



The Role of Fiction Writers in the Development of Kiswahili

Ernest Sangai Mohochi

To cite this article: Ernest Sangai Mohochi (2019) The Role of Fiction Writers in the Development of Kiswahili, *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, 5:3-4, 332-346, DOI: [10.1080/23277408.2019.1680915](https://doi.org/10.1080/23277408.2019.1680915)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23277408.2019.1680915>



Published online: 24 Nov 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 327



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)



The Role of Fiction Writers in the Development of Kiswahili

Ernest Sangai Mohochi

Department of Languages, Linguistics and Literature, Rongo University, Kenya

Translated by Ken Walibora, Riara University, Nairobi, Kenya

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses fiction writers' contribution to the development of Kiswahili language. The paper is anchored on the assumption that writers play a big role in the development of language. The contribution of fiction writers has not been widely investigated. This paper analyses the position that creative writers in Swahili literature have accorded this language in their works, and how this position contributes to the development of the language. Additionally, there is a discussion on how writers affect readers' appreciation of the importance of the Swahili language. This study was guided by social influence theory that holds that popular and distinguished people have a lot of influence that can shape others in society. Writers have this characteristic and so they can shape the outlook and views of their readers on the importance of the Swahili language. The data used in this paper was collected by reading the fictional works of three writers of Swahili literature who were purposively sampled: Shaaban Robert, Wallah bin Wallah, and Ken Walibora, together with questionnaires sent to 40 students and 8 lecturers at Rongo University. Similarly, these authors' works were purposively sampled. Findings of this study show that these writers have given Kiswahili a special position in society and have used admirable characters who love and defend the language, thus influencing the readers to also love Swahili.

KEYWORDS

fiction writers; social influence; the development of Swahili language; students; teachers

Introduction

Language is a concept that should be addressed through diverse approaches to enable it to carry out its functions in society. This is especially because language changes over time. Different stakeholders should make deliberate efforts to employ a variety of approaches to language use and development. Writers are among the people who are of importance in this process. This article addresses this group of stakeholders but with particular emphasis on writers of fiction, with social influence theory guiding the discussion. The article starts with a short discussion on the concept of influence, drawing on the views of several authorities. The second section looks at the influence that writers have on

society. This is followed by detailed discussions on the contributions of fiction writers in the development of the Kiswahili language which includes analyses of specific literary works of three fiction writers in Kiswahili to demonstrate the special status that they have given the Kiswahili language in their writing. Also addressed are the views of students and teachers of Kiswahili on the contribution of fictional writers in the development of the language.

On Social Influence

Many experts, mainly social psychologists, have investigated the concept of social impact or influence across a variety of human activities. Friedkin (1998) is one such expert who has investigated the concept of social influence. He uses social psychology while basing his ideas on the structural analysis of society. Differences between human beings are one of the important issues he addresses. Human beings differ not just in terms of biological or spiritual matters such as gender and religion; they also differ in professions and their roles or positions in society. In life processes, and because of differences in the social structure, actors influence one another in different interactions. There are times when they are in mutual agreement; other times they disagree. Thus, as people interact, there are several affecting or influencing processes that take place. Usually, people tend to change or follow the views of others that they interact with in one way or another. This makes us aware that in our relationships, there is the act of influencing or being influenced. Moreover, in the processes of interpersonal influence, people make efforts to control their social environment by changing the inclinations and views of the people they relate with (Friedkin, 1998). It becomes normal for people to do that in order to agree with those they think are important to them. Thus, the impact by influential people in society becomes important because it affects the views and inclinations of the majority in several circumstances.

Furthermore, according to the theory of social influence that Friedkin (1998) defines, readers must identify the contribution of each actor in this process of influence. Individual actors have personal views or inclinations that should be acknowledged in the discussion of what happens in social interactions. Friedkin (1998) also identifies three bases of interpersonal influence: cohesion, similarity, and centrality. Therefore, for A's opinion to affect B it is imperative that B should initially be aware of those opinions that A has. After that, the possibility of A convincing B will depend on the importance or value of A's views to B.

In an environment where there is cohesion and where there are regular interactions, there is the possibility of actors influencing one another. Therefore, when there are similar views among actors, the possibility of influence is great, such that the actors do not realise or think about it. In such circumstances, it is possible to hear O say 'I am like P, so I will act and trust what P does' or 'I want to be like P, and I will be more like P if I act and trust what P does' (Friedkin 1998, 71, quoting

Durkheim 1933; Dahrendorf 1959; Hechter 1987). According to Friedkin's third base which relates to centrality, actors with higher status in a group have a greater chance of influencing their compatriots compared with those who are deemed to be of lower status.

