

# Factors Affecting Students' Performance in English Language in Zanzibar Rural and Urban Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

This study investigated the factors affecting students' performance in English language subject in Zanzibar Secondary Schools. Bloom's (1982) model of evaluation was used as a framework in the study. The study employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected using interviews, classroom observation, questionnaire and documentary review. Result of the study reveals that students were highly motivated to learn English for future expectations such as local and international communication, academic advancement and employment prospects. However, students' performance was affected by shortage of English teachers and absence of teaching and learning materials. The findings shows that presence of untrained, under-qualified, and trained teachers in schools who were incompetent as a result they skipping to teach some difficult topics in the syllabus. Study findings also indicated that students' infrequent use of English language at school and home, large class size, teachers' responsibilities, poor conducive teaching and learning environment in the classrooms, limited home support environment and poverty were contributing factors for English poor. Based on this study results, study recommends in-service teachers training to enhance teachers English teaching skills, equal distribution of English teachers, adequate teaching facilities, and conducive learning environment at the schools.

Key Words: English proficiency, students' performance, variables, attitude, comprehensive.

## 1. Introduction

Language is one of the most useful tools we have as humans. Without it we could not think thoughts expressible to others, nor could we engage in the activities that commonly take place in the society we build ourselves (Di Pietro, 1994). Language is very important in education. For instance, Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1997) asserted that education is carried out largely through the medium of language, thus, language is very significant in the education process. Additionally, ADEA (2005) argues, "Language is not everything in education, but without language, everything is nothing in education" (p. 5). Language plays a crucial role in learning, and if the learner is handicapped in the language of instruction, then learning may not take place at all as the instructor or teacher and the learner will not be communicating (Malekela, 2003).

The language of instruction in post primary education to both Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar is English. English subject is taught with consideration of the objectives stipulated in the syllabus. For example, the objectives are important since they provide means through which the goals of education in Tanzania could be achieved. It is through the syllabus that can assure the teacher if or whether he has achieved the goals or objectives of the course. With such situation it is important for teachers to establish objectives before working towards meetings the goals.

Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar use the same English language syllabus at 'O' level secondary schools, and it is expected that at the end of the course students will have acquired and developed skills of the language, both spoken and written so as to cope with English language demands at higher levels of education and the world at large (UTR, 2005). However, various studies from Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar reported that students' performance in English Language National Examination has been consistently poor and nearly half of the students fell into divisions four and zero both rural and urban secondary schools students (Roy-Campbell & Qorro; 1997; Nyamubi, 2003; Yohana, 2012). That meant that they graduated and left school with little proficiencies in English.

For example, in the year 2001, students English performance indicated that 197 students out of 296 (67%) failed the subject. In 2002, 181 students out of two hundred and ninety two (62%) failed. In the year 2003, 189 students (68%) failed. In the year 2004 the number of the students who failed increased up to 284 (72%). Similarly, in the year 2005 the number of the students who failed increased from 284 to 323 (78%). The trend shows that as time went, the number of students who failed this subject increased.

## 2. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to find out factors that have contributed to students' poor performance in English subject in Zanzibar rural and urban 'O' level secondary schools. The research questions that guided the study

were:

1. What are the factors that affect students' performance in English language subject?
2. How is teaching and learning of English conducted in Zanzibar secondary school classrooms?

### 3. Background

English is the medium of instruction in secondary schools and tertiary education in Tanzania and it is taught in primary schools as a subject. It is the government that decides on which language should be the instructional medium. For instance, it is stated in the Education and Training Policy (1995) that learners who complete primary school are expected to have adequately mastered English to be able to cope with it as the medium of instruction throughout secondary school. Despite the existence of that policy for about twenty years now students at secondary schools are not competent and effective in using the language. For example, The Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar (1996) claimed that teaching at secondary school level is affected by the low proficiency in English, which is the language of instruction. It is explained that the abrupt switch over to English as the medium of instruction from Kiswahili, which is the language of instruction at primary school, has tended to shock the pupils thus affecting their performance. To some extent this contributed to students' low performance not only in English subject but other subjects taught in English in Zanzibar.

There are factors that have been associated with students' low performance from various scholars. For instance, Vuzo (2010) explained that learners and teachers may have difficulties in using the language with adequate proficiency at the secondary schools. Gee (1992) asserts that it is language that the business of schooling is still primarily accomplished, whether that be spoken or written. If the learner is handicapped, in the language of instruction, then learning will not take place at all as the educator and the learner will not be communicating. That is why there have been debates about the effective language of instruction in the classroom in Tanzania. Researchers like (Roy- Campbell & Qorro, 1997) claimed that the switch from Kiswahili to English as a medium of learning in secondary schools was no longer a viable medium of instruction. They suggested the use of Kiswahili instead of English since students were not able to use it correctly and effectively.

