

ONSANSE'S LANGUAGE: NOT MORE THAN TWO-WORD UTTERANCES AFTER FORTY YEARS OF EXPOSURE TO FOUR LANGUAGES

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This paper set out to investigate the amount and nature of language the subject of the study (Onsanse) has learnt for four decades of exposure to several languages after being picked up at the age of 17, when he could produce only one word and one interjection in Ekegusii. The data from conversations and observations audio- and video-recorded for 154 hours show that Onsanse has picked up an amount of vocabulary that enables him to interact with people especially in Dholuo and Kiswahili. However, he has not acquired a grammar that would enable him to produce an utterance longer than two words. In another respect Onsanse's grammar is comparable to that of Specific Language Impairment subjects, since its morphological component is selectively impaired: for instance, in Dholuo, the language he seems to be most "competent" in, Onsanse has greater difficulty in using the singular subject marker prefix than its plural counterpart. At the phonological level, his speech was marked by omissions and substitutions of phonemes, but no typical features stood out as typical of his speech.

1. INTRODUCTION

Onsanse's case is that of an adult man, now aged about sixty, who has not succeeded in acquiring human language beyond just two-word utterances. His language can then be described most relevantly from the point of view of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). This is "the hypothesis that animals, including humans, are genetically programmed to acquire kinds of knowledge and skill at specific times in life" because "[b]eyond those 'critical periods' it is either difficult or impossible to acquire those abilities" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 17). According to Lenneberg (1967), the American psycholinguist who first applied the CPH to first language acquisition, "there is an optimal period and a sensitive time to acquire

language in a linguistically rich environment, after which further language acquisition becomes much more difficult and effortful" (p. 176).

Crystal (1997) points out that "[t]he critical-period hypothesis has been controversial" (p. 265). Nevertheless, there are cases that have been documented in history and put forward in support of the hypothesis. Lightbown & Spada (2006: 17) point out that "Two of the most famous cases are those of Victor and Genie". First, here is what the authors say about the case of Victor:

In 1799, a boy who became known as Victor was found wandering naked in the woods in France. When he was captured, he was about twelve years old and completely wild, apparently having had no contact with humans. Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard, a young doctor accustomed to working with deaf children, devoted five years to socializing Victor and trying to teach him language. Although he succeeded to some extent in developing Victor's sociability, memory, and judgement, there was little progress in his language ability. Victor responded only to sounds that had meaning for him in the forest, such as the cracking of a nut, animal sounds, or the sound of rain. He eventually spoke only two words, his favourite food "lait" (milk) and his governess's frequent exclamation "O Dieu" (Oh, God). He said "lait" only when he saw a glass of milk. He never used the word to ask for it. (p. 17)

And here is what they say about the case of Genie:

Nearly two hundred years [after Victor was discovered], Genie, a thirteen-year-old girl who had been isolated, neglected, and abused, was discovered in California.... Because of the irrational demands of a disturbed father and the submission of an abused mother, Genie had spent more than eleven years tied to a chair or a crib in a small, darkened room. Her father had forbidden his wife and son to speak to Genie and had himself only growled and barked at her. She was beaten when she made any kind of noise, and she had long since resorted to complete silence. Genie was undeveloped physically, emotionally, and intellectually. She had no language.

After she was discovered, Genie was cared for and educated with the participation of many teachers and therapists, including Susan Curtiss (1977). After a brief period in a rehabilitation centre, she lived in a foster home and attended special schools. Genie made remarkable progress in becoming socialized and cognitively aware. She developed deep personal relationships and strong individual tastes and traits. Nevertheless, after five years of exposure to language, Genie's language was not like that of a typical five-year old. There was a larger than normal gap between comprehension and production. She used grammatical forms inconsistently and overused formulaic and routine speech. (Ibid., p. 18)

Curtiss (1977) herself states that "Genie was completely without language, and after seven years of rehabilitation she still lacked linguistic competence" (p. 31). Similarly, Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams (2011: 23) reiterate that "The UCLA linguist Susan Curtiss, who worked with Genie for several years, reported that Genie's utterances were, for the most part, 'the stringing together of content words, often with rich and clear meaning, but with little grammatical structure'". Still with reference to the two cases, Singleton (2011: 408) remarked that "[t]ypically in such instances some post-rescue language development is observed - but of a limited and abnormal kind".

The cases of Victor and Genie served as a good background to a study by Achieng' (2012), which focused on the case of Onsanse, from Homabay County in south-western Kenya, who has failed to develop linguistic competence beyond the "telegraphic speech" reported for child language acquisition.¹

Onsanse's case is interesting to study in relation to the critical period hypothesis not only because it is another one of those rare cases where human beings have failed to acquire even their first language, but also, and more importantly, because it involves a multilingual setting, unlike the monolingual settings where Victor (with only French being used around him)

¹ The full details of his life are given in the next section.

and Genie (with only English being used around her) lived. That is why Achieng's study focused on this multilingual setting which involved four languages: English, Swahili, Ekegusii, and Dholuo. The study found that in all of them, the subject did not produce utterances that were longer than two words, after forty years of exposure to those languages. His first language is supposed to be Ekegusii, a language which he should have been exposed to until he was picked up, at age 17, and taken to be raised in a linguistic environment where Dholuo is the native language of the community around him, but where English and Swahili are also used.

Using the same data collected for Achieng's study, the present one aims to be a deeper analysis of the linguistic patterns that seem to characterize Onsanse's grammar, a term to be understood here as comprising lexical, morphological and syntactic aspects. In this connection, the question arises as to what the study will be looking for in Onsanse's grammar. In terms of possible language acquired by cases (like Victor and Genie) after the critical period, there is little which Onsanse's language would be compared to. After all, it will be remembered that Victor is reported to have produced only a couple of expressions. But since, on the other hand, Genie is reported to have acquired some language, Onsanse's own language could usefully be compared to the latter. Still, there will be an important limitation here: Genie's language was English, the language she was first exposed to, and indeed the only one. On the other hand, although Onsanse's language contains excerpts from English, he was only exposed to English much later than Genie, and much less frequently, given the very different sociolinguistic context he has lived in.

As e.g. Fromkin et al. (2011: 22-25) have done, we will compare Onsanse's language not only with that of other "case[s] of linguistic isolation" (p. 24) like Genie, but also that of cases of Broca's aphasia and specific language impairment (SLI), which are another two types of linguistic deficits. From what is known in the literature on Broca's aphasia, we would expect to find Onsanse's grammar to lack functional categories like articles (in the case of English) and all sorts of inflections (e.g. those marking tense and person). And from what is known about SLI, we would

expect to find that some of those functional categories are more impaired than others. Furthermore, since Onsanse has lived in a multilingual setting for so long, we would expect to see some influence of the languages he has been exposed to on each other.

2. THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH ONSANSE HAS LIVED

2.1 The lack of exposure to language from infancy to age 17

Onsanse was 57 years old when the data were collected from him in 2011. Below is his story as compiled by the researcher (Sr. Anne Achieng'), after it was narrated to her by several people: first, Onsanse's uncle, Mondagora; second, the administrative chief of the area, Zebedeo Nyandieka; third, Dr. Sister Dorothy Akoth and Sister Barbara Okuma of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, based at the Asumbi Convent in Homabay County, who saw him at the very time he was picked up and brought to live at a house next to their convent.

