Rethinking Language:
The Need for Language Supportive Pedagogies in Teacher Training in Tanzania

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Abstract

The importance of language is consistently ignored within teacher training across Africa, with training designed based on the assumption that learners are fully competent in the medium of instruction (MOI). This causes widespread challenges and often means that children cannot access education in a familiar language. This is particularly true at the primary level, where the familiar languages of the children may not be the same as the specified medium of instruction. Focusing on Tanzania, this paper discusses the need to embed language supportive pedagogies into teacher training at all levels, and particularly at the primary level. The paper discusses interviews with key stakeholders in education which illustrate language attitudes and language use within the classroom. Data from these interviews also highlights the challenges which teachers face relating to language, and the creative methods they use to resolve these challenges. We argue that monolingual approaches to language-in-education are not effective, and that formal training in multilingual, language supportive pedagogies is required to provide teachers with the skills they need to effectively engage with multilingual classrooms. Based on multilingual realities, we make practical suggestions for language supportive pedagogies. We view these pedagogies as an essential factor in teacher training which is linked to wider notions of access and equality, but which is currently being overlooked.

Keywords: multilingualism; teacher training; language policy; education; Tanzania

Ikisiri

Umuhimu wa lugha katika mafunzo ya walimu ni suala linaloendelea kupuuzwa barani Afrika. Mara nyingi mafunzo ya ualimu yanapoandaliwa inachukuliwa kuwa wanafunzi wote wanaifahamu vizuri lugha ya kujifunzia na kufundishia (LKK). Suala hili linasababisha changamoto kubwa, na mara nyingi hudhaniwa kwamba watoto hawawezi kupata elimu zao za asili wanazozimudu vizuri. Hali hii hujitokeza zaidi katika ngazi ya elimu ya msingi, ambapo lugha ambayo watoto wanaifahamu mara nyingi inatofautiana na lugha rasmi ya kujifunzia na kufundishia. Kwa kutumia Tanzania kama kifani cha uchunguzi, makala hii inajadili umuhimu wa kuwa na mtaala unaozingatia lugha katika mafunzo ya ualimu katika ngazi zote hususani katika ngazi ya elimu ya msingi. Makala inatumia data za usaili kutoka kwa wadau muhimu wa elimu kuhusu mitazamo ya matumizi ya lugha darasani. Data zinazotokana na usaili zinahusu changamoto za lugha ambazo walimu hukabiliana nazo, na mbinu bunifu wanazozitumia kuzikabili. Hoja yetu ni kwamba mbinu za utumizi wa lugha moja katika elimu si faafu katika mazingira ya wingilugha, na mafunzo rasmi yahusuyo ufundishaji unaozingatia lugha katika mazingira ya wingilugha yanahitajika ili kuwapa walimu maarifa wanayohitaji ili kufundisha vyema madarasa yenye wingilugha. Kulingana na uhalisia wa wingilugha, tunatoa mapendekezo ya mtazamo huu wa mafunzo ya ualimu kuwa kigezo muhimu katika mafunzo ya ualimu ambacho kinahusishwa moja kwa moja na mawazo mapana ya upatikanaji na usawa, masuala ambayo kwa sasa hayazingatiwi.

Maneno muhimu: wingilugha; mafunzo ya walimu; sera ya lugha; elimu; Tanzania

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1 Introduction

Although it has long been acknowledged that learners learn best in languages that they know and understand (UNESCO 2016; Erling et al. 2021a), many language-in-education policies (LIEPs) adopt what have been described as monolingual approaches (Lüpke and Cissé 2023; Shank Lauwo 2022) in which a specific medium of instruction (MOI) is prioritized for teaching and learning over others. What this means, particularly in multilingual contexts, is that LIEPs often require and expect students and teachers to carry out learning and teaching in a language that they may or may not be familiar with (Dearden 2014; Erling 2014; Erling et al. 2014). UNESCO's finding that "40% of the global population does not have access to education in a language they speak or understand" (UNESCO 2016, 1) is a powerful indication of the scale of impact that such policies have.

Such monolingual approaches to LIEPs not only have serious implications for the ways in which students are required to learn and behave in schools (Lüpke and Cissé 2023), but also for how teachers navigate the challenges of teaching in and through languages that they may not always be familiar with. While there is increasing evidence that students' learning and understanding is facilitated and improved by approaches that build on and make use of languages they are familiar with, there are fewer accounts of the impact of such monolingual approaches on the work of teachers. Given this lack of a specific focus on teachers, a key area that we contribute to in this paper is exploring the challenges faced by teachers in policy contexts that may require them to teach in languages that they may be less familiar with, as well as teaching in and through languages that they know their students may or may not be familiar with.