Researchers have found famous people are more influential than others in a group (Goldsmith 2015). This is evident not just in a group but also in the wider society. Discussions on influence involve aspects of how human beings make choices: is it the decision of a single person or does this person change views and principles to make them fit the effect expected from others and society? On the issue of influence, Mayhew (1997) argues that influence entails affecting the actions of other people by persuading them. No coercion or threats are used, or even promises of monetary gain; all material resources involved belong to society. In other circumstances, long-standing explanations of influence have been associated with the presence of status, authority, material wealth and social standing so that those who have these characteristics stand a great chance of influencing others; they become leaders or their opinion is admired in society. Their principles and opinions are easily accepted in society. Mayhew (1997) avers that even if there is no use of coercion and threats, there must be ways of presenting views and principles in order to influence others to act in a certain way. How do writers of fiction influence society according to this theory of social influence? This question is addressed in the following section.

Writers and their Society: A Question of (Counter)Influence

Generally speaking, writers have a great impact on, and influence in society. Many societies have developed and made progress in various fields as a result of the availability of various writings, many of them being the results of in-depth research. Writing is one important and foundational way that enables the exchange and passage of knowledge from one generation to the next, and from one society to another. The education sector depends on writing. Writing is also important in the preservation of culture and different social heritages, especially since the art of oral tradition is dying out. So, the preservation of traditions in books and articles or in soft copy in different networks and other technological means is pivotal. In the West, writers such as Spencer, Milton and Shakespeare helped develop English while Pushkin and Tolstoy helped grow the Russian language by using these languages in their literary writings (Ngugi, 1986). Shakespearean influence in English is so great that there is such a thing as 'Shakespearean English'. Many expect the writers in African languages to do the same for African languages.

In Africa, many writers have contributed to the expansion of African languages by putting them in print. Previously, this was important in the religious arena where missionaries worked with a few Africans to translate holy books into African languages. Putting those languages into writing gave them a certain

status and put them in the group of languages with writing. African languages also acquired writings that were not religious in nature. Accordingly, many writers have contributed to the development of writing Kiswahili because the language has been used in many writings.

It is, however, important to remember that in the past many writers preferred using English and other foreign languages to African tongues, since English, French, and other Western languages enabled them to reach a wider audience. Ngugi wa Thiong'o is one writer who since the 1980s came out to defend the importance of using local languages instead of foreign ones. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngugi observes that after writing *Petals of Blood* (1977), he stopped using English in his fictional works. He vowed to write his future books only in Kiswahili and Gikuyu believing that through translation, his thoughts would still reach a wide audience.

Discussions on the appropriate language for the production and writing of African literature is a subject that preoccupies many people. Because of the effects and influence of colonialism, Africans inevitably developed a liking for foreign things, including language while discarding their own. For instance, Ngugi (1986) complained about the arbitrary tendency of dividing Africa on the basis of foreign languages, that led to the grouping together of countries that use English, French, and Portuguese. He advances that argument by mentioning Chinua Achebe as one of the renowned writers who admitted that there was a form of betrayal when Africans used foreign languages instead of their own but he claimed he had no choice but to use English. Another writer who embraced this form of linguistic imperialism and even praised it was Leopold Sedar Senghor who revered the French language (Ngugi, 1986). Senghor held the view that French was a good language that gave the writer the ability to express his thoughts fully to a wider populace.

However, not everyone embraced linguistic imperialism. According to Ngugi (1986), writers such as Obi Wali and David Diop were against that stance and explained that the only language that a free African could use to express his culture and his emotions was his mother tongue. Diop, for example, believed the use of English, French, and Portuguese would only be temporary before African languages took their rightful place.

Discussions on the appropriate language for African writers to use in their works have persisted even into current times. For example, Aboh (2015) addresses it by using the Nigerian example. He claims that forcing people of diverse origins to come together and build a nation has made the English language the language of every sector in that country. Moreover, Aboh (2015) has reignited an old debate that has two sides to this question. On one hand, there are writers such as Wole Soyinka who, in 1975, suggested the use of Swahili, while others including Chinua Achebe who did not see anything wrong with using English. In East Africa, Kiswahili, a native language has given birth to many works that discuss the challenges of our lives and the various ways to deal with them. It is important to develop

Kiswahili and use it, with those who prefer English left free to use it, but constantly remind them that the local people do not always benefit from such writings.

