Debate

Uncovering language-in-education policy as a challenge to Tanzanian civic engagement

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Abstract

Language has long been an important dimension of civil society in Tanzania, where English is the language of secondary and tertiary schooling, even as the majority of people use Swahili. Femina Hip is a non-governmental organization (NGO) active in Tanzania with its popular magazine *Fema*. This paper examines how a 2011 *Fema* article ignited lively discussion of Tanzanian language policy and planning among students on study abroad from Austria, China, and other countries, and their Tanzanian professor of Swahili language and literature. Their discussion critiques the *Fema* article, and explores the conundrum of Tanzania's language-in-education policy through personal reflection.

Keywords Education, language of instruction, language policy, linguistic subordination, Swahili.

Descubriendo la política del lenguaje en la educación como un reto para el compromiso civil tanzano

Resumen

El idioma ha sido durante mucho tiempo una dimensión importante de la sociedad civil en Tanzania, donde el inglés es el idioma de la educación secundaria y terciaria, incluso cuando la mayoría de las personas usan swahili. Fémina Hip es una organización no gubernamental (ONG) activa en Tanzania con su popular revista Fema. Este estudio examina cómo un artículo de Fema de 2011 encendió una discusión animada sobre la política y planificación del idioma tanzano entre los estudiantes que estudian en el extranjero desde Austria, China y otros países, y su profesor tanzano de lengua y literatura swahili. Su discusión critica el artículo de Fema y explora el enigma de la política de lenguaje en educación de Tanzania a través de la reflexión personal.

Palabras clave: Educación, idioma de instrucción, política lingüística, subordinación lingüística, Swahili.

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1. Introduction

Now in its twentieth year of operation, a non-governmental organization, or NGO, known as "Femina Health Information Project," or "Femina HIP" and "Femina Hip", bills itself as "the largest civil society multimedia platform in Tanzania dedicated to fostering young changemakers" (Femina Hip website, 2019). Femina Hip engages television, radio, social media, and print as edutainment outlets in the United Republic of Tanzania, and its magazine *Fema* is one of the most popular and well circulated in the country, with a print run of some 500,000 copies (see Figure 1). Tanzania is a multilingual East African country of close to 55.5 million people, where more than 125 languages are spoken. General literacy is estimated at 71% of the population, with 58.2% of the mainland population exclusively literate in Swahili, compared with 0.84% of people able to read in English only (Tanzania Census Report, 2014). Focused on educating Tanzanian youth ages 13-20 on reproductive health, family planning, healthy lifestyles, and civic engagement, *Fema* (a unique word coined from the words "female" and "male") is a bilingual magazine published mostly in Swahili, the national language of Tanzania, with some english (also a national language of Tanzania) versions of its articles available in print and online via its website.

In this paper, I examine how an article from a 2011 issue of *Fema* entitled, *"Kisa Ukosefu wa Vitabu?* [Complaint over the lack of books?]" (see Figure 2) ignited lively discussion at the University of Dar es Salaam among students on study abroad from Austria, China, Ghana, Italy, and other countries, and their Tanzanian professor of Swahili language and literature. Within the swahili language, the term *Kiswahili* is an endonym (a language-internal term) that refers to "Swahili language". As a linguistic ethnographer, I was a participant observer in Dar es Salaam, the major urban center of Tanzania, when an Austrian student in the Fall 2011 Advanced Swahili course presented this *Fema* magazine article in class as part of an assignment to describe and respond to an original Swahili publication. The publication, written by Gaure Mdee, centers the Swahili phrase *"ukosefu wa vitabu,"* meaning a 'lack of books.' The author concludes that the preponderance of low standardized test scores is related to *"ukosefu"* (lack, deficiency) or a "lack" of books and well-stocked libraries in elementary (or primary) and secondary schools across the country.

The presentation of this article in the Advanced Swahili class at the university prompted a response from fellow students, as well as their Tanzanian professor, who countered the article's central argument by sha-

ring firsthand knowledge of challenges to Tanzanian youth literacy and educational success. In fact, after the student presenter invited comments, the professor responded by explicitly connecting the issue of educational success to the language that textbooks and other reading materials are often made available in, given that a majority of Tanzanian youth are not able to read proficiently in English: *"Mnaweza kuwana vitabu, kwa mfano katika shule za sekondari, na chuo kikuu, lakini kipo katika lugha ambayo wanafunzi hawaelewi,"* ([For] those with access to books, for example in secondary schools, and at university, [the books] however, are in a language which the students don't understand).

Here, I explore key excerpts from the classroom discussion, and draw upon approaches in critical applied linguistics (e.g., Mahboob & Paltridge, 2013) and sociocultural linguistics (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) to examine the significance of this talk as it relates to civil society in Africa, the enfranchisement of Tanzanian youth through schooling and literacy, and the longstanding debate on language of instruction across arenas of language policy and practice. These data come from a larger, ethnographic study of transnational Swahili identity and language learning that spans Mexico and the U.S., in addition to Tanzania (Thomas, 2020), which gathered over 200 hours of recorded audio in Tanzania through extensive participant observation.[1] Additional reporting from my larger study of Swahili language learning and teaching in Dar es Salaam explores cultural transmission through storytelling practices in the university classroom (Thomas, in press).

In essence, the discussion of the *Fema* magazine article within the study abroad classroom, becomes an important site for developing critical awareness of Tanzanian language of instruction policy, by bringing non-Tanzanian speakers of Swahili into a context where they can learn from their Tanzanian professor, and examine their own perspectives on language as a cornerstone of education and participatory democracy. This voices a critique –in Swahili– of the NGO's *Fema* magazine article, as an incomplete examination of the problems underlying Tanzanian school success. Linguistic attention to this classroom discussion of the *Fema* article, in the form of critical discourse analysis, additionally illustrates how NGOs and their publications circulate discourses that may undervalue the empowered role of language in civil society and education.

2. Introducing Tanzanian civil society

The notion of *civil society* encompasses the public sphere, apart from government or the private sphere, describing how organizations of concer-

ned citizens and interest groups participate in circulating ideas, thereby facilitating public debate and impacting and shaping civic culture (Rodrick, 2004). This is a sector of society often "credited with effective resistance to authoritarian regimes [in Europe and Latin America], democratizing society from below while pressuring authoritarians for change" (Foley & Edwards, 1996: 38). However, the successful advocacy and social empowerment work of non-governmental organizations like the Green Belt Movement, the environmentally focused, tree-planting group founded in 1977 by late Kenyan scientist and Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, gathers a strong argument in favor of a strong civil society sector in African countries as well.

Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, have been greatly expanding their role in social advocacy, education, healthcare, and other sectors within the United Republic of Tanzania in recent decades (Tufte, 2014; Green, Mercer, & Mesaki, 2012; Lange, Wallevik, & Kiondo, 2000). NGOs are a key subsector of Tanzanian civil society, and of those organizations, foreign-funded NGOs remain significant. Language continues to divide the Tanzanian civil sector; NGO activities are reported more widely in English-language newspapers than in Swahili-language newspapers (Lange, Wallevik, &Kiondo, 2000), and many NGOs publish their websites and publications primarily (or exclusively) in English, even as newspapers in Swahili have a wider readership and Swahili literacy greatly outnumbers English literacy in Tanzania. While this may be because NGOs want to describe their activities to prospective international donors and audiences outside Tanzania, this linguistic practice serves to extend colonial regimes of language. Priorities on English during the British colonial era resulted in Swahili's lesser official and academic status, even as it remains more the language of the Tanzanian popular imagination than English.

In Tanzania, there are many locally founded non-governmental organizations active at present, including: 1) Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA), which was founded in 1987 by a coalition of Tanzanian women (including Fatma Alloo, Edda Sanga, and Leila Sheikh, among others) and advocates for women's and children's rights through uses of media; 2) Journalists of the Environment in Tanzania (JET) or *Chama Cha Waandishi wa Habari wa Mazingira,* founded in 1991; and 3) *Twaweza* (We can make it happen), an organization focused on mobilizing citizens around issues of children's education and government partnerships across Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. Of the many organizations founded by non-Tanzanians currently operating in Tanzania, there are: 1) The *Toa Nafasi* Project, founded in 2012 by U.S. American Sarah

Rosenbloom, which aims to enrich classroom learning for Tanzanian children in the Moshi area, near Mt. Kilimanjaro; and 2) Femina Hip, founded in 1999 by Swedish national MinouFugelsang, aims to educate Tanzanian youth about sexual and reproductive health and rights. While this brief (non-exhaustive) description may make it seem as though the civil society sector is fairly recent within Tanzania, and mostly concerned with education and social advocacy, Tanzanian civil society has a long historical profile, and, similar to other countries, also includes a range of political parties and the market (business and economic sectors), as well as labor unions, religious organizations, neighborhood associations, and student groups, for example (e.g., Carothers and Barndt, 1999).

In colonial Tanganyika, civil society included Islamic organizations, Christian organizations, sports clubs, and dance societies, among others. The African Commercial Association –a national association of Black African traders and merchants, was also an important contributor to the civil sector, alongside the African Association– a national association of Black African clerks, teachers, and civil servants that would support the anticolonial independence movement (Lange, Wallevik, & Kiondo, 2000). Under the leadership of Julius Nyerere, then a young teacher just returned from studies in Britain, the African Association would transform into the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), and connect and organize with city workers through local trade unions, and recruit women leaders through dance societies, which were also popular through the 1960s (Lange, Wallevik, & Kiondo, 2000). Another key component of TANU's impact was its mobilization of these local networks through use of the Swahili language.

Nyerere's aim to use Swahili as a strategic tool of linguistic unification built upon the language's centuries-long mercantile and liturgical profile across eastern Africa, its appropriation by German and British colonialists and missionaries for newspapers and Bible teachings, and mobilization in previous anticolonial social movements, including the Maji Maji Rebellion (1905-1907) during Germany's brutally exploitative rule of Tanganyika (e.g., Pike, 1986). Previously, standardization of Swahili had been a major objective of the British colonial rule, during which the Christian missionary-linked colonial administration met significant resistance as it worked to systematically shift Swahili from its Arabic script to Latin script, and remove some Arabic-based words, in a bid to disassociate Swahili from its Islamic heritage and gain control over the language (Topan, 2008).

3. Swahili literacy, civil society, and one-party rule in Tanzania

For Nyerere, the choice of Swahili as Tanzania's national language (with English as an additional national language) was not only political because it impacted Tanzania's nationhood and international profile. Nyerere and the TANU organization were keen to empower everyday Tanzanians to become participants in a political and community-building process that was both new to the country following its 1961 independence from the British, and also previously out of reach due to use of German or English for colonial administrative activity (Topan, 2008). To this end, Swahili literacy was a key part of Nyerere's vision, and he personally supported the development of the language by publishing in Swahili and translating two Shakespearean works into Swahili in 1961. His government also supported the expansion and institutionalization of the *Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili* (TUKI), or Institute of (Ki)Swahili Research, and its academic work of performing studies of Swahili language, linguistics, and literature, in addition to publishing journals and dictionaries, and developing new Swahili vocabulary to expand the language's capacities in areas of linguistics, technology, medicine, and other subjects. The Nyerere government also legislated a National Swahili Council and affirmed a plan to expand beyond the colonial policy of Swahili as a medium of instruction in schooling only through fourth grade or standard 4, and English thereafter for the remainder of primary and secondary schooling, as well as tertiary schooling. In 1967, Swahili was made the medium of instruction for the seven years of primary school, with plans –as yet unfulfilled– to expand Swahili throughout secondary and tertiary schooling as early as the 1980s and 1990s (Topan, 2008).

Apart from transforming language policy for formal schooling, the Nyerere government also invested in a mass literacy campaign aimed at building a citizenry steeped in *ujamaa* (African socialism), who could, at least, theoretically participate in liberating themselves from colonial economic legacies and attitudes in both rural and urban contexts (Lange, Wallevik, & Kiondo, 2000). The countrywide adult-literacy campaign became a cornerstone of TANU's (now Tanzania African National Union after Tanganyika's unification with Zanzibar in 1964) profile, with adult literacy classes held in the open air, schools, churches, and party headquarters, in order to reach learners wherever and however possible. Key among the texts used to develop Swahili literacy in the government's adult education program was the *Mazungumzo* (Discussions) series, which featured stories about a young boy who dreamed of finding love and riches in the big city, and

later returned to the countryside destitute, and with renewed appreciation for rural village values of collectivized wealth and women who didn't wear miniskirts (Callaci, 2017).

Under Nyerere, campaigns for Swahili literacy were used as a way of reaching historically undereducatedpopulations, while pushing back on capitalist narratives, in service of the state. Towards the 1970s, this began to coincide with the TANU government's takeover of newspapers, outlawing of televisions, and suppression of organizing through moves to nationalize unions and other organizations, as well suppress other political parties (Lange, Wallevik, &Kiondo, 2000). At the same time these policies suppressed civil society autonomy, they resulted in an expanded reading public, a number of emergent, local fiction writers, and a lively music and songwriting scene, particularly in the big city of Dar es Salaam (Callaci, 2017). Overall, this investment contributed to Swahili's greater integration into everyday Tanzanian life. This allowed wider institutional investment and publishing in Swahili, and expanded popular and creative use of Swahili, even as English remained the language of instruction in secondary and tertiary education.

