



# Challenges Facing Learning and Teaching English Subject in Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania

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**Abstract:** English language is one of the major languages in the world and it definitely plays an important role in education system. It is the most widely used language which has received considerable attention from the world due to its increasing importance for globalization. This study focused on investigating the challenges facing learning and teaching English subject in secondary schools in Morogoro municipality, Tanzania. The study employed a cross-sectional design based on both qualitative and quantitative approach in order to meet the research objectives. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were employed; purposive sampling was in selecting 2 representative public secondary schools namely Mafiga Secondary School and Sua Secondary School for the study and 4 key informants (2 school heads and 2 wards educational officers) while random sampling was used to select 27 English students from each school and 6 English teachers making a total of 60 respondents for this study. Primary data collected were processed and analyzed through SPSS version 20. Despite the fact that students had negative attitude on English subject but also, our study found that large class size, poor infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning materials, poor technology and unqualified teachers to be the main limiting factors affecting students' academic performance in English subject. Basing on the study results the researchers concluded that school head teachers and school management have to play a very important role and provide the opportunities for the English teachers to utilize the available learning and teaching resources for students' academic achievement in English subject. Also, the study recommends that the government of Tanzania should strive to promote equitable distribution of educational resources i.e., learning and teaching resources to all public secondary schools in the country to improve educational standards and students' academic achievement.

**Keywords:** English Subject, Learning, Teaching, Perception, Students and Teachers

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## 1. Introduction

Language is primarily a human non-instinctive method of communicating ideas and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols through which thoughts, feelings, ideas and emotions are communicated either in spoken or written form or through sound signals [18]. Thus, language is the universal medium for transmitting or conveying common facts including complex thoughts, ideas and feelings of human beings. Languages are the most authentic means through which people and communities can

retain and safeguard knowledge, wisdom and their nomenclature passed down by their ancestors. English language is one of the major language families in the world and definitely plays an important role in education system. Despite of being the most prestigious and dominant language, it is also the most widely used language which has received considerable attention from the world due to its increasing importance for globalization [4].

According to Skutnabb-Kangas [17] English language used the word submersion to refer to instruction using a language that learners do not speak which he equated as

equal to taking someone into water without teaching them how to swim. Since teaching of English is focused on the ability of learners to be capable of mastering the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, the learners (students in this case) should have abilities in reading and listening to support their speaking and writing. Hence, in the learning of English, students would absorb and cope with the development of science, technology and art.

Since lessons in primary schools in Tanzania are taught in Kiswahili and then abruptly switches to English in secondary schools. Therefore, many students find the transition from primary to secondary school difficult for many reasons, including the transition from Swahili language to English language. Hence, the study is geared at investigating the challenges facing learning and teaching English subject in secondary schools in Morogoro municipality. English is useful for communicative, political, scientific and cultural purposes around the world so it is necessary for every student to learn English. Nowadays, in Tanzania English is taught as a second language, the majority of the language teachers are NNS (Non-Native Speakers) of English, although teachers play a vital role in determining the success of students.

Despite of the fact that Tanzania has so many teachers of grade A who teach English, but still there is a problem of teaching and learning of this subject as it is argued that the quality of education in Tanzanian government primary schools has declined and much has been said about this decline, even in the higher levels of education [19]. Also, Kadegehe [10] states that the pupils fail even to construct a single sentence of English so there is a need to observe what the causative of this failure in English subject within secondary schools in Tanzania.

Although students view learning English as a difficult subject but also, in their classrooms English is used only to answer teacher's questions and spoken during English class. The concern on poor academic performance in English language among secondary students in Tanzania and the factor influencing students' academic achievement in English language has been investigated quite extensively. While there is an improvement in general students' performance in education, little is known about the challenges teachers encounter in teaching English language in secondary schools. Therefore, the study is geared at investigating the challenges facing learning and teaching English subject in secondary schools in Morogoro municipality, Tanzania.

## 2. The Theoretical and Analytical Framework

Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world hence raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological

advances. Also, it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution [15].

Educated workers raise national income directly because schooling raises their marginal productivity. They raise national income indirectly by increasing the marginal productivity of physical capital and of other workers. In highly educated countries the spillover effect on other workers is minimal, but in less-educated countries the spillover effect appears to be much larger. In all countries, the positive effect of a rising human capital on the productivity of physical capital is required to offset the diminishing returns to investment in physical capital and make rising investment in physical capital financially viable in the growth process. The study used the theory of Education in Economic Development due to the fact that "Age of Human Capital" in the sense that the primary determinant of a country's standard of living is how well it succeeds in developing and utilizing the skills and knowledge, and furthering the health and educating the majority of its population [13].

