

SWAHILI'S CURRENT SPREAD TO A REMOTE AREA: DATA FROM PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN VIDUNDA WARD (CENTRAL TANZANIA)¹

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Prof. Arvi Hurskainen is recognised as one of those scholars who have substantially contributed to the advancement of Swahili studies. His creative activities cover a wide range of topics related to the most important African language spoken in the sub-Saharan region. From early dialect research reflected in his grammatical sketch of and lexical material on the Makunduchi variety of Swahili to sophisticated computer-assisted corpus analysis based on software developed by him and other Finnish experts, Swahili has occupied a substantial place in Arvi's linguistic research. Similarly, he was instrumental in initiating comprehensive linguistic and cultural research along the coast and the islands, whose inhabitants have strong Swahili mother tongue backgrounds. This Finnish funded project (Computer Archives of Swahili Language and Folklore) was jointly implemented by Arvi and his colleagues from Finland and the Institute of Swahili Research in Dar es Salaam. The project set a ground-breaking example in the sense that sporadic data collection by individual researchers was superseded by a well-designed venture that included linguists and Swahili experts on a large scale, thus facilitating effective documentation of the rich oral and written traditions of the Swahili-speaking communities in the area. Kilwa, Mafia, of course Zanzibar and Pemba as well as mainland sites known for their Swahili mastery and scholarship were visited and important data saved from oblivion. In addition, this vast stock of tape-recorded documentation which became subsequently available was converted in Helsinki into an electronic version that can be retrieved at University of Helsinki Language Corpus Server (UHLCS) by scholars who are interested in any aspect of Swahili language, literature and culture.

In recognition of Arvi's committed work on Swahili, it is rather logical that the author of this paper should also address Swahili issues. This is done from a

¹ The author thanks Dr. Carol Benson (Stockholm) for checking and, where necessary, correcting the English text.

different perspective that is outside the scope of Arvi's studies to look at the specific circumstances under which Swahili has spread as the lingua franca of Tanzania (and beyond) and as the national language of the country (L2, in addition to its function as the mother tongue of a growing number of East and Central Africans).

In Tanzania and in other parts of the region, Swahili as L2 has made fast progress. This language has vigorously penetrated even into remote corners of the countryside where ethnically homogeneous populations are still found. This development brings up an interesting issue, since ethnic homogeneity – i.e. the almost exclusive dominance of a particular ethnic group/nationality – is often seen as a strong stimulus for wide use of the language that is inherent to that ethnic group/nationality (L1).² In other words, the conditions for maintaining this L1 are considered to be favourable, as individuals who identify themselves as belonging to a particular ethnic group are normally expected to be competent in the L1. But this is not always the case, as observed earlier by the author among the Bondei in the 1970ies nor among the Ngasa (February 2003).

In the recent past, Åsa Wedin (2004: 76) found in north-western parts of Tanzania in the Kagera Region among Nyambo people a widespread use of L1 (Ru-)Nyambo in a number of domains, particularly in informal ones. In this context she speaks even of a 'Runyambo-dominated setting' (Wedin 2004: 78). In addition, she illustrates the role of Swahili L2 that is important in formal domains and increasingly in informal ones as well. A similar linguistic situation in an ethnically homogeneous area is seen in Mekacha's case study, conducted in the Mara Region among Nata people (Mekacha 1993).

Speaking of the implications of a situation where a particular ethnic group/nationality dominates and, as a consequence, its language also dominates, the then Tanzanian Swahili Promoter summarized in 1974 with regard to education:

Teachers who are posted in places such as Kwimba District or Masai District find themselves forced to learn Kisukuma or Kimasai in order to be able to communicate with the new toddlers in standards I and II. (Khamis 1991: 98)

The issue of L2 competence was pointed out by Whiteley (1969: 3), who referred to four types of Swahili speakers, where types three and four speak Swahili L2 less frequently as follows:

² In fact, any definition of 'ethnicity' refers to language as one of the constituents that are typical for defining an ethnic group/nationality, comp. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 174–175) quoting two separate sources. Hence, to speak of 'ethnic community languages' (e.g. Mekacha 1993) or 'lugha za jamii' (=languages of community [-ies] e.g. Tanzania 1997, Msanjila 2003) is a tautology, as there is no language without a community. That's why the label L1 has been chosen here to mean any Tanzanian language other than Swahili (L2), comp. also Kahigi (2004), Rubanza (2004).