Onsanse was picked up, aged 17, from under a bushy, dirty tunnel near the forest at the Riana market next to the Kisii town of Kisii County in Kenya. That was in 1974. He had been living in isolation, deprived of social interaction from around age 2½. He had no language except for, shrieks, growls and groans. His identifiable human-like language was the sound *mhhmhh*. Those who picked him up later found out that he had no parents. They named him after his late father, Ondoro, for future identification.²

When he was picked up, he had a peculiar look and was little in stature, looking like a small boy. He was hairy and could not talk. He had wounds all over his body. He was unable to walk and his legs seemed as if they were deformed. However, he was able to move little with the help of his hands dragging along his legs. Sister Mary Stephen Nkoitoi, who was the superior

² The name *Onsanse* became known to the researcher during the data collection period from the interview session with his uncle Mondagora.

general of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph at the Asumbi convent—at that time, decided to pick up the boy and adopt him.

Onsanse Ondoro was born in 1957. He was the only child of his parents. He was born of a deaf and dumb mother, called Chetunda Ondoro. Soon after Chetunda was married to Mondagora Ondoro, Onsanse's father, the latter got employed at a farm in Kericho district to pick tea on tea plantations. Onsanse's mother stayed behind at the Riana village in Kisii district. But when she got pregnant, she went to Kericho to live with her husband, and that is where Onsanse was born.

Then the whole family returned to Kisii for the Christmas festival that year. But in the following January the father went back to Kericho, leaving Onsanse under the care of his mother. She was very possessive of her son and feared he would be bewitched. So, she kept him in the house or close to her chest most of the time. The turning point in Onsanse's life came when she unfortunately died, when he was just two. Onsanse's father came home to bury her and did not go back to Kericho, as he had to nurture Onsanse. Due to the frustration of losing his wife at an early age, coupled with the responsibility of nurturing a young child, Onsanse's father took to heavy drinking. Routinely, he would prepare some food for his son, put it beside him, and leave the boy in the house alone the whole day. Onsanse would eat the food at will. Later, he would crawl out of the house to look for the father, and more often than not he would not find him. Many times he had to spend the night in the cold, while his father was still in his drinking dens. The latter died when Onsanse was just learning how to walk. Onsanse was not adopted by anyone. His uncle, who would have taken care of him, just wished for him to die so that he could inherit Onsanse's father's land.

Onsanse was thus left to fend for himself. He would move from bush to bush in the forest, from empty houses to under tunnels and bridges, and even in burrows. He would sometimes be seen at the area's small shopping centre, which had only two small shops at the time. There, people would throw some food at him. And since he had had no toilet training, they had to throw stones at him to force him to eat from not near them, as he would

eat and defecate at the same place. He later learnt to throw stones back at his “attackers”. Many of those who threw stones at him saw him as a curse on society. So, they avoided him by any means.

When Onsanse was picked up by the late sister Mary Stephen Nkoitoi from the Riana tunnel in 1974, he had wounds, could not walk, and looked like a five-year old. He was brought to live in a Catholic sisters’ convent compound, which was a multilingual environment, as the sisters spoke English, Kiswahili, Dholuo, and Ekegusii. The first word he is reported to have uttered is “*obosondoto*”, for the Ekegusii word *obosontoto*, meaning ‘chyme’.

2.2 His life in a multilingual environment for four decades

Onsanse grew up in such a multilingual environment. The indigenous community in the midst of which the Asumbi convent is located speaks Dholuo as the native language. However, Onsanse interacts with the community only when he leaves his abode to go to the road or to the nearby shopping centre known as *Sinema*. The Asumbi convent is a complex surrounded by many teaching and training institutions, among which the Asumbi Teachers’ Training College, the Asumbi Technical Training College, the Asumbi Girls’ National School, the Asumbi Girls’ Boarding Primary School, the Asumbi Scheffer Boys’ Primary School, the Asumbi Mixed Primary School (among other schools) and the shopping centre. There is also another trading centre, Rangwe, to the north of Asumbi. Onsanse has the chance to visit all these places in the company of the sisters, as he is taken to work on their Koderu and Mirogi farms to the south and east of Asumbi, respectively.

Later, when Onsanse had recovered partially from most of his wounds, Sister Nkoitoi sent him to the Asumbi Mixed Primary School, in the hope that he would not only get formal education but would also be socialized. On this latter front, he was unable to play games with his fellow pupils. He saw them as people ready to pick up a fight with him. So, he would be the first one to start throwing stones at them.

Inside the classroom, he would sit in class and attempt to repeat words during drills. But he could not remember those words the next day. After a year in school, he was unable to write or read anything. And because he was destructive by breaking windows as he threw stones at his fellow pupils who tried to mock him, he was discontinued. The school administration advised the sisters to take him to a special school. They took him to the Joel Omino Special School located in Kisumu town. There he was unable to learn either language or the other cognitive skills such as mathematics. There are no records of any words that he might have picked up when he was there. He was sickly and was in and out of hospital most of the time; his doctors complained that there was poor care at the school at that time. In fact, the wound he had when he was picked up had increased in size and turned gangrenous.

In the end, he was brought back to Asumbi for treatment and advanced care at the Asumbi Mission Hospital. It took twelve years for the wound to heal. During this time he lived with the sisters and picked a few words that were repeated to him. According to Sr. Dorothy, he picked up abusive words faster than the other words. His favourite is *potato*, which he has always used to mean 'dunderhead' address anyone who annoys him.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data were collected by one of the authors (Sr. Anne Achieng'). She made recourse to conversations, interviews and observations. She spent 154 hours of daily interaction with the subject for twenty-two days.

3.1 The conversations

These were one-to-one conversations which the researcher had with Onsanse over a period of six weeks. They started by the researcher first presenting Onsanse with a new T-shirt to create rapport and elicit some verbal response from him, such as *thank you*. On the following days, she would begin by giving him his favourite drink, a cup of tea. These gestures

enabled a conversational atmosphere of friendliness that would otherwise have been most likely impossible.

The conversations took place in an open place next to the entrance to Onsanse's house. He could thus see the people who crossed the road opposite and those who came to greet him. Such a setting prompted a significant amount of vocabulary from him for recording. But in the first days, the conversations did not go as the researcher had expected, as Onsanse produced few words, in the form of responses mainly initiated by the researcher. Eventually, as the days went by, he got more acquainted with the rather new conversational environment for him and became more relaxed, which enabled him to initiate the some of the conversations, answer questions and make comments on what was going on in the surroundings.

3.2 The oral interviews

Sr. Anne visited Onsanse to interview him ten times between 16 December 2011 and 7 January 2012 in his house at the Asumbi compound. The interviews were conducted face to face, in a room at the convent. Only the two were present, except for a few interruptions from visitors and workers who popped in to greet the two. Sr. Anne had a book containing pictures of people and things familiar to Onsanse. She asked to identify the pictures. At times she used probes like *What are the people in the pictures doing?*, in the hope of eliciting longer utterances. The interviews were audio-recorded.

3.3 The observations

For two weeks, daily, from 8.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., Sr. Anne "observed" Onsanse's language as they both walked along the road going to the shopping centre, as she visited him while he was working, as he interacted with his male friends, his fellow workmates, and his superiors (i.e. the sisters in charge of allocating him work). Such encounters were video-

recorded by Sr. Anne, especially with a view to “immortalizing” Onsanse’s case for possible future studies, since such cases are extremely rare. All the recordings were supplemented with the notes she took of occasional utterances produced when the recorder was off.

4. THE GRAMMATICAL AND PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES OF ONSANSE’S SPEECH

The lists of utterances in this section contain all the words and phrases that Onsanse was able to produce in each one of the four languages for all the duration of the recording.³ They are arranged alphabetically just for ease of reference to them. Where the dots appear between words, they correspond to pauses between utterances. (They are represented by slashes in the appendix.)

