

Kiswahili Dialects Endangered: The Case of Kiamu and Kimvita

Dr. Peter N. Karanja

Senior Lecturer

Department of Kiswahili and African Languages

Kenyatta University

P.O. Box 43844 – 00100

Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract

Many commentators of Kiswahili language always indicate that Kiswahili has many dialects. Some say that Kiswahili has over 15 dialects. However, very few studies have been done to ascertain whether these dialects are still spoken, especially in the face of the onslaught of standard Kiswahili and other dominant languages in the Kiswahili speaking areas such as English and other local languages. By focusing on two Kiswahili dialects (Kiamu and Kimvita) and using a quantitative language use and attitude analysis, this paper observes that Kiswahili dialects are threatened with extinction not only, ironically, by the onslaught of standard Kiswahili, but also from other dominant languages such as English and emerging social dialects such as Sheng. This paper investigates the possibility that speakers of Kiswahili dialects may be shifting to standard Kiswahili and other dominant and emerging languages such as English and Sheng leading to possible death of the dialects. Using Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, Landweer's Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality and UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment Assessment Guidelines, this paper investigates the vitality of Kiamu and Kimvita dialects of Kiswahili in Kenya and arrives at the conclusion that Kiamu and Kimvita dialects and, by extension, other Kiswahili dialects in Kenya are critically endangered and are likely to die in the near future. Assumptions can also be made that some of them are already dead.

Key Words: Language, Kenya, Kiswahili, Dialect, Kiamu, Kimvita, Language death, Language endangerment

1.0 Introduction

This paper investigates the sociolinguistic situation of two Kiswahili dialects in Kenya - Kiamu and Kimvita - through domain and language attitude analysis. The paper's point of departure is the general assumption that Kiswahili dialects are endangered by, among other factors, the onslaught of standard Kiswahili, English, and Sheng, and so they are likely to be dying. The paper holds the position that the Kiswahili dialects are vital for the development of standard Kiswahili and, therefore, their endangerment is the endangerment of standard Kiswahili. Kiswahili is a Bantu language which is estimated to be spoken by between 80 and 100 million people - or more - worldwide, mainly in Eastern Africa and adjacent islands, and parts of Central and Southern Africa (Massamba 1995, Mulokozi 2002). This number represents those who speak Kiswahili as either their L1 or L2 with varying levels of proficiency. It is estimated that there are between 1 to 2 million indigenous speakers of Kiswahili. These speak the various indigenous dialects of Kiswahili. These indigenous Kiswahili speech communities are the focus of this paper.

1.1 Kiswahili Dialects

It is estimated that Kiswahili has about 15 dialects spoken all over Eastern Africa and some parts of Central Africa (Chiraghdin and Mnyampala, 1977). All these dialects are said to be mutually intelligible differing in certain phonological and lexical features (Bakari 1985). The main dialects recorded in East Africa are Kiunguja (spoken in Zanzibar); Kimakunduchi (or Kihadimu) and Kitumbatu (rural parts of Zanzibar); Kipemba (Pemba island); Kimtang'ata (Tanga Town and environs); Kimrima (Coast of Tanzania, opposite Zanzibar); Kingao (Kilwa and environs); Kimvita, Kingare, and Kijomvu (Mombasa island and environs); Kiamu, Kisiu, Kipate, Kibarawa (or Kimiini), and Kitikuu (along the coast of northern Kenya into southern Somalia); Kivumba and Kichifundi (Wasini and Vanga); Kingwana (DRC and Congo) and Kingozi (dead original form of Kiswahili, only available in classical Swahili poetry) (Chiraghdin & Mnyampala 1977, Bakari 1985).

The standard dialect called Kiswahili Sanifu (or Kisanifu) is a recent (1930) creation and is based on the Kiunguja dialect (Whiteley 1969). The dialects have thrived for ages since the origin of Kiswahili. The history of Kiswahili and the Waswahili has been embedded and passed on through these dialects. Many classical literary works have been written in these dialects (SOAS 2006). However, with the advent of standard Kiswahili, proliferation of English, and the emerging of urban varieties of Kiswahili such as Sheng, the role of these dialects in communication and cultural transmission has declined rapidly to an extent that some of them have become moribund (Nurse & Walsh 1992). The current sociolinguistic situation of these dialects is not known for sure as there is very little linguistic research done on them (Bakari 1985). This paper is based on the premise that the Kiswahili dialects are threatened and, in fact, some may be on the verge of extinction. Therefore, through a language use survey of selected domains, and language attitude analysis, this paper investigates the vitality of Kiamu and Kimvita dialects. The discussion is guided by the tenets of Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), UNESCO's (2003) Language Vitality and Endangerment Guidelines, and Landweer's (2000) Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality.

1.2 The theory

Several theories and models of language endangerment exist. There is no clear-cut definition of an endangered language agreeable to all commentators of language endangerment. However, most generally agree that an endangered language is a language that is likely to die due to various diverse factors (Krauss 1992, Cahill 1999, Crystal 2000, Nettle & Romaine 2000, UNESCO 2003). According to UNESCO (2003), a language is endangered when it is on the path towards extinction. A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. This means that there are no new speakers, especially children. This leads to the pertinent question: what are the indicators of the possibility that a language is likely to die?

Among the factors that have been listed as indicators of language endangerment are: a language having too few speakers; a language not being transmitted from the older to the younger generations; a language not actively being used in everyday or new activities; languages not being documented; speakers having negative feelings of ethnic identity and attitudes about their language in general, among others. Different authors have given prominence to different indicators depending on their own research experience and environments (Fishman 1991; Krauss 1992; Crawford 1995; Landweer 2000; UNESCO 2003; Batibo 2005; Gordon 2005; Wurm 1998, 2003). Close analysis of these and other literature reveals that there are three key factors of language endangerment:

1. Size and distribution of a speech community's population
2. Intergenerational language transfer
3. Language use in the various domains of life and related attitudes.

It is generally assumed that a speech community with a small number of speakers is more endangered than one with a large number of speakers. However, this is a debatable argument because records exist of languages with relatively large number of speakers but which are considered endangered due to other factors. As Brenzinger (1998 cited in Fabunmi & Salawu 2005) notes that even a major language like Yoruba, with 20 million speakers, has been called 'deprived' because of the way it has come to be dominated by English in higher education. Fabunmi and Salawu (2005) demonstrate this by using evidence that Yoruba is actually dying from other factors other than population size alone. There is also evidence of small languages that are not endangered (Cahill 1999). This means that the factor of size of population of speakers, though a very strong factor, cannot be solely used to determine the fate of an endangered language.

The second factor of language endangerment is the rate of intergenerational language transfer. A language is considered endangered if it is no longer transmitted from the older to the younger generations. Fishman (1991) came up with a model called "Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale" whose key tenet is that when parents fail to transmit their language to their children, the language is endangered. This could be as a result of the parents themselves finding no need to do so, or even the children resisting to take up the language even if the parents are willing to transmit it. Children in a multilingual context are likely to be exposed to other languages in other situations such as schools. Children are likely to learn the languages they are most exposed to. If they have low exposure to L1 than L2, the transmission of L1 is likely to be low and may lead to them shifting to L2.

A third major indicator of language endangerment is the domains and functions of use of a language. This refers to the contexts and situations where the language is regularly used (Fishman 1975). While it is true that the less domains a language is used the more endangered it is, it is also true that some domains are more crucial than others in the maintenance of a language. According to Crawford (1996), one symptom of language endangerment is that usage declines in traditional domains such as in churches (worship places), cultural activities, schools, and, most important, the home. Landweer (2000) says that the loss of a language in the home domain is a sure sign that it is endangered. Reduction of the number of domains and frequency of use of a language in a domain may lead to language loss. This is made worse if the dominant languages begin to make inroads into the domains previously reserved for use of minority languages. For example, this can happen when young people switch to the dominant language and start using it at the home and social domains.

The attitude of the speech community to their group and language is also an important indicator of language endangerment. Both objective and subjective attitude towards a language are important for its maintenance. Subjective and objective attitudes means that while members of a particular speech community may feel attached to their language and culture and express a positive attitude towards them, it may be found, on investigation, that they do not use the language in practise. Therefore, it is the objective use of language that matters and not the subjective willingness to do so without using it. Members of a speech community with a positive attitude towards their language are less likely to shift to another language. The opposite is true – those who detest their language and see it as inferior are likely to shift to the one they see more prestigious (Dorian 1998).

Investigators of language vitality have built theories on language endangerment around the above factors depending on the prominence they give to the various factors. This paper uses elements of the Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), Landweer's (2000) Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality, and UNESCO's (2003) Language Vitality and Endangerment Assessment Guidelines (LVEAG) theories that focus on the importance of intergenerational language transfer, language use in the various domains of life, and attitudes towards language.

GIDS theory is based on the principle that a language is threatened if there is no intergenerational transmission taking place. Intergenerational transmission refers to the natural processes in the home, family and neighbourhood through which succeeding generations replenish their speakers (Fishman, 1991). GIDS, therefore, builds on the argument that languages survive or decline depending on the extent that they are transmitted intergenerationally.

Landweer's (2000) Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality include factors such as relative position on the urban-rural continuum; domains in which the language is used; frequency and type of code switching; population and group dynamics; distribution of speakers within their own social networks; social outlook regarding and within the speech community; language prestige; and access to a stable and acceptable economic base. Of relevance to this paper are the issues of the domains in which the language is used and the level of prestige a language masters within the relevant speech community. According to Landweer (2000), the more domains in which the language of a community operates as the dominant medium of expression, the more vital the language is likely to be. At the same time, the use of language in some domains is more indicative of vitality than some other domains. Landweer places a lot of importance in the use of a language in the home domain, such that it is the degree of a mixture of the community language and other languages at home that determines the level of vitality of a language.

The LVEAG document has a total of nine factors to be considered while evaluating language vitality and endangerment. These are grouped into vitality factors, language attitude factors, and urgency for documentation factors. The factors are: Intergenerational language transmission; absolute number of speakers; proportion of speakers within the total population; shifts in domains of language use; response to new domains and media; availability of materials for language education and literacy; governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies; community members' attitudes towards their own language; and type and quality of documentation.

