“HATUCHEKI NA WATU”: KENYAN HIP-HOP ARTISTS’ THEORIES OF MULTILINGUALISM, IDENTITY AND DECOLONIALITY

By

Esther Milu

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ABSTRACT

"HATUCHEKI NA WATU": KENYAN HIP-HOP ARTISTS' THEORIES OF MULTILINGUALISM, IDENTITY AND DECOLONIALITY

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This is a qualitative research study that constellates several theoretical and methodological approaches to understand *why* and *how* three Kenyan Hip-hop artists, Jua Cali, Nazizi Hirji and Abbas Kubbaff, engage in translingual communicative practices. A variety of data types including in-depth phenomenologial interviews, lyrical content and multimodal compositions were evaluated to understand how and why the artists used particular linguistic and semiotic resources in composing their texts and in their everyday communication. A translingual analytical framework was applied to examine these resources across various modalities of communication: verbal, written, audio, visual, performative and embodied. Findings from the study indicate that the artists translingual practices are aimed at : 1) constructing various ethnicities and indentities based on their everyday language use and not on dominant language ideologies or theories of race and ethnicity in the country; 2) engaging in language activism work by raising critical language awareness within dominant institutions, and by actively participating in the preservation of youth languages and cultures; 3) theozing and practicing diverse options for cultural and linguistic decolonization. The study concludes by proposing a translingual pedagogy that challenges students to demonstrate critical awareness of the "linguistic culture" surrounding the languages, codes and symbolic practices they use in their translingual composing. The study also pushes back on the current prescriptive theories of multilingualism and instead proposes a theory of multilingualism that is always emergent and negotiated.

For the Mwanzias

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INTRODUCTION:

ENTERING THE RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION LANGUAGE WARS

My research interest in language diversity began in 2010 after joining the rhetoric and writing graduate program at Michigan State University. In one of the graduate seminars titled "Studies in English Language" with Dr. Geneva Smitherman aka Dr. G, I was introduced to the language diversity scholarship in composition studies. Because of my natural interest in how people "do language," I was immediately drawn to the language conversation in the field. Throughout my graduate program, I read and followed scholarship that responds to or proposes approaches to addressing language difference(s) in writing classrooms.

For the last four years, I have particularly been very interested in understanding the translingual approach to writing. Unlike code-switching (Wheeler and Sword 2006; Elbow 1999) or code-meshing (Young 2007; Canagarajah 2006), the translingual approach (Horner et al 2011; Horner, Necamp and Donahue 2011; Canagarajah 2013) seems to capture the kind of multilingualism I embody—one characterized by moving across languages and modalities and one not based on proficiency in discrete languages but on mutual intelligibility and negotiation of meaning. I come from a very linguistically diverse country, Kenya, where moving across languages in communication is an every day practice. Many Kenyans in their everyday communication draw or use language resources from their ethnic languages, English and Swahili. We call this practice Sheng or speaking in Sheng. Although Swahili is Kenya's lingua franca, people have varied proficiencies in the language. Similarly, while English is emerging as Kenya's second lingua franca, not every one speaks the language or many Kenyans have varied proficiencies in the language. In multilingual and multiethnic contexts, Kenyans enhance their

communication and negotiation of meaning by using other modalities and strategies of communication like body language and translation. Therefore, reading about translingualism, I knew to a great extent it captured the kind of multilingualism many people in Kenya practice.

As a multilingual student, and following the invitation by composition language scholars to bring our home languages in academic writing, I was very interested in learning how to employ my multilingual literacies and assert my linguistic identity in the American academic setting. I also wanted to learn how to teach students like me in the first year writing classes I taught to do the same. Unfortunately, this has not been easy particularly because as an emerging field of study, there is little representation or examples of how translingualism works in academic writing. The dominance of English monolingualism in rhetoric and composition, and American academia in general, limits and constrains such knowledges and practices.

At the same time, while I was drawn to the translingual approach to writing because it shows promise for students like me, I was bothered by the current theorization because it ignores or does not emphasize the role culture plays in shaping how a person translanguages. By culture I mean a person's or a group's way of life including behaviors, values, experiences, religious practices and belief systems, language and ways of using language, socio-class and hierarchies, racial and ethnic relations/politics, political and economic systems, among others. As such, the current theorization of translingualism ignores how a cultural group's theories and ways of using language shapes how they engage in translingual practice. This what Schiffman (1996) calls "linguistic culture," that is, the "set of behaviors, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk

belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religo-historical circumstances associated with a particular language" (p. 5).

Reflecting on this definition, I wondered how the linguistic culture(s) of English, Swahili, and my ethnic language, Kikamba, shape how I translanguage. More specifically, I wanted to understand how the linguistic cultures of the languages Kenyan Hip-hop artists' use influences how they engage in translingual practice. For example, while Kenyans have historically valued ethnic languages and used them to assert their ethnic identities, in multiethnic and multilingual urban cities, using ethnic languages is not positively embraced especially after the infamous 2007 ethnic-based post election violence. Kenyan literary writer and political activist Koigi wa Wamwere has noted for example that "language differences are also a source of tension among Africans. In some quarters in Kenya, the argument runs; if you speak your language, you propagate ethnic hate and are a tribalist. Only a single language for all Africans—in this case Kiswahili—will eradicate negative ethnicity" ("Towards Ethnic Genocide," (2012, p.9). Thus, the current linguistic culture surrounding the use of ethnic languages seems to be shifting from positive to negative, particularly in multilingual/multi-ethnic Kenyan urban cities and because of the current Kenyan political climate characterized by tribalism (See more discussion of this in chapter three).

Further, English language, a heritage of British colonization occupies an ambivalent position in Kenya since it is at once a symbol of upward status and modernity, and at the same time a symbol of colonization and imperialism. While Kenyans strive to speak the best English they can, the language is also blamed for historically having played a damaging role of mental

and linguistic colonization and marginalizing indigenous languages and knowledges. (Wa Thiong'o 1986). Swahili on the other hand represents Kenya's national culture and identity. It is thus a symbol of sovereignty and independence from British colonialism. As Kenya's lingua franca, it is privileged as the language of facilitating interethnic communication and promoting ethnic cohesion. Although it is spoken in several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Kenya, it is the language of marking one's Kenyanness.

Sheng defined as a practice of moving across languages in communication, is viewed as a language practice used mostly by the Kenyan youth to assert their identity and to resist dominant and standard language ideologies. However, with Sheng's history as originating among poor urban working and non-working class, and predominantly spoken in Nairobi urban-ghettos, it has over the years been stigmatized and blamed for negatively influencing the teaching and speaking of standard Swahili and English in Kenya. However, with the current increasing commercial value of Sheng, the linguistic culture surrounding this formerly stigmatized youth language is changing from negative to positive (See chapter one for detailed discussion of Sheng) and thus becoming the dominant language (practice) for many artists.

This short synopsis of the linguistic cultures surrounding some of the common languages Kenyans use in their translingual practice gives us an idea of how it might influence how they mesh and mix different languages and codes in their everyday communication. Similarly, the artists I worked with expressed certain assumptions, prejudices, attitudes, stereotypes towards some of the languages they used in their translingual composing. These different ways of thinking about language was shaped by the linguistic culture(s) I describe above and the larger

Kenyan culture or way of life. This is what I believe is lacking in the current theorization of translingualism.

A number of scholars in composition studies have raised concerns about how hybrid language pedagogies proposed in the field so far fail to emphasize the role racial/ethnic and linguistic culture plays in shaping how and why people practice different kinds of bi/multilingualism. Lyons (2009) for example, questions the value of code meshing and other hybrid pedagogies for Native communities. Grounding his argument on culture (and ethnic identity), he argues that the choice of language for Indian Americans is tied to politics related to the past and continuing colonization and thus language choice and use is about the search for sovereignty and decolonization. He notes for example that code meshing (and translingualism) "violates the elders' rule of mutually assured separatism" and interferes with the preservation and maintenance of native languages. As such, he advocates for code switching since it promotes traditional bilingualism and gives Native students access to Standard English code, which he sees as important for "accessing" important things for the community, and also for the maintenance of native languages. Canagarajah (2015) addresses Lyon's concerns by sharing similar fears raised by elders from his own Sri Lankan Tamil diasporian community in Canada. The elders fear that the Sri Lankan youth's practice of mixing English with Tamil leads to "heritage language being corrupted and their ethnic identity lost" (p.17). Using the Sri Lankan youth as a case, Canagarajah argues that young people today are developing complex language identities, ideologies and ethnicities based on their everyday language use.

While I agree with Canagarajah, especially because this is one of the major findings of my research, I see Lyon's concern being more than just maintenance and preservation of structural features of native languages. For example, while the Kenyan youth are developing new ways of using language and new-ethnicities, their practices are not completely removed from their elders' cultural, ethnic, colonial, historical and political experiences. In any case, indigenous language scholars like Wyman, McCarty and Nicholas (2014) have also shown that indigenous youth are actively engaging in language crossing and shifting practices characterized by hybridity, heteroglossia and translanguaging. These practices are a reflection of the diverse sociolinguistic contexts they are always participating in. At the same time, the authors argue that the youth are aware of their communities' cultural goals and aims of language maintenance, revitalization, continuance and survivance contrary to previous scholarship which constructs them as not involved or disterested. As such, they actively participate in language preservation efforts following and sometimes pushing back on some of their elders' approaches, as well as using innovative approaches some made available through new media. They do so while negotiating competing and contradictory narratives and discourses surrounding issues of language loss, authenticity, language maintenance, access, power, identity, stigma among others.

As such, I see Lyons (2009) concerns not being about resistance to hybrid language pedagogies but more about the need to be aware of the historical, colonial, cultural, racial/ethnic, power and ideological issues surrounding the use of indigenous languages. This is what Lee (2014) calls "critical Indigenous consciousness" or a critical language awareness towards indigenous language use, research and teaching. Such consciousness or awareness is only

possible if one is aware of the linguistic culture surrounding individual indignoeus languages. Writing about Navajo people and their language, for example, Schiffiman (1996) notes:

> The Navajo, as is well known, are the most language-loyal Amerindian in North America; some of this may have to do with the demographic size of the group, but much of it may be related to their world-view about language, and its importance in their universe, without which there can be no human life. For the Navajo, death of their language would obviously mean not only the death of Navajo culture but the destruction of the world. For the Navajo, language maintenance is equivalent to holding the world together and avoiding utter chaos. (p. 73)

Schiffiman (1996) shares another example of the linguistic culture surrounding Tamil, the language afore-mentioned by Canagarajah. He identifies the religious myths and legends surrounding the origin of Tamil noting that it was given to the Tamil people by their god Murukan (Murugan). While Schiffiman (1996) agrees that a demand for purism in Tamil may be untenable and perhaps irreverent for Tamil youth as Canagarajah notes above, he at the same time argues that awareness of the cultural and religious history surrounding the language is important:

> Of course it is not always easy for a linguistic culture to decide what is or are its own sources, and the literature on purism is rife with description of inaccurate and often downright silly interpretations of what is indigenous and what is foreign. But the point is that it doesn't really matter so much what the details are, as long as there is a *perception*

> on the culture that linguistic purism is a necessity for the survival of the language, the culture, or whatever, and that speakers are mobilized to participate in a movement to reconnect the language with its roots. Given the myth of divine origin of the Tamil, however, it is clear what the motivating factor out to be—ridding Tamil of admixtures from other languages, whether Sanskrit or others, to return to the sweetness of Tamil as it was first taught by Murukan. (p.180)

My argument in this dissertation project is for translanguagers to have a critical awareness of the linguistic culture(s) surrounding the languages they bring to their translingual practice. While, the translingual composing practices of the artists I worked with reflected everyday multilingualism in Kenya, in my interviews with them, they revealed an awareness of how past and contemporary socio-economic, ethnic relations/politics and political history shapes their language choices and use. Similarly, in my own teaching and enactment of translingual pedagogies, I have come to learn that a student's choice or decision to translanguage is not always a simple one. A translingual approach to writing that does not push students to show criticality in language use, that is, demonstrating awareness of how historical and contemporary linguistic culture surrounding the different languages, codes and symbolic practices they bring to their translingual writing is not different from a monolingual approach to writing. This finding is line with what African American language (AAL) scholars have argued over the years in terms of understanding the history of AAL in order to develop effective language pedagogies and positive language attitudes among students and communities (See Smitherman 2000; Richardson 2003; Baker-Bell 2013).

Milson-Whyte (2013) offers us another example of language use within the Jamaican community noting people's resistance to hybrid pedagogies that propose the meshing of Standard English and Jamaican Creole (JC). She suggests the need to understand the historical and sociolinguistic situation in the country, and the power relations operating between the use of Standard English and JC. She notes for example that a language like JC was created through the institution of slavery and plantation and is thus very stigmatized in Jamaica. Over the years, she writes, many JC speakers (including students) have developed a "contradictory attitude" towards Standard English and wish to keep the languages separate or maintain "the unequal relationship between" the two (p.123). Milson-Whyte proposes that before students are invited to code-mesh or translanguage, they first need to understand how historical, cultural and political factors shape particular use(s) of languages. This is because language choice and use is tied to such factors, which are significant for the community.

Writing from a different discipline but similar theoretical orientation, Creese and Blackledge (2010) propose that teachers should take into account the socio-political and historical environment in which language practices are embedded, that is, the, "local ecologies of schools and classrooms" and the "specific sociopolitical settings in which the processes of language use create, re-flect, and challenge particular hierarchies and hegemonies, however transient these might be" (p.104). Creese and Blackledge arrived at this conclusion after testing the role translanguaging played in facilitating the learning and teaching of bilingualism in complementary schools in the United Kingdom. Like, Lyon and Milson-Whyte above, Creese and Blackledge hint that a variety of cultural, sociopolitical and historical factors have to be

taken into consideration as we evaluate *how* and *why* people translanguage or how to enact translingual pedagogies in the classroom.

In this dissertation, I begin to address this gap using Kenyan Hip-hop as a case. The guiding question for this project is: *how* and *why* do Kenyan Hip-hop artists engage in translingual composing. I chose Hip-hop culture because this is where translingual practices—the moving across languages and modalities—is happening extensively and rapidly, yet their voices and practices are not represented in translingual scholarship. Further, I see Kenyan Hip-hop artists offering rhetoric and composition scholars a window to understand African youth language and literacy practices in general. The artists participating in this study, Jua Cali, Abbas Kubaff and Nazizi Hirji, embody the type of multilingualism advocated by translingual theorists, particularly those in composition studies (Horner et al 2011; Horner, Necamp and Donahue 2011; Canagarajah 2013; Horner and Selfe 2013). Specifically, the artists' multilingualism is characterized by 1) the combining of various languages and codes to generate new meanings and grammars; 2) the moving across languages and modalities in composing and performance; 3) an emphasis on mutual intelligibility and negotiation of meaning rather than on proficiency in discrete languages. In my conversation with them about why and how they engage in translingual writing, issues related to cultural, historical, educational, racial and ethnic, language contact and other experiences came up. These issues seemed to influence how they theorize and use different languages in their compositions. This is what Schiffman (1996) calls "cultural baggage" which needs to be considered as we evaluate how people theorize and use language. Similarly, Canagarajah (2011) has noted that it is important to "find out how translanguagers

perceive their relationship to the codes they mix in their utterance" or whether their "translanguaging is free of values" (p.10).

The title of my dissertation project "Hatucheki Na Watu": Kenyan Hip-Hop Artists' Theories of Multilingualism, Identity and Decoloniality," summarizes the key findings of my project. That the artists are: 1) developing their own theories of multilingualism, 2) constructing new ethnicities based on sound and everyday language use, and 3) inventing and following their own paths to cultural and linguistic decolonization. I borrowed the phrase "Hatucheki na Watu" from Kenyan Hip-hop song "Boomba Train" by Nameless (David Mathenge) and the late E-sir (Issah Mmari). The literal translation of this Swahili phrase is that "we don't laugh with people," in other words "we don't play." If interpreted following a Hip-hop nation language framework, it could mean "we are bad or "we are the illest." As such, I use the phrase to argue that the artists represented in this study are the illest in terms of engaging in innovative language practices, in theorizing their multilingual practices, in using language to construct various indentities, and in determining the decolonial options to adopt.

Each chapter addresses these findings. In Chapter one, "History of Hip-hop in Kenya: Economic, Political and Sociolinguistic Context," I trace the history of Hip-hop in Kenya and Africa in general. I locate this history in the context of the socio-economic and political reforms happening in Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, I discuss how the adoption of neo-liberal and market free reforms led to economic decline in Kenya and Africa in general. This led to rural-urban migration, rapid urbanization, unemployment and poverty in Kenyan urban cities. Many youths in African cities started using Hip-hop as an outlet to express their

socio-economic marginalization and disfranchisement. I also show that unlike in the US where Hip-hop began in disfranchised and poverty-stricken inner cities, in Kenya and Africa in general, it began among wealthy and relatively privileged youth who had access to the culture. It was not until years later that it spread to the inner city where it took root. I identify and locate the geographical areas where Hip-hop began in Nairobi-Kenya and discuss the sociolinguistic context as well. I also discuss how the transition from a single party to a multi-party democracy in Kenya led to liberalization of many institutions like the media. This saw a rapid spread of Hip-hop culture in the country. In my discussion, I show how this socio-economic, political and sociolinguistic history shaped and continues to shape Kenyan Hip-hop artists' language choice and use.

In chapter two, "Methods and Methodology," I discuss how and why I constellated a variety of methods and methodological/theoretical approaches in my data collection, analysis and interpretation. Specifically, I used the in-depth phenomenological interviewing structure proposed by Irving Seidman in his book *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. The interviews followed a three-phase structure where phase one focused on the artists' life histories, phase two focused on details of Hip-hop artists' experiences, while in phase three, the artists reflected on the meaning of their experience and practice. During the interviews, I engaged in sociolinguistic interviewing to capture the artists' everyday (natural) speech and to elicit specific information on *why* they used particular languages and language varieties in their compositions. I also observed the artists' "language in use" as they interacted with their friends, with family members in their homes, in the studio, with other artists, in live performances and also during the interviews.

I supplemented the interview and sociolinguistic fieldwork data with lyrical data, that is, songs written by artists. Another source of data was multimodal compositions for the songs captured as screenshots from their You-tube videos. In my analysis, I incorporated conversational interviews with each artist to provide their perspective on their language choices and use and as a way of offering the reader the artists' personal analysis of their translingual texts. I also constellated a variety of theoretical frames to provide my own interpretation of the artists' goals for engaging in translingual composing. These theories include the practices of everyday life (de Certeau 1984) and decolonization (Mignolo 2011; Wa Thiong'o 1986). Throughout the dissertation, I present the interview data in verbatim for a number of reasons: 1) to demonstrate how the artists embody translingual practice as part of their everyday; 2) to *represent* the artists translingual practices as "authentically" as possible, 3) to demonstrate how I engaged in practice-based research by using a variety of translingual rhetorical strategies in my data collection, analysis and representation. To read my full research story and experience in Kenya, see appendix A.

In chapter three, "Rappin Like a Mkenya: Translingualism as a Construction of New Ethnicities," I share stories of the three artists as they theorize their language choices and practices in relation to their cultural, racial and ethnic identities. Their stories revealed that they use translingualism as a strategy to resist dominant language ideologies in Kenya. It is also a strategy to resist dominant models or theories of ethnic and national identity, which are rooted in British colonial administrative policies. Using interview and lyrical data, I demonstrate how the artists are constructing new ethnicities and a new national identity based on how Kenyans sound and on everyday language use. However, I also show that while the artists are practicing new

ways of using language and constructing new ethnic identities, these practices and identities are not entirely new. Rather, they mimic the pre-colonial language practices as well as how Africans/Kenyans theorized ethnicity and multilingualism before colonization.

In Chapter four, "Wakilisha Mtaani": Translingualism as a Performance of Street-Conscious Identity," I use Nazizi Hirji as a case to demonstrate how she combines a variety of linguistic and semiotic resources to strategically perform an urban, specifically a Nairobi street conscious identity. I chose to focus on Nazizi in this chapter because she has a unique story as the first Kenyan female MC. Also, unlike Jua Cali and Abbas, she: 1) has a multiracial background, 2) comes from upper social class and 3) was raised speaking predominantly English. I demonstrate how I applied a translingual analytical framework to read one of her Hip-hop texts. Drawing from de-Certeau theory of *practices of everyday,* I show how Nazizi's every day street practices like riding in a Matatu, story telling and ways of dressing shape her language choices and use. I also demonstrate how these everyday practices shape how she performs and constructs a Nairobi-street conscious identity.

In Chapter five, "Kuna Sheng": Translingualism as Language Activism," I use Jua Cali as a case to demonstrate how his translingual composing practices are tied to his language activism work. Drawing from interview data and a translingual analysis of his song "Kuna Sheng," I share how he uses his music to raise critical language awareness by challenging dominant language ideologies and institutions that marginalize youth languages and cultures. I also show how his work challenges standard language and monolingual ideologies particularly in the Kenyan media. Further, I show how he theorizes his lyrics as public archives deliberately

"composed" to preserve Kenyan youth linguistic culture. Drawing from Mignolo (2011) and Wa Thiog'o (1986), I show how his translingual composing practices are decolonial—that is, they work towards a linguistic and mental decolonization as well as a recovering of everyday practices like pre-colonial African oral archiving practices.

In chapter six, "Tugenge Yajayo": Discussion of Findings and Implications," I reflect, discuss and summarize the major findings of my study and their implications for pedagogy, further research and theorization. One of the findings is that the artists' stories revealed a contradictory theory of their multilingualism. At times, they followed the traditional definition, which views languages as discrete and interpretes multilingualism as proficiency in separate and multiple languages. Other times, the artists followed the new multilingualism (translingualism), which views languages as always in contact with each other and combining to form new meanings and grammars, and not based on proficiency in discrete languages but on negotiation of meaning. However, while these two definitions emerged during our conversations, all their compositions followed the new multilingualism. Another important aspect that emerged out of their definitions is that they did not theorize their multilingualism in terms of semiotic resources but in terms of language resources only—this is not in line with the translingual approach as theorized in composition studies. Consequently, the artists had a contradictory theory of their language practices. They defined their multilingual practice as slang and other times as language. This finding calls for more research that explores the possible origin or root cause of these contradictions and negative internalizations of some of their languages. The artists seemed to negotiating different kinds on multilingualism as they theorized their language practices. As such, I propose a theory of multilingualism that is always being negotiated.

Another finding discussed is that the artists are developing new ethnicities based on sound, that is, how Kenyans sound or their everyday language use not on dominant language ideologies and racial and ethnic categorizations/models in the country. As I discuss in chapter three, the current/dominant ethnic and racial theories in Kenya originate from colonial history and experience. However, in teasing out this finding, I learned that the artists' new language practices and ethnicities are not necessarily new; rather, they mimic pre-colonial African ways of using language and ways theorizing ethnic and racial identity. As such, I argue that, the artists' translingual practices have a de-colonial feature. They work towards linguistic and cultural decolonization as well as a recovery of the pre-colonial language practices and understanding of ethnicity. This finding has implications on pedagogy. Specifically, my research suggests that teachers need to be aware of African students' colonial histories. They also need to understand how the impact of linguistic colonization might hinder African students from engaging in translingual practices or how it might shape how they translanguage. In addition, before teachers can invite students to use their home languages in their writing, they need to be aware or understand the "ethnic and cultural baggage" international students bring to the classroom. For example, in the Kenyan cultural context, as the artists revealed, composing in ethnic language might be a liability than an asset/resource given the current socio-political climate and impact of negative ethnicity that continues to plague the country.

Another finding, which came up as I reflected on my experience analyzing the Hip-hop texts, was that translingual approach is limiting in terms of understanding multilingual practices of the Kenyan Hip-hop artists. While I drew from the current theorization to build my own language coding scheme and translingual analytical framework to read the Hip-hop texts, it was

not always applicable in all contexts especially given the complexity and nuance of each artist's language practices. For example, it was very difficult to apply the framework in reading Jua Cali's texts which while multilingual, are predominantly in Swahili. Similarly, Nazizi texts exhibited the use of a variety of Englishes, which wasn't the case for Jua Cali or Abbas. This suggests the need for more research, theorization and more examples of practical application of translingualism to help teachers and students better understand how translingual approach works in different multilingual contexts. I also raise the question of whether the current theorization of translingualism is enough to bridge the trans(multi)linguality and trans(multi)modality divide.

CHAPTER 1:

HISTORY OF HIP-HOP IN KENYA: SOCIO-ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT

The first time I heard the word Hip-hop was in 1993 when I joined Mutonguni secondary school for my high school education. Mutonguni is a boarding school located in the rural areas of Kenya in Kitui county, Eastern province. Being a county (formerly district) school, majority of the students were from within the county, a few from the neighboring counties and just a handful from the Nairobi county, the capital city. For the Nairobi students however, Mutonguni was in most cases a "school of choice." Their parents usually made a special admission request to the school in order to give their urban-raised children a rural-life experience. It was the Nairobi students who talked about Hip-hop. They were relatively rich and more exposed to life outside Kenya. The rural folks like me had no idea what this genre of music was about and where it had come from. We were the *washambas* or the "unenlightened ones." The Nairobi students on the other hand were the "cool kids" usually referring to themselves as the "us guys" or "born towns" aka "born Ts," meaning "born in the city." It was from them that we heard names like Tupac and Notorious B.I.G. They also tried teaching us how to rap and imitate African American rap songs and African American English.

While it is not clearly documented in existing literature how Hip-hop arrived in Kenya, interviews with my research participants helped in shedding light on this history. They are among the pioneer Hip-hop artists and all three of them were born and raised in Nairobi city. Jua Cali for example shared with me that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, travelers from Kenya to the United States brought with them recorded Hip-hop shows especially from the Black

Entertainment Television (BET). He noted for example that, Rap City, a BET Hip-hop show that started in 1989, was very popular among the Kenyan urban youth. Nairobi being a cosmopolitan city and a regional air travel hub for many African countries facilitated the flow of traffic and goods from the West and Africa as travelers brought with them popular culture magazines, audio and videocassettes and vinyl records. Jua Cali observed that during this time, Hip-hop culture began to spread in secondary schools within Nairobi county/city. He compared the popularity and value of BET Hip-hop videocassettes among students in urban secondary schools with "hot cakes." Interestingly, this was the case in many African countries. Writing about South Africa, Warner (2011) shares how in the early 1980s, "the main avenues of hip-hop dissemination...were rather interpersonal (underground), hand-to-hand, tape-to-tape, audio, and video bootleg networks" (p.114). Likewise, Shipley (2012) shares a comparable situation in secondary schools in Ghana where students "listened to records of Black American music, imitating hairstyles and clothing and setting up groups to imitate the sounds" (p.31). Thus, it was not surprising to learn that all three artists participating in my study started experimenting with rap music while in high school.

However, to better understand the origin of Hip-hop in Kenya and Africa in general, one has to examine it within a socio-economic and political context.

Socio-economic and political context

The emergence of Hip-hop in Kenya, like in many African countries, occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was a period during which many African countries were experiencing major political and economic changes. Politically, many countries were transitioning from a

single-party political system to multi-party democracies. It was also a time when many African countries were experiencing major economic decline attributed to the adoption of neoliberal policies and other market driven reforms in the 1980s[1]. Some of the notable policy reforms were the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS). These policies abolished all the government-run social sectors through privatization. Kenya, like many other African countries, adopted these policies. One of the negative effects of the policies was a high rate of inflation, which consequently led to economic decline.

Among those mostly affected by the policies were rural populations, especially women and youth. This saw mass migration of many youths to the cities to look for employment opportunities. Consequently, many cities in Africa witnessed changes like rapid urbanization, increased unemployment, widening of income gaps, among other worsening socio-economic indicators. Ironically, one of the positive aspects of the neoliberal policies and the market reforms was the liberalization of trade. This saw increased transnational flow of goods to Africa from western countries. Among these goods was Hip-hop culture. As the urban youth began getting exposed to the culture, many used it as an outlet to express their frustrations caused by the neoliberal policies in their respective countries (Ntarangwi 2009; Saucier 2011; Charry 2012; Shipley 2012; Clark and Koster 2014).

[1] The policies and the reforms "imposed" on Africa by the West through its agencies, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, were touted to decrease foreign debt, increase efficiency, improve the economy and consequently modernize Africa. The key features of the policies were: trade and market liberalization through the removal of any restrictions and controls imposed by the government; cutting of public expenditures on social services like primary education, primary health care and infrastructure investment; reduced or no regulation by the government on any profit making enterprises and agencies; privatization of government owned enterprises like banks and parastatals. The policies promoted the idea of "individual responsibility" and "free will" and abolished the idea of "public goods" and "community."

In addition to experiencing the negative socioeconomic effects of the neo-liberal policies, Kenya like many African countries was going through major political changes. In the early 1990s, Kenya was transitioning from one party state to a multiparty liberal democracy. Since its independence from British colonization in 1963, Kenya was a defacto one party state. The first president, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, governed the country under one political party system—the Kenya African National Union (KANU). After his death in 1978, Daniel Arap Moi, the then vice president, succeeded him. Following *nyayo* or the footsteps of his predecessor, Kenya became a de jure one-party state. Both leaderships, especially president Moi's, were characterized by dictatorship and high levels of "state sanctioned" corruption in many government sectors. This led to further deterioration of the economy, widening of wealth disparities, worsening of standards of living and joblessness for the majority of the Kenyan youth. The dictatorial leadership also instilled a "culture of fear" among majority of the poor populations since the state controlled every sector in the country—politics, education, economy, judiciary, police, and media among others.

For many years, lobbyists and activists called for change of the political system in the hope that a strong opposition would check the executive, participate in developing or changing laws that favor the Kenyan majority, reduce corruption and also improve the economy. It was not until the 1990 that president Moi finally gave in to a multi-party democracy. In 1992, Kenya held its first multiparty elections, which saw Moi, unfortunately for many Kenyans, "re-elected" back to office for the third term. Although there was political change, the economy did not improve. Corruption worsened as Moi used state machinery to maintain his power and position. This saw him "re-elected" for the fourth term in 1997, making him the longest serving Kenyan president

for 24 years. Throughout his reign, the economy continued to deteriorate with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reaching an all-time low of zero in 2000. Many people lost their jobs and many government workers were retrenched. The rapid urbanization and lack of employment saw many youths concentrated in Nairobi's inner cities characterized by extreme levels of poverty, poor standards of living and other forms of marginalization.

It is from this historical, political and socio economic context in Kenya that youth in Nairobi's inner city or ghetto began using Hip-hop to call for socio-economic and political change by speaking about their experiences of poverty, marginalization and other forms of injustices. Kamau Ngigi, also known as Kama, a pioneer Kenyan Hip-hop artist and a member of the Kalamashaka Hip-hop group shares his experience living in Dadora, one of the economically disenfranchised neighborhoods in Nairobi's inner city during this period:

> In 1992 just before I went to high school was the multiparty election. Before the election there was less division; after the multi-party election, when the incumbent president came to power, Kenya fell. The economy collapsed. Rich people would not associate with the poor. Money circulated only with the wealthy. Poor people felt like the rich were the enemy. If you were rich, from the uptown, you were considered "Babylon" part of the oppressive system. In the ghetto, Kenya really suffered. There was no money in circulation. People were laid off. Jobs were lost. There was anger, chaos, and corruption. The police who were supposed to protect were harassing and arresting people. Poor kids got involved in crime and delinquency. For me rap was a way to express myself instead

> of turning to gangs, robbing, and stealing. Hip-hop saved my life in that way. If it wasn't for the outlet, I would be on the other side. (Ngigi, p. 259)

Elsewhere in Africa, Hip-hop was used to oppose other corrupt postcolonial and neocolonial leaderships in countries like Senegal, Gambia, Madagascar, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Tunisia. In South Africa, it was used to oppose apartheid and post apartheid government. As Clark and Koster (2014) observe, "early hip hop groups addressed the social, political and economic realities on the ground, often linking them to broader discussions of power, race and economics" (p. xv).

Hip-Hop routes to Africa

The arrival of Hip-hop culture in Africa was through artifacts like audio and videocassettes, vinyl records, pop culture magazines, newspapers and fashion paraphernalia (Warner 2011; Charry 2012; Shipley 2012; Clark and Koster 2014). In most cases, these Hip-hop cultural artifacts were imported or remitted from United States and Europe by African travellers, immigrants, Africans in exile or pen pals. Charry (2012) identifies the cities of New York and Paris playing a very instrumental role in the spread in Hip-hop. Specifically, he identifies France as one major route that Hip-hop culture took to reach Africa. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he writes, France was the second largest market for Hip-hop after U.S. This was the same period when the culture began to take root in France through tours and performances by the pioneer and major Hip-hop artists from the U. S.[2]

[2] Charry gives examples of such artists being Fab Five Freddy, deejays Afrika Bambaata and Grandmixer D.S.T, Infinity Rappers, dance groups like Rock Steady Crew and Double Dutch Girls, and Graffiti artists like Futura 2000, Phase 2, Ramelzee, and Dondi.

