

Language Policy and Planning – the Tanzania Experience

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1 Introduction

The Tanzanian experience is a typical case that illustrates how language policy and planning is a site of struggle - for cultural influence, economic dominance, and political control. The similarities with other African countries in this struggle are so obvious as to require little restating - a conflictual triglossic environment, with the ex-colonial language, viz. English, at the top of the hierarchy, a regional lingua franca, viz. Swahili, in the middle, and multiple local ethnic community languages¹ at the bottom of the heap (Rubagumya 1991). Yet some of the battles lost or won and the methods employed are worth examining particularly because the Tanzanian case has been so often erroneously cited as a success story.

Similarities of the Tanzanian experience with multilingual situations outside the African continent go beyond the colonial factor: they revolve around the theoretical position that regards multilingualism as a curse, as inefficient and dysfunctional in the management of society:

Wherever the language of the government and the law differs from that of the mass of the people, plans for economic, agricultural and industrial development are more difficult to make - because the basic research is hindered by the language barrier - and more difficult to put into effect. Linguistic diversity therefore acts as a brake on economic progress (Le Page 1964:18).

..diversity of language impedes the nation's economic and educational progress as well as its unity (Le Page 1964:84).

It is neither practicable nor desirable for the state to nurture and promote all languages spoken within its borders, as advocated by human-rights protagonists (Mkude 2002:76).

The official English only movement in the USA is a good example of the monolingualism school. In spite of the much-touted cultural melting pot image of the American dream, English is indeed regarded as the cement that binds the citizens together; all bilingual education programmes are in the final analysis assimilationist to the national language and culture. And for many people the monolingualism ideal is

¹ There are 150 ethnic community language (Atlati ya Lugha za Tanzania 2009).

the original divine plan before the Babelian distortion through human pride². Although the relatively recent international pronouncements in favour of multilingualism and cultural diversity provide ground for the counter-attack (World Conference on Linguistic Rights 1996; UNITED NATIONS 1997; UNESCO 2001, 2003)³, practice in the regional bodies shows that multilingualism is heavily under siege (Phillipson 2009:139). The UN declarations expressing concern about the future of the world's linguistic diversity and urging deliberate protection are themselves witness to this fact.

As we examine the case of the Tanzanian struggle for linguistic independence in this wider perspective, it will be important to determine the extent to which this national struggle has been swept up into the global forces of neoliberalism (a.k.a. imperialism) and why multilingualism should fall victim to these forces. And since there are gloomy prognoses on the planet's linguistic diversity it may be worth reflecting on the tempting parallel being drawn, viz. that the world is headed towards the existence of one 'global' or 'international' language in the same way that Tanzania is headed towards one national language.

Section 2 presents a brief background to the linguistic situation up to independence in 1961. Section 3 examines what may pass as language policy and planning activity, by looking at actual practice in government affairs, at the University of Dar es Salaam as a case study, and at the national language council set up to manage language affairs. Section 4 revisits the debate on the language of instruction. Section 5 discusses the challenges to the status quo and the future.

2 Historical background and the status quo

The larger part of the territory that has evolved into present day Tanzania was first ruled by the Germans (1885-1919) before passing into British hands after the First World War (1919-1961). The islands of Zanzibar and Pemba were ruled by the British

² In the Judeo-Christian scriptures the multiplicity of languages on earth originated from the failed plan of people to encroach on divine authority by building a tower to the heavens; god ruined these plans by making the people speak different languages and so be unable to work together on the project.

³ Various international initiatives during the past fifteen years have sought to build a consensus to the effect that minority languages need not disappear; that they should not disappear; and that any language that is running out of speakers should be well-documented for the benefit of humanity. Languages need not disappear because humans are capable of mastering several languages very well and societies should be so organized as to accommodate multilingualism and multiculturalism. Nations are urged to foster "the learning of several languages from the earliest age" (UNESCO 2001).

throughout (1990-1963). So it was English rather than German that got entrenched as the language of power pitted against Swahili, the language of wider communication, and about 150 other ethnic community languages. This conflict was most visible in the decisions and practices regarding the language of government and education: While the Germans made considerable use of Swahili in administration and the education system, the British run an English administration and education system with only slight concessions to Swahili in both sectors (Rubagumya 1990; Qorro 2012).

One of the most significant steps in language planning was the establishment of the Inter-territorial Swahili Language Committee in 1930 to co-ordinate and harmonize the development and use of the language across the British East Africa territories of Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Kenya, and Uganda⁴. As will be discussed later, this constitutes the roots of the present Institute of Kiswahili Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam. So by the time of Tanganyika's independence in 1961, and its union with Zanzibar to form Tanzania in 1964 the triglossic situation was already well-established. The post-independence experience - now already longer than the British occupation of Tanganyika - has witnessed only a mere tinkering with the establishment and arguably a strengthening of i) the position of English vis a vis that of Kiswahili, and ii) the position of Kiswahili vis-a-vis that of the ethnic community languages.

3 Manifestations of a language policy

By 'language policy' someone would normally expect a written statement by a governmental authority setting out the broad principles that will guide public behaviour in matters of language. The policy would give the desired direction of change in the use of the language resources available in the society and the strategies for effecting that change. The policy then becomes the basis for framing laws, regulations, and directives to determine action/practice. This applies to all sectors of public management, even in non-governmental organizations.

In the absence of an umbrella policy, everyday practice in the relevant sector/field may be guided by laws, rules, regulations and directives drawn from different sectors. These may produce contradictory actions depending on the wider context in which each such instrument was conceived and developed. For instance, the law for the licensing of mass media (radio, television, newspapers) may constrain the use of ethnic community languages even though the Bill of Rights in the constitution espouses the right to give and receive information. Or the law that controls the quality/standards of products and their safe use e.g. medicinal drugs, insecticides, machine tools, or food

⁴ The Tanzanian parliament recently ratified the protocol to (re-)establish a Swahili Commission for the East African Community (*Mwananchi*, 2 November 2012).

products, may limit itself to the use of an official language like English even if the consumers cannot understand instructions written in English.

3.1 Government practice

At independence the first action of government in matters of language was to declare Swahili the national language and also official language in conjunction with English. It is arguable that the 'national language' title is empty of content when juxtaposed to the 'official language' title. It should go without saying that a national language is the official language of government and public affairs. If a national language shares its official position with a 'foreign' language then a justification for the situation ought to be provided in a language policy that also sets out the roadmap for the eventual removal of that foreign language from its usurped position. There has been no such policy in Tanzania.

A national language is understood as the medium that is accessible to a large section of the relevant nation mainly because it has cultural roots among the people of that nation and so it is the medium through which the members of that nation communicate with each other on a daily basis and get governed/ruled, i.e. it is the official language⁵. In this sense it is possible to conceive the existence of more than one national language to match the linguistic composition of the given society. It is also possible to conceive of a language that has cultural roots among a section of the people in a nation but it is not widely enough shared: this may be regarded as a community or regional language.

