

(RE-)EXAMINING THE STANDARD KISWAHILI ALPHABET IN THE TEACHING SYLLABUS FOR LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Kiswahili is a foreign language (FL) in Uganda. Formally, the teaching of Kiswahili begins in the lower secondary phase. In this phase, Kiswahili had been taught for many years without an authorised syllabus. Nonetheless, in 2008, the government of Uganda launched the existing grammatical syllabus (hereafter, 2008 syllabus). It should be noted that, while the teaching of standard Kiswahili is among the aims postulated in the 2008 syllabus, information and topics regarding, for example, the alphabet of standard Kiswahili are missing in this syllabus. Pedagogically, this situation appears to contrast with, for example, the advanced scientific suggestions that the learning of the alphabet should be among the initial topics in grammatical syllabi and subsequently, in the FL classrooms' activities. Using perspectives on document analysis to constitute its methodology, in this theoretical paper, we first provide a general overview of the grammatical syllabi as a framework for teaching and learning FLs, drawing specific examples from the 2008 syllabus. Then, we analyse the aims of teaching Kiswahili as established in the 2008 syllabus. Thereafter, we examine the alphabet of standard Kiswahili. Lastly, we propose possible procedures for adopting the Kiswahili alphabet into the 2008 syllabus, as a way of facilitating the teaching and learning of standard Kiswahili mainly in Uganda's lower secondary schools.

Keywords: alphabet, Swahili, syllabus, content, grading and sequencing, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

This theoretical paper draws from Bowen's (2009) proposals on document analysis to constitute its methodology. In particular, it reviews the aims of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda's lower secondary schools, as outlined in the 2008 syllabus. For example, Bowen (2009: 32) argues that document review, as a research method, entails the identification of 'meaningful and relevant passages of a text or other data'. In this respect, the paper primarily examines one of the aims of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda. It states that the 2008 syllabus aims to 'guide teachers on what to teach so as to enable learners to develop communication skills using *standard Kiswahili*' (Republic of Uganda, 2008b: ix, emphasis ours).

Nevertheless, as the teaching of standard Kiswahili is being emphasised in the 2008 syllabus, in this grammatical syllabus, for example, information and topics on the alphabet of standard Kiswahili are missing, as can be seen in Table 1. Subsequently, the absence of such crucial information (i) contrasts with scientific evidence that the learning of the alphabet should be among the initial topics in grammatical syllabi and subsequently, in foreign language (FL)

classroom activities (see, e.g., Mtesigwa, 2009: 64-65; cf. Bourke, 2006: 285); and (ii) seems to lead to Kiswahili FL learners confusing the alphabet of their first language (L1), that of English, as a second language (L2), and that of Kiswahili, particularly the consonant blends (clusters), as frequently observed mainly in the Kiswahili classrooms of some secondary schools in Uganda by the first author of this paper during teaching practicum assessment sessions.

Table 1: The graded topics for Senior One Kiswahili learners

Terms	Topics	Sub-topics	Aspects
First	Tenses	Present tense	Listening & speaking
	Nouns	Noun class (16)	Speaking & writing
	Nouns	Noun class (5-6)	Listening & speaking
	Nouns	Nouns class (3-4)	Listening & speaking
	Nouns	Noun class (7-8)	Writing
Second	Punctuation	Punctuation	Speaking & writing
	Pronouns	Noun class (15)	Speaking & writing
	Nouns	Noun class (17)	Writing
	Nouns	Noun class (1-2)	Writing
	Nouns	Noun class (1-2) & (18)	Writing
	Verbs	Verbs	Speaking & writing
	Adverbs	Adverbs	Speaking & writing
Third	Prepositions	Prepositions	Writing
	Sentence construction	Simple sentences	Speaking & writing
	Introduction to composition writing	Story writing	Writing
	Oral literature	Oral literature	Speaking & writing
	Oral literature	Tongue twisters	Speaking

Source: Modified from Republic of Uganda (2008b: 1-17)

The above table with the list of topics has been extracted from the 2008 syllabus (see Republic of Uganda, 2008b: 1-17). The topics are designed to be taught to Senior One (grade 8 in the South African context) learners of Kiswahili in lower secondary schools of Uganda. It is in Senior One that learners are, for the first time, formally introduced to the teaching and learning of Kiswahili. At this level, most learners can at least exhibit 'competencies in at least two languages', that is to say, their first language (L1) and English, which in most cases serves as the second language (L2).

