

Demographic Factors and Second Language Learning: What Motivates Children to Learn Another Language in the South of the Sahara?

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ABSTRACT

Research shows that attitude and motivation are the primary impetus towards second language (L2) learning. However, there are differences among learners regarding their attitude and motivation towards the target language as learners' backgrounds are diverse. This article explains how demographic factors affect children's attitudes and motivation towards English in the South of the Sahara, drawing from case study research conducted in Zanzibar-Tanzania. The Attitude-Motivation Battery tool by Gardner (2004) was used to generate data from 400 Grade Six pupils in Zanzibar. Data were analysed through SPSS, version 26, to develop correlations between variables; i.e., age, sex, parents' support, area of residence and parents' occupation. The study revealed that most pupils had an affirmative attitude towards English. There is a significant relationship between pupils' attitudes and parents' support (0.001), area of residence (0.001) and pupils' attitudes. Also, there is a significant relationship between pupils' motivation and area of residence (0.001) and parents' support (0.001). Children's motivation to learn English is more instrumentally triggered than intrinsic. Other factors like age and parents' occupation did not affect pupil's attitudes and motivation towards English. Therefore, language policies and the curriculum should be developed based on children's aspirations. Also, L2 scaffolds should be designed based on learners' diversities in resources and geographical backgrounds.

Keywords: Second language learning, South of the Sahara, demographic factors, attitude, motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, there has been intensive research on teaching and learning a second language (L2) in the South of Sahara (for example, see Sane, 2022; Rubagumya et al., 2021; Malekela, 2010; Qorro, 2006; Swila, 2009; Ismail, 2007; Block-Utne, 2003). However, most of the studies have focused on policies, pedagogy, and resources while extralinguistic factors, particularly attitude and motivation, have not undergone prolific research. This might have affected the policies, pedagogy, and resources to strengthen the teaching and learning a second language in the region. This article explains what motivates learners to learn a second language in the South of the Sahara using a case study of the Zanzibar Islands. The Government of Zanzibar¹ introduced a new system of Education in 2006 to introduce early immersion in upper primary education; i.e., Grade Five and Six. As such, the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) switched from Kiswahili to English for Mathematics, Science, Geography, and ICT in upper primary education (Swila, 2009 & MoEVTZ, 2006).

The current Education and Training Policy of Zanzibar states that “Kiswahili shall continue as the medium instruction in the public pre-primary and primary schools, except for Mathematics and science subjects beginning in Primary Five where English shall be used” (MoEVTZ, 2006, p. 36). This early immersion is meant to produce learners who can use English in different communicative contexts, including learning through English in secondary education. While the policymakers aspire to develop nationals who can communicate in English; English proficiency has been on thin ice (Maalim, 2015 & MoEVTZ, 2006; Ismail, 2007). The situation worsens even after introducing English as the LoLT in upper primary education. It requires research to explain whether the observed limited proficiency in English is propagated by attitudes and motivation toward the language. This is important to help the Government implement the education policy as it is understood; i.e., English is the medium of instruction for post-primary schools and required for commerce and tourism

¹ Zanzibar is an autonomous part of the United Republic of Tanzania. It comprises of two Islands, namely Pemba and Unguja.

in Zanzibar (MoEVTZ, 2006). The term attitude is generally a hypothetical psychological construct, which defines or promotes certain behaviour and explains their directions and persistence. It is a convenient and efficient way of explaining patterns in behaviour (Baker, 1992). On the other hand, motivation refers to a set of beliefs and expectations which trigger interest in learning a language, e.g., employment and academic excellence (Pawlak, 2012; Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011; Pourfeiz, 2016; Ushida, 2005). Therefore, research to understand learners' psychological construct and motivation towards a language would inform interventions on observed limited language proficiency. Learners with positive beliefs about a language tend to develop a positive attitude toward learning the language whereas negative beliefs would lead to class anxiety, low cognitive achievement, and negative attitude (Yang, 1999; Victoria & Lockhart, 1995). The research available shows that many language policies do not explore and develop from communities' interests in the planned languages (Rubagumya, 1990 & Qorro, 2006). This article partly addresses the gap by informing the learners' interest in learning a second language drawing from the experience of learning English in Zanzibar.

