Research Paper

Influence of Learner Attitude on Performance of English Language: A Case of Public Primary Schools in Matuga Sub-County Kenya

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Abstract
Purpose: *The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of learner attitude on the performance of English language, specifically the influence of learner interest in English and learner interest in attaining better results on performance of English language.*

Methodology: *The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study were class 6 and class 7 attending public primary schools Matuga sub-county. Primary data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. Secondary data was collected through review of relevant literature. Descriptive statistics such and ordinal regression analysis were used to test the relationship between learner interest in English language, learner interest for better results and learner performance in English Language.*

Findings: *The study findings showed Matuga sub-county learners who attends public primary schools in either class 6 or class 7 have a high interest in English (83.1%). A significant majority of the learners (80.7%) had some interest in performing better in the English subject. A slight majority of the respondents (51.6%) rated their performance in English as either high or extremely high. A change in the 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English had the highest influence (-0.802 folds) on learner performance when compared to 'Slightly Interested' (0.642 folds) and 'Interested' (0.359 folds). A change in the 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English had the highest influence on learner performance (-0.642 folds) compared to 'Slight Interest' (0.293 folds) and 'Strong Interest' (0.561 folds).*

Conclusions: *The study concludes that the relationship between learner attitude and performance of English is statistically significant for learners attending public primary schools in Matuga sub-county. There is high interest in English and interest for better results by learners.*

Recommendations: *The study recommends that policy makers, training institutions and teachers should develop, implement and sustain policies, measures and activities that encourage the interest of the learners towards learning English subject as well as attaining better results in the subject. These policies, measures and activities should be continuously monitored to ensure that they remain effective in promoting and sustaining the interest of learners in the English language and also in improving future performance in the English subject.*

Keywords: *Learner attitude, Interest in English Subject, Performance in English*

I. INTRODUCTION

Kenya Constitution 2010 identifies English Language as the official language in Article 7 and as one of the official languages to be used in the country's National Assembly in Article 120. The Fourth Schedule in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 mandates the National Government of Kenya the role of determining the language policy and promoting both the official and local languages. The Kenya Basic Education Curriculum Framework (2019), directs that after two years of pre-primary education, students should to be taught the foundational skills of reading and writing the English language at the earliest opportune time and from grade 4 onward, English should replace the language of the catchment area and become the medium of instruction. As a medium of instructions, all subjects except for Kiswahili, French and German are taught in English. These policy guidelines demonstrate the critical role that proficiency in the English language plays not only in the school system but later in the job market.

In Kenyan primary schools, proficiency in English is usually demonstrated through performance in English examinations that are administered at institutional, zonal, regional and national levels. Performance in English by learners in public primary schools in Matuga sub-county has continued to be low. Various studies have been undertaken on factors that determine the performance of English in schools. These studies have proposed a number factors that influence performance of English Language. These factors fall into a number of categories such as; learners' attitudes, instructional techniques, instructional materials, evaluation techniques and home environment (Nabea (2009, Souriyawongsa (2013), Mwango (1998), Barasa (2005), Boissiere (2004) and Petrides (2006). Despite the numerous studies that have been carried out, the extent to which various factors influence performance of English language in public primary schools have not been widely undertaken.

1.1 Problem Statement

The Fourth Schedule in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 mandates the National Government of Kenya to determine the language policy and promote both the official and local languages. In line with this mandate the National government has implemented a number of measures geared towards enhancing performance of English in schools. The government measures have included: development and provision of standardized curriculum and training materials, deployment of trained English teachers, continuous teacher development programs, and administration of standardized examinations. These interventions are implemented together with institutional and other stakeholder led interventions such as motivational programs by parents and school's management committees. Despite these interventions performance in English by learners in public primary schools in Matuga sub-county has continued be low. Interventions geared towards enhancing performance of English can only be effective if policy makers and other actors understood the direction and extent to which various factors affected the final results.

