*Original Paper*

# Enhancing Language of Instructions by Using the *Language Supportive Teaching and Textbooks* Materials in Secondary Schools in Temeke District

Josephine Joseph[1*] & Kalafunja Osaki[1]

[1] Department of Educational Foundation: St. Augustine University of Tanzania, Tanzania

[*] Josephine Joseph, E-mail: josephinjonathan98@gmail.com

*Abstract*

*Various arguments and solutions are proposed in the current discourse on weak English language proficiency in Tanzania. Most authors agree that the standard of reading, writing, speaking of the language is low. Proposed solutions vary. One solution proposed has been to support student language proficiency in form 1 by running a language supportive program. Language Supportive Teaching and Textbooks [LSTT] is one among the recent programs designed and practiced in some schools in Dodoma, Morogoro and Lindi regions of Tanzania. The program with materials available for further experimentation since 2016. This study investigated the enhancement of the proficiency in the language of instructions by using tried LSTT materials to improve English language proficiency among Form 1 students in Temeke district in Dar es Salaam. The study employed action research design; using a quantitative approach to administer a vocabulary and comprehension pre and post –tests, and qualitative research approach aimed at understanding the views of teachers and students through interviews and observation of learning in classrooms. The study was guided by Constructivism Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) focusing on learning by seeing and scaffolding by following teachers and peers, and Bilingual theory of Common Underlying Proficiency model (Cummins, 1980's). Two public secondary schools were involved in the study, which included a sample size of 160 participants among whom 154 were students, four English teachers and two Head teachers. The researcher selected students from two streams in two schools hence one stream termed as a "treated group" and other group used to compare the results of pre- and post-test. Purposive sampling used to select four teachers. After running eight lessons, the findings revealed that through LSTT materials both teachers and students benefited as classroom interaction improved. Teachers were able to present the lesson well through LSTT*

*approaches and pedagogy, which promoted students participation through exercises and better understanding, as well as improved speaking and reading. Those who were oriented through LSTT material had a higher score in the posttest, which was significant. After the researcher had been teaching through the LSTT materials most of the students in the trial gained confidence and more interest to learn through English language. Their scores in vocabulary and comprehensive test also improved significantly.*

*Keywords*

*Language supportive materials, Medium of instructions, English language, proficiency*

## 1. Introduction

Tanzania is a multilingual country with a heterogeneous linguistic landscape. There are many language diversities. Among them the education policy allows the use of only Kiswahili and English in schools; the remaining 120 languages are used only at home. English is a foreign language, one of the official languages and the language of instruction in secondary schools and higher learning institutions (Brock-Utne, 2017). Despite the status given to English as a medium of instruction, neither students nor teachers can speak it well in secondary schools, due to poor language education since primary school level. Form one students' experience difficulty in learning as they are in transition from Kiswahili in primary to English in secondary schools. To address the issue of low English proficiency, the LSTT baseline project was created, with the goal of strengthening innovation and practice in education, particularly for form one students in Tanzania, transitioning from Kiswahili medium to English, which is used as a medium of instruction in secondary education (Baseline Report, 2014).

The LSTT project designed sample textbooks in Tanzania secondary schools that are accessible to students and have the greatest impact on improving teaching and learning strategies that support language acquisition. Form one students, according to the baseline study, are supposed to use Kiswahili in the classroom, which will help them to digest difficult words and concepts and hence be able to produce innovative ideas by using both Kiswahili and English. As a result, they will be able to acquire both spoken and written English. Students need opportunities to read and write during lessons as well as to speak and listen to improve their low level of English language proficiency, especially for form one students.

In Tanzania, English is used as a foreign language and considered as the language of business in the world through the influence of globalization. It is also the medium of instruction in post-primary education. Despite their preference for English as a medium of instruction, the language does not facilitate effective teaching and learning because most students and even teachers do not speak or write it well. Students and teachers are supposed to be proficient in the language of instruction, which will enable them to interact during the teaching and learning process.

William (2017) argued that students before joining the post-primary school use Kiswahili as the medium of instruction; English is only taught as a subject from standard 3; in secondary school,

English is the only medium of instruction. Students in public primary schools are forced to learn in a language in which they have no prior practical experience, so they focus on memorizing rather than understanding. English as a medium of instruction is a serious challenge for most learners. They cannot explain various issues, and sometimes students escape to participate in morning speeches and debates. These are results of a lack of English language proficiency as students feel inferior and feel that they cannot contribute or give their ideas on the issue concerned. The same concept applies: if you ask them to explain in English, they fail, but if you tell them to explain in Kiswahili, they give their ideas. The use of the LSTT approach was recently practiced in some schools in Dodoma, Lindi, and Morogoro with encouraging results.

