Original Article

The Contribution of Language Supportive Teaching in Facilitating the Transition from Kiswahili to English Medium of Instruction in Form One: The Case of Morogoro Teachers' College, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the Contribution of Language Supportive Teaching (LST) in the Transition from Kiswahili to English Medium of Instruction in Form One: The Case of Morogoro Teachers' College. This study had four specific objectives; To assess the success of LST training in Morogoro Teachers' College, to find out how LST works in secondary schools where graduates from the LST training in Morogoro are teaching, to determine how LST contributes to the transition from Kiswahili to English medium instruction, and to examine challenges which leaners experience after making the transition between primary and secondary schools. The study involved a sample of 8 respondents (i.e., 5 teacher educators) from Morogoro Teachers' College and 3 secondary school teachers from the college; the researcher used descriptive design which used qualitative research approaches. Nonprobability sampling techniques such as purposive sampling was used to get the sample for this study. Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources and instruments such as interview guides were used. The study revealed that LST has contributed more towards the language of teaching, the training led to additional teaching skills to teachers, improved students' English proficiency, improved English practices, strengthened students' self-confidence in group discussion, teaching English language has been strengthened, pedagogical skills enhanced, and English Language Speaking Enhanced in Classroom Strengthened Students' Ability to Communicate in English without Fear of Errors. Also, the study found that LST in secondary schools is implemented through the following ways; group discussion, collegial partnership, sentence structure and pronunciation, teaching aids and the use of students' thinking language. The study also found that LST has improved students' vocabulary, improved students' reading in English language, improved students' writing in English language, helped teacher's new ways of supporting the mastery of subject content language, and helped to engage students in learning process.

INTRODUCTION

This study was about how Language Supportive Teaching (LST) contributes to the smooth transition from Kiswahili to English medium instruction in Tanzanian secondary schools. Language opens the main door to knowledge development and that it enables transfer of information from one generation to another. A familiar medium of instruction provides teachers and learners an opportunity to interact in the process of teaching and learning. English as a medium of instruction plays a great role in creating competent workforce who in turn influences foreign direct investment in the country (MoEvt, 2008).

Barrett et al. (2014) Language Supportive Teaching is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of Study. Learners in environments using communication to learn and practice the target language by interactions with one another and the instructor, the study of authentic texts (those written in the target language for purposes other than language learning), and the use of the language both in class and outside of class. That method also claims to encourage learners to incorporate their personal experiences into their language learning environment and to focus on the learning experience, in addition to the learning of the target language.

Background of the Study

The language of instruction is an important factor in teaching and learning, since without it the circuit of complete communication between the sender and receiver of messages in terms of subjects, remains incomplete. This claim is evidenced in Campbell (2013) who points out that the language of instruction really mattes, because it is a key to knowledge acquisition as well as adaptation of science and technological advancement. Through language, we can define and confine how we think and reason.

English as a language of instruction is used in most parts of African countries not only for academic purposes, but also as a medium of communication in business, tourism, and political issues among others. For example, in South Africa, English is used as a medium of instruction at tertiary level, but due to low emphasis in teaching functional language

skills, it leads to low achievement to student performance (Arkoudis, 2003).

In Tanzania, the medium of instruction in primary education is Kiswahili while English is the medium in secondary and higher education. The transition from primary to secondary education is also a transition from Kiswahili to English medium education. Research by Rubagumya (1990); Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1997); Brock-Utne (2019) has shown that the use of English as a medium of instruction in secondary education has devastating effects in learning because students' proficiency in English is low. This calls for attention in the transition process from primary to secondary education and from Kiswahili to English medium of instruction.

A baseline study conducted in 2013, according to Barrett et al. (2014), showed that the transition is challenged by, among other things, difficult textbooks for Form I. While students' proficiency in English language is low, the textbooks used are too difficult; making the students unable to use them. After the baseline study, sample Language Supportive Textbooks were designed in the subjects of English, Mathematics, and Biology. The try out conducted in secondary schools showed that the sample textbooks were successful in making students both learn subject content with ease and improve their competence in English language. Barrett et al. (2014) Both the baseline study and textbooks design were done within the first phase of a project known as LSTT, which stands for Language Supportive Teaching and Textbooks. The project involved language and education experts from Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), Aga Khan University, Bristol University, and the University of Dodoma (UDOM). In the project, it was agreed that Language Supportive Teaching involve textbooks that are accessible to Form I students; that is, with simple language, adequate illustrations, bilingual glossaries, and adequate learning activities.