Further, during this time, France was a major destination for many West African immigrants, especially Senegalese. Consequently, this saw a number of them begin to embrace and practice the culture. Charry (2012) gives an example of MC Solaar, who was a pioneer and one of the most successful Hip-hop artists in France. He was born in Senegal to parents from Chad and raised in France. He, among other African immigrants in Europe, played a critical role in mentoring and supporting pioneer artists in their respective home countries. Similarly, Shipley (2012) shares the story of Ossei Rockstone, a Ghanaian, who began his Hip-hop career in the 1980s while in London where he had immigrated with his parents. While in London, he travelled to New York where he "would buy the latest hip hop gear to bring back and sell in London at a time when this was new to the British scene" (p.38). After establishing his career as a member of the PLZ group,[3] an English language rapping group, Rockstone along with his fellow rapper Freddie Funkstone from Sierra Leone, returned to Ghana in 1994 where he worked towards "radically shifting the trajectory of his music and unintentionally shifting the direction of popular music" (p.37) in the country.

The emergence and spread of Hip-hop in Africa while strikingly similar, was not uniform. According to the current scholarly literature, South Africa and West African countries seemed to have a first mover advantage. South Africa, besides being more developed than any other African country, had earlier access to global media and western cultural expressions. Cape Town, dubbed "Tavern of the Seas," has historically played the role of being "a central hub of international traffic in commodities, peoples and cultures" (Warner 2011, p.116). Similarly,

[3]Shipley writes that PLZ at first stood for Party a la Maison and then Parables, Linguistics and Zlang.

Senegal, and later Ghana, had easy access to both Paris and New York compared to any other country in Sub-Saharan Africa. Senegal, besides its past colonial relations, had very close and strong political and cultural ties with France. In addition, Senegal's geographical proximity to France compared to any other Sub-Saharan country was an added advantage. Charry (2012) observes that in the 1980s, there was an influx of Senegalese immigrants and travellers in New York City who worked as merchants, vendors or taxi drivers. He identifies a number of factors why Senegal had more immigrants in New York compared to any other African country:

- the ending of exit visa requirements for Senegalese citizens in 1981
- a severe drought that devastated peanut farmers from 1973 to 1985
- Structural Adjustment programs beginning in1984, intensifying rural poverty
- a new and cheap direct flight from Dakar to New York
- France's imposition of Visa restrictions on African Visitors
- depreciation of the French Franc (and consequently Senegalese currency) and appreciation of the value of the US dollar
- a venerable tradition of long-distance trading

Writing about Ghana, Shipley (2012) notes:

> In the late 1980s, the increasing ease of international travel and expanding access to foreign television, radio and video facilitated the rapid movement of images, objects, and practices between Ghana and the rest of the world. Through the 1990s the development of cultural tourism brought an increasing number of students and tourists to Ghana to

> experience African culture. After the return of democratic rule in 1992, many young Ghanaians living abroad returned to seek opportunities in the newly privativizing economy" (p.32).

Among the "accoutrements and paraphernalia of hip hop culture" from Paris and New York to Africa in the 1980s were b-boy movies and music videos like the *Wild Style, Flashdance, Beat Street, Breakin and 2, Krush Groove* and *Body rock.* Music videos included Michael Jackson's *Thriller,* Malcolm Mclaren's *Buffalo Girls* and Rock Steady Crew's *Hey You* (Warner 2011; Charry 2012). Tours by international artists and practitioners also played a big role in spreading the culture. Examples include DJ Sidney of France who in the mid 1980s toured Francophone West African countries with the Paris City Breakers. One member of the group was a son of Mali immigrants. After this tour, there was a break out of breakdancing groups in Africa like the Abidjan City Breakers, Bamako City Breakers, Dakar City Breakers and Cape Town City Breakers. These groups were named after their countries' capital cities, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal and South Africa respectively, and following the tradition established by New York City Breakers. They became pioneer breakdancing groups in Africa. Equally important were tours by Malcolm McLaren in 1983 to South Africa, and the 1994 Public Enemy performance in Ghana.

Thus, because West Africa had first access, it was also one of the routes which Kenyans began accesing Hip-hop culture. For example, Abbas, a participant in my study and a pioneer Kenyan Hip-hop artistr, revealed that he grew up listening to West African music. His father, who was an artist, travelled to different countries in West Africa to do art exhibitions and brought home a wide collection of music from different parts of the world. Some of the music

was by Youssou N' Dour, an internationally recognized and celebrated Senegalese artist known for developing an eclectic style of popular Senegalese music that borrowed from traditional Senegalese music styles and international genres like Hip Hop, Jazz, Soul and Cuban Rumba. Baaba Maal was another artist that Abbas grew up listening to. Baaba studied in Paris and returned home to become a pioneer in creating Senegalese popular music. Charry (2012) observes that, "the strength of Senegalese Baaba Maal and Youssou N' Dour on the world music market undoubtedly cleared the path" (p.15) for Senegaleese and West African popular music. Arguably then, this is one of the routes or the earliest ways that Kenyan youth started gaining access to youth popular music, including Hip-hop.

Early Hip-hop in Kenya: From the suburbs to the inner city

Unlike African American Hip-hop which began among disenfranchised youth in New York's inner cities, Kenyan Hip-hop began in the Nairobi suburbs. It was consumed and practiced by youths who belonged to middle and upper class families. Nazizi, a participant in my study, confirmed this by saying initially Hip-hop in Kenya was performed by rich kids. She said for example, "in the beginning, Hip-hop here [Kenya] was related mostly to... the rich kids coz they could afford it. They could listen to Tupac and who is who in [Hiphop]" (Nazizi Hirji, Personal Communication July 19, 2013). This was not different in many other African countries as Charry (2012) observes:

> ...Hip-hop was initially embraced in Africa by secondary school-educated (and some college-educated), well-travelled, and relatively privileged youth. They represented a different kind of Africa than the stereotypes that the rest of the world was used to seeing,

> one that was more culturally allied with trends in the United States and Europe than the more deeply rooted traditions that were closer to home." (p.12)

In Kenya, however, Hip-hop from the suburbs did not have much success. For many artists, they did not go past the "wannabe stage" for a number of reasons: 1) their message and high-class socio-economic status did not reflect the aesthetics of Hip-hop, that is, it dis not speak to and against the social, economic, political disenfranchisement of the youth; 2) they rapped or performed their music in English which unfortunately alienated most of the urban and rural audiences, the majority of whom did not speak English as part of their everyday language use; 3) The rich youth, comprise a small elite minority and thus "did not initially earn public sanction as the people's representatives" (Kidula, 2014, p. 173). Over-time, Hip-hop culture started spreading to the entire Nairobi city as students shared and exchanged Hip-hop cultural materials while in high school as mentioned above. This facilitated the spread of Hip-hop culture amongst the youth across all the neighborhoods in Nairobi—from the suburbs to the inner city where it finally took root.

Mapping the Nairobi urban space

It is important to understand the Nairobi urban space particularly its neighborhoods because Kenyan Hip-hop started in Nairobi, and arguably still is a Nairobi phenomenon. Nairobi is the capital and largest city in Kenya. The city and its surrounding area make up the Nairobi County. It is estimated that the city's population is about 3.5 million making it the 14th largest city in Africa. The Central Business District (CBD) is where administrative offices are located, for example the city hall, the parliamentary buildings, attorney general chambers as well offices

of various government ministries. It is also where most Nairobians work. Outside the CBD, are residential locations or neighborhoods mostly known as estates. The neighborhoods can be understood in terms two broad residential divisions: Westlands and Eastlands. Westlands is comprised of the suburbs while the Eastlands is Nairobi's inner city (ghetto), comprised of working and non-working class. The suburbs are also referred to as "uptown," and are located in the west and north central of Nairobi metropolitan area where most European/white settlers lived during the colonial period. These neighborhoods/estates include Lavington, Karen, Gigiri, Muthaiga, Brookside, Spring Valley, Loresho, Kilimani, Kileleshwa, and Hurlingham among others. Currently, the Westlands is occupied by the Kenyan-upper and middle class, South East Asian communities and European expatriates.

The low and lower income estates are located mainly in far Eastern Nairobi also known as the Eastlands. These include, Umoja, Kariokor, Dadora, Kariobangi, Embakasi, Huruma and Eastleigh. The history and socioeconomic differences between these two divisions can be explained historically. The differences can be traced back to the colonial period when white British colonizers and settlers designated the Eastlands for African workers and rural-urban migrants, while the Westlands was reserved for white colonialists and settlers. Today, the Westlands/Eastlands binary is emphasized because of the wide economic disparities between the two regions.[4] Of importance is to note that many of these neighborhoods have played a big factor in shaping most of the Hip-hop artists' journeys to stardom, and also the stories they tell through

[4] These two broad divisions or categories tend to however ignore the lower-middle and upper middle income neighbourhoods located in the north-central areas such as Highridge, Parklands, Ngara, Pangani, and areas to the southwest and southeast of the metropolitan area like Fedha, Pipeline, Donholm, Greenfields, Nyayo, Nairobi West, Madaraka, South B, South C, Buru Buru among others. The binary also ignores neighborhoods like Kangemi, Kawangware and Dagoretti comprised of lower income, yet are located in the "Westlands."

their music as discussed in chapters three, four and five. It is also important to note that, while Hip-hop began in the Nairobi suburbs, because the youth in these neighborhoods had the "first-mover" advantage, the origin of Kenyan Hip-hop is credited to Nairobi's inner city, the Eastlands. These are the neighborhoods where many of the notable pioneer artists lived.

The pioneers of Kenyan Hip-hop

While contemporary Kenyan youth music began in the year 1990 with the release of Ricky Oyaro's song "Renaissance" and Jimmy Gathu's, "Look, Think, Stay Alive", it is widely accepted within the Kenyan Hip-hop circles that Hardstone and Kalamashaka were the first Kenyan Hip-hop artists. Hardstone, aka Harrison Ngunjiri released his first song "Uhiki" in 1997. The Kalamashaka group (also known as K-Shaka) comprised of Kamau Ngigi (aforementioned), Robert Matumbai Joni and John Vigeti started writing Hip-hop music as early as 1995 but did not record their first song, *Tafsiri Hii* ("Interpret This") until 1997. Ted Josiah, a producer and a key player in promoting many of the pioneer Hip-hop artists, observes that, it was after the release of "Uhiki" that Kenya witnessed a breakout of new artists writing contemporary music like Hip-hop, R&B, Dance Hall and Ragga (Hip-hop Colony). He however notes that, before Hardstone and Kalamashaka, there were many other artists who had been writing, recording and performing Hip-hop in churches, homes, bedroom studios and other private venues. For example, Ted himself was a member of the contemporary gospel group, HART, which incorporated Hip-hop elements in their music. They released their first song in 1995. Kama of Kalamashaka admits that before the release of "Tafsiri" and "Uhiki," youth from the Nairobi suburbs were already writing and performing Hip-hop music but it had not reached the mainstream local and national media. Most of the performances were through free styling battles

where pioneer artists from Eastlands and those from the Westlands would battle in club houses like Florida 2000 (F2) located in Nairobi's CBD. Kama observes that, "clubs were a place the poor and rich kids would meet, the city center, the connection between the ghetto and uptown" (p.259).

The reception of "Uhiki" and "Tafsiri" by the Kenyan urban audience was phenomenal—signaling the young generation's longing for a Kenyan youth sound. Writing about *Uhiki,* Nyairo (2004) notes that it "heralded a new era in terms of musical style, production and audience reception" (p.36). Before the emergence of Hip-hop, Kenyans were enjoying a plethora of music traditions/styles/genres—local, regional and international. Popular local genres were Benga, Taarab, Chakacha, a variety of traditional folk songs from different ethnic communities across the country and patriotic songs aimed at celebrating Kenya's sovereignty, heritage and praising political leaders, but mostly the president. Popular regional genres, mostly from Central Africa like Democratic Republic of Congo included Soukous and Rumba, while American genres included, Jazz, Blues, Soul, Rock and Roll and Country. From Jamaica, popular genres were Reggae and Dance Hall.

However, from all these musical traditions, perhaps it was only Reggae and Dancehall that the Kenyan youth related to because it spoke directly to their experiences of social-economic disenfranchisement and political marginalization. Nevertheless, the diverse musical traditions aforementioned acted as a springboard for many of the pioneer Hip-hop artists. Ted Josiah observes that it was Hardstone's Hip-hop, R&B, Ragga fusion album that "opened doors" for Kenyan contemporary Hip-hop artists. Nyairo (2004) concurs with him noting that, it was

"Uhiki's" "unconventional form" that drew the attention of many audiences, old and young, rural and urban because it brought together several musical traditions—from "ethnic folk-song to American rhythm-and-blues, from Swahili ballad to Jamaican Reggae" (p.39).

Kenyan Hip-hop and language Use: In the beginnings

> One of the most fundamental challenges across the continent was how to create something original that spoke to the young people. The basic components to be addressed by artists included the musical foundation, language, lyrics, vocal style (flow) and overall message. (Charry 2012, p. 11)

As seen from this quote, language has been very central in determining and shaping the identity of African Hip-hop. In Kenya, artists from the suburbs wrote and performed their Hip-hop music in English for a number of reasons. First, as the first generation Hip-hop artists, they followed/imitated the African American Hip-hop music tradition, which is typically written in what Alim (2006) calls Hip-hop Nation language, a language practice rooted in African American English and tradition. Across Africa, it is well documented that the composing and performance practices of the first generation Hip-hop artists, in the 1980s, was characterized by imitation, mimicry and appropriation (Saucier 2012; Charry 2012; Shipley 2012). Secondly, English was the dominant language spoken in the Nairobi suburbs where the upper class people lived. English is part of Kenya's heritage through British colonization and has been privileged as the official language of education and business. After independence, the wealthy Kenyans and political elite who could afford the houses where the Europeans settlers lived moved in and assumed the upper class status. By default, they used English to index their high status and socio-

economic mobility. Speaking English was considered prestigious. In many schools in the city, students were punished/disciplined for speaking any other language.

On the other hand, Hip-hop from the Eastlands was written mostly in Swahili and Sheng. Swahili also known as Kiswahili is a hybrid of Arabic and Bantu languages. It emerged and developed as a result of intermingling of Bantu speaking groups with Arab traders along the East African coast dating back to as early as 6th century. Over the years, Swahili has grown by borrowing from other languages like English, German, French among others. After independence, Swahili was declared Kenya's national language or the language to represent national culture and identity. Thus it is taught as an additional but a mandatory language in primary and secondary schools. Swahili is also spoken regionally in several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa like Tanzania, Congo, Uganda, Mozambique, Rwanda and Burundi.mHence, there are approximately fifteen different Swahili *lahajas* dialects spoken across Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Kenya, Swahili also serves as the main language of interethnic communication since Kenya is a very ethnically and linguistically diverse nation. Out of the 38,610,097 Kenyans, (Population Census 2009) 99% are Africans, who make up the 40-ethnic/tribal communities in the country. Non-African population (Asian, European, and Arab) constitutes 1%. And since language is the primary marker of ethnic identity in Kenya, it is estimated that there about 40 ethnic languages spoken in the country and a variety of dialects within some of these languages. The ethnic languages are usually spoken in rural Kenya, that is, outside the major cities like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru where, arguably, populations are ethnically

homogeneous. Nairobi being a multicultural and multilingual space, Swahili is the dominant language used especially in the Eastlands. Naturally, it was one of dominant languages used by most of the pioneer artists, in addition to Sheng.

Sheng is an urban youth code characterized by use of multiple languages in communication through linguistic practices like code-mixing and switching, word coinage and inventiveness, semantic inversion and extension, unconventional spellings and pronunciation among others. The origin and development of Sheng is still debated. Mazrui (1995) notes that Sheng began in the 1930s during the colonial period as a slang used by African natives, workers and rural-urban migrants who lived in the multiethnic underworld located in the Eastlands where they had been forced to live by the European or white settlers (p.173). Others scholars however argue that Sheng began in the 1960s in Nairobi as "secret code" primarily used by the youth where besides combining English and Swahili in their speech, included their ethnic languages like Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba among others to mark themselves ethno-linguistically (Abdulaziz & Osinde, 1997; Githiora, 2006). Today, Sheng is not just limited to English, Swahili and ethnic languages but also borrows from other languages like African American Language, Jamaican Creole, French, Gujarati among others

Since Sheng emerged as a result of urbanization in the densely populated multilingual Nairobi's inner city, naturally, it was the dominant language or language practice used by the pioneer Hip-hop artists who lived in the Eastlands. Initially however, artists like Kalamashaka started to rap in English following the tradition of African American rappers. However, as Kidula (2012) notes, "the language alienated the singers from the conditions they claimed to represent" (p.175), that is, the gangsta lifestyle and the socio-economic circumstances that characterized the Dadora hood. However, when they released their first song "Tafsiri Hii"

written in Sheng and Swahili and then Hardstone released "Uhiki," written in Kikuyu, Kiswahili, English and Jamaican Creole, it became an eye opening experience for many artists who realized they can write Hip-hop in indigenous languages, Sheng, or Swahili.

Writing and performing in Sheng in the early years had its own challenges. From the early 1990s, Sheng users and speakers were highly stigmatized for using the language in public or official domains. Githiora (2006), identifies three definitions that revealed Kenyans negative attitude towards Sheng: "a gangster language" "a dirty language" and "a secret language." These attitudes mostly emerged from scholars and political leaders who blamed Sheng for poor language and literacy performance in Kenyan primary and secondary schools. Sheng was for example blamed for interfering with the teaching of Standard English and Swahili grammar (Momanyi 2009; Iraki 2010). Consequently, in the early and mid 1990s, Hip-hop artists who wrote or performed their music in Sheng were stigmatized. Kama of Kalamashaka notes that, in the beginning, Hip-hop from the Nairobi inner city was not well received, especially by youths from the suburbs because it was written in Sheng and Swahili. He recalls an incident in 1998 when African American rapper Coolio visited Kenya. His group Kalamashaka was invited to "curtain raise"/open for him. When they performed their song "Tafsiri Hii," which was written in Sheng and Swahili, the audience booed them down. He associates this response to the stigma attached to Sheng and Swahili then, noting that rich kids from uptown "never" spoke Swahili or Sheng. According to Kama, they referred to Sheng as "lugha ya maobao" or the language of thugs.

Interestingly however, a month after this incidence, "Tafsiri Hii" was played on Kenyan national radio and received a very positive reception by Nairobi urban youth audience elevating

the Kalamashaka to great fame. Many urban youths began to recognize inner city Hip-hop artists as legit. The perception of Sheng and Swahili among the Nairobi youth also began to change as the media continued to promote Kenyan Hip-hop music written in these two languages. It is important to note that similar shifts on the language of African Hip-hop were happening in several other countries in the continent as Charry (2012) notes:

> In the 1980s local producers understood that the stage of imitation, rapping in English and using African American accents and slang, had little value. By the mid-1990s, however, there was a breakthrough, not just in the release of rap recordings across the continent but in recordings that demonstrated that African youth had embraced the genre and made it their own. When the breakout came in 1994 or 1995, African rap had emerged as a mature genre, featuring creative use of mother tongues, smart multilanguage word plays, messages that were relevant to the experience of African youth, original rhythmic flows, and within a few years, instrumental tracks that drew on local music. (p.16)

Kenyan media and its role in Spreading of Hip-hop culture in early 1990s

The spread of Hip-hop culture through the Kenyan local and national media was very slow in 1980s and early 1990s. In Kenya, any music suspected to raise political consciousness was banned or censored by the state. As Saucer (2011) notes, "African governments have recognized the power of hip-hop in its ability to reach and communicate with audiences. Africa's less democratic leaders often fear the political potential of a youth movement spurred by it, and have tried to censor the more politically charged artists and marginalize its youthful listeners"

(p.xv). Before 1990, when Kenya was still a one party state, and before the introduction of the neo-liberal policies and the market-driven reforms, Kenyan media, both TV and Radio, was state owned with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) assuming monopoly in all broadcasting and entertainment. Throughout the Kenyatta and Moi dictatorial regimes, KBC only played music that supported the status quo. With a lot of state surveillance and censorship, Hip-hop culture was basically an underground phenomenon, watched, read and performed subversively in homes, churches, clubs and other private spaces. Writing about the rest of Africa Charry (2012) notes:

> The pioneers of the genre began gaining a young audience through live performance rather than recordings. It is no coincidence that when national political systems opened up to multiparty democracy in many countries, rap began to flourish. A key factor was the privatization of radio, which took place in various countries in the 1990s, both broadening the audience and serving as an outlet to stimulate local creativity. (p. 15)

In Kenya, the introduction of multiparty liberal democracy in 1992 saw the liberalization of many social sectors including the media and broadcast industry. The liberalization also saw the emergence of privately owned TV stations like the Kenya Television Network (KTN), and FM radio stations. Jimmy Gathu, a Kenyan TV presenter and personality, is credited for being instrumental in facilitating the spread of Hip-hop culture in Kenya. He created and produced a music shows that aired every weekday on KTN. Each day, there was a themed title for the music programs namely, Rap'Em, Kass Kass, Rastrut, Jam-a-Delic and Rythmix— where music genres like Hip-hop, R& B, Reggae and Dancehall were featured. KTN also streamed the South African

based music program, Channel O, and the American cable and satellite television channel, MTV then based in Ghana. All these channels gave many youth access to the popular music from the international realm as they continued to perfect and indigenize their art. Capital FM (radio) is credited for being a pioneer in promoting the spread of American based Hip-hop and other popular genres like R&B and Reggae and Dance Hall, and for promoting the then emerging Kenyan artists like Hardstone and Kalamashaka.

Throughout the mid and late 1990s and early 2000s, the Kenyan media continued to promote emerging Kenyan Hip-hop artists. It was also a period when many privately owned TV stations and FM radio stations came up, for example, the Nation Television Network (NTV) and Citizen TV. New FM Radio stations included Nation FM, Kiss FM, Home Boys radio, Ghetto radio among others. These channels and stations produced music shows that promoted local youth music. NTV had a show called *The Beat* while KTN had *H2O.* Even KBC, in its effort to compete with the other stations started coming up with youth based music shows like *Music Time* and *Mizizi*. This is the period that the Kenyan Hip-hop industry witnessed a breakout of new artists like K-South, E-Sir, Nameless, Nonini, Necessary Noize, Prezzo, Gidi Gidi Maji Maji, Kleptomaniacs and many others. It is the era when the three artists participating in my study, Jua Cali, Nazizi and Abbas entered the Kenyan Hip-hop scene.

CHAPTER 2:

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

In this dissertation project, I was interested in answering the following research question: *why and how do Kenyan Hip-hop artists practice translingual writing.* To answer the question, I used several methodological and theoretical approaches to collect and analyze the data. The main data collection methods were in-depth phenomenological interviewing and sociolinguistic fieldwork. I engaged in sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic interviewing (Paris 2011) to capture the artists' everyday (natural) speech and to elicit specific information on *why* they used particular languages and language varieties in their compositions. I also observed the artists' "language in use" in natural contexts as they interacted with their friends, with family members in their homes, in the studio, with other artists, in live performances and also during the interviews.

I supplemented the interviews and sociolinguistic fieldwork data with lyrical data, that is, songs written by artists. Another source of data was multimodal compositions for the songs captured through screenshots of You-tube videos. I then developed a translingual analytical framework to analyze and make sense of all the data. In my analysis, I incorporated conversational interviews with each artist to provide their perspective on their language choices and use, and as a way of offering the reader the artists' personal analysis of their translingual texts. I also constellated a variety of theoretical frames to provide my own interpretation of the artists' goals for engaging in translingual composing. These theories include the practices of everyday life (de Certeau 1984) and decolonization (Mignolo 2011; Wa Thiong'o 1986). Throughout the dissertation, I present the interview data in verbatim for a number of reasons: 1)

to demonstrate how the artists embody translingual practice as part of their everyday; 2) to *represent* the artists translingual practices as "authentically" as possible, 3) to demonstrate how I engaged in practice-based research by using a variety of translingual rhetorical strategies in my data collection, analysis and representation. I however translate some of their responses.

Below, I discuss in detail the in-depth phenomenological interviewing approach I employed and the translingual analytical framework I developed to make sense of all my data. For a detailed narration of my research story and experience in Kenya, see Appendix A where I introduce the three artists participating in my research and the process of identifying them. I also provide a synopsis of each interview experience and my observations of the artists' language in use.

In-depth phenomenological interviewing

My motivation to use interviews as a mode of inquiry was to listen to the Hip-hop artists lived experiences as composers and language users. I also wanted to understand how they make meaning out of their experience. Interviewing allowed me to listen to their stories as they reconstructed their experiences through narration. As is the case with phenomenological interviewing, my interview design followed a three-phase structure. I specifically followed the in-depth phenomenological interviewing structure proposed by Irving Seidman in his book *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. Seidman argues that each phase serves as a foundation to the next phase and should take 90 minutes since the purpose "is to have the participants reconstruct their experience, put it in the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning" (p.

20), Further, the interviews should be spaced three days to a week apart to allow the participant to "mull over the preceding interview" (p. 21).

At the same time, he also notes that the structure does not always work in all researcher contexts, especially the spacing between interviews because of difficulties in identifying and contacting participants, or working within the participants' schedules. This was my experience. While I followed the three-phase structure (see interview protocol in the appendix B), each phase did not last for 90 minutes nor did I space the interviews three days to one week apart. For example, with my first participant, Jua Cali, I conducted phase 1-2 interview in one sitting, which lasted 36 minutes. The final phase was conducted five days later and took 54:23 minutes. For the second participant, Nazizi Hirji, I conducted the three phases in one sitting. The total amount of interviewing was 1:40:34 minutes. Similarly, for my third participant, Abbas Kubbaff, all the three phases were completed in one sitting for a total of 63:30 minutes. Below I describe what each phase is aimed at accomplishing:

Interview one: focused life history

In the phase one interview, Seidman writes that, "the task is to put the participant's experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" (p.17). In this phase, I asked all the three participants to talk about their past lives up until they became Hip-hop artists. In my interviewing, I had them "reconstruct their experiences" with their families, with peers, in schools, neighborhoods, with other artists, and their experiences within the Kenyan Hip-hop industry. I wanted to understand how various influences or factors in their past life helped in shaping the kind of artist they are

today. The main question in this phase was: "How did you become a Hip-hop artist?" This question allowed them to "reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events" with their families, schools, neighborhoods, the media, and the Hip-hop industry and culture to help me understand how these factors shaped their development as artists. In addition, I asked the artists questions that allowed them to give detailed information about their social, racial/ethnic and class and educational backgrounds. This information was useful in helping me understand how ethnic/racial and socioeconomic factors shaped or continues to shape their experience and practice as Hip-hop artists.

Interview Two: The details of experience

In this phase, the purpose is to "concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (p.18). My goal in this phase was for the participants to reconstruct details of their experiences and practices as Hip-hop artist. I employed artifact based interviewing by asking each participant to bring or choose a song or an artifact that they felt represented who they are as a Hip-hop artist. I then asked them questions based on the song or the artifact they chose. Some of the questions included: why did you choose the artifact/song you brought today? Of all your things/songs, why did you choose this one? Is this the thing/song you think best represents the artist you are or the artist you'd like to be? Tell me the process of creating this song? What is the likely place/audience for you to perform this song? These questions gave them an opportunity to illuminate and give me a global sense of their practice and experience as Hip-hop artists. I also engaged in sociolinguistic interviewing to elicit specific information on *why* they used particular languages and language varieties in their

compositions. Examples of such questions included: what languages did you use to compose this song? Why these languages? Are these the typical languages you use in your compositions?

Interview Three: reflection on the meaning

In this phase, I asked the participating artists to reflect on the meaning of their experience as Hip-hop artists. According to Seidman, "the question of "meaning" is not one of satisfaction and reward. Rather it addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants work and life" (p.18). My interview questions in this phase aimed at understanding how the artists made connections between their work, other artists, their communities, and their life. The artists reflected on how various factors in their life have brought them to where they are today or the present moment. Some of the questions in this phase where: given what you have said about your life before you became an artist, and given what you have said about your music now, how do you understand as the role of Hip-hop in your life and in your community? What kind of Hip-hop artists do you see yourself becoming in the future? What are your plans, hopes, or expectations in five to ten years? What kind of music do you imagine creating/composing in the future?

All the three interviews were audio taped. The original plan was to videotape the interviews to capture the artists' presentations of themselves as artifacts and to get an embodied sense of their storytelling and performative styles. However, due to challenges contacting artists and their busy schedules, videotaping was not possible.

In addition, I spent more than eight hours observing and taking field notes on Jua Cali's language use, six hours with Nazizi and four hours with Abbas. These observations were done in different contexts and days except for Nazizi.

Building a translingual analytical framework

To interpret and understand what and how languages/codes are meshed in the translingual texts, I developed a key as shown in the table 1 below. This key represents the different translanguaging strategies and concepts discussed by translingual theorists in a variety of fields. Some of them include: code-mixing/meshing/switching; idiosyncratic grammars/syntaxes, spellings and pronunciations; linguistic inventiveness and neologisms; semiodiversity and glossodiversity.

Key	***Interpreting translingual practice in Kenyan Hip-hop written texts***
	code-mixing/meshing/switching arising from combination of two or more languages in a text
	Idiosyncratic grammars/syntaxes, spellings and pronunciation arising from combination of two or more languages (Horner et al 2011; Canagarajah 2013)
	Neologisms (Liu 1995; Horner et al 2011; Alim, Baugh, & Bucholtz (2011)
	Semiodiversity (Diversity of meanings in a word, phrase or idea) (Horner et al 2011; Canagarajah 2013; Lu and Horner 2013; Pennycook 2008)
	Glossodiversity e.g diversity of Englishes used in a text.

Table 1:Key for interpreting language resources in translingual Hip-hop texts

However, following a translingual theoretical framework, this key was not enough. I went beyond analyzing what or how words and other linguistic resources are meshed in the texts to also examine: 1) what and how semiotic resources (symbols and images) are used; 2) how different modalities of communication (verbal, written, audio, visual, performative) work

together to produce meaning; 3) the social and material context (ecological affordances) in which the texts are created and embedded. These analytical categories aforementioned were aimed at testing the affordances of the prefix "trans" in translingualism and as theorized by a number of scholars. Canagarajah (2013) has noted that the prefix "trans" does two things to language. One, it rejects the ideological practice of labeling and treating languages as separate, discrete or monolithic. Instead, a translingual orientation favors an approach that views language as always in contact and shaping each other to produce new meanings. As such, speakers in their everyday language use shuttle between various languages as they negotiate how to use various linguistic resources to construct situated meanings.

Similarly, Selfe, Horner and Lockridge (2015) see "the "trans-" prefix as an alternative to the "multi" prefix and "meant to focus on cross-language and mode work and the need for negotiation." Writing from a different discipline but similar theoretical orientation, Pennycook (2007) also sees the prefix "trans" taking "us beyond the 'posts' and the 'critical', and as an overarching framework, allowing scholars to pull together numerous 'trans' concepts like transgression, transculturation, translation, trans-textuality, trans-modality among others" (p.37). In line with this theorization, my analysis of linguistic resources was put in relation with other semiotic resources, modalities and specific ecological affordances or cultures. Beyond analyzing the print/written version of the songs, I engaged in their visual and performative aspects captured through You-tube screenshots. I then analyzed the social, cultural and material context in which the songs are embedded.

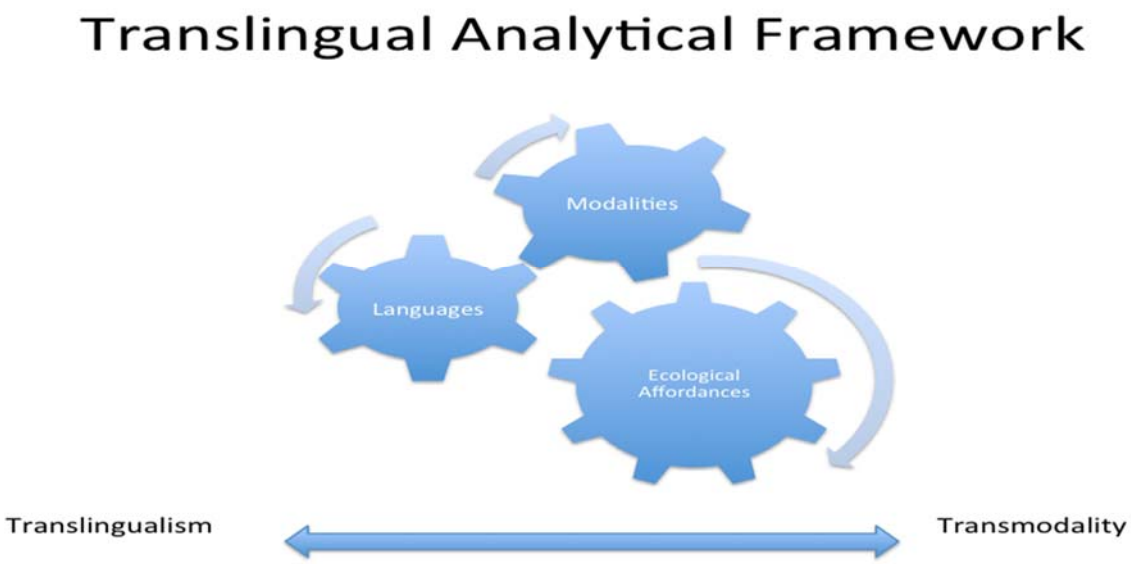

Figure 1:Flow diagram demonstrating various relationships in a translingual analytical framework

CHAPTER 3:

RAPPIN LIKE A MKENYA: TRANSLINGUALISM AS A CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ETHNICITIES

On Thursday April 2nd 2015, I began my day with my 10-minute morning ritual of watching CNN while getting ready for the day. From the kitchen, I heard a voice and an accent so distinct and familiar coming from the TV that I instantly stopped what I was doing and rushed back to the living room. It was the Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta, addressing the nation after a terrorist attack at the Garissa University college located in the North Eastern province of Kenya. On the bottom of the screen was the caption, "BREAKING NEWS: 15 dead, 500 missing following a terrorist attack in Kenya." For the rest of the day I just sat, read, watched, and listened to CNN and other Kenyan news channels, via You Tube, to follow the story as it developed. Before the end of the day, it was confirmed that the Al Shabaab terrorist group had killed 147 college students in the worst attack yet.

