

Students' Attitudes and English Language Performance in Secondary Schools in Tanzania

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Abstract. The study explored the role of attitudes in secondary school students' performance in the English language. It explored how learning English was silhouetted by students' interests and utilitarian attitudes to the language. The fieldwork covered six secondary schools in Morogoro Urban and Mvomero districts in Morogoro Region. Respondents were students and their teachers of English. Data were collected through questionnaire and an achievement test. It was found that students differed in terms of their mastery of English, scoring higher in the structure section, while composition was the most poorly scored section. In all, students, in both Form One and Form Four, had strong and positive attitudes to English. Specifically, while Form One students had more positive interest attitudes than their counterparts, Form Four students displayed more utilitarian attitudes to learning English, compared to Form One students. Students' positive attitudes are in line with the current Government policy on the language of instruction in secondary schools. The paper ends by emphasising that students' positive attitudes to English can be exploited to enhance the learning of the language.

Keywords: Students' language attitudes; English language learning; performance; secondary school; Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

Tanzania is essentially a multilingual society. The country has about 150 ethnically-based languages (Muzale and Rugemarila, 2008), used by several communities especially in rural areas. For most Tanzanians, matters pertaining to customs, values, humour and cultural practices are often better communicated by the use of these ethnic languages (Rubagumya, 1993). Kiswahili is the national lingua franca, official language and the second language for about 80 percent of Tanzanians (Mapunda, 2013). Mapunda (*ibid.*) further observes that the exclusion of ethnically-based languages from being used in the education system in Tanzania makes the transition of non-Kiswahili speaking children from the home language in a primary school language

difficult. Primary school education in all public schools is derived through the medium of Kiswahili. Pupils learn English as a subject.

At the secondary school level, there is a switch of the language of communication in which English takes over as a medium of instruction (URT, 1995). At this change point, most Pupils from public primary schools experience a new language, that is English, which, according to Komba, et. al. (2012), it is unfamiliar for expressing concepts that students previously learned in Kiswahili. In this experience, most learners feel a hard and confusing task of expressing themselves when they are not competent in the language (Roy-Campbell and Qorro, 1997). This situation might have been a logical consequence of successive narrowing down the sphere of English language in the Tanzanian society between 1960's and 1980's. During that time, the language was restricted to classroom use, and was used to only communicate with foreigners (Rubagumya, 1999).

English language has, at various levels of use, historically been changing its role and status. It was both the national and the official language throughout British rule in Tanganyika (1918-1961). According to Rubagumya (1999), this served the interests of the colonial administration, which needed to communicate with all locals in one language-Kiswahili, and with the metropolis and business community in English. In the 1960s, the political agenda for Tanzania was disengagement from neo-colonialism and the building of a self-reliant society (Rubagumya, *ibid.*). Currently English is needed in Tanzania in order to have regional and international relationships, as it facilitates communication, and this language is more vital in this era of globalisation of information, technology and commerce.

English language is taught as a language in all public primary schools, from class three onwards. It is also used as the medium of instruction in the education system, starting from secondary school to tertiary level. At Forms Five and Six levels, English language is taught as one of the subjects in a given combination. Similarly, in universities, it is one of the courses offered. Tanzania follows an education system of 7-4-2-3+, that is, seven years of primary school, four years of ordinary level secondary school, two years of advanced level secondary school and three years or more of university education (URT, 1995).

Although English is spoken by few people, it occupies a high status as it is the language of higher education, in the judiciary system, and in diplomatic circles (Schimied, 1986). *The Education and Training Policy* (1995) presents that the objectives of language teaching in secondary education are to promote the development of competency in linguistic ability and effective communication. These objectives indicate that English language is a very important school subject and medium of communication at both local and international levels. The English syllabus for forms I-IV targets at enabling students to communicate effectively with other speakers of English language both inside and outside the country and use their knowledge of English in furthering students' own education (URT, 2010).

It is therefore expected that, after the ordinary secondary school level of education, students will have acquired and developed the specified knowledge, attitudes and skills of that language, so as to cope with the English language demands at higher levels of education and in the world of work in general.

