

KiKAR: a Swahili variety in Kenya's colonial army

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Abstract

The paper discusses attitudes, identity construction, agents of linguistic change, and the outcome of dense language contact in Kenya's colonial army during the early decades of the twentieth century. The growth and development of a simplified Swahili variety in the Kenyan battalions of the King's African Rifles (KAR) during the inter-war period was influenced by the European officers' attitude towards Africans and their languages, the military's overarching desire to construct a distinct identity in the colony, and the diverse ethnolinguistic background of African soldiers. While the colonial military provided the ethnographic settings in which the new Swahili variety emerged, it was the African soldiers who were the principal agents in the restructuring and maintenance of KiKAR. The paper further illustrates the structural and lexical simplification of KiKAR based on data contained in KAR's language teaching manual: Newell's (1933) Notes on Ki-Swahili as Spoken by the K.A.R. KiKAR provides a rare glimpse into the outcome of an early contact situation involving diverse African languages and English during Swahili's pre-standardization era.

1. Introduction

African soldiers and British officers serving in the Kenyan battalions of the King's African Rifles (KAR) army in the 1920s and 1930s spoke KiKAR,¹ a variety of Swahili characterized by a relatively simplified structure and a distinct lexical borrowing of military terminology. KiKAR, also known as Kikeya, initially emerged as nonstandard Swahili, laden with substrate influences of African languages, spoken by soldiers recruited from diverse ethnolinguistic groups such as Luo, Kalenjin, and Kamba. English-speaking officers acquired

1. The Swahili prefix *ki-* denotes "the language of" hence KiKAR means "the language of KAR"

this form of Swahili and used it as KAR's formal language of command until the late 1930s when standard Swahili was formally adapted. Initial contact between speakers of the various languages was hampered by lack of a common medium of communication. For instance, at the time of joining the military, African soldiers recruited in the Kenyan highlands had no formal training in English or Swahili, and no significant contact with native speakers of the two languages. Similarly, British KAR officers deployed to the region did not speak Swahili or any of the languages familiar to soldiers under their command.

The natural tendency for groups of people faced with such a linguistic impasse is to seek a compromise language that breaks existing communication barriers. In the case of the densely multilingual Eastern African region, Swahili, the trade language in the region, served as the language of choice for broader interethnic interaction. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in the KAR battalions a simplified form of Swahili, learned informally as a second or third language and containing varying degrees of first language interferences, served as the medium for informal interethnic communication. In the inter-war years, the barracks form of Swahili became the formal language of command allowing for its expansion through borrowing of lexicon relating to command, equipment, and other foreign concepts pertaining to a military and European lifestyle. Non-Swahili features were also incorporated into the lexicon of the emerging military Swahili: KiKAR.

Studies in contact linguistics indicate that a broad range of linguistic and social factors can determine the outcome of language contact. However, every outcome has its own peculiar social context that governs its unique character (Winford 2003; Holm 2004; Mufwene 2001; Thomason and Kaufmann 1988). In the case of KiKAR, as discussed later in this paper, factors that shaped the outcome of this simplified language include; the diversity of languages in contact; ideologies and attitudes of British officers towards African languages; power and prestige relations in a hierarchical institution; and the length and intensity of interactions.

Central to the discussion of this topic are three key factors that facilitated the genesis and development of this African-language based, simplified language, in the initial contact period between African and European languages. First, African NCOs (noncommissioned officers) played a crucial role in the restructuring, maintenance and elevation of the substrate from its informal context into a dominant institutional code. Serving as trainers for African recruits and Swahili (KiKAR) language instructors to British officers, NCOs were principal agents of linguistic change in the King's African Rifles. Second, British officers' view of Swahili as an inferior language provided an environment that tolerated the use and development of an attenuated Swahili in the military. Finally, KiKAR served as an essential tool in the construction of a distinct identity that the military sought to project in the colony. A brief linguistic description of

KiKAR, presented below, illustrates the structural simplification and lexical borrowing of this Swahili variety. For the moment, however, let us first provide a brief historical background of the KAR army in order to illuminate the social context under which KiKAR emerged.

