Exclusion through Language: A Reflection on Classroom Discourse in Tanzanian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This paper discusses classroom discourse in Tanzanian secondary schools in the light of English as the medium of instruction. There are several factors influencing classroom interaction in Tanzania. This paper will be confined to the medium of instruction as the prime factor. Other factors will, however, be highlighted. The use of English as the medium of instruction in Tanzania secondary school is a barrier to learning and in fostering classroom interaction. The language of instruction barrier contributes to a majority of students being excluded in classroom dialogue. Drawing upon the ideas of various theorists on classroom discourse and learning and from findings of recent studies, it is recommended that the use of a familiar language such as Kiswahili will promote effective teaching and learning and maximize classroom interaction. In addition, the need to improve learning conditions is highlighted so as to achieve the goal of effective classroom interaction. Suggestions are also given for strategies that can be used to promote interactive learning.

Introduction

Currently, English is the medium of instruction (MOI) at secondary school level and the majority of instructional media and pedagogical materials available at this level are also written in English. However, English remains a foreign language and is not commonly used for daily communication. In an environment where English is not used, yet remains the MOI, it may be expected that learners and teachers alike will encounter enormous difficulties in using the language with adequate proficiency. This is certainly the case in Tanzanian secondary schools. Gee (1992) contends it is in language that the business of schooling is still primarily accomplished, whether that be spoken or written. If the learner is completely handicapped in the language of instruction, then learning will not take place at all as the educator and the learner will not be communicating. Therefore, learning through using the language that students know very well as the MOI is most effective. The role of language in learning cannot be taken for

granted as it is in learning and using language that students and teachers enter into and participate in the ongoing dialogue of meaning- making in the classroom. This is the focus of this paper which reports on the findings of a study conducted to find out whether the MOI used has any impact on classroom discourse.

Teaching and learning in the Tanzanian context

Galabawa (2000) has summarized studies on classroom practices in Tanzania. These studies observe the following practices most frequently used in classrooms.

> There seems to be time constraints in teaching and learning; there is a lack of teaching and learning materials; little time is devoted to students' work; the medium of instruction is difficult and hence limits oral and written communication; and learning seems to be examination driven.

The curriculum and textbooks developed by the Institute of Education in Tanzania were and continue to be traditional and content laden. This is also noted in the Education and Training Policy of MoEC (1995) where it is stated that the curriculum in Tanzania continues to be subject-centred and does not respond easily to ever-changing socio-economic developments. Frequent additions of new content to the curriculum overload it. As a result teachers are under pressure to cover the material in the syllabus rather than to uncover what is important for the students. In order to achieve secondary education objectives, it is suggested in the Education and Training policy document that the Tanzania Institute of Education shall: 'Merge theory and practice and the general applications in the ordinary level secondary school curriculum' (MoEC, 1995, p.56).

However, very little is being done to this effect. Secondary education does not adequately meet the learning needs of students. The instructional process does not enable students to master both vocational and cognitive skills at the end of the cycle. Due to these factors, instruction in a majority of classrooms in Tanzania and in nearly all subjects reflects a direct transmission model, the 'talk-and-chalk' style of classroom interaction, where the teachers lecture and students passively copy notes. The students are seen as empty vessels and only receive, are filled with and store the deposits of knowledge. The learners receive knowledge in an uncritical one-way transfer. In this case, students do not develop critical consciousness.

Language policy and Practice in Tanzanian Secondary schools

At least two policy documents relating to language were released in the 1990's. In 1995, the then Ministry of Education and Culture issued the *Education and Training* policy in Tanzania*,* which stated that:

> The medium of instruction in pre-primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject. The medium of instruction in primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject. 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 (MoEC 1995, pp 35- 45).

This is the policy that is officially practised in secondary schools in Tanzania despite the fact that a cultural policy (*Sera ya Utamaduni*) was issued in 1997 in favour of Kiswahili (MoEC, 1997)**.**

There is a medium disconnection factor for students in Tanzania as they join secondary education and begin learning in English as another new language of instruction. Kiswahili is used as the MOI in pre-primary and primary education. It is used for most of the fundamental knowledge that the majority of Tanzanians acquire. English, the MOI at the secondary level, does not lead to the consolidation of the ideas, knowledge, skills and principles acquired at primary level. It is stated in MoEC (1995) that learners who complete primary school are expected to have adequately mastered English to be able to cope with it as the MOI throughout secondary school. This is, however, not the case and students proceed in education with deficient skills in the MOI. The disconnection factor is proliferated as there is no link between the language used at home and the MOI used at school for the majority of the students.

