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English Language Teaching in Tanzania: A Colloquium

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*Utafiti Vol. VII No. 2, 1985, Journal of
the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
University of Dar es Salaam.*

(This is a revised and updated version of a paper originally written in October, 1978. The revisions, mainly of omission, are in the body of the paper; the updating has largely been done in the footnotes).

Introduction

Language, like water and forests, is a national resource. It is in no danger of becoming exhausted through overuse — the reverse, indeed, is true — but it can be well managed or poorly managed and, if wrong choices are made, the results may be serious for the social and political life of a people and in particular for education. It is nowadays generally accepted that, if such results are to be avoided, language resources must be protected and developed and the use and teaching of languages within the national speech community must be carefully planned.

In 1978, the Institute of Education organised a Colloquium with the aim of giving those professionally concerned a chance to discuss one important aspect of language 'management' in Tanzania — the teaching of English at the primary level. This is an issue that connects with very many inter-related problems of language use and planning in the country, and the present paper, which was originally written immediately after the colloquium as a summary of impressions, touches on a number of these. The event itself is now several years in the past, but the fact that the issues are still energetically alive is adequate testimony to the continuing significance of those otherwise somewhat distant discussions. A recently completed report⁽²⁾ on the condition of English in the Tanzanian educational system makes this fact abundantly clear.

2. The Problems.

2.1 'Declining standards'

It is part of the background assumptions of all discussion of the present position of English and ELT in Tanzania that standards - i.e. observed levels of proficiency — have declined and are declining.⁽³⁾ There is little in the way of concrete data to support this widely held belief. Still less is it possible to say precisely how, and precisely how far, standards have declined⁽⁴⁾ But there is no shortage of suggested reasons to account for what is happening. The following is a list, in no particular order, of the most prominent of these:

- absence of opportunity and incentive to use English particularly in the primary school, associated with the fact that English is no longer a medium of instruction at any level of primary education;
- the diminishing functions and declining prestige of English in Tanzania;
- absence of clear official guidelines on what the present functions of English in Tanzania are or should be, or on the value of the language in the development of the nation;
- uncertainty among teachers as to the nature of their role in teaching English and in creating favourable conditions for its successful use;

- lack of specialist English teachers at primary level;
- generally low qualifications of many primary school teachers, a problem inevitably aggravated by the move towards universal primary education;
- lack of commitment to the teaching of English in the schools, so that the subject does not always receive its due share of time and attention in school curricula;
- shortcomings of the existing coursebooks at primary level, a lack of any coursebook at secondary level and a general shortage of good supplementary materials such as readers.
- uncertainty on the part of parents as to the benefits to be gained by their children from the efforts of learning English;
- an absence of effective motivation in school pupils to learn the language well.)

2.2. 'Attitudes'

Tanzania, in the pre-Independence period, was linguistically 'tri-focal' (in Whiteley's term), using a non-African world language, an African lingua franca, and a large number of localised African languages "in specific well-defined social settings which would over time invest these languages with particular values, themselves capable of exploitation for various purposes".⁶ Tanzania, Whiteley noted, has remained linguistically trifocal, "but with some re-allocation of settings". At the time that he was writing, Whiteley could report that English was still the language associated with upward social mobility. He described the policy of adopting Swahili as the national language as "an ideological imperative inducing a state of mind towards the language as one of the behavioural corollaries of the national ethos". In 1978, on the evidence of what was said at the colloquium, the process of re-allocation of settings, though no doubt obvious and striking to anyone with experience of the situation ten or twenty years previously, seemed less significant than the concomitant re-allocation of values. The positive values attached to English as "the language associated with upward social mobility", of access to higher education and the world of international culture, had been largely lost, and had been replaced with negative values, as the language of former colonial domination, as a language to be spoken out of necessity (for some) rather than out of choice. In the process of change of values and exploitation of values, the rise of Swahili, it appeared, had to a small extent resulted from, and to a large extent resulted in, the decline of English both in its symbolic and its instrumental aspects. To use English unnecessarily was felt (some said) to be "kasumba"—indicative of a non-Tanzanian mentality. How are these two realities to be reconciled? So far as the teaching of English is concerned, it is presumably part of the teacher's role to foster positive attitudes to what he teaches, but such an answer clearly does not get to the root of the problem if, amongst teachers themselves, there is an element of uncertainty, an ambivalence in their dealings with the language.⁽⁷⁾

2.3 'Functions'

