



## **Impact of Language Diversity on the Secondary School Learning Process in Nyamagana District, Tanzania**

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**Abstract:** This qualitative study, conducted in Nyamagana District, Tanzania, aimed to comprehensively explore the impact of linguistic diversity on the learning process within secondary education. Employing interviews, classroom observations and a literature review, the study investigated the multifaceted nature of linguistic diversity, revealing communication barriers that hindered students' comprehension and participation. Teachers employed diverse strategies, including bilingual instruction and visual aids, to address these challenges. Recommendations included the development of language support programs and investments in teacher development for the effective management of linguistic diversity, fostering equitable and inclusive learning environments. The study contributed crucial insights for stakeholders committed to creating culturally rich and inclusive educational settings in Nyamagana District's secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Linguistic diversity; language barriers; academic performance; communication strategies; inclusive learning.

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### **Introduction**

In Tanzania, the landscape of secondary education is characterized by rich linguistic diversity, with a multitude of languages spoken by students hailing from various ethnic backgrounds. This diversity, while culturally vibrant, poses significant challenges in the realm of education, as it introduces language barriers that can hinder effective communication and learning experiences in the classroom. Understanding the impact of language barriers and devising strategies to overcome them is crucial for promoting inclusive learning environments in the Tanzanian secondary education.

Tanzania stands as a testament to cultural diversity, encompassing a tapestry of more than 120 distinct ethnic groups, each with its unique language and cultural practices (Batibo, 1992). Within the realm of education, this cultural richness has given rise to dynamic multilingual classrooms, where students arrive with varying language proficiencies and preferences (Shank-Lauwo, 2022). However, amid this diversity lies a challenge. Although English serves as the official language and medium of instruction in secondary schools (Benson, 2005), a significant number of students communicate in Kiswahili or their mother tongues at home, creating a linguistic divide between the familial and scholastic environments

As language undeniably assumes a pivotal role in the teaching and learning process, the presence of language barriers resonates with far-reaching implications. Such barriers can significantly impede students' ability to comprehend subject matters, actively engage in classroom discussions and cultivate essential communication skills. Consequently, this phenomenon can inadvertently culminate in restricted academic achievement and reduced student engagement, particularly for those hailing from linguistically diverse backgrounds (Parker et al., 2005b; Sylvain, 2010).

Drawing inspiration from authors such as Benson (2005), Batibo (1992), Shank-Lauwo (2022), Parker et al. (2005b) and Sylvain (2010), this study embarks on a journey to unravel the nuances of language diversity, the challenges it poses and the potential strategies to cultivate inclusive learning environments. By doing so, it sought to contribute to the broader discourse on educational equity and student empowerment within the unique context of Nyamagana District's secondary schools.

The significance of addressing language barriers in Tanzanian secondary education, as emphasized by various authors, is profound and multifaceted. Firstly, the work of Billings and Gogan (2011) highlights that creating inclusive learning environments is pivotal. This fosters a sense of belonging and support for students from diverse language backgrounds, enabling them to freely express themselves, share perspectives and engage collaboratively in the learning process. Moreover, Shah and Johansson's study (2016) underscored that overcoming language barriers positively influences academic outcomes, providing clarity for readers. Tailoring communication approaches to cater for various linguistic needs optimizes instructional practices, leading to enhanced comprehension and knowledge retention. In the realm of higher education, Ferguson and Zhou's study (2001) stressed the importance of providing targeted language support and resources to enhance educational outcomes. Outside the academic context, Flores's work (1999) highlighted the challenges faced by patients with limited English proficiency and emphasized that overcoming these language barriers is essential for effective communication. Furthermore, Anderson et al.'s study (2016) shed light on the impact of language barriers in research studies. Their study emphasized the ethical imperative of clear and accessible communication to ensure participants'

understanding of study procedures and risks. In conclusion, these authors collectively underlined the significance of addressing language barriers. By fostering inclusivity, improving academic outcomes and preparing students for global engagement, overcoming language barriers in Tanzanian education becomes a transformative endeavor with far-reaching implications.

The literature addresses the problem of informal language use, particularly Kiswahili and other native languages, as communication strategies in Tanzanian secondary classrooms where English is the official language of education. While this informal communication may support students' understanding and participation, it poses challenges in maintaining consistent language instruction. The use of multiple languages may lead to language mixing and code-switching, potentially impacting language proficiency and academic performance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was grounded in the Language Socialization Theory, originally introduced by Ochs in 1988. This theory provided a valuable lens through which it is possible to investigate language acquisition, usage and adaptation in specific socio-cultural contexts. In the context of Tanzanian secondary education, characterized by a mix of English, Kiswahili and other native languages, this theory helped the researchers to explore how students were socialized into using various languages for communication. It emphasizes that language learning is a social process influenced by interactions and immersion in communicative contexts, highlighting the role of cultural context and mediation by more knowledgeable individuals. This framework informed the study's examination of language barriers and communication strategies, shedding light on how students and teachers navigate language diversity and develop effective communication practices in multilingual classrooms.

