

## **The “Languages of Tanzania” project: background, resources and perspectives**

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Tore Janson was instrumental in designing and initiating the “Languages of Tanzania” (LoT) project. This project, which will certainly also shape the African Languages Section of the Institutionen för Orientaliska och Afrikanska språk at Göteborgs Universitet<sup>1</sup> (GU) in future, entered its initial phase in 2001.

LoT is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), and is located within the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at the University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM). The coordinators and main researchers there are Henry Muzale and Josephat Rugemalira.

Until his retirement in early 2001, Tore Janson was involved in project planning activities on the Swedish side. Once the project officially came into operation in mid-2001, this author took on its stewardship at GU. Suffice it to note here that GU and UDSM are partner universities and signatories of a cooperation agreement signed 12 October 1998. Tore Janson was also a member of the Swedish delegation that added the final touches to the 1998 agreement.

### **1. Background**

LoT is a vast project, as it aims at dealing with all languages spoken in Tanzania besides Swahili, which is known for having been widely supported in language and literature studies to date. For each of the other Tanzanian languages in question, therefore, LoT’s objectives are to:

- produce a description of the language,
- produce a list of vocabulary for it,
- determine its genetic classification,

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- determine its number of speakers, and
- place it on a language atlas, showing where in the country it is spoken.

Speaking of languages in Tanzania prompts the first question that is crucial to understanding the complex issues to be focused on in the LoT project: What is a *language* in the Tanzanian context? This very question was also asked by Polomé (1980: 3) in the initial part of the publication entitled *Language in Tanzania*, edited by Polomé and Hill (1980).<sup>2</sup> The answer to it referred to the understanding that mutual intelligibility was relevant for *dialects* while two language varieties that were not mutually intelligible were to be regarded as *languages*. Since LoT could not proceed from comprehensive language and dialect studies in the Tanzanian context, it seemed plausible to take the aforesaid widely accepted distinction as the project's point of departure. However, a number of special cases were not consonant with the distinction; suffice it to note here the position of Chagga and its dialects, where a speaker of a regional variety from the eastern fringe of the Chagga-speaking area is said to be unintelligible to a speaker of a regional variety in the western parts of that area. This is one of the reasons LoT was initiated: to provide answers that would help to understand problems intrinsic to the Tanzanian context — including the issue of *language vs. dialect*.

The second question concerns the existing ethnonyms (names for ethnic groups) and glossonyms (names for languages/dialects) in Tanzania. Until the LoT project can provide more accurate information in this respect, therefore, it has to adopt those names that have emerged from population censuses<sup>3</sup> and previous ethnographic and linguistic works. These sources have produced valuable lists of ethnonyms and glossonyms, which encompass substantial — albeit sometimes preliminary — information about the ethnic and, to a certain extent, linguistic composition of the Tanzanian population. To name just a few authors of a rather impressive collection of material available for some language families or zones, there are Moffett (1958), Nurse (1979), Polomé and Hill (1980), as well as more specific contributions dealing with the situation from a linguistic or comparative perspective, e.g. Nurse (1988), Rottland (1982), and

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<sup>2</sup> The latter publication formed part of the “Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching in East Africa” that was funded by the Ford Foundation. The results of the survey carried out in Uganda were published in 1971; the Kenya material came out in 1974, Ethiopia was 1976 and the Zambia book appeared in 1978. Polomé and Hill's (1980) publication constitutes the Tanzanian part of the survey.

<sup>3</sup> The 1967 population census (Tanzania 1971) was the last with published data on the ethnic composition of the Tanzanian population. It is not known why this practice was stopped, but it could be assumed the census would have produced material that did not suit the concept of *ujamaa* or that it might reveal sensitive information the authorities preferred to suppress.

others. Although the most recent and, hence, most often-cited reference for Tanzania (besides other countries) is the Summer Institute of Linguistics’ (SIL 2001) *Languages of Tanzania (Ethnologue report for Tanzania)*, this source is not recommended as a reference material beyond a very elementary level: it contains errors, misinterpretations and improperly researched data — including estimates of numerical strength and glossonyms — which fail to adequately reflect the actual linguistic situation.<sup>4</sup> This is a pity since the SIL works in Tanzania, but is obviously not in a position to obtain and present acceptable linguistic data in a country-relevant summary.

In respect of ethnonyms, some of the aforesaid (and other) publications have recorded names for ethnic groups that are occasionally taken to reflect a certain linguistic reality.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that a society’s ethnic composition provides an important clue to the description of the linguistic situation that prevails in that society, such a description certainly needs further input, e.g. from sociolinguistic field work. A case in point is that the dynamics of language shift in Tanzania are relatively unknown because of a lack of relevant research results obtained by way of longitudinal studies. Furthermore, although there are observations on general tendencies of language shift, the details are scant and outdated. Thus, what the Tanzanian context lacks is access to statistical information about mother-tongue-(MT-)speakers<sup>6</sup> of a language or language variety, as well as reliable figures on language competence and use.

So far, it has been possible to establish how many people claim to belong to a particular ethnic group at a particular point in time, e.g. in a census year. Furthermore, a relationship could be assumed to exist between ethnicity and the number of people claiming to speak a language/linguistic variety peculiar to an ethnic group. Nonetheless, in Tanzania (as elsewhere), there is the well-known

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<sup>4</sup> Suffice it here to note some examples from the Internet copy of the SIL (2001) report: Kw’adza (Qwadza) is identified as an extinct language, but is actually found as an alternate name for Kutu. Baraguyu is included under Maasai dialects, while Kwavi and Parakuyo (which is an alternate form of Baraguyu) are claimed to be unclassified. In addition, Segeju is said to be an alternate name for Dhaiso (E20), spoken in the Muheza District; however, the language is subsequently listed as a separate entry under E40, i.e. Mijikenda (which should be G40), found in the same area. For clarification of this language status see Mann and Dalby (1987: 149). Moreover, in an initial remark, SIL states: “National or official language: Swahili”; firstly, it should be “National and official language ...”, and secondly, does the statement imply that English has been dropped as the second official language?

