



Environment as a Determinant Factor for Speech Style and Recognition: A Case of Swahili Language in Tanzania

Hilda Pembe

University of Kansas, USA

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Abstract

This study offers a fresh look at the impact of the environment in influencing speech styles, focusing on Swahili as a case study language. This study navigates beyond the usual concerns of speakers, topics, ages, and genders to explore how the environment we surround ourselves can impact our language habit in terms of how and what linguistic expressions we produce. The study is carried out using observation as a method of data collection in the city of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and includes a variety of settings such as restaurants, daladalas (public minivans), and mitumba marketplaces (second-hand clothing shops). The collected data was analyzed using the speech acts theory as a guiding framework to determine the various ways in which the environment influences speech. This paper serves high significance in the field by casting on the influence a social environment can have in our speech habits. By suggesting that environment can be a determinant of different speech styles and habits, the study opens up new dimensions to our knowledge of different dynamics that chiefly influence language use.

Introduction

Tanzania is an East African country which resulted from the merging of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964. This union birthed a triglossic nation, where English serves internationally, and Swahili is the national language. Predominantly spoken among 164 ethnic groups, Swahili is pivotal, especially in Dar es Salaam, a bustling metropolis with diverse expressions in contexts like restaurants, public transport minivans, and secondhand clothes markets. This study explores the influence of environments on specific Swahili expressions in contexts like "mgahawani" (restaurants), "daladala" (minivans), and "mitumbani" (secondhand clothes markets) in Dar es Salaam.

Human communication, a cornerstone of social interaction, follows principles set in structured scenarios. According to Bloomfield (1933), communication's flow hinges on settings and responses. Blass (1990) expanded this, emphasizing the 'context of situation' and 'context of culture,' incorporating cultural elements into communication. Language, a dynamic tool, transforms with social settings, conversational methods, and speaker identities. Various studies have studied Swahili speech, exploring discourse styles (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1995; Maganga, 2010; Idarus, 2010) and the addressor-addressee dynamics (Ogechi, 2002; Omari, 2011).

The profound yet underexplored impact of the Tanzanian environment on social communication prompts complex inquiries. These span the guidance of context on speech styles, expressions in diverse settings, understanding illocutionary force universality, and Swahili grammar adherence. The



study explores how the environment shapes speech. In Tanzanian restaurants, a significant research gap exists regarding the specific moulding of speech and linguistic patterns. Acknowledging restaurants as places for meal exchange, dating back to A. Boulanger in Paris in 1765, the term "restaurant" globally varies linguistically (Akdeniz, 2019). In Tanzania, it's a linguistic borrowing from British colonial influence.

Tanzanian restaurants, diverse in classification, consider factors like cuisine, offering style, location, and cost. Divided into formal and informal, formal ones feature organised settings, prime locations, and formal language. Informal, dubbed "mamantilie", lack fixed locations, run by small traders, and vary in prices. Communication is informal Swahili, regionally influenced, personal, and may include slang and proverbs.

Another linguistic context is the one that features public transportation, specifically the locally termed "daladala," once part of government owned Usafiri Dar es Salaam (UDA). The term originated from a fare hike in 1981, linking 5 Tanzanian shillings to a dollar, evolving the term "dollar" to 'dala' due to pronunciation challenges. Widely embraced, 'daladala' now represents public transport in Dar es Salaam, despite actual fares ranging from 400 to 1000 Tanzanian shillings. The communication within daladala is informal Swahili, rich in boastful, humorous, and slang expressions, with conductors and drivers employing coded terms for efficient communication.

The secondhand marketplaces popularly called 'mitumbani' are also among the studied areas. These areas unveil varied speech styles influenced by the graded mtumba goods, ranging from high-quality to low-cost items. Sellers and buyers engage in language shaped by the nature of goods, involving interaction like picking and displaying. The affordability and popularity of mtumba goods among different socioeconomic groups are influenced by their quality. Focusing on medium and low-quality clothes, the research emphasizes sellers' linguistic strategies in advertising and displaying to potential customers. In Dar es Salaam's key mtumba marketplaces, such as Kongo Street and Manzese, sellers use informal Swahili marked by jokes, slang, irony, and proverbs, connecting with specific customers and enhancing buyer attraction.