2. The King's African Rifles

The King's African Rifles (KAR) was Britain's colonial army in East Africa. In keeping with the British regimental system it consisted of battalions recruited in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika (Tanzania), and Nyasaland (Malawi). Although an Inspector General provided a measure of uniform control and supervision during the inter-war era, in practice each battalion was largely autonomous with its own character and traditions. The government of Kenya was responsible for raising and funding the King's African Rifles' 3rd and 5th battalions in the 1920s and 1930s. The average KAR battalion consisted of roughly two hundred soldiers during the inter-war period. The rank-and-file of these units consisted entirely of African soldiers, known in Swahili as *askari*, was recruited largely from remote rural communities in the Kenyan highlands. They were led by an officer corps that consisted entirely of European officers seconded from the regular British Army who served one or two four-year-terms in East Africa. With the exception of a few members of the Bugandan royal family, the rigid East African color bar dictated that an African soldier in the KAR could rise no higher than the non-commissioned rank of Regimental Sergeant Major.

3 KAR and 5 KAR, as they were more commonly known, made the most extensive use of KiKAR during this period.² The officers of Tanganyika's 6 KAR prided themselves on their command of more grammatically correct Swahili. The Ugandan 4 KAR relied on a simplified form of Sudanese Arabic known as "KiNubi" before switching to a Swahili version of KiKAR that was closer to Standard Swahili in the 1930s. Conversely, Nyasaland's 1 KAR and 2 KAR used ChiNyanja as their language of command.

In Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika, these regionally focused military varieties gave way to a more standardized version of Swahili during the Second World War known as Kivita, with **vita** being the Swahili word for 'war'. Kivita was most likely the work of the East Africa Army Education Corps, which was staffed primarily by civil servants recruited from the various territorial education departments. Reasoning that it was easier to teach a small percentage of British officers simple Swahili than it would be to give hundreds of thousands

2. A number before KAR designates the number of the battalion of the army, e.g., 3 KAR = 3rd battalion

of African soldiers a crash course in English, the colonial military establishment set out to codify KiKAR. They changed their mind in the post-war era when the KAR battalions tried to make English the language of command, and Kivita largely fell into disuse by the 1950s. Yet English proved unworkable, and the later KAR battalions still spoke Swahili, but it was a form of the language that was much closer to the standardized Swahili spoken by the general populace (Nurse 1997: 273; Parsons 1999: 112–115).

Although the army employed KiKAR during parades, drills and other formal military activities, the degree to which African soldiers used it during informal inter-ethnic communication remains uncertain. As a rule, British KAR officers preferred not to recruit men from coastal communities who spoke Swahili as their first language. Assuming that these coastal communities were too politicized and “soft” to make good soldiers, they preferred uneducated recruits who came from upcountry pastoral and agrarian societies that had little exposure to Swahili. Some British officers considered it “presumptuous” for a soldier to address them in English, even if he was fluent in the language (R. C. Glanville, Kenya National Archives, MSS/78/4). As a result, many African soldiers in the inter-war Kenyan KAR battalions learned KiKAR along with their officers.

3. Factors influencing the growth of KiKAR

Linguistically, the emergence and development of KiKAR was influenced by three factors: language attitudes, linguistic convenience, and social identity.

3.1. Language attitudes

Divergent attitudes among colonists towards Swahili variously impacted the growth and development of the language. Missionaries and colonial administrators recognized the language as an appropriate tool for attainment of religious, educational and administrative goals in Kenya and made significant contributions towards the codification and standardization of the language. Whiteley (1969) notes that early colonial administrators “bewildered by East Africa’s diversity and multiplicity of languages” saw Swahili as a “godsend [...] widely used by officials and un-officials alike to suit administrative convenience.” Conversely, colonial settlers (both British and Asian) and military officers considered Swahili to be a low prestige language necessary only for facilitating basic communication with their African subordinates.