This paper examines the role of language in education at the primary school level in multilingual Tanzania, with a focus on teachers'

everyday classroom experiences and the challenges they face, particularly with regard to language practices in their classrooms. We draw on interviews with teachers, headteachers, and education officers to present novel insights into contemporary experiences of, and attitudes towards, multilingualism in education in the country. Drawing on this data, we highlight how current LIEPs shape and define teachers' practice and argue that monolingual approaches are ineffective and do not best enable teachers to implement their curricula. We highlight an absence of any direct language-related training or support within teacher training which prepares teachers for the multilingual realities of their classrooms; we illustrate the ways in which teachers draw on their own multilingual repertoires and creativity to adapt to the needs of the learners in their classrooms, often in opposition to official policy. We show the challenges which arise from monolingual approaches to education, when multilingual realities are ignored and multilingual pedagogies are not embedded within teacher training.

2 Language context in Tanzania

There are approximately 150 languages in Tanzania, 85% of which are Bantu languages (Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania 2009, xi). Out of these languages, Sukuma has the largest number of 'native speakers', with 5,195,504 speakers.[1] In terms of speaker numbers, Sukuma is followed by Swahili, whose number of 'native speakers' was estimated at 2,379,294 in 2009 (Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania 2009, 2). However, Swahili is the most widespread language both in Tanzania and across East Africa, where it has long played a role as a language of wider communication, as well as being a national and regional lingua franca. Swahili

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[1] The numbers are based on the 2002 census which shows that in 2002 Tanzania had a population of 34.4 million people.

is spoken in urban and semi-urban centres in most parts of Tanzania. However, in rural areas, and particularly in remote rural areas, it is estimated that about 85% of Tanzanians communicate through their community languages (e.g. Ngoni, Sukuma) (Mtavangu 2002; Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania 2009). Recent studies have shown that, in rural Tanzania, community languages constitute an important medium of communication (UWEZO 2011; Mapunda 2021; Mapunda and Gibson 2022) and in this regard everyday life in Tanzania is negotiated and experienced multilingually.

The majority of debates surrounding LIEP in Tanzania focus on the positions of English and Swahili, while ignoring the approximately 150 other languages in the country (Mapunda and Gibson 2022). In line with the 2014 Education and Training Policy, Swahili is the stated MOI in primary education, with English taking over as the MOI in secondary and tertiary education. This means that the wide variety of languages or linguistic resources that students and teachers bring with them to the classroom are not formally recognised as languages to be used in learning and teaching, and students and teachers are therefore required to navigate learning and teaching in Swahili and English, which many are unlikely to be familiar with. These somewhat blunt shifts in the MOI cause a range of challenges for multilingual students, who enter formal schooling with a range of different linguistic backgrounds and levels of confidence, competencies, and exposure to the official MOI. This is particularly crucial in the early years of education, where students are building their foundational knowledge and developing their literacy practices. As Foster (2023, 142) highlights, the education system in Tanzania centres around two language transitions. When students enter primary school they are expected to transition from their community language to Swahili and, in secondary school, from Swahili to English. Failure to successfully achieve these transitions is heavily stigmatized

and creates a situation in which the children's community language and origins are undervalued. Ideologies which stigmatize, undervalue, or ignore languages other than English and Swahili in primary schools in Tanzania are common (Lauwo 2022)

In Tanzania, the type of language used in textbooks is often at a level which is not appropriate for learners (Barrett 2014; Barrett et al. 2014; William and Ndabakurane 2017), but is instead developed as if learners are entirely fluent in English. This, however, is typically not the reality (Clegg 2015). For example, the language used in textbooks will often be at a level which is not grade-appropriate. Language proficiency then directly influences learners' abilities to engage with their education. Adamson's (2022) research on English-medium secondary schools in Tanzania also finds that it is not only students' proficiency which affects classroom engagement but that, even where students state that they understand English, there is a "prevalence of fear and shame [which] acts as an additional layer of learning constraint, preventing students from fully participating in classroom dialogue and constraining their language choices both around school and in their communities" (Adamson 2022, 10–11). William and Ndabakurane (2017, 102–103) also highlight that students are punished for using additional languages, which are often prohibited (see also Reilly et al. forthcoming).

3 Teacher training in Tanzania

The main document that focuses on current teacher training in Tanzania is the National Curriculum Framework for Basic Education and Teacher Education [NCFBETE] (TIE 2019). There are three levels of teacher training in Tanzania: certificate, diploma, and degree programmes. Certificate and diploma level programmes take two years to complete, while the degree level programme takes three years. Swai et al. (2022) note that teacher

training in Tanzania has faced a number of challenges, notably a lack of suitable facilities and resources. However, in collaboration with donors, the Government of Tanzania continues to support efforts to improve the quality of teacher education in the country.

