The author uses some terminology that will be unfamiliar to you (like "mesolect," etc.) but the pages reproduced here give a good, general introduction to the history of English in Kenya. Our guest speaker, Professor John Mugane, is a native of Kenya, and he has a more expansive view of the dynamic nature of English spoken in Kenya, as you will hear.

Some terms to keep in mind:

"Kiswahili" is another term for Swahili
Swahili is a long-established language of trade
"Kikuyu" and "Luo" are languages spoken within Kenya
"Sheng" is a pidgin formed from Swahili, English, and other local languages

Fun fact: Barack Obama's father was a Luo speaker.

Postcolonial English

Varieties around the world

Edgar W. Schneider
University of Regensburg

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2007

In the context of discussing encroaching norms and standards in SAfE, Black SAfE, especially as spoken by educated speakers, occupies a very special position. This is due not only to the fact that the majority of the South African population consists of Native Africans but also to the continuous presence of the accent as used by black political leaders in the media. Some authors believe in an explicit "restandardization" of SAfE with the Black variety as a target, a "new standard" (Brutt-Griffler 2002:163; see de Klerk 2003; van der Walt and van Rooy 2002). Black SAfE is now gaining native speaker status: there is an increasing (though still rather small) number of children who grow up speaking it as their first language.[28] It is clear that the variety has for a long time enjoyed covert prestige among Africans. Consider the following, telling, statement: "Black children who attend private schools are sometimes embarrassed to be seen to speak standard SAE, and they therefore adopt a more typical African pronunciation in the townships" (Silva 2001:89). De Klerk and Gough see this prestige now becoming explicitly overt (2002:370), as is evidenced by observations like the following: "serious announcements and up-market advertisements are increasingly in BSAE accents, reflecting changing perceptions of its status" (371; see Coetzee-van Rooy and van Rooy 2005). So there seems to be potential for the variety to be not only an "established symbol of identity, solidarity and of aspirations of black South Africans" (Lanham 1996:27) but of becoming even "a powerful national unifier, bridging the gap between speakers of very different indigenous languages" (de Klerk 1999:318).

Two more indicators suggest that SAfE has been making progress into phase 4. One is a broadly based and generally recognized literary creativity, spearheaded by two recent Nobel laureates: Nadine Gordimer in 1991 and J. M. Coetzee in 2003. The other is a decisive step toward codification, though only on the lexical plane, with the production of two substantial scholarly dictionaries, Branford and Branford (1991) and, in the style and quality of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Silva et al. (1996).

Thus, SAfE has made deep inroads into phase 4, although it is not justified to talk of a single, stabilized variety, and an endonormative orientation is highly disputed at best. Homogeneity seems a future possibility in the middle classes (Mesthrie, p.c. 2006), though it is unlikely ever to characterize the entire society, with ethnic and social identities and varieties persisting. At the present stage it is impossible to tell how much a growing national identity will contribute to further homogenization. Besides, SAfE operates in the context of strong multilingualism, and African languages (including Afrikaans) are likely to remain the primary ethnic markers. No doubt the strong role of English in the country will persist, and it will be interesting to see where the present momentum toward English will lead.