By scrutinizing formal and informal restaurants, Daladala transport language, and Mtumbani speech styles, this study unveils the interplay between environments and speech adoption in Tanzania. It aims to elucidate how surroundings shape communication, deepening our understanding of the dynamic relationship between social settings and linguistic expressions in the Tanzanian context.

This research was guided by the Speech Acts Theory, which explores the idea that words function as actions. This theory, outlined in the publication 'Doing Things by Words,' is implemented through three conceptual frameworks: Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary. The first, Locutionary, concerns the foundational act of speaking and encompasses three interconnected sub-acts: (i) the phonic act of producing the sounds of an utterance inscription, (ii) the phatic act of constructing a linguistic expression in a specific language, and (iii) the rhetic act of contextualizing the utterance-inscription (Masaki, 2004). To elaborate, the initial sub-act involves the physical act of vocalizing a sequence of sounds, particularly in written language. The second sub-act involves constructing a coherent sequence of sounds or symbols, like a word, phrase, or sentence, in a given language. The third sub-act manages tasks like assigning reference, resolving deixis, and disambiguating the utterance-inscription lexically and/or grammatically. Broadly, these three sub-acts align with the three distinct levels in linguistic theory: phonetics/phonology, morphology/syntax, and semantics/pragmatics.

The second-to-last element, the Illocutionary act, refers to the intended function that speakers aim to achieve when producing an utterance—an act inherent in speech. Examples of illocutionary acts encompass accusations, apologies, promises, orders, refusals, swearing, declarations, and expressions



of gratitude. These functions or actions are commonly known as illocutionary force or the focal point of the utterance, often conveyed through an illocutionary force indicating device, with the most direct and conventional type being an explicit performative, as mentioned by Asher (1994). Finally, the Perlocutionary speech act pertains to the impact an utterance may have on the addressee. In more technical terms, a perlocution is the act through which the illocution produces a specific effect or exerts influence on the addressee, representing a consequence or by-product of speech, whether intentional or not.

Applying speech acts theory to language styles in restaurants, daladala (public transportation), and mitumba markets in this study reveals Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary acts. Conductors, meal sellers, and mitumba sellers use verbal expressions for communication, aiming to achieve objectives through articulated actions. Successful communication hinges on cooperative principles elucidated by Grice and Leech in these diverse linguistic contexts.

Methodology

This study employed observational methods for data collection, with the researcher immersing herself in the study areas as a customer. To achieve the objectives, speech behavior in mamantilie, daladala, and mitumbani contexts was meticulously observed. The study involved 24 daladala, 15 mamantilie, and 16 mitumba vendor respondents, purposefully selected for comprehensive exploration of communication dynamics. Mamantilie respondents were chosen from specific locations based on prevalent lower socioeconomic status, resulting in 38 expressions. Daladala respondents were selected from various routes, and mitumba vendor respondents were purposefully chosen from known areas, totaling 43 and 29 expressions, respectively.

Deliberately choosing areas with a prevalent low economic background acknowledges the high informality in speech and ensures a substantial presence of individuals for comprehensive findings. This intentional selection captures diverse communication patterns influenced by economic factors, offering a thorough understanding of linguistic expressions within the socio-economic context of the chosen areas.

Results and Discussion of the Findings

Data analysis of this study is based on Swahili expressions with a typical contextual meaning and is guided by speech act theory.

Mamantilie-based Expressions: The study found that expressions born out of the context of local restaurants commonly known as *mamantilie* normally appear in short form given the need to quickly attract customers and the timesaving pacy lifestyle and habits of the people engaged in these settings. The following table shows expressions mostly used in local restaurants.



