

DISCUSSION PAPER 15

Birgit Brock-Utne

Language, Democracy and Education in Africa

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Preface

This publication is built on two papers, both written during January and February 2002 when I was a guest researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI).

The NAI-editor of the publication has merged the two papers into a coherent whole where paragraphs and information in paper one which originally could also be found in paper two are now deleted. Likewise the references behind each paper have been merged.

In the first paper, I look at the language question through the eyes of a social and political scientist. I view the language question mainly as a question of social class, of power. What social classes profit from the continued use of European languages in Africa? Who benefits? Who loses? My focus is also on language use in the courts and in the political domain in Tanzania and South Africa. A slightly modified version of this paper will be presented to the Communication and Culture Commission of the International Peace Research Association at a conference in Seoul in July 2002.

The second paper is an extended version of my talk to the NAI Research Forum on 24 January 2002. It describes the two research projects in which I am now involved in Tanzania and South Africa. In this paper, I focus especially on the question of language of instruction and do so through the eyes of an educationist. As I did during my NAI Research Forum talk, I place greater emphasis on the Tanzanian part of the project.

I am grateful to the NAI for providing me with congenial working conditions at the beginning of my sabbatical year and for publishing these two papers. Since both projects are in their early phases, I shall be happy to receive comments on the papers making up this publication.

22 February 2002

Birgit Brock-Utne

The Language Question in Africa seen in the Context of Globalisation, Social Justice and Democracy¹

INTRODUCTION

Can there be genuine democracy in South Africa when prevailing post-apartheid institutions continue to foster forms of knowledge that continue to produce inequalities which continue to underprivilege the African majority? (Alidou and Mazrui, 1999:101)

The forms of knowledge being referred to here are those built on European culture and tradition and delivered in European languages. Those forms of knowledge that could empower the underprivileged would have to be built on African culture and tradition and be delivered in African languages. A genuine concern for social justice and democracy would lead African political leaders to work towards strengthening African languages. Donor pressure, as well as the impact of the capital-led market economy, often called globalisation, however, work towards the retention of European languages.

At the end of 2000, I received a four-year research grant from the Norwegian Research Council to describe and analyse current language-in-education policies and their implementation in Tanzania and South Africa. In this project, I shall look at the background to these policies, the forces working for and against change, and the manner in which teachers cope in secondary school classrooms in Tanzania and in the higher grades of primary school in South Africa. Late in 2001, I, together with Tanzanian and South African colleagues, received funding for a five-year period to expand this analysis and to add a second research component. This is an action component: we plan an experiment in which we will let some secondary school classes in Tanzania and primary school classes in South Africa be taught in their own language in some subjects for two more years.

The use of a familiar language as the language of instruction is central to classroom learning. Those of us who have worked as teachers in classrooms are witnesses to the truth of David Klaus's opening statement of 2001: "There appears to be general agreement that students learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying" (Klaus, 2001). In countries as widely diverse as Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Italy, children have the advantage of starting their

¹ I would like to thank the South African researchers Neville Alexander and Kwesi Kwaa Prah for the time they gave me in February 2002 to discuss the topic of this paper. Likewise, I would like to thank the Gambian researcher, Ebrima Sall and the Danish researcher, Hans Erik Stolten at the Nordic Africa Institute for the useful discussions and information on references while I was preparing this paper. Last but not least I would like to thank the Norwegian author Gunnar Garbo for valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

formal education in a language familiar to them, the language they normally use with their parents and their friends and hear all day.

The strengthening of African languages both in education and in the public domain, in the courts and in the media, is a matter of social justice for the masses of Africans, as well as of the exercise of democracy.

In this paper, I look at the language question more through the eyes of a political scientist. I view the language question more as a question of social class, of power. What social classes profit from the continued use of European languages in Africa? Who benefits? Who loses? My focus is also on language use in the political domain and includes South Africa.

Most Western donors to African countries are concerned with what they call good governance. In this concept they normally include transparency, a free press and multiparty democracy of a Western type. Little thought has, however, been given to the fact that the languages the donors use to communicate with the political leaders of the African countries is spoken by only about 5 per cent of the population.

Many African leaders have been concerned about social justice. Yet few of them have, when they were in power, been concerned about the social injustice arising from the use of languages of instruction that are a barrier to knowledge for the masses of African children. Using a language of instruction and a culture most children are familiar with would signify governments' willingness to embark on the necessary redistribution of power between elites and masses. Professor Kwesi Kwaa Prah, originally from Ghana and now the director of the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) in Cape Town, maintains that the developmental transformation of Africa needed to eradicate poverty is only possible if "we can take knowledge and modern science to the masses in their own languages" (Prah, 2000:ii). Prah is, however, also very concerned that African languages need standardisation and harmonisation and that the construction of African languages often reflected evangelical rivalry more than existing linguistic reality. Sifree Makoni (1998, with further reference to Herbert, 1992) notes that the emergence of a single standard for Zulu and Xhosa was prevented by the competing interests of different missionaries.

The "education for all" strategy formulated at the important educational conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 was meant to target the poor (Brock-Utne, 2000). In an article on education-for-all policy lessons from high-achieving countries, Santosh Mehrotra (1998) draws our attention to what he sees as the most important characteristic of those developing countries that have the highest percentage of population with a completed basic education:

The experience of the high-achievers has been unequivocal: the mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction at the primary level in all cases ... Students who have learned to read in their mother tongue learn to read in a second language more quickly than do those who are first taught to read in the second language (Mehrotra, 1998:479).

In most African countries this insight is, however, not being acted on. The recent spread in Tanzania of private primary schools using English as the language of instruction is a case in point. Parents who want their children in these schools argue that, in a time of globalisation, English is the language of the global village. The

move away from *siasa* (political education) taught in Kiswahili in secondary schools to “civics” taught in English is another indication that even one of the most progressive African countries when it comes to language policy – Tanzania – now faces problems. I return to this point.

In this paper I discuss two irreconcilable trends – one in the direction of globalisation, a capitalist market economy and the strengthening of former colonial languages, and the other being genuinely concerned with good governance, democracy, poverty alleviation and social justice. This latter trend, should it be taken seriously, would, in my view, result in the strengthening of African languages. This viewpoint has also been advanced by Dr. Kamanga (2001) of the Faculty of Law at the University of Dar es Salaam. At a conference on globalisation and higher education in Africa, he warned against the deleterious effects globalisation could have on the linguistic rights of the African masses.

GLOBALISATION

Globalisation may mean more than one thing. Some people feel that the term simply denotes a multiplicity of international relations; personal encounters with foreign peoples and their food, clothes, languages, music and dance; or the experience of satellite broadcasting and world-wide contacts via the Internet. Much of this is, of course, to the good.

My focus is, however, on that massive economic globalisation, with wide-ranging social and cultural repercussions, that has taken place over the last two to three decades, and which continues to radically transform our societies – on the terms of capitalist corporations. I am here concerned with capital-led globalisation.

Economic domination and penetration has taken place over the ages, varying in form from mutually beneficial trade to violent robbery. The process took an especially sinister form during the era of European colonisation and the transatlantic slave trade. The industrial revolution in Europe was followed by a dramatic increase in international trade, which is still accelerating, and which is still marked by the extraction of raw materials from the former colonies in return for finished products from the transnational corporations of the North. It is true that an increasing amount of production today takes place in the South, but by underpaid workers under the dominating ownership and direction of Northern corporations. During the last few decades the economic penetration and domination by transnational corporations (TNCs) has accelerated at such a pace and to such a degree that we are confronted with a global phenomenon that needs a specific name. It is this phenomenon that I here refer to as globalisation. This is what more and more social scientists the world over have in mind when they use that word.

Today's globalisation is due to two particular changes, one technological, the other political. Firstly, electronic communications and computers have made it possible for top executives to oversee and direct enormous transnational corporations and to move limitless amounts of financial capital the world over instantaneously.

Secondly, through political decisions our governments have dismantled national controls over capital movements, profits and foreign investments. By this willed or enforced political choice – the consequences of which have seldom been spelled out to the electorate – our political leaders have removed those legal and administrative tools that might have protected local economic and social systems. Our national economies have been turned into an unregulated global market where private speculators and corporations have free play. A number of international agreements and organisations have paved the way for this globalisation process.

Arrangements like the European Common Market and the North American Free Trade Area have opened up free movement of capital, goods, services and investments within specific regions. Directed by Western interests, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund used their creditor powers to first pressure the poor debtor countries of the South and then the collapsing members of the former Soviet Union to turn their own battered economies into the same kind of unrestricted market. Last but not least, GATT, which has now been rearmend as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), has become a vehicle for ensuring that practically the whole world is opened up for the unhindered operation of private capital. This explains why half the world's one hundred largest economies today are not countries, but transnational corporations.

The weakening of the state is a characteristic of the globalisation process. For the education sector, this means cuts in government expenditures on education, the introduction of so-called cost-sharing measures, the erection of private schools, and the liberalisation of the textbook market (see Brock-Utne, 2000). So-called civil society is supposed to play a bigger role within this globalised neo-liberal agenda. But as Professor Mushi points out in his book on democratisation in Tanzania, the main role of civil society is to foster liberal democracy and economy as understood in the West. According to Mushi (2001:14), "The civil society is not expected to be a revolutionary force from below but simply a constellation of elite-led pressure groups."

At the end of last year a special issue of the *International Review of Education* was published on Globalisation, Language and Education (Brock-Utne, 2001, ed.). The articles in it critically discuss the impact of globalisation on the education systems, cultures and languages of individual countries. The Oslo conference in 1998, "Globalisation: on Whose Terms?", critically examined the effects of globalisation, especially on the education sector in the South. In the final article of the conference proceedings (Brock-Utne and Garbo, eds., 1999) the Danish educational researcher Kirsten Reisby (1999) demonstrated what locally situated, participatory schooling practices with global perspectives might contribute. Educational reform of that kind might be an important contribution – provided that it went in tandem with broad grassroots mobilisation by environmental organisations, women's groups, religious societies, trade unions, concerned academics and other non-governmental forces.

Robert Phillipson (2001) in his article in the special issue on Globalisation, Language and Education shows how globalisation is effected through a small number of dominating languages. Being himself an Englishman, Phillipson does not shrink

from characterising his own mother tongue as being at the heart of contemporary globalisation processes. He shows how the forces behind globalisation promote the diffusion of English, often to the detriment of the mother tongues of most people. Moreover, he draws attention to the role of the World Bank in rhetorically supporting local languages, but channelling its resources into strengthening European languages in Africa. He also points out that transnational corporations seem to be well served by the bank's policies.

Phillipson rightly points out that the colonial exercise was not merely about conquering territory and economies, but also about conquering minds. During the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial era, the British government saw the advantage of promoting English as a world language. Likewise, today's globalisation exercise is about conquering minds.

Phillipson shows how throughout the entire postcolonial world English has been marketed as the language of "international communication and understanding", "economic development", "national unity", and so on. These soft-sell terms obscure the reality of North-South links and globalisation, namely that the majority of the world's population is being impoverished, that natural resources are being plundered in unsustainable ways, and that speakers of most languages do not have their linguistic human rights respected.