Effective pedagogical teacher training is an essential component of delivering quality education (Hardman, Abd-Kadir, and Tibuhinda 2012). However, several issues have been identified with current teacher training provisions in Tanzania. Pre-service teacher training in Tanzania has not always had the desired impact. As Tarmo (2016) highlights, teachers have been found to continue to use traditional teaching approaches even after receiving training in more student-centred pedagogies. Komba and Mwakabenga (2019) focus mainly on continuing professional development (CPD) and highlight that there are limited opportunities for professional development. They also show that there is a lack of motivation amongst teachers to pursue professional development opportunities and that self-directed professional development is uncoordinated. Training is, moreover, not always appropriate to the specific context in which teachers are working. Komba and Mwakabenga (2019) identify around 100 organizations offering professional development for teachers but state that there is a lack of coordination between these organizations, as well as duplication of resources and services offered; there is unequal coverage, with urban areas being favoured. They also argue that most in-service training is donor-funded, so not typically sustainable once funding is withdrawn.

Among the challenges which have been identified in teacher training in the country, and of specific relevance to this paper, is the lack of focus on multilingualism. As has been noted in other contexts (Costley and Leung 2020), the importance of language is consistently ignored in teacher training across Africa (Clegg and Afitska 2011; Clegg and Milligan

2021). Teacher training is designed based on the assumption that teachers and students are fully competent in the MOI (Erling et al. 2021b), which means that little to no training is given to teachers on how to approach supportive language learning and development. The *de facto* approach is instruction through the medium of Swahili at the primary level and then through English in secondary schooling, and this is grounded in what we might describe as a 'restrictive monolingual approach'. This means that at present, in pre-service and in-service training, there is minimal, if any, focus on strategies to engage with multilingual learners, and/or to engage in learning multilingually, as the emphasis is on the need for teachers to help students to develop Swahili and English as quickly and effectively as possible. This also means that teachers are not necessarily supported in developing their knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning in multilingual contexts and, specifically, little to no training is provided to teachers on how to work multilingually in multilingual classrooms. An additional issue in Tanzania is that the language skills of teachers are not taken into consideration when deploying them to particular areas. Teachers will often be deployed to areas where they are unfamiliar with the community languages and may therefore need to stick more rigidly to the monolingual MOI.

4 Methodology

Our study adopted a linguistic ethnographic approach to data collection. This was designed around three key principles: researching collaboratively, researching multilingually, and researching responsively (for further details on the principles see Costley and Reilly 2021; Reilly et al. 2023). Our ethnographic work employed a range of data collection methods, including participant observation, classroom observations and recordings, reflective field

notes, interviews, and focus groups. In this paper, we discuss interviews conducted in September-October 2021 with teachers, head-teachers, and education officers, in the Tabora and Ruvuma regions of Tanzania. Interview participants were recruited based on their interest in and connection to education in the area. A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants. In total 18 interviews were conducted. Out of these 18 participants, 11 were male and 7 were female. They ranged in age from their 20s to their 50s.

Ethical approval to conduct the research was obtained from the University of Essex and the University of Dar es Salaam. All data were anonymized to ensure that the content of the interviews is kept confidential and no participants can be identified. Interviews were conducted by locally based researchers with extensive knowledge of education policy and practice in Tanzania, as well as of teacher training. The interviewers were further assisted by local contacts in each region. Interviews were conducted multilingually and participants were free to draw on their entire linguistic repertoires during the interview process; languages used include English, Swahili, Sukuma, and Ngoni. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and translated. Translations were worked on by the local team and by users of the language and translations were agreed upon collectively. After the transcripts had been translated into English, the whole project team collaboratively analysed the interviews using a thematic analysis (see Goodson and Tagg 2018) to identify key patterns and themes. This involved iterative stages of coding interviews, which project members conducted both individually and collectively via Zoom meetings. Our collaborative coding process was used to highlight the key themes which we identified as being present within the interviews. We focus on three key themes that emerged in our discussion: i) challenges and pressures faced by teachers and learners,

ii) strategies employed by teachers, and iii) experiences of training.

5 Our findings

In this section, we begin by discussing the challenges and pressures our participants face in the classroom, before moving on to the strategies they use to manage these challenges; we also highlight the training needs their comments raise. Through our analysis, we seek to show that our participants are acutely aware of the challenges that exist within the education sector as a result of the gap between official monolingual language policies and the actual linguistic repertoires of students and staff. Teachers handle these issues in different ways and, importantly, recognize the need for more focused pedagogical training on how to effectively manage multilingual classrooms.

5.1 Challenges and pressures faced by teachers

Teachers clearly state that language issues are present within the education system. These issues mainly arise from students not having Swahili language skills when they start school. There is then a clash between the language skills which students possess (in their home languages) and the language which is supposed to be used as the MOI – Swahili. This is highlighted by one teacher who is based in a predominately Ngoni-speaking area, and who states:

> Katika kata yangu kuna changamoto hasa kwa watoto wale wanaoanza, kwa sababu wanakuwa na lugha ya awali, kwa mfano Kingoni. Kwa hiyo, wanakuwa na wakati mgumu sana pale wanapoanza darasa la awali; yani kuwa-*transform* kutoka kwenye lugha mama kwenda kwenye lugha ya Kiswahili. Kuna

baadhi ya maneno yanakuwa bado yapo kwenye lugha mama. Kwa hiyo, mwalimu anapata kazi hiyo.