The second phase of the LSTT project focused on training teachers to implement LST so that the transition from Kiswahili to English medium instruction is effective. Phase II involved Bristol University from the United Kingdom, while Tanzanian institutions were St John's University of Tanzania, the University of Dodoma, and three teachers' colleges namely Butimba, Morogoro, and Mpwapwa. For the Tanzanian institutions, their teacher education academic programs were improved to include a Language Supportive Pedagogy (LSP) in their teaching and learning. Courses involved in the improvement were Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and English language. Targeted students were those taking science and who were training to teach in secondary schools. Phase II was planned and implemented in collaboration among the involved institutions. The intention was that after the training of the science and English language pre-service teachers, LSP would be scaled up to all secondary schools where the graduates would work.

Like many postcolonial countries, Tanzania has a policy of using both an African language and English as medium of instruction in public education. Seven years of primary education is delivered through the medium of Kiswahili. Kiswahili originated from coastal areas of East Africa and is not the lingua franca in metropolitan centers in Tanzania. Secondary education is only available in the medium of English. Students making the transition to secondary education, particularly those living in remote, rural, or disadvantaged communities, have had very little exposure to English. The majority do not have the level of proficiency assumed by the syllabus (Barrett et al., 2014).

Research Objectives

- To assess the success of LST training in Morogoro Teachers' College

- To find out how LST works in secondary schools where graduates from the LST training in Morogoro are teaching

- To determine how LST contributes to the transition from Kiswahili to English medium instruction

Research Questions

- How successful was the LST training in Morogoro Teachers' Collage?

- How do the LST graduates from Morogoro Teachers' College apply the knowledge at schools where they work?

- How does LST help secondary school students to cope with the transition of medium of instruction from Kiswahili to English?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the case study design. The study adopted the triangulation method (i.e., the combination of both primary and secondary data collection). The target population of this study comprised of 5 Morogoro Teacher educators from Morogoro Teachers College who are involved in Language Supportive Training, 3 student teachers from Morogoro Teachers College with Language Supportive Teaching knowledge. Therefore, the sample size made a total number of 8 respondents. Semi structured interview was used for both participants. After data collection, all the data collected were adequately checked for completeness. The qualitative data available documents and interview were analysed by themes analysis. The data were checked to ensure that the output is free from outliers and the effect of missing responses is at minimum.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Success of LST after the Training Ended in 2019 Academic Year

Additional Teaching Skills to Teachers (ATST)

During an interview with respondents concerning the success of LST program which was conducted at Morogoro Teachers' College, one of the respondents R1 said that;

> *"I was among those participated language supportive training at Morogoro Teachers' College in Morogoro. The language supportive training was very important to me and one of the successes of the program is that it has supplemented my teacher education in secondary schools. The program has helped me to train my colleagues on how to ensure form one students use English language effectively"* (R1)

The views proposed by (R1) points out that most teachers after their language support training at Morogoro teachers college as professional teachers do get the opportunity to provide tips of supportive language techniques to their fellow teachers so as to boost their mind on how to help form one students to better understand English language. Collaboration with other non-English subject teachers who did not attend the LST has strengthened the competency in the language of instruction and learning among teachers and students respectively.

Improved Students' English Proficiency (ISEP)

Improved students' language proficiency is very useful aspect in teaching and learning. Our education system embraces English language as a medium of teaching and learning. Some of respondents during an interview concerning the success of the language supportive training program conducted in Morogoro said that LST has brought great impact on shaping the ability of students to use

English in their daily academic activities. Teachers who attended the training have been conducting seminars to teachers who did not attend the LST program in Morogoro. They are doing this for the benefit of students. During interview one of the respondents pointed out;

> *"Effective teaching by using the language of instruction immerse students to English language and make them benefits bilingual instructions. After attending the LST program in Morogoro most of my colleagues at my working station have been requesting me to conduct seminars and give them techniques how to use English and Kiswahili to strengthen English speaking at school particularly for form one students"* (R2)

Improved English practices

Language supportive training has supported the improvement of English practices in form one classes. Teachers who attended Language supportive training are helping in enhancing English practices in secondary school students. In order for anyone to perform better at English, daily practices are encouraged so as to build a tendency of considering English language as a normal language which can be used in academic issues. Respondents have their views on how language supportive training has improved English practices in classrooms and outside the classrooms. One of the respondents impressed the interview session when she pointed out that;