In his article, he states that the Shell corporation is currently funding a project to upgrade "Education language specialists" in Bulgaria, a project that is doubtless good for both the oil company and the British textbook business. English for business is business for English. Phillipson quotes the November 2000 statement of David Blunkett, the British Minister of Education and Employment, that, "it makes good economic sense to use English fluency as a platform to underpin our economic competitiveness and to promote our culture overseas."

A recent development is the globalisation of distance education, big business for American, Australian and British universities. School-level exams across the full range of subjects are also a business that consolidates the dominance of English. The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate is the second largest examination organisation in the world, after Educational Testing Services of Princeton, New Jersey. It organised exams in 1996 in 154 countries (Phillipson, 2001).

In her article, "Globalisation of (Educational) Language Rights" in the same issue of *IRE*, the Finnish socio-linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) notes that the lack of basic linguistic human rights (LHRs), including educational language rights (ELRs) for minorities and indigenous peoples, is what often leads to, and/or can be used to mobilise sentiments that can then be characterised as "ethnic conflicts." This Skutnabb-Kangas finds to be especially the case where linguistic and ethnic boundaries coincide with economic boundaries or with boundaries differentiating the relative political power of linguistically and ethnically defined groups. If legitimate demands for some kind of self-determination are not met, be they cultural autonomy or more regional economic or political autonomy, the result may often be demands for secession. Thus granting education- and language-based rights to minorities can and should regularly be part of conflict prevention.

She mentions that when the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) created the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities in 1992, it was precisely “as an instrument of conflict prevention in situations of ethnic tension.” The high commissioner reported to the expert group preparing the guidelines that the minorities he was negotiating with generally had two main demands:

- self-determination (sometimes but not always including some control over natural resources), and
- mother-tongue medium (MTM) education.

These demands remind me of a conversation I had with Zimbabwean colleagues in Harare several years ago. They said: “What our country desperately needs is two reforms, one dealing with the redistribution of land and one with the introduction of our own African languages as the languages of instruction.” I have heard similar statements from black intellectuals in Namibia and South Africa.

IN SEARCH OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
– THE LANGUAGE POLICY OF SOUTH AFRICA

At the Globalisation and Higher Education in Africa Conference at the University of Dar es Salaam in November 2001, Dr. Kamanga was concerned that African languages seldom find meaningful protection under national laws. In Tanzania, according to him (2001) “there is a need ... for the Constitution of Tanzania to explicitly recognise ‘language’ as one of the grounds for discrimination, for instance in Art.13 (5).” In an interview with Prof. Rugatiri D.K. Mekacha, former head of the department of Kiswahili at the UDSM in February 2001, I was made aware that language is no longer mentioned in the constitution of Tanzania. The constitution of 1962 noted that Kiswahili and English were to be the national languages. Since then, there have been thirteen changes to the constitution (most recently in 1999/2000) and the language issue has been removed.

The South African constitution provides better protection for African languages. In an effort to eliminate domination of one language group by another, the drafters of South Africa’s constitution decided to make all eleven of the country’s major languages equal and official. Thus, Section 6 (1) of South Africa’s constitution states that, “The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.”

The constitution further imposes a positive duty on the state in terms of subsection 2:

Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.

To this end, subsection 5 provides for the creation of a Pan South African Language Board to:

promote and create conditions for the development and use of

- i) all official languages;
- ii) the Khoi, Nama and San languages; and
- iii) sign language

In my interview in February 2002 with Dr. Neville Alexander, a prominent former member of the Pan South African Language Board, he bemoaned the fact that the board is unable to work in accordance with the statute. "There is a lack of political will on the part of the current government to have our progressive language policy work", he explained.

Despite the progressive language policy, languages other than Afrikaans and English seem almost completely absent from practical planning. The spaces opened for them in the constitution and in such important documents as the Langtag Report¹ remain largely vacant.

In his article, "Language Policy and Democratic Practice in South Africa", Stanley Ridge concludes that, in the interests of democracy and justice, a move from rhetoric to practice in key strategic areas is urgent:

This has been dramatically evident in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where the voices which could not previously be heard in the apartheid era have spoken to South Africa overwhelmingly in languages other than English and Afrikaans. (Ridge, 2000:62)

THE LANGUAGE OF THE COURTS

The actual achievement of justice is very often determined by the language of the actors in the judicial theatre. English and Afrikaans still largely predominate in the law and legal system of South Africa, leading to the alienation of the legal system from the bulk of South African society. These two languages, English and Afrikaans, have dominated the legal field since the early colonial and apartheid days. By contrast, in Tanzania Kiswahili is used as the judicial language in the primary courts. Bills come to parliament in English, but they are debated in Kiswahili, before being written as the law in English. In lower courts both English and Kiswahili are used, but sentences are written in English. Arnold Temu (2000) notes that in 1980 Kiswahili was used in courts 78 per cent of the time. In the high court, only English is used.

In South Africa, however, while use of indigenous African languages was allowed in the black homelands, Africans with legal matters to settle within so-called white South Africa had to endure the conduct of proceedings in either English or Afrikaans. If they were not conversant in either language, translation services were provided.² Two lawyers, Professor D.A. Ailola (University of South Africa) and F.I. Montsi (lecturer at the University of the Western Cape) note that "there can be no doubt

¹ The brief of the Language Plan Task Group (Langtag) set up in November 1995 by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, is to advise the minister on a National Language Plan for South Africa.

² The *Magistrate's Court Act*, Act 32 of 1994, places a duty on a magistrate to call a competent interpreter if he is of the opinion that the accused is not sufficiently conversant in the language in which evidence is given (Ailola and Montsi, 1999).

that the exclusive by-passing of indigenous languages, in enacting laws and conducting legal proceedings, created enormous obstacles for the native speakers of those languages" (Ailola and Montsi, 1999:135).

There is to date little evidence of actual court processes or proceedings in all eleven official languages. Section 35 of the constitution provides that "every accused has the right to a fair trial which includes the right to be tried in a language that the accused person understands or, if it is not practicable, to have the proceedings interpreted in that language."

Interpretations do not always work well, however. Ailola and Montsi use concrete examples to show that even when translation facilities are available, fatal mistakes can occur because certain expressions are, at best, incapable of exact interpretation. Others simply cannot be translated. They mention the word "murder" as a good example of this problem. While most Bantu languages have a term for "killing", they have no equivalent for "murder." Thus, according to a Zambian legal informant, one of his clients nearly incriminated himself in a case of murder because of improper translation of the term. The accused had been asked in Tonga whether he admitted to killing the deceased. He replied in the affirmative. The translator turned to the bench and stated, "My Lord, he says he murdered him."

Had it not been for the defence lawyer's alertness in spotting the mistranslation, the matter would have ended there and a conviction would have ensued. The accused could have been hanged. In reality, the accused meant to say that he killed the deceased, but there were extenuating reasons. Here Ailola and Montsi remind us that killing without the requisite unlawful intent or malice aforethought is not tantamount to "murder." Sometimes, it is not even unlawful. Thus "killing" in self-defence or in the defence of one's family or property is often lawful. Similarly, it is not a criminal offence to kill during a war, civil strife, or in the lawful suppression of a crime.

In cases where the court does not understand the language of the accused, the interpreter plays a semi-autonomous role. Ailola and Montsi claim that the interpreters often play a subservient role in relation to court administrators and frequently internalise the values and attitudes of their court superiors. They cite a study by Nico Steytler (1993) from the then Zululand showing the unsatisfactory quality of interpretation, made more serious by the fact that others in the court were not conversant with Zulu. There was no effective means for checking the veracity of the interpretation, given that only the English and Afrikaans versions are recorded.

There is a great need in South Africa today of lawyers and judges who speak the languages of the majority population.

REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASSES

Though the legal system might work somewhat better for Tanzania, since most cases are in Kiswahili, Tanzania's current education policies lead to social injustice

for the masses and reinstate the inequality of pre-independence times. I refer to the so-called cost-sharing and privatisation policies, as well as the reduced emphasis on Kiswahili in secondary school.

The language question is about power. The choice of language of instruction in Africa is a political choice, a choice that may redistribute power in a global context as well as within an African country between the elites and the masses. African political writers concerned with reaching the masses will often write in African languages. The Kenyan, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) found that when he started writing plays in Gikuyu, they really reached the masses. But then he also became a threat to the government and was imprisoned for a year. His radical writings in English did not provoke such repercussions from government. Choosing an indigenous language as the language of instruction – a language people speak, are familiar with and which is part of their cultural heritage – would redistribute power from the privileged few to the masses. I quote two voices from two continents:

A. Mahinda Ranaweera, researcher and former director of education at the curriculum development centre of the Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka, writes about the great advantage to the population of the introduction of Sinhala and Tamil instead of English as the languages of instruction, *especially* for science and technology:

The transition from English to the national languages as the medium of instruction in science helped to destroy the great barrier that existed between the privileged English educated classes and the ordinary people; between the science-educated elite and the non-science educated masses; between science itself and the people. It gave confidence to the common man that science is within his reach and to the teachers and pupils that a knowledge of English need not necessarily be a prerequisite for learning science (Ranaweera, 1976:423)

He notes that the change of medium of instruction in science and mathematics always lagged behind other subjects because of special difficulties, like the absence of scientific and technical terms, textbooks, and proficient teachers. Yet he found the greatest need to switch to the national languages in the science subjects. He gives two reasons:

- First, science education was considered the main instrument through which national development goals and improvements in the quality of life of the masses could be achieved. Thus, there was a need to expand science education. The English medium was a great constraint, which hindered the expansion of science education.
- Secondly, in order to achieve the wider objectives of science education, such as inculcation of scientific methods and attitudes, didactic teaching had to be replaced by an activity- and inquiry-based approach. This requires greater dialogue, discussion, and interaction between pupil and teacher and among pupils themselves. “Such an approach makes a heavy demand on the language ability of the pupils and will be more successful if the medium of instruction is also the first language of the pupils.” (p.417)

Fafunwa (1990) holds that one of the most important factors militating against the dissemination of knowledge and skills in Africa, and therefore of rapid social and economic improvement for the majority of people, is the imposed medium of communication. He claims that there seems to be a correlation between underdevelopment and the use of a foreign language as the official language of a given country (e.g., English, French or Portuguese):

We impart knowledge and skills almost exclusively in these foreign languages, while the majority of our people, farmers, and craftsmen perform their daily tasks in Yoruba, Hausa, Wolof, Ga, Igbo, Bambara, Kiswahili, etc. ... The question is: Why not help them to improve their social, economic, and political activities via their mother tongue? Why insist on their learning English or French first before modern technology could be introduced to them? (Fafunwa, 1990:103)

Fafunwa's claim of a correlation between underdevelopment and the use of a foreign language as a country's official language seems likely and is highly interesting. Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2000:71) similarly points out that:

No society in the world has developed in a sustained and democratic fashion on the basis of a borrowed or colonial language ... Underdeveloped countries in Africa remain underdeveloped partly on account of the cultural alienation which is structured in the context of the use of colonial languages.