The next two weeks were characterized by fear, helplessness, grief and inertia. All I did was watch, read and listen to Kenyan news. It was sad to listen to relatives of the victims recount the last moments with their loved ones. They shared, for example, how the terrorists made the students call their relatives to say their last goodbyes and then shot them as their relatives listened. The survivors narrated their ordeal saying how the terrorists separated Muslims from Christians and then killed the Christians point blank. This pattern of killing was similar to other previous terrorist attacks in the country where Muslims were spared[5]. However, the unique

[5] For example, in 2013, 68 people, mostly Christians, were killed at the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi. In another incidence in 2014, a bus traveling from Mandera, a town located in the North Eastern province, to the capital city, Nairobi, was attacked and 28 Christians isolated and executed. In the same year, 36 quarry Christian workers were killed near the same town.

aspect of the Garissa attack as the survivors revealed, the terrorists asserted that the North Eastern province of Kenya belonged to the Somali ethnic community. This terrorist threat implied that none of the other over 40 ethnic and racial groups in the country was allowed to live or work in this geographical location. As a Kenyan, a Christian and non-Somali, I could not help thinking about this new form of threat. The possibility of one being a target of domestic terrorism because of their ethnicity or living in a geographical location where they are an ethnic minority began to get real.

A few days after this incidence, Kenyan Hip-hop artist Frobo released a song that paid tribute to the Garissa victims and other Kenyans who had previously lost their lives through terrorist attacks and other forms of violence. The second verse of the song caught my attention:

[1]Mimi nitawapa knowledge	[1] I will give you knowledge
[2]hata kama sikumurder college	[2] Even though I never finished college
[3]Chekini habari kila siku ni war	[3] Check out the news, everyday it is about war
[4]Mazee tafakari what you just saw	[4] [Man] just think about what you saw
[5]Hatutaki kuwasikia man mkibonga mkibonga	[5] Man, we don't want to hear you to talk and talk
[6]Juu hata last year bado tuligongwa	[6] Because even last year we were attacked
[7]Kisa cha Westgate bado a great hatred	[7] The Westgate incidence was a case of great hatred
[8]waliomadwa Mandera, post election violence, Kibera	[8] Those who were murdered in Mandera, Post election violence and in Kibera
[9]mimi bado ni **Mkenya**	[9] I am still a Kenyan
[10]Mkizindi kututenda	[10] If you continue hurting us
[11]nitawakubusha kama **Mkenya**	[11] I will remind you as a Kenyan
[12]Tunapigwa na militia, kila siku tunalia...	[12] We are attacked by militia, every day we are crying...

Table 2: Excerpt from Frobo's lyrics, "Garissa We are One."

In listening to this translingual song, the word Mkenya in line [9] and [11] stood out as the artist raps, "I am still a Kenyan," and "I will remind you as a Kenyan." For a moment I wondered about the importance of embodying a nationalist or a Nation-State identity for the artist. I had noted this pattern of identification with Nazizi, Abbas and Jua Cali when I asked them to talk

about their racial and ethnic identities and how it influences their language choice and use. They all seemed to resist identifying based on ethnicity and chose a "national" identity instead. As I listened to their stories, the following questions came up:

1. How do the artists theorize their ethnic and racial identities as they engage in translingual practice?
2. Are their composing practices consistent with their theories of language and racial and ethnic identities?

While composition scholars are beginning to consider the potential affordances of translingualism, particularly in addressing language diversity in the field, there are still concerns that the approach ignores or does not emphasize how people theorize their racial, cultural and ethnic identities as they engage in translingual practice. In this chapter, I begin to address this gap using Kenyan Hip-hop as a case. The artists represented in this study embody the type of multilingualism advocated by translingual theorists, particularly those in composition studies (Horner et al 2011; Horner, Necamp and Donahue 2011; Canagarajah 2013; Horner and Selfe 2013). Specifically, the artists' multilingualism is characterized by 1) the combining of various languages and codes to generate new meanings and grammars; 2) the working across languages and modalities in composing and performance; 3) an emphasis on mutual intelligibility and negotiation of meaning rather than on proficiency in discrete languages. In my interviews with them, I wondered whether their racial and ethnic identity influenced the choice of languages and codes they bring to their translingual practice. As they responded to this question, a number of

issues not related to language came up. These issues seemed to play a major role in how they engaged in translingual practice.

One of them was ethnic tension, and the impact of negative ethnicity in the country, particularly in last decade. For the three artists, identifying with a particular ethnicity or using tribal language in their everyday composing and speaking seemed more of a liability than an asset. My interpretation of this was that "tribal/ethnic identity" was an example of what Schiffman (1996) calls "cultural baggage" which needs to be considered as we evaluate how the three artists theorize and use language. My goal then was to find out if race and ethnicity in Kenya shapes how the artists translanguage. My approach to finding out was through interviews with them and a sociolinguistic analysis of their lyrics. These two methodological approaches allowed me to explore not only *how* but also *why* the artists engage in translingual composing.

Resisting Ethnic Identification

Typically, when you ask a Kenyan to tell or describe their ethnicity or race, you get responses like, "I am a Kamba, or a Luo, or Luhya, or Kikuyu, or Kalenjin, Indian" and so on. These names index different ethnic and racial groups in the country. Kenya is a racially and ethnically diverse nation. The majority are Africans who make up the over 40-ethnic/tribal communities in the country. In terms of numbers, Kikuyu comprises 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6% while other tribes combined comprise 15%. The non-African population (Asian, European, and Arab) constitutes 1%. According to the 2009 population census, there are about 38,610,097 people in Kenya. In 2015 however, it was estimated that the country's population was 47.8 million (World Population Review). As a

Kenyan, I know identifying with a particular ethnic community or racial group is or has been the dominant practice, especially for Kenyans of African descent. And since language is the primary marker of ethnic identity, artists mark themselves ethnolinguistically by speaking, composing or performing in one of the over 40 ethnic languages and dialects spoken in the country. However, in my interviews with the artists participating in this study, they neither wanted to identify with a particular ethnic group nor did they mention using any of the ethnic languages in composing or performing their music. And while they seemed to claim a nationalist identity, it was also not based on the dominant assumption of using Swahili, Kenya's lingua franca, but a Swahili that was mixed with other languages. Further, while they incorporated English in their lyrics, they were opposed to the idea of composing in English only. Instead, Sheng, the practice of moving across languages was dominant in their compositions. Njogu (2008) has observed this practice among other Kenyan Hip-hop artists:

> In urban settings I have watched in admiration as young artists from different ethnic backgrounds compose and produce lyrics in *sheng*, their slang. Ethnic backgrounds of the youth, in most cases marked only by the names they were given by birth, are put aside and a generational identity enshrined in socio-cultural interests takes precedence. Reading through *Kwani?* Literary Journal, I have become convinced that a Kenyan identity driven principally by a youth culture has been emerging. This identity pays little attention to ethnolinguistic considerations in defining the world and manifests itself in a vibrant popular culture that draws from the richness of our diversity. It should be nurtured and given an opportunity to blossom. (p.ix)

As a Kenyan, and a fan of Jua Cali, Abbas or Nazizi's music, I was not surprised by their multilingual composing practices. However, their resistance to identify based on ethnicity surprised me. I came to this research following the dominant understanding of race and ethnicity in the country which assumes that one's racial and ethnic identity can be explained with a simple equation: ethnic group=Ethnic language=geographical place. This is the model/theory of race and ethnicity I was taught growing up or the one I was familiar with. As I was to learn later during my research process, this theory or model is based on a colonial and racist ideology that sought to categorize Kenyans through the "divide and rule" British colonial administrative policies. As discussed in chapter one, Kenya was a British colony from 1895 to 1963. The current ethnic groups in Kenya marked predominantly through language and geographical concentration are as a result of colonial administrative policies. This practice did not exist during the pre-colonial era as Ogot (2012) notes:

> There were no pure ethnic groups. Each group was a dynamic and living unit whose continuity depended less on its purity or single origin than an ability to accommodate and assimilate diverse elements and ideas. Most of the myths, legends, epics and rituals one meets in stories of origin, migration and settlement, serve to foster the integration of peoples with diverse origins...colonialism introduced the concept of boundaries as lines drawn on a map. And since administrative boundaries tended to be based on ethnic or linguistic units, they froze cultural development and population mobility at a certain point in time, thus fossilizing situations, which had been fluid. (p. 30-31)

Other African/Kenyan historians and languages scholars (See for example Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* and Sinfree Makoni "From misinvention to disinvention") have written about how African people before the colonial era could belong to multiple ethnic groups. They have also shown that speaking multiple ethnic languages was the norm or what in this project I call "a practice of everyday life." Similarly, mobility was not restricted by physical boundaries.

While the artists represented in this study did not claim to adopt the pre-colonial African perspective on ethnicity, they all clearly resisted the current colonial and dominant practice of ethnic identification that promotes "one language one community" ideology. Instead, they are developing their own ethnicities based on their everyday language use and the current Kenyan linguistic culture(s). A number of scholars in other fields have written about how youth today are developing new ethnicities in ways that "engage[s] rather than supressses *difference*" (Hall 1996), and based on every day language use and sound (Harris 2006; Rampton 2006; Paris 2011). As I demonstrate through their stories below, the artists' translingual practices are not "free of values." They pay attention to the linguistic culture surrounding the languages they bring to their translingual experience by expressing certain ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices and myths about the languages. They shared for example how particular "cultural baggage" like negative ethnicity influences their language choice and use.

Jua Cali's Story: Neither a Mtaita nor a Mluhya

My conversation with Jua Cali about his ethnicity went as follows:

Esther: How would you describe your ethnicity?

Jua Cali: me?

Esther: Yes.

Jua Cali: …for me, let me just say it is very hard to describe my ethnicity.

Esther: Why?

Jua Cali: um…how do I say this? I am... (thinking) I represent everyone in Kenya…so when I perform among the Luhya, people think I am Luhya. When I go perform at a place like Taita, people think I am a Taita. For me that is a good thing...because I want to bring everyone together.

Before conducting this interview with Jua Cali, I had done some research on him online. One of the results that came up from my Google search was that he was either a M/Taita or M/Luhya. So when he mentioned Taita and Luhya in his response above, I wondered whether he was hinting that he belonged to one or both of these two ethnic communities:

Esther: Why would they think that [you are Taita or Luhya]?

Jua Cali: Because that is what I give them...let me just say I am a basically a *true Kenyan*…I like it when people cannot tell what [ethnic group] I am from.

Esther: So you don't want to be associated…or identify with a particular tribe?

Jua Cali: No no no no.

Esther: You just want to identify as a Kenyan?

Jua Cali: Yes...You know how Kenyans are. So sensitive about this kind of stuff. We are very tribalistic. So it is a good thing if we entertainers can come out and try our level best to bring Kenyans together, if we are able to.

Despite asking him about the ethnic identity of his parents and grandparents, which would have revealed his ethnic heritage, identity or lineage, he declined to say. He insisted they too are Kenyans. From his response, I noted three reasons for resisting a racial or ethnic identification: 1) to represent everyone in Kenya, 2) to bring all Kenyans together and 3) to fight negative ethnicity (tribalism) in the country. These factors arise from the current socio-economic, tribal differences and political circumstances in the country. For example, in the recent past, ethnic tensions have arisen in the country due to political differences between leaders. A notable and recent example was the 2007 ethnic-based post election violence which left more than 1, 200 people dead and 600,000 displaced from their homes. This violence dubbed "ethnic cleansing" arose after some ethnic communities' belief that the 2007 presidential election was rigged. The dissatisfaction with the election results sparked interethnic strife leading to mass killings and displacement. Among the tribes most affected were the Luo, Kikuyu and the Kalenjin. One effect of the violence has been intense fear among Kenyans who now shy away from living in geographical locations where they are not part of the ethnic group. Writing about the violence, Njogu (2008) notes:

> Either as spontaneous and random or organized, militaristic and systematic violence, the mayhem that enveloped Kenya, especially in the Rift Valley and Nyanza, was without a doubt a form of ethnic cleansing. Communities were targeted for harm or eviction because of their ethno-linguistic identity manifested in names, physical features, cultural symbols or as represented in their national identity cards. Revenge attacks towards the end of January 2008 in parts of Nairobi and Central Kenya also took an ethnic dimension. (p.x)

As a public pedagogue, Jua Cali brings this cultural and ethnic baggage to his language choices and use. He has to embody an ethnic identity that allows him to be accepted in every tribal/ethnic community in the country where he performs and distributes his music. Such an identity must allow him to represent everyone in Kenya as he engages in community re-building work. Consequently, composing and performing in his ethnic language is not an option for Jua Cali because, and as Wamwere (2012) notes, "language differences are also a source of tension among Africans. In some quarters in Kenya, the argument runs; if you speak your language, you propagate ethnic hate and are a tribalist. Only a single language for all Africans—in this case Kiswahili—will eradicate negative ethnicity" (p. 9). Jua Cali thus adopts a "nationalist" identity or what Frobo in the opening song calls a *Mkenya* identity. This identity for Jua Cali is rhetorical and tactical because it implies he is bigger than a tribe.

At the same time, I read Jua Cali's Mkenya identity as informed by a new nationalist consciousness, which is different from the first or the pre-independence nationalism. The first nationalist consciousness and ideology can be traced back to the 1940s and 1950s when Kenyan political leaders mobilized all Kenyans from all ethnic backgrounds to resist and end settler colonialism. Ogot (2012) writes that, "to the majority of Africans... nationalism meant the removal of colonialism; it meant *Uhuru*, freedom, with the hope that other things would be added later" (p.1). Symbols to reflect this new national identity were developed, for example a national flag, a national anthem, a loyalty pledge, Swahili as the national language, coat of arms among others. These shared attributes represented the country's unity and the historical events that had shaped the struggle to end British colonization. A national motto of peace, love and unity was also developed. After the end of settler colonialism however, the pre-independence

nationalist spirit began to dwindle. Ogot (2012) attributes this failure to African leaders' adoption of nationalism models developed in Europe and America. Such models, he notes, did not take into account Africa's pluralistic societies.

After independence, there was no motivation or a strong basis to sustain the pre-independence nationalism. Thus, many Kenyans continued to identify based on their ethnic groups. Ethnicity however became highly politicized with the political elite using it as means to advance their own communities economically. Ogot (2012) notes for example that "as political independence got close, a clear schism developed in the African leadership groups between the so-called "majority" groups identified as the Kikuyu and the Luo, and "minority" interests represented by the Luhyia, Kalenjin, the Maasai, Coastal peoples and the Somali in the North Eastern Province" (p.12). This practice, what Wamwere (2008) calls the "philosophy of ethnic eating," characterized by ethnic greed by the political elite has continued since independence. Consequently, it has led to some ethnic communities being economically disenfranchised and marginalized based on ethnicity. Inequality, poverty and lack of faith/trust in the political system has led to hatred between ethnic communities and numerous incidences of interethnic strife have arisen. The assertion by the al Shabaab terrorist group in my opening story that the North Eastern province of Kenya is for the Somali ethnic group is to a large extent tied to the politics of ethnic marginalization and local ethnic geo-polititics.

These social-political issues have prompted Kenyans in leadership positions to call upon everyone to embody a nationalist identity/consciousness and a renewed commitment and pride to the country. The slogan *Najivunia kuwa Mkenya* I am proud to be a Kenyan is now very popular

and promoted through social media, commercials, advertisements, clothing among other ways. Several popular artists have embraced the slogan/theme and composed music that reflects this identity and consciousness (see for example Trappee and Avril, Eric Wainaina, among others) and so is Jua Cali. In sharing the message in "Kiasi," one of the songs he thought best represents who he is as an artist, he said:

> Kiasi, I touched on different topics…Kiasi is a common man's music. Yaani mtu foreigner akicome hapa, aulizwe mkenya ni nani, na akiekewa Kiasi na anajua Kiswahili, will get Mkenya ni nani. Coz I touched on wasee kulewa, I have touched on raha za watu, I have touched on watu kushikwa na polisi. I have touched on hizi matrucks kuanguaka watu wanaenda kuchota mafuta. Yaani basically nimeongea what mkenya speaks to you. (Jua Cali, Personal Communication, June 27, 2013).

In this quote, Jua Cali asks, *Mkenya ni nani* who is a Kenyan*?* The word *Mkenya* indexes a Kenyan national identity. He then goes on to share what he thinks is the essence of a Kenyan by listing everyday practices and behaviors that typify this identity. According to Jua Cali, "Kiasi is a common man's music" because it captures the Kenyan spirit of resilience exemplified through practices like living a carefree and happy lifestyle like getting drunk despite economic hardships, constant police harassment, people engaging in risky behaviors among other things. He then says, "Basically [in this song] I talk about what a Kenyan speaks to you." According to Jua Cali, "if a foreigner wanted to understand who a Kenyan is or what it means to be a Kenyan, and they spoke or understood Swahili, all they need to do is listen to the song "Kiasi."

Thus, for Jua Cali to represent the Mkenya experience, it is important for him to embody an identity that makes everyone who is economically and ethnically marginalized feel represented in his music. Borrowing the words of Chinua Achebe, a Mkenya identity is the one capable of representing Kenya's "particular" and "peculiar" experience. It is also his process of developing a conscious ethnic identity based on his everyday experiences, not on ethnic languages, place of residence, or origin. The Mkenya identity is also important in expanding his audience base and to compete nationally. It is also tactical because it allows him to access and sustain economic opportunities which is particularly important in a country where artists don't earn from music sales but mostly through endorsements.

Consequently, the Mkenya identity impacts his language choice and use. The first song Jua Cali picked to represent who he is as an artist is "Bidii Yangu," which loosely translated means "My Hustle." After picking the song, I asked him to talk about the language(s) he used to write the song.

> **Esther:** Ile song ya Bidii, uliandika na languages gani?
>
> **Jua cali:** Kiswahili. Hiyo ni Sheng. Hiyo ni Sheng

Jua Cali says he used Swahili to write the song. He then immediately follows that one-word answer with *hiyo ni Sheng* That is Sheng (See emphasis above). What struck me in this response (and throughout the interview) was that Jua Cali talked about Swahili and Sheng interchangeably, not showing any distinction or discreteness between the two. His theory of language or multilingualism is therefore consistent with the translingual approach, which discourages viewing languages as discrete. Further, while Jua Cali hardly uses other languages in

his composing, he theorized his music as multilingual. His theory of language diversity is based more on semiodiversity (the diversity of meanings that might be realized in one language or in a monolingual utterance) than on glossodiversity (diversity of languages) (see Pennycook 2008; Canagarajah 2013; Lu and Horner 2013).

In the following excerpt from "Bidii Yangu," translingualism is realized in three ways: 1) use of English words and phrases in a Swahili dominant verse (***bold italics***); 2) Swahili words and phrases assuming or taking a new meaning than the original (underlined); 3) idiosyncratic grammars, spellings and pronunciation that arise from combination of two or more languages (**bold**).

Nimeacha watu wengi sana wakule **roundi** hii niachieni pia mi' ninone
Safari yangu ningepeleka mbio lakini nimeamua kuenda pole pole
Usifikirie nimechoka niko na nguvu ka zile ngombe nyi' uona mtaani
Sitachoka kutafuta majani
Sitachoka kuendelea na safari
Wacha mguu zangu zitembee
Wasanii wote wa nguvu wapepee
Kimaisha na kila kitu wanafanya
Ni bidii na utafika pahali unataka
Ata nikigonga ***one hundred*** bado mziki zangu sitaacha kusambaza
Nimeamka **chali** yangu na sioni tena ka n'talala
Weka ***mattress*** kando tunaenda kazi
Weka ***stress*** kando mambo ikue safi
Morale morale watu wang'are
Morale watu watambe
Na mjipandishe juu ka bendera na muimbe hii ngoma ka ***National Anthem***

Table 3: Excerpt from Jua Cali's lyrics, "Bidii Yangu."

As we continued with our conversation, I wanted to know why he engages in translingual composing or writing in Sheng:

Esther: Why Sheng?

Jua Cali: unajua (thinking) kidogo am mad at watu wale wanaimba na kizungu…[thinking] coz unajua ile place mimi nimetoka, muziki ni a reflection of oneself, ama wewe ni *ambassador wa society yako*. Na mimi *my Kenyan society* and as far as I know, si huongeanga Sheng. Kutoka mi nizaliwe, mi' nimepata Sheng hapa na tutaiacha hapa. Hiyo ndio predominant[ly] ama 98% percent ya Wakenya huongea Sheng. Hata tukisimama hapa utasikia tu watu wanabonga Sheng. Unaona? So, mimi kama musician, naturally nitaimba what I comfortably talk, hiyo ndiyo language nitause, and *my message* nataka watu wale wako karibu na mimi waunderstand…I use Kiwahili, Sheng ndio kila mtu ataelewa na watu wakuwe wanaenza relate, watu wanaenza enjoy, watu wanenza sing along.

Jua Cali offers several reasons why he uses Swahili and Sheng in writing his music. He begins by pointing out that he is "a little mad or disappointed by Kenyan MCs who rap in English." In explaining his disappointment, he says, "where I come from, music is a reflection of oneself. You are an ambassador to your society. And for me, as far as I am concerned, my society is Kenya." Again, his "new nationalist consciousness" kept emerging when he used the word "ambassador" arguing that representing Kenya using English is out of order. From this response, it became clear to me how important language, particularly Sheng, is for Jua Cali. As an "ambassador" to "his Kenyan society," Sheng is the language that helps him best represent Kenya since it is the language predominantly spoken in country.

As he was responding to my question on "why Sheng," he wanted to confirm or prove to me the predominant use of Sheng in the country. As you will note in the response above, he asks

me to "pause the interview" and listen to the people sitting around us at the Nairobi Carnivore restaurant where I conducted the first and second phase interview. He says, "you will notice everyone here is speaking in Sheng." To support his argument "statistically," and based on his everyday observations he said, "98% of Kenyans speak Sheng." Unlike Njogu (2008) above who labels Sheng as slang and marginalizes it to a specific context (urban settings), Jua Cali refers to Sheng here as a language to ideologically and strategically privilege it. In doing so, he makes an argument that Sheng or translingual practice in Kenya, and following de Certeau is a practice of every day—not marginal (regional or urban) but part of the dominant national culture.

Jua Cali continued to further argue that Sheng is not a new phenomenon in Kenya. He noted for example, "when I was born, I found Sheng here and when I die, it will still be here...therefore, for me as a musician, naturally, I will rap/sing in the language I can comfortably speak... I want the people near me to understand. I use *Kiswahili, Sheng,* so that people can understand, so that that they can relate, so that people can enjoy, so that people can sing along." Jua Cali also expressed a negative attitude towards composing in English only. During the interview, he revealed that he doesn't collaborate with artists who use English only in their compositions or performance. He for example said, *msanii wa kizungu akikuja, it is a big no.*

While Jua Calis's use of Swahili is consistent with performing his national or the Mkenya identity, his story above calls for a different kind of Swahili, or a new national language or lingua franca for Kenya. For Jua Cali, a lingua franca should reflect the reality of Kenyan's ways of speaking characterized by moving across languages. Jua Cali' story invites Kenyans to embrace and celebrate Sheng as part of Kenya's national identity. He noted for example *si huongeang'a Sheng* we [Kenyans] speak Sheng. He supported his argument from a

sociolinguistic point of view and with an awareness of how colonial and historical factors have shaped this new national identity by saying, *the moment, Kenya, Kizungu iliingia hapa na waarabu wakakuja na hizo Kiswahili, hizo mixture, for every action there is a reaction...naturally hii kitu ingehappen. Hii ndio product.* **"**The moment English was introduced in Kenya and the Arabs brought the Swahili mixtures[6], a new language had to emerge because for every action there is a reaction." For Jua Cali, Sheng or translingualism is the product and is "part of our culture" and "a very unique thing" for Kenyans. "*Sheng is a beautiful language,"* he said, *"yaani ni culture yetu na kitu moja unique, unique kwetu.*

Abbas Kubaff's Story: A Kenyan but mostly a Pan-African

Like Jua Cali, Abbas resisted identifying based on a particular ethnic community. In the conversation below, Abbas and I discuss his race and ethnic identity:

> **Esther:** How would you describe your race or ethnicity?
>
> **Abbas:** The luckiest race (laughs).
>
> **Esther:** Why?
>
> **Abbas:** I don't think in terms of race. But, I can't be naïve and say this is not that kind of world [where] people always classify each other. I can say I am proud of who I am and am doing the human level best of what I can and with what I have, with my resources, that is, my talent to improve and to educate people. To better Africans, you know, as a whole…I forgot my tribe coz actually the last time

[6] Jua Cali is referring to the fact that Swahili began as a hybrid of Arabic and Bantu languages. Its origin is attributed to intermingling of Bantu speaking groups with Arab traders along the East African coast dating back to as early as 6th century.

> someone asked me about my tribe, I said I was Pan African. um... *I am basically a Kenyan*. But, I got a mixed background. My background is from Nyeri, from central Kenya but I am mostly pan African (laughs). (Personal Communication, July 23, 2013).

While Abbas could have easily identified as a Kikuyu since his real name, Andrew Kabiru, and the fact that he is from "Nyeri" and "Central Kenya" reveals his ethnic identity, he does not. Instead, he chooses a "national" identity by saying "I am basically a Kenyan," but then quickly adds "but I am mostly Pan-African." His response also reveals his opposition to practices of "classifying" people based on race and ethnicity. His identification as a "pan-African" suggests that he thinks beyond tribal, and even a nationalist identity. I read Abbas' adoption of a "basically Kenyan" and a "pan African" identity as very conscious of how local ethnic and racial politics negatively impact people locally, and also globally. His desire to assume an Afro-diasporic identity aims at promoting unity, educating and empowering all people of African descent.

When I asked Abbas to pick a song that he felt best represented who he is as an artist, he picked "Mchizi" which was released in 2013. He says the song is "basically a summary of his life" since it captures his past and present experiences of being exposed to "bad life" in the Nairobi ghetto, his marriage and divorce, death of his parents, media attack and "everyday pressure." In our conversation, I asked him to talk about the languages involved in creating the song:

> **Esther:** Lets talk about the languages used in composing the song "Mchizi."

> **Abbas:** It is in Swahili. That is *authentically* me. I have always thought if I keep it that way, then am *original* because I was born here and I will never give my music commercial priorities. I have always [used Swahili] because *it is in me* and [my music] has a much more purpose than being commercial. I always believe if I want to maintain to be *original,* I have to maintain *where I come from, my culture*.

Composing in Swahili allows Abbas to be "true to himself," "authentic" and "original" and most importantly "maintain his culture." This assertion is part of the larger Hip-hop ethos of "keeping it real." He further says, "I was born here" (meaning Kenya). When I asked him what would be the best audience to perform the song, his response was, "to an audience of people who [has] never experienced it because it is something they won't expect." He said, "if it is up to me to force other people to listen to it, know where I come from and understand my culture, then [that is] my purpose." Like Jua Cali, Abbas wants to use language in ways that portray him as a Kenyan cultural ambassador. Abbas continued to say he would love to perform the song "in one of those big events hosted by MTV or something," because, "it will give them a clear picture of what Africa is capable of— what sort of talent they are missing out to expose."

Like Jua Cali, Abbas theory of language was very similar. He asserted his main language of composing is Swahili. It was not until I asked him if there were any other languages in the song that he revealed using Sheng.

> **Esther:** So you said the song is in Swahili, are there in other languages in the song?

> **Abbas:** Swahili and Sheng. *I took it to the hood of Nairobi coz that is where I grew up.* I describe where I grew up, you know. I just say it in [in the verses] in a very clever way.

Abbas had a hard time making a distinction between Swahili and Sheng or viewing them as discrete. Unlike Jua Cali however, Abbas implies Sheng is an urban phenomenon when he says "I took it to the hood of Nairobi." Here, he theorizes Sheng as slang like Njogu (2008) above. However, later in the interview he theorized Sheng as a language. For example, when I asked him what typical languages he uses to write his music he said, "I have always kept it Swahili, Sheng and English...these are *my first languages,* you know. I have always found it easier to use that because it will make it easier to flip vocabulary, my verbs and nouns and make rhyming words because these are the languages *I am familiar with"* (Personal Communication, July 23, 2013). In this quote, Abbas privileges Sheng by referring to it as his *first language* as a Nairobi urbanite. Further, Abbas reveals that while translingual composing in Kenyan Hip-hop may reflect the everyday Kenyan speech culture, in composing lyrics, it is a uniquely complex practice. However, the availability of multiple language resources facilitates his composing practices and makes it easier for him to meet Hip-hop genre conventions and expectations like rhyme and rhythm. Androutsopoulos (2010) supports his argument by noting that the lyrics:

> go through several stages of editing, in which artists use literacy to optimize the rhyme and other formal properties of their lyrics and to tailor them to rhythmic constraints, thereby taking into account genre conventions and audience expectations. The final outcome of this process (i.e., the lyrics heard in a

> recording) may well incorporate traces of conversational and vernacular style, but its conditions of production distinguish it from spontaneous discourse. (p.20*)*

Further, and like Jua Cali, Abbas expressed a negative attitude towards "English only" composing. He noted for example that if he used English only, it would be a betrayal to his culture and would serve "a commercial purpose," which to him is secondary. While Abbas uses English in his writing, it is never "English only" but always mixed with Swahili to make it Sheng. The excerpt below from the song "Mchizi" offers a good example. Translingualism is realized in several ways: 1) use of English words and phrases in a Swahili dominant verse (**bold**); idiosyncratic grammars, spellings and pronunciation that arise from combination of two or more languages (***Bold Italics***), 3) linguistic inventiveness/neologisms or words assuming new meanings than the original (<u>underlined</u>);

Wengine husemanga ati ***bro*** amechizi
Wengine husemanga mi nimechizi
Wengine hunichekelea hu hu hu hu x2

Mimi niliponawiri kimuziki
Nilikosana na marafiki
Nilipendwa na mashabiki
Nilichogwa na magazeti
Wazazi walipofariki niliwazika kwenye mazishi
Ili niwalanze mahali pema
Mola awe na sisi
Bado natafuta KC, yule ndungu yangu **like crazy**
alipotea ni myaka mingi imepita
Si ni KC, alikuwa na bonge la **Afro**
Alikuwa chuo ya Dago
Alinifundisha ***kuhustle***
Kupinga **tease** ya **muscles**
Vile tukienda **shows** vile tungekinda ***macastle***
Alinifudisha ku[…]ni kama **game** ya Burkina Faso
Jinsi ya kushikishang'a na Big G na [wadasuu]
So nafeel ni kama **peacock**
Niko **proud** kuwa na **big bro**
Maisha huwanga mafupi basi napunguzanga mawanzo
Najua tutaonana siku moja wakati bado
Sasa nafanya kazi nimebarikiwa na babu
Wasanii siwatatii ama ta'watafundisha adabu

Table 4: Excerpt from Abbas Kubaff's lyrics, "Mchizi."

Nazizi Hirji's Story: A Combination of six different races and things.

Unlike Abbas and Jua Cali, Nazizi has a multiracial background. As she revealed in her story, her multiracial identity was not easy to negotiate in a country where skin color is central in determining one's racial and ethnic identity. My conversation with her about her race and ethnicity went as follows:

Esther: How would you describe your race or ethnicity?

Nazizi: My race is very interesting because I used to ask my mother this when I was growing up. I used to ask her "what tribe am I and what race am I" and she used to tell me "you are a Kenyan." So when people asked me what tribe am I would say, "I am a Kenyan". But when I grew up, I realized they wanted to know more [they would ask]

> "Kenyan? What tribe are you?" For me… I am Kenyan by birth and my parents are Kenyan by birth too, but my dad is half Tanzanian, and half Indian and then my mom is Iranian, Ugandan, Sri Lankan and Arab. So it is a combination of six different races and things. But, I find my identity and my culture in Nairobi, in music. That is how I found my identity.