In my region, the great challenge is for children who are starting school since they have their native language, for example Ngoni. Therefore, they face a great challenge when they begin their nursery education since it is so difficult to transform them from their mother tongue to Swahili. There are some words which are still in their mother tongue. So teachers face these difficulties.[2] (Primary school teacher, Songea, 10th October 2021)

Others highlight similar difficulties in different geographical areas, with one participant noting that this is more of a challenge in less urban school settings:

Changamoto ipo eeee! Kwa mfano, sisi unajua tupo pembezoni kidogo na mji. Kwa hiyo, shida tunayopata ambayo ni changamoto watoto tulionao kulingana na jiografia tuliyo nayo sehemu tuliyopo watoto wengi wanatumia lugha mama ambayo lugha hiyo. Mfano kwetu kuna Kinyamwezi na Kisukuma. Kwa hiyo, sasa unakuta hiyo changamoto unakuta mtoto kwanza anapokuja kuanza shule mfano darasa la awali unajikuta kwamba mtoto anatumia zaidi lugha ya nyumbani na Kiswahili anakuwa hakifahamu. Iyo kwa kweli ni changamoto kubwa. Yaani inatufanya tuchukue muda mrefu sana kwa kumfundisha mwanafunzi mpaka kumbadilisha kutoka kwenye lugha ya Kisukuma au Kinyamwezi kumleta kwenye lugha

ya Kiswahili. Kwa hiyo inatukuta wakati mwingine tunakuwa tofauti kidogo na wale walioko mjini. Mjini utakuta wanafundishwa wanaanza moja kwa moja kwa sababu mtoto anakuwa kaja na lugha ya Kiswahili. Lakini kwa sababu ni pembezoni inatukuta miezi sita tunahangaika na mtoto kumtoa kwenye lugha ya Kisukuma au Kinyamwezi kumleta kwenye lugha ya Kiswahili.

Ah, there are challenges for sure! For instance, as you know we reside on the edge of town. Therefore, the problem we get is as a result of the geography and the area we live in, many children use their mother tongue. For example, where we are we have Nyamwezi and Sukuma, so you find when the child first comes to school for instance the kindergarten class, you find him/her using native language and s/he doesn't understand the Swahili language. This is honestly a big challenge because we spend a lot of time teaching and changing that child from the Sukuma and Nyamwezi language into Swahili. So, this is one of the differences that we often experience that those who are in town don't face. In town, they are able to be taught straight away because the child arrives and already knows Swahili. But for us in the village we spend even six months trying to get a child out of Sukuma and Nyamwezi into the Swahili language. (Primary school teacher, Nzega, 5th October 2021)

This participant specifically highlights the time needed to get to a point at which students are able to effectively learn. Ensuring that students are able to acquire Swahili language skills is thus viewed as an essential task, as being

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[2] For each quotation the transcription of the interview conducted in Swahili is given, followed by an English translation.

able to learn through Swahili is one, if not *the*, key factor in enabling students to effectively engage in education. It was also noted that these challenges are exacerbated when the teachers' language skills do not align with those of the students, as there are teachers who do not speak the language of the wider community because they are not locals and have been sent to the region from somewhere else.

Participants do not only raise language issues as challenges but also highlight other more general practical and logistical challenges which teachers face. These are mainly due to a lack of funding and resources, and an insufficient number of teachers for the number of students in each class:

> Aaaah ni mazingira, mazingira ya huku vijijini kwa mfano huku kwangu kuna uchache wa walimu nalo ni tatizo uchache wa vitabu. Na hili linakuwepo walimu waliokuwepo kutojimudu vizuri kufundisha darasa la kwanza. Lakini kama nilivyosema awali, baadhi ya watoto wanashindwa kujimudu kwenye lugha ya Kiswahili, kwa sababu darasa la kwanza na la pili ndiyo msingi wa kumjengea zile stadi za KKK [*kusoma, kuandika na kuhesabu*]. Kwa hiyo akifika darasa la tatu kama hamudu kwa vyovyote hata darasa la nne hawezi kufanya vizuri.

> *Oh it's the environment, in rural environment like where we are, there is a shortage of teachers, shortage of textbooks and most of the teachers who are present are unable to teach Standard One. But as I said at the beginning some children are unable to master the Swahili language, because*

> *in grade one and two this is the basis for building skills in the '3 R's [i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic]. So when a child gets into Standard Three if he/she cannot understand at all, well even Standard Four she/he will not do well.* (Primary school teacher, Songea, 10th October 2021)

These wider resourcing problems and those related to language are not separate issues, as a lack of sufficient resources and large class sizes make it more difficult for teachers to give students the attention they need to effectively engage with the lessons.

While there is significant pressure on teachers to work with students so that they are able to proceed with their education through the medium of Swahili, they experience additional pressures in having to follow the monolingual Swahili-only language policy themselves. From a policy perspective, teachers are only supposed to use Swahili in the classroom – even in contexts in which their students do not have the Swahili skills to understand the teacher or, by extension, to understand the subject content or to engage with education at all.