The effective learning of a foreign or second language depends largely on the attitudes of individuals to the target language (Baker, 1992). Little is known on how attitudes Tanzanian secondary school students have on English as a foreign language, would determine their learning and performance in English language as a school subject.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that English is taught in Tanzanian schools from the primary school level, the majority of secondary school students are performing poorly in national examinations (Mkumbo, 2012). This poor performance may be explained by the fact that learning a foreign language effectively is associated with learners' attitudes and the utilitarian need to learn it (Nyamubi, 2003). In this way, factors such as learners' academic advancement or career aspirations in life may shape their attitudes towards and performance in the language.

In this frame of reference, this study was formulated to sift how students' attitudes to the English language explain their performance in the subject. The study explored the trend of students' performance in English.

The major research objectives are two:

First, to examine how students' attitudes to learning English correlate with their performance in the subject, the realisation of which was guided by these questions:

What are secondary school students' attitudes to learning English?

How do these attitudes explain their performance in English language in class?

Second, to explore the performance level of secondary school students in English, the data of which were guided by two questions:

What is the performance level of secondary school students in English?

How do students' demographic variables, gender and class level, elucidate their performance in the English language?

Attitudes are important aspects in the formation of national language policy. Baker (1992) affirms that no policy on language can be successful if it does not conform to the expressed needs and attitudes of language users in the community. Thus, it is anticipated that the findings of the study might shed some light on possible ways of encouraging socially desirable attitudes to learning the language. It is therefore hoped that this study will contribute to improving the teaching and learning of English language, and hence lead to better students' performance.

RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, a review of literature is made. It provides a discussion of the main concepts of the study in order to discern the gap to be filled in by the present study.

Attitudes and Language Learning

Different people have defined differently the concept of attitude. To begin with, Anold (2005) defines attitude as either mental readiness or implicit predispositions that exert some general or consistent influence on a fairly large class of evaluative responses, which are usually directed towards some objects, events or persons. Ewen (2003) on the other hand, defines attitude as a mental and neural state of readiness organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.

The common characteristic in these definitions is that attitudes entail evaluative predispositions to respond to social objects that interact with situational variables, thus guiding and directing the overt behaviour of an individual. The working definitions preferred in this study are Ajzen's (2001), who defines an attitude as a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person or event, and Armitage and Conner's (2001), who see that the role of attitudes is to help locate objects of thought, such as language, as being an object that is perceived to be favourable or unfavourable. These definitions are preferred because they link attitudes to measurement, that is, whether they are favourable or unfavourable in relation to an object, person or event.

In this way, if an attitude of a person to an object such as language is known, it can be used in conjunction with situations and it can explain a person's reaction to it. A survey of attitudes provides an indicator of current community thoughts, beliefs, preferences and desires (Garrett, 2010). Attitudes comprise beliefs about things that have some social significance. Such beliefs, for example, can be values that are attached to English by many Tanzanians that knowing the language is synonymous to being educated (Mapunda, 2013). It also provides social indicators of changing beliefs and the chance of success in language policy implementation.

Attitudes and motivation differ in that while attitudes are learners' feelings of approval or disapproval to learn the target language (Mapunda, 2013), motivation to learn language is an extent to which an individual strives to learn the target language because of a desire to learn the language and satisfaction experienced in the activity of learning (Ushida, 2005). In this, a motivated learner is eager to learn the language, expand efforts to learn it, and to sustain the learning activity. This encourages language retention, fluency, need for achievement and improved strategies to increase students' language comprehension levels (Wilkinson, 2015). According to Ushida (2005), motivation mediates the relationship between language attitudes and language achievement. The current study, however, examined the role students' language

attitudes in their performance in English without including motivation as mediating factor between the two variables under study, because other studies have dealt with this (Gardner, 2000, Ushida, 2005).

Language as a tool for socialisation and determinant of individual knowledge of the world is highly gendered in language use in school and society (Kidenyi and Getui, 2011). Gender as a social constructed concept shapes interpersonal relation and the way people perceive language, that is, their attitudes towards that language in its use as well as learners' overall performance. It determines how female and male students feel about the language they learn (*ibid.*).

