Unasemaje? – Introductory Swahili for Proficiency

A Comprehensive Computer-Delivered Package
for Classroom Instruction and Individual Study

NOTE: While technology is an integral part of the project being proposed, the proposal format for does not allow inclusion of sample materials in electronic form. Some screen shots have been provided, but of course they cannot show the actual function of the technology. Therefore, a working module of a sample lesson, samples of media files, and additional screen shots can be found via the link: <http://web.pdx.edu/~fischerw/swahili>

1. NEED FOR THE PROJECT

East Africa and it neighboring countries comprise a key region of conflict and emerging economic, cultural and political significance. Notable indicators of its significance are, to name just a few, increasing population, examples of both discouraging unrest and encouraging emergent stability and attention to human rights, the growing influence of China in East Africa, and intrusions of conflicts from elsewhere in the world. Swahili, as the region's main language, is therefore a strategic language, and the widespread of English is not sufficient reason to downplay the importance of Swahili - especially in some of the most critical instances where it is (must, should be!) used.

But Swahili is as yet a less commonly taught one (LCT), and lacks sufficient instructional resources, much less a comprehensive introductory program delivered with modern technology. The primary target groups for which the materials to be developed are: language teachers and their students in colleges and universities; U.S. government agencies and similar organizations, whether government or commercial; non-profits and commercial entities; students undertaking

independent language study; and English-speaking heritage speakers of Swahili. For the indefinite future, the factors described here will increase the already undersupplied demand for those proficient in Swahili to serve all the needs of national interest, ranging from social to economical to political within the United States and between us, our allies, and other important regions in the world.

Swahili (called Kiswahili in the language itself) is the first language of the Swahili people (Waswahili), who inhabit several large stretches of the Indian Ocean coastline from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique, including the Comoros Islands. The name "Kiswahili" comes from the plural of the Arabic word sāhel ساحل: sawāhil سواحل meaning "boundary" or "coast". It is part of the Bantu language family spoken in Africa. Adding the "Ki" to the word gives the meaning "coastal language". But Swahili is much more than that.

Although only 5-10 million people speak it as their native language, Swahili is a language of business and government in much of East Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a national or official language of four nations including Kenya and Tanzania as it main hub, and is the only African language among the official working languages of the African Union. Swahili is spoken natively by various groups traditionally inhabiting about 1,500 miles of the East African coastline. Approximately 10% of the Swahili vocabulary derives from the Arabic language, resulting from the fact that the language evolved through centuries of contact between Arabic-speaking traders and many different Bantu-speaking peoples inhabiting Africa's Indian Ocean coast. There are also Arabs in Oman that speak Swahili. It also has incorporated Persian, German, Indian and English words into its vocabulary, due to contact with these different groups of people. Swahili has become a second language spoken by tens of millions in three countries, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Congo (DRC), where it is an official or national language.

Swahili, or other closely related languages, is also used by people in Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique, Somalia, and Zambia, and by nearly the entire population of the Comoros.

In the United States, 1 of every 7,151 people age five and older speaks Swahili at home. Of the 20 counties with the greatest number of Swahili speakers, Georgia and the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area are home to three apiece. The largest populations of Swahili speakers are in Los Angeles County; Harris County, (Houston) TX; and Montgomery County, MD (U.S. English Foundation Swahili Data Sheet).

Swahili is not an easy language to master for native speakers of English. Foreign Service Institute language specialists have not yet classified Swahili on their difficulty scale, but we could argue that, since it is related to Xhosa and Zulu, both of which are considered to be category 2 (out of 3) languages in terms of difficulty for speakers of English, it can be regarded as being of similar difficulty: certainly less difficult than Arabic, Chinese, or Japanese; certainly more difficult than French, German, and even perhaps Russian.

Swahili is a very critical language and it should be taken into consideration for a wide range of reasons, including these:

• Swahili meets short- and long-term requirements with emphasis on high-level expertise in languages critical to our national security.

• There are approximately 36,690 persons residing in the United States who are proficient in Swahili. (U.S. English Foundation Swahili Data Sheet)

• Swahili has multiple proficiency tests available.

• Swahili satisfies personal desire to know Africa better through study of one of its principal languages and develop understanding of Africa's cultural linkage to America.

• Swahili also enables learners to understand better the Arab and Islamic cultures.

2. POTENTIAL FOR THE USE OF MATERIALS IN PROGRAM TO OTHERS

The quality and experience of the project team and the proposal's evaluation plan ensure that the Swahili materials will be developed according to high standards and to fit the needs of teachers and students elsewhere. The program will be packaged in such a way that it can be distributed conveniently and at no undue cost – indeed, at a cost far below that of language textbooks heretofore, as is proved by the successful low-cost distribution of the other instructional materials upon which the proposed Swahili package is based. The paucity of other up-to-date, pedagogically appropriate instructional materials ensures that the package will be considered very seriously for adoption anywhere that Swahili is taught, and may well encourage other institutions to begin teaching the language.

3. ACCOUNT OF RELATED MATERIALS

Resources for teaching Swahili are very limited and often out of date. None of the materials reviewed is here is truly proficiency oriented, and most of them rely heavily on the instruction of grammar or on the improvement of articulation/speaking- that is, accuracy of pronunciation of words in isolation, but with no profiled concept of comprehensibility as progressively acquired capability. As mentioned above, the commonly used materials to teach first year Swahili presented below fail to correspond also to the acquisition sequence strongly by the ACTFL proficiency guidelines.

Teach Yourself Swahili (1996/2003) by Joan Russell, *Swahili: A Foundation for Speaking, Reading, and Writing* (1979/1998) by Hinnebusch and Mirza, and *Let's Speak Kiswahili: A Multidimensional Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Swahili as a Foreign Language* (2003) by F.E.M.K. Senkoro, all follow the grammar-translation method, focusing specifically on extensive grammar analysis and repetitive use of mechanical drills with the goal of acquiring

understanding of the structure of the Swahili. Thus they largely focus on the traditional methods: high focus on grammar explanations, memorization of expressions, and translations. The newest book in the market by Senkoro unfortunately introduces the learners in the first lesson with dialogues that quickly reach the Swahili native-speaker level and are unmanageable by learners below the higher ACTFL levels.

