



Students' Perceived Level of English Proficiency in Secondary Schools in Dodoma, Tanzania

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This paper looked at students' perceived level of English proficiency among Dodoma secondary schools in Tanzania. Factors like attitude, anxiety, classroom activities, motivation, and learning resources were considered as influencing English learning. The study was guided by three theories: Input Hypothesis, Inter-language and Vygotsky's theory of value. Correlation design was used to describe the association between the student and teacher-related factors and students' perceived level of English proficiency. Purposive sampling was used to select 300 form three students. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the participants. Reliability of the research instrument was determined by conducting a pilot study. Pearson Descriptive statistics and Kendall's Tau-b were used to analyze the data. The study revealed that the students' perceived level of proficiency in spoken English was average. The findings indicated a significant positive correlation between perceived English proficiency and attitude toward the English language, classroom activities, teacher motivation, and classroom environment. It is suggested that further studies integrate qualitative research methods to the research design in order to get an in-depth understanding of students' perception on English proficiency.

Key Words: Proficiency, English, Perception, Level, Dodoma, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

According to the current educational demands, English Language has become a tool of communication to facilitate both national and international interactions in business,

science and technology, education, foreign relations as well as other areas. English is also a second official language and a medium of instruction in secondary schools in Tanzania. This makes it important to equip student teachers with appropriate skills to enable them cope with the paradigm shift, from content to competence based teaching and learning (MOEVT, 2009)

Kiswahili is the national and official language in Tanzania. Kinigi (2002) observes that Kiswahili is widely spoken in Tanzania. Teachers and students speak Kiswahili during school activities. There is no rule that requires students to speak English at school as a result, spoken English is not practiced. Rubagumya (2003) reports that 79.8% of parents would not send their children to a school where English language is not the medium of instruction, however, they attribute their children's low proficiency in English language to teachers who speak Kiswahili most of the time.

Rugemalira (1990) observes that wealthy Tanzanian parents send their children to Kenya and Uganda to start primary school to have a good foundation of English language. There are many young men and women from Kenya and Uganda who qualify to take high paying jobs in Tanzania because of their English skills thereby displacing Tanzanians who would be qualified if only they spoke better English.

Second language acquisition is the process of learning a second language after a first language is already established. There are many factors affecting the process of learning the second language. According to Gardner (1985) motivation and attitude are the most influential factors in second language acquisition.

The researchers take note that little has been done so far to address factors affecting spoken English in Tanzania secondary schools. It is for this reason that a study of the students' perceived level of English proficiency in Dodoma Municipality schools in Tanzania was in order.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by three theories—the Input Hypothesis theory (Krashen, 1995), Inter-language theory (Selinker, 1972) and Vygotsky's theory of value. The first two theories guide teachers on how to motivate students. Motivation is one of the most important variables in teaching English language. Krashen (1995) states that for acquisition to occur, the learner has to be exposed to the language which is beyond his current competence (that is $i+1$), which can be understood and still be challenged to make progress. Input should neither be so far beyond students' reach (that is $i+2$) nor so close to students' current stage that they are not challenged at all ($i+0$). According to this theory, the teacher should know the ability of his/her students. He/she should not simplify nor complicate the lesson presented to the class. In the English language, a teacher who uses complicated language discourages students from following the lesson. Teachers should use Krashen's formula of $i+1$ not $i+2$ or $i+0$.

Krashen's theory emphasizes the importance of knowing the ability and the needs of students before teaching (Brown, 2003). Krashen's theory guides the teacher on

motivating students to learn the target language. Students lose interest in learning the second language when the teacher uses a language which is too hard or too easy.

Inter-language Theory

Inter-language theory (Selinker, 1972) refers to gradual process of learning the second language from the first language or mother tongue. Teachers should be aware of this gradual learning in order to encourage students. At every stage of learning, learners have rules of grammar which are not perfect yet. The rules become more and more complex as the student progresses. This means the learner travels along the inter-language continuum towards L2 (L1 being the starting point of the development).

