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A Language For All? KiSwahili as a Tool For Unity
Problematizing the East African Community's language policy

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Abstract

In modern state-development it is common practice to use one language for unifying people in a nation or region. However, in the wake of decolonisation, many African states found themselves struggling with the decision to pick a national language. African languages are rarely dominating whole nations, making it hard to choose one language as a tool for unity. The kiSwahili language is therefore a rare case. It is a well-known *lingua franca* in the East African region that the vast majority of people in Tanzania and Kenya comprehend. It was chosen as a national language in both countries in their postcolonial era, to different degrees of success unifying each nation. Today, five states have come together to create the East African Community (EAC), including Tanzania and Kenya. The objective of the EAC is to provide economic, political and social unity in the region. The EAC argues that the kiSwahili language plays an important role in order to achieve unity in the region. KiSwahili has therefore developed from being promoted as a national language into a regional language. This thesis aims to analyze and problematize the EAC language policy and discuss to what extent it is possible to establish the sought-after regional unity. Its findings conclude that even though one language could be used as a tool for unity, it is highly contextual and many factors need to be taken into consideration when planning for regional unity.

Key words: kiSwahili, national unity, regional unity, East African Community, Tanzania, Kenya, language policy

Word count: 11322

List of Abbreviations

EAC	East African Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
EU	European Union
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
EAKC	East African KiSwahili Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
WPR	What's the Problem Represented to be
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

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1. Introduction

KiSwahili is currently being portrayed as the language that will strengthen economic, social and political capital in the Great Lake Region in Eastern Africa. It is one of the official languages in the East African Community (EAC), planning to be spread to countries in the region that does not have a history of speaking it, such as Rwanda and Burundi. (Trudell 2016; Mwaniki 2010)

In postcolonial Kenya and Tanzania, the kiSwahili language has been promoted as a tool in order to achieve national unity to different degrees of success. There are multiple dependent factors in these cases impacting whether kiSwahili is being adopted by the country and its citizens, such as dimensions of power, education and religious ties. While all of them should be investigated in order to paint a holistic view of the matter, this thesis aims only to address the ones of *national and regional unity*. It adapts the definition that national unity is a part of a political ideology, and that language can be used as a tool for achieving and promoting national unity. Similarly, *regional unity* is defined on the same basis as national unity, with the distinction that the unity is supposed to spread between nations.

The thesis adapts a case study method in order to highlight contextual aspects to how kiSwahili has created unity in the past, and connecting these facts to the current language policy of the region. This language policy has been created by the EAC, consisting of a total of five nations. Therefore, kiSwahili has emerged from being a tool for *national* unity, to one supposed to create *regional* unity. This thesis emphasizes that the ideological aspect should be considered when a language is being promoted, further arguing for the use of language policy in the data collection.

1.1 Aim and research question

While it is true that a language has the ability to bring unity, it could likewise develop as a dividing factor between ethnicities and values. A common language has been described as an asset in order to promote nationalism and unify a country. When the majority of the

population are able to use one language, they have the ability to participate in the nation's political and socio-economic development. Simultaneously, when citizens do not comprehend their own national languages, it hinders social, economic and democratic development. Unfortunately, language policies tend to be neglected when studying political and social aspects of Africa. (Rosendal 2010; Kische 2004)

Language is furthermore a common target of attack in order to hinder ethnicities and their identities (Fishman & García 2010, p 78). For instance, a well-known example is when the Spanish dictator Franco made it forbidden to speak Catalan in the country (Webber & Trueta, 1991). Therefore, language policies should arguably be highlighted when discussing current development challenges, as they hold the potential of excluding people from political participation and violating human rights. This can particularly be argued to be applicable in the African context. One of the continents most persistent effects of colonialism is that many of the nations use European languages as official languages. One problem with the European languages in Africa is that they tend to be spoken only by a prestigious elite, thereby not being representative for a nation as a whole. Another one is that the indigenous African languages tend to be seen as inferior in comparison to the European languages, thus dividing African societies (Kamwangamalu 2016 , p 165; Rosendal 2010; Trudell 2016; Prah 2008).

One could indeed discuss the relevance of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 10, which aims to strengthen equal outcomes. The goal is specifically targeting social inclusions regardless of economic status, and to reduce inequalities that are produced as a consequence of certain discriminatory policies and practices (United Nations 2021). The thesis is not arguing that the language policy of the EAC is discriminatory in itself, merely acknowledging that it is a possibility especially in the African context.

If kiSwahili is to spread successfully in East Africa in order to promote regional unity, much in line with what the EAC are working for, one can argue that it would be beneficial to highlight factors that have been able to impact the unity or disunity of the language. By problematizing and analyzing the language policy from 2007, this thesis aims to understand to what extent kiSwahili is able to bring regional unity in Eastern Africa. The research question of the thesis is therefore:

“How can the kiSwahili language policy of the East African Community from 2007 be problematized and understood through the concepts of national and regional unity?”

2. Background

The background will start in 2.1 with a discussion of why unity could be hard to achieve in Africa because of the continent's great number of indigenous languages. Section 2.2 covers why kiSwahili holds such a unique position in the African language debate, since the language consists of all the necessary components to become a unifying national language. Then, 2.3 consists of a brief history of kiSwahili and its development, in order to show how it has been promoted and used in both pre-colonial and during the colonial era in Tanzania and Kenya. Finally, part 2.4 explains the creation and objectives of the EAC, specifically in relation to kiSwahili.

2.1 The language question in Africa

“Language is a core cultural institution and at the heart of an individual’s and a society’s identity” (Childs 2003, p 5).

Languages and their use might not be a priority when thinking of current development challenges. However, there are many aspects to consider when it comes to languages. In fact, language and its policies in general, and the African ones in particular, impact and shape societies to a great extent. Language and modern state-development are intertwined in multiple ways, since a common language can be used as a tool for unifying people in a nation or region (Wright 2016, p 7-8). Westerners are for most of the time able to use their mother tongue in every situation in society, perhaps even taking it for granted. This is far from the African reality, where instead multilingualism is the common norm. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the role of *lingua francas* in Africa, meaning languages used for communication between people who do not share native tongue. To be able to communicate with people nearby, read news or understand what is communicated by the government, Africans generally have to learn at least one, most of the time multiple, *lingua francas* beyond their native tongue (Janson & Retsö 2008, p 5). Indeed, Africa has the highest concentration of languages in the world (Kishe 2004). Roughly 31 percent of the world’s languages are found in Africa, with an average of 50 languages in each African country

(ibid). One of the causes is a geographical one. Instead of one culture becoming dominant, many smaller societies became isolated, and their languages never merged together (Janson & Retsö 2008, p 10, 16; Marshall 2016, p 119). But perhaps more importantly, many nations in Africa have been constructed through the arbitrary borders drawn during the “scramble for Africa”. These borders hardly took any consideration to languages, cultures or ethnicities on the African continent (ibid).

