

Pupils' Attitude and English Performance in Primary Schools in Lwengo Sub-County, Lwengo District

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the relationship between pupils' performance in English and their attitudes toward the subject in primary schools. The study had two main objectives: to identify the factors that influence English performance in Lwengo subcounty and to assess the level of pupils' attitudes towards English in the same subcounty. A descriptive survey research design was used, with a study population of 170 respondents and a sample size of 133 participants. The findings revealed that factors such as instructional materials, government policies, and teacher-related factors played a significant role in English performance. Additionally, the study found that positive attitudes towards English were associated with higher levels of performance. The government should prioritize the training of more teachers to accommodate the growing number of students in English classes. District education officers and school administrators should also arrange workshops and refresher courses to enhance teachers' skills in teaching the English language. Furthermore, the government should consider improving teachers' remuneration to ensure sufficient numbers of full-time teachers. Regular school inspections should be conducted to monitor teacher and student attendance. Finally, the school administration should organize debates, seminars, and presentations to enhance the communication skills and competencies of both students and teachers.

Keywords: English language, government, absenteeism, pupils.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, especially in developed countries like the United States of America and Britain, English is defined as applied knowledge and an integral subject that has an impact on our everyday activities. It is also defined as a tool that is important to both individuals and the nation as a whole to survive and meet global economic requirements. [1] This implies that English subjects continue to be the most important subjects, as the world is currently at a stage where its wealth and economic development are highly dependent on an effective communication workforce [2-4]. In developed countries, including Uganda, the poor performance in English subjects and its role is still felt due to the low enrollment rate in the subject from lower levels to institutions of higher learning, at tertiary institutions, and this is a threat to Uganda's development and economy [5, 6]. This observation calls for an investigation into factors that cause poor performance so that efforts to improve the English pass rates in primary schools can be made appropriately [7, 8]. In Uganda's context, the English language was introduced in Uganda in the early 19th century by the British colonial administration. Although the English language is a foreign language in Uganda,

it is the official language of instruction in primary schools. Given the importance of the English language as a subject, it is therefore significant for the learners to demonstrate such ability in the way they are responsible for questions at all levels, yet this seems not to be the reality. The statistics of results from the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEBC), however, reveal that year after year, only 10% of the candidates who write English in the Uganda National Examination Board pass with either credit or distinction. This painful revelation is the motivation for the study. Although departments of English in some schools have introduced pre-English programs to boost the performance of the learners, the performance has only benefited a few of the learners, while the majority have remained poor. It is quite inevitable to appreciate that, over time, graduates have been recruited to teach the subject, but their impact has not yet been felt in causing better performance in the subject. This study, therefore, is designed to assess the tenable reasons for the pitiable performance in English. Although English in primary schools is both a subject and a medium of instruction, its performance, however, has remained wanting as the gap between

proficiency and performance remains wide open. Specifically, in Lwengo Sub-County, Lwengo is a small sub-county with the largest number of residents living in the villages, and as a result, most of the students commute from the villages to the center for their studies. Also, the majority of the populace in the sub-county is uneducated, and as a result, English is spoken on a small scale. This therefore implies that the students have limited exposure to and access to English since the native

languages are largely used. The researcher therefore seeks to find out if this affects the performance of English. Despite the emphasis placed on the English language by all teachers at all levels, the rate of performance in learning and proficiency is still lacking (PLE, 2017, 2018, 2019 results). With this background, the researcher therefore seeks to investigate the causes of such performance in Lwengo sub-county, Lwengo district.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed descriptive survey research design using both qualitative and quantitative. The design was because it helped the study to collect data from different categories at a single point in time. The qualitative was used to elicit opinions and feelings.

Study Population

The study population of 170 respondents was the target population which included parents, teachers, head teachers, and pupils.

Sample size and sampling procedures.

A sample size of 133 respondents participated in the study. The sample size was selected as below using Robert Krejcie & Morgan [9]

Table 1

Category of respondents	Target population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Teachers	20	19	Purposive
Pupils	100	80	Simple random
Headteachers	5	3	Purposive
Parents	45	40	Simple random
Total	170	133	

Source: [5]

Research instruments

Wang et al., [10] define research instruments as instruments with which to collect the necessary information. The data was collected through the use of questionnaires and interview schedules. Questionnaires for head teachers, teachers and standard seven and eight pupils were used to collect data. A questionnaire enabled the researcher to collect information that was easily analyzed.