The Inter-language Continuum

L1 _____ L2

The learner has to move along this continuum if he/she is to learn the second language. He/she moves along the road making errors and being corrected. For example, the learner may make this mistake: “they *goes* home every Sunday”. This learner has not mastered the rules of L2, which state that only the third person singular of verbs applies “s”. It is only after the teacher has corrected the student that he realizes the mistake. By gradual process of trial and error, the learner slowly and tediously, succeeds in establishing closer appropriateness to the system used by native speakers of the language. As explained on Krashen’s theory, the inter-language continuum theory was another force that intended to check how teachers help students of Dodoma to pursue Silinker’s (1972) inter-language continuum in their learning of English.

Stages of Inter-language Development

1. *Random errors:* The learner is only vaguely aware of the rules that govern the language, but the application of these rules becomes tricky.
2. *The learner has begun to identify the system and to internalize the rules.* These rules may not be correct (not the same as the L2 rules), but they are the best the learner has at this stage. At this stage, the learner has a lot of backsliding. He/she seems to have got the rules, and then forgets them. For example, he/she can use present continuous (I am going to school every day instead of present simple, I go to school every day and he may not be able to correct himself/herself.
3. *Stage three is known as a systematic stage.* The learner is closer to L2; he makes fewer errors at this stage.
4. *This stage is known as stabilization stage.* The learner makes very few errors. The teacher has to know that errors give the learner a base on which improvement can be done. He/she has to encourage the learner not to discourage him/her. He has to correct the errors that the learner makes, but not so much that the learner is discouraged from speaking at all. This may result in the learner’s loss of fluency as he/she is usually trying to analyze rules and grammar before actually saying anything in order to avoid making mistakes. Error analysis advises teachers not to take errors negatively and prevent students from advancing in learning the language effectively. Students’ errors are seen as a natural indispensable part of the learning process. It is

expected that students make errors when they first begin to speak a foreign language. Teachers should work with what the learner has produced in a non-threatening way. One way of doing this is for the teacher to repeat correctly what the student has said incorrectly, without calling further attention on the errors (Selinker 1972).

Vygotsky's theory of value stresses the importance of looking at each child as an individual who learns distinctively. Consequently, the knowledge and skills that are worthwhile learning varies with the individual.

The overall goal of education according to Vygotsky is to "generate and lead development which is the result of social learning through internalization of culture and social relationships." (Davydov & Kerr, 1995). He repeatedly stressed the importance of past experiences and prior knowledge in making sense of new situations or present experiences. (Fedom & Vogel, 1993). Therefore, all new knowledge and newly introduced skills are greatly influenced by each student's culture, especially their family environment. Language skills are particularly critical for creating meaning and linking new ideas to past experiences and prior knowledge. According to Vygotsky, internalized skills or psychological tools are used to gain mastery over one's own behavior and cognition. Primary among these tools is the development of speech and its relation to thought.

Vygotsky maintained that language plays a central role in cognitive development. He argued that language was the tool for determining the ways a child learns "how" to think. That is because complex concepts are conveyed to the child through words. Learning, according to Vygotsky, always involves some type of external experience being transformed into internal processes through the use of language." (Fedom & Vogel, 1993) It follows that speech and language are the primary tools used to communicate with others, promoting learning.

Literature Review

This section looks at how attitude, anxiety, motivation, classroom environment, and learning resources affect English language.

Language attitudes

Learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards the languages (Starks & Paltridge 1996: 218). Gardner (1985: 10) sees attitudes as components of motivation in language learning. According to him, 'motivation ... refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language'. He believes the motivation to learn a foreign language is determined by basic predispositions and personality characteristics such as the learner's attitudes towards foreign people in general, and the target group and language in particular, motives for learning, and generalized attitudes (Gardner 1985). Wenden (1991) sees attitudes as including three components: First, attitudes tend to have a cognitive component. This could involve beliefs or perceptions about the objects or situations related to the attitude. Second, attitudes have an evaluative component. This means that the objects or situations related to the attitude may generate like or dislike. Third, attitudes have a behavioral component, i.e. certain attitudes tend to prompt learners to adopt particular learning behaviors. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) discuss

the current issues, pedagogical implications and new directions in beliefs about language learning including social, cultural, contextual, cognitive, affective, and personal factors among which attitudes have an important place. Similarly, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) conclude attitude as an important factor in language learning in their study on the internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort.

