

Problem of English Language Proficiency in Tanzania Schools: The Causes and the Way Forward¹

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Abstract

Tanzania is one of the few African countries that promote the use of an indigenous language as the medium of instruction throughout primary education, but English takes over in post-primary education. Previous studies revealed lack of proficiency in English among many secondary school teachers. In addition, many students in the university that the researcher had contact with could not speak and interact fluently in English. This study sets to assess the causes of poor proficiency in English language among secondary school teachers and teacher trainees. The data for the study were collected through questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussion, observation, and documentary analysis. The study made substantive recommendations that will help to improve English proficiency among the teachers and teacher trainees in Tanzania, which include introduction of English proficiency test and course at the beginning of teacher training program, provision of in-service training, and making English language a compulsory subject at advanced level of secondary education.

Keywords: Tanzania, Language policy, proficiency, medium of instruction, English language

1. Introduction

Language is the most important communication tool for assessing cognitive skills, knowledge, technologies, attitudes, and values. Language teaching continues to be an essential aspect of education as accessibility of knowledge depends on the mastery of the language of instruction. Language choice has been one of the most difficult challenges facing multilingual countries and their governments. In a country where many languages are spoken, the position given to these languages vary: the official and dominant language, the official but minority language, and other non-official and minority languages. This sort of hierarchical positioning draws boundary between favoured and unfavoured languages as well as the attitudes of people towards these languages. In Tanzania, like in many other multilingual countries, the positions

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occupied by these languages constitutionally empower or marginalise their development, spread and wide usage. Tanzania has more than 120 languages including English and Kiswahili (Senkoro, 2005), and it is one of the few countries, alongside Somalia and Ethiopia, that promote the use of an indigenous African language as the medium of instruction (MoI) throughout primary education. However, Kiswahili ceases to be used as MoI in post-primary education where it has been replaced with English (Makori, 2005). The choice of English as MoI does not consider the proficiency, accessibility of knowledge and success of learners with the language (Roy-Campbell, 2001).

The use of English in Tanzania as the sole MoI excludes many learners who do not possess proficiency in the language. According to Bamgbose (1999:2-3), “language exclusion leads to a high school drop-out rate, high percentage of learners repeating classes, and a high failure rate at the end of examination”. If the teachers are not proficient in the MoI, it hinders transmission of the subject content. Here, the classroom offers little or no opportunity for negotiation between the learners and their teachers on what the teacher teaches even when the learners do not understand.

However, foreign languages are beneficial in that they are international and serve as the means of transferring the knowledge of modern science and technology (Hamseso, 1997). Associating English with prestige, power and economic opportunities has been the driving force for many parents who wish their children and wards attend English medium schools. Also, its significance in education leads to positive attitude towards the language. With the status of English, locally and internationally, there are three principal functions that English serves in Tanzania: it is a language of international communication, a language of commerce, and a language of education (Trappes-Lomax, 1985). Studies (such as Qorro, 2008; Tibategeza, 2009) have revealed that many secondary school teachers do not master English. A teacher’s poor proficiency in English often leads to frustration, high drop-out rate and poor performance in learning tasks on the part of learners. The present work is an empirical study that explores the causes of poor English language proficiency among secondary school teachers in Tanzania, and also assesses ways in which English language proficiency can be improved.

2. Literature Review

Many scholars have explored different areas of language and education in Tanzania. Some have assessed language as a MoI (Roy-Campbell, 2001), the contradiction in ideology, policy, and implementation of language in education (Swilla, 2009), the analysis of language-in-education policy implementation (Tibategeza, 2009), among others. Studies in some secondary school classrooms in Tanzania (such as Tibategeza, 2009) show that most students and the majority of teachers are seriously challenged when using English as the language of teaching and learning.

The study by Mosha (2014) focused on the factors that have contributed to students' poor performance in English as a subject in Zanzibar ordinary level secondary schools. The data for study was collected through interviews, classroom observations, questionnaires, and documentary reviews. The study revealed the following factors as the causes of poor performance in English: (a) untrained and less qualified teachers teaching the subject, (b) infrequent use of English, (c) large class sizes, (d) teachers' other responsibilities, (e) poor teaching and learning environment, (f) skipping of difficult topics in the syllabus, (g) the absence of teachers' in-service training, (h) excess work load, (i) lack of teaching facilities, particularly textbooks, and (j) the absence of or inactive school debates and English clubs.

