



Developing Secondary School Learners' Competencies in Speaking and Writing in English: A Study of Teachers' Strategies in Kinondoni Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

English language is the current medium of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools. Tanzanians are often concerned about the fact that the majority of secondary school students lack communicative and linguistic competence and are unable to communicate effectively in English without periodically switching codes to Kiswahili. Teachers' ignorance of teaching strategies to positively assist students in learning the English language has been largely blamed for students' low English competencies. This study explored the strategies used by teachers to develop learners' competencies in speaking and writing English in community secondary schools and private secondary schools. Specifically, the study aimed to explore existing teaching and learning strategies for developing student competencies in speaking and writing skills and to investigate teachers' experience in developing competencies in speaking and writing skills in English language subjects.

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The study relied on a mixed research approach and a descriptive survey design. A sample size of five heads of English departments, 14 subject teachers and 204 students from selected secondary schools was used. The data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, document reviews, and observation and analysed by descriptive statistics and content/thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers of English subjects were not conversant with contemporary strategies of teaching English language. Additionally, the structure of the classroom, the quantity of students, and the lack of teaching and learning resources made even the traditional strategies ineffective. The study concluded that secondary school students in Tanzania are confronted with the twin task of learning the subject matter and the language at the same time that their teachers face the additional challenge of utilising the most effective instructional strategies to support their English language competencies. For students to acquire the competencies needed, English should be well taught using effective strategies and enable students to be equipped with the language skills.

Keywords: Teaching strategies; writing skills; speaking skills; learner competency; English language, secondary schools; Tanzania.

1. INTRODUCTION

English language is the current medium of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools. For students to acquire the knowledge needed, English should be well taught and enable students to be equipped with language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing). This implies that they should master the English subject competencies, which will lead to the competencies of other subjects. The general competencies for form I-IV are to use appropriate English to communicate in a variety of settings and to use English to achieve academically. Scholars have argued that knowledge, skills and attitudes among teachers who teach the English language are not well imparted for the effective teaching and learning of the English language [1] and [2]. One obstacle standing in the way of success for ESL students is writing. Writing as an English skill is a fundamental part of language. When a child writes, ideas and knowledge combine to create a unique meaning (1). "In Tanzania, it is expected that after graduating from secondary education, students have acquired and developed knowledge, attitudes and special skills of the language to meet the demands of the English language at higher levels of education and in the world of work in general. There are four skills in English, namely, listening, reading, speaking and writing. Based on the competence-based curriculum, speaking and writing are among the four basic competences that the student should gain well" (2) [3].

The Government of Tanzania at different times has been developing different strategies in the improvement of the language in Tanzania. This has led to changes in the English syllabus in

various fields as a way to incorporate the best way of teaching English in Tanzania. As a strategy to improve English language skills in Tanzania, the government introduced a communicative curriculum focusing on English skills at the O-level; this replaced the old curriculum, which was the basis of the structure and thus could provide the ability to communicate to the student. The new syllabus requires the use of the communicative approach (CA), which requires teachers to use CA when they teach the English language [4].

Although the English language is the medium of instruction in secondary schools, the language does not facilitate effective teaching and learning because it is not spoken or written well by most students and even teachers, especially in most public and community-owned secondary schools. For a language used as the medium of instruction, there is a need for development to facilitate the generation of knowledge. This means that both students and teachers are supposed to be proficient in the language of instructions, which will enable them to interact during teaching and learning processes. Speaking and writing are key areas where students and teachers face great difficulty. These are important to express what students and teachers are thinking verbally or in written form. Teachers' strategies in imparting these competencies need special attention. "English is a setback in the learning process in Tanzania secondary schools, and it is still an uphill task for Tanzanian learners to achieve learning objectives using the English language" [5]. According to Joseph in Kinondoni Municipality, 21 students had high performance in writing skills (9%), 87 students had average performance (37%), and 126 students had low

performance (54%). For speaking skills, 18 (8%) scored high, 76 (32%) scored average, and 140 (60%) scored low [6].

A language used as the medium of instruction should be developed to facilitate the generation of knowledge. This means that both students and teachers are supposed to be proficient in the language of instructions, which will enable them to interact during teaching and learning processes. Speaking and writing are key areas where students and teachers face great difficulty. These are important to express what students and teachers are thinking verbally or in written form. Teachers' strategies in imparting these competencies need special attention. However, despite claims to the contrary, research on the status of these competencies in Dar es Salaam schools is still very limited. Teachers claim that student writing is very poor and that running discussions is extremely difficult due to low speaking ability. Evidence on these claims is still very weak and needs justification from findings. Some also claim that private schools are doing better in promoting English speaking and writing. However, little hard evidence is available to support these claims. Therefore, this study investigated the strategies used by teachers in the local community and private schools to develop competencies in writing and speaking skills in the English language. Specifically, it was aimed at exploring existing teaching and learning strategies toward developing student competencies in speaking and writing skills and investigating teachers' experiences in developing competencies in speaking and writing skills in English language subjects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