With this view, Omari (1997) asserts that to use Kiswahili will not solve the education problems in the system but rather worsen them through horrible expenses for translating the books, teaching teachers to use Kiswahili terms, depress motivations of pupils and parents who preferred English despite of all. However, Tanzania has not yet been able to use Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in educational institutions above primary schools despite several declarations intending to do so.

### 4. Literature Review

#### 4.1 *English Language Learning and Teaching in Classrooms*

The teaching and learning process involves two active participants in the classroom - the teacher and the learner, and that language learning does not fall entirely on the teacher. The students must also assume more responsibility for the learning process (Quist, 2000). For example, Vuzo (2010) reported "It is through interactions with each other that teachers and students work together to create intellectual and practical activities that shape both the form and the content of the target subject. However, such situation is not commonly found in secondary schools in all subjects due to the fact that lecture method dominates the teaching and learning process which leads to passive learning" (p.18). Once Cummings (2002) as quoted in Wang et al. (1994) said: "when I hear, I forget. When I see, I remember and when I do, I learn" (p. 111). Cummings noted that learning in which students are interactive produces far more effective participation in a class. Meaning that effectiveness of language learning and teaching in the classrooms will depend upon the educational repertoire teachers have. This idea concurs with Quist (2000) in that successful teaching and quality of pupil learning is closely related to the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Furthermore, the English teacher is a figure in the language course. Literature indicates clearly that it is the teacher who sets the tone for learning activities (Allen & Valette, 1997; Quist, 2000). Since to teach is to communicate, English teacher must have maximum communicative competence. Also a teacher must be knowledgeable in the language itself so that he/she can make useful decision regarding what should be taught to whom, and how the teaching should be done. Researches demonstrate clearly that among the factors that lead to students' poor performance are qualities of teachers (Harmer, 2003; Mosha, 2004). Moreover, empirical studies showed that if early years at the school fail to provide the right foundation for learning, then no amount of special provision at later stages will be able to achieve the full potential of the child in terms of how his learning will proceed, and how beneficial his attitudes are towards his future life and learning (Quist, 2000).

Teaching materials are very important in the whole process of teaching and learning to any subject. They make

learning more pleasant to the students because they offer a reality of experience, which stimulates self-activity and imagination on the part of the students. They also supply concrete basis for conceptual thinking and hence, reduce meaningless word responses from students (Nyamubi, 2003). For instance, Kapoli (2001) noted that authentic materials enable the students to explore the language used in day-to-day life and which is tailored to their needs and interests. UNESCO (2000) reported that the provision of teaching and learning materials especially books is an effective way of improving results. However, the World Education Report (1998) reveals out that in many countries, conditions are difficult, whether they relate to the physical states of schools and the availability of teaching and learning materials, class sizes, or the changing characteristics of the student population.

#### *4.2 Attitudes of Language Learning*

Attitudes refer to the sets of beliefs that the learner holds towards members of the target group and also towards his own culture (Brown, 2000). Language attitude is an important concept because it plays a key role in language learning. For example, researches conducted by Gardner (2001, 2002) about attitudes and motivation showed correlation with linguistic performance of learners, emphasizing the role of attitudes and motivation as determinant factors in language learning. It is also generally agreed among researches that positive attitudes facilitate the learning process, though attitude does not determine the behaviour (Khanna & Agnihotri, 1994).

In education, attitudes are considered both as input and output. Attitudes have a positive correlation with success in learning the second language because they facilitate learners' motivation to learn the language (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). They added that individual attitudes towards the language that they learn meet important needs as they satisfy certain functions such as achieving high grades in language examination.

#### *4.3 Motivation and Language Learning*

Motivation is the most used concept for explaining failure or success of a learner. Also motivation has been regarded as one of the main factors that influence the speed and amount of success of foreign language learners (Gardner, 2006). For instance, Gardner (2006) reported "Students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels" (p. 241). He further added that "If one is motivated, he/she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities" (p. 243).

In another development, Elliot, Kratochil, and Cook (2000) see motivation as an internal state that arouses to action, pushes us in particular directions, and keeps us engaged in certain activities. They added that learning and motivation are equally essential for performance and they enable us to acquire new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, motivation provides the impetus for showing what we have learned, and that more motivated people achieve higher levels but Harmer (2004) cautioned that motivation that brings students to task of learning English could be affected and influenced by the attitudes of a number of people.

In teaching, motivation is one of the factors that influence success or failure in learning a language, particularly a second language or foreign language (Gardner, 2006). In the same Petty (1998) argued that if students do not want to learn, their learning efficiency will be slow such that they may learn virtually nothing, and if you know how to motivate students, you can highly increase their learning. Apart from motivation and attitudes, researches show clearly that home environment has a part to play in students' poor performance in schools (Suleiman, 1999; Mapuri, 1999).