Re-allocation of settings, as mentioned above, appears not to have been so extensive, nor to have had so decisive an impact on the language learning situation, as the shift in attitudes and values. There are now, as previously, four principal functions that English serves in Tanzania. It is a language of international communication, a language of commerce, an official administrative lan-

guage, and a language of education. In each of these functions except the first there has been some reduction in English use. In relation to the commercial and official functions, neither the existing situation nor the process of change are easily described except in the most impressionistic terms. English is still much in evidence in the 'literature' of commerce — advertising material, guarantees, warnings and instructions on products, etc — far less so in that of administration—forms, circulars, official correspondence, etc. One hears conflicting accounts of the extent to which English is still used in offices, whether government or commercial, and in the processes of law⁽⁸⁾. What is not in doubt is that many people confidently expect English to yield to Swahili, in all these settings, in the foreseeable future. In relation to the educational function, both the immediate and longer-term future present greater uncertainties. English has not been a medium of instruction in the primary schools, except in the teaching of English since the mid 1960's. It is the medium of instruction in secondary and university education but, particularly in the former, there is said to be a certain amount of unofficial use of Swahili. There is a general expectation that Swahili will become the principal, if not the sole, medium of instruction in secondary schools (Forms I-IV) in the fairly near future and that this will eventually extend to Forms V-VI and the University.⁽⁹⁾ This is not to say that people are unaware of the difficulties in the way of this process, particularly in the provision of teaching materials, the training of teachers and the working out of a smooth programme for transition. They merely insist that the difficulties make the change over a question of when and how, not whether. In some contrast with these other functions, the use of English in its international function is certainly enhanced by present circumstances rather than diminished. For it is seen, not merely as a language for formal international relations, but as "a tool for communication with the outside world..... i.e. for acquiring knowledge from the outside world as well as for educating the outside world on Tanzanian policies", "for sharing the socialist experience, and for personal development".⁽¹⁰⁾ Here the 'international' merges with the 'educational' functions, each reinforcing the other, and this most clearly in the teaching, at all post-primary levels, of African literature in English originating from all parts of continent.

One occasionally hears the position of English in Tanzania compared to that of French now and perhaps Portuguese and other internationally used languages in the future. This is to view English in Tanzania as a 'foreign' rather than a 'second' language. English, of course, shares with these other languages the characteristic of being non-indigenous to the speech community, but it is clear that it continues to fulfil a set of functions within that community more extensive than that implied by the term 'foreign language'. The 'settings' are reducing, but gradually, and it might reasonably be expected that, if the process of transition, at least in the domain of education, is to be an orderly one, it will also be a fairly protracted one.

2.4. 'Aims'

In the light of the foregoing it is not surprising that one of the dominant themes of the Colloquium was the question of what the aims of teaching English in the primary school should be. There were a number of participants who felt that this was not in fact an issue and that the Colloquium should concern itself more with the essential business of considering how the teaching of English in Tanzania could be improved. There seemed to many, however, to be

an important link between these two, that is between knowing the reasons for teaching English and knowing how best to teach it. If there was to be clear thinking on methods and materials there must first be clear thinking on aims and objectives. The Colloquium was thus, on more than one occasion, brought back to the question: Why are we teaching English in the primary school? — posed not as rhetorical device to imply that we should not really be teaching it at all but rather as a procedural challenge to the participants: once we know 'why' then we can start to consider "how better".

There must clearly be a connection between the aims for teaching a language and the functions fulfilled by that language within the national speech community. The relationship is not a simple one of exact correspondence, however, in which functions determine aims. Account must also be taken of two distinct sets of factors:

- (i) who, in social terms, the learners are, and the likely future roles they will fulfil in which a knowledge of the language will be needed by them;
- (ii) what is educationally feasible, in terms of availability of time, materials, teachers, and the will to learn.

It is possible to obtain some partial clarification on the question of learners and their needs by constructing a matrix in which the principal functions fulfilled by English in Tanzania intersect with the four main language activities. Each cell may then be marked with a + to indicate a definite need, a - to indicate a definite lack of need, and a ? to indicate a possible need. The figure below represents the outcome of such an exercise.

	Internal Communication	Official Language	Commerce	Education
CONVERSATION	—	—	?	?
LISTENING	?	—	+	?
READING	?	?	+	+
WRITING	—	?	—	+

The values in the cells are inserted tentatively, on the basis of comments and opinions expressed by participants at the colloquium as well as by others I have spoken with, including university students in seminars. They are intended to represent the plausible or possible needs, in relations to English, of the primary school leaver who does not have the opportunity of proceeding to formal secondary education.⁽¹¹⁾ Since Tanzania's policy of Education for Self-Reliance takes as one of its fundamental principles that education for the primary school child should be self-contained and should not be conceived of merely as the basis for the secondary education that most children will not proceed to, a particular problem is posed for the teaching of English at primary level. It might be expressed in this way: If the needs of secondary education were entirely left out of account, what would be the reasons for teaching English in the primary school? In summary:

English for international communication

The opportunities for personal international communication are obviously slight for most primary leavers. There are, however, some opportunities for using the receptive skills, in listening to English language broadcasts and reading overseas English language publications.