Anxiety

Since the mid 1960s scholars have entertained the possibility that anxiety interferes with second language learning and performance; however, documentation of that relationship came much later. Interestingly, the relationship between anxiety and second language achievement puzzled Scovel over three decades ago (Scovel, 1978). Scovel reviewed the available literature on anxiety and language learning in an attempt to explain a truly conflicting set of findings. At the time there were studies which found the anticipated negative relationship between anxiety and second language achievement, but several studies found no relationship, and positive relationships between anxiety and second language achievement were also identified (Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977). In other words, contrary to the predictions of many language teachers, some studies found that learners with higher levels of anxiety actually showed higher achievement scores. Scovel posited a rational solution to this enigma. He argued that since various studies used different anxiety measures such as test-anxiety, facilitating-debilitating anxiety, etc., they logically found different types of relationships between anxiety and language achievement. Scovel concluded that language researchers should be specific about the type of anxiety they are measuring and recommended that anxiety studies take note of the myriad of types of anxiety that had been identified.

Palacios (1998) examined the impact of classroom climate on students' levels of foreign language anxiety and found that several components of Classroom climate were associated with higher (and lower) levels of anxiety. Palacios also found that classroom levels of affiliation among the learners, lack of competition, and clear task orientation were associated with lower anxiety levels. Several studies have also noted a negative relationship between language anxiety and outcome measures other than final grades. Trylong (1987) found a negative relationship between anxiety and teacher ratings of achievement; MacIntyre, Nkiels, and Clément (1997) observed a negative relationship between anxiety and students self-ratings of their language proficiency. Gardner and

MacIntyre (1993) present perhaps the most extensive set of findings with respect to language anxiety. Using measures of both classroom anxiety and language use anxiety, they found significant negative correlations with several language production measures including a cloze test, a composition task, and an objective French proficiency measure. Interestingly, they found somewhat higher negative correlations between student anxiety scores and their self-ratings of French competence than with their actual performance on the tests of French ability. Finally, with respect to some of the nonlinguistic but hoped-for goals of language instruction, Spitali (2000) found a negative relationship between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale scores and a

measure of attitudes toward people of different cultures in American high school language learners of French, Spanish, and German.

Motivation

In the classical social psychological theory of language learning proposed by Gardner and his associates, there are two major types of motivation, *instrumental* and *integrative* (Gardner & Lambert, 1972); there are also two sets of learning outcome, linguistic and nonlinguistic (Gardner, 1985). *Linguistic outcomes* consist of target language proficiency; *nonlinguistic outcomes* consist of more general changes in the learner. Similarly, Lambert's (1974) model included *self-concept* in learning outcomes.

Numerous studies have focused on linguistic outcomes of learning as indicated by proficiency test scores. These studies were concerned with what kind of motivation led to higher proficiency achievements (e.g., Gardner, Day, & MacIntyre, 1992) and how motivation and other learner factors influenced learning achievements (e.g., Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997). It has been proposed that Gardner's classical model should be expanded in light of broader psychological theories (e.g., Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Expanded models have included new factors such as *learning situation* (Dörnyei, 1994), *self-confidence* (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994), *salience of goals*, *valence*, and *self-efficacy* (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