The effect of Swahili's status as a national language was to give it clout over the ethnic community languages; it systematically replaced them in several domains. The independence government abolished the traditional chiefs and thereby removed one public domain where ethnic community languages might have found some use - namely the chief's local government. By giving prominence to the agenda of building a modern united nation with one national language, the ethnic community languages got painted in a negative light as forces of tribalism and traditionalism. Increasingly it became a matter of pride for the younger generation to speak Swahili rather than the ECL. Knowledge of Swahili would almost always be a sign that someone has been to school. In Swahili's own battles with English, government authorities would at various intervals issue directives to its functionaries not to use English "unnecessarily". But in the case of the ECLs voices against speaking Swahili "unnecessarily" would be confined

⁵ South African usage has sought to make a different distinction: there are eleven 'official languages' which are used in wider public contexts and in regional and central government affairs; then there are 'national languages' which are less significant in public life because they are spoken by smaller sections of the nation but have cultural / historical/ritual significance and deserve to be preserved (Constitution of South Africa 1996).

to the domestic realm and would increasingly be ignored by the younger generation that was under various integrationist influences including i) universal primary education in the Swahili medium where speaking an ECL is a punishable offence; ii) ujamaa/villagization policies which could bring together people speaking different languages who might then find comfort in Swahili in this semi-urbanized environment; iii) secondary schools with a national catchment area, where pupils were deliberately transported across many regions away from home to get a "national education" in state (owned/nationalized) schools with non-fellow tribesmen; and iv) military service camps (National Service). These nationalizing forces created an ethos that made it unpatriotic, almost subversive, to speak an ECL. The population census questionnaire removed the question on ethnic identity, which from pre-independence practice to the 1967 census, used to give an indirect picture of the languages in the country. A request to include a language question in the 2002 census was rejected:

The Census Commissioner took the opportunity to make the point that Tanzania is past the stage of counting tribes and has made giant strides towards the creation of a homogeneous nation with one national language (Damas Mbogoro, personal communication). He maintained that any activity making reference to tribal languages is retrogressive in that regard (Muzale & Rugemalira 2008:9)

The 2012 census reaffirmed the suppression of the ECLs. A question⁶ on literacy skills had the following options for the respondent to choose from: i) Kiswahili; ii) English; iii) Kiswahili & English; iv) other language; v) cannot read and write. A respondent who mentioned an ECL under option iv) was told that ECLs don't count as languages, that languages like Spanish and French were the intended choices⁷.

The census is a potent policy and planning tool of course and the "literacy" question does really deserve further scrutiny. The question (No. 17 in the census short questionnaire) suggests that the intent is to indirectly obtain information on languages spoken (by people aged 4 years and above). The clerk who rejected an ECL as a possible answer must have gone beyond his/her brief because the census authorities give the impression that their interest was simply with literacy in English and Swahili and that there was no official list of "other languages". However it is clear that the census does not regard ECLs as languages and so it is possible that some people who said they could read and write an ECL would be categorized under option (v), viz.

⁶ Je unajua kusoma na kuandika katika lugha ya Kiswahili, Kiingereza, Kiswahili na Kiingereza au lugha nyingine yoyote? (Can you read in Swahili, English, Swahili and English, or any other language).

⁷ Dr. Amani Lusekelo's Nyakyusa was discounted. Dr. Abel Mreta was told that there is no provision for Asu (personal communication).

cannot read and write. It is also probable that the interpretation of the census results is going to be that most Tanzanians speak Swahili, the national language.

Other measures were more explicit in instituting curbs on the ECLs. The communications policy, laws and rules prohibit the use of ECLs in broadcasting.

15. Every free-to-air licensee shall-

(a) ensure that only official languages, namely Kiswahili and English, are used for all broadcasts except where specific authorization has been given to use non official languages (TCRA 2005)

The election rules make it an offence to use 'divisive' language or a language other than Swahili in the campaigns (Tanzania 2010b).

Swahili shall be the only campaign language. Where Swahili is not understood and there is a necessity a candidate shall speak in Swahili while an interpreter interprets into the language spoken in the relevant area (section 2.1k).

The code of conduct urges political parties and candidates to guard against tribalism, and all discrimination along gender, religious and racial lines (sections 2.1d & 2.2j). So even if there were no clause proclaiming Swahili the only campaign language, it would still be dangerous for a candidate to use an ECL because that would expose him/her to the charge of tribalism.

Although the 1976 Newspaper Act does not prohibit the use of ECLs in newspapers, the government has not registered any ECL newspaper since independence. This of course is partly accounted for by the fact that the Nyerere government controlled all mass media and private newspapers were first allowed in the 1990s under the liberalization measures of the time. But the government's position against the use of ECLs in newspapers was made explicit by one government official:

“Serikali imesema haitasajili magazeti yanayochapishwa katika lugha za makabila, kwa kuwa itakuwa ni kupanda mbegu za ukabila nchini na kuchochea migawanyiko. ...[Ingawa]sheria ya magazeti ya mwaka 1976 haizungumzi chochote kuhusu usajili wa magazeti ya lugha za makabila [...]kama usajili wa aina hiyo utaruhusiwa itakuwa vigumu kwa serikali kufuatilia habari zinazochapishwa katika magazeti ya aina hiyo kwa kuwa lugha zitakazotumika hazitaeleweka na wengi. Haitakuwa rahisi kwa serikali kufuatilia mabaya ambayo yanaweza kuchapishwa na magazeti ya aina hiyo kwenye makabila yanayohusika” (NIPASHE 1999).

[The government will not register newspapers using tribal languages because this will sow seeds of tribalism and foment divisions...[Although] the 1976 newspaper act says nothing about newspapers using tribal languages, if such newspapers are allowed it will be difficult for the government to monitor what is published because the languages will not be understood by many people. It will be difficult for the government to keep track of bad things that could be published in such papers in the relevant tribes].

In this context one would be forgiven for thinking that the statements found in *Sera ya Utamaduni* (1997:17) in favour of ECLs were inserted by mistake. The policy urges the research, conservation, and translation of ECLs; the need to produce dictionaries and grammars in ECLs; and the need to publish various materials in the ECLs. In any case the true intent of the pronouncements is stated: "The indigenous languages will continue to be used as a reservoir for the development of Swahili" (my translation)⁸. And although there are salaried Cultural Officers in the districts they do not work on the research and conservation of ECLs. Instead they contribute to the transformation of the local dances into hybrid forms using Swahili instead of ECLs and focusing on political messages that flatter the establishment - which ensures that the relevant dancing troupe can get favours from the government.

The measures discussed above in connection with the smothering of the ECLs were not part of a comprehensive language policy. Rather they were part of statecraft by the nationalist politicians who used Swahili as one of the tools for gaining control over the instruments of state or, as they would put it, 'cementing' the nation.

Swahili also got considerable respectability to enable it to make some inroads into the domains of English. But on this front Swahili's fortunes have had a chequered career. In parliamentary debates Swahili essentially replaced English; but the bills have always been drafted and enacted in English even though the reading is of a **summary** version in Swahili. Similarly the rules and regulations that ministers draw up to facilitate the implementation of the laws are published in the government gazette in English. Government circulars are sometimes in English and sometimes in Swahili. Over the years there has been an attempt to provide Swahili translations to some key documents, notably the annual budget speeches, but not the acts of parliament. This spills over into the courts where proceedings are mainly in Swahili, but the records and the judgement are in English. So although the judge writes the judgement in English the public reading will be of a **summary** version in Swahili.