<sup>5</sup> Polomé (1980: 5) claims that the 1957 census dealt with language data, but I was unable to verify this claim in the official 1957 census publication (Tanganyika 1963) at my disposal. In fact, the inclusion of language data in previous censuses seems to be unusual, as these surveys normally asked about ethnic origin and not about language knowledge. Also, the list of Tanzanian languages in Polomé (idem) does not actually originate from the 1957 census document, but is copied from a bibliography. Nurse, who was also involved in the Tanzania survey quotes from the 1967 census document (Tanzania 1971), so he had access to the then most updated statistics, while Polomé (1980) used an outdated version.

<sup>6</sup> The language learnt from infancy.

asymmetry between ethnic identity (self-identification) and linguistic competence or practice. Thus, on the one hand, ethnic data are neither comprehensive nor reliable enough to assess the linguistic situation. On the other hand, speaking a particular language as a MT or first language (L1)<sup>7</sup> does not necessarily imply an ethnic identity associated with that language. Two examples should serve to illustrate this point:

1. According to Bondei informants, in these days ethnic self-identification as a *Bondei* (i.e. membership of the Bondei ethnic group) is based on criteria like having been born in what is traditionally known as “Bondei country”, having parental roots in Bondei culture and traditions, and possessing a consciousness of belonging to the Bondei ethnic group,<sup>8</sup> as well as some other, rather vague criteria — all of which together shape the ethnic identity and self-identification as being typical for Bondei and irrelevant for another ethnic group. In a number of cases the self-identification no longer includes the feature of speaking a Bondei language.<sup>9</sup> Of course, linguistic competence in Bondei (language) is desirable for any member of the ethnic group, but in view of the Bondei people’s century-long exposure to Swahili, such competence is no longer an inherent element of Bondei ethnic identity. The latter is particularly true for the young generation.<sup>10</sup>
  
2. The shift to Swahili as an MT or L1 does not entail a similar shift of ethnic identity, in the sense of becoming a “Mswahili”. However, this issue is not dealt with in any further detail here, as it does not constitute the focus of the LoT project. Suffice it to refer here to the above example of those members of the Bondei who speak Swahili as an L1, and where ethnic identity is then the sum of other relevant criteria.

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<sup>7</sup> The language learnt after mastery of the MT. At a certain point and for certain speakers, the L1 becomes the more frequently used means of communication and replaces the MT.

<sup>8</sup> According to the population statistics (Moffat 1958; Tanzania 1971), the Bondei grew in number from 29,525 in 1948 to 47,944 in 1967, i.e. by 62 percent. In comparison, the Tanzanian population as a whole increased by 55 percent during that same period, or by an average of 2.9 percent annually. However, Bondei experts in Magila at the end of the 1970s asserted that the number of those actively speaking Bondei had decreased drastically.

<sup>9</sup> African language names are used in this paper without their noun class prefixes, e.g. *Bondei* and not *Kibondei*, *Swahili* and not *Kiswahili*, contrary to common practice in Tanzania. The reason for the choice here is, primarily, that the prefix syllable makes no sense in English. Moreover, if one were to insist on using the prefix, for the sake of consistency one would then be obliged to add other relevant noun class prefixes, e.g. a Bondei person would need to be referred to as an *Mbondei*, and the Bondei people as *Wabondei*. One should also consider the converse: glossonyms for non-African languages reflect the grammatical system of the African language into which they are incorporated. In Swahili, for example, *English*, *Français* and *Deutsch* become *Kiingereza*, *Kifaransa* and *Kijerumani*, respectively.

<sup>10</sup> See also Legère (1983).

As is widely known, assimilatory processes — particularly along the coast, in the hinterland and in most urban areas in the country — have had and continue to have a substantial impact on language competence and language use, with a detrimental effect on languages other than Swahili. However, outside the areas of multi-ethnic and multilingual composition, the non-Swahili MT and competence in it are still important, frequently even decisive, factors for defining identities. Accordingly, for the rest of mainland Tanzania, ethnic identity is normally supported by competence in the language variety peculiar to the ethnic group. Hence, it is possible to use figures about the ethnic group for a preliminary approach to account for the numerical strength of language varieties in Tanzania.

Other issues centre on what terms to apply to languages or language varieties in Tanzania.<sup>11</sup> The project’s title, “Languages of Tanzania”, excludes Swahili by definition, although in reality the latter is Tanzania’s most important language. Also, the project description makes clear what *LoT* stands for, but this does not solve the terminological dilemma of what to call those languages and language varieties other than Swahili. For example, the British Administration used the terms *tribal language*, *native language* or *vernacular*<sup>12</sup> (a term which still persists) to describe languages other than Swahili. Another rather popular term was (and still is) *local language*. However, none of these terms seems adequate. Calling Sukuma<sup>13</sup> with its vast distribution a *local language*, for example, rather misses the point. In addition, Sukuma has probably more MT-speakers than Swahili in Tanzania.

Since the languages or language varieties other than Swahili (but even the latter) are a prominent symbol of ethnic identity, they are sometimes called *ethnic community languages*. This term, probably coined by Mekacha (1993) and used prominently in his dissertation, is unsuitable as well. As argued earlier, no ethnic group exists that does not have a particular language or language variety associated with it — which is often used as a sound criterion for self-identification. Hence, it seems tautological to include in a term, as an imposed defining feature, a sense which is already inherent in it. In addition, even

<sup>11</sup> For a recent discussion see Mekacha (1993).

<sup>12</sup> The Oxford Dictionary gives the following etymology: *vernacular* is derived from the Latin *vernaculus*, “domestic, native”, and in turn from *verna*, “home-born slave” (Pearsall 1998: 2054).