Partisans of empire advanced skewed and patronizing interpretations of African languages and their speakers. Swahili, the most widespread language in the region was considered “redundant”, “too primitive a language for twentieth-century thought” and a “lingual obscenity” to which no Briton “worth his

salt should be a party” (quoted in Whiteley 1956: 351). Military officers regarded African soldiers as lacking in intellectual capabilities necessary for grasping complex issues including the grammatical complexities of the more standard Swahili. Therefore, the general consensus was that “good [grammatical] Swahili [was] useless and unintelligent to the average *askari*.” Language scholars such as Broomfield (1930: 520) also propagated the notions of colonial benevolence and altruism:

The African is not at present sufficiently methodical and painstaking to carry out any of these tasks [linguistic borrowing] by himself. He has not yet realized the necessity of accurate thought and expression. He often obscures distinctions which his language is already capable of expressing [unlike] the European [who] is accustomed to accurate expression, and in this respect Swahili is likely to be benefited by his [European] influence.

Such were the prevalent attitudes among social groups and colonial institutions that facilitated the growth of simplified varieties of Swahili: Kisetla, Kihindi³ and KiKAR. The first two varieties developed as a result of prolonged contacts between African farm employees and their English- and Asian-language-speaking employers.

Suffice it to say that, similar Swahili varieties intended to serve narrow professional needs or enriched by regional linguistic characteristics were common elsewhere in East Africa where Swahili was the medium across indigenous and foreign languages. Fabian (1986: 11) acknowledges the input of indigenous languages in the emergence of Shaba Swahili spoken in Congo. He observes:

It is therefore legitimate and even necessary to count among the conditions that influenced the development of Shaba Swahili, multilingual interaction and contact with other vehicular languages (e.g. Fanagalo/Kitchen-Kaffir), with autochthonous Bantu languages, and with European languages.

While the dynamics of the development of Shaba Swahili may be different from those of KiKAR, the contention that various agents involved in the language contact situation, including Africans, had an input in the development of the variety is a view we share with Fabian.

The diverse language attitudes of the colonial administrators and missionaries on the one hand, and the settlers and military officers on the other, had contrasting impact on the growth of Swahili.

The emergence of settler varieties of Swahili arose from the need of speakers of foreign and indigenous languages in East Africa to overcome emergent communication barriers. However, the linguistic input of Africans in the language restructuring process is rarely acknowledged.

3. Although it would be interesting to compare KiKAR to Kihindi and Kisetla, such an endeavor is beyond the purview of the current paper.

3.2. *African soldiers and the growth of KiKAR*

European colonists may have provided the ethnographic settings in which the new African language varieties emerged, but it was the African colonial laborers, “who spoke the targeted more indigenous languages non-natively” who were the agents of the restructuring process (Mufwene 2001: 174–175). African soldiers, particularly the NCOs, were instrumental in the emergence, propagation and maintenance of KiKAR.

African NCOs in the Kenyan KAR battalions played an active role in facilitating communication between Africans and Europeans. They made European and African values mutually intelligible and interpreted the British military system to fellow African soldiers. Moreover,

since most British officers served short tours, senior African NCOs established and preserved a battalion’s collective memory and traditions by tutoring new arrivals in Swahili [...] [they even] quietly corrected inexperienced platoon commanders on the parade ground. (Parsons 1999: 107)

The longer tenure of African soldiers in KAR allowed for a continuity and linguistic stability of KiKAR that officers could not facilitate owing to their relatively shorter tour of duty.

Additionally, African noncommissioned officers served as language instructors for newly deployed British officers and African recruits. In his KiKAR language manual, Newell (1933: 4) recommends two learning strategies intended to enhance a new officer’s acquisition of KiKAR. First, he suggests the “best way of learning a useful K.A.R. vocabulary is to listen to *askaris* and other officers talking.” Second, and perhaps more significant, Newell notes, “it is the part of the job of the African Clerks in Coys [companies], to teach new officers the language, and use should therefore be made of this facility.” Teaching the language variety without strict instructional guidelines made NCOs the transmitters and standard bearers of KiKAR.