4. Language of instruction in Tanzania and linguistic subordination of Swahili

Into the 1980s and 1990s, as Tanzania suffered a devastating economic downturn due to persistent drought and a widening global recession, the international donor community increasingly funneled monies to Tanzania-based NGOs, ballooning the number of registered NGOs in the country (Lange, Wallevik, & Kiondo, 2000). Outside investment in Tanzania also took the form of complex loans and other aid from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, through their structural adjustment programs. In order to receive the funds, Tanzania and other African nations had to agree to certain mandated reductions in education spending, including for public universities. This was designed to curtail the education of poor and working-class African youth (Mazrui, 1997). Ultimately, this resulted in greater privatization and NGO-management and funding of K-12 schools and universities, and in families having to pay (unaffordable) school fees and other related costs that were previously funded by the government (Brock-Utne, 2000). Structural adjustment programs also effectively limited plans for the expansion of Swahili as a language of instruction in Tanzania, contravening earlier recommendations by the Tanzanian government, and

other studies finding in favor of indigenous language education in other African countries (e.g., Mazrui, 1997; Brock-Utne, Desai, & Qorro, 2006).

Ironically, the World Bank had earlier in the 1960s published its own findings in favor of mother-tongue education for students' cognitive development. However, its subsequent economic policies in Africa effectively emphasized European ex-colonial languages (e.g., English, French). According to noted African Studies scholar Alamin Mazrui (1996: 44), this furthered "the continued role of instruction in Euro-languages in creating and maintaining social divisions that serve an economy dominated primarily by foreign economic interests and, secondarily, by a small aspiring African bourgeoisie." In the Central African Republic, these loans required the import of school textbooks in French that were written and published in Canada and France. In Tanzania, it paved the way for a multimillion dollar British-funded initiative on English Language Teaching in 1987. These policies effectively diminished the power of self-governance.

Following the end of one-party rule in Tanzania with multi-party elections in 1995, there began to be more investigations into languages of instruction and language policy implementation, with K-12 classroom-based experiments examining the potential success of teaching subjects like geography and biology in Swahili (e.g., Mwinsheikhe, 2003). This includes the LOITASA project, on Languages of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa, a research initiative funded by Norway from 2002-2006, with in-country research investigators in partnership with local K-12 and university institutions. The project successfully produced a suite of studies and books (published by Tanzanian and South African publishing houses) that provide a range of research-based pedagogical and policy recommendations regarding language in education and medium of instruction (e.g., Brock-Utne, Desai, & Qorro, 2003; Mwinsheikhe, 2003; Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004; Brock-Utne, Desai, & Qorro, 2006; Qorro, 2009; Brock-Utne, 2010).

Among their many findings, LOITASA researchers (e.g., Brock-Utne, Desai, & Qorro, 2003; Malekela, 2003) discuss how students and instructors continually find it challenging to communicate exclusively in English, even with the strict English-only rules in effect on secondary school campuses throughout Tanzania, and punishments for speaking in Swahili or other languages. These challenges are made even more visible by 99% failing rates on the nationwide English Proficiency Test at private and public secondary schools from Tabora, in the east of Tanzania, to Morogoro, in the west of Tanzania (just southeast of Dar es Salaam) (Malekela, 2003). This coincides

with the legacies of colonial practices in the U.S., for example, which kidnapped and forced children from Indigenous Nations into 'Indian Schools' and punished them for speaking Indigenous languages (e.g., Grande, 2015).

Beyond the LOITASA project, Vavrus (2002: 377) takes note of how structural adjustment programs expanded privatization of secondary and tertiary education in Tanzania, and observes how students violating the strict English-only policy at one such secondary school were publicly shamed:

> At one prestigious private school, a girl was wearing a burlap vest with the words "Shame Upon Me" written on it, and at another private institution a student had a wooden sign on her chest announcing that she would not speak Swahili. When I asked a teacher at the secondary school about the student's offense, she told me that the girl had spoken in Swahili during class and was being punished for violating the school's policy of using English only on school grounds.

Ironically, Vavrus's conversation with the local teacher at the school took place in Swahili, but the teacher nevertheless reasoned, "Educated girls know English." The teacher's statement illustrates an ideology regarding English that subordinates and delegitimizes Swahili language ability and knowledge gained through Swahili.

This *linguistic subordination* is enabled by beliefs and actions that lean on the standardization and prevailing dominance of other certain languages as a rationale for minimizing particular languages and diverse ways of speaking (Lippi-Green, 2012). Linguistic subordination is observed in social accommodations to more dominant and empowered languages, from the workplace to contexts of schooling and entertainment, in ways that minimize and erase the multilingual abilities and sociocultural differences of people in many countries around the world, and countries that have continued to experience the impacts of colonial regimes of language, from the U.S. to Namibia, and beyond (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; McCarty, Collins, and Hopson, 2011).

At the university level, Malekela (2003: 109) observes that though all subjects (outside of Swahili language and literature) are mandated to be taught in English, that university students mostly communicate with each other in Swahili, and that "sometimes even in lectures where English is supposed to be the medium of instruction, lecturers switch codes and use Kiswahili occasionally to clarify a point to students most of whom have difficulty following what is taught in English." These observations bear resemblance to what Blommaert (1992) has witnessed of 'Campus Kiswahili'

at the University of Dar es Salaam back in the 1990s, including uses of codeswitching by students and professors at the university, many of whom often used Swahili alongside English to produce phrasing that creatively intermingled the morphological and syntactic rules of both languages.

Today, as a result of the predominantly Swahili activity of Tanzanian civil society, multilingual Tanzanians are predominantly literate in Swahili (at least 58%), with combined literacy in both Swahili and English at around 12.3%, in addition to people able to read in languages other than Swahili or English (Tanzania Census Report, 2014). Given these relative statistics, it is rather remarkable to consider how English continues in its role as the medium of instruction across secondary and tertiary education in Tanzania. The prestige of English, through its colonial footprint and global profile, has helped it continue to subjugate Swahili, even though it is Swahili, and not English, that is in the comfortable command of the vast majority of Tanzanians.

4.1 *Setting, participants, and methods*

This paper features data collected in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania through participant observations in an advanced-level Swahili language class of 14 students at the University of Dar es Salaam, during 2011. This was the only such advanced-level course offered for non-Tanzanians (study abroad students or international students) in the first term of the academic year (August-December). The term *study abroad* refers to elective sojourns made by students through stays outside of their home country (or country of study) for supplemental educational purposes (e.g., Trentman & Diao, 2017). As a linguistic ethnographer, or researcher interested in learning about the cultures of language use and language learning in the Tanzanian university context, I developed a practice of regularly attending this and other language classes on campus, particularly those for non-Tanzanian students at the university on study abroad, including language courses in Swahili, English, and French. I regularly made audio recordings in these classes, and whenever possible, supplemental video recordings. All recordings were made with the informed consent of students and their professor.