⁸ "Lugha za asili zitaendelea kutumika kama hazina na chanzo cha kukuza Kiswahili." Tanzania 1997:17

The relative strengths/constituencies of Swahili and English can be discerned in the division of turf. The nationalist mass movement associated with the independence struggle and socialism under TANU/ASP⁹, and later with the successor party, CCM¹⁰, has always been the bulwark for Swahili. Two examples of this base are more than symbolic of the Swahili movement. The first concerns the state controlled media. The party has published a daily paper, *Uhuru*, in Swahili since independence (known as *Mamboleo* and later *Ngurumo in pre-independence days*). The government published the *Nationalist* (later renamed *Daily News*). These were the only daily papers until the liberalization moves of the mid 1990s - one in Swahili from the party, and the other in English from the government. The radio was also state controlled and had a small English section with restricted hours. The Swahili service was an effective tool of propaganda and played a significant role in the consolidation of the language in mass political activity and was under the effective control of party activists. Even after the liberalization which saw the birth of private newspapers, radio stations and television channels, it was not until 2009 that the government launched a Swahili newspaper - *Habari Leo!*

The second example of the relative bases of the two languages comes from the constitutional process. The independence constitution was in English, of course. So was the 1965 Interim Constitution of the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar, establishing the single-party regime¹¹. By the time of the unification of the two parties in 1977 the party was strong enough to not only draft its constitution in Swahili, but also the same party cadres took charge of the process which put in place the 1977 constitution of the united republic in Swahili. The gains on this score still hold ground today as the nation is in the midst of a constitutional review process. An attempt in late 2011 to backtrack by presenting the constitutional review process bill in English was thrown out of parliament after a public outcry opposing, in part, the use of English. The revised bill was drafted in Swahili and passed by parliament in early 2012 (Tanzania 2012a). It is possible that if other laws were presented to the wider public for scrutiny as the constitutional review process bill was, some of these would draw enough public anger to force the government to write them in a language that the readers would understand.

As a workplace, government/public service is linguistically schizophrenic. Often the relevant agency has an English name following the legal instrument that established the

⁹ TANU - Tanganyika African National Union; ASP - Afro Shiraz Party.

¹⁰ CCM - Chama cha Mapinduzi (Revolution Party).

¹¹ In fact there were two parties, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) on the mainland and Afro-Shiraz Party (ASP) in Zanzibar until their unification into Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) in 1977.

In Pius Akumbu & Blasius Chiatoh (eds.) 2013. Language Policy in Africa: Perspectives for Cameroon. Kansas City: Miraclaire Publishing.

relevant entity (e.g. Tanzania Revenue Authority; Energy, Water, and Utilities Regulatory Authority; Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority; Tanzania Commission for Universities; Tanzania Ports Authority; Tanzania Electricity Supply Company; National Housing Corporation; Muhimbili National Hospital; Tanzania Roads Agency; National Institute for Medical Research; Capital Development Authority; National Social Security Fund). Most documents are in English and the people handling them struggle to understand them or to create new ones on old templates (see insert below from a government official issuing instructions regarding the 2012 census discussed earlier).

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Tarehe 25/08/2012

TO
THE ALL RESIDANCE AND
RENTER AT APARTMENT, HOTEL
AND OTHERS

REF: CENSER COUNTING PEOPLE 26 AUG 2012

Refer the above mentioned Subject


Remember the Government of Republic Union of Tanzania announce on 26.08.2012 is the day of counting people [censer] for all living visitors in Tanzania. This is legal order for Beural Statistics No: 1 of 2002.

Because for this day any people who sleep at your House, Hotel, or residence apartment on 26.08.2012 he or she must be accountable in this censer. Also all people must answer this Question from the Censer Officer.

ORDER

If your refuse to be countable or stop censer Officer to do the job of counting people from 26.08.2012 and 7 days more its is criminal case, than you will be charged in the court and fine with sentenced in prison for 6 month. Then please give all assistance Censer Officer what he or she need

Thanks in
advance.


Peter J. Mushi
Chairman
Local Government



N.B District Commissioner of Kinondoni

 Hon: Mstahiki Meya – Municipal Council

 Director of Kinondoni Municipal

 Hon: Ward Registative Chancellor of Msasani

 Ward Exacutive Officer of Msasani

In oral communication they speak Swahili; in meetings they will sigh with relief if allowed to use Swahili and discussions will be animated and long. If English has to be used the discussions will be dominated by a few people and any daring dissenter has to

apologize for using Swahili¹². The surprising thing is that in virtually all of these situations there are no explicit rules mandating the use of one language or the other; rather it is the established tradition and/or the perceived high status of English which puts Swahili on the defensive.

3.2 The University of Dar es Salaam - a case study

The University of Dar es Salaam forms an interesting case study in this regard. When the university was established in the 1960s (initially as part of the University of East Africa) there was a languages and linguistics department that catered for English, French, and Swahili¹³.

When the Faculty of Arts and Social Science was inaugurated in July, 1964, there was no Department of Kiswahili. Instead, there was the Department of Language and Linguistics which offered courses in linguistics, French and English. Occasionally, some Kiswahili courses were taught as options, particularly in the second or third year.

With the advent of the University of Dar es Salaam on July 1, 1970, the Department of Kiswahili was born. It was a deliberate decision by the government that the national University had to have a department which would cater for the national language. Hence the first intake was in July, 1970.

Maganga 1991: 7

A major reorganization followed the dismemberment of the University of East Africa with each of the constituent colleges of Makerere, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam becoming independent universities. While Makerere and Nairobi formed/maintained departments of African languages and literature separate from the departments of English (language & literature), Dar es Salaam was determined to be innovative. For

¹² A member of parliament claimed, during the parliamentary debate on the protocol to establish the Swahili Commission for the East African Community, that the reason for bad business contracts (e.g. in mining, procurement, management of enterprises) is failure of the government negotiators to understand the full intent of the contracts they commit the government to (MWANANCHI, November 2012). Would admission of ignorance ("with good intentions") be an acceptable defense in the face of a charge of corruption in these circumstances?

¹³ Kozi yangu ya Fasihi ya Kiswahili niliianzisha mwaka 1968 katika Idara ya Language & Linguistics wakati John Woodhead alikuwa mkuu wa Idara. Na mwaka 1969, Mohamed Abdulaziz nami tukaanzisha BA Swahili & Linguistics katika idara hiyo hiyo. Wakati huo, BA English & Linguistics na French & Linguistics zilikuwa zipo tayari (Farouk Topan in a message to Saida Yahya-Othman on 22 October 2012). [I started my course on Swahili Literature in 1968 in the department of Language and Linguistics at a time when John Woodhead was Head of Department. And in 1969 Mohamed Abdulaziz and I started the BA Swahili and Linguistics in that same department. At that time BA English & Linguistics, and French and Linguistics had already been established]

Swahili the university established a department, and also a research institute (Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili)¹⁴ - this being a carry-over from the colonial Inter-territorial Language Committee already mentioned. English was split into two branches: one branch formed the department of Literature while the other branch joined French to form a department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics (FLL).