> Ila sasa sisi kama wasimamizi tunapokaa na wale walimu wa madarasa ya chini tunawashauri zaidi kutokana na sera ya elimu ambayo ipo tusifanye hivyo kwa maana ya kuwafundisha kwa kuchanganya lugha ya asili na lugha ya Kiswahili.

> *But as representatives we advise the teachers of the lower classes to abide with the existing language policy. We should stop them from mixing up the community language and Swahili*

while teaching. (Education officer, Songea, 11th October 2021)

5.2 Strategies employed by teachers

Given the widely recognized challenges which arise when the LIEP does not correspond to students' linguistic abilities, teachers adopt a range of strategies to deal with the situation. In itself, the fact that there is a range of approaches, which depend on particular teachers and schools, highlights that there is currently no system-wide approach nor any supported pedagogical practices for dealing with multilingualism in education in Tanzania. Some teachers and schools do not accommodate students' use of languages other than Swahili. Multiple participants in our study report the use of punishment for students caught speaking the languages that they are familiar with rather than Swahili. This is done in the belief that it will encourage students to speak Swahili more. However, one participant notes that this practice may have a negative effect on the students.

> Hapa huwa mara nyingi wanapewa adhabu ili waweze ku*adapt* kuongea Kiswahili…Yani kule nilivyoenda mara ya mwisho walimu walikuwa wanatumia kulazimisha kutumia lugha ya Kiswahili kwa adhabu ndogo ndogo kulingana na umri wao pia ile ya kuvaa vibao na kuwapa vitabu pia, ili waelewe kwamba hiki kinatamkwa. Lakini changamoto ipo bado.

> *Here they are often punished so that they can adapt to speaking Swahili.… When I went last time, the teachers used to force the use of Swahili with minor punishments depending on the age of a child. Also, the practice*

of wearing blocks[3] and giving them books so that they may learn how to pronounce this and that. But the challenge remains. (Headteacher, Songea, 9th October 2021)

Such punishments also have the negative effect of making children feel inferior, to the extent that they may not come to school the following day. These approaches are quite prevalent, with teachers reporting that forbidding the use of community languages and requiring the use of Swahili is a strategy adopted to help students learn only in Swahili, as is required by the syllabus and by the wider LIEP.

Other teachers described adopting strategies which are not as restrictive and which do not follow a monolingual Swahili-only approach. One education officer stated that, when teaching, they would use some Ngoni to aid student understanding:

> Wa kwangu mwenyewe kwa mfano, nilipokuwa nafundisha nilikuwa naingia darasani nafundisha kwa kutumia lugha ya Kiswahili. Lakini ninapoona watoto pengine nilivyokuwa nawaelekeza hawaelewi, *at least* kwa kiwango kidogo sana, nilikuwa natumia misamiati ile ya Kingoni ilimradi watoto waweze kuelewa ninachokizungumza.

> *Me myself, for example, when I used to teach, I would enter the classroom when I was teaching and use Swahili. But when I saw some students perhaps not understanding what I was explaining at least a little I would use some Ngoni vocabularies so that the children could understand what*

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[3] This relates to the practice of children being given a wooden block to wear around their neck as a form of punishment at school, typically for having spoken in a language which is not in line with that mandated by the language policy.

I was talking about. (Education officer, Songea, 11th October 2021)

Other participants support this 'mixing' approach, as it enables students to be exposed to Swahili while also allowing them to have access to classroom discussions in a language that they know:

> Ningependekeza lugha za asili na lugha ya Kiswahili. Kwamba kwa madarasa yale ya chini, walimu watumie lugha ya maeneo yale pamoja na Kiswahili wakati wanapokuwa wanawafundisha watoto. Kwa mfano, katika ufundishaji wanaanzia kitu rahisi kwenda kigumu. Kwa hiyo sasa watoto wanapoingia tu mazingira mapya inabidi waanzie kile wanachokijua. Na kile wanachokijua ni lugha ya asili. Sasa wanaweleta taratibu katika hiki ambacho ni kigumu, lugha ya kufundishia ambayo ni ya taifa. Kwa hiyo kuchanganya kunasaidia katika kumfanya mtoto aweze kuelewa.