In another study, Mbaga (2015) examines the effectiveness of classroom interactions in promoting English language learning in secondary schools in Tanzania. The study revealed the factors which hinder meaningful classroom interactions: large classes, lack of books, lack of classroom teaching equipment, and lack of teachers who are well trained and motivated. According to Qorro (2008), most students' proficiency level in English in the institution of higher learning is low, as language is a hindrance in active participation in and out of the classroom.

With continuous use of English in education and its effects on the learners' performance, the government of Tanzania in 1980 appointed a committee to review the education system in general and submit suggestions. One of their suggestions was that Kiswahili should be the MoI in secondary and tertiary education following English language problems which were detected among the learners in secondary schools (Tibategeza, 2009). But for the fear that English will lose ground in Tanzania, the British government established English Language Teaching Support Projects (ELTSP) in 1987. The main objective of ELTSP is to eradicate the problems related to English language teaching and learning, as well as to continue the use of English as the MoI. The ELTSP include: The Zanzibar English Language Improvement Programme (ZELIP), The Form 1 English Language Orientation Programme (F1ELOP), and the Secondary English Language Orientation Programme (SELOP). ELTSP did not achieve its main objective. Tibategeza (2009) pointed out that learners find it difficult to cope with instructions carried out in English and teachers themselves make grammatical errors. According to Qorro (2008), the level of English language proficiency among the learners was too low for the effective learning of the subject content to take place. The use of a language other than a child's first language as the MoI, particularly in early primary education, is a case of language exclusion, especially when the child does not possess adequate proficiency in the language. This choice of another language for the child's basic education ignores the language that the child brings to school, which s/he is already familiar with. Trappes-Lomax (1985:11-12) enumerates the reasons for low academic performance in school, which include (a) the position of English and its teaching in Tanzania (b) the absence of opportunities and incentives to use English particularly in the primary school (c) lack of specialist English teachers at the primary level, and (d) low qualifications of many primary school teachers. After almost four decades of Trappes-Lomax's study, the problems associated with English language in Tanzanian schools continue to increase. Recent studies (such as

Tibategeza, 2009) have shown that learners who graduated from primary school lack good knowledge of English to be able to access learning in the language in secondary education and also faced with being taught by teachers who have not mastered the language. For example, Qorro's (2008) study revealed that when the teacher's handwriting was not legible, students did not ask but simply copied words incorrectly and seemed unable to distinguish between correct and incorrect spelt words.

Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1987) conducted a survey on the reading competence in English language among some selected secondary school learners in Tanzania. The study was motivated by the assertion that learners who are competent in the MoI tend to perform well in other academic subjects and vice versa; thus confirming the hypothesis that proficiency in the language of instruction is an important factor in educational performance. The students were given reading skill tests both in Kiswahili and English. The result of the study revealed that students read and comprehend better in Kiswahili compared to English. Despite the result of the study, the parents still preferred education of their children and wards in English.

3. The Problem

The number of secondary schools in Tanzania doubled due to the efforts of the government in expanding secondary education. The increase is to meet the high demand for secondary education and to accommodate the expanded enrolment. To ensure enough teachers in secondary schools, the government through the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, *lowered* the entrance qualification in 2007 for those who wished to join the teachers' training colleges.

Compounding the problem is the issue of language as MoI, which has been an old problem and has continued to cause great havoc in achieving academic excellence. Many learners enter the primary school with their native languages which they never use in education but switch to Kiswahili as MoI throughout primary education. However, there is no continuity as Kiswahili ceases to be used as the MoI in post-primary education, but English. According to Mbagha (2015), for a learner to be quick, resolute, and an effective thinker, mastery of the language of instruction is a basic prerequisite to the learning process by both learners and teachers. Lack of proficiency in English also leads to failure or poor academic performance on the part of the learners. More worrisome is the lack of proficiency in the language by the teachers who are expected to be language models for their learners. However, teachers are not good language models for their learners when it comes to mastery of English. According to Criper and Dodd (1984) "the standard of English of Form 4 and Form 6 remains low". Colleges of education and universities are forced to accept students who perform poorly in English. They graduate as teachers with little improvement in their English and consequently return to schools as teachers with poor command of the language which they are expected to use as MoI.

