



The Portrayal of Nouns and Figures of Speech in the Expansion of the Standardisation of Swahili Language in Tanzania

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Abstract

In this era of science and technology, the standardisation of the Swahili language in Tanzania has been developed due to the emergence of new words in various fields such as health, politics, ICT, and education. This article focuses on the portrayal of nouns and figures of speech in the expansion of Swahili language standardisation. The research in this article is evaluative. The data was collected in the field and libraries, where interviews and text analysis methods were used. The discussion was guided by Einar Haugen's (1966/1972) theory, concerning standardisation of languages whose main foundation is expansion aimed at broadening the use of language in fields such as education, politics, law, health, science, business, architecture, and sports. The results of this research have shown that language expansion gives language the ability to fill gaps in vocabulary and to eliminate the shortcomings in discussing various activities across all areas of life. It also gives the language the capacity to be used in the relevant contemporary contexts. This means that it allows the language to keep pace with the time, development and changes in society.

Introduction

According to BAKITA (2016, 2017), language standardisation is an official process of giving rules and grammatical procedures to a language to ensure that it has proficiency and consistency of words among its users, to the extent that it can harmonise all structural, phonetic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects for all people regardless of their residential differences and geographical boundaries; so that it can transformed and be officially used for national and international communication. Kiango (2002) and Massamba (1989, 2005) state that the process of standardising the Swahili language began before Tanzania gained its independence and continued after independence. Language standardisation is a process of establishing language standards, including grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, to ensure that the language is used correctly and accepted in society. This may involve establishing guidelines for the use of words, vocabulary, and Swahili sentences (or other languages), to make it easier for people to understand and use the language with unity and accuracy. Ferguson (2006) discusses language standardisation as a *social and linguistic process* whereby a particular variety of a language is selected, codified, and accepted as the "standard" form, often for national or official purposes. His views reflect both the functional and ideological dimensions of standardisation.

Kipacha (2012) in literature explains that standardisation is the process of aligning dialects, vocabulary, spelling style, and grammar to create a standardised Swahili to be used in translation, education, law, media, and written literature. It can also mean the process of designing common



structures or systems used in writing literary works. This involves establishing writing guidelines, style, and the use of various artistic techniques, such as figures of speech, character development techniques, and literary work content. In a novel or story, standardisation may include the comparison of artistic structures such as the beginning, climax, and ending of the story. This helps manage the literary structure in a way that the reader or listener can easily understand.

In language and literature, standardisation relates to the process of establishing norms or standard procedures regarding language usage, grammatical structures, writing, and literary style. The goal of standardisation in this context is to ensure that language and texts are accepted and easily understood with accuracy. Additionally, it is a process of setting and implementing standards and guidelines that ensure that language and texts are clear, recognisable, and adhere to ethical and grammatical principles, enabling scholars and the audience to understand and enjoy the message being conveyed. This article interprets standardisation as a process that enables the availability of a single language with a uniform way of speaking and writing that is widely accepted in practice.

Matinde (2012) explains the concept of a noun as a word used to denote the name of a thing, person, place, or idea. Nouns are one of the essential parts of speech in language and serve as a link in sentences. Also, a noun can be one or more, depending on the name representing one or many things, and it can have a pronoun, such as a demonstrative or a suffix, that differentiates the noun type. In the standardisation of Swahili, the accuracy of noun usage has been an important issue, especially in the context of education and formal communication. Noun systems have been easily incorporated into Swahili guidelines, as follows: Common nouns are nouns used in both singular and plural forms, for example, *mtu* (singular) and *watu* (plural). Place nouns: These are nouns that refer to locations, such as *shule* (school), *mji* (town), and *nyumba* (house). State nouns: These are used to denote states or conditions, such as *furaha* (happiness), *hasira* (anger). In the standardisation of Swahili, the use of nouns includes literary accuracy, for example, in the use of adjectives, conjunctions, and noun classes (such as *ki-*, *mu-*). This accuracy has brought efficiency in the use of standardised Swahili in the context of education, culture, and formal communication.