<sup>13</sup> In 1967, some 1,529,917 people identified themselves as Sukuma. Between 1957 and 1967, the Sukuma had increased by almost 40 percent, while the average population growth for this period was 33 percent. The population growth rate for the Sukuma, therefore, was approximately 7 percent above average. SIL (2001) quotes figures from Johnstone (1993), who claims that the Sukuma numbered 5 million in 1993. The SIL/Johnstone data imply that the Sukuma would have grown by about 18 percent annually. Taking into account the 1957-1967 growth rate, i.e. 4 percent per annum, a more realistic figure would be 3,1 million for 1993.

Swahili is rooted in an ethnic community (e.g. the Shirazi of Zanzibar) where, amongst other criteria, linguistic competence in Swahili determines one's ethnicity.

More useful would be the term *national language*, the various meanings of which are discussed by Brann (1994).<sup>14</sup> In Africa, it is frequently found to name a language or language variety that has its roots in a particular African region or country where it has been spoken for centuries. Using *national language* in this sense in the Tanzanian context, however, could lead to confusion because there, the term is associated with Swahili, which is seen as having spread “nationally”, i.e. all over the territory, and serves the majority of Tanzanians in multiple domains of use.

Neither has it been helpful to consult official sources. A recent document on cultural policy (Tanzania 1997), which, probably for the first time since 1961, officially recognises the existence and value of languages other than Swahili and attempts to define their role in society, calls them “*lugha za jamii*” (idem: 17), meaning “languages of society(-ies)” or “languages of community(-ies)”. Again, one may ask: are there communities (societies) without a language? Also, since Swahili definitely belongs to a community too, these official terms include Swahili in the same category as any other Tanzanian language. In the same document, however, when describing the tasks that lie ahead for the “*lugha za jamii*”, the source drops that term and refers instead to “*lugha za asili*” (“original languages”). Unfortunately, the latter term does not offer a plausible solution either, for the very reason that it does not set Swahili — with its millennium-long history as an “original language” at the coast — apart from any other language or language variety in Tanzania.

As an attempt to contribute towards the terminological discussion encountered in LoT, therefore, there seem to be two options:

1. Since all Tanzanian languages belong to the Tanzanian nation, they could all be referred to as *national languages* (NLs). One may then distinguish the principal national language, Swahili, from the rest by an index number, for example. Thus, Swahili would be referred to as the NL1, whereas all languages other than Swahili such as Sukuma, Nyakyusa, Sambia, Bondei

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<sup>14</sup> According to Brann (1994: 133), “... the term ‘national language’ has been, and is being, attributed in turn, and in different polities and circumstances, to the **territorial** languages of a given polity (chthonolects); to the **regional languages** representing the second order of geopolitical allocation (choralects); to the inter-ethnic or majority ethnic languages, serving as a **language-in-common** or **community language** throughout a State (demolect); and finally to the **central language** used for the government's official acts and records, also often serving as a symbol of the language-nation-state (politolect)”.

as well as those spoken by small groups like Hadza, Sonjo or Mbugwe, would be referred to as NL2.

2. As is widely known, the status and use of many languages and language varieties in Tanzania, other than Swahili, are slowly being eroded. The spread of Swahili and its gradual ascent to attain official status, particularly after 1961, has left the other Tanzanian languages and language varieties with no viable future in most formal domains. Thus, in official domains such as the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, the use of Swahili has been firmly established and has sometimes even been consolidated by legal action. This, in turn, has had a domino effect on other formal domains such as business and the economy, the media, education and, even, religion, where languages and language varieties other than Swahili, if they existed in those domains to begin with, were marginalised and excluded. Even in cases where some languages exert an assimilating influence at the regional or district level, like Sukuma in north-western Tanzania or Nyakyusa in south-west Tanzania, they cannot compete with Swahili. In formal domains where Swahili dominates, no other language is accepted or used as a means of communication. Accordingly, in functional terms, the position of most languages or language varieties other than Swahili — whether spoken by a million people or a few hundred, like Hadza, which is on the verge of extinction — is that they are all relegated to a few informal domains. In the latter domains they are used mainly for communication among members of the extended family, or for traditional functions and ceremonies in the village. In functional terms, then, these languages have become minority languages in comparison with Swahili. In view of these functional characteristics, this paper will henceforth refer to the languages and language varieties other than Swahili as *minority languages* (MLs) (or language varieties) which includes the sense of *marginalised languages* (or language varieties) in the case of Tanzania.

## **2. Perspectives: attitudes towards MLs in Tanzania**

It is inspiring to note that, recently, probably as the result of democratisation and the advent of multi-partyism, the political climate in Tanzania with regard to MLs has changed. This was not the case for many years after Independence in 1961, when MLs were regarded as a threat to national unity. It was feared that they promoted tribalism and ethnic division, thus undermining the concept of a Tanzanian nation with Swahili as its national language. SN Eliufoo, Minister of Education at the time, underlined this position as early as 1962. Answering a

question in the National Assembly about, amongst other things, radio programmes in Masai for Masai-speakers,<sup>15</sup> the Minister argued as follows: “[W]hen we are struggling to mould the nation, it would be undesirable ... if we gave encouragement to such special treatment to a tribe” (Tanganyika 1962: 661).

In public, government officials were not enthusiastic about the existence of MLs. As the then “Mkuzaji Lugha”, i.e. Promoter of (Swahili) Language in the Ministry of Culture and Youth, Abdu Khamisi (1974: 299) made the following characteristic statement:

... there appears to have been very little debate regarding the future of tribal languages. While the government does not restrict anyone from using the languages, it does not seem to take notice of their role in Society either.