Validity of data collection instruments

Validity refers to the degree to which a method, a test or a research tool measures what it is supposed to measure. Mohajan [11], instrument validity refers to accuracy and meaningful inferences made based on the results obtained. Expert judgment from the university supervisor was used to assess the extent of the items in the instruments, address the objectives and well as whether the format of the instruments gives the correct impression.

Reliability of data collection instruments

Mugenda and Mugenda [12] define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research

instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated tests when administered several times. Pretesting aims to gauge the clarity and relevance of the instruments. The test-retest technique was used to test the consistency of the instrument.

Data collection procedures

Permission was obtained from the selected schools (letters attached) and with clearance from the University. The first letter was presented to the school administrators to ease access to the respondents. The researcher further explained the purpose of the study, created rapport and assured the respondents of the confidentiality of their identities and there after questionnaires were handed to individuals within the sampled schools.

Data analysis techniques

The data obtained was edited first to identify the errors made by the respondents. The data collected was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistic technique and presented in frequency distribution tables and percentages. Qualitative data

was analyzed and interpreted by organizing data into themes or topics guided by the objectives of this study and then establishing the relationship among these themes or topics.

assured that the information given was treated with confidentiality and their identities were not abused. The informed consent form was requested from all the participants who agreed to participate.

Ethical Consideration

The study was conducted ethically. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and

RESULTS

Social demographic characteristics of the respondent's

Both males and females were fairly represented as indicated in the table below. This was derived from 70 respondents who participated in the study.

Table 2: Sex composition of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentages%
Males	65	46.6
Females	68	53.4
Total	133	100

Source: primary data, 2021

The above table shows that 46.6% of the respondents were males and only 53.4% were females. This implies that the study was gender sensitive in choosing the respondents.

Table 3: Age bracket of the respondents

Only adults were considered during the study as tabulated below

Age ranges	Frequency	Percentages%
11-17 years	80	60.2
18-40 years	45	33.8
41-50 years	08	6.0
Total	133	100

Source: Primary data, 2021

The above table indicates that respondents between 11-17 years formed 60.2%, 33.8% of the respondents were between 18-40 years, and 6% were between 41-

50 years. This implies that the youth and adults tend to engage in learning and teaching activities more than the aged population.

The factors influence English performance as administered to teachers, pupils and parents.

Table 4: Showing Factors contributing to English performance as administered to teachers, pupils and parents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Availability of English Instructional materials	50	37.6
Government underfunding	32	24
Limited parental support especially illiterate parents	50	37.6
Influence of mother tongue language in English learning	24	18
Teachers cordial relationship between the teachers and learners.	65	48.9
Self-confidence.	57	42.9
Teachers' ability to interpret and use English Instructional materials	50	37.6
Teachers absenteeism	56	42.1
Teachers teaching and communication skills	44	33.1

Source: Primary data 2021

From the table above, respondents reacted towards general factors influencing the performance of the English language. Responses were; Availability of English Instructional materials 37.6%, Government under funding 24 %, Limited parental support especially illiterate parents 37.6%, and the Influence of mother tongue language in English learning 18%. From the table above, respondents reacted to

teacher-centered factors responsible for performance in English; responses were tabulated as follows Teachers cordial relationship between the teachers and learners 48.9%, Self-confidence 42.9%, Teachers' ability to interpret and use English Instructional materials 37.6%, Teachers absenteeism 42.1% and Teachers teaching and communication skills 33.1%.

Pupils attitude and performance in English Language
Table 5: Pupils attitude and performance in English Language

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor perception towards English teachers	67	50.4
Poor perception towards English being a foreign language	70	52.6
Poor perception towards English being a subject and a medium of communication.	58	43.6

Source: Primary data 2021

From the table above, respondents reacted to pupils' attitudes towards English language performance; responses were tabulated as follows, Poor perception towards English teachers 50.4%, Poor

perception towards English being a foreign language 52.6%, Poor perception towards English being a subject and a medium of communication 43.6%.