Third, a group ... who regularly use the language to a limited extent... Finally, there are those with a very limited control of the language who use it only sporadically.

Further material and information on the linguistic situation in other ethnically homogeneous Bantu L1 speaking areas are available, such as for the Rangi people in Kondoa District (Legère 1992)³ or for the Kaguru people in Petzell (forthc.) The situation in areas with non-Bantu ethnic groups such as Sandawe or Datoga/Barabaig is described in Legère (1992, 2000).⁴

The data below illustrates the role and use of L1 and L2 in Vidunda Ward of Central Tanzania (Morogoro Region, Kilosa District). This area is also typically ethnically homogeneous. It has been the home of the Vidunda people for at least 100 years. The material which follows familiarizes with the current ethno-linguistic situation in this part of Tanzania.⁵

Vidunda (Guthrie: Zone G 38, *Chividunda*⁶ is the autonym) belongs to those Tanzanian L1s which are known for their low numbers of speakers.⁷ Although no reliable statistical data is available (the last population census which took ethnicity into account dates back to 1967),⁸ the number of Vidunda speakers now seems to be well under 20,000 people. Vidunda is spoken (alongside L2 which is continuously gaining ground) in three major villages (Vidunda,⁹ Chonwe and Udunghu). In the 2002 census in this Vidunda core area (Vidunda Ward) 9,794 people were counted.¹⁰ Vidunda people are also found in other parts of the Kilosa

³ See Legère (1991) and to a limited extent Stegen (2003).

⁴ For a recent general discussion of L1 issues and the neglected position of these languages see Mkude (2001) and Msanjila (2003).

⁵ This is a by-product of the research project 'Wild plant names in Bantu languages' funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. In addition, the Languages of Tanzania (LoT) project which aims at the documentation of Tanzanian L1's and is funded by SAREC (the Swedish African Research Cooperation unit of SIDA) also stimulated work on the Vidunda language. The support of both institutions for enabling the author to embark on Vidunda language issues is gratefully acknowledged. To date no linguistic research has ever paid attention to this language.

⁶ *Vidunda* means 'mountains', thus *Chividunda* – language of the mountains (as opposed to [Chi-] *Saghala* which is an almost identical variety spoken in the valley north of Vidunda).

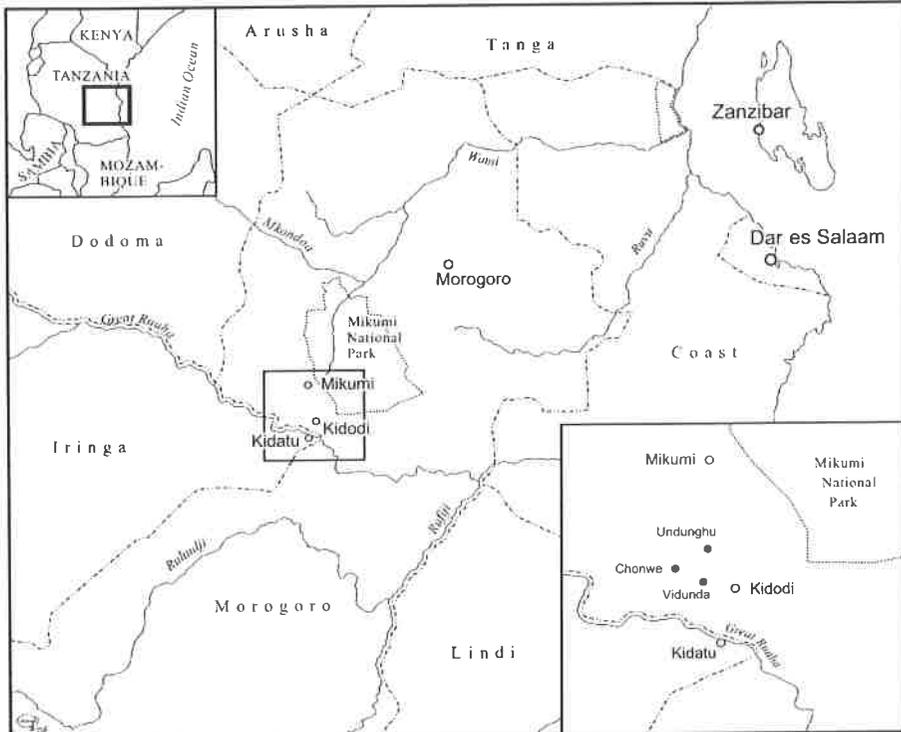
⁷ This highlights the urgent task of studying the Vidunda language.