5. Research Methodology

The study applied five research instruments to collect relevant data for the study: review of relevant documents, observation, administration of questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion. According to Patton (1990), a combination of different methods provides a cross-data validity check and, therefore, reduces errors that can be experienced when one particular method is used. This study uses the descriptive research design which is largely meant to describe the state of affairs as it exists in a given place. Descriptive research according to Okolo (2009:221) “is that research which specifies the nature of a given phenomenon”. Okolo stated further those accurate descriptions are imperative for making a wide range of assumptions and policies. A descriptive design helps to find out more about the phenomena and, therefore, captures it in a detailed way (Wisker, 2001). The population of the study includes all secondary school teachers, head of secondary schools, district education officers, teacher trainees and their tutors.

The sample used in this study was drawn randomly from Nyamagana district which is under Mwanza region of Tanzania. The sample was drawn from fifteen secondary schools, three teacher training colleges (two private colleges and one government established college) and one university. Secondary schools in Nyamagana district were grouped into three for this study: old public secondary schools (which are schools established before 1990), new public secondary schools (established from 1990) and private schools. Five schools were randomly selected from each group.

A total number of 588 people participated in the questionnaire, while 45 were interviewed. The following table summarises the distribution of the participants.

Table 1: Summary of Questionnaire and Interview Participants

Questionnaire Participants		Oral Interview Participants	
Secondary school teachers	150	Secondary school principals	15
College students	305	University HODs	4
College tutors	19	College principals	3
University students	100	College tutors	3
University lecturers	14	University lecturers	7
Total	588	College class representatives	5
		University course representatives	4
		Dean, Faculty of Education (University)	1
		District Education Officers	3
		Total	45

Key: HODs stands for Heads of Departments

The questionnaire and interview were used to assess the level of English and Kiswahili usage in different school contexts, the frequency of their usage, attitude of the respondents

towards the languages, causes of poor English proficiency, different activities in place to improve proficiency in English, and suggestions on what can be done to improve English language proficiency among teachers and teacher trainees.

For focus group discussion, a total of eight group interviews were organised, with participants numbering 51 college students.

Table 2: Summary of Focus Group Discussion Participants

College A		
1 st Group	1 st year class Representatives	7
2 nd Group	2 nd year class Representatives	6
3 rd Group	College Elected Prefects	7
4 th Group	Members of English club	11
College B		
5 th Group	1 st year class Representatives	5
6 th Group	2 nd year class Representatives	4
College C		
7 th Group	1 st year class Representatives	6
8 th Group	2 nd year class Representatives	5
		51

Group B and C do not have college elected prefects and members of English club. The time for each group discussion lasted between forty-five minutes and two and half hours. Focus group discussion was used to assess the attitude of the teacher trainees towards the use of English and different contexts where they use the language. The method provided an avenue to cross-check the information gathered from the questionnaire, observation, and documentary reviews. The method was used to get more perspectives on English language use from the participating students who were free in expressing their views and at the same time advancing arguments based on what their co-students had said. The method was also used to assess if the college students' English proficiency was tested before their graduation and their stand, if the testing of English language proficiency is introduced. The results gathered from questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion were presented as a whole.

Observation was used to assess the linguistic landscape within the teacher training colleges. Linguistic landscape assessed were the language used in the school signboards, names of buildings, classes, offices, kitchens, and toilets, including written notices pasted on the college notice-boards. This was to establish whether the language of instruction is reflected on the signpost in the college premises.

Documentary review was another method used in the collection of data. The documents reviewed were: The *Education and Training Policy* (1995), Communication Skills Syllabi and subject timetable for teacher training institutions. The documents were reviewed to find the official position with regards to English language in schools and teacher training institutions.

6. Findings

In this section, the presentation of the findings of the study follows this order: participants' background, documentary review, results on Kiswahili and English language usage, causes of poor English proficiency among teachers, action plans already on ground to improve English proficiency, and recommendations for improvement.