Ali Mazrui asks, "Can any country approximate first-rank economic development if it relies overwhelmingly on foreign languages for its discourse on development and transformation?" Will Africa ever effectively "take off" when it is held so tightly hostage to the languages of the former imperial masters? (Mazrui, 1996:3).

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1996) remark on the striking fact that in much educational policy work, even in policies on education for all, the role of language is seldom considered. This shows myopia on the part of donors and the researchers who guide them: they urge the setting of targets for universal literacy, but little thought is given to the language in which literacy is to be achieved.

When it comes to bilateral donors, both the British and the French seem to use development aid to strengthen the use of their own languages as languages of instruction. The British Council has played no unimportant role in the language policies of Tanzania and Namibia (Phillipson, 1992; 1999; Brock-Utne, 1993; 1997; 2000; 2001a). Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1996) tell of the succession of British conferences to "assist" newly independent ex-colonies to organise their education systems in the 1960s. In these conferences, language was given little attention, and if raised, the focus would be only on the learning of English. A British Council annual report admitted that although the British government no longer had the economic and military power to impose its will in other parts of the world, British influence endured through "the insatiable demand for the English language." The report maintains that English is Britain's greatest asset, "greater than the North Sea Oil", and characterised English as an "invisible, God-given asset" (British Council Annual Report, 1983:9).

If the African child's major learning problem is linguistic, and I tend to agree with Obanya (1980) that it is, then all the attention of African policy-makers and

aid from Western donors should be devoted to strengthening African languages as languages of instruction, especially in basic education. The concept “education for all” becomes completely empty if the linguistic environment of basic learners is ignored.

Kathleen Heugh (1999), writing on languages, development and reconstructing education in South Africa, shows that the language-in-education policy changes that came into force in 1997 are flawed in their conceptualisation and implementation. The role of African languages in South Africa is not adequately addressed, despite policy statements to the contrary. Vic Webb (1999), in her analysis of the language-in-education situation in South Africa, presents a similar picture. In spite of the country’s institutional documents which proclaim linguistic pluralism to be the national objective, she finds that the country seems to be regressing to its pre-apartheid monolingualism – “English” only.

She shows how this is to the detriment of the black population. In the Bantu Education years (1953–76), South Africa actually had a better language-in-education policy for the majority population, but for the wrong reasons. During the eight-year period that the mother tongue was phased in and maintained as the primary language of learning, the matriculation results of black students steadily improved, reaching their zenith in 1976. It was the inflexible implementation of Afrikaans as a medium for 50 per cent of the subjects in secondary school in 1975 that led to the student uprising in Soweto the following year. The government was forced to back down and in 1979 the *Education and Training Act* was passed, reducing mother tongue to four years of primary school followed by a choice of medium between Afrikaans and English. Most schools opted for English. The reduction of the use of the mother tongue has, however, coincided with decreasing pass rates, which dropped to as low as 48.3 per cent by 1982, and 44 per cent by 1992 (Heugh, 1999:304). There can be little doubt about who loses from the change from mother tongue to foreign language as the language of instruction after the fifth or even fourth grades in South African primary schools.

DEMOCRACY AND MULTIPARTYISM

Ousseina Alidou and Alamin M. Mazrui (1999) focus on the ex-colonial (“imperial”) languages as promoters of intellectual dependency, to the detriment of democratic development in South Africa specifically and to North-South relations generally.

Writing from so-called francophone Africa, Paulin Djité (1990) argues:

It is hard to believe that there can be, or that one can possibly argue for, a true and lasting development under such policy when so many people do not know their constitutional and legal rights, cannot understand the developmental goals of their governments and therefore cannot actively exercise their basic democratic rights, simply because they are written in foreign languages. (Djité, 1990:98)

Djité notes that there is considerable research which clearly demonstrates that less than 15 per cent of the African population of “Francophone” countries can (barely)

function in French, while 90 per cent of the same population function very well in widely used African languages such as Hausa, Djula/Bamanankan, Fulfulde, Kiswahili and Wolof.

Donors are currently very concerned about democracy and “good governance” in Africa. It seems paradoxical that most of them are not more concerned about the fact that some 90 per cent of the people of Africa have no knowledge of the official language of their country, even though it is presumed to be the vehicle of communication between government and citizens.

Missionaries and religious institutes like the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) are bent on reaching the minds and hearts of the masses of people, including the very poor. They understand that for a message to get through it must be delivered in the language people speak and use. Joseph Butiku, director of the Nyerere Foundation, said in my interview with him in February 2001 that a primary aim of the Foundation is to further democracy. For this purpose, it is extremely important to communicate with people in a language they understand. In Tanzania, Kiswahili is an instrument of national unity. He mentioned that the Catholic Church in Tanzania had initially used Latin. The clergy soon realised that people did not understand the sermons, psalms and liturgy, and they therefore adopted Kiswahili as the language of the church. This was a very wise move, since Tanzanians started attending in much greater numbers.

When I did my fieldwork in Namibia on the use of the African languages after independence (Brock-Utne, 1995), many Namibians I met in the north of the country complained that their own politicians from the north, and having Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga as their first language, would address them in English. They had great difficulty in understanding what their politicians were saying.

Many African countries are now establishing multiparty systems. This is partly a domino effect originating in eastern European and the former Soviet Union, and partly through pressure by the so-called donor community. There were also democratic forces within African countries, especially among intellectuals, working towards multiparty democracy.¹ An important question is whether the rapid and sometimes externally induced introduction of multiparty systems in poor African countries may strengthen the old colonial languages to the detriment of African languages. There is certainly a need for a study of the language policies of the new parties being born in Africa today.²

In the Seychelles, the language of instruction in elementary school is Creole. In secondary school it is English. French is taught as a foreign language. The ruling party has been a promoter of Creole. Officials in the Ministry of Education, with whom I had several conversations in 1992 about language policy, claimed that all

¹ Internal debates played a greater role than donor pressure in the introduction of multiparty democracy in Tanzania, Zambia and Madagascar, but reforms in this direction in Kenya and Malawi resulted from donor pressure (Garbo, 1993).

² While examples can easily be found of parties that further colonial languages, one can also probably find that parties with their main basis in a certain district may further the local language more than the more common lingua franca. The Inkatha Freedom Party in South Africa, with its “extreme Zulu chauvinism”, (Zegeye, 2001:9) is a case in point.

their studies showed that the switch to Creole had benefited the great masses of children. Members of the elite, with whom I also talked, preferred English and French as official languages and regarded the introduction of Creole, a language they looked down upon, as an imposition by the leftist government with which they disagreed. They wanted their children to be educated in English or French.

Some of the new parties write their party programme in English. Mr. Ferrari, at that time leader of the new Institute for Democracy in the Seychelles, which was formed to distribute information on democratic methods of governance, told me that he had sought financial help from a French development agency to further the work of the institute. He was promised aid on condition the institute used French as the medium of communication and would work to strengthen the French language in the Seychelles and write their brochures in French! He declined the offer. One of the new parties in the Seychelles, led by Jacques Houdoul, states explicitly in its party programme that it wants to minimize the use of Creole, especially as a language of instruction. The party argues that Creole prevents the Seychellois from participating in world culture.

In Tanzania, the ruling and for many years the only party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), conducts all its meetings, writes its party programme, and distributes leaflets in the national language, Kiswahili. However, there is a tendency among the newly emerging parties to use English in order to attract sponsorship from foreign donors. Also, most of the new parties have been started by “schooled” people who have been trained abroad and who, in many cases, have little respect for Kiswahili. Che Mbonda, leader of one of the opposition parties, said in 1992/93 that if he became the president he would see to it that children started learning in English from day one of grade one in primary school.

Before the introduction of the multiparty system in Tanzania, the then president of Tanzania, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, appointed chief justice, Francis Nyalali, to head a constitutional commission to gather the opinion of the people on multipartyism. The Nyalali Commission traversed the country to ascertain whether the people wanted a multiparty system or not. The work of this commission injected renewed energy into Tanzanian political life, and was in many ways revolutionary, because for the first time since the one-party state had been established Tanzanians were encouraged and felt free to voice their criticism of the ruling party in open, official meetings. The Norwegian Embassy in Dar es Salaam followed the work of the constitutional commission closely. In a report of 22 April 1992, the embassy wrote:

The Constitutional Commission maintains that in the many hearings it arranged with people around the country 80 per cent of the people preferred to continue with the one-party state. This gives us an indication of the attitudes among ordinary people. It is necessary to add that the majority of the participants had criticisms of CCM, the present ruling party. (Royal Norwegian Embassy, Skriv, 1992:1. My translation)

People wanted changes to the way CCM was functioning, but not a multiparty system. Nonetheless, the government decided to introduce a multiparty system. It was said that it was Julius Nyerere himself, who still had much informal power (he was known as *baba ya taifa*, the father of the nation), who felt that one should not

deny a minority their right to organise themselves. In his view, respect for minority rights was an important part of democracy, and he made a political decision that he meant to be for the good of the nation.

The Nyalali Commission recommended that concurrent with the registration of new political parties, a nationwide programme of education for democracy be put in place. The commission recommended that changes be made to *siasa* (political education) in secondary schools. The commission did not, however, recommend that the new subject be called “civics” (Mkwizu, 2002). Nor did it recommend that the subject be taught in English. The change from *siasa* to “civics” bears closer examination, since it relates to globalisation, democracy, social justice and language policy.

*ELIMU YA SIASA*¹ IN TANZANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
THE CHANGE FROM CIVICS TO *SIASA*

After the independence of Tanzania, President Nyerere himself started to work on the educational policy of his country. He was proud of his earlier training and work as a teacher and was often called *mwalimu*.² His policy document “Education for Self Reliance” (ESR) is counted as one of the most important texts for students of education in Africa (Nyerere, 1968). The declaration spelt out the values of *ujamaa*³ society. As a result of these new values and philosophy, the subject then called “civics” was transformed.

In 1968, there was a name change of “civics” to *Elimu ya Siasa* through the ministerial circular of 1968, which spelt out the aims of the new subject. These aims were to correspond with those of Education for Self Reliance. The circular, issued in English, was to be in effect from May to December 1968. In 1969, another circular was issued and stressed the importance of understanding the ruling party’s objectives and the tenets of the Arusha Declaration.

In July 1970 a circular (EDG G2/6/11/3 of 14/7/1970) was issued to secondary school teachers instructing them to use the term *Elimu ya Siasa* instead of “civics” and to use Kiswahili in teaching this subject instead of English. The aim of *Elimu ya Siasa* was to foster among pupils a sense of commitment to their country. The circular indicated that teachers should have the necessary commitment and that the subject could be better taught by teachers with knowledge of history, economics and political science.

Under the umbrella of my research project in Tanzania and South Africa one of my Tanzanian Master’s students in Norway, Mary Mkwizu (2002), has taken on the task of studying the changes that occurred when civics was changed to *Elimu ya Siasa* (often just called *siasa*), and when it was changed back to civics in 1992.