English as an official language

It is difficult to imagine realistic circumstances in which primary leavers in Tanzania would positively require to use English for any 'official' purpose. Some forms are still in English, certain job opportunities may require applicants to have a knowledge of English, one of the two national newspapers is in English, as well as the external broadcasting service. The possibilities are few.

English in commerce and industry

The principal needs that can realistically be included in this category appear to be: the reading of commercial material such as advertisements, instructions and workshop manuals, and some conversational English in, e.g., the tourist industry.

English in education.

It is here that the strongest claim for the teaching of English in primary school can be made, and the claim is scarcely weakened by leaving out of consideration the needs of those who will proceed to full-time secondary education. It was stated at the Colloquium that approximately 70,000 students were at that time engaged in private study through the correspondence courses of the Institute of Adult Education. Even outside this number, it seems certain that English provides access to further learning, and to a widening of horizons and capacities, for the primary leaver who does not regard his education as completed with the completion of his formal schooling. Within this function, it seems clear that the principal need is for the skills relating to the written medium, and in particular for skill in reading. It is certainly arguable that, in terms both of language pedagogy and also perhaps of future need, the conversational skill is a useful, even indispensable, concomitant of these. But there can be little doubt that the essential educational requirement at this level is for facility in reading. In note-taking, essay-writing, discussion, the student may, if necessary or if he prefers, turn to Swahili for communication with himself, his teachers, or his peers. But a coursebook or a volume from the public library will not translate itself. Skill in reading is thus the irreducible necessity in what might perhaps be called 'English for self-reliance in further education'.

Such an analysis is in fact implicit in the aims for teaching English in Tanzanian primary schools stated in the official teacher education syllabus. These are:

- (a) To give primary school leavers a permanent reading knowledge of English so that they can have access to ideas and information available in English and useful to Tanzania, or so that they can continue with their education through the use of English as a medium of learning.
- (b) To develop, through learning English language skills, the pupils' education for self-reliance, politically, technically, socially and culturally. (12)

We may note the emphasis of the *educational* value of English to the primary school leaver, and the identification of reading as the essential skill that the pupils need to acquire.

The importance of developing the reading skill, and the need to produce suitable materials so as to enable the teacher to do this more effectively, were two prominent themes in the discussions of the Colloquium. Within this broad statement of aim, however, a more precise statement of objectives, desirable and realistic, is very much needed. Careful consideration still needs to be given to such questions as the type and level of reading attainment sought, the scope of the recognition vocabulary and syntax, the types of text most appropriate for comprehension materials at different levels, the nature of the comprehension skills to be aimed for, and the appropriate types of exercise and test for fostering and monitoring the development of such skills. The same type of renewed attention to the detailed specification of objectives, at a time of transition in English language use and teaching, would also undoubtedly be of value in relation to the other main skills — conversation, listening and writing.

Realistic aims, it goes without saying, are aims which match with the available resources. The resources in question are both material and human. The former include classrooms and coursebooks, the latter include the professional competence of the teachers as well as enthusiasm for the task on the part of both teachers and pupils. It seems reasonable to suppose that some limitation of aims, a more precise specification of aims, would be beneficial in two ways at least. On the one hand, narrower aims, in the absence of large numbers of specialist teachers, represent a more achievable target, and, though the written language makes more demands in terms of published material, it probably makes fewer demands in terms of teacher skill. On the other hand, more specific aims, and aims which can be seen to be socially desirable and educationally feasible, may result in more positive attitudes to the learning of English on the part of all concerned, pupils and parents, as well as teachers. In this context, less may mean better. Better should mean more useful to those acquiring the skill.

2.5 The medium of instruction.

There were no secondary school teachers of English at the Colloquium. Had there been, the question of English language competence of Form I entrants, and the relation of this to primary curriculum, might have been a major topic of discussion. In fact the question was scarcely touched on. Reference was made to the need for intensive teaching of English in the early months of secondary education, to the need for a secondary English course for Tanzanian schools, to the fact that English was not taught as a subject in Form V and VI, but, since the focus of discussion was the primary curriculum, these issues were not dwelt on. Nevertheless, the present role — the uncertain role — of English as a medium of instruction in secondary schools, and the fact that this role is sustained by the teaching of English that is done in the primary schools, means that primary English and secondary English cannot for long be considered in isolation from one another.

So far as the role of English as a medium in secondary education is concerned, the present situation is characterised by a small number of influential doubts and certainties. They may be summarised as follows:

Certainties:

- (i) English is the official medium of instruction for all subjects except Swahili and politics.
- (ii) English is the language of the 'O' level examinations, with the same exceptions.