6.1. Background of the Participants

Most of the respondents (565) were under the age of 41 years, 52 respondents were between the age of 41 and 50, 16 respondents were 51 years and above. On the gender of the respondents, 369 were male, 244 were female while 17 did not indicate their gender. The study also assessed the educational background of teachers who participated in the study. The study revealed that the majority (60.9%) were first degree trained teachers, while 32.7% were diploma trained, and only 3.6% of the secondary school teachers who participated in the study were not qualified to teach but were hired as support staff.

6.2. Documentary Review

The first document reviewed was the *Education and Training Policy* (1995). The document discusses general issues regarding education and training in Tanzania. The focus of the document is not only on language but also on general issues pertaining to education and its training. It is only in chapter five that the language policy is explained, focusing more on the MoI to be used at different levels of education, and also where the language will be taught as a subject. The need for the development of communication skills of the learners is emphasised at all levels of education. According to the policy, "the medium of instruction for secondary education shall continue to be English except for the teaching of other approved languages and Kiswahili shall be a compulsory subject up to Ordinary level" (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995: 45). The policy declares the official language of instruction in teacher colleges: "the medium of instruction for teacher education at Certificate level shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject while for Diploma level and Degree level teacher education and training, English shall be used, except for foreign language teaching which will be in the relevant language itself and Kiswahili shall be a compulsory subject" (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995: 49). The document takes cognisance of the need for students to excel in communication skills and for that matter, the MoI in the teacher education institutions depends on which level a teacher trainee is prepared to teach. For learners in secondary schools, they are expected to communicate only in English.

The study assessed the entry requirement for colleges and universities for prospective teachers. The *United Republic of Tanzania* (1995: 48) states clearly that the "minimum admission

requirement for the Teacher Education Certificate Course shall be Division III of the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination while for the Diploma Teacher Certificate Course, minimum entry requirement qualification shall be Division III in the Advanced Certificate of Secondary Education Examination”.

Regarding the entry requirements, the minimum academic requirements for admission into higher education institutions is stated as follows: “to join a degree programme, one must have at least two A’ Level principal passes and a subsidiary pass with a total of not less than 4 points for non-science students and 2.5 points for science students”. However, institutions may set the requirements higher than those of TCU or NACTE. Advanced Level (A’ Level) students with one principal pass and a subsidiary in National Examination results were allowed to join teachers’ colleges for a Diploma in Secondary Education courses. According to education stakeholders during interviews, lowering the entrance qualification attracts many people with poor performance into the teaching profession, which leads to many incompetent teachers.

Another document reviewed is the Communication Skills Syllabi for Colleges. Communication Skills is a course which cuts across all teacher training institutions. The objective of the course is to enable the teacher trainees to develop skills of oral presentations, discussion, reading academic texts, taking notes and writing (essays, letters, curricula vitae, minutes, memos and reports). The course covers the use of the main four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The study revealed that the course is expected to be covered within eighty hours of the students’ first year. The teaching timetable of the colleges and university were assessed with the intention to compare the required number of hours for the Communication Skills course and what is in practice. The study made an alarming discovery in one of the colleges that Communication Skills is taught there for only one hour in a week instead of three hours. And instead of covering forty hours in a semester, only thirteen hours is likely to be covered. A Communication Skills tutor interviewed stated that,

“I was not aware of the required time allocated to teach this course from the syllabi. I have been teaching this course for the past two years for one hour in a week except on some occasions that I extended the class to one and half or two hours on my own, especially when the students do not have another course after mine”.

However, in the sampled university, the course was taught for three hours per week from the timetable assessed.

6.3. Results on Kiswahili and English Language Usage

On languages used in different contexts, the results showed that Kiswahili was used more with medical staff (71.3%), non-academic staff (88.1%), and in religious context (78.6%). However, English language usage was used more with students in the class (56.9%), in making spoken and written announcements (64.5% and 81.3%, respectively). English was also used more

with students during questions and answers in the class (83.3% and 76.9%, respectively). On the frequency of English language usage in different contexts, the results showed that 60% of the respondents claimed they always use English to ask and answer questions in the classroom, to teach, interact with students in the classroom and when making written announcements. On the contrary, 35% and 47% claimed that they rarely or never, respectively, use English with non-academic staff. Also, 24.5% and 23.5% rarely and never, respectively, use English during religious gathering.

