

How the emphasis on Swahili has affected secondary education in Tanzania

Michael Sinienga

Assistant lecturer, Department of philosophy. The Archbishop James university College (AJUCO). Songea, Tanzania.

ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper was to describe the way in which the emphasis on Swahili has affected secondary education in Tanzania, and this has attracted many scholars within and outside Africa. The Ludwig Wittgenstein theoretical framework of picture and language games was used to indicate that the limits of my language are the limits of my world'. The paper is a descriptive in nature and it intends to describe the way the emphasis of Swahili has affected Tanzania on education. The paper shows that approach to linguistics used in the past has prevailed without change. This has led to language problems and setbacks for the majority of Tanzanians when it comes to international job market. English language as the medium of instruction in the country has been the victim, as blamed by many scholars within and outside Tanzania as the cause of poor performance in secondary schools. However, the study has revealed that Swahili has played a significant role as a unifying factor among the Tanzanians and has helped to solve the issue of tribalism.

KEYWORDS: *Emphasis on Swahili, impacts, secondary education, Tanzania*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Education system in Tanzania has become a topic that attracts the attention of many scholars. As a student at Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) which is located in Kenya, I was exposed to different students from other countries such as Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Kenya in sharing ideas about the education system in our respective countries, Tanzania seemed to be totally different from the other above mentioned countries. According to the Tanzanian education system, in primary schools the medium of instruction is English. Then when this students joins secondary school will find that English is the medium of instruction. This abrupt change has had a profound affect on the education in Tanzania. We all know that the Children have right to get an education of quality. The emphasis to use Swahili as language of instruction in primary schools has both positive and negative effects for learners, teachers and to Tanzanian government.

While the politicians measure education improvement in terms of figures such as numbers of schools and Colleges in the country, but the paper has clearly shown this is not an access to the improvement of education as the language of instruction is a problem. As senkoro puts, that the use of English as a medium of instruction in Tanzania secondary schools and higher learning institutions continuous to decrease access to quality education (senkoroF.2005). Unless Tanzania government sees this as a problem the problem will remain unsolved. It is recommended that Tanzanian government should take an action to improve English language proficiency in schools in general and in secondary school in particular.

This paper therefore intends to investigate how the emphasis on Swahili has affected education in Tanzania with reference to Wittgenstein theories of language. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 -1951) was an Austrian philosopher, I will consider his language theories as explained in Tractus Logico philosophical, in his book he shows the relationship between language and reality and his view of language as a social practice. I will discuss his theories as they apply to Tanzanian policy of education as language of using Swahili as language in primary schools and English in secondary schools and higher learning institutions

It all started in 1962, contrary to everyone's expectation, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere decided to address the parliament in Kiswahili language. This was a revolutionary step considering the linguistic climate that prevailed at the time(Khamis ,1974) What was the climate? Swahili held a low status in the society it was regarded as a language of less privileged people while English was for privileged and noble people., since that day Swahili

was elevated from the language of Kabwela (less privileged people) to the language to be used by the President of state in the National assembly before all the world dignitaries. Swahili was being widely used on mainland Tanzania and the Islands of Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia. It was in 1968 when definitive statement was made by the then second Vice- President Hon. Rashid Kawawa regarding the roles Swahili and English in his paper the Vice- President observed that Kiswahili was already the medium for all political activities and administration and a medium of instruction in primary schools and adult education. English on the other hand was assigned the role of international language in addition to being used as a medium of instruction in secondary school at the university level” (Khamis 1974),

It has been well documented that students are not prepared for the use of English as the medium of instruction, students and teachers alike struggle to express themselves clearly in a language they have not mastered. Swahili after becomes the de facto language of instruction as students and teachers switch to the more familiar language for clarification and discussion (ROY – Compbell et al 1977). These changes led to Swahili replacing English in primary school education it has been well documented that students are not prepared for the use of English as the medium of instruction. Students and teachers alike struggle to express themselves clearly in a language they have not mastered. Swahili then becomes the de facto language of instruction as students and teachers switch to the more familiar for clarification and discussion.(Royal- Compbell at 1977)

In my theoretical frame work I will refer to the theory of Ludwig Wittgenstein and I will focus mainly on his theories of languages expressed in his early work the tractatus logico philosophicus he shows his concern with the relationship between the words and the language .

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In his book namely Tractatus logico philosophical Wittgenstein presents the theory of language which he named it as a picture theory of language it is also known as the picture theory of meaning in this theory he maintained that the language is a picture of reality, it is all about what reality is all about, is a reflection of what reality is. According to Wittgenstein, to understand a language is to understand a reality. The major argument of Wittgenstein on the language is the rules of the use of ordinary language, is neither right or wrong, neither true or false the language is merely useful for the particular applications they are applied for, the members of any community, College students or rap musicians for example develop ways of speaking that serve their need and these constitute the language game they employ. (Weerasekara 2013).