Methodology

This study used a case study design to generate quantitative data through a questionnaire survey that was distributed to 400 Standard Six pupils in Unguja and Pemba Islands of Zanzibar. Zanzibar was taken as a case study because English was introduced as the LoLT for some subjects in upper primary schools in 2006 with the intent to strengthen English proficiency among pupils. The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery by Gardner (2004) was used to assess pupils' attitudes and motivation in Zanzibar. The tool was translated into Kiswahili for learners to comprehend it easily. Thus, pupils responded to 116 questions on attitudes and motivation. The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery is a standardized tool that has been used in research conducted in various countries on attitudes and motivation toward language learning, including Brazil, Croatia, Japan, Poland, Romania and Spain (Gardner, 2004). Purposive sampling was used to select four districts from the Islands; two districts from each Island, as well as the schools to include in the study. As such, the study picked one good-

performing and one poor-performing district from each region. The four districts are Kati District, Mjini District, Micheweni District and Chake Chake District. Then, one poor-performing school and one better-performing school were selected from each district (the schools are anonymised as schools A to H). Where a school had more than one Grade Six stream, one stream was randomly selected from each school. Usually, primary school classrooms in Zanzibar have an average of 45-50 pupils in one stream. Having obtained signed consent from the head teacher, all pupils present in the selected stream on the day of the visit were asked to fill out the questionnaires. Data were analysed through SPSS, version 26, to develop correlations between variables; i.e., age, sex, parents' support, area of residence and occupation. Pearson's correlation analysis model was employed to establish a linear relationship of variables with pupils' attitudes and motivation.

Results

Pupils' Attitude towards English in Zanzibar Public Primary Schools

The findings revealed that the majority of the pupils in Zanzibar public primary schools (80.5%) had a positive attitude towards English while the rest (19.5%) had a negative attitude. Figure 1 summarizes the attitudes among the pupils.

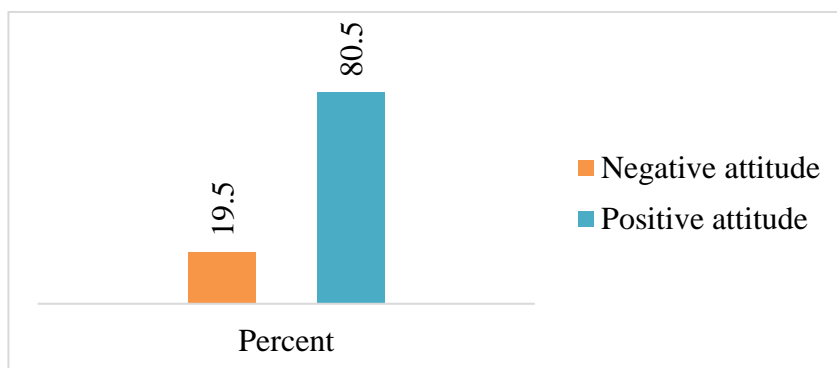


Figure 1: Pupils' Attitudes towards English in Zanzibar primary Schools (N=400)

Pupils' Attitudes and Area of Residence

The majority of pupils from Kusini Pemba (92.1%) and Mjini Magharibi (88.3%) had a positive attitude towards English while 11.7% and 7.9% respectively had a negative attitude towards the English language. Correlation analysis revealed that there are some differences among pupils regarding their attitude towards English based on the pupils' area of residence ($P>0.001$) and parents' support ($P>0.001$). On the other hand, there is no significant ($P>0.80$) relationship between fathers' employment and mothers' employment ($P>0.41$) and pupils' attitudes (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Pupils' Attitudes and Area of Residence (N=400)

	Pupils' attitudes		Total	Chi-square	P-value
	Negative attitudes	Positive attitudes			
Region's name					
Kusini Unguja	29(29.6%)	69(70.4%)	98	25.39	<0.001
Mjini Magharibi	12(11.7%)	91(88.3%)	103		
Kaskazini Pemba	29(29.6%)	69(70.4%)	98		
Kusini Pemba	8(7.9%)	93(92.1%)	101		

Table 2: Pupils' Attitudes and Parents' Occupation (N=400)

	Pupils' attitudes		Total	Chi-square	P-value
	Negative attitude	Positive Attitude			
Father's occupation					
Employed	48(19.9%)	193(80.1%)	241	0.07	0.80
Unemployed	30(18.9%)	129(81.1%)	159		
Mother's occupation					
Employed	46(18.3%)	206(81.7%)	252	0.67	0.41
Unemployed	32(21.6%)	116(78.4%)	148		

Pupils' Motivation towards Learning English in Zanzibar Public Primary Schools

In establishing pupils' motivation, the analysis was based on items 7, 8, 15, 17, 28, 35, 59 and 72, 79 of the Attitude and Motivation Battery Test. Variable principal component analysis was employed in the items from the checklist to measure pupils' motivation toward English. Likert scale questions were extracted into different components. The variables that had more representatives were rotated into the first component and the average mean was computed to establish pupils' motivation for the continuous variable. Then, the average of the motivation for the continuous variable was computed and used for the categorization of the mean below (Low motivation) and the mean above (High motivation). The analysis revealed that most pupils (59.0%) had high motivation towards learning English in Zanzibar public primary schools. Pupils believed, for example, English would be useful in getting a job, being more educated and career. For them, it would be a great loss to study English if Zanzibar had no contact with English-speaking countries.