During the interview, the teachers admit that during their training, Kiswahili dominated in the classroom lessons. One teacher stated that “we often ask and answer questions in the classroom with Kiswahili and we often do not discourage the learners from the use of Kiswahili”, which is contrary to the main objective of Communication Skills course. One of the principals of one of the colleges stated that “the college has a debating club, which was a good arena for students’ teachers to practice spoken English”. However, this is contrary to what was discovered during the group discussion with class representatives. One teacher trainee stated that, “our college at this present time does not have a functioning or active debating club. In fact, since I entered into this college, I have not heard anything about the club meeting”.

On the attitude of the trainees towards the use of English in and outside the classroom, more than half of the focus group participants have a positive attitude towards the use of English. To them, they need the language because English is a language of wider communication and international relation. However, they seem to be disappointed with the level of English language usage in their colleges even among their tutors. A second year student stated that, “I am often ashamed to speak English among my friends because I am often ridiculed as being proud. This is discouraging and does not give room for one to improve”. The use of English language alone as MoI has not been practical. The negative attitude poses a challenge to the implementation of the current official policy that requires the use of English as the sole MoI at post-primary level of education. The students stressed that all the education stakeholders view English as a language of power and upward advancement.

On whether the college tests students’ proficiency before their graduation, the findings showed that the proficiency in English language is not specifically tested. For example, the class representative of second year in one of the colleges stated that “our college assesses the ability of the students’ proficiency in English using the institutions’ formal assessment tools such as class presentations, oral and written class works”. The student stated further that “we are also tested through micro-teaching, teaching practice, comprehensive examination and research defense”. These assessments are outside individual course assessment and require more than one assessor. However, some teacher trainees oppose testing of the learners’ English proficiency especially those whose specialisation is Kiswahili. According to one course representative, “it will never be fair to introduce an English language proficiency test in teacher training institutions while there are some of us whose specialisation is Kiswahili”.

The linguistic landscape² within the colleges was assessed, to establish whether the language of instruction is reflected on the signpost in the college premises. A total of 29 signposts were observed. It was discovered that 28 signposts were written in English while only one was written in Kisukuma (the dominant language of the community). However, all other notices in the school compound were all written in Kiswahili except the “Speak English Rule” written boldly in English.

6.4. Causes of Poor English Proficiency among Teachers

The study revealed that one of the major causes of poor English proficiency among secondary school teachers is the linguistic situation of the country. According to the respondents, the position accorded to Kiswahili does not encourage the use of English except inside the school and specifically in English language classrooms. The findings support Tibategeza’s (2009) conclusion that the dominance of Kiswahili in all contexts in Tanzania, especially in school environments, creates poor spoken English among the students. In other words, English is rarely heard outside the classroom, except in transactions involving a foreigner who does not understand Kiswahili.

Another cause is lack of or inadequate exposure to the English language. The teacher trainees claimed that they are not exposed to the language enough to get an understanding of the language, except during the teaching and learning of English language. It was revealed during a discussion that even during the teaching of the English language, the teachers often code-switch between Kiswahili and English. The respondents claimed that switching of codes help them in learning the subject content but does not help them in improving their English language competence. One of the secondary school principals stated that many teachers who tried to use only English while teaching have been found to often mislead the students because they themselves are not competent in the language, and this is called *negative exposure*, according to Qorro (2006: 109).

The amount of time dedicated to English language learning is another cause for poor English language proficiency among the teachers. The time is limited due to many other subjects and other school activities that are included in the curriculum. In training colleges, the amount of time is three hours per week, where it competes with Kiswahili. However, in the primary schools there are seven English periods, and each lasts for forty minutes. The majority of our respondents (78%) are of the opinion that time and duration of teaching English is not the problem in schools, but the quality of teachers and teaching within the periods. The periods allocated to English make it seem as if Kiswahili is the dominant language of teaching English. The respondents stated that pupils cannot master the language with the current language practices.

²Linguistic landscape is the language used in the school signboards: names of buildings and classes, offices, kitchens, toilets, etc.