Theoretical Aspects to consider in Classroom Discourse

Tanzanian secondary schools have followed the traditional teacher-centred lecture method, whereby the teacher dominates and serves as the centre of knowledge, directing the learning process. There is a need to develop critical consciousness through student dialogue (Freire 1970). Learning is supposed to be interactive and cooperative so that students do a lot of discussing and writing instead of listening to teacher talk. This type of learning highlights the current paradigm shift that is being advocated for secondary education in Tanzania, whereby education is supposed

to be student centred rather than teacher centred. Hence, the basic format for the class is supposed to be based on dialogue around problems posed by the teacher and students. In the same accord, as far as instruction is concerned, in Bruner's (2002) view, the instructor should encourage students to discover principles by themselves. The instructor and students should engage in active dialogue (Socratic learning). Active dialogue and student centred learning in Tanzanian secondary schools may not be achieved because of the MOI that does not foster dialogue but is a barrier to dialogue and thus does not promote student learning.

Moreover Freire (1970) suggests that, rather than solving problems for learners, the teacher should pose problems and engage students in dialogue and critical reflection, a process he calls conscientisation. Hence, the classroom becomes the context in which students analyze their reality for the purpose of participating in its transformation. Knowledge rather than being transmitted from teacher to student is collaboratively constructed involving the transformation of traditional teacher-student roles.

As has already been highlighted, there seems to be very little active engagement of students and teachers in participatory activities and probing discussions in secondary classrooms in Tanzania. Mercer (1995) however stresses that learners need to get involved with new knowledge in order to consolidate their own understanding, but this cannot be done just through listening to information being presented clearly or logically by an expert. They will almost certainly need to try to use it themselves, under different conditions, if they are to make the knowledge their own.

In his discussion on the search for knowledge Wells (2002) declares that the activity of knowing constitutes, in its theoretical mode at least, the process of justifying beliefs through reasoning, conjecturing, evaluating evidence and considering counter arguments. Information can be accumulated but knowledge and understanding are only generated by working with information, selecting from it, organizing it, and arguing for its relevance. Thus, it is suggested that when planning educational opportunities for the construction of knowledge it is important to take account of the fact that knowledge is a purposeful action within a cultural framework and also

that it is inherently social in its motivation and interactional in its orientation. Another theorist in this regard is Vygostsky (1978), who asserts that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. His theory of learning emphasises that full cognitive development requires social interaction. The teacher, working with the school child on a given question, explains, informs, inquires, corrects, and forces the child himself to explain. The role of adult guidance and assistance is in enabling the child, in collaboration with more expert others, to do what he or she is not yet able to do alone.

The significance of Language in classroom discourse

Classroom dialogue through an understandable language has a significant role to play in learning. It is through interactions with each other that teachers and students work together to create intellectual and practical activities that shape both the form and content of the target subject as well as the processes and outcomes of individual development. The language that mediates interaction in the teaching and learning process is very important for both the teacher and the learner. They have to be competent in it otherwise the teaching and learning process will be deficient or less effective, as the success of teaching and learning depends on the contribution of both teachers and learners. In Tanzania however, teachers, like students, have low levels of English language proficiency and encounter difficulties in teaching and learning due to the limitations posed by the English MOI.

Equally, Halliday and Martin (1993: 94) insist that 'language is the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge'. Similarly, Mercer (1995) emphasizes that some of the most creative thinking takes place when people are talking together, so one of the most important opportunities that schools can offer is the chance to involve other people in their thoughts- to use conversations to develop their own thoughts. From this perspective language is conceived as the prime tool for shared thinking and establishing joint understanding in social interactions (Bergqvist and Saljo 2003). Besides learning through discussion with teachers, students also learn by sharing, discussing critically, reviewing one's own and others' ideas among themselves. In this way, the students can construct new knowledge and relate new knowledge to prior knowledge though interacting with others. Individually we use

language to transform experience into knowledge and understanding. This provides us with both an individual and a social mode of thinking.