## 3. Research Methods and Methodology

The study was conducted at Mafiga and Sua Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality which employed mixed research approach i.e., both quantitative and qualitative research approach were used. Both purposive and randomly sampling techniques were used. Primary data were collected from 60 respondents (i.e., 54 English students who were randomly selected and 6 English teachers) through structured questionnaires. Also, in collecting a qualitative data, focus group discussions and key informant interviews was used to key informants i.e., two (2) school heads and two (2) ward educational officers to allow the freedom of expression and maximum participation in respect to knowledge, experience, opinions and feelings.

The researchers ensured validity of the study by conducting a pilot test involving English teachers, school heads and some students to evaluate the completeness, precision, accuracy and clarity of the questionnaires. Also, the questionnaires were sent to the experts i.e., policy makers responsible for education policies before distributing them to the respondents. The comments from the experts were helpful for researchers to make changes in questionnaire designs in order to collect the relevant information with regard to the challenges facing learning and teaching English subject in secondary schools in Tanzania. Collected data were organized, coded, processed and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Statistical Package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies and percentages were derived using SPSS.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In investigating the limiting factors in learning and

teaching English subject in secondary schools, the study asked the question regarding the challenges students and teachers face in learning and teaching English subject respectively in Morogoro municipality. Regression analysis based on Logistic Regression Model was performed to ascertain the relationships between the dependent variable (Students' Performance in English Subject) and independent variables such as class size, technology, unqualified teachers, school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials. Our model is specified as follows;

$$Y = L_i = \ln \left( \frac{P_i}{1-P_i} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \dots + \beta_n X_n + \mu$$

Where; Y=Dependent variable (Students' Performance in English Subject)

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ClassSize + \beta_2 Technology + \beta_3 TQuality + \beta_4 SCHInfrastructure + \beta_5 TEACMaterials + \mu$$

Table 1. Variables of Binary Logistic Regression Model.

Variables	Type	Measurement	Expected Sign
Dependent Variable			
Students' Performance in English	Dummy	1 if Poor, 0 if Good	
Independent Variables			
Class Size	Dummy	1 if Large, 0 if Small	-
Technology	Dummy	1 if Low, 0 if Advanced	-
Unqualified Teachers	Dummy	1 if Present, 0 Otherwise	-
School Infrastructures	Dummy	1 if Poor, 0 if Good	-
Teaching and Learning Materials	Dummy	1 if Inadequate, 0 Otherwise	-

(i) Class Size

It is expected that when class size is large that is when there are many students in a class, teachers are not able to handle properly every student, for instance asking as many students as possible questions to ensure that most students have understand their English lessons. A crowded class will result into poor performance. Therefore, a large will be directly related to poor performance.

(ii) Technology

If a teacher and his students are equipped with modern technology, the performance of students will increase. The probability of poor performance will be negatively related to advanced technology.

(iii) Unqualified Teachers

If the English class is conducted by an unqualified teacher, that is, English teachers who are well trained to deliver English lesson, obviously their students will perform poorly in the English language. Consequently, poor performance and unqualified teachers are directly related.

(iv) School Infrastructures

Similarly, good school infrastructures create a good

L=the logit, and hence the name logit model

Ln=log

$\left( \frac{P_i}{1-P_i} \right)$ =The odds ratio

$\beta_0$  =Constant term

$\beta_i$ =Coefficients to be estimated

$X_i$ =Independent variables ( $i=1, 2, 3...5$ )

$X_1$ =Class Size

$X_2$ =Technology

$X_3$ =Unqualified Teachers

$X_4$ =School Infrastructures

$X_5$ =Teaching and Learning Materials

$\mu$  =Error term

Therefore, after inclusion of independents/explanatory variables the equation was modified to;

learning environment and hence good performance, as they both motivate students and teachers to work hard.

(v) Teaching and Learning Materials

Availability of teaching and learning materials makes teachers and students to deliver English lessons more efficiently and learn the language more easily and better. Availability of teaching and learning materials and students' performance will move in opposite directions.

In short, we expect that all coefficients of determination i.e.,  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4,$  and  $\beta_5$  are expected to be negative.

The OLS regression method is useful in analyzing data with a quantitative (numerical) dependent variable [8]. But, in this study logit model was chosen as it is a standard method of analysis when the outcome variable is dichotomous [9]. The logit regression model was used to assess the influence of class size, technology, unqualified teachers, school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials on Students' Performance in English Subject (dependent variables).

Table 2 shows that the logit model fits well the data measured by Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> (Cox and Snell=0.572 Nagelkerke=0.651).

Table 2. Model Summary.

Step	-2 Log Likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	180.143 <sup>a</sup>	0.572	0.651

Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than 0.001.