Learner attitude has been identified in various studies as a key determinant of performance of English in public primary schools. This study sought to identify the influence of learner attitude on the performance of English in public primary schools in Matuga sub-county.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to analyze the influence of learner attitude on the performance of English language. The study specifically analyzed the influence of learner interest in English and learner interest in attaining better results on performance of English language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review.
2.1.1 Interactionist Theory

Social Interactionist Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction between the developing child (learner) and linguistically knowledgeable adults like teachers. This theory bases largely on the socio-cultural theories of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, and was emphasized or reinforced by Bruner (Gass,2002). It lays emphasizes on the role of feedback from learners and reinforcement in acquiring language. The teachers' attitude towards English as a subject will determine the level of interactions. It asserts that much of a child's ability to undertake linguistic growth basically stems from the modelling of and interaction with mainly parents and other adults like teachers, who very frequently, are bestowed with the responsibility of providing instructive correction. Teachers with less interest in the subject will interact less with learners which through modelling affect the interest of the learners and by extension affect learner performance in the language.

2.2.4 Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is a cognitive theory of motivation based on the assumption that individuals naturally want to explain why events occur, especially when these are important to them, such as grades in school end of term test; or events that are unexpected such as when one fails an easy test or succeeds against many odds (Weiner, 1992). The theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this reaalates to their thinking and behaviour. This theory is helpful in the exploration of the thoughts that accompany learners' performance at school. Attribution theory focuses on the factors that individuals give to explain their behaviour or performance in certain tasks. The theory seeks to answer the 'why?' question that individuals usually ask following events. Weiner (2005) posits that learners undertake an attributional search, trying to understand what happened. The perceived cause of the event is important regardless of any objective explanation because whatever learners perceive (luck, effort, etc.) as being the cause of the event will affect their future motivation toward engagement with similar tasks. For example, learners' decision regarding whether to enroll or put extra effort in English courses in the future may be partially determined by their attributions for successes or failures on previous English examinations.

2.2 Empirical Review

Various studies have been undertaken on factors that determine the performance of English in schools. These studies have proposed a number factors that influence performance of English Language. These factors fall into a number of categories such as; learners' attitudes, instructional techniques, instructional materials, evaluation techniques and home environment (Nabea (2009, Souriyawongsa (2013), Mwango (1998),). Fink (2005) findings of a study undertaken in Nairobi indicated that the preference of English among the youths was consistently stronger than the preference of mother tongue, Kiswahili or Sheng. The study further noted that learners had different beliefs about the nature of the English language which to a large extent influenced their performance. Yeya (2002) had similar views that many teachers, learners and parents had a negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of some subjects. Some learners had a belief that English is much more difficult to learn than other languages while others had a belief that the most difficult part of learning English is learning Grammar, yet others had a belief that English is the world's most important language. It is apparent from these beliefs that the learners' achievement of low or high grades would be determined by their own belief about the language that they are learning. If they, for example, believed that English is the most difficult language to learn, they may be discouraged from working hard thus ending up with low grades. The present study aimed at establishing learners' attitude towards English in public primary schools in Matuga Sub-County and also establish whether learners' attitude toward English had any influence in performance in English.

2.3 Research Gap

Various stakeholders in the education sector have implemented numerous interventions to enhance performance of English. Performance of English by public primary schools in Matuga sub-county remains low. A number of studies have been carried out that have established the determinants of performance in English. No study has been carried out to determine the statistical significance of the relationship between the attitude of the learner towards the English language and performance among learners in public primary schools in Matuga sub-county. Specifically, this study assessed the statistical significance of the relationship between learner interest in English, learner interest for better performance and learner performance in English. The study analyzed the collected data using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study utilized the survey research design. It involved collecting data through self-administered questionnaires from the study participants. The survey research design was preferred for the study since it has the ability to collect large amounts of data from a diverse population and the ability to analyze the data in a systematic and rigorous way that captures the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of the population (Kothari, 2019).

3.2 Target Population

The target population for the study were class 6 and class 7 attending 80 public primary schools spread across 11 administrative units in Matuga sub-county.