In education, attitudes could be both an input and an output. A favourable attitude to language learning may be a vital input in language achievement. Baker (1992) found the following: First, attitudes have a positive correlation with success in learning a second language; and second, they facilitate learners' motivation to learn the language in relation to goal attainment. Attitudes can also be an outcome. After a language-learning course, the teacher and learners may have favourable attitudes to the language learnt, if they expect to benefit from it. In this way, learners will strive to achieve highly in the expectation of doing well in examinations and mastering the language, which in turn facilitates better performance.

Gardner (1985) argues that second language learners with positive attitudes towards the target language learn more effectively than those who do not have such positive attitudes. He explains that learners' language attitudes predict students' degree of success in terms of linguistic outcomes in learning the target language.

In language learning, attitudes seem to be very important in predicting learners' academic performance. The learner's favourable attitude to the language she/he is learning would facilitate success in it. Tahaineh and Daana (2013) argue that personal beliefs about one's capabilities and positive attitudes towards what one is learning positively influence learning. In this way, learners' positive attitudes to the language they are learning could help them to master the language, leading to success in their performance at school and after school linguistic needs in real daily-life situations.

However, little is known about the contribution of students' attitudes to English to their performance at the secondary school level in Tanzania. The present study therefore was intended to address this issue.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in secondary schools in Morogoro Region, Tanzania. The area was randomly selected from other twenty-five Regions, in Tanzania Mainland. Two districts in Morogoro Region, Morogoro Urban and Mvomero, were selected, from which six secondary schools were randomly picked for the study.

Morogoro, like other regions, catered for the education of the local people from both urban and rural areas around the country. Schools in the area had varying characteristics in terms of student composition, which were essential aspects that explained students' attitudes towards English language learning in relation to their performance in the language.

The population of this study included secondary school students and teachers in Mvomero and Morogoro Urban districts. Six secondary schools were selected, that is, three schools from urban and the other three from rural areas. Specifically, the target population included Forms One and Four students and their teachers of English.

Form One students were involved in the study because they had just completed primary education where majority of them, particularly from public primary schools, had been learning all subjects, except English, in Kiswahili. Additionally, because the language of instruction in primary schools is Kiswahili, with exception of English medium primary schools, it was important to find out how the change to English as the language of instruction in secondary schools could explain students' attitudes to the English language.

Form Four students on the other hand were involved in the study because, at their level, the English language syllabus content for ordinary level was supposed to have been covered by the learners. Additionally, Form Four students would have more immediate needs for the language for higher studies or employment, and that would adequately gauge students' attitudes to learn English.

Teachers of English were involved in the study, as they were the important input in the teaching-learning process. Their views on students' attitudes to learning English were considered important to the study. Teachers provided information that was useful for analysing and discussing the findings.

The sample comprised 450 students, that is, 230 males and 220 females. Their ages ranged from 12 to 17 years. In the selected schools, all Forms One and Four students had an equal chance of being involved in the study. Thus, the sample was 276 and 174 for Forms One and Four, respectively. Again, the sample can be categorised as 280 students from urban secondary schools and 170 from rural schools. Permission to access schools in the study area was obtained from relevant authorities and institutions, and all participants agreed to participate in the study.

The selection of teacher respondents who participated in the study from each school was through the purposive sampling technique, which was utilised to deliberately choose respondents in accordance with the data that was intended to be collected. Thus Forms One and Four teachers of English from each school were included in the study on the merit of their duties.

Student respondents, on the other hand, were selected by randomly picking one stream in each Form in every school that had more than one stream. Since streaming in Tanzania's secondary schools is not based on ability, it was reasoned that, whichever stream was picked, it would provide a fairly representative sample of all students in that level. In schools where there was only one stream, there was no choice but to pick that stream. The number of students in each stream ranged from 25 to 65.

Two data collection instruments were used in this study. These were questionnaires and achievement tests. Questionnaires, which included attitudinal rating scales, were twofold: one for students and the other for teachers. The Students' questionnaire was designed to elicit their personal data, and their attitude to the English language. The standardised instrument for measuring individual students' attitudes towards a language they learn was adopted from Krashen (1981). However, these items were modified to suit the Tanzanian situation, and in particular, in the context of English language learning at the secondary school level. The instrument had 15 items for interest attitudes sub scale and 10 items for the utilitarian attitudes sub-scale.