In terms of current computer-delivered programs, of which there are of course only a few, the Pimsleur method offers an introductory of survival Swahili with a goal of acquiring proficiency for basic communication with local speakers. This program is audio only and focuses on developing listening skills and pronunciation. Different from the previous materials, the Pimsleur method has no explicit grammar instruction, but the grammatical structures presented seem to be guided not only by the learner's linguistic level but by the need raised by the situation presented. The units fail to provide the ability for the learner to create with the language outside of he situation presented in the tapes or the CD-ROM or memory-card package

With regard to online learning programs, a few programs such as International Language Course or Livemocha.com facilitate learning by communicating with native speakers, but our examination of them shows no evidence of a coherent pedagogical plan.

Others of the few available resources do not offer a full-service courses. For example, *Euro-Talk Vocabulary Builder Swahili* focuses, as the name says, on building vocabulary, but has no significant grammatical component. However powerfully learners build vocabulary, they cannot rise beyond the ACTFL Novice level without acquiring the structural competence that allows them to move from the text type of fragment to that of the sentence and, eventually, beyond. Moreover, the product is intended for children.

Talk Now! Swahili (eurotalk.com/us) exhibits features that are indeed attractive to the interested learner: everyday vocabulary, sound files, and printable vocabulary lists. But a closer look reveals many shortcomings, whether of pedagogical design or implementation of technology. A speech-recording facility that lets the learner "compare your voice with native speakers" is not actually very useful; beginning learners do not have the ability to conduct such a comparison, and the audio-lingual parrot-behavior the facility encourages does not promote proficiency beyond the Novice level. "Intelligent Software [that] remembers words you get wrong and targets your weak points" is another way of saying that the program conducts drills of vocabulary and, possibly, grammatical forms at the level of word morphology and uncomplicated sentence structure; such software is not intelligent at all. The feature "Wide range of words – from greetings and phrases to parts of the body, numbers and shopping" underscores the limitation of the product largely to vocabulary building. There is, of course, nothing wrong with learning survival vocabulary. But such programs cannot substitute for a systematic teaching and learning process based on professionally understood and current pedagogy.

The giant among the non-academic or "popular" methods for language learning is, of course, RosettaStone. Among its strictly linguistics features (that is, aside from its copious media), users most frequently praise it, in overt terms, for building vocabulary. Covertly such users may also be implying thereby that RosettaStone does not focus on, or even offer, the explicit grammar instruction that so many frustrated language students have come to hate. Other users offer the same observation, but as a criticism. On-line reviews show how distorted or at least dysfunctionally limited the notion of grammar can be in such learners: "Grammar improves your ability to create original sentences and write fluently." "You have to have verb conjugation to learn a foreign language." Mostly true, as far as it goes; but grammar has many other, and far

deeper functions than that, and it does not have to be taught or learned with extensive explicit instruction. But it must somehow be learned, and therefore somehow be taught. For that to happen, the grammar must be sequenced properly and the quantity kept to a truly manageable level. For proficiency to emerge, awareness of grammar must be applied in communicative situations.

All of the materials reviewed above exhibit either a lack of pedagogical competence, or else a pedagogy that cannot claim to be proficiency-oriented as that term is understood by today's language-teaching professionals, and as the concept itself is implemented in the best exemplars of their materials. Many of the full-strength textbook programs are obsolete in whatever real-world content they offer. Most do not address cultural competence systematically or even with the modest depth required by learners who are acquiring Intermediate proficiency. Few existing materials follow the ACTFL *Guidelines* with sufficient understanding of their implications for scope and sequence. And few teach language in a genuinely learner-friendly manner.

The foregoing should not be understood as implying that resources for learning Swahili are somehow of especially low quality in their pedagogy and technology. Much the same is true of the resources for most other languages. Our colleagues have striven mightily to furnish their learners with what they can. But the profession still has a long way to go in its implementation of current best thought in pedagogy, and publishers are still very reluctant to "push the envelope" in either the pedagogy or the medium of distribution. Add to that discouraging general state of affairs the unprofitability of publishing in the less commonly taught languages, and it is not difficult to see why the resources are not better, and why major grant support may be the most promising way to address the problem.

4. LIKELIHOOD OF ACHIEVING RESULTS

The pedagogical and linguistic qualifications of the project team are described further below. This section deals with (a) *pedagogical principles*, (b) the *magnitude of the project* itself, and (c) the *practicality and reliability of the delivery system* for the instructional materials.

a) Pedagogical principles

The organizing principle of content creation is *proficiency*, derived from and related to:

1) the general concept of language proficiency developed over several decades in various governmental agencies and then with the participation of the American Council on the Teaching for Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and, of course, language teaching professionals everywhere in the country and at every level preK-20;

2) the ACTFL *Proficiency Guidelines* as, so to speak, a manifesto. Proficiency is not only a goal and a source of standards and assessment tools, but also, we believe, an appropriate source of an acquisition and teaching syllabus. That is, the *Proficiency Guidelines* can be a guide to selection of communicative functions to be taught, choice of contexts / contents (situations for communication), and sequencing of the presentation of both larger and smaller linguistic features (and along with that a specification of the accuracy to which the teaching will aim and by which the learning can be assessed).

Unasemaje? will follow a multi-skills approach that will:

1) sequence the presentation of the language according to the ACTFL *Guidelines*;

2) emphasize speaking and, to a lesser extent, writing in the communicative contexts that comprise the ACTFL Novice, Intermediate, and - to a limited extent - Advanced levels;

3) employ a rich collection of multi-media resources to promote both comprehension, for the development of reading and listening proficiency, and to provide the comprehensible input (Krashen) without which functionality in speaking and writing cannot emerge and progress;

4) pay attention to learning styles and strategies with varied skills activities, tutorials to build learning skills themselves, and individualized projects, such as planning a trip for one's own personal or vocational interests;

5) measure learner outcomes with tests and other assessment facilities that focus on gauging functionality in real-world communication, but which also identify strengths and weaknesses in vocabulary and grammar;

6) include instructor annotations and tutorials to provide systematic support both for teachers who have systematic pedagogical knowledge and those who are still acquiring it;

7) deliver the instructional content through a modern technological medium that will allow the materials to fully replace a conventional textbook in classroom and individual use, and go beyond the conventional textbook is several significant ways.