¹ Political Education, in English.

² Meaning “teacher” in Kiswahili.

³ “Ujamaa” means “family-hood” in Kiswahili. The idea was to extend traditional African values of kinship to Tanzania as a whole. The word is often heard in connection with the *ujamaa* villages, settlements that were built in order to ease the access of people to water, electricity and schools. The spirit in these villages was to be of a co-operative, *ujamaa* kind. The *ujamaa* villages were to be governed by those living in them.

Between 1987 and 1992, I myself sat for many hours at the back of secondary school classrooms and observed the teaching of *siasa*. It was a subject both students and teachers enjoyed. Students were active, and engaged in discussion and argument. The subject was taught in Kiswahili. I sometimes observed the same class during the following lesson, which might be in geography, history or mathematics. It was difficult to believe I was observing the same group of pupils. In these lessons they were passive and hardly said a word. The teachers were struggling with English, their vivacity and enthusiasm were gone. When I talked to the teachers about the changes that I had observed, they admitted that the use of English as the medium of instruction was a great barrier to them. They also mentioned that the *siasa* syllabus was not as detailed as that for the other subjects. For example, it set out in only five lines what was to be covered in Form one. This called for creativity on the part of teachers

Mkwizu (2002) has studied the secondary school syllabus for *siasa*. It stated that in Form one, pupils were to learn about the Arusha Declaration, Education for Self Reliance and socialism in rural areas. In Form two they were taught about TANU (Tanganyika African National Union)¹ and ASP (Afro Shirazi Party),² the government and the ESR philosophy. The syllabi for Forms three and four were slightly more comprehensive. However, there was no syllabus for Forms five and six. There was the simple instruction that students should learn about recent books written by the then president, Julius Nyerere. They were also to study other books like *Afrika Inakwenda Kombo (Africa is Going Astray)* by Rene Dumont and *Kilimo Baada ya Azimio la Arusha (Tanzania: Agriculture after the Arusha Declaration)* by Leonard Banes.

In March 1973, another syllabus was issued and lasted until 1976. This had slightly wider coverage than the previous syllabus, and explained in more detail all the contents of the 1970 syllabus. It was written in Kiswahili.

Komba (1996) analyses the *siasa* syllabi from 1968 to 1991 in his doctoral thesis, and points out that the aims of *siasa* assumed that there was consensus about *ujamaa* ideology itself. This was not always so. Teachers had to grapple with this false assumption as they attempted to abide by the overall requirements of ESR philosophy.

Komba notes that the stated aim of, *siasa* was the creation of critical awareness of political phenomena through open, balanced discussion and the analysis of a range of evidence and opinions. To fulfil this aim, ambiguities, inconsistencies and contradictions within the *ujamaa* ideology should have been an important part of the syllabus rather than being simply glossed over (Komba 1996:10).

CHANGE FROM *ELIMU YA SIASA* BACK TO CIVICS IN 1992

Changes from *Elimu ya Siasa* back to civics can be traced to the political changes in the country from the single party system under CCM¹ to the multiparty system. The

¹ TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) was the party on the mainland.

² ASP (Afro Shirazi Party) was the party on Zanzibar.

Nyalali Commission called on the education system to plan strategies to make people the subject of political reform rather than passive consumers. As mentioned above, the commission recommended changes to the subject it continued to call *siasa*. It wanted the subject to create critical awareness of political phenomena through open discussion and insisted that the subject be detached from any particular party. Mkwizu (2002) comments that “it is surprising to see that the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Institute of Curriculum Development opted for the name Civics.”

The Ministry of Education and Culture issued circular ED/OKE/S.4/25 in May 1993 to introduce changes to *siasa*. The circular can be seen as an attempt by the Ministry to cope with the newly introduced multiparty system:

Mada za somo lililokuwa likiitwa Elimu ya Siasa zimerekebishwa ili kuendana na mfumo wa demokrasia chini ya vyama vingi vya siasa nchini. Somo hili sasa litaitwa Civics katika shule za sekondari na litafundishwa kwa kiingereza.

(transl. Topics under the subject that was called *Elimu ya Siasa* have been changed in order to cope with the system of multiparty democracy in the country. From now on the subject will be called Civics in secondary schools and *it will be taught in English*. [emphasis added])

The changes to the content that had been so closely related to the philosophy of the one party system are understandable. The change of language of instruction is, however, less understandable.

Mkwizu has interviewed teachers who used to teach *Elimu ya Siasa*. All of them complained they were not consulted on the change of language of instruction. Several teachers noted that they had enjoyed teaching *Elimu ya Siasa*, but could not teach civics since their command of English was not good enough. Others compared the lively discussions they could have when they were teaching *siasa* with the passivity of the pupils now they had to teach the new subject in English.

They felt that the change of medium of instruction had been brought about in an undemocratic manner. Several teachers also mentioned the problem of undemocratic participation in the classroom, since those who are proficient in English (though few in number and from better-off homes dominate the discussions.

¹ TANU on mainland Tanzania and ASP in Zanzibar formed *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) – the Party of the Revolution – in 1977.

The Battle over the Language of Instruction in Tanzania¹

A RESEARCH PROJECT IS BORN

Since the time I worked as a professor at the University of Dar es Salaam and participated in student-teaching supervision in secondary schools around Tanzania, the language of instruction in African schools generally, and in Tanzanian secondary schools and institutions of higher learning especially, has continued to puzzle me and pique my research interest (Brock-Utne, 1993; 1995; 1997; 2000; 2001; 2002).

Once I learnt to speak Kiswahili,² I experienced how much easier it was to communicate with, and even tutor (though this was not allowed) my students in Kiswahili. A colleague of mine from the Faculty of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam, Grace Puja (2001), interviewed 34 female students as part of her Ph.D. thesis about conditions for female students at the university. In working towards her doctorate in Canada, she had written her interview guide in English and had started to interview the students in that language. Somewhat to her surprise (the students had all done six years of secondary school and some university courses in which English was the language of instruction) she discovered that the students much preferred to be interviewed in Kiswahili. She ended up by conducting only eight of the 34 interviews in English. Among these eight were several students who had studied abroad and a couple who spoke an Indian language at home. The remaining interviews were conducted in Kiswahili because participants did not feel comfortable in English. One of the participants who wanted to be interviewed in Kiswahili explained her reasons this way:

I do not like to speak English because I cannot speak fluent English. When I am speaking English, which is not my everyday language, I speak very slowly and therefore, first, I feel uncomfortable, I do not enjoy speaking, and secondly I may not succeed in communicating what I want to say. (Puja, 2001:133-4)

Participants told Dr. Puja that it is an artificial situation for them to speak English in class only, while the rest of the time everybody speaks either Kiswahili or an ethnic language. Puja mentions that some university teachers who took part in her study claimed that poor oral English skills and a limited English vocabulary limit how effectively students are able to learn. One teacher added that to ask a Tanzanian university student to speak English in class is like punishing her/him.

While at the University of Dar es Salaam, I met other colleagues who shared my critical perspectives on the effects of donor interventions and conditions on the schooling prospects of the poor masses of African children and youth (Sumra, 1996a:

¹ This paper was first presented at the Nordic Africa Institute Research Forum, Uppsala on 24 January 2002. I have benefited from the valuable comments of the Director, Lennart Wohlgemuth, the Research Director, Henning Melber, and Researchers Signe Arnfred and Ebrima Sall.

² Thanks go to my faithful Kiswahili teacher, Faraji Kitonge, the Director of KIU in Dar es Salaam and to patient colleagues like Prof. Mwijabu Possi, Director Naomi Katunzi and Dean George Malekela.

1996b; 1998a; 1998b). These interventions and conditions relate to privatisation, so-called cost-sharing, reduced government expenditures and the strengthening of colonial languages. In the fall of 1994, Prof. Sumra spent three months at my institute in Norway under NUFU¹ funding for guest researchers from the South. We started discussing a collaborative research project that would benefit the masses of Tanzanian schoolchildren. At the 1995 NASEDEC² conference in Norway, Prof. Sumra gave a lecture on the inequalities some donor interventions had led to in Tanzania (Sumra, 1996a).

In the fall of 1995, I was asked by the National Institute of Education in Namibia³ to assess the situation of African languages in Namibia after independence (Brock-Utne, 1995). Five years later, the study was followed up by my student, Halla Holmarsdottir (2000) in her Master's thesis. Her fieldwork was supported by the Nordic Africa Institute. We found that the situation for African languages as medium of education had worsened since the apartheid period, and was even worse in 2000 than in 1995 (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, 2001).

From 1996 until 1998 I was engaged in a research capacity-building project at the historically black universities in South Africa (Brock-Utne, 1999).⁴ This prompted in me a keen interest in the schooling situation of the majority population of South Africa. One of the participants in this project, Sibongile Ramalimetya Thandiwe Koloti (also known as Metsa), a lecturer at the University of Zululand, taught me much about the Zulu language and the difficulties learners face when the instruction is in English rather than in Zulu. Metsa later took her Master's at the University of Oslo (Koloti, 2000) and we led a special seminar on the language of instruction in Africa and edited a publication on this subject (Brock-Utne and Koloti, eds, 2000).

In 1999 I decided to apply for money from my university to be able to plan a NUFU research project together with my former colleagues in Dar es Salaam. By this time, Prof. Harold Herman from the University of Western Cape had mentioned to me the interest of some of his colleagues in working on the language-in-education situation in South Africa. NUFU had announced that they would encourage applicants to apply for South-South-North cooperative projects rather than just South-North cooperative projects⁵. A group of researchers from the University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Western Cape met with me and other representatives of my institute in Bagamoyo, Tanzania in January 2000. When the Norwegian delegation returned to Norway, however, we were informed that all the NUFU money had been frozen and no new projects would start in 2001.

¹ NUFU arranges co-operation between Norwegian universities and universities in developing countries.

² The Nordic Association for the Study of Education in Developing Countries (NASEDEC) is almost thirty years old. It holds an annual conference, which rotates between the Nordic countries. The conferences are supported by the development agency in the NASEDEC country where the conference is held. The budget is mainly used to bring researchers from the South to the conference. Most of the conferences have resulted in a publication. NASEDEC's board comprises two elected members from each Nordic country.

³ I would like to thank Director Patti Swartz from NIED, as well as the Namibia Association of Norway, for this interesting consultancy.

⁴ I would like to thank Director Wolfgang Gmelin from DES (German Development Foundation) for this challenging assignment and learning opportunity.

⁵ When the money was finally granted at the end of 2001 for the period 2002–2006, we were surprised and distressed to learn that South-South-North cooperative projects were funded at the same level as the usual South-North projects.

The project we had defined in Bagamoyo comprised two different research components, as well as a staff development component. The first research component was a description and analysis of current language policies, their background, the forces working for and against change, and the manner in which teachers cope in secondary school classrooms in Tanzania and the last part of primary school in South Africa. The second component involved an active experiment in which we would let some classes in Tanzanian secondary schools and primary schools in South Africa be taught in the language of the students in some subjects for two extra years. This experiment would necessitate the consent of ministries, school inspectors, headmasters, teachers, parents and pupils. It would also require the production of textbooks and teaching material.