4.1 Utterances in Dholuo

Table 1: All the words produced by Onsanse in Dholuo

Onsanse’s utterance	Target word ⁴	Meaning
1) <i>Aaduogo</i>	<i>abiro duogo</i>	‘I will come back’
2) <i>Abolo</i>	<i>saa aboro</i>	at 2.00p.m
3) <i>Abokayi</i>		‘I’ll bite you’
4) <i>Adhiadhia</i>	<i>dhiadhia</i>	‘just go’
5) <i>aa-tho</i>		connoting ‘am tired’
6) <i>Bando</i>		‘maize’
7) <i>Bedo</i>		‘sitting’
8) <i>Beer</i>	<i>b(e)er</i>	‘fine’
9) <i>Chai onge</i>	<i>Onge chae</i>	‘There is no tea’
10) <i>Cham</i>		‘eat’

³ These words have been extracted from the conversational context in which they were produced. The actual conversation, which features a significant amount of codemixing, is given in the Appendix.

⁴ This will be given only where Onsanse’s utterance was different from the intended one.

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 11) | <i>Chiro</i> | | market |
| 12) | <i>Chano</i> | <i>ochanu</i> | 'comb' |
| 13) | <i>Chwade</i> | | 'cane her' |
| 14) | <i>Dhi adhia</i> | | 'Just go' |
| 15) | <i>Dhiii</i> | <i>dhi</i> | 'go' |
| 16) | <i>Ere?</i> | | 'where?' |
| 17) | <i>Goi</i> | | 'beat you' |
| 18) | <i>Idho</i> | | 'climbing' |
| 19) | <i>Kama</i> | | 'like this' |
| 20) | <i>Keakela</i> | <i>kel akela</i> | 'Just bring' |
| 21) | <i>Kiny</i> | | tomorrow |
| 22) | <i>Kodh</i> | <i>koth</i> | 'rain' |
| 23) | <i>Koles</i> | <i>kolej</i> | 'college' |
| 24) | <i>Koro</i> | | 'now' |
| 25) | <i>Kucha</i> | | 'there, visible sight' |
| 26) | <i>Kucho</i> | | 'there, far away' |
| 27) | <i>Madhi</i> | | 'Please have a drink' |
| 28) | <i>Maekoles</i> | <i>maekolej</i> | 'at the college' |
| 29) | <i>Makochaa</i> | | 'on the other side' |
| 30) | <i>Maonge</i> | | 'There is no hope' |
| 31) | <i>Maooketho</i> | <i>okethore</i> | 'This is spoiled/dead/out of use' |
| 32) | <i>Mee oting'o ng'o</i> | <i>oting'o diel</i> | 'He/she is carrying a goat' ⁵ |
| 33) | <i>mee</i> | <i>diel</i> | 'goat' |
| 34) | <i>Mtoka ... ruoko</i> | <i>naaluoko mtoka</i> | 'I was washing the vehicle' |
| 35) | <i>Nang'oo?</i> | | 'How are you?' |
| 36) | <i>Ndhiyo</i> | <i>dhiyo</i> | 'go away' |
| 37) | <i>Nee</i> | | 'see' |
| 38) | <i>Ng'ou</i> | | [Note: This is an offensive expression used by children and the youth to distress or enrage their opponent.]' |
| 39) | <i>Ni?</i> | | 'What?' |
| 40) | <i>Nindo</i> | | 'sleep'??? |

⁵ Onsanse used the onomatopoeic word *mee* to designate a goat.

41)	<i>Nitie</i>		'present'
42)	<i>Nyako ber</i>		'a beautiful girl'
43)	<i>Nyamura</i>	<i>nyambura</i>	'a cat'
44)	<i>Nyingi</i>		'your name'
45)	<i>Nyuka onge</i>	<i>Onge nyuka</i>	'There is no porridge'
46)	<i>Ochamo</i>		'She is eating'
47)	<i>Ochungo?</i>		'He/she is standing up?'
48)	<i>Ochwade</i>		'He/she has been caned'
49)	<i>Odhi</i>		'He/she should leave/go'
50)	<i>Odiro</i>		'He/she has thrown'
51)	<i>Ogada</i>		'elephant grass'
52)	<i>Ogoro</i>		'He/she has drawn'???
53)	<i>Oketho</i>	<i>Okethore</i>	'It is malfunctioning/faulty.'
54)	<i>Okimiya?</i>		'Why don't you give it to me?'
55)	<i>Okombo</i>	<i>Okombe</i>	'a cup'
56)	<i>Omodhi</i>	<i>omodho</i>	'he/she...to drink with'???
57)	<i>Ombasa</i>	<i>Mombasa</i>	'Mombasa' [City]
58)	<i>Ongade [ongade]</i>	<i>Ong'ade [oŋade]</i>	'He/she has cut it'
59)	<i>Onge</i>		'not there' [i.e. 'I have no say']
60)	<i>Onge dhi</i>	<i>Oonge dhiyo</i>	'He/ she is absent/not here, go away'
61)	<i>Onindo</i>		'He is sleeping'
62)	<i>Oonge</i>		'She is absent'
63)	<i>Oonyiero</i>		'He/she is laughing'
64)	<i>Orumo</i>		'It is finished/over'
65)	<i>Otado</i>	<i>tado</i>	'roof'
66)	<i>Otero</i>		'He/she has taken'
67)	<i>Otho</i>	<i>nosetho</i>	'He/she has died'
68)	<i>Otindo</i>		'He/she is sipping'
69)	<i>Oting'i</i>		'He/she has carried you'
70)	<i>Oting'o ng'o</i>	<i>oting'o</i>	'He/she is carrying'
71)	<i>Otwo</i>		'He is sick'
72)	<i>Pi</i>		'water'
73)	<i>Piny</i>		'earth'

74)	<i>Pipilele</i>	<i>pilepile</i>	‘each day/daily’
75)	<i>Polis</i>		‘policeman’
76)	<i>Rabo</i>	<i>rabolo</i>	‘banana’
77)	<i>Rangwe</i>	<i>Rangwe</i>	[This is the name of a shopping centre.]
78)	<i>Ruoko ah!</i>	<i>luoko ah!</i>	‘washing ah!’
79)	<i>Sani</i>		‘now’
80)	<i>Tado</i>		‘roof’
81)	<i>Tweye</i>		‘tie it/him/ her’
82)	<i>Wadhi</i>		‘Let us go’
83)	<i>Yiecho</i>	<i>oyiecho</i>	‘He/she is tearing’
84)	<i>Yuak</i>	<i>oyuak</i>	‘He/she is crying’

4.1.1 Grammatical features

The detailed grammatical features observed in Onsanse’s performance in Dholuo are the following:

- omitting the modal *-bir-* (will) from *abiro* (I will), merging the personal pronoun *a-* with *-duogo* (to be back) into *aaduogo*, and, in addition, doubling the personal pronoun *a-*. Notice that the blended word *aaduogo* may mean ‘I have just returned’, even though, from the context Onsanse clearly meant to say ‘I will come back’;
- omitting the object *-o* from *abiro*;
- omitting the third-person subject marker *o-* from *oyuak* (he/she is crying) to produce *yuak*, from *oyiecho* (he/she is tearing) to produce *yiecho*, from *oonge dhiyo* (he/she is absent/not here) to produce *oonge dhi*;
- omitting the past tense morpheme *na-* (was) and the first person singular marker *-a-* from *naaluoko* (I was washing) to produce just *ruoko* (for *luoko*, actually);
- omitting the past tense morpheme *n-* and the third person singular subject morpheme *-o* from *nosetho* (she has died) to produce just *otho*;
- omitting the initial *o-* from *oonge* (he/she is absent) to produce *oonge*;

- omitting *-re*, a reflexive morpheme pointing back to the subject, from *okethore* (it is malfunctioning) to produce *oketho*;
- replacing *diel* (goat) by *ng'o*, which has no meaning, in *oting'o ng'o* (he/she is carrying) used for *oting'o diel* (she is carrying a goat);
- reversing the word order in *nyuka onge* said for *ongge nyuka* 'there is no porridge); and
- adding *mao-* to *oketho*, said for *okethore* (it is malfunctioning), to produce *maooketho* (this is dead/out of use);

In summary, Onsanse's grammatical production in Dholuo has two really frequent features: a) omitting morphemes, which is the most frequent feature, and b) substituting some morphemes with others.