What is the African fictional writers' contribution in ensuring that African languages develop and attain the status of the foreign languages as Diop believed? This question is addressed in the following section with reference to Kiswahili literature. But for now, I make preliminary observations on the approach I used in arriving at my conclusions. On methodology, I read the creative works of different Kiswahili writers and demonstrated their contribution to the development of Kiswahili language. In doing so, the first step entailed reading the works of pioneering writers who contributed to the growth of Kiswahili literature. The second part involved an in-depth reading of specific works of Shaaban Robert, Wallah Bin Wallah, and Ken Walibora showing how they contributed to the thematic development of Kiswahili in creative works. Their works that influence the growth of Kiswahili were purposively sampled. I used questionnaires to collect data from the students of Kiswahili at Rongo University, teachers from the university and neighboring schools in Migori and Kisii counties of Kenya. The primary aim of using the questionnaires was to elicit views from the teachers and students on the role of fiction in the development of Kiswahili, together with the writers' influence in development of Kiswahili. In total, 40 students and 8 teachers took part in this study.

Writers of Fiction and the Development of Kiswahili

Besides their contributions to writing generally, fiction writers have also contributed to the development of Kiswahili. For example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's viewpoint on this topic generated a longterm conversation on the same. In reference to Kiswahili, the first contribution comes from the publication of many works of fiction. Pioneer works of fiction in Kiswahili include works such as *Utendi wa Tambuka; Al Inkishafi* (1980), *Takhmisa ya Liyongo*, *Utenzi wa Mwanakupona*, and *Mashairi ya Muyaka* (1979). The second generation writers included Walter Mbotela, Henry Kuria, Graham Hyslop, and Gerishon Ngugi. The third period included prominent authors, such as Shaaban Robert, Euphrase Kezilahabi, Ebrahim Hussein, Mugyabuso Mulokozi and their compatriots from mainland Tanzania, together with Said Ahmed Mohammed, Mohammed Suleiman Mohammed and Mohamed Said Abdalla from the Islands. Kenyan authors of this same generation included Abdilatiff Abdalla, Chacha Nyaigoti Chacha, Jay Kitsao, Rocha Chimera, and Kithaka wa Mberia.

The current generation of writers comprises Ken Walibora, Kyalo Wamitila, Mwenda Mbatia, John Habwe, and Timothy Arege, among others. In the beginning, many works of fiction came from Tanzania but from the 1990s Kenyan writers wrote many works. All these writers have contributed a great deal to the development of Kiswahili by enriching the treasure trove of Kiswahili writings and featuring diverse themes therein. Thus, the target reading audience of their

works keeps growing. This is because the writing of particular authors and the diverse issues that they address attract readers. For example, in Adam Shafi's novel, *Kuli* or Al Amin Mazrui's play, *Kilio cha Haki*, readers know about and can identify with the working conditions of regular workers during the colonial period, which involved the exploitation of the Africans, especially the poor. Thus, literature plays different roles, one being addressing the history of our societies.

Given that literature plays a big role in the teaching and expansion of knowledge in a particular language, it is clear that these writers have helped in teaching the language. For example, the writer of this paper used Ken Walibora's *Ndoto ya Amerika* (2001) and Clara Momanyi's *Tumaini* (2006) to teach Swahili to foreign students in the United States. Many teachers of Kiswahili in the US and western Europe use different literary works in their lessons, especially for intermediate and advanced level students. Although there has been an ongoing contentious discussion among experts on the role of literature in teaching language, it is clear that literature not only helps in making students understand culture, but it also teaches them how to express feelings. Moreover, literature helps expand students' use of different linguistic structures that they encounter in their reading. This is not apparent only in the teaching of foreign students. Even in the context of Kiswahili in East Africa, when students reads many works of fiction, their vocabulary grows and so do the various structures they use in the language.

Kiswahili in Literary Works

There are writers of fiction who have explicitly discussed the importance and role of Kiswahili in society in their works. Their contribution is special because they address issues related to in their writings. The first writer we discuss is Shaaban Robert who talks about Kiswahili clearly in his poem, *'Titi la Mama'* ('Mother's Breast'):

*Titi la mama litamu, hata likiwa la mbwa,
Kiswahili naazimu, sifayo iliyofumbwa,
Kwa wasiokufahamu, niimbe ilivyo kubwa,
Toka kama mlizamu, funika palipozibwa,
Titile mama litamu, jingine halishi hamu.*

A mother's breast is sweetest, though it were a canine's
And to you Kiswahili, I affirm your value unknown,
To those who do not know you, I sing how glorious
Springs forth like a spring, to seal the unknown
A mother's breast is the sweetest, none satisfies like it

*Lugha yangu ya utoto, hata sasa nimekua,
Tangu ulimi mzito, sasa kusema najua,
Ni sawa na manukato, moyoni mwangu na pua,*

*Pori bahari na mto, napita nikitumia,
Titile mama litamu, jingine halishi hamu.*

The language of my childhood, mine in my adulthood,
From that time when my tongue was heavy, and now when I know how to speak
It is akin to perfume, in my heart and nostrils,
The wild, oceans and rivers, I use it as I cross,
A mother's breast is the sweetest, none satisfies like it.