⁸ The 1967 Population Census (Tanzania 1971) recorded 19,585 people who identified themselves as Vidunda.

⁹ The coordinates are: latitude 7o 34' 60 S, longitude 37o 1' 60 E (Vidunda Parish).

¹⁰ Source: Tanzania (2003: 61). Vidunda village is situated in the mountains four kilometres up the escarpment from Kidodi (350 m altitude) in the valley. Vidunda's altitude is approx. 780 m above sea level. There is a road to the village for 4x4 vehicles which ends there. Immediately in its neighbourhood the mountains reach an altitude of 1,600 m above sea level, thus near Chonwe an altitude of 1,400 m was registered. This village and Udunghu can only be reached on foot.

district.¹¹ However, as a result of the ethnolinguistic complexity (as documented in a variety of L1s), L2 occupies a strong position as the general medium of communication in formal as well as informal domains. The use of L2 is wide-spread among all inhabitants, including those who originally spoke Vidunda who have gradually given up their mother tongue in favour of the L2.



Map 1: The Vidunda Ward

There is a clear overall dominance of Vidunda people with a negligible number of people of non-Vidunda origin in the Vidunda Ward. The latter came for various reasons (e.g. marriage, job as a primary school teacher or nurse) and have been living in the area for variable periods of time. In fact, one may speak of Vidunda Ward as being an ethnically homogeneous area.

At first glance, it could be assumed that this ethnic homogeneity is conducive for far-reaching use of the L1, in this case the Vidunda language, since all villagers (the tiny group of immigrants excluded) are expected to share the same language. However, as known from other places, ethnic homogeneity does not

¹¹ Examples are in the valley east of Vidunda in ethnically heterogeneous settlements like Kidodi, but also in Kilombero or Kidatu. Their exact number is not known.

necessitate linguistic homogeneity. There are various other factors shaping and modifying the linguistic situation that must be taken into account, and these are also relevant for Vidunda Ward. These include people's frequent exposure to the L2 in the villages with the stipulated use of the L2 in a number of formal domains, which in turn result in a higher status for the L2 than the L1. This exposure also comes from seasonal work outside the Vidunda area, small-scale business (sale of vegetables in places like Kilombero or Kidodi where L2 is widely used), and so on. As a consequence, the L2 has a strong impact on language knowledge, attitudes and use among Vidunda people and is beyond the control of individuals.

Earlier observations demonstrated that despite the dominance of Vidunda people their language did not enjoy a unique, privileged position as the most prominent medium of communication, but shared this role with L2 depending on the speaker/addressee constellation and/or the subject to be discussed. Most adults who were met were found to be bilingual (L1+L2). It was also found that code-switching was frequent among people in Vidunda village or even in the homestead.

Given this situation the problem of language loyalty and maintenance arises, especially with regard to the younger generation who, on top of being exposed to L1+L2 communal code-switching among adults, are exposed to L2 as the medium of instruction and learning (MoI) in their formal primary schooling, which is supposed to teach completely in Swahili, as stipulated by the curriculum. However, teachers are reported to code-switch frequently similar to what Wedin (2004) observed.¹²

As outlined in earlier studies,¹³ the group of children aged 6 to 15, in particular the younger ones, are, on the one hand, a typical product of the linguistic situation that has shaped them with regard to L1 competence. On the other hand, these primary school learners evidence the far-reaching impact of the L2 as a subject and MoI which interferes with and even stops conceptualization and development of L1 skills. Accordingly, a quantitative survey¹⁴ of the linguistic competence, attitudes and perspectives which specifically focused on the young generation was planned and subsequently conducted in four village schools of

¹² She reports from Kagera that on a number of occasions during her classroom visits she met lower primary teachers who switched from Nyambo to Swahili and vice versa, while learners were not allowed to do so.