As it can be seen in Table 1, the first topic Senior One Kiswahili learners are required to be taught by their teachers is tenses, specifically present tense, as graded in the first row of the second and third columns within the first term. It should be noted that this form of grading of topics qualifies the 2008 syllabus to be categorised under grammatical syllabi. This is because grammatical syllabi organise learning content in discrete units. Learners are required to synthesise the discrete units and produce meaningful constructs (see Long, Lee, & Hilman, 2019).

In grammatical syllabi, the teaching of the alphabet of the FL that learners are acquiring is crucial. As Xiao (2005: 233) maintains that the teaching of the alphabet is, principally, to introduce, for example, the characters of a given language to learners, Mtesigwa (2009: 64-65) is of the view that instructional books such as syllabi, among other components, should have the standard alphabet along with the corresponding sounds or pronunciations (phonetic alphabet), as has been demonstrated by Jjingo and Visser (in press).

In other words, the absence of the Kiswahili alphabet in the 2008 syllabus largely contrasts with the aims of, for example, teaching ‘standard’ Kiswahili in Ugandan lower secondary schools, as postulated in the 2008 syllabus, as will be discussed briefly after providing a general overview of grammatical syllabi in the following section.

That said, it should be remembered that the standard Kiswahili alphabet being referred to in this paper is the version that is predominantly used in mainland Tanzania. This is because most Kiswahili instructional materials in the education systems of Uganda subscribe to this attested variety (see, e.g., BAKITA, 2005, 2015; TUKI, 1981, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2006), as also observed by Mbaabu and Onyango (2019: 62).

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF GRAMMATICAL SYLLABI

In relation to their formal existence, it is stated that grammatical syllabi, also known as synthetic, structural, linguistic, formal or traditional syllabi, have been in existence since the 1960s (Long & Crookes, 1993: 13), although their history dates back to the 16th century in the philosophies of traditional linguists who used to analyse and describe languages (Breen, 1987: 85). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 4), such languages include classical languages (Greek and Latin) as well as modern ones (German, English, Italian and French). Accordingly, Ellis and Shintani (2014: 53) point out the view that the procedures of designing grammatical syllabi are premised on language theories rather than pedagogical approaches and their associated methods, as is the case with contemporary syllabi such as task-based ones (see, e.g., Ellis et al., 2020).

In light of the above, scholars (e.g., Krahnke, 1987: 15) contend that, given that grammatical syllabi have existed for an extended period, they are still influential in syllabus design decisions as well as in classroom practices (see, e.g., Republic of Uganda, 2008a, 2012). This is because grammatical syllabi provide a framework from which contemporary syllabus design principles are developed (Breen, 1987: 81; Fortez, 1997: 15). In addition, the influence of grammatical syllabi in FL classrooms is still experienced (McDonough et al., 2013: 12; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018: 4). This is due to (i) the importance of a grammar (focus-on-form) component in language teaching even in communicative approaches such as task-based language teaching and content-based language teaching (Benati & Schwieter, 2019: 496-497; East, 2018: 219-221; Ellis, 2018: 165; Gilabert & Castellví, 2019: 530; Nassaji & Kartchava, 2019: 609-610; Richards, 2006: 27-35); and (ii) the fact that most language teachers were taught through these syllabi (Richards, 2001: 2-3). Krashen (2002: 117, 2009: 86) concludes that most FL learners consider form-focused exercises that underpin grammatical syllabi as suitable approaches to acquire the language they are learning. In other words, to such learners, FL learning is all about focusing on small linguistics structures of a particular language, as can be seen mainly in the sub-topics of the first and second terms, as listed in Table 1.