Pedagogically, it is understood that, in order to develop easily cognitive competencies in students, it is important that the language closest to the linguistic and cultural experience of students is used (Heath 1992). In Tanzania however, English remains a secondary language for students and teachers. It is only rarely used outside the classroom. Christie (2003) stresses that education ought to be the means for helping learners develop ways of using language as a social mode of thinking, which is unlikely to be successful if their opportunities for using the language are limited to narrow response slots in conversations with teachers. In Tanzania, so long as the MOI is English in secondary schools, where most students are not in a position to respond even to the limited narrow response slots in classroom conversations with teachers, it is unlikely that learners will develop ways of using language as a social mode of thinking.

Methodology

The objective of a study the author conducted in connection with this subject was to find out if there were differences in classroom discourse in social science classes taught in different MOI (Kiswahili and English). This study took place in two government secondary schools in Tanzania; school X and school Y which are located somewhere close to Dar es Salaam, the commercial capital of Tanzania. Preparations for the study were finalised after the necessary teaching materials had been prepared and distributed to the respective schools. A seminar was conducted for teachers participating in this study so as to orient them and normalize their teaching with respect to the study. In this study both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized. These approaches were used in order to complement each other and provide additional insights. The study was conducted on the grounds that concur with Corbetta (2003), who further underscores that:

> The quantitative and qualitative techniques yield different kinds of knowledge. Far from being a handicap, this is actually an advantage. Only a multi-faceted, differentiated approach can provide a complete vision of social reality, just as a statue in a square reveals the completeness of its form only when viewed from different angles (Corbetta 2003: 51).

The main data gathering techniques used in this study were: a quasi experiment in which experimental classes were taught in Kiswahili MOI and control classes were taught in English MOI, classroom observation, documentary analysis and interviews (these are not highlighted in this paper). In this regard both objectives, the quantifiable measures of students' performance in tests in the quasi experiment as well as the qualitative context of this study, were incorporated, and classes were observed in the course of the quasi experiment. As a researcher I had the opportunity of continually making sense of, interpreting and describing the setting as the study proceeded.

The following section gives a synopsis of classroom excerpts that were extracted from the findings and field notes that were collected during the classroom observations conducted in 2005 in selected government secondary schools in the country in the teaching of social sciences (Geography in particular). In the original study a minimum of two excerpts per MOI were selected to demonstrate these differences. Teachers in this study who were labelled Teachers A and B were from school X, whereas teachers C and D were from school Y. All these teachers were represented in the excerpts, in which particular emphasis was put on the questions and answers. All excerpts using the same MOI gave relatively the same impression. Hence only two excerpts have been selected, particularly because they illuminate the nature and extent of students' input in the class sessions comparatively better. The excerpts give a vivid picture of the situation in the classrooms when the different MOI, English and Kiswahili, are used.

A Glimpse of Classroom discourse in the Tanzanian Classrooms

Excerpt I: A Geography Class taught in English MOI

1. T: Okay let us continue… [The teacher realized that students had limited ideas and decided to proceed to write the following sub-topic on the blackboard] …FEATURES PRODUCED BY WATER AND WIND IN DESERTS.
2. T: Can you read aloud the above words on the board?
3. SS: F-U-T-U-R-E-…... [Feature- SS pronounced as future. The lesson turned into an English grammar lesson as the teacher corrected the students' pronunciation].
4. T: This land has been experiencing very dry…These streams which carry water….What will happen when it rains? [The teacher repeated her question. This time she used many words to explain but once more the students were silent].
5. SS: --- [Another long pause of silence].
6. T: What do you think? What will appear after? Will the land remain the same or change? [The teacher further elaborated the question].
7. SS: Chhhhaaaannnngggggeee. [In chorus though low tones. In an instance some students made facial gestures to each other indicating that they did not understand. The teacher continued to explain some of the features produced by water and wind in the desert…].
8. T: A hot desert wind is very strong, why? [One of the students had his hand up but the teacher picked on other students. Most of these other students remained silent or repeated previous students' answers].
9. S: --- [Silent. After being asked to answer the teacher's question].
10. S: In desert area there are few trees…
11. T: Yes…and you …why…? [The teacher proceeded to ask other students]
12. S: They are few trees… [A repeat of what a fellow student had said].
13. S: Rain is very few in desert area … anything cannot be there when the winds came…
14. T: Yes…good and you …
15. S: Repeat your question teacher [Some students had still not understood the question].
16. T: Yes…and you …and you…
17. S: There is no tree in the desert. [Another repeat of a fellow student's answer].
18. S: I do not know madam… [A second student responded that he did not know. Meanwhile a total of 5 students remained standing due to failure to answer the teacher's question. Some students continued discussing in unauthorized pairs in Kiswahili. A couple of the students in the class looked down on their desks while the teacher looked around the class to pick on them to answer].