Considering intergenerational language transmission, for example, LVEAG classifies the level of language endangerment as follows.

Safe (5): The language is spoken by all generations. The intergenerational transmission of the language is uninterrupted.

Stable yet threatened (5-): The language is spoken in most contexts by all generations with unbroken intergenerational transmission, yet multilingualism in the native language and one or more dominant language(s) has usurped certain important communication contexts. LVEAG, however, qualifies this by noting that multilingualism alone is not necessarily a threat to languages.

Unsafe (4): Most, but not all, children or families of a particular community speak their parental language as their L1, but this may be restricted to specific social domains (such as the home where children interact with their parents and grandparents).

Definitely endangered (3): The language is no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home. The youngest speakers are thus of the parental generation. At this stage, parents may still speak their language to their children, but their children do not typically respond in the language.

Severely endangered (2): The language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may still understand the language, they typically do not speak it to their children, or among themselves.

Critically endangered (1): The youngest speakers are in the great-grandparental generation, and the language is not used for everyday interactions. These older people often remember only part of the language but do not use it on a regular basis, since there are few people left to speak with.

Extinct (0): There is no one who can speak or remember the language.

1.3 Methodology

This research was part of a wider study that used a mixed research design to investigate the sociolinguistic status of Kiswahili dialects in Kenya (cf. Karanja 2009). While a Mixed Research Design was used in the main research project, this paper focuses on the quantitative aspect of the wider study. Data collection and analysis, therefore, followed the quantitative approach. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 12) computer programme. Reconnaissance survey was done in January 2005, and fieldwork between October 2005 and February 2006.

1.3.1 The study sample

The target sample was the indigenous speakers of Kimvita and Kiamu dialects *within their community setting*. These dialects were conveniently sampled to represent urban and rural Kiswahili dialects, respectively. Emphasis on the community setting was important because language use in the various domains of life required that the speech communities be considered within their community setting. The dialects community settlements made up the research area and therefore they needed to be identified first. Historical records and literature and information from key informants during the reconnaissance survey were considered in identifying Mvita (also known as Mombasa Old Town) and Amu (Lamu Island) as the traditional settlement areas where Kimvita and Kiamu speech communities, respectively, resided.

A combination of stratified, purposeful, and random based sample of 345 residents, from both dialect areas, was used. These included 145 from Amu and 200 from Mvita. Ideally, the best way to arrive at a statistically reliable sample for this study would have been to consider the total Kiamu and Kimvita speakers and then, using suitable statistical techniques, arrive at a suitable sample. This can only be done using statistics from official population census. However, such data does not exist in the Kenya population censuses. The sample for this study was, therefore, arrived at depending on the objectives of the study, expected outcomes, and convenience. The respondents were considered by age group categories composed of children of age 14 years and below; the youth of between age 15 to 24; and adults of age 25 and above. This stratification was guided by one of the main focuses of this study; the rate of intergenerational language transfer as an important indicator of the level of language endangerment. The children and youths were sampled from the primary and secondary schools within Amu and Mvita. Both primary and secondary schools were used because they are rich sites for children and youths. It is from the schools that the education domain can be studied. From the schools, it is also easier to get information on language use in other domains that the children and the youth participate in, including the home-community-neighbourhood setup.

1.3.2 The research Instrument used

This study used a combined language use and attitude questionnaire (LUAQ) to study language use patterns and attitudes within the Mvita and Amu speech communities.

Most of the questions used in the LUAQ used in this survey have been used successfully in other similar studies and therefore they did not need rigorous pre-testing procedure. However, the questionnaire was given to a sample of respondents before the actual fieldwork and some adjustments made. For example, a decision was made to orally administer the LUAQ so that the chances of misunderstanding the questions were reduced, given the largely illiterate audience.

1.4 The results and discussion

As indicated above, there were a total of 145 valid responses in Amu and 200 in Mvita, making a total of 345 out of conveniently targeted sample of 240 respondents from each area. This disparity meant that the best way to get reliable results from these data was to group the cases and deal with frequency percentages rather than individual counts. Therefore, the data were considered in three age group categories, namely children, youths, and adults, as presented in the following table.

Table 1: Sample distribution by age-groups

| | Age Group | N | % | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------|-----------|----|------|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Amu | Children | 61 | 42.1 | 9 | 18 | 12.97 | 1.741 |
| | Youths | 49 | 33.8 | 16 | 24 | 17.57 | 1.768 |
| | Adults | 35 | 24.1 | 25 | 65 | 40.31 | 10.786 |
| Mvita | Children | 71 | 35.5 | 9 | 15 | 12.89 | 1.712 |
| | Youths | 86 | 43.0 | 16 | 23 | 17.91 | 1.845 |
| | Adults | 43 | 21.5 | 25 | 60 | 39.28 | 9.842 |

The higher rate of responses from the children and the youths can be attributed to the fact that it was easy to access them and retrieve questionnaires in primary and secondary schools, unlike the adults who were randomly selected across the study area. The fact that the data were considered in aged groups, rather than holistically, means that the fewer adults and youths would not affect the overall reliability of the results. There was not much difference between the males and females in the valid responses. For Amu the respondents were 48.3% males and 51.7% females, while for Mvita it was 54% males and 46% females. Out of the total respondents in Amu who answered the question on marital status, 89.5% were married and Mvita, 77.4%. Youths and children were not asked this question.

1.4.1 Place of birth

Considering all age categories, most respondents indicated that they were born in either Amu or Mvita, respectively, as shown in the following table.

Table 2: Place of Birth

| Age Group | Amu | | | | Mvita | | | |
|-----------|--------|-------|-------------|------|----------|------|---------------|------|
| | In Amu | | Outside Amu | | In Mvita | | Outside Mvita | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Children | 42 | 68.9 | 19 | 31.1 | 50 | 70.4 | 21 | 29.6 |
| Youth | 38 | 77.6 | 11 | 22.4 | 77 | 89.5 | 9 | 10.5 |
| Adults | 35 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 38 | 88.4 | 5 | 11.6 |

However, considering those who were born outside the dialect areas, there were more children (31.1%) and youths (22.4%) than adults (none) born outside Amu. The pattern was similar in Mvita. However, unlike in Amu where no adult indicated to have been born outside Amu, 11.6% of the adults in Mvita indicated that they were born outside Mvita. The implication and assumption is that Amu and Mvita communities are becoming increasingly mixed, probably from in-migration, which may call for the use of standard Kiswahili and other newly introduced languages into the area at the expense of Kiamu and Kimvita.

1.4.2 First language of respondents

This question was aimed at finding out how many respondents claimed Kimvita or Kiamu as their L1 against other languages being investigated, as presented below.

Table 3: First Language of Respondent (%)

| | Amu | | | | | Mvita | | | | |
|----------|-------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-------|---------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-------|
| | Kiamu | Swahili | Other Swahili Dialect | English | Other | Kimvita | Swahili | Other Swahili Dialect | English | Other |
| Children | 37.3 | 25.4 | 20.3 | 0 | 16.9 | 38.0 | 26.8 | 8.5 | 0 | 26.8 |
| Youth | 50.0 | 35.4 | 14.6 | 0 | 0 | 57.1 | 25.0 | 6.0 | 1.2 | 10.7 |
| Adults | 85.7 | 14.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 57.1 | 31.0 | 2.4 | 0 | 9.5 |

As revealed, in Amu, less than half (37.3%) of the children reported Kiamu as their L1 compared to the large majority of adults (85.7%) who indicated the dialect as their L1. Similar results for Mvita were recorded for children (38%) and adults (57.1%). These results, coupled with the fact that there are more Amu respondents claiming *other* languages as their L1, could be an indication that ethnolinguistic mixing started earlier in Mvita than in Amu.

Specific results to note for Mvita include the fact that fewer adults (57.1%) in Mvita reported Kimvita as their L1, compared to 85.7% of Amu adults who indicated that Kiamu was their L1. This would suggest higher propensity for the Wamvita to shift from Kimvita than the Waamu shifting from Kiamu. Another result to note is that more children and youths in Amu are reporting other dialects as their L1, compared to children in Mvita.

As can be seen from *Table 3*, the lower the age groups, the fewer the L1 speakers of Kiamu or Kimvita. The data show that 37.3% and 38% of the children indicated Kiamu and Kimvita as their L1 respectively. In comparison, 87.5% and 57.1% of the adults said that Kiamu and Kimvita were their L1. This means that less and less of the younger generation are having Kiamu or Kimvita as their L1, probably shifting to other languages.

Another significant comparison that can be made is that there are more children within the Mvita community (26.8%) reporting other languages other than Kiswahili and its dialects as their L1 compared to those claiming the same for Kiamu (16.9%). This is indicative of the possibility of more outsiders and outside communities influence on the Mvita community compared to similar influence on the Amu community, from either recent in-migration or increase in mixed parentage.

It is also worth noting that there are high percentages of those who claim Kiswahili as their L1. While looking at individual questionnaires, it was clear that many of the children who indicated Kiswahili as their L1 were of mixed parentage but did not speak either of their parent's L1.

The conclusion that can be for this question is that given that less and less children are indicating other languages other than the dialects being investigated as their L1, it follows that the children are being exposed to other languages and shifting to them. This may be indicative of increase in migration into the areas and of increased intermarriages. This clearly puts the dialects to danger.

1.5 First language of respondents' parents

To get an indication of the level of intermarriages or mixed parentage within the Amu and Mvita speech communities, there was need to know the ethnolinguistic background of the respondents' parents. The results show that chances of both respondents' parents speaking either Kiamu or Kimvita as their L1 are higher in the higher age groups than in the lower age groups, as indicated in the following comparative table.

Table 4: Comparative first language of parents by age groups: Amu and Mvita (%)

| | Mother First Language | | Father First Language | |
|----------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | Kiamu | Kimvita | Kiamu | Kimvita |
| Children | 36.7 | 23.9 | 30.0 | 21.7 |
| Youths | 46.9 | 37.2 | 55.1 | 36.0 |
| Adults | 85.7 | 37.2 | 77.1 | 30.2 |

As can be seen from the table, there is a marked decrease in the percentage of parents of respondents who speak Kiamu as their L1 with age. The range is smaller for Mvita.