As pointed out in the first paragraph of this section, grammatical syllabi have been given different names (cf. Keck & Kim, 2014: 7). This further suggests that in the field of second language acquisition, scholars have also defined these syllabi in various ways. According to Jjingo (2018: 68), such definitions are based on scholars' perspectives on language models, approaches and their related methods, as they occur in the FL classrooms. Nevertheless, with reference to Wilkins's (1976: 2) definition of synthetic syllabi, Nunan (1991: 27) defines such syllabi as those that organise learning topics discretely, as suitably captured in the second (topics) and third (sub-topics) columns of Table 1.

Relatedly, Breen (1987: 85) is of the view that such units represent language systems such as pronunciation, phonology, grammar and morphology. According to Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993: 9), the above language systems are again divided into manageable units for learners, as can be seen in the first and second terms (under sub-topics) in Table 1. In this respect, during the teaching and learning processes, Nunan (2004: 11) contends that the small manageable units are extended to FL learners one after the other until a meaningful construction (spoken and/or written) is realised (cf. Jjingo & Visser, 2018: 90-92).

In summarising the overview of grammatical syllabi, we need to consider the general observation that has been brought forward by several scholars (see, e.g., Bell, 1981: 27; Kumaravadivelu, 1993: 72; Richards, 2013: 12) regarding the issues of the learning content and its associated objectives in grammatical syllabi. The three scholars argue that all the content and objectives are predetermined, graded and sequenced by other stakeholders for FL teachers and learners to use while in the classrooms, which is the case with the 2008 syllabus (see also Republic of Uganda, 2019b).

Having briefly given a general overview of grammatical syllabi with specific examples from 2008 syllabus, the next section will provide an analysis on the aims of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda, as mainly postulated in the 2008 syllabus, in order to contextualise further the gaps that this paper is addressing.

AIMS OF TEACHING KISWAHILI IN UGANDA'S LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As we write this paper, it should be noted that in February 2020, the Ministry of Education and Sports of Uganda launched a revised curriculum for lower secondary schools in the country (see Republic of Uganda, 2019a). The revised curriculum, which has been designed to lead learners in attaining competencies in a particular subject, provides for Kiswahili as a mandatory subject for Senior One learners (see Republic of Uganda, 2019b: 8). Unlike the 2008 syllabus, at least the revised curriculum (Republic of Uganda, 2019b: 10) indicates the need for learners to learn to pronounce Kiswahili sounds even though it is also silent on exhibiting the standard Kiswahili sounds (see also National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), 2020a: 2-3, 2020b: 2-3). Nevertheless, it should be remembered that while the revised curriculum began to be implemented early 2020, the 2008 syllabus is still in use until 2022 (see NCDC, 2020c: 1; cf. Republic of Uganda, 2019), which clearly emphasises the need for and demonstrates the relevance of this paper.

It should be emphasised that Uganda is a multilingual country with over 40 indigenous languages and their associated dialects and sub-dialects (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig, 2020). Kiswahili is among the few foreign languages being taught and spoken in the country. In this

respect, Kiswahili is taught as an FL and is formally introduced to learners for the first time in lower secondary schools (i.e., Senior One). Literature holds that from the 1990s, the number of secondary schools teaching Kiswahili has gradually been rising given the increasing importance and status attached to Kiswahili mainly in national (Republic of Uganda, 2005, 2006), regional (see, East African Community, 2017; Kische, 2003; Ojwang, 2008) and international (Chebet-Choge, 2012; Moshi, 2006, 2017; Wa'njogu, 2008) settings.

In light of the above and concerning the growing importance of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda, the literature shows that Kiswahili was included in the formal education systems of Uganda by the 1920s (Pawliková-Vilhanová, 1996: 167). The aims of teaching Kiswahili in the country have been somewhat implicitly or explicitly stated and implemented. However, to achieve such aims, mixed reactions have been observed from different stakeholders within and outside the education systems of Uganda. Such reactions partly influenced the ejection of Kiswahili from Uganda's education systems in 1952. See, for example, Evans and Ssentenza Kajubi (1994), Jjingo and Visser (2017) and Ssekamwa and Lugumba (2000) on the interpretations of the aims of teaching Kiswahili during different periods within the education systems of Uganda.