> *"I have been organizing students in groups and assigning them a task which requires them to speak in front of their colleagues in English language. I told them that they should mix even with Kiswahili so that they capture the concept and English vocabularies easily. This technique has positively worked for form one students. I knew this technique after being among those attended the language supportive training in Morogoro Tanzania" (*R3)

Strengthened Students' Self-Confidence in Group Discussion (SSSGD)

One of the best way students can use to understand how to listen, write, and read in English language is self-confidence. Most students fail in English speaking campaign at School because they lack self-confidence. It was discovered that language supportive training which was conducted in Morogoro has influenced teachers to guide students build self-confidence when speaking English in the class and outside the classroom. Respondent said that;

> *"After the language supportive training in Morogoro and returning to my working institution, I started using group discussions as a best way through which my students can build confidence when using English language. Many students have developed self-confidence when using English language and Swahili where necessary in group discussion"* (R4)

This means that when the two languages are used for form one students, it becomes very easy for students to understand English language than using English language only to teach them how to pronounce, to write, and to read. Language mixing has brought positive impact to the teaching and learning of English language in form one.

Teaching English Language has been Strengthened

On this theme, a teacher was termed to be crucial person in students' learning by using English language yet some of teachers lack confidence when it comes the use of English language during teaching and guiding students in English. Language supportive training has provided teachers with techniques that can help to boost their confidence because English language can be taught by using Kiswahili and English language. One of respondents said that;

"I was among facilitators of the LST program, I can confirm that LST has helped teachers to build confidence during teaching. LST insisted teachers to use the two languages in order to help students understand the vocabularies, so using Swahili to clarify any English term help teachers be flexible and also confident" (R5)

Pedagogical Skills Enhanced

This is among the successes that respondents were quoted during an interview. One of the respondents who was among facilitators of the LST Program said that;

"One of the key issues in language supportive training in Morogoro was to equip teachers with new pedagogical skills which can help teachers to teach with fond of confidence. I hope that the training has brought positive impact in teaching form one students" (R6)

Strengthened Students' Ability to Communicate in English without Fear of Errors (SSACEWFE)

The findings show that students tend to fear to speak English because they face shortage of English language vocabularies and they are really challenged by grammatical issues so they fear to speak in front of their colleagues. The respondents during an interview said that since supportive language training aimed at preparing teachers on how to use supportive language to learn in English language, then it is possible that these teachers use the training effectively to ensure that students are confident and develop ability to communicate in English without fear of grammatical errors. Respondent (R8) pointed out that;

"LST has increased tolerance of grammatical errors during students' conversations" (R8)

Grammatical errors stand as obstacles for students to speak English when they are at school. It is always the teachers who can ensure that their students are confident enough during conversations.

LST was considered by respondents as a tool which has brought grammatical tolerance among students. Teachers with good knowledge on language supportive techniques can help students to consider grammatical errors as normal issue in conversions in English language.

One of the respondents noted that when one or both languages are not functioning fully (e.g. because of pressure to replace the home language with majority language), cognitive functioning and academic performance may be negatively affected. For a language to be used as the medium of instruction, it should be well developed to facilitate knowledge generation. That means, both teachers and learners need to be proficient in the language to interact with each other during the teaching and learning process. However, this is contrary to what transpires in the Tanzanian educational system and classroom contexts. In Tanzania, the teaching and learning process is done in the environment whereby the teachers and learners lack sufficient English proficiency (Ndabakurane, 2012).

How LST Works in Secondary Schools Where Graduates from the LST in Morogoro are Teaching

The second objective of this study aimed to establish the way LST is working in secondary schools where graduates from LST in Morogoro Teachers' College are teaching. The finding was obtained through interview, the teachers who were involved in the interview were three in total. These teachers were invited for the interview at Kigurunyembe Teachers' College. Teachers' trainers were found at Kigurunyembe Teachers' College. The main themes extracted from the interview include; group discussion, collegial partnership, sentence structure and pronunciation, teaching aids, and the use of students' thinking language. All the ways in which LST works are discussed below;

LST Works through Group Discussions (GD)

While exploring the ways LST works during an interview, two respondents said that LST works through group discussion during learning process. Teachers who attended Language Supportive Training have been facilitating the transition of Swahili to English medium of instruction by emphasizing group discussions for form one students to make them help each other. The respondents argued that group discussion encourages English language speaking campaign in classroom during teaching process. To support this, one of the respondents said that;

> *"At my school where I am working, LST works through group interaction between one student and another, this help students to fetch English techniques from others"* (T1)

Respondent (T1) tries to say that group discussions help students to get new knowledge from others. Students are more active and adopt instantly how to speak new language through others in groups. Group discussions have different students with different capabilities.

