STUDENTS' ATTRIBUTES INFLUENCE ON THE ADOPTION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT SOMALI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Background: The adoption of English as the language of instruction has continuously been on the rise globally. In Somalia, teaching English is done as a subject both at the primary and secondary levels. In contrast, at the tertiary level, students and academic staff indicate low levels of English proficiency. This led to this study investigating students' attributes influence on the adoption of English language as an instructional language at Somali National University. Krashen's monitor theory informed the study.

Methodology: A mixed methods approach was employed, whereas the design used for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The target population for this study consisted of lecturers, students, senior management staff and the Director of Education. A sample size of 30 students, 88 lecturers, 15 senior management officers and 1 Director of Education was considered. The sample size was selected using a simple random and proportionate stratified sampling technique for lecturers and students, whereas the purposive sampling technique was employed for the Senior Management Officer and Director of Higher Education. The collection of data was through questionnaires, interviews and focused group discussion. The reliability of the data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. Percentages and regression were used in the analysis.

Results: The study noted that the language of instruction was a big challenge at Somali National University, where Somali and Arabic were predominantly used inside and outside the classroom. The challenges were attributed to the weak implementation of the language and schooling system. The study concluded that students' attributes influence English adoption as an instructional language. It recommended that the government of Somalia develop a policy to ensure that students joining universities have a background in English.

Keywords: Students' attributes, language proficiency, the language of teaching, English language, Somali national university

INTRODUCTION

The use of English as the delivery language of instruction has increased globally (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Aizawa & Rose, 2019; Macaro et al., 2018). This implies that English is the most widely written and spoken language globally (Rao, 2019). This is attributed to the adoption of international policies (Aizawa & Rose, 2019; Jibeen & Khan, 2015; Kruikow & Galloway, 2018) and also the Ministry of Education directives to accredit the courses offered in English language. The adoption of English as the medium of instruction has a lot of advantages including growth of universities, standardization of the private and public sectors and development of academic research and publications among others (Macaro et al., 2018). Despite the several studies conducted globally, the adoption of English language in teaching and learning remains unclear (Aizawa & Rose, 2018; Jibeen & Khan, 2015; Kruikow & Galloway, 2018).

The adoption of English in developing countries enhances the competitiveness of both public and private universities globally. It also enables competition of global scholarship and research funds (Brown, 2016; Luanganggoon, 2020; Macaro, 2017; Fenton et al., 2017; Kruikow & Galloway, 2018). Other advantages associated with English adoption as the medium of instruction include increased career opportunities, quality education and internationalization in Thailand and South Asia (Tang, 2020; Luanganggoon et al., 2018; Luanganggoon, 2020).

The adoption of English is faced by the challenge of lack of implementation policies at the beginning of the language globally (Macaro, 2018; Aizawa & Rose, 2018). Another challenge was argued to include the role of the other languages as media of instructions (Earls, 2016; Fentol et al., 2017; Kruikow & Galloway, 2018). An example is Qatar where Arabic is the native language and is used in the Islamic religion. This implied that adoption of English language will pose a threat to Arabic language. According to Tang (2020), the challenges affecting the implementation of English as an instructional language are categorized into linguistic, cultural, structural and identity related challenges. These findings collaborate with Huang (2015) who argued that students' perception affected the use of English u as a delivery language in Taiwan.

In Africa, the challenges of implementation of English as the instructional language intensified. This was mainly attributed to heavy reliance and borrowing of policies that enhance the utilization of English as the delivery language of instructions in institutions of higher learning (Nhongo, 2013; Bagwasi, 2021). However, this approach was associated with some benefits such as increased competitiveness from local to international levels (Gwakwa, 2016; Wilinska et al., 2020).