In each section, respondents were to respond by rating the appropriate reply. Responses were tapped in a four-point Likert type format, ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). To ensure that high scores indicated higher or positive attitudes towards English, negatively worded items were reverse scored. Scores obtained were correlated with students' performance. The teachers' questionnaire asked them to provide information on the students' attitudes to learn English language.

The achievement tests in both Forms One and Four were administered to students so as to ascertain their performance in English. There were two tests; one for Form One and the other for Form Four. They were both curriculum-based as they covered the content as stipulated in the respective syllabi. Both tests consisted of three sections, comprehension, composition and structure or grammar. The whole achievement test was marked out of 100. The marking of both tests was based on a marking scheme. The tests were marked by the researcher and two independent teachers of English. The scores obtained in both tests measured students' performance.

The students' questionnaire and the achievement tests were administered by the researcher with the help of the teachers of English in each school. Questionnaires were distributed to each respondent, and enough time was given to respond to the questionnaire. Respondents completed a questionnaire at their schools in the presence of a researcher. Assistance was provided, as needed, to help in reading and understanding the survey items. Achievement tests were administered to students a day after they had filled in the questionnaire. Time for the test in both classes was one hour, which was enough for respondents to complete all test questions. As for teachers, questionnaires were distributed to each respondent by the researcher. The time and day for collection were set.

As regards validity and reliability of the instruments, the questionnaire was written in English and later translated into Kiswahili with assistance of a person fluent in both languages. This ensured consistency in the content and meaning. In the field, respondents were given an opportunity to choose any of the two languages in which they were comfortable to communicate. This was due to the fact that although English is the language of instruction in Tanzania secondary schools, students across the board, including those with difficulties in understanding English can understand and are fluent in Kiswahili (Lyakulwa, 2012).

Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted prior administering the survey. This was done to find out whether any of the items were ambiguous to ascertain applicability, relevance and usefulness of research tools. The pilot study also served as a means to find out the internal consistency or reliability as well as the validity of the questionnaire, which was found to be of fairly good quality, with a reliability coefficient of 0.89. The main study was done in July-August, 2015.

Data were entered and analysed using SPSS for windows (version 21) following IBM guidelines. Cross tabulation was performed to obtain frequencies, means and percentages of students' responses on their attitudes towards English. An independent t-test was performed to explore the variations among respondents in terms of gender, class and school location. Pearson's correlations were calculated to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables.

RESULTS

Attitudes towards Learning English

The results are presented in relation to the identified two attitudes types, which, according to Krashen (1981), are interest attitudes - which show one's willingness to learn a language, and utilitarian attitudes - which refer to the benefits one expects to get after learning the language.

The study sought to register students' willingness to learn English, which reflected their interest attitudes towards the language. Results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Students' Ratings on the Interest Attitudes to Learning English by Gender, Class and School location (N=450)

Category		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	SD	t	p
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Gender	Male	124	53.92	91	39.59	9	3.91	6	2.61	27.23	5.257	1.255	0.072
	Female	96	43.62	86	39.09	27	12.28	11	5.0	29.64	5.176		
Class	Form I	143	51.82	113	40.94	12	4.35	8	2.89	29.14	5.484	1.725	0.081
	Form IV	76	43.68	66	37.93	21	12.07	11	6.32	27.26	2.218		
School Location	Rural	84	49.41	74	43.53	8	4.71	4	2.35	26.82	4.361	0.865	0.377
	Urban	156	55.71	98	35.01	17	6.07	9	3.21	2.84	4.372		
TOTAL		228	50.66	171	38.0	34	9.5	17	3.77	27.82	4.478	1.657	0.172

Key: SD= Standard deviation.

As regards gender, the data showed that more male students, 93.4 percent, than female students, 82.7 percent, showed that English was more interesting and preferable than most other subjects in the curriculum. The difference however, was not statistically significant when an independent t-test was conducted. It yielded the following results: male students' mean = 27.23, standard deviation = 5.257, female students' means = 27.23, standard deviation = 5.176, $t(450) = 1.255$, $p = 0.072$.