The popular concept of one language, one people and one state thus became problematic in the wake of decolonisation in the African context, since unifying people through a single national language would prove to be a hard challenge. This complex situation is commonly referred to as the language question of Africa. Favoring one ethnic group and their language can potentially spark conflicts and exclusions in society. Thus, the states tend to choose an official language that at least a few percent of all the people comprehend as a *lingua franca*, often a colonial language such as French or English (Janson & Retsö 2008, p 2-6). Generally, colonial languages are of higher prestige on the African continent, as people view them as tools for accessing job markets, information and status (Ouane & Glanz 2010). However, the average level of European languages in Africa remains low, especially in rural areas, suggesting that language becomes a question of class (Rosendal 2010; Trudell 2016). Adopting a model with European languages in African school curriculums tends furthermore to correlate with high rates of illiteracy and school dropouts (Kamwangamalu 2016, p 23). The ruling elite tend to resist changing current language policies, since it will likely decrease their own influence (Rosendal 2010; Prah 2008). When only a small percentage of the African population can fully comprehend their official languages, it hampers democracy as well as economic and social development (Rosendal 2010). One could question to what extent a colonial language would be able to bring unity to a nation where only a small prestigious elite can speak it. Despite the serious impact language policies can have, they have been widely neglected when researching political and social aspects of Africa, further arguing for the importance of this topic (ibid). Thus, African language policies are important to investigate, since they could provide hinders and solutions for the masses to access high-status domains such as employment, political participation and education (Kamwangamalu 2016, p 139).

2.2 KiSwahili as a tool for national and regional unity

A common language can be seen as a powerful tool to achieve unity in nations and regions, since it provides an essential step in ensuring the full participation of the masses in the political, socio-economic and cultural development. It holds the potential of cutting across tribal ethnic ties whilst promoting a sense of a joint community. An African *lingua franca* in African nations would arguably be the ideal option, since it would be best suited to articulate African culture. An indigenous *lingua franca* not only fosters pride but builds bridges between its people of similar history and culture, thus leading to mutual understanding and greater political and economic unity. (Kishe 2004)

However, as mentioned earlier, only a few African states are monolingual. This is why the kiSwahili language presented itself as a rare case in postcolonial Kenya and Tanzania. According to Wright (2016, p 83-84), it contained the three most essential conditions for a national language at the time. First, kiSwahili is an *indigenous language*, much in line with the symbolic dimension that was to become a signal for a new, independent Africa after colonialism. Additionally, it *did not benefit any particular ethnic group*, meaning it could work as a neutral cohesive language in a political sense. Finally, it was also able to foster a *regional identity*, since it was already commonly used as a *lingua franca*. Contrastingly, most national languages in postcolonial Africa are closely linked to potentially disruptive dimensions caused by power conflicts between various ethnic or/and socioeconomic groups (ibid). Keeping this in mind, it is easy to see why the EAC are arguing that kiSwahili could work as a unifying tool for the region. In Tanzania, kiSwahili has been the national and official language since the 1960s, strengthening its use from domestic to the state. In Kenya, it became the official language in the 1970s (Mazrui & Shariff 1994, p 72). In both countries, kiSwahili is spoken by a majority of their citizens. It is moreover the largest language on the continent in terms of number of speakers in comparison to other African languages. KiSwahili is estimated to be spoken by 100 million people in the world, by far the most widely spoken Bantu language (Kishe 2004).

Indeed, it has been suggested that the only type of language that can ensure participation in the social, economic and political system is an African one (Ojwang 2008). However, kiSwahili has not always been associated with solely unifying aspects. As

Mukuthuria (2006) rightfully points out, one can question if Uganda ever will fully embrace kiSwahili as a national language. Its close historical connection to the dictatorship of Idi Amin has resulted in kiSwahili being associated with looting, brutality and other abuse of human rights. Ugandans would likely not be suggesting the language as a unifying tool, but perhaps the opposite. Further aspects of the complexity with promoting the kiSwahili language is covered in section 4.1.

2.3 Unity through kiSwahili in a historical perspective

In order to understand the significance of kiSwahili in the East Africa region, this section will cover how the language has been used as a tool for unity during precolonial and colonial rule; and which factors have impacted its unity and disunity throughout history.

The name kiSwahili is presumed to originate from the Arabic word for coast, *sawāhil*. The term *kiSwahili* means ‘language and culture of the coast’ whereas *waSwahili* translates to ‘people of the coast’. Swahili is just an English simplification of the standard kiSwahili and its vernaculars, which is why this thesis insists on using the term ‘kiSwahili’ for the language (Walsh 2018). While being a native African Bantu language, kiSwahili holds a large number of Arabic loanwords, and has partially adopted grammar from Arabic. The impact that the Arabs have had on the region and its language is immense and should not be neglected. One of the reasons is the religion that was spread in East Africa, resulting in kiSwahili speakers becoming muslims (Jansö Afrika 2008, p 14-15; Mazrui & Mazrui 1995, p 35). Another aspect is because of several hundreds of years of trade with the Arabic world. Although it was not yet particularly well spread, kiSwahili established itself as a *lingua franca* in East Africa early on due to its commercial value (Simpson 2008, p 254). It can therefore be argued that it created a sense of regional unity through a common language in precolonial Tanzania and Kenya.

KiSwahili kept on growing during colonial rule. Usually, colonists did not want to learn African languages, and thus imposed their own languages. Partially this was due to the fact that indigenous languages could be unifying Africans, arguably not what the colonists were striving for. However, kiSwahili was an exception to this rule. The widespread use of kiSwahili already in place, and the economic advantages of using a single language, made

Germany keep kiSwahili as the language of communication. (Simpson 2008, p 254; Kamwangamalu 2016, p 41)

KiSwahili played an important role as the tool for communication during the resistance and rebellion against the German East African colonists. By using kiSwahili, many regions with different ethnicities were able to communicate (Mazrui & Mazrui 1995, p 37). Thus, kiSwahili became a symbol of regional unity, crossing ethnic barriers.

Another aspect that should be highlighted during the colonial era is the one of standardizing the kiSwahili language. Colonisers did not like the fact that kiSwahili vocabulary included terms connected to Islam (Mazrui & Mazrui 1995, p 39). Still, the benefits of the language as a *lingua franca* could not be ignored. Instead, the colonists wanted to change the language to suit their interests better. It was decided that kiSwahili should be written with the Roman script instead of Arabic, and replace Arabic words with German ones (ibid). Because of the work by the missionaries, the kiSwahili language was studied, written down, translated and taught in a more formal setting (Simpson 2008, p 254). As early as 1870, there was a handbook of the kiSwahili language, and in 1882 also a dictionary (Simpson 2008, p 255). An early disagreement was which vernacular of kiSwahili was to be standardized between the Mombasa one in present Kenya, and the Zanzibar one in present Tanzania. Although picked at first, the Zanzibar vernacular quickly became seen as a liability due to it being heavily influenced by the Arabic world. It was therefore changed to the Mombasa vernacular, a change that would last until the British took over (Simpson 2008, p 254).