- lack of specialist English teachers at primary level;
- generally low qualifications of many primary school teachers, a problem inevitably aggravated by the move towards universal primary education;
- lack of commitment to the teaching of English in the schools, so that the subject does not always receive its due share of time and attention in school curricula;
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2.6. 'The start of learning'¹⁵

At what stage in the primary school curriculum should English teaching begin? Since so much in the pattern of language teaching depends upon what decision is made on this issue — in connection, for instance, with the training of teachers and the provision, revision and supply of textbooks — the last afternoon of the Colloquium, when it happened that the subject came up, was scarcely the ideal time for discussing it. But once it was raised it was not easily let go: getting to grips with this particular issue seemed, all of a sudden, to be a prerequisite for the resolution of many other problems. Briefly, since the Colloquium was near its end, there was some lively debate.

The question of when language learning should start is one in which a number of assumptions are firmly entrenched. Two are particularly powerful. One of these is that there is a correlation between length of time spent learning a language and level of achievement, and this may be summarised as *Longer means better*. The other is that there is a critical period for language learning in the development of the individual and, though no-one is quite sure what this is, it seems likely that *Earlier means better*. In fact, neither of these assumptions is based on very much more than myth. In relations to the first, we may agree that, once the fundamentals of a language have been grasped, then continued exposure to and use of the language, and continued effort in actively learning it, are likely to result in steadily increasing competence. But, if we put the question as follows: Given a defined set of objectives for language learning, what is the optimum period in which they should be pursued? — then it is easy to see, taking account of inevitable limitations on resources both human and material, that to answer without qualification 'the longer the better' might be at best misleading.

In giving consideration to what might be the most suitable period of learning, it is clear that account must be taken not only of the extent of a course but also of its intensity. At present, English in the primary school is taught over a period of 20 terms (from the second term of Primary 1 to the end of Primary 7). If we assume an average of four periods a week over that time, we may estimate that each child attends about 1,000 lessons, i.e. receives 6-700 hours of formal instruction in English. This is equivalent to 100 days devoted exclusively to the learning of English. Are these '100 days' well spent? If we may judge by widespread comments on declining standards, they represent at present a less than satisfactory investment. This being so, it is probably at least worth considering whether a reduced but more selective investment — for example a reduction in the extent of the period of learning from 20 terms to 12, thus beginning instruction in the first term of Primary 4, partially compensated for by a slight increase in intensity — might not result in an actual improvement in performance. I am not aware of any research which is addressed to this specific issue (no doubt there is some) but it is certainly tempting to suppose that long and perhaps, as viewed by the pupils, sometimes desultory language courses might, after a period of years, begin to prove, if not counter-productive, at least not convincingly productive.

But at this point the second assumption that I have referred to appears to argue against the desirability of change. If learning were to begin later, the learners would be older, and would not their facility in language learning be reduced? It is perhaps worth reiterating here, what has been said often elsewhere, that the evidence in support of this view is very far from being conclusive. Ingram (1975) sums it up as follows: "There is a popular notion that young

children are somehow more talented at learning second languages, even in formal settings, than older children and young adults. Occasionally this is linked to the notion of critical periods, if the learning has not taken place within a given period, it is supposed not to come about at all, or only with great difficulty. As far as I am aware there is no objective support for this supposition, in fact such findings as there are go in the opposite direction (.....) There remains the notion that what children may be better at is discrimination and pronunciation. This idea is on the whole more reasonable but even here there is no very compelling evidence. (16) Furthermore, whatever the persuasiveness of any experimental evidence, there may be practical considerations which, in particular circumstances, as pointed out by Rubin (1971), carry more conviction. "It might be true, for example, that children learn a second language best between the ages of six and twelve. Still, the establishing of the most appropriate time to begin a language within this period in a particular country will depend on available resources and on the goals that language teaching is attempting to satisfy." (17) Such particular considerations within the Tanzanian context might include the following:

(i) A later start for English language teaching would enable English to be taught by the more skilled of the present English teachers, particularly those with some degree of specialist training.

(ii) It would reduce the problems faced by the colleges of national education in training for English teaching large numbers of students whose own command of the language is often far from satisfactory.

(iii) It would permit a concentration of materials development and supply on a narrower front, with a possible resultant increase in both quality and relative quantity.

(iv) It would allow children in their early primary years to devote all their language learning capacity to the essential task of mastering Swahili and to the equally vital task of acquiring literacy in that language.