### **5. Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework in this study is based on Bloom's (1982) model of evaluation because of its suitability in the process of language learning and teaching. It was useful in examining the interdependence of variables, teaching and learning process to students' performance in English language subject. The model consists of three items: Predictor variables, Mediating variables and Performance. According to Bloom (1982) predictor variables and mediating variables influence greatly students' performance. Figure 1 summarises the idea contained in the model that if the predictor variables and mediating variables were of high quality, then teaching and learning process would produce good performance in language comprehension, production and attitudes towards English.

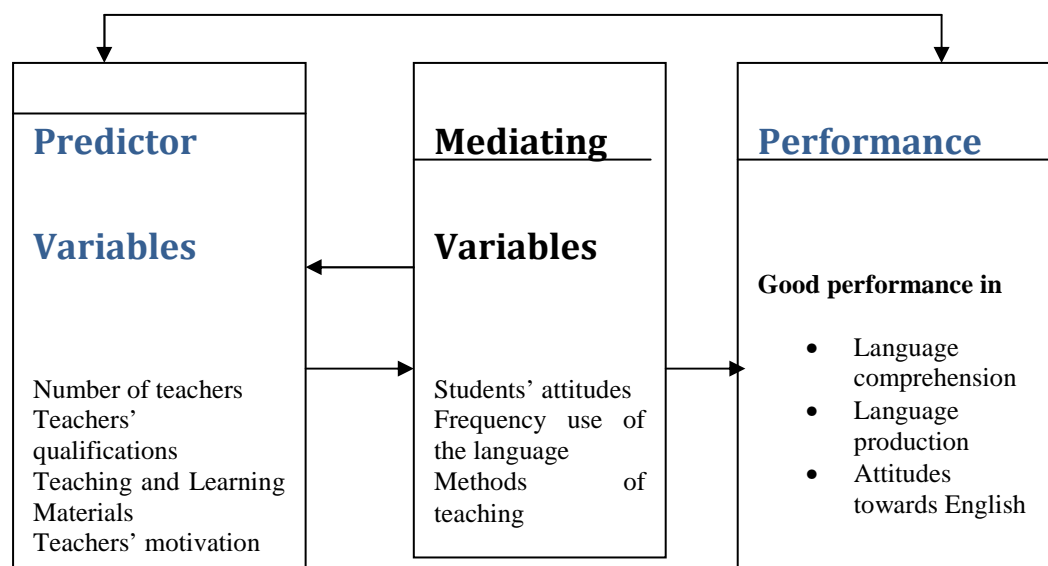


Figure 1. A Model for Explaining Students' Performance in English Language Learning.

The model examines the relationship between variables, teaching and learning process with performance in English language. It was anticipated that if there were enough and well qualified teachers to teach English language subject, availability of teaching and learning materials, they would contribute to students' high performance in the subject. It was also hoped that students would perform better if they had motivation to learn the language because their motivation would determine their success. Additionally, if teachers had motivation to teach the language, students would perform better because teachers were the ones who determine students' success. The study also assumed that if the school environment especially classrooms and home environment were conducive to students' learning they would contribute to high performance not only in English subject but also in other subjects taught in English, hence, high school achievement.

Furthermore, it was expected that students' attitudes toward the language they learn could predict their academic performance. Also students' frequent use of the language inside and outside classrooms would influence the level of performance in the language they learn. On top of that, it was expected that if English language teachers could manage to organize content, learning objectives, and apply recent methods of teaching and learning English, students would perform highly in the subject at the end of the course.

Performance in language refers to level of mastery in terms of comprehension, production and attitudes toward the subject. On one hand, it was anticipated that when predictor variables and mediating variables were favourable then, the level of performance would be high; on the other hand, when they were of low quality then, performance would suffer.

## 6. Methodology

The objective of the study was to find out factors that have contributed to students' poor performance in English subject in Zanzibar rural and urban 'O' level secondary schools. The study took place in four schools; two from rural (A and B), and two from urban (C and D). In this study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to enhance the credibility of the findings. Creswell (2005) argues "combining qualitative and quantitative data best understand and explain a research problem" (p. 52). In addition, to that Corbetta (2003) argues "...different approaches can provide a complete vision of social reality.....when viewed from different angles (p. 51).

Data gathering instrument were interview, observation, questionnaire and documentary review. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the four secondary schools since they had poor results in English National Examination for five consecutive years. Random sampling technique was used to select the students from Form One to Form Four in the selected schools. A total of 80 students were involved; 40 from urban and 40 from rural secondary school whereby ten students were picked from each form with gender consideration. Students provided information on school and home environment as well as attitudes towards learning the subject. Thirteen teachers teaching English were included in the study whereby six were male and seven were female. The aim of including teachers in the study was to investigate the way they applied knowledge and skills in the classroom whereby emphasis was put on competence in handling the subject matter, methods of teaching, and use of

teaching and learning materials.