Excerpt 2: A Geography Class taught in Kiswahili MOI

1. T: *Chikichi linakuzwa wapi?* (Where is palm oil grown?)
2. S: *Kigoma* (A town South-West of Tanzania).
3. T: *Nani amewahi kuona mmea wa chikichi?* (Who has ever seen the palm oil plant?)
4. S: *Mimi mwalimu* (me teacher).
5. T: *Ehe tuelezee..* (Yes…can you explain it to us).

6. S: *Chikichiki linapokuwa halijakomaa, mbegu zake zikiwa mbichi nyeusi sana, zikipevuka zinaanza kuwa njano, zikikomaa zinakuwa nyekundu.. hapo zinakuwa tayari kuvuna mbegu zake halafu zinachemshwa hadi zile mbegu zinavimba…baadae wanakamua yale mafuta toka kwenye mbegu…yale masigasiga au matakataka yake yanatumiwa kama mbolea* (When the palm oil seed is raw it is very dark; as it matures it becomes yellow and finally when it is ripe it is red…here the seeds are ready to harvest. These seeds are later heated by boiling till they are swollen…after which oil is squeezed out of these seeds…later the remains are used as manure…) [Fellow students also seemed to listen carefully and to really enjoy the lesson and learning from their colleague. This raised their curiosity and they had several questions to ask their fellow student].
7. S*: Hivo unavyosema unatwanga hizo mbegu mpaka katikati au***?** (Did you say that you grind the palm oil seeds to the core?)
8. S: *Hapana. Maganda yake ndio yanayotoa mafuta* (No. The palm oil seed covering is the one that produces oil).
9. S: *Je mti wake sasa unakatwa baada ya kuvuna hizi mbegu kama vile mgomba?* (Do you cut down the tree after you have harvested the seeds from this tree like a banana plant?)
10. S: *Hapana ule mti wake unaendelea tu kuwepo hadi hapo msimu mwingine mbegu zingine zinatakapo komaa kuvuna* (No. The tree is not cut at own but will continue to bear fruit in other seasons…) [The teacher appeared quite satisfied and contented and she proceeded with the lesson. The student had done most of the explanations that the teacher would have made].
11. T: *Ni nini matumizi ya chikichi?* (What is the palm oil seed used for?)
12. S: *Hutumika kutengeneza siagi...* (It is used to make margarine).
13. S: *Mwalimu, inakuwaje kuwa Chikichi linatumika kutengeneza siagi?* (Teacher, how is it possible that palm oil is used to make margarine) The teacher elaborated and asked for more contributions on the uses of palm oil.
14. S: *Mti wake hutumika kama dawa.* (The tree is used as medicine).
15. T: *Ya nini?* (For what?)
16. S: *Ya ukimwi!* (For AIDS!)[One students cracked a joke].
17. SS: *Haah Haah!* [Fellow students laughed. The lesson proceeded and the teacher went on to look at the growing of rubber].

Excerpt 3: A Geography class taught in Code Switching MOI

[The lesson began with a review of the previous lesson]
1. T: Try to brain your storm the conditions to growing of the palm… [This was an incorrect statement by the teacher. The teacher intended to request students to recall what had been taught in the previous lesson].
2. SS: --- (Silent).
3. T: It needs high temp…approximately twenty six degrees…to…It also needs enough sunlight. Can anyone explain what do I mean by enough sunlight?
4. SS: --- (Silent).
5. T: Ok you can say in Kiswahili [Students were permitted to freely use Kiswahili].
6. S: *Jua la kutosha*. (Enough sunlight).
7. T: What is the wet condition?
8. SS: Silent .

9. T: In Kiswahili [The teacher seemed to have realized that students could express themselves in Kiswahili but not in English].

