

Challenges Facing Pupils in Learning English as a Subject in Public Primary Schools in Nyamagana District,

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges facing pupils in learning English subject in public primary schools in Nyamagana District. The study applied mixed research approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. The researcher conducted the research in public primary schools whereby 5 out of 80 public primary schools were selected to represent the whole population in Nyamagana District. The study involved 186 pupils from standard three up to standard seven, 186 parents, 21 teachers, and 5 head teachers. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and observation. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive analysis with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 20th version software and presented in form of tables using frequencies, percentages. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis and presented in quotation and narration form. The study revealed that pupils didn't enjoy learning English subject, pupils do not understand English subject, and pupil's ability to speak English language also pronunciation are the challenge facing pupils in learning English language as well as the communication language among pupils with their teachers is a challenge faced pupils in learning English language. Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the study recommend that teachers should guide and encourage pupils to perceive English language positively and seek more avenues where they can be practicing the language for better fluency and vocabulary development. Such avenues include socializing with other pupils from private schools who are fluent in the English language, overcoming the fear of making errors in speaking and writing English language and actively seeking help to correct errors and mistakes

Key Words: English, Learning, Public, Primary Schools, Challenges

Introduction

Language has historically been a tool for human development. In pre-colonial Africa, the Africans had their own languages that were used as a medium of communication (Ngonyan, 2017). This fact was violated by the advent of colonialism which brought foreign languages and the indigenous languages were despised and treated satanically (Lodhi, 1993). Consequently, today many African countries do not have a common

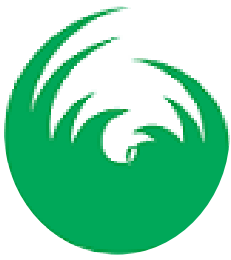
indigenous language that can be utilized as a national language and a medium of instruction. In this regard, the African countries have been struggling to build post-colonial multiethnic unity using colonial languages like English, French, and Portuguese. Tanzania, like many other African countries, has a colonial history that includes the use of English as an official language and a medium of instruction in secondary and university education. At lower levels of public pre-primary and primary schools, the language of instruction is Kiswahili

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and English with the exception of a few schools which are private and registered as the English Medium Schools and International Schools which basically have Kiswahili as a compulsory subject. In these schools, the aim is to help a child to have a clear, continuous development of skills and mastery of the knowledge in terms of medium of instruction, spirally, from pre-primary education progressing on to primary schools. When the policy came out in 1995, English language was prescribed as the medium of instruction at secondary school level and a compulsory subject at the primary school level (MOEC, 1995).

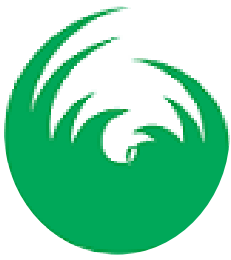
From time to time, there have been complaints on the government's newly introduced changes in curriculum whereby English teaching and learning begins in standard three, not in pre-primary education as it was stated in the language policy of 1990 and 1995. The problem is that when developing language policies and curriculum development, policymakers rarely consider the interests of learners; language policy is often led by political expediency rather than the needs of learners who essentially are the key stakeholders of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning English in Tanzania today begin from standard three using the new English language syllabus which directs teachers to teach English language from standard three up to standard seven. This ignores pupils of pre- primary school, standard one and those of standard two. The new English syllabus states that teaching and learning English language focuses on three main competences which are, comprehension, communication, and vocabulary development, intended to lead to the achievement of the five objectives as outlined in the Tanzania Institute of Education syllabus (T.I.E, 2016).

Studies such as Elibariki (2017), Mayaru (2015), Anyienda (2015), Robert (2015), Rugemalira (2005), and