The institutional structure of the university expressly refused to recognize the existence of ECLs. From 2001 a research project funded by Swedish SIDA has done considerable documentation work on the ECLs. The *Languages of Tanzania Project* is housed within the department of FLL. It has published over thirty books, mainly dictionaries, a few sketch grammars, collections of folk tales, four volumes of occasional papers in linguistics, and the *Atlasi ya Lugha za Tanzania*¹⁵. Debates within the project team have occasionally shown the tension of two perspectives about research on ECLs. The first perspective is that the central mission of this work is to document and, in this way, promote the ECLs for possible expanded domains of use by the respective communities:

...the project researchers framed the objectives in linguistics terms - language atlas production, documentation of grammar and vocabulary, and how these may inform linguistic theory, as well as broader considerations of preserving a people's cultural heritage. But someone at SIDA added something more appealing to a non-linguistic decision making audience, i.e. "It may also provide basic knowledge to issues related to school enrolment, extension services etc." In SIDA's analysis of "relations between research programmes and SIDA's development strategy" this project was slotted under two sectors: i) "Education - knowledge valuable to understanding of local languages and their relation to the education system"; ii) "Legal security - knowledge valuable to understanding of local languages and access to the legal system for the poor" (Rugemalira 2011:11-12).

The second perspective is that the ECLs are endangered and so need to be quickly documented and archived for posterity. Because researchers are racing against time they ought to start work on the most endangered, i.e. those that have the least number of speakers and are not being transmitted to offspring (Legere 2002). In this perspective there is no future for ECLs. As projects come and go, the flurry of activity on ECLs under this project may eventually die as it is unlikely that local resources could be made

¹⁴ The department of Kiswahili and the Institute of Kiswahili Research eventually merged in 2009 to form the Institute of Kiswahili Studies (Taasisi ya Taaluma za Kiswahili).

¹⁵ Tanzania language atlas.

available for continued research, and unthinkable that a teaching programme for these languages can ever develop at the University of Dar es Salaam.

An important appendage to the department of FLL is the Communication Skills Unit (CSU) created in 1978 in order to address the widely felt staff dissatisfaction with proficiency levels in English among the student population. As noted in Rugemalira (1990:105) the CSU was not a new type of outfit in African university settings. Rather it was a familiar organ fabricated in the hope that it could tackle a fundamental problem, viz. the use of a foreign language in the educational institutions of a nation. The architects of the CSU designed for credit 'study skills' courses for the majority of the student body and were at pains to avoid calling them remedial grammar courses. The remedial programme that they designed for a smaller 'at risk' segment was eventually phased out as the general student enrollment rose and attendance/diligence at a non-credit course became difficult to enforce. The CSU course was in effect the extension of English language courses to tertiary level, the authorities having noted that the teaching at the lower levels had been inadequate and ineffective. The theoretical assumption here is that more teaching (more time) will result in better results¹⁶.

The CSU model has been uncritically extended to all tertiary institutions (for certificate, diploma and degree courses) in the country given the preeminent position that the University of Dar es Salaam has historically occupied. It is arguable that the formula proposed by the CSU for tackling the 'language problem' was faulty from the beginning because it assumed that most students did not need to be taught English, but only study skills in order to adjust to the academic environment of the university. But even if they had designed a formula for teaching English they would have encountered several problems:

- i) Negative learner attitudes - why does anyone want to teach me more English when I did that in primary and secondary school? Surely there are other things to learn at university! This is the fate that befell the remedial grammar component of the CSU programme.
- ii) The fossilization factor - bad teaching and learning over the years has fixed a certain interlanguage in the learner so that no remedial work will undo the damage.
- iii) Cost effectiveness - the small classes of the late 1970s and 1980s (with students not exceeding 30 per group) were eventually replaced by large classes in the 1990s and the

¹⁶ Osbiston (1982) criticizes the adopted CSU model and suggests that since it was adopted in haste under pressure characteristic of aid projects, there was need to review it and focus efforts on i) servicing the felt communicative needs of a few students, and ii) conducting research into the root causes of the students' communication problems at the lower levels of the education system before university.

new millennium. Now a single lecturer typically has a class of up to 800 students (delivering three lectures per week) and cannot organize seminar groups for practice sessions. For the early student/instructor ratio to be maintained the university would have had to hire hundreds of lecturers just for this programme alone. In terms of cost it would be more effective if such resources were directed at the lower levels of school in order to make the language teaching there more effective.

The language problem has not gone away of course and the CSU dilemma¹⁷ has become even more acute. University authorities have been prodding CSU staff to constitute themselves into a centre or institute of communication studies in order to more effectively tackle the worsening problem. Msuya's (2011) doctoral study found that the CSU courses have had no appreciable impact on the English proficiency levels of the students in spite of the students' felt need for a course that would help in this regard. The feeling among CSU staff is that the university is not the place to tackle the English language problems of the students it admits. Two proposals have been advanced from staff: One is to set up a strict admission policy that would disqualify candidates without an adequate proficiency in English. The mere mention of this would raise hell from the population - that a Tanzanian can be denied admission to a university education because of failing an English examination, and this, 50 years after independence! The alternative is to set up a full year of English study before embarking on university courses - just in the same way as students going to China or Russia spend a year studying the language of the country before they start working on their degree courses. This alternative may not be politically explosive, but its cost implications would call for a re-planning of the ELT regime in general. It might, for instance, require that the teaching of English start later - in secondary school - and so concentrate the resources on a smaller front for effect.

The Institute of Kiswahili Studies (IKS) has a respectable track record of research and teaching and has been a pioneer in the use of Swahili as LOI in a university context. For many years this was confined to the undergraduate level. In 2009 however the use of Kiswahili in the M.A. programme - for teaching and writing the dissertation - was approved by the university senate.

From the administrative angle the experience of the IKS raises issues of language attitudes within academia. As would be expected IKS has been on the forefront to promote the use of Swahili in university administration and has had to struggle to make the point that they have a right to prepare meeting documents in Swahili and speak the

¹⁷ This dilemma is captured by Msuya (2011:11) in these words: "There are ... contending views among academicians about what communication skills courses seek to achieve... academic literacy, ... [or to improve] students' poor level of general proficiency in English language"

language in university meetings. Recently the senate rejected the proposal for establishing a taught PhD programme from the institute and directed, among other matters, that the authors provide a glossary for the benefit of senate members who do not understand what they regard as difficult Swahili vocabulary. The feeling of the Institute Director was that this is unfairly frustrating their efforts; that what the honorable senators find incomprehensible is standard technical terminology in linguistics and literature, noting that he, as a language specialist, does not demand that documents from the Engineering and Sciences departments provide a glossary for their own technical terms¹⁸.