At the end of 2000, I was granted funding for a four-year research project (2001–2004) from the Norwegian Research Council (NFR¹), focused on the first of the two research components. I was able to employ a research assistant, Halla Holmarsdottir, for the first three years of the research period.² We decided that she would concentrate on South Africa, since she had just completed her Master's studies on the language situation in Namibia, a situation not so very different from that in South Africa, and because South Africa, especially the Cape Town region, may be an easier area to work in for a young researcher than Tanzania. She is currently³ in South Africa doing her fieldwork, supported through the NFR project as well as the Nordic Africa Institute.

I chose to focus on Tanzania, which is familiar to me, as is Kiswahili, thus easing communication. I have also been fortunate to have Tanzanian Master's students who are interested in the language issue and have written their theses as part of our project.

FIELD TRIPS TO TANZANIA IN 2001

I made two short field trips to Tanzania in 2001, a week in February and three weeks in November, to collect documents. I also had several interviews with teachers, headmasters, laypeople, politicians, and with education officers in the Ministry of Education and in the Tanzania Institute of Education.⁴ In addition, I had discussions and interviews with researchers from the departments of foreign languages and Kiswahili, the Institute for Kiswahili Research and the Faculty of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam. I also discussed the language situation with Dr Anna Kishe, the secretary general of Bakita⁵ and was able, through *Haki Elimu*, to attend

¹ Norges Forsknings-Råd (NFR) – Norwegian Research Council.

² The Norwegian Research Council encourages research assistants to use the material from the projects as the basis of their Ph.Ds. My assistant is therefore also a Ph.D. student. In the latter half of 2004, I intend to take unpaid leave to summarise the results of our project at that time.

³ She started her fieldwork in September 2001 and will continue until April 2002. She is observing in classrooms and has administered a comprehension test both in isiXhosa and in English to see how much learners understand. She will also interview policymakers about the implementation of language policy in South Africa.

⁴ I especially want to thank Dr. Martha Qorro for all the effort she put into arranging many of these interviews, as well as my transport.

⁵ *Bakita – Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa* – is the National Organisation for Kiswahili.

a meeting with the Minister of Education, Joseph Mungai, at which, among other policy issues, the language of education in Tanzania was discussed.¹

Several of my Master's students from Tanzania have written or are writing their theses on the language of instruction in that country. These students have conducted studies and observations in secondary school classrooms. In November 2001, I went with one of them to a school where, as part of her fieldwork, she made observations on and observed in three classes. I encountered again the language problems of students and teachers and their coping strategies. Two of my students have been doing a study in Tanzania to parallel the study that our NUFU partner in South Africa, Zubeida Desai (2001), had done in that country. She let students in several different grades at the end of primary school describe the actions in a cartoon first in Xhosa and then, a little later, in English. The difference was striking. The Xhosa versions were translated into English for us so we could see how well the children expressed themselves in their own language. Their sentences were long, their vocabulary advanced and their stories vivid and full of life. Generally, spelling and punctuation was also good. When the same children wrote in English, their sentences were short and their stories partly or totally unintelligible. They lacked the vocabulary to express their thoughts and there were many spelling mistakes.

The results that two of my students, Mary Mkwizu and Mwajuma Vuzo, collected from Tanzanian secondary classrooms are no better.² One of my Tanzanian students in this project recalls, in the introduction to her Master's thesis, her own school days:

I can recall from my school days about my Chemistry teacher who every ten minutes or so he would ask us: "Any question students?" Nobody answered and he would conclude: "If there are no questions, then you have understood everything!" We did not understand him at all, not only because he taught in English only, he spoke American English! – he was a Peace Corp. The issue was language, as it is in our contemporary schools. (Mwinsheikhe, 2001)

A HISTORICAL GLANCE AT LANGUAGE POLICIES

I have elsewhere given historical glimpses into the language policy of Tanzanian education (Brock-Utne, 1983; 2000; 2001; 2002). Here, I relate how, as early as the second Five Year Plan of Tanzania (1969–74), the continued use of English as an instruction medium at secondary and tertiary levels of education was deemed unsatisfactory. The adoption of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction in primary schools was thought to be only part of a larger plan to use Kiswahili as medium of instruction throughout the educational system. As the Five Year Plan noted:

Children, on entering secondary school, will now have to shift to study in a new language, at the same time as taking on more difficult sets of subjects ... [A]s the government

¹ *Haki Elimu*, which can be translated as the Right to Education, is a Tanzanian NGO. I would like to thank Prof. Justin Galabawa for having taken me to this interesting meeting.

² They are now – January 2002 – analysing these results.

moves over to the complete use of Kiswahili it will hence become more and more inappropriate to have the secondary and higher educational system operate in English. (URT, 1969:152)

The government of the time was also aware that when it comes to language of instruction, there is a class issue involved. The important question of who benefits from continued use of ex-colonial languages and who loses has to be asked. What about the masses of Tanzanians, the main concern of the government at that time? In what language ought learners to study the everyday problems of their nation, the problems they will have to help solve when they leave school? The Five Year Plan has this to say about the linguistic gulf:

The division between Kiswahili education at primary level and English education at the secondary level will create and perpetuate a linguistic gulf between different groups and will also tend to lend an alien atmosphere to higher education, making it inevitably remote from the problems of the masses of society. (URT, 1969:152)

In 1969, the Ministry of National Education sent a circular to the headmasters and headmistresses of all secondary schools outlining the plan for the gradual introduction of Kiswahili as medium of instruction. According to Bhaiji (1976), secondary schoolteachers at the time also favoured the shift to Kiswahili. The Ministry's circular suggested that political education, *siasa*, should be taught in Kiswahili from the 1969/70 school-year; domestic science from the 1970/71 school-year; history, geography, biology, agriculture and mathematics from the 1971/72 school-year (Bhaiji, 1976:112). Bhaiji notes that curriculum developers had already started to translate and compile the technical and scientific terms for school subjects. Some schools had already received a booklet on Kiswahili mathematical terms. Polome (1979) claims that the initial plan was for Kiswahili to become the medium of instruction in all subjects in Forms one and two by 1973.

The teaching of *siasa* through the medium of Kiswahili was commenced. But then the reforms stopped. A study commissioned by the National Kiswahili Council showed that secondary school students had great difficulty with school subjects because the medium of instruction – English – represented a great barrier (Matteru and Mlama, 1978). The study argued for the shift to Kiswahili at both secondary and tertiary levels of education.

At the end of 1980, the then president, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, appointed a presidential commission on education to review the entire education system. He made J. Makweta the commission's chair. The Makweta Commission presented its report to the president in February 1982. The recommendations on the medium of instruction more than refuelled expectations by actually setting a date for the change from English to Kiswahili. In January 1985, the first year of secondary school, Form one, was to start using Kiswahili and in 1991 the university was to start teaching through the medium of Kiswahili. However, this recommendation was deleted from the official report published in 1984 (Rubagumya, 1991).

In the years 1969 to 1983, Tanzanian educators were waiting and preparing for the shift to Kiswahili as the medium of instruction in secondary and also university

education. But in 1983 “the government quite unexpectedly sought to turn the tide” (Lwaitama and Rugemalira, 1988:2). In August 1983, the Minister of Education, J. Makweta was quoted in the press (*Uhuru*, 1983) as saying that the expected change of medium was not going to take place. This must have been a difficult statement for him to make. He had himself chaired the commission that had suggested the change of the medium of instruction to Kiswahili. He later told me that he personally favoured the switch to Kiswahili but the government decided to stop the further use of Kiswahili at the higher levels of the education system. The decision seems to have been taken by President Nyerere himself, partly with the support of the British Council, the cultural arm of the British government.

When discussing this issue with Makweta at the end of April 1992, he put part of the blame for the reversal of the decision to switch to Kiswahili on university people, especially at the then department of education. “You intellectuals betrayed us”, Makweta said to the Dean of the Faculty of Education. “We did not get the support from you we needed. How could we carry the decision through with so little support from the intellectual community?”¹

During July and August 1984, Clive Criper, a linguist from Edinburgh University, and Bill Dodd, an administrator with long experience in Tanzania, were carrying out a British government-funded study on levels of English across the educational system. Their study confirmed earlier research showing that levels of English were too low in most schools for effective learning to take place. They found that:

- Only about 10 per cent of Form four pupils were at a level that one might expect English-medium education to begin (Criper and Dodd, 1984:14).
- Less than 20 per cent of the university sample tested were at a level where they would find it easy to read even the simpler books required for their academic studies (Criper and Dodd, 1984:43).

Based on these findings, Criper and Dodd reached the following astonishing conclusion: “The Ministry of Education should issue an unambiguous circular setting out the policy on English medium education” (Criper and Dodd, 1984:73). To many of us, this conclusion seems highly illogical. Based on the above research findings, one would think that their conclusion would encompass an argument for a switch to a medium of instruction with which students were familiar, namely Kiswahili.

Lwaitama and Rugemalira (1988) claim that this last statement was no coincidence. The British government that had paid the consultancy also wanted to see the English language strengthened in Tanzania. Rubagumya (1991:76) also notes the following paradox: although Criper and Dodd stated categorically, after concluding their empirical research, that English had ceased to be a viable medium of education in Tanzania, their recommendation on the English Language Support Project (ELSP), which the British Government was to fund, was on condition that English continued as the medium of instruction!

¹ My translation of a Kiswahili conversation among Makweta, then Minister of Education and later Minister of Communication, Prof. Masha, the Dean of the Faculty of Education, and myself, 22 April 1992.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF CURRENT
LANGUAGE POLICIES

Current language policies in Tanzania can best be described as confusing, contradictory and ambiguous. Language is longer mentioned in the constitution of Tanzania. The 1962 constitution stated that Kiswahili and English should be the national languages. Since then, there have been thirteen constitutional changes (the last in 1999/2000) and the issue of language has disappeared.¹

The official language-in-education policy currently being followed in Tanzania is set out in the *Education and Training Policy* (MoE, 1995) which, *inter alia*, states:

The medium of instruction in pre-primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject. (:35)

The medium of instruction in primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject (:39)

The medium of instruction for secondary education shall continue to be English, except for the teaching of other approved languages and Kiswahili shall be a compulsory subject up to ordinary level (:45)

Two years after MoE had issued this policy, in August 1997, the Ministry of Education and culture issued another policy document, *Sera ya Utamaduni* (Cultural Policy). Chapter 3 deals with language issues, including the language of education policy. The aim of this policy is to clarify the Tanzanian government's policy on the place of the different languages of Tanzania in the formal education system. Section 3.4.1 includes the following statement: "*Mpango maalum wa kuiwezesha elimu na mafunzo katika ngazi zote kutolewa katika lugha ya Kiswahili utaandaliwa na kutekelezwa*" (My translation: "A special plan to enable the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in education and training at all levels shall be designed and implemented.") (MEC, 1997:19)

The Ministry was, however, aware of the important role of English and wanted the teaching of this language as a subject to be strengthened. The policy explicitly states: "*Kingereza kitakuwa ni somo la lazima katika elimu ya awali, msingi na sekondari na kitahimizwa katika elimu ya juu na ufundishaji wake utaboreshwa.*" (My translation: "English will be a compulsory subject at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels and it shall be encouraged in higher education. The teaching of English shall be strengthened.") (MEC, 1997:18)

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE *SERA YA UTAMADUNI*
LANGUAGE POLICY OF 1997?

