Cambridge Books Online

http://ebooks.cambridge.org/

Language, Youth and Identity in the 21st Century

Linguistic Practices across Urban Spaces

Edited by Jacomine Nortier, Bente A. Svendsen

Book DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896

Online ISBN: 9781139061896

Hardback ISBN: 9781107016989

Chapter

13 - Urban youth speech styles in Kenya and the Netherlands pp. 271-289

Chapter DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019

Cambridge University Press

13 Urban youth speech styles in Kenya and the Netherlands

Margreet Dorleijn, Maarten Mous and Jacomine Nortier

Introduction

In this chapter, we compare urban youth speech styles (UYSSs) in Nairobi, Kenya (Kiessling and Mous 2004), and in the western parts of the Netherlands as documented around the major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht (see Nortier and Dorleijn 2013 and references there). This chapter is a first attempt at a Northern European/ African cross-continental comparison.

We definite UYSS as the linguistic practices of (mostly) young people in multilingual urban environments. There are large historical, socioeconomic and demographic differences between Kenyan and Dutch UYSSs, and the linguistic input in both environments differs greatly. Nevertheless, the conditions under which UYSSs emerge are comparable in at least two respects: (1) they are the creation of multilingual adolescents in urban environments, and (2) they emerge as a stylistic option, rather than out of communicative need (contrary to pidgins, for example).

Therefore, a comparison of the two UYSS situations in these widely differing parts of the world may contribute to our understanding of exactly how linguistic and extra-linguistic factors contribute to the linguistic characteristics of UYSSs.

We will proceed with the following questions in mind:

(i) What are the linguistic, functional and social similarities and differences between Dutch and Kenyan UYSSs? This question is empirically oriented.

(ii) To what extent can a UYSS be considered a 'universal' language-contact phenomenon that may emerge everywhere similar circumstances can be found (comparable to the way in which e.g. pidgins are claimed to arise)?[1]

[1] But clearly different from pidgins in the sense that these emerged out of communicative need and not as a stylistic enrichment – here we are inclined to disagree with e.g. Kotsinas (1988*a*) who claimed that UYSSs could best be classified as pidgins.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

In the first section of this chapter, we describe specific lexical and grammatical features of UYSSs in the Netherlands and Kenya, followed by a description of their functional characteristics. We build on earlier work on UYSSs in the two countries (e.g. Dorleijn and Nortier 2009; Kiessling and Mous 2004; Nortier and Dorleijn 2008). In the final section, we take stock of the commonalities and differences between UYSSs in the two countries, return to a discussion of the questions above and suggest relevant dimensions that could be referred to in a systematic comparison of UYSSs on a larger scale.

General

Dutch UYSSs are spoken in large urban areas in the west of the Netherlands. They are especially documented in the larger urban areas (see Dorleijn and Nortier 2009 and references there). There are impressionistic observations that UYSSs are used in less urbanized areas of the Netherlands as well, but this has not yet been studied systematically.

On the African continent, too, UYSSs are mostly to be found in urban areas. Africa's urban centres are growing at an immense rate, and UYSSs have arisen in several fast-growing cities, such as Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Nairobi (Kenya), Douala (Cameroon), Cairo (Egypt), Johannesburg (South Africa) and Kinshasa (DR Congo), as well as others (Kiessling and Mous 2004). A growing body of research has been conducted on these UYSSs in recent years (Barasa 2010; Ferrari 2009; Githinji 2009; Ogechi 2002; Rudd 2008; Samper 2002, all on Sheng; Hurst 2008 on Cape Town youth language; Mulumbwa 2009 on Lubumbashi Ndoubil). In this chapter we discuss Sheng of Nairobi and Kenya UYSSs in some detail. Other African UYSSs are compared and contrasted to Sheng.

Sheng is the UYSS of Nairobi and most other major cities in Kenya, but it is less prominent in Mombasa and along the coast (Beck 2010: 22). There is a competing UYSS in Kenya, called Engsh, which is socially and linguistically different from Sheng. Sheng is used extensively in songs and rap and in Kenyan popular youth literature (see Rinkanya 2011).

Definition

We define Dutch UYSS as the linguistic practices of young people from diverse ethnic peer groups in informal contexts, in which lexical and/or non-lexical non-Dutch material is mixed into Dutch. The origin of the non-Dutch lexical material is found in heritage languages spoken in

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

the Netherlands, such as Sranan, Berber, Arabic, Turkish, Papiamentu,[2] Cape Verdian Creole and (American) English.

There is no obvious rule or standard as to how many non-native Dutch elements must be used for a UYSS utterance to be considered as such. In some cases or circumstances only one or two words, or an occasional pronunciation that deviates from the standard is enough to mark a certain stretch of speech as a UYSS. In other cases, full sentences or larger stretches of speech contain several lexical, prosodic, phonetic or grammatical elements that mark them as a UYSS. One of the important functions of Dutch UYSSs is that they are used as markers of ethnic, religious and/or cultural identity (see references in Nortier and Dorleijn 2013).

Sheng started out as a means for youth to mark their urban identity rather than an ethnic identity. The urban identity obviates ethnic identity since ethnic identity is associated with rural culture and with the past. For speakers of Sheng, being young and part of the big city are strong markers of identity. Also, Githinji (2009: 42) argues that the youth did not master their ethnic language well enough to use it as a solidarity language, and needed Sheng for that function, Swahili being too formal. The fact that Sheng includes elements from Kenya's vernacular languages does not make Sheng a vehicle of a specific ethnic identity, nor is there any ethnic group with a particularly high prestige among the youth.