Table 3: Pupils' Motivation towards Learning English in Zanzibar (N=400)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Pupils 'motivation		
Low motivation	164	41.0
high motivation	236	59.0

Further analysis revealed that pupils' motivation towards English also varied depending on the areas of residence. The areas which were revealed to have high motivation among the pupils are Mjini Magharibi 72 (30.5%) and Kusini Pemba 73 (30.9%). Pupils in other regions, Kusini Unguja 66(40.2%) and Kaskazini Pemba 39(23.8%), had low motivation compared to the former.

Table 4: Pupils' Area of Residence and their Motivation to Learn English (N=400)

Pupils 'Motivation	Region Name				Total
	Kusini Unguja	Mjini Magharibi	Kaskazini Pemba	Kusini Pemba	
Low motivation	66(40.2%)	31(18.9%)	39(23.8%)	28(17.1%)	164
High motivation	32(13.6%)	72(30.5%)	59(25.0%)	73(30.9%)	236

Correlation analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between pupils' motivation and area of residence ($P < 0.001$) and parents' support ($P < 0.001$).

Table 5: Pupils' Demographic Characteristics against their Motivation (N=400)

Variables	Pupils' motivation
School	$r = 0.48, P < 0.001$
Region	$r = 0.30, P < 0.001$
Age	$r = -0.123, P = 0.014$
Parents' support	$r = 0.732, P < 0.001$

With regards to the parents' support, most pupils pointed out that their parents find that it is important for them to learn English and are very interested in everything they do in English.

Discussions

The analysis revealed that most of the pupils in Zanzibar have an affirmative attitude towards English. What may count as a difference between learners 'positive attitude in Zanzibar and the learners from developed countries is the motivation to learn English. While the learners in developed countries learn a second (i.e., English and French) for enhanced skills and networking (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997), learners in Zanzibar primary schools have a high level of instrumental motivation goals. For the learners in Zanzibar, English is a strategic instrument to excel with further studies and get employment for personal and family development. However, this situation in Zanzibar is not exceptional, a high

level of instrumental motivational goals is also demonstrated by second language learners in other developing countries (Hashwani, 2008; Sengkey & Galag, 2018). Pupils' attitudes towards English language in Zanzibar revealed a lot of diversities depending on the areas of residence and parents' support for the pupils. There were more pupils from Mjini Magharibi and Kusini Pemba who had an affirmative attitude towards English compared to the rest of the regions. This could be because the two regions, i.e., Mjini Unguja and Chake Chake Pemba are urbanised than their counterparts. The affirmative influence comes from contacts with English language speakers (mostly tourists) and exposure to opportunities that English offer. For example, there are hotels, tourism activities, and other places where English is used. Only a minority of pupils had a negative attitude towards English language.

This, however, should not be ignored. Their negative attitude could be attributed to unfavourable conditions like poor pedagogy, resources, support, and exposure that those pupils in urban are favoured by. Other factors like the structure of the language and orthography could also explain the reason for their negative attitude. For example, the pupils who speak Kimakunduchi – the Southern dialect, and Kitumbatu – the Northern dialect, have more burden in learning the English language compared to others. Thus, some of them may have a negative attitude towards the language because they are already struggling to learn the 'standard Kiswahili' which has some features which are distinct from their dialects (Furumoto & Gibson, 2022; Miyazaki & Takemura, 2019). Thus, pupils in primary school have a dual task; i.e., to learn 'standard Kiswahili' and English simultaneously. This case is similar to the challenge faced by the Maasai students in Tanzania where pupils' learning of English is thwarted by the dual task to learners; i.e., learning Kiswahili which has features different from the Maa language and English language simultaneously (Sane, 2022).

Conclusion

With respect to the results obtained in this study, it is concluded that pupils have a positive attitude towards English in Zanzibar primary schools.

Pupils' instrumental motivation; i.e., hope to get job opportunities and excel in higher education, influenced pupils' affirmative attitudes towards English. However, there were variations observed based on pupils' demographic factors. There were more pupils with a positive attitude toward English in urbanised areas than those who resided in up-country. Those who received support from parents tended to have a positive attitude and motivation toward English than their counterparts. These findings inform that the prevailing socio-economic conditions of families in under-resourced areas influence the learning of a second language. On the other hand, the results may be encouraging the policymakers about their decision and objectives to officialize English in Zanzibar as stipulated in the Education and Training Policy (2006).

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