Nazizi's response shows the complexity in describing her racial or ethnic identity given her parents diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. From her perspective, these diverse backgrounds do not allow her to fit neatly in any of Kenya's dominant/prescribed ethnic and racial categories. The question, "what tribe are you?" which she was constantly asked growing up emerges from the Kenyan dominant practice of describing ethnic identity based on language or location. She however affirms her national identity when she says: "I am a Kenyan by birth." At the same time, Nazizi says she found her identity in Nairobi and in music. Claiming a Nairobian/urban identity is inconsistent with the dominant racial/ethnic practice in Kenya. It is assumed that those who live in urban cities/centers live there temporarily (either for work or school). Thus, Kenyans living in Nairobi are expected to have two homes—an urban and a rural one. The rural home is tied to one's ethnicity, ethnic language and "authentic" African cultural traditions. Nazizi's performance of her identity as a Nairobian (urbanite) disrupts this dominant narrative/equation of Ethnic Identity =Ethnic language =ethnic group=geographical place/location. It shows her agency to claim an urban identity. Like Abbas and Jua Cali, Nazizi carves a new and complex ethnic identity based on her everyday experiences and language use.

When Nazizi began her career as a Hip-hop artist, she had a hard time being accepted in the Kenyan Hip-hop industry. As discussed in chapter one and more in chapter four, she came from an economically privileged background and used English predominantly in her composing. These two attributes did not augur very well with the Kenyan Hip-hop industry. Specifically, the fact that she did not write in Swahili or Sheng, the languages of everyday Kenyans, attracted a lot of criticism from several Kenyan Hip-hop practitioners. During my interview with her, she shared a personal story where in the beginning of her career, her music producer Ted Josiah was hesitant to work with her because she rapped in English only (see more discussion of this in chapter four). Her "English only" composing practices projected an image of a "non" Kenyan. Thus, it was important for Nazizi to get it right with her language choices in order to succeed as a Kenyan Hip-hop artist as she reveals below:

> In order to try to change my lyrics to something Kenyans would relate to, I would go to my lyrics and try to cross out some specific words and replace them with Swahili words. So I have my English words but I have my Swahili words as well…which is Sheng actually. I did not know that I was creating something that was already there. Coz he if he [Ted Josiah] had said "write in Sheng, I would be confused because I would be like "I don't live in the hoods coz most of the hood area has their own Sheng and I came from Runda and Runda is uptown. There is no Sheng there. So I did not know any Sheng but Sheng is English and Swahili mixed. So the way I wrote it, he liked, [he said] it was really original... Just like a normal Kenyan …so eventually I brought him a song, which was mostly Swahili, but with English and he loved it. And that was *Ni Sawa Tu* which I rap "Mama nataka kuwa rapper." which was my first

> song. And basically after the first song, you know, that was it. I think I had already proved to everybody [I can do Kenyan Hip-hop]. I was no. 1 on the charts, I think, for two months. Everybody was like "who is this"? I was the youngest artist on the scene at that time and a female artist. So everybody wanted to collaborate with me. When I did that song there was a whole uprising …people loved it! (Nazizi Hirji, personal communication, July19, 2013).

It is interesting to note that while Nazizi could have written in "Swahili only," Kenya's lingua franca, and reach majority of her Kenyan audience, she sub-consciously decided to mix English and Swahili. Josiah "liked it" saying it was "original" and she sounded like a "normal Kenyan." Like Abbas, Nazizi reveals her initial understanding of Sheng as slang spoken in the Nairobi Ghetto. She later theorizes it as a practice of mixing of Swahili and English, which characterizes the speech patterns of most Kenyans. When I asked her what languages she uses to compose her music and why she said:

> I find it hard to write in languages I don't speak. There was a time they [music producers] were trying to make us write in Luganda. I couldn't because they are teaching us the words, I did not *feel like it was me* and I wasn't sure if I am portraying me using a language I don't know, you know. It could be written down for you and taught to you but are you sure that it is you in those words? So I find *me is more in English and Swahili.* I can definitely say if I am given something in English and Swahili I can check it and say, this is wrong. I don't want to sound like that. *This is not*

> *me.* If it is another language that I have no say about it, it is just my voice basically and my name they are using, then the *message* is theirs (Nazizi Hirji, personal communication, July 19, 2013).

Luganda, is an ethnic language spoken in Uganda, a country that neighbors Kenya on the West. While Nazizi refused to use Luganda, she revealed being comfortable using Jamaican Creole in her composing. During the second phase interview, I asked her to pick a song that she felt best represented her as an artist. She picked the Song "Kenyan Girl, Kenyan Boy," which she co-wrote with fellow artist Kevin Wyre when both were members of the Necessary Noize group:

> **Esther:** Could you talk to me about the languages involved in writing the song Kenyan girl, Kenyan boy?
> **Nazizi:** We write a lot in Sheng, English and Patwa which is like Jamaican Patwa...a lot of Kenyans relate to relate to Jamaican Patwa because they listen to a lot of Reggae and a lot of Dance Hall.

In her response, I noted that she omitted mentioning Swahili, which to her is by default embedded in Sheng yet highlights English as a distinct language. Like Jua Cali and Abbas, Nazizi had a hard time talking about the languages as distinct particularly when used in the lyrics. Further, Nazizi reveals her use of Jamaican Patwa. Throughout her music career, and especially when she was in the Necessary Noize rap group, she learned many Kenyans listen and relate to both Dance Hall and Reggae music. Therefore, in order to appeal to their audiences, She and Wyre learned not only how to combine these genres in their Hip-hop music but also how to

use Jamaican Creole. When I asked how they came to know that Kenyans liked Jamaican Creole, she said:

> You see, for us, we are those artists who have been part of the fans coz we went to the same clubs, we listened to the same DJs and once you get to know all that, you are part of them. You know what they do, what they listen to, what they like. We knew because of the streets we go to and the clubs we go to, that this was big. It is almost like research, not research as such but research by default, like you just know things. And of course it is gonna influence what you write, what you know about your environment (Nazizi Hirji, personal communication, July 19, 2013).

In the excerpt below, Nazizi's translingual dexterity is realized by moving across several languages: English (*italics*), Swahili **(bold),** Sheng words (Underlined) while sentences with features of Jamaican Patwa are ***bold Italics.***

Hii *track* **inaenda kwa** wadhii **wote wa** mathree
Dere **wa** mathree, conda **wa** mathree
Pia kama unapanda mathree
Necessary Noize
Kenyan girl, would you come take a walk with me
Nataka chali wa Nairobi
Kenyan boy, would you come take a walk with me
Poa, tunataka manzi **wa Nairobi**
Woi woi woi
Dat Kenyan boy make mi heart skip a beat like woi
The way him a move on the dance floor woi
He an original Kenyan boy
Yo, Waire, the love child, Nazizi, the first lady, we make it hot
You know, you know, we make it hot

Table 5: Excerpt from Nazizi and Wyre's lyrics, "Kenyan Girl, Kenyan Boy."

Nazizi's story reveals her effort to rap in ways that reflect the Kenyan linguistic landscape. Her story complicates the dominant understanding of the Kenyan language culture by showing Jamaican Creole, an Afrodiasporic language as part of that culture. Unlike Jua Cali and Abbas, her new ethnicity borrows from cultures and languages that are not "authentically Kenyan."

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared stories of three Kenyan artists as they theorize their language choice and use in relation to their racial and ethnic identities. Findings from their stories reveal that the artists are engaging in translingualism to construct new ethnicities based on how Kenyans sound not on physical characteristics, place of origin, ethnic language or place residence. However, their new ethnicities are not completely removed from their elder's culture or the Kenyan national culture. The artists expressed certain ideas, prejudices and attitudes towards the languages they bring to their translingual practice. For example, they expressed a negative attitude towards English only composing and valued Swahili and Sheng more. This showed their awareness of Kenya's linguistic culture and a variety of historical, socio-cultural and political factors that have shaped it. In my discussion, I have also argued that the artists' new ethnicities and language practices are very similar to precolonial African ways of using languages and theorizing about ethnic identity. As such, their translingual practices have a decolonial element—a resistant to dominant language ideologies originating from colonial and imperialistic cultural practices.

Further, in their theorizing about language, the artists revealed a contradictory theory of multilingualism—one influenced by the traditional approach, and another by the translingual

approach. This also influenced how they theorized about some of the languages they bring to their translingual practice. For example, they sometimes theorized Sheng as slang and as an urban youth practice and other times as a complex language widely practiced across the country.

CHAPTER 4:

"WAKILISHA MTAANI": TRANSLINGUALISM AS A PERFORMANCE OF STREET-CONSCIOUS IDENTITY

> When Ted called me, I was so excited to go to the studio. So excited! I went and he wanted me to be in a song with Nikki. Nikki was one of his artists then who he was really marketing. She was doing a song called "Sitalia" and he wanted me to do a rap verse. I was happy, I mean, I was in the studio. I recorded but it wasn't my own song. So I kept coming back and saying, "Ted, I just don't want to be in Nikki's [thing], I want to have my own song. Then he was like, "but Nazizi, you rap in English most of the time, how are you going to sing to these Kenyans in English?" (Nazizi Hirji, personal communication, July 19, 2013).

The excerpt above is from a conversational interview I had with Nazizi Hirji, one of the participating artists in my study. She was sharing her story about how she began her career as a Hip-hop artist and her struggles to gain acceptance in the Kenyan Hip-hop industry. Nazizi, as the first Kenyan female MC, was a first generation African Hip-hop artist. As such, she was from a socio-economically privileged class. In Kenya, the predominant language used by members of this social class is English since it symbolizes upper class status and upward mobility. Therefore, Nazizi's composing practices were in English. For many Kenyan Hip-hop practitioners, her English only composing practices alienated the majority local Kenyan audience. Specifically, the fact that she did not write her music in Swahili, Kenya's lingua franca, or Sheng, the Kenya urban youth language, attracted a lot of criticism from producers, fellow rappers and other Hip-hop practitioners. In the excerpt above, Ted Josiah, a pioneer Kenyan MC, writer and music producer who discovered Nazizi and later became her producer for many years, was at first

hesitant to offer her a recording time in his studio, let alone sign her. The problem: she rapped in English.

Similarly, fellow rappers looked down upon Nazizi because she grew up in Runda, a prestigious neighborhood in Nairobi. As discussed in chapter one, in the beginning, Hip-hop in Africa was only accessible to rich kids and was mostly performed in the suburbs. Consequently, the performative practices of the first generation African Hip-hop artists were characterized by imitation, mimicry and appropriation of African American Hip-hop. From the mid 1990s however, African artists began creating Hip-hop music that reflected their local cultures, identities, experiences, and languages. One of the first moves to indigenize/localize the culture in Kenya was to remove it from the suburbs and take it to the streets. In the Kenyan Hip-hop cultural context, the streets are *the mtaa* or *mtaani.* And with the street being the "locus" of all Hip-hop cultural activities (Alim 2006), it is not uncommon to hear artists mention the word mtaa or mtaani in their lyrics or make a reference to the streets, particularly the ones they represent. For Nazizi however, her neighborhood Runda did not represent the typical Nairobi inner city mtaa and hence was not considered part of Kenyan urban street culture.

Further, and as discussed in chapter three, given the politicized nature of racial and ethnic identity in Kenya, particularly the privileging of phenotype and "tribe" in determining one's ethnic and racial identity, Nazizi's multiracial identity put her at a harder position to prove not only that she could wakilisha or represent the Nairobi urban street experience, but that she was a Kenyan. In my conversation with her, she revealed how her racial/ethnic identity was and has always been under scrutiny:

> ...when people asked me what tribe am I would say, "I am a Kenyan." But when I grew up, I realized they wanted to know more [they would ask] "Kenyan? What tribe are you?" For me, I am Kenyan by birth and my parents are Kenyan by birth too but my dad is half Tanzanian and half Indian and then my mom is Iranian, Ugandan, Sri Lankan and Arab. So it is a combination of six different races and things. But, I find my identity and my culture in Nairobi, in music. That is how I found my identity (personal communication, July19, 2013).

In this chapter, I discuss how Nazizi resists dominant theories of race and ethnicity in the country by constructing an urban, specifically a Nairobian identity through her music and her translingual practices. The guiding questions for this chapter are:

> How does Nazizi translanguage to strategically construct a Kenyan, specifically a Nairobi street conscious identity? What specific linguistic and semiotic resources does she use to construct this identity? What ecological affordances facilitate the enactment of translingual practices and consequently the production of her identity?

Language and construction of a street- conscious identity in Hip-hop

I borrow the term "street-conscious identity" from Alim (2006). He locates *the street* as an important cultural space for the creation and performance of Hip-hop activities for a number of reasons: 1) it is the site, sound and center of the Hip-hop Culture-World; 2) it continues to be the "driving force in contemporary Hip Hop Culture"; 3) it is the locus of the linguistic-cultural activities of Hip Hop and is thus a "space of culture, creativity, cognition, and consciousness" (p.124). Alim (2006) further notes that, for a rapper to be able to represent the streets and be

successful within the Hip Hop culture, he or she needs to have street credibility which is gained and maintained when an artist is culturally and physically connected to the streets. This connection, he argues, is "a key value for members of the Hip hop Nation (HNN)," the "imagined community" where members regardless of geographical location, cultural and ethnic background, participate through shared cultural practices and the use of Hip-hop nation language[7].

Alim (2006) discusses African American rappers use of Hip-hop Nation Language in their everyday language use and composing practices. Black rappers, writes Alim, as members of the Black street culture, consciously "vary their language use" to forge "a linguistic-cultural connection with the streets" (p.112), and to represent Black Street culture, which encompasses "set[s] of values, morals, and the cultural aesthetics that govern life in the streets" (p.112). Specifically, he writes, these practices are aimed at a "strategic construction" of a "street-conscious identity." Building on the works of earlier Black language scholars like Labov, Wolfram, Fasold, Baugh and Smitherman, Alim (2006) further argues that Black artists' street language is a variation of the Black language. He demonstrates this by analyzing the linguistic variability of copula absence in the lyrics and conversational speech of both Juvenile and Eve. He however concludes that, while Black rappers employ features of Black language, they also vary their language use based on the "personal investment speakers have in the construction of their linguistic identities" (p.113).

[7] The term "Nation language" was coined by Caribbean historian, poet, and literary and music critic Kamau Braithwaite to describe African slave descendants' ways of speaking or using language, that is, their New World/Caribbean language heritage. Braithwaite (1984) explains "Nation language" as "influenced very strongly by the African model "English it may be in terms of some of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English" (p. 13).

Other scholars have examined the role and importance of the streets as a cultural space for the creation, production and performance of Hip-hop. Spady et al (1999) engages in conversations with artists and other Hip-hop practitioners from various regions across the United States to demonstrate the role streets play in shaping artists' social activities and identities. Spady et al (1999) further argue that the relationship between the artist and the street is "semiotic," since the "street shapes the artist and the artist shapes the street" (p. xi). Consequently, they argue, Hip Hop Nation language can only be understood in the context of street culture since it, "lives, breathes, and cultivates in [the] **streets"** (p. xviii). The authors therefore propose the "need to conduct a systematic study of conversations among rap artists and their host of interactants on Hip-Hop" in order to gain a better understanding of how various street experiences shape artist's' performative language practices, that is, all the "hip-hopological" activities related to the culture. Such research is important, they argue, because artists have a lot to teach us about the 'the street' and all the social interactions that happen there.

Similarly, Keyes (2002) argues that a proper interpretation of rap should be done in the context of urban street culture. Like Alim (2006), Keyes (2002) citing Baugh (1983) argues that Rap's verbal style is derived from Black Street Speech, a "nonstandard dialect" that thrives within African American street culture," and which is characterized by "constant reinvention and variation in new terminologies associated with street speech" (p.123). He further notes that Black Hip-hop Street speech has a distinct style whose nuances can only be understood by examining "broad categories of black language and rhetorical style, music-making practices and paramusical features" (p. 125-126). For Keyes, paramusical features include elements like posturing, street dress, jewelry, hairstyles, attitude and crew among others. An analysis of these

elements, he argues, is important because artists "bring to their performance a street culture sensibility or "attitude" and a persona that undergirds the aesthetic of style" (p. 6).

While many Hip-hop scholars have examined how Hip-hop artists use language to construct various identities and to communicate their message, much of the scholarship privileges the written or the verbal mode of expression over other modalities. Yet, many Hip-hop scholars like Keyes (2002) and Alim (2006) above continue to argue for the need to examine Hip-hop language through broader categories that take into account all paramusical/paralinguistic and rhetorical features involved in a Hip-hop composition. Pennycook (2007) has called for a study of Hip-hop language using a "transmodal" theoretical framework since Hip-hop as a "broader cultural formation," entails different modalities of communication like Mcing, rapping, break dancing, graffiti, and Djing among others. These elements, he notes, "pushes us to open up more diverse and complex modes of analysis of which language is only one part" (p.10). Similarly, Spady et al (2006) call for more research on the "multimodal world" of Hip-Hop by noting that all the elements have important communicative potential:

> The Sound of Rap (voice quality, inflection, pauses, silences, melodies and rhythms, textures, and tones) is just as important as the Site/Sight of Rap (locus, focus, gestures, signals and symbols marvelously co-existing in a fluid space of possibilities). It brings with it a host of nonverbal cues evidenced in the everyday speech acts among members of this Hip Hop Nation (p.16).

Rose (1994) has in particular shown the communicative potential realized through the rap video by observing that, over the years it has developed its own style and genre conventions which

“visualize hip-hop style and usually affirm rap's primary thematic concerns: identity and location” (p. 9).

In this chapter, I begin to explore how meaning making in a Hip-hop song is realized through a variety of modalities—verbal, visual, performative and written—using a translingual theoretical framework. I do so by analyzing Nazizi Hirji’s “Kenyan Girl, Kenyan Boy” lyrics and the accompanying rap video. I chose to analyze the song because it is the one Nazizi picked to represent who she is as an artist. In both the lyrics and the video, Nazizi translanguages by using the type of multilingualism that emphasizes working across languages and modalities and one not depended on proficiency in discrete languages but on mutual intelligibility (Horner et al 2011; Horner, Necamp and Donahue 2011; Canagarajah 2013; Horner and Selfe 2013). Following a translingual theoretical framework, I go beyond analyzing how words and other linguistic resources are used in the text to also examine: 1) what and how semiotic resources (symbols and images) are used in the text; 2) how and what modalities of communication (verbal, print, audio, visual) work together to produce meaning; 3) the social and material context (ecological affordances) in which the text is created and embedded.

I further engage in a sociolinguistic analysis of the song to demonstrate the diverse languages and codes “meshed” and “mediated” in the text. As Canagarajah (2013) notes, it is still important to focus on language for analytical purposes as long as the analysis is informed by multimodality (p.7). In line with this theorization, my analysis of linguistic resources will be put in relation with other semiotic resources and specific ecological affordances or cultures. I do so by engaging in a social-semiotic/visual analysis of the rap video to the song captured through screenshots.

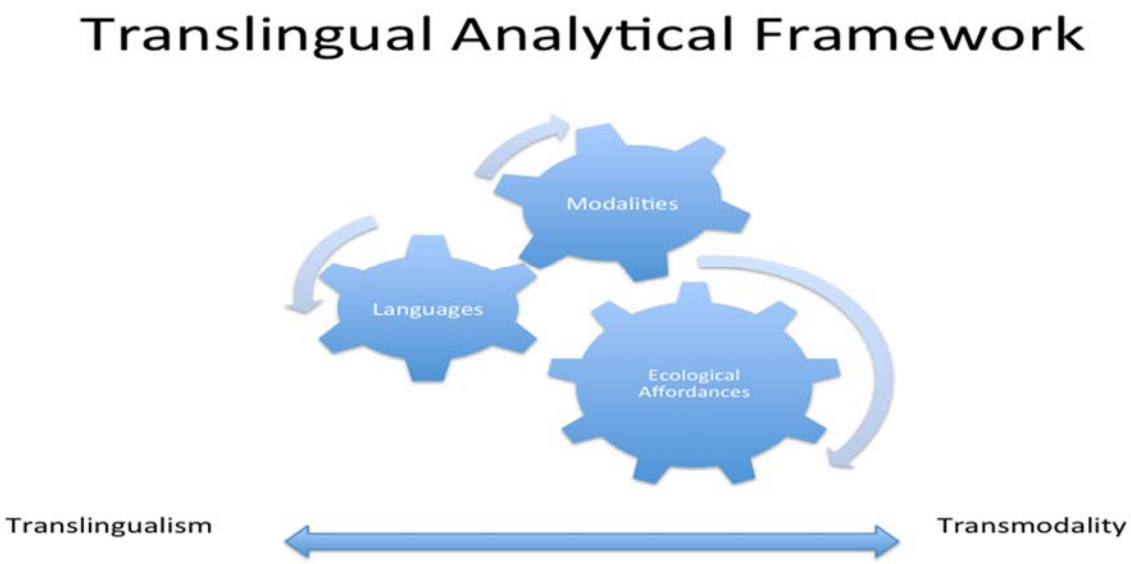

Figure 2: Flow diagram demonstrating relationships in a translingual analytical framework

My goal is to showcase how Nazizi uses particular semiotic resources to construct a Kenyan, specifically a Nairobi urban street identity. In other words, I demonstrate how Nazizi constructs her street identity visually using particular signs and symbols. Following Kress and Leeuwen (2006), a "visual means of communication are rational expressions of cultural meanings, amenable to rational accounts and analysis" (p. 20). I therefore analyze how particular forms (signifiers) are used to represent Nazizi's everyday practices and help her realize particular meanings specific to Nairobi street culture. Also, and following Rose (1994), a visual analysis of Nazizi's rap video narrative helps us see how she depicts Nairobi urban streets, as well as invites us to see her "milieu... local pose, crew, or support system" (p.10).

In the end, I demonstrate that by analyzing Nazizi's song through written, verbal, visual and performative modalities, I am able to reveal a variety of linguistic and semiotic resources drawn

from the following linguistic cultures: Swahili, English, Kikuyu, African American Language, Jamaican Creole, Hip-hop Nation language and Sheng. This would not have been possible through an analysis of the text through one modality. Further, I also demonstrate that an analysis of several cultures, that act as ecological affordances, facilitates the presence of a variety of linguistic and semiotic resources. For example, Hip-hop and Reggae cultures facilitate the presence of linguistic and semiotic resources associated with Afrodiasporic languages like African American language, Jamaican Creole and Hip-hop Nation language. Nairobi urban street culture, on the other hand, facilitates the presence English, Swahili, Kikuyu and Sheng linguistic resources.

Figure 3: A list showing linguistic resources, modalities and ecological affordances evaluated in Nazizi's lyrics"Kenyan boy, Kenyan girl."

In my analysis, I also incorporate conversational interviews with Nazizi to provide her perspective on her language choices and use, and also as way of offering the reader her personal analysis of the song. I present her responses in verbatim to not only demonstrate how she embodies translingual practice as part of her everyday, but to also to heed Spady et al (2006)

observation that it is through "conversational narratives" that we listen to the "the voice in the community" and also because:

> It is within conversation—a central form of human interaction and major site of intersubjectivity –that we (re) create ourselves and our stories. Hip Hop Nation in process. Hip Hop music flowin through the very veins of that nation. Signs and symbols. Significant sites of the (trans) formation and narration of Hip Hop Cultures, identities and histories. (p.36)

But, can Nazizi wakilisha the Kenyan mtaa, streets?

Like many global Hip-hop communities, the language of Kenyan Hip-hop as a sub-variety of Hip-hop nation language is rooted in the Kenyan urban street culture. This language goes beyond just combining of various languages to generate new meanings and grammars but also encompasses what Richardson (2010) calls "jackin" of English (and other dominant) cultural forms through "contiguous juxtaposition of complex signs, borrowing, revising, and turning them to purposes for which they were not originally envisioned"(p. 106).[8] However, when Nazizi began her career, she was not familiar with the Kenyan street linguistic culture, Sheng. One of the approaches she engaged in to learn about it was to hang out with artists from the inner city. She noted for example, "I would go to Dadora, South B, Kariobagi South where all the artists lived. I would be around them in their areas trying something new and then I got really good in

[8] Richardson (2010) describes this as an Afro-Diasporic tradition.

writing in Sheng. And I realized that is actually what I want to write because that is what reaches the people more" (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

The neighborhoods Nazizi mentions above are part of the Kenyan mtaas and are mostly located in the Eastside of Nairobi' metropolitan area and are commonly known as the Eastlands. In my interview with Nazizi, Jua Cali and Abbas, I learned that one reason why the artists translanguage in their compositions and performances is, and following Alim (2006), to gain and maintain street credibility, compose street conscious rap and consequently to construct a street conscious identity. From listening to Nazizi's story in particular, I became interested in understanding how she uses language in her composing to construct and perform a Nairobi street conscious identity. I chose to focus on Nazizi in this chapter because unlike Abbas and Jua Cali, she was neither raised in the inner city (Nairobi's Eastlands) nor did she grow up speaking the urban street language, Sheng. For example, Jua Cali's mtaa is Calif[ornia] while Abbas' is Kariobagi South. According to Nazizi, fellow rappers referred to her neighborhood, Runda, as *ubambini*— a derogatory Sheng term used to describe neighborhoods where rich people live. Thus, according to Nazizi, fellow MCs claimed she did not understand the aesthetics of Hip-hop because she was not culturally and physically connected to the Eastlands and consequently lacked an awareness of the experiences of majority of Nairobians who live in the inner city. This kind of criticism is inline with many U.S Black rappers and practitioners' argument that artists need to be culturally and physically connected to the streets. Hip-hop producer Marley Marl has, for example, observed that, "you've got to be from the streets to know what rap is about, or at least be out there to know what's going on" (cited in Spady et al 1999, p. xiv).

While all the streets in the Eastlands are not the same, and while some are socio-economically better off than others, some of the everyday issues that many residents deal with include high rates of unemployment, prevalence of informal settlements (slums), lack or poor drainage system and garbage disposal, overcrowding, homelessness and street families, police harassment, high levels of poverty among others. Most of the people in Eastlands are low-income earners. Growing up, Nazizi was removed from this environment. For her primary/elementary education, she attended some of the prestigious schools in Nairobi like Consolata, Aga-Khan and St. Austin's Academy and Makini. These schools are located in Nairobi's Westlands. The Westlands as discussed in chapter one, are neighborhoods occupied by the Kenyan-upper class, political elite, rich South East Asian entrepreneurs and European expatriates. For her high school, she attended the International School of South Africa at Mafikeng, South Africa. She later went to Malaysia where she started her undergraduate studies but later completed her degree at the prestigious United States International University (USIU) in Kenya earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in sociology. Her father worked for the British multinational pharmaceutical company, GlaxoSmithKline, while her mother worked as a communication specialist for international companies including Emirates. In the eyes of many Kenyan Hip-hop practitioners, her upper class identity disqualified her from doing Hip-hop or representing the urban streets.

In addition, when Nazizi started her career as a Hip-hop artist, English was the dominant language in her composing yet Sheng ndiyo lugha ya mtaa ya Kenya. Sheng is Kenya's street language. Sheng began in the Eastlands during the colonial period through a de facto segregation because this location was designated for the multiethnic African workers and rural-urban migrants. In an effort to search for a common language to facilitate communication in Eastlands,

Sheng, a creolized language practice emerged when the multiethnic groups mixed all the languages in their repertoire (mostly English, Swahili and Ethnic languages) in their communication. Westlands on the other hand was reserved for colonial white settlers. After Kenya gained independence and the colonialists left, the Westlands was occupied by the rich few. This is still the case today. English has been the predominant language spoken in Westlands. Therefore, as a Westlander, Nazizi used English in the beginning of her career. And while her rap skills were great, many music producers and record labels did not want to work with her as shown in the opening excerpt. To counter this criticism, Nazizi learned how to translanguage in her lyrics in an effort to compose a street conscious rap, to construct a street conscious identity and to construct her own ethnic/racial identity.

In the next section, I examine how she does this in her lyrics and rap video. I do so through an analysis of her practices of everyday life (De Certeau 2010) as enacted in the streets of Nairobi. These everyday practices include riding in a Matatu, storytelling and dressing.

Matatu ride as an everyday street practice

Nazizi's song "Kenyan Girl, Kenyan Boy," is a (re) presentation of Kenyan urban street culture through a narration of what she calls a typical, everyday Kenyan love story— love as experienced in the urban streets of Nairobi, specifically inside a Matatu.

Figure 4: Screenshot of a Matatu. Source: Necessary Noize's, "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl," You-Tube Video

Though a love story, Nazizi's song pays homage to the Matatu culture. A Matatu, as shown in the screenshot above, is a minivan used as a public means of transport in Kenya. According to the Oxford English online dictionary, a Matatu is "a small privately owned bus, often decorated with pictures, words or phrases, that carries passengers and has a driver that you pay to take you somewhere, usually along a fixed route with other stops for people to get on and off." The dictionary goes on to explain the origin of the name "Matatu" by noting that, it is short for Swahili phrase "*mapeni Matatu"* or 'thirty cents,' "a flat fare charged in the early 1960s." People who ride Matatus in Kenya are the non-working, working and lower middle class who cannot afford to buy or maintain a car. Every neighborhood or mtaa in Nairobi has its own Matatu assigned a specific number. Typically, Matatus in Nairobi carry passengers from the various neighborhoods or *mitaas* in the city to bring them to the Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) to work during the day, and take them home after work. They also ferry passengers from one mtaa to another. Unlike big buses, the Matatus, because of their small size (a 14 sitter and 36

sitter) can navigate the most overcrowded, crime-ridden streets of the inner city. Matatus also transport people from urban cities to rural areas of Kenya.

To begin an analysis of the song, the materiality of the Matatu needs to be examined or "qualified" because "it is an affordance for meaning-making." As mentioned above, a translingual analytical framework proposes an examination of the "ecological affordances," or the material and social contexts in which a text is embedded. Canagarajah (2013) for example notes that, "texts not only participate in local ecologies; they are themselves ecological, constituted by diverse resources for meaning and structure" (p. 5). In line with this argument, my first material object for analysis is the Matatu. As a material and semiotic resource, it is important to analyze the Matatu in relation to other linguistic resources. In the song's intro, Nazizi makes a dedication (or gives a shout out) to all the participants of Matatu culture: the driver, the conductor and all the passengers.

Original Lyrics	**Translation**
Hii **track** *inaenda kwa* ***wadhii*** *wote wa* mathree	This track goes to all my people who ride in a Matatu
Dere *wa* mathree, conda wa mathree	The driver of the Matatu, the conductor of the Matatu
Pia kama unapanda mathree Necessary Noize	And if you ride in a Matatu Necessary Noize

Table 6: Excerpt from Necessary Noize's lyrics, "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl."

In this excerpt, Nazizi translanguages by drawing from a variety of linguistic resources. For example, she mixes English words (**bold**) with Swahili words and phrases (*Italics*). Further, the underlined words have idiosyncratic grammars, spellings and pronunciation arising from

combination of two or more languages, which constitute a translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013). For example, the words "dere" and "conda" are contractions of Swahili words Dereva and Kondakta (which are borrowings from English words "driver" and "conductor" respectively). Further, instead of using the word "Matatu," Nazizi anglicizes the word to "Mathree," a deliberate attempt to breakaway from the everyday usage. Further, Nazizi translanguages through use of neologisms (Liu 1995) by coining new words that assume new meanings than the original (***bold italics***). For example, she chooses to use the word "wadhii" instead of English word "passengers" or Swahili word "wasafiri." According to the Sheng Nation dictionary, the word "wadhii" also spelled as "wathii" is derived from the Kikuyu word "Athii" which means travelers. The word was mostly used by Matatu touts when calling for the driver to be on the look out for "travelling people or passengers." Over the years, the word "wadhii" has assumed more meanings like "my people" or "my friends." Nazizi uses the word because it has broader meanings than just passengers because her song honors all the participants of the Matatu culture.

While the words conda, dere, mathree and wadhii are not Nazizi's coinages or inventions, her use of them is consistent with Nairobi street culture, Matatu culture and the Kenyan youth culture. It is also in line with De Certeau's (2011) theory of practices of every day, that is, how ordinary people make do with dominant cultural forms and languages. In the case of Nazizi, the dominant languages are English and Swahili. She draws from these two languages to create a new language, the Nairobi street language, which is neither English nor Swahili. Such a practice is also in line with what Pratt (2008) calls transculturism, the process by which "subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (p.7). Throughout the song, Nazizi makes a conscious decision to use the

street language as opposed to standard Swahili and English. Some examples are shown in table 7 below.

Street Language	**Swahili**	**English**
Chali	Kijana	dude/young man
Manzi	Msichana	girl or young woman
Ma/karao	Askari	Cops/police officers
Mahewa	Muziki	Music
Mabeste	marafiki	Friends
cheki	Angalia/tazama	Check (something) out
Bleki	Piga breki	brake
Sleki	Kuzumbaa	To be slow
Fegi	Sigara	Cigarette
Niaje	Habari gani?	Whats up?
Vipi	Habari gani?	Whats up?
roundi	Kuzunguka/kutembea	To walk/go around
Bamba	Kipedenzwa na jambo fulani	Be fascinated (by something)

Table 7: Examples of Nairobi street language as used by Nazizi in Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl, " lyrics.