English language competency is necessary for connections on a regional and worldwide scale, and it is much more important in this age of information, technology, and commercial globalisation. Language is also used as a medium of communication in schools, at home and in the community. According to Rees, "many learners do not hear adequate and authentic English from first language speakers of the language in a register appropriate for their age or scholastic level" [7]. According to Janks, most of the current English teachers in Africa are incompetent either in communicating or teaching in English [2]. Fakeye adds that when teachers are incompetent and use the English language frequently in the teaching process, it hinders the understanding between the teacher and students

[8]. Studies also indicate that there are difficulties in using the English language, which is noted as a serious problem in the education system in South Africa and other developing countries, as English competence among students is a challenge [9]. De Wet and Janks argue that knowledge, skills and attitudes among teachers who teach the English language are not effective in teaching and learning the English language [1] & [2].

One obstacle standing in the way of success for ESL students is writing. Writing as an English skill is a fundamental part of language. When a child writes, ideas and knowledge combine to create a unique meaning (1). "In Tanzania, it is expected that after graduating from secondary education, students will have acquired and developed knowledge, attitudes and special skills of the language to meet the demands of the English language at higher levels of education and in the world of work in general. There are four skills in English, namely, listening, reading, speaking and writing. Due to competence-based curricula, speaking and writing are among the four basic competences that students should gain well" (2) [4].

2.1 Writing Skills

Historically, writing skills for second language were imparted by involving different strategies and approaches. With regard to the instructional aspects of second language (SL) writing, the early 1960s was marked by the prevalence of a product approach. Kroll, in a review of literature about that period, argues that the model for teaching writing was composed of four steps. First, rules of writing were presented to students, and then students were provided with text for classroom discussion and analysis. Third, having supplied the students with an outline based upon the text, the teacher provided a writing assignment. Finally, the teacher provided feedback with comments based on the quality of writing skills presented by students [10].

Similarly, in the 1970s, the composition model was dominant and used to control EFL instruction. Hyland argues that the process of learning to write in a second language was observed to involve linguistic development and lexical knowledge as well as being familiar with the syntactic and cohesive devices necessary for forming the building blocks of a text [11]. In other words, learning to write involved imitation and manipulation of models supplied by the teacher

(3). Richards presents activities for this approach, such as guided writing, familiarisation, free writing, and controlled writing [12]. Another approach observed by Richards is a shift in focus from mere attention to the structural aspects to both structure and content, the major activities including teaching writing using a paragraph-pattern approach with emphasis on the use of sentences and transitions [12].

Years around the 1990s in writing pedagogy, the common process was the process approach to writing, in addition to the use of the product approach that emerged as a new classroom ideology. According to Silva and Matsuda (4), the process approach is considered a complex approach, and they argued that recursive and creative processes look very similar in their general outlines to those used in learning the writing of first and second languages. Efficient and effective composing processes are among the requirements for the development of writing skills. In the composing process, learners are required to engage themselves in writing, rehearsing operations, composing or drafting, and editing or revising (5).

Currently, writing pedagogy in a second or foreign language has witnessed the emergence of new approaches such as the genre approach to writing instructions. According to Mirzaii, in language, there is a use of different genres in different context purposes, specifically in writing skills [13]. Bhatia defines genre as a detectable communicative occasion characterised by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and conjointly understood by the followers of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs [14]. Similarly, Hyland points out that “contemporary views of L2 writing observe writing skills as the process that involves composing skills and strategies for drafting and revising. In addition, there is a clear understanding of genre to be able to structure their writing experience according to the demands of a certain context or purpose” [11].

2.2 Speaking skills

The classroom offers almost a natural setting for a variety of speaking skills opportunities. One reagent for spoken language proficiency and expansion is the classroom environment. Phonemic awareness in the English language requires various activities, such as playing around words, intonation and singing with sound and rhythm. Such play gives children a sense

that language is made of words, that words are made of separate parts and that those parts are made of separate sounds.

In the classroom, students learn various contents that need to be substituted for stories and actions, which help and encourage students to internalise and exhibit the contents (6). The use and practice of poetry is necessary for effective speaking of the English language. This is possible when the teacher is rightfully selecting an appropriate poem. In selecting the poem for learning, the teacher considers the expression of strong feelings, attitudes, spirits or opinions (7).