## 7. Data Analysis

Data were organized according to the research objectives. Relevant themes were selected and coded. Holliday (2000) views themes as the basis upon which arguments and the data extracts are organized, providing headings for discussion and stages in the argument in data analysis. Item analysis was used in qualitative data. In quantitative data, tallies were converted into percentages, and then spread sheets were used in plotting graphs showing variables according to the questionnaires.

## 8. Results

### 8.1 To Examine Factors that Affect Students' Performance in English Language Subject.

The study findings indicated that various factors are affecting English teaching in Zanzibar rural and urban secondary schools. Results from this study showed that rural secondary schools had few qualified and competent English teachers compared to urban schools. For example, schools A and B had seven teachers teaching English while schools C and D had four teachers. Teachers in school A had an average of 7.4 periods per week while in schools B and C had an average of 13 periods per week. In school D they had an average of 28 periods per week.

Data from the study revealed that there were trained, untrained, and under qualified teachers teaching the subject. For instance, eleven teachers were trained and had diploma in education. One of them was not trained to teach English but Islamic Knowledge. Two teachers were not trained to teach English at all. They were Form Six leavers. They were teaching the subject because there was shortage of English teachers. However, results indicated that English teachers had varying teaching experience in the subject.

The study also examined the role played by teachers in using teaching and learning materials in the classrooms. Results showed that eleven teachers out of thirteen (85%) were not able to get the teaching materials suggested in the syllabus. Teacher from school A elaborated that "It is difficult for me to buy a newspapers because I do not have money. So it has always being difficult for me to teach students on how to write application letters" (Abdullah, teacher from schools A interview). In the similar vein teacher from school B reported that "she did not have time to prepare the teaching materials, on the other hand the school had no any support for teachers" (Khadija, from school B)

When teachers asked whether they could make their own teaching materials, (31%) of them said yes while (69%) said No and the reason being shortage of time, materials cost money that they did not have, and some of the materials were not available at their home environment. Moreover, none of the schools found with text books that would help the student to improve in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

On the part of motivation findings indicated that teachers had motivation to teach the subject. For example, twelve teachers out of thirteen (92%) admitted to have an interest in teaching the subject. Here is what five of the teachers said:

Teacher 1: "It is one way to improve my knowledge".

Teacher 2: "I am confident in teaching the subject".

Teacher 3: "It is my favourite subject".

Teacher 4: "It is an interesting subject".

Teacher 5: "I performed well in Teacher Training College that is why I teach it".

Results also indicated that students had motivation to learn the subject. For instance, seventy four students out of eighty (95.5) said that they liked learning English subject. Students provided their reasons for their affection to learn English:

Student 1: "English is an international language".

Student 2: "English is very important".

Student 3: "I want to use the language".

Student 4: "English will help me to learn other subjects".

Student 5: "I want to pass my exams".

Student 6: "I want to communicate with other people in the world".

Student 7: "I like the way the teacher teaches English".

The study findings indicated that physical classroom environment for the study schools was very poor but it was

worse in rural schools. For instance, 59 students out of 80 (73.5%) did not like their classrooms while twenty one students (26.5%) liked their classrooms. Reasons for not liking their classrooms were as follows:

Student 1: "No lights".

Student 2: "No windows and window shutters".

Student 3: "It is always dust".

Student 4: "It has a lot of holes".

Student 5: "It leaks during rainy season".

Student 6: "It is always noisy because we are many in the class".

Student 7: "It is not painted".

Student 8: "It is not attractive".

Student 9: "No doors".

Student 10: "No desks".

Family and home characteristics were also examined in the study to see the extent to which they play part in students' performance in the subject. Findings indicated that urban students had better studying areas that supported their learning compared to rural students. The study found that forty nine students (61.3 %) lived with their parents, and thirty one students (38.7 %) did not live with both of their parents and the reason being divorce, and death of one or both parents. However, sixty one students (76 %) showed that they lived with relatives such as brothers, sisters, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers who were not much responsible to their studies.

The study also investigated whether students got time to do English homework at home. Seventy seven students (96.25 %) said yes while three students (3.75 %) said no. However, it was found that most of the parents were unable to assist their children at home when doing homework regardless of enough time they had and the reasons being:

Student 1: "My parents are not educated".

Student 2: "My father does not know English".

Student 3: "My parents have no time".

Student 4: "My parents have no secondary education".

Student 5: "My parents have primary education".

Student 6: "My parents are old".

Student 7: "My mother does not understand my homework and my father is always not at home".