Locally, the challenge of language of instruction policy in Somalia was influenced by the break out of civil war in the 1990s that led to destruction of educational infrastructure and learning materials as well as deaths (MOECHE, 2017; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021). This led to unqualified teachers to undertake teaching using their most suitable language and the available resources. At primary level, the language of instruction is Somali. At secondary level, English is taught as a subject whereas at tertiary level, the language of instruction differed from private to public tertiary institutions. The Somali National University (SNU) adopts English as the language of instruction but there were some exceptions where the use of Somali and Arabic was allowed to some extent. This indicated a lack of policy regulation of the language of instruction. This led to a study on students' attributes as a factor influencing adoption of English as delivery language of instruction.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Across all the levels of education, the government of Somalia has developed policies that tackle the language used for class instructions across all levels of education (The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education [MOECHE], 2017; Yusuf, 2021; Ahmed, 2018). The languages of instruction adopted in Somalia include: Somali, Arabic and English with Somali being the dominant language of instruction (MOECHE, 2017; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021). However, English is used as a third language after Somali and Arabic where it is taught as a subject at both primary and secondary school level where it is used as language of instruction in several universities. The Somali National University being a government funded university provides training on language proficiencies to teachers; hence, it was expected to utilize English as the delivery language. However, the extent of successful implementation of English as the instructional language in the university remains unclear and the cause of the slow implementation is still uncovered for the particular university. The slow implementation process of the English language was caused partly by the lack of implementation framework. A lot of studies have been conducted on the aspect of English language proficiency, academic achievement, students' challenges, learners' satisfaction and history of languages of instructions in Somali (Addow et al., 2013; Yusuf, 2021; The Dexis Consulting Group, 2021; Eno, 2017; Aziz & Yasin, 2017; Ahmed, 2018). However, there is a dearth of studies on the factors affecting English language adoption as the delivery language at Somali National University; hence, the need for this study. The study specifically investigated the students' factor on the adoption of English language as the medium of instruction. This study sought to test the null hypothesis which stated that students' attributes had no influence on the adoption of English language as an instructional language at Somali National University.

STUDENTS ATTRIBUTES AND ADOPTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

In most countries, English is viewed as a foreign language yet very influential globally (Yasemin, 2014; Nuria & Antonio, 2017; Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015). The study investigating students' attributes and implementation of English as the instructional language was guided by Krashen monitor theory which was invented by Krashen (1994) and later improved by Schutz (2007). The theory consists of five hypothesis including acquisition learning, monitor, input, natural order and affective filter (Schutz, 2007). The learning acquisition hypothesis states that students acquire competencies in a language through learning or acquisition. Acquisition is an unconscious process where students are not aware of language rules whereas learning is a conscious process. The other four hypothesis elaborate on the relationship and differences between acquisition and learning. The theory is significant in explaining how the second language can be acquired by the students since acquisition is better than learning (Krashen, 1994; Schutz, 2007).

A lot of studies have been conducted globally that explain the relationship between students' attributes and adoption of English language. Yasemin (2014) argued that in Turkey, students taught in English failed to acquire disciplinary knowledge compared to those taught in Turkish. In another study by Ilyani and Liza (2021), they argued that some challenges associated with use of English language included students' language proficiency among others.

In African countries, the language of instruction choices was based on multilingual and bilingual settings where English is employed as a second or a third language. In Ghana, English is adopted as a third language after Leteh & Twi (Ansah, 2014). However, the predominant language of instruction was based on students' level of proficiency. In Somalia, the language of communication

is Somali and English is only a minor language (William & Leslye, 2003). The studies in Somalia were limited to private universities (Eno, 2017; Abubakar, 2018). This arose the need for this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study examined the influence of students' attributes on the English adoption as an instructional language. The study was conducted at Somali National University which is a public university. Mixed and descriptive survey research design were adopted in this study as they enabled direct collection of data from respondents. The population of the study was grouped into teaching staff (439), administration management (20), students (4791) and the Director of Education. Different types of sampling techniques were adopted depending on different populations. Purposive sampling was used on University Management Officers and Director of Education, whereas, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used on both lecturers and students. The sample size was distributed as follows: 88 lecturers, 30 students, 15 management officers and 1 Director of Education totaling to 134 respondents. Data was collected through the means of questionnaires, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and interviews. Pilot study was conducted at Mogadishu University where a total of 5 lectures, 5 students and 2 management officers were sampled to facilitate accuracy of results obtained. The reliability of the data and validity were tested accordingly. Data was analyzed using descriptive and regression statistical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reliability of data was tested through Cronbach's Alpha which indicated a value above 0.7 hence the data was internally consistent and dependable (Bryman and Bell, 2011). An overall response rate of 82% was recorded where 69 lecturers, 23 students, 11 university management officers and 1 director of higher education responded effectively.