This high value of Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> which are 57.2% and 65.1% for cox and Snell and Nagelkerke respectively reveals good predictive ability of the model used. This implies that the explanatory variables (class size, technology, unqualified

teachers, school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials) included in the logit model explains well the variation in the Students’ Performance in English Subject. Louviere *et al.*, [11] argued that pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> sometime reaches the high values as those of R<sup>2</sup> in the linear regression. Therefore, the presented pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> in our study was considered to have a good fit. Hence, Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> of 57.2% and 65.1% revealed in this study are considered to be good.

Moreover, the Chi-square statistics shows that the model is highly significant at 1% ( $p = 0.000$ ) indicating that all the variables included in the model were jointly different from zero. Table 3 presents the results.

**Table 3.** Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients.

		Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	128.493	5	0.000
	Block	128.493	5	0.000
	Model	128.493	5	0.000

Source: Field Study, 2021

The binary logit regression analysis indicates that all five (5) independent variables i.e., class size, technology, unqualified teachers, school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials were significant but negatively related to students’ performance in English subject as expected in our model specification. Table 4 presents the results.

**Table 4.** Estimated Results of Binary Logit Regression.

Variables	Coefficients ( $\beta$ )	Significance
(Constant)	2.081 (0.032)***	0.000
Class Size	-0.073 (-0.025)***	0.004
Technology	-0.063 (-0.023)***	0.007
Unqualified Teachers	-0.024 (-0.026)**	0.035
School Infrastructures	-1.006 (-0.024)***	0.000
Teaching and Learning Materials	-0.040 (-0.023)*	0.081

Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* Significance at 1%, 5% and 10% Respectively

Chi-Square: 128.493 at 5 df and  $P < 0.000$

Number of Observation=60

Pseudo R2: Cox and Snell R square=0.572 Nagelkerke R square=0.651

The regression analysis shows that all five explanatory variables were statistically significant despite being negatively related to the dependent variable (students’ performance in English subject). The study result implies that students’ poor performance in English subject in the study area was highly influenced by class size, technology, unqualified teachers, school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials.

**4.1. Class Size**

Researchers considered class size as an important factor in school design and derived a host of costly facility-related issues that are part and parcel of the school building’s planning, design, construction, cost, maintenance, and operation. It was found that class size met the a priori expectation that there is a direct relationship between number of students (class size) and the probability of students to perform well in English subject. The class size in our study was categorized into two groups, the large class size and small class size. Large class size was assigned the value of 1 and small class size was assigned the value of 0.

From regression analysis, class size was found to be highly statistically significant at 1% ( $p = 0.004$ ) with coefficient – 0.073 but negatively related to students’ performance in English subject. The slope coefficient of class size in our study implies that the log odds ratio of large class size to affect students’ academic performance in English subject is -0.073 units.

$$\text{Odd Ratio of the Class Size} = \left( \frac{P_L}{1-P_L} \right) = e^{\beta_i} = e^{-0.073} = 0.930$$

The odds ratio of the class size variable is equal to 0.930

indicating that the odds ratio of class size in favour that the large class size will negatively affect students’ performance in English subject will increase 0.930 times if the number of students increases by one unit that is switching from 0 to one.

Also, during interview and focus group discussion with teachers, it was found that students attending each class were around 45, but the number enrolled according to the student list was higher, generally above 50 students. This was found to be one of the challenges affecting the quality of English teaching and learning at Mafiga and Sua secondary schools. It was argued that a small class size is believed to enhance educational quality i.e., in a small class, it would be easier for the teacher to manage the activities. The study result is in line with various related studies [14, 12] who found that pedagogically large class size causes congestion in the classroom hence creates many difficulties to the teacher teaching in the class. Therefore, basing on the study findings the researcher concludes that small class size is more important to student achievement than bigger class size especially in English subject. Also, the study recommends that there is a need to reduce the class size to about 25 students so as facilitate the effective use of communicative activities in classes.

**4.2. Technology**

In this study technology was found to be negatively related to students’ academic performance in English subject. Technology in this study was categorized into two groups, an advanced technology was assigned the value of 0 and low technology was assigned the value of 1. Technology was found to be highly statistically significant at 1% ( $p = 0.007$ ) level of significance with coefficient – 0.063 but negatively related to student performance in Morogoro municipality. This

is shown by the odds which are equal to 0.939. This means that schools with low technology in the study area is more than 0.939 times likely to improve the students' performance in English subject than schools with advanced technology.