Scope and Sequence: The following tables list the "contexts" or chapters of ***Unasemaje?***

1 Hello? Who? What?	11 Changing money	21 Renting a car
2 Where? When? How much?	12 At the local market	22 Bed & breakfast
3 Tickets and passports, please?	13 Preparing for a trip	23 Historical places & cultural sites
4 Fast food at the airport	14 Getting a hotel room	24 Going on a hike
5 Transportation to the hotel	15 Local orientation & tour	25 Getting medical help
6 At the hotel	16 Gifts for family & friends	26 Advanced shopping
7 Street & internet contact	17 Visiting a friend	27 Post office
8 In a restaurant	18 Evening entertainment	28 Traveling on
9 Meeting a colleague	19 What do you recommend?	29 Farewell party
10 Finding a taxi	20 At the nature park	30 Vistas - past & future

The repetition of certain basic themes (food, transportation, shelter, etc.) in the list points toward a larger, fundamental feature of the method: the "spiral syllabus", which is predicated on the conviction that functioning in a given context is not a matter of going immediately from incompetence to master by acquiring a conscious or intellectual understanding of it and then somehow transforming that knowledge into proficient communication. The same can be said for acquisition of vocabulary and, with regard to that very much debated phenomenon, grammar. Here two particular features should be noted:

1) In *Unasemaje?*, as in its forerunners, grammar and vocabulary are segmented and sequenced to match the learners' likely acquisition order. For example, learners simply do not acquire all features of the past tense simultaneously, even if the past tense is presented to them that way. Probably, then, learners will make better progress if they are not forced to attempt to learn what they cannot yet absorb for communicative use. The textbook, for any language, that actually *underestimates* what real learners can manage probably does not yet exist. The danger is excess, not "dumbing it down".

2) The grammatical and lexical "ceilings" of *Unasemaje?* are, therefore, considerably below what so-called "introductory" texts customarily include. The basic rule here – one that has been much discussed in the profession - is that a program that aims at Intermediate-High for its truly best learners and Intermediate-Low for its typical learners should not have them spend much time and effort attempting to learn linguistic features that are typical of levels higher than, approximately, Advanced-Mid (though such language may appear as "comprehensible input" and for development of reading and listening skills). In rough terms, the columns below represent zones of increasing proficiency: Context 1-10 range from Novice to Intermediate-Low;

11-20 from Intermediate-Low to Intermediate-Mid; 21-30 from Intermediate-Mid to Intermediate-High.

The sample materials on the project's website illustrate these points in detail, with a draft scope and sequence, and sample chapters from early and late in the program. Reviewers who are not proficient in Swahili can explore the same points with downloadable, fully-functional extracts from the already-existing Spanish and German programs.

b) Magnitude of the project

Given the characteristics of most technology-supported language-learning resources, which serve merely as ancillaries to ink-on-paper textbooks, or are standalone resources that do not constitution full packages, it cannot be overemphasized that *Unasemaje?* is a complete introductory program that contains all the resources that would be found in an ink-on-paper textbook that employed the same pedagogy to deliver the same language and cultural content. Thus the present section describes in detail the resources the package will deliver, illustrating some of them with screen-prints from the Swahili mockup and from the already-existing full Spanish and German versions. More samples of Swahili materials can be found on the website whose link is given on the first page of this proposal.

