

Introduction

Swahili Basic Course aims first of all at assisting the student to develop ability in understanding and speaking everyday Swahili of a standard variety. On the basis of well-established speech habits, he can then go on with relatively high efficiency to the further skills of reading and writing.

The course is designed for use in any of three general types of study situation: (1) a full-time language program of thirty or more hours per week, (2) a language program in which one or more part-time students attend class for three to six hours per week, and (3) (much the least desirable) individual study in the absence of any speaker of the language.

In any of these situations, the class should be guided in such a way that it concentrates on one small task at a time. For this reason, the 150 units of the course are comparatively short. Each unit is in turn divided into a brief dialogue (with notes) and a series of short exercises. The dialogues and exercises are further broken up into individual lines. In most of the exercises, there is a further division into two or three columns. The word or phrase at the left is called the 'cue.' The sentence in the next column is the 'desired response' to that cue. In those exercises having a third column in Swahili, the sentence in the second column is intended to serve as a secondary cue, and the corresponding sentence in the third column is the desired response to it.

In teaching with these materials, it is suggested that the instructor emphasize the following activities:

With dialogues:

1. Individual and group repetition of the dialogue line-by-line, immediately after the instructor. Books should be closed at first, so that the students may become accustomed to depending on their ears. The instructor may correct errors by repeating the mispronounced word as it should have been said.

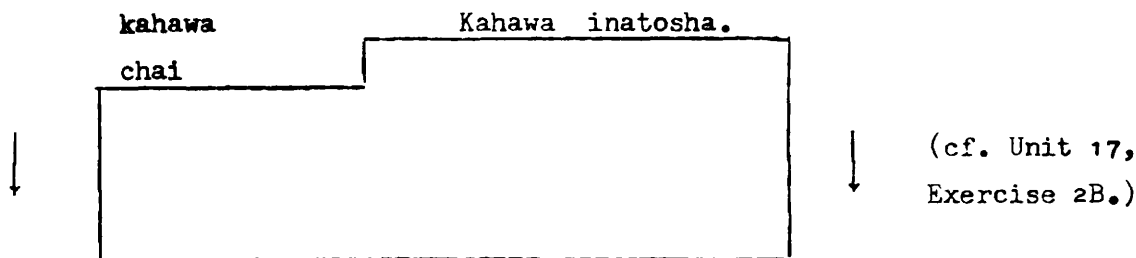
2. When the students are able to repeat the lines of the dialogue correctly, they should open their books. The instructor reads the dialogue and the class repeats, line-by-line, at the same time following with their eyes the printed words.
3. After going through the dialogue two or three times in this way, students should take turns reading aloud.
4. Finally, students should close their books, and practice assuming one of the roles in the dialogue until they are able to do it from memory—without mistakes.

With exercises:

1. Students repeat after the instructor the 'desired response' sentences of the exercise.
2. The instructor gives only the 'cue' for each line. Individual students give the desired responses.

It should be noted that very little English is needed in any of these activities. In fact, the instructor or the student who finds that more than 20% of the words he uses in class are in English, may be sure that he is proceeding with less than maximum efficiency.

For individual study, tape recordings of the dialogues and the exercises are available. It is also suggested that while practicing the exercises, the student make use of a notched card which can be slid down the page as he goes along. As soon as he has given his own response to a particular cue word or phrase, he slides the card down to reveal the answer, thus receiving immediate confirmation or correction of his own reply. At the same time, the next cue word or phrase appears in the notch:



Rate of progress and total achievement, then, should be measured in terms of answers given to the following questions:

Concerning each dialogue:

Level 1. Can the student repeat the dialogue accurately, line-by-line, after the instructor, with book closed?

Level 2. Can the student read the dialogue aloud independently of the instructor, with excellent pronunciation and intonation?

Level 3. Can the student take any role in the dialogue, without hesitation or mistakes, book closed?

Concerning each exercise:

Level 1. Can the student repeat the Swahili sentences of the dialogue accurately, line-by-line, after the instructor?

Level 2. Can the student give the Swahili sentence after hearing the Swahili cue word, or the English translation, with his book closed?