In evaluating such considerations we are brought back, as is suggested above in my second quotation, to the goals for language teaching. It is not easy to generalise about the Colloquium discussion of the start-of-learning issue, for though vigorous it was short and necessarily inconclusive. What was clear, however, was that the considerable thought that had been given to the proper goals for English teaching in the primary school had stimulated an impressive enthusiasm for re-evaluating strategies. The start of learning is a strategic issue par excellence, and one that is bound to be brought in question as a result of the changing role of English in Tanzania. What did emerge from the discussion was the existence of a very general awareness of this fact, coupled with some concern that, in the proper place and time, this particular area of language teaching strategy should be given the renewed attention it now perhaps deserves.

2.7 'Acceptability'.

An important aspect of any consideration of the proper goals for English language teaching is the question of *what* English should be taught — that is to say, not merely how much, nor what registers of English, but what sort or quality of English should be, if not the target, at least the anticipated and accepted outcome of teaching in the primary schools. The issue was raised by a number of participants, who expressed concern about the prevalence of certain non-standard forms in the English of their students, the difficulty of eradicat-

ing these, and the consequent likelihood of their continued dissemination in the primary schools.

The presupposition that all such variants of the standard language are in need of eradication is not, in fact, self-evidently true. (I do not, of course, have in mind here the errors of individual learners, the making of which is normal, and indeed productive, part of the language learning process). The arguments have been well rehearsed.⁽¹⁸⁾ On the one hand it is argued that, since regional separation is invariably accompanied by language variation, and since it is indisputable that areas of natively spoken English show variation in relation to one another, it follows that there is no reason to suppose that areas of second language English either can in practice, or ought in principle, to maintain strict adherence to some external standard. Furthermore, there may be positive arguments in favour of the growth of local norms, since these may appear to make the language less foreign and therefore more easy for the second language learners to accept, to identify with, and perhaps to learn (though such an argument to some extent presupposes that the learner is aware that local usage is different). Provided intelligibility, international or local, is not at risk, there is no reason to adopt a puristic attitude to English where it is used as a second language.

On the other hand, it is argued, the case of second language varieties and that of first language varieties are not comparable. There is generally no formal codification of second language varieties and it is mistaken to imagine that they constitute coherent homogeneous linguistic systems. Intelligibility is not a reliable criterion for acceptability and, furthermore, it is by no means certain that those most personally involved, the language learners, will be satisfied with what they might regard as no more than second best. It may be that international standard English is unattainable in practice, but if the target aimed at is anything other than the standard language then the results obtained will be even more divergent than they are anyway.

In surveying the situation of English in Tanzania in the light of such arguments (and if the reader wishes to give them their due he is recommended to consult the originals) we may note the following points: (i) English in Tanzania has in the past functioned and to a considerable extent continues to function as a second rather than a foreign language, in that it is used *within* the speech community for a number of essential communicative roles. To use a language is to change it. English in Tanzania has changed, slightly but perceptibly, through use. Examples could be cited at all levels of language, notably in relation to pronunciation (for example the pronunciation of the vowel in *bat* as either a low central vowel as in *but* or, perhaps in compensation, as a mid front vowel as in *bet* and in relation to idiomatic expression (*it is really a wonder and this food is somehow tasteless* were among examples cited at the Colloquium). These variants, though uncodified in any formal sense, are not random eccentricities of individuals who have not mastered the language properly but, rather, are consistent characteristics shared by people who have mastered the language properly, if by 'the language' we mean the language as it is commonly used in Tanzania.

(ii) The available models for language learners at the primary level are all Tanzanians (though there are at present a number of native English speakers teaching English in secondary schools and colleges of national education). It is in pronunciation, particularly in the mastery of the systems of stress and intonation, that a satisfactory model is most necessary. The problem of a model does not of

course arise in connection with the reading skill (but it clearly does, in the form of a necessary sensitivity to errors on the part of the teacher, in the acquisition of competence in writing).

(iii) Few primary leavers will have any opportunity to use their English skills in communication with English native speakers.

(iv) Since a number of the variants in question are well-established, and since it is certain that in many cases they are re-inforced by first language interference, the effort involved in 'drilling them out' — as anyone who has attempted this task will confirm — is very considerable. The chances of the standard form sticking, in any circumstances other than those of the most careful attention to speech, are extremely remote.

In terms of effective use of resources (of time, skill, energy, enthusiasm, etc.) it seems better to judge that many of the more widespread local usages are either not worth attempting to eradicate, on the grounds that the work involved outweighs any possible gain in intelligibility or social acceptance, or else are positively desirable from a cultural diversity point of view, or both, and that the time saved might better be devoted to teaching the more essential points (whatever it may be agreed these are) of English lexis, grammar and transmission. This is not to suggest that local variants should be taught — it is fairly obvious that they are in no need of further reinforcement — but merely that they should not be deliberately-un-taught. They should simply be accepted.