10. S: *Hali ya unyevunyevu*. (moist conditions).

11. T: Palm oil can grow in various types of soil. What does this mean?

12. S: *Aina mbalimbali za udongo*… [The T asked the students to explain what they had understood in Kiswahili. This was to check how much they had understood. However, conducting a lesson in such a way could be very boring and takes time. The lesson involved a lot of repetition].

13. T: Preparation of palm oil for uses… [The T wrote shorts notes on the blackboard and then continued explaining]… After harvesting the seeds of oil palm they are cooked by steam…Do you know steam?

14. SS: Yes…*Mvuke* (…it means steam in Kiswahili). [The T distributed to students samples of the oil palm seeds collected from the school surroundings. The teacher teased students in Kiswahili while distributing the seeds].

15. T: *Ole wako ule hayo matunda…nimeyahesabu*… You should not eat these seeds… I have counted them… [The students laughed and spoke in low tones in Kiswahili].

16. T: The fruits also grains to produce oil [The T has used the wrong terminology here. She should have said "the seeds are ground to produce oil". She then asks the students the meaning of the sentence].

17. S: *Sijaelewa hiyo sentensi…* (I have not understood that sentence) [The student here indirectly requested the teacher to repeat in Kiswahili most likely].

18. T: [Elaborates in Kiswahili]… *Nimesema lile tunda hutenganishwa na zile kamba kamba au nyuzi zinazozunguka mbegu hutumika kutengeneza mafuta* (I have said that the fruit is separated from the threads that surround the fruit which are used to produce oil).

19. T: [The teacher continued to explain]… *tunda hilo husagwa kutengeneza mafuta*. (the fruit is crushed to produce oil).

20. S: *Hiyo hapo sentensi ya kwanza unasema kuwa unapika mchikichi kwa kutumia mvuke, je mvuke unafanya nini?* (In your first sentence you said that you cook the palm oil fruit with steam, what does the steam do?)

21. T: *Mvuke unauumusha, au kuvimbisha lile tunda tayari kwa kutoa mafuta…* (Steam makes the fruit puff up and swell ready for the production of oil) *Ok ni nini matumizi ya chikichi*… (Ok what are the uses of palm oil?--) [The teacher asked a question in Kiswahili then interpreted it in English. The lesson proceeded. The teacher called upon various students to answer].

22. S: To make the cooking oil.

23. T: *Ndio… haya mafuta yanaitwaje kwa Kiswahili?* (Yes… what is this oil called in Kiswahili?).

24. SS: *MAWESE*… [In chorus].

25. T: Ok what are the other uses of palm oil? [Pointing at different students].

26. S: Margarine.

27. S: Soap.

28. S: Bloom [rather than broom].

29. S: *Mwalimu hiyo pale ingetolewa kwani tunazungumzia* palm tree… (Teacher that should be removed [referring to broom] Are we talking of the palm tree?

30. T: ***Tunazungumzia mti mzima…*** *(*We are talking of the whole tree…) [The T elaborated in Kiswahili. The lesson ended].

Discussion

In attempting to guide learners, teachers use classroom talk to do three things:

- To elicit relevant knowledge from students, so that they can see what the students already know so that the knowledge is seen to be owned by the students as well as the teachers;

- To respond to things that students say, as feedback on their attempts so that the teacher can incorporate what students say into the flow of the discourse and gather students' contributions together to construct more generalised meanings.

- To describe the classroom experiences that they share with students in such a way that the educational significance of those joint experiences is revealed and emphasised (Mercer 1995, p. 26).

This however is not the case in Tanzanian secondary classrooms. The excerpts above from Vuzo (2007) verify the view that the dominance of English in secondary education in Tanzania limits the internalization of knowledge by students because it is communicated or made available in a language that is not well-known to teachers and students to jointly construct knowledge. There is not much dialogue in the sole medium of English. Since discourse is essential for communication in the classroom environment and is of great importance in academic teaching and learning, unofficial pedagogic practices take place in secondary school education, especially code switching and code mixing to Kiswahili in order to facilitate some dialogue in teaching and learning. They are unofficial in the sense that the MOI officially stated to be used in secondary schools is English (MoEC, 1995).