3.2 Sample Design

The study applied a stratified random sampling technique. In each of the 11 administrative units in Matuga subcounty, 30% of the schools were selected. This generated a total of 26 schools out of the 80 public primary schools registered in Matuga sub-county. A simple random selection method was again applied to select 4 learners from each class in every school sampled. These generated a total of 208 respondents for the study.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

Self-administered questionnaires were used for collecting primary data from the respondents. Secondary data was collected through review of available literature.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was examined and checked for completeness and comprehensibility. The data was then summarized, coded, tabulated and analyzed using SPSS version 23. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. Ordinal regression analysis was used to test the statistical relationship between learner interest in English language, learner interest for better results and learner performance in English Language.

IV.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Learner Bio-Data

The respondents provided details of their gender, class of attendance, length of stay in Matuga and the type of school they attended. The results were tabulated in Table 1

Table 1: Learner Bio-Data

Learner Bio-Data		N	Marginal Percentage
Gender	Male	104	54.2%
	Female	88	45.8%
Class Distribution	Class 6	95	49.5%
	Class 7	97	50.5%
Duration of Stay	5 to 10 years	11	5.7%
	10 to 15 years	78	40.6%
	Over 15 years	103	53.6%
School Type	Mixed Day	159	82.8%
	Mixed Day and Boarding	33	17.2%
Valid		192	100.0%

The results in Table 1 indicate that there were more male respondents (54.2%) than female respondents (45.8%). Majority of the respondents (50.5%) were in Class 7 as compared to (49.5%) who were in Class 6. A significant number of the respondents (94.2%) had stayed in Matuga sub-county for more than 10 years suggesting that either the respondents were born in Matuga sub-county or had relocated into the county while still very young. A significant number of respondents (82.8%) attended mixed day primary schools as compared to only (17%) who attended mixed day and boarding primary schools.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Learner Interest in the English Subject

The respondents were required to indicate their level of interest in the English subject. The results are tabulated in Table 2

Table 2: Interest in English Subject

Interest in English Subject		N	Marginal Percentage
Interest in English Subject	Undecided	31	16.1%
	Slightly Interested	49	25.5%
	Interested	82	42.7%
	Extremely Interested	30	15.6%
Valid		192	100.0%

The results in Table 2 indicate that majority of the respondents (83.1%) had some interest in English that ranged from slight interest to extreme interest. A notable number of respondents (16.1%) were undecided on where they had any interest in English.

4.2.2 Interest for Better Results in English

The respondents were required to indicate their level of interest in enhancing their performance in English. The results are tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Interest for Better Results in English

Interest for Better Results in English		N	Marginal Percentage
Interest for Better Results in English	No Interest	37	19.3%
	Slight Interest	35	18.2%
	Strong Interest	92	47.9%
	Very Strong Interest	28	14.6%
Valid		192	100.0%

The results in Table 3 indicate that majority of the respondents (80.7%) had some interest in performing better in the English subject. A notable number of respondents (19.3%) reported no interest in attaining better results in English.

4.2.3 Learners Performance in English
The respondents were required to rate their performance in the English subject. The results are tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4: Learners Performance in English

Learners Performance in English

		N	Marginal Percentage
Learners Performance in English	Very Low	33	17.2%
	Low	60	31.3%
	High	80	41.7%
	Extremely High	19	9.9%
Valid		192	100.0%

The results in Table 4 indicate that a slight majority of the respondents (51.6%) rated their performance in English as either high or extremely high. A significant number of respondents (48.4%) rated their performance in the subject either as low or very low.

4.3 Inferential Analysis
The study applied ordinal logical regression to analyze the relationship between learner interest in English, their interest for better results in English and their performance of the English subject.
Ordinal Regression
Diagnostic Test
Model Test Statistically
The model was examined for fitness. The following hypotheses were tested for the model fitness.
Ho=The Model is Not Statistically Significant
H1=The Fitted Model is Statistically Significant.
The Results is presented in Table 5.