DISCUSSION

The major obstacle to assisting students to pass national examinations in English was noted to be a lack of qualified personnel. The findings reveal that some teachers do not have the necessary qualifications required to address the students' English difficulties, especially in literary work. This is especially true for untrained graduates who, at times, shy away from teaching difficult aspects of English. This fact is also backed and observed by Igboanugu [13], who says that lack of experience on the part of teachers may result from untrained teachers who are inexperienced in the methodology and techniques of answering questions. The study also found out that the teachers themselves are a problem in the passing of the learners as they are not committed to their call of duty since they par time to earn extra coins. Deocampo [14] observed that poor performance is a result of teachers not being dedicated to their duties. Some are traders, while others are drunkards who devote most of their time to drinking. As a result, they give students homework or assignments that they never mark or correct. This demonstrates the students' mastery of the subject content. It was noted from the findings that school administrators were another contributor to poor performance. This was shown by the non-commitment of the principal to equip the school library as well as stock enough course books for use. Blumberg and Meredydd [15] reported that the administration should provide an administrative relationship in which each party can count on the other to meet the expectations of each other. Skehan [16] noted that facilities are crucial in learning languages. Facilities like libraries are important components of learning English. They provide the basis for reading, and this is where reading material is kept. A school without a library lacks a vital organ. The researcher concurs with this. Findings noted that the influence of the mother tongue and it's being a medium of communication (instruction) in primary schools where these students were before and current teachers getting out of their ways to use vernacular to teach, explain, and interact hurt performance. Ozoemena [17] and Nyika [18] confirmed the same. Study findings revealed that the

methodology used by most teachers was not student-friendly. Methodologies such as teacher-centered approaches hinder learners and students from achieving desired results. Abdalrahman [19] observed that to develop writing skills, students should be encouraged to write compositions, short stories, poems, dialogues, etc. This was blamed by teachers on the over-enrolment of classes that do not favor teachers using student-centered approaches. Further, the study findings attested that the curriculum of secondary education was overloaded with students forced to study over 12 (twelve) subjects that spared them little time to take a keen interest in studying English and required them to read several setbacks that they found punitive. The study findings revealed that students' attitudes towards language learning also lead to students' performance. If a student has a positive attitude towards the subject, then there will be smoother learning than when the student's attitude is negative. Littlewood [20] and Mazana [21] had the same view on this. Also, the study findings revealed that a lack of communication competence by the teacher and the students is a big threat and leads to students' poor performance. Therefore, the teacher should be knowledgeable and able to communicate easily in class using the English language, because this will make students desire to take an example from their teacher. Sarkar et al. [22] observed that to teach is to communicate. English teachers must have maximum communicative competence. Findings noted that motivation is the most important and used concept for explaining the failure or success of a learner. For instance, Gardner (2006) reported that "students with high levels of motivation will do better than students with low levels." He further added that "if one is motivated, he or she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities. Furthermore, study findings revealed that students have a lot of personal problems, including income and family, among others, which leads them to failure. Therefore, teachers have to give proper guidance and counseling to the students to attain success. Salgon et al. [23] confirmed the same.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that there is a big shortage of qualified personnel, as a greater percentage of teachers are untrained graduates who do not have enough skills or knowledge to teach a demanding subject like English. Further study findings revealed

that the medium of instruction (communication) in both teaching and interaction was in catchment languages (vernacular), which limited students to exposing themselves to competency in English. Other serious revelations from the study findings

were blamed on poor methodologies applied by teachers not being student-friendly, such as teacher-centered approaches that left students within the yoke of the teacher. The study was also able to establish that the secondary school curriculum was congested while the time allotted for a lesson was not sufficient as the year ended without completing the syllabus, which is derived from the curriculum. The study also revealed that a lack of motivation from teachers was a big threat, as demotivated students could not learn effectively. The study showed that a lack of communicative competence by the leader and the students led to poor performance

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should ensure that enough teachers are trained to manage the swelling numbers of students in English classes. There is a great need for district education officers and school administrators to organize and send teachers for workshops and refresher courses to reinforce the teachers' skills and expertise in handling the English language. The government is tasked with looking into the remuneration of teachers so that they are paid better to regulate the number of teachers who work part-

in expressing themselves using the English language. The study also revealed that there is no proper guidance and counseling in schools by the teachers, which is a great threat to students because students have their own problems, family problems, and other problems related to learning, and this hinders them from attaining success if they are not guided. Other study findings revealed that students' attitudes toward studying the English language are also an obstacle to their success. If a student has a positive attitude, then it means that this student will pass higher than that of someone who has a negative attitude.

time. The inspection of schools should be regularized to monitor teachers' and students' absenteeism. The school administration should organize debates, seminars, and presentations for both students and teachers to improve the communication skills and competencies of both the learners and the teacher. Teachers of English and other teachers in schools should strive at all costs to use formal media of instruction to encourage interaction in schools.

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