Robert praises Kiswahili because of its beauty and he says he will inform those who do not know it by singing in praise of this precious language.

He also explains how it nurtured him up from childhood to adulthood where he uses it with ease and fluency. It enables him to carry out his business wherever he goes. For that reason, he compares it to perfume. Maybe of greater importance is the refrain '*Titile mama litamu, jingine halishi hamu*' ('A mother's breast is the sweetest, none satisfies like it'). By comparing Kiswahili with a mother's breast, Robert shows us its importance. No one can deny the importance of a mother's breast to a child. At the same time, we can examine the imagery of the dog in depth. There are animals that have gained more respect compared to a dog, but to a dog's puppy, nothing can replace the mother's milk. Similarly, though there are other languages that stand higher on the ladder of respectability, only our indigenous languages can quench our thirst. So, to us, Kiswahili is the language that we can use in our activities to achieve development. Therefore, we have no choice but to develop it so that future generations can continue feeding on a mother's breasts and reap the benefits.

Wallah Bin Wallah in his poem, '*Tutukuze Kiswahili*' in the *Malenga wa Ziwa Kuu* (1988) anthology, discusses Kiswahili's big role in society. He starts by saying he will speak the truth. Among the many other things, he says: language makes a country to be respected; it is important to all, old and young; its absence can stagnate a variety of things. God blessed Africa with Kiswahili so we should spread it, locally and internationally; it is important we use it and with the fluency required, and attempt to repair what is broken collectively. The refrain is '*Kiswahili kitukuzwe, kwani lugha ya Taifa*' ('Let Kiswahili be praised since it is the national language'). This poem was set in the Kenya when Kiswahili was only the national language. But whatever the poem talks about concerns the whole of Africa, which is the birthplace of this language. The poem '*Tutukuze Kiswahili*' popularised Kiswahili and influenced many people's view of the language. This was especially so when the then Kenya Broadcasting Corporation radio and television used it as the signature tune for the *Lugha Yetu* [Our Language] programmes. Wallah's poem, '*Tutukuze Kiswahili*' was recited in a beautiful tune and became famous throughout the country.

Another writer in this group is Ken Walibora. In his novel, *Siku Njema* (1996), the Kiswahili language has been accorded an important role by the author. First of all, all character names are derived from the Swahili culture. These are names such as

Zainabu, Msanifu Kombo, Salim, Vumilia Binti Abdalla, Selemani, Bakari, Rashidi, Amina, Zawadi, and Athman. The hero's nickname, Kongowea Mswahili, which is better known than his real name, Msanifu, is one of them. Secondly, Walibora has depicted some characters as people who love Kiswahili, such as Zainabu Makame, Kongowea's mother. She was a good singer and composer of *taarab* poems, greatly loved within East Africa and beyond. Her popularity came from her singing in the Mbelewele Taarab Group from Tanga Town in Tanzania.

Several characters in the novel discuss her fame and popularity. Her son, Kongowea, explains clearly her prowess in the composition of poetry. Kongowea also shows how Zainabu loved poetry. Here are quotes that show this:

Mama alikuwa na mazoea ya kusoma tungo za washairi farisi. Ndiposa haikumwia vigumu kutunga na kuimba nyimbo za taarab zilizowapa watu pumbao. Alikuwa ashiki mkubwa wa lugha ya Kiswahili na ushairi wake, nami nadhani sitakosea sana kusema kwamba alinirithisha mwelekeo huo. (Walibora 1996, 1–5)

Mother regularly read compositions from accomplished poets. Therefore, it was easy for her to compose and sing *taarab* songs that captivated people. She was a great fan of Kiswahili language and its poetry, and I wouldn't be wrong in claiming I inherited that from her.

Slightly later in the story is this description:

... wakati mwingine aliniomba nimwimbie au nimsomee shairi moja au mawili kutoka kwenye Sauti ya Bara, diwani aliyoipenda kama asali. Alipoaga dunia, wapenzi wa muziki wa taarab walihuzunika mno kutokana na kumpoteza mtunzi na mwimbaji mahiri wa fani hii ya muziki wa Kiswahili. Mazishi yake yalihudhuriwa na watu wengi ajabu.

At times, she would ask me to sing or read for her one or two poems from *Sauti ya Bara*, an anthology that she loved just like honey. When she died, *taarab* music fans grieved the loss of an accomplished composer and singer of this genre of Kiswahili music. Thousands attended her burial.