Moreover, the fact that African soldiers accounted for ninety-four percent of the KAR army precipitated the military establishment’s adoption of KiKAR as the principal language of command. In many colonial institutions and experiences, Europeans adopted the lingua franca that already served as a trade language and developed special sections of town where their African employees communicated among themselves either in their first languages or in their new lingua franca (Mufwene 2001). In the case of the KAR, one can safely surmise that the multilingual African soldiery, recruited from various ethnic groups, and living together in the barracks, used KiKAR for broader interethnic communication. Furthermore, new recruits took a four-month training and acculturation process under the guidance of African NCOs, which seemed to be a period of KiKAR immersion as well.

The lack of documentary evidence and comprehensive oral histories of the period make it difficult to ascertain whether soldiers retained KiKAR during interactions with civilians or whether they spoke their own unique variety different from formal KiKAR. However, anecdotal evidence from veterans of the inter-war KAR suggest that African recruits learned KiKAR as part of their military training and may have used it to communicate with fellow soldiers from other ethnic groups (Interview, Micah Omasete, April 1994). In the Ugandan 4 KAR a Swahili-speaking Sergeant had to learn KiKAR because his men could not understand his more grammatically appropriate Swahili (H. A. Borradale, Kenya National Archives, MSS/78/1). Finally, most informants who served in the post-World War II KAR recall that they often interacted with soldiers from other communities and learned to speak other languages in addition to Swahili. Wives and children of soldiers also recall learning to speak Swahili in the barracks (Interviews, Damaris Kimwele and Kalumu Mulaimu, March 1994).

3.3. *Identity construction*

Another factor that might have motivated the colonial military to adopt a distinct language was the desire to establish a group identity or social class marker. As Labov (1972) noted in his classic study of adolescent peer group networks in Harlem, distinctive ways of talking are important indicators of group identity, cohesion and solidarity. A unique language variety, he further argues, may serve as a symbol for demonstrating group membership. To some degree, professional military officers preferred to maintain KiKAR to distinguish themselves from the missionaries, government officials, and settlers whom they often believed did not truly understand Africans as well as they did. They also sought to ensure that African soldiers embraced a unique military identity that granted them superior and privileged status relative to the rest of population. Interviews with African veterans of the inter-war KiKAR suggest that they did indeed consider themselves more capable and manly than their civilian counterparts (Interviews, Abdallah Nzyuko and Mwana Wambua, March 1994).

4. **Defining KiKAR**

An attempt at a comprehensive definition of spoken KiKAR is a difficult undertaking. First, the number of living speakers who served in the King's African Rifles in the inter-war era is rapidly declining. Second, the institutionalized memory of Swahili development in the modern Kenyan Army contains little, if any, information relevant to the understanding of the nature of such non-standard varieties. Third, extant literature on Swahili focuses primarily on the

growth of the standard dialect, relegating other early emergent varieties to footnotes or brief commentaries. Research into the nature of KiKAR is surprisingly limited, with our only knowledge of a detailed written account resting exclusively on H.W. Newell's (1933) unpublished KiKAR lesson manual for newly posted British officers: *Notes on Ki-Swahili as Spoken by the K.A.R.*⁴

Nonetheless, other definitions of simplified varieties that emerged in similar contact environments can shed some light on the general linguistic outcome of the language context under study. For instance, Whiteley (1969) illuminates the distinctive features of Kisetla: an attenuated grammar; verbs occurring only in infinitive, imperative, and first person singular indicative; and a vocabulary sprinkled with English. Mufwene (2001) contends that varieties that emerged in situations where Africans and European colonial agents had prolonged interactions, were, in most cases, second-language approximations of local Swahili, some lexified by European languages, others by indigenous African languages, but all without an "across-the-board constant model".

Though shaped by its own unique factors, KiKAR was a Swahili variety that served both as a medium for the multilingual Kenyan soldiers, who were nonnative speakers of Swahili, and a language variety that European officers adopted for military convenience. British colonial army officers considered Swahili too sophisticated to be the language of command and distrusted its native-speakers, most of whom were coastal Muslims, as potential political subversives. The development of KiKAR allowed them to employ the existing nonstandard Swahili without having to recruit Africans who spoke it as their first language.