4.1.2 *Phonological features*

The detailed phonological features observed in Onsanse's performance in Dholuo are the following:

- omitting the initial *o-* from *ochanu* (comb) to produce *chano*;
- omitting final *-l* from *kel* and then merging *ke-* with *akela* to produce *keakela* from the intended *kel akela* (just bring);
- omitting *-b-* from *nyambura* (cat) to produce *nyamura*;
- omitting the *m-* from *Mombasa*, to produce *Ombasa*;
- omitting the final *-yo* from *dhiyo* (???) to produce *dhi*;
- replacing the initial *-l-* by *r-* in *luoko* (washing) to produce *ruoko*;
- replacing the final *-j* in *kolej* (college) with *-s* to produce *koles*;
- replacing the final *-u* in *ochanu* (comb) by *-o*;
- swapping positions of syllables in *pilepile* (daily) to produce *pipilele*;
- lengthening the final vowel in *dhiiii*, used for just *dhi* (go);
- repeating syllables in *adhiadhia*, used for just *adhia* (just go), and *oting'o ng'o* for just *oting'o* (he/she is carrying).

In summary, there are three main phonological features of Onsanse's speech: a) omitting phonemes, which is the most frequent feature but with no clear pattern emerging as to which sound and in which position in the word is the most affected; b) substituting some phonemes for others.

4.2 Utterances in Ekegusii

Table 2: All the words produced by Onsanse in Ekegusii

	Target word	Meaning
85) <i>Abicha</i>	<i>ebicha</i>	'a photo or a picture'
86) <i>Bikoroto</i>	<i>ebikoroto</i>	'shoes'
87) <i>Choombe</i>	<i>chiombe</i>	'cows'
88) <i>Echiro</i>		'market'
89) <i>Eechuma</i>		'metal'
90) <i>Eeakulu</i>	<i>esukuru</i>	'school'
91) <i>Egari</i>		'car'
92) <i>Ekararamu</i>	<i>ekaramu</i>	'pen'
93) <i>Ekararamu skulu</i>	<i>ekaramu yesukuru</i>	'a pen for school'
94) <i>Endege</i>		'an aeroplane' or 'a bird'
95) <i>Engiya</i>		'It's good / Come in'
96) <i>Engoko</i>		'a chicken / a hen'
97) <i>Enyoni</i>		'a bird'
98) <i>Eseso</i>		'a dog'
99) <i>Eesiko</i>	<i>isiko</i>	'outside'
100) <i>Eskulu</i>	<i>esukuru</i>	'a school'
101) <i>Etuon</i>	<i>etwoni</i>	'a cock'
102) <i>Eya</i>	<i>eye</i>	'this one'
103) <i>Eye</i>		'this one'
104) <i>Gere</i>	<i>gera</i>	'weigh'
105) <i>Ikondo</i>	<i>egekondo</i>	'a monkey'
106) <i>Itabu</i>	<i>egetabu</i>	'a book'
107) <i>Irangi</i>	<i>erangi</i>	'paint'
108) <i>Koroto</i>	<i>egekoroto</i>	'shoe'

109)	<i>Kubuli</i>	<i>ekeburi</i>	'a padlock'
110)	<i>Mabwa</i>	<i>amaoga</i>	'flowers'
111)	<i>Makara</i>	<i>amakara</i>	'charcoal'
112)	<i>Mbeche</i>	<i>embeche</i>	'pig / warthog'
113)	<i>Mobe</i>	<i>omobe</i>	'one who is bad'
114)	<i>Mbuuu...ya</i>	<i>mbuya</i>	'fine'
115)	<i>Mtobe</i>	<i>amatobe</i>	'mud'
116)	<i>Ng'ai</i>	<i>ngai</i>	'where?'
117)	<i>Nyumba</i>	<i>enyomba</i>	'house'
118)	<i>Obosondoto</i>	<i>obosontoto</i>	'chyme'
119)	<i>Ochire</i>		'He/she has come'
120)	<i>Okure</i>		'He/she has died'
121)	<i>Otero</i>	<i>oroteru</i>	'a type of African tray'
122)	<i>Otwee</i>	<i>omotwee</i>	'head'
123)	<i>Oyo mwana</i>	<i>omwana oye</i>	'this child'
124)	<i>Rora</i>		'see'
125)	<i>Yaya</i>		'no'

4.2.1 Grammatical features

The detailed grammatical features observed in Onsanse's Ekegusii performance are the following:

- omitting the noun-initial class-marking vowel *e-* from *ebikoroto* (shoes) to produce *bikoroto*, from *ekeburi* (padlock) to produce *kubulu*, from *embeche* (pig) to produce *mbeche*, from *enyomba* (house) to produce *nyumba*; *o-* from *omobe* (one who is bad) to produce *mobe*; *a-* from *amabwa*—which is a wrong word Onsanse used for *amaoga* (flowers)—to produce *mabwa*; *a-* from *amatobe* (mud) to produce *mtobe*, and *a-* from *amakara* (charcoal) to produce *makara*;
- omitting both the noun-initial class-marking vowel and the second noun-class marker prefix *ege-* from the nouns *egekondo* (a monkey) and *egetabu* (book) to produce *itabu*—where the expected *e-* was replaced

by *i-*; *ebi-* from *ebikoroto* (shoes); *om-* from *omotwee* (head) to produce *otwee*;

- omitting the preposition *ya* from *ekaramu eskulu* (said for *ekaramu yesukuru*, ‘a pen for school’); and
- placing the demonstrative *oyo* (for *oye*) before, instead of after, the noun in *oyo mwana* (for *omwana oye*, ‘this child’).

In summary, Onsanse’s Ekegusii grammar production is typically characterized by one feature: omitting the two noun-class marker prefixes, but mostly the noun-initial vowel prefix.

4.2.2 Phonological features

The detailed phonological features observed in Onsanse’s performance in Ekegusii are the following:

- doubling the *-ra-* *ekaramu* (pen) to produce *ekararamu*;
- omitting the medial *-a-* in *amatobe* (mud) to produce in *mtobe*;
- omitting *-s-* from the word *eskulu* (school) to produce it as *eeakulu*—where *-ea-* was substituted for the *-s-*;
- omitting the final *i-* from *etwoni* (cock/rooster) to produce *etwon*;
- omitting the syllable *-ro-* from *oroteru* (a type of tray) to produce *otero*;
- omitting the vowel *-u-* from between the consonant sequence *-sk-* to produce *eskulu* instead of *esukuru* (school);
- replacing *-ke-* in *ekebuli* (padlock) with *-ku-* to produce *kubuli*;
- replacing the *-r* in *ekuburi* and *esukuru* with *-l*;
- replacing the final *-e* in *eye* (this) by *-a* to produce *eya*;
- replacing the noun-initial vowel *e-* in *ebicha* (photo/picture) with *a-* to produce *abicha*;
- replacing the *-io-* in *chiombe* (cows) with *-oo-* to produce *choombe*;
- replacing the initial *i-* in *isiko* (outside) with *e-* and doubling the latter to produce *eesiko*;

- replacing the initial *e-* in *erangi* (paint), *egekondo* (a monkey) and *egetabo* (a book) with *i-* to produce *irangi*, *ikondo* and *itabu*;
- replacing the final *-a* in *gera* (weigh) with *-e*, to produce *gere*;
- replacing the /ŋg/ in *ngai* (where) with /ŋ/ in *ng'ai*;
- replacing the final *-e* in *oye* (this) with *-o* in *oyo*; and
- voicing the /t/ in *obosontoto* (chyme) to produce *obosondoto*.