¹³ In addition to the Tanzania-related material (Legère 1992, 2000 and in particular the post-doctoral dissertation Legère 1982) see also Legère & Kanuri (1992) for examples from Kenya, and Legère, Trewby & Van Graan (2001) which summarizes among other things the results of fieldwork in Northern Namibia.

¹⁴ On the relevance of quantitative methods see Nardi (2003) or Saville-Troike (2003: 8) who wrote: "... many practitioners today are recognizing the need to ... include quantitative data in ethnographic descriptions."

Vidunda Ward.¹⁵ This survey was expected to shed light on the linguistic situation in the Vidunda core area specifically among the young generation and, moreover, to provide information that would support the general picture about the status and use of L1 and L2 among Vidunda people.

The survey took place from September to December 2003. The first visit (to Vidunda Primary School) was made September 4, 2003.¹⁶ During this and subsequent visits to other schools, learners were requested to respond to a brief questionnaire¹⁷ that dealt with their language competence, language use and language attitudes. The respondents were taken from Standard (std.) 1 (to achieve the most authentic picture of learners' backgrounds at the moment when schooling starts), from std. 5 and from std. 7. Answers from the latter group were supposed to reveal important facts about the impact of L2 as MoI as well as more generally about the formal spread of L2 in school. Suffice it to note here that the survey made a reasonably representative sample possible.¹⁸ For example, in Vidunda, out of 646 learners in the school 196 kids (i.e. one-third) answered the questionnaire.

In std. 1 P. Mkwanihembo administered the survey for obvious reasons. He also recorded learners' answers, rather than the classroom teacher who might have influenced the answers. In upper grades learners administered the questionnaire themselves. These children were also requested to write their name on the survey for cross-checking. As learners' names were recorded, dubious answers could subsequently be eliminated; there was, however, no need to do so. This was, of

¹⁵ The University of Dar es Salaam was kind enough to issue a research clearance for studying the endangered position of the Vidunda language. This support is gratefully acknowledged.

¹⁶ This was done by the author and Mr. Peter Mkwanihembo (of Vidunda village). Subsequently Mr. Mkwanihembo as field-worker went on foot to Udunghu (16/11/2003), Itembe (28/11/2003) and Chonwe (6/12/2003) to continue with the data collection. Mr. Mkwanihembo's commitment to the survey is outstanding and highly appreciated. A special word of thanks goes to him for his tireless efforts in collecting samples from these far-away schools.

¹⁷ The emphasis was on 'short'. As experienced earlier, too many questions tire and confuse interviewees and lead to automatism in the sense that often initial enthusiasm, their objectivity and seriousness quickly fades away in the later part of a long questionnaire where they give stereotypical or irrelevant answers just to finish and with the idea of pleasing the researcher. The material discussed by Uphor (2005) is probably an example of an overloaded questionnaire that lacks focus and goes into too many extra-linguistic details that are of little relevance to the description of the linguistic situation.

See the appendix for a copy of the questionnaire that had stood its test in earlier surveys. In all schools the questionnaire was distributed, administered and introduced to the learners in Vidunda by Mr. Mkwanihembo.

¹⁸ This is one of the strengths of a written survey. Comp. Milroy and Gordon (2003) "... written surveys can provide good amounts of useful data in a fairly brief time-frame".

course, not possible in std. 1, but when the learners raised their hands in answering the questions, the classroom teacher was present and in the position to confirm the relevance of the given answers (or otherwise correcting).