> *I would recommend native languages and Swahili. That for the lower classes, teachers should use the local language as well as Swahili when teaching children. For example, in teaching they start with something easy and go on to what's hard. So now that when kids are entering a new environment, they have to start with what they already know. And what they do know is the native language. Now they are slowly bringing that which is difficult, the language of instruction which is the national language. So the 'mixing' helps the child to understand.* (Education

officer, Mbogwe, 27th September 2021)

As this participant highlights, this approach allows students to build on what they already know, does not completely cut them off from the classroom context, and allows them to begin to get more comfortable with the learning environment before moving on to more use of Swahili. There are challenges with this approach though, which mainly stem from the aforementioned pressures of the Swahili-only policy. While teachers do recognize that 'mixing' helps learners to understand, the fact that it goes against the policy means that some will not adopt this approach:

> Unapowapeleka ile lugha asili unaona darasa kidogo linakuwa na mapokeo fulani kama mazuri kwa sababu unaenda nao na kuelewa tofauti kama unatumia lugha moja ya Kiswahili tu. Lakini sasa sisi tunasisitiza zaidi kutumia lugha ya Kiswahili kwa sababu tunaamini ndiyo lugha amabyo inatakiwa. Wale watoto tuwasasidie tunakutana na changamoto nyingi na tunaangalia darasa linavokuwepo. Nauona hapa kuna changamoto watoto labda niwasaidie kwa namna hii lakini mwisho wa siku tunafika kwenye malengo yale ambayo yale tunayataka ya watoto wajue Kiswahili.

> *When you use the other languages, you see that the class is better because you are going along with them [the children] they understand more than when you use Swahili only. But for us, we emphasize the use of Swahili because we believe it is the language that is required. So we help them and they are faced with lots of challenges in the class. But I think*

if there is a challenge, perhaps I can help the children so that at the end we can achieve the objectives, including that the children should know Swahili. (Education officer, Songea, 11th October 2021)

Teachers who do not have the language resources necessary to 'mix' may rely on support from other colleagues:

Kwa hiyo mimi, nikiona vile kwa mfano mtoto anahangaika huwa kwanza najitaidi kutafuta suluhisho kwa walimu wenzangu. Labda kuna kitu ukiulizwa kwa Kingoni inakuaje wakishaniambia basi naenda kuwarekebisha.

Therefore, if I see them struggling, I try to find a solution from my fellow teachers. Maybe how do we call something in Ngoni, I go back to correct them immediately after they have told me. (Primary school teacher, Songea, 8th October 2021)

The approaches that emerge from the reports of strategies adopted by teachers are varied and diverse. They also reflect the fact that teachers are given little guidance or direction on appropriate strategies to effectively deal with multilingual contexts. This is concerning given the fact that teachers highlight how important it is that students are able to learn through Swahili, but they are not given any support on appropriate pedagogical approaches to help students do this.

5.3 Experiences of teacher training programmes

Teachers note that language and language issues are not covered specifically, sufficiently, or in detail in any training that they have received:

Wana shida hiyo kwa sababu walimu wengi wanafundisha levo ya msingi. Wamemaliza kidato cha nne sasa hawajaingia ndani zaidi kwenye sayansi ya lugha. Yaani wapo tusema kama vile hawajaingia ndani. Kwa hiyo kuna tatizo kwenye jambo hilo la lugha.

They have that challenge because many of the teachers are teaching the foundational level. They have finished grade four but they have not gone any further than that in the science of language. So, we could say they haven't gone very deep. So there is this language problem. (Education officer, Songea, 11th October 2021)

Teachers are therefore responsible for their own professional development in this area, drawing on their own experiences and on the collective pooling of knowledge. As our data indicate, teachers develop their strategies themselves and through peer learning with colleagues.

Hizi mbinu katika fundisha fundisha sababu nimefundisha shule tofauti tofauti. Saa zingine kuchanganyachanganya na akili zangu basi tukawa tunaelezana humu ndani labda huenda tukifanya hivi na hivi tunaweza kutoa watoto kutoka hali fulani kwenda hali nyingine. Na zingine huwa wanatupa kwenye hizi semina kama TP ['*Tusome Pamoja*' seminars] kwa mfano, kwa hiyo walikuwa wanatuelekeza.

I obtained these techniques in the teaching processes since I have taught in different schools. Other times, I use my own creativity and when we share with my fellow teachers, we get to know how to help the children

move from one level to another. And we get the other techniques from various seminars such as those provided during the teaching seminar TP [Tusome Pamoja; Lets Read Together] for example which are among those who taught us some of the methods. (Headteacher, Songea, 9th October 2021)

Our participants suggest that it would be beneficial to receive more training which is directly related to helping students who do not have Swahili language skills when they arrive at school.

Kuna mafunzo ambayo inabidi yatolewe ambayo ni mafunzo kazini ambayo inabidi yatolewe kwa walimu hao wa madarasa ya awali, la kwanza na la pili kwa ajili ya kuweza kumudu 'KKK' kuweza kumudu hizi lugha za kawaida yanaweza yakatolewa kazini lakini yakasaidia katika suala la ufundishaji.

There is training that needs to be provided which are on-the-job training that needs to be provided to those lower classes for them to grasp the '3 Rs' and help them to master teaching processes. (Primary school teacher, Songea, 10th October 2021)

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Mafunzo ya aina gani kuwepo na kozi za mara kwa mara walimu waende chuoni au angalau hata kama siyo chuoni mazingira haya-haya ya kikata. Basi wanapokutana pale wanapeana uzoefu wanabadilishana mawazo na mbinu

mbalimbali nafikili inaweza ikasaidia zaidi kuwafanya watoto waelewe.