This further consolidates the suggestion made in earlier observations that parental mixing is a recent phenomenon within the Amu community. This is because the overwhelming majority of the adults in Amu report that the L1 of their parents is Kiamu compared to Kimvita for Mvita. The fact that even in the older age groups there is an indication of mixed linguistic parentage in the Mvita community means that the Kimvita mix started earlier than the Kiamu mix.

Therefore, comparatively, the chances of the parents not speaking Kimvita in Mvita as their L1 is higher than Kiamu in Amu; suggesting less exposure of respondents to Kimvita in Mvita than to Kiamu in Amu. It is also important to note that there are higher chances of one parent speaking other languages other than Kiamu than there are for Kimvita in Mvita. For example, children in Amu reported that 26.2% of their mothers speak *other* L1 languages while similar reports by children in Mvita stood at 40.8%. The figures of fathers for the same measure were 26.7% for Amu and 44.9% for Mvita. This suggests that incidences of parental mixing with other communities are higher within the Mvita than within the Amu community.

The results for the L1 of parents imply that the chances of the parents of a respondent being a speaker of either Kimvita or Kiamu decrease with increase in age. It means that the younger generation is exposed to less and less of the dialects due to the increasing mixed ethnolinguistic parentage. However, the fact that parents have different L1s does not mean they use either or both L1s at home. They could also use another language, which could be a lingua franca.

1.5.1 Language proficiency

To investigate the multilingualism factor and how it relates to language shift within the communities being investigated, two variables were coded for this question; the number of languages the respondent was proficient in, and the level of proficiency.

Table 5: Language proficiency - Amu and Mvita (%)

| Age Group | Number of Languages | Amu | Mvita |
|-----------|---------------------|------|-------|
| Children | One | 0 | 0 |
| | Two | 0 | 2.8 |
| | Three | 13.3 | 14.1 |
| | Four | 63.3 | 49.3 |
| | Five | 23.3 | 16.9 |
| | six | 0 | 16.9 |
| Youth | One | 2.1 | 1.2 |
| | Two | 0 | 4.7 |
| | Three | 4.2 | 23.3 |
| | Four | 54.2 | 45.3 |
| | Five | 31.3 | 20.9 |
| | six | 8.3 | 4.7 |
| Adults | One | 8.6 | 0 |
| | Two | 14.3 | 41.9 |
| | Three | 42.9 | 41.9 |
| | Four | 34.3 | 16.3 |
| | Five | 0 | 0 |
| | six | 0 | 0 |

The results show that the majority of the respondents in both Amu and Mvita speak between 3 and 5 languages, with the mode being 6. The mean was 3.82, for Mvita respondents, and 3.93, for Amu respondents. This means that the majority of the respondents were multilingual with an average repertoire of 4 languages. Further analysis reveals that the children and the youths have more languages in their repertoire (mean = 4) than the adults (mean = 3). This means that the children and the youths have more languages at their disposal when choosing how to allocate them to the different domains. Logically, the more languages choices a speaker has, the higher the chances that some languages will not be frequently used. It is clear that Kiamu and Kimvita have more languages to compete with in the children age group than among the adults.

The second variable coded for language proficiency looked at the level of proficiency, specifically the language that the respondents thought they were most proficient in. The aim was to find out how many respondents would indicate Kimvita and Kiamu.

Table 6: Languages most proficient in (%)

| | | Amu | | | Mvita | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------|-------|--------|----------|-------|--------|
| | | Children | Youth | Adults | Children | Youth | Adults |
| Language most Proficient in | Kiamu | 37.7 | 50.0 | 85.7 | 32.9 | 47.7 | 44.2 |
| | Swahili | 32.8 | 25.0 | 14.3 | 35.7 | 31.4 | 46.5 |
| | Other Swahili dialect | 16.4 | 10.4 | 0 | 8.6 | 7.0 | 2.3 |
| | English | 1.6 | 10.4 | 0 | 7.1 | 7.0 | 2.3 |
| | Other | 11.5 | 4.2 | 0 | 15.7 | 7.0 | 4.7 |

It is clear from this table that the highest concentration of proficiency in Kiamu or Kimvita dialects is among the adults but less with the youth and even lesser with the children. For example, in Amu, 85.7% of the adults listed Kiamu as the language they are most proficient in while in Mvita, 44.2% of the adults reported the same for Kimvita. On the other hand, the data for the same variable for children was 38.3% and 32.9% for Kimvita and Kiamu respectively. This certainly shows that the use of Kiamu and Kimvita among the younger generation is declining rapidly. When the results for Kiamu and Kimvita for this variable are considered in relation to the results for the other languages, the observation is that more and more children are becoming more proficient in other languages at the expense of Kiamu and Kimvita. For example, in Mvita, more children reported themselves to be more proficient in Kiswahili (35.7%) than Kimvita (35.7%).

It is also worth noting that very few respondents in all age groups reported English as the language they are most proficient in. This may, therefore, suggest that on this score, English is less of a threat to Kiamu and Kimvita than standard Kiswahili. However, it is the actual use of a language that can determine language use pattern more reliably than the capacity and proficiency of a speaker in using the language. This is done in the following domain analysis.

1.6 Domain analysis

This section is based on the assumption that the number of speakers and the domains in which Kiamu and Kimvita are used are decreasing, thus threatening the dialects. Domain analysis is important in determining the sociolinguistic situation of a language, hence the level of endangerment. Two domains were considered for analysis in this paper; the home and education domains.

1.6.1 Home domain

The sub-domains considered in this domain included respondents' language choice when communicating with their parents, grandparents, siblings, and spouses. Where a sub-domain was not applicable to a given age group, the relevant question was omitted for that age group. For example, children were not asked any question on the language use while communicating with spouses because they are, ideally, not expected to be married.

1.6.2 Communicating with grandparents

Communication between children and their grandparents is important because it represents language contact between the oldest and the youngest generations. It is through the linguistic interaction of these two generations that the "purest" and oldest linguistic inheritance can be passed to the youngest members of a speech community and therefore ensure continuity in language. A break in transmission at this level would be dangerous to the existence of a language.

Generally, results show that the main languages used by children and youths with their grandparents in the two areas are the dialects (Kiamu/Kimvita) followed very closely by Kiswahili, as the following table reveals.

Table 7: Speaking with grandparents (GP) (%)

| | | Amu | | | | Mvita | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------|---------|-------|---------|----------|---------|-------|---------|
| | | Children | | Youth | | Children | | Youth | |
| | | To GP | From GP | To GP | From GP | To GP | From GP | To GP | From GP |
| Kiamu in Amu | Never | 18.3 | 28.8 | 8.9 | 6.7 | 40.8 | 48.6 | 19.7 | 22.4 |
| | Rarely | 13.3 | 10.2 | 8.9 | 8.9 | 5.6 | 5.7 | 6.6 | 9.2 |
| | sometimes | 25.0 | 18.6 | 13.3 | 11.1 | 15.5 | 14.3 | 18.4 | 14.5 |
| | always | 43.3 | 42.4 | 68.9 | 73.3 | 38.0 | 31.4 | 55.3 | 53.9 |
| Kimvita in Mvita | Never | 22.4 | 25.9 | 8.9 | 20.5 | 8.6 | 12.7 | 11.8 | 14.5 |
| | Rarely | 5.2 | 10.3 | 24.4 | 18.2 | 25.7 | 23.9 | 40.8 | 42.1 |
| | sometimes | 53.4 | 48.3 | 51.1 | 43.2 | 27.1 | 22.5 | 25.0 | 23.7 |
| | always | 19.0 | 15.5 | 15.6 | 18.2 | 38.6 | 40.8 | 22.4 | 19.7 |
| Swahili | Never | 78.0 | 83.9 | 71.1 | 77.8 | 64.3 | 61.4 | 68.0 | 72.4 |
| | Rarely | 10.2 | 1.8 | 17.8 | 11.1 | 7.1 | 5.7 | 12.0 | 11.8 |
| | sometimes | 11.9 | 14.3 | 11.1 | 11.1 | 25.7 | 28.6 | 16.0 | 14.5 |
| | always | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.9 | 4.3 | 4.0 | 1.3 |
| English | Never | 90.0 | 89.7 | 88.1 | 90.2 | 88.6 | 91.2 | 92.0 | 98.7 |
| | Rarely | 1.7 | .0 | 4.8 | 2.4 | 1.4 | 4.4 | 4.0 | 1.3 |
| | sometimes | 8.3 | 6.9 | 7.1 | 4.9 | 7.1 | 4.4 | 4.0 | .0 |
| | always | 0 | 3.4 | 0 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sheng | Never | 90.0 | 89.7 | 88.1 | 90.2 | 88.6 | 91.2 | 92.0 | 98.7 |
| | Rarely | 1.7 | .0 | 4.8 | 2.4 | 1.4 | 4.4 | 4.0 | 1.3 |
| | sometimes | 8.3 | 6.9 | 7.1 | 4.9 | 7.1 | 4.4 | 4.0 | .0 |
| | always | 0 | 3.4 | 0 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Key : To GP. = Respondent speaking to grandparent. From GP. = Grandparent speaking to respondent

While it is not surprising to see many youths and children frequently using the dialects with their GP, it is worth noting that Kiswahili is being used almost as frequently as the dialects. In fact, in some instances, such as children in Amu speaking to their GP, Kiswahili is used more than the dialects in this sub-domain. Considering the *sometimes* and *always* scales together, 67% of the children in Amu indicated that they used Kiamu while speaking to their grandparents, and for the youths it was 82.2%. For Mvita, the scores for the same variable were 62.1% for children and 84.4% for youths. The results for other languages indicate that in Amu, 72.4% of the children used Kiswahili while speaking to their GP, while for the youths it was 66.7% who did so. For English, in Amu, it was 11.9% for the children and 11.1% for the youth and for Sheng it was 8.3% for the children and 7.1% for the youth. In Mvita, figures for the same variable were Kiswahili: 65.7% for the children and 57.4% for the youth; English: 28.6% for the children and 20% for the youth and Sheng 8% for the children and 4% for the youth.