Language is central to the carrying out of all classroom activities. Since language is a crucial device through which teaching and learning activities are accomplished, the success of an activity is dependent upon the language capability of the participants in these activities. The inadequacy of English language proficiency in Tanzanian classrooms influences the quality of participation in classroom oral interaction. It is from this perspective that this paper focuses on the language of teaching and learning in Tanzania and how it impacts classroom discourse.

It is noted from the excerpts above that if teachers enforce the use of English as the sole medium of instruction the effect is to preclude student participation and progress. Student participation was low in English MOI classes in comparison with Kiswahili MOI classes. Typically, students in this situation respond by being completely silent. Even the typical question and answer sessions lack verbal exchange. This is because the learners' knowledge, life experiences and language resources are excluded from the classroom discourse. Students seemed not to comprehend the content as they gave incorrect answers. It is also evident that students were having problems in answering the teacher's questions. Their responses were also quite brief. The teacher spent time trying to elaborate on an aspect, repeating it and giving lengthy explanations in the lesson. Teachers also continuously asked the same question of several students. In English MOI classes students had nearly no questions for the teacher or their fellow students. In any case, even if the students participate, they will not give responses that foster classroom interaction, unless the teacher allows a mixture of Kiswahili and English to be used by the students.

On the contrary, the situation is different if Kiswahili were used instead. Student- teacher and student-student interaction was high in Kiswahili MOI classes as they contributed impressively to class discussions; teachers responded to several questions coming from different students and students also responded to fellow students' questions. Moreover, students gave very long answers, for instance, where a student gave a long explanation on palm oil growing and harvesting. The student was speaking from her experience. This student minimized greatly the task of the teacher who just gave some extra information.

The situation exemplified by these excerpts explains why, in order to have a meaningful classroom discourse, both teachers and pupils use code switching strategically, as this helps teachers and students to manage classroom interactions efficiently, and to negotiate the pedagogical content meaningfully. Most teachers end up using Kiswahili to explain points to students, to highlight new information and to provide definitions of concepts that are difficult for the learners to grasp in English. Teachers also use Kiswahili for reinforcement, where in this case most teachers used strategies like repetition, reformulation, clarification and giving illustrations in class to relate the lesson to knowledge gained outside the classroom, thereby tapping the everyday knowledge of the students programmed in Kiswahili. Therefore, by using

Kiswahili the teacher went into greater detail and depth. Tollefson (1995) emphasizes that if the goal is to foster language as a tool for critical thinking, for making sense of and acting on issues of importance in life, then the use of the first language is critical for identifying these issues. Even beyond the early levels of schooling, the use of the language of instruction is always seen as a resource rather than an obstacle (Tollefson 1995).

Generally, it is presumed that people are most competent in their first language, or are most familiar with it. In the Tanzanian case Kiswahili may take this place. It is estimated that Kiswahili is the language that is spoken by approximately 99% of the population either as their first or second language (Masato 2004). For this reason there are no language barriers in communicating in Kiswahili for the majority of Tanzanian people. Kiswahili may facilitate more meaningful interaction and become one tool among many in the process of constructing meaning.

This however does not rule out the fact that indigenous languages are in use especially in rural areas. Hence ideally, apart from Kiswahili, these indigenous languages could also be used at the primary level of education. In Tanzanian primary schools however other indigenous languages are not used in education even at the primary level. Brock-Utne (2005) asserts that the best would be that Tanzania would settle for a policy where the mother tongues of the children were used for the beginning of literacy together with Kiswahili, which then would be used as the language of instruction at a later stage, while English was taught as a subject throughout the educational system. However, Kiswahili MOI could serve well as a base and initial phase for multilingual language learning. The use of other indigenous languages can gain from using Kiswahili MOI. Fafunwa (1990, p.105) insists that it is possible to use a multiplicity of indigenous languages by advising that, 'once a particular mother tongue has been developed as a medium of education in a given country, it is relatively easy to apply the same principles to other languages'.

In regard to learning foreign languages such as English the best way to master them is through the improved teaching of English as a subject but not through having it as a MOI. English teaching is a specialized field just like the teaching of history, mathematics etc. Qorro (2004)

stresses that it is thus insulting to teachers of English when it is assumed that teachers of all subjects can assist in the teaching of English. Furthermore, Phillipson (1992) suggests that less English taught by better qualified teachers to learners who have already developed high cognitive proficiency in their mother tongue may provide better conditions for learning English.