However, in Dar es Salaam, the schools are not using the approach because the LSTT project did not cover the region. The approach advocates a bilingual language approach and the researchers wanted to test it to see if it would work in Dar es Salaam public secondary schools. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the enhancement of the language of instruction by using the LSTT (Language Supportive Teaching and Textbooks) materials to improve English language proficiency among Form 1 students in secondary schools in Temeke district because English as the medium of instruction is still a challenge, especially in ward secondary schools. In the response to the above problem, the study was guided by four specific objectives. The objectives were to assess students' level of understanding of English language and subject content learning in form one in secondary school and to explore the challenges that teachers and students face when using English as the medium of instruction in a secondary school. It also aimed to examine the usefulness of LSTT materials in teaching and learning English subjects in Temeke district and to find out how the LSTT approach helped to improve English language proficiency for Form One students in secondary school in the Temeke district.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design and Sample

The study employed a mixed method involving both qualitative and quantitative research design approaches because it gives a wide range of research methods and techniques for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. The study employed an action research design. The targeted population involved head teachers, class teachers, and Form One students in ward secondary schools in Temeke district. The sample size was 160 from two-selected secondary schools. The sample size in this study was as follows: (4) English teachers; (2) headmasters; and (154) students from two secondary schools chosen.

### 2.2 Data Collection Instruments

The study used in-depth interviews, questionnaires, documentary review, pre-and post-tests, and observations as the methods of data collection based on enhancing the language of instructions by using LSTT materials in secondary schools.

Questionnaires focused on asking participants their knowledge of LSTT materials. The interview was

36

used to solicit the answers about experience in teaching English for form one and their views concerning the potential for LSTT textbook materials on improving English language proficiency in secondary schools. The study involved classroom observation whereby the researcher did collaborative teaching with the English teacher, selected form one English subject topic by using Language Supportive Teaching and Textbook material for a period of three weeks, and observed the reactions of form one students in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. This helped the researcher to observe and evaluate the teaching and learning process with and without LSTT in order to draw a conclusion on the usefulness of LSTT materials.

The researcher reviewed the English textbooks in order to find out if the textbooks are supporting students to acquire English language skills. The students' assignments were reviewed which helped the researcher to obtain information on students' involvement in the lesson and to find out if they understood what they were taught in the lesson. In this study, the researcher gave the students a pre and post–English test in order to determine the usefulness of LSTT materials in enhancing the language of instructions in secondary school. The researcher assigned a pre-test for Form 1 students intended to assess their level of understanding of English language. After three weeks of studying English lessons by using LSTT materials, the researcher assigned a post-test in order to evaluate the usefulness of Language Supportive Teaching and Textbook materials.

## 3. Result

The results from the data collection process are presented in Table 1, and the discussion of the analysis presented thereafter.

This part presents findings on the role of language-supportive approaches in improving English language proficiency for form one student in secondary schools. We used questionnaires, classroom observations, English proficiency tests, and documentary review to collect data and to find out how the LSTT approaches are approaches used to improve English language proficiency.

*Students' Participation during the Lesson*

**Table 1. Student's Participation during Lesson Number1 in School A**

| Students' participations in the lesson | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes, very well | 3 | 75 |
| Very little | 1 | 25 |
| Not at all | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | 4 | 100 |

*Source*: Field Study 2021.

Table 1 indicates teachers' responses to the question about students' participation in the lesson by using

37

LSTT pedagogy. As 3 teachers responded that students showed participation in the lesson very well and only 1 teacher responded that students showed very little participation while teaching through Language Supportive Pedagogy. The total number of teachers involved was four. Because of those responses, LSTT approaches seemed effective for those students, as three teachers who used LSTT found that their students participated very well in the lesson.

In addition, the researcher asked teachers if LSTT approaches helped Form 1 students to improve English language proficiency and English subject content. All four teachers responded that yes, LSTT approaches assisted students to improve English language proficiency for various reasons. Firstly, LSTT approaches enable students to improve their language proficiency because they allowed using Kiswahili in discussion and hence, acquiring the ability to express their ideas correctly in spoken or written English during the teaching and learning process.

Secondly, LSTT approaches are effective as through them, learners interacted as the materials allowed them to work in pairs with the aid of diagrams and pictures found in textbooks. The pictures allowed learners to illustrate the ideas and enabled them to construct sentences in English, even though they were broken sentences at the end. Hence, they improved their English language proficiency. In addition to that, they responded that LSTT approaches enable students to improve English language proficiency through textbooks that gloss key terms from English to Kiswahili. Students added new vocabulary, which assisted them to compose sentences and do class work very well.