In summary, Onsanse's Ekegusii performance is characterized by two main features: a) typically, replacing sounds (mostly vowels) with others, in all word positions (initial, medial and final), and b) omitting sounds (from all three word positions).

4.3 Utterances in Kiswahili

Table 3: All the words produced by Onsanse in Kiswahili

	Target word	Meaning
126) <i>Aaa ... rudi?</i>	<i>anarudi</i>	'He/she is coming back'
127) <i>Abaari</i>	<i>habari</i>	'Greetings'
128) <i>Aendapi?</i>	<i>unaenda wapi?</i>	'Where are you going?'
129) <i>Api</i>	<i>wapi</i>	'Where?'
130) <i>Aakuja</i>	<i>amekuja</i>	'He/she has come'
131) <i>Ameleta</i>	<i>ameleta</i>	'he/she has brought'
132) <i>Babari ako?</i>	<i>Habari yako?</i>	'What's your news? / How are you?'
133) <i>Banga</i>	<i>panga</i>	'machete'
134) <i>Boskel</i>	<i>baiskeli</i>	'bicycle'
135) <i>Chai hakuna</i>	<i>Hakuna chai</i>	'There is no tea'.
136) <i>Chiko</i>	<i>jiko</i>	'Charcoal stove'
137) <i>Enda</i>	<i>aende</i>	'Let him/her go'
138) <i>Eenakufa</i>	<i>alikufa/atakufa</i>	'He/she/it died / will die'
139) <i>Fenji</i>	<i>mfereji</i>	'water tap'
140) <i>Gari</i>		'car/vehicle'
141) <i>Hakuna</i>		'There is not'

170)	<i>Pole</i>		'I'm sorry'
171)	<i>Sai</i>	<i>saa hii</i>	'now'
172)	<i>Simama</i>		'Stand up'
173)	<i>Sisisi</i>	<i>sisi</i>	'us'
174)	<i>Sista ... aendapi?</i>	<i>Sista ... anaenda wapi?</i>	'Sister...where is she going to?'
175)	<i>Sista ... kuja</i>	<i>Sista anakuja</i>	'Sister ... is coming'
176)	<i>Ugali</i>		'ugali'
177)	<i>Uku</i>	<i>huku</i>	'here'
178)	<i>Yako?</i>	<i>Habari yako?</i>	'What's your news? / Good morning'
179)	<i>Yemikuja</i>	<i>Umekuja</i>	'Have you come?'

4.3.1 Grammatical features

The detailed grammatical features from Onsanse's performance in Kiswahili are the following:

- adding the Ekegusii noun-initial vowel *e-* to *gari* to produce *egari*;
- omitting the tense morpheme *-na-* from *anakuja* (he/she is coming) to produce *kuja*, from *anaenda* (he/she is going) to produce *aende*, and from *naosha* (I am washing) to produce *osha*;⁶
- omitting the class marker *zi-* from *zinaenda wapi* (where are they going) to produce *nendeapi*—where, evidently, other changes took place;
- omitting the personal pronoun *a-* from *amekufa* (he/she is dead) to produce *nakufa*;
- omitting the copula verb *ni* e.g. from *Hii gari ni ya kolej* (this call if for the college) to produce *Hii gari ... maekoles*;
- omitting the complex auxiliary *nilikuwa* (decomposable as *ni+li+kuwa* 'I+was+in the process of') and the tense marker *na-* from *Mimi nilikuwa naosha gari* (I was washing the car) to produce *Mimi egari ... osha*;

⁶ However, the morpheme was not omitted in all cases, since he produced the full form *anafanya*.

- omitting the preposition *ya* from *Hii ni gari ya kolej* to produce *Hii gari ... maekoles*;
- omitting the final *-a* on the verb root from *naenda* (I am going) to produce *naend*;
- replacing *-li-* in *alikuwa* (he/she died) with *-na-* to produce *eenakuwa*;
- replacing *-me-* in *amekuwa* (he/she has died) with *-na-* to produce *nakuwa*;
- replacing the personal pronoun *a-* in *alikuwa* with *e-* in *eenakuwa* (note in passing that it was specifically attached to the verb *-kuwa*);
- replacing the future tense marker *-ta-* in *itakuwa* (it will die) with *-na-* in *eenakuwa*; and
- using the direct imperative *enda* (go) for the mitigated imperative for *aende* (let him/her go).

In summary, the main features are the following: a) mostly omitting functional morphemes, both inflectional and free, and b) replacing morphemes with others. This latter feature consisted essentially in replacing the other tense morphemes with the present tense marker *-na-*. It should be noted, though, that even this *-na-* was omitted in some of Onsanse's utterances.

4.3.2 Phonological features

The detailed phonological features observed in Onsanse's performance in Kiswahili are the following:

- adding an extra syllable to *sisi* (we) to produce *sisisi*;
- avoiding the consonant sequences *mf-* and *mt-* in *mfereji* (water tap) and *motto* (child) to produce *fenji* and *mototo*;
- merging *waenda wapi* into *nyeendapi*;
- omitting (or avoiding?) the sounds /h/ and /w/ in the production of words like *habari* (news), *huku* (here), and *wapi* (where);

- omitting the second syllable from *pikipiki* (motorbike) to produce *pipiki*;
- omitting the final vowel a- (on the verb root) from *nasoma* (I am reading) and *naenda* (I am going) to produce *nasom* and *naend*;
- replacing *-fere-* in *mfereji* by *fen-* to produce *fenji*;
- replacing *wa-* and *una-* in *waenda* (you go) and *unaenda* (you are going) with *nye-* /ɲe/ to produce *nyeendapi*;
- replacing the sounds /z/ and /ʃ/ by /s/, thus producing the words *kasi* for *kazi* (work), *msuuli* for *nzuri* (good), and *keso* for *kesho* (tomorrow);
- replacing the sound /l/ in *nalala* (I am sleeping / lying down) with /r/ to produce *narara*;
- replacing the sound /r/ in *nzuri* by /l/ to produce *msuuli*; and
- voicing the *-ta-* in *nataka* (I want) to produce *nadaka*.

In summary, Onsanse's performance in Kiswahili is characterized by two main features are: a) omitting certain phonemes (from all word positions), and b) replacing certain phonemes with others.