Linguistic characteristics

The base language

A distinction between several groups of Dutch UYSSs can be made. A variety of styles can be observed, including clearly distinct ones such as *Straattaal* ('street language') with lexical material from Sranan and other heritage languages, and a style characterized by the use of a Moroccan accent (Cornips, de Rooij and Reizevoort 2006; Nortier and Dorleijn 2008). What all variations of Dutch UYSSs have in common is that (colloquial) Dutch is the base-language, adorned with all kinds of features ranging from prosodic features, accent (phonetic features) to lexicon. Very typical is the inclusion of (deliberate) deviations from Dutch grammar, in which second-language acquisition features are stylized and exaggerated. Another common feature is prosody. UYSSs

[2] Since most Antilleans in the Netherlands come from Curacao, we call their language Papiamentu instead of Papiamento, as the language is called on Aruba and Bonaire.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

do not necessarily all show the same prosodic features, but each form of UYSS deviates in some way from standard Dutch, for example by a higher pitch or a different rhythmic pattern. However, a detailed phonetic study has not yet been carried out. Prosodic features are distinctive markers for all Dutch UYSSs; often a mix of prosodic and lexical as well as grammatical characteristics can be observed. For the Dutch (and, for that matter, for other Germanic, Northern European countries), it is not an issue which base language to use, since in these European countries only one language is the socially dominant language that serves the function of base language.

Also, Sheng, and other UYSSs on the African continent, are based on the most dominant spoken lingua franca. It is essential in this respect to compare the UYSS to the informal spoken variety of the dominant language of the city, which itself often deviates from the formal standard language. Some ways in which Sheng deviates from Standard Swahili may be attributed to informal, spoken Kenyan urban Swahili.

Nevertheless, the base language issue is more complicated on the African continent than in Europe. In some African countries, two dominant languages compete: an indigenous language and a 'colonial' language. Which language is selected as the base for a UYSS may differ. Sheng, for example, is based on Swahili, one of the national languages of Kenya, spoken as a first language along the coast and as a lingua franca in the rest of the country. At the same time, another UYSS is widespread: Engsh. In Engsh the base language is English, which is the second national language of Kenya next to Swahili and equally important.

Sheng deviates from Swahili in its lexicon. Several words are taken from English, Luo, Kikuyu and other languages. Many word forms are deliberately changed or manipulated Swahili as well as borrowed words. In addition, Sheng speakers creatively change the meaning of both Swahili and imported words, often in a playful way (see below). In Engsh, more or less the same happens, but there the base language is English. The functions and connotations of Engsh versus Sheng differ enormously (see below for a discussion), and the difference is determined by the base languages. By contrast, in Dutch UYSSs the difference is not on the level of the base language but rather the inserted material (e.g. Moroccan insertions in one UYSS, Sranan in another) that determines the difference.

In other parts of Africa comparable things happen. Iscamtho is based on urban Zulu and not Standard Zulu, Nouchi is based on Français populaire and not on standard French and so on. In the case of Sheng, the base language is an indigenous language; the same is true for Congo's Kiyankee, based on Lingala, and for present-day Iscamtho in Soweto,

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

which is based on Zulu. In some countries the base is the language of the former colonizer or a derivation thereof. In those instances the UYSS has an extra psychological function of appropriating the language of the former colonizer: French in Côte d'Ivoire and in Cameroon. Most interesting are the situations in which the choice of the base language becomes part of the linguistic negotiation inherent in the UYSS. Ndoubil of the Congo is based on Lingala in Kinshasa and the west of the country but on Swahili in the east of the country (Goyvaerts 1988), while the term Ndoubil is used for both. In South Africa the name Tsotsitaal is used both for the Afrikaans-based UYSS once spoken in Sophiatown, and for any of the South African UYSSs, regardless of their language base (*cf.* Chapter 6). In fact, Aycard (2008) reports that, in Soweto, current Iscamtho can be spoken using either Zulu or Sotho. It is the deviant lexicon that is considered essential for the UYSS. Which language is the base language may be determined by several considerations: it may be the appropriation of the colonizers' language, or it may simply be the most convenient option at a given point, where in fact the choice of a base language does not seem to be an important feature of the UYSS in question, or, by contrast, as in the case of Sheng and Engsh, the choice of the base language is an identity statement.

Phonetic and phonological features

The most striking features of (spoken) Moroccan-flavoured UYSSs are pronunciation and intonation patterns. Nortier and Dorleijn (2008) discuss several factors that may contribute to the dominance (and popularity) of the Moroccan accent rather than a Turkish or other heritage accent. One factor seems to be that the Moroccan community is in an advanced stage of transition to Dutch, which leads to the creation of their own version of Dutch. In the Turkish community, on the other hand, Turkish is maintained, making the need for their own version of Dutch less urgent. Another factor is the very strong covert prestige associated with Moroccans and their languages in the Netherlands (Nortier and Dorleijn 2008).