Another linguistic strategy she uses to show her street knowledge is by using code names for the streets as used by Nairobi urban youth residents, not the dominant names used by the older generation or the government:

Nazizi' Naming of the Streets	**Actual Names**
Westi	Westlands
Jeri	Jericho
Jerusa	Jerusalem
Hurli	Hurlingham
Buru	Buru Buru
Umosh	Umoja
Kibich	Kibera
Koma	Komarocks
Calif	California
Lgt	Langata
Dandoch	Dadora
Outer	Outering

Table 8: Examples of coded Nairobi street names as used by Nazizi in Necessary Noize's lyrics "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl," lyrics.

Since the song "Kenyan Bo, Kenyan girl" is a collaborative piece between Nazizi and Kevin Wyre, I was curious during the second phase interview to know why she chose this song to represent who she is as an artist. She responded by saying:

> … because it is such a classic story—a love story but a simple love story in a Matatu, you know. And I think this is me. I am very aware of my surrounding and I really write based on the things I see and the things I experience. And just the fact that it is Kenyan boy, Kenyan girl, it really gives us a tag. It gave us a tag. Everywhere we went people will be like, "sasa Kenyan girl," they would call me Kenyan girl and so that was like my tag even when [you] go to Nigeria or if you go where, they know that song. And they are like "Kenyans", "Matatus" coz that song represented a lot of things within the Hip-hop culture here. In the video, there is a lot of Graffiti that we have in the Matatus, yeah? This was a very clever song showing how we can appreciate our culture in a very clever way. We put Graffiti and Matatu in the video. We shot [the video] in the Matatu, on the streets on the roads, you know, and *I think that just represents who I am. I am about the streets* (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

As Nazizi confirms, the Matatu gives Kenyan Hip-hop a distinct identity. The Matatu has been a central and symbolic institution both within the Kenyan Hip-hop culture and the Kenyan urban street culture. Since the inception of Hip-hop in Kenya, the Matatu has been an important space to practice, participate and consume Hip-hop culture. When Hip-hop culture took root in Kenya in the mid 1990s and early 2000s, the Matatu was the main space where the Kenyan urban youth accessed and listened to the latest Hip-hop and all kinds of popular music from different parts of the world as well as by Kenyan artists. The youth judged how good a Matatu was based on the

kind of music it played, whether it was fitted with biggest and latest video and sound system, or if it was beautifully decorated with graffiti and other kinds of creative arts. In the fanciest ones, the inside lighting system mimicked a discotheque.

Figure 5: Screenshots of graffiti in Matatus. Source: Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl," Video.

However, both the Matatu culture and Hip-hop culture continue to face constant police harassment and censorship by the government. As such, the Matatu continues to be a contested space for practicing Hip-hop. For example, in 2005, a year after the "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl" song was released, the then Kenyan transport and communication minister, John Michuki, introduced new transportation laws aimed at increasing road safety in the country. Among the things eradicated from Matatus were graffiti and any creative artworks on the Matatus and the

playing popular music. These laws required all the 36 seater Matatus to be painted one solid color, while all the 14 sittter Matatus to be painted white with a yellow stripe in the middle. Arguably, this is considered one of the major and explicit attack and censorship of Hip-hop culture by the Kenyan government.[9] Despite the harassment and censorship, the Matatu practitioners and the Hip-hop artists continue to work in solidarity to resist these local dominant and oppressive structures as Nazizi demonstrates. In the song's outro' verse, she in a "very clever way" captures the "values, morals and aesthetics that govern life" in the streets of Nairobi particularly between the Matatu culture, Hip-hop culture and the dominant culture as represented by the police. She does this while giving shout outs to all the Matatus that ply various mitaas in Nairobi.

Original	**Translation**
1.Yo mathree za two three Westi	1.Yo, mathree number 23 for Westlands
2.Two three za jeri, Jerusa na outer	2.23 for Jericho, Jerusalem and Outering
3.fourty six hurli, kile, Ongwaro	3.46 Hurligham, Kileleshwa, Ongwaro
4.Mogaka piga left hapo nakucheki	4.Mogaka make a left turn there I see you
5.Forty four Kahawa na Githurai	5.Number 44 Kahawa and Githurai
6.Wano tuko pamoja for life	6.Wano **we are together for life**
7.Fifty eight Buru ongeza mahewa man	7.58 Buru Buru, increase the volume [music] man
8.Thirty three emba number eleven south B south C	8.33 Embakasi, number 11 South B and C
9.Omosh weka matuta	9.Umoja weka [matuta]
10.Number eight kibich nineteen Koma na	10.No.8 Kibera, 19, Komarock and
11.namba nne namba tisa Eastleigh Calif mzima Gitonga na mwasa see you	11. No. 4 and .no, 9 Eastleigh, all of Calif, Gitonga and Mwasa see you
12.Number fifteen, lgt punguza mahewa makarao wako kwa horizon	12.No. 15, Langata reduce the volume the cops are at the horizon
13.Mathree za Dandoch one ten Athi River	13.Mathree for Dadora no. 110 Athi River
14.Asanteni kwa kumfikisha Waire safe one love	14. Thank you for taking Wyre home safely **one love**
15.Pia one twenty five one twenty six ditch represent mkam	15. Also 125, 126 Jade **represent** [tunakam]
16.Mathare north, shuttle massive	16.Mathare North, Shuttle massive
17.Mathree zote sijataja tukopamoja kama mabeste haha	17.I have not mentioned all the matatus but **we are together as besties**

Table 9: Exerpt from Necessary Noize's lyrics, "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan girl," outro verse

[9] The current president, Uhuru Kenyatta, removed this ban 2014.

In line [6], Nazizi emphasizes the relationship between Matatu culture and Hip-hop culture when she raps ***tuko pamoja for life*** *we are together for life.* In line [14], Nazizi uses the phrase "one love" to signify her love, solidarity and respect for the Matatu culture. In line [15] she uses a Hip-hop Nation lexicon *represent* (Alim 2006; Richardson 2006) by asking a Matatu culture practitioner, Jade, to "represent." While in line [17], realizing she cannot give a shout out to all the Matatus in Nairobi, reminds them they are still together in solidarity and as friends *tuko pamoja kama mabeste.*

Figure 6: Screenshot showing interaction between Matatu culture practitioners and the Kenyan traffic police. Source: Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl" Video

To further demonstrate the relationship and solidarity between these two cultures, in line [7] above, Nazizi tells Matatu number 58 for Buru Buru to play Hip-hop music (mahewa) louder but immediately in line [12] asks them to reduce the volume because the cops (makarao) are in the "horizon" (see image below). The use of Kenyan street code words "mahewa" (for music) and Makarao (for cops) indexes a shared language between the two cultures and their solidarity

against their common enemy—the police and the government. The traffic policeman standing next to the driver of the Matatu is probably giving him a ticket for some "alleged" traffic offense like playing Hip-hop music loudly or even asking for a bribe.

The Matatus on the other hand reciprocate this relationship in several ways. First, the Matatus in Nazizi's rap video are decorated with graffiti, an element of Hip-hop. Secondly, in the image above in particular, the messages "Overloaded" and "Fullyloaded" are also specific to Kenyan Hip-hop culture. The words do not mean "over-loaded" and "fully-loaded" with passengers but with an entertainment/musical system that guarantees the passengers "full" and "over" enjoyment of Hip-hop music during their ride. On the Matatu's widescreen, there is a signpost engraved with the message "Hatucheki na watu" whose literal translation is: "We don't laugh/play with people." As such, it could mean, we are not down with particular people, especially if they are the enemy like the police or the government. This saying is from the Kenyan Hip-hop song "Boomba Train" by the late Hip-hop artist E-sir and Nameless. The Matatus' use of a saying associated with Kenyan Hip-hop shows the shared language between the two cultures. In the image above, the Matatu and Hip-hop cultures are in direct opposition to those in power as represented by the police officer in uniform who symbolizes the oppressive government.

Nazizi's verbal and visual demonstration of these language practices shows her street consciousness. They help her communicate her message that the "weaker" groups in the street" need to protect each other. It also shows how the artists and Matatu practitioners, as the weak, "manipulate" and "divert" the street space by "play [ing] on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of the foreign power (De Certeau, p. 37). Matatus are also represented as

promoting and supporting local artists in a country where the government fails to support the Hip-hop industry, for example, failure to control piracy, and also its blatant censorship of Hip-hop music that challenges the status quo (See more discussion of this in chapter one).

Storytelling as an everyday street practice

In her main verse, Nazizi uses the art of story-telling or narratitivizing (Alim 2006; Smitherman 2000) to explain to her mabeste or friends her romantic encounter with chali wa Nairobi, Nairobi dude or the Kenyan boy. The structural setting of this storytelling session is a makeshift salon, an open space in the streets. These makeshift salons commonly known as vibandas are usually located next to the estates or neighbourhoods in outskirts of Nairobi's CBD.

Figure 7: Screenshot of Nazizi with her crew in an "open air salon" in the streets. Source: Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenya Girl," You-Tube Video

This is very typical of Kenyan non-working and working class women or those living in Nairobi's Eastlands. It is also a safe space where women meet to share stories and gossip. The

fact that Nazizi gets her hair done in these vibandas and not in an upscale hair salon, establishes her physical connection to the streets. Nazizi then narrates to her mabeste her encounter with chali wa Nairobi by translanguaging in her lyrics. In the verse below, she incorporates English words and phrases **(Bold)** in a Swahili dominant verse while the idiosyncratic grammars or syntactic structures in *italics* are as a result of combining English and Swahili.

Original Lyrics	**Translation**
[1] Nilikutana naye nikipanda **twenty three**	[1] I met him while boarding **[a Matatu] no.23**
[2] Kwenye **bus stop** *akinicheki* **secretly**	[2] At the busstop he was checking me out secretly
[3] Jamaa **was so fly, yo,** karibu me *nibleaky*	[3] The guy was so fly, yo, i nearly fainted
[4] Akapanda mathree karibu nami kaketi	[4] He boarded the matatu and sat next to me
[5] Immediately, sikungoja *sikusleaky*	[5] Immediately, I did not wait or waste time
[6] Nikajidai, **excuse me** una fegi?	[6] I asked him, do you have a cigarette?
[7] Got his attention sasa poa mambo **deadly**	[7] Now that I got his attention, things starting looking good
[8] Niaje chali vipi unaitwa nani?	[8] What is up chali, what is your name?
[9] Mi naitwa Naz na Buru ndiyo mtaani	[9] My name is Naz and **Buru is my street/hood**
[10] Where you going to? Unashuka upande gani?	**[10]** Where are you going to? Where are you alighting?
[11] And if you don't mind twende *roundi* mtaani	[11] And if you don't mind let's **do a few rounds in the street/hood**
[12] I like the way you smell hiyo ni **Cologne** gani?	[12] I like the way you are smell; what cologne are you wearing?
[13] Umenibamba **style** ingine **deadly** yaani	[13] I like your style; it is so deadly
[14] Unapenda Reggae *ninacollection* nyumbani	[14] Do you like Reggae; I have a collection at home
[15] Tumefika kujapiga **left** hapa njiani	[15] We have arrived, come on, lets take a left turn here on the road
[16] Puff some of that tuongee mambo fulani mambo fulani	[16] Puff some of that [cigar] then we will talk about some stuff.

Table 10: Excerpt from Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan girl," lyrics.

As mentioned above, Nazizi says the "Kenyan Girl, Kenyan Boy" song is an everyday or ordinary people's love story happening in the everyday space, the Matatu. In my conversation with Nazizi, she was very clear that she did not want to represent or tell a love story for the Kenyan upper class. She analyzed the song by saying, "this is not a love story Carnivore *ama sijui wapi*. This is *a love story kwa road, kwa streets*" (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

Carnivore is a high-class restaurant where only upper middle and upper class people go or meet. I further asked Nazizi to share how the idea of writing the song came about and she said:

> If Nazizi was to meet a guy on a Matatu, what would she say? You don't know this person... you are just trying to get their attention. You don't know when they are getting off. It could be the next stop and you are really trying to get this person interested. It is such a typical Kenyan girl, Kenyan boy story because a lot of people meet in the Matatu. Some people... you might see the same person two or three times, same Matatu and you are going to the same place and you keep bumping into them, you know. And it is such an untold story and I think that is why everybody was able to relate to it... it's just Kenyan. It is so Kenyan, this thing (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

To establish her credibility and participation in this everyday youth-love culture, she is the main character in her rap video story. She represents the everyday *manzi wa Nairobi* (a Nairobi chick or "the Kenyan girl") who is trying to get the "attention" of *chali wa Nairobi* (a Nairobi dude or "the Kenyan boy") during a Matatu ride. Nazizi's choice to make a Matatu the central symbol in this love story is significant in establishing her connection with the Nairobi working class and the urban street culture. In telling the "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl," story and being part of the story, Nazizi's establishes her credibility as *a participant of the Nairobi urban street culture.* As a member of Kenyan upper class, and being from Runda, the expectation was that she doesn't have to ride in Matatus because she can afford to buy or maintain a car. As mentioned earlier, she shared during the interview that many fellow rappers, particularly from the Kenya's inner city, were very critical of her being from Runda. They constantly asked:

> What does she know about Hip-hop? *Amegrow Bambini*, things like that, you know. She is from Runda. What does she know about Sheng? And this was the main topic for the longest time. I had a hard time to prove in the ***streets*** that I was actually a Hip-hop artist" (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

Nazizi translanguages when she says "Amegrow Bambini" to capture some of the criticisms and resistance she received from Kenyan Hip-hop practitioners and rappers. "Amegrow" is combination Swahili morpheme "Ame," and English word "grow" to mean, "She has grown up in [Bambini]." The word "Bambini" is a Sheng neologism—an appropriation and localization of the Rastafarian word, Babylon. Within the Kenyan Hip-hop and street culture, it is derogative term used to describe places where rich people live. Bambi/mabambi describe rich or powerful people, particularly those who do not share the experiences of the working class or the poor, or care to improve their conditions. In this case, Runda is U/Bambini. Therefore, Nazizi's identity as a Bambi alienated her from Kenya's urban or inner city streets—What Hip-hop artists are expected to represent. Nazizi however counters this assumption by saying, "for me my thing is, it doesn't matter where you live. It is the same, it is the same, it is the same message I am trying to get across through my music. Ubambini ni ubambini but it doesn't mean ukiishi huko, ati uko different, you get it? You still a Kenyan. People from Runda still go on Matatu as well" (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

She proves this in her verse above where in line [1] by saying she boarded a Matatu no. 23, reveals that she rides in Matatus like every day working class Kenyan youth. Next, in line [9] she claims Buru, short for Buru Buru, as her mtaa which is located in the Eastlands. Claiming Buru is her mtaa and not Runda, shows she is down with the Eastlands and that she can wakilisha

represent the Kenya's inner city. Nazizi also seems to have a good knowledge of streets. When she gets to her stop in line [11], she asks chali wa Nairobi "they do a few rounds in the street/hood and "puff" some cigars as they talk."

Although Nazizi might not have had the inner city experience, riding Matatus was her every day practice as she revealed during the interview. She noted for example that she visited various neighborhoods in the inner city like Dadora, South B, Kariobagi South among others to be with other artists. She says: "it was a huge deal for me to go on the Matatu. To hear what song the Matatu would be playing, hear what the vibes of that Matatu will be like, dying to be in town, see different people, going to meet different people. That was me." (personal communication, June 18, 2013).

Ways of dressing as an everyday street practice

In line [14] above, Nazizi asks chali wa Nairobi, the Kenyan boy: "unapenda Reggae, ninacollection nyumbani?" Do you listen to Reggae music? I have a collection at home." The mention of Reggae in this song reveals another ecological affordance that needs to be qualified and discussed. As discussed in chapter two, Hip-hop in Kenya was a reserve of the rich kids while Reggae was popular in the inner city in the early and mid 1990s. As pioneer in the industry, Nazizi shared that:

> In the beginning, Hip-hop here [Kenya] was related mostly to... the very start, it was for the rich kids coz they could afford it. They could listen to Tupac and who and who. But in the hood, in the Ghetto, it was Reggae that was big. Then came a change later where it

> [Hip-hop] wasn't associated anymore with rich children (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

Therefore, when Nazizi tells chali wa Nairobi she has a collection of Reggae music at home, she indexes her awareness of this history and the popularity of Reggae-music culture in Nairobi's inner city. Further, during the interview, I asked Nazizi to talk about her favorite music growing up. While Hip-hop was her number one choice mentioning names like Tupac, Foxx Brown, Lil Kim, Da Brat, Wu Tang clan and Queen Latifah, she said Reggae had a big influence on her:

> I also had a great love for Reggae, Bob Marley. When I was growing up, he was a big deal for me. Of course I started hearing his music from my dad's collection but then I started getting interested in his message a lot and started buying my own CDs saving my own money and buying my own Bob Marley collection. I remember my parents complaining when I was around 16 that I have become too much Bob Marley oriented. They were like, "we don't like this direction you are headed to. You are always playing his music. All you buy is his music and all you do is put his posters in your room." My room was full of Bob Marley everywhere (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

Nazizi shared that she is not just a Hip-hop artist, but a Reggae artist. The Rastafarian philosophy and message is very central to her music. Words like Jah, Rastafarian, dreadlocks, Rude bwoy among others, which are connected to Rasta ideology and symbolism (Richardson 2006) are prevalent in her music (See more discussion of this in the appendix A). Line [14] in the Outro verse, she uses the phrase "one love," a term associated with Reggae. Further, and as shown in

rap video images below, Nazizi embodies this identity by dressing in Rasta colors and wearing dreadlocks. Also a member of her crew on the right hand side is dressed in Rastafarian colors.

Figure 8: Nazizi with her crew in an "open air salon" in the streets wearing rasta colors and dreadlocks. Source: Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenya Girl," You-Tube Video

Figure 9: Nazizi with her crew in an "open air salon" in the streets wearing rasta colors and dreadlocks. Source: Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenya Girl," You-Tube Video

When I asked Nazizi what languages were used in writing the song she said:

> We write a lot in Sheng, English and Patwa, which is like Jamaican Patwa. That is what Wyre was using. Wyre was always inclined to do that because he wanted to be more of a Dancehall artist, which he is now. I would say that was his beginning of Dancehall, in a way. A lot of Kenyans relate to Jamaican Patwa because they listen to a lot of Reggae and a lot of Dance Hall…so, that is the language we used (personal communication, July 19, 2013).

As mentioned above, this a collaborative piece between Nazizi and Kevin Wyre. It was through our conversation that Nazizi revealed that Dance Hall, in addition to Reggae, are mediated and meshed in this Hip-hop text. Consequently, because of Reggae and Dance Hall's Jamaican origin, Jamaican Patwa is mediated in the text. Therefore, music genres mediated in song become ecological affordances that facilitate diversity of Englishes in the text. For example, while on the surface level the second verse looks like it is written in one language, English, a deeper linguistic analysis reveals grammatical and phonological features associated with Afro-diasporic Englishes like Jamaican Creole and African American Language (AAL).

[1] Woi woi woi
[2] *Dat* Kenyan boy *make mi heart* skip a beat like woi
[3] *The way him a move* on the dance floor woi
[4] He an original Kenyan boy
[5] **Yo**, Waire, the love child, Nazizi, the first lady, we make it hot
[6] You know, you know, we make it hot

Table 11: Excerpt from Necessary Noize's "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan girl," lyrics.

For example, in line [2] the word "that" is pronounced as "*dat"*—a phonological feature of both JC and AAL. The use of *mi* instead of *my* in *make mi heart* is a feature of JC. In sentence [3] *The way him a move*, "a" is an aspect marker, a grammatical feature of JC, while **Yo**, is Hip-hop nation language lexicon. The deliberate omission of copula "is" in "He an original Kenyan boy in line [4] is a AAL feature.

Although Nazizi claims that it was Wyre who used a lot of Jamaican Creole in the song, in the verse above, she uses Jamaican Patwa as well as in her other songs. I was therefore curious to know her proficiency level in the language and how she gained competence in the language:

> **Esther:** So how did you learn the language, Jamaican Patwa?
>
> **Nazizi:** From music…in the beginning from music that we listened to. You kinda learn it from there. It's like learning from music. Same way someone can learn Sheng from a song I have done. Like that.
>
> **Esther:** So you see a word or hear it, how do you know what it means?
>
> **Nazizi:** The context it is been put in, yeah? The context and probably you have heard the same word used in the same context in another song so you automatically know what it is… and of course eventually we met different people. We met some Jamaicans and we have asked some words and now we work with Jamaican artists. Like I have done a big album with Ginjah from the [United] States. So even from the collaborations we have done, I have picked a lot of words. Recently Wyre was in Jamaica shooting his new video so the interest then cultivates the whole process of learning the language and learning the words to use in specific places. So it is not very difficult to learn if you have heard it a

> couple of times, you kinda understand what they are saying (personal communication, June 19, 2013).

I highlighted this extended dialogue to show Nazizi's theory of multilingualism because it very well aligned to the translingual approach which emphasizes a multilingualism that focuses on mutual intelligibility than proficiency in discrete languages (Horner et al 2011; Horner, Necamp and Donahue 2011; Canagarajah 2013). Arguably, this reflects the multilingualism of the larger Kenyan, Nairobi urban culture. For example, when I asked her to talk about her Kenyan audience in relation to her choice to use Jamaican Creole, she said:

> You see, for us, we are those artists who have been part of the fans coz we went to the same clubs. We listened to the same DJs and once you get to know all that, you are part of them. You know what they do. What they listen to. What they like. We knew because of the streets we go to and the clubs we go to that this was big. It is almost like research, not research as such but research by default, like you just know things. And of course it is gonna influence what you write, what you know about your environment (personal communication, June 19, 2013).

This response reveals Nazizi not only as a language user but also a language learner and researcher. She reveals a language learning process characterized by immersion into the culture. She also shows the role streets play in teaching and shaping what languages to use in her lyrical compositions. The streets then become a site not only for creativity, production and performance of Hip-hop, but also for language research and learning.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, I have shown how Nazizi uses linguistic and semiotic resources to 1) verbally and visually construct her Nairobi/Kenyan street identity, 2) assert and showcase her Nairobi/Kenyan street knowledge and 3) construct her ethnicity as a Nairobian. A socio/linguistic analysis done in the context of multimodality (Canagarajah 2013) revealed a variety of linguistic resources associated with languages like Swahili, English, Sheng, Kikuyu, Jamaican Creole, AAL and Hip-hop Nation Language. By drawing from all the languages in her repertoire, Nazizi composing practices challenges the traditional multilingualism that views languages as static, discrete or as bound in a particular place/region or tribal/ethnic group. Through a translingual analysis, I was able to demonstrate the ecological affordances (cultural, material and social contexts) in which Nazizi multilingual/multimodal text is embedded. Such an analysis allowed a demonstration of how her everyday practices in the streets of Nairobi like riding in a Matatu, storytelling and dressing are acts that shape her language choices and practices. These practices, and following de Certeau, are not passive acts, but communicative practices that not only express Nazizi's street identity and consciousness, but are also aimed at resisting dominant or oppressive structures. A linguistic and semiotic analysis done simultaneously foregrounds broader language categories, which would not have been possible through a mono-modal analysis. My analysis also reveals the affordances of a translingual analytical framework in understanding Hip-hop texts.

CHAPTER 5:

"KUNA SHENG": TRANSLINGUALISM AS LANGUAGE ACTIVISM

On July 10, 2013, I received a call from Jua Cali. When I saw his in-coming call, I was pleasantly surprised yet confused since I had just completed all the scheduled interviews with him the previous week. The first thought that came to my mind was that he wanted to connect me with other Hip-hop artists. I had shared with him my difficulties finding artists to participate in my research.

"Niaje," he greeted me.

"Poa." I replied with a rather dumbfounded expression on my face.

"Uko wapi?" he was wondering where I was.

"Kwa nyumba," I told him I was at home.

"Come huku. You are supposed to be here!" he said emphatically.

"Wapi?" I wondered where he was saying I was supposed to be.

"Huku Kenya Cultural Centre?" He said.

"Kuna nini?" What is going on there?

"Wee kuja!" Ni hapa karibu na Kenya Nairobi National Theatre."

Jua Cali shared that an important event related to language work was taking place at the Kenya Cultural centre and he thought I should be there. I quickly hopped in a Matatu and headed to the Nairobi central business district. From the Afya Centre bus stop, I walked along Moi Avenue towards the Kenya Cultural Centre. At the lobby, the atmosphere felt more like an academic

space. There were registration tables, people wearing nametags, books on display among other conference related paraphernalia.

> "What is going on?" I asked the volunteer who was handing me a registration packet.
> "This is a language workshop," she replied and directed me to the room where the participants were.

The room was quiet. A crowd of about fifty people was listening attentively to a presenter who was explaining or demonstrating something from a PowerPoint slide projected on a smart board. Jua Cali saw me and waved acknowledging my arrival. I walked inside and sat on an empty seat two rows behind him. Before long, I started recognizing familiar faces in the room. Among those were Kenyan media practitioners, local actors and actresses and famous Kenyan Hip-hop artist, Nonini. Also present were language scholars from different universities in the country as well as from United States and Europe. At the end to the presentation, the session was opened to participants and a heated conversation about the role of Sheng in economics, media and education ensued. Reading through the registration packet materials, I learned that the event was a 'Sheng and Media Workshop." The event was organized by "Twaweza Communications," a Kenyan based strategic communication institution that focuses on issues like public policy, media and culture for purposes of sustainable development. The event had brought together scholars, media practitioners, local actors and actresses and artists to talk about the role of Sheng in the Kenyan media and other dominant institutions.

Observing Jua Cali participate in this event brought home to me his commitment to language work. During our interviews, he had hinted at engaging in language activism work when I asked him to reflect on the meaning of his experience as a Hip-hop artist, that is, to make an intellectual and emotional connection between his work, life and community. The topic of language activism became more apparent when I asked him to talk specifically about his song "Kuna Sheng." Lockwood and Saft (2015) define language activism as "attempts in endangered and/or minority communities to preserve linguistic diversity" (p. 3). Language activism work can be achieved through "language-related activities ranging from documentation, training and skill-sharing, to materials development, language programmes, raising community awareness and encouraging participation in language work" (Florey 2008, 121). Jua Cali's language activism is characterized by the two latter approaches: first, by teaching and raising community awareness about Sheng as a valid Kenyan youth language and culture and secondly, through encouraging Kenyans to participate in language work. This chapter focuses on Jua Cali's language activism work.

"Kuna Sheng": A language activism song

The screenshot below is from Jua Cali's You Tube video for his song "Kuna Sheng." The translingual message appearing at the end of the video can loosely be translated as saying *there is no other language in this world as sweet as Sheng. So, Kenyans lets try our best to protect and preserve this culture.*

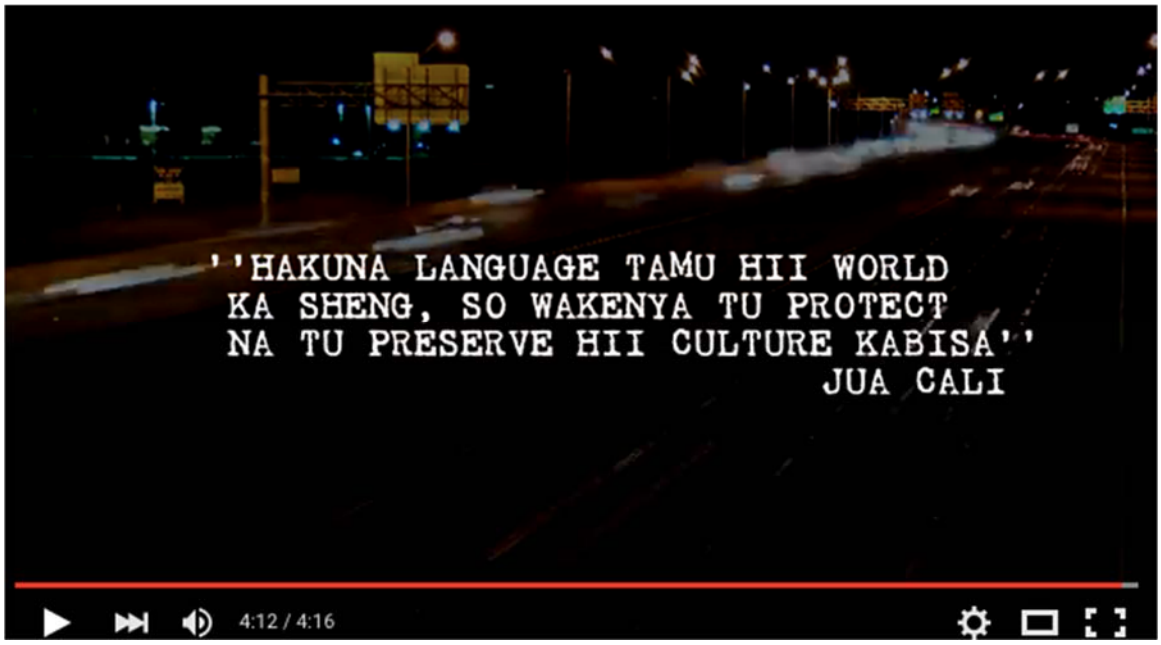

Figure 10: Screenshot of Jua Cali's "Kuna Sheng" video on You-Tube

When Jua Cali wrote this song, it was clear that it was not just a celebration of the uniqueness, richness and diversity of Kenya's urban youth language, Sheng, but mostly about advocating for its preservation. In the screen shot message, Jua Cali specifically draws attention to Sheng as both a "language" and "culture" that needs to be "protected" and "preserved." As discussed in previous chapters, Sheng has been a subject of attack from a variety of Kenya's dominant institutions like the media, the school system, corporate industry and the government. Jua Cali noted that the school system, represented by scholars, has been one major opponent of the language:

> …unajua watu wamekuwa wakioppose [Sheng]. Scholars wamekuwa wanaoppose hii language sana. Message yangu is: this is a spoken language which is going to be hard kuiua. The only thing scholars wanaenza fanya ni kuiembrace na life eindelee. Wajua pia

> sisi tukienda shule kulikuwa na Sheng na haikutuaffect. Ikikuja pale kwa environment ya class, there is no way utaanza kuandika vitu za Sheng kwa insha. So hii ni spoken language hakuna vile inaffect. So message yangu kwa hao scholars ni wasikuwe worried so much juu ya hii Sheng kwasababu there is nothing pia watu wanaenza fanya. Yaani ndio hivo (Jua Cali, Personal Communication, June 27, 2013).
>
> You know, people have been opposing [Sheng]. Scholars have particularly opposed this language so much. My message: this is a spoken language, which is going to be very hard to eradicate. The only thing scholars can do is to embrace the language and life continues. You know, when we went to school, Sheng was still there and it never affected us. In a classroom environment, it will not affect you because there is no way you will write your composition in Sheng. This is a spoken language and will not affect [anything]. So my message to these scholars is that they should not be too worried about Sheng because again, there is nothing people can do about it. This is how things are.

The Kenyan school system, as one of the dominant institutions, promotes a uniform or standard use of Swahili and English in all public domains by perpetuating a standard language ideology. Lippi-Green (1997) defines Standard Language Ideology (SLI) as "a bias toward an abstract, idealized homogeneous language which is imposed and maintained by dominant institutions and which has as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class" (p. 54). In Kenya, this ideology marginalizes language-mixing practices like Sheng by advancing the idea that they are wrong, inferior and reflect users as cognitively deficient. Further, the SLI discourages the use of Sheng in dominant domains.

This consequently runs the risk of annihilating Sheng and the cultural aspects that accompany it. This kind of threat is what prompted Jua Cali to step in to not only counter the SLI ideology, but to also use translingualism as a way of practicing and advocating for language preservation. When I asked him to share with me why he wrote the song "Kuna Sheng," two distinct reasons related to language activism were apparent: 1) to promote critical language awareness among dominant institutions particularly the Kenyan media; 2) to practice and advocate for the preservation of Sheng language and culture. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss how Jua Cali engages these two language activism approaches.

Promoting critical language awareness in the Kenyan media

In a news article titled "Useless and vile, sheng must go," published in 2013, Clay Muganda, a media practitioner and then a writer for a Kenyan newspaper, the *Daily Nation,* called for a total ban of Sheng in professional and media spaces, specifically on national television. He noted that Sheng has no cultural, political, commercial, aesthetic or cognitive value. He offered a number of reasons why it should be banned on national media: 1) Sheng is a "superficial and indefinable gobbledegook" and a "vile, despicable, uncouth, [and] impolite" language, 2) radio and TV programing in Sheng promotes and "encourages illiteracy," and 3) "the [Kenyan] Constitution does not even recognise it or list it as one of the Kenyan languages." He further castigated its use in popular music/culture noting that: 1) it added no commercial value to the artists; 2) it made them unpopular; and 3) revealed their cognitive inabilities. To support his argument, Muganda offered an example of two popular music groups in the country, Camp Mulla and Sauti Sol, and attributed their quick success and rise to fame to composing and performing their music following standard language practices. He observed that, "their songs are

in defined and refined languages which also signify clarity of thought and the state of their minds."