Ryang argues that in a classroom, the teacher is the one who is expected to develop learners' language competence [15]. Syomwene adds that effectiveness in teaching and learning the English language depends on the great role played by the teacher inside and outside of the classroom. Most teachers fail to be dynamic and still use traditional approaches in teaching. Teachers fail to make the English language a real-life experience. They fail to take initiative, which is necessary for dynamics and interest in learning the English language. In the classroom, teachers focus on methodologies that are designed and presented in English language books. The practice of oral presentation is very limited, which restricts learners' interest in the English language [16]. Furthermore, the large number of learners in classrooms becomes a challenge in teaching and learning the English language. It is difficult to help learners based on individual differences, as some are slow learners while others are fast learners. Moreover, it is difficult for teachers to apply various teaching methods and use various teaching and learning resources. Inadequacy of the teaching and learning materials hampers the whole process (8). In most public schools, whether primary or secondary, teachers emphasise reading and writing, forgetting to impart oral skills, that is, speaking among learners (9). Learning of the English language focusing on examination is among the reasons teachers emphasise reading and writing skills. This is observed in examination-based curricula with a focus on passing examinations among learners for future undertakings. This situation makes teachers forget the practice of speaking English, resulting in difficulties in understanding and communicating well in English. In Kenya, for example, the emphasis on teaching oral skills in primary schools is very low (10). He argues that

in Kenyan classrooms, the teaching, learning and practices of oral skills in English language have been abandoned because in KCPE and KCSE, there is no test for oral skills. The negligence of teaching oral skills among learners of the English language creates a worry that affects the internalisation of language skills in pupils' proficiency in the English language.

Teaching English in Africa generally and Tanzania in particular does not account for the needs and interests of learners. Learners go through difficult times, sometimes suffering from both physical and psychological torture in the process of learning the language. English policy makers do not think about students when they make language policies or develop curricula. Language policy is often driven by political expediency rather than students' interest. Classroom exercises, textbooks, assessments, and the school environment make learning English in Africa an uphill task. Textbooks are often difficult for the average student to understand.

"In Tanzania, the presidential commission on education, which was appointed by President Nyerere, recommended that English should start to be regarded as the medium of instruction in secondary schools. In 1984, the government announced that the language of instruction should be both English and Kiswahili, stating that English would be consolidated at all levels of education" (11). "The main feature of the Tanzania education system is the bilingual policy where students learn both Kiswahili and English. English is essential because it links Tanzania and the rest of the world through technology, commerce and administration. The learning of Kiswahili enables Tanzanian students to keep in touch with their cultural values and heritage. English is taught as a compulsory subject in primary education, where at post primary, it is a medium of instruction" [3]. Therefore, students have to learn the English language to cope with the academic situation in the country.

The government of Tanzania at different times has been developing different strategies in the improvement of the language in Tanzania. This has led to changes in the English syllabus in various fields as a way to incorporate the best way of teaching English in Tanzania. As a strategy to improve English language skills in Tanzania, the government introduced a communicative curriculum focusing on English skills at the O-level. This replaced the old one,

which was the basis of the structure and thus could provide the ability for students to communicate. The new syllabus required the use of a communicative approach (CA), which required teachers to use CA when they taught the English language. Currently, English teaching in Tanzania is more theoretical than practical and does not take into account the needs and interests of students, but it is based on politics. Assessment focuses on recall rather than students' ability to use language for communicative purposes in Tanzania [4].

Reflecting on the experience of using the English language as a medium of instruction (MOI) in Tanzania, some scholars have tried to present their arguments about how the English language is used as an MOI in Tanzania. Ismail (13), for example, wonders if English is a gift or a curse for Zanzibar, the island in Tanzania, since the use of English has failed to match reality. Tanzanian students have negative feelings about the use of English as a medium of instruction. The use of the English language seems to torture the minds of the students, and thus, they do not enjoy the language, but they are only forced to use it in a slavish way. They are not happy with it at all.

Rubagumya claims that while creating some opportunities to use English in the school environment is a good idea, forcing students (and teachers) to speak English and punishing them for not doing so is counterproductive in three ways. First, the "speak English" rule is difficult to enforce unless schools become some kind of "police state". In fact, teachers are the first to break this rule in and out of the classroom. Second, learning English in such a hostile environment becomes painful for students. Third, the "speak English" rules demonise African languages and create in the young minds of learners the impression that English is the only legitimate language for producing and disseminating knowledge [17].

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-method research approach, which includes qualitative and quantitative techniques in collecting data such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis. The approach therefore reduces the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative approaches when a researcher finds one way is not enough, and it ensures the validity and reliability of the study (14). This

study employed a descriptive research design. A descriptive research design was applied in this study because it can use a wide variety of research methods to investigate one or more variables. This kind of design researcher does not control or manipulate any of the variables but only observes and measures them. Through this design, the researcher used purposive sampling to select six heads of English departments and fourteen English subject teachers from six secondary schools.