During the study, the researcher assigned the test to form one students to examine their level of understanding of the English language. Two tests were administered in two selected schools where the first test was in order to determine students' level of understanding English, while test two was given in order to find the usefulness of language-supportive teaching materials in secondary schools. The test number two was administered to both groups of students taught with and without LSTT materials. In school "A" 77 form one students were taught by using the Language Supportive English Textbook as an experimental group that the researcher intended to find the outcomes of using LSTT materials in the teaching and learning process. In school "B", 77 students were termed as a control group who were taught without LSTT materials in order to compare results.
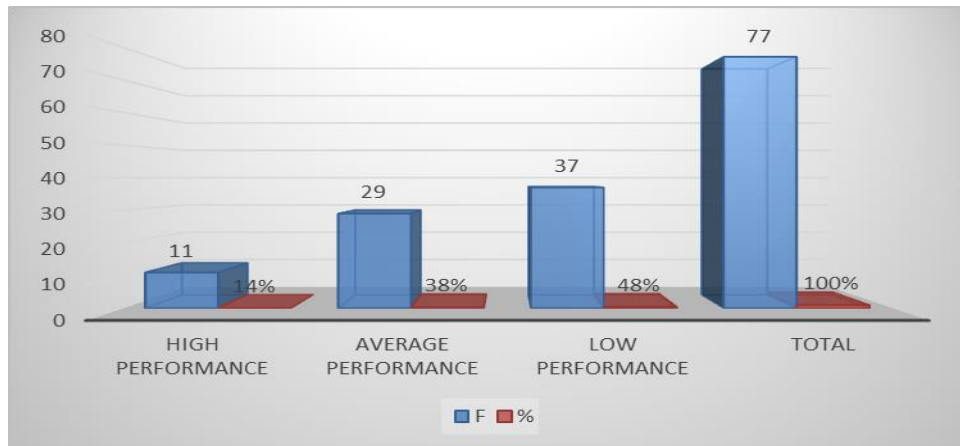
**Figure 1. School A Test 2 English Proficiency Test**
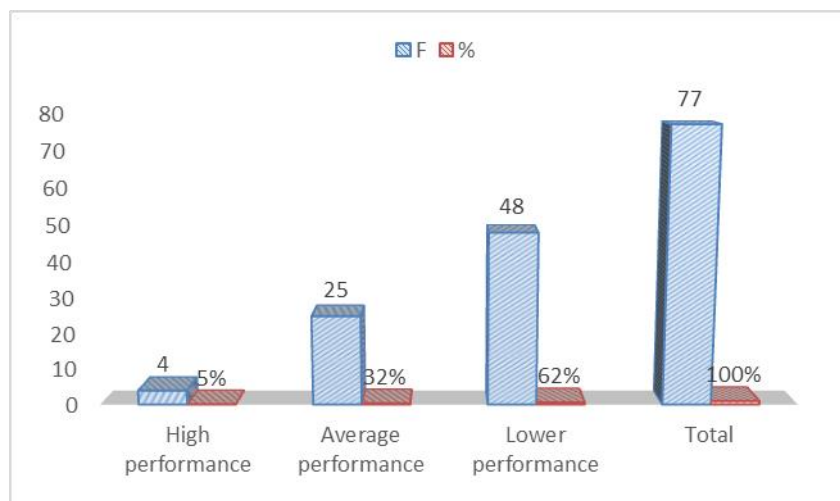
*Source*: Field Study 2021.



**Figure 2. School B Test 2 English Proficiency Test**

*Source*: Field Study 2021

Figure 1 and 2 present test two results of school A and B, after students of school A had been oriented through LSTT materials, their results were: 11 students performed higher, 29 students had average performance, and 37 students had low score. The total number of students was 77. In school B, 4 students performed well; 25 students had average performance; 48 students did poorly. Total number of the students from school B were 77. The results demonstrate the usefulness of LSTT materials in school "A", their performance was higher than in previous tests. Students in school 'A' performed better than students in school "B", where in school "A" Students showed more success in answering questions well. As a result, they began to learn about using English as a medium of instruction.

In other words, students from School B who were taught without LSTT material performed poorly on Test 2. Test results revealed that LSTT materials have functionality in building students' English language proficiency in secondary schools. These results indicate that, teachers were able to use LSTT

materials to assist their students in developing language skills such as speaking, listening, and writing.

## 4. Discussion

The study found that students' level of understanding of the English language is still poor as they asked several questions and when they answered, they failed to capture the meaning of what they asked for. For example, there was a lesson where the teacher was teaching revision about prepositions. The researcher observed that only a few students answered the questions, and others attempted to answer questions, but they answered them incorrectly, and some were afraid to talk. During the teaching and learning process, students relied on the teachers' centered method, and this was because of the language barrier. In addition, through the English language proficiency tests 1 and 2 which the researchers provided to the students, there were some students who scored lower marks, such as 7 out of 50. Some did not understand the meaning of questions, and this was because students lacked a sufficient prior background in the language, as in primary school they learnt it as a subject only, often taught by a little fluent teacher. In addition, they do not use English outside the school as a means of communication.