Her fame and singing prowess was glowingly discussed in the *Baraza* newspaper. The news of her death came under the banner 'WAPENZI WA TAARAB WAMZIKA MWIMBAJI HODARI' (TAARAB LOVERS BID FAREWELL TO FAMOUS SINGER). Besides describing the thousands of people that attended her burial and the many attributes of the late Zainabu, the newspaper also reported the following:

'... kwa wapenzi wa taarab wa mbali na karibu, kifo kimewapiga pute johari adimu na thamani ... Naye Zainabu Makame ameacha nyayo zake katika safu za waimbaji na watunzi hodari. (15-16)

... to *taarab* enthusiasts from far and wide, death has snatched from you a rare and precious gem ... and Zainab Makame has left her footsteps in the line of consummate singers and composers.

Similarly, when Kongowea arrived in Mombasa in his quest to escape from Selemani Mapunda and trace his father, he was welcomed to Rashid's home. The very first day he spent time at Rashid's home, who did not know then that Zainabu was

Kongowea's mother, he played a taarab song sung by Zainabu Makame on his stereo. After the song came to an end, Rashid said, (63) '*Basi mwanamke huyu alikuwa akiimba kweli... Looh! Kifo ni mwizi mkubwa wa kuiba kila kilicho bora.*' (That woman was quite a talented singer ... Ooh! Death is a robber, robbing us all things precious.) In his letter to his son, Kongowea, his father says the following about his mother, '*Mamako Zainabu Makame tulikutana zamani sana ... Alikuwa mutribu aliyeghani nyimbo za taarab kwa lahani taanusi*' (132) ('I met your mother, Zainabu Makame, a long time ago ... she was a taarab singer who sang with enchanting tunes.'). It is clear from all the praises that Zainabu had a special talent in her field. It is also clear that she influenced many people, including her son Kongowea, and others.

Zainabu's co-parent, Kongowea's father, was also involved in popularising Kiswahili. When he finally meets him after his long search, Kongowea realises that Juma Mukosi was a lecturer of Kiswahili at the university a while back, before he resigned and went to live in Kitale. He met with Zainabu at Mombasa, when he was busy researching the Kimvita dialect of Kiswahili, while Zainabu was singing taarab. Kongowea also finds out that his father, Juma Mukosi, is Amuj Isokum, the author of the famous anthology, *Sauti ya Bara*, that his mother loved reading and so did he. The same anthology was analysed in school by Alice and the teacher Nambuye Pilipili. Because of his parents' character attributes, especially pertaining to Kiswahili, it was no wonder that Kongowea ended up loving and truly honoring Kiswahili language and its cultures.

Walibora has used numerous examples to show how Kongowea loved Kiswahili to the extent of getting the Mswahili nickname, one that became popular and eclipsed his real name, Msanifu Kombo. His love for Kiswahili emerged when he was very young. He says, '*Nilipojua kusoma nilijikusuru kuzisoma tungo adhimu za Kiswahili nilizopata kukumbana nazo, vitabuni na magazetini*' (5) (When I learned how to read, I endeavored to read all famous Kiswahili writings that I could lay my hands on). On the next page, he says, '*Waama, mambo yanayohusiana na Kiswahili na Uswahili yamenitamia kwa miaka mingi. Niliwahusudu wazee wengi wa Tanga kwa umahiri wao katika Kiswahili na kunga zake za ushairi*' ('In fact, issues to do with Kiswahili language and culture have appealed to me for a long time. I envied many Tanga elders for their prowess in the language and its poetry). Because of this, Msanifu loved spending time with the elders to gather knowledge from them. He also loved reading different books in the Tanga public library; something he says helped him understand Kiswahili better than his peers.

While in primary school, he wrote an essay, *Kongowea Mswahili*, which won in the primary school competition in Tanga Province. That was how he acquired his nickname, Kongowea Mswahili, while in class six. Because of his prowess in school, especially in the Kiswahili language subject, his peers started calling him the Kiswahili expert, although he never considered himself one. One day, Kongowea is at the public library, going through the Kiswahili dictionary written by Dr. Ludwig

Krapf when word reaches him that his mother who was gravely ill was calling him (11–12).

After reading the newspaper article on his mother's death and burial, Kongowea makes a statement that shows he not only loves Kiswahili because he knows it, but he respects it to the extent of worrying about its usage by other people. He praises the writer for using proper Kiswahili; something that he indicates is rare in many Kiswahili newspapers. He says

... waandishi wa habari na vitabu wanayo dhima ya kuwafundisha wasomaji wao ufasaha na umbuji utakikanao ... Mtu anayepima ubora wa Kiswahili kutokana na kile akisomacho katika magazeti yetu hana budi kukihukumu kuwa lugha dufu na pungufu. (17)

News writers and book authors have the responsibility of teaching readers fluency and acceptable language usage that is required ... anyone who judges Kiswahili quality from what he reads in the newspapers would definitely conclude it is a worthless and deficient language.

Walibora clearly shows he is an author who values Kiswahili and encourages its development by following the laid down rules and norms in his characters such as Kongowea in *Siku Njema*, and Amani in *Kidagaa Kimemwozea*.