A sample size of five heads of English departments, 14 subject teachers and 204 students from selected secondary schools was used. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of 204 students to offer equal opportunity among them. The selection of samples of schools considered both public and private sectors for the purpose of comparison in teaching skills in English. The skills investigated among key instruments to assist the researcher included fluency level, expressive ability in speaking and grammar level, and punctuation marks in writing skills. The data were collected through interviews, document reviews, and observation. A questionnaire with open- and closed-ended questions was administered to respondents to collect demographic information and knowledge on teaching English language skills. In addition, the study observed and recorded the teaching process in classrooms and classroom communication and provided comments for improvements. The recording of the learning process in the classroom was guided by an observation checklist in both verbal and written communication. The results from private and public secondary schools were compared and used to suggest the best practices. Subject teachers interviewed after classroom presentation; the 20-minute interview offered an opportunity for views, opinions and suggestions for improvement.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Teaching and Learning Strategies Aimed at Developing Student Competencies in Speaking and Writing Skills

The study intended to determine the strategies used by teachers in teaching English subjects in visited secondary schools. The assessment was performed by considering six strategies used in teaching English subjects. For each strategy, the researcher used several practices to measure the implication of a specific strategy among the

visited secondary schools. The strategies included memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognition, affective and social strategies, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategies practiced in teaching English

Strategy	F	%
Memory	24	12%
Cognitive	96	47%
Compensation	108	53%
Metacognition	87	43%
Affective	58	28%
Social	124	61%

Source: Field Data (2022)

The findings from Table 1 show that social learning strategies were dominant, with 61 percent of the respondents indicating that they used the strategies that were related to social aspects. The next most used strategy was compensation at 53 percent, followed by cognitive at 47 percent. In addition, a metacognitive strategy was used by 43 percent, while an affective strategy was used by 28 percent. The last strategy was memory, as it was used only for 12 percent.

The study went further to investigate each strategy as used by teachers and students in impacting speaking and writing English language in the visited secondary schools. A prepared questionnaire was distributed to students, and with the help of English teachers, students were assigned to respond in specific practices on each strategy. The discussion of each strategy was performed separately under the following subtitles.

4.1.1 Memory strategy

In the memory strategy, 6 practices were presented among visited students for assessment, and the results are displayed in Table 2.

The findings from Table 2 revealed that 53 percent of respondents use English words in a sentence for them to remember, and 39 percent can connect the sound of new words and an image or picture of the word to trigger their memory. In addition, 43 percent remembered English words by making a mental picture of a situation in which the words were used. Forty-seven percent used rhymes to remember new English words, while 27 percent used flashcards to remember new English words. Finally, 35 percent physically act out new English words.

Table 2. Teachers’ use of memory consolidation strategy

S/N	Strategies	F	%
1	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them	108	53%
2	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word	79	39%
3	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used	88	43%
4	I use rhymes to remember new English words	96	47%
5	I use flashcards to remember new English words	55	27%
6	I physically act out new English words	72	35%

Source: Field Data (2022)

Generally, the choice of the group of language learning strategies that are of cognitive nature by the learners in the current study was congruent with the ‘Depth of Processing Hypothesis’. The hypothesis states that the cognitive energy a person exerts when manipulating and thinking about a word, the more likely it is that they will be able to recall and use it later (15). In a study by Nematy that compared the impact of teaching through memory strategies on experimental group comparison to control group, students were taught the meaning of new vocabulary items by giving synonyms and mini-contexts. The study found that the students of the experimental group outperformed the control group in both short-term and long-term scores, portraying the superiority of memory strategies in short-term and long-term retention [18].

4.1.2 Cognitive strategy

The study measured the application of cognitive strategy among visited students by using eight practices, as presented in Table 3.

The findings from Table 3 reveal that 60 percent of respondents always say or write new English words. Thirty-seven percent of students try to talk like native English speakers, and 42 percent of respondents practice the sound of English. In addition, 45 percent of the visited students use English words in different ways, and 60 percent start conversation in English. Thirty-one percent

of students watch English language TV shows or go to movies where English is spoken. Finally, 31 percent of visited students write notes, messages letters, or reports in English. In other studies, cognitive strategies were significantly linked to second language proficiency (16).

4.1.3 Compensatory strategy

This set of strategies involves the learner guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and “talking around” the missing word to aid speaking and writing; and strictly speaking, using gestures or pause words to help him/her make up for the missing knowledge (17). In the current study, learners’ usage of compensatory strategies is presented in Table 4.

The findings from Table 4 reveal that 76 percent of students make guesses to understand unfamiliar words in English, while 60 percent use gestures when they cannot think of an English word during conversation. Table 4 shows that 55 percent of students make up the new word when they do not know the right English word to use. In addition, 66 percent of students read English without looking up every word, and 52 percent use the word that means the same when they cannot think of an appropriate English word. According to Cohen (18), compensatory strategies that are used for speaking and writing can be regarded as communication strategies.