Like other public organizations, the university does not have explicit rules¹⁹ on what languages to use but relies on tradition or established practice - which is the inherited British university system run in English. After Swahili was declared a national/official language it found its way into some of the official organs of the university. The most prominent is the Workers' Council - a rather superfluous organ imposed on public organizations during the populist/socialist phase of single party rule. With many members being non-academic (administrative) staff it was necessary that it conduct its business in Swahili rather than English. Similarly there is a separate committee for recruitment and promotion of academic as opposed to administrative staff; the former conducts its business in English while the latter works in Swahili. Accordingly documents that come to the Disciplinary Committee may be in English or Swahili depending on the type of staff member being put on the defensive. Most other university organs (academic departments, colleges and schools, University Senate, and University Council) normally conduct their business in English and the institutional message is very clear, that Swahili is for the lower ranks of the university staff.

On the whole then, government business is transacted and recorded in English. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s pro-Swahili elements in government did attempt to enforce the use of the language in government communication these elements became noticeably weaker day by day from 1980s. Legere (2010) notes an increasing tendency on the part of the elite (including members of parliament) to code switch from Swahili into English or to just throw an English word into one's speech in order to show off. The websites of many government and parastatal agencies use only English and do not attempt to address the audience that does not understand English.

3.3 The National Swahili Council

¹⁸ Dr. Aldin Mutembei, personal communication.

¹⁹ Council resolution in the 1960s apparently declared English the language of university affairs (Dr. Henry Muzale, personal communication)

The pre-eminent institution established by the government for promoting Swahili is the National Swahili Council - better known by its Swahili acronym, BAKITA²⁰ - established by an act of parliament in 1967. As a language academy conceived in the purist tradition the mandate of such an organ is problematic. As an administrative arm of government for formulating and implementing language policy, the potential impact is unlimited. Viewed as a research, development and publishing body, it would be difficult to distinguish it from the university institute already discussed.

BAKITA does try to play the role of language police as guardian of the purity of the Swahili language²¹. Where it may be able to get in the way of a writer or publisher involves the publication of school materials if these must seek approval from the Ministry of Education. Approval cannot be granted before BAKITA is satisfied with the Swahili standards in the relevant materials. But the council does not have any influence on any other materials that can be published and sold without government approval - general books, novels, newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, etc. It would be unfortunate if BAKITA were to claim power to censor/edit such works. It would probably throw away more than half of the materials coming out of these channels, including the ever changing slang forms in the tabloids and FM radio talk shows. Could they regulate individual performance by, for example, banning code-switching in public speaking - e.g. parliament, radio and TV broadcasting? If they could, would it be legitimate use of government powers?

BAKITA might want to follow the lead of its French counterpart²² in an aggressive regulation campaign regarding the domains of use of the national language. One possible area to tackle could be the language of product labels and packaging, as well as product manuals. A regulation that required all products produced locally for the domestic market to use Swahili or both Swahili and English would have as its rationale the protection of consumers by providing instructions in a comprehensible language. This could then be extended gradually to also cover imported products. If this got to cover IT hardware and software it would be a forward looking measure with tremendous potential in an area where local talent is considerably shackled by beliefs about the inadequacy of Swahili (cf. Halvorsen 2010:133)²³. Similar regulatory activism

²⁰ Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa.

²¹ "Kuhimiza matumizi fasaha ya lugha ya Kiswahili na kuzuia upotoshaji wake" [To encourage the correct use of Swahili and curb its corruption] www.bakita.go.tz

²² Academie Francaise

²³ "The production of Kiswahili academic and scholarly internet content is of great importance. It is argued, however, that participation through Kiswahili in the ICT era is inhibited and undermined by remnants of the colonial system, including the language policy" (Halvorsen 2010:133)

might cover the government departments and parastatal organizations that produce documents in English only; this could then be extended to tackle private organizations/companies that work only in English, including the business names which are predominantly in English. A regulation could force them to adopt a bilingual policy. The council has not attempted to take on this regulatory role yet.

The research and development role has been most articulated in the activities of the council probably because of the collaboration and influence of the academics from the University of Dar es Salaam Institute of Kiswahili Studies. Their virtually permanent association with BAKITA as researchers, governing board members, chairpersons, and even currently one of them as executive secretary of BAKITA, has blurred the line between the functions of the council and the institute. While the council was very active in the coining of technical terms in the 1970s and 1980s, it is the university institute that has been consistent in producing dictionaries of all types (monolingual, bilingual, subject specific), as well as textbooks and general books. Indeed it is arguable that BAKITA was superfluous from the very beginning; that the language research and development functions could and have been well taken care of by the academic institute at the university, while the regulatory role could have been performed by a competent and willing body of civil servants in the appropriate ministry²⁴.

4 The language of instruction (LOI) debate

In no other sector has language policy and planning been most agonizingly felt and contested than in education. And yet for some people it would appear that there has not been [perhaps there cannot be] a proper debate because the contestants do not have a common perception of what the issues are, or what the national education agenda should be.

The status quo on LOI is that in public schools, Swahili is used from nursery school to Primary Seven. Then there is a switch to English from Secondary One through University. In a few private primary schools (catering for less than 2% of the total primary school enrollment) English is used right from nursery school. The Swahili gain into English turf got established in the early post-independence years but is now in serious danger of being reversed. Some of the arguments or argument gaps in this debate, and the related decisions (or lack thereof) are quite astonishing. For instance, Cripier and & Dodd (1984) found that English was no longer an effective LOI; but they went on to recommend that the government issue an unambiguous circular reaffirming the continued use of English as LOI, in return for British aid. A similar consultancy report tied to foreign aid trod the same path as Cripier & Dodd more than twenty years

²⁴ There have always been a director of culture and desk officers in charge of language matters in government structure.

later: the consultants recommended the reintroduction of English as LOI in Zanzibar primary schools even though they acknowledged the low levels of proficiency in English²⁵. And on the mainland, the drafter of the revised Education and Training Policy (Tanzania 2009) may have been taking dictation from those consultants in Zanzibar, except where he/she ignores research findings on English proficiency levels in the school system:

Various researches have shown that a person understands subject content well if learning is done in a language they understand well, and even better if it is in the first language. Experience from a greater part of the world shows that different communities/societies use their own languages to get knowledge and various skills and that foreign languages are taught for communication purposes. Students at the secondary school level master Swahili and English better than other languages. In order to enable the students to understand various concepts well the languages which are most commonly used in the country shall be used in accessing knowledge and various skills in school.

Objective: to consolidate the use of Swahili and English in order to enable students to learn efficiently and fulfill social needs.

Statement: The LOI at secondary school level shall be English. (Tanzania 2009, section 5.6.3; my translation)

The author of this passage knows that it is not true that Tanzanian students have a good command of English. So why does he/she disregard, even twist, the truth? And even if it were true that the learners have a good command of both Swahili and English, why does the policy statement pick out only English as LOI, immediately after conceding the need to use "languages that are most commonly used in the country."