Kongowea Mswahili also composed Kiswahili poems. After his long talk with his uncle, Kitwana Makame, over his decision to move away from Tanga, Kongowea is sleepless and decides to compose the following stanza:

*Naambe ambaye amba, atakaye badiliko
Ajaponifunga kamba, nisiende nitakako
Nayo njia nitatamba, kule Kenya nende huko*

(Let him talk he who talks, he who wants change,
Even if he ties me up, that I should not go where I wish to,
I will get on the road, to Kenya I will go).

When it was time to leave Tanga, among the few things he carried in his bag were three books: a story titled *Shani Kubwa*; the *Sauti ya Bara* anthology, together with a Kiswahili dictionary. His decision shows the status of Kiswahili in his life. When he lived with Rashid in Mombasa, he loved spending his spare time in the library reading books. He also wrote short stories and poems, some of which were featured in the *Baraza* and *Taifa Leo* newspapers. '*Hapana shaka niliandika mno, lakini ilikuwa kazi iliyonipa furaha isiyomithilika. Niliipenda. Nilipenda kuchangia, japo kwa akali ndogo, utukufu wa lugha ya Kiswahili*' (74) (There is no doubt that I wrote prolifically, but it gave me immense joy. I loved it. I loved contributing to articles, though in a small way, to the prominence of Kiswahili).

When he arrived in Kitale and took up residence in Ms Mercy MacDonald's mansion, Mswahili continued to compose poems and sent them to the papers and many were read in *Baraza* and *Taifa Leo*. He became famous with many people knowing him, such as the teacher in the school where Alice, Ms Mercy's daughter attended. Alice's teacher requested to meet him when Alice asked for

help in the analysis the *Sauti ya Bara* anthology. Teacher Nambuye invited Kongowea Mswahili to address his students, Kiswahili being the topic. He was initially hesitant to assist Alice or to visit the school but he eventually acceded to both requests for his love of Kiswahili. This was after his poem, '*m'baguano*' garnered first position in the poetry composition competition in the country. In response to the invitation to address the school, he said, ... *nitakuja. Nitakuja tu kwa sababu ya utukufu wa Kiswahili*' (120) ('I will come; I will come only because of the glory of Swahili').

In preparation for his lecture at the school, Kongowea read many books, some that he had brought from Tanga and others that he had bought in Kitale. He said buying Kiswahili books was a habit. How many teachers of Kiswahili and experts can confidently say they buy books regularly? Though there were some, they were not many. In his lecture titled, *Problems facing Swahili*, Mswahili explained a lot of issues about Kiswahili before Kazi Kwisha disrupted his lecture. Kongowea stated clearly the importance of Kiswahili and then complained that in most cases, we do not appreciate, honour or develop Kiswahili diligently. He appreciated and praised foreigners such as Lambert, Dr. Krapf, F. Johnson and Prof. Wilfred Whiteley for their immense contribution in research and writing on Kiswahili. He cautioned his audience that the onus of developing Kiswahili was on all of them, from upcountry or from the coast. He lamented that writers in Kiswahili did not have such a big market because many people did not love reading Kiswahili. Even the experts read English books. He said that the greatest enemies of Kiswahili were ordinary people themselves. How many can prove Kongowea wrong? This is a truth that is supposed to make us ponder and rouse us to change our views on Kiswahili.

Walibora's work has had a lot of influence among many Kiswahili literature enthusiasts, especially in Kenya. His novel *Siku Njema* was selected as a form four level set book, and this made it even more popular. Many students who read this book in school admit it influenced them to love the Kiswahili subject.

Similarly, in his other novel, *Kidagaa Kimemwozea*, Walibora continues with his usual trait of according Kiswahili an important role in his fictional writings. This work has several names from Kiswahili and Swahililand, such as Amani, Imani, Nasaba Bora, Bi Zuhura, Mashaka, and Madhubuti. In the initial pages of the novel, his love for Kiswahili is evident from the principles that Amani postulates about the urban slang, Sheng that the character DJ uses. He explains that Sheng irritates and he is shocked that old people are now joining the group of people that use it and hence trash Swahili grammar. This is his position: '*... Hata hivyo, ana itikadi bado kwamba kilugha hiki dufu ni tishio kwa uhondo na umilisi wa lugha*' (5) ('... however, he still believes that this worthless language is a threat to the harmony and competency of language'). We are also informed how Mwalimu Majisifu garnered fame from his prowess in authoring literary works. Although we later know the truth that he used to steal manuscripts from other authors, it is clear that the author thinks someone can become famous and be rich from authoring literary works in Kiswahili. In addition, Majisifu loved the language and tried to use it appropriately. It is not a wonder that he gets

the nickname the Grammar Police Officer because of his penchant for correcting those who break the rules of Kiswahili grammar.