When the bible eventually was published on standardized kiSwahili in 1930, it consisted of a more “bantuised” version of kiSwahili, and the edition became widely spread in Tanzania. This period up to independence of 1961, served as the formative spread of kiSwahili as a *lingua franca* when it was used in administration, education and media. In schools, textbooks were used that helped spread kiSwahili nationally (Simpson 2008, p 255). Thanks to a number of printing presses owned by the churches in Zanzibar, printing materials in kiSwahili was easily manageable and helped spread the language among non-kiSwahili speakers (Koffi 2012, p 301).

The debate of standardizing kiSwahili kept on going when the British overtook the rule from the Germans by the end of WW1. KiSwahili was by then already a well-spread language in Tanganyika and British Kenya. It was used by members of civil services, the police, and army (Mazrui & Mazrui 1995, p 45). However, in the 1930s, the British implemented the inter-territorial language committee to once again standardize kiSwahili

across national boundaries, since they wanted the same vernacular to be used in all East Africa. Now, it was decided to bring back the Zanzibar vernacular as the standard one in Tanganyika and British Kenya (ibid). Two aspects were more emphasized than others: uniformity in the articulation and application of grammar in spoken but especially written kiSwahili, but also the orthography of the language. School textbooks were for instance proofread to make sure it was a “correct” form of kiSwahili (Simpson 2008, p 256).

The implementation of standardization impacted the unifying effect kiSwahili had on Africans. Natives eventually came to feel that it was not their own language anymore. Without the Arabic influence, they did not recognize their own language. Thus, the standardized version was not particularly well received. Some reports state that native kiSwahili speakers often asked the provocative question: “Where is this kiSwahili spoken?”, since it only existed in written form in schoolbooks (Wright 2016, p 87). Evidently, kiSwahili was seen as a tool for unifying the region during the colonial era, however one can argue that the standardized version of kiSwahili gave the opposite outcome. The thesis will continue to discuss standardization as a unifying factor in section 4.1.

Finally, the implementation of colonial languages in the region shall not be overlooked. The introduction of English in administration and education was made to enforce English as the new official language. The schools, army, police and judiciary employed english speaking people. Except for the first few years in primary education where kiSwahili was used, English was the language for any higher education. Very few people spoke English since very few attended school. Those Africans who did got the nickname “Wazungu Weusi”, meaning Black Europeans, at the time a highly regarded compliment. English thus became the language of progress and advancement, creating a new language power dimension that the region is yet to recover from. (Rubagumya 1991; Kamwangamalu 2016, p 37)

2.4 The East African Community

The organisation East African Community (EAC) was in its current form established in 1999. Initially founded in 1967, it lasted merely a decade before collapsing. The original founding member states from 1967 were Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Currently, it includes Burundi and Rwanda as well, with the ambition to include further neighbouring states in the future

such as Malawi. The EAC objective with regional integration has adopted its model from the European Union (EU), where member states respect their sovereignty while also agreeing on regional decisions. (Bachmann & Sidaway 2010)

The EAC is indeed a business oriented institution. For instance, it has established a customs union and a common market, boosting exports and imports in its region (Muluvi *et al* 2012). Using only one language could potentially help the economy thrive further, since having multiple languages often results in extra costs and efforts such as translations of documents (Muluvi *et al* 2012). Perhaps it is therefore not surprising to find that the EAC has established its very own KiSwahili Commission, an institute solely focusing on developing the use of kiSwahili in the region. The commission stated in 2017 that it recognizes kiSwahili as an important asset and resource in the process of promoting a sustainable economic, political and social development of the community (East African Community 2017). The Great Lake nations are moreover convinced that if a regional identity can be fostered, it will develop a culture of peace and unity (Kishe 2004). This was one of the topics heavily underlined in a conference held in Uganda in 2001 (*ibid*). Although it is true that language has the power to unify people, there is arguably a need to investigate to what extent the language policies at the same time might cause harm and exclusion (Bamgboṣe 2000). The data collection will consist of the EAC language policy in order to analyze how the role of kiSwahili is being emphasized, and whether it is able to establish the sought-after unity.

3. Theory

The theory section is going to discuss the concepts of nationalism and regionalism. Nationalism is important to grasp since it can be seen as a movement that helps create a sense of national unity and identity. Then, regional unity is defined by drawing on similarities from national unity. Language is in turn defined as a tool within nationalism and regionalism, utilized to promote unity both nationally and regionally.

3.1 Nationalism and regionalism

The theory of nationalism has been widely discussed in social sciences in general, and its connection to language in particular. Gellner (2008, p 1) suggests that 'language is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent'. The nationalist *sentiment* is connected to this statement, while nationalists *movements* are caused by nationalist sentiments. Moreover, it is a theory that urges political boundaries to stand over ethnic ones, thereby uniting the citizens. With this definition in mind, there are a big number of potential nations on earth (Gellner 2008, p 2).

However, political will and shared cultures are essential in order to establish the theory of nationality in practice. The varieties of organizing groups throughout the history of mankind comes down to crucial factors such as: will, solidarity and identification on the one hand; fear and compulsion on the other (Gellner 2008, p 52). Naturally, these factors are not sufficient when isolated. Political will in itself cannot define a nation, and shared cultures could mean fuzzy boundaries, to say the least (Gellner 2008, p 53). Gellner (2008, p 56) means that nationalism is essentially a higher culture that absorbs lower cultures of the majority or even totality of the population.

Zake (2002) agrees with the perspective that nationalism can be identified as an ideology that promotes a collective and unified consciousness and identity. However, according to him the most important stakeholder that should be focused on in the matter of nationalism is the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), and how they organize the social order to their main ideology. ISAs can consist of different institutions such as churches, schools, political organizations, trade unions, media and literature. The ISAs are constructing subjective

consciousness amongst citizens in order to achieve political power. Thus, nationalism is primarily an ideologically driven process, and all nationalist movements develop projects that justify and promote their political agendas. The idea is that ISAs and their ideologies essentially create a sense of self-identity amongst individuals, transforming them to subjects of particular political systems. Thus, individuals must be analyzed, since they themselves are tools of modern state power. Even though this theory was originally constructed in connection to the ideology of capitalism, nationalism should arguably be able to apply to other ideologies as well. Socialist states have for instance also been using national ideologies to a great extent. When analyzing nationalist ideologies, one can look for three common interventions listed by Zake (2002). First, there is the invention of ethnic history and national memory. Then, the invention and preservation of national language and, finally, the invention of substantially different ethnic and national cultures. These methods can be seen as tools for achieving a national consciousness. Together, they shape individuals that know their history, speak the national language and live by the national culture. The assumption that languages are consistent and inherited historically by various cultures are thus questioned, instead proposing that national languages are products of historical events. Another factor discussed by Zake (2002) is that the creation of a standardized vernacular enables ISAs to spread more effectively, by homogenizing a national consciousness. (Zake 2002)

Language thus plays a central role in creating a common identity. A group of people that are able to communicate and set goals together have an easier time creating a sense of common unity, rather than a group without a mutual language. When the theory of a modern state became popular in the West, many states saw the opportunities with one language to unify all people (Wright 2016, p 7-8). As mentioned earlier in section 2.1, the concept of one language, one people and one state proved to be challenging in postcolonial Africa.