4.1. *KiKAR manuscript*

H. W. Newell, an officer who served with 5 KAR, intended his *Notes on Ki-Swahili as Spoken by the K.A.R.*, to be used in training junior officers newly seconded to the Kenyan KAR battalions. The unpublished manuscript, written in standard Swahili orthography except for some English loanwords, falls in the tradition of what Whiteley (1969: 12) refers to as "grammars for students of all levels of sophistication [...] specifically written for colonists, missionaries, soldiers, and even postmen [...] [and] written for fellow Europeans".

The twenty-four page text consists of a preface that reflects Newell's perception of KiKAR and Swahili, grammar notes (pp. 4–12) on vowel pronunciation, verbal morphology, noun class system and other features. Newell highlights the distinction between KiKAR and other Swahili varieties by constantly reminding readers that certain grammatical constructions are either "rarely heard in

4. The manuscript is available at the library of the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi.

K.A.R. conversation” or “though incorrect [are] the norm used in K.A.R. for saying [...]” A vocabulary list (pp. 13–24) is conveniently arranged into topics of interest to the officers: K.A.R. ranks, equipment, drill, and so on.

Though not as significant in quality and in its contribution to future Swahili developments as the missionary classics, Newell’s *Notes on Ki-Swahili as Spoken by the K.A.R.*, nonetheless, provides a unique insight into the result of early contact between nonnative, upcountry Swahili and English in a more specialized (military) setting. The notes, seeking to “help officers to speak, at any rate a little, soon after arrival in the country and to avoid the more glaring grammatical atrocities”, reveal, to some degree, the grammatical and lexical features of KiKAR spoken in the 1920s and 1930s.

Fabian’s (1986: 9–11) description of similar manuscripts or vocabularies in Congo helps to situate Newell’s treatise in a broader colonial context. In contrast to the more comprehensive Swahili grammars, particularly those compiled by missionaries, Newell’s text falls in the tradition of language manuals that were “rudimentary”, “compiled by linguistic amateurs”, “destined for users who have limited and very special interests in learning some Swahili” and consequently, were “truncated descriptions of reduced variants of vehicular Swahili”. Nonetheless, Fabian argues that such manuals can help reveal indicators of language use.

The significance of Newell’s text is evident when KiKAR is considered as a precursor to Kivita, the World War II Swahili variety, and likely progenitor of the military language used by the modern Kenyan armed forces. The army, the police, and the paramilitary forces in Kenya have all utilized Swahili as the primary language of command (Mazrui and Mazrui 1995: 7). Newell provides us with the first stratum in the history of military language in Kenya. In addition, the text reveals in some detail the nature of non-missionary Swahili in the years preceding standardization, the simplification of complex Swahili constructions and the extent of lexical borrowing from English, and the officers’ attitude towards Swahili and its speakers. Newell’s manuscript is the only documentation of KiKAR, known to these authors. Most importantly, it seems likely that the author was transcribing and analyzing a language as spoken at the time. Whether he adequately represented the varieties of Swahili spoken by both officers and soldiers is hard to determine. However, most new officers received a copy when they were posted to Kenya after 1933. Furthermore, it is certain that British officers and rank-and-file soldiers rarely interacted outside of formal military parades and operations. Nonetheless, Newell provides the only window to KiKAR as spoken in the inter-war era.

5. A linguistic sketch of KiKAR

KiKAR was structurally simpler than Swahili proper. Speakers simplified Swahili grammar, sound and lexical structures in a systematic process that allowed minimal irregularity. Through noun class reduction and deletion, elimination of complex and irregular constructions, lexical borrowing and semantic extensions, KiKAR maintained a fairly simple and regular Swahili structure. This distinct military language made it convenient for officers to command their troops, soldiers to interact, and it helped establish a conspicuous military culture that set KAR *askaris* apart from the general population.

5.1. Noun class reduction

As with other Bantu languages, Swahili groups nouns into sets containing distinct prefixes for singular and plural formations. Each noun class comprises respective rules that govern the syntactic behavior of adjectives, pronominals, adverbs and other components modifying the head noun.