The pronunciation of /z/ is a salient characteristic of Moroccan Dutch. This sound is more voiced than in Dutch as it is commonly spoken. Moreover, it is geminated (see Hinskens 2011).[3] Other such characteristics include Dutch /g/ [x], which is sharper, some schwas are not pronounced, and /r/, which is pronounced as an alveolar trill [r],

[3] We refer to the varieties of the western part of the country, around the major cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

whereas in general Dutch /r/ can be realized in a multitude of ways, among them as an uvular trill or approximant. Another feature of Moroccan Dutch is that /s/ as the first sound in a consonant cluster is pronounced as [ʃ] written as sh in the examples below, which are taken from the Internet.

(1) Stoer hoor Lois vuitton tasje. Nou ik heb een TAS.. dus tazzz. . .[4]
Tough man Louis Vuitton bag . . . Well I have a BAG.. so tazzzzz
[tazz is 'shit!' in Moroccan, and sounds like Dutch 'tas' (bag)]

(2) (. . .) als je voor shlet aangezien wilt worden (. . .)[5]
if you want to be considered a slut
[initial /s/ pronounced as [ʃ]]

(3) je bent gewoon te ergg voor woorden.
you are just too bad for words
[ergg (erg → bad) with a long and sharp [x]]

On *YouTube*[6] *Relschoppers* ('troublemakers') have been interviewed, a group of 13 and 14-year-old Moroccan and Turkish rappers in Utrecht. Most members of the group have a Moroccan background, and they use an accent that is recognizable as Moroccan. Strikingly, one of them, Nihat (or *Kleine Turk*, '*Little Turk*'), uses the same accent, on top of some Turkish characteristics (a palatalized /k/, for example). These Turkish-based features are less prominent when he is rapping.

Pronunciation or phonetic features such as pitch are less important in Sheng. No general pronunciation markers such as a Moroccan rhythm in Dutch UYSS have been observed in Africa, apart from observations such as that Nouchi should be spoken quickly, and similar general qualities for other UYSSs. To a limited extent, broad pronunciation markers have been observed in Nairobi where Engsh deviated from Sheng by favouring closed syllables; where Sheng sometimes replaces *z* by *s* (both Kikuyu and Luo lack the *s*/*z* distinction) and by adding *o* at the edges of the word which is reminiscent of Luo. Nevertheless, these phenomena are never aimed at creating a style element by copying an ethnically defined feature. The lack of *s*/*z* distinction does find its origin in the Swahili of second-language speakers, but is taken up as a deliberate stylistic feature and does not occur in instances of unconscious mistakes.

[4] www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7KlwBDfuEc.
[5] We found (2) and (3) on www.forums.marokko.nl.
[6] www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMdo3yWnFoY

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

Lexical, morphological and grammatical features

For the Dutch examples, we start out with a few examples of typical lexical features:

(4) 1 woord voor deze pokoe : Gruwelijk[7]
one word for this song [Sranan]: fantastic[8]

(5) ik heb geen pools nodig dus ga loesoe
I don't need Polish so just go away [Sranan]

(6) tfoee jullie hebben (...) nog nooit in jilla gezeten he?
shit [Berber] you have never in jail [Sranan] been huh?

(4)–(6) were all found as comments on the aforementioned *YouTube* video[9] of *Relschoppers*. The lexical items that mark the utterances as UYSS are underlined. In (4), the Dutch word *gruwelijk* has changed meaning; originally it meant 'horrible', but in UYSS it means 'fantastic', 'great'. Interestingly, it is often the case in Dutch UYSSs that negative terms indicate an opposite (positive) meaning. As can be seen in the examples, UYSS elements have both Moroccan (in this case Berber) and Sranan roots, even within the same utterance (in (6)). The following examples are comments on a video by a Surinamese-Dutch rapper called *Keizer*.

(7) Chille track. Chille pokoe.
chill track. Chill song [Sranan]

(8)

ZO	VEEL	LOBBI	VOOR	JOU	KEIZER♥♥
so	*much*	*love [Sranan]*	*for*	*you*	*Keizer [name of rapper, meaning 'Emperor']*

[7] In this chapter, most examples from Dutch UYSSs are drawn from the Internet. The Internet is a rich source of UYSS, specifically in comments on *YouTube* videos, from which the examples below are drawn. Computer-mediated communication is increasingly important among adolescents (see e.g. Danet and Herring 2007). There is evidence that written language on the Internet can be compared to spoken languages in some crucial respects such as spontaneity (see Dorleijn and Nortier 2009 and references there for additional arguments on the unmonitored status of specific Internet data). Obviously, it is not possible to study paralinguistic patterns such as speed, rhythm and pitch in written texts but, interestingly, UYSS users frequently reflect salient phonological characteristics – such as their pronunciation – in a creative manner, examples of which were discussed in (1)–(3). In examples throughout the article, the original texts from the Internet are used, including typos and other errors. Discussed items are underlined by the authors of this chapter.

[8] Further translations are only provided when the glosses do not suffice.

[9] www.youtube.com/watch?v=myxTPAVEpdU.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

There were more than 2,400 reactions to this video by *Keizer*.[10] Among them, however, no instances of UYSS in which Arabic or Berber was used were found; most of the elements that characterize the comments as UYSS are English and Sranan. This seems to confirm the field observation that Moroccan (Berber/Arabic) elements are not typically used by people with a Surinamese background.

