

Research on the Kizigua Language

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Habari!

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

- 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)**

Kizigua	Swahili	English
Zina	Jina	Name
Zino	Jino	Tooth
Zuwa	Juwa	Sun
Yangu	Langu	My
Yako	Lako	Your
Yake	Lake	His/her

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

English	Swahili	Spanish
I speak	(Mimi) Ninasema	(Yo) hablo
You speak	(Wewe) Unamsema	(Tú) hablas
S/he speaks	(Yeye) Anasema	(Él/ella) habla
We speak	(Sisi) Tunasema	(Nosotros) hablamos
You all (yinz) speak	(Ninyi) Mnasema	(Vosotros) habláis
They speak	(Wao) Wanasema	(Ellos/ellas) hablan

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.

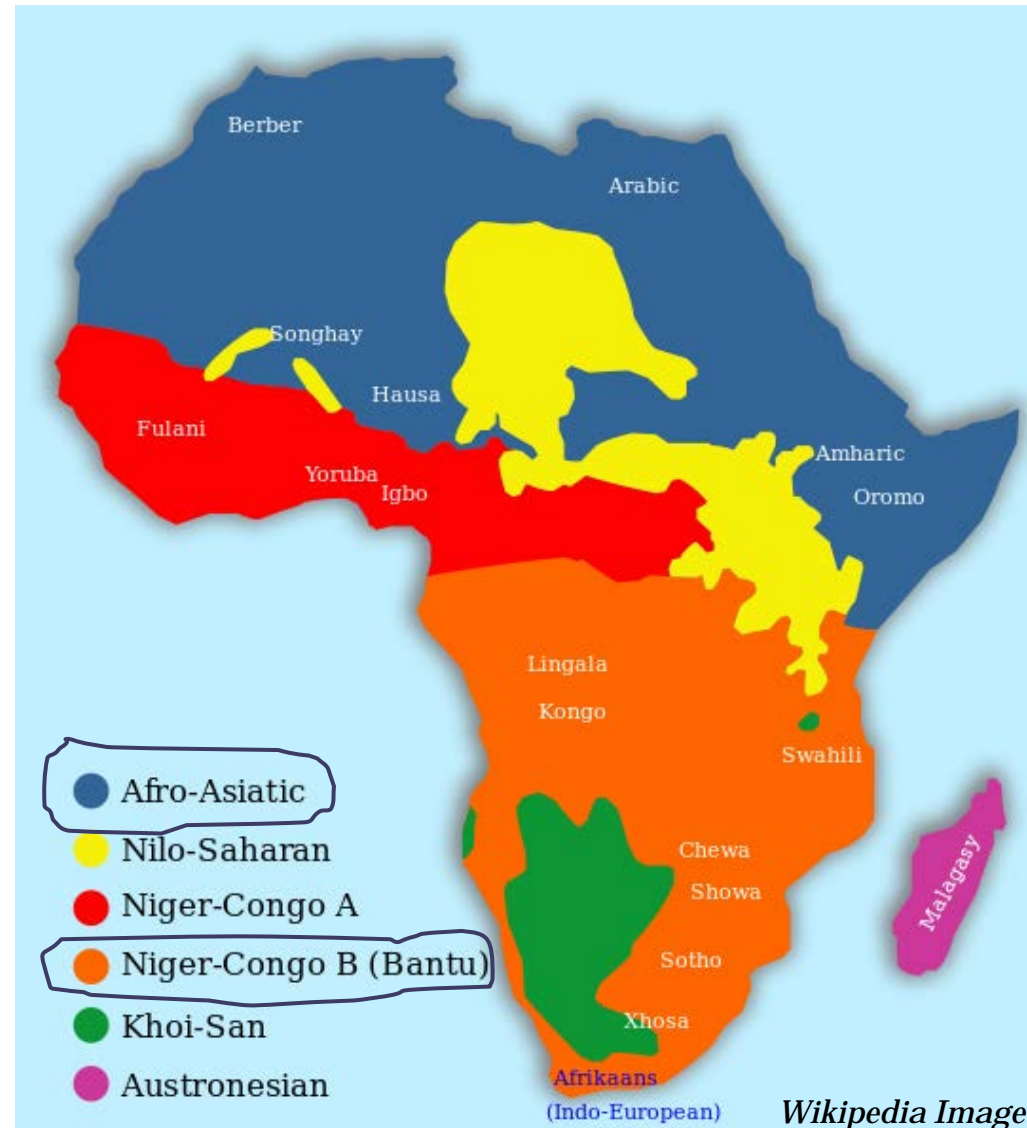
History of Kizigua

- 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

In Tanzania

- Kizigua spoken today not the same as it was in the 19th century, but probably fewer changes than in Somalia
- Around 400,000 speakers (2008 estimate)
- Evidence of dialect variation, mainly in pronunciation, some differences in verb forms
- Probably more dialect variation than in Somalia
- But less influence from other languages

In Somalia

- Kizigua spoken today not the same as it was in the 19th century
- About 20,000 speakers (pre-war estimate)
- Language influenced by Afro-Asiatic languages
 - Probably mainly from Maay Maay, possibly from Somali as well
- Some words from Italian
 - Ex: 'bunyo' (from Italian 'pugno' meaning 'fist')

Compare

British English

- English spoken now is not the same as it was during Shakespeare's time (17th century)
- More dialect variation than in the US even though there has been less influence from other languages.

American English

- English spoken now is not the same as it was during the time of the 13 British colonies (18th century).
- Scots-Irish, German, and other immigrant groups as well as contact with Native American groups had an impact on the development of the language

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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Business cards available with phone number