After 1952, when Kiswahili was formally ejected from the education systems of Uganda, the need to teach Kiswahili in the country resonated once again in the Government White Paper of 1992 (see Republic of Uganda, 1992). It is in this Government White Paper that the language-in-education policy is embedded. For example, the language-in-education policy states that 'Kiswahili and English will be compulsory subjects for all secondary school students' (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 17-20). This was stated purposely 'to prepare for the training of the teachers of this language' (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 17) because, as Mukama (2009: 85) argues, there were schools that informally taught Kiswahili using teachers who were linguistically and pedagogically incompetent in Kiswahili (see also Batibo, 2003: 31 for similar views).

Thus, to further address Mukama's (2009: 85) observations and in order to provide a framework from which the teaching and learning of Kiswahili in lower secondary schools would be coordinated nationwide, the 2008 syllabus was produced (Republic of Uganda, 2008b). The 2008 syllabus (Republic of Uganda, 2008b: vii) reveals that there are two particular aims of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda. These are: 'to; (i) [e]nhance and harmonise the teaching of Kiswahili in secondary schools; (ii) [g]uide teachers on what to teach so as to enable learners to develop communication skills using standard Kiswahili. These communication skills are: listening, speaking, reading and writing' (Republic of Uganda, 2008b: ix). It is clear from the first aim of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda that, before the production of the 2008 syllabus, the teaching of Kiswahili in lower secondary schools was not uniform in schools with regard to using a single 'national' syllabus.

As for the second aim of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda, as drawn from the 2008 syllabus, while it emphasises the teaching of standard Kiswahili so that learners can develop all four language skills (cf. Ssentanda, 2014: 3) of Kiswahili, the same syllabus is silent on information in respect of standard Kiswahili, for example, its alphabet. This means that, as pointed out earlier with regard to syllabi as reflections of the aims of education in a given country, the 2008 syllabus scarcely reflects this aim in its content. This implies that the 2008 syllabus undervalues the rationale of teaching standard Kiswahili in lower secondary schools as required by the government (Republic of Uganda, 2008b: vii-ix). The possible implications

for such a dilemma are twofold, namely pedagogical implications and implications related to the designing of instructional materials such as Kiswahili textbooks and reference materials, as will be discussed below.

One of the pedagogical implications is that using a Kiswahili syllabus without the standard alphabet seems to cause learners to often confuse the consonant blends (clusters) of standard Kiswahili (cf. Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Mbaabu, 1991: 112). Consequently, such pedagogical practices expose Kiswahili learners to acquiring ‘alphabetic sounds’ from a range of Kiswahili dialects and varieties, as mainly produced by their respective teachers who in most cases are non-native speakers of Kiswahili. As a result, learners acquire a mixture of, for example, written and oral skills from various Kiswahili dialects, which is contrary to the second aim of teaching standard Kiswahili in Uganda (cf. Mbaabu, 1991: 74).

Similarly, concerning designing of instructional materials, Mbunda (2003: 3-4) states that the content of the textbooks should be derived from the content of the national syllabus (cf. Haule, 2003: 19; Richards, 1985: 8). This means that the syllabus acts as a framework from which material designers, such as textbook writers, get relevant information in order to write and publish school books with content that is both in line with the content in the syllabus and which reflects the national aims of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda, as discussed in this section.

Accordingly, in the absence of a common design criterion for textbooks and reference materials, Mbaabu (1991: 112) stresses that educational material writers produce instructional books that can predominantly be regarded as substandard or contrived, for example, with regard to a given level of learners or particular classrooms (cf. Besha, 2003: 68; Gilmore, 2007). Thus, in an attempt to overcome the above dilemma, there is a need to (re)consider the alphabet of standard Kiswahili when designing the syllabus so that teachers of Kiswahili and materials developers can have an authentic or standard source to guide them while carrying out their respective duties of teaching and materials development.

To associate ourselves with the alphabet of standard Kiswahili, it is desirable to briefly review the circumstances under which the standard Kiswahili variety came into existence. This will be followed by an examination of the alphabet of standard Kiswahili.