Specific Moroccan lexical elements are first and foremost used by people of Moroccan background, but also by those with other linguistic backgrounds who wish to be associated with them. Conversely, Sranan lexical items seem to be more widespread, and are used by all UYSS speakers.

Users of UYSS have stated in interviews that one of the core characteristics of their speech is that the lexicon changes very quickly. A prominent Dutch rapper and UYSS user observes that one characteristic of 'real *straattaal*' is that in every exchange with a peer, you will hear a word that you don't know (Willy Wartaal p.c.).

In (9), again from the comments on the *Relschoppers* video, two words from Arabic are used: *gatar* [xatar] ('cool') literally means dangerous and is integrated into Dutch with the Dutch superlative ending *-ste* added. The Arabic *a sahbi* means 'my friend'. *De jaar* is Standard Dutch: *het jaar*. Instead of neuter, the common gender definite article *de* is used. Overgeneralization of the common gender is a common L2 feature, but also serves as a stylistic marker among ('wannabe') non-native speakers of Dutch.

(9)	gatarste	muziek	van	de	jaar	a	sahbi!
	most dangerous ('coolest')	*music*	*of*	*the*	*year*	*my*	*friend*

Finally, example (10) features all of the stylistic elements of UYSS (i.e. lexical, phonological and grammatical). Again, this is a comment on the *Relschoppers* video.

(10)	Schijt	aan	*die*	*haters*	*mattie*.	Iedereen	heeft	mening	tog?
	Shit	*to*	*the*	*haters*	*my friend.*	*Everyone*	*has*	*(an) opinion,*	*right?*

	maar	houdt	die	kk	reacties	voorje.	Swa	die	liedje	is
	but	*keep*	*those*	*cancer*	*reactions*	*to you.*	*Friend*	*that*	*song*	*is*

	geniaal	luister	het	24/7
	brilliant	*listen*	*(to) it*	*24/7*

Dutch *haters* is the same as in English and is used for 'negative people'. *Mattie* is from *mati*, 'friend' in Sranan. *Mening* ('opinion') lacks the

[10] www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ciEPOmvs8s.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

indefinite article 'een'. *Tog* (spelled '*toch*' in standard Dutch) is possibly used to show the hard /g/ pronunciation. *Kanker* ('cancer') (of which *kk* is an abbreviation) is often used in UYSSs. It is used as an intensifier. *Swa* is Papiamentu, meaning 'friend'. *Die liedje* (standard Dutch *dat liedje*) is an instance of overgeneralization of common gender.

In a Sheng discourse, every utterance will have several points of difference with Swahili. In (11) we present an example from instant messaging (Barasa 2010: 260). In this example, the construction in which the verb is repeated in the infinitive for emphasis is itself Swahili (or general Bantu); the actual verb, however, is not. The past marker is taken from English, but the main lexical item *hata* ('fail') is uniquely Sheng. The use of an English tense marker in a Swahili construction makes it difficult to establish the frame language in this example or the matrix language if it is considered code-switching.

(11)	they	hata–d	ku-hata
	3pl.E	fail.Sh-past.E	inf.Sw-fail.Sh
	'They failed completely.'		

A number of concepts have several possible special Sheng words. In the typical domains of the adolescent street vocabulary, replacement is fast, and many competing word forms exist. The rapid replacement is obviously typical of youth language in general (Ogechi 2005:353), though the need for replacement in Sheng may be particularly urgent because of its double nature as anti-language ('deep' Sheng) and as a modern city language (common Sheng). Githinji (2009: 69) reports 45 different words for 'girl', 30 for 'money' and 22 for 'thief'. These words are within the popular domains of youth language, but also a common word like 'to eat' has nine variants (Ferrari 2009: 185).

The common strategies to render Swahili Sheng are illustrated in Table 13.1. We present examples from different periods and different sources, some of which are no longer fashionable. Words are taken from other languages, such as American English. The fascination with American youth culture and its hip-hop scene is a source of inspiration for Sheng.

Several authors provide examples of completely new words coined in Sheng, though it is possible that their etymology has become obscure. Ogechi (2005: 342) mentions twelve examples, including *deepa* ('head teacher') and *kerende* ('crowd of people').

Grammar is generally not manipulated in Sheng. Ferrari (2009: 150ff) mentions a number of grammatical features in which Sheng deviates from Standard Swahili, but most of them are also common in varieties

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

Table 13.1. *Sheng: linguistic strategies.*

Loans
kam ('come') from English (Githiora 2002: 166)
lola ('watch') from Giriama (Githiora 2002: 166)
ngiri ('one thousand') from Kikuyu (Ogechi 2005: 342)
unbwogable ('not scared') from Luo *buogo* ('be shaken') (Barasa 2010: 58)

Loan translations
Tarehe, which is Swahili for '(calender) date', is also used in the sense of a romantic engagement in Sheng after the English model (Bosire 2009: 80).
Ma-hewa, plural form of Swahili *hewa* ('air') is used in the meaning of 'music' after the English model of *radio air*.

Semantic manipulations
Swahili *waka* ('light up, glow') is used for 'to be drunk' in Sheng.
Kosovo is used in Sheng to mean 'a dangerous place' (from the war in Kosovo).