4.4 Utterances in English

Table 4: All the words produced by Onsanse in English

- 180) *Aayu?* ['How are you?']
 181) *Bo ... bo ... bo ...* boarding
 182) *Boarding school*
 183) *Eeh ... eeh ... go back ... go ... go ... eeh ... eeh ... go back*
 184) *Go back*
 185) *Is coming* [for 'Someone is coming']
 186) *Ooh!*
 187) *Potato* [i.e. 'dunderhead']
 188) *School*
 189) *Too mush* [for 'too much', i.e. I am tired]

4.4.1 Grammatical features

The only grammatical feature worth pointing out here is the lack of a subject in the verb phrase *is coming*. It should be added, however, that the same segment contains the progressive auxiliary *is* and the accompanying *-ing* inflection on the main verb *coming*. This is significant because the redundancy of both the auxiliary and the inflection, both of which are functional elements, was not expected in this kind of limited grammar which is comparable to that of Broca's aphasics. Unfortunately, Onsanse did not produce enough verb forms to provide us with evidence, or the lack of it, of the possibility that while he may have difficulty with certain inflections, e.g. those marking tense and agreement, he did not have any with the progressive aspect marker *-ing*. That would have been evidence for selective impairment.

4.4.2 Phonological features

Three observations can be made:

- reducing the three syllables of *how are you* into the two of *Aayu*,
- the initial hesitation in trying to pronounce the word *boarding*, and
- the substitution of the sound /tʃ/ with /ʃ/ in the word *much*.

Since these three appeared only once each, no meaningful generalization can be made from them.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The first thing to point out is that Onsanse has acquired language after he was picked up and raised in an environment where he was exposed to plenty of linguistic input. This makes his case comparable to that of Genie, but not that of Victor. And what Curtiss (1977: 45) reported about Genie's linguistic competence, namely that "she had a large vocabulary but lacked

the ability to string words correctly”, would also apply to Onsanse's, of course we agreed that “large” has its special meaning in this context.

Whether large or small, Onsanse's vocabulary is the widest in Dholuo: all the utterances gathered contain about 80 different lexical items from Dholuo, about 50 from Kiswahili, about 40 from Ekegusii, and about 10 from English.⁷ The difference in these numbers can be easily attributed to the fact that Dholuo is the dominant language in the environment where Onsanse has been living for four decades⁸. But what is of greater significance than just those numbers is the fact that he managed to learn some language, however limited it is.

The nature of Onsanse's speech is of great theoretical relevance in several respects. First, it was highly hesitant, as shown by the numbers of slashes (representing the time in seconds) between words and phrases in the transcribed conversations in the Appendix. Second, not a single one of his utterances was longer than two words in one breath. In other words, his speech can be likened to the “telegraphic speech” reported, for normal children in first language acquisition, to start “around the time of their second birthday” (Fromkin et al., 2011, pp. 346-347). Third, Onsanse's speech, like child language acquisition telegraphic speech and the speech of brain-damaged subjects (specifically Broca's aphasics), is basically composed of content words.

Further, Onsanse's speech is comparable to that of specific language impairment subjects to the extent that some morphemes and phonemes seem to be more affected than others. For instance, in relation to grammatical features, while the most frequent feature of his Dholuo performance was the omission of (obligatory) inflectional morphemes, mostly the subject marker, Onsanse retained all of them in some instances. A good illustration can be found in his utterance *abokayi* (I will bite you),

⁷ We were not able to trace the following non-words produced by Onsanse to any one of the four languages: *bweeti*, *esarara*, *goa*, *masarara*, *mbusarara*, *maseti*, *oru*, *owo*, *sapala*, *sisiwe*, *ututi*.

⁸ However, to a certain extent the difference seems also to have to do with how often the researcher used each language to put questions to Onsanse.

which is composed of the first person singular and subject marker *a-*, the future marker in the form of modal auxiliary *-bo-* (will), the verb stem *-ka-* (bite), and the second person singular object pronoun *-yi* (you). Another illustration appears in *wadhi* (let us go), where Onsanse maintained the first person plural pronoun *wa-* (we). A third example is in the word *tweye* (tie her), which contains both the main verb *twe-* (tie) and the third person singular object pronoun *-ye* (her).

These examples suggest that Onsanse's impairment of inflectional morphology is selective: on the one hand, he has greater difficulty in handling the subject-marking morphemes than the object-marking ones, and, on the other hand, when it comes to the subject morphemes themselves, he has greater difficulty with the singular marker than the plural marker. This observation mirrors the findings reported by Radford et al. (p. 251) from SLI studies:

One of these investigated SLI children's performance on two regular inflectional affixes, the plural *-s* (*two book-s*) and the third person singular present *-s* (*she arrive-s*). ... Despite the fact that both affixes are regular, SLI subjects' performance with the plural is considerably better than with the tense/agreement suffix.

It would thus be suitable to borrow Radford et al.'s conclusion that "Taken together, these findings indicate that the different grammatical functions of the affixes [are] the controlling factor" (p. 251).

Selective morphological impairment was also observed in Kiswahili and Ekegusii. In Kiswahili, Onsanse had less difficulty using the tense marker morpheme *-na-* than the other tense morphemes, namely *-li-*, *-me-*, and *-ta-*. He actually used it in lieu of these latter. In Ekegusii, while the typical feature of his speech was to omit the two noun-class marker prefixes, the noun-initial vowel was more affected than the morpheme that follows it.

With regard to phonological impairment in Onsanse's speech, there were two main tendencies across Dholuo, Ekegusii and Kiswahili: omitting certain phonemes and replacing certain others with others. However, no clear pattern emerged from which sounds were typically affected in Dholuo.

In Ekegusii, on the other hand, the omission and substitution of specific sounds seems to affect more vowels than consonants. The picture seems a little bit clearer in Kiswahili: the omission (or avoidance?) of the two sounds /h/ and /w/ tended to be systematic, and so did the use of the sound /s/ for /z/ and /ʃ/. It could be argued, though, that the latter feature is not particular to Onsanse's Kiswahili, but typical of the Kiswahili of Dholuo speakers in general. Still in Kiswahili, the dropping of the final vowel (as in *naend* for *naenda* and *nasom* for *nasoma*) could also be attributed to influence from Dholuo, a language which, unlike Kiswahili (and other Bantu languages) allows closed syllables.

Beyond grammar and (segmental) phonology, Onsanse's utterances display other linguistic features worth studying: from lexical coinages, like the word *esarara(ra)* (a non-word in the four languages) used as a noun to designate any animal or insect which he could not name, to prosodic features and codemixing.

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APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCHER'S CONVERSATIONS WITH ONSANSE, THE SUBJECT ⁹

(Note: The researcher is R, while Onsanse is S.)

Conversation No. 1: [Greetings, with R's questions asked in Dholuo, Ekegusii and Kiswahili]

1. R: *Ondoro misawa?* (Ondoro, good morning?)
2. S: *Beer* (fine)
3. R: *Idhi nade?* (How are you?)
4. S: *Onge* (not there, [meaning: 'I have no say'])
5. R: *la kanye?* (Where are you coming from?)
6. S: *Kucha* (there)
7. R: *Niitimo ang'o chakre okinyi?* (What have you been doing since morning?)
8. S: *Mtoka //// motoka //// ruoko. Ah /// ah //// motoka* (vehicle, wash, vehicle)
9. R: *Ondoro mbuyore?* (How are you Ondoro?)
10. S: *Mbu ///// mbuuu //// ya (Fi... fi...fine)*
11. R: *Inki gwakora rero?* (What have you been doing from morning?)
12. S: *Obosondoto* (chyme)
13. R: *Obosondoto? Naya gaki Ondoro?* (Chyme? Really Ondoro?)
14. S: *Yaya (no).* [He keeps silent.]

Conversation No 2: [More greetings, with R's questions asked in English and Kiswahili]

15. R: How are you Ondoro?
16. S: *Aayu?* [Trying to repeat the greeting *How are you?*]
17. R: Where are you coming from Ondoro?

⁹ The number of slashes corresponds to that of seconds which Onsanse took to produce the next utterance.