General Hints to the Instructor

1. When you speak to a student, look directly at him, and insist that he speak directly to you when he replies.

2. Don't spend too long with one student; if a student continues to make the same mistake after three or four tries, go on to another student. Later, come back to the student who made the error.

3. The students should learn to understand and speak Swahili at a normal rate of speed. For this reason, do not speak to them more slowly or clearly than the slowest and clearest style in which you might speak with another speaker of Swahili.

4. The students' books should be closed about 80% of the time in class.

5. Don't try to explain how the language works: teach the language, not the grammar.

6. Emphasize:

hearing before understanding,
hearing and understanding before repetition,
repetition before independent production,
speaking before reading and writing.

The Pronunciation of Swahili

The pronunciation of Swahili varies slightly from one geographical area to another. In addition, since most speakers of Swahili have learned it after first learning some other language, there are noticeable discrepancies among the speech of persons with different national or tribal backgrounds. The following notes do not attempt to set forth any of these variations but only to indicate those points which are essential to an intelligible and widely acceptable pronunciation of the language.

The standard treatment of this subject is A. N. Tucker and E. O. Ashton, Swahili Phonetics (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1942). It consists of bound reprints of two major articles which appeared originally in African Studies for that year.

Vowels. There are five vowels.

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Examples</u>
a	When stressed, similar to <u>a</u> in <u>father</u> , or <u>o</u> in (American English) <u>odd</u> . Technically: a low central unrounded vowel.	basi 'only' kitabu 'book'
	When unstressed, between <u>a</u> of <u>father</u> and <u>u</u> of <u>up</u> . Technically: a slightly raised low central unrounded vowel. Speakers of English must still take care not to 'reduce' the quality of unstressed /a/ as	kusoma 'to need' birika 'water vessel'

much as they would in English.

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Examples</u>
e	<p>Similar to <u>e</u> in <u>bet</u>.</p> <p>Technically: a lax lower-mid front vowel. Other varieties of this sound have been reported in certain environments, but those allophones are absent from the speech of the two speakers who served as principal sources for this investigation.</p>	<p>kuleta 'to bring'</p> <p>kujenga 'to build'</p> <p>embe 'mango'</p>
i	<p>Roughly similar to the vowel of English <u>eat</u>.</p> <p>Technically: a high front unrounded vowel, unglided, and less tense than its nearest English counterpart.</p>	<p>vita 'war'</p> <p>rafiki 'friend'</p>
o	<p>Between the vowels of English <u>boat</u> and <u>bought</u>.</p> <p>Technically: a lax, lower-mid, back rounded vowel, unglided.</p>	<p>mtoto 'child'</p> <p>ng'ombe 'ox'</p>
u	<p>Reminiscent of the vowel of English <u>too</u>, but lying somewhere between that vowel and the vowel of <u>took</u>.</p> <p>Technically, a slightly lowered high-back rounded vowel, unglided.</p>	<p>bure 'free'</p> <p>kuruhusu 'to permit'</p>

Consonants

b, d, j, g These sounds may be pronounced as in English bow, dough, Joe, go respectively.

Technically: Bilabial, alveolar, palatal, and velar voiced stops. When not in combination with a nasal consonant, these sounds are pronounced implosively by most speakers. The sound represented by the letter j has little or no affrication.

These sounds may be pronounced as in English peas, tease, cheese, keys respectively.

Technically: Bilabial, alveolar, palatal, and velar unvoiced stops. The palatal stop has strong affrication. The degree of aspiration associated with these sounds varies. None of the speakers consulted in the preparation of this course has a contrast of aspirated vs. unaspirated unvoiced stops, however.

These sounds may be pronounced as in English.

Technically: There is no noticeable difference between these sounds and the corresponding nasal sounds of English.

This sound is pronounced like ng in English sing. But in English, this sound never occurs at the beginning of a word, while in Swahili it may occur there.