Table 1: Model Fitting Information

Model Fitting Information Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	379.399			
Final	.000	379.399	6	.001

From the results in Table 5 the difference between the intercept only and final model is significant (0.01) since it is less that standard value (0.05). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected hence the model is Statistically significant. The model is therefore good for analysis as it adequately describes the data. Furthermore, the model goodness of fit was examined using the Goodness of Fit test. For the model goodness of fit the following Hypothesis tested were
Ho=The Fitted Model is fit
H1=The Fitted is Model is Not Fit

Table 6: Goodness of Fit

Goodness of Fit	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	.033	12	1.000
Deviance	.066	12	1.000

From the results in Table 6, the significance level in both Pearson and Deviance Test were compared with the standard value (0.005). The Null hypothesis is rejected if the p-value is less than the standard value (0.05) for both the test. From the results in Table 6 the p-values for both the Pearson and Deviance tests were not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis in not rejected hence the model is fit for analysis. This result shows that the right statistical analysis was applied in the study since there is no significant difference between the observed data and the fitted model.

4.6 Learner Attitude and Performance of English Subject

An ordinal regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between learner attitude and performance of English subject. Learner interest in English and their interest for better results in English represented the independent variables while their performance in English represented the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Learner Attitude and Performance of English Subject

Learner Attitude and Performance of English Subject

		Estimate	Odds Ratio	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[StudentPerformance = 1]	-29.68	-1.466	20.249	2.148	1	0.143	-69.367	10.008
	[StudentPerformance = 2]	12.664	0.945	13.401	0.893	1	0.345	13.602	38.929
	[StudentPerformance = 3]	0.747	1.844	0.405	3.41	1	0.065	0.046	1.54
Location	[InterestinEnglishSubject=1]	-24.65	-0.802	30.717	0.644	1	0.422	-35.555	84.854
	[InterestinEnglishSubject=2]	14.447	0.641	22.528	0.411	1	0.521	29.707	58.601
	[InterestinEnglishSubject=3]	4.288	0.359	11.932	0.129	1	0.719	19.097	27.674
	[InterestinEnglishSubject=4]	0[a]		.	.	0	.	.	.
	[InterestforBetterResults=1]	-14.54	-0.642	22.646	0.412	1	0.521	-29.846	58.926
	[InterestforBetterResults=2]	6.706	0.293	22.871	0.086	1	0.769	38.121	51.533
	[InterestforBetterResults=3]	6.706	0.561	11.939	0.315	1	0.574	16.694	30.106
	[InterestforBetterResults=4]	0[a]		.	.	0	.	.	

The result in Table 7 is interpreted as a linear regression examining the sign of the estimates. A positive sign suggests a likelihood of a positive impact on the dependent variable while a negative sign in the estimates indicated a likely of a negative impact on the dependent variable.

The following hypothesis were examined

Ho1: Learner Interest in English does not Significantly Influence Learner Performance
From the results in table 7, the independent variable 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English was found to contribute to the model (**Estimates= -24.65; Ordered log= -0.802, SE=30.717, Wald=0.046, p=0.422**). The estimated odds ratio indicated a negative relationship of nearly **0.802** folds. For every one unit increase in 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English, learner performance decreases by **0.802** units. The results suggest a negative and statistically significant (**p=0.001<0.422**) relationship between 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English and learner performance in English. In addition, 'Slightly Interested' category of learner interest in English was found to have a positive and statistically significant influence on learner performance (**Estimates= 14.447; Ordered log= 0.641, SE= 22.58, Wald= .411, p=0.521**). The estimated odds ratio indicated a positive relationship of 0.641 folds. This suggest that for every one unit increase in 'Slightly Interested' category of learner interest in English, learner performance increases by 0.641 units. The positive relationship between 'Slightly Interested' category of learner interest in English is statistically significant(**p=0.521>0.05**). Furthermore, 'Interested" category of learner interest in English was found to positively and significantly affect learner performance (**Estimates=4.288; Ordered log=0.359, SE= 11.932, Wald=0.129, p=0.719**). The estimated odds ratio indicated a positive and statistically significant(**p=0.719>0.05**) relationship indicating for every increase in the 'Interested" category of learner interest in English, learner performance increased by 0.0.359 folds. The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between learner interest and learner performance in the subject is rejected. The results also indicated that a unit change in the 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English had the highest influence (-0.802 folds) on learner performance when compared to the other two categories examined (0.642 and 0.359 folds).