Adoption of English as a Delivery Language

This study sought to investigate the extent to which teachers appreciate the implementation of English as the instructional language at Somali National University. The results were tabulated as shown below on a 5-level Likert scale.

Table 1: **The adoption of English as an instructional language**

Statement	VSE(1)	SE(2)	ME(3)	LE(4)	VLE(5)
a) Our university has English language policies which address it as the language of instruction	69(100.0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
b) Due to the presence of a common language of instruction, we experience an influx of foreign students admitted to undertake respective courses at SNU	68(98.6%)	1(1.4%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
c) Our university has responded to the internationalization by offering numerous courses in the English language	0(0%)	36(52.2%)	33(47.8%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
d) Students' attributes affect the adoption of English as the instructional language at SNU	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	14(20.3%)	55(79.7%)
e) The attributes of the teaching staff affect English adoption as the delivery language at SNU	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	67(97.1%)	2(2.9%)
f) Internalization affects the adoption of English as the language of instructions at SNU	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	63(91.3%)	6(8.7%)
g) Multiculturalism affects the adoption of English language as an instructional language at SNU	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	67(97.1%)	2(2.9%)
h) The adoption of English language in delivery of instructions at SNU is essential	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	63(91.3%)	6(8.7%)

According to the findings from Table 1, all respondents agreed that the university had no policies on adoption of English as the language of instruction. However, its adoption was influenced by students' attributes 55(79.7%) to a very large extent, teachers' attributes 67(97.1%) to a large extent and multiculturalism 67(97.1%) to a large extent. This implied that students' attributes had a lot of impact on English adoption as the language of instruction at SNU. However, the adoption of English as the instructional language faced some challenges. The challenges of English language adoption were traced back to primary and secondary schools where English is taught as a subject only. This leads to poor proficiency on students who join universities. According to Yusuf (2021), Somali National University masters' students lacked proficiency in English attributed by poor background in English as the language is ranked third after Arabic and Somali.

Although, the faculty members appreciated the significance of English as a medium of instruction 63 (91.3%), the language has not been fully embraced at Somali National University. These findings are supported by Fuad (2018) and Mohammed (2018) who argued that Somali teaching

staff showed interest in having a standard language for teaching although the education system lacked regulations for English adoption. The Director of Higher Education expressed that lack of commitment in implementing language policies leads to the decline in managing students' attributes at Somali National University.

Students Attributes and Adoption of English language

Students' attributes were investigated through some aspects which included the level (year) of the course that one was undertaking, oral and written English skills of students, their attitudes, proficiency in the English language, background in the language and use of other local languages in classroom conservations

Table 2: The students' attributes

	Statement	VSE(1)	SE(2)	ME(3)	LE(4)	VLE(5)
a)	The students I lecture possess good oral and written English skills	0(0%)	6(8.7%)	51(73.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
b)	Our students have positive attitudes towards the utilization of English as an instructional language	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(2.9%)	67(97.1%)
c)	The English language proficiency is considered as a major factor when students enroll in the university	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	46(66.7%)	23(33.3%)
d)	Students who join our university have background in the English Language	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(2.9%)	67(97.1%)
e)	Students use Arabic and Somali when answering questions or elaborating a phenomenon during lectures	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(7.2%)	39(56.5%)	25(36.2%)
f)	Students use Arabic and Somali during their normal conversations	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	55(79.7%)	14(20.3%)
g)	Learners perform better when exams are administered in the English language	53(76.8%)	16(23.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
h)	Learners actively participate, ask questions, and engage in discussions in the English language	53(76.8%)	16(23.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
i)	Students like being taught in the English language	0(0%)	58(84.1%)	11(15.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