Chacha and Zhong (2013) revealed that there are challenges facing the teaching and learning of English language in public primary schools in Tanzania. Among other challenges are the teaching and learning processes that do not account for the needs of learners. When developing language policies or curricula, policymakers rarely consider learners. Others include lack of enough time for practice, the attitude held that English is a tool used for colonialism, and a poor foundation of English language. However, the studies dealt on teachers and some of them, like the paper done by Komba and John (2015), concentrated on the pupils in private English medium primary schools. The challenges cited have far reaching effects in the learning process to the extent that the learners' academic performance is negatively affected. This implies that besides the problems among teachers in instructing English, there are challenges for students learning English especially in the public schools at lower levels like the primary schools. This paper, apart from assessing the pupils' ability to speak and write English language and examining the teaching and learning approaches, sought to explore and document the challenges facing pupils in learning English language in the public primary schools in Nyamagana District.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is guided by the Behaviorism Theory of Learning by B.F. Skinner. According to this theory all behavior is no more than a response to external stimuli and there is no innate programming within a human being to learn a language at birth (Skinner, 1948). Anyone who spends time with children, for instance teachers and parents, know how rewarding and praising children or learners for good behavior or good work done, builds self-esteem and confidence. Parents and teachers know that rewarding is an effective tool that can be used to bring out the positive in children. Skinner, in his concept of "operant conditioning" insinuates that language



learning grows out of a process of reinforcement and punishment, where individuals are conditioned to say specific things. Generally, Skinner box is soundproof and light-resistant, and usually uses an animal to either reward or punish it for engaging in a certain behavior. The process of teaching and learning therefore becomes the process of changing the behavior of a learner.

This theory is relevant to this paper because it posits that the process of teaching and learning requires the availability of resources and a conducive environment which will facilitate effective learning. This theory, therefore, is helpful in evaluating the teaching and learning behaviors in public primary schools in relation to English language learning. Teachers can therefore create an appropriate environment in which a sense of self-esteem can grow and develop (Gill, 2012).

Literature Review

The Challenges Faced by Pupils in Learning English Language in Public Primary Schools

Learner Interest and Expectation

Rubagumya (2010) argues that learners go through difficult times when learning English; sometimes suffering both physical and psychological torture because teaching and learning language in Africa generally, and Tanzania in particular does not account for the needs of a learner's interests. As mentioned earlier, policy makers hardly think of learners when formulating either language policies or curriculum development where by language policy is almost guided by political interest rather than the interests of the learners. In Tanzanian public primary schools learning English subject is more theoretical than practical whereby time used in the process of teaching and learning English is limited to only 40 minutes per period which makes teachers to be left with the burden of helping the pupils but they fail because of the time which is limited.

Fortune (1992) observed that discovery learning may not be available for all pupils if it conflicts with their own learning expectation and culture. Most Tanzanians received English language as a colonial language due to the influence of the society they lived in. Learning it has therefore been viewed as a punishment, and so the learners perceive the learning of the English subject negatively; which is likely to lead to poor performance. For some pupils whose views are to go for higher education they put more effort starting from secondary level where English is the medium of instruction, and there is no way they can escape it. That being the case, they find themselves with the burden of learning it by any and all means, because all subjects excluding Kiswahili are taught in the English language; while in primary schools Kiswahili is the medium of instruction and national language spoken everywhere in the country. Being forced to learn using a new language (English) therefore creates challenges to the learners (who have to learn it), as well as for the teachers who are required to implement it.

Language of Instruction

Kioko (2014) outlined challenges of limited access to resources attributed them to the large enrolments. Resources provided at schools are not enough because the enrolment is too high compared to the materials provided so there is lack of enough books, classrooms, and electronic machines such as computers, radio, which could be used to teach correct pronunciation. Kioko also cited limited language opportunities for learners to practice the language. This is because English is not a language medium at public primary schools, so pupils and teachers use it in the classroom only for about 40 minutes after that they switch to Kiswahili which is the medium of instruction, therefore pupils are likely to forget what they have been taught in the English language lesson.



Yogi (2017) conducted a research titled: “Kiswahili or English: a policy analysis of language instruction in Tanzania”. The purpose of the study was to identify the relationship between Tanzania’s language policy and the effects on students in secondary school. It also explored the history of post-colonialism, gives an overview of the current state of the policy, examined other countries practices by comparing statistical findings, and discussed the reality of challenges faced by current Tanzanian students. The paper concludes that language instruction is just one of many challenges with Tanzania’s education system. The usage of either language has the potential to be successful; however it depends on policy implementation, access to resources, and the quality of teaching. This current study angled on the issues related to pupils in the learning of English language in public primary schools in Nyamagana District.

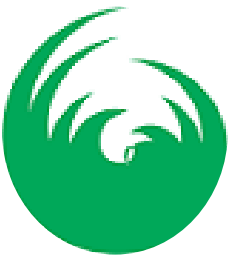
Language Policy Developments

Solak (2015) in his research “Current challenges in English language learning in Turkish Schools” also mentions challenges of limited language opportunities for the learners to practice and the contradiction brought about by the languages policy whereby English language is used as the official language but is not a national language and is therefore learnt as a second language. This causes difficulties for learners to master it thereby adversely affecting performance.