Table 1: Conversation in the mamantilie (restaurant) context

Audience	Kiswahili	English	Meaning
Meal seller	Wapi wali kuku	Where chicken rice	Who ordered rice with chicken
Customer	Hapa	Here	Here I am
Meal seller	Nani chai moja	Who one tea?	Who ordered a cup of tea
Customer	Kona	Corner	the order comes from someone who sits at the corner
Meal seller	Ng'ombe	Cow	Who ordered a beef
Customer	Mimi kima	I am a black monkey	I ordered a certain kind of food called kima
Customer	Kimwana sogea	Come, little baby!	Calling a meal seller
Meal seller	John?	John?	A warning that, the calling is not good.
Customer	Tengeneza zege moja faster faster	Make faster faster one concrete	Make me a partially dried chips with eggs as quickly as possible.

The highlighted conversation showcases the challenge of comprehending language styles for outsiders, marked by short forms, jokes, proverbs, and slang. An inquiry about a beef order receives an unrelated response like "I am a black monkey," illustrating humor or camaraderie. Similarly, a customer using "kimwanasogea" signals the meal seller, strengthening their intimate relationship. Aligned with Grice's cooperative principles, these instances, though deviating, serve the maxim of relevance, fostering shared meaning, humor, or reinforcing interpersonal bonds in the specific communication context. Cooperative principles guide these departures, enriching meaning within their dynamic communication.

Daladala-based Expressions

Data analysis for this study has shown that *Daladala* expressions were found to be in three groups namely nouns, verbs and phrasal expressions as indicated in table 3 below.

Table 2: Classification of Daladala Expressions

S/N	Trip Route	Nouns	Verbs	Phrasal expressions
1.	Bagamoyo	4	3	2
2.	Mandela	3	2	1
3.	Morogoro	3	3	2
4.	Uhuru	5	2	2
5.	Kawawa	2	1	1
6.	Sam Nujoma	4	2	1
	Total	21	13	9

Table 2 highlights in daladala routes, noun expressions dominate conversations at 48.8% (N=21), followed by verbs at 30.2% (N=13), and phrasal expressions at 21% (N=9). This prevalence stems from routes intersecting diverse areas, observing objects, attitudes, and behaviors, leading to frequent noun



expression generation. The study focuses on expressions occurring at least three times in specified trip routes, analyzing them based on meaning and expression manner.

a) Noun Expressions:

The study collected 21 daladala noun expressions, analyzing seven due to their high frequency. See table below.

Table 3 Noun Expressions

S/ N	Expression		Meaning
	Swahili	English	
1.	Wa kusoma	A person in school	Student/students
2.	Manesi	Nurses	Traffic police officers
3.	Wagonjwa	Sick people	Any station/stop named after a health center or hospital like Muhimbili, Amana and Mwananyamala
4.	Mwanga/mchawi	Witch	The fellow daladala
5.	Mkwanja/mpung a	Slasher / rice plant	Money
6.	Mawe	Stones	The passengers who do not drop until the end of the route
7	Mwisho wa nyodo	End of pride	Signifying a station located at a graveyard

On daladala routes, conductors employ noun expressions for vital communication. For example, "oooo wasomi! let go" directs the driver to proceed, particularly when students are present. The term "nesi/manesi" alerts the driver to traffic police, emphasizing adherence to traffic rules. "Mchawi/mwanga" signifies a rival daladala hindering passenger attraction. Additionally, conductors creatively name stations, like "Mwisho wa nyodo" near a graveyard. These noun expressions serve both locutionary and illocutionary functions, conveying literal meaning and intended purposes, enriching communication's contextualization on Tanzanian daladala routes.

b) Verb Expressions

This study collected 13 verb expressions in daladala context; analysis identified six highly used verbs across routes, reflecting contextual language impact.