As a modifiable learner factor that influences the linguistic outcome of learning, motivation has caught relatively substantial research attention since the 1980s. Many of the related studies were government funded, involved research teams, and the findings are widely known. For example, Wu, Liu, and Jeffrey (1993) in a large-scale regression-analysis study found motivational intensity was among the six factors that exerted significant influence on proficiency, and it alone explained 12.3% of the variation in proficiency. Zhou (1996) provided a detailed report of the social psychological factors in this study. Drawing on Gardner's classical model, she proposed a motivation model for students: Motivation = Goal + Effort + Non-English related activities. Similarly, Wen and Wang (1996) conducted a regression-analysis study to examine the effects of 16 learner factors on English proficiency. Motivation in this study was classified as either *surface* ("I am required to learn") or *deep* ("I want to learn"), following the education theory of Biggs and Telfer (1987). Among the 11 modifiable learner factors, four had significant effects on proficiency, including motivational intensity and deep level motivation. From the beginning of the new millennium, several studies have appeared exploring the relationships between motivation and other learner factors such as learning beliefs (Wen, 2001) and the internal structure of motivation (Qin & Wen, 2002). Drawing on expanded models (e.g., Clément et al., 1994; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), Qin and Wen used the linear structural equation model (LISREL) statistical software to build a sophisticated model for motivational behavior; the influencing factors included prior English proficiency, causal attribution, interest in English, anxiety, self-efficacy, valence, learning purposes, and goal orientation in terms of linguistic outcomes.

Classroom Environment

It is expected that classroom environments which encourage student autonomy and control, and help students realize the link between their effort and success promote development of mastery goal orientation. In fact, a multiple of research has shown that classroom environment has great influence on students' motivation in terms of self efficacy, intrinsic value beliefs, and goal orientations (Ames, 1992; Ames, 1990; Greene, Miller, Crowson, Duke, and Akey 2004; Müller & Louw, 2004; Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, Turner, 2004). According to Ames (1990), there are six classroom structures which have impact on these motivational variables: task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation, and time. She proposed that in order to promote mastery goal orientation, effective strategy use, active engagement, intrinsic interest, and attributions to effort, there should be novelty and variety in tasks. Moreover, tasks should provide students with an optimal level of challenge to help students set short-term goals and focus on the meaningful aspects of activities (Ames 1992). Moreover, classroom structures should encourage student autonomy and responsibility in the learning process. Students should be able to make choices and feel that they have control over their learning. Indeed, self-determination theory suggests that classroom structures supporting autonomy promote adaptive motivational beliefs and intrinsic motivation (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Furthermore, classroom structures focusing on individual improvement and mastery are suggested to help development of adaptive motivational beliefs (Ames, 1992). In an empirical study conducted by Müller and Louw (2004), it was found that students' interest, intrinsic motivation, and self determined forms of extrinsic motivation were related to perceived support of autonomy and competence, relevance of the contents, and transparency of requirements. In line with these findings, the authors proposed that learning environments in which students are autonomous in their learning, receive informative feedback concerning their progress, experience a friendly and positive atmosphere, and interact with each other during the learning process are likely to promote intrinsic motivation.

For language learners, the most pertinent and immediately available community is the language classroom community. Encouraging a greater sense of community within the language classroom can only occur through increased interaction between students – learning communities need to engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information (Wenger, 2006). This change in student-student relations also necessitates a gradual change in the role of the teacher in the classroom, from the autocratic model to the democratic model (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003). Dornyei (1997) has further argued that although classrooms in which teacher largely controlled the learning may result in short term learning gains, cooperative classrooms in which positive interdependence was a key factor constitutently result in more learner achievement over a long period. In order to encourage intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy, “we may conclude that from a motivational point of view, CL is undoubtedly one of the most efficient instructional methods” (Dornyei, 1997 p. 490). All these environment factors are necessary for English proficiency.

Learning Resources

Learning resources play an important role in English teaching process by making language learning more effective. Learning resources include things that facilitate learning and teaching of English language. For example, teachers, text books, library, pictures, video, and other teaching materials. The teacher's responsibility is to ensure learning resources are appropriate, accessible, identifiable and relevant to students learning needs (Waithaka, 1987).

Television is another learning resource that promotes spoken English by listening carefully to speakers, the learner slowly gains vocabulary and proper pronunciation. Chance and Chance (2002) maintain that learners must be involved in hands- on activities in order for them to learn effectively. Taylor (2007) supports this by arguing that it is insufficient for learners to merely read or write about a topic because the brain learns well when all senses are employed: hearing, seeing, feeling and tasting.

A teacher as human resource can be a powerful instrument through which students' proficiency in English can be increased. Teachers are the most important resources for learning. Guest speakers can also be invited by teachers to deal with specific topics in the classroom interaction. Students as human resources can be used to evaluate their own language proficiency. They can listen to their colleagues as they speak and comment on the strengths and weakness. William (2008) calls upon English teachers to encourage students to be instructional resources for one another.