In 1976, the annual meeting of the National Swahili Council (Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa [BAKITA] in Swahili) joined the forum of those discussing the role of MLs. Some BAKITA members felt that there was no need to perpetuate MLs because in doing so one supported ethnic cleavage. This, in turn, could undermine the promotion of Swahili.<sup>16</sup> Other BAKITA members at the same meeting argued that MLs should be preserved.

Experts have often made clear that MLs were worth considering for basic education in particular. For example, it is well known that, even now, school entrants in rural areas up-country are frequently found to have limited or no competence in Swahili, the medium of instruction (for primary education).<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, data collected among speakers of non-Bantu languages such as Sandawe in Standards 5 and 6 in the early 1990s (Legère 1992a) revealed that, after being at school for several years, as many as 18 out of 27 pupils still had an inadequate command of Swahili.<sup>18</sup> This situation was observed mainly in villages with a widely mono-ethnic and, consequently, monolingual population. Accordingly, the need to communicate in Swahili was not massively felt, because the ML was still the locally dominant medium of communication. Thus,

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<sup>15</sup> According to Chief Barnoti (Tanganyika 1962: 661), they “... do not speak Swahili at all ...”. Similar demands for radio broadcasts in Sukuma in 1966 and 1967 were rejected too, although back then, radio programmes were still available in Hindi - a clear preference for an economically strong minority.

<sup>16</sup> The press reported as follows “... *katika kukuza lugha ya Kiswahili hakuna haja ya kudumisha lugha za makabila, kwani kufanya hivyo ni kuleta utengano wa kikabila na hii inaweza kuzorotesha ukuzaji wa Kiswahili*” (*Uhuru*, 2 November 1976, p 5).

<sup>17</sup> Personal communication by Åsa Wedin about the situation in Karagwe, north-western Tanzania.

<sup>18</sup> Compare further results in Legère (2000), as well as in Legère (1981) and Legère & Karekezi (1991).



since children spent most of their pre-school years at home where the ML predominated, they were addressed mainly in the ML, and spoke it too. The school-going siblings of pre-school youngsters might bring Swahili home, but such exposure was not systematic.

Hence, the Swahili competence of Standard 1 learners in rural areas is often rudimentary and retards the learning process in Lower Primary, although government officials normally play down this fact. Nonetheless, the current Lower Primary curriculum takes into account the second-language status of Swahili up-country. The curriculum urges teachers to assist learners up-country by teaching them Swahili language skills.

The change of official attitudes towards MLs took place in the 1990s, as evidenced in a newspaper article in *Mzalendo* (Dar es Salaam) by Peter Mtesigwa (1993) on behalf of BAKITA.<sup>19</sup> In those days the debate on multi-partyism was in full swing, which explains why the approach towards MLs had become more lenient. Some of the highlights of Mtesigwa’s article (idem: 6) include the following:

- MLs should have a chance to develop — not merely allowed to exist.
- People needed to recognise that ML development was a gruelling task.
- ML development should begin by reducing the languages in question to writing.
- The promotion of MLs should not pose a threat to national unity or to Swahili.<sup>20</sup>

As BAKITA was involved in the discussion of language policy issues to be included in the forthcoming policy document on Tanzanian culture, Mtesigwa’s paper shed light on some ML issues that policy-makers found relevant.<sup>21</sup> The final product of the discussion was published as *Sera ya Utamaduni* (“Cultural Policy”) (Tanzania 1997). As the statements in that document concerning MLs

<sup>19</sup> *Mzalendo* (“patriot”, “nationalist”) is the Sunday mouthpiece of the ruling party, Chama cha Mapinduzi.

<sup>20</sup> The original text of the abridged version above is as follows:  
 “... yafaa lugha hizi zipewe nafasi ya kustawi licha ya nafasi ya sasa ya kuruhusiwa kuwepo. Hii ni kwa sababu zinao umuhimu kwa Watanzania hasa ambao Kiswahili si lugha yao ya kwanza ... Wapenzi wa lugha hizo, hata hivyo, wanapaswa kutambua tu kwamba wanayo kazi kubwa mbele yao ili kuzistawisha ...

*Hawana budi kudhamiria kwamba lugha hizi sasa lazima zifikie hadhi ya kuweza kuandikwa ...*

*“... jitihada hizo zisiwe chanzo cha kubomoa umoja uliopo kati ya Watanzania wa makabila mbali mbali... Mapenzi ya lugha za makabila yasiwe chanzo cha kuua Kiswahili.”*

<sup>21</sup> The fact that a policy document was being drafted was already mentioned in 1991. This author, for example, was informed of it by officials from the Language Division of the then Ministry of Education and Culture, who were attending the Workshop on Swahili in Primary Education in October that year.

are material to the LoT project, the text is quoted in full below (idem: 17-18):<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2 *Lugha za Jamii*

*Lugha za jamii ni hazina kuu ya historia, mila, desturi, teknolojia na utamaduni wetu kwa jumla. Aidha, lugha hizi ni msingi wa lugha yetu ya taifa, yaani Kiswahili. Kwa hiyo:*

3.2.1 *Jamii zetu zitaendelea kutumia na kujivunia lugha zake za asili.*

3.2.2 *Wananchi, mashirika ya umma na ya watu binafsi yatahamasishwa kuandika, kukusanya, kutafiti, kuhifadhi na kutafsiri lugha za asili katika lugha nyinginezo.*

3.2.3 *Uandishi wa kamusi na vitabu vya sarufi za lugha za asili utahimizwa.*

3.2.4 *Mashirika ya umma na ya watu binafsi yatahimizwa kuchapisha na kusambaza maandiko katika lugha za asili.*