Table 4: Verb Expressions

S/ N	Expression		Meaning
	Swahili	English	
1.	Ondosha/tembea/ambaa	Remove something/ walking/ move	Driving
2.	Nipangie/jipange	Arrange for me/arrange yourself.	Sit or stand properly so that other customers can get a space in the bus.
3.	Tanua	Expand	Going off your lane to escape traffic jams.
4.	Chomekea	Put something somewhere	Intruding a lane and putting a bus head first in front of another vehicle especially at a traffic wait so that you become the first to depart when allowed to.
5.	Kalala	Sleeping	Staying in one bus station for a long time
6.	Vunja	Break	Just keep quite/break conversation

Verb expressions play a crucial role in conductor-driver interactions and, at times, with passengers. For instance, to initiate driving, conductors tap on the daladala's door, uttering "ambaa." "Jipange" organizes passengers, while "nipangie" seeks assistance, optimizing passenger accommodation during peak hours. In bustling Dar es Salaam, traffic congestion challenges daladala drivers, leading to the creation of expressions like "tanua" and "chomekea" for navigating unauthorized roads to overcome the city's infrastructure limitations and maximize earnings.

The daladala context introduces the verb expression "kalala," indicating an extended bus station stay, linked to inactivity resembling sleep. Another, "vunja," signals maintaining silence after prolonged discussions or misunderstandings. "Vunja," associated with breaking, signifies the conclusion of disputes. These expressions reflect daladala's unique context, showcasing language-style impact. Interactions within this system shape verbal cues, illustrating how "ambaa," signaling movement, has both literal and perlocutionary effects, influencing passengers. This highlights the contextual molding of meaning and language impact in transportation settings like daladala.

Passenger directives like "jipange" and assistance requests with "nipangie" have both literal and influential effects. The locutionary effect is the literal instruction for efficient boarding, while the perlocutionary effect fosters cooperation, aligning with the goal of accommodating passengers efficiently, particularly during peak travel times. In Dar es Salaam's traffic challenges, expressions like "tanua" and "chomekea" directly instruct drivers to navigate through traffic, highlighting how the context shapes language style. "Chomekea" efficiently navigates traffic, while "tanua" signifies driving off the main road, reflecting the impact of traffic context on language use.

The verbs "kalala" (extended stay) and "vunja" (maintain silence) highlight perlocutionary effects. "Kalala" conveys literal stay, influencing patience. "Vunja" literally means silence, creating a calm atmosphere post-discussion. In the daladala context, these expressions showcase context's powerful influence on both locutionary and perlocutionary effects in linguistic interactions.

c) Phrasal expressions

Commonly used phrasal expressions, adapted for daladala communication, were found in the study. After analysis, seven frequent expressions from the nine collected were identified as widespread across all routes.



Table 5: Phrasal Expressions

S / N	Expression		Meaning
	Swahili	English	
1.	Kaza mguu/ nyoosha goti	Tight leg/straight knee	Increase speed
2.	Jua kali	The burning sun	The business is not good hence no money
3.	Kijiji kinavuka	A village crossing	Many passengers are coming
4.	Ondoa mchuma	Remove a nice bus	Drive a nice bus
5.	Kama kawa	It is ok	As usual
6.	Kuna pesa za kigeni?	Do you have a foreign currency?	When the passenger delay to give the bus fare or when the conductor is slow to return charge to passengers and driver want to move.
7.	Mwendo wa mateka	Like captives	Straphangers standing in two rows holding handgrips

Communication in daladala often involves phrases, especially between drivers and conductors. For acceleration, phrases like "kaza mguu" or "nyoosha goti" are used, connecting with foot actions on the accelerator. "Jua kali" expresses financial challenges, likening it to scorching sun difficulty. "Kijiji kinavuka" instructs waiting for a group, linking to villagers' group movement. "Ondoa mchuma" signals departure, reflecting pride. "Kuna pesa za kigeni" humorously questions delays. "Kama kawa" appreciates gestures. These phrases serve diverse purposes, maintaining secrecy, showcasing style, saving time, and fostering conversation, influenced by daladala's unique context and the profound impact of context on language style.