Msokile (1992) and Mulokozi (1996) explain that figures of speech are artistic techniques used in language and literature to enhance the effectiveness of messages and make writing more beautiful. These are techniques used to describe things indirectly, to provide a deeper image or meaning. Figures of speech are artistic methods used in the Swahili language to convey deeper meanings or evoke emotions in listeners or readers. These figures are important in the expansion of Swahili because they increase the effectiveness of language use and provide a unique relationship between the context and the audience. Some well-known figures of speech that have been standardised and used in Swahili include the following proverbs: '*punguza mwendo, utafika salama*' (reduce your speed, you will arrive safely) or '*mchagua jembe si mkulima*' (a chooser of a hoe is not a farmer), '*mtoto akililia wembe mpe*' (if a child cries for a razor, give it to him/her).

It should be noted that in the standardisation of Swahili, figures of speech are widely used in literary and linguistic writings to enhance the effectiveness of communication with the community. Furthermore, the use of figures of speech helps to strengthen Swahili culture by bringing new meanings to sentences and conveying feelings and messages through artistic techniques. Therefore, there is a need to continue standardising various figures of speech to promote the use of the Swahili language on a broader scale. Matinde (2012) explains that the standardisation of nouns is the process of selecting, organising, and approving an official way of pronouncing, writing, and using nouns in a standardised language to eliminate confusion of usage between different dialects or styles.



Hussein (2023) explains that the standardisation of figures of speech is a process of organising, clarifying, and establishing official rules regarding the use, writing, and interpretation of figures of speech in standard Swahili, so that they can be used correctly, understood, and distinguish content in literary works and formal communication. In figures of speech, rhetoric is used to create cultural heritage and effectively describe various themes in society. The ability of Swahili to produce figures of speech that address social issues, culture, and profound emotions is crucial for the language's expansion. Figures of speech, as another element of Swahili literature, are a way of using words or expressions in a unique context where the meaning of a word or sentence comes from culture and literary traditions. Idioms in Swahili are crucial in enhancing grammatical efficiency and providing additional meanings that extend beyond the literal meaning of the word itself.

Therefore, standardisation of nouns and figures of speech in the Swahili language is an ongoing process, as the Swahili language is evolving and changing geographically, semantically, and in usage. Nouns and figurative expressions in the Swahili language have been and continue to be standardised as the need for these words increases. This article has focused on the standardisation of specific nouns and figurative expressions, examining how they have emerged and been standardised for use in various fields, as explained below.

In the standardisation of Swahili, the effectiveness of nouns depends on the correct use of reinforcing systems (prefixes) as well as adhering to the form of nouns that correspond with the modern context. The contribution of nouns in standardisation is evident as they help identify variations of words and also enable Swahili to broaden the scope of translating various concepts. Furthermore, there have been standardised Swahili nouns that have been incorporated for use in different groups of nouns according to multiple dialects.

Research Theory

The research for this article has been guided by Einar Haugen's (1966) theory regarding standardisation in languages. One of the foundational aspects is the expansion aimed at broadening the use of language in various social areas, including education, politics, law, literature, science, business, medicine, engineering, and sports. Einar Haugen's theory on language standardisation is one of the significant contributions to the field of linguistics, literature, and language standardisation. Haugen was known for his work on language standardisation and wrote about how language can be organised and disseminated through common standards used in various communities. His theory emphasises how language can adapt and develop in written and literary forms, being accepted by large and diverse communities. In summary, Einar Haugen (1972) described language standardisation as a process involving three main stages: language standardisation, Language preparation, and language dissemination.

Language Standardisation

At this stage, the community or nation wishing to carry out standardisation selects a specific language or dialect as the official language or context of the language. This may involve selecting one dialect from the numerous existing ones, thereby establishing it as the standard for language use in official matters, education, and administration. Example: In Swahili, the standard Swahili dialect has been chosen as the official language in many East African countries.