Semantic manipulations: antonyms
m-see from Swahili *m-zee* ('old man') is used in Sheng for 'youth'.
Swahili *mchafu* ('dirty, unkempt person') is used in Sheng in the sense of 'to be very good at'.

Form manipulations
m-see ('youth') from Swahili *mzee* (z>s) ('old man')
dika ('card') from English 'card', *kadi* in the Swahilisized form and *dika* after reversal of syllables (Ogechi 2005: 340)
daaroo ('class') truncated from Swahili *darasa* (Ogechi 2005: 341)
diiroo ('window') truncated from Swahili *dirisha* (Ogechi 2005: 341)
presoo ('president') truncated from En. (Ogechi 2005: 341)

of Swahili as a second language. It is difficult to ascertain whether these features are deliberately used as emblems for Sheng, or simply reflect common informal urban Swahili. Some, however, cannot be explained as learners' mistakes, such as the use of the locative marker -*ko* as the general verb 'to be' including usages of existence, identification and quality, an example of which is *u-ko mgonjwa* ('you are ill'). Another remarkable grammatical feature is the reduplication of the infinitival prefix *ku*- with monosyllabic verb stems to express intensity, as in *ku-ku-la* ('to eat a lot').

The pronunciation and grammar of Sheng do not differ greatly from standard Swahili. The occasional non-standard Swahili element in Sheng syntax, such as the suffix -*ang* for plural events, is a widespread phenomenon in Kenya's Bantu languages and quite common in the spoken Swahili outside the traditional coastal ethnic Swahili areas (Bosire 2009: 78).

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

African UYSSs compared

In many respects, the other African UYSSs are comparable to Sheng. They make use of roughly the same set of manipulations to create style as was observed in Kiessling and Mous (2004) and has been confirmed by subsequent research. They each have their own names: Nouchi (Abidjan), Kindoubil, now Kiyankee (Kinshasa), Iscamtho, Esikasie, Tsotsitaal (Johannesburg),[11] Camfranglais and many variant names in Cameroon (de Feral 2009). The African UYSSs all show various specimens of form manipulation. Verlan seems more common in francophone West Africa, but javanais does occur in Sheng in the form of the insertion of a syllable *sV* (V is a copy of the preceding vowel). Truncation and the addition of sounds or syllables with no other function than to mark the form as UYSS are very common. Such added material is often [o:], but in Nairobi Engsh also [z], which originates in an extended use of the English plural marker.

Semantic manipulations are very common in all African UYSSs in the form of using a word for its opposite meaning, but also many ludic deviations. The combinations of semantic and (series of) formal manipulations make it often very difficult to reconstruct the etymology of a word. There are few or no real grammatically deviant features in the African UYSSs.

All African UYSSs are widespread among youth, and constitute the major language in informal language use on university campuses. Local music production and radio stations are the main media that spread the UYSSs. African UYSSs – like Sheng – all deviate quite radically from their bases; sometimes only a few features may suffice to recognize an utterance as UYSS. This is a correlate of the fact that these practices are best characterized as styles. One can express a certain style by making abundant or sporadic use of the style elements. Texts with only a few features of the UYSS can already be recognized as such. In the absence of extensive corpora, it is difficult to establish whether UYSSs differ in the degree to which they deviate from their bases. Nonetheless, we have the impression that the deviation from the base languages is considerable in all African UYSSs.

Social context, ideologies and practices

In the Netherlands, UYSSs play an important role in expressing group solidarity and a certain non-Dutch urban identity. In this section we discuss some factors that play a role in identity construction.

[11] Mesthrie (2008) has suggested the term *tsotsitaal* for any instance of UYSS in South Africa, and *Tsotsitaal* with the capital T for the original Tsotsitaal of Sophiatown (*cf.* Chapter 6, this volume).

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

Dutch UYSSs are used by young people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. For them, the use of a UYSS is an essential part of their subculture. Speakers of UYSSs associate themselves mostly with rap, hip hop and related scenes and music styles. UYSSs are used deliberately and in specific circumstances. Speakers choose whether or not to use it. Notorious L2 features, such as the overgeneralization of common gender, are stylized and exaggerated to a large extent. Furthermore, the UYSS is none of the users' L1 (Nortier and Dorleijn 2008).

Speakers with a Surinamese, Antillean or Cape Verdian background tend to use more Sranan and Papiamentu than Berber or Arabic (or even no Berber or Arabic at all); speakers with a Moroccan background, but also those with Turkish-Dutch and Bosnian-Dutch backgrounds, will use more Arabic or Berber than Sranan (Cornips, de Rooij and Reizevoort 2006; Nortier and Dorleijn 2008). An element of 'not being native Dutch', of having a migrant background, plays a role in the use of Dutch UYSSs. Apart from Dutch and English, migrant languages tend to serve as resources from which to draw. But to say that UYSSs each mark a specific ethnic identity would be an oversimplification. As mentioned above, one group of UYSSs is mainly used by speakers with a Caribbean or Cape Verdian background, and another group mainly by speakers with a Moroccan, Turkish, Bosnian or more generally speaking a Muslim background. Between UYSSs that are mostly Sranan-inspired and those that are mostly Moroccan-inspired, factors such as race or ethnicity therefore clearly play a role. Within groups, however, other values may be important, for example religion (in the Dutch context, Islam is particularly relevant and salient). Although there is to our knowledge no research on the topic, it is possible that for those of Caribbean background, a common history of slavery may be important, as it indeed is in the Caribbean (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985). In any case, there is much overlapping in the diverse Dutch UYSSs.