Bilingualism in View of CS (code switching) in Tanzanian Classrooms

Myers-Scotton (1993) and Winford (2003) in their definitions of code switching explain that CS is a bilingual practice. There have been various views in regard to CS in Tanzanian secondary schools. Kadeghe (2000) for instance proposes bilingual education as a solution for the Tanzanian language policy. It is however important to stress that the way CS was practised by observing classes in this study (see excerpt 3) demonstrated that there was no formula as to how these two languages English and Kiswahili were used. The use of the different languages was random; no particular standard was applied, so that there were some classes where teachers used more Kiswahili than English and vice versa. All in all if we consider implementing such a policy, it will have some implications. It implies that even exams should permit students to use both languages as was the case in this study. The lack of principle in the use of languages could also be reflected in the examinations. One can therefore argue that although it is a better option as it enhances understanding than the continuity of English as the sole MOI, it may be more complicated to implement. In a sense to some extent I concur with Rubagumya (2000: 115), who claims that, 'Code switching in Tanzanian classrooms is done in a haphazard manner, which may be pedagogically counterproductive'.

It will not be possible to achieve functional bilingualism through CS, as students and teachers will be inclined to build on the language they are most competent in with little input going to the other language, as exemplified in this study. The chances of learning English in this way are limited. The students and teachers will remain poor at communicating in English. Code switching does not entail knowing English. All in all, a bilingual policy is also limiting. The goal in the Tanzanian context anyway should be to promote linguistic diversity in terms of a multilingual education policy. The goal should be to promote multilingualism.

I-R-F (Initiation- Response -Feedback) as reflected in the classroom context in Tanzania

Christie (2003: 4) argues that 'a fundamental theme that runs through virtually all the work in the classroom discourse analysis is the recognition it gives to language behaviour as structured experience'. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) are remembered most for the particular move they identified as Initiation, Response, Feedback (IRF), or sometimes following Mehan's (1979) similar Initiation, Response, Evaluation (IRE) moves. The IRF structure as traditionally practised, with the teacher providing the great majority of the initiation moves, has been the target of some criticism, on the grounds that it fails to give students the opportunity to ask questions themselves and to negotiate meaning (Thornbury 1996). In short it is associated with a heavy teacher-centred classroom methodology. Nonetheless we need not underscore the need for formal correction, which the feedback (F^i)-move offers in learning.

In practice in Tanzania, since the teacher-student relationship is asymmetric, coupled with the use of English as the MOI, the teacher most frequently initiates the sequences and evaluates the students' responses, making up typical classroom interaction in the Tanzanian context of the classic teacher-pupil IRF moves. This is also illustrated in excerpt I. As long as we in Tanzania continue to use English, we are hampering the students' capacity to initiate classroom discussions. The evaluative role of the F-move is dominant in Tanzanian secondary classrooms, but there is a need to encourage the discourse role of the F- move, whose purpose is to pick up students' contributions and 'to incorporate them into the flow of classroom discourse' (Mercer 1995: 26). Here the teacher is supposed to extend the dialogue and encourage further contributions. The discourse role of the F-move it seems can be attained in the Kiswahili MOI as in excerpt II. Moreover, it is observed that students initiate some classroom conversations as well. This indicates that incorporating students cannot be achieved in the context of Tanzanian secondary schools given the constraints that the students face in the MOI given the fact that the English language has no communicative status as far as students are concerned. The excerpts above highlight the need to use a more familiar language such as Kiswahili to enable students to be incorporated in the classroom discourse. Inclusion in the classroom discourse seems possible mostly when Kiswahili is used as the MOI.

In any teacher-initiated classroom interaction, the teacher has to make a principled choice between each type of follow-up. If the teacher only gives evaluative follow-up, it will impede the

development of a dialogue between the teacher and the class. On the other hand, if the teacher only gives discoursal follow-up s/he will not help the students correct their mistakes. Therefore, when responding to students' contributions, the teacher needs to find the balance between the competing follow-up needs.