Another cause is lack of or limited teaching materials especially audio/video for good pronunciation. The respondents admit that English teachers teach either with insufficient materials or, in most cases, teach without any material. The study reveals that teachers enter the class often with only their lesson notes, and rarely with any other material that can aid the teaching of the subject. According to the principal of one of the schools during interview, “we have few teaching aid, and most of what we have are very old and some are no more relevant like when they were brought”. Another principal stated that they encourage the teachers to create their own materials that can assist them in their teaching. One of the teaching professional objectives is to ensure the trainees are capable of producing aids and materials for teaching. The preparation of some teaching materials may need funds for their purchase, but some are readily available for teachers to pick from home or school environment. However, the teachers are of the opinion that producing any teaching aid involves money which they claimed they do not have. One of the teacher trainees stated that teachers come to class with teaching aid when the school inspectors come to visit the college. One can conclude that teachers can improvise teaching materials but either there is no motivation for them to do it or no monitoring on what they teach and how they teach them.

Limited seminars and workshops is another cause for poor English proficiency among teachers. One of the principals during interview stated that “the main reason for limited seminars and workshops is lack of funds as the organisers of every workshop or seminar have to pay the teachers in attendance “*sitting allowance*”, which was confirmed by the District Education Officer. The Education Officer also stated that “when a workshop is organised and there is no monetary allowance attached to it, the teachers must be informed, and from my record, teachers are not interested and do not attend any workshop or seminar without receiving or having the hope of getting their sitting allowances”. Allowances hinder frequent conduct of workshops and seminars. From the study, teachers do not care much about the knowledge they will get from such seminars and workshops but put more attention on monetary benefit.

Another problem is the quality of students admitted to be trained as teachers. One of the head of the schools stated that “the problem of poor English proficiency in Tanzania can be traced to the background of the teachers’ education, where the school system encourages the use of Kiswahili in all contexts of school”. He stated further that “the problem of English language proficiency exists because there are three categories of teacher trainees that end up in secondary school as teachers:

- i. Students who complete their O-Level and move straight to A-Level and then to the university before joining a secondary school as a teacher. The teachers in this category acquire better proficiency than others.
- ii. The second category of teachers is constituted by those who complete their A-Level, and who have been employed for a few years to teach before they proceed to the university to obtain a university degree. The teachers in this category are not as good as the one mentioned above.

- iii. The third category has the teachers who complete their O-Level but failed. They are not qualified to further their studies. The students later undergo a two-year training course in teachers' colleges after which they are awarded a certificate in education, which allows them to teach in primary schools. These set of teachers are later enrolled in tuition classes to write their A-level examination and get admission to colleges and universities. Teachers in this category have great difficulties with English language usage during their diploma/university studies, and when they graduate, their proficiency is often lower than the teachers in the first and second categories”.

Another contributing factor to poor proficiency in English is lack of relevant textbooks in the colleges and university visited. According to a teacher trainee, “there are some books which you will not see in the library and none of the students has the books. However, teachers often have some of the books, but they do not like giving students their copies for fear of losing the books”. The principal of one of the colleges stated that the average ratio of students and books was very discouraging.

Like lack of textbooks is poor preparation of some subject contents by the teachers as well as skipping of poorly mastered topics by the teachers, which affects the teaching and learning of English. In a chat with one of the tutors at teacher training college, the tutor stated that, “the cause of poor mastery of English is that we don't have enough materials to prepare for the lesson and sometimes, the topic you want to teach is not in the available textbook.”

Another cause is shortage of qualified and competent English language teachers at all levels of education. The study interviewed the college principals of training colleges on the qualification of the teachers who are hired to teach at training colleges. It was discovered that the government established, and managed colleges had qualified teachers while in the individual and privately managed colleges, the case is different.

Furthermore, poor foundation for the teaching of English language in primary school is another cause. One of the principals interviewed stated that from his experience in teaching in primary schools for many years, pupils were not encouraged to speak English. The only period English is taught and used in the school is filled with code-switching between Kiswahili and English, thereby not giving the learners enough opportunity to learn and practice the language.