In addition to UYSSs where Moroccan or Sranan elements dominate, there is impressionistic evidence that there are UYSSs with other ethnic flavours.

UYSSs are in-group varieties. The linguistic domain is leisure time and 'liminal moments' (Rampton 1997): stretches of time spent with peers, in which structure falls away, such as in the classroom when the teacher leaves for periods of time.

In addition to a non-Dutch, urban and hip-hop identity, the use of UYSSs is associated with toughness. It is not only a way to express identity and belonging to a group, but also rebellion against the establishment and mainstream culture. At the same time, various activities by both users and non-users of UYSSs aim at the advancement of

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

standardization. Explicit efforts to create a place in public space are made. For example, several *straattaal* word lists have circulated on the Internet (see e.g. www.Straattaalwoordenboek.nl); the Gospel of Matthew has been translated into *straattaal* (www.straatbijbel.nl); comedians with a Moroccan background make efforts to gentrify the Moroccan-flavoured UYSS varieties (e.g. www.salaheddine.nl); and several authors have published books using UYSS elements (e.g. Aarab 2006). Both users and non-users are involved in spreading *straattaal* outside the group of its original users. It has reached the domain of television commercials, and in 2011 an important newspaper organized a contest for the best *straattaal* translation of a classical Dutch poem.

Kenya is a country with more than 40 indigenous languages, mainly from the Bantu (Kikuyu, Luyia, etc.) and Nilotic families (Luo, Maasai, Kalenjin, etc.). Swahili is an indigenous language spoken along the coast as a vernacular and all over the country as a lingua franca, and it is one of the official languages of Kenya. The dominant language in administration and education is English. Both Swahili and English are accessible to most Kenyans, though in varying degrees. Swahili–English code-switching is very common, especially in urban centres and public space (Myers-Scotton 1993; Ogechi 2002). Code-switching has certainly contributed to the ease with which English material appears in Sheng.

Sheng developed in Nairobi in a context of rapid urbanization, probably in the 1970s. Parkin (1977) describes communities of practice with linguistic behaviour that comes close to Sheng, but he does not characterize it as one code, nor does he use the term Sheng. Spyropoulos (1987) refers to a newspaper article that uses the term Sheng in the *Standard* of 30 August 1985.

Speaking Sheng has no ethnic association. Swahili does not have a strong ethnic association either, as most Swahili speakers are second-language speakers, but it does have a weak association with Islam and with the state. Sheng started out as a way to mark an identity among streetwise urban youth, but quickly became a marker of urban youth in general, and expanded to mark youth identity in general. Currently, the age range of Sheng speakers is extensive. Sheng is innovative enough to still have a function as a marker of (streetwise) urban youth identity, as evidenced by youth who speak deep Sheng (Samper 2002), and at the same time it marks modernity and Kenyan citizenship for a wider group of speakers.

Swahili and particularly English are the languages of education. Some vernacular languages are used in the first years of education, but otherwise there is little or no institutional support for the vernacular languages. Sheng, as an anti-language, is not recognized by the state, and

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

is seen as a major threat to the educational system (Momanyi 2009). Notwithstanding this lack of official support, Sheng is quickly becoming more and more acceptable in society. Several radio stations, such as Kiss FM, have Sheng as the dominant broadcast language. Sheng is common in popular youth culture, in advertisements, in awareness campaigns about AIDS and on television.

If in its early days the functionality of Sheng may have been restricted to the favourite topics of adolescent youth, this is no longer the case. For more and more people, Sheng has become their primary language. Possibly it is the mother tongue of children growing up in certain neighbourhoods of Nairobi. In its early days the use of Sheng was frowned upon, and the competing UYSS Engsh developed in reaction to Sheng, as a way to avoid association with 'criminal' Sheng speakers, but still marking urbanity and modernity. Engsh was an identity of the richer youth but has now become a marker of education among the youth.

Although Sheng is used in writing and in public media (there are even dictionaries of Sheng (Moga and Fee 2004), attitudes towards its conventionalization remain ambivalent. On the one hand, internal conventions are extremely strong, and it is crucial to use the 'correct' Sheng forms and the latest words to avoid ridicule; on the other hand, the Sheng lexicon remains ephemeral due to its continuous renewal, which is essential to its nature, as in any other form of slang or anti-language.

The situation in Kenya, with two competing UYSSs, may be unique in Africa in the sense that there is some social stratification associated with the UYSS.[12] In general, the common pattern is that the UYSS originates in the street among gangs, or even in prison as a criminal argot, but then expands to become an in-group language of the youth in the streets with an anti-establishment association, even as it continues to expand in function and vocabulary to a general youth language and beyond. The ease with which this expansion through society happens shows that any social or anti-social associations of a UYSS are easily overcome in Africa.

