



Compelling reasons for online Learning in Africa: The Tanzania Case from Nyakato Theological Bible College

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INTRODUCTION

Global Learning Initiative is offering the Global Greek Grammar (3G) course on New Testament Greek at Nyakato Lutheran Bible College which is associated with the University of Iringa (UI).

This classroom has been described in news from Global Learning Initiative on [Bible OL in use in Tanzania, Denmark and Minnesota](#) and in a discussion of the new [MoodleBox Virtual Classroom plans](#)

The 3G course developed by Harold Kime was presented at Nyakato in 2015 after being introduced to Rev. Kirsten I. Buch of Danmission by Judith Gottschalk who built the exercises for Bible OL.

The first class started in the school year 2016/2017 as part of a course at the level of diploma. At that time, the course started with four students of diploma with Rev. Kirsten I. Buch as their instructor. The number of students was increased in the 2017/2018 school year to eight, with the first four students now in their second year. Among the eight students, there is only one female who is in her first year.

During the face-to-face learning sessions, all students gather in one computer room with enough computers, using a Libri system installed with support by Suomen Lähetysseura from the Finish Lutheran Church.

IMPORTANCE OF GREEK: A TESTIMONY

by John Mongi

Greek has become an important subject to us after understanding it's importance in studying and having a full understanding of the meaning of the gospel in New Testament.

For example:

1. Luke 21:1 Swahili Bible gives us a very different meaning of the word **sadaka** (sacrifice) from the Greek meaning **δῶρα** which mean gift.
Akainua macho yake akawaona matajiri wakitia **sadaka** zao katika sanduku la hazina.
Ἀναβλέψας δὲ εἶδεν τοὺς βάλλοντας εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον τὰ **δῶρα** αὐτῶν πλουσίους.
2. 1 Cor 14:1 Swahili Bible gives us a different meaning of the word kuhutubu (preaching) from the Greek meaning **προφητεῦτε** (prophecy)
Ufuateni upendo, na kutaka sana karama za rohani, lakini zaidi kwamba mpate **kuhutubu**.
Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα **προφητεῦτε**

By understanding such examples we understand the difference in meanings, and Greek can now become the most important learning subject to prepare for our future service as pastors.

PROJECT EVALUATION: FACILITATOR

by Kirsten Buch

There are many compelling reasons why fellow teachers should adopt online learning solution for their classroom in Africa.

The internet is growing fast in Africa.

There are still rural areas in Tanzania where the internet is slow, but it is available, and it is getting faster and faster. In Tanzania a new internet provider “Habari Leo” offers a competitive SIM-card, and a new company called “Smile” started by young computer people is expanding in the bigger cities. We pay for download speed, but not for amount of MB, and the next-fastest down/upload has excellent results: we can easily have 8 students working at the internet at the same time.

The smartphones are now equal to small computers – and they are cheap.

Specially the Hong Kong firm Tecno is growing rapidly in Tanzania – and probably other countries also. In the Spring of 2018, it is possible to get a dual-card phone for about 180.000 tzs (68 euro) and this can easily do the job. We tried a cheaper one for 99.000 tzs (36 Euro), but found it did not have enough memory. A laptop would do a better job, but most students do not have access to one.

The raspberry Pi 3 computers

At our college we have 12 student-computers and one teacher-computer, all installed in a project organized by Asmo Koskinen from Finland (see <http://global-learning.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=30>). Currently there is a problem with the supply of internet services in the state owned tele company. President Magufuli has promised improvement on the company, and he usually keeps his promises, but the TSSL in Mwanza is not improved by this solution, and we plan to move from TSSL to “Smile”. Koskinen has now introduced a *server – thin client* model. All programs, including the “online learning” is installed on this server. This opens opportunities for smaller towns lacking electricity or internet connections. Teaching can now be based on solar power and a tethering & hotspot phone for program renewal at the server.

New way of learning.