The object of such a policy would not be to lower standards, in the realisation that present standards are unobtainable. Rather, it would be to raise standards, through the realisation that present goals are not necessarily realistic or desirable, and through the consequent diversion of resources to areas of greater need.⁽¹⁹⁾

8. Courses of Action

Though the main aims of the Colloquium was discussion rather than making recommendations or arriving at decisions, a number of suggestions for improving the teaching of English in Tanzania were made:

(i) Clear aims should be established for the teaching of English, especially in the primary schools, and clear guidelines should be provided for schools and colleges on the role of English in Tanzania's development and in particular on its value in education.

(ii) The methods used in teaching English and the coursebooks and materials provided should be suited to the aims set forth. An emphasis on the written medium and in particular on reading, at least calls in question 'the primacy of the spoken language' and the appropriateness of some features of the audio-lingual method.

(iii) New materials are needed — a coursebook for secondary schools, supplementary readers for the primary schools.

(iv) The much needed secondary English coursebook should, as was done with *English for Tanzanian Schools*, be developed within Tanzania according to the Tanzanian philosophy of education.

(v) Teachers and tutors should be released from their duties for the purpose of working on the needed materials. Account should be taken of the useful work done by some college students in producing reading materials, and procedures should be devised for encouraging this work and for editing and producing it.

(vi) Certain problems faced by tutors in the colleges of national education, such as the brevity of courses and unpredictable interruptions to the normal routine,

should be tackled so as to enable the colleges to fulfil their functions more efficiently. Study, it was said, is also work.

(vii) Renewed consideration should be given to the level at which English is introduced in the primary schools.

(viii) Consideration also should be given to the possibility of training specialist English language teachers who would concentrate on English language teaching in the schools.

(ix) Since the present Grade 'A' English syllabus is unrealistically full in relation to the time available to teach it, an attempt should be made to identify its more and its less essential components. Alternatively, the syllabus should be re-written.

(x) Opportunities for the use of English by learners should be created through, for instance, the production of specialised radio programmes or perhaps an ELT column in the Daily News.⁽²⁰⁾

In addition, there is an obvious need for research. The following questions, explicit or implicit in the Colloquium discussions, give some indication of what might usefully be undertaken.

- What functions are fulfilled at present by English in Tanzania and how do they appear to be changing? Who uses English in these various functions, and what educational level have they reached? Does their competence in the language match the demands that are made upon it?
- What are the implications for language planning and language pedagogy of the shift away from English as the sole medium to the use of English as a subsidiary medium of education post-primary?
- How should the reading and writing skills required by primary leavers be more precisely specified?
- What generally are the needs of language learners at different educational levels? What language functions must they be competent in, what concepts must they be able to express? What lexis and grammar should be taught as appropriate realisations of these functional and semantic categories?
- What English is 'acceptable' in Tanzania? Is there a Tanzanian English?
- What model of English are language learners exposed to? i.e. what English do the teachers have? What is the impact of this model on the language learning behaviour of pupils?
- What is the nature and effect of first language interference in the learning of English? To what extent are learners' errors the consequence of other factors such as over-generalisation?
- What methods are best suited, at the primary level, to a situation in which the main need is for skill in the written medium? What is the role of the spoken language in achieving facility in reading and writing?
- How, in short, as one contributor put it, do Tanzanian children learn a foreign language?

Any reader of this list will be able to extend it on the basis of his own experience of things that we need to know more about. Though some will already be familiar with research that has been undertaken within the Institute of Education, the Department of Education and the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, it might be that one immediately useful aid would be a bibliography of all recent work in Tanzania in this area, as also a synopsis of current research.⁽²¹⁾ Some permanent basis for co-operation between all those involved in research might also be considered.

9. Conclusion

Perhaps a more general point may be made in conclusion. In language planning in relation to education, where what is in question is the general approach to the teaching of some non-indigenous language, two broadly different types of policy may be distinguished. The first, which may be called the minimalist policy, proceeds from the identification of the essential, irreducible, functions that cannot be fulfilled without recourse to the language in question. The nature of the competence called for, and the categories of people who need it, are established, and a programme is devised for the teaching of this precise competence to these precise people in the most efficient and economical manner. The recent rapid developments in the theory and practice of "ESP" (English for specific purposes) are in part, a response to language learning requirements of this sort. The second type of policy, which may be called maximalist, is based on the assumption, first, that there is no member of the national speech community for whom some knowledge of the language will be entirely useless, and, second, that the more extensively it is taught in the schools, the higher the overall level of competence in the language will be. Those few who need the language at a high academic or scientific or commercial level will acquire the skills they need gradually, and effectively through the normal processes of the educational system. Such a policy thus naturally aims at the teaching of the language to all school pupils, starting at whatever is thought, bearing in mind the availability of resources and the establishment of realistic goals, to be the most effective age or educational level.