One of the functions of UYSSs in Africa is to overcome and avoid ethnic differences. Using Luo elements in Sheng does not mean that one associates oneself primarily with a Luo identity, but rather with an encompassing modern Kenyan identity which includes all Kenyan ethnic groups. What is considered 'crossing' in London (Rampton 1998) does not exist in Nairobi; the closest parallel is the use of forms from other varieties of Sheng defined by neighbourhood (and class) rather than by

[12] Though Nassenstein (2011) reports on a second UYSS in Kinshasa called Langila (verlan form of Lingala) and spoken among artists. Wilson (2012) reports on inverted Kindoubil in certain areas of Kisangani.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

ethnicity (Githinji 2009: 123). The Iscamtho speakers in Soweto claim that their language does real justice to the concept of the 'rainbow nation' (Aycard 2008).

There are two different life cycles for UYSSs in Africa. One is the model of the rebirth of a new UYSS with every generation (e.g. Ndoubil became Kiyankee), and the other is continuous growth of the UYSS resulting in stratification with a 'deep' variety that develops faster in order to keep an in-group code and a more encompassing speech style that signals modernity (as is the case with Sheng, and possibly Iscamtho). In the second situation the UYSS can be acquired as one of a speaker's mother tongues. We have no information yet on the possible consequences of first-language acquisition in relation to UYSS, but the time is ripe for such research.

We repeatedly see a strong growth in function in genres in which the UYSS is used, in the domains and subjects of language use and in the speaker community. Developing from in-group slang to youth anti-language, to general youth style to style marking urbanity and modernity, the UYSSs acquire more and more speakers, of different ages, from different cities and from the rural areas. The style is spread primarily through song and rap texts, but the UYSSs gain public prestige by their use in advertisements and on certain radio and television stations and programmes. Computer-mediated communication is a crucial factor in the spread of these styles. UYSSs do not seem to make it into printed media for communicative purposes, and are not used as a primary language in newspapers. Their introduction as a target or instructional language in the educational system is still unheard of, since they are considered to be a major threat to educational goals. Some UYSSs fade out, only to be replaced by new ones. For Sheng and Iscamtho it has been reported that the UYSS is now sometimes acquired at the same time as the mother tongue (Aycard 2008; Ferrari 2009: 203).

Dimensions of comparison

In the previous sections we discussed – either implicitly or explicitly – structure, ideologies and practices of Dutch and Kenyan UYSSs. Now we will discuss dimensions that are relevant for the comparison of these. We repeat here the first question we asked in the introduction and briefly discuss the relevant dimensions: What are the linguistic, functional and sociohistorical similarities and differences between Dutch and African UYSS?

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

Structure

With respect to the structure of UYSS, the following dimensions appear to be relevant.

1. Are there clear *base languages*? If so, how many? Both Sheng and Dutch, but also the other European UYSSs that are considered in this book have one clear base language, namely the dominant language of the society. For some African UYSSs, in particular present-day Soweto UYSS, this is not clear, and the choice of any of the dominant Bantu languages seems possible and irrelevant.
2. What are characteristic features of UYSSs?
   The use of lexical elements from a range of languages that reflects the range of ethnic or linguistic groups that use the UYSSs is characteristic of both Dutch and other European UYSSs (*cf.* the other chapters in this book).

   A particular *accent* as an important marker seems to be typical for Dutch UYSSs, where a type of stylized Moroccan accent is widely used. This is not the case for Sheng. Phonetically, Sheng does not differ greatly from informal spoken Nairobi Swahili.

   Prosodic features: Impressionistic observation indicates that in Dutch UYSSs, intonation contours and a specific staccato manner of speaking are highly salient. For Sheng, no such features have been reported.

   Grammatical features: In Dutch UYSSs, the overgeneralization of grammatical common gender is an important marker. This and most other features can be traced back to L2 acquisition features that are overgeneralized and stylized. Also, Sheng has some grammatical features that can be traced back to the acquisition of Swahili as an L2. However, these features do not seem to be typical only for Sheng, but also for the varieties of Swahili that are widely spoken in the city where most speakers of the base language are L2 speakers.
3. *How many features* are needed for an utterance or stretch of discourse to be classified as a UYSS? A style such as Dutch *straattaal* is less developed, less deviant from Standard Dutch, if one considers all expressive elements compared to Sheng. Nonetheless, it is true for both that the presence of only a few crucial style elements is enough to make an utterance *straattaal* or Sheng. Viewing the phenomena as a style explains that only a few features may be enough to recognize a stretch of discourse as such. After all, it is typical of style phenomena that the presence of only a few salient features can suffice to be identified as such.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

4. What is the *role of language play*? The fact that UYSS lexical items are constantly renewed in both Sheng and Dutch suggests that in both parts of the world, the creation of new words is a salient characteristic. Sometimes a mixture of morphemes is involved (see (10) and (11)). Semantic manipulations are also rather common in the UYSSs of both continents. As for form manipulations, truncation and syllable reversal is a pervasive characteristic of (spoken and written) Sheng, but is not particularly prominent in Dutch UYSSs. On the other hand, Moroccan-Dutch UYSSs in written form on the Internet play with the representation of specific sounds. For example, the Arabic voiced glottal stop is represented through the numeral '3' (which in shape resembles the corresponding Arabic character somewhat).[13]

Function and status

With respect to the discussion of the function and status of UYSSs, the following dimensions are relevant.