The survey addressed both general and language-specific questions, of which the first five had to do with name (1), gender (2), age (3), place of birth (4), ethnic origin (5), while numbers 6 through 13 covered the following aspects:

- mother tongue [MT here understood as the language acquired in infancy] (6)
- L2 acquired/learnt in infancy (7a)
- L2 learnt before attending school (7b)
- L2 learnt while attending school (7c)
- language(s) predominantly spoken (8)
- language spoken with parents (9)
- language spoken with peers (10)
- extent of Swahili competence (11)
- language preference (12)¹⁹
- knowledge of other languages (13).²⁰

In the following a selection of results of the survey are briefly presented and commented upon. Some details that seem to be self-explanatory are excluded here for the limited character of the paper, for example neither place of birth nor ethnic origin are explicitly referred to. Almost all interviewees were Vidunda speakers who were born and grew up in the area, hence also Vidunda by ethnic origin.

Table 1 illustrates the gender and mother tongue (MT) composition of the selected school classes (question 2 and 6).

¹⁹ This data is not included in this paper, question 12 is very similar to 8 and a sort of cross-check for the latter's relevance.

²⁰ This turned out to be irrelevant, as learners had almost no contact with speakers of other languages. Any answer that mentioned English was dropped because it was not realistic for the low command of this language all over the area.

	2 boys	2 girls	6 MT Vid	6 MT Sw
Chonwe std. 1 (63)	31	32	63	0
Itembe std. 1 (55)	26	29	54	1
Udunghu std. 1 (33)	13	20	33	0
Vidunda std. 1 A+B (99)	58	41	98	1
Results (total 250)	128	122	248	2
Chonwe std. 5 (47)	22	25	47	0
Itembe std. 5 (38)	13	25	38	0
Udunghu std. 5 (46)	22	24	46	0
Vidunda std. 5 (61)	39	22	60	1
Results (total 192)	96	96	191	1
Chonwe std. 7 (11)	5	6	11	0
Itembe std. 7 (17)	8	9	17	0
Udunghu std. 7 (26)	9	17	22	4
Vidunda std. 7 (36)	13	23	35	1
Results (total 90)	35	55	85	5

Table 1a: Number, gender (2) and MT (6, in figures)²¹

	2 boys	2 girls	6 MT Vid	6 MT Sw
percent std. 1	51	49	99	1
percent std. 5	50	50	99	1
percent std. 7	39	61	94	6

Table 1b: Number, gender and mother tongue/MT (percentages)

The facts which transpire from *table 1* are as follows:

a) Out of 478 learners in the sample groups 237 are boys and 241 are girls, thus there are a few more girls than boys in the sample. It does not seem that gender has influenced the answers, since both sexes are equally exposed to the same ethno-linguistic situation, producing rather uniform answer patterns across gender lines.

b) The almost homogeneous linguistic background of the sample group (which can be generally inferred from the ethnic composition of the Vidunda Ward) is displayed in the right-hand columns which deal with MT Vid and MT

²¹ The number of learners interviewed is in brackets, Vid = Vidunda (L1), Sw = Swahili (L2).

Sw (question 6). The overwhelming majority of the interviewees have acquired Vidunda as MT in early childhood. The rest came from other places, where they acquired the L2.

Table 2 has to do with L2 learning (7a, b, and c) and the language which is most frequently spoken (8).

	7a ²²	7b ²³	7c ²⁴	8 Vid	8 Sw
Chonwe std. 1 (63)	0	0	63	63	0
Itembe std. 1 (55)	1	0	54	54	1
Udunghu std. 1 (33)	0	7	26	33	0
Vidunda std. 1 A+B (99)	1	10	88	98	1
Results (total 250)	2	17	231	248	2
Chonwe std. 5 (47)	0	14	33	7	40
Itembe std. 5 (38)	0	1	37	38	0
Udunghu std. 5 (46)	0	34	12	45	1
Vidunda std. 5 (61)	1	8	52	33	28
Results (total 192)	1	57	134	123	69
Chonwe std. 7 (11)	0	2	9	0	11
Itembe std. 7 (17)	0	7	10	0	17
Udunghu std. 7 (26)	4	12	10	0	26
Vidunda std. 7 (36)	1	1	34	2	34
Results (total 90)	5	22	63	2	88

Table 2a: L2 learning (7) and language most frequently spoken (8, in figures)

	7a	7b	7c	8 Vid	8 Sw
percent std. 1	1	7	92	99	1
percent std. 5	1	30	70	64	36
percent std. 7	6	24	70	2	98

Table 2b: L2 learning and language most frequently spoken (percentage)

As shown above in tables 1 and 2 (column 7a), Swahili has only been acquired by a few as MT. For the rest it was learnt at a later stage of their juvenile years. In

²² L2 acquired in infancy.