Under item 3.1.5 in the Cultural Policy document (idem: 17), MLs are identified as national treasures and as a source for elaborating Swahili terminology. The former view perpetuates a tradition where MLs were reduced to the role of guarding the rich cultural heritage that was always being targeted for upliftment in the interests of national culture (expressed and preserved in Swahili). In this role, the MLs themselves were vulnerable to neglect. The latter view of MLs, that is, regarding them as a source of terminological development for Swahili, originated at the BAKITA meeting in 1976. In 1978, even the late JK Nyerere himself highlighted this role for MLs.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, the official recognition of MLs in the Cultural Policy document today lends strong support to the LoT project. Not only does the project operate in consonance with the Tanzanian government's policy position as regards MLs, it also implements related recommendations the government

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<sup>22</sup> This a summarised translation of the Swahili text cited:

- MLs represent sources of history, customs, traditions, (traditional) technology and culture in total.
- People will continue using ML and being proud of them.
- People [and] parastatal and private institutions are encouraged to write in, collect [material for], study [emphasis added] and protect MLs, and to translate from these languages into others.
- The production of dictionaries (glossaries) and grammatical descriptions (*vitabu vya sarufi*) is encouraged.
- Institutions and individuals are encouraged to edit/publish texts in MLs.

<sup>23</sup> "... katika kukuza Kiswahili, maneno mapya yatafutwe kwanza kutokana na lugha za kibantu kabla ya kuazima maneno kutoka lugha nyingine" (*Uhuru*, 16 September 1978, p 1). In developing Swahili, new words should first be sought in Bantu languages before borrowing from other languages is considered.

makes. It is hoped, therefore, that the government will actively support the practical implementation of its policy towards MLs.

It was argued earlier that the Tanzanian authorities’ indifference towards documenting the ethno-linguistic situation at the grass roots<sup>24</sup> makes it difficult for LoT to set priorities. In view of this lamentable situation, which results from the lack of relevant statistical data, the numerical strength of ethnic groups as recorded back in 1967 can only guide the LoT’s research strategy to a certain extent. For a start, one could assume that an ethnic group with less than 20,000 members is more likely to be subject to assimilation by bigger groups than vice versa. The direction of linguistic assimilation works the same way: MLs spoken by small ethnic groups tend to be assimilated by those of their larger neighbours. However, they could also skip assimilation by another ML and give way directly to Swahili. Accordingly, MLs spoken by numerically small ethnic groups are more vulnerable than their larger counterparts. However, this is a general observation only, which needs to be verified.

Thus, on the one hand, socio-economic factors may accelerate language shift and loss (e.g. the hinterland situation as a result of strong contacts to the coast). On the other, such factors could stabilise and conserve the current situation (e.g. where the speech community is largely self-reliant by practising subsistence economy with little exposure to the world outside that of their immediate neighbours. The latter is the case for the Barabaig and their language (Legère 2000), for example, and is assumed for the Hadza. This observation is not new, and points to a process that has been going on for centuries wherever ones goes in Africa.

### 3. Priorities of LoT

Earlier a list of endangered MLs was compiled (Legère 1992b), based on the 1967 census data for Tanzania. This list is regarded as being more relevant and reliable than the figures produced in SIL (2001), which presents the majority of numerical data for MLs as an updated version of the 1957 population census. In addition, the criteria on which the SIL update was based are obscure. Also, judging from own calculations with the SIL figures it seems that, from 1957 onwards, SIL assumes an unrealistic 7 percent general population growth rate a

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<sup>24</sup> It could also be a reluctance to face the fact that some up-country areas did not support the projection of Tanzania as being a country where Swahili was spoken everywhere. The following statement by Khamisi (1974: 289) is certainly still true today: “Very little has been written on what language people speak — under what occasion — and with what degree of sophistication ... What is true about the linguistic behaviour along the coast and in some town centres in the country may not necessarily hold true for the most remote corners of the country.”

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<b>REF.</b>	<b>ETHNONYM</b>	<b>1948</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>1967</b>
1	Dorobo	890	1868	2038
2	Karanga*	1408	---	2861
3	Mbugwe	7913	6436	4280
4	Vinza	4029	4135	6898
5	Kwavi	---	7378	7037
6	Rungwa	5372	7158	7144
7	Nata	---	---	7336
8	Swahili*	---	11590	7721
9	Bende	8836	7792	8269
10	Ikoma	9711	6131	8568
11	Issenye	---	---	9235
12	Burunge	9716	12408	9286
13	Ikizu	9303	11229	10647
14	Holoholo*	4410	---	10931
15	Mbunga	13454	11682	10957
16	Lambya*	7467	15803	11847
17	Wanda	7677	9477	12008
18	Sonjo	3593	4593	12418
19	Tongwe	8513	8746	12851
20	Pimbwe	13137	11479	13773
21	Doe	7781	9734	13869
22	Mambwe*	15672	25115	13994
23	Kisi	5706	5291	14922
24	Bungu/Wungu	8291	14926	14926
25	Shashi	---	7100	14951
26	Jiji	---	4653	14957
27	Alagwa/Wasi/Chasi	12513	13996	15746
28	Suba*	17146	---	16123
29	Taturu	9162	11372	16648
30	Gorowa	17705	11973	17397
31	Ndonde	13777	13165	17653
32	Segeju	12046	11575	18688
33	Vidunda	10560	12771	19585
34	Machinga	14499	14224	20204
35	Isanzu	12243	12964	20355
36	Rungu/Lungu*	11144	13751	20437
37	Ngurimi	11973	12988	20917
38	Hadza?	---	---	---
39	Ongamo/Ngasa?	---	---	---

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*Table 1. Trends in ethnic changes*