METHOD

This study was conducted through correlation research design, which measures the degree of association between two or more scores or between two or more variables that have been obtained from the same group of subjects. Correlation research was used to predict and describe the association between anxiety, attitude, motivation, classroom activities, learning resources, classroom environment and proficiency in English language. The study focused on finding out factors associated with secondary school students' perceived level of proficiency in spoken English in Dodoma municipality, Tanzania. The researchers investigated the relationships between the variables to discover the extent to which they affected one another and how they caused the existing problem of spoken English language in Tanzania secondary schools.

Population and Sampling Technique

In this study, the target population was the public secondary school students in Dodoma Municipality. The sample for this study were 300 form three students of three public secondary schools in Dodoma municipality. Table 1 shows the sample for this study and the total population of students.

To select the sample, purposive sampling technique was used. According to Ary (2002), purposive sampling technique is done based on the researcher's judgment. The researcher builds up a sample that is satisfactory to his specific needs. Gay (2006) comments on sample size that when the sample is too small, the results of the study may not be generalizable to the population. Usually the problem is too few participants rather than too many. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the three hundred students as a sample for the population. Form three students were selected to

participate in the study because they had been in secondary school for three years and were expected to respond to the questionnaires adequately. In addition, the form three were expected to speak English well, since they were about to complete their O' levels.

Table 1: Summary of population and sample of students

<i>School</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Sampled respondents</i>	<i>Total population</i>
School A	Male students	54	565
	Female students	46	
School B	Male students	60	550
	Female students	50	
School C	Male students	55	500
	Female students	35	
Total		300	1615

Research Instruments

The questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was designed from the review of related literature and the conceptual framework to measure the independent and dependent variables. Each item was scored on a four point scale with the following numerical values to indicate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement as follows: 4 = Agree (A); 3 = Tend to agree (TA); 2 = Tend to disagree (TD); 1 = Disagree

Most students did not understand what tended to agree or tended to disagree meant. Some students associated the terms with the word 'doubt'. So I tend to agree to them meant I doubt whether I know English. It was the role of the researchers to explain what the statements meant. This study revealed the importance of using more than one research instrument. It indeed showed the limitation a single method can cause in the findings.

The structured questionnaire had six sections. Section one had five statements on proficiency in English; section two, five statements on attitude toward English; section three, eight statements on classroom activities; section four, five statements on learning resources; section five, five statements on teacher motivation; and section six, five statements on language anxiety.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted. The Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Cronbach's alpha (the reliability coefficient) is a measure of the intercorrelation of items; the estimate of internal consistency of items in a scale, measuring the extent to which item responses obtained at the same time correlate highly with each other. This is based on the relationship among the scores derived from the individual items or subsets of items within a test (Ary 2002). The widely-accepted social science cut-off is that alpha should be .70 or higher for a set of items to be considered a scale, but some use 0.75 or 0.80 while others are as lenient as 0.60.

The data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed and examined to ascertain the reliability of the research tool. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. There were 3 sections of the original questionnaire (35 items): Perceived Level of Proficiency with 5 items, Student-related Factors (Attitude and Anxiety) with

10 items, and Teacher-related Factors (Teacher motivation, Classroom activities, Learning resources, Classroom environment) with 20 items. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.72, 0.70, and 0.53, respectively. Some items in the questionnaire on teacher-related factors were rephrased and 3 more items were added, so as to increase the reliability to its acceptable value. The reliability coefficient obtained for the final questionnaire on teacher-related factors was 0.86. The final questionnaire consisted of 38 items.

Data Gathering Procedures

The pilot study was done in three public secondary schools in Arusha municipality. The pilot study was used to assess the reliability of the instrument, to gauge how long it will take the respondents to answer questions. It also helped the researchers to confirm whether items were stated clearly and had same meaning to all respondents. The researchers made sure that respondents on which the instrument was pre-tested were not part of the selected sample for the real study. Pre-testing helped the researchers not only to increase the number of items, but also to re-frame and modify questions which appeared unclear, annoying and sensitive to respondents in order to get their maximum co-operation in the exercise.