Language Preparation

This is the stage where the chosen language is developed and formally written. At this stage, grammatical systems, spelling, and word usage are recorded in books and guides, and standards for language use are documented for all. Here, dictionaries, grammar books, and other guides are



prepared to ensure that language use is grounded in high standards of accuracy and efficiency. Example: A Swahili dictionary, grammar guidelines, and also the rules for creating and using words in Swahili, such as the use of affixes and sentence structures.

Language dissemination

This is the stage at which the established language begins to be used in the community in an official capacity. Here, the language is used in various sectors, including education, administration, media, and business. Teaching and training about this language are initiated to ensure that people know and use it effectively. For example, the introduction of Swahili as a language of instruction in schools and promoting its use in the media and administration.

Therefore, Einar Haugen described standardisation as a process of selecting, preparing, and distributing a language so that it can be used easily and effectively in society and in various areas of life. This process involves establishing standards of writing, grammar, and usage to ensure that the language meets the goals of being standard and used in everyday life.

Research Methodology

The data for this article have been collected using interviews and text analysis methods. These methods have been chosen due to their importance in language analysis, especially in matters related to the representation of nouns and figures of speech in the expansion of Swahili standardisation. These methods are employed to investigate, understand, and determine how nouns and figures of speech are used in the Swahili context and how they influence the process of language standardisation. Additionally, the data for this research have been obtained from professionals, various stakeholders in Swahili, and scholars from different universities in Tanzania, particularly UDSM and UDOM, as well as stakeholders from BAKITA and BAKIZA. These areas have been selected using targeted sampling methods because they are locations where various academic activities and conferences related to the Swahili language and literature take place.

Additionally, the integration in these areas has enabled stakeholders and scholars to gain experience with standardisation issues, thus providing us with more realistic data. Furthermore, the clarification and interpretation of nouns and figures of speech have been discussed semantically in four main areas: health, education, ICT, and politics. The selection of these areas is based on their high level of human interaction, which necessitates the presence of language usage.

Results and discussion

This section pertains to the results and discussion, which involves two elements: nouns and figurative expressions that have been standardised from the year 2000 to the present. Examples and meanings of those nouns and figures of speech expressions are outlined as defined below.

In the health context, words such as:

'UVIKO-19' (COVID-19), this word means *Ugonjwa wa Virusi vya Korona*, which emerged in 2019. This word did not exist before but emerged during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease and has been standardised from the English word 'Covid-19,' which is found in the third edition of the Swahili dictionary.

'Barakoa' (Face mask): This word has expanded in use due to the emergence of the coronavirus disease and has been standardised it is found in the second edition of the Swahili dictionary which means a device worn on the face to cover the nose and mouth to protect against disease pathogens, dust, smoke, or airborne infections.



'*Kitasishi*' (Steriliser): This is a word that has been created and standardised from the English word 'steriliser' during the coronavirus pandemic, meaning a germ-killing agent.

'*Vilikizi*' (Nutritional supplements): This is a word that has been created and standardised from the English word 'food supplements,' referring to alternative food for a patient who has a deficiency of specific nutrients in the body.

'*Kitakasa*' (Sanitiser): This is a product used to reduce or eliminate harmful microorganisms (like bacteria, viruses, and fungi) from surfaces, skin, or objects.

'*Tibalishe*' (Therapeutic food): This is a term that has been created and standardised from the English term 'Therapeutic food,' meaning science-based practices that depend on nutrition to improve individual health and well-being.

'*Saratani*' (Cancer) is a term that has been created and standardised from the English word 'Cancer,' referring to the disease characterised by uncontrolled cell growth in the body. Additionally, this word has been used in context as '*kansa*', which is the Swahili version of the term.

Karantini (quarantine) is a period of isolation used to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. It involves keeping people (or animals) who may have been exposed to an infectious disease away from others, even if they are not yet showing symptoms. Also, in the figures of speech, sayings emerged as follows:

'*Kinga ni bora kuliko tiba*' (Prevention is better than cure): This saying emphasises the importance of protecting oneself from diseases before the need for treatment arises. Prevention is the first step in ensuring good health.