Indeed, language is not sufficient nor mandatory to build a state, however it often stands as a symbol of nationality. A common indigenous language has in many cases resulted in a powerful factor of unity and identity (Fishman & García 2010, p 77). A group identity becomes a core part of language planning, which is much central to nation building in general and to regional building for the EAC in particular.

Ethnicity is another common theme when discussing nationalism, however no nation consists of an ethnic base naturally. Balibar (1990) suggests that racism holds a vital role in nationalism. Essentially, the mindset of one's race as superior versus others as inferior. She

furthermore argues that language is a key factor in nationalism, helping build unity around one's race, especially when defining and speaking "a language of the people". This theory can be applied to the colonial context in Africa, where colonialists supposedly viewed themselves as a superior race holding a superior language (Simpson 2008, p 254).

Others argue that the main focus of nationalism is political integration, oriented by the state. It provides an economic necessity according to Kishe (2004) which can only be fulfilled if the state is capable of reaching the masses in society. A common *lingua franca* can thus be used to ensure participation of all members of society in the political, socio-economic and cultural development of one's nation. In postcolonial Africa, European languages tend to exclude people from society, thereby creating disunity (Prah 2008). Therefore, one can argue that the East African Community would have an easier time reaching its goal for regional unity by choosing an indigenous language. Kishe (2004) argues that an indigenous *lingua franca* fosters pride among its people, crossing ethnic ties and promotes political unity.

In sum, Gellner argues that nationalism is a political theory, but in order to be established into practice, will and shared cultures are needed. Zake's definition of nationalism is that it needs to be approached as an ideology that uses its citizens to create a national consciousness through elements such as a national language. According to Fishman and Wright, language can create a sense of common unity amongst people, much relevant to the theory of a modern state. Kishe is of the opinion that language should be seen as a tool that promotes nationalism and thus unity, and especially in the African context this matter needs to be taken into cautious consideration. Finally, Balibar suggests that ethnicity and dimensions of racism hold a vital role in the creation of nationalism.

With all these concepts considered and noted, *this thesis defines nationalism as a political ideology, and language as a tool for achieving and promoting its unity*. Therefore, nationalism can be created by a political movement, such as in postcolonial Tanzania, where kiSwahili was promoted to create a sense of unity and nationalism. The EAC is however a transnational organization, which means that the definition is in need of an extra tweak. KiSwahili has transformed from being an asset creating *national* unity, to one supposed to bring *regional* unity. Therefore, we must also accept the definition of *regionalism* as a political ideology.

A region is most often based on factors such as common history, culture and geographic proximity. It should be mentioned that regional unity nowadays is often based on the concept of collaborations between states due to factors such as trade agreements and tourism, much in line with the EAC. The European Union is seen as a successful example, where a region becomes more coherent while also respecting national practices. Jönsson (2010) argues that regions today will have to renegotiate their identities because of changes caused by globalization, similar to the way states do. This is much in line with what Gellner (2008, p 56) touches upon when defining nationalism as a higher culture absorbing lower cultures. In a sense, regional unity is national unity in a broader perspective. Nationalism is achieved by creating unity among the citizens, and regionalism is achieved by unifying nations. (Jönsson 2010)

The aspect of regions and identity has changed since the competition of trade has become more significant. The creation of regional unity has been described as the practice by institutions to create symbols of identity or coherence among the inhabitants. This is carried through in order to establish a regional unity. Social and historical processes should always be considered when discussing regional unity, since they can influence the effectiveness of the unity outcome. A sense of regional unity can enhance business, trust and culture in the region. (Raagmaa 2002)

The unifying factors of regional unity have been discussed, but there are many more factors that will differ between regional unity from national unity. These factors are acknowledged, however this thesis will be focusing on their similarities rather than their differences in order to demonstrate the development of kiSwahili as a tool for national unity, to one for regional unity.

In order to answer the research question of this thesis, the definitions of nationalism and regionalism provide a helpful lens to explain how kiSwahili is being used in order to establish unity in the East African Community. It can be argued that, particularly in the African context, it is important to include political ideology in the definition, since kiSwahili has been used to organize masses in pre-, post- and during colonial times. Seeing that kiSwahili is not limited to solely one country but more so to one specific region, one could speculate whether it is able to bring regional unity to East Africa, just like the EAC are arguing for it to develop. Therefore, these concepts of national and regional unity will be discussed in relation to the EAC language policy that will be covered in the analysis.

4. Literature review

This section will cover aspects that have enhanced or hindered unity through language in a postcolonial state. By including the cases of Tanzania and Kenya, the discussion aims to find themes that are similar for the cases, but perhaps more importantly distinguish them from one another. Both nations are founders of the East African Community, therefore making them relevant to investigate. Tanzania is furthermore where the East African KiSwahili Commission is based. The amount of available data regarding these countries and their relation to kiSwahili, both historically and currently, further justifies the selection of Tanzania and Kenya. KiSwahili has also developed differently in Tanzania compared to Kenya, making it relevant to include both cases. The literature review is thus mainly focusing on these two countries within the East African Community.

4.1 Unity through kiSwahili in Tanzania and Kenya

When modern day Tanzania became a nation, it held many disparate groups. Some were still hunter-gatherers, some were seafaring traders and some belonged to a sophisticated and privileged urban life. More than 120 ethnic groups with different cultures and languages had to be merged together into a common national culture, at least that was the prospect that the president Julius Nyerere envisioned. The president picked the already established *lingua franca* kiSwahili as the language that was going to unify the nation. (Wright 2016, p 85-86)

When Kenya was founded in 1963, a search for a collective identity in a diverse population began just like in neighbouring Tanzania (Simpson 2008, p 235). KiSwahili was, and still is, seen as the language of solidarity in the country (Simpson 2008, p 236). However, the English language has historically been of higher prestige in Kenya if compared to Tanzania. English is for instance the language used when laws are drafted and debates are being held in the government (Simpson 2008, p 247).

One can see how the concept of nationalism and one unifying language influenced the new states. A common *lingua franca* was seen as a tool, utilized to bridge together multiple people and their cultures in each country.