On the issue of Language policy, the researchers Brock (2001) state that the current policy in Tanzania can best be described by words like confusing, contradictory and ambiguous. Language is no longer mentioned in the constitution of Tanzania. In 1962 it was stated that Kiswahili and English are the official language.

The Official language policy that is currently followed in education is that one laid down in the (MOEC, 1995) states that “The medium of instruction in primary schools shall be Kiswahili and English is a compulsory subject”. Two years later after MOEC had issued this policy, in 1997, the Ministry of Education and Culture by then issued another policy dealing with the language of instruction. This document was entitled: “Sera ya Utamaduni (cultural policy)”. It states that a special plan to enable the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in education training at all levels shall be designed and implemented. The policy then explicitly states that English will be a compulsory subject at pre – primary level, primary level and secondary levels and it shall be encouraged in higher education (MOC, 1997). The policy of education in Tanzania on language is therefore contradictory and negatively affects the teachers and learners in the whole process of teaching and learning English in schools. Hence accounting for challenges faced by English teachers at Public Primary Schools of Nyamagana District.

Vuzo (2019) did a critical review on implementation of sustainable language education in the Tanzanian context. The study addresses a set of related challenges in regard to language in education that hinder the attainment of development, specifically sustainable development goal 4 on quality education. The study states that language policy developments in Tanzania center on the use of either Kiswahili or English in the different education levels. This has had some consequences as highlighted from research that shows the detrimental consequences of using an unfamiliar language for learning in post primary education. This cannot lead to sustainable development. The paper accentuated other language in education hurdles in attaining proper and sustainable language education such as lack of clear distinction between



foreign languages and second languages in language teaching, improper implementation of competence based language teaching, issues in language teacher training, multilingual language learning, and general language competence. The current study dealt with the challenges facing pupils in learning English Subject in public primary schools in Nyamagana District.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Maodi (2018) conducted a study on teachers' management of language transition from grade 3 to grade 4 in South Africa. The situation in South Africa is such that learners in grade 3 are taught in African languages in township schools. The language of learning and teaching after Grade 3 is English, whereas the schools are multicultural, and many learners do not have English as their home language. In grade 4, there is subject teaching and the language of learning and teaching is English. The study revealed that learners in township schools struggle when they transition from grade 3 into grade 4. The Gauteng department of education has tried to provide sufficient teacher and learner material support, but the participating teachers did not have the strategies on how to manage learners' language transition from grade 3 into grade 4. Maod's study relates well to the current study in the aspects of language learning and second language environments but this current study went further by investigating ability of pupils, the approaches used and the challenges faced by pupils in teaching and learning English language in public primary schools in Nyamagana District.

The Use of Indigenous Languages

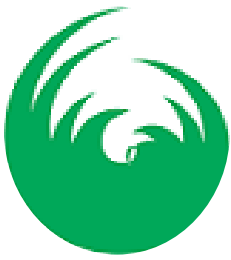
Kazeem and Suleiman (2020) conducted a study about prospects and challenges of the language policy in Nigeria. The research states that the indigenous languages

in Nigeria have been relegated to the background at the expense of foreign languages. Official language policies have variously been enunciated in documents such as the National Policy on Education. Yet, there are problems facing indigenous languages in Nigeria. The study revealed that despite Nigeria being a multilingual society; there are few multilingual speakers of indigenous languages in Nigeria. Moreover, it was however recommended that indigenous languages should be developed in order to enhance socio-cultural integration. The current study went further by exploring the pupils' abilities in the spoken and written English, and the approaches used in teaching and learning in public primary schools in Nyamagana District.

The reviewed works generally reveal that the ability of pupils in speaking and writing English language in public primary schools is low to the extent that it has forced parents and guardians to find better schools that use English as the medium of instruction for their children. Furthermore, the approaches used in teaching and learning English language in public primary schools are unfit and affected by many challenges that lead to poor performance in English language by pupils. Finally, the challenges faced by pupils in learning English language in Public primary schools are discussed.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Nyamagana District in Mwanza Region, Tanzania. Nyamagana District is one of the seven Districts of Mwanza Region of Tanzania. The district has experienced challenges which have negatively impacted on the process of teaching and learning of English as a subject. The challenges include lack of motivation, poor learning/teaching environment, poor approaches, and failure to speak and write in English effectively, among others, which hinder the effective learning of English subject in public primary schools.