'*Afya ni mali*' (Health is wealth): without health, there is no richness.' This saying stresses the importance of health for everyone's life. Even if a person has a lot of wealth, without health, they cannot enjoy their riches.

'*Bila mazoezi, mwili hupungua nguvu*' (Without exercise, the body loses strength). This saying highlights the importance of exercise in maintaining the body's strength and preventing health issues such as obesity and heart problems.

'*Afya ya akili ni bora kama afya ya mwili*' (Mental health is as important as physical health). This saying emphasises the balance between mental and physical health. Prioritising mental health is as important as maintaining physical health.

'*Tiba ni muhimu lakini kujua chanzo ni muhimu zaidi*' (Treatment is important, but knowing the cause is even more important.) This saying highlights the importance of identifying the cause of a disease to provide more effective and lasting treatment.

In the education context, there are nouns and figures of speech such as:

'*Akili Mnemba*' (Artificial Intelligence): This is a noun that has been created and standardised from the English term "Artificial Intelligence," meaning acquiring knowledge through a digital system where the learner asks a question and receives answers within that system.

'*Elimu bure*' (free education): This refers to education provided to citizens at no cost, where the government offers educational opportunities to children and youth without charging any fees. This word has emerged after education began to be provided free of charge, compared to the past when



education involved payment of tuition fees and other contributions, particularly in primary and secondary schools.

'Elimu jumuishii' (inclusive education) is a noun that refers to education that includes children with disabilities.

'Elimu mtandaoni' (E-Learning) is a noun which means training offered through the internet.

'Tathmini endelevu' (continuous assessment) is a noun that refers to the assessment conducted regularly during the lesson period. Also, figures of speech emerged as follows:

'Mtoto aliye na elimu, hana mwenyewe' (A child with education has no owner). This saying emphasises that a child with education is an important resource for the family, community, and nation as a whole. Education enables the child to achieve their goals and bring about positive changes.

'Mazingira bora huzaa elimu bora' (Good environment yields good education). This is a saying that shows the importance of good environments for students and teachers to achieve educational goals. School, home, and community environments should be friendly to education.

'Mwanafunzi ni mjenzi wa taifa la kesho' (A student is the builder of tomorrow's nation). This expression emphasises that today's youth, especially students, are the ones who will build the nation of tomorrow by utilising the education they receive today.

'Ujuzi ni rasilimali isiyoweza kuibiwa' (Skill is a resource that cannot be stolen). This saying shows that education and skills are assets that involve thoughts and knowledge that cannot be lost or stolen; a person directly benefits from the skills and education they possess.

'Teknolojia ni daraja la elimu ya kesho' (Technology is the bridge to the education of tomorrow). This saying emphasises that technology is important for educational development.

'Elimu mtandaoni ni mkombozi wa wengi' (Online education is a saviour for many). This saying emphasises that E-learning helps those who are marginalised socially or economically.

'Usisome kwa ajili ya mtihani, soma kwa maisha' (Do not study for the exam, study for life).

This saying emphasises that true education is not just in the classroom, but in life.

'Kila mwanafunzi ana kipaji chake' (Every student has their own talent). This saying emphasises that education should recognise the diversity of students.

'Elimu jumuishii ni haki ya kila mtoto' (Inclusive education is a right for every child). This saying emphasises that every child deserves an education, even those with disabilities.

'Usisubiri ajira, jiajiri' (Do not wait for employment, create your own job). This saying emphasises and encourages creativity and entrepreneurship.

In the political context, there are nouns and figures of speech such as:

'Haki za binadamu' (human rights): This noun has been integrated and built in a modern context as part of political struggles to protect and respect the rights of every citizen, including gender rights, the right to live, and the right to express opinions.

'Utawala bora' (Good governance): This noun refers to leadership systems that prioritise transparency, accountability, and equality. It emphasises the importance of having leaders who ensure the proper management of public resources and protect the interests of the citizens.



'*Haki za watoto*' (Children's rights): This noun relates to political efforts to protect and advocate for children's rights, including the rights to education, health, and protection against discrimination and abuse.