The question that has preoccupied me during my fieldwork in Tanzania during 2001 has been: What has happened to the language question in secondary schools after the *Sera ya Utamaduni* was published in August 1997? What about the design

¹ Information provided in an interview with the late Professor Rugatiri D.K. Mekacha, of the Department of Kiswahili UDSM, 5 February 2001.

of a plan to enable the implementation of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction at all levels of the educational system? I have been trying to gather recent documents on this issue and, as mentioned earlier, also interviewed various government officials and university people at various times in 2001.

At the University of Dar es Salaam, I came across the report on the 1998 UDSM Academic Audit. Point 4.4 (UDSM, 1999:71-3) of the report discusses “Language as a Medium of Teaching and Learning.” The authors of the report mention that from their talks and discussions with various groups of students and staff, “it was evident that most students have problems with the language medium of instruction (i.e., English). Proficiency in the language is low and leaves much to be desired.” (UDSM, 1999:71)

The panel members were very concerned that members of staff with good English proficiency were approaching retirement and no recruitment of younger staff had been authorised since the abolition of tutorial assistantships. They also refer to research findings pointing to the poor command of English in secondary schools.

One can only guess what will happen when the seniors begin to exit in numbers in the next four or five years and the University is forced to recruit from among the products of secondary school English language training of the 1980s and 1990s. Then the problem of English language communication among University teachers will be visible and painful ... If nothing should have been done by that time, then it should be time for the University to decide going into the lingua franca (Kiswahili) – a language in which both teacher and student will be able to interact meaningfully and confidently. (UDSM, 1999:72)

This decision is, however, already the official policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture as laid down in *Sera ya Utamaduni* (MEC, 1997). And the decision about what language to use for instruction in Tanzania is to be made by the government and not the university. In their discussion on the language issue, the panellists refer to Jean Jacques Rousseau who was very critical of the French education system and of teaching in Greek and Latin. He asked: “If the master’s Greek and Latin is such poor stuff, how about the children?” The panellists ask:

In similar vein, in the next five to ten years, the University of Dar es Salaam should be able to judge and, if appropriate, to query: If the master’s English is such poor stuff, how about the students? Stop it. Let us go Kiswahili. The University needs to take a decision and to act very soon in connection with the language problem. (MEC, 1997:73)

Here again, panellists appear to think that it is the university that takes the decision on the language of instruction, bypassing the Ministry of Education, the politicians and the government. But the attitudes of university people do count when a decision to change the medium of instruction has to be taken. After discussing the problems caused by the low proficiency of students in the medium of instruction at the university, the authors of the audit report conclude with the following illogical and astonishing statement:

But judging from the current and projected global trends and the fact that English is fast becoming the ICT language globally, UDSM should continue to use English as a medium of instruction. (MEC, 1997:73)

This report is as confusing, contradictory and ambiguous about language-in-education policy as the sum of policy recommendations on the same issue from the Ministry of Education over the last several years.

The *Sera ya Utamaduni* from 1997 is the latest policy statement on the language of instruction from the Ministry of Education and Culture. As mentioned, it states that a special plan to enable the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction at all levels would be designed and implemented. In my interviews with politicians, government officials and academics in 2001, I tried to find out what had happened to this policy statement. To what degree had it been followed up?

After the 1997 *Sera ya Utamaduni* policy had been officially proclaimed, a special plan was actually commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC, 1998) and drawn up through a consultancy. The main research for the report was done by senior lecturer Casmir M. Rubagumya in the department of foreign languages at the University of Dar es Salaam in collaboration with colleagues from Lancaster University and financed, interestingly enough, by the British Council. Right after the consultancy team had been constituted and its first working proposals were known, a debate started between leading members of the team and some researchers from the department of Kiswahili who felt that the initial proposals were not true to the policy set out in *Sera ya Utamaduni*. According to Dr. Mekacha:

You should have seen the first proposal they came with. It looked like the main aim was to strengthen English. They were talking about giving people an option. The second quarrel I had with Rubagumya was on the issue of bilingualism. Why bilingualism? They talked about something they called “systematic bilingualism.” (Interview with author, 5 February 2001)

In a written response by Rugatiri Mekacha (1997) to a paper written by Rubagumya (1997), he expresses concern about the fact that the government needs advise about how to implement the new language policy and he feels that the first signals from the consultancy team, “seem to me to be attempts to react to the declaration with the implicit view *of protecting the continued use of English as medium of instruction* [italics original] at higher levels of education, even if it is for only some time to come” (Mekacha, 1997:96).

Mekacha’s paper was written before the consultancy report was finalised and published. His suspicion that the consultancy report would not advise on how to implement the new language policy but rather be an argument against it is, as far as I see it, based on two factors:

- An understandable *déjà vu* feeling:

One is reminded of the other British Council financed research conducted by Criper and Dodd, just after the publication of the report of the Makweta Commission, following which the English Language Support project was launched and implemented for ten years with little, if any, achievement. (see Simmonds et al. 1991) (Mekacha, 1997:96)

- A call by Rubagumya (1997) to let English and Kiswahili support each other in the form of bilingual practice termed additive rather than subtractive bilingualism. Mekacha writes:

I suppose the call will be part of a range of policy options to be discussed and presented to the Ministry of Education and Culture as the mentioned research envisages, instead of advising the government of how best to implement the policy (*Sera ya Utamaduni*, 1997), which is already in place. (Mekacha, 1997:97)

When one studies the draft report of the consultancy team there is, however, reason to claim that Mekacha's fears have not come true. This is not a new Criper and Dodd report, undermining a government report and insisting on the continued use of English as the language of instruction. The consultancy was funded by the British Council, which is probably the reason why one of the two full-time consultants is a UK citizen. One might have wished that since one consultant, Rubagumya, is from the department of foreign languages, the other full-time consultant would have been from the department of Kiswahili. This is not how donors work. But the British consultant, Kathryn Jones, is not a monolingual Briton but one with Welsh as her mother tongue and is concerned about language discrimination. Moreover, the British Council project officer in Dar es Salaam was Roger Avenstrup who, although he is British, has a perfect command of Norwegian and a keen interest in African languages.¹

If the British Council or part of the Tanzanian elite wanted a report undermining the *Sera ya Utamaduni* policy of 1997, this is not what they got. In order to advise the government, the consultancy team conducted a study comprising the following three interconnected components:

- The first component, entitled *Language Use in Classroom Settings*, presented detailed and systematic insights into the language in five different settings in Tanzania: standard one classes; late primary education (standard six classes); the transition into secondary education (Form one classes); middle secondary (Form 3 and 4 classes); and Teacher' Colleges (Grade A Certificate and Diploma classes). A total of 94 lessons were observed and documented in written field-notes, audio recordings, video recordings, photographs and samples of written text. The data were collected by a team of eight researchers with backgrounds in linguistics and teaching.
- The second component is entitled *Language Issues in Education in Tanzania*. The purpose of this component was to investigate the range of views expressed by different stakeholders about the use of Kiswahili and/or English as the language of learning and teaching at secondary level and above in Tanzania. Five hundred and seventy-one audio-recorded interviews with stakeholders in each of Tanzania's seven educational zones were carried out by a team of seven researchers.
- The third component, *Language Planning and Policy Implementation*, draws on the insights of the two empirical research components, together with the

¹ Dr. Roger Avenstrup has spent many years in Namibia working closely with the Minister of Education. He was a good discussion partner for me when I made a study of the African languages of Namibia after independence (Brock-Utne, 1995; 1997). Not long after the consultancy report on the language for learning in Tanzania came out, Dr. Avenstrup unfortunately lost his job with the British Council in Tanzania. I have often been struck by the fact that individual consultants in donor agencies can make a great difference.

experience of language planning in a number of postcolonial settings. It further includes “an analysis of the Tanzanian socio-linguistic context, and corpus planning in Kiswahili to propose effective and realisable recommendations for implementing the language policy of *Sera ya Utamaduni*.” (MEC, 1998:xi)

As part of this last component, two workshops were held in Dar es Salaam at the beginning and towards the end of the project for representatives of the key stakeholders identified by MEC. Their purpose was to discuss language planning and policy implementation strategies in the form of discussion papers by Professor Mwansoko from the Institute of Kiswahili Research, the project language-planning consultant. A third workshop on the project research findings and draft language planning and policy implementation recommendations was held for Ministry of Education and Culture officials under the chairmanship of Dr. Ndagala, Commissioner for Culture.

The classroom studies undertaken as part of the consultancy revealed that at primary level, teachers and students are accomplishing the task of teaching and learning satisfactorily. But, to quote the report:

At secondary level the data reveals that teachers and students fail to learn effectively through the sole medium of English. Kiswahili is used in class for teachers to express themselves effectively and for students to understand their teachers. Kiswahili is the de facto medium of instruction in many classrooms. Those teachers who were seen using only English in class were often found to be misleading their students. Code-switching is not the solution for a bilingual education system. It is therefore recommended that Kiswahili become the medium of education at secondary school. (MEC, 1998:xiii)

This recommendation had already been made in *Sera ya Utamaduni*, the policy document whose implementation the consultants were to advise on. One may wonder about the use of the concept “bilingual education system” in this report. When Kiswahili becomes the medium of education at secondary school, why should the education system be called “bilingual”? In Norway (with four million inhabitants) Norwegian is the language of instruction in primary, secondary and higher education. English is learnt as well as another foreign language, but Norwegians would never call their education system “bilingual.”

The consultancy report ends by proposing a gradual change to the use of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction, starting with Form one in 2001.

The gradual introduction of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction allows for a gradual programme of pre-service and in-service teacher education to accompany the changeover. Kiswahili, as a medium in which both teachers and students are competent, opens up new opportunities for more meaningful learning across the curriculum. The main aim of the teacher education programme is to create awareness of teaching and learning methodology, which takes advantage of these opportunities. The programme also provides a vehicle for dissemination of subject-specific Kiswahili terminology. (MEC, 1998:xvi)

Among the other proposals made in the consultancy report is the conduct of an information campaign on the advantages of using Kiswahili as the language of

instruction. It is further proposed that model demonstration schools be attached both to the Faculty of Education at UDSM and to select diploma colleges.

My interviews on the implementation of *Sera ya Utamaduni* as well as on the recommendations of the consultancy report, took place in 2001, the year in which, according to the report, the gradual change to the use of Kiswahili as the language of instruction in secondary school was to take place. Yet there were no signs that this was happening. Neither had the Faculty of Education at UDSM been equipped to host a model demonstration school where secondary school subjects would be taught through the medium of Kiswahili.