Muganda also called out scholars and scholarship that advances the idea that Sheng has a commercial, aesthetic or educational value:

> There are those Kenyans who, well-versed in matters of art, always defend sheng, in English of course. But, if they ever took time away from attending seminars and addressing workshops on sheng, they will realise that it has not added any value to the lives of "artistes" as they would want us to believe. Instead, these artistes they defend and applaud for using this unique Kenyan "invention" have been buried under a surfeit of their superficial and meaningless words, which they cannot sell because no one is ready to buy them (Muganda 2013).

This news article is one example of the kind of rhetoric propagated by the Kenyan media as Jua Cali observed during our conversation. The impact and effect of such rhetoric became manifest, noted Jua Cali, as Kenyan radio hosts started giving artists composing in English only more airtime.

While Jua Cali's language activism work targets the general media, his specific focus is the Kenyan radio. Targeting the radio is important because it is the medium that reaches a wider Kenyan audience compared to the print media and television, which is dominated by monolingual ideology of either Standard English or Swahili. The Kenyan radio is one of the

main media spaces where multilingual literacy practices have been practiced. It is thus more threatened by the standard language and monolingual ideology. Githiora (2016) maps the multilingual broadcasting practices of the Kenyan radio:

> Radio broadcasting more closely reflects the reality of Kenya's multilingualism, according to a survey of 47 FM Radio stations which have a presence on the Internet. Of these, 22 broadcast in English, representing 47% of the total; 15 radio stations (32%), are designated 'community' radio stations because they broadcast in the language of the specific Kenyan community although some of its programming (e.g. interviews and commercials) may be in Swahili or English. Seven radio stations broadcast in Swahili only (15%) while 1 (Ghetto FM) overtly claims to dedicate itself to a Sheng audience. Its name suggests that association between Sheng and the inner city. At least one radio station (Sound Asia FM) broadcasts in Nairobi and Mombasa in Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi and English, representing 2% of the total number of radio stations broadcasting in Kenya today. (p. 8)

Jua Cali's song "Kuna Sheng," was therefore, first, a counter rhetoric to the Kenyan media's perpetuation of a negative language ideology about Sheng and multilingual literacy/composing practices among artists as he revealed in our conversation:

> **Esther:** Why did you decide to write a song about Sheng?
> **Jua Cali:** [thinking] Sijui nianzie wapi hii story ya Sheng (thinking) Okay ile kitu kwanza iliniprompt ni media. Walianza kupatia artists wale wanaimba kizungu airtime,

> unaona? Which kila mtu ako na opinion yake yale life…for watu kuimba kwa kizungu for some ni sawa…but for me personally it is a no…As much si huoengeanga kila siku Sheng, ni fiti pia kukumbusha watu, kuna Sheng.
>
> I don't know where to begin with this Sheng story. Okay, the first thing that prompted me to write the song is the media. They [radio hosts] started giving artists who rap in English more airtime, you get? Well, everyone has their own opinion in life… and for some people, singing in English it is okay but for me, personally, it is a no… and as much as we speak Sheng everyday, it is also important to remind people *there is Sheng.*

The literal translation of the song's title "Kuna Sheng" is "there is Sheng." Jua Cali notes that the first reason why he wrote the song was to first remind the media practitioners and everyone else that Sheng is a Kenyan language, and secondly, language mixing was the practice of everyday in the country. As our conversation continued, Jua Cali noted that he also wanted to promote awareness that Sheng, more than English, shapes Kenya's linguistic and cultural identity. By promoting artists who rap in English only, he argued, the media practitioners reveal their "naïvity" and lack knowledge on the "power of language." He noted for example that the Kenyan media, specifically the radio, is yet to "evolve":

> Unajua…over the years… redio inafaa ievolve kama musiki …unapata news presenters naïve. They don't know the power of language wanasikia muziki ya Kenya inasound poa na hii kizungu, he or she just plays. Hajui. So for me its…naivity. Ni hiyo nawenza shout na hii ning'ependa wasikie (Jua Cali, Personal Communication, June 27, 2013).

> You know…over the years, the radio should evolve just like music. You find that we have very naïve news presenters. They don't know the power of language. They listen to Kenyan music written in English and think it sounds good. So they just play. They just don't know. So for me, I think it is naivety. I have no fear saying this. In fact, I want to shout so that they can hear.

My interpretation of Jua Cali's use of the words "naivity," or his description of the Kenyan media practitioners to not have "evolved" or lacking an understanding of "the power of language" was that the practitioners engaged in *uncritical use of language in their everyday broadcasting*. Jua Cali's goal is then to promote what critical linguists call critical Language Awareness (CLA). Fairclough (1992) defines CLA as the process of raising people's consciousness on, "how language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological process which people are often unaware of" (p.205). Further, Jua Cali's use of the word "evolve" implies that the media practitioners, like many Kenyans, are still stuck in a "colonial mentality" or "colonial thinking," which shapes how they think about their languages. Specifcifically, there is a tendancy to disregard their own languages and privilege European languages. Kenyan language and literary scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o shares the same sentiments when he asks:

> How did we arrive at this acceptance of the 'fatalistic logic of he unassailable position of English in our literature', in our culture and in our politics? How did we, as African writers, come to be so feeble towards the claims of other languages on us and so

> aggressive in our claims for other languages, particularly the languages of our colonization? ("Decolonizing the Mind," (1986, p. 9)

Jua Cali's language activism work therefore seems to propose a "decolonial thinking" in the Kenyan Hip-hop industry and the media. This kind of thinking, he implies, will facilitate a "delinking" from English language imperialism, which originates from the colonial legacy. According to Jua Cali, composing or rapping in English only by Kenyan rappers is a reflection of cultural alienation. As Jua Cali argues in chapter three, language is a "reflection of oneself," and artists as Kenyan "cultural ambassadors," should not represent using English only. Thus, speaking or singing exclusively in English by a Kenyan betrays their cultural identity and worldview. Composing in English only, particularly within the Kenyan popular cultural context, entails a cultural and linguistic colonization.

Jua Cali's translingual composing and activism can therefore be seen as a decolonial project that aims at "disengaging or breaking away from the western code…sustained by and anchored in the rhetoric of modernity and logic of coloniality" (Mignolo, 2011, p. xvii-xviii). In the Kenya context, the English language symbolizes modernity, progress, development. Conversely, it was/is through colonization and continuing western imperialism that the privileging of English justifies the marginalization of indigenous languages and language mixing practices like Sheng. Jua Cali's language activism work therefore is very well aligned with Wa Thiong'o's (1986) who calls for a linguistic decolonization as well as a decolonization of the mind by Africans. He proposes a theory of language and communication that emphasizes the centrality of culture:

> Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (p.16)

However, unlike Wa Thiong'o, who proposes a "decolonial option" of using native or indigenous languages in composing, Jua Cali proposes a "multilingual option" that reflects the pre and postcolonial multilingual Kenyan identity. Further, Jua Cali's theorization acknowledges the role and impact of language contact. His decolonial project does not propose a complete "delinking" from the English language. He noted for example that *the moment, Kenya, Kizungu iliingia hapa na waarabu wakakuja na hizo Kiswahili, hizo mixture, for every action there is a reaction...naturally hii kitu ingehappen. Hii ndio product. "*The moment English was brought to Kenya and the Arabs brought the Swahili mixtures,[10] a new language had to emerge because for every action there is a reaction. This is the product." (Jua Cali, Personal Communication, July 3, 2013). Jua Cali's decolonial thinking is aligned with Mignolo's argument that "decolonial projects build on what Westernization disavowed by incorporating western contributions to human civilization" (p. 66). Thus, "border thinking" or "border gnosis" or "border

[10] Jua Cali is referring to the fact that Swahili began as a hybrid of Arabic and Bantu languages. Its origin is attributed to intermingling of Bantu speaking groups with Arab traders along the East African coast dating back to as early as 6th century.

epistemology" is integral to Jua Cali's decolonial project, which is also a basic tenet of the translingual approach to language.

Through his everyday composing practices and language use, Jua Cali engages in language activism and consequently raises critical language awareness by deliberately choosing not to use English only as demonstrated in the interview transcripts above and in his composing practices. He told me for example he would never write a complete sentence in English in his lyrics, *hautawai sikia a whole sentence ati, "I am chilling in the hood." Hautawai sikia kitu kaa hiyo.* When he uses English, he says, he limits it to words and phrases only, not complete sentences. Further, while Jua Cali is proficient in Standard English and Swahili, he does not adhere to the two languages' standards. His theory of language learning and use is aligned with Frantz Fanon's observation that to speak is more than being in "a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (p. 17-18). To speak English only then for Jua Cali, is to completely embrace a western civilization. Again, and following Mignolo (2011), Jua Cali's decolonial project, particularly his use of English is characterized by an "epistemic disobedience." In the interview transcript below for example, Jua Cali expresses a strong negative attitude towards English only by saying he does not collaborate with artists who compose in English only, another activist strategy:

> **Esther:** So Sheng na Swahili, these are the languages you use in your music?
>
> **Jua Cali:** In my music, yes… predominantly. Hautawai sikia kizungu hapo.

Esther: But maybe when you are collaborating with other artists, I mean, does this affect your choice of language?

Jua Cali: Hapana. Most of them they know! Msanii wa kizungu akikuja, it's a BIG NO.

Esther: Really?

Jua Cali: It is a BIG NO. My target ni watu wa Kiswahili…and they have been loyal…nimekuwa kwa hii industry since 2001. And I am still performing mpaka waleo. So these guys are very loyal… hawajai nitupa.

In this interview excerpt, Jua Cali categorically asserts that he does not compose his music in English *hautawai sikia kizungu hapo*. When artists who compose in English only seek collaboration with him, he says, *msanii wa kizungu akikuja, it's a big no*. He further observed that, "most of them know." Another important point Jua Cali makes above is that he has been in the industry for 15 years and maintained a very loyal fan base. Jua Cali's story and his personal accomplishment as an artist counters media practitioners like Muganda's argument that Sheng has no economic and aesthetic value for Kenyan artists or it makes them unpopular. As discussed in my research story in appendix A, Jua Cali is one of the prominent artists in the country. Since 2001, he has had a very steady and successful career, which has earned him a large fan base in Kenya, across the East Africa region, and internationally. Because of his enormous success in the Kenyan Hip-hop industry, he has won numerous awards like the Kisima Music Awards, Chaguo La Teeniez Awards (Choice of Teens) (CHAT Awards), Pearl of Africa Music Awards (PAM Awards). He has also been nominated for international awards like the 2007 MTV Europe Music Awards, the Music of Black Origin (MOBO) Awards and MTV Africa Music Awards.

Also, because of his large youth fan base, he has gotten many endorsement deals from domestic and international multinationals that target Kenyan and East African youth market. For example, in 2007, he signed an endorsement deal with Motorola for its W-model, with Telkom-Kenya as the Orange Ambassador for their youth market. He also worked with Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, Inc. (WBIE) on the *Pamoja Mtaani*, Together in the Hood project to produce an Interactive video aimed at bringing HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention as well as other challenges the youth face living in East Africa's inner city. He has also been a target of multinationals as a Kenyan youth cultural ambassador because they see the commercial value of Sheng as a youth culture. Jua Cali's success and particularly, his large youth fan base can also be attributed to his use of Sheng. A Coca Cola billboard like the one below captures his success story.

Figure 11: A Coca-Cola Billboard of Jua Cali in Nairobi City. Source: Esther Milu, 2014.

One of the things Jua Cali is opposed to is "uncritical" imitation of African American culture and language by Kenyan Hip-hop artists. As discussed in chapter one, the first generation Hip-hop artists imitated the African American Hip-hop music tradition, which is typically written in Hip-Hop Nation language rooted in African American English. Across Africa, and as I noted in chapter one, it is well documented that the composing and performing practices of the first generation Hip-hop artists, in the 1980s, was characterized by imitation, mimicry and appropriation. However, this began to change in the mid 1990's as the radio started promoting artists who write their music in Swahili or Sheng (See for example Nazizi's story in chapter four). But as Jua Cali's story revealed, the English only or monolingual ideology seems to be returning. Jua Cali argues that artists who subscribe to the English only composing practices need to "evolve":

> Wacha niseme how an artist evolves. An artist, we ukianza kuimba…this is a very young guy, mimi… I am very young guy naingia kwa industry. I have been listening to Hip-hop all this time. Kizungu! Hip-hop ni Kizungu tupu unasikia so naturally utatend kutaka kuimba kama zile musiki unasikia ama you tend to create the same thing unasikia. Hio ndio shinda … ile time msanii hukuja kujidiscover ni ile siku atajiseparate from what you are listening to. Now you will become a true artist. Si unasikiza rap ya Kizungu unaimba rap ya Kizungu, unasikiza Reggae unaimba reggae. Utaenjoy Reggae lakini ndio lakini you sing now maybe some Kenyan music…kama Benga…hapo saa ndio unakuwa true artist. Unajiseparate from what you love na sasa unaimba what is in your heart. (Jua Cali, Personal Communication, June 27, 2013).

> Let me explain how an artist evolves. When an artist starts singing…say a young person like me…I am very younger and I enter the [music] industry… I have been listening to Hip-hop all this time. English! All the Hip-hop you listen to is in English only. So naturally you tend to create and sing a type of music similar to what you hear. That is the problem. An MC attains self-discovery and becomes a true artist when they separate themselves from what they hear. Don't just listen to English rap and write your rap in English or listen to Reggae and you sing Reggae. Yes, you will enjoy Reggae but maybe combine it with some Kenyan music …like Benga…that is how you become a true artist. You separate yourself what you love and sing what is in your heart.

While Jua Cali recognizes the impact and critical role of African American culture on Kenyan Hip-hop, noting artists like Notorious B.I.G, Tupac and Jay Z were a big influence on his rap career, he at the same time proposes that Kenyan artists should not rap like African American Hip-hop artists, who rap in African American English. He seems to be arguing for use of African American English by Kenyan artists in ways that show knowledge of AAL's linguistic culture. Jua Cali proposes that Kenyan rappers should "evolve" or discover who they are as artists and rap about their everyday experiences and in their own languages and by incorporating local music cultural forms. In this excerpt, Jua Cali advocates for the critical use of English by artists by proposing hybridity not only of languages but also of genres that show a Kenyan/African cultural identity. Benga, which he for example suggests above, is a genre of Kenyan popular music that started between the late 1940s and late 1960s and whose roots can be traced among the Luo tribal community. And as the artists evolve, he proposes, so should the radio practitioners:

> hawa naïve redio presenters…unapata mtu, anapenda music za America sana, mpaka subconsciously akisikia mkenya anaimba kama mtu wa America anapenda. Unaniget? Unaona…yaani tu ni psychological kabisa yaani nikisikia mkenya anaimba kama Kanye West nasema eh, hii inasound fiti because he is used to that sound forgetting huyu ni mkenya. He should be telling them kuimba na Kuzungu ni wrong. Nataka husound kama mkenya, hiyo flavor ya Kenya. Sasa ndio hapo presenters wetu naïve wanaanguka (Jua Cali, Personal Communication, June 27, 2013).
>
> These naïve redio presenters…you find someone loves American music so much to the extent that when they hear a Kenyan singing like an American, they subconsciously think it is good, you get? I mean it is very psychological. It is like if I listen to a Kenyan singing like Kanye West I say, eh "this sounds good!", because he [presenter] is used to that sound forgetting this is a Kenyan." He should be telling them: "singing in English is wrong. I want you to sound like a Kenyan. Your music should have a Kenyan flavor." This is where our naïve radio presenters fail.

Jua Cali offers an example of Kanye West noting that just because Kenyans can rap in English or like African Americans, it doesn't mean they should. He noted that African Americans have a justification to use English in their rap because of the cultural and linguistic context in the United States. He therefore sees the responsibility of media practitioner's to be about teaching Kenyan artists and general public the relationship between language, culture and communication. Another proposal that he seems to be making is that Kenyan artists and media practitioners need to speak and do language in such way that when their diverse audiences (say for example African

Americans) hear or listen to their music, they will not wonder: "where they from?"[11] He sees this as important because as he asserted during our conversation, *Hiphop nikama fingerprint yako* Hip-hop is like your fingerprint.

Practicing and advocating for language preservation

> …the second thing nikasema, anajua sisi problem yetu sisi waafrika difference yetu na wazungu, we don't preserve history … we don't kabisa kabisa. We don't. No wonder hatujui mahali tunaenda kwasababu hatujui mahali tumetoka. Kuna vitabu za Sheng zimetokea hiyo ni preservation ya history kwasababu hata … mtoi after 100 years akishika hiyo book ya sheng atasema, "oh kumbe wasee walikuwa wanaongea hivi?" So mimi nikasema siwenzi andika kitabu. The only thing naweza fanya kupreserve hii history ni kuandika ngoma ya Sheng ndio hata after 20 years mtoi wako akija kusikia hii ngoma atasema, "oh wasee the year 2000 walikuwa wanaongea hivi?" kwasababu, Sheng itakuwa imechange definitely. So na hii kitu vile tumeieka on record…the moment I recorded the song na nimeshoot video, hii iko on record forever…Umeniget? (Jua Cali, Personal Communication, July 3, 2013).

> The second reason [why I wrote the song] is because I thought, you know, the problem with us Africans, the difference between white people and us is that we don't preserve history. We don't *completely completely*, we don't. No wonder we don't know where we are going because we don't know where we are coming from. They are books on Sheng that have been published. That is preservation of history because a kid born after 100

[11] Phrase from Missy Eliot and Pharell song WTF ("Where They From.")

> years will read the book and say, "oh, so this how people used to speak?" So I said, I can't write a book. The only thing I can do to preserve this history is to write a song about Sheng so that even 20 years later a kid can listen to the song and say "oh in 2000, this how people used to speak," because Sheng will definitely have changed. So we have put it on record. The moment I recorded the song and shot the video, we put it on record forever, you get?

In this excerpt, Jua Cali reveals that the second reason why he wrote the song "Kuna Sheng," was to preserve the Kenya youth language and culture. Jua Cali begins by calling out Africans for their "lack of engagement" with historical or cultural preservation compared to the "West." He however recognizes efforts being made by "a few" Kenyans who are preserving Sheng language and culture by writing books.

While Jua Cali's assessment that "Africans don't preserve history," might be true, this only applies to the current period in Kenyan history since this wasn't the case in the past. Africans have always preserved their cultures and histories through oral literature as well as through rocks inscriptions, body scarring, baskets, gourds, and beadwork among other practices, *and* including writing. Further, and as African scholar and philosopher John Mbiti writes, the African people preserved their traditions not necessarily through "writing" but "in people's hearts, minds, oral history, rituals and religious personages like the priests, rainmakers, officiating elders and even kings (1969, p.4). Oral literature—poetry, myths, legends, proverbs, riddles, tongue-twisters among other forms of folk wisdom—has been one of the main ways in which history and culture was preserved and passed from one generation to the next.

As a Kenyan of Jua Cali's age, I can attest to his assessment that cultural and historical preservation has significantly diminished, at least based on personal experience and observation. I remember when I was young, my siblings and cousins would converge at our sũsũ's (grandmother's) hut every evening and sit in her earthen kitchen floor to listen to different kinds of oral literature told in our mother tongue, Kikamba.

> "Osai wano," my grandmother would always begin, inviting us to each story telling session.
>
> "Twoosa," we would all respond in unison.
>
> "Naku tene tene muno," She would begin, "Kaviluku na Munyambu mai nduu muno. Mekaa maundu moo monthe me muamba. Mai na indo mbingi na nimaumaniasya kuinthya indo syoo. Indi muthenya Kaviluku niwaviidisye undu utonya kukeng'a munyambu nikenda amuvene indo isu syoo syonthe…

Sũsũ's stories ranged from myths, to legends, to historical narratives. There would always be a moral lesson to each story. The storytelling sessions were also an opportunity to teach important historical facts of our community and family lineage. Okpewho (1992), explains that oral tradition in Africa as the means by which people "acquire, on a general or collective basis, information concerning themselves: who they are, their origins and connections, and the peculiar ways of living and behaving that identify them as a people and that must be preserved for the sake of cultural continuity" (p.115). This kind of teaching was continued and sustained in school. From Kindergarten through sixth grade, we had oral literature sessions where we shared the stories, songs, myths, legends, proverbs, riddles and tongue twisters we had learned the previous

day from our grandparents. And since these stories were communal knowledge, it was not uncommon to hear students sharing the same stories, often with variations as is expected of African oral literature.

However, the privileging of written literacy through colonization and western education devalued orality and consequently diminished the traditional approaches of African cultural preservation. This is another example of the consequence of the modernity/coloniality dyad or what Mignolo (2011) calls the "colonial matrix of power":

> …of which the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality are its two sides: one constantly named and celebrated (progress, development, growth) and the other silenced or named as problems to be solved by the former (poverty, misery, inequities, injustices, corruption, commodification, dispensability of human life). (p.xviii)

In Africa for example, it was through the "rhetoric of modernity" and the "logic of coloniality," that the silencing of indigenous knowledges and archiving practices began. Kenyan scholar, activist and Nobel Prize winner, Wangari Maathai, provides an example of this silencing in her memoir *Unbowed*:

> Before the arrival of the missionaries, Kikuyus and the Kenyan communities had largely oral cultures. The ways they delivered a message or passed information included the use of drums, horns, shouting or sending somebody. Among Kikuyus, one interesting form of message transmission and education was *gĩchandĩ,* which was made of gourd. When you

> shook it, the beads on strings on the outside and seeds and stones inside made music. As players and actors shook the gourd, they relayed riddles, proverbs and other folk wisdom and information. These gourds were also inscribed with symbols and marks that represented a form of writing that these artisans would use for recitations and conveying information. Ironically, the missionaries described such instruments in detail, but then encouraged the local people who had converted to Christianity to destroy them. Even as they trivialized many aspects of the local culture, including various art forms, they recorded them and saved some of the artifacts, which now reside in European museums. I have heard that one of these *gĩchandĩ* is in a museum in Turin, Italy. (p.9)

Similarly, in my everyday observations, I have also noted that grandmothers in my village no longer hold storytelling sessions with their "dot.com" grandchildren in the evenings. This practice seems to have died with my grandmother's generation. Every time I hear of a death of a person of grandmother's age, I think of the knowledge that gets buried with each archive. While I have seen my mother's enthusiasm to continue practicing the tradition with my kids, nieces and nephews, it doesn't seem to work. The kids would rather read the stories in their books or watch or listen to the stories through TV or their tablets. Similarly, teachers are no longer invested in teaching oral literature as they were when I went to school. Wa Thiong'o (1986) explains this educational outcome using modernity/coloniality matrix by noting that the physical violence of colonialism was accompanied by "the psychological violence of the classroom" (p.9).

Jua Cali's activism work, though "unconsciously," seems to be about revitalizing and recovering this everyday practice—the precolonial African traditional cultural preservation methods. He does this by archiving Sheng language orally. The song "Kuna Sheng" is a Sheng archive, a dictionary of sorts. He identifies Sheng words and phrases and then offers a translation or interpretation. The three main verses of the song are dedicated to identification and interpretation of Sheng words. During our conversation, Jua Cali asserted that, *the third thing mimi napenda sheng sana so pia nilikuwa nataka kuonyesha wasee yaani hii Sheng is a beautiful language, yaani ni culture yetu na kitu moja unique, unique kwetu.* "the third reason why I wrote the song is because I love Sheng so much and I wanted to show my people Sheng is a beautiful language, that is, it is our culture and one thing that is very unique, unique to us."

Jua Cali emphasizes the uniqueness and diversity of Sheng in the way he writes the song. He maps the different regions/places where Sheng is spoken. He begins with its birthplace, Nairobi by identifying several neighborhoods like California (the neighborhood he grew up), Buru Buru, Dandora, Okongo (Maringo) before branching out to other parts of the country. He then proceeds to rap that every region in Kenya has their own Sheng, and while all Kenyans speak the language, they do not necessarily always understand each other *lakini si wote tunaelewana*.

Kuna sheng ya Calif lakini si wote tunaelewana
Kuna sheng ya Buru lakini si wote tunaelewana
Kuna sheng ya Dandora lakini si wote tunaelewana
Kuna sheng ya Okongo lakini si wote tunaelewana

Jua Cali's approach to his oral archiving disobeys "modern" or western archiving or language translation/interpretation approaches. In terms of translation, he does not follow the standard language rules of Kenya's dominant languages, English or Swahili. For example, in the verse below, the standard Swahili translation for *wangondi* would be walimu (teachers), but he interprets it as *madingo*. Similarly, *ing'anga* would be *mia moja* in Swahili (one hundred Kenya shilling) but he translates it as *soo moja*. Both *madingo* and *soo* are Sheng words. Another example is *sulu bin sulu* which he interprets as *kushare,* meaning to share something. *Kushare* is a Swahilisization of the English verb *share.*

[1] Wagondi siku hizi wanaitwa madingo
[2] Kutoka chwa ni kutoka mbio
[3] Nikikuitisha ing'ang'a nakuitisha soo moja
[4] Nikikuambia nitegee nakuambia we ngoja
[5] Unashtuka nini wacha kujitisha
[6] Kutia blunder nikujiingiza
[7] Nikiongea na wewe poa nakusikiza
[8] Kupigwa na makarau ni kuvaliwa
[9] Unajaribu kupiga simu nangos haina kitu
[10] Chali yangu umechar hauna kitu
[11] Baadaye tunakuona umebambwa kwa mbulu
[12] Kushare kitu ni sulu bin sulu

Table 12: Excerpt from Jua Cali's lyrics "Kuna Sheng."

Another way in which Jua Cali engages in "epistemic disobedience" in his oral archiving and language translation/interpretation is by using African oral rhetorical practices like dramatized dialogue and performativity. For example, he engages in dramatized story telling to explain the meaning of some the words or phrases. For example, in line 9 to 11 of the first verse he raps:

[9] Unajaribu kupiga simu nangos haina kitu	[9]You are trying to make a call but your mobile phone, *nangos* has no have credit,
[10] Chali yangu umechar hauna kitu	[10]My friend *umechar,* you are broke,
[11] Baadaye tunakuona umebambwa kwa mbulu	[11]Next thing we see you *umembambwa*, caught up in *mbulu* trouble,

Table 13: Excerpt from Jua Cali's lyrics,"Kuna Sheng."

Finnegan (2012) explains the role of dramatized story telling in African oral literature by observing that a poet or storyteller uses dramatized dialogue or storytelling as part of his/her emotional appeal, that is, for "manipulation of the audience's sense of humour or susceptibility…to be amazed, or shocked, or moved, or enthralled at appropriate moments (p.7). Further, it adds, "drama and meaning to the relatively simple and straightforward wording" as well as "emotional intensity, vividness and, often, humour of the delivery" (p.8)

Another rhetorical approach Jua Cali uses to enhance his translation is performance. Finnegan (2012) explains that in African oral literature, the performer has various visual resources at his disposal…to enhance the impact and even sometimes the content of his words (p.7). Jua Cali performs his archiving and translation and interpretation through use of visual resources like gestures, facial expressions and mimicry as shown in Figure 12 below.

Gesture 1.

Gesture 2.

Gesture 3

Gesture 4

Figure 12: Screenshots of Jua Cali using gestures in his song "Kuna Sheng." Source: You-Tube Video.

Gesture 1: One raised finger to enhance his translation of *ing'ang'a* as *soo moja,* "one hundred Kenyan shillings".

Gesture 2: Two-fist gesture, mimicking the action of fist fighting to demonstrate his translation of *kupigwa na makarau* being "beaten by police" which in Sheng is *kuvaliwa*.

Gesture 3: Rad hand gesture mimics the action of someone speaking on the phone to demonstrate translation of *nangos* as a "cellphone".

Gesture 4: Bringing hands together like in prayer and then apart again means "to share something" which in Sheng is *sulu bin sulu*

Figure 13: Screenschots of Jua Cali and members of his crew performing the chorus for his "Kuna Sheng," You-tube video

Further, notes Finnegan, the "visual aspect is sometimes taken even further than gesture and dramatic bodily movement and is expressed in the form of a dance, often joined by members of the audience (or chorus)" (p.7). However, since orality of the text is only available through the rap video, I analyzed the performance of the chorus by examining how the members of his crew as featured in the video participate. The following screen shots capture each crewmember's visual performance of the chorus which they participate through a call and response, African rhetorical mode, and by repeating the song's refrain message *lakini si wote tunaelewana*.

In conclusion, the oral, visual and performative elements of the song enhance the song's written mode. The modalities work together for meaning-making, and to support rhetorical strategies needed for negotiation of meaning in a multilingual context like Kenya, and in the understanding of a translingual oral archive like, "Kuna Sheng."

Impact of Jua Cali's language activism work: Conclusion

Jua Cali's language activism seems to be accomplishing the two goals I identified above. In terms of promoting critical language awareness among Kenyan media practitioners, His language activism work, along with that of other activists, is reversing a SLI ideology in the Kenyan media and other professional settings. It has for example provoked scholars to engage in more conversations about the use of Sheng in academic and professional settings. The workshop discussed in the beginning of this chapter and organized by "Twaweza Communications," is one example how different stakeholders are beginning to show committed to promoting language diversity, and theorizing the future of Sheng in the country. The 2015 Urban Youth language conference held in Nairobi is another example of the impact of language activism work. It is a good indicator of the attention youth languages like Sheng are beginning to garner in Africa—from marginal to being part of the mainstream culture.

Further, recent language scholarship reveals increasing use of Sheng in professional settings, media and advertising as people in these fields continue to discover its resourcefulness as having both a commercial and artistic value (Mutonya 2008; Kariuki, Kanana and Kebeya 2015; Ndemo 2015). The table below shows increasing use of Sheng in media spaces in particular.

Media type	Outlets	Types of programming/show
Radio	Ghetto Radio 89.5FM, QFM	Talk shows, call in shows, news, entertainment.
TV	K24,KBC,KTN, Citizen, NTV	Sit coms, call in shows, news, entertainment
Online	Various	Social media, emails, chat groups, websites, and so on
Film	Various	Example: award winning 'Nairobi Half Life'
Newspaper	Daily Nation	Children's page, Humor and entertainment pages
	Standard	Children's page, Humor and entertainment pages
	The Nairobian	Weekly column '*Stori za mtaa*' ('Stories from the Hood')

Table 14: Sampled media platforms that use Sheng (source Githiora 2016).

Jua Cali's second language activism goal of practicing and advocating for the preservation of Sheng language and culture is also working. After he released the song "Kuna Sheng," other artists, "Wazee wa Mji" (village/city elders—Konkodi, Manchu, Prime MC, Vioxxi, Virusi) did a remix of the song. Each of the artists participating in the Remix documented more Sheng words and phrases as spoken in the communities aka streets they represent.

Figure 14. Screenshots from a remix of "Kuna Sheng" You-Tube Video by Konkodi, Manchu, Prime MC, Vioxxi and Virusi.

Like Jua Cali, they offered interpretation of the words and phrases by employing the same rhetorical strategies employed by Jua Cali: dramatized storytelling, use of gestures, mimicry and other bodily expressions, call and response and repetition. This approach to language archiving and translation/interpretation also helps tell stories and experiences of their communities.

Further, and as a result of increased language activism work in the country by various groups, Sheng preservation and documentation forums have begun getting tremendous attention and support from both internal and external language activists. One example is *Go Sheng*, the official curator of the Sheng language and culture in the country.

CHAPTER 6:

"TUGENGE YAJAYO": DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Multilingual theories as negotiated

One of the emerging themes across all the artists was a contradictory theorizing of their multilingual practices. On one hand, they followed the traditional definition of multilingualism which views language as separate and discrete. This definition also interprets multilingualism as proficiency in multiple but distinct languages. Other times, the artists followed the translingual theory of multilingualism, which discourages viewing languages as discrete or bound within a particular geographical region or community of speakers. Translingualism also emphasizes mutual intelligibility and negotiation of meaning, rather than proficiency in discrete and multiple languages. I also noted that the contradictory theorizing of their multilingualism shaped how they defined some of the languages involved in their compositions. For example, the artists defined Sheng as slang and other times as language, or sometimes as a practice and other times as a language in its own right. Other times they seemed to demonstrate internalized notions of separations between oral and written languages.

However, despite the contradictions in theorizing, the artists' composing practices seemed to support the translingual approach. None of the artists' lyrics was written in one language. All artists claimed to use Sheng, a practice which involves combining and moving across languages. As I analyzed their written and oral lyrics, I noted that the combining of languages also generated idiosyncratic grammars, spellings and pronunciations. Further, some Swahili words and phrases were used in ways that assumed new or diverse meanings. These linguistic strategies support the translingual tenet, which assumes that languages are always in

contact with each other and combine to generate new meanings, grammars and diversity of meanings. Below, I offer a few examples from each artist to show their contradictory theories of multilingualism and of Sheng.