Amani was an accomplished author, gifted with great talent. He loved poetry and used it to pour out his feelings whenever he faced a misfortune. He composes a poem for his late mother (33), he composed a stanza after Uhuru dies (110), and he wrote Mwalimu Majisifu a poetic message after the truth about his manuscript is brought into the open (143). Similarly, during the Patriots' Day celebrations at Sokomoko, the status of Kiswahili is clear in the discussion between two characters. One of them is of the opinion that it would have been better if Mtemi Nasaba Bora read the speech that was translated in Kiswahili instead of English that many in attendance did not understand (70). The answer is that he is following the example set by the His Excellency the President of Tomoko. It is true that many citizens attend meetings, listen to speeches, and then go back home with no idea what the message in the speech in question was. If you asked them, they would not answer because the majority does not understand the language used. The author clearly shows he is disgusted by the theft of fiction manuscripts, which shows he values the efforts of authors and their contribution, and bemoans the theft of their hard work.

Walibora did not just write *Siku Njema* and *Kidagaa Kimemwozea*. He has a recent unpublished poem, titled '*Lugha Bora*' (The Excellent Language). In this poem, he addresses Kiswahili through personification and says he would want to send it. He advises it to be strong and warns it against its enemies, such as black Europeans who impede it by not using it. He wants it to first go and face up to English and inform it that he is no longer its slave and has already discarded it. It should then go to the Dutch language and tell it that Dutch benefits the Dutch but has no status in Swahililand. After that, it should go to the Portuguese language and inform it that Kiswahili supersedes it in many things, so it is no competition. Then it should go to Arabia and inform Arabic that it (Kiswahili) is now scaling the heights and cannot be compared with Arabic. Finally, it should go to China and inform the Chinese language that it fears it not. Kiswahili language is way richer in composition and should not be ridiculed and slighted. In '*Lugha Bora*', the author compares Kiswahili with other 'big' languages and, according to him, Kiswahili is not a lesser language. He admits that those other languages are important to those who use them; therefore, appearing to advise us not emulate Europeans, we should stand strong to honor and develop Kiswahili, our esteemed language.

Perspectives from Students and Teachers on the Contribution of Writers

After studying the works of the authors mentioned in this paper, data was sought through administering a short questionnaire to teachers and students of Kiswahili. The questionnaire had seven questions which were used to gather information on

the role of fictional writers in developing Kiswahili. The questions were open-ended and gave the participant an opportunity to explain their views. The first question asked them to state three Kiswahili literary writers that they love most, with the objective of wanting to know if there are authors that they find invigorating and who they value. Nineteen authors were mentioned. Two of them were mentioned more than 20 times, one was mentioned 19 times and the others mentioned less than 10 times. The three who led were Ken Walibora (26), S. A. Mohamed (26), and E. Kezilahabi (19).

In the second question, the participants were asked to give reasons why they liked the authors they chose. The aim was to show if there are reasons that arise from the authors' contribution to the development of Kiswahili. The following reasons were identified: they address topical issues in society (17); rich language and great creativity (11); use of creative and captivating language (10); clear language (6); addressing women's issues (5), boosting readers linguistically (3). Three answers out of the six address language directly.

Another question was whether they thought literary writers had made any contribution to the development of Kiswahili. Thirty-two of them concurred that literary authors do contribute, while two said they do not. Some respondents did not answer this question. The next question asked those who had answered in the affirmative in the previous question to elucidate the writers' contributions. The explanations given were: that they boost the language and make many to love it (16); aiding upcoming authors creativity (13); the use of new vocabulary (7); helping learners' language grow by using vocabulary that nurtures their knowledge and competency in language (10); bringing new knowledge. Four out of five answers address the language question directly.

The fifth question was whether a writer had influenced their views and standpoints on Kiswahili. Twenty-four participants said Yes, while nine said No. Other respondents did not answer this question. Those who answered in the affirmative were asked to state how they were influenced by the author they had mentioned. Answers included: making them love Kiswahili more (10); knowing the importance of Kiswahili (7); encouraging them to write works of fiction (4), not understanding and therefore hating Kiswahili (1). Finally, they were asked to give general views on the role of writers. Most of them repeated points that they had already stated like the importance of writers and strengthening vocabulary, encouraging upcoming authors, disseminating new vocabulary and therefore developing Kiswahili. What became clear is that these students understood that authors of fiction are stakeholders who play an important role in the growth and development of Kiswahili language.