The package opens with a screen that displays, by random selection, one of the program's several hundred graphics (see screen-print below). Generic buttons provide help, producer credits, an exit choice, and even another random picture. The "Main Resources" button, always available, lets the learner use general resources that most textbooks provide: a cumulative glossary, a comprehensive reference grammar, a generic vocabulary (family, colors, etc.), and a "survival" grammar (fast look-up charts).
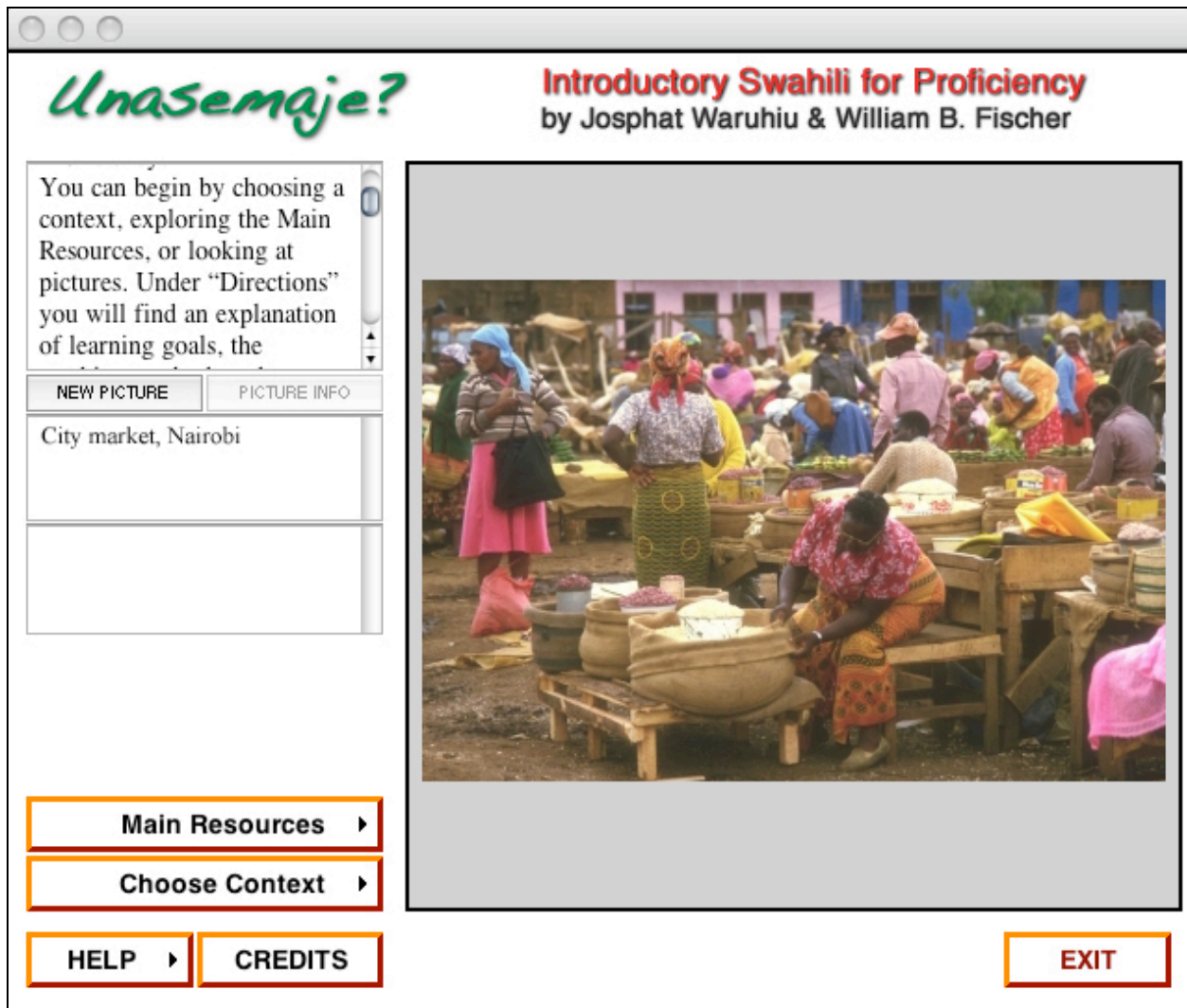
Other of the "Main Resources" underscore the tremendous advantages the technological delivery has over the ink-on-paper textbook. The "Word Search" facility allows the user to enter a target word and then searches for that word in the data arrays that contain information about the media files. A list then appears with short descriptions of those files; the user clicks on an item and the media resource is displayed in a separate palette (see screen shot below, left). Other options furnish lists, by sub-category, of the graphics, audio and video resources, which can then appear in the separate palette. With the media resources come information about them, for example transcripts of the broadcast segments, with vocabulary help. A "Grammar Index" choice brings up a choice of several-dozen grammar terms; choosing one then calls up all related topics

in the program, with links to their explanations in the individual chapters. "Websites" links to the list of URLs on the *Unasemaje* support site. It will be maintained after the grant period ends.

The "Choose Context" menu button list the several dozen topics or "chapters" of the program, such as "restaurant", "car rental", "clinic." Clicking on a Context choice is equivalent to opening a chapter in a textbook, with its various pages of dialogs, vocabulary lists, grammar explanations, etc. The user then sees a screen (see screen shot below, right) with a randomized graphic specific to that chapter, and two more generic buttons: "Context Resources" (for use in classroom and individual study), and "Context Activities" (mostly for use outside the classroom).
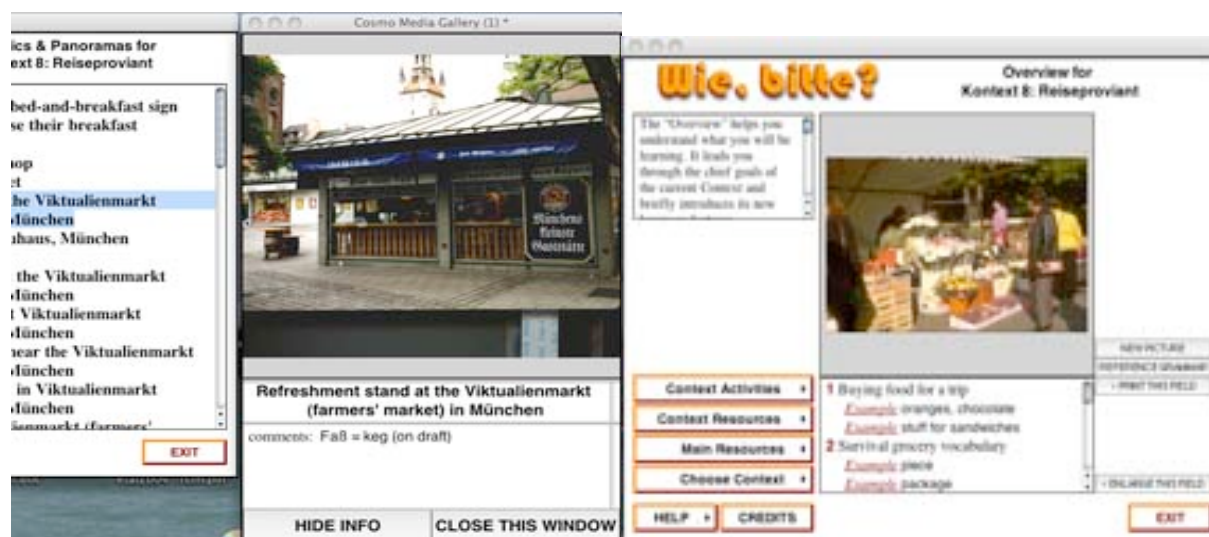
The "Context Resources" are:

1) overview: a display of learning objectives, illustrated by sample lines from the dialogs (click to play the sounds);

2) graphics and panoramas, and broadcast clips: as in the "Main Resources" menu, but the lists are specific to the current chapter (its theme, its grammatical topics, its vocabulary);

3) dialogs: display of the dialogs for the chapter (average: 5); the dialog speechlines are click-and-hear; summaries (bilingual) and vocabulary lists for each dialog are available; and the user can even choose how much of each dialog speechline's text to display (all, none, hints);

4) websites: as in the "Main Resources" menu, but URLs specific to the current chapter;

5) glossary: as in the "Main Resources" menu, but words specific to the current chapter;

6) structures: grammar topics for the current chapter (see screenshot, below left), with short explanations and sample (click-to-play) examples from the dialogs; these texts can be printed by clicking a button, as can other fields which the learner might want as paper resources.