A comparison of native Swahili (Kiunguja and Kimvita dialects) speakers' noun class systems documented by missionaries Krapf (1882) and Steere (1934), with Newell's (1933) account of KiKAR, illuminates the glaring deviations and simplification of the latter system. Whereas native Swahili speaker's speech contained five-paired classes (**M-/WA-**, **M-/MI-**, **JI-/MA-**, **KI-/VI-**, and **N-/N-**) plus three odd ones (**U-**, **KU-**, and **PA-**), KiKAR speech utilized four noun class pairs (**M-/WA-**, **M-/MI-**, **KI-/VI-**, and **N-/N-**, transferring classes **JI-/MA-**, **U-**, **KU-**, and **PA-** to a residual class **N-/N-**) aptly categorized as "miscellaneous". Newell advises new KiKAR learners "to classify all nouns not in one of the other classes as being of this [**N-**]class". The transferred nouns assumed the features and agreement structure of class **N-/N-**.

Noun class reduction and subsequent transfer of truncated noun classes created superficial regularity by avoiding complex construction and minimizing rules all together. Such reduction gave KiKAR its identity as a simplified and restructured Swahili variety.

5.2. Simplification of complex morphophonemic rules

The aforementioned transfer of **JI-/MA-** and **KU-** classes to super class **N-** achieved more than the ability to eschew the complex noun class rule. The transfer allowed KiKAR speakers to replace intricate, context-sensitive, plural formation rules characteristic of these classes, with context-free ones. Consequently, it obtained a more predictable structure by adopting the uniformity of singular and plural formations permissible in the new class. For in-

stance, while both **JI-** and **N-** classes have a zero prefix, that is, some constituent singular nouns lack the conventional noun class prefixes (**JI-** and **N-**), the sound and word structure of the plural form does not change in the **N-** class (**nyumba/nyumba** ‘house/houses’, **tikiti/tikiti** ‘ticket/tickets’, **risasi/risasi** ‘bullet/bullets’), but is indicated by **MA-** prefix in the latter (**jina/majina** ‘name/names’; **bega/mabega** ‘shoulder/shoulders’; **tunda/matunda** ‘fruit/fruits’). The restructured noun class system produced a simpler and predictable pattern of plural formation for KiKAR speakers.

Furthermore, KiKAR speakers reduced the intricate grammatical rules, particularly the nasal assimilation rules governing adjectives qualifying class **N-** nouns. The conventional noun-adjective-agreement rule was simplified through deletion of all context-sensitive adjectival prefixes qualifying Class **N-** nouns. Newell (1933: 5) argues that since “N cannot stand before certain consonants [...] it is best [therefore] to make a general rule not to put a prefix before the adjective at all for this class.” Needless to say, such change was not applicable to the regular and predictable agreement other noun classes of the truncated KiKAR system. While subject-verb agreement, demonstratives and possessives in spoken KiKAR adhered to standard Swahili rules in the regular classes, the impact of aforementioned transfer of nouns belonging to the **JI/MA**, **U-**, **KU-** and **PA** classes to the **N-** on these grammatical elements distinguished KiKAR from standard Swahili. Such simplification, Myers Scotton (1979) observes, has been a common characteristic of non-native, upcountry Swahili.

5.3. *Omission, substitution and deletion*

Further simplification occurred through omission, substitution and deletion of intricate and context-sensitive grammatical processes with context-free ones. For instance negation of the imperative mood, a two step process that involves infixing negative marker ‘**si**’ after the subject prefix and changing the final verb vowel ‘**-a**’ to ‘**-e**’, was substituted by a one-step process in which the negative marker ‘**si**’ is infixes ***usipiga** ‘don’t hit’. Further, the plural imperative form which, Newell observes, was “rarely used in KiKAR.” was substituted with the singular imperative or subjunctive forms, which KiKAR-speakers used interchangeably to express both moods. Therefore, the meaning of **fanya** ‘do’ and subjunctive **ufanye** ‘should do’ is understood in context. KiKAR speakers also substituted variant forms of interrogatives **-pi** ‘which’, **-ngapi** ‘how many/much’, with more regularized nominal phrases. Interrogative **-pi** formed by appending the appropriate class pronoun prefix, gave way to the structurally consistent **nani** ‘who’. Therefore, in spoken KiKAR, Newell observes the ungrammatical nominal phrase **mtu nani** ‘which person’ was used instead of **mtu yupi**. Also the interrogative **-ngapi** subject to specific class affixation was real-