STANDARD KISWAHILI

It is important to mention that the need to teach standard Kiswahili in schools within the East African region, where Uganda is located, began in different periods in each country (i.e., Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Uganda). The differences in periods were due to differences in the social, political and economic factors that prevailed in these countries or the region at large (see, e.g., Marten, 2009; Mbaabu, 1991, 2007). Marten (2009: 1026) reveals that in first half of the 19th century, discussions to standardise one dialect of Kiswahili so that it could formally be used in the education systems of the East African countries had begun.

Similarly, Mbaabu (2007: 26) maintains that, from the 1930s, there were series of regional conferences comprised of representatives, mainly Europeans, from Kiswahili speaking countries, including Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar. These representatives were members of the Inter-Territorial Language Committee, also known as the East African Kiswahili Committee. The committee was, among other responsibilities, assigned to identify and consider a single Kiswahili dialect that could be standardised and promoted for usage in,

among other avenues, schools within the region. Considering the above, from time to time, the committee, for instance, discussed and refined ambiguities arising from morphological and phonological aspects of the chosen dialect; published school textbooks by using a single style and writing system; translated books from English into Kiswahili by using a single dialect; and compiled dictionaries (Mbaabu, 1991: 102).

Consequently, Mbaabu (1991: 22) asserts that the representatives chose one dialect, Kiunguja, spoken in Zanzibar, out of the 15 dialects of Kiswahili. Kiunguja was the dialect on which standard Kiswahili was based. Kiunguja was composed of both Arabic and Roman scripts (Mbaabu, 1991: 22). Kiunguja was chosen because it served as a dialect of commerce and trade at the coast and in the interior of East Africa (Marten, 2009: 1026; Mbaabu, 1991: 18). This meant that Kiunguja was the most spread dialect, and its usage was common and wider compared to other Kiswahili dialects (cf. Batibo, 2002: 1-2). Its choice meant that there was little effort to promote it to the people given the fact that most people spoke it mainly as their L1 or L2. Nevertheless, the major responsibility of the representatives at that time was to standardise Kiunguja so that it could be recognised and serve as an official language of the region (cf. Batibo, 2002: 1-2). For a detailed discussion about the history of standardising the Kiunguja variety, see, for example, Mbaabu (1991: 41-70).

The Kiswahili alphabet

The *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* defines the term alphabet as ‘a set of letters which are used to write a language’ (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 21). In addition, in this paper, an alphabet is considered in the same sense as ‘a type of a writing system that denotes vowels and consonants’ (Daniels & Bright, 1996: xxxix). Similarly, this paper treats the concept of alphabet similar to the notion of orthography. This is because an alphabet is a constituent within a language orthography, and both the alphabet and the orthography deal with issues of letter writing, pronunciation and spellings, among others (see also Perret & Olive, 2019; Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2020). For instance, it should be recalled that the Kiswahili alphabet is derived from the Latin or Roman alphabet. This alphabet is a presentation of different sounds and their respective sound combinations. As pointed out in the previous section, the Kiswahili alphabet was laid down by the East African Kiswahili Committee. This suggests that its applicability is based on the general acceptability of its usage (cf. Mbaabu, 1991: 112). Kihore, Massamba and Msanjila (2003: 30) suggest the view that language orthographies need to be simple and explicitly written for the alphabet users, such as teachers, to fully understand and use the alphabet effectively. In support of Kihore et al.’s views, Uusen and Mürsepp (2010: 170) emphasise that a simple alphabet provides room for easy identification of spelling or pronunciation mistakes and other related errors.

In other words, Uusen and Mürsepp (2010: 171) advance the view that the teaching of an alphabet facilitates the easiness of writing a variety of texts with higher quality in each language. In addition, Xiao (2005: 223) and Mtesigwa (2009: 64-65) argue that orthographic information mainly helps learners to conceptualise through observing the underlying structures of the letters and their subsequent words in each language. Such a situation is what Xiao (2005: 223) refers to as visual familiarity. Thus, considering the above views and with regard to the alphabet of standard Kiswahili, Williams (2004: 579) observes that Kiswahili is one of the languages with a simple alphabet which is easier and can be learned quickly, especially in writing (cf. Mbaabu, 1991: 76-77). In general, the Kiswahili alphabet is

composed of 30 letters. Furthermore, the alphabet of standard Kiswahili is composed of two major sound clusters, vowels and consonants, as shown in the first columns of Table 2 and Table 3, respectively. To understand the Kiswahili alphabet, there is a need to treat vowels and consonants separately so that the readers or users of the Kiswahili alphabet are positioned to draw a clear distinction between the two sound clusters.