For Wittgenstein, the technique of language games was to break the tendency, and thus the expectation of being able to answer questions such as: ‘What is time?’, ‘What is meaning? And “What are numbers” Connected with the inclination to look for substance corresponding to a substantive is the idea that for any given concept, there is an essence’ (Byrne, S 2008). According to Wittgenstein language is the picture of the world, the world cannot describe itself without a language that the objects of the world are pictured by the means of language. Therefore the language is very important in receiving knowledge without a language the knowledge cannot be received, again if the language is not clear to the learners it will limit them in attaining the knowledge.

The Wittgenstein’s theory of language is very important as the importance of the language is concerned. From the very beginning, language has been an essential tool for the daily relations between human beings. Apart from other innumerable roles, language has played and continues to play an important function in the process of learning as it enables life experiences to be to be expressed and passed on by the society to younger generations, Besides being at the core of education, it is the principal means of communication between instructors and learners. Language is also a vital means by which we present our thoughts to ourselves and to others (Senkoro,2004) the language should be well known by the addresser and addressee, failure of that will cause misunderstanding to the learners. I remember a priest from Kilimanjaro region (Moshi) Tanzania after graduating his PhD in theology from the Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) went back to his home village, during the celebration of the holy mass he told his people (Christians) that: ‘ from today address me as Fr. Dr so, (the name withheld) and I am serious about it, if you don’t put ‘Doctor ‘ when addressing me that will be unfair, being a doctor is not a joke’. so after the mass celebration one old man came to that priest and said “my son I am so glad that you are a doctor, help me I feel pain on my leg, no I am not a medical doctor!” replied the priest. Had he explained well the nature of his PhD this misunderstanding would not have occurred. The clarity of language is very important for effective communication.

III. THE EFFECTS OF EMPHASIS ON KISWAHILI

3.1 Sense of belonging and identity.

The emphasis of Swahili has positive impacts to some areas in education one of these impacts is the issue of sense of belonging and identity. ‘Nearly twenty years after independence Court and Kinyanjui concluded that Tanzanians students have stronger sense of national identity than their Kenyan counterparts (Miguel,2004) This is very true, I witnessed this when I was in Kenya at Catholic University of East Africa, Kenyans admired the

way we organized ourselves, we helped each other, we were as if we belonged to one ethnic group. I remember one asked ‘ You people of Nyerere are you coming from one region? Tanzanians wherever they meet they become like a family. In his speech of 5th March 1998 Nyerere said “ Not all of us will have the same concept of community, but all of us have a need to belong however socially insensitive we may be, we have a need to belong to a community of fellow human beingbut those of us who have been lucky enough to receive a good education have a duty also to help to improve the well being of the community to which we belong” (Africa today and tomorrow).

The Swahili language is spoken all over the republic of Tanzania so it is a unifying factor, students from primary to University level are unified by Swahili language this has eliminated the sense of tribalism among the students.”The minority languages are only spoken in the home, and they are threatened by Swahili (Patzell M,2012) Nyerere was such a socialist who had a clear perception of how Tanzania should be in terms of development, he used Kiswahili as tool for liberating Tanzanians from tribalism and disunity.

3.2 The position of Tanzanian graduates in labour market.

Immigrants from Kenya,Uganda and Zambia who were exposed to English at younger age,are often more qualified to take high paying jobs in Tanzania because of their English skills,the displacing Tanzanians who would be qualified if only they spoke better English (Eleuthea Sa 2007). As it was pointed earlier in the abstract, being in Kenya I noticed that Tanzanian policy of Education as medium of instruction is concerned differs totally from other nations because of lack of good foundation of English at early stage is the root of problem in Tanzanian Education..Although Julius Nyerere has been praised as great leader for Tanzania, his national building credited with forestalling political tension and allowing for a peaceful transition from colony to republic (Miguel 2004) he is now paradoxically criticized both for his failure to bring Swahili into secondary classrooms and for his failure to establish English as a medium of instruction at earlier stages of education (Eleuthea Sa, 2007). Failure of establishment of English as a medium of instruction at earlier stages is the genesis of the problem in Tanzanian policy of education.

According to Wittgenstein’s quote “ The limits of my language are the limits of my world” has come true to Tanzania, because students in secondary school use English as a medium of instruction which they are not conversant with so they use language they don’t know to learn subjects they don’t know. Normally in process of learning we use what we know to learn what we do not know, Jesus in the bible taught the people using parables which were familiar to the people in relation to the kingdom of God which was not known to the people at that time. Therefore, English has become a setback in learning process in Tanzania secondary schools and in higher learning institutions. As I am writing this paper, came one of my students asked me in Swahili “ samhani Mwalimu,hivi ‘land lord’ linamana eneo unalokaa? Which means “excuse me sir does the word landlord means a place where you are staying? This is a third year student doing bachelor of education degree. This situation lead to many graduates not to fit in when it comes for job market as they can not compete with graduates from Kenya and Uganda because the interview is conducted in English. Self Confidence and self esteem are weapons every student should possess, inability to use English leads to lack of confidence and self esteem. Just by using common sense we can see that it does not make good sense to use the language which is not understood by learners as a language of instruction. So the majority of Tanzanians will always remain observers when it comes to international job market. Education should be relevant to the learners’ environment and liberate him or her from ignorance. Therefore, education should set man free from the chains which limit him / her to participate in matters of decision making, leadership and participatory democracy in the society (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer,as cited by Sanga,1982).