The Advanced Swahili class met twice a week for 60 minutes each session, and the transcribed excerpts of classroom discussion that I share in this paper come from a 60-minute class period recorded in audio and video on December 19, 2011. It is important to note that it was typical in this Advanced Swahili class to speak exclusively in Standard Swahili throughout the class period (during the entire semester, I observed the

professor use English only about 1% of the time, in order to explain an exceedingly abstract concept like *nahau* (idiom), for example). This was a monolingual practice which "Sharifa," the professor, often initiated with her style of greeting students upon entering the classroom. In order to protect the anonymity of participants in these contexts, I refer to them using their chosen Swahili names (it is often typical for students of language to choose personal names common to the target language culture) or pseudonyms.

In settings focused on the learning of Swahili language, it is routine to refer to language instructors as *Mwalimu,* or Teacher, a Swahili term that confers respect, and in Excerpt 1 (below), Mwalimu Sharifa greets her students collectively in Swahili. This elicits a response from a student (S) (unidentifiable on the audio or video recording), also in Swahili, before one student in particular, "Lea," already facing her fellow students from a standing position in the front of the room, ready to give her presentation on an original Swahili publication, launches into a brief description of the *makala* (article) she will present.

Lea is a student from Austria, who studied Swahili at the University of Vienna for two years prior to coming to the University of Dar es Salaam for yearlong study abroad. She also learned some Swahili during a previous summer in Tanzania, during which she worked as an intern in a local NGO. Mwalimu Sharifa is a Tanzanian national, and a speaker of another Tanzanian language in addition to Swahili and English.

Other participants in the classroom include five students on yearlong study abroad from Ghana, another six students on study abroad from China, one student from Germany, one student from Finland, and myself –a doctoral student researcher from the U.S–. The students from China arrived in Tanzania with Swahili names they had already chosen for themselves, including *Suleiman* and *Aisha*. As students from outside of Tanzania, all of these students were understood to have advanced knowledge and ability in English in addition to their multiple, respective home languages (e.g., Twi, Ewe, Ga, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, German, Finnish). I often sat in the classroom alongside students, taking notes and participating in discussion, with my digital audio-recorder off to the side, and small digital camera propped up on a stack of books at the back of the room for the best vantage point. By this point, toward the end of the semester, I was a regular fixture in the language classroom, along with my recording equipment. The teacher (T), an unnamed student (S), and Lea (L) are audible in this segment (Excerpt 1).

In the transcript, I present their verbatim utterances, and note any nonverbal utterances or actions within double parentheses in Swahili and English, both to illustrate that these can be accurately described in Swahili, and also to visually extend bilingual continuity across the segments of the transcript (even though it is common practice within applied linguistics publications to note these only in the language of translation). In these transcripts, I also do my best to visually align my English translations with the Swahili phrases they supplement.

Excerpt 1:
Swahili greetings as evidence of classroom language policy

1	T:	*((anaingia darasani)) Habari zenu? Hamjambo?* ((enters classroom)) How is everyone? How are you all?
2	S:	*Habari yako?* How are you?
3	L:	*((anasimama mbele ya watu wote darasani))Nzuri. Asante.* [3.0][2] ((standing in front of class)) Good. Thank you. [3.0]
4		*Sawa, makala yangu[.] ni marefu kidogo. Lakini hata hivyo,* Okay, my article *[.]* is [a] little long. But nevertheless,
5		*nitayasoma.* I will read it [aloud].

As Excerpt 1 shows, the normative practice within this Swahili language class was to use Swahili from the very beginning of the class period. There is also little to no observable hesitation by Lea, in initiating her role as presenter to the class (lines 4-5). This illustrates that students are accustomed to using Swahili as quasi-experts, to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, with guidance and encouragement from their instructor. In keeping with the format of previous student presentations, Lea reads aloud the Swahili publication she has chosen, which is from *Fema,* the magazine by NGO Femina Hip, "Kisa Ukosefu wa Vitabu?" [Complaint over the lack of books?] (Figure 2).

My class observations were regularly complemented by informal participation with learners and instructors in their separate activities beyond the language classroom, both on and off campus. Many of the students I later interviewed from the class each individually remarked how much they

appreciated the rigor of their Advanced Swahili course. Many felt their instructor's emphasis on speaking Swahili throughout aided them in building their vocabulary, and provided them with practice expressing themselves on academic subjects they did not have the opportunity to discuss in the informal settings they frequented beyond their university classroom in Dar es Salaam.

Figure 1. Front cover of *Fema* July-September 2011 issue. The organization's focuses on education, family planning, and sexual and reproductive health are visible within the styling and word choices on its bilingual magazine cover.

Kisa ukosefu wa vitabu?

Moja ya sababu ya idadi kubwa ya wanafunzi kushindwa mitihani wa kidato cha nne uliopita ni kukosekana kwa vitabu na kama tatizo hili litaendelea, matokeo huenda yakawa mabaya zaidi mwaka huu.

HA GAURE MDEE, PICHA HANNA

BLAME THE LACK OF BOOKS

BY GAURE MDEE, PHOTO HANNA

Students should be encouraged to embrace imagination and creativity through reading a variety of books

42 FEMA MAGAZINE: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

44 FEMA MAGAZINE: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

FIGURE 2. At left, *"Kisa Ukosefu wa Vitabu?"* [Complaint over the lack of books], article in Swahili in the *Fema* July-September 2011 issue circulated in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. At right, the English version of the article in the same magazine issue.

5. Analysis and findings: Critical discussion of language and civil society in Tanzania

Throughout this section of the paper, I develop a careful, qualitative analysis through examination of both 1) excerpted data I later transcribed from recordings I made while observing in Mwalimu Sharifa's class; and 2) a close reading of the *Fema* article by author Gaure Mdee (Figure 2), which was the subject of Lea's presentation in the Advanced Swahili class that day. In examining these uses of language, I explore how the interactions between Lea and her counterparts led to expanded discussion of several claims made in the *Fema* article. By following the class's real-time statements and responses to one another, I pursue an interactional microanalysis (e.g., Moore, 2006; Githiora, 2008) of their discussion that draws upon local sociocultural information gathered throughout my ethnographic study of contexts of higher education in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Systematic analysis of these moments of classroom talk is paired with textual analysis of related segments from the *Fema* article, in a series of ethnographic vignettes that examine how the author words their specific claims, and how these are interpreted and responded to within the classroom discussion.