Kiswahili vowels

Ladefoged and Disner (2012: 26) and Massamba, Kihore and Msanjila (2004: 24) define vowels as sounds that are produced when the air pressure from the larynx is pushed out of the human mouth or nostrils without restriction from the vocal tracks or vocal folds. Because of limited space, the articulatory mechanisms for both vowel and consonant sounds, which typically are discussed in conjunction with the alphabet, are not examined here (for the discussion of articulatory mechanisms of Kiswahili alphabet, see, for example, Jjingo & Visser, in press; Kihore et al., 2003; Mohammed, 2001; Myachina, 1981). In explaining vowels further, Ladefoged and Disner argue that the function of vowels is to contrast with one another to bring differences in the words that human beings use. Alcock and Ngorosho (2007: 646), Ashton (1987: 3), Kihore et al. (2003: 13) and Mpiranya (2015: 5) stress that standard Kiswahili has five vowels, written as ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘i’, ‘o’ and ‘u’. Nonetheless, given the differences in articulatory proximities among the vowels, Kihore et al. (2003: 13-14) maintain that standard Kiswahili vowels should be represented as follows: ‘i’, ‘e’, ‘a’, ‘o’ and ‘u’, which are phonetically symbolized as, [i], [ɛ], [a], [ɔ] and [u], respectively. Thus, with the combination of vowels and other letters of the Kiswahili alphabet, the FL learner will be able to, for instance, produce standard Kiswahili words as exemplified in the third column of Table 2.

Table 2: Kiswahili vowels and their phonetic symbols

Kiswahili vowels	Phonetic symbols	Example	Meaning
i	[i]	[pikipiki] <i>pikipiki</i>	motorbike/motorcycle
e	[ɛ]	[endekeza] <i>endekeza</i>	coddle
a	[a]	[arubatajara] <i>arubatahara</i>	fourteen
o	[ɔ]	[kɔnɔkɔnɔ] <i>konokono</i>	snail
u	[u]	[ufukufuku] <i>ufukufuku</i>	provocation

Source: Modified from TUKI (2000, 2001)

Kiswahili consonants

Unlike vowels, Ladefoged and Disner (2012: 26) and Massamba et al. (2004: 27) define consonants as sounds that are produced when air pressure from the larynx is either partially or fully obstructed by the vocal tracks until it is finally realised through the human mouth or nostrils. As pointed out in the previous section, given the focus of this paper, the articulatory mechanisms of consonants, which typically are discussed together with the alphabet, are not examined in this paper. Scholars, including Kihore et al. (2003: 15), Massamba et al. (2004: 28) and Mpiranya (2015: 5), are of the view that the standard Kiswahili consonants are 23 in total (cf. Mohammed, 2001: 3), along with two glides. All the above scholars agree and provide the two glides ‘w’ and ‘y’ in the same table with the consonants, as shown in the first column of Table 3.

Table 3: Standard Kiswahili consonants and glides

Kiswahili consonants	Pronunciation*	Phonetic symbols	Example	Meaning
b	be	[b]	<i>baba</i>	father
ch	che	[c]	<i>chacha</i>	turn sour
d	de	[d]	<i>dada</i>	sister
dh	dhe	[ð]	<i>dhambi</i>	sin(s)
f	fe	[f]	<i>fana</i>	successful
g	ge	[g]	<i>gamba</i>	scale
gh	ghe	[ɣ]	<i>ghali</i>	expensive
h	he	[h]	<i>hama</i>	emigrate
j	je	[ʃ]	<i>jaa</i>	become full of
k	ke	[k]	<i>kaka</i>	brother
l	le	[l]	<i>lala</i>	sleep
m	me	[m]	<i>mama</i>	mother
n	ne	[n]	<i>nazi</i>	coconut
ny	nye	[ɲ]	<i>nyanya</i>	tomato(es)
ng'	ng'e	[ŋ]	<i>ng'ara</i>	sparkle
p	pe	[p]	<i>papa</i>	shark
r	re	[r]	<i>raha</i>	comfort/bliss
s	se	[s]	<i>sasa</i>	right now/now
sh	she	[ʃ]	<i>shamba</i>	garden/farm
t	te	[t]	<i>tata</i>	complication
th	the	[θ]	<i>thamani</i>	value
v	ve	[v]	<i>vaa</i>	dress/put on
w	we	[w]	<i>waa</i>	frame
y	ye	[j]	<i>yaya</i>	babysitter
z	ze	[z]	<i>zaa</i>	bear