3.3 Introduction of English medium schools.

Anderson(1975)and Mvungi (1982)show that proficiency in the medium of instruction is a very vital factor in education performance. English medium schools has been introduced as solution to the problem of education in governments schools. In Tanzania poor learning environments as the language of instruction is concerned, have been identified as main factors that lead to poor performance in public schools. That is why most parents like to register their children in English medium Primary schools to get good foundation of English which is the medium of instruction in secondary school.

“Comparatively, English medium primary schools are far more expensive than state owned schools, most parents would like their children to register in English medium primary schools, the expenses associated with these schools in turn act as screening mechanism such that the only affluent families manage to have their kids in these schools (Komba &John D 2015) This creates inferiority complex among children whose parents can not afford to register them in English medium schools. Due to this situation the only wealthy parents can afford to have an access to good education for their children, while the majority of Tanzanians can not achieve best education,

There some secondary schools although are not English medium schools, they introduce what is called 'pre form one' where students will be required to be in school for one year before starting form one so as to equip the students with English language ,this is common in Catholic seminaries. So for ordinary level from form one to form four will be a duration of five years instead of four years. This is a burden to the parents because they have to pay fees for all those five years.

Pre-form one classes are meant to prepare pupils before joining form one classes. with at least an introduction of what he or she will be expected to learn at that level, because in most government schools pupils learn all subjects in Kiswahili so they are gradually introduced to English at this point introduction of pre-form one classes came as a way of boosting education standards in the country, however at some point, others considered it as a way of making money as most of schools charge parents for this service. In most government schools. Swahili language being the major a major means of communication in public primary schools, the pre-form one came as way of introducing them to English,

3.4 The language of instruction and the quality of education

The language of instruction is a key element to quality education, because it is a medium through which knowledge is obtained and shared among the students and teachers, now if the language is not well known to students and sometimes even to teachers it will be a set back in learning process. In many countries, large numbers of children are taught and take tests in languages that they don't speak at home, hindering the early acquisition of critically important reading and writing skills (Unesco, 2016)“ There is no language problem in primary education and other informal VET centers which use Kiswahili as a medium of instruction, this is because the majority of Tanzanians are proficient in Kiswahili language (Lupogo, 2014).Poor performance in national examinations is a consequence of poor ELP or it could be true that poor performance and down fall of standard of education in Tanzania is because of using as the LOI, language we are not efficient are not efficient and proficient in (Komba, 2012). According to Wittgenstein quote “the limits of my language are the limits of my world” The limit of the language of instruction is the limit of the knowledge because the leaner will be limited, because he/she is taught in a language which is not known to him or her. in such a situation learners can not ask questions or give any academic contribution. It is even worse for slow learners ,who need closer attention and clarity as you teach them, so when you teach them by using the language which is not known to them what do you expect from them? This has led Tanzanian education to be textbook and examination oriented one, and this is challenged by Mahatma Gandhi who said “ If books are treated as a vehicle for education, the living word of a teacher has little value.

A teacher who teaches from the text books does not impart originality to pupils”(Tadesco and Morsy,1997) This bookish kind of education together with the problem of language of instruction can not bring transformation to learners nor can make them to be creative but they will be forced to memorize without understanding what they are memorizing. Politicians are fond of giving numbers indicating how much enrolment figures rates have improved right from primary schools to university levels of education in Tanzania and perhaps elsewhere. This then is termed as improvement in access to education and consequently more empowerment, it is argued here that expanded enrolment in Tanzania does not necessarily mean improvement in access to education. In fact if anything the use of English as a medium of instruction in Tanzania secondary and even university education continues to decrease access to education (Senkoro, 2005)

IV. CONCLUSION

The Swahili situation is nonetheless slightly different. It has demonstrated its cohesive nature, socially, commercially as well as politically. No parent who has travelled outside his village fails to recognize this fact. But bad educational practice could make people have a second thought about the whole language policy Basically, most language experts in Tanzania have so far been considering English as a factor for underachievement of most students of higher levels of education, because students fail to learn effectively through the sole medium of English.In this case, teachers are forced to use Kiswahili to clarify the lesson (Jones, Rubangamya & Mwansoko as cited by Komba,2012) Positively there good outcomes as a result on emphasis of Swahili in Tanzania as pointed out earlier.

For learning of all kinds has a purpose: That purpose is to increase man's power over himself and his environment. In other words, the function of learning is development of men and of mankind. And development must start where you are.(Nyerere,1973). But on the contrary the emphasis on Swahili in education policy to some extent has limited Tanzanians' power over themselves and has isolated the majority of them globally. “Unless Tanzania has a defined policy it remains a nightmare talking of National education system with curriculum that is relevant to Tanzania both in content and culture,”(John J. Assey,2014) Tanzanian government should revisit its education system especially on language of instruction. As long as English is a medium of instruction in secondary schools and higher learning institutions students or learners should be well

prepared to use English as a medium of instruction. Swahili should also be maintained as it is a unifying factor for Tanzanians against tribalism.

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