

Perception of Teachers on Challenges Facing the Use of English as Medium of Instruction in Tanzanian Secondary Schools: A Case of Karatu District, Tanzania

¹Naisujaki Sephania Lyimo, PhD* and ²Sophia John Laiser

¹Lecturer, Arusha Technical College, Tanzania

²Lecturer, Tumaini University Makumira, Tanzania

*Corresponding author: naiviebe@yahoo.com

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Abstract: *The paper discusses challenges of language of instruction on Students academic performance of Secondary Schools in Karatu District, Tanzania. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised of 627 Teachers of Ordinary level Government Secondary Schools in Karatu District. The study was carried out in 15 Ordinary level Government Secondary Schools. Data was collected from 249 teachers selected randomly. A pilot study of 60 teachers from secondary schools in Kilimanjaro Region was done. Data collection was done through questionnaires. Descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages were used to analyze quantitative data. The study concluded that majority of teachers in public secondary schools in Karatu District face challenges in teaching using English as language of instruction. Hence language of instruction is a barrier to academic achievement to both students and teachers. Majority of teachers in public secondary schools stressed that incompetence in language of instruction hinders classroom interaction between teachers and students which contributes to low academic achievement of students. The study recommends that Ministry of Education and Vocational Education Training (MOEVT) should come up with a policy on promoting English language of instruction to improve competencies to students and teachers, put emphasis on the language of instruction from lower levels, introduction of English clubs, campaigns and competitions among students to increase the level of competency in public secondary schools.*

Key words: Challenges, English, Language, instruction, Academic, Performance, Karatu, Tanzania

1. Introduction

Language is a very important aspect in human life. It is a tool for facilitating the communication process in day to day human activities. Language plays a crucial role in teaching and learning. Language of instruction is an indispensable medium for carrying or transmitting education from teachers to learners and among learners and if both teachers and learners are handicapped in the language of instruction, then effective learning may not take place (Malekela, 2003). For many years, there has been a debate on the appropriate language of instruction to be used at all levels of education in Tanzania (Ngussa, 2017; Sumra & Catabaro, 2014; Qorro, 2006; Telli, 2014; Malekela, 2003; Qorro, 2006). The use of Kiswahili as a language of instruction at primary school level and

English at Secondary schools and Tertiary levels brings confusion to teachers and learners. As a result, teaching and learning process is not taking place effectively because of language of instruction barrier. Tanzanian official languages for instructions are Kiswahili and English. Kiswahili is the language of instruction in public Primary schools while English is taught as a subject in secondary schools. When a student from Public Primary schools advances to secondary school, the language of instruction swiftly changes from Kiswahili to English (Telli, 2014). All subjects are taught in English in secondary schools except Kiswahili language which remain as a subject. In this transition, little attempt is made to help students cope with the situation. Consequently, the teaching and learning process becomes challenging for most of the teachers and students in

secondary schools and these results in poor performance in subjects taught in English (Qorro, 2006). Sumra and Catabaro (2014) added that, English is an important language in today's world and all Tanzanian students should learn it and be fluent in it. While in secondary schools both teachers and students struggle to express themselves using the language of instruction (English), this situation confirms that language of instruction debate still exists, so it requires researchers/educators to come up with solutions to address the debate. It is for this reason that the present study investigates the challenges of using English as a language of instruction on academic performance of students in Karatu District Council in Tanzania to come up with relevant recommendations to Policy Makers.

The study adopted Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) theory by Cummins (1979) which supports language development skills under cognitive development for students' academic performance. CALP is the language ability required for academic achievement in a context-reduced environment. This level of language learning is essential for students to succeed in school. Students need time and support to become proficient in academic areas. The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges facing the use of English as language of instruction on academic performance of students in Karatu District Council in Tanzania.

2. Review of Related Literature and Studies

This section reviewed theoretical and empirical literature from books and journal articles related to the language of instruction and academic performance of students.

2.1 Challenges Facing Teachers when using English as Medium of Instruction in Tanzanian Secondary Schools

Education, for many countries of the world, is increasingly becoming bilingual or multilingual as a result of the impact of globalization (Telli, 2014). Hence, national language policies and the selection of languages to be used as the language of instruction in schools are of considerable importance for quality teaching and learning to be realized (UNESCO, 2005). The issue of language of instruction in Tanzania cannot be ignored as Tanzania is basically a multilingual nation (Telli 2014).

