

SWAH 1010/1020 Student Reflection

CCE Reflection: What have I learnt about the Swahili immigrant community?

My group and I translated citizenship practice test questions for the Swahili immigrant community. By doing so, this allowed Swahili immigrants to study for the naturalization test in an easier way. This was a cool way to bridge the gap between us as American citizens and people who are other types of residents here, so there is not as much hostility. It was an act that showed our hospitality instead of antagonism, of which there is so much in the world today. In order to translate these citizenship questions, we found a pdf of the practice questions online, and then we split up those questions evenly among our group so that we could have them all translated. We provided the question in English and then a translation in Swahili, that way they could see both translations side by side. It was a rather easy task, but I think it does a lot to show a more hospitable attitude toward immigrants than the very standoffish attitude that some Americans have.

Personally, I translated a block of the citizenship questions. I helped find the pdf online, and then on my own I looked up the vocabulary necessary. I then submitted those questions to Dkt. Rotich so that she could also refine them, as I am sure my Swahili wasn't completely understandable. This was a good exercise in realizing challenges that immigrants face that we don't always think of. It helped to build empathy and understanding toward the immigrant community. Further, I asked my sister some of the questions, in English, as I was translating them, and she had a hard time answering them. I found this more enlightening, as not only is there a language barrier for immigrants, but these questions are very difficult! I've had years and years of American history drilled into my brain, and yet I also barely knew the answers.

Our project was fairly straightforward. We really just had to look up vocab to help in translating. Perhaps that was one challenge, then, that we didn't know a lot of the Swahili translations for the vocab used on the test. In order to address these challenges, we used various vocab sources to help us find the translated words. However, it is often difficult to find very reliable English/Swahili dictionaries, as Swahili words fluctuate between communities/regions, so there is still the chance that some immigrants might not be familiar with the particular vernacular that we used. Thus, it is very good that Dkt. Rotich was able to look over our translations. Overall, I really enjoyed the community engagement aspect of our class and it helped bring awareness to the Swahili community in Charlottesville and other challenges they face.