On the other hand, results for GPs speaking to their grandchildren show that there was not much difference in the pattern of language exchange with the grandchildren speaking to their GPs. The dominant languages still remain Kiswahili and the dialects with, as would be expected, the dialects having a slight edge over Kiswahili. While English and Sheng are rarely used with the grandparents, it is worth noting that more English is used in Mvita with the GP than in Amu. This result is expected given that Mvita is within a more urban setting than Amu. It is also interesting to note that among those who said that they never speak the indicated languages to their grandparents, in Amu 18.3% of the children and 8.9% of the youth indicated that they *never* used Kiamu with their GP while 48.6% of the children and 19.7% of the youth said so for Kimvita in Mvita. This means that although Kimvita may comparatively be the most frequently used for this context, it was also the most highly rated for never being used among the indicated languages. This logically means that, in this sub-domain, Kimvita is practically dead to almost 50% of Mvita grandchildren.

In summary, although the results show evidence of transmission of the dialects taking place from the GPs to the grandchildren, they are facing stiff competition from Kiswahili which is almost equally as frequently used in this sub-domain as the dialects. Starting from the assumption of an ideal situation where “only” the dialects would have been used in this sub-domain, the competition from Kiswahili means that the respondents are shifting to Kiswahili from the dialects. There is also a big percentage of the respondents who have “dropped” the use of the dialects in this sub-domain all together. Again, given that the children are using Kiamu and Kimvita dialects less frequently with their grandparents than do the youths, and, at the same time more children using Kiswahili for this domain than the dialects, it means that the dialects are being given up for Kiswahili in this sub-domain.

In other words, transmission of the dialects from the GPs to the grand children in both Amu and Mvita is reducing. By the time the children become youths in the next decade, it logically follows that very little if any of the dialects will be transmitted from GPs to the children. Going by this rate of transmission, it means that, for this sub-domain, Kiamu and Kimvita are critically endangered but the danger is higher for Kimvita than Kiamu. While it is clear that transmission of the dialects from the GPs to children in Amu and Mvita is decreasing, in most cases GPs spend less time with the children than their parents. It would therefore be important to see how much of these dialects is transmitted from the parents to the children.

1.6.3 Parents

Just as with the grandparents, questions were asked both ways; respondents speaking to their parents and parents speaking to the respondents. These questions were asked to all respondents irrespective of age group. Results for this variable reveal that compared to the youth and the adults, fewer children are speaking Kiamu or Kimvita to their parents. The results are summarized in the following table.

Table 8: Speaking with parents (%)

| | | Amu | | | | | | Mvita | | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| | | Children | | Youth | | Adults | | Children | | Youth | | Adults | |
| | | To Prts | From Prts | To Prts | From Prts | To Prts | From Prts | To Prts | From Prts | To Prts | From Prts | To Prts | From Prts |
| Kiamu (Amu) | <i>Never</i> | 8.5 | 23.3 | 10.4 | 6.1 | 0 | 0 | 43.5 | 47.1 | 17.9 | 20.9 | 2.3 | 0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 13.6 | 10.0 | 4.2 | 8.2 | 0 | 0 | 4.3 | 8.8 | 9.5 | 9.3 | 0 | 2.3 |
| | <i>Sometimes</i> | 39.0 | 23.3 | 20.8 | 26.5 | 8.6 | 2.9 | 14.5 | 7.4 | 13.1 | 9.3 | 2.3 | 4.7 |
| | <i>always</i> | 39.0 | 43.3 | 64.6 | 59.2 | 91.4 | 97.1 | 37.7 | 36.8 | 59.5 | 60.5 | 95.3 | 93.0 |
| Kimvita (Mvita) | <i>Never</i> | 6.8 | 8.3 | 16.7 | 16.3 | 48.5 | 87.5 | 7.0 | 9.9 | 5.8 | 10.6 | 9.3 | 14.0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 16.9 | 13.3 | 16.7 | 10.2 | 21.2 | 6.3 | 28.2 | 22.5 | 30.2 | 38.8 | 46.5 | 44.2 |
| | <i>Sometimes</i> | 55.9 | 60.0 | 45.8 | 51.0 | 27.3 | 6.3 | 26.8 | 22.5 | 41.9 | 32.9 | 37.2 | 34.9 |
| | <i>always</i> | 20.3 | 18.3 | 20.8 | 22.4 | 3.0 | 0 | 38.0 | 45.1 | 22.1 | 17.6 | 7.0 | 7.0 |
| Swahili | <i>Never</i> | 29.8 | 36.8 | 34.0 | 38.3 | 91.2 | 97.1 | 27.1 | 25.7 | 21.2 | 22.6 | 71.4 | 76.2 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 5.3 | 15.8 | 19.1 | 14.9 | 2.9 | 0 | 20.0 | 18.6 | 30.6 | 38.1 | 19.0 | 19.0 |
| | <i>Sometimes</i> | 52.6 | 36.8 | 38.3 | 40.4 | 5.9 | 2.9 | 47.1 | 48.6 | 41.2 | 31.0 | 9.5 | 4.8 |
| | <i>always</i> | 12.3 | 10.5 | 8.5 | 6.4 | 0 | 0 | 5.7 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 8.3 | 0 | 0 |
| English | <i>Never</i> | 8.5 | 89.5 | 10.4 | 84.1 | 0 | 100.0 | 82.6 | 91.3 | 86.9 | 92.9 | 97.7 | 100.0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 13.6 | 3.5 | 4.2 | 6.8 | 0 | 0 | 2.9 | 1.4 | 9.5 | 7.1 | 2.3 | 0 |
| | <i>Sometimes</i> | 39.0 | 7.0 | 20.8 | 9.1 | 8.6 | 0 | 13.0 | 7.2 | 3.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>always</i> | 39.0 | 0 | 64.6 | 0 | 91.4 | 0 | 1.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Key: To Prts. = Respondent speaking to parents. From Prts. = Parent speaking to respondent

The above table reveals that the higher the age group, the higher the percentage of those who speak Kiamu or Kimvita to their parents. For example, considering the *sometimes* and *always* scales together, on speaking to their parents, 78% of the children in Amu indicated that they used Kiamu while it was 85.4% for the youth and 100% for the adults. The pattern was similar in Mvita where 61.2% of the children indicated that they mostly speak Kimvita to their parents compared to 72.6% of the youths and 97.6% of the adults. For Kiswahili the scores for the same variable in Amu were 76.2% for the children, 76.6% for the youths and 28.3% for the adults. Similar scores for Kimvita were 64.8% for the children, 74% for the youth and 64% for the adults. This shows that the children are using as much Kiswahili as Kiamu or Kimvita while speaking to their parents.

Another important observation to make is that while the use of Kiamu and Kimvita by the respondents in speaking to their parents is higher in the higher age groups, the use of Kiswahili for the same variable is higher the lower age groups. This means that while fewer children use Kiamu to the parents, they at the same time use more Kiswahili to their parents.

For example, in Amu, while only 3% of the adults indicated to *always* speak Kiamu to their parents, 20.7% of the children and 20.8% of the youths indicated to *always* speak Kiamu to their parents. Results for the same item in Mvita were 38% for the children, 22.1% for the youths and 7% for the Adults.

The data for English shows a similar pattern where more children use English to their parents than the youths and adults do. In Amu, 12.5% of the children said that they always used English to speak to their parents while 8.5% of the youth and none of the adults did. In Mvita slightly more youth than the children use English to their parents while none of the adults reported to use English to their parents. This means that English is gradually finding its way into the home domain in both Amu and Mvita, although not as much as Kiswahili.

Contrary to expectations, the children do not use much Sheng at home to their parents. While no child indicated to *always* use Sheng in this context, a small percentage in both dialect areas indicated that they *sometimes* use Sheng to their parents (8.5% in Amu and 18.2% in Mvita). However, though a negligible percentage in comparative terms, this certainly shows that Sheng is also starting to enter the home domain through this sub-domain.

Generally the results of this variable show that while some Kiamu and Kimvita is still being transferred to the children by the parents, the two dialects are facing stiff competition from Kiswahili and English. Just as in other variables the onslaught of Kiswahili and English on the dialects is more evident in Mvita than in Amu. Sheng is not an immediate threat in this important sub-domain of the home domain. The following section considers the language use pattern of the parents while speaking to their children. This is very important because this is where the intergenerational transmission of language actually takes place.

1.6.4 Parents to respondents

For this variable, it was assumed that speaking to parents in one language did not mean that the parents would respond in the same language. This question investigated the language that the parents use to speak to the respondents.

The results show that generally the most common languages for the parents while speaking to their children in both Amu and Mvita are Kiamu and Kimvita respectively. However, as in the situation of respondents speaking to their parents presented earlier, a higher percentage of parents of respondents in the higher age groups use the dialects more frequently while speaking to the respondents than the parents of the children do. For example, in Amu, 44.1% of the children indicated that their parents always used Kiamu to them while 59.2% and 97.1% do the same for the youths and adults respectively. In Mvita, the results for the same item were 36.1% for the children, 60.5% for the youths and 93% for the adults. This clearly shows that with successive generations, less and less of Kimvita and Kiamu is being transmitted to the children.

For Kiswahili, slightly more parents of the youths *always* use Kiswahili more frequently than those of the children. In Amu 18.6% of the children's parents *always* use Kiswahili to their children while 22.4% of the parents of the youths reported to be doing so. None of the adult respondents' parents in Amu *always* use Kiswahili to their children. In Mvita there were more children than youth respondents indicating that their parents *always* use Kiswahili to them. The results for this item were: 45.1% for the children, 17.6% for the youths and 7% for the adults. Again, this means that the parents in these two dialect areas are exposing their children to more and more Kiswahili at home. It is also evident that more children in Mvita are being exposed to more Kiswahili by their parents at home than those in Amu.

Very few parents *always* use English to the respondents (Amu: children 10.7%, youths 6.4%, adults 0%; Mvita: children 7.1%, adults 0%). However, the little that is being transmitted is socially significant given the fact that these are traditionally exclusively Kiamu or Kimvita speaking areas. Also, while no respondent reported that their parents *always* speak Sheng to them, a small percentage indicated that their parents *sometimes* use Sheng to them (Amu: children 7.1%, Youths 9.1%; Mvita: children 7.2%). This is contrary to expectations especially given that Sheng is reputed to be a language for youth identity (see Githiora 2002). The assumption is that the parents of these respondents are young urban parents. However, these small percentages, however negligible, are indicative of the potential role that Sheng is likely to play at home. As presented later in this paper, other sub-domains of the home domain such as speaking to siblings are more receptive to Sheng. The cumulative effect would eventually be significant to children's language choice in Amu and Mvita.