18. S: eeh/// eeh //// go back ////////// go //// go //// eeh /// eeh
//// go back.
19. R: *Habari Ondoro?* (How are you?)
20. S: *Abaari* [Trying to repeat the greeting word *habari*]
21. R: *Umetoka wapi?* (Where are you coming from?)
22. S: *Api? ///// Kucha ////////// kule ///// eeh /// eeh ///// uku*
(Where? /// there /// there /// eeh /// eeh /// in here)
23. R: *Ulikuwa unafanya nini mchana kutwa?* (What have you been doing
the whole day?)
24. S: *mimi ////////// egari ///// mh /// mh // osha ///// gari (////*
vehicle //// mh // wash /// vehicle)

Conversation No 3: [R's questions asked in English and Dholuo]

25. R: What is her name? [Pointing at a girl he does not like].
26. S: *Hm hm*
27. R: Where is sister Apolonia?
28. S: *Apolo /// otho //// otho* (dead///dead)
29. R: *Macha ang'o?* (What is that?)
30. S: *Abicha //// picha.* (A picture)
31. R: Where is it?
32. S: *mh // mh // mh /// aa-tho* (Am tired)

Conversation No. 4: [Questions asked in English, Dholuo and Ekegusii]

33. R: Which animal is this?
34. S: *Choombe.* (A cow).
35. R: *Ma lemane?* (Which animal is this?)
36. S: *Mee //// oting'o //// oting'o mee ////.* (*mee ////* is carrying
//// is carrying *mee*)
37. R: *Ma ang'o?* (What is this?)
38. S: *liigari ///// maekoles.* (This vehicle /// for college).
39. R: *Inki iki?* (What is this?)

40. S: *Esese* (a dog)
41. R: *Inki makobeka?* (What is it doing?)
42. S: *Echiro* (a market)
43. R: *Neye?* (What about this one?)
44. S: *Sondari* (secondary school)

Conversation No. 5: [Questions asked by both R and S on their way to the Sinema shopping centre]

S greets people along the way.

45. S: *Aayu?* [for 'how are you?']

[He asks them]:

46. S: *Nyeendapi? Aakuja //// yemikuja //// sisiwe.*

They tell him:

47. *Wadhi e chiro ngiewo omena.* (We are going to the market to buy silver fish).

He is excited by the site of the motorcycles along the way and says:

48. S: *Pipiki //// eee, ///// eee //// nendeapi?. Ere kiny /// chiro. Nyako //// ber.* (The motorcycles /// eee /// eee /// Where going? Where tomorrow, market)

The school children from a nearby school are going out for lunch and they greet him:

49. Ondoro, how are you?
50. S: *Eekulu //// eskulu //// nasom.* (School //// school //// read)

He sees a sister coming their way and he talks to R:

51. S: *Sista /// Kuja // Olisabet //// Ok.* (Sister /// coming // Elizabeth /// Ok).

He greets the sister and asks her:

52. S: *Nan'go? //// Nitie.* (How are you? //// There).
53. Sr. E.: *Antie, idhi nade Ondoro?* (I'm fine Ondoro. How are you?)
54. R: *Otindo. Koro? ///// Onge/////.* (Otindo. How? ///// not there)

He meets another female figure and initiates the talk:

55. S: *Madhi //// Haa // Yuu? Aa/// adhi/// Adhia ///. Madhi ///. Haa /// yu?* (Drink //// Haa // You? Ah /// I go///. Just go ///. Drink /// Haa /// You?).

She responds:

56. Sr. E: *Ondoro, adhi maber, idhi kanye?* (Ondoro, I am fine, where are you going to?).

57. S: *Too mush ////* (Too much).

He sees a lame boy and comments:

58. S: *Otwo.* (He is sick).

Then after a while, he says:

59. S: *Yuak //// Hakuna //// Nyuka //// Ni // Mbeya //// Chai onge /// Nyuka onge.* (Crying //// it is not there //// porridge //// it is //// bad //// tea is not there /// porridge is not there).

He sees another sister approaching and says:

60. S: *Is coming. Sista //// nakuja ///// Sisisi //// aendapi?* (She's coming. Sister //// She's coming //// Sister //// Where are you going to?)

Raising his voice, he utters:

61. S: *Naendapi?* (Where is he going to?)

62. The sister: *Ninaenda nyumbani. Ondoro, na wewe je?* (I am going home. What about you, Ondoro?)

63. S: *Ngoja //// nakuja ///// chai hakuna ///// orumo.* (Wait //// I'm coming ///// Tea is not there ///// it is over).

He claps his hands. Shortly after, he greets an elderly woman:

64. S: *Babari ///// yako //// Babari ako.* (What's your news? ///// Your [news] //// What's your news?).

65. The elderly woman: *Ondoro, we chanda gi Kiswahili.* (Ondoro, do not disturb me with Kiswahili).

He then reminds me of the batteries for his portable radio he is carrying.

66. S: *Hakuna //// masasi. Ukimiya //// masasi //// masasi //// masasi. Jembe //// mbaya //// wadhi //// Rangwe. Sai Rangwe //// Maonge ///// Naenda /// e /// gari /// ongade /// ogada.* (No //// batteries. Why don't you give me //// batteries //// batteries ////

batteries. A hoe //// bad //// let us go //// Rangwe. Now Rangwe
 //// it is not here //// I am going /// to the /// vehicle /// to cut ///
 elephant grass).

Then he sees a chicken and shouts:

67. S: *Nee //// ngoko ////. Keso //// keso ////. Eennakufa ////. Okure*
 (See //// chicken ////. Tomorrow //// tomorrow //// It will die ////.
 Dead).

R then asks him:

68. R: *Ere wuonu?* (Where is your father?)

He responds:

69. S: *Onge dhi //// adhiya /// dhi adhia ///// koro //// dhiii.* Go back
 //// Go back. *Wadhi //// wadhi //// kucha. Nee gari.* (Not there go
 //// just go ///, go just go //// now //// go)

Then he turns aggressive and warns R:

70. S: *Abokayi //// potato //// ng'ou.* (I will bite you, potato, *ng'ou*)

R and S become quiet for a long time waiting for S's temper to cool.
 Fortunately, the two meet S's friend and S greets him:

71. S: *Habari ///// msuri //// habari.* (How are you? //// Fine //// How
 are you?).

He is now smiling. And before the friend can respond, he goes on:

72. S: *Uliendapi? //// Sapala. Sista //// naend //// misa ///// abolo.*
 (Where did you go? //// *Sapala.* Sister //// I'm going //// mass ////
 at 2.00).

Then R and S go back to the house where R embarks on letting S identify
 what is in the pictures she shows him:

73. R: *Ondoro, wachna nying gini?* (Ondoro, name this.)

74. S: *Mabwa.* (For the 'flower' R shows him.)

75. S: *Skul-Sule ///// Uruti.* (School //// *Uruti* [which is a nonsensical
 word])

76. S: *House hii //// msuuli //// nyumba //// msuuli. Engiya ////*
nyomba (This //// beautiful //// house //// beautiful. This ////
 house).

He then remembers that he needs batteries for his small radio and interrupts:

77. S: *Keakela ///// masasi ///// Sista. Ma ///// bo //// bo //// bo //// boding //// skol. Maoketho ///// oketho ///// oketho /////*
(Just bring them. ///// batteries ///// sister. This one ///// bo ///// bo ///// boarding //// school. This spoiled ///// spoiled ///// spoiled).