In terms of students' class level, the data revealed that students' positive interests in learning English is stronger when they at the lower classes. It was shown that Form One students (mean= 29.14, standard deviation = 5.484), that is, 256 students out of 276, held an opinion that English should be used to teach all other subjects in the curriculum to all students at all levels of the country's education system. Form Four students, on the other hand, held this opinion by 81.6 percent, with a mean of 27.26, and a standard deviation of 4.218 among them. Results indicated that the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, given the t-test results: $t(450) = 1.725$, $p=0.081$.

In terms of school location, the data showed that there were no significant statistical differences between students studying in rural-based schools (mean=26.82, standard deviation=4.361) and those in urban secondary schools (means = 26.84, standard deviation = 4.372) as regards to their interest attitudes to learn English. Students in both categories indicated that they used English language more frequently in their interactions and that English as a schools subject was not difficult to learn. The independent t-test results $t(450) = 0.865$, $p=0.377$, indicated the absence of statistically significant variation between students from the two locations.

Furthermore, the study sought to find out student's utilitarian attitudes to learn English. These kinds of attitudes reflected their perceived usefulness of the language when learning it at school as well as after school value of English. Table 2 summarises the results.

Table 2: Students' Ratings on the Utilitarian Attitudes to Learning English by Gender, Class and School location ((N=450))

Category		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	SD	t	p
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Gender	Male	112	48.69	106	46.09	7	3.04	5	2.18	23.97	4.972	1.446	0.071
	Female	111	50.45	86	39.09	14	6.37	9	4.09	21.86	4.821		
Class	Form I	118	42.75	118	42.75	26	9.43	14	5.07	24.29	4.721	1.253	0.014*
	Form IV	87	50.0	65	37.36	14	8.05	8	4.59	23.96	4.683		
School Location	Rural	84	49.42	62	36.47	15	8.82	9	5.29	26.73	4.128	1.568	0.096
	Urban	121	43.21	143	51.07	11	3.93	5	1.79	26.84	4.239		
TOTAL		246	54.66	162	36.0	32	7.11	10	2.23	24.61	4.371	1.469	0.069

Key: *= p value is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The study revealed that secondary school students had strong utilitarian attitudes towards learning English, that is, benefits learners expect to get after learning the language.

In terms of gender, majority of students, both males (94.7 percent) and female (89.5 percent) agreed that English was the subject worth learning in schools because it helped them to learn better the other subjects taught through the medium of English. The t-test results indicated absence of statistically significant differences between male students (mean= 23.97, standard deviation = 4.972) and female students (mean = 21.86, standard deviation = 4.821) at $t(450) = 1.446$, $p=0.071$.

Again, the majority of students recognised the importance of English language in the world. In this, they agreed that studying English would make them more knowledgeable in various fields of study. The t-test results indicated that more Form Four students 87.3 percent (mean = 24.29, standard deviation 4.721) than Form One students (mean = 23.96, standard deviation = 4.683) felt stronger usefulness of English in the school and after school lives. This difference was statistically significant given the results $t(450) = 1.253$, $p=0.014$.

Additionally, the majority of students, 94.2 percent from urban-based schools and 85.8 percent from schools in the rural setting, refuted the notion that English was overvalued in the Tanzanian education system. The difference on their opinion was not statistically significant, $t(450) = 1.568$, $p= 0.096$.

Teachers were asked their opinions on the learning of English among secondary school students in Tanzania. They revealed that students liked to learn English to the extent that they were ready to attend paid private tuition sessions in order to succeed and advance in other subjects. Furthermore, teachers revealed that students liked debating in English and to be taught all subjects through the medium of English. The majority of teachers were of the opinion that students' utilitarian attitude to learning English was prompted by the need to advance to further studies. Table 3 summarises the results.