Collegial Partnership (CP)

This was another theme which was extracted during an interview with respondents. According to respondents, teachers trained in language supportive programs have been using collegial relationship to transmit the knowledge on how to equip students with English language through language supportive model. Respondents argued that science and language teachers have been collaborating to help students understand English language which is the medium of instruction in secondary schools in Tanzania. In supporting this theme, one of the respondents said that;

> *"Science and language teachers work collaboratively; this helps to form collegial partnerships between science and language teachers especially those who attended the*

> *training on language supportive program at Morogoro Teachers' College in Morogoro"*

Another respondent said that;

> *"Most of English language teachers did not attend language supportive training, therefore, those who attended the training are always collaborating with those who did not attend the training. We are doing this at our school because not all teachers attended the training."*

Sentence Structure and Pronunciation (SSP)

Among main themes extracted during interviews with respondents at Morogoro teachers' college and at schools where those trained on ways through which LST works, was through sentence structure and pronunciation. Respondents said that the supportive languages such as Kiswahili and Local languages are used to clarify English words on how to form sentences and how to pronounce English words correctly. For example, a respondent from school X said that;

> *"Here at my school, LST works through the use of supportive language such as Kiswahili in forming Sentence structure and how to pronounce English words"*

This particular respondent meant that since the formulation of sentences and pronunciation of English words are crucial issues in learning through English language as a medium of instruction, there is a need for teachers to use supportive languages to help students towards fluent at English.

Teaching Aids (TA)

In the process of identifying the ways in which LST works in schools where teachers who attended the training on language supportive model, teaching aids were discovered during an interview with respondents. One of the respondents was recorded saying that;

"After returning to school where I teach, I have been teaching form one for more than two (2) years now, I put LST in practical through the use of Images that support interpretation of English texts, it makes easier for form one students to understand English texts"

This respondent meant that teaching aids can be supportive to students to understand what English texts mean. Teachers were encouraged by the respondents to use relevant teaching aids in classroom.

The Use of Students' Thinking Language (USTL)

Students' thinking language was among the ways in which teachers use as a way of implementing the use of techniques derived from LST program. In the process of collecting information or data through interview, one respondent said that;

"Allowing the usage of Kiswahili mixed with broken English and Kiswahili mixed with a local language help student to manage to participate in group discussions by using their own thinking language."

This respondent wanted to tell the education specialists that the permission of using broken English and Kiswahili mixed with their local language helps students to build confidence at English language in secondary schools especially form one students. These findings are in line with what Kibui and Athiemoolam (2012) found that most of the students do not practice English after school hours. They mostly use lingua franca at home which is either Kiswahili or the vernacular (i.e Gikuyu, Kalenjin, Luhya, and Kikamba). When students are playing with their friends out of their homes, they speak Pidgin English called sheng. They mix English, Kiswahili and other local languages.

Contributions of LST to the Transition from Kiswahili to English Language Medium of Instruction

The third objective of the current research study aimed at exploring the contributions of LST to the transition from Kiswahili to English language medium of instruction. After thematic analysis of the quotations from the respondents, the following were the main themes identified from the interview quotations; improved students' vocabularies, improved students' reading in English language, improved students' writing in English language, helped teacher's new ways of supporting the mastery of subject content language, and helped to engage students in learning process. These themes are discussed below;

Improved Students' vocabulary (ISV)

During exploration of the contribution of LST to the transition from Kiswahili to English language medium of instruction, respondents gave different views during an interview. The exploration was done to student-teachers who are teaching in secondary schools. For example, the first respondent said that;

"English language is built on vocabularies, most students fail to understand the vocabularies because of poor background, the LST through teachers have brought big change among students, for example English-Swahili translation has helped students to improve their vocabularies."

The findings are supported by the study of Chivhanga and Chimhenga (2013) who found that the reasons for poor performance in English language includes lack of English foundation background, students' lack of confidence in speaking English, poor motivation to students, unsupportive curriculum which does not help the learners to improve their English proficiency, and ineffective teaching.