Together with the interactional analysis, this text-based analysis centers concerns of critical applied linguistics, in that it focuses on "how power is constructed and exercised through language," often uncovering less obvious or hidden with a view toward education and informing a shift in practices that can successfully "empower those who are at risk from oppressive practices" (Mahboob & Paltridge, 2013: 1). The *critical* of "critical applied linguistics" specifically refers to this focus on social relations that empower and disempower. Within this view, there is no such thing as neutral language, because language, as an artifact that shapes and is shaped by society, constantly harbors and transmits ideas about our social relations. In addition, approaches to language teaching and language policies (both informal and official) are themselves not neutral, as they stem from particular worldviews and expand upon unequal power relations across student-teacher relationships, as well as across languages (Vavrus, 2002; Moore, 2006; Mahboob & Paltridge, 2013; Trentman & Diao, 2017).

Indeed, much of the intertwined history of Swahili and other languages in Tanzania illustrates the non-neutrality of language as a fundamental conduit of civil society; during the colonial period, British moves to consolidate control over Tanganyikan peoples were orchestrated, in part, through policy-outlined changes to Swahili, and formal teaching of Swahili. This included the British standardization of Swahili, and an authoritarian shift away from Arabic script to Latin script as early as the 1940s, as well as the teaching of Swahili to British soldiers and colonial administrators in both Britain and Tanzania (Topan, 2008). Into the post-independence period, TANU's objectives to expand mass Swahili literacy among Tanzanians during the 1960s and 1970s coincided with its pro-agrarian philosophies, such that its educational texts described big cities as places where women fell into disrepute and traditional cultural values disappeared (Callaci, 2017).

5.1 *Ethnographic vignette #1: "The problem isn't books, it's language"*

In the continuation of the Advanced Swahili classroom discussion (Excerpt 2 below), Lea encourages Mwalimu Sharifa to share her perspective on these issues as both a Tanzanian and educator. Lea invites Mwalimu Sharifa to enter the discussion by addressing her with an open-ended inquiry: "Perhaps, you can explain to us a little, on the state of schooling here in Tanzania, secondary schooling…" (lines 190-191). This strand of the discussion flows from Lea's read of the 2011 article featured in a section of *Fema* magazine on "Citizen Engagement." In this way, the magazine itself

forges an explicit link between issues of student literacy, educational achievement, and local access to books and libraries in Tanzania. Also important is the way the article centers voices from NGOs in its description of books as underfunded and schools as under-resourced. This appears intended to leave Tanzanian readers with the impression that the best way to become an 'engaged citizen' is not to become directly involved in government, but to participate in NGO activities and leadership.

The *Fema* article opens with a statement that equates student's lowtest scores with the limited and inadequate government funding schools receive to procure textbooks (Mdee, 2011: 42): *"Kwa mujibu wa taarifa iliyotolewa na taasisi isiyo ya kiserikali ya kuamsha uelewa wa wananchi, Twaweza iliyotolewa Machi mwaka huu, fedha ambazo serikali hutoa kuwezesha shule kununua vitabu vya kiada na vifaa vingine vya kujifunza, hazitoshi".* According to information released [in] March of this year, and generated by Twaweza [We can make it happen], a nongovernmental organization [that] awakens the understanding of citizens, funds which the government regularly gives to enable schools to purchase textbooks and other learning materials, are insufficient.

Here, in describing the underfunding of schools and needed textbooks, the author emphasizes the need for books above all else in schools and downplays the role of government by centering an NGO (Twaweza) in their description of the government's limited impact. The author goes on to quote the executive director at one of Tanzania's largest publishers, *Mkuki wa Nyota* [Spear of Stars], on the importance of books, as well as a representative for a foreign NGO based in Britain, which collects used books in the United Kingdom and brings these to more than 800 Tanzanian schools. Joe Lawson, the representative from Read International's East African regional initiative, is quoted rather strikingly as keen on making *any* book available (Mdee, 2011: 42): *"Sisi katika Read International tunataka kuweka wazi kwamba kitabu chochote ni muhimu kuliko kukosa kitabu kabisa".* (We at Read International want to make it clear that any book is more important than [having] no books at all.)

By featuring this foreign NGO leader and their agenda of "any book vs. no book" within in article, the author has effectively empowered an outsider perspective that ignores acute complexities of Tanzania's educational landscape. Though the issue of language is never explicitly addressed in the article, English would be the predominant language of books donated in Britain, and therefore the author is implicitly arguing for a greater number of English-language texts in Tanzanian schools.

Ultimately, this is what Mwalimu Sharifa later takes issue with most during the classroom discussion, explaining that improving student's access to books must also be about sourcing books in a language they can understand. In the Advanced Swahili class so far, Mwalimu Sharifa's objective has been to encourage students to expand their discussion as a result of Lea's presentation. However, at Lea's request, she joins the discussion to share her educator's perspective on the situation of Tanzanian education (line 193).

Excerpt 2:
Language in Tanzanian Education

190	L:	*Labda, ((kwa Mwalimu)) unaweza kutueleza kidogo,* Perhaps, ((to Teacher)) you can explain to us a] little,
191		*hali ya [.] shule katika hapa Tanzania, shule ya sekondari* [on] the state of [.] schooling here in Tanzania, secondary schooling
192		*hakuna aa* there isn't uh
193	T:	*Tatizo siyo vitabu tu, ah kama amesema ah, Emma. Kuna tatizo la* [The] problem isn't just books, ah, as she has said ah, Emma. There's [the] problem of
194		*lugha pia.* [*Mnaweza kuwa na vitabu,* language too. [[Take the issue of] books,
195	L:	[*Mm: kweli.* [Mm: right.
196	T:	*kwa mfano katika shule za sekondari, na chuo kikuu, lakini kipo* for example in secondary schools, and [at] university, however [the books] there
197		*katika lugha ambayo wanafunzi hawaelewi.* are in [a] language that students don't understand.
198	L:	*Mm.* Mm.

These moments from the classroom discussion illustrate how Lea's open-ended question about the "state of Tanzanian education" was interpreted by her instructor as an opportunity to highlight what was missing from the *Fema* article. Within Mwalimu Sharifa's view the *Fema* article failed to address the related issue of language. Mwalimu Sharifa explains that books accessible to students at secondary schools and universities in Tanzania are often in a language they do not understand. Here, the professor is alluding

to how students are largely unable to comprehend English, even though this is the language mandated for their schooling. She underscores her perspective by using Swahili to express her observations, a language which she is personally invested in as an instructor of Swahili. Within her view, the *Fema* article has done a disservice because it has failed to amplify the issue of language as a key factor in the continued challenges facing Tanzanian youth.