Table 3: Teachers' Opinions about Learning English Among Students (N=16)

Opinion Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Students like to learn English	2	12.5	8	50.0	5	31.2	1	6.3
2. Students like to be taught all subjects in English	3	18.7	10	62.5	2	12.5	1	6.3
3. Most students like debating in English	3	18.7	6	37.5	4	25.0	3	18.7
4. Students are prepared to pay for English language tuition	3	18.7	6	37.5	6	37.5	1	6.3
5. Most students learn English in order to advance in other school subjects	5	31.2	9	56.2	1	6.3	1	6.3
6. Students want English only in order to be selected for further studies	4	25.0	3	18.7	7	43.8	2	12.5

Students' English Language Performance Levels

Students differed in their mastery of the English language as reflected in their scores in the test. The results are presented separately according to the classes in all the schools. They show how well the students fared by gender in the tests' three sections, which were comprehension, structure and composition. Table 4 shows Form One results.

Table 4: Form One Performance by Test Sections and Gender

TEST		PERFORMANCE LEVEL					
Section	Maximum Score	Male (N=134)		Female (N=142)		Total (N=276)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Comprehension	30	15.09	4.47	12.87	4.74	13.95	4.72
Structure	35	23.18	6.19	20.43	5.86	21.77	6.17
Composition	35	14.00	11.72	10.58	5.80	12.25	9.13
Whole Test	100	51.53	13.84	43.97	12.20	47.65	13.54

Key: SD= Standard deviation.

The results showed that in Form One, in the comprehension section, the average score was 13.95, out of 30, with male students getting a higher mean score than female students, which was 15.09 and 12.87, respectively. Performance in English structure was better than the other sections, with a mean score of 21.77, the male students with a mean score of 23.18, while the female students score was 20.43. However, the results in the composition section showed the lowest mean score of 12.25. In all, the total test average score was 47.65.

Table 5: Form Four Performance by Test Sections and Gender

TEST		PERFORMANCE LEVEL					
Section	Maximum score	Males (N=96)		Females (N=78)		Total (N=174)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Comprehension	30	16.49	6.29	15.52	6.15	15.95	6.21
Structure	35	21.95	5.74	19.67	4.46	20.68	5.18
Composition	35	18.63	4.66	17.48	4.19	17.99	4.43
Whole Test	100	57.00	12.13	52.47	11.02	54.48	12.18

Key: SD= Standard deviation.

In Form Four, similar trends were observed as shown in Table 5. Results indicated poor performance levels in composition and higher marks in the English structure section. The mean scores were 18 out of 35, and 21 out of 35, respectively. In the comprehension section, the score was 16 out of 30. In all, the composition section registered the lowest score compared to the other sections, with a mean score of 17.99, with the male students scoring an average of 18.62, and female students' mean score was 17.48. As in the case of Form One, performance in English structure was on the whole better than in other sections, with a mean score of 20.48, with male students getting 21.95, and female students 19.67. The comprehension section had a mean score of 16.49 for male students and 15.52 for female students. The mean score for the whole test was 54.48, with male students getting 57.00 and female students 52.47.

The Relationship between Attitudes and Performance

The scales, 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' were assigned weighted scores whose sum was used as an index for attitude, while students' scores in the achievement tests were used as the dependent variable.

Table 6: Correlation between Test Scores and Students' Attitudes towards English Language Learning

Category	Form	Comprehension	Structure	Composition	Whole Test
Interest Attitudes	I	0.216**	0.275**	0.210**	0.280**
	IV	0.198**	0.200**	0.169	0.206**
Utilitarian Attitudes	I	0.269**	0.276**	0.200**	0.209**
	IV	0.274**	0.282**	0.240**	0.288**
<i>Overall Attitude Scale</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>0.176**</i>	<i>0.272**</i>	<i>0.264**</i>	<i>0.331**</i>
	<i>IV</i>	<i>0.222**</i>	<i>0.286**</i>	<i>0.220**</i>	<i>0.344**</i>

Key: ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 6 show that there was evidence in support of the aspect that students' performance in English was positively related to the attitudes they have to learning English. Thus, in Form One, the performance in the whole test yielded a positive correlation of 0.331, while in Form Four it was 0.344. Moreover, when the three sections of the test were correlated with students' attitudes to learning English, all yielded positive correlation coefficients. The English structure section had the highest correlation coefficients across both attitude categories compared with the other two sections, while composition yielded the lowest but positive correlation coefficients.