Some authors have focused on the successful story of kiSwahili as a language for national unity in postcolonial Tanzania. Wright (2016) describes how kiSwahili quickly established itself as the national language in Tanzania. It became closely associated with *Ujamaa*, translated familyhood, the socialist ideology that president Nyerere promoted. Not only was kiSwahili presented as a national language, but also as an African one. The language was therefore promoted to the people as the African language, the language of the people, and as the language against colonialism (Wright 2016, p 88). KiSwahili had been used as the language of political mobilisation when protesting against colonialism in the 1950s. Citizens that spoke English in public could be accused of having ‘a colonial hangover’ (Rubagumya 1991). Harries (1969) argues that kiSwahili became a reflection of national will and purpose, while functioning as the symbol of national unity. During the *Ujamaa* ideology, Tanzania reached the highest adult literacy rates in Africa and achieved universal primary education. Vavrus (2002) states that the successful practices of the government were recognized and praised, and that it was all done through kiSwahili. Indeed, the unifying role of kiSwahili in Tanzania furthermore downplayed the roles of ethnic and religious divisions in the country (Wright 2016, p 89). Political participation increased in Tanzania, since a wider group of people could comprehend and contribute to the government when kiSwahili was used. KiSwahili also came to spread in a more democratic sense in Tanzania's school system if compared to countries that kept a colonial language, where it usually resulted in a continued language for the elites (Wright 2016, p 89). Tanzania has been described as a state where language building has been conducted successfully to a great extent. KiSwahili as a tool for national unity was achieved in Tanzania, especially if compared to Kenya and Uganda where English was favored the first 20 years after independence (ibid). This body of literature suggests that the *Ujamaa* policies would not have been able to be carried out to the same extent without kiSwahili, since language has a higher chance of spreading when an accepted ideology is connected to it (Wright 2016, p 89).

However, the Tanzanian unity is not solely a story of success, which according to Wright (2016, p 90) correlates with the influence of global institutions. In the early 1980s, when it was clear that the socialist policies did not result in any economic growth, *Ujamaa* was eventually scrapped on the behalf of a more liberal ideology. In order to secure necessary foreign loans and humanitarian aid from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Tanzania was pushed to abolish their socialist policies in return (Wright 2016, p 90). These global institutions furthermore promoted the use of English, creating a strong position for the English language. As foreign aid grew to become a large part of the national budget,

Tanzania had to concur to these conditions. Due to the liberal reforms, Tanzania's budget for education decreased from 11.7% of the GDP in 1980 to only 2.5% in 1995 (Wright 2016, p 90-91). School attendance and literacy rates diminished during the same period, and Wright (ibid) suggests that this caused the *Ujamaa* idealism to slowly disappear. The activists that taught kiSwahili were replaced by paid teachers that lacked the same motivation or time commitment to spread the language (Wright 2016, p 91). The learners changed attitudes as well, literacy and education was seen as tools for achieving economic opportunities, rather than contributing to their community and nation. State schools were deemed to not offer good enough education, and when private schooling was allowed in the 1980s, English tended to be used as the medium of instruction (ibid). Wright (2016, p 92) points out that at this point, English started to take form as a language of the elites in Tanzania. Simultaneously, kiSwahili started to lose its strong status to English, and the unity it had been bringing started to decrease.

The case of adapting one's language due to pressure from global institutions is not a unique one to Tanzania. Indonesia also obliged to the IMF-reforms in 1997, with one consequence being that of English started to spread in the country (Wright 2016, p 106-109). Wright (2016, p 96-97) includes Indonesia in the discussion since it is both similar and different to the one in East Africa. With the idea of one nation, one language, they too had to choose a national language to create a cohesive nation (ibid). The Bahasa Indonesian, today more commonly known as Indonesian, was chosen as the national language at independence. Just like in Tanzania with kiSwahili, the Indonesian language came to spread with the idea of unity against colonialism in a new nation. Moreover, the state emphasized that Indonesian was a core symbol and the basis for ethnic and cultural unity (Wright 2016, p 98). It also presented itself as a neutral language not connected to a prestigious elite (ibid). Today, the language is seen as the national language and is spoken by the vast majority of the citizens. Nevertheless, much like what happened in Tanzania, the national language started to lose power to English (Wright 2016, p 107-109). In cities, primarily Jakarta, Indonesian was quickly established, however it continued to be mainly a secondary language in the rural parts of the country. This was especially reflected in the school system, which held large issues such as corruption due to low wages. Instead, the international schools that used English began to establish themselves and gain power (Wright 2016, p 104).

Although kiSwahilization was never fully achieved in Tanzania, kiSwahili still promoted a sense of national unity, especially before the 1980s liberal reforms (Wright 2016, p 92). The same can be said about Indonesia. The Tanzanian cohesion is to this day

sought-after by many African states, and former president Nyerere was convinced that kiSwahili played a huge role in unifying the country (Githiora 2018, p 49). Zake's (2002) idea that political ideology correlates with language promotion can therefore be seen in the Tanzanian and Indonesian cases. The kind of unity that Tanzania was able to establish through kiSwahili is arguably the same one that the East African Community are longing for in its current policy. The difference is that it has emerged to become a tool for regional unity, rather than a national one.

A question that naturally follows is why kiSwahili was never promoted as much in Kenya as it was in Tanzania? As Githiora (2018, p 44-45) rightfully points out, kiSwahili was indeed seen as the language of optimism, much connected to anti-colonial ideas and unifying people of all regions before independence. There is moreover no other language in Kenya accepted as the national language than kiSwahili (Githiora 2018, p 177).

Some scholars believe that one answer could potentially lie in the ideological aspect. In contrast to Tanzania, Kenya's ideological path was far more vague. Kenya did not emphasize the role of language as much in their postcolonial ideology. Neither did it refrain from using the colonial language structures to the same extent (Githiora 2018, p 50). For example, candidates that wanted to run for political office were required to comprehend kiSwahili, and some oral and written tests were even implemented. However, many of the later cabinet ministers were not able to use kiSwahili of anything above intermediate level, suggesting that the tests were likely never taken too seriously (Harries 1976).

Instead, Githiora (2018, p 45, 49) argues that because English came to remain as the main medium of instruction, it established itself in the centre of power. The English language is one of the most obvious consequences of colonial rule in today's Kenya, and it still holds its position of power within business, education and the parliament. English is not solely a language of written communication and for formal business, but frequently used in the nation's everyday life (Githiora 2018, p 44). English is moreover the more dominant language in higher-status groups. Their negative attitude towards kiSwahili during colonial rule is still today a dominant one among the groups of higher socio-economic status. Githiora (2018, p 48) suggests that this attitude has created a fear that came to shape Kenya's *laissez-faire* attitude towards language planning, possibly explaining why it has stayed unregulated historically and currently. While these groups do represent a minority, they are nevertheless a powerful group in terms of political power and economic capital (Githiora 2018, p 43). Vavrus (2002) emphasizes how quite the contrary situation developed in

Tanzania, where all political parties were consistent in their support of kiSwahili.