Ho2: Learner Interest for Better Results in English does not Significantly Influence Learner Performance
From the results in Table 7, the independent variable 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English was found to contribute to the model (**Estimates= - 14.54; Ordered log= -0.642, SE= 22.646,**

Wald=0.412, p=0.521). The estimate indicated a negative relationship of **0.642** folds. For every one unit increase in 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English, learner performance in English decreases by **0.642** units. The results suggest a negative and statistically significant relationship (**p=0.521>=0.05**) between 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English and learner performance in English. In addition, the 'Slight Interest' category of learner interest for better results English was found to have positive and statistically significant influence on student performance (**Estimates=6.706; Ordered log= 0.293, SE=22.871, Wald=0.086, p=0.769**). The estimated odds ratio indicated a positive relationship of nearly **0.293** folds. This suggest that for every one unit increase in 'Slight Interest' category of learner interest for better results English, learner performance in English increased by **0.293** units. The relationship between Slight Interest' category of learner interest for better results in English and learner performance in English is positive and statistically significant(**p=0.769>0.05**). Furthermore, the 'Strong Interest' category of learner interest for better results in English was found to have positive and statistically significant influence on learner performance in English (**Estimates=6.706; Ordered log=0.561, SE=11.939, Wald=0.315 p=0.574**). The estimated odds ratio indicated a positive relationship of **0.561** folds. This suggest that for every one-unit increase 'Strong Interest' category of learner interest for better results English, learner performance in English increases by **0.561** units. The relationship between 'Strong Interest' category of learner interest for better results in English and learner performance in English is positive and statistically significant(**p=0.574>=0.05**). The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between learner interest for better results in English and learner performance in English is rejected. The results also indicated that 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English had the highest influence on learner performance (-0.642 folds) compared to the other two categories examined (0.293 and 0.561 folds)

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Matuga sub-county learners who attends public primary schools in either class 6 or class 7 are interested in the English subject with a significant majority (83.1%) having interest in English that ranged from slight interest to extreme interest. A notable number of respondents (16.1%) were undecided on whether they had any interest in English. A significant majority of the learners (80.7%) had some interest in performing better in the English subject. A notable number of respondents (19.3%) reported no interest in attaining better results in English. A slight majority of the respondents (51.6%) rated their performance in English as either high or extremely high. A significant number of respondents (48.4%) rated their performance in the subject either as low or very low

The relationship between 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English and learner performance in English is negative and statistically significant. For every one unit increase in 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English, learner performance decreases by 0.802 units. Both the 'Slightly Interested' and 'Interested' categories of learner interest in English have positive and statistically significant relationship on learner performance in English at 0.641 and 0.359 folds respectively. The 'Undecided' category of learner interest in English had the highest influence (-0.802 folds) on learner performance when compared to the other two categories examined (0.642 and 0.359 folds).

The relationship between 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English and learner performance in English is negative and statistically significant. For every one unit increase in 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English, learner performance in English decreases by 0.642 units. Both the 'Slight Interest' and 'Strong Interest' categories of learner interest for better results in English have positive and statistically significant influence on learner performance in English at 0.293 and 0.561 folds respectively. The 'No Interest' category of learner interest for better results English had the highest influence on learner performance (-0.642 folds) compared to the other two categories examined (0.293 and 0.561 folds).

5. 2 Recommendations

The study recommends that, in order to enhance the performance of English by learners attending public primary schools in Matuga sub-county:

1.   Policy makers, training institutions and teachers should develop, implement and sustain policies, measures and activities that encourage the interest of the learners towards learning English subject.

2.   Policy makers, training institutions and teachers should develop, implement and sustain policies, measures and activities that encourage and sustain the interest of the learners in attaining better results in English subject.

3.   There should be continuous monitoring and review of these policies, measures and activities to ensure that they remain effective in promoting and sustaining interest of learners in the English language and also in improving future performance in the English subject.

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