6.5. Action Plans Already on the Ground to Improve English Proficiency

The action plan taken by the university chosen as our sample is the introduction of a Basic English language Course (BELC). The general objective of the course is to raise students' proficiency in English language skills so that they can handle their academic work better and improve their oral and written communication. Teacher trainees in the said university were required to take the course for the duration of four semesters due to the significance of English in their teaching career. However, the BELC lecturers during interview stated that the range of linguistic problems that students have when they join the university is too vast to deal with in just

a course of three hours per week. Also, the BELC deals with a large number of students, which makes it difficult for course instructors to attend to the individual needs of the students who have varying degrees of proficiency in the language.

Another action in place was the introduction of “Speak English Campaign Rule” or what some call “No English No Service Rule”. This rule applies to colleges and the university visited during the course of this study. In all the colleges visited, there is always a place where one will see the campaign notice as shown in the figure below:

Fig 1 English Language Campaign Rule



The above figure was captured in one of the colleges visited. The message of the campaign is clear: English should be used in interactions of any kind; used for teaching and learning, as well as giving instructions. In practice, the rule is not effective as it is supposed to be because the education stakeholders do not pay consistent attention to it even when everybody is aware of the campaign rule.

Another action in place is on teaching methodology. A principal in one of the colleges stated that “the teachers are encouraged to use class presentation for some of the topics”. The study reveals that the students are often given a topic which they are required to study carefully and on which they are expected to make oral presentations in the class as well as take questions from their course mates. However, the teacher takes over from where the trainees stop. This method of teaching, according to some of our respondents, assists them in improving their spoken English in addition to learning the subject topic.

7. Recommendations

Proficiency in English language might be very difficult to achieve with the sociolinguistic situation of Tanzania. In order to improve secondary school teachers’ proficiency in English language, there is the need for deliberate efforts from all the stakeholders to work towards the

improvement of the language. First, there is a need to assess the kind of students who are admitted into teacher training institutions. For example, introduction of English language proficiency test at the beginning of the students' first year. The trainees that do not perform well in the proficiency test will be made to enroll for a Basic English Language Proficiency course. The course objectives will include developing the learners' reading and writing skills, as well as helping them to teach effectively with English as the MoI. During the course of the programme, the trainees will be made to complete a quiz and write an essay on a weekly basis, read at least one book every week and write a summary of the book. In addition, written examinations will be taken at the end of the semester to assess the students' progress. Finally, the study recommends the introduction of English language proficiency test for teacher trainees at the end of their programme as part of final examination to assess their English language proficiency. The examination will help to ascertain the level of proficiency of each teacher trainees in English language and a credit pass should be made a requirement for graduation.

Many secondary school teachers require in-service upgrading of methodology and language skills, but such services are not provided by relevant stakeholders due to lack of fund. According to the *United Republic of Tanzania* (1995:50), "in-service training and re-training shall be compulsory in order to ensure teacher quality and professionalism". The education sector should devise a way that will make the organisation of workshops and seminars less expensive for the organisers. For example, *sitting allowance* should be ruled out to allow more and frequent workshops and seminars. It should, if possible, be held in boarding secondary schools during vacations, so that teachers will be accommodated with schools' boarding facilities. This will cut down expenses especially with regards to accommodation and venues for the seminars and workshops.

Extensive use of pair and group work among the teachers is another recommendation. There is need for individual teachers to involve other teachers in the preparation of what they intend to teach. Group work collaboration is a necessary part of second language teaching methodology. The teachers involved can discuss their strengths and weaknesses and get help with their difficult topics from their colleagues.

Another recommendation is promoting dual language model. According to the model, both Kiswahili and English are to be used as languages of education in both primary and secondary education. With this model, students will receive half of their instruction in Kiswahili and the other half in English. Students are to learn to read and write in English and Kiswahili. Almost all students are expected to have the same difficulties in learning English as there is no student who will claim to be a native speaker of English. According to Tibategeza (2010), the 50-50 Dual Language Model intends to cater for a homogeneous group with Kiswahili as their main language and English as a second or foreign language. There is a need to put more emphasis on the use of English in and outside the classroom for the learners to get ample time to practice the language.

Furthermore, the government, through the Ministry of Education, should set up a committee that will work to revive English Language Teaching Support Projects (ELTSP), which was established in 1987. The committee will work with all heads of schools and teachers from the primary school to the university level. The committee will work out programmes that will cater for different levels of education.