Researchers conducted classroom observations in order to see what is going on within the classroom setting. The study discovered that using English as a medium of instruction hinders the achievement of subject content because students fail to grasp the meaning of key terms, some fail to answer questions correctly, and others fail to read simple paragraphs written in English. The findings revealed that there are challenges of using English language as the medium of instructions in secondary school because of the low incompetence of language for both teachers and students. The teaching and learning materials are not enough in supporting students acquiring English language proficiency. In overcrowded classes, it is hard for teachers to assist all students in the teaching and learning process as language barriers deny effective classroom interactions. English as the language of instructions is a disaster, especially for students in ward secondary schools who are unfamiliar with the English language. In the transition from primary to secondary school, students found it difficult to learn and hence some relied on memorization. Others failed exams not because they were ignorant; but because the language barrier denied them the opportunity to acquire the required knowledge.

Different scholars discussed the challenge of using the English language as the medium of instruction, for example, Lymo (2018) who conducted a study on the challenges facing the use of English as the medium of instruction in Tanzania found that the majority of teachers in public secondary schools are facing challenges in teaching using English as the language of instruction. Hence, language of instruction is a barrier to academic achievement for both students and teachers; they stress that incompetence in language of instruction hinders classroom interaction between teachers and students. As a result, it led to low academic achievement of students.

In addition, the study found that LSTT materials are useful in assisting students to acquire English language proficiency in selected secondary schools. Researcher during the study worked together with teachers to implement LSTT materials in enhancing the language of instructions for form one in the

40

Temeke district. After teaching through LSTT materials, the researcher asked students if they think LSTT materials helping them to improve English language proficiency. Findings indicated that all 31 students responded yes, after using those materials, were helping them to improve their English language proficiency. Students were able to understand subject contents because the materials used simple language, through discussion, students were able to talk in pairs in Kiswahili, which they learned through the language, and they knew the subject contents well. Students were able to understand subject contents because the materials used simple language, through discussion, students were able to talk in pairs in Kiswahili, which they learned through the language, and they knew the subject contents well.

Apart from that, the materials enabled students to construct sentences that follow grammatical rules, so they started composing sentences in the English language and they were able to express the new concepts in English. In addition, LSTT materials enabled them to gain confidence, and hence they started practicing speaking broken English because practice makes perfect, they have improved their language proficiency. William (2017) conducted the study on Language Supportive Teaching and Textbooks LSTT for Bilingual Classrooms. William (2017) researched Language Supportive Teaching and Textbooks LSTT for Bilingual Classrooms. The findings indicated that LSTT materials are useful as students after having oriented through the LSTT textbook, were able to do exercises in the textbooks without the facilitator's help and students gained confidence and interest in mathematics, having used the user-friendly LSTT material.

In general, teaching through LSST materials proved to be most significant in improving students' English language proficiency, also during teaching and learning process students were able to discuss and present assigned tasks without worrying about their ability to use language. Glossaries found in the textbook enabled them to understand the subject contents easily within the within the shortage period.

This *bilingual* approach to language teaching is proving to work effectively in the context of Tanzania. The trial LSTT materials have now been used in many schools with success and it is now time that the authorities commissioned a group of writers to create a full English language textbook and a training manual to orient teachers on how to teach language more effectively in the early grades of secondary school. There will need to be a coordinated training program for supervisors to ensure that this is done effectively. Those who argue that English is not a necessity for learning are being unrealistic, as neither India nor China have made this argument. Yes, strengthen the use of the Kiswahili *lingua franca* at all levels, but provide an opportunity for learners to acquire fluent English in order to access the ocean of knowledge available in this language.

**Acknowledgement**

## References

Barrett, A. A. et al. (2014). *Language Supportive Teaching and Textbooks: Baseline Study, Study, Bristol: LSTT*.

B. Brock-Utne. (2017). *Multingualism in Africa*: *Marginalization and empowerment*.

Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingual Education and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy College Hill*. San Diego College Hill, San Diego

Gabriel, P. P., & Elisa, D. D. (2017). Strengthening English Learning in Language Transition Classes: Classes: Spiraling English Teachers' Competence in Tanzania. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, *3*(3). https://doi.org/10.9734/ARJASS/2017/32271

Milligan, T. (2016). Comparat, T., T.e Education Journal, 52(3), 328-342, Exploring the Potential for Language Supportive in English Medium of Instruction: A Rwandan Case Study. *Comparative Education Journal*, *52*(3), 328-342. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2016.1185258

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Processes Development*. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

William, F., & Ndabakurane, J. (2017). *Mathemati F., and Teaching and Learning in Tanzania, African Journal of Teacher Education*, *6*(1), 96-118. https://doi.org/10.21083/ajote.v6i0.3946