This study employed the descriptive research design which involved collecting information from the respondents using survey questions and interviews from the key informants. The design was embraced because of its ability to capture the important information about people’s experiences, attitudes, views, opinions and habits as well as the important educational or other issues pertaining to the study objectives (Orotho & Kombo, 2012). This current study collected both qualitative and quantitative data on the challenges facing pupils in learning English language in public primary schools in Nyamagana District. The design is useful in this study because it gives room for the researcher to apply mixed methods in a single study. In the analysis, the quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics while the qualitative data was analysed by interpretive analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The Challenges Faced by Pupils in Learning English Language

The data concerning challenges faced by pupils in learning English language were collected through focused group discussion and interview from English teachers, parents and pupils. The results show that most of the pupils do not enjoy learning the English language, Pupils ability to speak English language, Pupils ability to speak English language, Pronunciation as well as Pupils communicate with their Teachers in English. Table 1 bellow is explaining the extent of challenges faced by pupils in learning English language in Nyamagana District.

Table 1: Challenges Faced by Pupils in Learning English Language

Item	strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Pupils enjoy learning English subject	1	10	1	10	1	10	6	60	1	10
Pupils do not understand English subject	3	30	3	30	1	10	2	20	1	10
Pupils ability to speak English language	5	50	1	10	2	20	1	10	1	10
Pronunciation Challenge	4	40	3	30	1	10	1	10	1	10
Pupils communicate with their Teachers in English	1	10	2	20	1	10	3	30	3	30

Pupils Enjoy Learning English Subject

The findings Show that 2 (20%) respondents agreed that pupils enjoyed learning the English subject, 1 (10%) was non-committal, while 7 (70%) disagreed with the statement. This indicated that most of the pupils do not enjoy learning the English subject. This results demonstrate that when pupils being taught they do not enjoy learning English language because they learn it under psychological torture. Due to this, communication

in class between pupils and teachers in the teaching and learning process is limited and strained. The findings concur with Rubagumya (2010) findings which argues that learners go through difficult times when learning English sometimes suffering both physical and psychological torture because teaching and learning language in Africa generally and Tanzania in particular does not account for the needs of learner’s interest.

Also the findings supported with the information obtained during the interviewee with one of the interviewee who say that pupils do not enjoy learning English subject due



to the high numbers of pupils in public primary schools of Nyamagana District compared to the number of classrooms and teachers, the number of pupils in a single classroom ranged from 100 and above for the pupils of standards three up to standard seven. The findings revealed that the classrooms were overcrowded (more than 45 pupils which is the standard number). The findings are in line with those of Charles (2020) that noted that the challenge of overcrowded classes in Chemba District, in Dodoma Region resulted from the fee-free basic education, as teachers reported an increase in enrolment and attendance. This is due to the influence of free education in Tanzania which was announced in 2015 by the then president of Tanzania giving an opportunity to every child of school-going age. The policy however did not take into consideration the need to respectively improve infrastructure and employ more teachers to cater for the increased enrollment of learners. This situation has affected learning because both human and material resources are a necessity for effective learning outcomes.

Moreover, the responses from the respondents during the interview with one of the interviewee show that the learning environment of the English subject in public primary schools of Nyamagana District is not conducive due to the fact that there were inadequate materials such as desks and learning rooms. The rooms are small compared to the number of pupils because of overcrowded classes. Some pupils do not have desks, chairs or tables where they can sit and write in order to learn better, instead, they sit down on the dust since many classrooms had no concrete floor. Those who manage to access desks are crowded on the desks ranging from 4 pupils and above. Due to this, teachers then fail to use the required methods to teach for better effectiveness.

Furthermore, the overcrowded classes are reported by Muthusamy (2015), as stressful to the teachers and

learners. Moreover, Muthusamy mentioned the chief problems with stressful overcrowded classrooms being the inadequate classroom space, safety and health issues, low learner and teacher engagement, disruptive behaviors, instructors experiencing emotional and psychological problems, increasing workload, and insufficient instructional time. Moreover Bayar (2015), discussed that lot of crowded classes in schools with students at different language levels were not guided to take responsibility for their own learning outside the classroom.