The "Context Activities" include:

1) writing tutorials and tasks, similar to OPI situations but for writing;

2) projects (multiskill pursuits, such as "My Dream Trip" or "My Music - Their Music") that let the learner explore, often via internet resources, the country and its language for individualized purposes (examples on website);

3) situations: setups for speaking activities, with four levels of difficulty;

4) dialog roleplays (see screenshot below, right): the learner selects a dialog for the chapter, and then assumes one of the speaker roles in it; buttons allow the learner to record his/her own voice in that dialog role and then play it back in sequence with the pre-recorded speechlines of the other speaker(s) in the dialog.
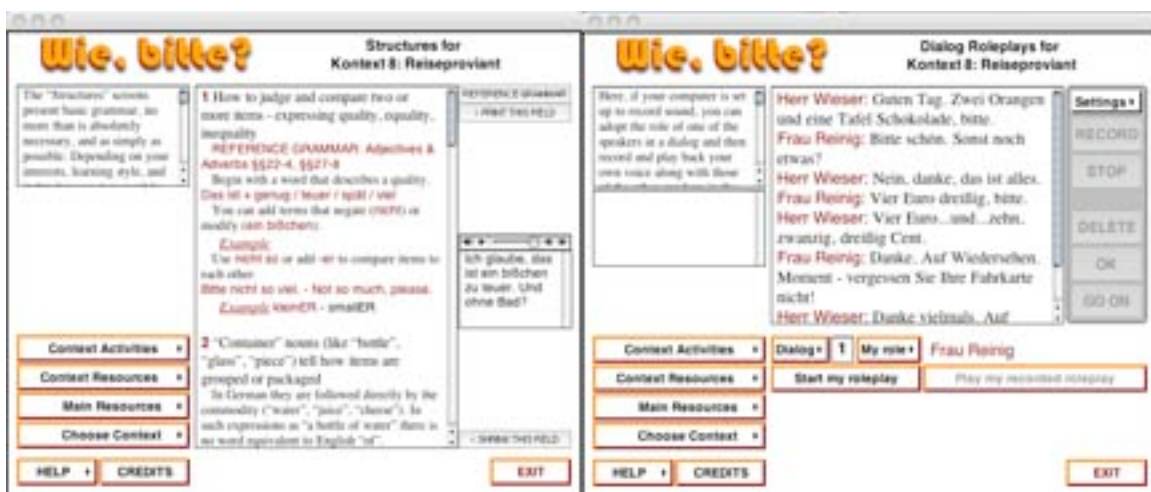
The last feature, dialog roleplays, serves very well to show the advantages of the technological medium over ink-on-paper publication, even when a textbook is accompanied by audio CDs. No conventional textbook can help a learner enter a dialog in this manner. Of course it is possible to deliver the same resource over the internet with a browser and a popup recording palette, but there is often an annoying delay in sound-file downloads, even for single audio files. Managing the multiple sound-files for an entire interactive dialog, both for recording and playback, would be very problematic. This was one of many factors that influenced the choice of delivery by a local standalone program over an on-line browser-based method – which was in fact used in an earlier version of the Spanish and German programs, and found wanting.

c) Practicality and reliability of the delivery system

The proposed project does *not* depend on development of a new and untried technology. The software "shell" that will be used to deliver the new Swahili content is the creation of the proposed PI, but is based on a commercial authoring program. The shell has been in existence for more than twenty years. During that time it has been through four major revisions. The introductory German program delivered through the software has been used by several thousand learners over more than ten years, with never a failure in its operation, other than incidental errors involving language content or file names. Today's students take readily to the technology.

By far the greatest amount of time and labor for the Swahili project will be taken up by developing the language and cultural content itself and by accumulating the multimedia resources. When that content is available is appropriate file formats, with its identifying information stored in database files, it will take at most a few weeks to transfer it to the "shell" and test it for use in classrooms and individual study. That is shown by the identical operation with Spanish content, and by the creation of the sample Swahili unit (see website) for this

proposal, which took less than a week from initial conception to readiness for use in a course. Of that week, by far the largest part was taken up by creating the content. The Swahili implementation of the "shell" took just a few hours.

5. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER PROGRAMS

See above, item #2.

6. PLAN OF OPERATION

a) design of the project

The success of the project depends on two processes: *1) creation of linguistic and related content* suitable for an introductory language course; *2) transfer of that content to its medium of delivery*, in this case as educational software rather than ink-on-paper publication with ancillary technology-based resources. Necessary adjuncts to those processes are: *3) field testing*; and *4) project evaluation*. Enveloping the whole of the project is *5) the system of managing the project*. Topics 1 and 2 are addressed here, topics 3, 4, 5 later under other headings.

1) Content creation in relation to design of the project

The plan of operation comprises, first, a stage of content creation. This stage is comprised of development of a scope and sequence, followed by generation of the specific linguistic and cultural content to fit the scope and sequence. Since **Unasemaje?** is a proficiency-oriented package, the linguistic content must by selected and sequenced to fit the learners' likely sequence of acquiring the language, rather than following a logical system suitable to an "academic" or "analytic" understanding of a new language. Thus it is not at all a foregone conclusion that the program would first present, say, the sounds of the language and then, perhaps, its noun classes and verb system – and not even with those gigantic topics divided into

such still large categories as the past tense, the passive, etc.. Rather, the planning must include a carefully thought-through process of determining how learners acquire the language – in what sequence and how much over what stretch of teaching and learning, and then dividing the larger features of the language into manageable "chunks" and sequencing them, and other "chunks" of other larger features, in the best possible way. This will needs result in a scope and sequence that area at odds with a Parnassian linguistic view of the system of the language, but which are much closer to how acquisition takes place, even if the language is presented in the very large "chunks", category by category, which typify the grammar-translation approach and the presentation of information about the language to the professional academic linguist.