The facts regarding the state of English in Tanzanian schools are quite clear - that proficiency levels are too low for the language to function as an effective language of instruction (Mlama & Materu 1978; Criper & Dodd 1984; Roy-Campbell & Qorro 1997; Rubagumya et al. 1999, Qorro 2008²⁶). From this observation many people have argued that it makes pedagogical sense to use a language that both learners and teachers have better mastery of, which happens to be Swahili. In opposition to this a strong English

²⁵ See the discussion in Brock-Utne (2012:14-15) of the recommendations of the MoEVT/University of Bristol report.

²⁶ Qorro 2008 provides an excellent review of the literature on this subject in Tanzania.

lobby has managed to keep English as LOI and even regain some lost ground for the language.

There are three broad beliefs that constitute the foundation of the English camp so that genuine discussion in favour of Swahili is impeded. The first is the belief that English is *the* international language of science and technology, that all one needs in order to access that science is to learn English; that to attempt to teach and do science using other languages is like re-inventing the wheel since English is 'already there'²⁷. It follows from this basic ideological stance that knowledge of English is an essential (the most important) component of being educated. A curriculum without English is inconceivable.

The second belief is that the best way to teach and learn English is by making the language the medium of teaching all other subjects in school. Relegating the language to the status of mere subject will result in no mastery and worse still it will lead to the wiping out of the language from the country (which God forbid) because there will be no incentive for students to make an effort to learn it.

The third belief revolves around the neo-liberal agenda of promoting a 'free market' for goods and services globally. English is seen as a good that is freely available for pick-up at the market prices then prevailing. The government is prodded to open up the primary school market [but not the post-primary levels] further so that both private and public schools can choose to use English as LOI. In this regard an attempt by the Dar es Salaam City authorities to introduce English as LOI in the city's schools was blocked by central government in 1998²⁸. But ten years later the unrelenting prodding of the

²⁷ Clive Criper, personal communication, 1984.

²⁸ cf. Rugemalira 2001 : "In the current context, the new private primary schools seem to be lending weight to the pro-English camp. Available information indicates that no private school that relies on fees can survive unless it uses English as the medium of instruction. Parents will simply not send their children to a Swahili medium private school. They generally will not tolerate any suggestions regarding code-mixing within the school, maintaining that any room allowed for use of Kiswahili will destroy the 'fledgling efforts at mastering English'.

There are three dangers in this development. The first is that, alongside cost, the language of school will increasingly become a segregating factor in society, which will undermine the foundations of a cohesive nation. This will become more so if quality education, whether by coincidence or design, is seen to be associated with English medium schools. The second danger is that because of the disproportionate significance attached, by society, to mastery of the English language, wider educational objectives might be sacrificed as schools scramble to demonstrate to anxious parents how fast they can get their pupils to speak English fluently. This fear is not without foundation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents' comments about the quality of the new schools invariably assign special weight to achievement in the English language. The third danger is that the government may seek a shortcut to the problems besetting the education sector by declaring English the medium of instruction from the primary school level. This would seem to give every school child an equal opportunity to *learn* English while at

English forces was beginning to produce results. As already noted, the Zanzibar authorities decided to reinstate English as LOI for some subjects starting with fifth grade in government schools, but implementation of this decision has apparently been delayed for lack of teachers. And Mainland Tanzania is poised to follow suit (Brock-Utne 2012:14-16)²⁹.

Plans and policies regarding what languages to teach in the schools, and when, have understandably been a reflection of the LOI issue. Swahili, besides being the LOI in primary school, is also a compulsory subject up to Secondary Four level. It forms one of the subjects in the advanced level combinations and there is now a degree in Swahili at the universities of Dar es Salaam and Dodoma. The policies in place do not acknowledge the problems that children face in their first few years of schooling since the majority do not have Swahili as their home language. Research has shown that a significant section of the pupil population does experience transition problems in learning in a language that is not spoken at home³⁰. Indeed, as already noted, school

the same time deflecting public attention from the urgent need to make substantial investment in education. A few years back the Dar es Salaam City Commission attempted to do just that - reintroducing English as the language of instruction in the city's schools. At that time the move was blocked from the Ministry of Education (EAST AFRICAN 1998)".

²⁹ The Minister for Education and Vocational Training has been quoted as saying that a return to English as LOI in government primary schools is imminent:

The government is planning to introduce English as a medium of instruction from Standard Three in a bid to raise the confidence of Tanzanian job seekers in the East African common market. Education and Vocational Training minister Shukuru Kawambwa said recently the poor background in English language made Tanzanians fear East African job market. 'Tanzanian education is not inferior as people think. The problem we face is poor background in English language, we are going to make sure that in three years English will be the medium of instruction', said the minister. *The Citizen*, 21 October 2010

³⁰ For instance, Mapunda (2010:210) found that children in rural schools where Swahili is not the community language were placed at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in schools where Swahili was the children's home language. In the rural schools "teachers stigmatize responses provided in the ECL. This stigma impacts pupils negatively as most decide not to attempt (withdrawal from participating). This in the long run is likely to have the effect of making learners look down upon their own cultural values in favour of the school's.... Similarly, because of the policy directives, teachers unquestioningly use only Kiswahili even when pupils cannot make any significant progress. This trivializes and or inhibits the learning process."

practices proscribe the use of the ECL even in non-classroom activities³¹. But Swahili is a real second language in Tanzanian communities that do not have it as first/mother tongue, and most people, particularly those who complete primary school, do develop a respectable level of receptive knowledge. Still it is arguable that deficiencies in the education system (poor teaching, lack of facilities and materials, bad curriculum emphasis e.g. the absence of an articulated reading programme) are responsible for poor levels in Swahili proficiency. For instance, a report by a non-governmental organization claimed that Kenyan pupils outperformed their Tanzanian counterparts in Swahili literacy tasks (cf. Uwezo 2011).

When to start teaching English in school has been changing, back and forth. The table below provides a summary of the constant changes (Qorro 2012:52-4).

Year	English as subject	English as LOI	Remarks
1920	Primary Five	Primary Seven	Beginning of British rule. School system: years 1-4 lower primary; 5-8 middle /upper primary school.
1958	Primary Three		'The earlier the better' argument was a winner
1960		Primary Five	
1965		Secondary One	Swahili declared LOI for nursery & primary school, teacher training and adult literacy campaign. School system: 7 years for primary school
1970	Primary One		
1980	Primary Three		
1995	Nursery School		"Kiswahili and English shall be compulsory subjects for all students from pre-primary to Ordinary Level secondary education." MOEC 1995:52 Liberalization re-opened the door for

³¹ In English medium schools ECLs and Swahili are prohibited by 'Speak English' rules and humiliating sanctions are imposed as part of school quality assurance policies.

			<i>private</i> English medium pre-primary and primary schools.
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Table 1: ELT and English as LOI swings in the Tanzanian curriculum

The general trend apparent in the table above is the progressive push of ELT to the very early years of school. It would be interesting to study the comparative efficiency of the two pedagogical positions: one, that learners should acquire an unshakable foundation of literacy in the first (one) language before being introduced to literacy in another language, as opposed to two, that all other factors remaining equal, the simultaneous introduction of literacy skills in different languages is unproblematic³². Of course in the Tanzanian case, all factors are not equal; in particular for most urban learners, oral proficiency in Swahili is nearly perfect at ages 4-6, while it is nil in English. For most rural children proficiency in Swahili is nil when they enter school.