The students in Tanzania (and many other countries) depend on their teachers. A good teacher can do well, but often both teacher and students have no books and the number of students can be up to 200 in class. Online learning can overcome this challenge. We believe that this will become the teaching solution.. Knowledge from books is quickly outdated, and in many African countries there is a lack of educated teachers.

The new way of learning has some immediate helpful results: The students learn to self-evaluate their work. They learn to compete with themselves and not with their classmates. It gives everybody the possibility of reaching one’s own potential and at one’s own pace. It makes individualization possible and it generates motivation. Everyone has to take responsibility for their own learning.

The skills they learn through the online learning system can later on be applied in many other contexts and are not limited to the environment of a university scholarship. They will not stop learning after leaving college. They now have a different understanding of teaching and the role of a teacher. As a teacher you cannot and should not be at the focus of learning, but be consultant or counsellor.

Credits

If the international credit system is applied to the online learning system, the students will be able to bypass local university's requirement to redo exams. This demand is based on the old system of local universities independence of outer world communities and is a source for a waste of time for the students. If the ETC-points can be accredited it will offer significant opportunities for us here in Tanzania.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE COURSE: LEARNER

by Dickson Muhigi Jonas

SIGNIFICANCE

Among many results, the following results from the 3G course deserves to be noted:

- ✓ It encourages students to be self-directed. Global Learning Initiative is accessed online. Every student has their own account which he or she can access at their convenience. This encourages the students who have supportive electronic devices to learn at their own time, even without the presence of the instructor. It also motivates the students to become self-directed rather than depending on the teacher for everything as “spoon feeding”. The teacher serves more as an instructor than a teacher.
- ✓ Online contact. The resources provided for the course enables the student to meet his or her instructor at any time online. This has been appreciated by students since everyone can be instructed, directed, marked and corrected by the instructor without a physical meeting. As a result, some students continue working on the course during the weekend and holidays. When they encounter difficulties, they can contact their instructor online and carry on.
- ✓ It saves time. As long as the course can be accessed by everyone on one’s own account, it enables the fast learners to proceed faster. In this way, the course encourages those students to spend their time more efficiently
- ✓ Motivation to students. The students are motivated to learn more. They are provided with enough texts and exercises to read and practice through Bible Online Learner. Also, they are given more opportunity to attempt and submit the exercises of the Course Units until they attain the mastery. They can submit the exercise as many times as they want to.
- ✓ Accessibility. Moreover, the course can be accessed at any time and everywhere where there is internet access. At the time writing, students are at their homes for the holidays, but some of them continue running the course at home under online contact with the instructor.

CHALLENGES

Despite the success of the course, there are some challenges which hinder the teaching and learning processes. The following are the chief problems:

- ✓ Computer system. Most of the students need more introduction to the program installed on the computers in the library at the college. Many students can have access more to Microsoft program than Libri. Even if there is a teacher who introduces these computer systems, it is still a challenge to use computers, and it needs to be improved in the future.
- ✓ Internet access. The internet access at the college is the main challenge which hinders the learning processes. Sometimes the internet becomes is very slow or not available. If this happens during session time, it hinders the students very much in learning. We are grateful to the instructor who has volunteered to overcome this problem by using her own device.
- ✓ Some students are not self-directed. When students are not familiar with the computer system in the library and lack of personal devices, they learn on their own unless the instructor is present. For these students, the instructor must function more as their teacher rather than their instructor, which is not bad, but is unnecessary at the level of diploma.

CONCLUSION

The course and the means of delivery of learning are very helpful. The students have become interested in it, despite their challenges. They are very grateful to their instructor for her tireless efforts in direction, instructions, guidance, encouragement and motivation.

However, the following is recommended for improvement of the course:

- ✓ There is a need for a better instruction on how to use the computers with Microsoft program.
- ✓ All stakeholders responsible for internet access should ensure the availability of internet at all times. This will make it possible for students to continue learning even on their smart phones.
- ✓ Most students believe they could be running this course better if they had a laptop.

“Let’s all take fast hold of instruction; we should not let it go, but keep it; For it is our Life” (Prov. 4:13)