### **Literature Review**

This section provides a comprehensive overview of existing research and scholarly works related to language diversity in Tanzanian secondary education, language barriers and communication strategies in inclusive learning environments. The section critically examines relevant studies and best practices that inform the current research on overcoming language barriers for promoting inclusive learning.

## **Linguistic Diversity in Secondary Education**

The literature review highlights the linguistic diversity in Tanzanian secondary education. Three seminal studies conducted by Brock-Utne (2007), Malekela (2010) and Nade (2016) contributed to the understanding of this vital aspect of education

Brock-Utne's study (2007) sheds light on the vast array of languages spoken by students in Tanzanian secondary schools. The author emphasized on the necessity of adopting culturally responsive pedagogies that consider students' linguistic backgrounds. Integrating cultural elements into instructional practices fosters an inclusive learning environment where students feel recognized and valued for their linguistic heritage. By engaging students with their own cultural context, teachers can enhance student motivation, participation and academic achievement.

In line with Brock-Utne's emphasis on cultural responsiveness, Malekela's study (2010) drew attention to the positive correlation between mother tongue education and academic performance in Tanzania. Malekela advocated for the use of students' mother tongues in instructional practices, as it enhances students' comprehension and engagement with the subject matter. Embracing mother tongue also boosts students' self-esteem and cultural identity, creating a positive learning experience that aligns with the learners' cultural roots.

Nade's (2016) study supported Malekela's findings and advocated for mother tongue education in South Africa. Similar to Tanzania, South Africa exhibits linguistic diversity, making instruction through mother tongue a relevant consideration. Nade's work reinforces the importance of mother tongue in fostering inclusive learning environments, improving academic outcomes and transcending geographical boundaries.

The literature emphasizes the benefits of linguistic diversity in education, but challenges persist in its implementation. Obstacles such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training in diverse approaches, and the necessity for relevant teaching materials in multiple languages hinder effective execution.

## **Language Barriers in Multilingual Classrooms**

Literature on language barriers in multilingual classrooms reveals the challenges faced by students

and teachers in effectively communicating and engaging in the learning process.

In their study, Gorgorió and Planas (2001) investigated the prevalent issue of linguistic misunderstandings in Tanzanian mathematics classrooms, emphasizing its role as a substantial barrier to effective communication. Their study highlighted the importance of using contextually appropriate instructional language to bridge language gaps. They revealed the intricate connection between social, cultural and linguistic aspects within mathematics teaching and learning, challenging the perception of mathematical language as universally understood. The study underscored the imperative for teachers to be attuned to students' diverse linguistic backgrounds, urging them to tailor their language to match students' proficiency levels and cultural contexts. This approach aimed to create a more inclusive and conducive learning environment, recognizing and accommodating linguistic diversity to enhance comprehension and engagement in mathematics education.

Denmark et al. (2021) conducted a study that shed light on teachers' behaviors, beliefs and attitudes toward multilingualism. Employing the Multilingual Classroom Questionnaire (MCQ) as their data collection tool, the study unveiled a prevailing positive disposition among teachers towards multilingualism, emphasizing their recognition of the value in preserving and supporting children's first language (L1). This study underscored the pivotal role of proficiency in L1 for nurturing language and literacy development in children's second language (L2). Additionally, it revealed an intriguing connection between teachers' attitudes and their competence in a foreign language. While the study provided valuable insights, offering practical implications for supporting multilingualism in educational settings, it would benefit from the inclusion of more contextual information about the Danish multilingual landscape and a discussion of potential limitations and future research directions.

Opoku-Amankwa's paper (2009) focused on the influence of Ghana's English-only language-in-education policy on students' classroom communicative practices and learning experiences. The study highlighted how the use of English, an unfamiliar language, created anxiety among students and impeded effective classroom participation. The paper also addressed key issues

impinging on literacy development in multilingual classrooms in postcolonial Africa and challenged uninformed attitudes towards mother tongue/bilingual education. The study further debunked negative perceptions about mother-tongue education and explored the potential for bilingual/mother-tongue education in Ghana's multilingual classrooms.