Knowing other subjects like physics in English was noted to be a challenge to most students even after having been oriented through LST textbook. However, there was a notable improvement for most students although the accuracy in English remains a great challenge. English being a challenge is not unique to students but also to most teachers who demonstrated poor English proficiency in the entire period of LST pedagogy implementation. Most of the students could not use English when working in groups or pairs as long as the LST textbook offers a wide choice of the language to be used. This implies that most of the students opted for Kiswahili as their most powerful tool for discussing subject matters and negotiating meaning. It could be concluded that most of the students gained confidence and interest in subjects notably having used LST material which proved to be user-friendly because of its shorter and unambiguous sentences and glossaries and because it gave the learners an option to use Kiswahili in the teaching and learning process

Improved Students' Reading in English Language

This was another contribution of LST to the translation from Kiswahili to English language medium of instruction. The respondents said that teachers who attended the language supportive training in Morogoro have contributed much on the improvement of students' reading ability and therefore, most form one students have benefited from LST. In connection to this view, one of the respondents said that;

> *"When students join form one in my school have been faced by problems in reading English words. So, when they get directed how to read English words by using Kiswahili, it has brought improvement to students."*

Improved Students' Writing in English Language

Language supportive training conducted at Morogoro teachers' college was identified as one of the best trainings programs to occur in Tanzania. The respondents said that the use of two languages

in helping form one student to understand English language have great impact on students' writing skills. Before the introduction of language supportive training program, most teachers were stressing to use English language to instruct students on how to writing English words. This brought difficulties in providing instruction because students are always unfamiliar with English language. Respondent TT2 said that;

"Teachers who attended LST have helped students to improve writing skills in English language. Previously things were worse because students were not familiar with the language of instruction particularly in their first days at secondary schools."

Helped Teachers New Ways of Supporting the Mastery of Subject Content Language

It was noted during an interview that some teachers in secondary schools have little ability in mastering their subject matter content language, this is because English language is not truly understood to the fullest among them. They have the knowledge to transmit to students but sometimes they fail to do so because of the language. Language supportive training program was identified as among the tools that has helped teachers to master effectively their subject contents. In a conversation with a respondent during an interview, respondent said that;

> *"Some of teachers have been facing difficulties in mastering their subject matters because of language barrier, so the use of Kiswahili in clarification of different English terms"*

The extracted theme on the incompetent teachers due to problems in the language of instruction is in line with what Soakpa (2015) who noted that among the factors that influenced poor teaching and students' poor performance in Congo was misconception of English subject as being difficult. Both students and communities in which they live perceived English as the subject designed for a

certain group of people based on gender(men) or intelligence because of the line of professions it leads into, home backgrounds, undesirable teaching approaches, and availability of teaching and learning materials.

Helped to Engage Students in Learning Process

This was the last theme to be identified from the quotation of the last respondent concerning the contribution of language supportive training conducted at Morogoro Teachers' College in Morogoro. The last respondent said that in most secondary schools form one students are left behind during the learning process in the classroom due to unfamiliarity with English language. Language supportive training offered to teachers insists teachers to use the first language of students to explain or stress English words. This has allowed many students to be part of learning process in the classroom. A respondent said that;

> *"Since many students join secondary education with poor English language background they are always left behind during learning in classrooms. LST has cultivated teachers to help students to be part of learning through the use of the first language to stress the second language terms and phrases"*

These studies are in line with what Habumulemyi (2010) said that Mother tongue and Language of Instruction (LOI) in which a child learns is like a seed and plant whose growth and production depend on each other; and this should be taken into account by any bilingual country.

Challenges which Experience after making the Transition between Primary and Secondary Schools.

The evidence presented here confirms that transition to secondary school in Tanzania presents a challenge not only for students but also for their teachers. One interpretation of the data is straightforward: students received an insufficient

grounding in the English language in their primary schools, creating the inevitability of problems when faced with English-medium teaching in secondary schools. It would be absurd to underestimate the extent of this challenge. One of the respondents reported that;

> *"Nevertheless, a closer look suggests that the problems both for teachers and for pupils are more complex in the issue English language use when teaching."*

If so, the solutions will also be more complex than simply changing to Kiswahili-medium teaching in secondary schools. That may well be desirable but is a matter for national policy. Our argument here is that, even if Kiswahili-medium teaching was to be adopted nationally, achieving successful transition to secondary school would remain a major challenge.

The respondents claimed to like their school, enjoy their lessons, and help each other. At first sight, this appears inconsistent with the disturbingly high levels of bullying as it was reported. While direct comparisons are not possible owing to variations in the wording of items about bullying in different surveys, the prevalence of bullying is not inconsistent with reports from other countries in Africa (Burton & Leochut, 2013).