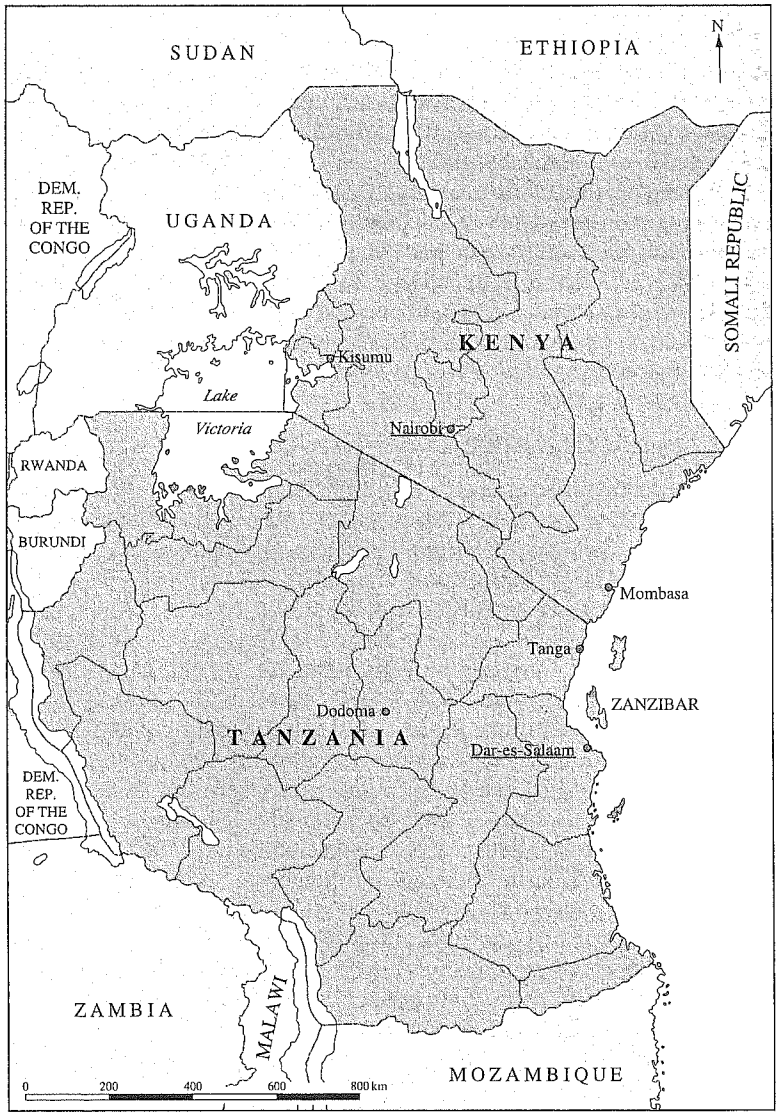
5.10 Kenya

English in East Africa (Map 5.6) is frequently treated as a coherent topic, because the region shared much of its early colonial history and some of its language features. Since independence, however, the three big states of the region have gone radically different ways. In Uganda, a cruel military dictatorship in the 1980s disrupted the country's evolution, and little documentation is available on the present state of English there (with the notable exception of Mazrui and Mazrui 1996); hence it will not be discussed here. Tanzania, to be discussed in section 5.11, deliberately followed a quasi-socialist path and pursued an African-centered language policy. Kenya, on the other hand, has opened itself to the world and has seen the English language thriving, within limitations.

5.10.1 Phase 1 (1860s–1920)

Although the first British ships reached the East African Coast in the late sixteenth century, a serious onset of phase 1 can be dated only into the 1860s, when (after a brief interlude which turned Mombasa into a protectorate 1824–6) the British became interested and involved in the coastal cities of East Africa, essentially as stepping stones to India.[29] At about the same time the first explorers and missionaries began to venture into the hinterland, mostly along established trading routes. After the so-called "scramble for Africa," the 1884–5 Berlin conference assigned formal authority in the region to the British. Their interest in the region remained small, however, until the construction of a railway in 1902, connecting the coast with Kisimu on Lake Victoria and later continuing into Uganda, called for more economic activity to make the investment profitable. Hence, early in the twentieth century a large number of settlers established a plantation system in the highlands north and west of Nairobi, forming one of Africa's few large-scale European settlements.[30]

In the nineteenth century, contact with English in the interior grew but slowly. The impact of explorers was restricted and not lasting. Missionaries brought English with them, and started teaching and spreading it systematically. However, they also, and in many cases primarily, used indigenous languages, chiefly Kiswahili, already an established lingua franca, for evangelization. In some cases soldiers, like the King's African Rifles, also disseminated English (Mesthrie 2002a:111). Exposure with English on a larger scale, however, only came with the white settlers who were attracted in large numbers by fertile lands and economic opportunities. Still, for a long time education was left to the missions, as the State did not want to spend money on it and the settlers were primarily interested in their profits.