Another factor to why kiSwahili did not result in the same unity in Kenya correlates with proficiency. The northern part does not use the language as much as the rest of the country. Perhaps more importantly though are the divisions within Kenya that correlates with one's vernacular of kiSwahili. Some vernaculars are more connected to power than others. For example, a persistent attitude among the coastal tribes is that they speak a more proper form of kiSwahili. (Githiora 2018, p 48; Ojwang 2008)

The standardization of kiSwahili should in theory be able to remove this issue, since it evidently provides one standard language for everyone to use. However, some scholars argue that it has instead had a contrary effect. Githiora (2018, p 177) highlights how the standardized version is perceived to only exist in books and dictionaries. Many Kenyans feel like standardized kiSwahili is a hard language to master, providing one reason why they speak their own vernacular instead (ibid). It seems furthermore that a problem with the standardized kiSwahili in Kenya is that the standardized version is not based on Kenyan kiSwahili, but Tanzanian. This could possibly explain the different attitudes towards the language coming from the capital cities Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. Dar-es-Salaam is a coastal city, therefore historically connected to kiSwahili to a greater extent than Nairobi ever have been. Nairobi valued English higher than kiSwahili already at the start of Kenya's independence (Harries 1976). Some Kenyans are of the opinion that they should have their own standardized version, coming from Mombasa, rather than the one in Zanzibar. There was even a lexicon published in 1936 for the "upcountry kiSwahili", in reference to the Kenyan vernacular. Some attempts have been tried by the Mombasians, but they have not gotten the needed support from the government in Nairobi (Harries 1976). This could explain why the overall acceptance of kiSwahili is thus lower in Kenya than in Tanzania (Ojwang 2008).

Regarding vernaculars and its ability to enhance divisions in society, one can find similarities in the case of Indonesia. Much like kiSwahili in Kenya, regional differences of the Indonesian language were created, impacting pronunciation and vocabulary (Wright 2016, p 102). The government tried to intervene and stop this development by creating its own language planning institution and urging Indonesians to speak the 'proper' Indonesian. In the year 2000 a policy was designed to hinder the use of codeswitching in the country. But with promoting one version of Indonesian as the proper one and others to be improper, it eventually resulted in language divisions. Wright (2016, p 99-103) argues that people from poorer classes experienced that they came to speak an inferior version of Indonesian, a view

that is still prevalent today.

Even though kiSwahili vernaculars have caused divisions in Kenya, it does not mean that kiSwahili has become less spoken in Kenya. Indeed, kiSwahili is still the nation's primary *lingua franca*, used as the primary language of the media and the administration. It is connected to urban life and its occupations, such as market, trade and industry. KiSwahili is a mandatory subject in both primary and secondary education in Kenya, and public universities hold a number of courses in kiSwahili (Githiora 2018, p 41). KiSwahili is sometimes used in the current Kenyan parliament, however English is far overrepresented in debates (Githiora 2018, p 47). Still, there is little doubt that kiSwahili is seen as the language of the nation.

Githiora (2018, p 47, 49) instead urges us to recognize that the unifying role of kiSwahili has disappeared over the years, especially in comparison to Tanzania. Kamwangamalu (2016, p 180) agrees and states that unlike in Tanzania, kiSwahili was never perceived as the language of prestige among Kenyans. Both are stressing the importance of the relation between kiSwahili and English, as pro-English speakers in Kenya likely have affected the perception and attitudes within the nation's language planning policies (ibid). The aspect of English and its relation to kiSwahili is however not touched upon in the EAC language policy from 2007. Neither are the divisions created by superior and inferior vernaculars of kiSwahili. The literature review suggests that these aspects should not be neglected when discussing regional unity, thus arguing for them to be included in the analysis section.

5. Methods

The method section will justify why a case study is useful for answering the research question of the thesis. Then, the process of data collection and coding is explained. Additionally, an approach to problematize and analyze the policy itself is introduced. Finally, limitations and ethical considerations to the research are highlighted.

5.1 Case study

In this thesis, the specific case being investigated is the use of kiSwahili as a tool to achieve regional unity in the East African Community. Case study research is a preferred method in situations where (1) the research question consists of “how” or “why” questions, (2) when the researcher has little control over behavioral events and (3) the focus of study is not entirely historical. The case study is relevant when the research question requires an extensive and in-depth description of a social phenomenon, likely highly contextual. The core of the case study is that it tries to illuminate sets of decisions, why they were taken and with what results. This thesis argues that this is much needed with the case of kiSwahili. Without investigating why language policies matter in general, and the kiSwahili one in particular, the result of the study would not be as trustful. (Yin 2014, p 2, 15-16)

It should be noted that every case study is indeed unique and can therefore not be generalized. Instead, the case study should aim to perform analytical generalizations based on theories, instead of extrapolating probabilities (Yin 2014, p 21). An additional limitation with a single case study is that it is considered as less compelling and thus less robust than a multiple-case study (Yin 2014, p 57). More cases could definitely have been added, such as Uganda. More factors could also have been brought into the discussion, rather than only focusing on unity. However, this is outside the scope of this thesis, instead it should be suggested as a topic for further research.

5.2 Data collection

In order to set boundaries for the study, the data collection should include documents that most effectively helps the thesis to answer its research question (Creswell & Creswell 2017, p 185). The study is discussing the matter of language as a tool for achieving unity in a political ideology, Thus, it would arguably be valuable to analyze policy documents in order to conduct an in-depth analysis. Collecting documents is useful when they represent data relevant to the study. Neither is it a biased type of data such as observations and interviews, even though the interpretations of the document will be biased (Yin 2014, p 106). An obvious limitation with using policy documents is ensuring that it is authentic and accurate (Creswell & Creswell 2017, p 188). On the other hand, a policy document is unobtrusive to the research, since it likely has not been created as a result of or in correlation with the case study (Yin 2014, p 106). It is moreover a stable source of data, since it can be reviewed repeatedly (ibid).

The data collection has been carried through on the official EAC website, where one can access key documents such as Annual Reports and Development strategies (East African Community 2021). The more general documents of the EAC will be coded in order to identify patterns and concepts that could develop the analysis (Creswell & Creswell 2017, p 135, Halperin & Heath 2020, p 350). The coding will be following the principle of using a priori code, meaning the data collected relates to a certain theory or topic, which in this case would be unity (Halperin & Heath 2020, p 350). In this case, the labels will consist of certain keywords, including: *kiSwahili*, *unity* and *language*. The coding process thus allows the thesis to narrow itself down to where the focus lies at a supranational level in the East African region. It should be noted that even though the coding process consists of *expected* codes, one should also be aware to note *surprising* one's as well (Creswell & Creswell 2017, p 195).

On the website, one can furthermore access policy documents of specific institutions. By applying the tag “East African Kiswahili Commission (EAKC)”, documents arguably relevant for the thesis have been acquired. The document ‘Establishment of the East African Kiswahili Commission’ (2007) discusses the objectives and the importance for the KiSwahili Commission in particular. Since the document is recognizing how and why the kiSwahili language should be used as a tool for unity in the region, it will be used as the main document

for the analysis. As stated earlier however, other documents of the EAC that are discussing the relevance of kiSwahili will also be included to give the analysis a greater depth. It is important to note that the data analysis will not try to measure the impact of the policy, but merely try to define, analyze and problematize what the policy is trying to represent on regional unity.

