

Sojourner *Express*: February 2020
Nora Hajian



Hello, folks! I hope the winter season has been treating you all well. There's no snowfall where I am, so you will just have to enjoy your snowfalls on my behalf.

I officially have a boss in the office! She's a great help when I have questions, and I'm now at the point where sometimes the questions I'm puzzling about are ones that she is also puzzling about. I'm also starting to chat more with the two Ikoma Scripture translators, which is very helpful to me as I try to analyze and add Ikoma words to the database. The translators' spirit of camaraderie and cooperation helps to make up for my struggles to keep up with their Swahili and ask questions in Swahili.

Fortunately, I am continuing with my Swahili studies, and gradually understanding more and more. Yesterday my language teacher took me to his mother's house in the late afternoon, and I enjoyed chatting with her about Canadian and Tanzanian animals, and our respective families. Conversational practice is important when learning a language that you plan to converse in. When I listen to someone addressing a group of people in Swahili, the trick is to understand the words quickly without having to look them up in my 'mental dictionary'. I'm getting to that point with the group of nouns, verbs and adjectives that I've been studying and hearing most frequently. Today, I think I understood my first natural Swahili sentence without having to miss out on the speaker's following sentences.

The words I've added this month include nouns with meanings such as testimony, sin, gift and law, and verbs with meanings such as praise, create, believe and follow. One word that gave me a bit of trouble was **kweri**, a verb that connotes a sense of washing or cleaning of some sort. I mostly use Swahili as an interface language when working with Ikoma, and Swahili has at least eight (!) different verbs that connote a sense of cleaning or washing. In Swahili, we **-oga** in the shower and **-tosa** ourselves in lakes or rivers, and we **-osha** dishes and **-safisha** the house or the table or the car. When our clothes are dirty we **-fua** them. We even **-tawadha** our feet and **-nawa** our face and hands. But when it comes to our hearts and lives, we need to experience **-takasa** : cleansing, purifying sanctification. **-takasa** is the the Swahili verb I ended up using to gloss **kweri**, since **kweri** gets used in mostly the same contexts that **-takasa** would be used. A gloss is a very short, provisional 'pre-definition', and usually only one word.

I miss you guys lots! Earlier this week I did the payroll for employed staff by myself for the first time, and next weekend I may end up taking my first trip to a village (just to visit with a local advocate for Bible Translation). As I am starting to get a lot more requests for money, please pray that I'll have wisdom and discernment to know when I should give and when I should not. Keep the staff here in your prayers! We are still dealing with work permit and residence permit issues. Thanks to God that he enables us – missionaries and national workers alike – to continue the work we are doing here in spite of a sometimes uncertain future. One of the New Testament translations we work with here, Suba-Simbiti, is going through the final community checks before it goes through typesetting and publication, and we are all very excited about that.

Much love,

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