Table 3. Learners’ practices of promoting cognitive development

Strategy	F	%
I say or write new English words several times	122	60%
I try to talk like native English speakers	76	37%
I practice the sounds of English	85	42%
I use the English words I know in different ways	92	45%
I start conversations in English	122	60%
I watch English language TV shows or go to movies spoken in English	64	31%
I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English	64	31%

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 4. Learners' use of. Compensatory Strategy

Strategy	F	%
To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses	156	76%
When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures	122	60%
I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English	113	55%
I read English without looking up every new word	134	66%
If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing	107	52%

Source: Field Data (2022)

4.1.4 Metacognitive strategy

During the study, 5 practices were assessed among the sampled students in selected secondary schools, and the findings are presented in Table 5.

The findings from Table 5 show that 27 percent of the sampled students try to find as many ways as they can to use English, and 37 percent notice their English mistakes and use the information to do better. In addition, 30 percent of students pay attention when someone is speaking English, and 39 percent try to determine how to be a better learner of English. Finally, 35 percent of sampled students look for an opportunity to read as much as possible in English. Furthermore, Rasekh and Ranjbary sought to examine the effectiveness of metacognitive language learning strategies during which the learners were randomly assigned to a control and an experimental group. Both groups received instruction on vocabulary learning strategies through a 10-week period of

instruction. However, only the experimental group received metacognitive strategy training during the course of the semester. The results of the study revealed that metacognitive strategy training has a significant positive effect on students' vocabulary learning of EFL [19].

4.1.5 Affective Strategy

Affective strategy is about the interests, attitudes, opinions, appreciations, values, and emotional sets of learners (19). Affective strategies were also indicated to be used by the learners in the study, as presented in Table 6.

The findings from Table 6 indicate that 34 percent of visited learners try to relax whenever they feel afraid of using English, and 21 percent give themselves rewards when they do well in English. In addition, 14 percent of learners write down their feelings in a language-learning diary, and 25 percent talk to someone else about how they feel when they learn English.

Table 5. Students' recollection of using metacognitive strategy

S/N	Strategy	F	%
1	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English	56	27%
2	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better	76	37%
3	I pay attention when someone is speaking English	62	30%
4	I try to determine how to be a better learner of English	80	39%
5	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English	71	35%

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 6. Learners' use of affective strategy

S/N	Strategy	F	%
1	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English	34	17%
2	I give myself a reward when I do well in English	43	21%
3	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary	28	14%
4	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English	51	25%

Source: Field Data (2022)

Rossiter designed an intervention study to examine the effects of affective strategy instruction on measures of second language proficiency and self-efficacy. The participants in this study were 31 adult intermediate-level ESL learners registered in a full-time ESL program in a postsecondary institution in Canada. Two classes participated in this study. One received 12 hours of affective strategy training, and the second served as a comparison group [20]. The findings indicated that the learners perceived the affective strategy instruction to be most beneficial in classroom activities and for real life purposes.

4.1.6 Social strategy

Social strategies are the strategies in which students engage to face the opportunity to be exposed to the target language and practice his/her already gained knowledge (20). The study assessed social strategies with five items, and the results are presented in Table 7.

From Table 7, the findings reveal that 61 percent of sampled learners ask another person to say it again when they do not understand something in English. Sixty-eight percent of learners ask English speakers to collect them when they talk, while 58 percent practice English with other students. In addition, 76 percent of learners ask questions in English, and 50 percent try to learn about the culture of English speakers. According to Burešová, for anyone to be able to speak about a conversation, there must be at least one question asked by one of the participants; then, the talk can be complementary and is not a monolog [21]. Additionally, Yohana, M., & Mwila consider social learning strategies important for forming interpersonal relationships [4].

4.2 Teachers' Experience in Developing Competencies in Speaking and Writing Skills in the English Language Subject

4.2.1 Teachers' education qualification and experience

The study sought to determine whether English language teachers were well trained and reoriented into CBC through workshops and seminars. It also sought to investigate how experienced the teachers were. Table 5 indicates the teachers' education level and experience, as 14 percent of sampled teachers had experience of 0 – 5 years in teaching

English subjects, while 86 percent had experience of 6 – 10 years. The findings indicate that the teachers who teach English in selected secondary schools were experienced and possibly attended several on-job training seminars to update their knowledge. Such a scenario influenced the researcher to determine whether the teachers who teach English subjects in selected secondary schools attend on-the-job training. This question was asked differently from those who had working experience of 0 – 5 years (2,40%) and those with experience of 6 – 10 years. One of the teachers with 0 – 5 years of experience has the following to say:

I was hired in 2018, but until now in 2022 I have never attended any training related to teaching English. In fact, I would like to participate in the training, but the challenge is that those opportunities happen very rarely. Since I arrived at our school, I have not seen any English teacher who has had the opportunity to attend any training. Therefore, I continue to teach using the same skills I learned inform the college (Interview, 2022 - researcher's translation).