5.3 The WPR approach

The analysis will be guided by Bacchi's (2009) approach "What's the problem represented to be?". The approach is in its core a critical analysis on policy, viewing all policy implementations as containing inherent problem representations. This approach is picked since it is used to understand and problematize the policy, rather than solving it (Bacchi 2009, p 2). Furthermore, it is emphasized that the WPR approach recognizes that in order to really understand a policy, one has to provide a solid background of the discussed issue (Bacchi 2009, p 20). These two aspects rhyme well with the aim of the thesis. The full WPR framework is constituted by the following 6 questions:

- Q1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?
- Q2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
- Q3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
- Q4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
- Q5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
- Q6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How can it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

(Bacchi, 2009, p 48)

The analysis will not be including all of the questions raised above, but instead seeks to utilize them as guiding questions in its aim to problematize the policy. Bacchi (2009) argues that the approach is highly useful for measuring and evaluating policies, something that this

thesis is not intending to do. Nevertheless, it provides a useful approach for policy analysis.

5.4 Reflexivity & Limitations

Since this thesis is doing an analysis of policy documents, it is arguably important for the researcher to be aware of potential biases and subjective opinions. The fact that experiences shape one's interpretations should furthermore be acknowledged (Creswell & Creswell 2017, p 183-184). In this case, perhaps it is more suitable to mention the *lack* of experiences. The author is discussing historical and current complex issues regarding kiSwahili in the East African context, without any connection to the region and not comprehending the language itself.

Moreover, the spread and perception of a language boils down to a great number of factors, such as power structures, socioeconomic capital, religious ties and more. This thesis only addresses the aspects of national and regional unity, since it does not have the capacity to analyze them all. By only looking specifically at one language policy, the thesis is restricted in another sense as well. Indeed, one can argue that a case study design is limited because it lacks external validity (De Vaus 2001, p 273). The case of the kiSwahili development is undoubtedly contextual in itself, and therefore it neither could or should be generalized to a wider language debate (Yin 2014, p 21).

5.5 Ethical Considerations

This research design has been reviewed against the criteria for ethics in research by the Swedish Research Council in order to ensure ethical considerations. The data accessed has been acquired from the official EAC online database, presumably with the intent for people to see it. Thus, the used data has not been in need of protection by the researcher. Still, ethics should be considered in order to ensure reliability and honesty when conducting research. (Swedish Research Council 2011)

6. Analysis

The analysis is divided into three sections. The first one discusses the influence globalization has had on the regional unity of the East Africa Community. The second section elaborates on how an indigenous language in a postcolonial state has to be understood in its relation to a colonial language. Finally, in the last section the idea of standardizing kiSwahili for the sake of unity is questioned.

6.1 Globalization and regional unity

There is no doubt that kiSwahili is seen as a fundamental aspect in the development of the EAC. Their current Development Strategy (5th EAC Development Strategy 2016, p 75) includes the East African Kiswahili Commission (EAKC) as one of their main strategic interventions. It is mentioned that the EAKC is crucial in order to popularize kiSwahili in the Republics of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (5th EAC Development Strategy 2016, p 45). Furthermore, kiSwahili is mentioned as a strength in the SWOT-analysis (5th EAC Development Strategy 2016, p 26). This is due to the fact that the EAC region is among the world's fastest growing regions in terms of trade. The business-friendly environment in the EAC is seen as to be enhanced by the 'business' language kiSwahili (ibid). It is also acknowledged that the Development Strategy will follow the EAKC guidelines when developing kiSwahili (5th EAC Development Strategy 2016, p 75). It is stated in the document that the vision of the Commission is to be the leading body promoting and coordinating the development of kiSwahili for regional unity and socioeconomic development in the EAC nations (ibid). This is further elaborated in the language policy from 2007, where one can read that the Commission is focusing on strengthening national, regional and international communication through the use of kiSwahili (Establishment of the East African Kiswahili Commission 2007, p 4). It is argued that developing kiSwahili as a regional language will ensure that positive African values are being expressed (5th EAC Development Strategy 2016, p 22).

When reading the document, the concept of regional unity is clearly apparent and emphasized. As Jönsson (2010) argues, regional unity is today often sought-after for its potential of trade. Indeed, it is argued by the EAC that the key gain from a regional

cooperation is an economic one. Similarly, Raagmaa (2002) states that unity can indeed enhance business within a region. KiSwahili is not only seen as a tool for unity through culture and people, but also as a tool that will enhance trade and business in the region. By applying question number one in the WPR-approach, Bacchi (2009, p 3) argues that one should see what the problem is represented to be? Arguably, the use of kiSwahili is a part of the EAC's political ideology to enhance trade. Communication through one language helps setting up and accomplishing goals while also saving costs, time and effort.

WPR-question number two encourages us to look into what presuppositions or assumptions should be taken into consideration (Bacchi 2009, p 5-7). In the case of Eastern Africa, it would be valid to argue that globalization has been able to impact the EAC policy. According to both Jönsson (2010) and Raagmaa (2002), regional unity is closely connected to globalization. Regions tend to merge together in order to enhance trade and business. Gellner (2008, p 56) argues that absorbing smaller cultures in order to create bigger ones is a natural process within nationalism, and therefore regionalism as defined in this thesis. By using Zake's (2002) concept regarding Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), one can apply it to the case of the East African Community. The region has and still is being affected by supranational institutions. The liberal IMF-reforms have impacted language policies in Tanzania to a great extent, forcing the government to increase its use of English. Kamwangamalu (2016, p 129) states that foreign aid to this day impacts which language is being used officially in Africa. All the countries in the EAC are also members of the African Union, a Union where 4 out of 6 official languages are European ones (African Union, 2021). Kamwangamalu (2016, p 181) suggests that if these bigger institutions would push for indigenous languages to be used, it would indeed allow smaller ISAs such as the EAC to adapt their language policies. Instead, globalization could be seen as reproducing the current view of European languages as superior, and African one's as inferior.

6.2 Language and unity in a postcolonial state

In the policy document from 2007, one can read the initiating objectives with the foundation of the institution EAKC. It is stated that the member states Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda “enjoy close regional, educational, scientific, technological, social, economic, cultural and

linguistic ties for their mutual benefit” (Establishment of the East African Kiswahili Commission 2007, p 1).