For her part, Mwalimu Sharifa has crafted an educational environment within her university classroom which prioritizes Swahili, particularly as this is the language, she wants her non-Tanzanian students to gain more experience with. Her own exclusive, monolingual uses of Swahili provide an example for her non-Tanzanian students to follow, and they consequently understand that their challenge is to persist in expressing themselves in Swahili –without resorting to English– even as the discussion becomes increasingly complex. A good example of this is in the way Lea (L) succeeds in formulating a follow-up question for Mwalimu Sharifa (T), persevering through hesitations, as she works to get the exact structural wording of her chosen Swahili verbs (Excerpt 3, lines 231-233). Lea asks about the possibility of whether Tanzania's language of instruction will ever change, using the Swahili term *lugha ya kufundishia* (language of instruction).

Excerpt 3:
Language Planners Have the Power

231	L:	*Hm. Na una—una—unafikiri kwamba lugha ya kufundish—shia?*
		Hm. And do you—do you—do you think that [the] language of instruction?
232	T:	*Hm.*
		Hm.
233	L:	*ita—ita—ita [.] itabadilika?*
		it will—it will—it will [.] it will change?
234	T:	*Aa, wa—watafiti wamefanya tafiti na wanaona wanafunzi*
		Uh, re—researchers have done research and they see [that] students
235		*wanaelewa zaidi kwa lugha ya Kiswahii ambayo wanae*[*lewa.*
		understand more with [the] language of Swahili which they under [stand.
236	L:	[*Mhmm.*
		[Mhmm.
237	T:	*Lakini, aa watu wanaopanga lugha, aa, kama serikalini, kuna*
		But, uh [the] people who plan language, uh, as in [the] government, there is
238		*sehemu inayohusika na mpangalugha, bado hawakubali kutumia*
		[a] section concerned with language planning, still they don't agree to use
239		*Kiswahili, kama lugha ya kufundishia.*
		Swahili, as [a/ the] language of instruction.

In response to Lea's question about Tanzania's language of instruction, Mwalimu Sharifa submits that any changes to be made to existing policies will depend upon the judgments of the government's language planners. However, these same people who plan languages, or *wanaopanga lugha* (language planners) (line 237), are reluctant to follow the recommendations of current research, and this paints a bleak picture within the professor's view. Mwalimu Sharifa's statements additionally illustrate her sophisticated awareness of ongoing research, or *tafiti* (research) (line 234), into the role of language in education, and disappointment with deferred policy changes on the part of government officials.

Even as the *Fema* article repeatedly downplays the role of government in education, by both describing government funding as extremely insufficient, and centering the work of NGOs and voices of non-governmental publishers and leaders, Mwalimu Sharifa is insistent upon the role of government. Through her participation in the classroom discussion, the professor outlines how government officials, such as language planners, can make impactful change just by mandating a linguistic regime more responsive to the reality of Swahili's success as a lingua franca. In her view, this would empower Tanzania's students to take greater advantage of available educational opportunities.

5.2 *Ethnographic vignette #2: Critical comparison of languages of instruction*

The *Fema* article additionally highlights study skills as a key factor in student performance, quoting a secondary school student who observes that peers are not strategically studying the books they already have access to (2011: 43): *"Badala ya kusoma kila kitu, nilichagua. Mtu akisema kuwa alishindwa kwa sababu ya kukosekana vitabu anakosea na asitumie hilo kama kisingizio, soma kwa makini".* (Instead of reading everything, I was selective. Someone saying that they failed because of a lack of books is wrong and should not use that as [the] excuse, study carefully.)

This quote has the effect of faulting Tanzanian students, in part, for their poor performance on standardized tests, again circumventing language and literacy, or even the stresses of testing or test design, as persistent factors in these student's educational outcomes. This is part of what Mwalimu Sharifa responds to (lines 552-554 below), emphasizing to her students that Swahili has the capacity to be a vehicle for the many subjects taught in Tanzanian schools, if only educational officials would advocate for the switch. Prior to this segment (Excerpt 4), the professor has mentioned

Google and Facebook as two tech giants expanding their uses of Swahili, alongside an even greater number of dictionaries and other books being authored in Swahili.

As the class period continues, Lea remains standing at the front of the room, while the professor, still seated in the rear of the room, concludes her remarks and says no more. During the next four seconds, a silence ensues as nothing more is said –not by the professor, not by anyone, and this seems to indicate to Lea that she should expand the discussion by inviting comments from other students. In this way, Suleiman (Su) and Aisha (Ai), two students from China, enter the dialogue, after Lea addresses a new question towards Suleiman, in particular (lines 556-558). Lea's question elicits an encouraging smile from Mwalimu Sharifa (line 557), which additionally indicates that Lea was correct to use Swahili to further the discussion.

Excerpt 4:
Language of Instruction in China, Part 1

552 T: *Yapo hayajathibitisha kutumika shuleni, kwa sababu bado lugha*
[The Swahili words] are there [although] they haven't yet been confirmed to be used in schools, because still the language [of instruction]

553 *haijakubali kakubadilishwa kwenda Kiswahili.*
has yet to be agreed to be changed to Swahili.

554 *Lakini Kiswahili ina—inaweza kubadilika.*
But Swahili it's—it's able to change/adapt.

555 L: *((anatikisa kichwa)) Mhm. [4.0] ((anamwona Suleiman))*
((nods)) Mhm. [4.0] ((looking at Suleiman))

556 *Wewe, kwa mfano*[*ume—ume [.] jifunza Kiingereza*
You, for example [you've—you've [.] learned English

557 T: [*((anatabasamu))*
[((smiles))

558 L: *kama kipindi au Kiingereza kilikuwa lugha ya kufundishia?*
as [a subject] or was English [the] language of instruction?

559 Su: *Lugha y* [*a*
[The] language o [f

560 L: [*Shuleni—shule ya msingi, shule ya sekondari?*
[At school—primary school, secondary school?

561 Su: *Aa, wakati nilipokuwa shule ya msingi au sekondari,*
Uh, when I was [at] primary school or secondary [school],

562 *aa, walimu wetu, alitufundisha kwa Kichina.*
uh, our teachers, s/he taught us using Chinese language.

563 L: *Kichina. Mhm.*
Chinese. Mhm.

In these moments of the discussion, we can see Lea step into more of a moderator's role, as she responds to Suleiman's emerging observations with a clarifying question (line 560). Lea's question has the effect of encouraging Suleiman to be more specific in his description of how *Kichina* (Mandarin Chinese) was the language of instruction throughout his experience of primary and secondary school.

