
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

Johna Brems, Ginny Stern, and Suzanne Winters

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Mid-Term Perspectives

As I write this we are in our fifth week and midpoint of school with the students. It is a challenge! We have students who are quite advanced. For example, one girl has previously attended an International English-medium school, while at the other end of the spectrum, we have several students who continue to struggle. However, they are all wonderful and mostly happy. The students range in age from 12 to 17 because, after primary school, children continue school only when their parents can afford to send them. TTF, through your donations, awards scholarships to the top performing girl and boy enabling them both to attend the next 4 years at Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary on full scholarship. An interesting difference from schools in the US: In Tanzania, the very best students go to the government-funded schools and everyone else must attend a private school which requires tuition. This enables the government to fund students in the particular disciplines which are needed to address shortages or specific challenges to the TZ economy.

Unlike in the U.S., the students feel very fortunate and are very happy to be attending school. While all teenage kids are a challenge at times, our students are eager to learn and have their own sense of humor. They find my attempts at speaking Swahili highly amusing and we do a lot of laughing and acting out verbs and nouns. Last week, we were learning how to turn a singular noun into plural using the word mouse in sentences. One of the students wrote a sentence, "I use my mice to study." I had the hardest time trying to understand what he was saying until he explained that the "mice" was part of his computer!

The students are in our classroom 7.5 hours a day, many of them walking long distances to arrive by the 7:30 starting time. They do not eat prior to school so we take a short break at 10:30 and provide tea (which is more milk than tea) with LOTS of sugar and *mandazi* (a fried donut type bread but not sweet) and *chapati* (similar to a greasy heavy flour

tortilla). The students do not eat again until evening when they arrive home. The diet here consists mostly of rice and beans, and *ugali* which is corn flour cooked to the consistency of and tasting very much like wall paper paste! As long as the people of Manow have one meal a day, they do not consider themselves poor. Poor is when you have nothing to eat for three or four days!

Life in Manow is challenging. Power and water are extremely unreliable and in fact, as I write this by solar powered flashlight, I'm awaiting the return of water which has been off for more than a week! Apparently, someone cut the water main to have water to make bricks for building a new house. This has interrupted the entire village's water supply. The water engineer has been working to restore the flow but every day, we hear the same "You will have water tomorrow" without results. I think when I return to the U.S., I may never get out of my shower! Similarly, the power supply is highly unreliable with loss of power several times a day on most days, sometimes for several hours!

In spite of the challenges, I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to participate in these students' education. The success of former students, now completing high school and university programs provides evidence of an effective and much needed resource. Many of the former Pre-Form 1 students frequently stop by our house after school, sometimes just to say hello, and sometimes to borrow books from our "library". They, without exception, express gratitude for the introduction to English provided to them in Pre-Form 1. It is my hope that the students I am currently teaching will similarly prove successful in their future schooling.

Suzanne

Adult English Classes at Manow

Adult English classes started the week after the young students' Pre-Form 1 English classes started. On the first day there were 9 adult students, the next 15, and by the end of the week there 20. I started to

get nervous when a local pastor announced the "free adult classes" at Manow. The numbers bounced around the first two weeks, but the core class has settled in at about 12 regular adults plus and a few extras. A good size.

It is hard to say who is learning more in the class: my students or myself. The class is eagerly working on their English while at the same time schooling me on my misuse and bad pronunciation of common Swahili. It is gratifying to know that every class gives me multiple opportunities to make them smile as I mangle another Swahili translation. It is humbling to know that for most of the people in my class - English is their third language (Nyakyusa and Swahili their primary languages).

I have noticed a number of differences in the way adult students approach English as opposed to the Pre-Form 1 students. The Pre-Form 1 students need to build a good foundation in English because their secondary school experience and future educational success depend on their English competency. National exams are in English and many of their high school classes are taught in English. Most of my adult students are taking the adult classes because they want to build their conversational skills. When I asked my class why they want to "learn" English they give me 4 reasons:

- To support their children or family members who are learning English,
- To improve themselves,
- To communicate with the occasional foreign visitor, or
- Just to understand the commentary when they watch "football" (soccer) on satellite TV.

To be honest they are all great reasons when you realize my class is made up of farmers, laborers, and shopkeepers who take time away from their families, fields, or work in the afternoon to come and learn English.

Another difference I have found is that adult students are not afraid to ask questions! The most common question: "Teacher why..... Why does English use 'To be' when Swahili uses 'To have.' Why does English put adjectives in front of a noun instead of the more logical placement after the noun?"

(My favorite) Why is the past tense of 'To go' 'went'?" All good questions, unfortunately my answer is pretty much the same: "just because English is different that way". (Anybody have a good explanation they want to share for why the past tense of "To go" is went?)

One thing that is the same for both the Pre-Form 1 and the adult students -- they both like to do crossword puzzles. I have been giving out simple crossword puzzles that were developed for the Pre-Form 1 class. Crossword puzzles are something very new for most of them. I had started giving them out as "take home" exercises, but the class much preferred to make them small group projects. The students were staying after class for a half an hour or more to work on them. They would not leave until everyone had finished their own copy. At first, I thought I had not made it clear that they could take the puzzles home. Eventually, it dawned on me that they enjoyed the puzzles but if they had to work on them at home, there would be not time. Most of the students in my Manow class are women. And just like the Pre-Form 1 young women, once they stepped out of class, the demands of family, farms, and life would not give them the time. So they instead choose to stay and take more time for "class" to finish their puzzles.

I am having a ball working with the community members in my class. Their stories give me a much fuller picture of life beyond the classrooms at Manow Junior Lutheran Seminary.

Ginny

The Joys of Tanzania (Teaching and Lake Malawi)

I can't believe I've been in Manow, Tanzania for over a month. I have seen and experienced and tried so many new things. Every day is an adventure.

The first part of October Tanzania celebrates the death of their first President Nyrere. Suzanne and I went with Martin Mwakaje to Matema on Lake Nyasa (Malawi). We stayed at this tiny place right on the beach. I was in the lake most of the time. One day we hiked to some falls and saw baboons along the way. One morning while Suzanne and I were correcting exams in the open air restaurant, a cat we had sort of adopted ran past being chased by a monkey! We were told that happens all the time.

They were playing. Another day I found a piece of hand-made rope in the lake and started wearing it as a choker. Suzanne sewed on a button and I put the heart from the necklace which David had given me on our honeymoon and had broken that weekend. This choker stops people who always look and point. When they find out I got it out of Lake Nyasa, they laugh!



Johna's necklace from the depths of Lake Malawi

Teaching 40 students, Monday thru Friday, 7:30-3:00 is a rigorous routine. We are greeted every morning with them standing and saying, "Good morning, Madame." We have given them so many action verbs and nouns and definitions to memorize. It is amazing to see how excited and creative they are with the sentences they are writing. Every day is a learning process for them and me. I am learning and laughing with their thoughts and English pronunciations like, "rectagon," instead of rectangle. The students also are learning and laughing at my thoughts and Swahili pronunciations such as, *lala salami*, instead of *lala salama* which means sleep well.

I awake every morning with an open mind, a huge heart, and a big smile for having this opportunity.

Thank you to all who are supporting this program,
Lala Salama *Johna*

Send email!!

We would love to hear from you about how things are going for you, and how you like the newsletters this year. We may not be able to respond as quickly as in the US, but we really like hearing from you.

Suzanne: swinters54@gmail.com

Johna: johnabrems@msn.com

Ginny: rafikisafi@gmail.com

If the newsletters inspire you to think about teaching in the program, please let Nancy know. Her email is wintersnl@comcast.net