Map 5.6: East Africa (Kenya and Tanzania)

Thus, during this period initial, if highly restricted, bilingualism emerged in the IDG stream. Of the other linguistic features of phase 1 we have no explicit documentation, but also no counterevidence. Some accommodation must have occurred in the STL community, but the whites tended to live on scattered farms, not in larger urban communities, so if koinéization occurred it presumably took longer than elsewhere. As any map will show, the toponymy of the region remains indigenous, of course (e.g. *Kigumo*, *Kerugoya*, *Nyaru*, *Molo River*, *Menenga Crater*, ...).

5.10.2 Phase 2 (1920–late 1940s)

The formal establishment of the colony in 1920 provides a convenient cut-off date for phase 2 in Kenya. British settlers kept immigrating in substantial numbers,[31] and English became firmly established as the language of administration, business, law, and other higher domains in society. In education, of course the British standard was uncontested. The settlers definitely felt British on foreign soil, maintained strong ties with the homeland, and refrained from socializing with Africans (Abdulaziz 1991:394).

With respect to the language education of Africans, the British pursued their classic "divide-and-rule" policy, i.e. they trained a small indigenous elite as administrators but essentially were not interested in disseminating the English language. For instance, the Phelps-Stokes Report of 1925 on African education recommended using the vernacular in primary and an African lingua franca in middle education, reserving English for the upper strata, to which few Africans progressed. Colonial officers had to learn Kiswahili, and until independence their promotion depended upon demonstration of their African language skills. The settlers in particular are reported to have resisted the spread of English to Africans on a larger scale, deliberately using kiSettla, a reduced form of Kiswahili, instead. Many of them were well aware that knowledge of the dominant language means access to power, and that they did not want to share. Thus, interestingly enough, "the presence of a significant English-speaking white population in Kenya from the 1920s to the 1940s was often more a liability than an asset to the spread of the English language in the country" (Mazrui and Mazrui 1996:272).

Conversely, while we have no immediate identity statements of Africans from that period it is clear that they saw English as an asset. In the 1920s an "enormous demand for English" grew (Kembo Sure 2003:251), and in the 1930s the first African-run primary schools opened, teaching English earlier than was suggested by the authorities (Zuengler 1982:113). Hence, the colonial language distribution in Kenya is interesting in that bilingualism involving the indigenous language is more common in the STL strand than

in many other colonies, but this was not intended as a step toward accommodation but rather as a strategy of restricting access to English from the IDG strand as much as possible, and thus of maintaining social distance between the colonized and the colonizers.

Kenyan English (which in its early phase is hardly to be distinguished from East African English in general) has its usual share of loanwords from the IDG strand, though we lack substantial historical documentation to discuss the timing of borrowings. According to the OED, the word *baobab* (also called *monkey-tree*) can be found in Livingstone's travel report of 1857 (though there is an even earlier record, relating it to Ethiopia). Encounters with indigenous fauna provide *simba* 'lion.' Words for indigenous objects and customs include *njohi* 'homemade beer,' *kuan* 'boiled cornmeal,' *ojuri* 'type of Luo food,' *jembe* 'hoe,' *shamba* 'cultivated plot of land,' *thahu* 'curse,' *safari* 'journey,' *ugali* 'maize dish,' *githeri* 'Kikuyu bean dish,' and *matatu* 'collective taxi' (Zuengler 1982:116; Schmied 2004a:939–40).

5.10.3 Phase 3 (late 1940s–)

The stable colonial status, with its clear separation of STL and IDG strands, was concluded by the aftermath of World War II. Africans returning from the war demanded political rights, including language education, with more self-confidence, and even India, the "jewel" of the Crown's possessions, was released into independence. The British were reasonable enough to understand that independence of their African colonies would come before too long. In a sharp turn of their policy, their goal now was to "modernize" these countries and prepare them for independence (amongst other things by teaching English on a broader scale), thus building the ties that would preserve privileged cultural, political, and economic relationships in the future, in the form of membership in the Commonwealth.