The results were not very different among the teacher participants. On the three writers that they love, 10 writers were mentioned. Those mentioned include Ken Walibora (6), S. A. Mohamed (5), and Katama Mkangi and Euphrase Kezilahabi who were mentioned three times each. Adam Shafi was mentioned twice, and five others were mentioned once. The reasons why they love them were as follow: they address the reality facing society (7); their good writing

style (5); their creativity and rich language (3); addressing the role of women (2); use of clear language (2), and defending standard Kiswahili (1). Four questions out of six address language directly.

All eight teachers answered the third question concurring that the authors have contributed to the development of Kiswahili. They said they agreed because those authors contribute to new vocabulary (4); they boost language and make others love it (3); they grow the creativity of writers who are learning the ropes (3); they help readers improve their language (3). All teachers answered that an author had influenced them. They said they had been influenced in several ways such as: improving language use (3); being more attentive to the use of Kiswahili (2); becoming authors themselves (2); discovering that Kiswahili is an important language in society (2); loving the Kiswahili language and literature even more (1). Their general views on the role of authors drew the same answers already stated: they develop Kiswahili (5); they enhance other writers creativity (3); contribute vocabulary (2), raise the status of Kiswahili (1).

The teachers and students of Kiswahili who participated in this study agreed to a larger extent that writers of literary works have a great role in the development of Kiswahili. They also influence their readers and are great stakeholders in the whole process of developing a language. Taking into account the tenets of the theory of social influence, these writers are stakeholders who should cooperate with other groups because their popularity can contribute to the sustainable development of Swahili.

Writers have shown their contribution to the development of Kiswahili and their impact on society in various ways. Their decision to use it in their writings has thus enriched the collection of Kiswahili writings. They make Kiswahili and its role in society one of the themes they address. They portray several characters who love Kiswahili language and who succeed in life due to the language. They contribute to the teaching of the language because literary works are important resources in language teaching, and they inspire upcoming writers. Walibora's characters works such as Zainabu Makame, Juma Mukosi, Amani, Kongowea, among others, influence fellow characters and help them understand the importance of Kiswahili. All three writers influence their readers to see Kiswahili as an important tool in personal, national and regional development. The views of teachers and students have also revealed the fact that literary works influence readers of literary works in different ways.

Conclusion

This article has discussed the role of authors of fictional works in the development of Kiswahili in reference to the theory of social influence. The first part dealt with the concept of social influence. In our day-to-day life, there are many circumstances of reciprocal influence among the members of society. There are people who influence us, and we influence others. Our interactions

depend on relations of influence. I discussed the importance of writers in society, especially literary writers. Writings and writers contribute to social development. Writers put knowledge in a way that it can reach many, and therefore educate and entertain, among other things. The discussion also addressed the role of fiction writers in the development of Kiswahili. This article was based on the analysis of the works of three writers to show how writers contribute to the growth of language. The article also addressed their diverse contributions as writers of literary works in Kiswahili.

In the last section, I show the views of teachers and students of Kiswahili regarding the role of fiction writers in the development of the language. It is clear that fiction writers are popular and this makes them influential. Owing to this, they have the ability to affect many people. When they come out as defenders of Kiswahili, write works in that language, and involve themselves in other activities that benefit them, they become important agents of the language.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank Prof Zaja Omboga, Centre for Translation Studies, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya for checking the translations.

References

- Abdulaziz, H. M. 1979. *Muyaka: 19th Century Popular Swahili Poetry*. Nairobi: EAEP.
- Aboh, R. (2015). "Talking' Igbo, 'Writing' English: Nigerianism in the Concubine." In *Essays on Language, Communication and Literature in Africa*, edited by A. Odeunmi and J. T. Mathangwane. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Accessed at <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rucke-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4648739>.
- Friedkin, N. E. 1998. *A Structural Theory of Social Influence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldsmith, E. B. 2015. *Social Influence and Sustainable Consumption*. International Series on Consumer Science. DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-20738-4_2
- Mayhew, L. H. 1997. *The New Public: Professional Communication and the Means of Social Influence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mlamali, M. 1980. *Al Inkishafi: Sayyid Bin Ali Bin Nasir*. Nairobi: Longman.
- Momanyi, C. 2006. *Tumaini*. Nairobi: Vide-Muwa Punlihsres.
- Robert, S. (2016). "Titi la Mama", *Katika Jahadhmi's Anthology of Swahili Poetry*. Accessed at <http://www.mwambao.com/mashairi.htm>.
- Ngugi, wa Thiong'o. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Ngugi, wa Thiong'o. 1992. *Petals of Blood*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Walibora, K. 1996. *Siku Njema*. Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers.
- Walibora, K. 2001. *Ndoto ya Amerika*. Nairobi: Sasa Sema Publishers.
- Walibora, K. 2016. "Lugha Bora", Unpublished Poem.
- Wallah, B. W 1988. *"Tutukuze Kiswahili", katika Malenga wa Ziwa Kuu*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Limited.