



Evidence Card for Investigator #2 – East African Kiswahili Language Commission



The Swahili language (or “Kiswahili,” as it is called) is a very interesting and important language. It was a common language spoken by the African trading people who lived along the coast of East Africa. Like many other African languages, it is from the Bantu language family, but over the course of several thousand years of use along the Indian Ocean trade routes, it has mixed in many Arabic and Persian words. Different dialects of the language are spoken today in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. More than 11 million people speak it as a first language (at home); more than 120 million others use it as a secondary language. It is thus the most widely known language in Africa.

The East African Kiswahili Commission, headquartered in Zanzibar, aims to promote ties among East African countries. The commission promotes teacher education and media development in order to encourage a common form of the Swahili language that will unite all speakers of the language. They also work with members of parliaments in different countries to give Swahili the status of an official language.