

Language practices and classroom processes in Rural Tanzanian

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overview

- Many African countries are blessed with a multiplicity of languages, ranging from less than ten to hundreds.
 - In such situations making rational linguistic choices regarding language in education is usually a challenge. Linguistic choices in education can take different perspectives:
 - i. Human rights perspective
 - ii. Utilitarian perspective
 - iii. Partisan perspective
- Etc.

Overview: Tanzania's Linguistic situation

- Tanzania has approximately 150 ethnic community languages, Kiswahili, a local lingua franca, and English, not to mention a few other languages (French, Arabic, and Chinese).
- The linguistic situation in Tanzania is usually described using the Ferguson's (1959) model of diglossia which involves the use of two varieties of the same language (H and L).
- Fishman (1967) and Abdulaziz-Mkilifi (1972) modified the model to include the functional distribution of two or more languages. Mkilifi (1972:198) describes the Tanzania's linguistic situation as triglossic, to capture the realism that there are ethnic community languages, an indigenous lingua franca, and an international language.

Overview: Tanzania's Linguistic situation

- This situation made Fasold (1984) to describe the Tanzania's linguistic landscape as *double overlapping diglossia*.
- The argument is that English has had a higher status than Kiswahili, and Kiswahili a higher status, than the ECLs. Of course, the claim is not without a challenge – it makes the assumption that all the languages are readily and freely available to the entire society, which is not the case.
- At primary level of education, government owned school the education policy declares Kiswahili as the medium of instruction through out the country. Privately-owned primary schools mostly use English. The policies do not assign ECLs any official role in education.

overview

- The current relative merry enjoyed by Kiswahili owe much to German colonial activity in Tanganyika, starting particularly from 1985 onwards.
- White (1980:262) observes that the German colonial regime wanted some people of Tanganyika to be proficient in arithmetic and Swahili, using the Latin script. These were to serve in government service in duties such as clerks, policemen, interpreters etc) in the government. So they opened up the first government schools in Tanga in 1893.
- This action was the starting point of institutional support for Kiswahili in Tanzania, and the beginning of the disregard for ethnic community languages.

Kiswahili vs ECLs

- During the British colonial rule, Kiswahili was still used, as a MoI in lower levels of education. After independence Kiswahili still received a lot of institutional support from the government. Some of the affirmative actions taken by the Government include the following:
 - 1962 Kiswahili was declared the national language.
 - 1962 Kiswahili was made the official language of the government.
 - 1964 the Government established the Ministry of Culture
 - 1967 the Institute of Kiswahili was established at the University of Dar es Salaam

Kiswahili vs ECLs

- For example, in February 1982 a presidential commission appointed by the then president, Julius Nyerere, known as the Makweta Commission, recommended a change from English to Swahili. The Commission recommended Swahili to be used as the medium of instruction in secondary schools, from January 1985 on, and to be extended to university education by 1992 (Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania, February 1982).
- In this regard, Rwezaura (1994, p.118) states that the government instructed the use of English to continue for a long time thereafter, against the Presidential Commission's report.

The current study

- Examines linguistic practices of the pupils and how they impact on their learning at primary school level. This is based on the understanding that sustainable development is only possible if there is an understanding of one's own environment. Accordingly, an understanding of one's own environment is made possible through education.
- The current study seeks to examine how the medium of instruction in the selected areas facilitate or inhibit teaching and learning.
- Language practices of the learners (the learners themselves, teachers, parents, and other members of the community) will be instrumental in accounting for the quality of classroom processes.