DISCUSSION

The Direction of Attitudes towards the English Language

The findings show that students have very strong and positive attitudes towards English language because it is the basis for further studies and it provides them with an opportunity to communicate with other people inside and outside the country. Similar findings were reached by Rubagumya (1993), who noted that the majority of students in Dar es Salaam Region secondary schools had positive attitudes to the English language. In this way, students' positive attitude to English is enhanced when they know that success in English goes hand-in-hand with their doing well at school.

The findings further indicate that students agree that they are very interested in learning English and that they like the language as it could help them learn other subjects better. Similar results were achieved by Kapoli (2001), who found that students' awareness that knowing English is a prerequisite for doing well at school impels them to strive to learn the language. Thus, when learners find satisfaction with their English language learning, they will feel motivated to learn the language and be more likely to form habits of reading English books

(Chien and Yu, 2015). Students' positive attitude to English is a requirement for positive classroom interaction, which in turn facilitates language learning.

Thus, despite the fact that Kiswahili their national language, very few students would like the language to be adopted as the medium of instruction in secondary schools. This corroborates Persson's (2013) findings that although several of the students in Tanzania secondary schools struggle with the vocabulary and the pronunciation, they feel that English is the path to higher education and a good job. These are contributing factors to the fact that the majority of students prefer English as their language of instruction in secondary school, to their own national language, Kiswahili. This attitude is very clearly related to a feeling that English is of great importance in the modern world and that knowledge of the language would be of assistance to students' opportunities for career advancement, which help them to improve academically and linguistically (Close, 2015).

It can be inferred from the findings that the English language no longer has the connotation that it is the language of colonialists, as Yahya-Othman (1990) noted, but rather, it is regarded as an international language for wider communication across the world. This is in line with Moody's (1992) observation that, in most East and Southern African countries, English has become an important means of communication, not only as a medium of instruction in schools, but also for informal social communication. English indeed has a functional utility in the Tanzanian education system in that it meets learners' immediate usage and practical needs. Knowledge in the English language, for example, provides students an opportunity to communicate with people both inside and outside the country (Nyamubi, 2003).

English has a high status and a major role as an international language for wider communication in the media, education, trade, science and technology. Graddol (1997) also agrees that the use of English is important in such aspects as books, newspapers, airports, air traffic control, international business, academic conferences, international sporting competitions, pop music and advertising. In this way, English provides a window for the discernment of the world and it gives the opportunity for the young to meet challenges of the pluralistic world.

One of the findings that emerged from this study is concerned with gender differences in students' attitudes towards a foreign language. Female students have consistently stronger positive attitudes of both an interest and utilitarian nature towards English than male students do. Nyamubi's study (*ibid.*) found a smaller difference between genders in that more girls than boys felt that they should use English as the language of instruction in all subjects. The reasons for the differences are presumably located in the socio-cultural behaviours of the two sexes (Kidenyi and Getui, 2011) with girls more inclined to like the arts subjects while boys go for the sciences and mathematics.

In terms of students' class level, the findings show that, while Form One students' interest attitudes were more positive than those of Form Four students, in the aspect of utilitarian attitudes Form Four students displayed a more positive inclination towards learning English than Form One students. This can be explained by the fact that Form Four students, who were about to complete their education at that level, have more functional attitudes towards the English language as they perceive it to be of more immediate value to them for either job opportunities or further education. Similarly, Ntawigira (2005) found that secondary school students in Rwanda are aware of the benefits of English in the national and international milieu.

The trends in the labour market have changed in Tanzania. Unlike in the past, current trends show that there has been a big increase in jobs requiring good communication skills in English language and sound knowledge of information technology (Chien and Yu, 2015). It has become necessary now for job seekers to prove their mastery of this language. In this way, students are likely to become proficient in their knowledge of English language through increasing occupational options and trade opportunities with outside societies in a way that will benefit individuals and society. Nyamubi's (2003) study revealed that knowledge of the English language increases students' chance of getting employment and/or helps them in their future studies.