Technically: A dorso-velar nasal resonant. Before vowels this sound

baba 'father'

dada 'sister'

jambo 'matter'

gogo 'lag'

panga 'large knife'

tisa '9'

chache 'few'

kaka 'elder brother'

mama 'married woman'

nene 'fat'

ng'ombe 'ox'

ngozi 'leather'

is spelled ng', but before other consonants, it is spelled n.

ny	<p>As in Spanish cañ<u>o</u>n, Portuguese nen<u>h</u>um, French g<u>a</u>gn<u>e</u>r. Technically: A palatal nasal. Before vowels, this sound is spelled <u>ny</u>, but before other consonants, it is spelled n.</p>	<p>nyumba 'house' ñchi 'land, country' ñje 'outside'</p>
th, dh	<p>These sounds are like the initial sounds of English <u>th</u>in and <u>th</u>en, respectively. Technically: Unvoiced and voiced ungrooved dental fricatives.</p>	<p>thelathini '30' kadhalika 'likewise'</p>
s, z,	<p>Like the initial sounds of English <u>s</u>ue, <u>z</u>oo, respectively. Technically: Alveolar grooved unvoiced fricatives.</p>	<p>saa 'hour' kuzaa 'to produce offspring'</p>
sh	<p>Like the sound spelled the same way in English <u>sh</u>e, with accompanying lip-rounding. Technically: An unvoiced palatal grooved fricative. (Note the lack of a voiced counterpart.)</p>	<p>shamba 'farm' kurusha 'to cause to fly'</p>
h	<p>Like the initial sound of English <u>h</u>ow.</p>	<p>kuhama 'to change residence'</p>

- f, v Like the initial sounds of English fine, vine, respectively. Technically: Unvoiced and voiced labio-dental fricatives. kuficha 'to hide'
vivu 'idle'
- r This sound is pronounced like the sound written with the same letter in the standard British pronunciation of very. It is thus not very different from the sound written tt in the common American pronunciation of witty. Technically: A voiced apico - alveolar flap. kuruka 'to fly'
- l, w, y These sounds may be pronounced as in English. kulala 'to lie down'
sawa 'equal'
haya 'these'
- gh This is the only Swahili sound that is likely to cause noticeable difficulty for speakers of English. It is made with the back of the tongue against the soft palate, in the same position as for English 'golly.' For English 'g', however, the tongue makes momentary contact with the soft palate, completely cutting off the flow of air. For Swahili gh, on the other hand, the back of the tongue does not make contact all the way across the soft palate. Instead, it comes so close to it that the flow of air from the ghali 'expensive'
gharama 'amount of money'

lungs is constricted. This gives rise to audible turbulence, or 'friction.'

Technically: A voiced dorso-velar fricative.

Syllabic Nasals.

In some words in which they precede other consonants, the nasal sounds may be pronounced as separate syllables. In these materials, syllabic nasals are indicated by a grave accent. This seems to be true for n, ny and ng' only when they are at the beginning of a word and when only one vowel comes after them in the word. It is also true of these three nasals that the consonants before which they occur are those which are formed at the same position of articulation as the nasal:

n̄	n̄ne	'four'
nȳ	n̄chi	'land'
ng'	n̄ge	'scorpion' (pronounced ng'ge)

The sound m, on the other hand, may be syllabic in words of any length:

m̄géni	'stranger'
m̄letée	'bring to him'
ham̄júi	'he doesn't know him'

Syllabic and non-syllabic m contrast with one another in:

m̄bóvu	'bad' (personal class singular)
mbóvu	'bad' (N class)

These are not distinguished from one another in the customary spelling of Swahili.

Stress

In general, the next to last syllable of a Swahili word or phrase receives a stress, which consists of a slight increase in loudness, usually with some increase also in length. In those instances where the stress falls

on some other syllable, its location is indicated in these materials by an acute accent: *lázima* 'necessary.'

In Swahili, each vowel counts as a syllable, and in addition, pre-consonantal nasals are sometimes syllabic. These facts must be taken into account in calculating which syllable is the next-to-last. Examples:

	<i>simletéi</i>	'I don't bring to him'
	<i>kukáa</i>	'to stay'
	<i>nilimpa</i>	'I gave to him'
	<i>kuómba</i>	'to request'
	<i>náina</i>	
or:	<i>namna</i>	'kind, sort'
	<i>hamna</i>	'you don't have'

Word Juncture.