The Mau Mau rebellion (1952–9), soon followed by Kenya's independence in 1963, caused the identities of the country's two major population groups to crystallize and their relationship to polarize. In the STL strand, a decision was unavoidable, and the majority of settlers, who apparently felt more English than African or simply did not feel safe any longer, decided to leave the country. Since then, the STL strand has been insignificant in Kenya, though it still exists: there is a small resident population of African-born white people of English (or European) descent, estimated to be up to 40,000 (Skandera 2003:16), who definitely regard themselves as Kenyans and Africans. In the IDG strand, of course the African identity as rightful owners of the land predominated and gained political and also violent expression, but the Anglicization and the strive toward English had taken

roots and had transformed the local culture. Ironically, the leaders of the independence movement, including President-to-be Jomo Kenyatta, were recruited from the English-trained, in many cases highly educated, elite of Africans that the British had wanted to serve the Empire as administrators. Clearly, their cultural background was hybrid, and their identity, and therefore that of most of their fellow countrymen, was strongly shaped by their exposure to English customs and language.

Thus, it was after the late 1940s that the English language became nativized in Kenya and spread rapidly, even "down the social hierarchy" (Schmied 2004b:921). Both parties contributed to this effect: the British with their modernization policy and attempt to now, unlike earlier, get the language rooted in East Africa for good, and the Africans with their broad desire to acquire it, motivated largely by utilitarian considerations. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the famous Kenyan author, attests how in the 1950s English was forcefully imposed upon Kenyan school children, who were punished severely for speaking their mother tongue in the vicinity of the school (see Skandera 2003:13).

Kenya adopted a capitalist economic system and has always remained open to the western countries for business relationships, cultural exchange, and tourism, and this has helped to preserve the importance and special status of English in the country. It has not gone unchallenged: Kiswahili was proclaimed the "national language" in a constitutional amendment of 1974, and there was a period when Kiswahili was officially promoted against English, for instance as the sole language of parliamentary debate (a function which English regained, however, in another amendment just a few years after, in 1979). However, the status of English as a strong second language and a co-official language was never seriously threatened. The constitution of 1998 calls for English and Kiswahili as the languages of the Parliament and for legislation in English (Skandera 2003:15).

So today the presence of English in Kenya's sociolinguistic make-up is strong. Its importance has actually "increased after independence and it occupies as a second language a secure role as the language of education, administration, commerce and modernisation in general" (Abdulaziz 1991:393). Certainly it has an essentially elitist and utilitarian character, as a language that is an indicator of a good education and the entry gate to desirable professions and white-collar jobs. Its use or non-use in any given situation depends upon a complex array of factors: social setting of the situation, medium, topic of conversation, status, ethnicity and language skills of interactants, and location. Its use is tied with upper- or middle-class status and with urban rather than rural contexts, but no longer exclusively so: according to a recent survey, "English is the unrivalled language at the place of work, both in urban and in rural areas." Even in

the rural sample (meant to be broadly representative) more than half of all respondents and even 35 percent of primary school graduates report using it (Kioko and Muthwii 2004:37). In the absence of reliable data (the latest survey dates back more than thirty years), speaker numbers are notoriously difficult to define and estimate.

Assumed speaker proportions of English vary between 5 percent (Kembo Sure 1991:246) and 80 percent (Michieka 2005:179), with Skandera (2003:19) and Schmied (2004a:922) reporting 15–20 percent. All observers agree that English is spreading, even beyond the middle and upper classes. In a 1987 study of urban poor "in the Nairobi slum of Kibera, 235 out of 485 respondents claimed some proficiency" in English, and of these 13 claimed extensive home usage (Mazrui and Mazrui 1996:284) – certainly a noteworthy phenomenon. At the other end of the social scale, there is a growing number of African native speakers, typically children who are raised in affluent urban families by educated parents of different ethnic backgrounds (Mazrui and Mazrui 1996:283).

The strong role of English is also reflected in its growing importance in education. In the mid-1960s the so-called "New Primary Approach" "kept spreading like wildfire," and reportedly half of all primary schools used English as a medium of instruction under this scheme (Mazrui and Mazrui 1996:279). Today English is the medium of instruction usually in the second half of primary education and in all of secondary education (Skandera 2003:20; Schmied 2004b:923; see also Kanyoro 1991:406).