Dr. Rubagumya told me in February 2001 that he was disappointed that the people in the Ministry did not follow up on the consultancy report. He said that the Ministry of Education and Culture has a culture division and an education unit. His feeling was that the culture division agreed with the report and wanted the policy to be implemented, while officers in the education unit did not want it implemented.

At the meeting I attended with Minister of Education Joseph Mungai in November 2001, a question was raised from the floor about the follow-up to *Sera ya Utamaduni* and the proposal to start teaching in Kiswahili in secondary schools from 2001. The Minister replied:

I hear there is some pressure to change. It mostly comes from professors. My own opinion is that I have to take into account what the community wants. Is it the community that has asked for this change? I get a large number of applications from groups that want a licence to start English medium primary schools. I have not had a single application from anyone who wants to start a Kiswahili medium secondary school. The Tanzanian community is not thinking about this language issue. I hear it from professors. I don't hear it from the community. The day I hear it from the community I shall start thinking about it.

The Minister is disregarding the *Sera ya Utamaduni* language policy of his own Ministry. He also disregards the consultancy report that followed it and all the many studies the consultants made recommending the switch in 2001. He further disregards the professors, many of whom have done research in classrooms for years and seen the problems the majority of children have. He disregards the fact that language policy is a class issue and that private schools can charge higher fees when they advertise themselves as English-medium schools, thus making it impossible for children of the poor to attend.

THE FORCES WORKING FOR AND AGAINST CHANGE

In many ways the language-in-education issue can indeed be looked at as a class issue. It is a battle between the silent majority, those who drop out of school, have to repeat grades, do not get anything out of the many years of schooling, and a small vocal minority belonging to the elite class. In my interview in February 2001 with Dr. Martha Qorro, Head of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at the University of Dar es Salaam, she remarked that both politicians and academics are divided on the language issue. There are those who support the use of Kiswahili as the language

of instruction in secondary school and the university and those who want to start with English as the language of instruction from first grade in primary school. She went on:

Unfortunately the last group has the most strength because they are backed up by powerful donors like British Council, US-AID and the World Bank. This group says things like, "English is the language of development, of modernization, of science and technology". The language of the global village – *kijiji kimoja*. There is no-one from outside Tanzania that supports the position that Kiswahili ought to be the language of instruction in secondary school and university. It is like a war between the two camps. The problem is the cabinet. (My translation from Kiswahili)

Donor influence

There is little doubt that Dr. Qorro is right when she maintains that education donors in Africa¹ have mostly worked to strengthen ex-colonial languages as languages of instruction. Mazrui (1997) mentions that a World Bank loan to the Central African Republic, allegedly intended to improve the quality and accessibility of elementary education, came with a package of conditions that required the nation to import its textbooks (and even French language charts) directly from France and Canada. It has been estimated that due to similar World Bank projects and linkages, over 80 per cent of schoolbooks in "francophone" Africa are now produced in France (Nnana, 1995:17).

There are other instances of publishing industries as well as consulting firms in the North that benefit directly from the use of ex-colonial languages as languages of instruction in Africa. An example from Uganda shows that an American consultancy firm is, by its insistence on the use of English, violating the official language policy of Uganda. In the White Paper from the government of Uganda, the following language policy is laid down:

- a) In rural areas the medium of instruction from P. 1 to P. 4 will be the relevant local languages; and from P.5 to P.8 English will be the medium of instruction.
- b) In the urban areas the medium of instruction will be English throughout the primary cycle.
- c) Kiswahili and English will be taught as compulsory subjects to all children throughout the primary cycle, both in rural and urban areas. Emphasis in terms of allocations of time and in the provision of instructional materials, facilities and teachers will, however, be gradually placed on Kiswahili as the language possessing greater capacity for uniting Ugandans and for assisting rapid social development.
- d) The relevant area language will also be taught as a subject in primary school; this applies to both rural and urban areas (GWP, 1992:19)

Most of the non-formal COPE (Complimentary Opportunities for Primary Education)² schools are in rural areas. Bushenyi, which I visited in 1997 (Brock-Utne,

¹ There are exceptions to this. The German development agencies DSE and GTZ as well as the Swiss development agency are now supporting the development of local languages as the medium of instruction in Niger (Brock-Utne, 1998).

² COPE (Complimentary Opportunities for Primary Education) – a non-formal programme for children who have dropped out of school or did not start at the right time.

1997b), is a rural district in Uganda where one would expect instruction to be in the local language, especially as COPE instructors have few years of schooling, little teacher training, inadequate command of English, and their pupils are often dropouts from regular schools or come from very poor homes with no exposure to English. Yet the instructor's guide to COPE instructors (written by the US-based firm "Creative Associates") states:

The COPE curriculum follows the official government language policy. In the first year, use the local language for all subjects except English. In English lessons, use English only. In the second and third years, use English for all subjects except mother tongue. Obviously there must be some overlap, but you *must* be using *English only* by term two year two. (Elphick, 1995:17, emphasis in original)

The instructor's guide does not follow the official government language policy since that policy advocates use of the local language as medium of instruction up to P4 in rural areas, precisely where most COPE schools are located. The same guide further argues that, "since there is extremely limited exposure to English in the environment of the average COPE child, it is absolutely essential that, when the time comes for using English as the medium of instruction, English should be used for all subjects." The guide recognises that pupils can often have problems understanding various subjects in English. One recommendation for solving this problem is by:

teaching in English and forcing pupils into a situation where they cannot survive without learning it ... after learning has been introduced in the local language, the teacher **must** teach in English, and preferably use English for all activities within the learning centre. (Elphick, 1995:17, emphasis in original)

When it comes to Tanzania, most of the development aid given by Britain over the last twenty years has been in the form of English language support. The English Language Teaching Support Project (ELTSP) has been financed by the Ministry of Overseas Development as a "top priority of British aid to education in Tanzania" (Bgoya, 1992:179). As noted in the previous paper, the British Council noted that British influence endures through "the insatiable demand for the English language" (British Council, 1983:9).

Newer studies, for example, by Zaline M.Roy-Campbell and Martha Qorro (1997), have shown that the language crisis in Tanzanian secondary schools is even more severe today than it was twenty years ago. Results of the university screening test (UDSM, 1994) usually administered to all new students fresh out of secondary schools, indicate that despite the fact that these students have studied under ELTSP, their English language proficiency is no better than that of pre-ELTSP students. In fact, the level of English is still declining.

The objective of the English Language Teaching Support Project, which was introduced in Tanzania in 1987 with a British development grant of 1.46 million, was to increase the English-language competence of teachers and to provide books for that purpose. Nine specialists from the United Kingdom were brought to Tanzania to implement the project. In the early days, it was realised that there was a great need for appropriate books in English, preferably written by Tanzanians, to replace the books written primarily for British students. Large numbers of books written by

British authors for British pupils had already been distributed without charge by the British Council to many secondary schools in Tanzania. During my trips around the country to supervise student teachers at secondary schools, I sometimes came across stacks of relatively new English textbooks lying around in the staff rooms. One teacher commented when she saw me looking at them: "They are highly irrelevant for our situation here. But what shall we do? We got these books for free and this is all we have."

The English Language Teaching Support Project proposed that Tanzanians be invited to write books, or that such manuscripts as already existed be submitted to the project for approval, editing, and eventual publication. Walter Bgoya notes that several Tanzanian publishers believed the Tanzanian publishing industry might benefit from the project, which would buy no less than 20,000 copies of the English supplementary readers (Bgoya, 1992:179). Publishers held manuscripts in which they had already invested a lot of time and work but had not published because of a lack of funds. However, the project did not help Tanzanian publishers to survive. On the contrary:

As it turned out, the agreement stipulated that the first edition of all books published under the project had to be published in the UK and by either Longman, Macmillan, Oxford University Press or Evans. Only a reprint could be published in Tanzania under a co-publication arrangement between the UK publisher and a local one. But even this was revised, and no book was published in Tanzania. British publishers, it is said, insisted that they should publish the books in the UK even if the manuscripts originated in Tanzania. English-language teaching is also good business for publishers in the UK. (Bgoya, 1992:179)

Certainly, publishing industries and consultants in the North profit from the use of ex-colonial languages in education in Africa. They are, however, greatly helped by some of the African elite. The losers are the masses of Africans and thereby the development and self-reliance of the African continent.

Watu wakubwa

In analysing the forces working for and against a change of the medium of instruction in Tanzania it is not enough to look at donor influence. The attitudes of leading politicians and the intellectual elite – the big people – *watu wakubwa* – also have to be exposed and scrutinised. One of my informants remarked :

Shida ni watu wakubwa. Wanapeleka watoto wao nje za nchi au kwa shule ya kimataifa hapa hapa. Wanatumia Kingereza kama lugha ya kufundishia tangu darasi la kwanza.
(My translation: The problem is the big people of our country. They take their own children to schools outside this country or to the international schools here where they use English as the language of instruction from grade one.)

My informants told me that the reason many private primary schools in Tanzania have started using English from grade one is that are then able to call themselves international schools and charge higher fees. The parents who can afford these fees are relatively better off and the social segregation that Nyerere fought against is back. Parents like these schools because their children meet children from more

well-to-do homes, the teachers are better paid and there is more instructional material. Many parents also think that the earlier children are exposed to English the better, and that the best way to learn English is by having it as a language of instruction. In this, they have fallen victim to several of the fallacies so well described by the sociolinguist, Robert Phillipson (1992; 1999). Phillipson claims that a central aspect of English linguistic imperialism is how the language is taught. In the TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) profession in its formative years, a number of key tenets evolved:

- English is best taught monolingually;
- the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker;
- the earlier English is introduced, the better the results;
- the more English is taught, the better the results; and
- if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop. (Phillipson, 1999:208)

Adhering to these tenets has had major consequences, structural and ideological, for the entire ESL (English as Second Language) “aid” operation in postcolonial education systems. Close scrutiny, in the light of the knowledge now available to us, indicates that all the tenets are false (see Phillipson 1992, chapter 7, for a detailed study of the genesis of the tenets and their validity). They can be more appropriately labelled as

- the monolingual fallacy;
- the native speaker fallacy;
- the early start fallacy;
- the maximum exposure fallacy; and
- the subtractive fallacy.

From my Tanzanian informants, I heard several stories about pupils from well-to-do homes attending these private “international” schools being in tears because they did not understand what the teacher was saying. In several cases, the parents had listened to their children and let them switch to a regular primary school where Kiswahili was the language of instruction and the children had been so happy.