²³ L2 learnt before attending school.

²⁴ L2 learnt while attending school.

some cases, the exposure to and learning of Swahili started before learners enrolled in school. Thus, in the std. 1 group approx. 10 percent of the learners (see column 7b) came to school with Swahili L2 practice as a result of outside-of-school learning. However, the vast majority of first-year learners had a limited command of Swahili (the language of instruction in all subjects), hence the L2 is mainly learnt while attending school.

It is interesting to note that a number of learners (30 and 24 percent respectively) in the std. 5 and 7 groups (especially in Udunghu) claimed that they had learnt Swahili prior to beginning school. Obviously, there is a certain contradiction (expressed in percentages) between what was said by those enrolled in std. 1 in 2003 and the std. 5 and 7 interviewees. It seems that a number of the latter probably had no exact memory of those years before school. This in turn resulted in an overestimation of the role of L2 (quite logical due to its high status) in their early life. In any case, the std. 1 learners' self-evaluation is more plausible, down-to-earth and consonant with what the classroom teacher said than that of the std. 5 and 7 groups' self-evaluation. This contradiction is certainly a problem of attitudes, where more realistic figures for L2 cannot be proven anymore. Another aspect that cannot be substantiated is the extent of early L2 competence of the children; this would require more participatory observation or preferably an in-depth analysis of recorded speech.

In addition, the weight that each of the two languages is given as most frequently spoken (qu. 8) is also related to attitudes and proper self-evaluation. In the first place it is quite clear that those who are not competent in L2 have no choice – they have to speak L1. This is particularly true for the std. 1 learners, for whom Vidunda (excluding those 2 who are Swahili speaking) is almost exclusively number one, as shown in the right-hand columns 8 VID and 8 SW of *table 2*. It is not until L2 competence is advanced such as in std. 5 that the situation is prone to change in favour of L2, since approximately one-third of the children claim to speak Swahili most frequently. However, learners in std. 7 in particular show an overwhelming preference for the L2, i.e. for 98 percent of them L2 is the most frequently used medium of communication. Similarly there is a hierarchy of L1 preference, because std. 5 illustrates the intermediate phase where approximately two-thirds of the learners are still in favour of L1, while the std. 7 group that is obviously well advanced in L2 competence claims to use the latter language widely at the expense of the L1.

Table 3 looks into language use (9 and 10) and L2 competence (11).

	9 Vid	9 Sw	10 Vid	10 Sw	11 good	11 low c.
Chonwe std. 1 (63)	63	0	63	0	0	63
Itembe std. 1 (55)	54	1	54	1	1	54
Udunghu std. 1 (33)	33	0	33	0	3	30
Vidunda std. 1 A+B (99)	98	1	98	1	7	92
Results (total 250)	248	2	248	2	11	239
Chonwe std. 5 (47)	47	0	32	15	25	22
Itembe std. 5 (38)	38	0	38	0	17	21
Udunghu std. 5 (46)	45	1	34	12	16	30
Vidunda std. 5 (61)	52	9	25	36	40	21
Results (total 192)	182	10	129	63	98	94
Chonwe std. 7 (11)	11	0	0	11	11	0
Itembe std. 7 (17)	15	2	3	14	17	0
Udunghu std. 7 (26)	15	11	0	26	25	1
Vidunda std. 7 (36)	31	5	3	33	36	0
Results (total 90)	72	18	6	84	89	1

Table 3a: Languages spoken with parents (9) and peers (10), L2 competence (11, in figures)