The study also investigated the extent to which students practised the language in the classrooms. Group discussions was a method of teaching that was thought to involve a free flowing conversation, giving students opportunity to express their opinions and ideas when learning English in the classrooms. However, findings revealed out that fifty five students (68.75 percent) admitted to sit in groups and discuss while twenty five students (31.25 percent) did not sit in groups and discuss. When asked whether they did their discussions in English language sixteen students (20 %) said they were able to use English language, while sixty four students (80 %) claimed not being able to use English language when discussing. Results from the study indicated that students had problems in responding correctly to the questions given in the class in English. Figure 2 is an example a work done by one of the students in Form Four Class who were expected to sit for the National Examination.

Q The arrival of Europeans to Africa was a source of many problems, some of which are still disturbing the modern African state to day. Referring to any reading you have done justify the above statement.

This clear that the author Chenua chebe shown the how come Europeans to Africa was a source of many problems, some of which are still disturbing the modern African state to day. For ~~with~~ start to use the books "IS IT POSSIBLE?" and "THINGS FALL APART".

With start the book "IS IT POSSIBLE?" I justify the statement above.

Firstly, destroyed the culture of people Africa, this is problem of society Africa like style the clear example through the character Likaken who destroyed the culture like style. He wear the trousers and shirt.

Secondly, disobedience many people are disobedient in the society, children speak without talking or angry, the old people the show the characters the students who happy after come Saaya's father.

Thirdly, introduce christian. In society Africa after come the Europeans to Africa they introduce the christian. The christian are lead separated between family and family, parents and his children good example show this book is Likakeni.

The point above its justify the arrival of Europeans to Africa was a source of many problems, some of which are still disturbing the modern African state to day which show the book "IS IT POSSIBLE?"

Figure 2. Illustrates an example of a work done by one student in school D.

Figure 2 illustrates clearly that the student understood the question but the problem was language. Relevant points such as culture, Christianity, obedience are shown in the work but the student was not able to explain them. However, the work had a lot of grammatical mistakes.

Language use in schools was also put into consideration in the study. Findings are presented in Figure 3.

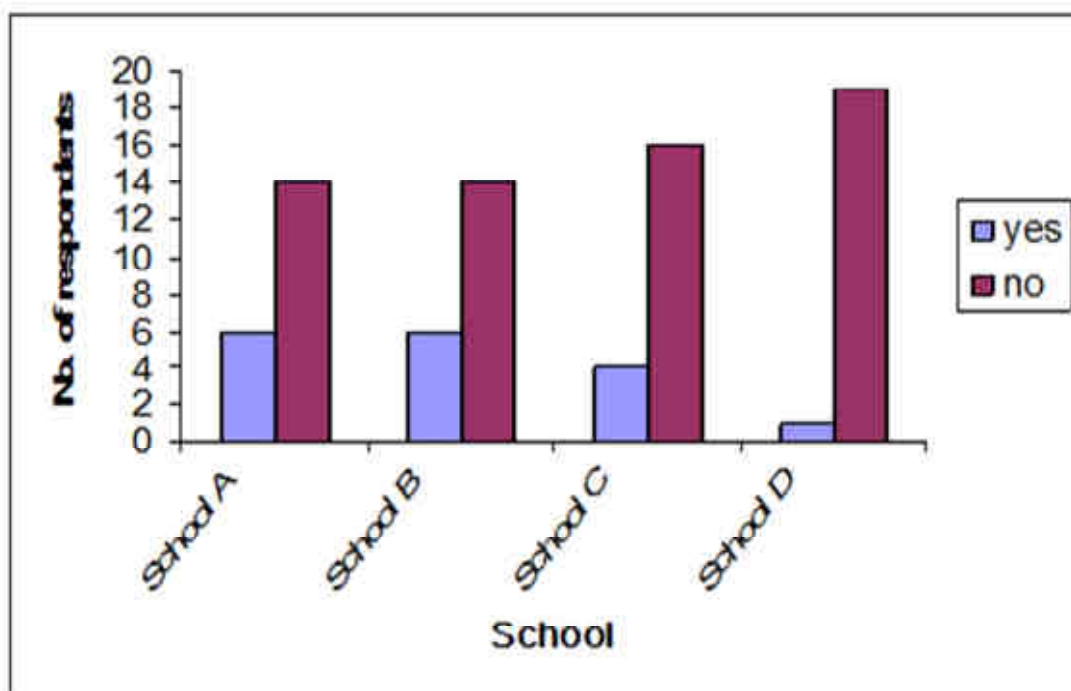


Figure 3. Students' use of English outside classrooms

Key:

Yes: Students who communicated in English outside classrooms.

No: Students who did not communicate in English outside classrooms.

Figure 3 shows the number of students who used and did not use English outside classrooms. Results indicate that rural schools had a high number of the students who were not able to communicate in English when at schools compared to urban schools. The problem was found in all schools but it was serious in school D where almost all students could not use the language and reason was English was difficult for them, and they did not know how to use the language.

The study also examined activities that could expose students in using the language such as debates and English clubs at the selected schools. Results are shown in Figure 4.