Daladala phrases convey financial struggles, like "jua kali," likening challenges to scorching sun hindering earnings. "Kijiji kinavuka" instructs waiting for a group, linking to villagers. "Ondoa mchuma" signals departure, reflecting pride. "Kuna pesa za kigeni" humorously questions delay in returning change. "Kama kawa" appreciates gestures. These phrases conceal information, showcase style, save time, and foster conversation, varying between routes or daladalas. Deeply influenced by the specific daladala context, these phrases demonstrate context's profound impact on language style. For instance, "kaza mguu" instructs acceleration, with both locutionary and perlocutionary effects, conveying urgency. The phrase 'mwendo wa mateka' creatively compares passengers' standing to captives, revealing the importance of context in shaping language style and illustrating illocutionary force in passengers' actions during public transport.

The use of "jua kali" by conductors and drivers conveys financial difficulties, metaphorically referencing a scorching sun hindering movement and earning money. "Kijiji kinavuka" instructs waiting for a group, blending literal village crossing with perlocutionary effects, guiding the driver to wait for collective boarding. Similarly, "ondoa mchuma" signals pride in the bus, with the locutionary effect as a literal directive to let go and the perlocutionary effect instilling pride in passengers for their transportation mode. These phrases demonstrate how context molds language style, influencing both literal and implied meanings.

The phrase "kuna pesa za kigeni," used humorously to question delays in returning change or paying bus fare, demonstrates the impact of context on language style. The locutionary effect is a reference to foreign currency, while the perlocutionary effect involves passengers understanding the lighthearted



query about delays. This humorous use of language is specific to the context of currency exchange and payment delays in the daladala setting.

The daladala phrase "kama kawa," denoting appreciation, showcases how context molds language style, fostering positive interactions. The locutionary effect is literal acceptance, with the perlocutionary effect extending to cultivating positive sentiments. Overall, daladala phrases exemplify context's profound impact on language, shaping both locutionary and perlocutionary effects in communication dynamics.

Mitumba-based Expressions: Expressions in the context of secondhand clothes, specifically focusing on medium and low-quality items known as mitumba, form the basis of communication in this study. The majority of these communications are observed to be in noun form, referencing various types of clothing. However, there are a few instances where expressions are presented in phrase form. Please refer to Table 5 for details.

Table 6: Classification of Mitumbani Expressions

S/N	Mitumba Marketplace	Nouns	Phrasal expressions
1.	Kongo street	6	1
2.	Karume	7	2
3.	Manzese	4	1
4.	Ilala	7	1
	Total	24	5

Table 5 illustrates that discussions in the Mitumba marketplaces are predominantly characterized by the use of nouns rather than other different phrases. This prevalence is attributed to the sellers' intention to engage customers by articulating details about clothing or other items in their distinctive linguistic manner.

a) Noun Expressions:

This study gathered a total of twenty-four (24) noun expressions from the targeted mitumba marketplaces but upon analysis, it was found that the six noun expressions presented in the table below had a high rate of use-frequency across all the marketplaces. Some Mitumba expressions are indicated by noun form as follows:

Table 7: Noun Expressions

S/ N	Speech		Meaning
	Swahili	English	
1.	Makufuri	Keys	Underpants
2.	Kondomu	Condom	Stockings
3.	Kamba	rope	Tie
4.	Winchi	Winch	Bra
5.	Peseli	Pencil	Short tight dress
6.	Kitopu	Top	Short tight blouse

Mitumba clothing vendors employ vibrant speech to promote their merchandise, utilizing a unique style to captivate potential customers and passersby. Expressions like "makufuri" and "kufuri" refer to underpants, emphasizing the functional aspect. Terms like "winchi" signify bras designed for lifting breasts. Words such as "kondomu" and "kamba" create associations with stockings and ties based on garment shapes. "Penseli" represents a short, tight dress, and "kitopu" designates a short, tight blouse.



These creative expressions contribute to the lively atmosphere in the mitumba marketplace, showcasing the dynamic interplay between language, fashion, and commerce.