Provision of adequate teaching and learning materials will enhance the proficiency in English. Government should ensure the provision of English related materials such as dictionaries, grammar texts, spelling books, readers for different level of learners, audio-tapes, and a multitude of other resources. The study also recommends that the books, if they are not free for learners, should be subsidised by the government. The subsidised teaching materials will not only help the learners to have varied materials but also ease the burden from parents and guardians. However, the school management and non-academic staff should ensure that learning materials provided for the trainees' use are monitored and well-kept for further use.

Another way to improve teacher trainees is to make English language a compulsory subject for students during their advanced secondary education. In addition, a pass in English should be a requirement for prospective teachers. This will boost the quality of teachers that teach in secondary schools with regard to the use of English.

Introduction of an English language club is another recommendation to improve the proficiency of teacher trainees. One of the objectives of English language club is to improve students' written and spoken English. The club will be organised and managed by teacher trainees, with supervision of competent and qualified teachers. A second year teacher trainees stated that "if the members of the club are required to read at least a book in a week and be given a chance to share with others, it will definitely assist the proficiency of most of us".

Another recommendation is the "Speak English Campaign Rule" or what some call "No English No Service Rule". In all the colleges visited, there is "Speak English Campaign Rule" poster placed where everyone will see. The school authorities through their tutors should enforce it consistently. Enforcing "No English No Service Rule" in teacher training institutions will help the teacher trainees to speak English often. Students should be required to speak English more often to be more proficient in the language. The rule should extend to asking and answering questions in the class. One of our respondents stated that "the college can enforce stricter rules in teacher training colleges by making sure that teachers themselves do not use Kiswahili except for private interactions among themselves but should adhere to language specification as stipulated in the *Education and Training Policy* of 1995.

The education stakeholders should rethink introducing English at a certain level in primary school as MoI, and English language specialists to be involved. If English is properly taught at this basic level by competent teachers, learners' performance will gradually improve and as they are moving to higher classes, their proficiency will increase. Also, there is need to have

proper monitoring by the authorities that only English is used during the teaching and learning of the language, probably in a simplified form.

In summary, there are three options in solving the problems at hand. The first is to continue the use of English both as MoI and teaching the language as subject as it is now in Tanzania. The second is to introduce English as MoI at certain levels of the primary school, and the third is to introduce a dual language model where English and Kiswahili will be used equally from the primary school level up to the university level.

8. Conclusion

We are all aware of the importance of English language and the prime of place it occupies in the world. It is the language of commerce, international diplomacy, including science and technology: the reasons language can make or mar the progress of a student along the educational, employment or political ladder. We have discussed the factors that impede or hinder proficiency in English among the teachers; the list of the causes is endless.

The major cause of teachers' poor proficiency in English language is weak English background right from primary school. Secondary school teachers are the product of the poor language in the education policy of Tanzania. The teachers who teach in primary schools are mostly the people who did not pass their O-Level examination and are forced to enroll for a Certificate course in order to teach in primary schools. During their Certificate programme, they are taught throughout their training in Kiswahili and they rarely use English in their college except during English language classes where Kiswahili dominates. Some of these primary school teachers later go for extra classes and write their A-Level examination and find themselves in either diploma or universities where they are trained to teach in secondary schools. Averting the situation is difficult. There is need for headmasters and education officers to stay less in office, but move around and monitor teachers while teaching, thereby detecting some of the problems they face as they teach. When this is done, education officers through the headmasters will devise ways to give the teachers necessary assistance to improve the teaching and learning of English.

Most learners who attended public (and non-English medium) schools have poor proficiency in English due to the quality of teachers who taught them. The learners enter secondary school where English is the sole MoI and without adequate understanding and knowledge of the MoI, their individuals' linguistic skills: their thinking, critical observation, questioning of ideas and facts, and in the interpretation of what is communicated to them are hampered. This poor background follows the students throughout their secondary school education with some becoming better with greater commitment in learning English. However, many never acquire proficiency.

The problem with regard to English language proficiency is obvious, especially lack of proficiency on the part of the teachers. The primary role of the teacher is that of transmitting the content of the subject or information to the learners. However, teachers' roles have shifted from

that of the information provider to that of a facilitator of learning. The issue of whether most of the teachers will be able to perform the task assigned to them effectively in English seems impossible as a result of their lack of proficiency.

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