Research on the Kizigua Language

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Pittsburgh Somali Bantu Cultural Celebration
October 21, 2012
Habari!

- Zina yangu ni Holman. Miye sisoma cизигула.
- “Hi! My name is Holman. I study Kизigua.”
- **Kизigua**

- Mimi ni mwanafunzi wa isimu ya lugha katika Chuo Kikuu cha Pittsburgh.
- “I am a linguistics student at the University of Pittsburgh.”
- **Swahili**
What is Kizigua?

• One of several languages spoken within the Somali Bantu community
  ▫ The most commonly spoken in the Pittsburgh community
• Other languages spoken include Maay Maay, Somali, and Swahili.
• /Ki-/ is a Swahili prefix meaning “language”
• Kizigua = “Language of the Zigua Tribe”
What is linguistics?

• The scientific study of language
  ▫ By scientific, this means studying language by observing how people actually use their language
  ▫ Also means looking for patterns.
• People tend to focus on the differences between languages, but there are many similarities as well.
  ▫ Explaining these similarities and differences is a major goal of linguistics
Similarities vs Differences

- Zina yangu ni Holman. Silonga cizigula. (Kizigua)
- Jina langu ni Holman. Ninasema kizigua. (Swahili)
- “My name is Holman. I speak Kizigua.” (English)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kizigua</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zina</td>
<td>Jina</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zino</td>
<td>Jino</td>
<td>Tooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuwa</td>
<td>Juwa</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangu</td>
<td>Langu</td>
<td>My</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yako</td>
<td>Lako</td>
<td>Your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yake</td>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>His/her</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarities vs Differences

- Similarities in pronunciation suggested relatedness.
  - In fact, Swahili and Kizigua are related languages
- But similarities do not have to found in related languages.
  - Ex: Swahili and Spanish make subject pronouns optional and have complex verb conjugations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I speak</td>
<td>(Mimi) Ninasema</td>
<td>(Yo) hablo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You speak</td>
<td>(Wewe) Unamsema</td>
<td>(Tú) hablas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he speaks</td>
<td>(Yeye) Anasema</td>
<td>(Él/ella) habla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We speak</td>
<td>(Sisi) Tunasema</td>
<td>(Nosotros) hablamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You all (yinz) speak</td>
<td>(Ninyi) Mnasema</td>
<td>(Vosotros) habláis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They speak</td>
<td>(Wao) Wanasesema</td>
<td>(Ellos/ellas) hablan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do linguists research languages they do not speak?

- Working directly with native speakers of the language is important.
- Native speakers of a language are the experts of speaking their language, not the linguist.
- But they don’t always notice patterns in their speech.
- The linguist’s job is to discover these patterns by asking questions, observing how people speak, and by recording the language being spoken.
History of Kizigua

- Originally from Tanzania
  - Still spoken in Tanzania by the Zigua people
- 19th century slave trade brought Kizigua speakers to Somalia
- Overtime, Kizigua became a language spoken by groups other than the Zigua in southern Somalia
- In Somalia, Kizigua came in contact with other languages
Two Major Language Families

- **Afro-Asiatic**
  - Includes Maay, Maay, Somali, and Arabic
- **Bantu**
  - Includes Kizigua and (Ki)Swahili
  - Name comes from the word for “person”
    - *Mtu* in Swahili
    - *Mntru* in Kizigua
## The Last Two Centuries of Kizigua

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Tanzania</th>
<th>In Somalia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Kizigua spoken today not the same as it was in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, but probably fewer changes than in Somalia</td>
<td>• Kizigua spoken today not the same as it was in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Around 400,000 speakers (2008 estimate)</td>
<td>• About 20,000 speakers (pre-war estimate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evidence of dialect variation, mainly in pronunciation, some differences in verb forms</td>
<td>• Language influenced by Afro-Asiatic languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Probably more dialect variation than in Somalia</td>
<td>▫ Probably mainly from Maay Maay, possibly from Somali as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• But less influence from other languages</td>
<td>▫ Some words from Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▫ Ex: ‘bunyo’ (from Italian ‘pugno’ meaning ‘fist’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British English</th>
<th>American English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• English spoken now is not the same as it was during Shakespeare’s time (17th century)</td>
<td>• English spoken now is not the same as it was during the time of the 13 British colonies (18th century).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More dialect variation than in the US even though there has been less influence from other languages.</td>
<td>• Scotts-Irish, German, and other immigrant groups as well as contact with Native American groups had an impact on the development of the language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Language Change

• Language is always changing whether or not there is contact with other languages.
• Each generation speaks the language a little bit differently resulting in gradual changes over time.
• Even though Kizigua has changed in both Tanzania and Somalia, the language has still been maintained by speakers from both areas.
• This is different from language shift, which is happening right now in Pittsburgh
  ▫ Younger speakers are losing the language because they are using it less than older speakers
Why study Kizigua?

- It is an underdocumented language
- Linguists know very little about it
- The greater the diversity of languages that linguists know about it, the better linguists can understand universal properties of all human languages.
- Kizigua has many unique features that have a lot to teach linguists
Why can’t we all just learn to speak English?

- Language is an important part of culture and identity.
- Learning English does not mean giving up other languages.
- Multilingualism rather than monolingualism is the norm in most of the world.
- Research shows many cognitive benefits of speaking more than one language
  - Ex: better problem-solving skills
  - Slows down aphasia, Alzheimer’s Disease, and other cognitive disorders
My Research

• Already have a good amount of information about the grammar collected, but more is needed
• Interested in sound structure
• Interested in surveying how different speakers speak the language
• More volunteers needed especially older speakers
What volunteers will do

1. Watch a 6-minute video and describe what happens in Kizigua
2. Pronounce a set of words in Kizigua
3. Answer some questions about how you use the language
   • Should take about an hour
   • Another family member can translate for volunteers that do not speak English
How to get involved

• Talk to me to arrange an appointment
• Interviews can be conducted today or at another time
• Interviews can take place at your home or anywhere convenient to you
Asanteni (Thank you)!

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