According to Marwa (2014), Tanzania has more than 120 ethnic communities, each community speaking its own language. Kiswahili and English are the two languages used officially in formal education. However, Kiswahili is the National language which is used in Parliament and at the primary level, mostly in public schools. The use of Kiswahili and English as languages of instruction in the

education system of Tanzania has been a point of much debate over the years (UNICEF, 2016).

Brock-Utne (2005) asserts that in quality learning, a child learns best when she/he understands what the teacher is saying and quality learning is about what will make the child develop her/himself. Zehlia (2010) affirms that language and quality are associated and language is related to quality. Language facilitates knowledge, improves communication and helps the cognitive learning. Qorro (2006) emphasizes that only when teachers and students understand the language of instruction are they able to discuss, debate, ask and answer questions, ask for clarification and therefore construct and generate knowledge that bring about quality sustainable development. Vuzo (2002; 2010), as cited in Kirui et al (2017) commented that, if learners and teachers have difficulties in using the language of instruction with adequate proficiency, consequently, they can fail to answer questions well, simply because they fail to understand the question, not because they do not know the answer. Language can affect the learner's ability to interpret instructions and questions. It can also lead to failure to express their ideas appropriately, hence poor academic performance.

Reiser and Dempsey (2007), cited in Ngussa (2017) explained the importance of language mastery on classroom interaction. The author explains that interaction involves behaviors where individuals and groups directly influence each other. While this can happen in many social settings, it can also be of great value in the teaching-learning process. Likewise, Tuckman and Monetti (2011) agree that interaction is an important factor for social structure. A study by Ngussa (2017) found that language competence increases the level of interaction and he recommends that language teachers should play good role to improve learners' mastery of the medium of instruction in order to enhance the interaction level during teaching-learning sessions.

Hakielimu (2008) in Kirui et al (2017), raise a concern that while children's Kiswahili language competencies are generally well developed, English language competencies are poorly developed in both primary and secondary schools of Tanzania. Students have difficulty in reading, writing and translating the language. On entering secondary schools, children not only have to relearn all the terms and concepts in a new language but also take on a more difficult set of subjects. If the majority of the students in secondary schools are unable to read and understand the language in which they are taught then it is difficult to see how their learning can be enhanced.

Mosha (2014) agreed that it is language that the business of schooling is still primarily accomplished, whether that be spoken or written. Student academic performance is a measure of the effectiveness of a teacher. If the teacher

and the learner are handicapped in the language of instruction, then effective learning will not take place at all, as the educator and the learner will not be communicating on the same situation. Brown (2000) agrees that one of the key attributes of an effective teacher is lesson clarity, which can lead to improved academic performance by the students. Again, Roy- Campbell and Qorro (1997) describe the Language of instruction situation as a crisis in Tanzania. They argued that, result of the low proficiency in the language of instruction is that students are tongue tied and teachers' professional confidence is undermined, the final outcome is low academic performance in tests and examinations.

Likewise, Vuzo (2002), cited in Kirui et al (2017) give divergent perspective that in the primary schools in Tanzania, Kiswahili is used as the Language of instruction (LOI) but the academic achievement is not good, this illustrates the point that language is important but not the sole contributor to quality education for sustainable development. Hakielimu (2008) agrees that, if majority of students in secondary schools are unable to read and understand the language of instruction in which they are taught, it is difficult to see how their learning can be enhanced.

2.2 Related Studies

Several studies from different countries have been conducted on the language of instruction as controversial issue in the whole process of teaching and learning. A study in Pakistan by Shaheen and Tariq (2013) found that the change in the medium/language of instruction has an impact on students' academic performance. Tanzania experiences the same problem as change in language of instruction from Kiswahili in primary to English in secondary schools impact academic performance of students.

Likewise Ahmed (2015) in the study on the history of foreign language policies in Turkey observed that the study of English language as a foreign language in Turkish educational system has been outlined in order to be aware of the present situation. The study recommended that a successful foreign language planning should be based on realistic and scientific data, data collection, and environmental analysis, goal setting, planning, pre application, response evaluation, assessment and evaluation. The study also recommended to the Turkish government that when planning a policy of a nation on an issue like foreign language policies, the responsibility should be taken by academicians who are specialized in their field.