In evaluating these different approaches, we might argue, on the one hand, that a minimalist policy will only be acceptable where the language in question fulfils no essential communicative functions, political, educational, administrative, etc. within the life of the community, i.e. where it functions as a foreign rather than a second language. Where the language does fulfil such functions, then denying the language to any category of learners (such as primary leavers) is bound to be socially divisive, setting 'those who know' — and therefore can — apart from 'those who know not' — and therefore cannot.

We might also argue, on the other hand, that a maximalist policy will only be effective where the language in question is, or will become, a necessary tool of communication to all learners, i.e. is truly a potential second language to all members of the national speech community. (The difficulties encountered in the universal teaching of French in Britain and Irish in Ireland, where neither language fulfils any internal communicative function for the vast majority of the population, provide instructive examples in this connection.)

It is clear that a difficult situation may arise where a language functions as a second language *within* the national speech community but not *throughout* it. In that case a language plan must balance the force of the first of the arguments above against that of the second. It may be that some of the uncertainties in the teaching of English in Tanzania spring from the possibility that Tanzania itself is on the edge of this dilemma. The discussion of the functions of English in Tanzania given above leads to the conclusion that, in secondary and higher education at least, English has at present a relatively clear cut role to play throughout the speech community. But in its other functions the value of universal English is less certain. And the educational function itself will become less certain as the spread and development of Swahili proceeds. Against

this there are signs, of which the Colloquium itself was undoubtedly one, of a renewed determination to make a maximalist policy work. The Ministry of National Education has called for a greater commitment to the teaching of English, the primary course books are in the process of being rewritten. ELT experts from Britain are at present assisting several of the colleges of national education, and the Institute of Education is making the determined efforts, through the revision of syllabuses and the writing of materials, to make the work of the teachers more effective.

It is of course important that all such effort should not just be, but be seen to be, well directed, i.e. directed towards the achievement of a set of goals generally accepted as being both realistic and worthwhile. For example, uncertainties about the continuing role of English as *the* medium of instruction (beyond the primary school) obscure the fact that English is likely to remain a medium at certain levels and for certain educational functions for the foreseeable future. There is a wealth of educational, technical, legal, literary, historical and other material in English in Tanzania, there are many highly or adequately fluent speakers of English for whom their knowledge of the language is an important factor in their professional activities, and there is long experience of English teaching. Clearly, English is still a valuable national 'resource'. As a non-indigenous second language, however, it is a resource that can only be managed — indeed can only be saved from total extinction — by effective teaching: by skilled and dedicated work in the classroom, supported by the best that can be achieved in syllabus, materials and evaluation design and in teacher training, with these activities in turn being guided by a national language plan that is, as far as possible (and there are many factors that make this not as far as one might otherwise be inclined to expect), coherent, consistent and convincing.

Efforts to make improvements in language teaching (in this broad sense) well directed will, it is perhaps in conclusion worth emphasising, be ineffective to the extent that the information on which they are based is incorrect or incomplete or inadequately grasped or understood. Some (by no means all) of the problems of English language teaching in Tanzania are traceable to this obvious fact: For those that are, the solution is research: not just more of it, but better appreciation of what has already been done.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For an official report on the Colloquium see Institute of Education (1978) *English language teaching: Colloquium report and recommendations*.
2. The Report 'On the teaching of the English language and its use as a medium of education in Tanzania' was produced in August 1984 by C. Criper and W. A. Dodd on behalf of the British Overseas Development Administration at the request of the Ministry of Education. It gives a comprehensive and insightful survey of the present situation, together with recommendations for a programme of remedial action.
3. A typical expression of this view is to be found in an article which appeared in the Sunday News of 26th Fe. 1978 by S. Kimario and others, entitled 'Why English has taken a Nose-dive'. The depth of the dive is made clear in a much quoted paper on the medium of instruction issue: 'Haja ya kutumia Kiswahili kufundishia katika elimu ya juu' by P.O. Mlamba and M. L. Matheru, published by BAKITA in the same year.