Deciding on what is the appropriate language of instruction in Tanzania has been a challenge and has attracted the attention of different stakeholders, particularly professionals and politicians as one of the respondents reported that; *"Currently, English teaching in Tanzania operates under total immersion, the success of which has been negligible."*

Teachers interpret communicative language teaching in terms of exclusive instructional use of the foreign or target language and dishearten students from using their mother tongue. Many schools in Morogoro introduce English campaign rule but it has not achieved the desired results

because it is advocated under hostile conditions. For instance, one of the respondents reported that;

> *The students are given corporal punishment when discovered speaking any other language apart from English particularly in the school compounds. They are also given wooden planks with phrases such as 'I am donkey, I am stupid' etc. to wear around their necks when discovered speaking their ECLs and Kiswahili. It is also common to find phrases such as 'No English No Service' around the school premises to suggest that if a student cannot proficiently express him/herself in English; he/she will not be assisted in any way.*

This concerning makes the student to fear and being not comfortable with the school learning environment and hence the language seems to be not enjoyable to the learners.

The main issue in relation to learning through a second language is the grasp of the language medium. As second language is generally the weaker language of most children, it follows that an inadequate grasp of the language medium is the norm rather than the exception. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that Malaysian children do not have the required competency to use English as an effective language medium and thus face the problem of inadequate grasp of language medium (Campbell, 2013). Many scholars have highlighted the adverse effects of learning through a weaker language. Macnamara (1967) offers detailed insights into this problem as of the respondent reported that:

> *The student's difficulty in following courses in his weaker language might seem at first sight to lie solely in his ignorance of certain words, phrases or syntactic structures. However, there is probably more to it than that. Those of us who read a second language poorly will probably from time to time have experienced difficulty in following the meaning of complex passages in*

> *that language, even though we could have translated each individual word and expression used. This we may have attributed to inadequate grasp of language.*

The impact of learning through a second language among students is even more damaging if it is introduced without due consideration of the need to adapt to its usage as language medium. This will further complicate the problem of inadequate grasp of language medium faced by the students. The introduction of a second language as a language medium should be gradual in nature. As pointed out succinctly by Dabene (1994,), "an educational institution should assign itself to ensure a harmonious transition from the family context to that of the school by trying to reduce the gap separating the two linguistic worlds."

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that most of the students gains confidence and interest in all subjects that use English language in secondary schools if they are allowed to use both local, Kiswahili, and English language during teaching and learning process. Many teachers need to be trained in language supportive issues so that to help the students perform better in all subjects which require the use of language. Language supportive training materials should be prepared abundantly to support teachers in secondary schools. For example, teacher-trainers said that the books designed for language support for students can improve Students' vocabulary, reading, and writing in English, therefore there is a need to prepare those materials for the betterment of students and teachers in general. During language supportive training in Morogoro, objectives were new and challenging to teacher trainers. However, the training helped the teachers to develop new ways of supporting the mastery of subject content language. Given the confidence which the learners had achieved from LST, the learners could understand both English and Swahili instructions whereas it was difficult for

them to interact with the subject matter in English as the sole means of communication.

Hence, this study recommends the use of language supportive pedagogy to enhance the teaching and learning of all subjects at secondary school level in Tanzania. The language supportive training must continue to be offered to teachers to make them more active in secondary school teaching.

Our data confirm that the issue of transformation teaching in English presents both pupils and teachers with a major challenge. Teachers lack the resources and the strategies to address the problems that pupils face. For pupils, bullying by other pupils and what they perceive as excessive punishment by teachers add to the challenge of learning in English. A substantial minority gives up the unequal challenge and stop attending. While peer mentoring has been to shown to have a beneficial impact in Western countries, there have been fewer systematic attempts to evaluate its impact in a low-income country such as Tanzania. We recognise that Western initiatives do not transfer easily to other contexts. Specifically, peer mentoring could be thought to require an approach to pedagogy and interpersonal relations that is firmly grounded in Western education and psychology. We do not believe that to be the case. Throughout Africa, older children still look after their younger siblings. By looking after them, they also teach them and that can be seen as informal peer mentoring. We are suggesting that the long-standing, chronic and complex problem of transition to secondary school in Tanzania could be addressed by a more systematic and structured form of peer mentoring, with benefits for teachers as well as for students.

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