Attitudes toward varieties of English are variable, and partly schizophrenic (Schmied 2004b:924). At least theoretically, British English and RP are still upheld as the target forms of language education, and the Kenyan National Examination Council accepts only the British standard, with the exception of a small number of loan words which are explicitly listed (Kembo Sure 2004:105). There is also a local form of a "complaint tradition" lamenting "falling standards" of English, primarily voiced in newspapers and government reports (Mazrui and Mazrui 1996:281; Kembo Sure 2003:255). This is unrealistic and undesirable, however, and in practice several surveys have yielded the result that Kenyans are willing to accept a non-ethnic accent of educated Kenyan English as their own standard (Kembo Sure 1991; Skandera 2003:24–5). There is even some evidence of covert prestige being assigned to Kenyan English: Skandera (2003:37–8) reports a statement by a speaker who has "full command of the standard forms" but uses them mockingly, clearly preferring a distinctively Kenyan, nonstandard variant.

To date progress toward acceptance of local forms as a norm or standard seems slow and painful, but it is being made. Occasional calls for an endonormative orientation can be heard, e.g. "The standards must be established from local varieties and not imported ones ... Serious work must start toward establishing a realistic standard" (Kembo Sure 2003:256). Kioko and Muthwii (2004:47–8) find that Kenyans appreciate a distinctly national, non-ethnic, and not foreign type of English, and they argue that "Kenyan 'stars' in the media and successful professionals" should be accepted as "norm setters, the models that speakers in Kenya approximate to," and their English should be "studied, documented and used for teaching in the school system" (see, with similar views, Abdulaziz 1991:394; Kembo Sure 2004:101). A study by Buregeya (2006), based on a questionnaire with students in Nairobi, can be regarded as a step in that direction. The author tested twenty six putative grammatical features of Kenyan (but not British or international) English and found that fourteen of these, slightly more than half, scored acceptability ratings of more than 60 percent, a rate considered "broadly acceptable" as features of Kenyan English, and three more had rates between 50 and 60 percent, considered "fairly characteristic." Features which were accepted by more than half of all respondents include *second-born*; *enable them improve* (without *to*); intransitive *revenge* (instead of *take revenge on*); genitive relative clauses without *whose*, e.g. *words which are easy to find the meanings*; intransitive *have* 'possess,' and the pattern *type for me this letter*. These relatively high acceptability ratings for a number of "deviant" syntactic structures seem indicative of a growing tolerance even for grammatical idiosyncracy.

Thus, structural nativization has been in full swing for many decades, and it is assumed to have gained even more momentum since the 1970s, when both teachers and textbooks were almost exclusively of local origin (Skandera 2003:13). And it has produced the outcome that is to be expected: distinctively Kenyan forms on the levels of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar (Schmied 1991b; 2004a, 2004b; Skandera 1999), embedded in a wider framework of East African features (Hancock and Angogo 1982:312–8).

Loan words are numerous, and were illustrated earlier. There is creative and hybrid word formation (*joblessly*, *impressment* 'burden,' *pedestrate* 'walk,' *overlisten*, *young husband* 'son,' *dry coffee* 'coffee without milk or sugar,' *mitumba cars* 'second hand ... ,' *panya routes* 'unofficial routes (esp. across borders),' *clean heart* 'without guile,' *wife inheritance* 'widow inherited by brothers of the deceased husband,' *youth winger* 'young party member,' *members' day* 'social gathering'), semantic change (*township* 'small town,' *upcountry* 'away from the city,' *heavy* 'pregnant,' *cut* 'refuse'), and the coinage of indigenous phraseology, studied in an entire book (Skandera 2003; e.g. *slowly by slowly* 'take it easy,' *talk nicely* 'give a bribe,' *queue-voting* 'voting by lining up behind a symbol of the candidate chosen,' *lie low like an envelope* 'behave inconspicuously,' *we shall meet/talk* 'farewell').

The phonology is partly to be accounted for by ethnic-language transfer. So Luos lack [ʃ], Kikuyus tend to insert nasals, and Bantu interference frequently causes a confusion of /r/ and /l/. Some of these peculiarities are national; others are shared with other East African countries.