Arising from the results presented in this section, several deductions can be made. That considering the use of the dialects in both areas by children to parents and parents to children, less and less of Kiamu and Kimvita dialects are being transmitted by the parents at home. At the same time more and more English and Kiswahili languages are being transmitted to the children. On the balance, the children contribute more to the use of English and Kiswahili at home than their parents do. This situation where less and less of the dialects are being transmitted to the children by their parents is endangering to the survival of Kiamu and Kimvita.

1.6.5 Parents to parents

The question was posed for the respondents to indicate the languages that their parents chose to speak to each other. The data on language use between parents can help indicate the level of marital interaction between people of different linguistic backgrounds. This would give an indication of which languages the children are exposed to, and hence their available language choices. The results of the data analysis on this variable are presented in the table below.

Table 9: Parents speaking to each other (%)

| Parents speaking to each other | | Amu | | | Mvita | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
| | | Children | Youth | Adult | Children | Youth | Adult |
| Kiamu in Amu | <i>Never</i> | 27.9 | 12.5 | 0 | 47.8 | 18.6 | 4.7 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 9.8 | 6.3 | 0 | 8.7 | 4.7 | 2.3 |
| Kimvita in Mvita | <i>sometimes</i> | 24.6 | 14.6 | 2.9 | 13.0 | 17.4 | 4.7 |
| | <i>always</i> | 37.7 | 66.7 | 97.1 | 30.4 | 59.3 | 88.4 |
| Swahili | <i>Never</i> | 12.1 | 21.3 | 84.8 | 8.6 | 14.1 | 18.6 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 8.6 | 27.7 | 12.1 | 27.1 | 40.0 | 39.5 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 53.4 | 38.3 | 3.0 | 18.6 | 24.7 | 34.9 |
| | <i>always</i> | 25.9 | 12.8 | 0 | 45.7 | 21.2 | 7.0 |
| English | <i>Never</i> | 37.0 | 37.8 | 100.0 | 25.0 | 29.4 | 83.3 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 9.3 | 26.7 | 0 | 26.5 | 36.5 | 14.3 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 46.3 | 33.3 | 0 | 47.1 | 30.6 | 2.4 |
| | <i>always</i> | 7.4 | 2.2 | 0 | 1.5 | 3.5 | 0 |
| Sheng | <i>Never</i> | 92.9 | 79.1 | 100.0 | 95.6 | 96.4 | 100.0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 1.8 | 9.3 | 0 | 2.9 | 2.4 | 0 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 5.4 | 11.6 | 0 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 0 |
| | <i>always</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Like in the previous home sub-domains presented in this section so far, the use of Kiamu and Kimvita between the parents of the respondents is less with the lower age groups. In Amu, 84.8% of the parents of the adults *always* speak Kimvita to each other while 21.3% of the youth's parents and 12.3% of the children's do the same. For the same score in Mvita, the results were 88.4% for the adults, 59.4% for the youths and 30.4% for the children. This means that the parents of the younger generation expose their children to far less Kiamu and Kimvita than the parents of the older generation do to their children.

The pattern is reversed when it comes to Kiswahili. The parents of the younger generation use more English and Kiswahili than the parents of the older generation. In Amu, 26.3% of parents of the children *always* speak Kiswahili to each other while 12.8% of the youths' parents and none of the adult respondents' parents *always* speak Kiswahili to each other. For the same score, in Mvita, the results were 45.7% for the children, 21.2% for the youths and 7% for the adults. It is also evident that parents in Amu use less Kiswahili among themselves than parents in Mvita. This logically means that although the children in both dialect areas are exposed to more Kiswahili than the older respondents are, the exposure is more in Mvita than is the case in Amu. In both areas, parents speak less frequently in Kiswahili. Again, while no parents *always* speak Sheng to each other, a small minority of the parents of the younger generation *sometimes* use Sheng. This may be statistically insignificant but as argued earlier, it is ethnolinguistically significant because it means that Sheng is likely to be a major factor in language choice and shift in the home domain in both dialect areas.

Consequently, while on the whole there are more parents of the child respondents speaking Kiamu and Kimvita to each other, a significant percentage *always* uses Kiswahili and English at home. This means that the children are being exposed to more and more English and Kiswahili at home. The consequence would be that given the generational pattern, the next generation of parents is likely going to be speaking more Kiswahili and English than Kimvita and eventually the two languages may replace the dialects. This trend portends danger to both Kiamu and Kimvita.

1.6.6 Siblings

The other influential sub-domain of the home domain is the use of language among siblings. The usefulness of this domain lies in the fact that siblings communicate to each other more frequently than they communicate with their parents. Therefore, while the parents ensure continuity of a language by transferring it to the children, siblings ensure its maintenance by using it among themselves. A language that is not used among the siblings, especially within the younger age groups, is endangered.

Therefore, a question which required the respondents to indicate their frequency of use of the different languages with their siblings was included in the questionnaire. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 10: Speaking with siblings (%)

| Speaking with Siblings | | Amu | | | Mvita | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------|-------|--------|----------|-------|--------|
| | | Children | Youth | Adults | Children | Youth | Adults |
| Kiamu in Amu | <i>Never</i> | 14.0 | 14.6 | 0 | 30.4 | 14.0 | 7.0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 15.8 | 8.3 | 0 | 7.2 | 9.3 | 0 |
| Kimvita in Mvita | <i>sometimes</i> | 31.6 | 43.8 | 23.5 | 29.0 | 11.6 | 4.7 |
| | <i>always</i> | 38.6 | 33.3 | 76.5 | 33.3 | 65.1 | 88.4 |
| Swahili | <i>Never</i> | 14.0 | 6.1 | 27.3 | 4.2 | 6.0 | 7.0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 7.0 | 12.2 | 6.1 | 18.3 | 30.1 | 41.9 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 43.9 | 53.1 | 63.6 | 33.8 | 43.4 | 48.8 |
| | <i>always</i> | 35.1 | 28.6 | 3.0 | 43.7 | 20.5 | 2.3 |
| English | <i>Never</i> | 13.0 | 10.6 | 44.1 | 5.6 | 2.4 | 26.8 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 11.1 | 4.3 | 20.6 | 25.4 | 32.5 | 41.5 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 55.6 | 70.2 | 35.3 | 53.5 | 51.8 | 31.7 |
| | <i>always</i> | 20.4 | 14.9 | 0 | 15.5 | 13.3 | 0 |
| Sheng | <i>Never</i> | 68.4 | 29.5 | 100.0 | 48.6 | 27.7 | 81.0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 7.0 | 13.6 | 0 | 27.1 | 32.5 | 16.7 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 19.3 | 40.9 | 0 | 17.1 | 32.5 | 2.4 |
| | <i>always</i> | 5.3 | 15.9 | 0 | 7.1 | 7.2 | 0 |

From the above results, it is clear that children use Kiamu and Kimvita with their siblings almost as much as they use Kiswahili. Considering the *sometimes* and *always* scores in Amu, 70.2% of the children reported that they frequently use Kiamu with their siblings while 62.3% said so for Kimvita in Mvita. For Kiswahili, the figures were 80% and 77.5% for Amu and Mvita respectively. The pattern is therefore similar for both the dialects and Kiswahili although Amu siblings use Kiamu more frequently than the Mvita siblings do with Kimvita.

It is important to note that although English is not *always* used as much as the dialects and Kiswahili, when those children who use it *sometimes* are considered, they are more than those who *sometimes* use the dialects or Kiswahili.

It is also worth noting that there is less frequent use of the dialects among siblings with among the children than the adults. At the same time there is more frequent use of Kiswahili and English among the siblings in the children age group than the adults and youths. This clearly suggests that on this variable, the dialects are losing to both Kiswahili and English.

One other interesting observation from these results is that there is more frequent use of Sheng by the youth with their siblings than do the children with their siblings – especially in Mvita.

This would mean that Sheng is an additional language picked up by children as they grow up. However, as the figures show, Sheng is not sustained to adulthood (*Never* = 100% in Amu and only *sometimes* = 2.4% in Mvita). This affirms the assertion that Sheng is just a social group marker used by the youth (Githiora 2002); at least for the moment.

These results show that at home, siblings use the dialects (Kiamu or Kimvita), Kiswahili and English with almost equal frequency. While the dialects have a slight edge over the English and Kiswahili, the languages compete almost equally for chances of being used by the siblings. An interesting result on this variable is that Sheng is also highly likely to be used by the youth to their siblings but its use in that age group does not portend danger as it is used for the specific purpose of a generation marker (Githiora 2002). Therefore, on this variable, the dialects are endangered by the onslaught of Kiswahili, English and Sheng. This danger is made worse by the fact that the siblings are most influential in the home, at times, more than even the parents.

Generally speaking, the data on language use in the homedomain in Amu and Mvita clearly shows that although the dialects are still being used at home, Kiswahili and English are gradually taking over. Less and less parents are transmitting the dialects to their children in favour of English and Kiswahili. Sheng is also interceding among the youth in some sub-domains of the home. On the whole then, Kiamu and Kimvita are critically endangered in the home domain. As the theories being used in this research postulate, loss of a language in this domain means that the language is on its way to death. Comparatively, however, Kimvita presents as the more endangered in the home domain than Kiamu, although both dialects are at different stages of the same downward spiral to death.

1.6.7 Education

Education is a key factor in determining language use patterns and, therefore, the sociolinguistic situation of a speech community. It has influence at both the individual level and the society level. At the society level, language policy on education affects language choice and use while at the individual level the level of education of a person implies linguistic influences acquired through the education system. The longer a person stays and the higher a person goes in an education system, the more the education language policy is likely to influence that person.

Four levels of education were considered while coding this question; none (no formal education), primary, secondary, and tertiary (any formal training above secondary school including colleges and universities). As stated earlier, the majority of respondents in both dialect areas were derived from primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the data shows more respondents as having primary or secondary education as opposed to the tertiary level of education. No tertiary institution was included in the survey because none existed within the study areas. However, of particular significance to this study was the variation of education levels among the adult respondents.