On the other hand, Form One students, who had just started their secondary school education, did not see the immediate relevance of the utilitarian aspect of the language, but rather they focused more on developing an interest in English, which they wished they could speak more and better. In a similar vein, Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) observe that language is important as one way in which knowledge is constructed and displayed as a means of gaining or controlling access to other resources.

Students' Knowledge, Attitudes and Performance in English

Students greatly differ in terms of their mastery of the English language. This is reflected in the scores in the given tests, showing that students' performance is good in both Forms One and Four. However, standard deviations, which indicate how students differ in terms of performance, are high, meaning that some students scored higher marks while others had lower scores. The main reason for this lies in individual abilities (Persson, 2013).

The results generally show that students in both Forms performed better in English structure than in comprehension and composition. It was noted that English structure was the area in the syllabus that was given higher priority in terms of teaching time than other sections (Nyamubi, 2003). Composition, which was poorly performed in both Forms One and Four, received little attention in terms of teaching time, with teachers claiming to have little time left for marking (*ibid*). Teachers reported that they had very heavy teaching load.

It will be recalled that students in both classes also performed poorly in the composition section. One of the factors that cause students' failure in English is the lack of writing exercises because teachers are more interested in teaching the grammar of the language at the expense of comprehension and composition, due to the heavy teaching load or to the easiness of teaching different sections of the syllabus. Supporting this argument, Kapoli (2001) observes that the reasons for concentrating on the teaching of English structure emanates from the English language syllabus, which concentrates more on the manipulation of grammatical structures, without any reference to the way in which the language is used by learners as a system of symbols.

However, from the teachers' perspective, the failure to provide writing exercises is caused by overcrowded classes. Additionally, the teachers indicated that heavy teaching loads, which resulted out of English language teachers' shortage to meet the demand of the increased number of students, contributes to a great extent to the lack of effective teaching by most teachers. They are of the opinion that the increased workload has reduced their readiness to attend to individual students academically. Unlike teachers of most other subjects, teachers of English need to provide and mark students' written work regularly, in order to facilitate their progress in the language, and thus foster their interest in learning it (Kapoli, 2001).

The findings show that students' performance in English is related positively to the attitudes they have towards learning the language. The whole test result has moderate but positive correlation coefficients across the two attitude types, that is, interest attitudes and utilitarian attitudes. This indicates that students' mastery of the language is facilitated by the attitudes they have towards the language. In general, attitudes towards a language are an important element in improving language learning (Mapunda, 2013). Thus, as argued elsewhere, learners' attitudes towards the language they are learning determine their performance, especially if they are in smaller classes and when teaching and learning materials as well as qualified teachers of the language are present (Persson, 2013).

Acquiring language skills empowers students to discover themselves and explore meaning through effective interaction. Teachers contribute in a number of ways to helping students acquire language skills through sustaining an interest in and positive attitudes to the English language.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research findings, discussions and interpretations of the study, the following conclusions are drawn. The level of English competency among secondary school students is high. Students' ability to use the language is good, in both Form One and Form Four, although there are variations among students. This good performance is associated with the presence of high quality learning environment at school.

Regarding students' attitudes towards learning the English language, they have strong and positive attitudes towards the language. English is found to be of

great importance in the modern world as it is the means of both local and international communication. The findings show a positive correlation between students' attitudes to English and their performance in the subject. The attitude to the language is an essential factor in the overall process of learning.

Tanzanian secondary school students have very favourable attitudes towards the English language. They have more utilitarian attitudes than interest attitudes, as they anticipate more benefits from learning the language, such as joining high schools and finding employment. These positive attitudes are in line with the current Government policy on the language of instruction in secondary schools, which advocates the use of English. Positive attitudes provide a good basis for sustaining students' interest in learning English, acting as an input for students to benefit from the instruction. These positive attitudes can be exploited to enhance the learning of the language.

Based on these findings, the following measures are recommended: First, there is need to improve the teaching of English in secondary schools, capitalising on the strong positive attitudes towards it and the high motivation for learning the language. Second, care should be exercised in any attempt to change English as the medium of instruction in secondary schools as students favoured it as the language of communication in secondary schools. It is important that the choice of a language of instruction should take into account the learners' expectations of it.

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