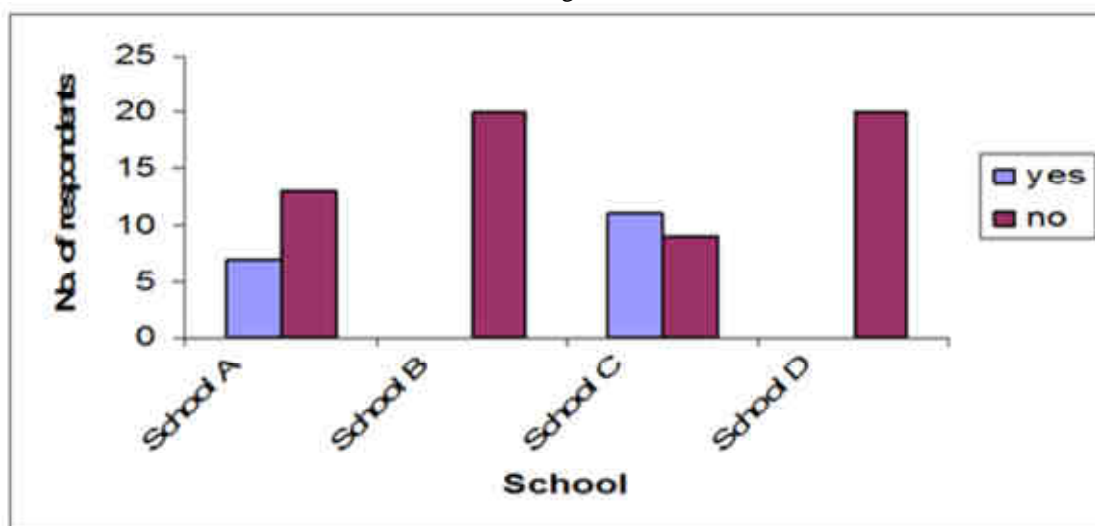


Figure 4. The Existence of English Clubs in the selected schools

Key:

Yes: Existence of English clubs at schools and the number of students who were members.

No: Number of students who were not English club members.

Figure 4 shows the existence of English clubs at the selected schools. The graph indicates that English clubs existed in two schools; A and C but they were not active. There were no such clubs in schools B and D and the students were not aware of what English clubs were. Additionally, school debates were not much practised in



schools as one way of improving students' speaking skill. Findings are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5 shows that in school A, fifteen students out of twenty (60%) admitted to participate in school debates compared to schools C and D. There were no debates in school B because students considered themselves as technicians. They spent much of their time in workshops rather than in English activities

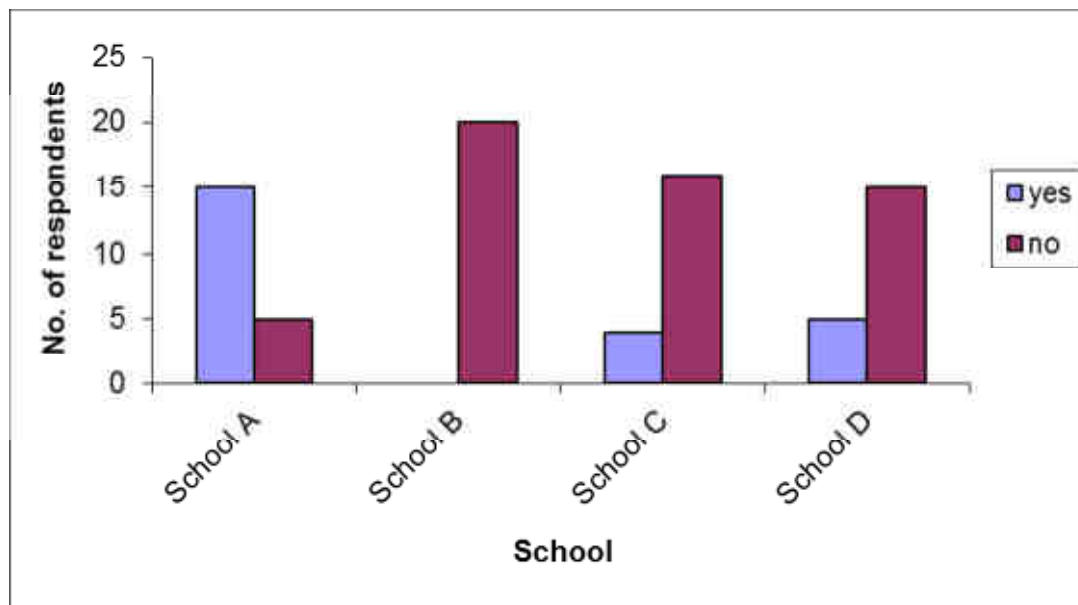


Figure 5. The existence of English debates in Schools.