While it is true that the linguistic ties can be argued as closely related, one could also argue for it to be different. Indeed, kiSwahili is a language spoken in all countries. However, its ability to bring unity to each nation is very different. Question number three in the WPR-approach emphasizes the importance to acknowledge historical aspects when understanding policies (Bacchi 2009, p 12). It becomes evident that kiSwahili, just like Indonesian and perhaps all languages in a postcolonial state, need to be understood in its relation to the colonial language. In Tanzania, kiSwahili was arguably successfully implemented as a national language because it was introduced in *opposition* to the colonial language. The distinction becomes important, since it influences people’s attitudes towards learning the language. This is a clear example of when language and ideology have become products of historical events, as discussed by Zake (2002). In contrast, the Kenyan experience promoted, or at least did not diminish, the colonial language to a greater extent. Language policies were never weaved together with the creation of the new independent state. The strong connection between the political ideology *Ujamaa* and kiSwahili is arguably essential in order to fully grasp the impact it had on national unity in Tanzania, where it became a core part of the state-building strategy. The lack of political promotion in the past could explain why English has a higher status in Kenya today. As Githiora (2018, p 43) suggests, English tends to be the language amongst the upper class in Kenya, a group that generally have had a negative attitude towards kiSwahili. This has possibly created a fear that eventually came to shape Kenya’s unregulated language planning (Githiora 2018, p 48). In Tanzania, political parties were instead consistent in their support of kiSwahili (Vavrus 2002). Thus, one could argue that when promoting the kiSwahili language, a unifying factor has been its connection with a political ideology taking a stance against colonial language reforms. It becomes important in a two-way situation: it enhances the national language and diminishes the colonial language, affecting its effectiveness to unify the people. Citizens that see their national language policy as a tool for a new nation are more keen to adopt it. If we were then to discuss regional unity, the same concepts should be able to apply. Already in ‘The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community’ (1999, p 93), it is proclaimed that one of their objectives was to introduce “the development and promotion of indigenous languages especially kiSwahili as a lingua franca”. Ironically, the English language was still kept as the official language of the community. Therefore, it looks similar to the way that Kenya implemented their language policy after independence. The EAC are positive towards the

idea of kiSwahili, but they have not effectively replaced it with English, at least not yet. In the policy document from 2007, it is stated that the East African Kiswahili Commission will make decisions and recommendations towards the development of the kiSwahili language in its region (Establishment of the East African Kiswahili Commission 2007, p 8). Arguably, the decision to work against English to effectively promote kiSwahili becomes a step the EAC will have to take eventually. This step has at least been shown to work in the past, and could therefore prove to be crucial in order to show that the promotion of kiSwahili is serious. If not, the region likely runs the risk of reproducing an excluding and unequal society by using English instead of a more widely spread and accepted kiSwahili as the language for unity.

6.3 Unity through standardization

Furthermore, the document ‘Establishment of the East African Kiswahili Commission’ (2007, p 1, 3) highlights that ‘KiSwahili shall be developed as the *lingua franca* of the community’ while also addressing that the Commission is going to perform standardization of terminology. Certainly the language could be perceived as just one language, and perhaps one could argue that it would be strange to articulate it differently. However, Bacchi (2009, p 12) argues that when looking at policies, one should question which aspects fail to be problematized? In this case, one can see that regional differences and the standardization of the kiSwahili language seems to play a role when discussing unity. Zake (2002) discusses the creation of a standardized vernacular as a natural process by ISAs to spread its ideology more efficiently throughout the region. In the East African context, one recurring theme is that the Kenyan people feel like the kiSwahili-speakers mainly come from Mombasa or other coastal cities, and consequently the language has not been successfully spread to all regions (Ojwang 2008). Moreover, today's standardized version of kiSwahili could be perceived as more Tanzanian than Kenyan, since it originates from Zanzibar (Githiora 2018, p 177). It is furthermore suggested that kiSwahili never became the high-status language in the capital Nairobi (Harries 1976). In Tanzania on the other hand, the standardized vernacular was widely accepted and spread throughout the nation. It gained high status in the capital Dar-es-Salaam and could thus get the proper support it needed from the Tanzanian government to spread all over the nation. KiSwahili is often argued as a neutral language, not connected or claimed by any ethnicity, and therefore being a language for all (Wright 2016, p

98; Harries 1976). However, the examples in Kenya, Tanzania and also Indonesia have shown that standardized versions and local vernaculars in the official language tend to create tensions and power dynamics, with some prestige to certain local accents. And that is just within the nation itself. When comparing the Kenyan kiSwahili vernacular to the one in Tanzania, one can see how they differ from each nation in its status. In Uganda, kiSwahili developed a bad reputation after being associated with the dictator Idi Amin, one it is yet to cover from (Mukuthuria 2006). The problem of natives not embracing a standardized kiSwahili has been an issue in the region since the idea originally emerged during the colonial era (Wright 2016, p 87). Despite the problematic dimensions regarding a standardized kiSwahili, the document shows that the nations within the EAC have agreed to the current objective of a standardized vocabulary (Establishment of the East African Kiswahili Commission 2007). By applying WPR-question number five, the thesis comes to question who is essentially benefiting from the standardization of kiSwahili? Throughout the analysis it becomes evident that the theory of standardization as a tool for achieving unity should be questioned, at least in the context of the EAC. If kiSwahili is not able to establish a national unity due to differences between vernaculars, one could indeed question its ability to bring regional unity.

7. Conclusion

In order to understand and grasp the complexity of the language question in Africa, there are arguably multiple aspects that need to be taken into consideration. One has to understand the country's history, the perception and attitudes of specific languages by the citizens, the present political ideology, the effects of globalization, standardization of languages and so on. Surely, language has the capacity to be a tool for unity. The problem is that one language is not a guarantee for unity. It is intertwined with a great amount of factors connected to it, all of them which should be investigated. Unfortunately, it was outside the scope of this thesis, but instead provides a recommendation for future research.

One of the key findings for this thesis is that globalization is indeed connected to the use of language in Africa. In countries where people speak kiSwahili to a great extent, English seems to have increased in power. Even in monolingual states, such as Rwanda and Burundi, European languages tend to be picked as official and national languages. Supranational institutions are likely affecting it, with agreements such as trade, investment and foreign aid. In the case of the East African Community, the institution needs to be understood in its relation to a global chain, and its connection to other organizations such as The African Union, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Tanzania connected its national language development to its postcolonial state-building . The nation successfully spread kiSwahili as the national language, increasing school enrollment and accomplished a sense of national unity. Kenya on the other hand did not emphasize the importance of language in their ideology, perhaps providing an explanation to why English carried on to be viewed as the language of power. By not taking a stance against English, it could arguably be difficult for kiSwahili to develop as the language of prestige in the region. Therefore, African language policies need to be understood in their relation to European languages and the power dimensions that come with for instance English or French.

As for the discussion of standardization, it seems like the idea initially is a decent one. One language for everyone, embraced by the masses. The benefits of saving time and money by implementing one language for all could prove to be crucial. This idea came to spread during the colonial era. But already at the very earliest stages of standardizing kiSwahili during

colonization, the native speakers were questioning the use of it. It was not spoken or heard anywhere other than in textbooks. Frankly, the standardized language was not their language. One should not forget that language is indeed a core part of people's identities. Therefore, it is not surprising that languages tend to develop regional vernaculars, partially as a reflection of the local culture. Perhaps this should be encouraged rather than discouraged. The analysis suggests that a standardized language, meant to suit everyone, becomes impersonal and instead comes to suit nobody.

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