4. This assertion, true in 1978, is now contradicted by the existence of the Dodd-Criper Report (see footnote 2) which presents data derived from proficiency tests administered to a large number of subjects at all levels of the educational system; and indeed by several earlier (but less comprehensive) studies.
5. Most of these points remain valid. However, the third should now be qualified because of the 1983 announcement by the Minister of Education that English would continue as medium of instruction in secondary and higher education, the fifth by the introduction several years ago of Grade 'A' (primary) teacher training programmes at Marangu and Korogwe Colleges of National Education which give special emphasis to English, and the eighth by the recent completion of a new series of English coursebooks for primary schools: *Primary English for Tanzania* (produced by the Institute of Education).
6. W. H. Whiteley (1971) "Some factors influencing language policies in Eastern Africa" in J. Rubin et al. (eds.) *Can language be planned?*
7. There has been little systematic research on attitudes to language in education in Tanzania, but the following may be noted: a. Andersson (1967) *Multilingualism and attitudes* (Institute of Education, University of Uppsala), which is briefly described in E. Polome and C. Hill (eds.) (1980) *Language in Tanzania*, O.U.P./International African Institute (page 121), and A.F. Bhajji (1976) "The medium of instruction in our secondary schools" in *Papers in Education and Development* 3.
8. On language in law, see D. Kavugha and D. Bobb (1980) "The use of language in the law courts in Tanzania" in Polome and Hill (op. cit). For a general account of language functions in Tanzania see E. Polome, "Tanzania: a sociolinguistic perspective" in the same volume.
9. In 1980 a seminar was held at the University on "The impact on the University of the expected change in the medium of instruction in the secondary schools". The seminar papers are collected in H. R. Trappes-Lomax R. M. Besha and Y.Y. Mcha (eds.) (1982) "Changing Language Media". At the time of re-editing this paper many would regard 'fairly near future' as very optimistic.
10. At teacher education handbook: Syllabi, p. 134, *Secondary school language syllabi*,
11. A somewhat different set of values is proposed in C.P. Hill (1980): 373-4 in Polome and Hill (op. cit), in which the original version of this paper is discussed.
12. *A teacher education English Handbook: Syllabi*, p. 8 Ministry of National Education, 1976.
13. There is a considerable literature on the medium of instruction issue, for example: Mlamba and Matteredu (op. cit); A.F. Bhajji (1976) "The medium of instruction in our secondary schools: A study report" in *Papers in Education and Development*, 3; C.P. Hill (1965) "Some problems of the chan-

geover from English to Swahili as the medium of instruction' in *English language teaching*, 20, 1; D. J. Mkude (1980) 'Aspects of the use of Kiswahili in higher education', University of Dar es Salaam 10th Anniversary paper; M.A. Mohamed (1975) The introduction of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools, MA dissertation, University of Dar es Salaam. Thirty or forty other titles could be cited.

14. Nevertheless, since 1978 the Institute of Education has produced, and the Ministry of National Education approved, revised syllabuses in English for Primary, Secondary and Teacher education, and has introduced an entirely new English syllabus for Form V and VI in which there is an approximately equal emphasis on language and literature.
15. Since this section was written, the 'start of learning' has been changed from term 2 of Primary 1 to term 1 of Primary 3. It seemed to me of some possible interest for the future (when it will be possible to judge the results of the change) to leave the argument in its original form.
16. E. Ingram (1975) "Psychology and language learning" in J.P.B. Allen and S.P. Corder (eds.) *Papers in Applied Linguistics*, O.U.P.
17. J. Rubin (1971) "Evaluation in language planning" in J. Rubin (et al.) (eds.) op. cit.
18. Notably in M.A.K. Halliday et al. (1964) *The linguistic sciences and language teaching* and in C. Prator (1968) "The British heresy in teaching English as a second language" in J. A. Fishman (ed.) *The language problems of developing nations*.
19. On English as it is spoken and written in Tanzania, see, for example, J. B. Maghway (1979) *Spoken English in Tanzania: Spelling and the pronunciation of vowels*, MA dissertation, University of Dar es Salaam, R. Andersen (1976) "An error analysis of the writing of Tanzania university students" *Occasional Paper No. 2*, Department of Foreign Language and Linguistics.
20. Have these courses of action been pursued? There are new syllabuses (footnote 14 above), a new series of books, *Primary English for Tanzania*, in preparation (some already in use), there have been Institute of Education Workshops to prepare new Primary materials and materials for Form V and VI, the level at which English is started has been changed: there is a new Diploma in English programme in operation at Marangu, Dar es Salaam and Morogoro colleges of National Education. There is, however, nothing new, yet, for the secondary schools (Form I-IV). It is doubtful if there has been, or realistically can be, any increase in opportunities for using English, but there has been a notable emphasis from the Ministry of National Education on the importance of maintaining adequate standards of competence in English (see, for example, the report in the Daily News of 11 Nov. 1982 'Schools told to stress English').
21. A bibliography has now been completed: H. R. Trappers-Lomax (1982) *Tanzania Applied Linguistic Bibliography 1960-1980*. The classified section of this gives some indication of what the main areas of research and analysis in the past few years have been.