On what other languages to incorporate in the school curriculum, there has been very little initiative. The introduction of French at the university and a few secondary schools in the 1960s was driven by foreign policy concerns. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs needed diplomatic personnel who would be able to use French. For many years the degree programme with French at the University of Dar es Salaam was combined with either teaching or international relations. The programme has remained extremely small because the recruitment base consists of only a few secondary schools. Even the recent introduction of a French option in the primary school curriculum may not change the situation soon partly because there are very few teachers, and partly because Tanzania is a keenly contested anglophone backyard³³.

Arabic is on the Zanzibar school curriculum but it is not a prominent subject, being taught in only a few schools. The attempt to introduce Spanish did not last may be because it was based on Cuban assistance. Chinese is yet to get an entry into the university system despite the aggressive moves of Chinese institutions. In general there has not been any serious planning for a place for several foreign languages in the school curriculum. Viewed in the wider context, this is a general planning failure partly caused by the manpower approach to educational planning - only educate enough people to fill the positions available in the formal economy (all of which was state controlled until the liberalization of the 1990s).

³² See Rugemalira (2005) for a discussion of this issue.

³³ In neighbouring Rwanda, which together with Burundi joined the East African Community in 2007, French has lost its privileged position after English was declared the main official language in 2008 (Rosendal 2011). The ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) is controlled by former refugees who grew up in Tanzania and Uganda and were educated in the English system in those countries.

Attitudes and policies regarding bilingualism and code-switching in the education system are steeped in the purist, 'monolingualism good bilingualism bad' tradition. This has often stood in the way of ingenious approaches to the language question in the curriculum. So even though researchers (Mlama & Materu 1978, Criper & Dodd 1984, Brock-Utne 2004) have noted that any thread of learning still available in the schools is attributable to the illegal use of Swahili - from secondary to tertiary levels, official policies/regulations still preach the complete separation of the two languages. A correct answer in an examination will not be marked at all if it is written in Swahili, and any code-switching will be penalized. Methods that would employ Swahili in explaining/giving instructions in an English language lesson are prohibited. Yet this is standard practice in many foreign language learning textbooks.

Lwaitama and Rugemalira (1990:38) note a speculation that the reluctance on the part of government to allow the use of Swahili as LOI might be due to the fear that "a switch to Kiswahili would remove a formidable barrier to secondary education and would thus open the floodgates for universal secondary education, a demand the government would not be able to meet". By 2006 the floodgates could not be firmly held in position any longer: the politicians abandoned the incremental plans of the education ministry bureaucrats and ordered the establishment of a secondary school in every ward. Table 1 shows the dramatic contrast between the 1980s dismal transition rates from primary to secondary school with the expansions of the new millennium. In the first five years of the eighties decade, a total of less than 100,000 students were admitted into secondary school, in a country with a population of more than twenty million³⁴ at the time. Twenty years later the transition rate was over 20%, having risen from an average of 4%; but the absolute figures were still incredibly low. In 2002, when the population was counted at 35 million, only 107,282 students got admission into secondary school (both public and private). The admission figure of 2004 is more than double the 2002 figure. The annual admissions from 2006 to 2009 are more than four times the 2002 figure, and about 54% of the primary seven class.

Year	Primary Seven Leavers	Secondary One Intake	Percentage
1981-1985	2311003	99709	4.3
1986	380096	27430	7.2

³⁴ Population census figures for 1978 and 1988 were 17 million and 23 million respectively.

2000	389746	84709	21.7
2001	444903	99752	22.4
2002	493504	107282	21.7
2003	490018	147490	30.1
2004	499241	180239	36.1
2005	493946	243359	49.3
2006	664263	448448	67.5
2007	773553	438901	56.7
2008	1017865	524784	51.6
2009	999070	438827	43.9

Table 1: Primary to Secondary School Transition Rates (Source: Tanzania 2010a)

The expansions in the primary school level had to spill over into the secondary level: "There has been an increase in total enrolment (Form 1- 6) by 143% from 675,672 students in 2006 to 1,638,699 pupils in 2010" (Tanzania 2010a, Table 4.1).

But this partial and sudden opening of the floodgates into secondary education created another challenge. Most of these new ward schools have no facilities or personnel - the most visible symbol is a building, with inadequate teachers, furniture, books, and other materials. The massive failure rates in the Secondary Four examinations in 2011 were shocking but not unexpected as the trend shows a declining performance over the past five years³⁵. The shock and frustration of parents and students fed into an increasing sense of class divisions: wealthier families have access to good quality private primary and secondary schools, with English as LOI right from kindergarten; the poor majority are stuck in a mediocre government system that even those who run it do not believe in.

The metaphor of the floodgates is meant to focus attention on an important policy issue, viz. whether mass education can be effective through a foreign language. Trappes-Lomax (1990) answered this question in the negative, suggesting that it might be too costly to muster the requisite resources, and not practicable because of certain attitudes

³⁵ The percentage of candidates scoring in the passing divisions I-III has declined every year from 2007 to 2011 (36.6, 27.31, 17.91, 11.59, 10.05). See Tanzania 2012b.

and habits that hinder the smooth mastery of any foreign language. To appreciate the seriousness of the issue, consider the rates of success of learning foreign languages even in the most widely acclaimed cases of the Nordic countries. It is arguable that the majority of the population that does not go beyond the secondary school (perhaps even some of those who go to university) does not have mastery of a foreign language sufficient for the individual to pursue studies of other subjects in that foreign language. Or imagine this scenario: A British government report noted that many pupils aged 14 to 16 "cannot use foreign languages independently and spontaneously and lack the confidence to write or speak fluently at any length". In one in eight schools inspected in 2002-3 achievement was "unsatisfactory" in this area (BBC 2004). If a consultant from France or Germany, or even a British consultant or politician, were to suggest that the best way to make British children learn French effectively is to use French in teaching all subjects in the entire school system, people might think the consultant was only making a joke. In the USA it is not the case that students, even at high school level have mastery over a foreign language and can use it to learn subject content in college. In short, the point of the argument is that low achievement rates in the English language in the Tanzanian school system are not merely a result of incompetent teachers or evidence of declining standards in education: in *any* foreign language learning programme there are individual and system factors that will constrain the achievement rates.

There are two lines that the government appears to be trying out as a palliative: the first is to extend English as LOI to the public primary schools and in this way soothe the poor in the belief that now their children can compete on an equal footing because they have access to English³⁶. A draft revised version of the Education and Training Policy - ETP (Tanzania 2009) documents this line of attack. Table 2 presents the 1995 version parallel to the 2009 revisions (translation of the 2009 version from the Swahili original is mine).