Table 11: Education of respondents (%)

| Age Group | Amu (N = 145) | | | | Mvita (N = 200) | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------------|---------|-----------|----------|
| | None | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary | None | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |
| Children | 0 | 96.7 | 3.3 | 0 | 0 | 95.8 | 4.2 | 0 |
| Youth | 2.0 | 10.2 | 85.7 | 2.0 | 0 | 14.0 | 82.6 | 3.5 |
| Adults | 28.6 | 40.0 | 20.0 | 11.4 | 2.3 | 39.5 | 16.3 | 41.9 |

Important figures to note here include the relatively higher percentage (28.6%) of adult respondents with no formal education among the Amu respondents compared to only 2.3% for the Mvita respondents. Also noting is that there are more Mvita adult respondents reporting to have tertiary education (41.9%) compared to those reporting the same from Amu (11.4%). The majority (68.6%) of the adult respondents in Amu have only received primary or no formal education at all, compared to 41.8% for the same category in Mvita. This means that although the majority of the respondents in the two areas have not received much formal education, there are more people who have some formal education in Amu than is the case in Mvita. This scenario affects language use and choice in these dialect areas. Having a larger number of people with formal education means that more of the people have been exposed to English and standard Kiswahili through the education system in Kenya which may encourage the use of the two languages as opposed to vernaculars (in this case Kiamu and Kimvita dialects). In school, they are also exposed to speakers of other languages.

Education is considered to be a vital domain in this study because people spend most of their formative years in school and so the languages they are exposed to during this time will largely decide their language use patterns for the rest of their lives. If a language is highly considered in school it is more likely going to be maintained than a language that receives little attention in school.

This study considered that there could be both formal and informal situations in the education domain. For the formal aspect, students were asked about the language they use in class and what language their school texts were written. For the informal sub-domain, they were asked about the languages they use during free time or playing in school.

1.6.8 Language use in class

Generally the language used by students in class while communicating with their teachers in schools in both dialect areas is English. The results for this variable are summarized in the following table.

Table 12: Speaking with Teachers in Class (%)

| Speaking with Teachers in Class | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | | Children | Youths | Children | Youths |
| Kiamu in Amu | <i>Never</i> | 67.8 | 56.8 | 58.6 | 45.3 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 11.9 | 15.9 | 20.0 | 33.3 |
| Kimvita in Mvita | <i>sometimes</i> | 15.3 | 27.3 | 11.4 | 18.7 |
| | <i>always</i> | 5.1 | .0 | 10.0 | 2.7 |
| Kiswahili | <i>Never</i> | 8.5 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 2.7 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 8.5 | 6.7 | 5.8 | 5.3 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 33.9 | 40.0 | 63.8 | 64.0 |
| | <i>always</i> | 49.2 | 48.9 | 26.1 | 28.0 |
| English | <i>Never</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 1.7 | 2.2 | 0 | 1.3 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 11.9 | 20.0 | 20.6 | 34.7 |
| | <i>always</i> | 86.4 | 77.8 | 79.4 | 64.0 |
| Sheng | <i>Never</i> | 94.9 | 71.8 | 94.2 | 98.6 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 5.1 | 7.7 | 4.3 | 1.4 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 0 | 20.5 | 1.4 | 0 |
| | <i>always</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

From the above results, 82.7% of Amu respondents indicated that they *always* speak English with their teachers in class while 71.3% indicated the same in Mvita. No one in the two areas indicated they *never* use English with their teachers. The second most used language in this sub-domain of education is Kiswahili with 27.1% of Amu and 49% of Mvita children saying that they *always* use it in class. Students reported that they *rarely* use the dialects in class (*Never + rarely*: Kiamu 76.1% and Kimvita 78.6%) in class with their teachers. Only 2.9% said they *always* use Kiamu for this situation. Virtually nobody (*never*: Amu 85.7% and Mvita 96.5%) reported that they speak Sheng in class with their teachers.

In general then, Kiamu and Kimvita are not used formally in school in both Mvita and Amu. English dominates this sub-domain but some Kiswahili is also used. This is not surprising given the fact that according to the education policy in Kenya, English is the official language of instruction while Kiswahili is a compulsory subject at both the primary and secondary levels of education. Unlike in other scores where Kimvita seems to fair worse than Kiamu, on this score the two dialects are equally rarely used in class.

1.6.9 Language use during free time in school

Children were specifically asked about the language they use while playing with their friends in school during free time. The results are summarized in the following table.

Table 13: Speaking during Free Time in school (%)

| Speaking during Free Time in School | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | | Children | Youths | Children | Youths |
| Kiamu in Amu | <i>Never</i> | 39.7 | 28.9 | 44.3 | 21.1 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 15.5 | 17.8 | 11.4 | 5.3 |
| Kimvita in Mvita | <i>sometimes</i> | 31.0 | 26.7 | 22.9 | 27.6 |
| | <i>always</i> | 13.8 | 26.7 | 21.4 | 46.1 |
| Swahili | <i>Never</i> | 15.3 | 6.7 | 4.3 | 15.8 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 11.9 | 6.7 | 12.9 | 30.3 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 45.8 | 64.4 | 52.9 | 36.8 |
| | <i>always</i> | 27.1 | 22.2 | 30.0 | 17.1 |
| English | <i>Never</i> | 3.4 | 4.4 | 5.6 | 2.6 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 12.1 | 4.4 | 15.5 | 31.6 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 41.4 | 55.6 | 32.4 | 30.3 |
| | <i>always</i> | 43.1 | 35.6 | 46.5 | 35.5 |
| Sheng | <i>Never</i> | 72.4 | 27.5 | 50.0 | 25.0 |
| | <i>Rarely</i> | 8.6 | 17.5 | 22.9 | 27.6 |
| | <i>sometimes</i> | 19.0 | 40.0 | 24.3 | 32.9 |
| | <i>always</i> | .0 | 15.0 | 2.9 | 14.5 |

From the results, it can be deduced that generally, students prefer using Kiswahili (*always* + *sometimes* = 68%) and English (*always* + *sometimes* = 72.3%), when they are not formally learning in class. There is no clear front runner language as far as this variable is concerned. However, English still has a small edge over the other languages. Unlike in class, the dialects perform better in this sub-domain (*always* + *sometimes*: Kiamu 48.5% and Kimvita 59.5%) although they still lag behind English and Kiswahili. It is also interesting to note that there is significant use of Sheng (*always* + *sometimes*: Amu 33.7% and Mvita 37.7%) more than could be expected in the school environment. This suggests the existence of code-switching in school. According to Landweer (2000), the frequency and type of code-switching is an important indicator of ethnolinguistic vitality. Landweer (2000) suggests that frequent individual unbounded code switching is the most threatening to an endangered language. The fact that children indicated that they sometimes use Sheng during free time in school may suggest instances of code-switching but this may not say much about the nature of code-switching – whether it is unbounded or with evidence of a diglossic or stable bilingualism. While this study did not look into the nature of the suggestive code-switching, the very fact that the possibility of code-switching exists between English, Swahili, Sheng and Kiamu and Kimvita implies the existence of language shift. On average, however, the respondents use English more than the other languages during free time in school (Means: Mvita - English 3.09, Kiswahili 2.82, Kimvita 2.62, Sheng 2.11 and Amu – English 3.23, Kiswahili 2.92, Kiamu 2.33, Sheng 1.86. where 1 = *Never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes* and 4 = *Always*).

1.7 Language attitude

Questions were posed to the respondents to find out how they generally rated the languages being investigated (Kimvita, Kiswahili, English, Sheng) according to their relevance to the main domains of their lives. The domains included were education, employment, friendship, culture, and general usefulness the languages to their lives.

1.7.1 Education

For this variable, the respondents were required to rate to languages according to how important they felt the languages were important for education. This question was put to the youth and adults. English was very highly rated as important for education in both Amu and Mvita. The results were as presented in the following table.

Table 14: Language attitude: Education (%)

| | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|---|---------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | Youth | Adults | Youth | Adults |
| Kiamu (in Amu) or Kimvita (in Mvita) For Education | <i>Not Important</i> | 44.4 | 3.0 | 21.1 | 7.0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 26.7 | 15.2 | 31.6 | 20.9 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 13.3 | 45.5 | 34.2 | 41.9 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 15.6 | 36.4 | 13.2 | 30.2 |
| Kiswahili for Education | <i>Not Important</i> | 2.2 | 3.0 | 0 | 2.3 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 11.1 | 12.1 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 33.3 | 27.3 | 28.0 | 23.3 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 53.3 | 57.6 | 68.0 | 67.4 |
| English for Education | <i>Not Important</i> | 2.2 | 3.0 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 2.2 | 6.1 | 1.3 | 2.3 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 15.6 | 36.4 | 14.5 | 2.3 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 80.0 | 54.5 | 84.2 | 95.3 |
| Sheng for Education | <i>Not Important</i> | 82.5 | 100.0 | 86.7 | 95.3 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 15.0 | 0 | 13.3 | 4.7 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

As can be seen from the table above, for education, both the youths and adults rated English more highly than the other languages, in both Amu and Mvita. For example, in Amu 96.6% rated English as important while 90.1% of the adults did the same. In Mvita, the results for this variable were 98.7% for the youths and 97.6% for the adults. The slightly higher figures for Mvita are expected because of its urban setting relative to Amu's rural setting.

Kiswahili was the second most highly rated language for education. In Amu, 86.6% of the youths and 84.9% of the adults rated Kiswahili as important for education. In Mvita, those who rated Kiswahili as important for education were 96% for the youth and 90.7% for the adults. Very few thought Kiamu and Kimvita were important for education while almost nobody rated Sheng as important for education.

This pattern was as expected because English is the official language of instruction in Kenya starting from the fourth year of primary education. Kiswahili is a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools.

1.7.2 Employment

English was also very highly rated by the respondents as far as getting a job is concerned as shown in the following results.