In the study, the questionnaires were administered by the researchers. The researchers had an opportunity to establish rapport with respondents and explained the purpose of the study and the meaning of items that were not clear. The researchers were willing to respond to any query from the respondents in order for the exercise to run smoothly and successfully. The exercise was done quietly in an organized manner and the administration of the participating schools cooperated well with the researchers.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics and Kendall's Tau-b, a nonparametric statistical treatment to measure correlation between two ordinal-level variables, were used to analyze data. The information collected consisted of large sets of disorganized data and there was need to organize or to classify the sample information and summarize it. The collected data was coded and data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Results and Discussion

The students were asked to do a self-evaluation of their perceived level of English proficiency, attitude toward the English language, and level of language anxiety. Moreover, they evaluated their teachers on classroom activities, motivation strategies, classroom environment and learning resources.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics on students' perceived level of English proficiency.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on english proficiency

<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
My oral English is good	2.86	.71
I am able to express myself well in English	2.88	.76
I manage English well as a medium of instruction	2.70	.74
I can talk about work or school without difficulty in English	2.72	.73

I am a competent English speaker	2.58	.80
<i>Overall Mean</i>	2.75	.54

The overall mean perceived level of proficiency is 2.75, which is average. This indicates that respondents had some problems with spoken English. They doubted their speaking skills. Yule (1996) found that the problem experienced in second language learning is related to the fact that students attempt to learn another language while having their own prestigious language and put less emphasis on the new language in order to master it. Secondary school students in Dodoma municipality have similar problem. Kiswahili language could be blocking mastery of spoken English because it is not only the most widespread language but also the most prestigious and dominant language. Teachers and students speak it all the time.

The descriptive statistics on students' attitude toward the English language is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on attitude toward English language

<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I enjoy learning English	3.41	.81
I have to demonstrate my ability in spoken English	2.95	.84
I like watching English programs on television	3.33	.89
I believe knowing English is important to me	3.53	.77
English is an interesting subject	3.49	.73
<i>Overall Mean</i>	3.34	.58

The overall mean score of 3.34 is an indication that students tended to have a positive attitude towards English language. However, the students are not much convinced that they have to demonstrate their ability in spoken English. This implies that students can be more proficient if steps are taken to help them improve their attitude. Xhomba (2008) found that English can be difficult if the learner has a negative attitude toward the language. Having a positive attitude towards the language is a good start to learn (Shirley, 2008).

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics on the students' self-evaluation of their language anxiety.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics on language anxiety

<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I get nervous if I have to speak English to someone	2.86	.98
I feel anxious when someone asks me something in English	2.82	.98
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class	2.50	1.00
I get embarrassed whenever I speak English incorrectly	2.71	.98
I fear to speak English because of being ridiculed	2.81	.97
<i>Overall Mean</i>	2.74	.64

The overall mean of 2.74 indicates that the students have a moderate level of language anxiety. It is obvious that students tend to be self conscious about speaking English in public or to a stranger. Some learners of English are intimidated when they converse with a better speaker of English. The little they know tends to disappear. All this is caused by anxiety. According to Kurman (2001) learners who fear and anticipate

negative evaluation tend to avoid doing things that will cause them to be negatively evaluated.

The students rated their teachers on classroom activities (table 5).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics on classroom activities

<i>The English Teacher</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Engages us in classroom conversation to promote spoken English	2.80	.98
Introduces a story telling session at the beginning of every lesson	2.61	.98
Gives topics to discuss in the classroom	3.00	1.06
Assigns roles to be played in the classroom	2.48	1.06
Schedules debates to develop students into competent public speakers	2.94	.97
Makes sure there is spoken English lesson everyday	2.76	1.04
Gives students chance to speak in the classroom	3.09	.99
Requires us to listen to audio tapes, radio broadcasting in English or watch English programs on TV	2.42	1.13
Overall Mean	2.76	.58

Respondents tended to agree that teachers engage them in classroom activities with an overall mean rating of 2.76. Observation checklist revealed that the classroom activities done in the target schools were to copy notes from the chalkboard into the exercise books and answering questions in the classroom. English teachers confessed that the real classroom activities could not be done due to congestion experienced in the classrooms. Richard (1990) noted that language learning requires a lot of effort which must be retained over a long period of time. Classroom activities enable many learners to sustain their interest in the target language. Learners of the second language need opportunity to practice the target language otherwise mastery of English can be difficult.