On the level of grammar, except for non-acrolectal patterns which are considered deviant, most innovations can be found at the interface of lexis and structural behavior, as predicted by the Dynamic Model. For example, a tendency to omit or insert particles is well documented (*pick* 'pick up,' *crop* 'crop up,' *leave* 'leave out/in'; *cope up with*). Of course, verb complementation patterns are also creative: *stay/remain with sth.* 'keep,' *wouldn't mind to give, discuss about, mention about, request for, allow him go, made him to do it, mind to tell, stop to deliver*; *rest, protest*, and *attend* used transitively. According to Schmied (2004a:931) the choice between infinitives and gerunds "varies freely." Mwangi (2003), in a dissertation on the topic, and others have shown prepositional usage to vary: *attach with, concentrate with, congratulate for*; a tendency to substitute *in* for *on, at*, or *to*; a tendency to use some complex prepositions particularly frequently (e.g. *according to, due to, apart from, irrespective of*) and to coin new complex prepositions (e.g. *in reference to, in respect to, with a view of*).

Similarly to other, comparable countries, a high degree of multilingualism results in much language mixing in Kenya. In fact, in Nairobi a variety with a name of its own, *Sheng*, has developed, which is essentially a composite of English, Kiswahili, and ethnic vernaculars used as an in-group jargon by young people (Abdulaziz 1991:397). Unlike Kenyan English itself, Sheng is a symbol of group solidarity, an explicit "attempt by the youth to construct a new identity" (Kembo Sure 2003:257).

On the basis of the above observations it can be stated that the process of nativization is still going on in Kenya and the English language is spreading gradually, though its potential scope seems largely confined by its coexistence with ethnic languages as the primary tools for group solidarity and human proximity and with Kiswahili as a regional lingua franca, especially in less formal domains. The process of nation-building and "detribalization" is still going on, and English certainly plays a role in this process, but at this point it seems unlikely to emerge as a symbol of a national identity. Further progress along the cycle of the Dynamic Model seems possible but is difficult to predict. Expressions of a positive attitude toward a Kenyan accent and variety of English, discussed above, and observations of some inter-tribal leveling may foreshadow endonormativity and a higher degree of homogeneity. There is some literary creativity in English (see Zuengler 1982:114; Abdulaziz 1991:393), but there is also opposition, the pivotal case being Ngugi, who explicitly returned from writing in English to writing in his native Kikuyu (see Kembo Sure 2003:253–4; Michieka 2005:183). Descriptive work on properties of Kenyan English is increasingly done, but codification cannot really be envisaged at this point.

In hindsight, it is interesting to observe that contrary to general expectation but in line with the Dynamic Model Kenyan English has been shaped by "colonial disadvantages and post-colonial windfalls" (Mazrui and Mazrui 1996:299). Despite ongoing debates on an appropriate language policy, English continues to thrive.

5.11 Tanzania

Tanzania (Map 5.6) shares some aspects of its linguistic evolution with its northern neighbor Kenya: a similar time frame of European and English colonization, similarities in cultural background and linguistic substrates, coexistence with Kiswahili, and geographical proximity, which accounted for a common "East African" region and form of English. On the other hand, there are also far-reaching differences: Tanzania was never a settler colony, and the colonial grip of the British was much lighter and shorter, so the role of English has largely been limited to education, administration, and a small range of "high" domains. Most importantly, however, independent Tanzania steered a persistent endoglossic course, and so the country provides a model case for the assumption that the developments described in the Dynamic Model can in fact come to a halt and the course of things can be changed at any stage. Also, in line with the weaker status of English many of the constituent elements of the model can be identified only much more weakly. I adopt the phases proposed by Schmied (1985:325).[32]

Phase 1, initial contacts with English on a broader scale, also began in the mid-nineteenth century with coastal contacts, mainly in Zanzibar, which was a British protectorate from 1890 until its independence in 1963, followed by unification with Tanganyika in 1964. The contacts were made especially by explorers and missionaries, although they used primarily Kiswahili, the region's established lingua franca. However, they also taught some English. Things did not change much when Tanganyika became a German colony from 1885. The Germans utilized Kiswahili as an administrative language. The presence of English during this period was restricted, and except for missionaries there was no STL strand worth talking about.

After World War I, in 1919, the League of Nations mandated Tanganyika to the British, a date which may be taken as the onset of phase 2. The interest of the British in the country remained reluctant, as it was not economically attractive and their legal hold was less immediate than in a colony. So to some extent, at least initially, they continued to rely