Key:

Yes: Existence of school debates and number of the students who participated.

No: Number of students who did not participate in school debates.

#### 8.2 To investigate the teaching and learning of English language subject in Zanzibar 'O' level secondary school classrooms.

Before classroom observation, teachers were asked if they understood the English language syllabus. All teachers admitted that the syllabus was clear to them but unable to finish it on time and the reasons were:

Teacher 1: "Few periods per week".

Teacher 2: "Long syllabus".

Teacher 3: "Occupied with other responsibilities".

Teacher 4: "School inconveniences".

Teacher 5: "Frequent interruptions from the Ministry itself".

Teacher 6: "Frequent meetings by head of the school".

Teacher 7: "Heavy load of periods".

Results from classroom observation revealed that some of the teachers did not manage to achieve the objectives stated in their lesson plans with teaching. A good example was found in school D where the teacher wanted the students to summarize chapter six in the book *The Tales from the Arabian Nights* in Form Two Class. The teacher did not allocate specific time for the students to read the chapter. It was also found that students were slow readers and did not manage to finish the whole chapter. When the teacher realized that she was running out of time, she started summarizing before the students finished reading the chapter. The problem of not achieving objectives with teaching was also found in school C.

In another development, the teacher was observed in school A teaching English structure. The topic was Result Clauses in Form Two Class. The class had sixty students. The teacher stood in front of the class teaching through lecture method. This teacher had language problems. She was not able to help the students on how to join sentences. So, she spent much time repeating the same explanation. At the end of the lesson only four students participated in the lesson by joining four sentences that were written on the blackboard correctly. Others were talking, watching and writing previous notes from the black board that led them not follow the said lesson. There

was no group discussion that would enable the students to interact and use English language in the classroom, and so make improvement in the speaking skill. At the end of the lesson students were not allowed to ask questions.

The study also investigated on how teachers motivated their students when teaching the subject. Results showed that teachers too had difficulties in writing correct English. Here is an example of what teachers wrote in the questionnaires:

Teacher 1: By congratulating them through prizes to those who do well.

Teacher 2: Praise them by saying good, excellent and well.

Teacher 3: By praise, by motivate them in telling that all people were starting in the same ways like those.

Teacher 4: Just I gave them motivation and I gave them the best advice in their future, moreover in English.

Teacher 5: To give them same activities to present in English.

Teacher 6: To write activities and bring to me for marking.

If you examine teachers' answers you will find that they had language problem too. For example, the first teacher made a grammatical mistake in the word 'prizes' to mean costs which does not relate to what he/she was asked. The third and fourth teachers had good ideas but they did not manage to present them clearly and correctly. Teachers five and six did not understand the question at all. Only teacher two provided correct response out of six teachers indicated above.

In another development, two teachers in urban secondary schools did not accept to be observed. One of them claimed to have other responsibilities, and the other said that he had finished the syllabus. It was strange to find out that the second teacher had finished the syllabus while before observation he said that he did not manage to finish the English syllabus because it had many topics and long.

## 9. Discussion and Conclusion

The study findings revealed that urban secondary schools were staffed with qualified teachers compared to the rural schools where in general there was shortage of English teachers. For instance, schools A and B had trained and qualified diploma teachers but students' performance were poor as those of schools C and D in the rural areas. This is an indication that teachers were not competent in teaching the subject despite the fact that they were trained. To some extent teachers were contributing factors to students' failure in the subject because some of them were not able to speak English fluently throughout their teaching. So, if teachers had language problem themselves, it would be difficult to expect the students to perform well in this subject.

The presence of under qualified, untrained and incompetent teachers in the rural schools to a high extent played part in the students' poor performance in the subject. For example, in the situation where the subject was taught by untrained form six leaver student, and the trained teacher in Islamic knowledge would not contribute to students' high performance in schools since they did not have adequate knowledge about the subject. Findings from the study contradicted those of Nyamubi (2003), who found that students' ability was good because of the presence of qualified teachers in English, and they were similar to those of Roy-Campbell & Qorro (1997), that teachers who become the major sources for language were not well trained. However, previous studies indicated that successful teaching and quality of learning is closely related to the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject (Quist, 2000; Mosh, 2004) and that academic qualification of the teacher is very important in determining students' performance (Harmer, 2003). Therefore, there is a need to have trained, qualified, and competent English teachers who would be able to impart the subject matter knowledge content to the learners on one hand; on the other hand; to improve students' performance in the subject.

The absence of teachers' in-service training to raise the quality of teaching also contributed to the students' failure in the subject. This means that teachers were not frequently trained in order to cope with recent methods of teaching English that would also improve students' performance. To have teachers who have not received in-service training for many years since their initial training contributed to learning that is ineffective, hence, students' low performance in Zanzibar schools.