Lea's initial question (line 556-558) becomes a catalyst, encouraging students to reflect on their own personal experiences with languages of instruction in their home countries, where they completed the majority of their formal schooling. Suleiman interprets this as an opportunity to share with the class how he learned English in China, not by studying all of his subjects via English, but by learning English in a dedicated class period, meaning that English was a subject of study unto itself (lines 564-566). Aisha (Ai) chimes in (line 569) to underscore Suleiman's (Su) observation, agreeing with his description of English as a *kipindi* (literally, "time period"), or subject studied within a class period, as opposed to spread across the entire curriculum.

Excerpt 5:
Language of Instruction in China, Part 2

564	Su:	*Wakati tunapo aa, kwenda darasani, yaani wakati* When we are uh, going to class, that is, when
565		*tunapojifunza Kiingereza, aa, na walimu wetu,* we're learning English, uh, and our teachers,
566		*alitufundisha kwa Kiingereza.* s/he teach us using English.
567	L:	*Mhm.* Mhm.
568	Su:	*Ndiyo.* Yes.
569	Ai:	*Yaani tunajifunza Kiin* [*gereza kamakipindi.* That is, we are learning Eng [lish as [a subject].
570	Su:	[*Aa.* [Ah.
571	L:	*Mhm.* Mhm.
572	Ai:	*Siyo lugha la kufundisha.* It's not [the] language of instruction.

These excerpts (Excerpt 4 and Excerpt 5) of the classroom talk illustrate how the advanced Swahili professor purposefully absented herself from the discussion (beginning in line 555), in order to create more conversational space for the students, with Lea continuing in her role as discussion moderator. This encouraged Lea to direct a new question to Suleiman, to which he responded with details about how language frame his education experiences in China, his home country. Both Suleiman and Aisha's responses confirm that Mandarin Chinese is the language of instruction in China, and that English is taught as one of the many subjects included within the primary and secondary school curriculum. Suleiman and Aisha's responses to the open-ended question posed by Lea illustrate how they are engaging with the topic of Tanzania's language of instruction as one through which they can understand critical differences between experiences of education in China and Tanzania, based on language as a means of becoming more intimate with or distanced from a chosen curriculum.

Throughout the exchange, Lea maintains the position of moderator with *"Mhm"* (lines 563, 567, 571), and a repeat of a key detail from Suleiman's remarks, *"Kichina"* (Chinese language) (line 563). By verbalizing *Kichina* after Suleiman says it, Lea displays her ability to follow the Swahili discussion, and also emphasizes for others in the room the importance of language, and Chinese itself, as the language of instruction for students in China. This reiterates the difference between languages of instruction in China and Tanzania, given that secondary and tertiary education in Tanzania is taught in English. In the final moments of the discussion, Mwalimu Sharifa returns to this point (Excerpt 6 below), as she summarizes for the students her main observations from Lea's presentation, and shares her closing thoughts on the subject.

5.3 *Ethnographic vignette #3: Pushing back on the linguistic subordination of Swahili*

The *Fema* article concludes by encouraging readers (likely secondary school students) to become more engaged in their education. Specifically, the author advises readers to ask their teachers for information about what books are needed for their curriculum, and to use this information, or syllabus, to collaborate and plan for how to work around not having the books needed (Mdee, 2011: 43): *"Mnavijua vitabu vinavyohitajika kwa muhtasari wa masomo wa sasa? Waulizeni walimu wenu wawapeni taarifa na mjadili jinsi ya kukabiliana na hali ya ukosefu wa vitabu vinavyohitajika. Kwa kufanyakazi pamoja mtasoma vizuri".* (Do you know [the] books that are [included] on the syllabus for your current studies? Ask your teachers to give you [this] information and discuss how to support each other [through] a situation of missing the required books. By working together, you will study well.)

In centering the student readers of this *Fema* magazine issue, the author's closing statements impart a call to action by encouraging readers to take charge of their learning. Readers are advised to reach out to their instructors for information on what books are required, and to work together to study and prepare in the likely event that all of these books are unavailable.

However, inasmuch as these statements can be viewed as an attempt to empower young Tanzanians to take charge of their education, they also harbor neoliberal discourses that suggest the road to a better life, or to "study well," is merely a matter of an individual taking local, agentive action. However well-meaning, this succeeds in obfuscating and avoiding discussion of the complex societal forces working against the Tanzanian student, including the range of national and international policies determining the

language of instruction, or structuring funding through governmental and non-governmental channels. In this way, the *Fema* magazine article concludes with statements that are misleading, and misses an opportunity to encourage readers to become more involved in shifting policies and practices that leave their schools underfunded and without enough books. For example, the *Fema* article might have informed readers on how to directly apply for funding, in the form of grants or book gifts, that would support their learning and better equip their school libraries. The article might also have described the path to becoming an official in the education ministry, or someone who push for change within the Tanzanian government. However, by focusing solely on the impact of NGOs within Tanzania's educational landscape from the very beginning of their article, the author foreshadows that the article will not encourage students to become more knowledgeable about governmental paths to change.

Nevertheless, after participating in Lea's presentation and discussion of the *Fema* article, Mwalimu Sharifa chooses to stress for her students the impactful change the Tanzanian government could lead if it were to restructure the language of instruction throughout secondary and tertiary schooling. Following Suleiman and Aisha's descriptions of their own experiences with the language of instruction in China (Excerpt 5 above), and additional discussion of the languages of instruction in other home countries represented by other students in the class, the professor comments on the increasingly palpable irony of Tanzania's continued reliance on English as a language of instruction (Excerpt 6 below).

In this segment of the classroom discussion, Mwalimu Sharifa rejoins the conversation with a short laugh (line 591) that communicates her rueful acknowledgement of the ongoing consequences of Tanzania's national language-in-education policy. This is also acknowledged by Lea, whose ironical laugh overlaps with that of Mwalimu Sharifa (line 592), and is followed by another student's smiling and laugh (line 593), further acknowledging the misalignments of language of instruction, literacy, and educational success already discussed among the class.

Excerpt 6:
Language as a Political Issue

591 T: *Kwa nini Tanzania* [*ni Kiingereza? ((cheka kifupisho))*
Why Tanzania [is English? ((short laugh))

592 L: [*((anacheka)) Mm.*
[((laughs)) Mm.

593 S: *Ah! ((anatabasamu)) ((anacheka))*
Ah! ((smiles)) ((laughs))

594 T: *Kwa sababu, wanaotua moja za Kiingereza, inaonekana kama*
Because, [for] those who put English first, it seems as though

595 *Kiingereza ni lugha ya kimataifa, Kiingereza ni lugha ya sayansi,*
English is [the] international language, English is the language of science,

596 *ni lugha ya teknolojia, [.] lakini hao wamesoma kwa Kichina,*
it's [the] language of technology, [.] but those [aforementioned students in our class] have studied via Chinese [language],

597 *wamesoma kwa Kijerumani:, hao wamesoma kwa Kiitaliano, na*
those [others] have studied via German [language], those [others] have studies via Italian [language], and

598 *sioni mumekosa nini katika teknolojia, katika maarifa:*
I don't see what they have missed in [terms of] technology, in knowledge.