When I asked Jua Cali what language he used to write "Bidii Yangu," the song he chose to represent who he as an artist, he said Swahili. He then added, "*Hiyo in Sheng. Hiyo in Sheng*." That is Sheng. That is Sheng. (Emphasis in original). In this response, he first theorized the song to be in Swahili only, then immediately added, "it is [in] Sheng." When I asked him "why Sheng," he replied, "I use Swahili, Sheng so that people can understand." Again, in this sentence, he treated both Swahili and Sheng as the same language, not showing distinction between the two. This theorizing follows the translingual approach which rejects the practice of viewing languages as discrete. At other times, Jua Cali theorized Sheng and Swahili as separate languages. For example, when he talked about people's negative attitude towards Sheng, especially Kenyans teachers, he said, "you know, when we went to school, Sheng was there and it never affected us. In a classroom environment, it will not affect you because there is no way you will write your composition in Sheng. This is a *spoken language* and it will not affect [English or Swahili]." In this response, I noted that he treated Sheng as discrete and distinct from English or Swahili and its use as bound within a particular place and time. A contradiction also emerged when he described Sheng as a spoken language yet used it to write his music. The screenshots below from his song "Kuna Sheng" visually demonstrates further contradiction. He first theorizes and defines Sheng as slang and later as a language.

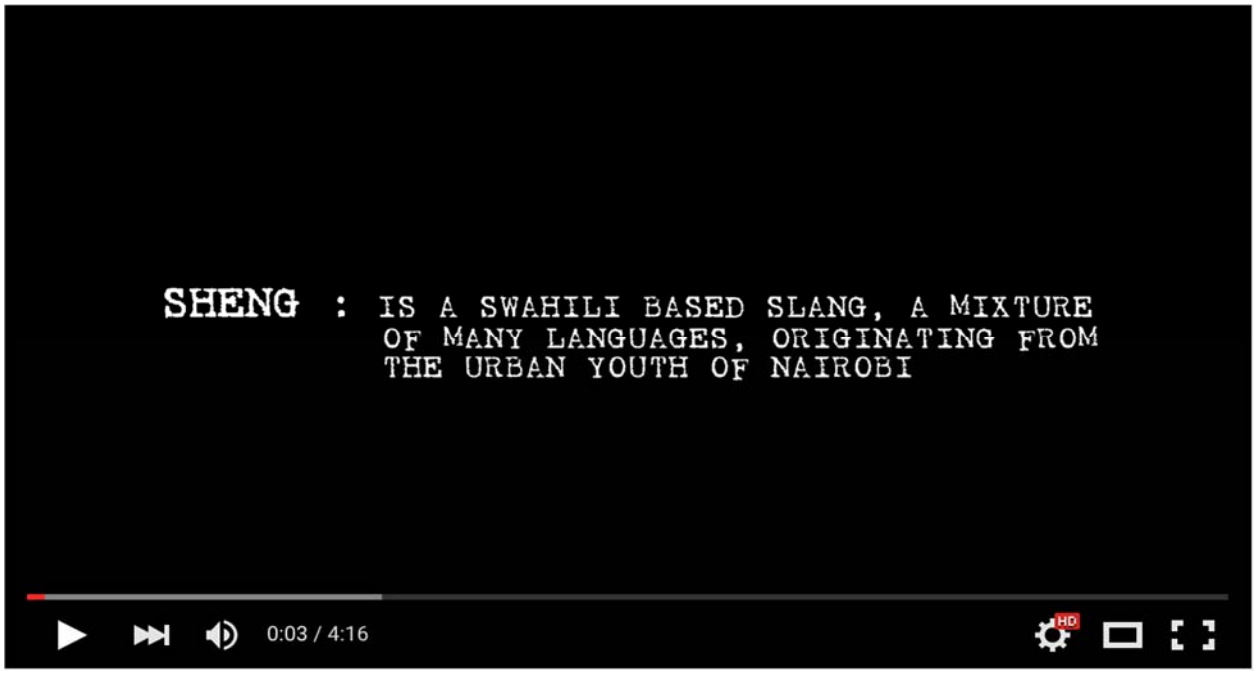

Figure 15: Screenshot showing Jua Cali's definition of Sheng. Source:"Kuna Sheng" You-Tube Video

At the end of the song, he theorizes Sheng as a language and a culture calling for its preservation and documentation.

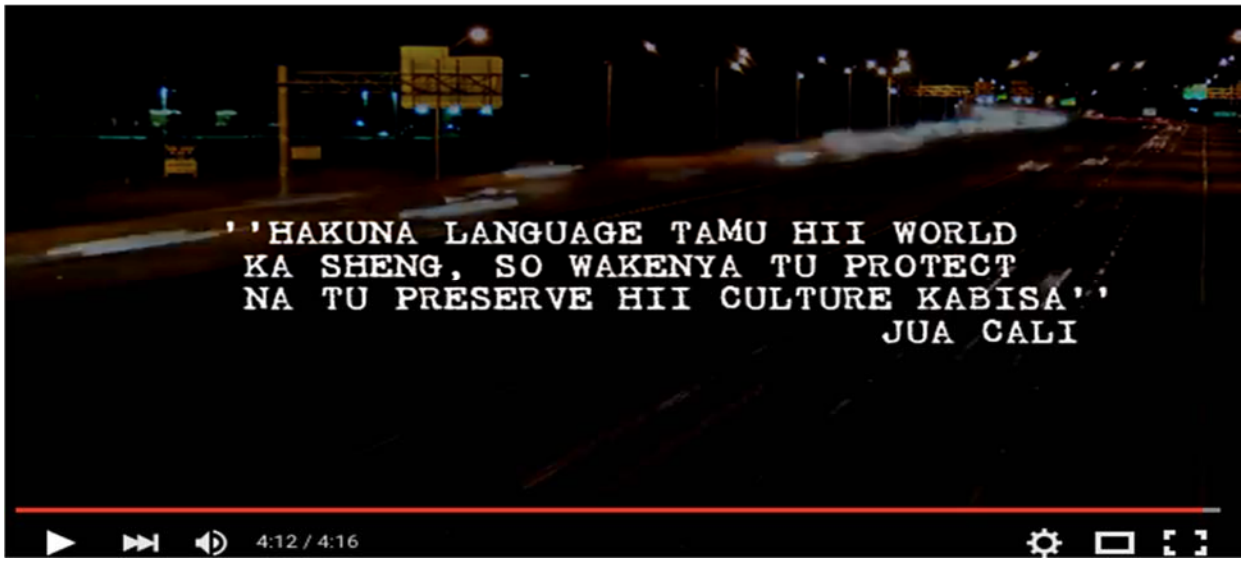

Figure 16: Screenshot from Jua Cali's song "Kuna Sheng" arguing for the preservation of Sheng. Source: "Kuna Sheng" You-Tube Video

Similarly, Abbas revealed a contradictory theory of multilingualism. For example, when I asked him what languages he used to compose "Mchizi," the song he chose to represent who he is as an artist, he said Swahili. It was not until I asked him if there are other languages used in the song that he revealed using Sheng. This shows he was theorizing the languages in the song following the translingual approach of multilingualism—showing no distinction between the two. When I asked him what typical languages he uses to compose his music, he said, "I have always kept it Swahili, Sheng and English...these are *my first languages*…because these are the languages *I am familiar with."* In this quote, he theorizes Sheng as a language and separate from Swahili or English. Further, and like Jua Cali, he at times theorized Sheng as a language and other times as Slang. For example, when he talked about using Sheng in his song "Mchizi," he said, "I took it to the hood of Nairobi [coz] that is where I grew up." In this response, he confines Sheng's usage to a particular place—Nairobi inner city.

Similarly, Nazizi theorized her multilingual practices in a similar way. When I asked her what typical languages she uses in composing her music, she said Jamaican Creole, English and Swahili. She however asserted that she was more comfortable writing in English and Swahili. When I asked her what languages she used to write "Kenyan Boy, Kenyan Girl," the song she chose to represent who she is as an artist, she said, "Sheng, English and [Jamaican] Patwa." I noted that in this response she omitted mentioning Swahili, which for her, is by default embedded in Sheng. Her responses revealed both theories of multilingualism. Like, Jua Cali and Abbas, she had a contradictory theory of Sheng. For example, in chapter four, she shared an anecdote whereby her producer asked her to use language in a way that "Kenyans could relate to." She then decided to mix English and Swahili in her lyrics and the producer liked it. If the

producer had asked her to write in Sheng, she said, "I would be confused because I would be like 'I don't live in the hoods coz most of the hood area has their own Sheng and I came from Runda and Runda is uptown. There is no Sheng there. So I did not know any Sheng but Sheng is English and Swahili mixed." From this response, I noted a contradiction. First, and like Abbas above, she theorizes Sheng as a language or as a way of speaking practiced in the Nairobi hood/ghetto, but also as a practice of mixing of English and Swahili in communication. This contradiction continued to further emerge when I asked her to talk about her future plans in terms of music career:

> I see myself being one of those Hip-hop artists recognized all over Africa not just East and South Africa like I am now and being able to say what I want to say and still be heard, not necessarily in Sheng. Like I was saying…we are trying to break the boundaries and be artists that can be heard further away from home. Still, I will have a little of Sheng there because I can never leave it but I want to do more English tracks (Nazizi, Personal Communication, July 19, 2013).

In this response, both theories of multilingualism were apparent. She theorized Sheng as part of the multilingual soup and also as a distinct language.

These emerging theories of multilingualism and Sheng raised further questions related to the possible origin or root cause of the contradictions and internalized theories about language. I particulaty see them connected to what Smitherman (2000) calls "linguistic push-pull," a

"psychological ambivalence to language." Writing about about Black English, she describes it as a "love-hate attitude" towards the language by African Americans:

> In an effort to establish and maintain themselves as first-class citizens, African Americans, on one hand, subscribe to the linguistic ethnocentrism of the dominant society; for example, they may decry those speakers with foreign accented English. On the other hand, their history of struggle has depended for its success in cultural and linguistic solidarity situated within a Black Experiential, that is, Afrocentric, framework. (p. 295)

Smitherman sees the linguistic push-pull tied to W.E.B Dubois idea of double consciousness "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others." As such, I see the contradiction in the Hip-hop artists theorizing emerging from Kenya's colonial history and dominant ideologies that priviledge some languages over others.

Further, the emerging contradictory theories of multilingualism complicates the proposal by translingual scholars to abandon the traditional definition of multilingualism. My research suggests that it might still be relevant to maintain both theories of multilingualism or interrogate why it might still be useful for some communities to maintain both approaches/theories. Based on the three artists theorizing however, I propose a *negotiatied theory of multilingualism*. The artists seem to negotiate their multilingualism depending on contexts and goals of composing. And just as the practice of multilingualism is always fluid and meaning as always negotiated, so should be the theory of translingualism.

Another important finding that emerged from the artists' definitions is that they did not theorize their multilingualism in terms of semiotic resources but only in terms of language resources. Thus, their theorizing is not consistent with translingual approach as theorized in composition studies. This raises questions of whether it is right for translingual scholars to impose their own theories of language on communities or whether they should follow or use theories emerging from the communities even as we challenge some of their internalized notions of languages that emerge from colonization, linguicism and other kinds of oppression. Still, I ask: Do language users have a right to their own theories?

Translingual practice in Kenya is tied to decolonization

Another common theme that emerged across all the artists is a resistance to identify based on ethnicity and race. The artists preferred a national identity—Kenyan. The current or dominant practices of racial and ethnic classification, which are based on physical characteristics, ethnic languages, geographical location or place of residence, emerge from British colonial administrative policies. During Kenya's colonial period, Caucasians or Europeans colonizers were placed top in the hierarchy, followed by Arabs and Indians. In the bottom of the ladder were Africans who were categorized based primarily on the ethnic language they spoke and geographical concentration/location. Ogot (2012) notes that this categorization interfered with African ways of ethnic identification and using languages which was characterized by fluidity. It also interfered with mobility and migration which was the way of life for African people. For the British colonialists however, the ethnic and racial categorizations and the "freezing" of mobility was necessary for administrative purposes. It is important to point out that while the artists

resisted the current ethnic/racial identification in Kenya, they did not claim to do so because it was colonial. As such, they did not claim to adopt the pre-colonial African ethnic identification practices.

At the same time, while the artists preferred a national identity, they did not follow the dominant expectations of using Standard Swahili to represent the Kenyan national culture and identity. After observing their language practices and listening to their theories of language use in relation to race/ethnicity, I concluded that the artists are developing new ethnicities based on how Kenyans sound or everyday language use not on dominant language ideologies and/or ethnic/racial theories (Hall 1996; Harris 2006; Rampton 2006; Paris 2011). Jua Cali's estimation that 98% of Kenyans speak Sheng, and Nazizi's revelation that Jamaican Creole is "big" in the Kenyan urban streets implies that a new Kenyan linguistic landscape and ethnicities are emerging. Following Harris (2006), the artists are shifting their approaches of understanding ethnicities "from visual to sound," and by observing and listening to "the everyday patterns of language use of ordinary people" (p. 9).

However, as I discuss in detail in chapter three, the artists' new language practices and ethnicities are not necessarily new; rather, they mimic pre-colonial African ways of using language and ways theorizing ethnic identity. As such, their translingual practices have a de-colonial feature. They work towards linguistic and cultural decolonization as well as a recovery of the pre-colonial everyday practices like language use and understanding of ethnicity and literacy. For example, as discussed in chapter five, Jua Cali's language activism work, which is about 1) raising critical language awareness and reversing Standard language and monolingual

ideologies in the country, 2) promoting and advocating for language preservation, shows the impact of colonization in marginalizing local languages and African oral literacy practices. This consequently has impacted how African/Kenyans conceptualize literacy. For example, while Jua Cali's language activism work is clearly decolonial, his observation that Africans don't preserve history compared to the West shows how he too is implicated in the colonial thinking which he is seeking to challenge. He privileges written literacy over oral literacy. Ironically, Jua Cali's oral archiving and language translation/interpretation practices in his song "Kuna Sheng" mimic the precolonial African rhetorical and literacy practices.

This finding has implications on pedagogical application of translingual approach to writing. Specifically, it suggests that teachers need to be aware of African students' colonial histories (and other formerly colonized groups) particularly the impact of linguistic colonization. In my own teaching and enactement of translingual pedagogies in first year writing classes, I have come to see this as very important because it can hinder students from engaging in translingual practices or might shape how they translanguage. Consider for example the critical response below from Patrick,[12] an African student from Angola in my class this semester. Patrick was responding to Geneva Smitherman's "From Ghetto Lady to Critical Linguist" and Gloria Azaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue.":

> After analyzing both texts I realized something very similar that did happen in large scale in my country, Angola before its independence, and, unfortunately, it still happens nowadays, but relatively on small proportion. During almost five centuries (500 years), Portuguese government required Angolan people to forget their national language and to

[12] The name Patrick is a pseudonym used to protect student's indentity.

> speak only Portuguese. There was a huge campaign of coercion for promoting Portuguese around the country as the most perfect language, and the national language as "inhuman" and "shameful". People who spoke Portuguese were seen as the "smartest" and "educated" while people who did speak Angolan languages where seen as "stupid" and "loser." Also, the ability of one speak well Portuguese was decisive to get a job or other social benefits, just like the story that Smitherman tells in her writing. As one could expect, a great number of Angolan parents stopped [of] teaching [to] their children national language. Nowadays, the generations who were born after independence of Angola, mainly the ones who live in urban areas, generally speaking, they just speak Portuguese (unfortunately, I am one of them). And even worst, they do not want to learn any national language, and they usually make fun of people who can speak one.

I highlighted this extended quote to argue that inviting African students to translanguage in an American writing classroom might not be a simple process. For example, I come from a former British colony, Kenya, where while ethnic languages were marginalized, I still had the opportunity and privilege of growing up speaking my ethnic language and receiving instruction in the language up to third grade. The British colonialists also promoted the use of Swahili as the language of facilitating interethnic communication in Kenya. Patrick did not have the same experience. Another African student in my class this semester from Rwanda, formerly colonized by Belgium and Germany, had an equally a different language history and experience. As I reflected on our different colonial histories and how they shaped our language and literacy identities as Africans, I realized that before teachers can invite students to translanguage, they need to have an awareness of how students' colonial histories might have shaped their language

identities. For example, it was after Patrick connected his experiences with Smitherman and Azaldua's stories that he began to critically think about his first language, Portuguese which is a European language. He also began to critically reflect on his unfortunate history and experience of being denied the opportunity to learn or use Angolan indigenous languages. Asking a student like Patrick to translanguage in their writing without having them interrogate and have an awareness of their language histories might perpetuate further colonization.

Linguistic culture(s) shapes a person's translingual practices

One of the concerns I had about the current theorization of translingualism is that, it did not emphasize the role "linguistic culture" plays in shaping how a person engages in translingual practice. Schiffman (1996) defines linguistic culture as the "sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, myths, religious strictures, and all the other cultural "baggage" that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their culture." As discussed in chapter three, this definition is broad enough to also include racial and ethnic politics or "baggage." One of the issues raised by the artists particularly Jua Cali and Abbas was how negative ethnicity or tribalism has ravaged Kenya, especially after 2007 post election. Speaking an ethnic language especially in multilingual and multicultural setting like urban cities in Kenya, one is marked in a certain way, for example in terms of political affiliation. As public pedagogues, the three artists bring this ethnic baggage to their language choices and use. The resistance to identify based on ethnicity and consequently their decision not to use ethnic languages in their compositions is based on an awareness of how ethnic politics among other associated factors threaten to divide the country along tribal lines. Their preference to use Sheng or/and Swahili predominantly in their composing, foregrounds their "understanding of the role of language in both

binding/bonding community" (Alim 2009, p.113) (see for example Jua Cali's story in chapter three).

Another way linguistic culture was revealed is through the ideas, prejudices and attitudes the artists expressed towards specific languages. Both Jua Cali and Abbas expressed a negative attitude towards English only composing. They valued Swahili more arguing it helps them represent the Kenyan culture, be original, authentic and convey their message. Similarly, they expressed a negative attitude toward standard language ideologies by practicing Sheng. Their stories also revealed their awareness of how linguistic culture surrounding different languages in Kenya has been shaped by colonial history, English (language) imperialism, the role of language contact, language ideologies, educational policies, school curriculum and the global spread of music genres and styles like Hip-hop, Reggae and Dance Hall. This finding has implication for translingual scholarship. While scholars like Canagarajah (2015) argue that the youth today are developing new ethnicities, my research with the three artists who represent the Kenyan youth reveal that their new ethnicities are not completely removed from the Kenyan national culture, racial/ethnic politics/relations and historical expereriences.

Further, this finding has implication in terms of thinking about pedagogical application of translingual approach. Teachers need to be aware or understand the "cultural baggage" students bring to the classroom, that is, how linguistic cultures shapes their literacy and language identities. Specifically, teachers need to help students evaluate how their racial or ethnic histories and identities might shape their language choices and use. For example, in the Kenyan cultural context, and as the artists revealed, composing in ethnic language might be a liability than an

asset/resource given the current socio-political climate and impact of negative ethnicity that continues to plague the country. This reminds me of the 1994 Rwanda genocide which was primarily ethnic based. African students bring this kind of ethnic and cultural baggage to the classroom. Yet, when they find themselves in American classrooms, they are expected to share the same racial experiences and linguistic culture with other Black or African American students. Therefore, my research suggests that discussions of language diversity in relation to race and ethnicity, particularly in our increasingly multilingual U.S classrooms need to be expanded. I see this as particularly important because current conversation in composition studies focus more on African American racial experience while the other minority students are grouped in homogenizing categories like minority, ESL, international or transnational students and discussions of race or ethnicity are not highlighted.

Is translingualism enough?

One of the argument advanced by the translingual approach is that communication involves moving across languages and modalities. Canagarajah (2011) for example proposes that linguistic analysis of translingual texts should be done in the context multimodality. Following this theorization, I was able to develop an analytical framework that helped me better understand and demonstrate how meaning making in Kenyan Hip-hop texts was realized through a variety of modalities—written, verbal, visual and performative. Chapters four and five for example demonstrate how conducting a linguistic and semiotic analysis simultaneously foregrounds broader language categories, which would not have been possible through a mono-modal analysis. Translingualism therefore seemed to bridge (trans)linguality and multi (trans)modality.

Recently however, Horner, Selfe and Lockridge (2015) have noted that these two areas of research, teaching, and practice in composition are still treated as separate despite the fact that they have "common points of origination." The scholars propose that discussions of (trans)linguality and multi (trans)modality need to be done together for the advancement of both fields of inquiry. As I reflected on the theorizing and my own interpretation and application of the translingual approach, I believe it has potential to bring conversations of both multi (trans)linguality and multi (trans)modality together. At the same time, I thought the title "translingualism" privileges languages over modalities. For example, the "lingual" in translingualism only captures the "language" not the "modal" aspect. My research proposes that an all encompassing name that brings together these two areas of research, teaching, and practice in composition studies is needed.

Another finding which came up as I reflected on my experience analyzing the Kenya Hip-hop texts was that, translingual approach is limiting in terms of understanding multilingual practices of the Kenyan Hip-hop artists. While I drew from the current theorization to build a language coding scheme to analyze the linguistic resources in the Hip-hop texts, it was not always applicable in all contexts especially given the complexity and nuance of each artist's language practices. For example, it was very difficult to apply the coding scheme in reading Jua Cali's texts which while multilingual, are predominantly in Swahili. Similarly, Nazizi texts exhibited the use of a variety of Englishes, which was not the case for Jua Cali or Abbas. After experiencing these challenges, I realized a uniform analysis of translingual texts has potential to flatten identities. This finding suggests the need for more research and theorizing to help teachers

and students better understand how translingual approach works in different multilingual contexts.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: My research story

Arriving in Nairobi in May of 2013, I did not know where or how to begin my research. Although Kenya is my home country, and I spent my teenage and adult life listening to Kenyan Hip-hop music, I neither knew any Hip-hop artist personally, nor did I know any particular person who could introduce me to any artists. A month had gone by and I was having no luck finding artists to interview. Then one day an idea came to mind. I was reading a story on Ghafla!, an informal Kenyan entertainment news website, when I started wondering whether whoever is in charge of the website can help me find some artists to interview. This was not the first time I was reading a story on Ghafla! I started using the site in 2010 when it used to be Kenyanlyrics.com. As a graduate student in the U.S and doing scholarly work on Kenyan Hip-hop, I had a hard time finding already transcribed lyrical content for my seminar papers. Ghafla! was a site that I had come to find very resourceful. In 2011, the site expanded beyond digitizing lyrics to become an informal news entertainment site featuring stories of Kenyan celebrities, including Hip-hop artists.

So when the idea of getting help from Ghafla! writers came to mind, I made a quick search through the website to see who was in charge. A story titled "Ghafla C.E.O Talks About His Life and His Experience Building Ghafla in this Inspiring Interview" came up. From this story, l learned that the CEO's name was Samuel Majani. I was also able to get the physical address of Ghafla! office: Eagle House, Kimanthi Street in the Nairobi Central Business District. On Thursday June 10 2013, I decided to visit Ghafla! office. The office was not as big or grand as I had imagined. When I walked in, the staff members were glued to their desktop computers either reading or typing something and with their backs turned away from the entrance. There

was no reception desk. I stood at the door for a few seconds thinking of the best way to draw their attention. Before I could make up my mind, one member of staff turned to his colleague to consult over something. As he was turning, he saw me standing at the door.

"Can we help you with something?" He asked.

"Hi!" My name is Esther. I am looking for Mr. Majani." I responded extending my hand to greet him.

"Do you have an appointment with him?"

"No."

"Well, he is not in today but you can leave your number with us. He will give you call back. Please have a seat.

He told me his name and said he was a writer for Ghafla! He grabbed a piece of paper and wrote down my name and phone number. Then out of nowhere he asked me why I wanted to see Mr. Majani. I started explaining to him about my research project, my frustrations finding artists to participate in my study and how I was hoping Mr. Majani could help me find contacts of a few artists to interview. He then asked me how I knew about Mr. Majani. I explained how I was a big fan of Ghafla! and how I had relied on lyrical content from their site for my scholarly research. As he listened to my story, I could see that he was pleased to learn that I was a fan and user of their site. He told me sharing artists' contacts was a small thing and that I did not need to bother their boss with that. Other staff members nodded in agreement. And just like that, he promised to share with me Ghafla! celebrity contact list. All he needed was my email address. I thanked the staff for their help and left their office feeling hopeful and skeptical at the same time. The

following day, I received an email from the Ghafla writer[13] sharing an excel spreadsheet with names, email addresses, twitter handles and phone numbers of various artists and celebrities in Kenya.

That weekend, I went through the list sorting out names of Hip-hop artists. Next, I emailed ten artists to invite them to participate in my study. A week went by and there was no response. The following week I sent reminders, no response. Frustrated and almost in despair, I decided to call. A number of artists were willing to participate in my study. However, I would schedule an appointment with them, but they would not show up. Others would cancel their appointments the last minute and say they don't have an opening in the near future or they would promise to contact me when they have an opening on their schedule. Others said they charge a fee for interviews. And just when I was about to conclude that my research would never happen, three artists agreed to participate. However, the process of interviewing them did not always go as smoothly as I had planned. Below, I introduce the three artists participating in my study and share my research story on how I conducted the three phase in-depth interviews with each artist. In my story telling, I also show how I observed the artists' "language in use."

Meet Jua Cali

A week had passed since emailing Jua Cali with no response. I decided to call him. To my pleasant surprise, he answered the phone. As I opened my mouth to speak to him, I could hear my voice shaking and my heart beating fast. Well, I had every reason to. First, I had had way too many not so good experiences with other artists. My pessimistic self was telling me this was

[13] I prefer to refer to the writer as "Ghafla! Writer" to protect his identity.

going to be another disappointment. Secondly, Jua Cali is one of the prominent artists in the country. Since 2001, he has had a very steady and successful career, which has earned him a large fan base in Kenya, across the East Africa region, and internationally. In 2007, a Kenyan leading daily newspaper, *The Standard*, listed him among the 100 most influential people in Kenya. Because of his enormous success, he has won numerous music awards. According to *Wasanii* website, he has won the Kisima Music Awards, Chaguo La Teeniez Awards (Choice of Teens) (CHAT Awards), Pearl of Africa Music Awards (PAM Awards). He has also been nominated for international awards like the 2007 MTV Europe Music Awards, the Music of Black Origin (MOBO) Awards and MTV Africa Music Awards. Also, because of his large youth fan base, he has gotten many endorsement deals from domestic and international multinationals that target Kenyan and East African youth market. For example, in 2007, he signed an endorsement deal with Motorola for its W-model, another one with Telkom-Kenya as the Orange Ambassador for their youth market. He also worked with Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, Inc. (WBIE) on the *Pamoja Mtaani*, Together in the Hood project to produce an Interactive video aimed at bringing HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention as well as other challenges the youth face living in East Africa's inner city. He's also the Bloodlink Foundation Kenya ambassador,"a non-profit charitable trust established in Kenya seeking to assist Kenyan people achieve better health and improved quality of life through patnership with communities, corporate organizations and public sectors." Arguably, Jua Cali is one of the highest paid Hip-hop artists in Kenya to date.

So when he answered the phone, I had every reason to doubt if he could ever find time to participate in my research. I explained very fast and in the clearest way I could why I was

calling. The one-minute of explaining felt like forever. He was listening quietly without interrupting me. When I was done explaining he said:

> "Eti unasema unafanya research ya Hip-hop," he asked.
>
> "Ndiyo," I replied.
>
> "Na umetoka Michigan?"
>
> "Yes. Ninasomea Michigan State University".
>
> "Poa poa. Let's do it!

And just like that, he agreed to participate in my study. I asked him to choose a location for the interview and he chose The Nairobi Carnivore Restaurant located on Langata Road. He proposed we meet at 1 pm. By 12 o'clock, I was already at the Carnivore Restaurant. Two hours later, no Jua Cali. Of course, I did not expect him to be on time. As the stereotype goes, Kenyans or Africans in general don't keep time. But when another hour went by and no Jua Cali, I began thinking this was going to be another case of no show. So I decided to give him a call. He assured me he was on his way. An hour later, my phone rang and it was Jua Cali trying to locate me in the restaurant's expansive sitting area. When I saw him, I smiled to signal that I had seen him. It was easy to recognize him because I had seen him in his music videos. Realizing I must be the "researcher," he shouted my name, "Esther! All the way from Michigan!" I said to myself, "this is going to be an easy interview." He then introduced me to his friend and manager, Tom. We spent a few minutes getting acquainted. Two minutes in the conversation I realized Jua Cali is the most down to earth person, very easy to talk to and with great sense of humor. I then

explained what my research was about in detail and my frustrations finding artists to participate in my study and how Ghafla! had been helpful with the process.

A few minutes later, a Carnivore Restaurant manager joined us at our booth. Jua Cali introduced me and as they continued to convesate, I began to realize they were doing a business meeting. I then started wondering if I should excuse myself. Jua Cali sensing my uneasiness told me, "Uko poa. Wacha nimalinzane na yeye kisha tutaendelea". Before long, they agreed on a business deal and the manager left but not before announcing all the food and drinks were on him. Jua Cali gave me signal to get started with the interview. I took out my notebook and my interview protocol. Looking through the questions, which were written in English, I told myself, "there is no way I am going to interview Jua Cali in English." It had been an hour since I started conversating with him and Tom and we were speaking Swahili with the occasional one word or a sentence in English. Even the business meeting he had just completed with the Carnivore Restaurant manager was done in Swahili and Sheng. I quickly made a decision that I will translate the interview protocol from English to Swahili and Sheng as needed:

Esther: Sasa niambie jina...

Jua Cali: Majina za ukweli ama za uwongo? (we both laugh)

Esther: Zote!

Jua Cali: Sawa. Kwa majina kamili, naitwa Paula Nunda. Stage name ama ile jina ninatumia professionally ni Jua Cali. Jua Cali with a C, not with a K.

Esther: Why C?

Jua cali: Jua Cali ni shortform ya Jua California.

And this how we started phase one interview, by asking him to tell me what his names were. Although I knew his stage name, and this question was not in the interview protocol, I still wanted to know if he had other names. Besides, I also wanted to know the meaning behind his stage name, which I had for many years, thought it was *Jua kali.* In the dialogue above Jua Cali responds to my question jokingly by asking me if I wanted to know his *majina za ukweli ama za uwongo* real names or fake ones? He then proceeds to say his full names are Paul Nunda and his stage or the name he used professionally was Jua Cali. His stage name pays homage to the hood he grew up, California, which is located in Eastleigh Estate in the East side of Nairobi, or the Eastlands. The name Jua Cali is a neologism. "Jua", is a Swahili word, which means "know" while the last part "Cali", is a short form of the word "California." Hence the literal meaning of his name is "Know California". He says he adopted the name to bring awareness to *his* street or hood.

In this phase one interview, Jua Cali shared a lot of background information with me: that he was born in 1979 and lived in the California street/neighborhood for 22 years, attended school at Ainsworth Primary School from Standard 1 to 6, then Shepherds Junior in Buruburu from Standards 6 to 8, then Jamhuri High School for his secondary education, and later joined Kenya Christian Industrial Training Institute (K.C.I.T.I) where he earned a diploma in Information Technology (IT). All these schools are located in the East side of Nairobi. We then proceeded through the other questions in phase one as he talked about his ethnicity, the kind of music he grew up listening to, and most importantly, how he became a Hip-hop artist.

In the middle of phase two interview, Mwalimu King'ang'i aka Churchill, a Kenya's leading comedian walked by and saw Jua Cali. Before I knew it, the interview stopped and both him and Jua Cali were engaging in hearty conversations about their recent projects and possible future collaborative projects. I also got excited about meeting these two celebrities at the same time and in the same space. And just like we all do with celebrities, we started taking pictures! After a few minutes, Churchill left and we resumed the interview.

I proceeded by asking Jua Cali questions that helped me get concrete details of his lived experience as a Hip-hop artist. I asked him to pick a thing or a song that he felt best represents him as an artist. He picked his song "Bidii Yangu." I then asked him several questions related to why he picked the song, why he wrote the song, the process of creating the song, the languages involved in writing the song among others. By asking him these questions was a way for me to elicit details of his experience composing, performing and distributing his music and his experience (s) as an Hip-hop artist. He shared with me that his music is based on everyday experiences of ordinary Kenyans. A song like "Bidii Yangu", he said, as well as others like "Kiasi", "Kwaheri" and Ngeli ya Ngege" are a "common man's music." That is, they tell stories about the everyday experiences of ordinary Kenyans. As he was talking about the meaning behind these songs, I could not help to see the connection between the name of his first album *Jua Cali-Sekta*, which was released in 2006. The name of this album hints to that fact that his music is about and for people who work in the *Jua kali* sector. Jua kali, which means "hot sun" and not to be confused with his stage name Jua Cali means Kenya's informal business sector comprised of low income population who mostly work under the "hot sun". His music reflects the values and culture of this social class. The message in his music is about fighting for social

justice and ending of socio-economic inequalities in the country and youth empowerment. “What a perfect coincidence,” I said to myself, “Jua Cali for Jua Kali”.