Also, the study findings revealed that poor performance of English subject among students is highly influenced by English language teachers who are disappointed by their low proficiency in speaking English and using technology during teaching times. This implies that poor academic performance in English subject influenced by disabilities of using new technology in teaching. The study result is consistent with the findings of many related studies which reported a negatively significant relationship between low technology and students' academic performance [1, 12, 5] who found that poor students' academic performance in English subject is influenced by disabilities of using new technology in teaching. Therefore, the study concludes that English has become a necessity to excel in science and technology and to catch up with the ever developing discoveries and inventions. Hence, technology needs to come into the classroom to keep up with the learning demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **4.3. Unqualified Teachers**

Our study sought to know the distribution of qualified English teachers in the study area. It was found that unqualified teacher affects students' performance negatively as it was statistically significant at 5% ( $p = 0.035$ ) level of significance with  $-0.024$  coefficient of determination. The study result indicates that English teachers in the study area were lacking in on job trainings and refresher courses especially, of English language teaching. Further, the study revealed that teachers do not get training in syllabi change, mostly teacher's use grammar translation method. Also, it was found that teachers had no awareness on communicative teaching method, a few of teachers as well as students use English language in their classrooms but no development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The study result is in line with the findings of various related studies [16, 20, 12] who found that teachers themselves are not competent in the use of English in teaching frequently they used Kiswahili; in many cases students had not been encouraged to speak English in normal conversation hence poor academic performance in English subject. Basing on study findings the researcher recommends that teachers should try to encourage students to use English as medium of communication not only in the class but also at home as well.

#### **4.4. School Infrastructures**

The study consider infrastructure not only building quality, but also the presence of furniture, equipment and access to electricity and water. Researchers assigned value 0 for a school with good infrastructures and zero otherwise, however, it was found to be highly statistically significant at 1% ( $p = 0.000$ ) with  $-1.006$  coefficient of determination. This implies that the more the poor infrastructures that most public secondary schools students make use during their

studies (i.e., the use of poorly built schools) negatively affects their level of understanding hence poor performance in English subject. Also, students were found to be learning in a class which has little or no roofing. The study result is consistent with the findings of various related studies [2, 12] who found that the provision of basic infrastructure show a high correlation with students' academic performance.

#### **4.5. Teaching and Learning Materials**

Researchers considered teaching and learning materials as all materials that facilitate the teaching and learning in secondary schools i.e., text books used for teaching by the teachers and those used by the students for reference. Despite being negative but it was found to be statistically significant at 10% ( $p = 0.081$ ) with  $-0.040$  coefficient of determination indicating that there is inadequate of learning and teaching materials in secondary schools in Morogoro municipality. It was agreed that the choice of school texts and their distribution, along with the System for Measuring and Evaluating the Quality of Education should involve all the educational stakeholders [16]. The study result is in line with various related studies [6, 7, 3] who found that the standards of selecting material to be taught must come down to questions as mundane as what will have meaning for the students.

### **5. Conclusion**

The study focused on investigating the challenges facing learning and teaching English subject in secondary schools. The study found that, there are many challenges that the English teachers and the students face in the learning of English in Morogoro municipality. Also, there are many influencing factors that contribute to learning and teaching challenges. Therefore, school head teachers and school management has to play a very important role and provide the opportunities for the English teachers to utilize the available learning and teaching resources for students' academic achievement in English subject.

Therefore, basing on the study results the researchers concluded that school head teachers and school management has to play a very important role and provide the opportunities for the English teachers to utilize the available learning and teaching resources for students' academic achievement in English subject.

### **6. Recommendation for Improvements**

#### **6.1. Recommendations to the Government**

The government of Tanzania should strive to promote equitable distribution of educational resources to all public secondary schools in the country. It will also improve educational standards in endemic poor students' achievement areas. Also, the government through ministry of education should ensure that the curriculum is reviewed after some specific time while all the stake holders i.e., students, teachers, parents and administrators should be included in the committee for reviewing the curriculum.

### 6.2. Recommendations to Teachers

Teachers should try to encourage students to use English as medium of communication not only in the class but also at home as well. Also, they should try to learn and use modern methods of teaching including communicative method in the class room. Moreover, to promote all four skills i.e., speaking, listening, reading and writing English language in the classroom, teachers should encourage students to read English newspapers and same is provided to schools.

### 6.3. Recommendations to Parents

Parents should encourage their children to use English at home and class. Also, they should try to buy their children different English books and magazines especially English newspapers and make sure that children read them on the regular basis. They should have close contact with the teacher so that, they can inquire about the study and class performance of their children. Lastly, parents should make sure that their children attend their classes regularly.

### 6.4. Recommendations to Students

Both school teachers and parents should encourage and advise the students to use English language in the classroom as well as at home so that, they can get good practice. Also, students should ask questions from their teachers in the classroom and get concepts clearly. Lastly, students need to work properly and attend classes regularly and should be emphasized to develop all four skills i.e., speaking, listening, reading and writing while learning English and promote self-study.

### 6.5. Area for Further Research

Based on the research findings, further research is needed in the area of;

- 1) Social factors affecting regular attendance of students.
- 2) Teacher competence in the use of integrated approaches and students' achievement.

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