

Githiora

Sheng

Rise of a Kenyan Swahili Vernacular

Of interest to linguists, artists, ma-youth, scholars of urban studies, educationalists, policy makers and language planners who are grappling with the challenges of multilingualism and language of education in Kenya. The city of Nairobi is a rich context for the study of sociolinguistic phenomena. The coexistence of speakers of many different languages, further differentiated by socio-economic status, age and ethnicity provide conditions for the development of a mixed code such as Sheng, an urban variety of Kenyan Swahili which has morphed from a "youth language" into a vernacular of wider use. Sheng is a unique phenomenon in the study of linguistic change and innovation in an African context, a reflection of the ethnolinguistic diversity of Kenya, and language asymmetry created by socio-economic disparities. It also provides a window into understanding the processes of urban multilingualism, within the specific space structuring of Nairobi city. This book is a detailed account of the rise and development of Sheng, its linguistic structure, social functions, and possible future directions. The author's analysis of its presence in newspapers, TV, radio and online, makes it clear that Sheng functions as a particularly useful lens through which to explore contemporary Kenya.



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