ized without any prefixation across the board. Hence in spoken KiKAR **watu ngapi** ‘how many people’ or **viti ngapi** ‘how many chairs’ would be used instead of the accurate **watu wangapi** and **viti vingapi** respectively. Similarly, **Mi-** class variant of **-ingi** ‘many/much’ **mingi** substituted all other noun class variants of **-ingi**. Newell notes that **watu mingi** (though incorrect) “would be easily understood to many men”.

Considering these elaborate simplifications, it is not surprising that syntactically simple sentences were the norm in KiKAR: “the relative [marker] is rarely heard in K.A.R conversation” (1933: 9). Newell also points out the deletion of the copula in spoken KiKAR; “simple sentences can be made without verbs, the verb “to be” being understood.” For instance, **mimi mkali** ‘I [am] fierce’ and **yeye mbaya** ‘he [is] bad’ were common non-verbal sentences. Similarly, in standard Swahili dialect, the personal object marker precedes the verb stem, but in restructured KiKAR, it follows the verb: **alipenda sisi** replaces the more complex construction **alitupenda** ‘he/she loved us’.

Based on scant grammatical information provided in the manuscript and assuming that Newell provided an accurate description of spoken KiKAR, the following observations point to further structural differences between the standard Swahili dialect and the KiKAR variety. First, Newell lists only four tense markers and their respective negation forms that correspond to standard Swahili. The tenses are present (**-na-**), future (**-ta-**), past (**-li-**), and present perfect (**-me-**). However, the present perfect negation marker (**-ja-**) is not indicated and no examples in the text show how KiKAR speakers negated the tense. Furthermore, Newell advises KiKAR learners to express conditionality by using **wakati** ‘when’ and **kama** ‘if’ followed by present tense instead of the more complex use of the time relative (**-po-**) and conditional tense (**-ki-**) respectively. Consequently, spoken KiKAR settled for the incorrect **wakati anafika** ‘when he arrives’ **kama anafika** ‘if he arrives’ instead of **atakapofika** and **akifika**. Second, while verbal derivations are common in Swahili and other Bantu languages, Newell lists only one: the passive form. Whether KiKAR utilized the prepositional, causative, reciprocal, and stative forms is uncertain in light of the limited grammatical information available to us.

5.4. *Lexical changes*

Through borrowing, code-mixing and semantic extensions, KiKAR molded a lexicon that distinguished military language from other reduced varieties. The nonnative Swahili speaker’s contact with military items and concepts unfamiliar to them necessitated the extensive borrowing of military vocabulary. When Newell wrote his manuscript in the early 1930s, colonial Swahili experts were strongly opposed to the indiscriminate use of English borrowing in Swahili.

G. W. Broomfield (1930: 521) admonishes fellow European in the colony:

The use of foreign words should be discouraged whenever suitable words of Bantu origin are available or can be constructed according to regular Swahili methods of word formation.

However, the closed nature of military society made KiKAR relatively impervious to the developments of Swahili in other institutions in East Africa.

KiKAR jargon included a generous borrowing of English terms, particularly in reference to concepts and items relating to military life. These included: all words of command, all numbers, parts of a rifle, equipment (bren gun, sling, scabbard); terms used in a scoring range (marksman, first class, inner, bull, miss, butts, load, fire); clothing (tie, socks, puttees, shirt, collar, braces); and ranks (sergeant major, sweeper, sergeant, corporal). The wholesale borrowing of English terms seems to have been restricted to concepts most commonly used in commands, parades and drills.

Other types of semantic change in KiKAR included borrowing, code-mixing, and semantic shift. Borrowing with modification, involved restructuring English terms in order to conform to the vowel-ending structure of Bantu words. For example, **bayoneti** ‘bayonet’; **pistola** ‘pistol’; **brashi** ‘brush’; **bathi** ‘bath’; **targeti** ‘target’; and **scouti** ‘scout’. The use of English phonetic transcription is clearly evident in these lexical items, particularly in **scouti**, in which the Swahili sound ‘k’ should have been used to replace English ‘c’. However, this is an orthographic and not necessarily a phonetic problem.