Our proposed program for Swahili begins, of course, at the very beginning, but properly also stays at the beginning level, rather than immediately soaring into the complexities of the language. In the first third of the program the instruction carefully establishes Novice-High proficiency. At the other end of its scope and sequence, *Unasemaje?* brings the extremely capable learners to the ACTFL Intermediate-High level for writing and speaking, which allows them to function at the ACTFL Advanced level some of the time, but not always and not comfortably. Given the implications of Krashen's "Input Hypothesis" and also the evidence of formal research and longtime personal experience, reading and listening proficiency will almost certainly be somewhat higher. Although Swahili courses can be expected to draw more than a few learners whose motivation, experience and innate language learning capability are typically higher than that of learners in introductory courses for the more commonly taught languages, for example Spanish, the more typical learner in the Swahili course is likelier to finish at the Intermediate-Low level in speaking and reading, given the relatively greater difficulty of the language for English-speaking learners when compared to the difficulty of Spanish for them.

This realistic assessment of what is and is not possible determines the "ceiling" of the program's grammar and lexicon, and also — but to a lesser extent — its cultural content. Starting from there (but building on work conducted before the proposal was submitted), the team will generate the functional, contextual, cultural, lexical and grammatical syllabus and map it onto the thirty modules of the package.

The outline scope and sequence and sample chapter excerpts, presented on the project website, illustrate the results of the process, but do not show the steps which led to the preliminary results and will be expanded and deepened to produce the full package. When the demonstration materials were prepared, the PI and the Swahili specialist first determined the "ceiling" proficiency that could reasonably be targeted in a year-long introductory college/ university language course with learners of somewhat better capability and motivation than commonly found in, say, an introductory French course. Since the package aims to recruit a broad population of learners for Swahili, the target was not set as high as would have been possible in an elite program for exceptional learners.

The team then examined the chapter topics of the existing German and Spanish packages. After initial units with the absolute necessities about self, others, and immediate world, in the first third of the list those topics fall largely under the headings of food, shelter, transportation, and miscellaneous personal needs (currency, checking email, etc.); in the second third the same topics reappear with more complexity, and new topics about less pressing needs appear (entertainment, simple culture); the final third of the list still recycles survival topics, at a still higher level, and continues the introduction of topics of less urgency and greater individual interest. Where Swahili culture is similar to the general cultures of the German- and Spanish-

speaking countries, the existing topics were retained, and generally in the same order. Otherwise, the themes were adjusted appropriately.

At this point three fundamental principles should be noted. As with the German and Spanish materials, the pattern of development is the reverse of the grammar-driven conceptualization. A pre-existing "logical" grammatical system was *not* adopted as a foundation, after which topics were then sought that might somehow fit or illustrate the grammar. Rather, the reverse was and will be the case: function and context / content have priority over grammar and lexicon.

Secondly, this does *not* mean that the package will lack grammatical rigor or even – such opinions have been encountered by creators of proficiency-oriented materials – that grammar has been abandoned. The ACTFL *Guidelines* and the several decades of discussion about them have said very emphatically (though perhaps still not emphatically enough) that the learner must acquire increasing grammatical competence in order to rise to further levels of proficiency.

Thirdly, the priority of function and context / content, combined with the notion of incremental gain in proficiency, demands that major grammatical topics be divided into levels of difficulty and sub-topics, and the resulting smaller parts of what was previously viewed as a single body of knowledge be introduced according to a "spiral" syllabus. To take a simpler example: not all patterns of pluralization are of equal difficulty to the learner, and not all are of equal need. Another, more complicated example: Prepositions, whatever their attendant grammatical features and lexical mapping onto the learner's own language, exhibit a wide distribution up and down the scale of proficiency. Some specific prepositions and their uses are absolutely essential early on; other prepositions, or other uses of a given preposition, belong much later in a proficiency-oriented syllabus.

After establishing the list of topics (contexts / contents) for the first dozen or so units, the team worked out a trial grammatical and lexical syllabus, with particular attention to the sample chapters. The process was recursive. This or that structure and word were "tried on for size", and then we looked to see how the candidate elements balanced with quite other grammatical and lexical features, and how they fit into the "spiral" sequence of their own larger categories of grammar and lexical. We also considered whether the given topic should move to another place in the master sequence of topics.

Similar discussions involving other points of grammar and hundreds of items of lexicon (and the related cultural ingredients) have already taken place, and many more will follow as we develop the details of scope and sequence and use them to generate the model dialogs. But development of other parts of the package need not and will not wait for that to happen. During that time the project team will put together a collection of graphic, audio, and video resources that will serve to exemplify the language in its various milieus, provide comprehensible input, illustrate aspects of culture.

The media resources will be assembled from conventionally available materials (found objects ready at hand), from internet resources, and from on-site visits. The media resources in the finished package will comprise the following resources: 1) 800 graphics (on-site photos of places and people, and scans of found objects [menus, advertisements, etc.]); 2) 100 or more sound files (average length 60 seconds) captured from authentic broadcasts (news items, commercials, weather reports, features, etc.); 3) ten or more QuickTime Virtual Reality (QTVR) panoramas of common environments in Swahili-speaking countries (street scenes, shop interiors, natural settings). See the project website for examples, including outlines of how the media will be incorporated into learning activities.

2) Transfer of content to medium of delivery

As the language content (dialogs, etc.) and multimedia resources are being acquired, they will be organized in such a way that the "shell" can deliver them as the finished package. As the demonstration module linked from this proposal shows, the "shell" will need only slight expansion: a few more data fields; yet another programming variable to allow it to handle Swahili along with Spanish and German; specification of the African-themed color-scheme for the user interface (button colors, etc.); the Swahili banner logo with the package title. It is in the nature of "shell" programs that more than 90% (probably more than 98%) of the investment is incurred in creating the package for the first language; subsequent languages come easily.

But considerably more work will be required to catalog the newly-created content, incorporate information about it in to the databases that will yield the arrays used by the "shell" program, and – drudgework – process the media files. The PI's previous experience ensures that the funding and time envisioned by the proposal will be sufficient to the task.