Table 15: Language attitude: Job opportunity (%)

| | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | Youth | Adults | Youth | Adults |
| Kiamu (in Amu) | <i>Not Important</i> | 45.5 | 12.5 | 34.2 | 22.5 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 27.3 | 9.4 | 28.9 | 40.0 |
| Kimvita (in Mvita) | <i>Important</i> | 15.9 | 28.1 | 27.6 | 22.5 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 11.4 | 50.0 | 9.2 | 15.0 |
| Kiswahili | <i>Not Important</i> | 0 | 9.1 | 0 | 5.0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 15.9 | 21.2 | 9.3 | 7.5 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 40.9 | 36.4 | 33.3 | 25.0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 43.2 | 33.3 | 57.3 | 62.5 |
| English | <i>Not Important</i> | 0 | 18.8 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 0 | 3.1 | 1.3 | 0 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 14.0 | 31.3 | 6.7 | 0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 86.0 | 46.9 | 92.0 | 100.0 |
| Sheng | <i>Not Important</i> | 70.7 | 100.0 | 94.7 | 100.0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 26.8 | 0 | 5.3 | 0 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 2.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

In Amu, 90% of the youth and 78.2% of the adults rated English as important for employment while in Mvita it was 99.7% for the youth and 100% for the adults.

For Kiswahili, in Amu, 84.1% of the youths and 69.7% of the adults rated Kiswahili as important for employment. In Mvita, the figures for this variable were 90.6% for the youth and 87.5% for the adults. This makes Kiswahili the second most highly rated language for employment.

It is worth noting that while the dialects are not rated as high as English and Kiswahili for employment, Kiamu is rated highly by more people in Amu than Kimvita is rated in Mvita. For example, 27.3% of the youth and 78.1% of the adults rate Kiamu as important for employment. In Mvita, Kimvita is rated as important for employment by 36.8% of the youth and 37.5% of the adults. The sharp difference between the Amu and Mvita adults for this variable can be explained by the fact that the adult literacy rate among the respondents in Amu is lower than in Mvita. Also, most of the adults in Amu are either unemployed or employed in the informal sectors which do not need the mastery of English.

1.7.3 Neighbourhood

Compared to the rating of the languages for education and job opportunities, the pattern of preference is almost reversed when rating the languages for use in the neighbourhood.

Table 16: Language attitude: Use with neighbours (%)

| Neighbourhood | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | Youth | Adults | Youth | Adults |
| Kiamu (in Amu) or | <i>Not Important</i> | 8.9 | 0 | 2.6 | 0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 28.9 | 2.9 | 14.5 | 4.7 |
| Kimvita (in Mvita) | <i>Important</i> | 37.8 | 17.6 | 32.9 | 18.6 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 24.4 | 79.4 | 50.0 | 76.7 |
| Kiswahili | <i>Not Important</i> | 2.2 | 26.5 | 6.7 | 2.3 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 46.7 | 41.2 | 49.3 | 67.4 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 48.9 | 17.6 | 36.0 | 20.9 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 2.2 | 14.7 | 8.0 | 9.3 |
| English | <i>Not Important</i> | 13.3 | 47.1 | 13.5 | 12.2 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 48.9 | 29.4 | 56.8 | 53.7 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 31.1 | 14.7 | 18.9 | 26.8 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 6.7 | 8.8 | 10.8 | 7.3 |
| Sheng | <i>Not Important</i> | 56.4 | 100.0 | 43.2 | 86.0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 41.0 | 0 | 41.9 | 11.6 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 2.6 | 0 | 9.5 | 2.3 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 0 | 0 | 5.4 | 0 |

In Amu, Kiamu was rated as important in the neighbourhood by 62.2% of the youths and 97% of the adults. In Mvita, Kimvita was rated as important by 82.9% of the youths and 95.3% of the adults. The surprising result worth noting here is that contrary to expectations, given the urban setting of Mvita and the rural setting of Amu, it is surprising to see a higher percentage of youths rating Kimvita more highly than Amu youth for the use of the dialects in the neighbourhood. This situation can be explained by the existence of a transitional dialect between Kimvita and standard Kiswahili which has been referred to as Kimombasa (Karanja 2009). This is an urban dialect with features of both Kimvita and standard Kiswahili that Mvita urban youths use.

Kiswahili was the second most highly rated language for both dialects for use in the neighborhood. In Amu, 53.1% of the youth and 32.3% of the adult considered Kiswahili as important in the neighbourhood. In Mvita, 44% and 30.2% of the adults rated Kiswahili as important in the neighbourhood. As can be seen from these results, the youths in both Amu and Mvita rate Kiswahili for use in the neighbourhood more highly than the adult do. It is also worth noting that although not as highly as Kiswahili and the dialects, English is also relatively positively rated for use in the neighbourhood especially by the youth in both Amu and Mvita.

1.7.4 Friends

Generally, Kiamu and Kimvita, respectively, were rated as the most important languages for communicating with friends. This is revealed in the following table.

Table 17: Language attitude: Use with friends (%)

| Friends | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|---|---------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | Youth | Adults | Youth | Adults |
| Kiamu (in Amu) or Kimvita (in Mvita) | <i>Not Important</i> | 15.6 | 0 | 13.2 | 4.8 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 24.4 | 2.9 | 14.5 | 7.1 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 40.0 | 17.6 | 35.5 | 16.7 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 20.0 | 79.4 | 36.8 | 71.4 |
| Kiswahili | <i>Not Important</i> | 9.1 | 20.6 | 6.7 | 7.1 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 18.2 | 38.2 | 37.3 | 59.5 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 56.8 | 35.3 | 41.3 | 23.8 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 15.9 | 5.9 | 14.7 | 9.5 |
| English | <i>Not Important</i> | 11.4 | 50.0 | 9.3 | 9.8 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 11.4 | 14.7 | 37.3 | 61.0 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 50.0 | 32.4 | 25.3 | 14.6 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 27.3 | 2.9 | 28.0 | 14.6 |
| Sheng | <i>Not Important</i> | 34.1 | 100.0 | 26.7 | 64.3 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 41.5 | 0 | 44.0 | 33.3 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 22.0 | 0 | 14.7 | 2.4 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 2.4 | 0 | 14.7 | 0 |

In Amu, 60% of the youths and 97% of the adults rated Kiamu as important for communicating with friends. In Mvita for Kimvita, the figures for the same variable are 72.3% for the youth and 88.1% for the adults. The dialects are followed by Kiswahili and English which had almost similar results for this variable in both Amu and Mvita.

1.7.5 Culture

As expected, Kiamu and Kimvita were rated highly in the culture domain. This is clear from the results presented in the following table.

Table 18: Language attitude: For culture (%)

| Culture | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|---|---------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | Youth | Adults | Youth | Adults |
| Kiamu (in Amu) or Kimvita (in Mvita) | <i>Not Important</i> | 4.4 | 0 | 3.9 | 4.8 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 6.7 | 0 | 11.8 | 0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 17.8 | 0 | 15.8 | 9.5 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 71.1 | 100.0 | 68.4 | 85.7 |
| Kiswahili | <i>Not Important</i> | 20.0 | 82.4 | 2.7 | 7.3 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 24.4 | 2.9 | 21.3 | 34.1 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 31.1 | 14.7 | 30.7 | 22.0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 24.4 | 0 | 45.3 | 36.6 |
| English | <i>Not Important</i> | 44.2 | 88.2 | 20.3 | 9.8 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 23.3 | 5.9 | 29.7 | 39.0 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 16.3 | 5.9 | 32.4 | 22.0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 16.3 | 0 | 17.6 | 29.3 |
| Sheng | <i>Not Important</i> | 74.4 | 97.0 | 81.3 | 90.5 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 17.9 | 0 | 12.0 | 7.1 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 5.1 | 0 | 1.3 | 0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 2.6 | 3.0 | 5.3 | 2.4 |

In Amu, 88.8% of the youth and 100% of the adults rated Kiamu as the most important language for culture. The pattern was similar in Mvita where 85.2% of the youth 95.2% of the adults rated Kimvita as important for culture. Kiswahili was rated a distant second for culture in both Amu and Mvita. It is also worth noting that English was also rated as important for culture by a significant proportion of the respondents especially in Mvita. For example, 49% of the youth and 51.3% of the adults in Mvita rated English as important for culture, while 32.6% of the youth and 5.9% of the adults in Amu thought English was important for culture. The important thing to note in this case is that English is finding its way into the culture domain, which traditionally is dominated by indigenous languages. This is not a good sign for the dialects because their roles will diminish if English and Kiswahili took over this domain.

It is worth noting that the bars are longer for Kiswahili and English in Mvita than in Amu. This means that English and Kiswahili are encroaching on these domains, faster in Mvita than in Amu.

1.7.6 General usefulness

For this variable, respondents were required to rate the languages according to how important they thought the languages were important for life in general. The aim was to test the respondents' general attitude towards the languages being investigated. In Amu, there was a clear division between the youth and adults about the language that the respondents thought to be generally the most important in their lives, as the following table reveals.

Table 19: For general usefulness in life (%)

| General usefulness in life | | Amu | | Mvita | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | Youth | Adults | Youth | Adults |
| Kiamu (in Amu) or | <i>Not Important</i> | 16.3 | 2.9 | 20.0 | 7.5 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 32.6 | 2.9 | 16.0 | 2.5 |
| Kimvita (in Mvita) | <i>Important</i> | 30.2 | 11.8 | 18.7 | 15.0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 20.9 | 82.4 | 45.3 | 75.0 |
| Kiswahili | <i>Not Important</i> | 9.1 | 50.0 | 1.4 | 5.1 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 6.8 | 20.6 | 14.9 | 30.8 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 40.9 | 20.6 | 43.2 | 30.8 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 43.2 | 8.8 | 40.5 | 33.3 |
| English | <i>Not Important</i> | 11.4 | 52.9 | 0 | 0 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 6.8 | 14.7 | 2.7 | 5.1 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 31.8 | 20.6 | 33.3 | 12.8 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 50.0 | 11.8 | 64.0 | 82.1 |
| Sheng | <i>Not Important</i> | 57.5 | 93.9 | 62.5 | 92.3 |
| | <i>Slightly Important</i> | 35.0 | 6.1 | 33.3 | 7.7 |
| | <i>Important</i> | 7.5 | 0 | 2.8 | 0 |
| | <i>Very Important</i> | 0 | 0 | 1.4 | 0 |

As the above table reveals, the most important language for general usefulness in life for the youth in Amu is English at 81.8% (*important* 31.8%, *very important* 50%) while the most important for the adults is Kiamu at 94.2%.