The other teacher added that:

It is true that I realised the importance of on-the-job training, but unfortunately, I have never had that opportunity. Here at the school, I have not seen any language teacher attending the seminar or workshop. However, I heard that they are often organised by the Ministry of Education, although they have not done so recently. Many teachers in our department continue to use the experience we gained from colleges (Interview, 2022-Researcher's translation).

The quotation from two teachers with working experience of 0 – 5 years revealed that the on-job training in the selected secondary schools is very minimal. Most teachers used the same knowledge and skills acquired in colleges and universities to teach students.

Furthermore, the study interviewed another group of teachers with 6 – 10 years of experience, and one of them said,

Since I was hired in 2014, I attended training once, and it was in 2015. The training was organised by the Ministry of Health under the Big Results Now (BRN) project, where it was a one-week training. This training was actually based on how to

Table 7. Learners' use of social learning strategy

S/N	Strategy	F	%
1	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or to say it again	124	61%
2	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk	138	68%
3	I practice English with other students	119	58%
4	I ask questions in English	156	76%
5	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers	102	50%

Source: Field Data (2022)

teach students in different groups in the sense of those who can help themselves and those who cannot. At the end of the training, we were also given a manual book so that we could use it in schools (Interview, 2022-Researcher's translation).

Furthermore, the study intended to understand the impact of such training on students' speaking and writing skills. This time, heads of English subjects were interviewed, and one of them who had attended the training said:

The implementation of what we learned in the seminar was truly useless. For example, as a subject teacher at that time, I only ended up identifying students who understood the procedures, but I did not have time to help them. The biggest challenge is that there was no follow-up in the schools after the training. There was a time when we failed to help the students because extra time was needed and the school did not have lunch (Interview, 2022-Researcher's translation).

As revealed by the head of the department, BRN training had no impact on the selected secondary schools in Kinondoni Municipality. The teachers attended the seminar, learn and get paid, but unfortunately, they fail to implement in their respective schools. This implies that the government spends money on educational programs but fails to follow up on the implementation of such programs. This situation creates misuse of government funds, as the intended objectives are not met.

4.2.2 Lesson presentation

For a clear understanding of the teachers' experience, the researcher decided to observe one English lesson presentation. However, before observing the teacher in the classroom, the researcher began by cross checking the

preparation of lesson plans and teaching aids. From what was observed, the teacher prepared a lesson on the topic called LISTENING for one student. The lesson lasted 80 minutes and had five stages, as displayed in List 1.

The findings from List 1 as-prepared by the English teacher were compared to what was presented in the classroom. The teacher entered the classroom five minutes later. She was supposed to begin the lesson at 11H55, but she entered the class at 12H00. She began by greetings the students and wrote the topic, subtopic and date on the chalkboard. Thereafter, she presented the new knowledge by reading the text followed by asking the students questions. The teacher read the text two times before starting the questions and answer sessions. Finally, the teacher concluded by asking students a few questions and provided answers when they failed to attempt.

After observation, the researcher came up with few comments. Even though the teacher tried to manage the class, she still had to manage the time well as she entered the class late. In addition, during the lesson presentation, she failed to identify vocabulary items to students before the beginning of the reading session. Furthermore, the teacher did not offer an opportunity for students to read after the teacher. The other challenge was that she failed to follow what was planned in the lesson plan. For example, in the lesson plan, there was a part of exercise, but she did not provide one. The study established that this kind of teaching does not offer an opportunity for students to participate in the lesson. This is opposite from what has been suggested in constructivist theory, which states that a child develops cognitively through active involvement in the environment. In addition, Manyak comments that instruction should not only be language-rich but also be socioculturally informed [22]. This entails teachers "recognising valuable cultural experiences and resources

students bring with them to class and finding ways to incorporate them into classroom activities for easy understanding”.

4.2.3 Assessment of writing skills

The purpose of this assessment was to measure the ability of students to write English. Some of the previous studies (21) classify learners’ errors into two general categories: those that result from mother tongue interference and those that

result from within the second language interference system itself. Both categories of errors (writing problems) are discussed and analysed in appropriate contexts. Table 9 gives a statistical summary of the main writing problems noted from the results of essays assigned to students. The researcher assigned 204 students to write an essay on malaria, and after the assignment, 202 papers were collected and marked out of 204, which is 99 percent. The findings are indicated in Table 9.