'*Mapinduzi ya kisiasa*' (Political revolution): This noun refers to significant and rapid changes in political systems. These are changes that occur after violence or major transitions in governance within a country or community.

'*Uongozi wa kijani*' (Green leadership): This noun describes a type of leadership that cares for and protects the environment, where leaders take actions to safeguard the environment and advocate for sustainable development.

'*Haki ya kujiamulia*' (The right to self-determination): This noun refers to the right of citizens or a nation to make decisions about their political, economic, and social direction without interference from external states or authorities.

'*Mabadiliko ya kikatiba*' (Constitutional reforms): This is a noun that refers to changes in the constitution of a nation or country to improve governance systems, citizens' rights, and government accountability.

'*Chakachua*' (To scratch): This is a noun that refers to the reduction of the quality of something. It is often used in a political and leadership context.

In figures of speech, sayings that extract political issues are as follows:

'*Hapa kazi tu*' (Only work here). This is a saying that emerged during the leadership of the late President Dr. John Pombe Magufuli, meaning that the priority is to work, not just words or promises.

'*Kazi iendelee*' (Let the work continue). This saying has emerged and started to be used by President Samia Suluhu Hassan after taking over from the late President Dr. John Pombe Magufuli, which emphasises the continued efforts even after changes and the development efforts should not come to an end.

'*Uongozi wa kimabavu*' (dictatorial leadership) refers to a leadership style where one person holds absolute power and control, making decisions without input, consultation, or consent from others. It is often marked by strict rules, limited freedoms, and punishment for disobedience.

'*Uongozi ni dhamana*' (leadership is a responsibility). This saying emphasises that leadership is not a position for personal gain, but a position to serve society and not an opportunity for personal benefit or that of one's family.

'*Haki za wanawake ni haki za binadamu*' (Women's rights are human rights). This is a phrase that highlights the importance of gender equality and the need to protect and advocate for women's rights as a fundamental aspect of human rights.

In the ICT (TEHAMA) context, there are nouns and sayings such as:

Tovuti (website). This is a noun which refers to the collection of related pages on the internet, like a digital home where you can read, watch, or interact with information

Pakua (download). This is a noun that means to transfer a file from the internet or another device to your own device (such as a phone or computer).

Pakia (upload). This is a noun which means to send a file from your device to the internet or another device/system.



Simu janja (smartphone). This is a noun that refers to a mobile phone with advanced features, such as internet, apps, a camera, and a touchscreen.

Kiotomotela (ATM machine). This is a noun that refers to a banking machine that allows you to withdraw money, check your balance, or deposit cash using a card.

Sasisha (Update). This is a noun which means making something more recent or improved, especially software or apps.

Sakinisha (instal). This is a noun that means to install a programme or app on your computer or phone so it can function.

Usalama mtandao (cybersecurity). This is a noun which means protecting computers, phones, and data from hackers or online threats.

In figures of speech, there are sayings which portray the ICT context as follows:

Ulimwengu wa kidijitali (Digital world). This saying refers to a realm dominated by the use of modern technologies

Elimu mtandaoni (E-learning), this is a saying that emphasises the system of learning through the internet

Kizazi cha dotikomu (the dot.com generation) is a phrase that refers to people born during the era of scientific and technological advancement.

Uraia wa kidijitali (Digital citizen) refers to people who have the skill to participate effectively and safely in networks and ICT devices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, nouns and figures of speech are important elements in the structuring of the Swahili language. Nouns provide the foundation of grammar and the ability to convey meaning in sentences, while figures of speech are used to bring teachings, ideas, and certain social and cultural situations. In the modern context, the contributions of nouns and figures of speech to the expansion of Swahili cannot be overlooked, as they enhance the language's effectiveness in various fields, including medicine, politics, education, literature, and cultural heritage. Therefore, it is essential to continue recognising the significance of structuring nouns and figures of speech in ensuring that Swahili continues to thrive and grow in this era of science and technology.

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