The production of a usable trial version of the package does not need to wait until all the linguistic content is created and all the media resources are acquired and processed. As the demonstration module on the project website shows, the "shell" can at any time be used to deliver more and more modules of the new package, and more features of those modules.

b) Is the plan of management effective? See below, items 7 (quality of personnel) and 8 (budget and cost effectiveness)

c) Section 605: The proposed project directly addresses item 6 (development and publication of specialized materials), and both draws from and contributes to item 5 (research on more effective methods of providing instruction and achieving competency in foreign languages, etc.),

item 7 (uses of technology), item 9 (application of performance tests), and other items that have to do with acquisition and dissemination of data.

d) use of resources and personnel: See below, items 7 (quality of personnel), 8 (budget and cost effectiveness), and 10 (adequacy of resources)

e) equal access treatment: The host university, as a state institution, operates under the usual policies and procedures to provide equal access treatment.

7. QUALITY OF PERSONNEL

a) project director / principal investigator

The proposed PI has compiled over twenty years of experience in producing materials for language instruction, both as conventionally printed textbooks and as self-sufficient technology-based resources that completely replace conventional textbooks in the classroom and for individual use by students. He was the originator of both German and the Spanish introductory packages which were then produced in cooperation with content specialists he himself recruited. He is very experienced with producing textbooks and computer-based language resources which work with languages other than his main foreign language, German. Beyond Spanish these languages heretofore include Chinese, Turkish, Italian, Portuguese, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Albanian and Urdu. Having built his first computer in 1962, he is skilled in all the technological operations that the project requires: programming, processing of digital media, database management, website development, and complex word-processing and use of text editors, whether for finished conventional publication, on-screen display, or use in data arrays. He has taught a course in technology for language teachers around twenty times since 1984. He has twice been awarded his university's prize for teaching with technology.

b) other key personnel

The project's Swahili specialist is well established at the host university as the core instructor of its Swahili project, which is housed in the same department as the PI's courses. He has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in education and training in technology. His language courses are known for their communicative approach, attention to culture, and openness to learners.

The project team has a combined experience of over fifty years of teaching introductory and lower-level language courses in institutions ranging from the Ivy League through selective private colleges, a non-selective urban public university, and K-12 public schools. The members of the team are thoroughly familiar with instructional materials, both conventional and electronic, for a variety of languages, including of course Swahili. They have extensive current knowledge of language pedagogy, content standards, and assessment methods. The introductory language programs upon which the proposed Swahili program will be based have been proven through years of use in classrooms, have been the basis of published articles, conference presentations, other grant awards, and prizes for excellence in teaching.

c) amount of time - appropriate to the project's need?

The project has been designed in accord with more than twenty-five years of successful experience producing introductory language programs, first for conventional publication and then as computer-based resources - but always for proficiency-oriented teaching and learning. The budget includes sufficient funding for released time for the PI and others on the team.

d) non-discriminatory employment: The host university, as a state institution, operates under the usual policies and procedures to encourage such applications. As an urban, non-selective public institution the host university is particularly attentive to that effort.

8. BUDGET AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

The *Unasemaje?* project proposes to conduct two activities that appear daunting: create a conceptually complex learning resource, and deliver it as standalone software (albeit with some print resources), rather than as an ink-on-paper textbook with modest on-line activities. The practicality and utility of that venture merit special attention, including considerable background information.

The truisms that time is money and money buys time are borne out by the PI's previous experience as an author and producer of textbooks and software. It should be emphasized that even in the development of *Wie, bitte? Introductory German for Proficiency* (John Wiley: 1988), which was the original expression of the pedagogical approach and the germ of the technology that were later replicated in *¿Cómo? Introductory Spanish for Proficiency* and will be the model for **Unasemaje?**, he was involved in far more than the composition of text files which then left his hands and mind and were transformed by others into the finished project. He and his co-author maintained their participation through many of the operations that were usually carried out by the various professionals in the publishing industry of the time. They two of them — the PI in his youth a letterpress printer and later a professional typesetter, his co-author still an amateur letterpress printer — insisted on participation in matters of layout. They selected graphics, from their own collections of found objects and photographs; they, and particularly the PI, collected broadcast segments and processed the audio files; the PI supervised recording of dialogs and mastering of all other audio materials, which took place at his own university rather than in the studios customarily engaged by the publisher; most of the ancillary materials were produced, camera-ready, by or under the supervision of the co-authors - at a time when desktop publishing was in its infancy and processing of media could involve the tedium of non-digital

photography and layout, and of editing miles of reel-to-reel recording tape. Even then, in the late 1980s, the PI was involved in the production of software ancillaries to the ink-on-paper textbook.

By 1994, when the Spanish package was nearing completion, the co-authors had progressed with the technological times. Correspondingly, changes were made in the technology of production and delivery. Eventually, in about 2006, and after years of effort to accustom students to the new technologies, the materials became matter-of-fact resources in the language courses. Nowadays most students, when they bother to notice the technology, praise the transformation from ink-on-paper textbooks to computer-delivered resources. They appreciate the financial savings and the convenience of the media; some also understand the greater effectiveness of the technology-supported delivery in the classroom — and it should be noted especially that we do not, and never have, proposed replacing a language classroom, with a human teacher in it, with some sort of automated teaching.

The PI has quite sufficient production experience to understand how much time the project will take and how it should be organized. He also has appropriate financial experience to manage it. He has directed many other grant projects of varying size. More to the point, he long ago acquired a knowledge of how much money is needed to do what. The original German project was probably unique, among language textbooks, in how much of the publisher's allocated funds were diverted from customary sub-contractors to various local teams supervised by the PI: the team which produced the dialog recordings, the developer of the ancillary software (before the PI assumed that work on his own), even the artist who did the drawings for the book's pictorial dictionary. Later on, using small grants and his own capital, the PI developed other language software, not described further in this proposal, which required recruiting and paying specialists

in language and technology. He is thus superbly prepared to gauge how long it takes to do what, how much it will cost, and what problems may occur along the way.