Education and Training Policy 1995		Education and Training Policy 2009 (draft 1)	
Section	Statement	Section	Statement

³⁶ The parallel Srilanka experience is really close: with independence (1940s) progressive policies brought in the use of native languages (Tamil and Sinhala) in all schools and public funding for the whole system, to replace the pre-independence dual system of private English medium schools and public and rural local language schools. Liberalization of the economy around 2002 re-introduced the dual system both in medium and ownership. English as LOI begins at grade 6; ... the public schools are free but underfunded; schools may choose English as LOI; it is argued that this move will serve equity by making the language available to the poor in the 'free' government schools (Lindberg & Narman 2005:320)

5.2.3	The medium of instruction in pre-primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject.	5.4.1	The languages of instruction in pre-primary schools shall be Kiswahili and English. Kiswahili and English shall be taught as subjects.
5.3.7	The medium of instruction in primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject.	5.5.2	The languages of instruction at primary school level shall be Kiswahili and English.
5.4.9	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.	5.6.3	The language of instruction at secondary school level shall be English.

Table 2: ETP revisions in LOI policy

Note that the revisions open the door for a return of English as LOI in the lower levels but keep the door firmly closed against Swahili to also become LOI at secondary school level. Of course the public will soon realize that there are no teachers to bring this English to the masses. At the time of writing (November 2012) there are unconfirmed reports that the attempts to push English as LOI further down the education system is being halted for now and the revised Education and Training Policy will reflect the 1995 position on this issue³⁷.

The second line of government action is an attempt to fix fees in the private schools so that more poor people can afford their services³⁸. Here too if the schools are starved of necessary resources quality cannot be guaranteed and there will not be any difference with the public schools. Also the private education section is much smaller than the public one; at the primary level it caters for under 2% of the total primary school

³⁷ Martha Qorro, personal communication.

³⁸ Some people have even suggested that the private English medium schools should be abolished as a way of leveling the field. And if Kiswahili becomes LOI at secondary level then there should not be room for English as LOI schools at all. For such people the central question is not LOI (and the debate is irrelevant), it is the class divisions between rich and poor.

enrolment. The 2010 enrolment in non-government primary schools was 152,279 out of a grand total of 8,419,305. At the secondary level the private share was 14% in 2010 (with 237,369 students in private schools out of a total of 1,638,699).

5 Conclusion: the present and the future

The state, by its nature, is inimical to individual freedoms and differences and is bent on imposing uniformity and central control of the citizens in the most efficient manner. From this perspective, multilingualism is bad. Yet the true democratic ethos requires the accommodation of differences rather than a simple dictatorship of the majority, let alone the imposition of the wishes of a powerful minority. In this perspective the suppression of the ECLs in Tanzania is as inexcusable as the continued holding back of Swahili in the face of English.

Still, even linguists may make language description and plan language development by suppressing some speech varieties in the process. The appropriate term is unification/harmonization of dialects and orthographies of course³⁹. In the Tanzanian case the influence of Swahili on conventions for writing the ECLs has been considerable. Will future generations - maybe five hundred years hence - be grateful to Nyerere and his followers for promoting Kiswahili at the expense of the ECLs?⁴⁰ Even in the sphere of religion where direct government intervention is limited, there have been clear signals of the decline of ECL use. The SIL laments the non-use of religious literature in the ECLs even where such literature is available in abundance⁴¹.

In the 1980s pro-Swahili activists and scholars could comfortably state that it was a matter of time before Swahili would be declared the LOI in the Tanzanian school system: Lwaitama & Rugemalira 1990:41 refer to "the inevitable change of media."⁴² There was a feeling, even among pro-English stalwarts, that Swahili was an unstoppable avalanche sweeping over the face of Tanzania in a similar manner that

³⁹ For a good example see the current initiative by CASAS at unification of orthographic conventions of African languages (Prah 2002).

⁴⁰ Note how the descendants of the British empire builders are enjoying the fruits of their ancestors' labours that put English on a pedestal as the language of international politics, science and technology.

⁴¹ "There are many languages in Uganda and Tanzania with Scriptures available in them, but it is a challenge to discern exactly why they are not being used" (Liz Thomson of SIL, personal communication 2010).

⁴² The Presidential Commission on Education had proposed 1985 as the year to start the change in Secondary One and that would proceed up annually and reach the university with the 1992 intake (Tanzania 1982).

English was sweeping over the face of the planet⁴³. Twenty years later Brock-Utne (2010: 92, 96) expressed similar optimism in spite of the evidence tilting heavily in favour of English. What is the basis for such optimism? Brock-Utne pins her hopes on the possibility of a few currently marginal thinkers gathering momentum and becoming sufficiently influential to have their views accepted as common knowledge - even when experience has amply demonstrated that academics have had no influence on the decisions regarding LOI as their research findings have been largely disregarded.

... apart from the political elite and international donor agencies such as the British Council and the World Bank, other stakeholders in the LOI policy-making process have had limited influence on the articulation and implementation of existing LOI policies (Galabawa, 2004:35)

My involvement at language policy level for over a decade and a half has taught me that technical experts can try to influence the process, but their success really depends on the amount of influence they have on the political actors. This is indeed a sobering thought for academics who might think that their research findings are so self-evident that political actors do not need to be persuaded to adopt them (Desai, 2006:110)

Such optimism needs to be tempered with an appropriate time-frame. In the short and medium term - over a period of up to fifty years, it may be difficult to envision the final triumph of Swahili over its nemesis. In the long term, (maybe over a century or two), Swahili may eventually become the national language it is destined to be and permeate every domain of use in Tanzanian society. Many of the opponents of Swahili as LOI - and African languages in general - would be prepared to live with that prognosis comfortably, saying the time is not ripe, the languages are not ready. A comparison can easily be made with the rise of English and the other European languages: that for them to emerge from under the dominance of Latin it took several centuries *and* structural changes in the economies and politics, including a major religious revolt that gave rise to the protestant churches!⁴⁴

The European comparison is disconcerting because there is no guarantee that the course of development of Tanzania's economy and political fortunes will strengthen Swahili, let alone the other ECLs. If the political economy continues to be a negligible appendage

⁴³ This feeling is captured in Nyerere's statement that "Kiingereza ni Kiswahili cha dunia" [English is the Swahili of the world] (*Mzalendo* October 1984).

⁴⁴ The translation of the bible from Latin into German and English by the protestant rebels was a significant component of the structural revolution that would wring power from a few religious and secular aristocrats and into the hands of a widening merchant and craftsman populace.

of the global economy under the control of a few powerful multinational organizations and superpowers (super-economies) then Swahili may not have a chance to become a language of power⁴⁵. In this regard it is not clear that the pro-Swahili forces will be able to get a strong language clause empowering Swahili entrenched in the new constitution now being formulated. And even if such a clause is successfully negotiated it would not guarantee a bright future for the language, if the South African experience is anything to go by.

⁴⁵ The 1980s vision of the World Bank required the Third World to focus its resources to primary education and leave tertiary education to economies that have a comparative advantage in providing it. This model is now bearing fruit to those with comparative advantage indeed: "...the collapse of the Indian university system has turned countries like Australia into sellers of tertiary education for overseas students from privileged backgrounds of India" (Ribeiro 2010:43). In China and Russia English medium universities are setting up shop to cash in on the income from those, local and foreign, that are able to pay.

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