	9 Vid	9 Sw	10 Vid	10 Sw	11 well	11 low c.
percent std. 1	99	1	99	1	4	96
percent std. 5	95	5	67	33	51	49
percent std. 7	80	20	7	93	99	1

Table 3b: Languages spoken with parents and peers, L2 competence (percentage)

Normally, children talk to their parents in L1. This is also the case in the Vidunda area, as demonstrated in *table 3* (left-hand columns). It is only in upper grades that this situation slightly changes. This is evidenced in percentages where at best one-fifth of the children speak the L2 (i.e. in std. 7) to their parents at home. L1

prominence is obvious for std. 1 learners who have no choice of the L2, hence are confined to L1 use. Std. 5 learners address their parents in L1 too, although, as a look at the right-hand side of the column makes clear, 50 percent L2 competence percent is quite acceptable. Nevertheless, it has been observed time and again that the informal domain of the family and communication with adults at home are dominated by L1. Failure to comply with this unwritten rule to speak L1 to parents and elders is a violation of existing norms and demonstrates lack of respect; respect is what the older generation expects from children, teenagers and even university students. The latter often emphasized this fact in conversation with the author, but also pointed out that, as a compromise, at least the exchange of greetings has to take place in L1, if all other attempts fail.

A distinctively different picture appears when children communicate with each other (qu. 9). The wide use of L2 is in particular evident among std. 7 learners who for more than 6 years were taught in L2. In addition, the fact that they learn and play together, e. g. in the schoolyard or elsewhere in the village, is a major factor that widely contributes to enhancing L2 competence and practice. Simultaneously, and this is the negative effect of the L2 MoI policy, std. 7 learners' L1 exposure, at least in school, becomes almost insignificant. Accordingly, these std. 7 learners have a serious deficit as far as their L1 competence and use is concerned. It is easier for them to communicate with their peers in L2 as this is the language of the school, while L1 is left behind to the extent that it becomes nearly impossible to make any meaningful transfer of school knowledge (e.g. school subject content) from L2 to L1 and, in attempting to do so, share with others through the L1 what they have learned. For the younger generation L2 is attractive and in their opinion well equipped for chatting on those themes that e.g. male teens find interesting such as sports (mainly soccer), music, radio broadcasts, stories, technology, and other forms of contemporary life. In addition, they can also use L2 and modify it in order to distinguish themselves from the parent generation.

Std. 5 is still more inclined to L1, maybe still feeling more attracted by their families and their home lives, while std. 1 kids have no alternative but the L1 which is the medium of communication with their peers.

Finally, the two right-hand columns of *table 3* which contain data for L2 competence, i.e. either good or low, are more or less self-explanatory and repeat what has been said earlier:

- Std. 1 children display low L2 competence for obvious reasons (i.e. the widespread use of L1 at home).
- Half of the std. 5 learners have mastered L2.

- A nearly 100 percent result with regard to high L2 competence is claimed by std. 7 learners, again proof of the impact of both formal and informal factors that were sketched above.

This analysis of the questionnaires establishes a general tendency of language shift among young Vidunda towards L2, as studied in other rather ethnically homogeneous areas of Tanzania among the young generation. In std. 1 the L1 is in most cases widely used, while L2 competence leaves much to be desired (a difficult situation the teacher has to face without proper guidance, since the curriculum is the same for Swahili-speaking and non-Swahili speaking learners; see comment by Khamis 1991 above). However, after some years in school the L2 takes over the role of the dominant medium of communication among those who are enrolled in the formal education system and hence exposed to L2 as MoI.

It must be borne in mind that any quantitative survey is subject to limitations.²⁵ This has to do with its nature as well as with the sample group above. The data commented upon in this paper originate from children's self-reports. All of them saw, read or were informed about a survey for the first time in their lives. However, there is no cause for doubting the honesty and diligence with which these learners approached this exercise of answering questions. In fact, they were willing to provide information that conformed as much as possible to reality. Although the sample group had no experience in understanding and administering a survey, their answers were valuable and relevant for portraying the linguistic situation of the Vidunda Ward from the perspective of the younger generation.