599 *Kwa nini, aa, hapa Kiingereza inaonekana kwamba ndiyo teknolojia,*
Why, uh, (is it that) here English appears that it's indeed technology,

600 *ndiyo maarifa, ndiyo [.] na Kiswahii hakiwezi kufanya hiyo.*
it's indeed knowledge, yes [.] and [that] Swahili can't do [any] of that.

601 *Kwa hiyo kuna tatizola hayo. ((anatikisa kichwa)) [.]*
Therefore there's [a] problem [with] that. ((nods)) [.]

602 *Siyo suala la ee lalugha, kuna tatizo la*
It's not [an] issue of eh of language, there's [a]

603		*[.] ((anashikilia mkono juu kwa upande wake)) siasa.*	
		[.] ((holds hand up on its side)) political problem.	
604	L:	*Ndiyo.*	
		Yes.	
605	T:	*Siyo la kitaaluma.*	*Ni tatizo la kisiasa. [4.0]*
		It's not an academic [issue].	It's [a] political problem. [4.0]

In essence, the brief, ironical laughter shared by Mwalimu Sharifa and her students (lines 591-593) accentuates the uneven power relations signified by Tanzania's alignment with English as a language of instruction, even as non-Tanzanians from Austria, China, and elsewhere travel to Tanzania to enhance their abilities in Swahili. Throughout the discussion, the professor has been participating by making a case in support of Swahili as a language of instruction in Tanzania. Having now heard, in her students' own words, how the English language is a taught subject, rather than a language of instruction in China, in addition to Italy, and Austria, Mwalimu Sharifa interprets this all as corroborating evidence in support of her evidence-based claim that students are better able to succeed when educated in language they understand. These observations then bring Mwalimu Sharifa to her next point, that Swahili is subjugated by *"wanaotua moja za Kiingereza"* (those who put English first) (line 594). There exists the circulation of a collection of coordinated ideologies about Swahili, or language ideologies, that privilege English as "the international language…the language of science, it's the language of technology…" (lines 595-596).

Apart from perspectives on English as the more technologically capable language, Mwalimu Sharifa wishes to guide her Advanced Swahili students in understanding Swahili as equally capable of serving as a conduit for knowledge and technological change. To this end, she poses a question to her students, asking, "Why, uh, is it that here English appears that it's indeed technology, it's indeed knowledge, yes, and that Swahili can't do any of that?" (lines 599-600). In other words, this Tanzanian professor of Swahili is explicitly guiding her students to question why English is synonymous with technology, knowledge, and modernity, while Swahili –the language that they have all invested in as Swahili-speakers–, continues to be marginalized. The answer to this question, Mwalimu Sharifa goes on to say, is that: "It's not an academic issue. It's a political problem" (line 605). What is particularly powerful about the professor's observation is the way

in which she delivers this statement to her students *in Swahili,* the language that continues to be marginalized, as if to display the language's capability for discussion of its own linguistic subordination. Put together, Mwalimu Sharifa's Swahili statements dissecting the issue of language of instruction, as well as her affirmations attesting to the capability and adaptability of Swahili as a modern language, demonstrate her courage in taking on this issue on her Dar es Salaam university campus, where the language of instruction is English. In addition, the classroom discussion also illustrates the potential of Swahili-language classrooms as sites of where non-Tanzanians, as study abroad students, can critically engage their language experiences through examination of languages of instruction as a policy issue affecting education worldwide.

6. In conclusion

Swahili-speakers on study abroad discuss language and civil society in Tanzania, to sum, the series of ethnographic vignettes detailed in this paper have provided evidence of how an article in an NGO's lifestyle magazine circulated in multilingual Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, led to debate among Tanzanian, Austrian, and Chinese speakers of Swahili in December 2011. The article, *"Kisa Ukosefu wa Vitabu?* [Complaint over the lack of books?]", was published in the September 2011 issue of *Fema* magazine, the well-circulated, student-focused publication of Femina Hip, an NGO that has operated in Tanzania since 1999, with a focus on secondary schools, and reproductive and sexual health. This article, by Gaure Mdee, posed the question of whether there is an ongoing problem with the funding of necessary textbooks in Tanzanian schools as a way of encouraging students to become more invested in reading, and developing stronger study habits through collaborative action.

At the same time, the *Fema* article's description of the governmental funding of schools as extremely insufficient, together with its emphasis on the role of NGOs in impacting Tanzania by making donated books available, and focus on how students can improve their reading and studying habits, served to discursively obfuscate two additionally important factors contributing to the Tanzanian educational landscape. This includes the government's impact on education through policy, and the role of languages of instruction on the educational experience. By virtue of how the article was published in consecutive Swahili and English versions, the magazine was itself illustrating that it understands language to be a significant di-

mension of Tanzania's civil societal infrastructure. Nevertheless, the *Fema* article shows how a civil society organization, such as Femina Hip, can use its publication to circulate discourses that implicitly downplay both the importance of language and the role, or impact, of government.

Lea, an Austrian study abroad student in the Advanced Swahili class at the University of Dar es Salaam, chose to present this *Fema* article to her class and begin discussion on the topic, by encouraging her professor of Swahili, Mwalimu Sharifa, to share her perspectives as both a Tanzanian and educator. This led to a lively discussion of language policy and planning as related to education, and encouraged the group of non-Tanzanian study abroad students to verbalize and share reflections on their own experiences with languages of instruction in their home countries, including China. Their student-centered discussion took place entirely in Swahili, framed by the monolingual practice of using Swahili exclusively throughout their advanced Swahili class. This practice encouraged the use of Swahili for vocabulary-building and development of interaction skills, such as formulating, asking, and responding to questions as part of an extended discussion.

Through the exclusive use of Swahili to express a viewpoint on the language of instruction debate the instructor, Mwalimu Sharifa, set an example for her students that demonstrated the Swahili's capacity for expressing nuanced observations and claims in support of a persuasive argument. In particular, the professor described the conundrum of Tanzania's language-in-education policy, by emphasizing the role that government officials and language planners are currently playing in refuse to affirm Swahili's capacity for formal educational activity within the country. Nevertheless, within the university Swahili-language classroom, the students and their professor, through their persistent use of Swahili, are engaged in the promotion of Swahili while existing policies on the campus and elsewhere in secondary and tertiary schooling are aimed toward the promotion of English.

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Notes

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2 Transcription conventions:
((nonverbal action or utterance))
[3.0] = measurable pause in number of seconds
[.] = momentary, but significant, pause

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