Pupils do not Understand the English Subject

The findings moreover, show that 6 (60%) respondents agreed with the statement that pupils do not understand the English subject, 1 (10%) was neutral and 3 (30%) disagreed with the statement. The findings therefore show that most pupils do not understand English. The findings also indicate that some pupils fall asleep or doze off in the classroom during the lesson when being taught English. The findings supported with Uwezo (2010) who reported that the pupils who learn English as a foreign language face a double problem: acquiring a new knowledge and learning a new language which leads to the conclusion that English is a difficult subject. Thus means that pupils believe that English is a difficult subject compared to other subjects because the language is not familiar to them, that is why they fail totally to understand the English language and have the knowledge.

Furthermore, the findings supported with the information provided during the interview with different interviewee when asked that what the challenge facing pupils in learning English language. One of the interviewee quoted saying that;

Teachers are not competent to teach the English language effectively because of the limited knowledge they have. It was also found that teachers are not taken for in-service



training to update their profession due to poor educational planning and management in Nyamagana District.

This quotation means that most of the teachers lack skills and technique to teach English subject thus fail to derive effective knowledge to the pupils hence pupils fail to understand English subject. This failure caused by the lack of in service training among teachers which resulted from the poor education planning from the district.

Moreover the information from the interviewee when asked on what are the challenge facing pupils in learning English Language. The interviewee quoted saying that;

Pupils are suffering in learning English because they do not understand it. English language is not understood by both the learners and the teachers, that is why pupils cannot speak it the way it is supposed to be spoken, and cannot write it the way it is supposed to be written. English is a complicated language to the pupils. Due to this perception, they fail to communicate with their teachers in the English language class, which leads to boredom in class. During examinations, the learners therefore fail to understand the instructions given including the way questions are framed. Most teachers whether competent or incompetent decide to use code mixing and code switching when teaching English to try to help the learners to understand better.

This means that most of the pupils do not understand well English language though teachers tried to employ different method of teaching and learning to ensure effective learning of English language thus result into the challenge in the learning of the English language among the pupils.

Pupil's Ability to Speak English Language

The study shows that pupil's ability to speak English language is a challenge faced pupils in learning English language. This revealed from the findings which shows that 6(60%) of respondents agreed that pupils ability to

speak English language is a challenge in learning English language, 2(20%) of respondents where neutral to the statement. Although 2(20%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement. This shows that the ability of the pupils is a challenge in the learning of English subjects in schools. The finding concur with Charles (2020) findings which identified difficulties facing teachers in ensuring learning of English language apart from overcrowded classes there is no enough time, slow learners, inadequate assessment, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and difficulty in completing a given subject syllabi, thus led to the challenge in learning English language among the pupils.

Also, the findings supported with the information obtained during the interviewee with one of the interviewee who quoted that;

Teaching and learning methods and methodologies used in learning English in public schools of Nyamagana District were not supportive enough for effective learning and the teacher-centered methods used instead of learner centered methods, including the use of code-mixing and code switching in teaching English, results from lack of competency and fluency in spoken English.

This means that teacher's employee different teaching and learning methods though the methods were not effective due to unsupportive hence become a challenge to the pupils in learning English language. This concurs with the study conducted by Elibariki (2017), who found that there were poor teaching facilities and lack of specialist teachers to teach English, thus affect the ability of the learner to speak fluently English language.

The findings also are line with those of Wayimba (2016), that identified problems related to learning environment inhibiting the learning of English in Kilimanjaro Region:



these problems included poor English language background, lack of immersion programs, and domination of Kiswahili language, curriculum inadequacy, policy inconsistency, language specialists shortage, and poor learning environment affect the ability of the pupils to speak English language. Moreover, Mariba (2015), noted that teaching and learning environment have a strong relationship as variables in students' low English language performance in public secondary schools. According to Mariba, the suitable learning environment for English Language is that with discussions and debates, question and answer sessions, small group discussions, and lectures.