Students also need to take advantage of the expertise of each other and also be recognized for their own. This is illustrated in excerpt II where Kiswahili is used as the MOI. This provides students with important reinforcement and incentives for continuing growth and development. When peer relations are mediated in a foreign language, these relations are impoverished. Peer collaboration has the potential to enhance the development of learners and to be effective, rather than lessons being imposed on them by the teacher. Students have to find learning enjoyable and useful. Peer collaboration also increases students' competence and confidence. Several times in Tanzanian secondary schools, as shown in the second excerpt contrary to the first one, the use of peer teaching is only present among students when they have private exchanges in Kiswahili which the teacher did not initiate (see line 6 to 11 of excerpt 2). The students use this strategy to explore the content in greater depth by translating sentences to each other, repeating teacher directives and clarifying the content. These acts have quite useful pedagogic consequences and should be promoted.

The way forward
School learning should occur in a meaningful context and not be separated from the learning and knowledge that children develop in the 'real world'. What is learnt has to be applied. Out-of-school experiences should be related to the child's school experience (Halliday 1973). Hence it is important to relate what is new to what is known. This type of learning in the Tanzanian context is hindered because of the MOI whereby students and teachers do not collaborate socially out of class in English. If we are to promote collaborative learning in the Tanzanian context the use of a familiar language should be encouraged. Excerpts show that in talking together in Kiswahili students could learn a great deal from each other and from the teacher rather than by using English (see excerpt 2).

Communication between the student and the teacher, and importantly between fellow students in a social setting, is an obvious help to learning but this cannot occur if there are learning difficulties with the language being used. The use of English as the MOI makes learning occur in a context that is not meaningful to the learners who do not use English in their 'real world' but Kiswahili. In this case we in Tanzania are not relating out-of-school experiences to the child's school experience.

With regard to this, I recommend some proposals by Wells (2002). These proposals should be applied to Tanzanian secondary schools as guidelines for promoting collaborative / inclusive learning. They include:

- The primary goal of education should be to understand. Students should personally understand and participate effectively and responsibly in similar and related activities even beyond the classroom.
- Second, it should be recognized that such understanding is achieved through engaging in joint activities with others that encourage collaborative knowledge building.
- Finally greater recognition should be given to the varied but critical roles that discourse plays in relation to all the modes of knowing except perhaps the instrumental. In this case then, the issue is that the dialogic potential of discourse needs to be emphasized (Wells 2002: 90).

Epilogue

I concur with Wells (2002) that, until students actively engage in collaborative knowledge building to test its relevance in relation to their personal models of the world and where possible, its practical application in action, knowledge remains at the level of information that has no impact on students' understanding.

As far as secondary education is concerned, Tanzania is maintaining the illusion that we are adopting the English medium for classroom interactions when in fact teachers and students are sneaking into Kiswahili by code switching. Therefore, if the goal of education is to promote understanding, an adequate curriculum theory must utilize an interactive model of teaching and learning (Barnes 1992). This is facilitated by the use of a familiar language. Certainly one learns

better and more material is covered if taught in a language one understands. In this case I agree with Malekela (2003), who contends that the government policy of using English as the MOI in secondary education is detrimental to meaningful learning. As such it fosters the exclusion of students in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, in order to promote effective teaching and learning, the learning environment will also need to be improved to make it conducive for teaching and learning. For instance learning materials, teaching aids, pre-service and in-service teacher courses and reducing the apparent large teacher-student ratios to manageable student numbers that will facilitate classroom interaction are some of the factors that should be addressed.

Surely, there is a need to develop further in Tanzanian classrooms a repertoire that includes interactive and transformative pedagogical techniques such as effective questioning, group experimental and discussion tasks, role playing, puzzle solving, games, simulations and project work, supplemented by opportunities for learners to exhibit what they have produced and receive feedback and encouragement. In order to promote a more dialogic and exploratory stance to the topic under consideration teachers are advised to pose questions that solicit students' opinions and conjectures (Mercer, 1995).

Student involvement is probably the single most important factor in learning as it makes learners feel that the knowledge is personally relevant to them. Thus, there is need to ensure considerable participation of all students in the teaching and learning process. Fostering effective classroom discussions is a crucial teaching skill. Talking with students rather than to students is the key to using classroom discourse well. Challenging students to interpret, analyze and manipulate information to deepen their understanding or see new connections can enliven the instructional process and make learning personally meaningful. This type of inclusive education through language seems however much more possible when Kiswahili is used as the language of instruction. This therefore is a call for a change in the language of instruction otherwise students will continue being excluded in the classroom discourse.

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[i] This refers to feedback and or follow up.