The above table shows that both the youth and adults in Mvita rate English as generally the most useful language in their lives. In fact, unlike in Amu where the adults rate Kiamu highest, the Mvita adults rate English as high as the youth. This could be attributed to the more urban setting of Mombasa, where people of different nationalities live, as opposed to Lamu where it is mainly the local people who stay there and would rather use Kiswahili than English. Considering the *important* and *very important* statistics together, the adult place English first at 95% while the youth rate the language at 97.3%. However, the adults rate Kimvita second at 90%, while the youth rate Kiswahili for the second position at 83.7%. Kimvita only comes third for the youth at 64% while third for the adults is Kiswahili at 64.1%. Only 4.2% of the youth rate Sheng as important in their lives. As expected, no adult rates Sheng as important for their lives.

Further, there were other questions aimed at finding the general attitude of the population about the dialects specifically. Questions were posed about whether Kiamu and Kimvita were useful to them; whether they should work hard to save Kimvita; whether it was a waste of time to learn Kiamu and Kimvita; whether they would teach their children Kiamu and Kimvita and whether they think the two dialects would die.

On the question of whether the dialects were useful to them, the results were as follows.

Table 20: Language attitude: Dialect usefulness to respondent (%)

| Dialect is useful to respondent | | Children | Youth | Adults |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------|--------|
| Kiamu | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | 10.2 | 10.6 | 0 |
| | <i>Disagree</i> | 23.7 | 21.3 | 0 |
| | <i>Agree</i> | 54.2 | 29.8 | 2.9 |
| | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | 11.9 | 38.3 | 97.1 |
| Kimvita | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | 22.1 | 9.3 | 9.3 |
| | <i>Disagree</i> | 33.8 | 12.8 | 0 |
| | <i>Agree</i> | 13.2 | 36.0 | 14.0 |
| | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | 30.9 | 41.9 | 76.7 |

This table clearly reveals that there is a difference of opinion according to the age groups. The children slightly disagreed (55.9%: *strongly disagree* 21.1%, *disagree* 33.8%) more than they agreed (44.1%: *agree* 13.2%, *strongly agree* 30.9%) that Kimvita is useful to them. However the youth agreed more than they disagreed. The youth that agreed were 77.9% (*agree* 36%, *strongly agree* 41.9%). The adults agreed more than the youth that Kimvita is useful to them. In fact only 9.3% disagreed. The emerging pattern here is that the younger the generation, the less use they see of Kimvita. Adults still see some usefulness of Kimvita.

From this table, it is clear that respondents from all age groups agree that Kimvita is useful to them. Unlike in Amu, most of the children in Mvita agree that Kiamu is useful to them (65.5%: *agree* 53.4%, *strongly agree* 12.2%). The positive attitude for Kiamu's utility, however, decreases with age. The adults feel more positively about Kiamu with all (100%: *agree* 2.9%, *strongly agree* 97.1%) of the adult respondents agreeing that Kiamu is useful to them. In fact, as can be seen, most adults (97.1%) *strongly agreed* with this variable while only 12.1% of the children *strongly agreed*.

The observations in Amu and Mvita mean that less and less of the younger generation see the usefulness of Kiamu and Kimvita. When such an attitude sets in, the dialects are likely to die as the children shift to Kiswahili and English which they consider more useful to them, as data analyzed reveals.

1.8 Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the sociolinguistic status of Kiamu and Kimvita dialects of Kiswahili in Kenya considering the assumption that these two dialects and, by extension, other Kiswahili dialects in Kenya are threatened with death by, among other factors, the onslaught of standard Kiswahili, English and Sheng. The results presented in this paper clearly show that Kiamu and Kimvita are losing to Kiswahili, English, and Sheng in almost all domains. When the adult age group data are compared with the children data, it emerges that the children are shifting to Kiswahili, English and Sheng. The rate of shift from the dialects to English, Kiswahili or Sheng varies from domain to domain. Regarding the children, the data reveals that while English dominates the education domain due to education policy support, Kiswahili dominates in almost all the other domains. The dialects are still being used at a limited rate by the children in some domains such as the home domain while speaking with the parents and grand parents. It is also clear that English and Sheng are finding their way into the home domain especially when children are speaking with their siblings.

Fishman (1991), Landweer (2000), and UNESCO (2003), whose theoretical standpoints guided this research point out that a major indicator of language endangerment is its loss in major life domains such as the home, neighborhood and school. It is clear from the results of this study that Kiamu and Kimvita dialects are definitely losing speakers in the two domains of home and school. This is an indication that these two dialects are endangered, and, if the trend continues, they are most likely going to die in the near future.

Generally, while the speakers of the dialects (especially the adults) still have positive attitudes towards the dialect, the language use pattern among the children and the youth indicate the opposite. They use more Kiswahili and English than the dialects. In fact, in the attitude test, the dialects only scored highly as suitable for culture. Kiswahili and English were rated most highly in the more important domains such as education and job opportunities. This shift of positive attitude from the dialects to Kiswahili and English in the main domains of life such as employment and education is a clear indicator of the endangerment of Kiamu and Kimvita dialects.

On the whole, the data clearly shows that children are shifting from the dialects. According to this paper's theoretical standpoint, it is clear that not much intergenerational transfer of Kiamu and Kimvita is taking place in both Amu and Mvita, respectively. This is a clear indication that the dialects are dying. The results show that the rate of decline in almost all the domains is faster in Mvita than in Amu. This is as was expected given the rural location of Amu. However, the difference in most instances is very small, indicating that Kiamu is as endangered as Kimvita.

A general conclusion can, therefore, be made that although this study took a minimal case study approach, given that most other Kiswahili dialects operate under similar socio-cultural and economic environment, it would be logical to conclude that other Kiswahili dialects are likely to be as endangered as Kiamu and Kimvita. In fact, indications are that many of the estimated 15 to 18 Kiswahili dialects are critically endangered. We may not, therefore, say for sure that the dialects exist in the numbers estimated. The sad fact is that standard Kiswahili, whose growth relies heavily on the dialects, emerges as the main threat to Kiswahili indigenous dialects.

However, as stated in the theoretical section above, there are so many factors that determine the level of endangerment of a language. This study recommends that along with existing studies such as Karanja (2009), there is need for a major survey, incorporating as many factors as possible, focusing on each Kiswahili dialect. This will help in making conclusive statements out the fate of Kiswahili dialects.

References

- Batibo, H. M. 2005. *Language decline and death in Africa: Causes, consequences and challenges*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bakari, M. 1985. *The Morphophonology of the Kenyan Swahili Dialects*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Brenzinger, M. 1998. *Endangered Languages in Africa*. Cologne: Koppe.
- Cahill, M. 1999. From Endangered to Less Endangered: Case Histories from Brazil and Papua New Guinea. SILEWP 1999-006. [Online: <http://www.sil.org/silewp/1999/006>]
- Chiraghdin, S and Mnyampala, M. 1977. *Historia ya Kiswahili*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press (OUP).
- Crawford, J. 1995. Endangered Native American languages: What is to be done, and why? *The Bilingual Research Journal*, 19(1):17-38 [Online: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWcrawford/brj.htm>]
- Crawford, J. 1996. Seven hypotheses on language loss: causes and cures. In: Cantoni, G. (ed.), *Stabilizing indigenous languages*. Flagstaff, Arizona: Center for Excellence in Education, Northern Arizona University.
- Dorian, N. C. 1998. Western language ideologies and small-language prospects. In: Grenoble L.A and Whaley, L. J. (eds.), *Endangered Languages: Current Issues and Future Prospects*. Cambridge: CUP. 3-21.
- Fabunmi, F.A. and Salawu A. S. 2005. Is Yorùbá an Endangered Language? *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 14(3): 391– 408.
- Githiora, C. 2002. Sheng: Peer language, Swahili dialect or emerging Creole? *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15(2): 159 - 181.
- Gordon, R. G. Jr. (ed.). 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>
- Karanja P. 2009. Investigating Language Death: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Kiamu and Kimvita Dialects of Kiswahili in Kenya. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing Krauss, M. 1992. The world's languages in crisis. *Language*, 68(1): 4-10.
- Landweer, M. L. 2000. Indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality. *Notes on Sociolinguistics* 5(1)5-22. [Online: <http://www.sil.org/sociolx/ndg-lg-indicators.html>]
- Massamba, D.P.B. 1995. Kiswahili kama Lugha ya Mawasiliano. In Mlacha S.A.K. (ed.). *Kiswahili katika Kanda ya Afrika ya Mashariki*. Dar es Salaam: Institute of Kiswahili Research. 1–11.
- Mulokozi, M. M. 2002. *Kiswahili as a national and international language*. Asian and African Department, University of Helsinki. Web publication on <http://www.helsinki.fi/hum/aakkl/documents/kiswahili.pdf>.
- Nettle, D. and Romaine, S. 2000. *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nurse, D. and Walsh, M. 1992. Chifundi and Vumba: Partial shift to death. In Brenzinger, M. (ed.). 1992. *Language Death: Factual and Theoretical Explorations with Special Reference to East Africa*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 181-212
- SOAS. 2006. Swahili Manuscripts Project. Swahili Manuscripts Database. London School of Oriental and African Studies. University of London: London [Online: <http://mercury.soas.ac.uk/perl/Project/listSwahiliCollections.pl>]
- UNESCO. 2003a. Language Vitality and Endangerment. UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages. Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages: UNESCO. [Online: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/file_download.php/4794680ecb5664adb9af1234a4a1839Language+Vitality+and+Endangerment.pdf]
- Whiteley, W. 1969. *The Rise of a National Language*. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd.
- Wurm, S. A. 1998. Methods of language maintenance and revival, with selected cases of language endangerment in the world. In Matsumura, K. (ed.). *Studies in Endangered Languages* (Papers from the International Symposium on Endangered Languages, Tokyo, 18-20 November 1995) Tokyo: Hituzi Syobo.191-211.
- Wurm, S. A. 2003. The language situation and language endangerment in the Greater Pacific Area. In: Janse, M. and Tol, S. (eds.). 2003. *Language death and language maintenance: Theoretical, practical and descriptive approaches*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 15-47.