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<b>1948&gt;1967 in %</b>	<b>DISTRICT/PROVINCE</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>	<b>REF.</b>
229		1948: Hadza?, Kindiga/Tindiga	<b>1</b>
203	Kigoma < Zaire		<b>2</b>
54	Mbulu		<b>3</b>
171	Kigoma		<b>4</b>
95	Bagamoyo etc.	i.e.Masai (also Baraguyu)	<b>5</b>
133	Mpanda		<b>6</b>
---	Musoma		<b>7</b>
67	Coast/country wide		<b>8</b>
94	Mpanda/Rukwa		<b>9</b>
88	Musoma	1948: Issenye and Nata	<b>10</b>
---	Musoma		<b>11</b>
96	Kondoa/Dodoma		<b>12</b>
114	Musoma		<b>13</b>
248	Kigoma < Zaire		<b>14</b>
81	Ulanga/Ifakara		<b>15</b>
159	Ileje/Mbeya - Zambia		<b>16</b>
156	Mbeya	> Ndali 1967: 85003	<b>17</b>
346	Arusha		<b>18</b>
151	Mpanda/Sumbawanga		<b>19</b>
105	Mpanda/Sumbawanga		<b>20</b>
178	Bagamoyo/Coast		<b>21</b>
89	Sumbawanga	< in Zambia 65,000	<b>22</b>
262	Njombe/Iringa		<b>23</b>
180	Chunya/Mbeya		<b>24</b>
211	Musoma	earlier treated as Sukuma	<b>25</b>
321	Kigoma	Swahili? Toponym? <Ujiji	<b>26</b>
126	Kondoa/Dodoma		<b>27</b>
94	Musoma	also in Kenya	<b>28</b>
182	Manyoni/Singida		<b>29</b>
98	Babati/Arusha		<b>30</b>
128	Nachingwea/Lindi		<b>31</b>
155	Tanga		<b>32</b>
185	Kilosa/Morogoro		<b>33</b>
139	Lindi		<b>34</b>
166	Singida		<b>35</b>
183	Sumbawanga	< in Zambia 55 000	<b>36</b>
175	Musoma		<b>37</b>
---	Arusha		<b>38</b>
---	Moshi		<b>39</b>

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REF.	ETHNONYM	M&D 1987	1948	1957	1967
3	Mbugwe	F2	7913	6436	4280
15	Mbunga	P1	13454	11682	10957
10	Ikoma	E4	9711	6131	8568
9	Bende	F1	8836	7792	8269
5	Kwavi	72B	---	7378	7037
12	Burunge	09A	9716	12408	9286
30	Gorowa	09A	17705	11973	17397
20	Pimbwe	M1	13137	11479	13773
13	Ikizu	E4	9303	11229	10647
27	Alagwa/Wasi/Chasi	09A	12513	13996	15746
31	Ndonde	P2	13777	13165	17653
6	Rungwa	M1	5372	7158	7144
34	Machinga	P2	14499	14224	20204
19	Tongwe	F1	8513	8746	12851
32	Segeju	E5 (G4.2)	12046	11575	18688
17	Wanda	M1	7677	9477	12008
35	Isanzu	F2	12243	12964	20355
4	Vinza	E1	4029	4135	6898
37	Ngurimi	E4	11973	12988	20917
21	Doe	G1	7781	9734	13869
24	Bungu/Wungu	F2	8291	14926	14926
29	Taturu	72D	9162	11372	16648
33	Vidunda	G1	10560	12771	19585
25	Shashi	E1 (E4?)	---	7100	14951
1	Dorobo	09A (72D)	890	1868	2038
23	Kisi	N1	5706	5291	14922
26	Jiji	?	---	4653	14957
18	Sonjo	E5	3593	4593	12418
7	Nata	E4	---	---	7336
11	Issenye	E4	---	---	9235
38	Hadza?	709	---	---	---
39	Ongamo/Ngasa?	72B	---	---	---

*Table 2. Growth (or contraction) in population for identified ethnic groups*

M&D 1987 = Classification according to Mann & Dalby (1987).

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<b>1948&gt;1967 in %</b>	<b>DISTRICT/PROVINCE</b>	<b>SIL 1987</b>	<b>REMARKS (SIL)</b>	<b>REF.</b>
54	Mbulu	24000	1999	<b>3</b>
81	Ulanga/Ifakara	29000		<b>15</b>
88	Musoma	15000	Issenye and Nata	<b>10</b>
94	Mpanda/Rukwa	20000		<b>9</b>
95	Bagamoyo etc.	?		<b>5</b>
96	Kondoa/Dodoma	31000		<b>12</b>
98	Babati/Arusha	30000	50000 R. Kiessling	<b>30</b>
105	Mpanda/Sumbawanga	29000		<b>20</b>
114	Musoma	28000		<b>13</b>
126	Kondoa/Dodoma	10000	Maarten Mous	<b>27</b>
128	Nachingwea/Lindi	33000		<b>31</b>
133	Mpanda	18000		<b>6</b>
139	Lindi	36000		<b>34</b>
151	Mpanda/Sumbawanga	22000		<b>19</b>
155	Tanga	15000	1999	<b>32</b>
156	Mbeya	24000		<b>17</b>
166	Singida	32000		<b>35</b>
171	Kigoma	10000		<b>4</b>
175	Musoma	32000		<b>37</b>
178	Bagamoyo/Coast	24000		<b>21</b>
180	Chunya/Mbeya	36000		<b>24</b>
182	Manyoni/Singida	?		<b>29</b>
185	Kilosa/Morogoro	32000		<b>33</b>
211	Musoma	82000	Sizaki	<b>25</b>
229	Arusha?	?	Aramanik	<b>1</b>
262	Njombe/Iringa	13000		<b>23</b>
321	Kigoma	12000		<b>26</b>
346	Arusha	20000	Temí	<b>18</b>
---	Musoma	0	variant name for Ikoma? (see Mekacha 1993)	<b>7</b>
---	Musoma	0	dialect of Ikoma	<b>11</b>
---	Arusha	?		<b>38</b>
---	Moshi	?		<b>39</b>

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year that is subsequently converted into an estimate for 1987. Moreover, the dynamics of ethnic assimilation and identity shift are not reflected in the SIL report.