Conversation No. 6: [R's Questions asked in all four languages]

The next day we meet and R initiates the greetings:

78. R: *Ondoro, habari.* (Ondoro, how are you?)

He coughs and says:

79. S: *Pole.* (Sorry).

Then he utters, in Ekegusii:

80. S: *Bikoroto* (shoes)

I then ask him to name the animals from a picture book.

81. S: *Ikondo* (a sheep) [and then he goes on to say] *Mbusarara ////*

At that point he keeps repeating the same word for all the animals he does not know and cannot identify by saying:

82. S: *Esararara* and *Sararara* [both of which are nonsensical words]

I then show him a bird and ask him:

83. R: Which bird is this?

He answers:

84. S: *Endege* (a bird).

85. R: *Na huyu, je anaitwaje?* (And what's the name of this one?)

86. S: *Engoko //// etuon* (a cock)

87. R: Tomato (what about this other animal?) pointing at a dog.

88. S: *Esese* (a dog)

89. R: *Na huyu je?* (And what about this one?) pointing at a goat.

90. S: *Mee /// nee mee* (Mee///see mee).

91. R: *Inki eke?* (What is this?)

92. S: *Fenji* (a tap)

93. R: *Ma en ang'o?* (What is this?)

94. S: *Pesa* (a pot).

Then I point at a picture of a woman in the book. He correctly identifies her as:

95. S: *Mama.* (Mother)

96. R: *Mama anafanya nini?* (What is she doing?)

97. S: *Kasi ///// anafanya ///// mama.* (Work ... She is working...)

98. R: *Huyu ni nani?* (Who is this?)

He identifies the child the woman is carrying as:

99. S: *Hii //// ya //// mototo. Oyo //// mwana.* (This //// for //// mototo. This one //// child).

Pointing at a jug, I then ask him:

100. R: *Mato en ang'o?* (What is this?)

101. S: *Okombo //// Ooh ///// omodhi ///// pi ///// maji. Otado // tado.* (Okombo //// ooh ///// drinking ///// water //// water. Otado // tado).

Pointing at the bicycle, I ask him:

102. R: What is this?

103. S: *Bo // bo // bo /// boskel. egari. Egari eye* (Bicycle. Vehicle. This vehicle). (bo /// bo /// bo.

Pointing at a snake, I ask him:

104. R: *Nee, ma ang'o?* (Look at this, what is this?)

105. S: *Ikondo* (a sheep)

Then, he calls all the other animals *esararara*, a word which does not exist in any one of the four languages.

106. R: *Inki eke?* (What is this? [in Ekegusii])

107. S: *Enyoni* (a bird [in Ekegusii])

Then I show him a pen, and ask him:

108. R: *Hii ni kitu gani?* (What is this thing here?)

109. S: *Ekararamu* (a pen) //// *skulu* (school)

Pointing at a ball, I ask in Dholuo:

110. R: *Wachna nying gini?* (Tell me the name of this item?)

111. S: *Mbeche* //// *tado* //// *kama* ////, *tatu* //// *mmmpira* ////
mupira //// *mupira*. (*Mbeche* //// roof //// like this /// three ////
 mmball //// ball //// ball).

Then I show him a hoe and ask:

112. R: *Hii ni nini?* (What is this?)

113. S: *Eechuma* ///// *chuma* ///// *gere* //// *lima*. (Metal ///// metal
 ///// *gere* //// I dig)

I show him wheat flour and ask:

114. R: *Na hii ni nini?* (And what's this?)

115. S: *Chapati* (chapatti) /// *mandasi* (doughnut)

116. R: *Hivi ni vitu vipi?* (What are these?)

117. S: *Koroto* ///, *ee*/// *koroto*. *Ng'ai* ///// *koroto*. (Shoes //// ee ////
 shoes. Where? //// shoes.)

He sees a girl that he has contempt for and our interview is distracted. He begins by such sounds as:

118. S: *mh, mh, mh* [he makes this sound when he does not want to
 welcome someone].

119. S: *ooo* ///// *ogoro* //// *go piny* //// *ogoro* //// *piny* //// *oo* ////
gari. *Ochwade* ///// *odhi* // *odhi* /// *nindo* //// *kucho* ///// *anaenda*.
 (Oh oh! /// Fell her down, /// fell /// May someone cane her //// she
 should go //// to bed //// there far away, //// go.

I give the girl some food and ask him:

120. R: What is the girl doing?

121. S: *Ochamo* //// *kama*//// *ochamo*. She is eating //// like this ////
 she is eating.

Pointing to a picture of the Kenyan flag, I ask him:

122. R: What is this?

123. S: *Ee* // *tai* //// *tai* //// *tai*. (*Ee* // tie //// tie //// tie.)

And pointing to a banana:

124. R: Which fruit is this?

125. S: *Rabo* //// *ra* //// *ra* //// *rabolo*. (*Rabo* //// *ra* //// *ra* ////
 banana.

On seeing the sisters returning from work, he is distracted and says:

126. S: *Aaa //// Rudi ? Anakuja? //// Simama ///// Ochungo?*

Pointing to a stove, I ask him:

127. R: What is this?

128. S: *Chiko* (for *jiko*, in Swahili)

Then I show him a picture of a child and ask him:

129. R: *Mtoto anafanya nini?* (What's the child doing?)

130. S: *Mtoto //// mtoto //// mtoto //// onindo* (Child //// child //// is sleeping)

I show him a picture of cars, and ask:

131. R: Which vehicles are these?

132. S: *egari* (A vehicle).

Then I show him a comb and a key, respectively, and ask him:

133. R: Which items are these?

134. S: *Chano /// kubuli /// kubuli eya.* (Chano /// padlock /// that padlock).

Then I show him a man carrying a knife, but he only identifies the knife as

135. S: *Kiso* ([for *kisu*, in Swahili] meaning a knife)

Then I show him a pen, which he correctly names:

136. R: What is this?

137. S: *Kalamu //// kalamu //// kalamu* (a pen)

I show him a picture of a cow, and ask:

138. R: Which animal is this?

139. S: *Kama* (milk [the cow] now [in Ekegusii])

And when the girl stands up as if to go, he says,

140. S: *Potato //// rabuon. Odhi /// odhi //// odhii /// nee //// odhi //// ochire.* (Potato////potato. Let her go///let her go///let her goo /// see /// she is going //// she is gone [in Dholuo]).

141. R: Today you will have a bath here.

142. S: *Mh // mh // mh.*

He spots a cat and calls out:

143. S: *Nyamura /// ae //// Nyamura cham //// dhi //.* (Nyamura /// ae //// Nyamura eat //// go//).

Later, while he is having a bath, he sees the girl coming back and shouts:

144. **S:** *Huyu //// Mbaya//// Enda////. Ndhiyo //// chwade ///// Polis tweye.* (This person //// bad //// go ////. *Ndhiyo ////* cane her //// Policeman jail her).

Our conversation resumes the next day:

145. **R:** What is this Ondoro?
146. **S:** *Itabu* (for *kitabu* 'book', [in Swahili])
147. **R:** How many are they?
148. **S:** *Itabu* (book).

Pointing to the sisters who come into the room, I ask him:

149. **R:** Who are these?
150. **S:** Sister.

And when he sees the grounds man laughing, he utters:

151. **S:** *Onyiero* (he is laughing).

To elicit lengthy sentences from him, I ask:

152. **R:** What did you eat yesterday?
153. **S:** *Mh mh mh //// mh // mh // mh. Aaduogo.*
154. **R:** The Bishop is coming today. **S:** *Mh // mh mh /// mh mh*
155. **R:** Where is the T-shirt I bought for you?
156. **S:** *Mh /// Msuri /// ber. (Mh /// Fine [Kiswahili] /// fine [Dholuo]).*