



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Swahili Module

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Lesson Grade Span: *Secondary (9-12)*

Targeted Grade Level(s) or Course(s): World History

Materials:

- Arabic, Swahili, Persian and Hindi/Urdu language cards printed on different colors and cut up (see below)
- Language graphic organizers
- Mini white boards and markers
- Wall for taping words
- Blue carpenters tape

Time needed: 1 50-minute period

Lesson Overview: The development of the Swahili language on the East Coast of Africa is a classic example of syncretism, the blending of cultures to create a new one. This lesson is intended to help students understand where language elements of Swahili came from and to consider the role of trade in the development of language.

Students will play the roles of Indian Ocean merchants from Aden, India, Hormuz and the Swahili Coast with the mission of learning the language of the Swahili to facilitate trade.

The following standards established by the National Center for History in the Schools in the Department of History at UCLA are applicable to this lesson:

Standard 4B- The student understands the development of towns and maritime trade in East and Southern Africa.

Explain the rise of commercial towns on the East African coast and the significance of Swahili as a language of trade. [[Interrogate historical data](#)]

Assess the importance of Islam, Arab settlement, and maritime trade in the economic and cultural life of Kilwa and other East African coastal cities. [[Analyze cause-and-effect relationships](#)]

Procedure:

As students walk in give them their color coded language cards. Have them gather by the color of their cards. Ask students to guess which language they are and write it on their white boards. Ask them what clues about the words made them think this. (If there are students from the Middle East, South Asia, or East Africa they may be able to guess)

In their language groups have students write down the meaning of their words on their graphic organizer.

Tell students that they are merchants from India (Urdu), Aden (Arabic), or Hormuz (Persian) who are new to the Swahili Coast. Communication is critical! Their mission is to find out how to say the word they are given in Swahili, as well as any other languages. They should find people from other languages with other cards that have the same meaning as theirs does.

Have students return to their regional "enclaves" to share the information they have gathered to complete their language graphic organizers.

Sort

Bring students together and have them lightly tape their words to the wall by language. Have students look at the word see if they can organize the words into categories.

1. Which types of words are used most broadly? Which are used in only two languages?
2. Why would certain words be used across all languages?
3. Which language has the most words in common with Swahili? (Arabic) Why might that be? (closest to East Africa, language of Islam)
4. Which words do they think would be most important for merchants? Why?

Explain to students that the ability to learn key words in a language was critical to trade.

Extension:

Link this lesson to introduce an Indian Ocean Trade Simulation (See University of Arizona MEOC Website)

Resources:

Mohochi, Sangai, and Michael Warungu. "KISWAHILI." *HOME*. Stanford University Swahili Department, n.d. Web. 11 Oct. 2016.

<http://swahililanguage.stanford.edu/>

Thilo Schadeberg. 2009. Swahili vocabulary. In: Haspelmath, Martin & Tadmor, Uri (eds.) World Loanword Database. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, 1830 entries. (Available online at <http://wold.cld.org/vocabulary/1> , Accessed on 2016-10-12.)

Master Vocabulary Sheet

Swahili Word	English	Arabic	Persian	Urdu/Hindi
bandari	The port	bandar	bandar	bandar
duka	The shop	dukkan	dukan	dukkan
jahazi	The ship	gahaz	jahaz	gahaz
kara kana	The workshop	karahana	Kark hana	kar hana
serikali	The government	sarkar	sarkari	Sar-kar
waziri	The minister	wazir	vazir	wazir
Al fajiri	The morning	Al-fagr	-----	-----
chai	tea	shy	----	chai
bahati	Luck/fortune	baht	baht	baht
kahawa	coffee	qahwa	qahva	
barabara	Right/correct	Barr (good/pious)	Bar a bar (even, equal)	Bar a bar (even/equal)
magharibi	The West	majrib		
karatasi	The paper	qartas		
wazi	clear	wadih	baz-waz	baz-waz
kalamu	The pen	qalam		
hakimu	The judge	hakim		hakim
desturi	The custom/tradition	Dastur (suctoms/habits)	dastur	Dasturi (customary payments)
dini	The religion	din		din

Arabic Language Graphic Organizer

Swahili Word	English	Arabic	Persian	Urdu
		bandar		
		dukkan		
		gahaz		
		karahana		
		sarkar		
		wazir		
		Al-fagr		
		shy		
		baht		
		qahwa		
		barr		
		majrib		
		qartas		
		wadih		
		qalam		
		hakim		
		dastur		
		din		

gahaz

sarkar

bandar

wazir

Dukkan

karahana

al-fagr

shy

baht

qahwa

barr

majrib

qartas

wadih

qalam

hakim

dastur

din

*The
government*

the ship

The minister

The port

*The
workshop*

The shop

tea

The dawn

coffee

Good luck

The West

correct

clear

The paper

The judge

The pen

religion

*The
tradition*

Persian Language Graphic Organizer

Swahili Word	English	Arabic	Persian	Urdu
			Jahaz	
			sarka	
			bandar	
			Vazir	
			dukan	
			karkana	
			Chai	
			baht	
			qahva	
			bar a bar	
			Baz-waz	
			hakimu	
			dastur	
			dini	

jahaz

sarkari

bandar

vazir

dukan

kark kana

chai

baht

qahva

bar a bar

baz-waz

hakimu

dastur

dini

*The
government*

the ship

The minister

The port

*The
workshop*

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tea

The dawn

coffee

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The West

correct

clear

The paper

The judge

The pen

religion

*The
tradition*

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chai

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qahva

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baz waz

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tea

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coffee

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correct

clear

The paper

The judge

The pen

religion

*The
tradition*

Swahili Language Graphic Organizer

Swahili Word	English	Arabic	Persian	Urdu
jahazi	The ship			
Banadari	The port			
duka	The shop			
kara kara	The workshop			
waziri	The minister			
serikali	The government			
alfajiri	The dawn			
chai	tea			
bahati	good luck			
kahawa	coffee			
barabara	right, correct			
magharibi	The West			
Karatasi	The paper			
wazi	clear			
kalamu	pen			
hakimu	The judge			
desturi	The custom, tradition			
dini				

jahazi

serikali

bandari

waziri

duka

kara kana

alfajiri

chai

bahati

kahawa

barabara

magharibi

karatasi

wazi

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religion

*The
tradition*

