

Learning through a familiar language versus learning through a foreign language – A look into some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania.

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International Journal of Educational Development

Volume 27, Issue 5, September 2007, Pages 487-498

Learning through a familiar language versus learning through a foreign language – A look into some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.10.004>

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Abstract

This article builds on 30 h of observations made in classrooms in secondary schools in Tanzania in the fall of 2004. The article presents an empirical study using an experimental group that was taught in Kiswahili and a control group taught the same topics in English. The author takes the reader straight into some of the classrooms and gives excerpts from four lessons. In the classrooms the teacher teaches a topic on one occasion in English and then the same topic is taught in Kiswahili. In one of the examples given here it is the same teacher who teaches the same topic in the two languages to two different classes. The observational data are examined using a theoretical framework known as

qualification analysis. The data are analysed with respect to the qualification categories that are promoted or inhibited through the class-room interaction taking place. The data show that if the aim is the stupidification of the Tanzanian labour force, the use of English, a foreign language to the students and a language poorly mastered by the teachers, seems to be an excellent strategy. If the aim is to create a labour force with critical abilities and creative qualifications, the language of instruction policy is unlikely to have such an outcome.



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Keywords

Language of instruction in Tanzania; Experimental study on the use of language of instruction; Qualification analysis; Learning in secondary school in Tanzania; Teacher & student interaction

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