Different courses and training should be given to teachers. They should go either at colleges or in their local wards. When they meet, they will share ideas and different strategies that I think can help all to understand better. (Education officer, Nzega, 5th October 2021)

Participants highlight the need for language-specific training in their pre-service and in-service professional development programmes. They also highlight the need for this to be context-specific, depending on the languages found in different areas:

Mi nafikiri wizara ingeboresha ikaweka mafunzo zaidi sasa inategemea na lugha yaani kwa ujumla inategemea na eneo fulani. Kila eneo fulani linachangamoto za lugha hasa kwa hizi shule za vijijini. Nafikiri wizara ingeangalia kwa makini pale ikaweka hata kozi mbili itatusaidia sana.

I think the ministry could reconstruct and put more courses and now it depends on the language, I mean it depends on the area because each area has its language challenges for these village schools. I think the ministry could check it clearly and put two courses, it will help us a lot. (Primary school teacher, Nzega, 29th September 2021)

Teachers desire training which will allow them to identify what students might struggle with under a Swahili-only policy, as well as giving them specific strategies and methods for

coping with these challenges. They want specific input, training, and advice:

Mimi binafsi ningependa nipate mbinu, kwanza nipate mbinu za kujua au kutambua changamoto zinazokabili jamii katika lugha yao. Lakini nipate sasa mbinu mbadala yakuweza kuwapokea sasa watoto wale wanaotoka katika mazingira yao na ingewezekana kuwe labda na kozi ya muda mfupi kwa wale watoto kabla hatujaanza nao yale masomo. Tuweze kuwapatia ndipo tuje na ile mitaala rasmi kwenye mazingira ya shule kama wanavyofanya labda vyuo ndo tuje tuendelee nao.

Personally, I would like to be taught methods. Firstly, I would like to get methods to know or to identify the challenges that are facing society in terms of language. Also, to get to know how to assist the children who come from those contexts. There could also perhaps be a short course before beginning the class lessons and after the course we can come to start teaching them through the recommended curriculum as they are doing in colleges. (Headteacher, Songea, 9th October 2021)

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Aaaaaaah mimi nafikiri kwa walimu hasa madarasa yale ya chini kwa maeneo haya ambayo watoto wetu mara nyingine wanakuwa na lugha hiyo mama Kingoni lazima kungekuwa na sijui tuseme ni kakozipawe na *mechanism* au njia yoyote ile ya kuweza kuwasaidia wale nao wakajua. Angalau basi hata maneno machache ya lugha ya

Kingoni ili aweze kumsaidia anapokumbana na changamoto ya watoto ambao kimsingi hawajui kabisa Kiswahili.

Ah, I think teachers who are responsible for the beginner classes in those areas where our children most of the time have Kingoni as their mother tongue they should really, I don't know, let's say have short courses for example and mechanisms or some way at least to help them when they come. At least just a few words of Kingoni in order to help them when they encounter the challenge of students who do not know Swahili at all. (Education officer, Songea, 7th October 2021)

One teacher also stated that language courses during teacher training would be useful as this would enable teachers to come to the classroom with the linguistic resources needed to communicate with the children and to be more confident in using languages other than Swahili:

Mengine kwa hapo mimi ni kujifunza lugha yao hii pia inatakiwa nijifunze niijue ili pale mtoto anapopata shida. Nisihangaike tena kwenda kumwuuliza mwalimu mwingine.

Something else for me is for me to learn their language, that is also needed for me to help a student when s/he has a problem. I should not have to trouble myself with asking another teacher. (Primary school teacher, Songea, 8th October 2021)

From our interviews there is a reported lack of attention paid to language in the training period for teachers. As a result, teachers are

not equipped to deal with the multilingual realities of the communities and students that they encounter when they are posted to their teaching posts across the country. Teachers are clearly aware of the issues and emphasize that language-specific training would be valuable for them.

6 Discussion and future directions

In this paper we highlight two important issues in the Tanzanian education system in relation to language. The first issue is that a monolingual language-in-education policy is restrictive within a multilingual context and does not reflect students' and staff members' linguistic repertoires or lived multilingual realities (Reilly et al. 2022). The second is that, due to the dominance of a monolingual approach to education, teachers are not given sufficient training in methods which would help them engage with learners who do not have a level of Swahili that would enable them to immediately start learning in that language. This is also evident through documents provided by the government. For example, while the Curriculum Framework for Basic Education and Teacher Education (TIE 2019, 28) argues that "[t]here should be room for learners and teachers to use mother tongue or code switching when and where necessary", the teacher training curriculum itself does not provide any opportunities for this kind of facilitation. This situation is also reflected in the comments shared by the participants in this study.