The students' evaluation of their teachers' motivation strategies is shown in table 6. The overall mean rating is 2.82, which indicates that the teachers fell short in motivating students to learn English.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics on teacher motivation

<i>The English teacher</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Motivates us to learn English	2.93	.93
Gives assignments which are not too easy nor too difficult	2.80	.91
Gives feedback that support our beliefs that we can do well	2.83	.89
Makes the lesson interesting and enjoyable	2.90	.94
Helps student to feel they are valued	2.88	.99
Overall Mean	2.82	.63

Ur (2003) affirmed that motivating students can be accomplished by the use of teaching strategies and variety of classroom activities to retain the interest of students in the lesson. In order to make learning and teaching interesting, instructors need to put a great deal of thoughts into developing programs which maintain students interest, keep students busy in various classroom activities, have good relationship with students and teach in an environment that is conducive for learning. With all these, students will definitely enjoy learning English language.

The students' evaluation of the classroom environment as presented in table 7 reveals that the English teachers need to exert more effort to provide a more conducive environment for effective learning of the second language to take place.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics on classroom environment

<i>The English teacher</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Creates a conducive atmosphere in the classroom	2.55	.98
Makes sure the classroom is tidy for teaching	2.78	.94
Makes sure students feel at home in the classroom	2.70	1.02
Provides support in challenging learning environment	2.87	.98
Overall Mean	2.74	.66

The classroom climate created and maintained by teachers and students has a significant bearing on students' learning and comfort level. Further, favorable classroom conditions foster increased participation in the classroom (Laura, 2006). The teacher can devise plans and activities that promote a successful learning and teaching of English. Establishing a learning oriented environment, students make consistent effort to achieve. Klausmeier (1985) noted that students in a conducive classroom experience success and relief from anxiety.

The area in which secondary schools in Tanzania is wanting is the availability of learning resources (table 8).

Table 8: Descriptive statistics on learning resources

<i>My school</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Has enough text books	2.23	1.08
Has a library with English reading/reference materials	2.11	1.14
Has visual aids, TV, radio which are frequently used in the English classroom	1.68	.96
Has language laboratory where tape recordings for practicing English are kept and used	1.71	.99
Has an English classroom that is conducive for learning	2.12	1.09
Overall Mean	1.97	.75

The overall mean rating of 1.97 implies that there is a scarcity of learning resources in these schools. This finding is supported by Komonte (1995) who found that the scarcity of learning resources in Tanzania was the chief cause of students' problems in the mastery of English language as a subject and the medium of instruction.

This paper tested the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the students' perceived level of English proficiency and the following variables: attitude toward the English language, language anxiety, classroom activities, teacher motivation, classroom environment, and learning resources. Table 9 shows the correlation matrix describing the degree of association of perceived level of English proficiency and the independent variables.

Table 9: Correlation coefficients between perceived level of English proficiency and the independent variables

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Kendall's Tau-b</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Attitude toward English	0.46	0.000*
Language anxiety	0.06	0.141
Classroom activities	0.33	0.000*

Teacher motivation	0.33	0.000*
Classroom environment	0.27	0.000*
Learning resources	0.06	0.173

*significant ($p < 0.001$)

Attitude toward English: Analysis of the Kendall's Tau-b showed a significant positive correlation (Tau-b = 0.46) between English proficiency and attitude towards English. This implied that students who had a positive attitude toward English tended to perceive that their proficiency level in English was high.

A learner with positive attitude enjoys learning English language and he/she is ready to do whatever it takes to learn the language. Jack (1990) reported that mastery of spoken English is a priority for the second language learners. Usually, they evaluate their effectiveness of their English on the basis of how well they feel they have improved their spoken English.