Similarly, Senapati et al. (2012), as cited in Ngussa (2017) established significant main effects of language of instruction for almost all the measures of cognitive

processes suggesting higher performance level of the English medium school children in comparison to their Odia medium counterparts in India. This advocates that English had significant role toward students' cognitive development processes.

Bringing a divergent opinion, Obiegeli (2013), as cited in Ngussa (2017), conducted an experimental study in two schools in Nigeria and revealed that students taught in Igbo language performed better than the students taught in English language. Based on this result, the researcher recommended the use of Igbo in teaching Basic Science, which seemed to help to relate the subject to the immediate environment on the learners. The finding of this study is also supported by the scholars such as Emenanjo (1990) and Banjo (1989), cited in Ojetunde (2012) who are of the opinion that mother-tongue should serve as a medium of instruction in the formative years (1-12) and that this should extend to as late a stage as possible. This, according to them, will offer the child opportunity to explore his/her natural environment, develop curiosity, communicate in the natural language, develop reasoning ability and engender self confidence.

Mwinsheikhe (2002), cited in UNICEF (2016) carried out a study of the extent to which Kiswahili is used by both students and teachers in the teaching of science in Tanzanian secondary schools, where English is officially the language of instruction. The majority of the teachers interviewed in the study acknowledged the existence of a language problem in the teaching and learning of science at the secondary school level and admitted that they used Kiswahili regularly to ensure that the students understood the material. This implies that, when teachers use English only during teaching and learning process, students fail to understand the concepts hence poor academic performance. English as the language of instruction need to be improved to allow effective classroom interaction.

Kinyaduka and Kiwara (2013) cited in Ngussa (2017), assessed the opinion of 408 teachers, students and parents on the impact of English language of instruction on students' understanding during instruction in Tanzania and came up with mixed findings. The study pointed out that majority of teachers and parents preferred the use of English as medium of instruction even though teachers considered English language as a setback to students' academic performance and majority of students could not understand. On the contrary Lupongo (2014) suggested the use of Kiswahili as a language of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools and tertiary institutions. Language of instruction has to be harmonized to minimize confusion for the better performance of students in secondary schools in Tanzania.

Likewise a study by Lupogo (2014) on Language of Instruction pointed the impact of English as a language of instruction in Tanzania. The study revealed the first impact of using English as language of instruction is failure of effective implementation of Vocational Education Training (VET). This is because the language (English) used by students to acquire knowledge is different from the language (Kiswahili) used in providing particular knowledge related services in the society. The second impact is failure of effective acquisition of relevant knowledge since the students are not proficient in language of instruction. It can be seen that debate on the issue of language of instruction still exist, this justify that more studies are to be done to come up with solutions to the language of instruction debate. It is for this reason that, the present study investigates the influence of language of instruction on academic achievement of students so as to come up with valuable recommendations to the policy makers and all educational stakeholders.

3. Research Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used in this study. The section explains research design, population and sampling procedure, validity of research instruments and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. Orodho (2012) asserts that descriptive survey research design is used in exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification.

3.2 Study Population

The target population for this study was Ordinary level secondary school teachers from 15 public Ordinary level secondary Schools in Karatu District Council. The study sampled 314 teachers. These are the persons who interact with learners and curriculum more frequently.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures

Simple random were used to select research respondents. Karatu District council has a population of 627 Ordinary level secondary school teachers which was sampled to get a representation to the study. Data was collected from 314 teachers selected randomly. The sample size for teachers was based on the guideline proposed by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). The study used the proposed sample size at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2014) defined reliability as the means that scores from an instrument are stable and consistent. Scores should be nearly the same when researchers administer the instrument multiple times at different times. For the case of this study to ensure that the instruments are reliable, a pilot study was conducted in Kilimanjaro Region. This is because teachers in this region have the same characteristics with those in Karatu District .The responses were subjected to a statistical treatment using Cronbach's Alpha technique where the cutoff point was set at level 0.7.