List 1. Extract of lessons prepared by the teacher

Date	Class	Subject	Period	Time	Number of students					
					Registered			Attendance		
					Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
30-jun-22	I-a	English	7th & 8 th	11:55-13:15	21	22	43	22	22	44

<p>COMPETENCE: By the end of topic the student should be able to identify general information in event</p> <p>MAIN TOPIC: LISTENING TO AND UNDERSTANDING TEXT</p> <p>SUBTOPIC: Listening to simple text on events</p> <p>MAIN OBJECTIVE: By the end of topic the student should be able to listen and understand various simple written</p> <p>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE: By the end of 80 minutes session the student should be able to respond to questions clearly</p> <p>TEACHING/LEARNING AIDS: Text, passage from selected book</p> <p>REFERENCE: TIE, (2016). English for Secondary Schools, Book One.</p>

Stage	Time	Teaching activities	Learning activities	Assessment
Introduction	6 min	To brainstorm the students on questions about previous lesson	To recall what they learnt	To check if they are able to recall
New knowledge	23 min	Students to pay attention and listen to the text	Students to listen to the text carefully	The ability of students to listen to the text carefully
Reinforcement	20 min	To record the tape and discuss in pairs with questions and answers	To discuss and give correct answers	The ability of students to discuss and give answers
Reflection	15 min	To assign them an exercise, to check their understanding	To respond to the given exercise	The ability of students to respond to the questions
Consolidation	13 min	To correct their mistakes, and well pronunciation of new vocabulary	To pronounce well new vocabulary	The ability of students to pronounce well vocabulary

STUDENTS' EVALUATION: They said that, the text was interesting
TEACHER'S EVALUATION: Approximately 40% of learners were able to listen and understanding
REMARKS: The lesson was well understood
INSPECTED BY: **DATE:** **SIGNATURE:**

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 8. Students' writing problems (N = 202)

Category of Writing Problems	Frequencies	Percent
1. Capitalisation problem	103	51%
2. Punctuation problem	187	93%
3. The use of singular and plural	143	71%
4. Poor organisation/Illogical sequence	201	100%
5. Spelling problem	148	73%
6. Grammatical errors	188	93%

Source: Field Data (2022)

4.3 Capitalisation Problem

The findings from Table 9 indicate that 51 percent of students had capitalisation problems in writing essays. The misuse of capital letters is the most common writing problem noted in this study, as it affected more than half of students. Using capital letters correctly is a writing norm that is required in all languages. It is a pedagogical problem that can be handled appropriately by professional teachers in schools. However, the study reveals that many students (approximately 51%) use capital letters instead of small letters and vice versa. For example, when the students explain the regions that are affected by malaria and try to mention morogoro (wrong) instead of Morogoro (correct) and dar es Salaam (wrong) instead of Dar es Salaam (correct). The study established that the sampled students were not aware of using capital letters for names of region.

The irregularity of using small letters at the beginning of a new paragraph and using capital letters in the middle of sentences were typical examples noted in the essays from to students. It should be noted here that the emphasis on proper usage of capital letters must be exercises during class lessons, preparation for examinations and communicative purposes as well. Among notable roles, capital letters signify the beginning of a sentence and denote a proper noun and a title (such as rank, status, book, play, and poem). Failure to use writing norms appropriately, such as capital letters, might lead to misinterpretation of information.

4.4 Punctuation Problem

The findings from Table 9 reveal that 93 percent of the sampled students had difficulties in the

appropriate use of punctuation marks. The problem could be the result of inadequate learning or poor teaching. Their writings seem to indicate that the students do not understand how to use the punctuation marks correctly in conveying information accurately and effectively. It was only the full stop that was used adequately and correctly. The commas that are used extensively to help the readers convey the intended meaning in long sentences were not adequately used. This reduces not only understanding but also accuracy. The sampled students did not seem to appreciate not only the commas but also the value of using semicolon and the colon in places where such punctuation marks are absolutely necessary. For example, most students failed to use comma after the word "in addition" or "however", which directly affected their essays. Mkude also notes the problem of punctuation in his study entitled "Matching Education with Communicative skills in Kiswahili in Changing Language Media study with the Kiswahili undergraduate students" conducted at the University of Dar es Salaam [23].

4.5 The Use of Singular and Plural

As indicated in Table 9, 71 percent of visited students faced difficulties using either singular or plural. The study established that in places where plural forms were to be used, some students used singular forms and vice versa. In the English language, most nouns have both singular and plural forms. When composing a phrase, the singular or plural form for each noun must be consciously chosen. This is also the case in other languages such as French, Russian, and Arabic.

Some words in the English language are understood as either singular or plural without changing spelling or pronunciation. For example, one sheep, two sheep; “One deer is heavy”, “Two deer are heavier”. In addition, the plural of some English words follows the rule of adding an “s” or “es” in plural forms. However, there are a handful of words and suffixes that do not follow the ubiquitous rule of adding an s (or es) to form the plural. For example: ox → oxen, goose → geese, man → men, tooth → teeth, die → dice, radius → radii, half → halves, child → children, person → people. From what has been observed in essays written by students, some were using the rule of adding an “s” to form plural in words like person something that was wrong.