1. What is the *overall function* of each specific UYSS? For speakers of Dutch UYSSs, the use of UYSS often expresses a belonging to a specific group, and/or a specific aspect of identity (ethnic, urban, cultural or religious). Dutch UYSSs emerged out of a need to distinguish oneself from the mainstream and to express in-group solidarity. In-group, informal interactions form the main domain of Dutch UYSSs. For most speakers it is an option, not a default means of communication. It is still one single, unstratified style. For speakers of Sheng, however, the situation is different, due – among other reasons – to its longer history. Currently, Sheng is the default unmarked means of communication for many speakers, and the L1 of some. For many, it is a vehicle for the expression of a general, supra-ethnic, urban identity. In other words: within Sheng itself, a stratification of diverse stylistic options has developed. Both Dutch UYSS and Sheng are associated with subcultures that have affinity with American hip-hop and 'gangsta' culture.
2. What is the degree of *reification*? What use is made of *labels*? African UYSSs always have a name, assigned by the speakers themselves. They sometimes have several names, including some that are more common among linguists, such as *Iscamtho* in Soweto. Dutch (and in general European) UYSSs sometimes adopt an (often pejorative)

[13] This is common practice throughout the Arabic-speaking world (Palfryman and Al Khalil 2007).

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

label assigned by the mainstream, *Smurfentaal* ('Language of the smurfs'), *Kanaksprache* ('Kanaka language'), *Kebabnorsk* ('Kebab Norwegian'), etc. as an honorary title. At other times, mere referential labels such as *Marokkaans Nederlands* ('Moroccan Dutch') or *Amsterdam Wests* ('Language from Amsterdam West') are used. Speakers of Sheng as well as Dutch UYSSs indicate that there exists a certain norm as to what constitutes a 'real' UYSS. For Dutch UYSSs, these norms seem to be mainly pragmatic and/or dependent on situational factors (Nortier and Dorleijn 2008).

3. To what extent are there forms of *institutionalization*? Both Sheng and Dutch UYSSs have made their ways (albeit marginally) to the mainstream media: in commercials, by comedians, in theatre performances. Several radio stations broadcast in Sheng. Both Sheng and Dutch UYSSs occur in written form as well, but mainly in computer-mediated communication (texting, social media, etc.).
4. What is the role of *ethnicity*? In Dutch UYSSs, racial, cultural and religious issues play a role. First, there is the ethnicity of newcomers, the migrants, versus the indigenous Dutch. Second, within the UYSSs there is a differentiation that can be associated with ethnicity (or race, or possibly common history): predominantly Surinamese *straattaal* is mainly used by Surinamese, Antillean and Cape Verdian speakers, predominantly Moroccan UYSS is mainly spoken by Moroccans, Turks, Bosnians and other (Muslim?) speakers. The base language Dutch is the dominant language of the society, and is the key to social advancement. Transforming this language and colouring can be seen as an act of rebellion, but also of appropriation. For Sheng, on the other hand, ethnicity is not an important issue because the newcomer versus dominant original inhabitant issue does not exist. Rather, Sheng is a vehicle to express a 'supra-ethnic' urban identity. Here, other dividing lines are relevant, such as urban versus rural.

The above discussion shows that functional as well as structural differences and similarities between Kenyan and Dutch UYSS can largely be attributed to social, historical and (macro-)sociolinguistic circumstances. In the development of UYSSs and their constantly changing structures, factors such as the following are relevant.

1. The historical, social and macro-sociolinguistic circumstances under which UYSSs emerge.
2. Colonial history, migration, urbanization, demography.
3. Status of the contributing languages (in numbers, degree of institutional support, etc.).

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015

4. Origin/source of the contributing languages (e.g. ancestral languages, migrant languages, prison slang, etc.).

A universal language contact phenomenon?

The second question we posed to begin with, was: to what extent can UYSSs be considered a 'universal' language-contact phenomenon that will emerge everywhere in similar circumstances, comparable to the way in which, for example, pidgins have arisen?

We see that a careful comparison of UYSSs can help to shed light on this question. From the discussion above, it appears that Sheng (together with other African UYSSs) is on the verge of becoming a lingua franca, because it clearly meets a need that is present in Kenyan society, a need that goes beyond ephemeral functions. It is a vehicle that expresses a supra-ethnic, cosmopolitan, urban identity (versus local, ethnic identities).

Sheng, established in the 1970s, is gaining native speakers and is no longer restricted to rebellious (or criminal) adolescents. Within Sheng, more or less clear-cut varieties can be distinguished; in other words, Sheng is stylistically stratified.

Dutch UYSSs, on the other hand, are still too young; we cannot know whether they will develop into a stable contact variety. As it is now, some norms seem to have developed, but these are pragmatic and situational in nature and pertain to the appropriate use of UYSSs as a whole, not to particular linguistic features. As of now, Dutch UYSSs do not seem to have internal stylistic stratification; they are still considered one single stylistic option with restricted domains. Their function seems to be to express identity and in-group solidarity of groups that have a marginal position in Dutch society. However, as discussed above, there are indications that their status is moving toward a more established position. Possibly in the future, Dutch UYSSs will fulfil the need to express a multicultural, cosmopolitan identity that will allow them to develop into stable varieties.

What we can learn from the comparison of African and European UYSSs, then, is that a need to express a certain identity in multilingual urban situations leads to similar outcomes, and that differences can be explained by sociohistorical factors, rather than by structural linguistic input.

Downloaded from Cambridge Books Online by IP 131.211.105.239 on Wed Nov 11 14:00:15 GMT 2015.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139061896.019
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2015