Classroom Activities: Classroom activities is another variable which significantly correlated with English proficiency with Tau-b = 0.33. The students who rated their English teacher high in providing them classroom activities tended to rate their own proficiency level in English as high. This implied that for a learner to be proficient in English he/she needs to practice spoken English regularly. Observation checklist revealed that this important variable was lacking in the three secondary schools in Dodoma municipality.

As stated earlier, English language is rarely spoken in Dodoma municipality secondary schools. Teachers and students speak Kiswahili most of the time. (Jack 1990) supports the findings that classroom activities are essential for learners of English because they help them to sustain interests in the target language. This shows that classroom activities and English proficiency work hand in hand.

Teacher Motivation: There is a moderate relationship between English proficiency and teacher motivation with Tau-b = 0.33. Students who rated their proficiency level in English as high also rated their teacher highly in motivating them to learn. Motivation is the second to positive attitude in arousing the interest of English language learners. Wolf (2001) supports the findings that the role of the teacher as a motivator is to encourage students to learn English by explaining the role of the teacher as a motivator that he/ she should encourage students to learn English, engage them in classroom activities and make them aware of their success and failure.

Classroom Environment: Classroom environment correlated positively with English proficiency with a correlation coefficient of Tau-b = 0.27. This implied that students of second language acquisition need to study in a tidy classroom with all the necessary items that facilitate learning available, making sure that students feel at home and they are ready to learn. Klausmeier (1985) supports the findings that in a conducive classroom environment, student make efforts to achieve and experience success. Nevertheless, they may experience failure at times, not as a punishment but as a natural consequence of their lack of effort.

Concerning learning resources, respondents confirmed that the school had very few learning resources. Textbooks were few such that students depended on teachers' notes for their success in English. This variable had the least coefficient ($\tau = .06$), indicating that there was no significant relationship between learning resources and perceived level of English proficiency. This may be due to scarcity of learning resources in all schools studied. Similar findings were reported by Komete (1995) who found that there was a scarcity of learning resources in Tanzania which was the chief cause of students' problems in the mastery of English language as a subject and medium of instruction. From the time Komete did her research to date, learning resources remain a problem in Tanzania.

Elaine (1992) found that anxiety and proficiency had an inverse relationship. This means that when anxiety is low proficiency goes up and when anxiety is high proficiency goes down. Learners with language anxiety levels tended to do poorly on language tests because they underestimated their competence relative to less anxious students who tended to overestimate their performance. Anxious students may focus their attention on their perceived inadequacies, the potential for failure and consequences of that imagined failure rather than concentrating on the task itself. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) found that anxiety can interfere with the learner's ability to take in, process incoming information which affects language acquisition. However, this study found that there was no significant relationship between perceived level of proficiency and anxiety ($\tau = .06$).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results suggest the following implications and suggestions for pedagogical practice. First, students' perceived level of proficiency in spoken English was average. There are many factors which influence spoken English such as attitude, motivation, classroom activities, classroom environment and learning resources. English learning deserves much of teachers' attention because language learning can bring about identity changes to learners; therefore, the above factors need to be put into consideration.

The best predictor variables were: attitude, classroom activities and motivation. This meant that these were the most important variables in teaching English language. A positive attitude towards English is a good start to learning the language. When learners are motivated, they internalize the need for learning and develop a self urge towards learning. Engaging students in classroom activities is a way of retaining their interests in the lesson, thus, motivating them to learn the target language. It should be noted that this study used self-evaluation instruments to measure English proficiency. Therefore, results were obtained based on students' own reports of attitude, anxiety, classroom activities, motivation and learning resources. These may not be sufficient to reveal the actual, on-going dynamic processes in students' learning of the new language. So, it is possible that there can be discrepancy between students' perceived level of English proficiency and actual self-regulatory processes. Thus, relying on just perceived self-regulation can be considered as a limitation to the present study. Finally, it is suggested that further studies integrate qualitative research methods to the research design in order to get an in depth understanding of students' perception towards English proficiency.

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