Table 1: Reliability of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.755	12

The teachers Questionnaire was considered reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of .755>.50 the set cut off point as shown in table 1. According to Cohen et al. (2005) validity is a demonstration that a particular instrument measures what it intends to measure. In quantitative data validity might be improved through, appropriate instrumentation. Validity of the questionnaire was therefore ensured through a review by five research experts from the University of Arusha in Tanzania and necessary adjustments were incorporated.

Cohen et al. (2005) defines validity as the degree to which a measuring instrument satisfies the purpose for which it was constructed. It measures how truthful the research results are or the extent to which scores truly reflect the underlying variable of interest. In this study, validity of instruments was determined by giving the questionnaire to aforementioned experts in education field to carefully and critically examine and assess the relevance of the items to the objectives of the study.

3.5 Research Instruments

In this study closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire was used to gather data from the teachers in Karatu District Council Arusha. The questionnaire is one of the most widely used techniques in research for obtaining information from subjects (Kothari, 2002). According to Best and Kahn (2006) a questionnaire is a set of questions dealing with some topic or related group of topics, given to a selected group of individuals for the purpose of gathering data on a problem under consideration.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, quantitative and some elements of qualitative approaches were employed in data

analysis. Descriptive Statistics established frequencies and percentages of closed-ended questionnaire responses.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of data, discussion of the findings and interpretations in relation to existing literature.

4.1 What challenges do teachers face when teaching using English as Language of Instruction in secondary schools?

By the use of questionnaires, teachers were asked to indicate challenges they face in teaching using English as language of instruction in secondary schools. As Table 1 indicates, 207 (83.1%) teachers agreed that they faced challenges in teaching using English as language of Instruction while 30 (12.1%) teachers did not agree. Twelve (4.8%) teachers were neutral. This implies that majority of teachers in public secondary schools in Karatu District agreed that they faced challenges in teaching using the language of instruction. The most common challenge mentioned through open-ended data from the questionnaire was learners' limited competence in Language of Instruction.

One teacher, for instance, commented that the issue of using two different languages; one at primary schools and another in secondary schools lowers the students' ability to master either of the two languages hence they cannot understand and apply what is being taught. Another teacher lamented that students are unable to answer essay questions because they lack vocabularies they also don't ask questions because they cannot construct using English language.

This finding implies that language of instruction in secondary schools is a barrier to academic performance of students. This finding is supported by literature in works of Ewie (2015) who proved that students lack proficiency in the use of English language in the school premises and outside which hinders their academic achievement.

Table: 2 Challenges faced by teachers

Teachers Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	207	83.1
No	30	12.1
Neutral	12	4.8
Total	249	100.0

4.2 Do students understand when teaching using English as a language of instruction in your class?

A total number of 215 (86.3%) teachers rejected that their students understand when taught using English as language of instruction, 20 (8.1%) agreed while 14(5.6%) were neutral

This finding show that, majority of teachers rejected that their students have ability to understand when teaching using English as language of instruction in the classrooms. The finding agreed with Brock-Utne (2005) who asserts that in quality learning- A child learns best when she/he understands what the teacher is saying and quality learning is about what will make the child develop her/himself. Zehlia (2010) affirms that language and quality are associated and language is related to quality. Language facilitates knowledge, improves communication and helps the cognitive learning. Qorro (2006) emphasizes that only when teachers and students understand the language of instruction are they able to discuss, debate, ask and answer questions and ask for clarification and therefore construct and generate knowledge that brings about quality sustainable development. This means that if students are not competent in the language of instruction, they cannot experience better academic performance.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that majority of teachers in public secondary schools in Karatu District face challenges in teaching using the language of instruction. The most common challenge mentioned through open-ended data from the questionnaire was learners' limited competence in language of instruction. Hence language of instruction is a barrier to academic achievement to both students and teachers. Majority of teachers stressed that incompetence in language of instruction hinders classroom interaction between teachers and students which contributes very much on low academic achievement of students.

Based on conclusion of this study, the researchers recommend that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Education Training (MOEVT) should come up with a policy on improving English as language of instruction to enhance competencies to students and teachers. Emphasis should be put on the language of instruction from lower levels (pre and primary schools). Introduction of language of instruction (English) clubs, campaigns and competitions among students will help increase the level of competency in public secondary schools and make them successful for the rest of their secondary school education journey and thus, reaching highest possible academic achievement.

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