When we finished phase two interview, we all agreed that we were tired. We started eating our food. Thomas Kwaka aka Big Ted, a former rapper and famous events organizer and then the deputy director in charge of Kenyan Government/state branding joined us. Jua Cali took time to catch up with him. I could not help but overhear them talking about possible collaborative projects. By this time, I had learned to go with the flow. It was part of Jua Cali’s hustle or as he called it, it is “all about the grind.” It is part of his everyday. I was happy that I was done with part one and two of interview.

I asked him to choose a location for the final phase interview and he picked his recording studio, Calif Records, which is located in Greenfield’s Estate, in Eastlands. He told me this was another thing/artifact he would pick to represent who he is as an artist besides the song “Bidii Yangu.” Although he told me he currently lived in Milimani, one of the Nairobi Suburbs, he said it was important for him visit and work from the Eastlands everyday, because he had to be in the streets where he grew up. In addition, he said his music is for the common man, many of whom live in the Eastlands. Thus, he not only has to see them everyday, but also live their experiences in order to write about their stories.

Going and being in the Eastlands

The day of the scheduled phase three interview with Jua Cali, I took a Matatu from South B neighborhood where I was staying during my research visit to Kenya, to Nairobi's city center or the CBD. At Accra road, it was a buzz of activities as crowds and crowds of passengers curiously looked for the right Matatu to board for their various destinations. Fleets of Matatus were lined up in Accra, Taveta and River roads, or wherever drivers could find a parking space. The 14-sitter white Matatus with a yellow stripe at the middle were lined up at Accra Road. Each had a portable signpost placed on its carrier advertising the destinations and various stops the Matatu will make. I finally saw one that had Greenfields as its final destination. I got in and sat down to wait for the Matatu to fill up. Half an hour later, the Matatu pulled out of the parking and joined River Road towards the Machakos Country bus station.

The traffic was heavy. It took us almost an hour to get to the Nyayo Stadium, which on normal circumstances should take at most five minutes. Finally, we reached Jogoo road and there was no traffic. It was a sigh of relief for everyone. All the passengers were very quiet. The silence was interrupted by the conductor asking us to pay our fare. "Pesa hapo nyuma, pesa hapo mbele," he was shouting asking us to pay the fare. After he was done collecting the fare and giving every one back their change as needed, he slumped back into his seat and the silence resumed. Some passengers closed their eyes feigning being sleepy or tired. Others looked through the window. I was one of those who looked through the window to admire the changes that had happened in the Eastlands. It was almost more than ten years since I lived in the Eastlands.

Soon we arrived at the Donholm roundabout and I knew we were about to reach Greenfields. A few metres past the roundabout, I decided to alight because I was not sure of my exact stop. I started walking and after asking two people how far Greenfields estate was, I realized I had to walk for almost a mile. The streets were noisy. People were everywhere, mindlessly going on with their business. On the sidewalks, women and men had arranged merchandize for sale. A woman was selling Sukumawiki/kales and other vegetables, next to him is man selling sweet potatoes, next, a woman was deep frying tilapia, next a man with wheelbarrow full of sugar cane stalks, next was fruit stall and the line continued. Behind them were different kinds of shops: barber shop, a butchery, a saloon, grocery stores and so forth. Further behind were residential apartments. On the road, Matatus drove full speed and hooting to draw attention of potential passengers. Conductors were outdoing each other shouting and whistling as they competed inviting passengers to ride their vehicles: "Beba beba beba! Tau beba! Ushirini tau beba," they sang.

I kept walking on the sidewalk as carefully as possible balancing not to step on people's merchandise or trip and fall on the road and get hit by a Matatu. This is the everyday Eastlands! After asking several people how far till I arrive at house No. 2464, I realized still had some distance to cover. My high heels were killing me and I was literally limping. "Twas totally a bad idea to wear high heels to Eastlands. "I should have known better" I told myself especially consindering I am no stranger to Eastlands. I had lived in Kayole and Umoja Innercore estates for six years between 2001 and 2006 and new what live in East lands was like. On the other side of the road, I saw a hawker carrying second hand shoes joined together by a string and placed across his neck. I called out to him and he crossed the road swiftly. I picked some nice second-

hand flats for Khs 300 about $3.5. He gave me a used/recycled paper bag to put my now dusty heels. “What a relief” I said to myself. This is another advantage of living in the Eastlands— everything is always available.

Soon I was outside Phase three of Greenfields estate. At the gate, the guard was fast asleep in his booth. “Habari yako! Unajua mahali Calif Records iko?” I asked him where Calif Records was. He did not respond. He actually looked upset for some reason. I was not sure whether it was because I woke him up or he was embarrassed that I found him sleeping on his job. Either way, he didn’t seem to care. He gave me a visitor’s book to sign my name. He did not say a word to me but pointed to the building where Calif Records was located. I knocked on the gate and a gentleman opened. I told him I was there to meet Jua Cali. He said he had not arrived in the studio. He gave me a chair to sit outside the verandah to wait. My feet are sore and dusty and so were my clothes. I was also tired and hungry.

An hour later, Jua Cali showed up with his crew. Clearly, he looked as tired as I was but tried to hide it as much as possible. As soon as he walked in, I was ready to get started so I switched on my audio recorder. “Salimiana basi halafu tutabonga,” he introduced me to his crew who turned out be upcoming artists from Eastlands whom he is mentoring and were also recording their music in the studio. He also introduced me to Clemo, his long time friend who together started the Calif records, named after California estate. The name Calif is a short form of California. The studio is known for producing Genge— a genre of Kenyan Hip-hop music. Jua Cali’s music is also Genge. He told me it was Clemo who came up with the name Genge, which is a Swahili word meaning a crowd of people. Thus, Genge is “music for the people”. According

to Jua Cali, the motivation to come up with name was to give Kenyan Hip-hop music an identity. However, other artists were reluctant to adopt the name and thus the name Genge became or remained Hip-hop music produced by Calif Records.

We finally sat down to start the interview.

> **Esther:** Haya, tuko ready.
>
> **Jua Cali:** Tuko sieeet!!
>
> **Esther:** Sasa, the next question ni: what kind of Hip-hop artist do you see yourself becoming in the future?
>
> **Jua Cali:** Okay...naenza jibu aje hiyo? I am living the future!
>
> **Esther:** Right now?!
>
> **Jua Cali:** Yea...(thinking). Unajua, nimekuwa kwa industry since 2001. Almost 12 years! So naweza sema I am living the future...yaani nimeachieve vitu mob sikuwai imagine nawena kufanya, kama kutour almost the whole world kwenda kuperformia watu...

This is how we began phase three interview. I asked Jua Cali questions that invited him to reflect on the meaning of his experience as a Hip-hop artist. For example, I asked him what kind of Hip-hop artist he sees himself becoming in the future. In the response above, he tells me he is "living the future." He then went on to reflect on his twelve-year career and what he has accomplished. I also asked him questions that helped him make connections between his work, other artists, his

communities, and his life. In this phase, he shared with me his language activism and preservation work and his ideas on the role of youth languages in Kenyan education system.

Meet Nazizi Hirji

On June 18th 2013, I emailed Nazizi inviting her to participate in my research. A few days had passed and I had gotten no response from her. I had come to realize that emailing was not the best approach to contact artists. So I decided to call her. She was willing to participate in my research right away. However, I could not explain the research in detail over the phone so she asked me to send her an email. Since I had already emailed her, I decided to write a follow up email on June 24th. After a week of waiting and no response, I decided to call again. She told me that had she was sick and hospitalized for a while. I said my *poles* and decided to give her time to feel better. A week later, I decided to give her a call and we finally set up an interview date, July 19, 2013.

On the day of the interview, I boarded a 36 sittter Matatu to Kitengala at the Nairobi Railways bus station. As we joined Uhuru highway towards Mombasa road, we found ourselves in heavy traffic. This is the everyday Nairobi. As we waited in the traffic, a man boarded the Matatu but there was no extra seat. The conductor and the driver seemed unbothered. He stood at the door as we drove through Mombasa road. And just immediately after we passed Athi River, the man took out a Bible from his brown leather bag and then suddenly shouted, “bwana asifiwe! Praise the Lord! A few people murmured “Amen.” Others just stared at him with utter indifference. Others looked outside the window unable to hide the annoyance on their faces. The preacher was not bothered by their indifference, lack of interest or attention. “Wasafiri

Wenzangu," he began, "leo tutasoma kukoka kitabu cha Waebrenia. Today we will read from the book of Hebrews..." He continued. No one seemed to be pay him any attention but he continued preaching with his voice rising every time he thought he hit a punchline.

As he continued to preach, I could not help but think about the good old days when riding in Matatus used to be real fun. In the early and mid 2000s, Matatus were the major site for practicing, sharing and consuming Hip-hop culture. They played the best and latest Hip hop from different parts of the world as well as by Kenyan artists. They were also fitted with LCD media players, the loudest bass speakers and decorated with graffiti and all kinds of creative arts. Matatus were the one space where the youth could consume and participate in Hip-hop culture. Unfortunately, in 2005, this was eradicated after the then Kenyan transport and communication minister, John Michuki, introduced new transportation laws aimed at increasing road safety in the country. Among the things eradicated were graffiti and any creative artworks on the Matatus as well as playing popular music. All transport providers were required to paint their 36-sitter Matatus in one solid color, while all the 14-sitter Matatus were to be painted white with a yellow stripe at the middle. Arguably, this is considered the most and major explicit attack and censorship of Hip-hop culture by the Kenyan government.

With Hip-hop culture eradicated from the Matatus, it gave way for preachers, hawkers and *madaktari wa miti shamba* herbal doctors to entertain and sell merchandize to mostly uninterested passengers. During my ride to Kitengela, we happened to have a preacher who was now emotionally blackmailing us by telling us the consequences of blasphemy. Of course this kind of rhetoric got everyone's attention. Many of us began to get ready to give him a financial

offering as had now become the tradition in Kenyan public transport. A few miles before we reached Kitengela, the preacher alighted to the relief of many. We finally arrived at the final stop.

At the Naiva's Mall, I gave Nazizi a call. She told me I was in fact meeting her mother, who was doing grocery shopping at the Naiva's supermarket. She was then to escort me to her home. She gave me her mom's number and I immediately called her. He mother told to wait in the parking lot. A few minutes later, I saw a woman, probably in her mid fifties walk out of the supermarket carrying groceries in one hand and holding a toddler's hand on the other. They walked towards me.

> "Wewe ndiye mgeni wa Nazizi," she asked me if I was Nazizi's guest.
>
> "Ndiyo" I responded.
>
> "Karibu."

We walked towards a Tuk Tuk taxi parked at the mall's parking lot. The three of us tried to fit at the back seat. I turned to Nazizi's son and asked his name. He seemed shy or probably scared of me. His grandmother told me his name was Tafari. "Tafari! Interesting name." I said to myself. I wondered if the name was in anyway connected to Tafari Makonnen or Emperor Haile Selassie who ruled Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974. Haile Selassie is hailed for his leadership style and influence on the Rastafarian movement. He is regarded as the messiah of the African race by the Rastafarian movement. As a fan of Nazizi's music, I could not help but think about and see the influence of the Rastafarian philosophy in her music. Besides Hip-hop, her other genres are

Ragga/e. Her music, particularly regga/e, reflects the influence of the Rastafarian philosophy, which she preaches through a message of resistance to all kinds of oppression, equality, love and unity among mankind. As the Tuk Tuk sped off out of Naiva's mall, Nazizi's song "Bless ma Room", which the Rastafarian rhetoric is apparent, kept coming to my mind:

Blessed be the Most High
Jah Rastafari, come on fire
Necessary Noize

Bless ma room when I wake up early in the morning
Say a prayer and I feel okay
Don't get lazy, you better stop yawning
Ask for guidance, never go astray
Now that you got the Jah Jah protection
Release all your tension
He's watching over you all day
Ghetto youth, you better pray
Oh, you better pray
And watch all your problems just fly away....

Nazizi wrote this song with his long time friend and collaborator Kevin Wyre. In 2000, they both started a music group called Necessary Noize along with artist Bamzigi. As a group, they released their first album under Audio Vault Studios. However, Bamzigi left the group. Nazizi

and Wyre went on to release their their second Album which contained popular hits like "Kenyan Girl, Kenyan Boy" and "Bless my Room" aforementioned. The Necessary Noize came together with Ugandan singer Bebe Cool to form a Reggae group, East African Bashment Crew. Nazizi has also collaborated with other artists like the Tanzanian group Gangwe Mob. She has collaborated with other Kenyan artists like Ukoo Flani Mau Mau, K-South, Prezzo, Nyota Ndogo among others. Recently in 2013, she released another hit album, *Mama Africa*, which she collaborated, with U.S based Jamaican Reggae Artist, Ginjah.

Soon we arrived at Nazizi's home in a nice neighbourhood that seemed to be an upcoming suburb outside Kitengela town. Nazizi came out of the house smiling to meet us. She was wearing green baggy pants and a yellow Bob Marley T-shirt. She helped carry the groceries inside the house and then invited me to sit down with her in the living room in her beautiful Persian rugs. It was intimidating to be in her presence at first; after all she is the "First Lady" of Hip-hop. This is a tag she gave herself when she started her career. Her fans have come to embrace the name because she is not only the pioneer female artist, but has had very steady career that has earned her mad respect from fans in Kenya and beyond.

We started phase one of the interview by talking to me about her family, class, racial/ethnic and educational background. As we continued with the interview, I realized Nazizi's upbringing was very different from that of an everyday Kenyan. Born in 1981, Nazizi was raised in Runda, one of the affluent neighborhoods/estates in the city of Nairobi. For her primary/elementary education, she attended schools like Consolata, Aga Khan and St. Austin's Academy. These are among the prestigious schools in the country, and few of which offer

international curriculum. She has lived in South Africa where she completed her high school at the International School of South Africa at Mafikeng. After completing high school in South Africa, she returned to Kenya and joined Makini School for her International Baccalaureate middle year program. She went to Malaysia where she started her undergraduate studies but later completed her degree at the prestigious United States International University (USIU), Kenya earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and minor in sociology. She told me she is planning to return to USIU to do her masters degree in psychology.

Nazizi realized she can rap at age of fifteen when she performed at a talent show while attending High school in South Africa. Before then, she told me, she had always been a writer and poet. As a child, she kept a journal where she wrote poems and some of her early lyrics. When she returned in Kenya, after completion of her high school and encouraged by his late elder brother, she started participating in free styling battles with other emerging male MCs in K1 and K2 Klub houses where she proved herself by winning most of the battles. But like many female artists, she shared that navigating the then male dominated industry was no walk in the park. She said for example, “a lot of people said “you are 15, you are a girl, you want to do Hip-hop in Swahili in Kenya, nah! It is not gonna work.” For Nazizi, she said, the disapproval is what motivated her to want to do Hip-hop more: to prove to everybody that she can do it. She released her first song in 1999 called “Ni Sawa Tu.”

I asked her to tell me some of the artists she listened to while growing up:

Esther: Were there particular Hip-hop artists you liked to listen to growing up?

Nazizi: I was a very big Tupac fan. I loved tupac. I think Tupac was my favorite. During this time, there was a big breakout of female artists like Foxx Brown, Lil Kim, Da Brat. Da brat I use to looove! She was one of my favorite female MCs. I got to meet her later in life… I have a photo with her. Wu Tang clan, Queen Latifah. These are the people I loved listening to. I was always drawn to the female aspect of the music but I hated the singing singing aspect of it like the R&B. I really focused on the hard-core rap. I appreciated that more and I also had a great love for Reggae. Bob Marley, when I was growing up, was a big deal for me. Of course I started hearing his music from my dad's collection but then I started getting interested in his message a lot and started buying my own CDs saving my own money and buying my own Bob Marley collection. I remember my parents complaining when I was around 16 that I have become to much Bob Marley oriented. They are like, "we don't like this direction you are headed to. You are always playing his music. All you buy is his music and all you do is put his posters." My room was full of Bob Marley everywhere. So they were complaining so much about it. I was like "you guys play Bob Marley. I heard it from you guys".

As she talked about the Bob Marley part, I could not help but see a connection between his son's name, Tafari, the message in most of her music, the yellow Bob-Marley T-shirt she was wearing during the interview and her almost 30-inch-long dreadlocks. Before I could ask her if there is any connection, Tafari walked to the living room from the kitchen. Nazizi touched his forehead to feel if he had fever. She mentioned that he had not been feeling well in the last couple of days. She put him to lie down on a baby mattress next to her. A few seconds later, he sat up and started crying.

"What do you want, Papi," Nazizi asked her son.

Tafari kept crying.

"Come I carry you basi. Do you want water?"

Tafari nodded.

Nazizi called out to her house help, "Dada! Mpe maji, please?" The house-help brought him drinking water in a cup. Tafari was quiet for a while and we continued with the interview. Nazizi noticed Tafari had poured the water on his babymattress and some on the carpet.

"See what you did, papi? She told him.

"Dada, dada! She called the house-help again, this time with urgency in her voice.

"Ha!" the house-help answered.

"Njoo."

The house-help walked to the living room.

"Unamuona jamaa vile amefanya? Amejimwangia maji!" Nazizi gestured to the house-help where Tafari had poured water.

"Haya bebwa na auntie yako." Nazizi told Tafari.

The house-help carried Tafari to the kitchen. We finished up phase one and began Phase two interview. I asked her to pick a thing/artifact or a song that she felt best represented her as an artist. She picked the song "Kenyan Girl, Kenyan Boy," which she co-wrote with Wyre. I asked her several questions related to why he picked the song, why she wrote the song, the process of

creating the song, the languages involved in writing the song among others. She told me this song, like many of her songs is written in Sheng, Swahili and Jamaican Patwa. She told me her music is based on everyday life experiences of what the Kenyan youth go through. She said for example the "Kenyan Girl, Kenya Boy" song is a typical love story of how everyday Kenyan girl meets a Kenyan boy and fall in love.

We continued with our conversation and she said the same thing about her song "Tension", which she co wrote with Wyre and Jaymo. She noted that the song is about the "different things that make you tense". The song talks about the different things teenagers or the youth in Kenya to go through:

> Like wanting to out, having no car, having no money, in trouble with the security, in trouble with police...in trouble with Kanju…my verse was [also being] in trouble with the family. I have a line there that says: "nimeshikwa nikidish ni Ramadhan tena nimebambwa life kwa sahani..." I used to hate Ramadan. I just wanted to eat! I am like "why do we have to fast!

Nazizi began talking about her identity as a muslim and the kind of resistance she faced from her family for choosing a career as a Hip-hop artist. She also shared how being a muslim shapes her choice of dressing.

Next, asked I her if she was to pick a thing that she thought best represents who she is as an artist, she said:

> If I was to choose something that would represent me that wasn't a song, I would choose my awards because they tell my whole story in such a few words. You will see the years in them, the titles on them and it's like my story is told."

She removed the awards from the cabinet. We then arranged them on the carpet as I read the titles in each. Under the Necessary Noize group, she won the 2004 Kisima Music Awards for Best Group and Best Music Video ("Kenyan Girl/Kenyan Boy") and Best Ragga Group, 2004 Chaguo La Teeniez Awards (CHAT) and the 2006 Pearl of Africa Music Awards (PAM Awards) for Best Group (Kenya). She also been nominated for various awards like the 2005 Tanzania Music Awards for Best East African Album, 2006 Channel O Music Video Awards, Best reggae video, 2007 Pearl of Africa Music Awards for Best Kenyan Group, the 2008 MTV Africa Music Award. She also told me some of her awards are with her other music collaborators.

We continued with phase three interview where I asked Nazizi questions that helped her reflect on the meaning of her experience as Hip-hop artist and how she makes connections between her work, other artists, her communities, and her life. She shared that she wants to write Hip-hop music which is "more African," that is, "one that fuses more African [music]" coz that is what I love now." She revealed that she now mostly listening to Dance Hall music and has taken a break from Hip-hop to reflect on what kind of Hip-hop music she wants to create in future. She says "typically, if you gonna do a Hip-hop song, they gonna give you a Hip-hop beat that sounds like it was made in the [States] or it was made abroad, even though you are rapping in your language or Swahili, its not African Hip-hop. It is just Hip-hop in general but in Sheng.

The beat doesn't say it is African." In ten years she hopes to own a band, do more live performances and to have "created that unique sound that everyone is looking forward to be the Kenyan sound". She also told me she wants to be very strong on her message. She said, "I see myself doing even more conscious Hip-hop because the older we get, the wiser we get". Nazizi said she was very particular and strong about her message on women and youth empowerment which has led her to be appointed as the ambassador for State of the African Union (SOTU) for their campaign, 'Be The Voice for Africa.' SOTU is a coalition of 10 civil society organizations that seek to promote active citizenship, effective national governance and the realization of the fundamental freedoms and human rights.

Almost five hours later, we completed phase three interview. We were both tired and hungry but she could not eat because it was Ramadan. But she told the house help to serve me some chai and snacks. We began to talk casually sharing stories about motherhood and marriage. Then out of nowhere she she asked me if she could do my nails because it was her favorite hobby. It was a humbling request and so I said yes. Soon, it came my time to leave. It turned out that she was also going to Kitengela town to watch a performance by a band comprised of members of the 12 Tribes of Israel. She called a Tuk Tuk taxi to come pick us up from her house. At Kitengela town, I bind her goodbye as I boarded a Matatu back to the Nairobi city center.

Meet Abbas Kubbaff

My first contact with Abbas was via a phone call because I did not have his email address. Our conversation was hard because of the noisy background on his side. However, I tried to explain as best as I could what my research was about and he agreed to participate. I

asked him to pick a location for the interview and he chose a restaurant inside the Nakumatt Prestige Mall located at Ngong Road. The day of the scheduled interview, I arrived at our meeting location on time. I waited for an hour, and there was no sign of Abbas. I called and he was *mteja*, he could not be reached. I suspected that he had turned off his phone or his battery was dead and would probably get back to me. After two hours, I called him again but got an automated message from the service provider saying, "samahani nambari ya simu uliyopiga, haifanyi kazi kwa sasa." I was disappointed to hear the number was no longer in service. I decided to go home.

A week later, I decided to call Abbas again. He answered the phone and told me he had lost his phone the previous week and that is why he was *mteja*. We rescheduled the interview and this time he chose a new location—Sub-Saharan Studios along Riara Road, off Ngong road. I arrived early as usual. First, to avoid getting caught up in the city traffic or worse, being late for my interview. At the studio, the staff was friendly but there was no sign of Abbas. The studio was busy as artists streamed in and out. I decided to go sit outside at the front porch and wait for him. Some people joined me outside and they seemed to be waiting for someone as well. Finally, Abbas showed up. He went around happily greeting everybody outside. It turned out everybody was waiting for him.

I introduced myself and then added, "Umechelewa! You are late.
"Nimechelewa kwasababu nilikuwa nakutafutia hii," he responded handing me a flyer. He told me he will be hosting an open mic event at K1 Klub house where new artists were participating in freestyling battles among other activities. The flyer read *Choma Nite!* Underneath was the

sub-title *Head to Head Battle of the Mic.* He invited me to the event. I noticed some of the people I was waiting with them were becoming impatient. It turned out, they were waiting to interview him, and according to his schedule, they were to go first. Although our interview was two hours late already, I decided to let them go first.

I could tell the interviewers were not from Kenya but I was not sure what country they were from. I overheard them saying they represent a particular media house or radio station but I could not catch the name. They began by asking him what his name Abbas Kubaff meant. He said it means a "social misfit." "That is important to know," I said to myself and wrote it down. The interviewers were conducting their interview in English which thankfully only lasted 10-15 minutes. Soon, Abbas gave me a signal to start my interview. I decided to continue interviewing him in English. We started phase one interview. There was a lot of background noise as artists and visitors walked in and out of the studio. It was also lunch break at Riara School, which is adjacent to the studio. Clearly, there was lot of distraction around us but I realized I could not do much about it. It was also waaaay too risky to even think of re-scheduling the interview. It was now or never.

Following the interview protocol, we began with Abbas' personal and social-economic background. He told me that his stage name is Abbas aka Doobeez (real name Andrew Kabiru Karuku). He was born in Nairobi, specifically in Eastleigh Estate. He has also lived in several estates including Langata, Dandora, Buru Buru, Karen and Nairobi West but mostly in Kariobagi South. He obtained his elementary and secondary level education in schools located in Dandora and Kariobagi South estates. For his tertiary education, he went to the Buru Buru institute of Fine

Arts (BIFA) where he earned a diploma in visual arts. As we continued our conversation, I learned that he was a visual artist before he became a Hip-hop artist. He said, "I was interested in visual arts as soon as I was born because my dad was professional artist. So I grew up into it. It was normal because it was in me... I started very early before I even started to school and stuff. The first lessons I learned were how to mix paint and water colors and play with them. So that grew in me since I was a toddler." He promised to show me some of his artwork at the end of the interview, which I later came to understand, are very connected to his Hip-hop work.

I then asked him to share how he became a hip-hop artist. He told me he grew up listening to different kinds of music. His parents travelled around the world for work and brought with them a collection of music by artists like Yuossou N'dior, Bob Marley, Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, ABBA, The Roots among others. With the emergence of Hip-hop, he says he started listening to DJ Cool Herc mix, African Bambaata, MC Amos, Snoop Dog, Talibu Kweli among others. Over time, he said he became interested in "more of conscious music because it kinda gave me an escape route to stop thinking if I had any problems. I just wanted to escape from all the depression you find in the ghetto." In listening to Abbas' story, you could tell he has had it rough in the Nairobi ghetto but it also shaped how he became an artist. For example, Abbas was a founding member of the K-South rapping/performing group comprised of his elder brother KC and rapper Bamboo. The name "K-South" honors their hood/ghetto Kariobagi South. Together as a group they produced their two very successful albums, 'Nairoberry' and 'Nairobism.' Abbas career started mid 90's when he started participating in freestyling battles in popular clubs houses like K1, K2 and Florida 2000 along with other pioneer artists.

In the second phase interview, I asked him to pick a song that he felt best represents who he is as an artist. He picked the song "Mchizi." About this song, he said, "I think I wrote myself—everything I have ever felt, every emotion…it basically talks about the summary of my life. When I was born, where I was born, what happened and you know... I was exposed to the bad boys but I came out of it." I asked him several questions related to the process of creating the song (which he says took 7 years to compose and produce). We then talked about languages involved in writing the song and he said he used Swahili because he wanted to represent his Kenyan culture and Sheng because he wanted represent the hood of Nairobi. These, he said were the main languages he used to compose his music. He further added that he uses English only when collaborating with artists who are not Kenyans, or when he is performing outside the country. He gave me an example of collaborative project he did with several international artists while he was in Germany between 2011 and 2013. We did not go into details about this project but from his website http://abbaskubaff.com/, I learned that the project was called "From Berlin to Nairobi (BLNRB)," where he worked with several German bands like Jahcoozi, Modeselektor and Teichmann Brothers. I also learned that he has performed internationally in countries like Germany, Finland and Switzerland.

In the last phase interview, I asked him questions that helped him reflect on the meaning of his experience as a Hip-hop artist and how he makes connections between his work, other artists, his communities, and his life. He revealed that his vision is to create not just conscious Hip-hop music but also music that is soulful and emotional, "organic," "appeals, soothes and elevates the spirit". Like Jua Cali and Nazizi, he wants to continue creating Hip-hop music that incorporates African music elements. He says his other goal is to "go back to K-South, the hood

that I represent in Nairobi and maybe build a school or a hospital because I know how it is over there...I would want to give back." He also hopes to engage in activism work to ensure that subjects like art and music are not removed from the Kenyan school curriculum—something the Kenyan government is considering

His committed to help the youth and less privileged discover and develop their talents became apparent when I observed him emcee the Open Mic event at K1 Klub house at Ojijo Road, Parklands. Aspiring artists showcased their talents through free styling battles and won numerous prizes. It was at this event that I was able to observe his "language in use". While my interview was conducted in English, in this event he was using Swahili and Sheng. Besides moderating/mciing the event, Abbas performed some of his famous hits like "Chapaa," "Nairoberry" among others. The crowd challenged him to freestyle, which he willingly did. I took a 6-minute video of his performance on my phone, which I later transcribed and become part of my field notes. In one of his freestyles, he critiqued the Kenyan political leaders for poor governance, which has led to economic inequality in the country. He called out members of parliament for demanding to be paid ridiculously high salaries when the country's economy was not doing well:

Wambunge wanataka mshahara ya mamilia
Waanzishe [biashara] hapa hadi kwenye pavilia
Ndio walipe Taxi, mimi nilipe taxes
Hata uulinze mwanachi bana hiyo ni nonsense
Hati ana Benz, na rims na rangi expensive

Holiday za Hawaii bila expenses

Huku nchi haina kitu jamani haimake sense

Watu innocent wanapewa sentence

The crowd cheered him on. He paused to catch his breath then asked, “Niendelee ama nimechafua recondi zaidi? he was asked the crowd if he should continue dissing them [those in power] or stop?

“Endelea!” the crowd urged him to continue.

“Niachilie ama niendelee!”

“Endelea!” The crowd screamed.

“Niachilie ama niendelee!”

“Endelea!

He resumed freestyling:

Mimi huwekanga mastanza

Pamoja tu vismart

Na rhyme kama nguo zangu siwenzi mismatch

Kwa track niko stadium, siwenzi mismatch

Watu wananisema sana, wananidisturb

Ati wanangojea Kubaff atoe disstrack

Mimi niko busy biashara mnanidisturb

Container, maburungo mingi nimedispatch

Muziki nasambaza kote nishadisperse

Abbass nikibass wanasema ninadisperse

Personal life yangu non-of-ya business

The crowd cheered him louder this time! Then he asked the crowd to give a shout out to the event sponsors, Farmers Choice, a multinational company that produces and distributes pork products.

"Nikisema farmers, mnasema choice!

"Farmers!" He shouts.

"Choice!" The crowd responds.

Although I did not get enough time to capture more information about Abbas through the interview or by observing him in this event, I later visited his website to learn more about him. I learned that he was not longer part of the K-South group. In 2005 he embarked on his solo career and released his solo album "Angabanga" that won him the Changuo La Teeniez (CHAT) awards in 2007, the Kisima awards in 2008 for Best Male Hip-Hop Artist. In 2010, Abbas released his second solo album "Mister Abbas" where he collaborated with artists such as Nazizi, Prezzo, Cannibal, Wyre, Nikki and DNG. In 2014, he released his third Solo album Ghettoholic where guest artists B-Man, Apondi and Harry Kimani, Bamboo are featured.

This research experience in Kenya while difficult was worthwhile. My interaction with Jua Cali, Nazizi and Abbas in different times and spaces allowed me to build important relatioships and understand them not only as artists but as everyday Kenyans. This is just the beginning of a relationship which I hope to continue sustaining and honoring.

APPENDIX B: Interview protocol

Phase one interview: Background

- When were you born?
- Where were you born?
- Where did you first live; what other places did you live?
- How do you describe your race/ethnicity?
- How would you describe your social class (working class, lower middle, middle, upper middle?
- When were your parents born?
- Where were your parents born?
- Where have your parents lived? Where do they live now?
- When were your grandparents born?
- Where did you go to grade school/high school/college? (names, locations, size of graduating classes)?
- Where did your parents go to school? Grade school? High school? College? locations? Public/private?
- How much school did your parents attend? Grade school? High school? College? If they have college degrees, what are they in?
- What kind of music did you listen to while growing up?
- What music programs/ radio channels did you listen to or watch?
- Who are some of your favorite musicians or songs?
- Describe how often you listened to music?
- Whom did you listen it with (family, friends, peers etc)?
- What kind of music did your parents listen to?
- How did you become a Hip-hop artist?

Phase two interview: Practices

- How would you describe your Hip-hop music?
- Why did you choose the artifact/song you brought today? Why, of all your songs, why did you choose this one? Is this the thing/song you think best represents the artist you are or the artist you'd like to be?
- Tell us the process of creating this song?
- What is the likely place for you to perform this song?
- Give as an example of a situation where you would NOT perform this song?
- Is it possible that somebody could listen this song and get the wrong idea about who you are as person or as an artist? What might they conclude that would be wrong?
- Were there other songs you ALMOST decided to bring but didn't? What are they?
- Do you think your fans would predict that you would chose the song you brought today to represent your present self? What would you think THEY would choose for you?
- Why did you write this song?
- Tell us about something you remember, a specific event that happened in your past in relation to this song?
- Describe the process of creating this song.

- Who else was involved in composing this song?
- What languages did you use to compose it?
- Why these languages?
- Which Hip-hop artists do you listen to?

Phase three interview: Identity

- What kind of Hip-hop artists do you see yourself becoming in the future?
- What are your plans, hopes, or expectations in 5-10 years?
- What kind of music do you imagine creating/composing in the future?
- What people (artists) do you see yourself collaborating/working with in the future?
- When you think about the three interviews we have done, do you think they capture your complete story as an Hiphop artist?
- What else do you want to say?

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