In the mitumba vending context, expressive nouns play a crucial role in vocal advertising. Beyond labeling garments, terms like "makufuri" and "winchi" provide specific details, depicting underpants and bras, respectively. Words like "kondomu," "kamba," "penseli," and "kitopu," crafted based on garment shapes, add creative layers to communication. While they literally name items, their perlocutionary effect aims to entertain, inform, and create a lively shopping atmosphere, showcasing the dynamic interplay between language and commerce.

The impact of context on language style is evident in how these nouns are tailored to suit the setting of a marketplace. In this dynamic environment, where sellers compete for attention, the language style becomes a tool for differentiation and attraction. The mitumba marketplace, characterised by lively exchanges and a bustling atmosphere, influences the choice of expressive language to effectively convey information and draw attention.

b) Phrasal Expressions

The study found that some funny, yet meaningful phrases were also common among the mitumba marketplaces. Five (5) phrasal expressions were collected and after analysis, the study found that all phrasal expressions as presented in the table below were common across all the mitumba marketplaces and were frequently used.

Table 8: Phrasal Expressions in Mitumba Marketplaces

S/ N	Speech		Meaning
	Swahili	English	
1.	Bei sawa na bure	Price is equal to free	Cheap
2.	Za leo leo	Of today	A new bale of used clothes
3.	Za kuogelea	Of swimming	Swimming gear
4.	Za kulalia	Of sleeping	Night dress
5.	Za masista	Of nun	A long dress/ skirt

Phrasal expressions in the mitumba marketplace serve to communicate information about clothes' functions, updates, structures, and pricing situations. Phrases like "bei sawa na bure" and "za leo leo" are commonly used to advertise new arrivals and low prices, aiming to attract customers with the message of fresh, affordable bundles. Other expressions like "zakuogelea" (swimming clothes) and "zakulalia" (night dress) elucidate specific clothing functions. Additionally, phrases like "zamasista" for a nun's long dress form based on clothing shapes, emphasising how garment styles contribute to unique expressions. In this dynamic marketplace, where sellers seek to captivate customers, phrasal expressions serve as vital tools reflecting functionality and marketing strategies.

The locutionary effects of phrasal expressions like "bei sawa na bure" and "za leo leo" lie in their literal meanings, communicating information about the newness of the merchandise and the attractive, low pricing. However, the perlocutionary effects extend beyond mere information. These phrases are crafted to evoke a sense of urgency and excitement, urging customers to perceive the items as fresh and nearly free, creating an atmosphere that encourages them to explore and make purchases.

Phrasal expressions like "zakuogelea" and "zakulalia" directly communicate clothing functions, providing clear information. The locutionary effect is straightforward labeling of swimming clothes



and night dresses, while perlocutionary effects extend to evoking mental images and influencing customer perceptions. For "zamasista," reflecting the shape and purpose of nun's long dresses, the locutionary effect is literal naming. The perlocutionary effect taps into cultural associations, creating a sense of reverence or modesty linked to nun attire, influencing customer perceptions based on the connotations associated with the phrase.

The influence of context on language style is evident in the strategic use of these phrasal expressions. In a bustling marketplace where competition for attention is high, the language style becomes a key component of marketing. The phrases are tailored not only to convey information but also to create an engaging and memorable shopping experience, fostering a connection between the customers and the merchandise.

In conclusion, phrasal expressions in the mitumba marketplace showcase the intricate interplay between locutionary and perlocutionary effects. The language style is carefully adapted to the context, influencing customers not just through information but through the creation of vivid mental images, associations, and a dynamic shopping environment.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that the environment plays a significant role in shaping specific forms of speech. It highlights that each distinct environment possesses its unique language usage, differing markedly from other settings. This diversity results in individuals adopting distinct language styles, which are beneficial for community members. Primarily, these styles are employed for self-introduction, attracting others, particularly customers, saving time, and excluding unwanted intruders. It is noteworthy that these styles are not universally known among Tanzanians but are rather exclusive to specific group members or those genuinely interested in acquiring knowledge about them.



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