Shortage of teachers and skipping of difficult topics in the syllabus indicate clearly that students were partially taught which might have contributed to low performance in the subject. Since the syllabus specifies the topics to be covered and the number of periods to be taught in each level, and the examination is set according to what the syllabus stipulates, and then it would be difficult for them to pass the subject without proper and effective

teaching. This greatly contributed to failure in the National Form Four Examination by majority of the Zanzibari students.

English teachers had many periods to teach especially in the rural schools. They had an average of 28 periods per week. The situation contributed to a great extent lack of effective teaching and low motivation to the teachers. Having such a load, it would be difficult for them to deliver the knowledge in such a way that it would raise the quality of teaching in the classrooms that would also contribute to students' high performance in the subject. Such situation would not also enable rural students to perform better in the subject compared to their fellows in the urban schools. Besides, large class sizes in the urban schools discouraged teachers to mark and correct students' work for feedback that did not attract students to learn the subject and consequently results into poor performance.

Physical classroom environment, particularly in the rural schools was not good to attract the students to learn and the teachers to teach. For instance, in the place where 73.5% of the students said that they did not like their classrooms meant that physical classroom environment was not conducive to influence teaching and learning. However, students' aspiration to pass examinations in English and other subjects were motivating factors for them to like learning the subject in Zanzibar secondary schools. For example, findings showed that 95.5% of the students had motivation to learn the subject because it was the means of local and international communication as well as employment but the general learning atmosphere was not attractive to them and so lose interest and contribute to poor performance. The fact that learning environment is crucial in teaching and learning process, then it would be difficult to expect students in such environment to perform well not only in English but also in other subjects taught in English.

To some extent English lessons observed were not taught effectively because of various reasons such as teachers' responsibilities they had, frequent and unexpected meetings with heads of the schools or from the Ministry, games, lateness and absenteeism especially particularly from teachers who lived in urban areas and taught in rural schools. This played part in partial teaching and affected students' performance at the schools. Of course there is no way one can expect these students to perform well at schools if they were not taught as expected.

Furthermore, the study disclosed that there was lack of teaching facilities particularly textbooks that would support students to master the basics of the language and contribute to effective teaching, hence, high performance. The fact that teachers had difficulties in getting the suggested teaching and learning materials shown in the syllabus at their schools, and they did not show interest in making them, to a large extent hindered not only the learning process but also the effectiveness of teaching, lower motivation, hence, students' low performance in the subject. Findings from the study contradicted those of Nyamubi (2003) who found that availability of teaching and learning materials, and good learning environment contributed to students' good performance in the Tanzania mainland.

On the part of motivation, the study found out that teachers had interest to teach the subject because they would have a chance to gain knowledge and improve in language command on one hand; on the other hand, they were discouraged by students' low understanding of the language that led to their failure. That meant that if students did not have a strong foundation in the subject, it would be difficult for them to pass the subject in the National Examination as expected. Nevertheless, students' aspiration to pass examinations was the motivating factor for most of them to like the subject despite of all hindrance factors.

In urban schools, students had better and satisfactory learning environment but did not communicate themselves or with their teachers in English when at schools. There were no ways they could master the language fully because language learning requires repeated practice and exposure. This situation prevented students' ability to improve on the command of the language that also led to poor communication, hence, failure in the subject.

Parents' good relationship was expected to increase the level and quality of the students' performance. However, the study found out that most of the students did not live with both of their parents and the major reason being death of one parent or both of the parents and divorce. This situation decreased students' opportunity to enjoy parenthood that could contribute to better performance when at schools.

In the situation where parents had not gone to school it was difficult for them to support their children when asked for help. Additionally, there were some parents who had secondary education but were unable to help their children at home when doing homework. Since homework is one of the ways that contributes to students'

performance at schools; lack of parents' support would likely hinder the learning process and performance, hence, failure. Results from the study concur to those of Suleiman and Mapuri (1999) that home variables are significantly associated with academic failure.

The absence of school debates between class and class or school and school denied the students opportunity to acquire English language skills such as spelling, tenses, and verb patterns that would help them to maintain their command of the language, hence good performance in the English examination. English clubs which could also enable the students to be familiar with each other and build a certain kind of self-confidence were not active.

### 10. Implication and Recommendation

Students' performance requires students to have mastered the reading, writing speaking and listening as well as being competent in using the language in different context. The findings have shown that untrained, under-qualified, and trained teachers who were incompetent were teaching the subject, which in practice it is inappropriate with consideration that they are the most determinant factor students' performance. Additionally, the tendency of some teachers to skip the difficult topics in the syllabus, large class size, poor conducive teaching and learning environment, and shortage of teachers need to be addressed by policy makers. Therefore, this study recommends the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training to make sure that teachers are properly trained in a manner that they would be equipped with proper content subject matter knowledge as well as methods and strategies of teaching the subject that will play part in students' high performance not only in English but also in other subjects taught in English.

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