In Swahili, there exist, at least for some speakers, two distinct pronunciations for a number of pairs of expressions which are identical with respect to their vowels and consonants. One such pair of expressions is spelled with the letters:

w a f a n y a g h a s i a

One of the pronunciations corresponding to these letters means 'they create a disturbance,' while the other means 'rioters.' The most conspicuous difference between them is that in the first, the syllable *fá* is more prominent than it is in the second. In neither pronunciation is *fa* as prominent--as heavily stressed--as the syllable *si*. We may attribute the differing degrees of stress on *fá* to the presence or absence of word boundary, writing the two pronunciations respectively:

<i>wafanya ghasia</i>	'they create a disturbance'
<i>wafanyaghasia</i>	'rioters'

In so doing, of course, we have introduced into our inventory of the Swahili sound system an entity which might be called word juncture.

Some linguists may prefer to do without the word juncture, introducing instead an intermediate degree of stress, which might be called 'secondary.' Morphological word boundaries (for almost all words) would then fall after the first syllable following a primary or secondary stress. A strictly phonemic

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	B. More concerning negative counterparts of the <u>na</u> - tense.
Unit 15	31
	'Bread and butter with the tea.'
	A, B Concord: Various classes of third person subjects.
Unit 16	35
	'Preparing to buy food at the door.'
	A. 'Applied' or 'prepositional' stem.
	B. The N class singular.
	C. Affirmative vs. negative forms of a verb with vowel-final root.
	D. Concord shown in object prefix, N class.
	E. Object prefix for singular of WA class.
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	D. The VI class.
Unit 19	52
	'Buying at the door.'
	A. Use of WA class conCORDS for all nouns denoting

transcription of utterances would then contain no word spaces, and each stress would be marked explicitly.

The lessons in this book do not employ that kind of transcription. Instead, they make use of a pedagogical orthography, which is thought to be most suitable for the use of foreign learners of the language. In it, word space sets apart units (words) which have been established on a non-phonological basis; stress is written only when it does not occur on the next-to-last syllable of a word which has been established on this basis.

A practical writing system, unlike either the phonemic transcription or the pedagogical orthography, can afford to do away with the marking of any and all stresses. It is important not to confound these three types of graphic representation of a language.

Pitch Phenomena.

Swahili, unlike other Bantu languages, is not a tone language. That is to say, there do not exist in the language pairs of words which are identical in their vowels and consonants, but different in musical pitch patterns and in meaning. Swahili does make use of a system of sentence intonation which is comparable to the intonation systems of Indo-European languages, although the details of Swahili sentence intonation are, of course, peculiar to Swahili. This aspect of the language has been discussed in some detail by Mrs. Ashton, and will not be described further here.

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Unit 1

1. Basic Dialogue. Routine greeting sequence.

Mutisya

jambo (MA)

matter, affair

bwana

master, sir, Mr.

Hujambo, bwana.

Hello! (said to a man)

Sangai

Sijambo.

Hello! (reply to the above)

habari (N)

news

-a

of

asubuhi (N)

morning

Habari za asubuhi?

How are you this morning?

Mutisya

~zuri

good

Nzuri.

Fine. ('good')

or

Habari nzuri.

Fine. ('good news')

Notes

A. This is an exchange of greetings between two men between the hours of daybreak and noon. Mr. Mutisya is a member of the Wakamba tribe, of Kenya. Sangai is a member of the Wabondei tribe, of Tanganyika.

B. Note that the first sound of jambo is not quite the same as the usual English pronunciation of the first consonant in Jim.

C. Note that in each word it is the next-to-last syllable that is accented. For that reason, we will not need to mark accented syllables in Swahili except in the very few words which violate the rule.

D. The symbols (MA) and (N) which follow certain words in the build-ups will be explained in Unit 15.

Unit 2

1. Basic Dialogue. Midday greetings.

Sangai

hujambo

you have no affair/trouble?

Hujambo, bwana.

Hello! (said to a man)

Mutisya

sijambo

I have no affair/trouble

Sijambo.