Source: Modified from Kihore et al. (2004: 12-17), Massamba et al. (2003: 7-44), Mohammed (2001: 3-4), Mpiranya (2015: 5)

* It should be remembered that the 'e' that follows Kiswahili consonants, as illustrated in the second column, should not be mistaken as vowel 'e' discussed in the previous section of this paper. Rather, it is an inherent vowel quality sound /e/ that determines the consonant sound of an independent consonant. Nevertheless, whenever a particular consonant is used in a Kiswahili word, the pronunciation of that particular consonant is determined by the vowel sound that follows that particular consonant.

Considering the information in the first column of Table 3, there are views discussed in Mbaabu's (1991: 27, 35) book that no alphabet is sufficient for all dialects of a given language and that language standardisation is a continuous process (cf. Kaplan & Baldauf Jr., 1997: 65). As pointed out earlier in this paper, while standardisation of the Kiswahili alphabet began in the 20th century, this process is ongoing to enhance phonological and morphological variations, especially in newly coined words, borrowed words from other languages and, particularly, because of advancements in information science and computer technology (see Batibo, 2002: 1; Legère, 2006; Massamba, 2007: 3-6).

THE WAY FORWARD

Having examined the standard Kiswahili alphabet, this section advances proposals and possible procedures for adopting this alphabet into the 2008 syllabus (as well as in the revised curriculum). It also suggests ways of implementing the standard Kiswahili alphabet in classrooms as well as reflecting it in materials development. First of all, there is a need to emphasise Xiao's (2005: 233) views that in language learning, the teaching of language orthography or the alphabet is a component of the language curriculum. Similarly, Mtesigwa (2009: 64-65) is of the view that instructional books such as syllabi, among other components, should have the standard alphabet along with the corresponding sounds or pronunciations (see, e.g., Jjingo & Visser, in press).

It should be stressed that Kiswahili has its standard alphabet, which has continuously handled the effects of new words because of language contact, terminology development and the influence of technological advancements. With all the above influences on Kiswahili, it can be argued that its alphabet has remained stable over time. Thus, the procedures that we are attempting to advance for adopting the Kiswahili alphabet into the syllabus are those that consider a standard alphabet that has been accepted and recognised for use in educational instructional materials such as the syllabus.

Regarding the approaches of designing instructional books for teaching FLs such as Kiswahili in Uganda, it has been inferred from Mtesigwa's (2009: 64-65) article that the first possible approach is that of listing the alphabet of the FL in the syllabus, textbooks or any reference materials, as exemplified in first columns of Tables 2 and 3. This approach assumes that FL Kiswahili learners and their teachers are aware of, primarily, one or two other alphabets. For example, in Uganda, lower secondary school learners are predominantly competent with the English alphabet because English is a language of instruction from upper primary school onwards (see Ssentanda, 2016: 98). Similarly, English is taught as a subject in lower secondary schools. In addition to competence in the English alphabet, learners at this level can be considered to averagely understand the alphabet of their L1. Therefore, when such learners are introduced to the Kiswahili alphabet, they are likely to refer to either the alphabet of their L1, that of English, or both, to understand the alphabet of Kiswahili. In this case, Besha (2003: 68) argues that both teachers and learners will be able to identify Kiswahili letters that either exist or are non-existent mainly in learners' L1. Subsequently, Mtesigwa (2009: 65) stresses that in such a situation, L2 teachers are encouraged to do more practice, especially in the letters that their learners are not familiar with as far as, for example, their L1 is concerned.