Code mixing, the mixing of vocabulary from Swahili and English languages within a phrase, was also liberally used: **kupiga bull** ‘to hit a target’; **kupiga miss** ‘to miss a target’; and **kupiga report** ‘to report’.

Semantic extensions, broadening the original meaning of a Swahili word, included words like **kukamua** ‘to wring/milk’ to mean ‘press trigger’, **kulanda** ‘resemble’ meaning ‘to be equal to’ and **hivi hivi** ‘haphazard’ to mean ‘upside down’. Some words shifted from a pejorative meaning to a more approved military term: **kuhara** ‘to have diarrhea’ assumed a new meaning ‘to rear’. Some words changed by acquiring a new specialized meaning in the command environment: **kulia** which also means ‘to cry’ specifically meant ‘to shout’ in KiKAR.

Words like **manyatta** included in Newell’s word list to mean ‘village’, further indicate KiKAR also drew vocabulary from African languages in the contact situation. **Manyatta** is Maasai word for ‘a settlement for warriors or boys’. Such borrowing may have been more extensive due to substrate influence of African languages in contact than indicated in Newell’s manuscript.

Newell’s word list also contains words derived from Arabic, but which may have had a broader meaning in KiKAR than in their current usage: **maktab** meant ‘office’, **mabus** ‘detention’, **kasu** ‘less time’, **kamasi** ‘cold’, and **sumu**

'gas'. The Sudanese soldiers, who spoke an Arabic pidgin, Kinubi, and who served in the early KAR battalions, most likely provided such lexical input into KiKAR. For instance, Kaye and Tosco (1993) identify **onbash** 'corporal' and **karakol** 'guard' as some of the Kinubi terms that were derived from Turkish military terms. In KiKAR, these terms are realized as **mbasha** and **korokon**, with meaning expanded for the latter to mean 'guard room'. Arabic loanwords are common in standard Swahili and such an input is not in any way being downplayed, but we highlight the input of Kinubi speakers to reinforce the argument that African soldiers played an important role in the construction of KiKAR and possibly other pidgin-like Swahili varieties that emerged at the time. It also shows the influence of Arabic coming down the Nile through the Sudan instead of Indian Ocean and the coast.

6. Conclusion

The study of historical development of Swahili often focuses on the major dialects and institutions that played a significant role in the standardization of the East African lingua franca. KiKAR teaches us that diverse colonial and African linguistic attitudes towards Swahili, coupled with social motivation within the colonial establishment, spurred the development of Swahili varieties. KiKAR facilitated the construction of a politically useful distinct military identity within the colony. British officers considered KiKAR speakers better soldiers on the assumption they were generally less likely to identify with local communities speaking different languages. Development of such an institutionalized variant of Swahili may have accentuated the need for an orthographic and grammatical standardization of the language that ensued.

While the linguistic structure of KiKAR illuminates the nature of simplified Swahili varieties such as Kisetla and Kihindi, it also underscores the fact that the so-called European Swahili varieties, though simplified and restructured, retained a Bantu structure and lexicon. African speakers therefore had a more active role in the development of the variety than is generally understood. The study of KiKAR informs the history of Swahili development by shedding light on the impact of contact between nonnative and nonstandard Swahili spoken by African soldiers and the English variety spoken by officers who lacked the motivation to master and promote the more standard Swahili spoken elsewhere in the region.

Finally, KiKAR shows how the colonizers spoke to the colonized. The King's African Rifles and British colonial authority in general depended on the cooperation and participation of African intermediaries. The KAR's unique modification of Swahili suggests that the interaction and communication between European offices and African enlisted men required a pragmatic modi-

fication of the most common language in East Africa to suit military circumstances. The truncated nature of KiKAR also suggests that conversations between colonial authority and its African auxiliaries were authoritarian, limited, and often garbled.

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