When the PI was first developing his German package, his editor at John Wiley remarked that - this was 1988 - a publisher had to invest about $250,000 in up-front money to produce a first-year textbook for Spanish (somewhat less for, say, German, since Spanish textbooks, even then, had to have full color). The editor also mentioned a textbook which had been produced and placed on the market, only to fail to sell even a single copy. The editor explained how that one failed book meant that the publisher had to have many other successful books merely to offset the losses occasioned by the one disastrous book. Other stories taught lessons about other kinds of expense and loss. Translating all those long-ago numbers into 2009 amounts: the amount of funding requested is realistically sufficient — neither too little nor, Heaven knows, too much. The project team has the drive and - equally important - the exceptional specialized skills to produce a rich resource on a reasonable budget.

9. EVALUATION PLAN

The team will recruit at least two external evaluators, at least one of whom will have experience with teaching and/ or assessing Swahili. The evaluators will travel to the project four times during its three years (see timeline). They will consult with the authors, examine the materials, observe field-testing, evaluate learner progress, speak with the students, and audit the accounts. Their evaluations will employ two independent sets of rubrics, one developed by the project team and one by the evaluators themselves; each group will use both rubrics. The evaluators will then file written progress reports and be available to the US DOE staff for confidential discussion.

During field-testing the students who are learning Swahili will also serve as evaluators, in their own special way. As students in the PI's German course have done for many years, they will evaluate their own progress in proficiency, using simplified versions of the ACTFL *Guidelines*. Their learning styles and strategies will be identified and supported, in accord with a NCLB grant the PI directed in 2006. A certifiable ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) will be conducted with each student during late in the course sequence, both during the two summers of field-testing and when the new course is offered during the regular academic year.

At least twice during the grant period the project team will present its work for open review by colleagues attending major conferences, probably the ACTFL meetings in November of 2010 and 2011.

10. ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

The members of the project team work at an urban university and have available the resources customarily found at such institutions. Work space for materials development and classrooms for field-testing the package have been secured. The team has adequate access to the technology needed to support development of the instructional materials: modern computers, specialized software, audio-visual equipment, and technology-enhanced classrooms. Their home department has its own tech lab, including facilities for mass duplication of digital media.

11. DESCRIPTION OF FINAL FORMAT

The instructional package will be delivered as a combination of, primarily, computer-based materials with some support materials in conventional ink-on-paper form (but also available as digital files). All the language learning resources for use in the classroom and in individual study will be contained on a single CD-ROM disk, including the master "shell", the hundreds of

graphics, and several thousand sound files. The "shell" program runs with no need for other software except the usual media-playing applications found on all consumer-level computers. The CD-ROM will be delivered in a DVD-like case, along with a user manual and introduction to the program. The printed booklet will contain core learning resources (dialog texts, glossaries, chapter overviews) for students to use when - if ever - they prefer to study with ink-on-paper materials; the same materials will be on the CD-ROM as printable PDF files.

The entire instructional resource and its ancillaries - will also be available for download from a server as compressed files (approximately 500 MB). It is possible some adopters would prefer that form of distribution; the server resource would also house for downloading any modifications of the "shell" program, which at approximately 15 MB would download quite speedily over the common high-speed internet connection.

The package will also include a model course website suitable for customization to adopters' needs for particular course content and to fit their institutions course-management systems. The website is not for the delivery of the instructional materials themselves, since those will be in a standalone package; rather, the site will show how to organize the syllabus, course description, and other resources for administering a course. The existing German equivalent of the support site can be examined at: http://web.pdx.edu/~fischerw/courses/firstyr_g/html/default.html

12. PROVISIONS FOR PRETESTING AND REVISION

The "shell" through which the Swahili content will be delivered has already been in use for more than ten years in a large-scale introductory language program directed by the PI. The technology itself has proved absolutely reliable when used by students with computers that have not been incorrectly modified. It works on any commercial computer running on Windows, Mac OS, or Linux, right when the computer is taken out of the box in which is was purchased. The

program works in classrooms that are equipped with standard-issue mid-level technology: either resident computers or the usual connections for attaching a laptop to run through a projector with sound. Although some students resisted the technology ten or more years ago, response now is almost universally favorable, not least because it saves the students each $150 a year on books.

The Swahili content itself, as incorporated into the shell, will be tested before student use it, and in the same way that German and Spanish content have long been tested: spot-checking of content display to trap filename inconsistencies (unusual) or detect missing media files (extremely unusual); thorough examination of sample lessons; proof-reading of text passages.

Pedagogical pre-testing and revision will follow the procedures established in the development of the German and Spanish programs, though of course with special attention to the needs of teaching and learning Swahili. This aspect includes, above all, care to calibrate the pace and level of the language to learners who are acquiring a language that is distinctly more difficult for speakers of English than are German and Spanish. The longtime experience with German and Spanish will preclude a Swahili program which might otherwise be not merely somewhat too difficult for the learners, but rather outrageously so. This is a lesson that the project team has absorbed well; unreasonably high expectancy of learner progress is still a common flaw of major commercial textbook passages, as one can see from a look at their scope and sequence in comparison to the ACTFL *Guidelines*; as is often apparent in learner frustration and course attrition; and as is documented by the frequent practice of using over a period of two years of instruction a textbook package that has been promoted as a "first-year" book.

The fine-tuning of the Swahili program will involve classroom observation (including that conducted by the external evaluators); analysis of communicative tests, including application of rubrics that are keyed to the ACTFL *Guidelines* and which gauge the extent of exposure, partial

control, and mastery of content; surveys of learner satisfaction (sense of achievement, comfort with learning); and evaluations of the technology interface. The external evaluation team will participate in and monitor the field-testing during all of its visits.

13. COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY

Swahili is in the RFP's list of 78 Less Commonly Taught languages. Since the "shell" is generic and can handle Unicode text, it could accommodate any of the other 77 as well. Swahili may not be our final product, and we are aware of economies of scale and synergism.