For example, between 1948 and 1967 the Jita, as an ethnic group, actually showed a population growth rate that was above the national average of 55 percent for that period, or 2.75 percent a year (as derived from the 1948 and 1967 census data). The Jita doubled in number from 71,433 in 1947 to 149,766 by 1967. This growth probably took place at the expense of neighbouring ethnic groups, including the Kerewe. In the latter case SIL (2001) claims that, in 1987, Kerewe was spoken by 100,000 people. Going back to the 1957 data when the Kerewe were 41,601 people, and assuming an annual population growth of 3 percent, the 100,000 mark would only have been reached in 2000. The SIL figure, however, implies that the Kerewe-speaking population would have had an extraordinary annual growth rate of 7 percent in order to reach the 100,000 mark by 1987. This is possible in the light of shifting ethnic and linguistic allegiances, but in the case of Kerewe, it is not likely. On the contrary, in a personal communication E. Kezilahabi (Zürich, 21 October 2001), himself a prominent Kerewe-speaker, complains about the erosion of ethnic identity and a massive language shift among the younger generation, who prefer to speak Jita.

The data presented for ethnic groups in table 1 above, therefore, contain figures extracted from the Tanzanian population census of 1967. The data are also contrasted with the ethnic composition that pertained in the former Tanganyika in 1948, as quoted in Moffett (1958: 294), and in 1957, as published by Polomé (1980: 4). In addition, the changes that become apparent from a comparison between the 1948 and 1967 figures are calculated as a percentage of growth or, in some cases, contraction. The upper limit for ethnic groups to be included was arbitrarily set at about 20,000 people. The table ranks each group in ascending order in terms of its numerical strength for the year 1967, and indicates the district and/or region where the ethnic group lives.

As can be seen, table 1 contains the names of 37 ethnic groups (found in Tanzania 1971) whose languages are regarded as endangered. Hadza (Hadzapi/Tindiga) and Ongamo/Ngasa have been added to this list, because both ethnic groups have not been counted in any of the censuses referred to above. It should also be noted that the following ethnonyms denote six cross-border groups, some of which are classified as “non-Tanganyikan” by Moffett (1958: 295):<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Moffett’s (idem) approach of identifying what he terms “authentic” ethnic groups, i.e. truly Tanganyikan (Tanzanian) communities, is quite useful, as this could help LoT to ignore non-Tanzanian MLs.



- From DRC (former Zaire): Holoholo and Karanga
- From Zambia: Lambya, Mambwe and Rungu/Lungu
- From Kenya: Suba (all marked by an asterisk in table 1)

It could be that fluctuations caused by people moving to and from a neighbouring country, might have influenced the statistics above. In any case, LoT could probably exclude the MLs of those “non-Tanganyikan” groups from its list.

Interesting to note is ethnicity with reference to Swahili. The statistics (e.g. Tanzania 1971) show that, as an ethnic group, the Swahili are a minority; hence, their MT would even qualify as an ML — which, of course, it is not.<sup>26</sup> Swahili will be also dropped from the list for the purposes of the LoT project.

The amended list as table 2 above illustrates the percentage of growth (or contraction) for the period 1948-1967.

If one bears in mind the general population growth of 55 percent for the period in question (or 2.75 percent a year), those ethnic groups in table 2 with a growth rate above 155 percent for the period can be inferred to have increased in size. However, for a high (and even low) growth rate, there is always the possibility of error rates. Thus, while for the 1948-1957 period the Sonjo show a mere 27 percent increase in size (i.e. below average for the period), between 1957 and 1967 the group expanded by 170 percent. They numbered 3,593 (or 100 percent) in 1948, therefore, by 1967 they had increased by 246 percent. This is a highly unusual growth rate of 13 percent per year. Extremes like this show the fragility of statistics as soon as external factors interfere (e.g. the Sonjo not having been properly counted prior to 1967).

The need to account for statistical errors means that the figures in table 2 cannot provide a completely accurate account of the ethnic composition and, consequently, the MLs in question. For both the ethnic and the linguistic components, however, the figures show tendencies that are important for setting priorities. The latter should be determined by the low numbers of some ethnic groups as well the fact that there is ethnic contraction — which is a dangerous development for the related ML.

Some of the 30 ethnic groups that are retained in the amended list (table 2) have been decreasing in number at an alarming rate. It cannot be assumed that the languages of these ethnic minorities are spoken outside the particular group, accordingly, several MLs of ethnic groups (listed above in table 2) seem to be largely threatened. This assumption pertains to, amongst others, the following

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<sup>26</sup> The data of population censuses (e.g. Tanzania 1971) also reveal the fact that the ethnonym *Swahili* is rarely found. For a discussion see Middleton (1992).

ethnic groups and, consequently, their languages: Bende, Burunge, Gorowa<sup>27</sup>, Ikizu, Kwavi (Baraguyu), Mbunga<sup>28</sup>, Mbugwe, Pimbwe, and Tongwe.

The hinterland of the coast should be another top priority for ML research, regardless of ethnic growth or contraction figures. Fieldwork that this author conducted there some years ago demonstrated that even the older generation, i.e. the over-40s, were inclined to code-switching between Bondei and Swahili, for example. As a consequence, competence in Bondei is rapidly decreasing in the entire community; hence, appropriate steps should be taken to study endangered MLs in the identified area.

For the rest of the country the situation seems to be less critical, but little is known about special cases. As we lack adequate data on language knowledge and language use, up-country research priorities are largely guesswork. It seems, however, that the numerical strength/weakness of ethnic groups should be taken as an indicator of relative ML strength/vulnerability.