(reply to Hujambo.)

mchana

daytime

Habari za mchana?

How are you today?

Sangai

Nzuri.

Fine.

Notes

A. Greeting at any time of day may begin either with jambo or with hujambo. The replies to each are as shown in Units 1 and 2. Jambo is an abbreviation of hujambo, but is not the best usage.

B. In pronouncing the word mchana, do not produce a vowel sound either before or immediately after the m.

C. The greeting with mchana may be used at any time during the daylight, but particularly in the middle part of the day.

Unit 3

1. Basic Dialogue. Routine evening greetings.

Sangai

Jambo, bwana. Hello (sir) !

Mirambo

Jambo, bwana. Hello (sir) !
usiku(U) night (starts about 7 p.m.)

Habari za jioni? How are you this evening?

or

Habari za usiku?

Sangai

Habari nzuri. Fine!

Notes

A. These simple perfunctory greetings (Units 1-7) are those which would be used by people who see each other almost every day.

B. Be sure you have not been pronouncing the last a in bwana and the first a in habari, like the last vowel sound in English sofa or the first in English above. The quality of both vowels in bwana and the first two vowels in habari should be practically identical. Speakers of English are particularly likely to 'reduce' such vowels when they are in unstressed syllables.

C. Mr. Mirambo is a member of the Nyamwezi tribe (Western Tanganyika).

Unit 4

1. Basic Dialogue. Greetings to a lady.

Hamisi

mama

mother

Hujambo, mama.

Hello (ma'am)!

Mrs. Mirambo

Sijambo.

(reply to Hujambo)

Habari za asubuhi?

How are you this morning?

Hamisi

Nzuri.

Fine!

Notes

A. Some people may use bibi 'lady' in place of mama in the above exchange. Many people use mama as the polite form of address to any grown woman. Bibi is used in the expression Bwana na Bibi Smith 'Mr. and Mrs. Smith', and in some other circumstances.

Unit 5

1. Basic Dialogue. Some variants on the greeting routine.

Mirambo

Jambo, bwana.

Hello (sir)!

Sangai

Sijambo.

(another reply to jambo)

Habari za mchana?

How are you today?

('News of daytime?')

Mirambo

~jema

good

Njema.

Fine. ('good')

or

Habari njema.

Fine. ('good news')

Notes

A. The new expressions in this exchange are interchangeable with their counterparts in the preceding units. In some parts of East Africa, the word nzuri is preferred to njema in these contexts.

Unit 6

1. Basic Dialogue. One more common variant in routine greetings.

Sangai

Hujambo, bwana.

Hello!

Mirambo

sana

very much

Sijambo sana.

(Another reply)

gani?

what kind of?

Habari gani?

How are you? ('What kind of news?')

Sangai

Habari njema.

Fine.

Notes

A. The questions in Units 5 and 6 may be combined to give:

Habari gani za mchana?

('What kind of news of daytime?')

The answer of course remains the same.

Unit 7

Test. Listen to the following dialogues. After each, summarize it by specifying the sex of the person spoken to, and the time of day or night.

Hujambo, bwana.

Hujambo, bwana.

Sijambo.

Sijambo bwana.

Habari za mchana?

Habari gani za asubuhi?

Nzuri.

Nzuri, bwana.

Hujambo, mama.

Hujambo, bwana.

Sijambo, bwana.

Sijambo.

Habari za asubuhi?

Habari za usiku?

Njema.

Habari njema.

Unit 8

1. Basic Dialogue. Breakfast in the dining room of the hotel.

Waiter

je welli/tell me! (used here to
introduce the yes-no question)

-taka to want

unataka you want

chakula (VI) food

(Je,) unataka chakula? Would you like [some] food?

Aramian (an American)

ndiyo that is it

Ndiyo, bwana. Yes, please.

kuna there is

gani? what kind?

Kuna chakula gani? What kind of food is there?

Waiter

tunda (MA) a piece of fruit

matunda fruit

na and

uji (U) thin porridge/gruel

yai (MA) egg

mayai eggs

Kuna matunda, na uji na mayai. There is fruit, gruel, and eggs.