As can be seen from the teachers' responses discussed above, there are implications for student learning and language practices. Some teachers opt for punishment, seeking to strictly enforce the Swahili-only policy, while others make use of techniques they have developed during their work and drawing from their own experience to attempt to engage learners. This mainly consists of 'mixing' and making use of the language more

familiar to the students. Teachers recognize that this is advantageous as it allows students to understand what is being said in the classroom. Nevertheless, some are reluctant to adopt it because they fear that it 'delays' the acquisition of Swahili, which could have negative effects on the students as they continue in their education.

Many of the participants in the study recognized the importance of language to education and are keen to acquire strategies for engaging with their multilingual classrooms in more open, effective, and 'policy-sanctioned' ways. This is essential when teachers, throughout their teaching careers, are placed in areas with a range of languages and have to adapt to these multilingual contexts. However, this is not being recognized sufficiently at a higher level; teachers are not adequately equipped and, due to a lack of attention given to language, teachers do not come to their roles with the knowledge they need to deal with their students' linguistic repertoires.

One positive initiative to mention here is work that is underway on developing language supportive pedagogy (LSP), which Clegg and Milligan (2021, 206) define as:

> a distinct pedagogy designed to help learners learn content when their command of the LoI, both social and academic, is in its earlier stages. It offers learners strong linguistic scaffolding, which reduces the language demands made on them by a high density of new language forms, thus enabling them to focus away from new language and deploy attention to new conceptual contents.

LSP was first introduced in Tanzania in 2013 and in Rwanda in 2014 via the Language supportive Teaching and Textbooks Project (see Barrett 2014; Milligan et al. 2016; see also

Rubagumya et al. 2021 and Barrett et al. 2021 for a discussion of the development of LSP).

LSP seeks to provide support to students who are in situations where they have to learn in languages in which they are still developing the requisite skills (Clegg 2021). These strategies do not prioritize monolingual practices within the classroom but rather legitimize the multilingual language practices that teachers and students bring to the classroom (Erling et al. 2021b) and reflect their lived multilingual realities (Reilly et al. 2022). LSP is designed to be contextually appropriate and inclusive for students' linguistic abilities (Rubagumya et al. 2021) and enable students and teachers to engage in translanguaging practices to aid content learning (Clegg and Milligan 2021). Resources such as textbooks created within a LSP framework aim to maximize comprehension while taking language into consideration. Sentence length, text length, and vocabulary are factors considered when designing resources, which can also include more visual elements, as well as multilingual glossaries (Clegg and Milligan 2021).

LSP also enables teachers and students to openly support and benefit from practices which may already exist 'undercover' (Clegg and Afitska 2011, 73). In their investigation of LSP in mathematics classes in Tanzania, William and Ndabakurane (2017) find that both teachers and students respond positively to LSP as it allows the use of both English and Swahili, therefore aiding students in understanding complex subject-specific English terminology. Investigating science classes in Tanzanian secondary schools, David and Venuste (2021) and Richard and David (2021) present similar findings. They illustrate that post-LSP intervention students show an improvement in their understanding of subject content and also feel positive towards a teaching approach which allows Swahili to be used to assist them in understanding their lessons. In all of the studies cited in this section, the authors conclude by advocating for a wider adoption of LSP in Tanzania, recognizing that, if the government wishes to continue to adopt monolingual approaches at both primary and secondary levels, then a significant overhaul to teacher training, curriculum development, and teaching and learning resources is required (Barrett and Bainton 2016).

Work on LSP in Tanzania has thus far largely focused on the secondary level and on supporting students in their development of English skills (Barrett et al. 2021). We suggest that introducing language supportive pedagogy into teacher training could provide a useful way forward for educators in Tanzania. At the primary level, many participants emphasize that part of their role is to move students away from their home languages and towards Swahili. Language supportive pedagogy presents a practical option for enabling students to acquire the language skills they need within the current, restrictive, monolingual language-in-education policy context.

We propose the following guidelines which we believe constitute a useful basis for language supportive pedagogy in Tanzania:

1) the linguistic repertoires that students bring to school should be viewed as a resource and students should not be punished for using any language in school;

2) teachers should use the linguistic resources within their classrooms to enable students to engage with education, promoting positive attitudes towards all languages present;

3) teachers should use the languages students know to support them in acquiring the Swahili skills they need to continue with their education.

We believe that education which is both multilingual and language-supportive is achievable (Clegg and Milligan 2021).

Alongside advocating for language supportive pedagogies, we also draw attention to the need to rethink monolingual language-in-education policies. Monolingual policies create artificial and restrictive monolingual

spaces within the school, limiting the ability of teachers and students to freely draw on their linguistic repertoire and skills, and reinforcing language ideologies which assert that certain skills are more legitimate or valuable than others. Given the specific language policies and ideologies present in the context of primary education in Tanzania, it is important to acknowledge that many children come to school without the knowledge of Swahili that they would need to engage in learning through Swahili-only instruction. Effective learning environments must acknowledge the multilingual reality of students, staff, and the communities in which they live, and seek to reflect this within language policy.

Abbreviations

MOI – Medium of Instruction
LIEP – Language-in-Education Policy

LSP – Language Supportive Pedagogies

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