4.6 Poor Organisation

This was also one of the problems in the students’ essays, as indicated in Table 9, in which all students (202, 100%) failed to organise their ideas. If this problem is not addressed seriously, the conveyed message would be totally distorted. For the readers to understand the intended written messages in English essays, the sentences and paragraphs should be systematically organised and logically arranged. Similarly, Mkude noted this problem with great concern in his study: “They often fail to appreciate the value of organising linguistic material strategically to secure maximal impact. Again, this weakness can be seen within and across sentences” [23-26].

What was observed from the essays written by students is that most of them were poorly organised. For example, a good English essay must be written in paragraph where each paragraph contains one idea well expressed. An essay must have introductory part, main body and a conclusion. Meanwhile, some of the sampled students write their essay with just a single paragraph. The researcher wonders how an essay of malaria with meaning, causes, effects and solutions could be presented in a single paragraph. Not only that but also other students begin their essay with causes of malaria without any introduction even to say what malaria is. Others messed up by beginning with effects, then causes and ending with symptoms.

Similar to other problems, poor organisation or illogical sequences may also be said to originate from poor teaching in schools. The problem could be reduced by effective teaching, the creation of a wider reading and writing habit, and

involvement in discussions and debates. The sampled teachers in Kinondoni Municipality claimed to guide students with several exercises on how to organise their work.

4.7 Spelling Problem

Using wrong spelling is another serious problem noted in this study. The findings in Table 9 revealed that 73 percent of students fail to write the appropriate spelling of some words. The following are some of the common spelling problems noted from students’ essays.

Table 9. Examples of spelling mistakes

Correct	Incorrect
Anopheles	Anofeles
Malaria	Maleria
Fever	Fiver
Mosquito	Moskwito
Glass	Grass
Night	Nite
Death	Deth

Source: Field Data (2022)

The problems from Table 9 may be said to arise as a result of pronunciation problems, as some students normally write English words as they pronounce. The wrongly spelled words are problems in the sense that, first, the words deviate from the Standard English orthography. Second, they make the words difficult to understand, especially for readers, and hence, it becomes difficult for them to decipher the intended meaning.

In addition, some English words with misspelling errors could result in another English word. For example, from the word “glass” meaning “nyasi” in Kiswahili to the word “grass”, which means “kioo”. This problem, if not completely eradicated, should be minimised. It appears that spelling in writing is a persistent problem that applies even to professional writers [27-29].

4.8 Grammatical Errors

The findings from Table 9 reveal that 93 percent of students faced a challenge of grammatical error. Like other writing problems, grammatical errors seem to result from inadequate learning and poor teaching. Richards calls [30-35] error “intralingua” and “developmental” errors. On the one hand, intralingua errors are problems that reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, faulty generalisation, incomplete

application of rules and failure to learn the conditions under which rules apply. Developmental errors, on the other hand, [36-38] illustrate the learner's attempt to try to build up hypotheses about the target language from his limited knowledge learned in schools or naturally acquired [13].

In the corpus, we note that 14 percent of the students under study were unable to correctly apply the relative markers in the subordinate constructions according to their noun classes. For example, in their essays, there was a lack of subject-verb agreement, which was a major challenge. For example, some students wrote: "*Children are affected..." instead of "Children are affected..."

The sources of these problems may be partly attributed to inadequate competence in the English language or the poor social background of the students themselves. The inadequate competence in English, which Richards calls intralingua errors, may arise as a result of either poor teaching or learning environments or from students who have had less exposure to the English language in their formative years [13]. The way a language lesson is taught may at times be a source of grammatical errors [39-41].

5. CONCLUSION

English language is the current medium of instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools. The majority of students in both public and community secondary schools lack communicative and linguistic competence and are unable to communicate effectively in English without periodically switching codes to Kiswahili. Either too, the teachers are used to teach in a mixture of English and Kiswahili and do not provide students the chance to speak English either inside or outside of the classrooms.

Additionally, they concluded that secondary school students in Tanzania are confronted with the twin task of learning the subject matter and the language at the same time that their teachers face the additional challenge of utilising the most effective instructional strategies to support their English language competencies. For students to acquire the competencies needed, English should be well taught using effective strategies and enable students to be equipped with the language skills.

6. RECOMMENDATION

There is a need for the government to employ more English language teachers who are efficient and committed to carrying out their duties diligently. Additionally, there is a need for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to provide regular in-service training to teachers on the proper skills and knowledge on the implementation of what has been planned in the curriculum. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education should enhance the baseline English course to enhance competences in the language among Form One students when they join secondary education. This will increase their level of competence in the English language as a medium of instruction in secondary schools and make them successful in their studies.

Additionally, the heads of schools and academic teachers must establish internal supervision teams to conduct regular supervision to check teachers' lesson plans, lesson notes and students' exercise books. Students are given enough exercises and are marked adequately. Regular monitoring needs to be done by heads of schools, academic teachers, and heads of English departments on the language of instruction used in classes, and both students and teachers need to be motivated to communicate in English language when they are out of classes.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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