Aramian

tafadhali	please
-letea	to bring for/to
niletee	bring me

Tafadhali, niletee mayai.

Please bring me [some] eggs.

Notes

A. Je at the beginning of a yes-no question.

The word je is used at the beginning of a question to focus the hearer's attention. In this way it is somewhat comparable to English Say! Je is not necessary in yes-no questions, but would not be likely to be used by an 'inferior' to a 'superior' as in the dialog for this unit.

B. The subject prefix slot: ni (1 sg.) vs. u (2 sg.).

Compare the forms:

unataka	'you want'
ninataka	'I want'

The syllables u- and ni- are 'subject prefixes' partly corresponding to the English subject pronouns you (sg.) and I.

C. Tafadhali.

Though we have given please as a rough English equivalent of tafadhali, the latter is used in Swahili less often than please is used in English.

D. Ni as subject or object prefix.

Compare the forms:

ninataka	'I want'
niletee	'bring me'

In both forms, the syllable ni- is a first person singular prefix standing for I or me. In the form which ends with -e it stands for the object (me).

E. The forms kipo or kiko are used in some parts of East Africa where in this dialogue we have used kuna.

2. Substitutions in single sentences.

A. Je, unataka _____?

chakula	Je, unataka chakula?	Do you want food?
mayai	Je, unataka mayai?	Do you want eggs?
matunda	Je, unataka matunda?	Do you want fruit?
chakula	Je, unataka chakula?	Do you want food?

B. Tafadhali, niletee _____.

mayai	Tafadhali, niletee mayai.	Please bring me eggs.
matunda	Tafadhali, niletee matunda.	Please bring me fruit.
mayai	Tafadhali, niletee mayai.	Please bring me eggs.
uji	Tafadhali, niletee uji.	Please bring me porridge.
chakula	Tafadhali, niletee chakula.	Please bring me food.

3. Substitution in sets of sentences.

uji	Kuna chakula gani?	What kind of food is there?
	Kuna uji.	There is gruel.
	Unataka uji?	Do you want gruel?
	Ndiyo. Niletee uji.	Yes. Bring me gruel.
matunda	Kuna chakula gani?	What kind of food is there?
	Kuna matunda.	There is fruit.
	Unataka matunda?	Do you want fruit?
	Ndiyo. Niletee matunda.	Yes, bring me fruit.
mayai	Kuna chakula gani?	What kind of food is there?
	Kuna mayai.	There are eggs.
	Unataka mayai?	Do you want eggs?
	Ndiyo. Niletee mayai.	Yes, bring me eggs.

Unit 9

1. Basic dialogue. Breakfast at the hotel, revisited.

Waiter

Je, unataka matunda?

Would you like ('do you want')
some fruit?

Aramian

Ndiyo, bwana.

Yes, [I would] (sir).

Kuna matunda gani?

What kind of fruit is there?

ndizi (N)

banana/bananas

Kuna ndizi?

Are there [any] bananas?

Waiter

chungwa (MA)

orange

machungwa

oranges

embe (MA)

mango

maembe

mangoes

Kuna ndizi na machungwa na

There are bananas and oranges and

maembe.

mangoes.

Aramian

~moja

one

basi

that is all (an interjection)

Tafadhali, niletee chungwa moja (basi). Please bring me **one orange**.

Notes

N. B. In some parts of East Africa, the plural of embe 'mango' is embe (N).

2. Kuna _____?

A. Kuna machungwa? Are there any oranges?

ndizi Kuna ndizi? Are there any bananas?

maembe matunda uji chakula mayai

B. Kuna _____ na _____.

Kuna ndizi na maembe. There are bananas and mangoes.

uji Kuna maembe na uji. There are mangoes and gruel.

matunda Kuna matunda na mayai. There is fruit and eggs.

ndizi Kuna mayai na ndizi. There are eggs and bananas.

3. Substitutions in sequences of sentences.

Kuna matunda gani?

Kuna maembe na ndizi.

Niletee ndizi (basi).

Substitute various combinations of names of fruits in this conversation.