#### 4. Resources at LoT's disposal

Resources that are available to the LoT project are a number of valuable contributions that describe language-related facts for various MLs. In particular, early missionary work during the German colonial period includes vocabularies and linguistic descriptions (based on Latin-style school grammars) as well as texts derived from orature. As most publications are in German this may complicate access to them; the structural information, however, is relatively sound and provides insight into grammatical aspects that even a linguist not competent in German will be able to extract without too much difficulty. In addition, an attempt has recently been made to reanalyse a missionary source published a century ago, and the results are promising.<sup>29</sup>

While for the years of the British Mandate and Trusteeship "... very little linguistic work was done ..." (Polomé 1980: 6), after Tanganyika's independence in 1961 a variety of linguistic publications and papers on MLs were published. A good summary of existing sources is found in Polomé (1980). The most recent bibliographical update is Maho & Sands (forthcoming). The latter is an exceptionally welcome reference that comprehensively lists the results of linguistic research and analyses available for Tanzanian MLs. While the bibliography sheds light on MLs that have been quite extensively studied,

<sup>27</sup> Autonym should be "Gorwaa", according to R. Kiessling (personal communication, 11 December 2001).

<sup>28</sup> See Legère (1992b).

<sup>29</sup> Christina Thornell at Göteborgs Universitet is compiling a grammatical sketch of Kerewe from a paper written in French by Hurel before 1909. See her paper in this volume.

more importantly it is also the key to defining research priorities in respect of those MLs for which neither published nor unpublished linguistic sources exist, and which are short of linguistic material. Thus, north-western Tanzania and its MLs are relatively well studied, while parts of central and southern Tanzania have been neglected in linguistic research. Derek Nurse, who initiated data collection in the early 1970s for a large group of MLs wrote subsequently grammatical and phonological sketches for major MLs (Nurse 1979), as well as other papers on comparative aspects, e. g. Nurse (1988). In addition, UDSM students compiled word lists for almost 80 MLs as part of the then Survey of Language Use and Language Teaching. Meanwhile the material has been made available on the Internet within the framework of the Comparative Bantu On-Line Dictionaries (CBOLD) site run by the University of California at Berkeley.<sup>30</sup> The word lists are still in a preliminary stage, since linguists have not yet thoroughly checked the lexicographical data collected and compiled by the students who are MT-speakers of those MLs against data from other MT-speakers. Nevertheless, with 1,079 entries each (as well as Swahili and English) this is an important point of departure for MLs listed in the appendix hereto.

For two MLs, i.e. Kwere (Nghwele) and Zaramo, the CBOLD material was recently checked by two Linguistics students from GU, Sweden. In July 2001 they discussed the data with ML resource persons and subsequently revised the word lists. In addition, tape recordings of the vocabulary and of additional texts were made in order for suprasegmental features and proper phonetic transcriptions to be included at a later stage. In cooperation with the UDSM’s Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, a standard grammatical questionnaire consisting of 250 sentences was also tested. This questionnaire, originally designed for a linguistic project in the early 1990s, was filled in by various resource persons, with subsequent tape recordings of the LoT sentence examples. The grammatical information and lexicographical data are now being processed.

## **5. The way forward**

The start of the LoT project, which has benefited greatly from Tore Janson’s input, has been promising. It is hoped that the coming years yield a substantial accumulation of valuable data and subsequent linguistic material within the framework of this project, in order to showcase the rich heritage of Tanzania’s minority and marginalised languages and language varieties.

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<sup>30</sup> For further details see Nurse & Phillipson (1975/1999).

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**APPENDIX: List of Tanzanian languages and language varieties**

Source: The Comparative Bantu On-Line Dictionaries (CBOLD) site run by the University of California at Berkeley, at <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/CBOLD/>. Certain glossonyms, such as Ganda and Embu, have been excluded here; since the latter are spoken mainly in neighbouring countries, it does not make sense to account for them in the LoT project.

1	Bena	31	Kutu
2	Bende	32	Kwaya (listed as Mkwaya)
3	Bondei (2x) <sup>31</sup>	33	Kwere
4	Bungu - Wungu	34	Lambya
5	Chagga - Kahe	35	Langi (Rangi)
6	Chagga - Keni	36	Luguru
7	Chagga - Kibosho (2x)	37	Luhya
8	Chagga - Kimochi	38	Lungwa (Rungwa)
9	Chagga - Kiseri (2x)	39	Makonde
10	Chagga - Lema	40	Malila
11	Chagga - Machame (2x)	41	Mambwe
12	Chagga - Mamba	42	Manda
13	Chagga - Siha (2x)	43	Matengo
14	Chagga - Vunjo	44	Matumbi
15	Doe	45	Mbunga
16	Fipa	46	Meru (3x)
17	Gweno	47	Mpoto
18	Ha	48	Mwera (2x)
19	Hangaza	49	N(y)amwanga
20	Haya	50	Nata
21	Hehe	51	Ndali (2x)
22	Ikizu	52	Ndamba
23	Iramba	53	Ndengeleko
24	Jita	54	Ngindo
25	Kami	55	Ngoni
26	Kerebe	56	Ngoreme
27	Kimbu	57	Nguu/Ngulu
28	Kinga	58	Nyakyusa
29	Kisi	59	Nyambo
30	Kuria (2x)	60	Nyamwezi

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<sup>31</sup> 2x = henceforth two lists.

- |    |        |    |                   |
|----|--------|----|-------------------|
| 61 | Nyiha  | 75 | Sonjo             |
| 62 | Pangwa | 76 | Suba              |
| 63 | Pimbwe | 77 | Sukuma            |
| 64 | Pogoro | 78 | Sumbwa            |
| 65 | Regi   | 79 | Turu (Nyaturu 2x) |
| 66 | Rufiji | 80 | Vinza             |
| 67 | Rungu  | 81 | Wanda             |
| 68 | Rungwa | 82 | Wanji             |
| 69 | Safwa  | 83 | Yao               |
| 70 | Sambaa | 84 | Zanaki            |
| 71 | Sangu  | 85 | Zaramo            |
| 72 | Shashi | 86 | Zigua             |
| 73 | Shubi  | 87 | Zinza             |
| 74 | Soga   |    |                   |