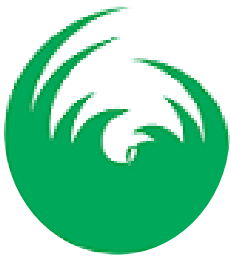
Pupil's Pronunciation

Also, the findings show that 7 (70%) agreed with the statement that a pupil's pronunciation is a challenge in learning English language while 2(20%) of respondents disagreed to the statements. Though 1(10%) of respondents is neutral to the statements. Thus shows that mother tongue affects their English pronunciation hence become a challenge in learning English language especial in the aspect of speaking and reading English language. The findings concur with Bayar (2015) findings which asserted that English lessons were generally teacher centered and lessons were mostly theory based rather than practice-based and there was no conducive and supportive environment for learning a foreign language because students did not have supplementary materials in English. Furthermore during the interviewee the study found that the time given to the pupils to learn English language is not enough for them to practice enough for effective learning specifically in pronunciation because first of all they are denied to learn English subject when they are in nursery classes or pre-primary class, standard one and standard two until they reach standard three when they start learning the English subject. The time allocated is

only 40 minutes per period, which is per day during the English subject session. After the 40 minutes or 80 minutes if it was a double period, the pupils are free to speak Kiswahili for the whole day when at school. At home they are also exposed to Kiswahili language speakers, a scenario that does not encourage them to use English language. Pupils then fail to have a consistent exposure to the English language thereby failing to interpret English texts and not understanding their teachers when they teach in English language. This concurs with Kaleelul (2017), who said that "having exposure to English speaking environment outside school for the learners is not possible. Thus continue to express the difficultness of learning English subject among the learners due to the poor practice in pronouncing English word.

Pupils Communicate With Their Teachers in English

Moreover, the study shows that pupils do not communicate with their Teachers in English hence become a challenge in the learning of English language. This revealed from the findings which shows that 3(30%) of respondents agreed that pupils communicate with their teachers in English. Though 1(10%) of respondents were neutral. Moreover 6(60%) of respondents disagreed that pupils communicate with their teachers in English hence become a challenge in learning English language. This shows that teachers contribute to the difficulties of the pupils in learning English language as they communicate with their teacher in English language. The findings are comparable to those of Wedin (2005), which was conducted in Karagwe District and found that teachers used Kiswahili in instructing English language, resulting in pupils' low level of academic content attainment in schools. This also encourages teachers and students to develop and employ safety tactics that hide failure and prevent pupils from learning.



Also, the findings corresponding with the response provided with one of the interviewee during the interview when asked what are the challenge facing learning of English language the interviewee quoted saying that;

Due to the nature of the pupils and the environment surrounding them it's difficult to the teachers to talk English to them frequently regarding they are unaware with the language and most of the time they use to talk their mother tongue language and not English language. Teachers use Swahili language in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning process regarding is the English subject. Though sometime teachers emphasis claiming to the pupils in order to become effective in the learning process.

This means that most of the teachers use to communicate in Swahili language with their pupils intentionally to help them to understand what is being taught in the class, though this become a challenge in learning English subjects.

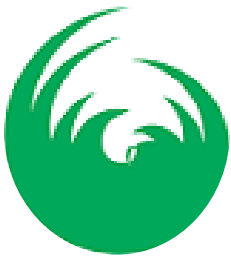
Conclusion and Recommendation

This current study about the Challenges facing pupils in Learning English Subject in Public Primary Schools in Nyamagana District assessed the ability of pupils in speaking and writing English language, examined the approaches used in teaching and learning English language, and identified the challenges faced by pupils in learning English language in public primary schools in Nyamagana District. The study revealed that pupils didn't enjoy learning English subject, pupils do not understand English subject, and pupil's ability to speak English language also pronunciation are the challenge facing pupils in learning English language as well as the communication language among pupils with their teachers is a challenge faced pupils in learning English language. Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the study recommend that teachers should guide and encourage pupils to perceive English language

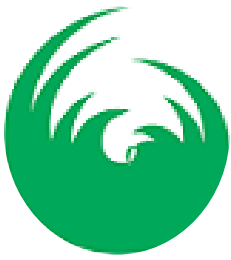
positively and seek more avenues where they can be practicing the language for better fluency and vocabulary development. Such avenues include socializing with other pupils from private schools who are fluent in the English language, overcoming the fear of making errors in speaking and writing English language and actively seeking help to correct errors and mistakes. Also, the government needs to build more classrooms to mitigate the challenge of overcrowded classes, to provide enough teaching and learning resources and ensure equal distribution of resources, create good learning and working conditions so as to motivate pupils to learn, and teachers to get the motivation to teach English language in public primary schools.

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