In addition to the above approach, with reference to Mtesigwa (2009: 65), Rifkin (1992) recommends another procedure. The procedure is that of adding pronunciations (sounds) of the alphabet in an order that corresponds to their specific letters as demonstrated in the second column of Table 2. Like in the first approach above, in this situation, Kiswahili learners and their teachers will identify sounds found in learners' L1 that are absent either in the L2 or FL – Kiswahili. As Mtesigwa (2009: 65) suggests, in such circumstances, teachers will attempt to help learners do more practice in such sounds until learners can independently realise them. Relatedly, Rifkin (*ibid.*) points out that such sounds should be illustrated in some words of the FL or L2, in this case, Kiswahili, as shown in columns 3 and 4 of Tables 2 and 3 (see Mtesigwa, 2009: 65). Lastly, Rifkin (*ibid.*) maintains that if possible, in the above-mentioned approaches and procedures, words in learners' L1 can be used and their equivalent words in

the L2 or FL be provided. This will provide room for the learners to identify some words with which they are familiar in both languages. Learners can be tempted to learn familiar words before attempting to learn words with which they are not familiar.

Furthermore, regarding the syllabus design processes, it is worth pointing out that all the above-mentioned approaches and procedures should be preceded by a section that postulates the aims and objectives of teaching Kiswahili in Uganda, as discussed earlier in this paper. Therefore, to apply the above approach and procedures, with regard to the 2008 syllabus, the approach and procedures can easily be inserted between the section of the aims of teaching Kiswahili and the section from where the syllabus content begins. In other words, the above approaches and procedures can be inserted between page (x) and page 1 of the 2008 syllabus (see also Republic of Uganda, 2008a: 1-5, 2012: 3-4). Similarly, the same procedures and approaches can be introduced between pages 9 and 10 of the revised curriculum. In arranging a syllabus in such an order, Mbunda (2003: 4) asserts that all textbooks and reference books writers can adopt the common criterion and that their books should also be written in the order that the syllabus has been written. Such an order ensures that users of such books, mainly language teachers and their learners in the language classrooms, have relevant books with content that has its origin in the national syllabus that is in line with the broader aims of education of the country.

CONCLUSION

There is a gradual increase in calls for studies regarding the design of instructional materials for FL teaching and learning mainly in the global south (see Beshu, 2003; Jjingo & Visser, in press; Mbunda, 2003; Mtesigwa, 2009). These studies, including those reviewed in this paper, have demonstrated the need to include the language alphabet into the instructional materials so that FL learners and their teachers can have a clear picture of the language that is being taught in the classrooms.

In particular, this paper has generally discussed theoretical perspectives with respect to syllabi for teaching and learning FLs while contextualising the aims of teaching standard Kiswahili, as established in the 2008 syllabus for Ugandan lower secondary schools. Specifically, the paper examined the standard alphabet of Kiswahili language purposely to provide teachers and learners of Kiswahili in Uganda with the exact orthography of standard Kiswahili. This was intended to assist mainly learners to draw a distinction between the alphabet of standard Kiswahili and those of their L1 and L2.

Subsequently, in this regard, the paper has offered suggestions regarding the procedures of adopting this alphabet into instructional materials in Uganda, for example, in the 2008 syllabus. If such suggestions and proposals are taken into account by Kiswahili syllabus designers as well as textbook and reference materials' developers, it is hoped that by large the teaching and learning of standard Kiswahili will be sufficiently realised in the lower secondary schools of Uganda.

In light of the above, this paper calls for more research that will examine the articulatory mechanisms involved in the realisation of Kiswahili sounds, as exemplified in the second column of Table 3 in this paper. This will provide both learners and teachers of Kiswahili with what can be regarded as basic or complete information about writing and pronouncing the alphabet of standard Kiswahili. Lastly, there is a need to start utilising contemporary

syllabi (e.g., task-based syllabi) that promise to lead learners to communicatively focus on the linguistic and non-linguistic properties of the L2s they are being taught (see Jjingo, 2018). It should be noted that grammatical syllabi, such as the 2008 syllabus, have received criticism regarding their suitability to sufficiently lead FL learners to communicatively acquire the language they are learning. Subsequently, contemporary syllabi have been innovated as alternatives.

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