One mother told me:

Because we belong to the more well-to-do in Tanzania and can afford the high school fees that the so-called international primary schools charge, my husband insisted that our daughter should start in one of these new schools. Everybody wants the best for his or her children, and he thought it was the best. I did not agree, but we decided we could give it a try. As you may know, these international schools have English as the language of instruction right from the start. That is what our daughter hated about the school. She had really big problems. She told me that she always spoke Kiswahili with her classmates, but when the teacher approached them, they tried to switch to English. She disliked school so much that she dropped out for days at a time and used all sorts of excuses for not attending. She claimed she was sick. She often said she had a severe stomach ache, and maybe she had. After some time we decided we should let her study in a school using the language of instruction which she was most comfortable with,

Kiswahili. Since she was transferred to Mlimani primary school, where the language of instruction is Kiswahili, she just loves school and has not stayed away for a single day. No more stomach aches. (My translation from an interview in Kiswahili)

Not all parents listen so attentively to their children. Many insist that their children continue in schools they dislike because parents think it is the best for them. When better-off parents send their children to English medium schools, other parents want to do the same for their children. People are more concerned with the example politicians and upper class people set in their choices for their children than with what their own children say. Many of my informants praised Julius Nyerere – *Baba ya Taifa*, the father of the country – for having had his children study in Tanzania and go to regular schools. Nyerere was also a great promoter of Kiswahili: He translated two of Shakespeare’s plays into Kiswahili, and saw to it that Kiswahili was used in parliament, in primary schools, in adult education and in the courts. But he was also instrumental in preventing the use of Kiswahili as language of instruction in secondary schools. In his later years, however, Nyerere admitted on several occasions that he had made a mistake about the language of instruction in secondary school and higher education. In an article on the language of instruction in Tanzania, Rubanza (2000) refers to an article in the *Daily News* in which Julius Nyerere (1995) advocated the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in secondary schools and other institutions of higher learning. However, Prof. Ruth Basha, Head of the Department of Kiswahili, UDSM, told me she blamed Nyerere for reversing the decision of 1985. It did not help much that, when he was at the end of his life and had no power any longer, “*haina nguvu*” (no strength), he admitted to having made a mistake.

On the fortieth anniversary of Tanzanian independence, 9 December 2001, the former president of Tanzania, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, was quoted in the Tanzanian *Guardian* as saying that he also now saw that Tanzanian secondary school as well as university students would benefit from having Kiswahili as the language of instruction. When he had the power to make this change, he did not make it, however. On the contrary, I was told that he sent his own son to the Kamuza Banda School in Malawi, a school modelled on Eton where young boys wear suits and ties, study Greek and Latin, and learn to speak the Queen’s English.

HOW TEACHERS COPE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS IN TANZANIA

Code-switching

A stimulating paper on indigenous language use in education in New Guinea by World Bank employee David Klaus (2001) opened with what for educators ought to be a truism, namely, “There seems to be general agreement that pupils learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying” (Klaus, 2001). Tanzanian teachers, like all other teachers, are aware of this fact. When they see that their students do not understand because the language of teaching is unfamiliar to them, they perform code-switching. By code-switching we normally mean the use of two

or more languages in a single utterance or sequence of utterances between two or more speakers. Through my own observations in Tanzanian classrooms as well as the experiences and studies of my Tanzanian students, most of whom have been teachers, it is clear that code-switching is the teachers' main classroom strategy for coping with their own unfamiliarity and the unfamiliarity of their students with the language of instruction.

One of the secondary schoolteachers that Halima Mwinsheikhe (2001) interviewed about the language question said, "If I insist to use English throughout it is like teaching dead stones and not students" (School CS2 teacher).

In the following passage, the science teacher changes languages completely when he sees that his students do not understand him. His own English is not easy to understand. He expresses himself much more clearly and effectively in Kiswahili. For him, the important thing is to get the subject matter across. He is teaching science, not English.

T: When you go home put some water in a jar, leave it direct on sun rays and observe the decrease of the amount of water. Have you understood?

Ss: (silence)

T: *Nasema, chukua chombo, uweke maji na kiache kwenye jua, maji yatakuaje?* (I say take a container with water and leave it out in the sun, what will happen to the water?)

Ss: *Yatapungua* (It will decrease)

T: *Kwa nini?* (Why?)

Ss: *Yatafyonzwa na mionzi ya jua* (It will be evaporated by the sun's rays)

(Rubagumya, Jones, Mwansoko, 1999:17)

The above exchange was observed by researchers working on the language-issues consultancy for the education sector development programme (MEC, 1998) and was reported by some of the main researchers. The teacher is not able to get his question across in English, but has no trouble when he switches to Kiswahili. Osaki's observations of science teaching in secondary schools in Tanzania have led him to a similar conclusion:

Students either talk very little in class and copy textual information from the chalkboard, or attempt discussion in a mixed language (i.e., English and Kiswahili) and then copy notes on the chalkboard in English ... teachers who insist on using English only end up talking to themselves with very little student input. (Osaki, 1991)

Yet this approach is, as we have seen, precisely what the American firm Creative Associates recommends for Ugandan teachers in non-formal COPE schools.

At present, much of the public debate on the choice between English or Kiswahili as the language of instruction in Tanzanian schools fails to distinguish between using language for learning and learning a language (Rubagumya, Jones, Mwansoko, 1999:11). Students in particular seem to think that to learn English well they should have that language as a language of instruction. However, the link between learning a language and learning through that language is a fallacy. There is no evidence to show that using a particular language as a medium of instruction will necessarily lead to proficiency in that language. If the aim is to learn English, it is much better

to have good instruction in that language by trained language teachers. Teachers trained in other subjects are not language teachers and are naturally more concerned about teaching their own subject matter to students. They will often use code-switching to help their students to understand, as can be seen in the following excerpt from a classroom observation on a Form one geography lesson:

T: These are used for grinding materials. It looks like what?

S: *Kinu* (pestle)

T: *Kinu* and what?

S: *Mtwangio* (mortar)

T: It looks like *kinu* and *mtwangio* and it works like *kinu* and *mtwangio* [the teacher continues to describe other apparatus.]

(Rubagumya, Jones, Mwansoko, 1999:18)

In this example, the teacher is satisfied that the student has the right concepts. The fact that these concepts are expressed in Kiswahili does not seem to bother the teacher, who does nothing to expand the English vocabulary of the student. Had the teacher insisted on an answer in English, he would most likely have met with silence.

In interviews conducted as part of a larger study for the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1998, both students and teachers admitted that the use of English as language of instruction in secondary schools is problematic. Yet a slight majority of teachers (50.9 per cent) and an overwhelming majority of students (82 per cent) favoured the continued use of English as the medium of instruction. As one student put it:

Sipendi Kiswahili kiwe lugha ya kufundishia katika shule za msingi mpaka Chuo Kikuu kwa sababu ni lugha ambayo naifahamu tayari. (I don't want Kiswahili as medium of instruction from primary school up to University level because it is a language I know already)

(Rubagumya, Jones, Mwansoko, 1999:22)

It is clear that this student wants to learn English and mistakenly thinks that this best done by having English as the medium of instruction. He is prey to the maximum exposure fallacy mentioned earlier. (Phillipson, 1992; 1999)

This student also thinks that because he understands and speaks Kiswahili, he does not need to further develop his knowledge of that language. However, to master a foreign language, he also needs to expand his academic vocabulary in his own language.

Classroom-management

In a school setting, language is used not only to impart knowledge but also for classroom management. Sitting in the back of many secondary school classrooms in Tanzania over many years to observe my students teach, I often noticed that even though they tried to use English throughout the lesson, they would, probably without noticing, switch into Kiswahili when they felt the need to discipline a student, have him be quiet, stand up or fetch something. In his doctoral thesis, Casmir Rubagumya

(1993) shows how Kiswahili is frequently used in classrooms in secondary schools in Tanzania for classroom management:

Teacher: Yes ... good trial in English ... they took out raw materials ... what else?

Yes ... *Rehema unasinzia?* (Rehema are you falling asleep?)

(Rubagumya, 1993:193)

Creating a good classroom atmosphere

My daughter, who attended development studies courses at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1987/88, regretted her limited knowledge of Kiswahili. She noted that even though professors lectured in English, they would crack jokes in Kiswahili, and the whole audience laughed. One of the secondary schoolteachers, Halima Mwinsheike, interviewed (2001:56), said: "I sometimes use Kiswahili to make students smile or laugh once in a while, which is good for learning." (School SSS teacher).

Both through observations and through questions, Mwinsheike aimed to find out the extent to which Kiswahili is "unofficially" used by students and teachers during science lessons and under what circumstances. The majority – 68 teachers – (74 per cent) acknowledged the existence of the language problem in the teaching and learning of science. Only a small proportion – 20 (22 per cent) asserted that they faced no problem.

Most teachers – 82 (89 per cent)¹ admitted to using Kiswahili in their teaching, while only nine (10 per cent) said they did not do so. It was interesting to note that some of the teachers who claimed to have no language problem indicated that they, despite official policy, used Kiswahili in their teaching. In response to the question, "What lesson activities prompt you to switch to Kiswahili?", 70 (82 per cent) teachers who admitted that they used Kiswahili during lessons said they used it to clarify difficult or key concepts in their lessons. The next most common reason provided (by 13 teachers – 15 per cent) was to give instructions for practical work and assignments.

The reasons for code-switching may be expressed differently, but the core of the matter is that teachers are concerned about the understanding capability of their students. Rubagumya (1997) explains that his 1993 studies forming part of his doctoral thesis revealed that secondary school students admitted that they followed lessons better if Kiswahili was used (Rubagumya, 1993).

Since most teachers use Kiswahili during lessons, it is not surprising to find that a good proportion of them – 58 (63 per cent) – say that they allow students to do the same. It would be natural for teachers who code-switch to allow their students to code-switch without any qualms, especially in lower forms.

According to the majority of teachers, students normally use Kiswahili in group work while a smaller proportion 26 (28 per cent) make use of "Kiswenglish."

¹ The high percentage of teachers who admitted that they were using Kiswahili in their teaching is probably accurate. Mwinsheike was probably able to get this answer by establishing a good rapport in the interviews, during which she would admit to having used code-switching herself. Since teachers know they are not supposed to adopt this practice, an outside researcher or school inspector would be unlikely to have this high a percentage of teachers admitting to code-switching.

Working in groups creates a much more relaxed atmosphere and students feel free to code-switch. In my own lectures in educational psychology and vocational guidance and counselling to about two hundred undergraduate students at the University of Dar es Salaam, I often gave them questions to discuss in small buzzing groups for five minutes. I wrote the questions on the blackboard in English. I very soon realised that all the buzzing groups were discussing the questions in Kiswahili.

Translations

Another coping strategy used by Tanzanian secondary schoolteachers in their classrooms is the more or less full translation of everything they say in English into Kiswahili. I have observed this strategy several times and observed it again in November 2001. Here is an excerpt from my diary notes:

The next class we observed was a Form II class that had commerce with a male teacher. He made use of Kiswahili to make students understand. He would say the sentences in English very slowly first and then repeat what he had said more quickly but in Kiswahili this time. On one occasion one of the students then asked him a question in Kiswahili and he answered in Kiswahili and at some length. On the blackboard he wrote daily sales four different places and always with two lls. He seemed a very good teacher, the students were eager and he was very quick to praise them ("excellent girl", "excellent boy").

The fact that everything is repeated naturally slows down the lesson, rather like when we use an interpreter to translate everything somebody says in a language we do not understand. As we know, this takes twice as much time as a conversation in one language (or with simultaneous translation). We also do not pay much attention to the first language because we know the information will be repeated in a language we understand better.

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