The results from the Table 2 indicated that Somali National University students have positive attitudes towards the utilization of English as a delivery language of instruction 67 (97.1%). Despite the interest, the students' oral and written English skills were reported to be moderate

73.9%. Apart from the students, during the admission the university had interest in English language proficiency and background. Students joining the university have poor proficiency in English language as indicated by one senior management staff. This in turn leads to students experiencing challenges in attending lectures facilitated in English. The director of higher education noted the same where the challenges in proficiency made students feel frustrated and dropped out of school and this was confirmed through the focused group discussion by the students. However, the university management failed to put in any measures in assisting students overcome this challenge.

There was need for government to take measures in ensuring that students who join universities in Somalia have a background in English language since this affects universities that uses English in course delivery. However, students in SNU mostly used Arabic and Somali to ask questions and when engaging in classroom discussions and normal interactions. From Table 1, 58 (84.1%) of the teaching staff indicated that many students despised being taught in English language. The students through FGD also indicated that they preferred lecturers who mix English and Somali while delivering for better understanding of the lessons. This practice of using 2 languages affected the performance of students where examinations administered in English language were likely to be failed by a large extent as noted by 53 (76.8%) of teaching staff. The findings were supported by Ganuza and Hedman (2019) who concluded that mother tongue has power as a delivery language and also influence the adoption of other languages in education system.

The results indicated that the university lacked clear policy guidance on the language of instruction adopted since Arabic and Somali languages were used both within the class and outside. This is clearly indicated by the fact that the university is cautious in admitting students who can use English language, but lacked measures in ensuring the use of English language in classrooms and in general interactions. Students' attitudes also affected the adoption of English language as the medium of instruction. Mustafe (2015) argued that the poor use of English language in classroom was attributed by lack of clear language policy in Somali. Hence there is need for a clear language policy practice in order to eliminate the negative attitudes towards employment of English as an instructional language.

Table 3: Correlations analysis on antecedents for adopting English as a language of instruction

			X1	Y
Spearman's rho	X1	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	
		N	69	
	Y	Correlation Coefficient	.605**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	69	69

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in correlation analysis Table 3 indicates a Spearman (rho) correlation value of .605** and correlation coefficient that is less than 0.05. This indicates a statistically positive and substantial relationship between students' attributes and adoption of English as the language of instruction, (r= .605, p < 0.05). The null hypothesis which stated that there was no statistically substantial link between students' attributes and the utilization of English as an instructional language at Somali National University was therefore rejected. The results indicated that an increase in students' attributes resulted to an increase in the adoption of English language as a delivery medium.

The study's findings indicated that the aspects of students' attributes investigated had positive and significant influence on the English adoption as the instructional language. The aspects investigated included students' proficiency, attitudes, oral and written skills, background of English and the use of other languages in classroom setting. These findings corroborated with Kaya & Ok (2020) who concluded that students' attributes strongly influence the adoption of English language in Turkey's curriculum. The students' attributes investigated included attitudes, competencies, behavior, cooperativeness, proficiency, listening and speaking publicly and motivation. This indicated the need for stakeholders to strengthen students' attributes for better adoption of English language as a delivery language of instruction.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicated that students' attributes were essential in the learning process. The entry behavior of university students was influenced by learners' characteristics and features. Although the university noted students' weaknesses in English language during admission, no measures were taken to assist the students in overcoming the challenges. Arabic and Somali were dominantly used by both students and teachers inside and outside the classroom; hence, posing a challenge in the implementation of English as the instructional language. The study concluded that there is a statistically positive and substantial link between students' attributes and adoption of English language as the medium of instruction at Somali National University.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that through the Ministry of Higher Education should develop a policy that ensures learners who join universities have a background in the English language by initiating suitable reforms in primary and secondary schools. The University Council and Management should introduce proficiency tests in all universities in order to ensure that students who join universities have basics in the English language and those who fail should attend proficiency classes within the university.

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