It should go without saying that the relevance of quantitative results should not be overestimated, nor should the details displayed and summarized above be underrated. The whole survey aimed at nothing other than collecting information from resource persons who are familiar with and themselves a product of the linguistic situation in Vidunda Ward. The details expressed above in figures and percentages are in support of the assessment of the current linguistic situation with particular reference to the status and use of L1 and L2 in the Vidunda area, which is typical for this ethnically homogeneous part of Tanzania (and beyond).

In a nutshell, the characteristic feature of this situation is a high degree of communal bilingualism, whereby even elders deliberately switch from L1 to L2 and back. It is no wonder that the sample group which represents the young generation lacks proper linguistic opportunities to develop their L1 competence to its fullest once they leave their homes. As a consequence, the 6- to 15-year-old age group is more or less left alone when it comes to language choice and language use, although there are almost no alternatives. The younger generation is handicapped with regard to their L1 competence. Thus, the std. 1 kids are still on

²⁵ See e.g. Milroy & Gordon (2003: 52).

their way to expand their L1 grammatical, lexical and conceptual foundations, while at the same time being forced to come to grips with the L2 as MoI. Accordingly, they are struggling in two directions. But in fact, the L1 avenue is currently already a dead end, as neither formal support nor incentives which would promote L1 maintenance are available.²⁶ The older ones are more and more trapped by the L2 that is prominent throughout much of their lives. This implies for L1 a significant setback and loss of almost all domains, not only the formal but also the informal ones where only the family has the resources for speaking L1 as evidenced above.

The future of Vidunda is certainly heavily influenced by the growing impact of L2. Judging from the survey results, the current young generation is mainly Swahili speaking. This implies for the future that L1 competence will be further eroding. Sooner or later, but in any case within the next generation, an active command of L1 may no longer be expected. As a consequence, L1 maintenance will be very difficult, as those who are supposed to do so are poorly equipped language-wise. This makes L1 inter-generational transmission and L1 maintenance quite difficult and, in the long run, impossible. Stopping this trend that impoverishes the linguistic heritage of Tanzania and the world is an important and worthy challenge for linguists, educationists and others.

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²⁶ For a discussion of this and other aspects of L1 maintenance and promotion, see Msanjila (2003) and various papers read at the 2004 LoT Conference "Lugha za Tanzania" that focused in detail on the current position and future of L1 in Tanzania. Many critical remarks and valuable suggestions of what to do can be found in papers by Kahigi, Madumulla and Rubanza (all 2004, see bibliography).

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

UJUZI NA MATUMIZI YA KISWAHILI

1. JINA LAKO
2. WEWE NI (TIA ALAMA YA ✓)
 - a) MSICHANA
 - b) MVULANA
3. UMRI WAKO
4. MAHALI PA KUZALIWA+ WILAYA
5. KABILA LAKO
6. ULIPOKUWA MTOTO MDOGO ULIZUNGUMZA LUGHA GANI HASA?
NILITUMIA HASA LUGHA YA
7. ULIANZA KUZUNGUMZA KISWAHILI (TIA ALAMA YA ✓)
 - a) ULIPOKUWA MTOTO MDOGO.....
 - b) KABLA YA KUTOINGIA SHULENI.....
 - c) BAADA YA KUINGIA SHULENI.....
8. SIKU HIZI UNATUMIA LUGHA GANI HASA?
NATUMIA HASA LUGHA YA
9. UNAZUNGUMZA LUGHA GANI NYUMBANI NA BABA NA MAMA?
NAZUNGUMZA HASA LUGHA YA
10. UNAZUNGUMZA LUGHA GANI HASA NA MARAFIKI ZAKO?
NAZUNGUMZA HASA LUGHA YA.....
11. UNAZUNGUMZA KISWAHILI (✓) (A) KWA SHIDA
- (B) BARABARA.....
12. UNAPENDELEA KUZUNGUMZA LUGHA GANI ?
NAPENDELEA KUZUNGUMZA LUGHA YA
13. UNAWEZA KUZUNGUMZA LUGHA ZIPI NYINGINE ?
NAWEZA KUZUNGUMZA LUGHA YA/ZA.....