The above-mentioned studies highlight the significance of addressing language barriers in multilingual classrooms for promoting effective communication and inclusive learning. Contextually, appropriate instructional language and positive attitudes towards multilingualism and mother tongue education are crucial for creating supportive and engaging classroom environments. However, challenges in implementation persist, including anxiety and barriers associated with using an unfamiliar language. Policy implications concerning the role of mother tongue education in multilingual classrooms also emerges. In conclusion, literature underscores the importance of effective communication strategies that consider context and students' linguistic backgrounds to foster inclusive learning environments. Educational stakeholders can use the insights from these studies to overcome language barriers and create empowering and culturally responsive learning environments in multilingual settings.

### **Communication Strategies in Inclusive Education Settings**

Effective communication strategies are instrumental in overcoming language gaps and in promoting inclusivity in the learning process. Two studies by Mkimbili (2019) and Ilomo and Ilomo (2017) emphasize the significance of specific approaches to enhance student understanding and encourage active participation. Mkimbili (2019) discusses the importance of using visual aids, gestures and simplified language to enhance students' comprehension of complex concepts. Visual aids such as diagrams, charts and illustrations serve as valuable tools for visual learners and help reinforce verbal explanations. Gestures, when used appropriately, can complement verbal communication and provide additional context and clarity to students. Moreover, simplifying language and avoiding jargon or overly complex terminology enable students to grasp content more easily, particularly those with limited language proficiency.

Ilomo and Ilomo (2017) proposed teacher-student partnerships as a communication strategy to create a supportive and interactive atmosphere in the classroom. By fostering strong teacher-student relationships and encouraging open communication, students feel valued, respected and more confident in expressing themselves. This partnership approach allows teachers to better understand students' learning needs and preferences, adapting instructional methods accordingly. In turn, students become more engaged and proactive in their learning journey, leading to improved learning outcomes.

These studies emphasized the crucial role of communication strategies in creating inclusive learning environments. Visual aids and simplified language accommodate diverse learning styles and language proficiency levels, ensuring effective information access for all students. Additionally, teacher-student partnerships foster a positive classroom climate, empowering students to actively participate and contribute to their learning. However, successful implementation hinges on factors such as teacher training, understanding students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and cultivating effective teacher communication. By tailoring approaches to meet diverse needs, educators can bridge language gaps and promote an inclusive learning environment that values all student's unique abilities and perspectives.

Literature review has revealed some gaps and areas for further study in the field of language diversity, language barriers and communication strategies in inclusive learning environments. While studies by Brock-Utne (2007), Malekela (2010) and Nade (2016) emphasize the significance of recognizing linguistic diversity in Tanzanian secondary education and the benefits of mother tongue education, there is a need for more in-depth exploration of the practical implementation of these strategies in diverse classroom settings. Additionally, the works of Gorgorió and Planas (2001), Knudsen et al. (2021) and Opoku-Amankwa (2009) highlight challenges faced in addressing language barriers in multilingual classrooms, indicating a necessity for further investigations into effective communication techniques and teacher training programs to overcome these obstacles.

This study sought to establish the influence of linguistic diversity on learning experiences within the secondary education system in Nyamagana

District, Tanzania. The study aimed to establish the complexities, communication barriers and teachers' strategies associated with linguistic diversity, with the overarching goal of providing valuable insights for promoting inclusive and equitable learning environments in this specific educational context.

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

The research approach employed in this study was qualitative, involving the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to delve into language barriers and communication strategies in the Tanzanian secondary education. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, were utilized to explore the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of both teachers and students. The focus was on understanding the complexities of the issue through rich descriptions and narratives rather than quantitative numerical analyses, aiming to provide a deep and holistic understanding of the research topic. Through qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, classroom observations and document analysis, the study aimed to unravel the intricate dynamics and challenges associated with linguistic diversity, providing nuanced insights for informing targeted strategies to foster inclusive and effective learning environments within Nyamagana District.

### **Population and Sampling**

In the Nyamagana district, where 30 government-owned secondary schools operate, the study endeavored to explore the impact of language diversity on the learning process. To ensure a representative and diverse sample, a meticulous sampling strategy employing simple random sampling was employed to randomly select five public secondary schools. This method was chosen to eliminate bias and provide an unbiased snapshot of the district's educational landscape. Each selected school was then represented by a purposefully chosen English language teacher (totalling 5 teachers) as teachers play a crucial role in shaping the language-learning environment. Additionally, to comprehensively delve into the effects of language diversity, four students from each of the five schools were included in the study, resulting in a total of 20 student representatives.

### **Instruments of Data Collection**

Multiple data collection methods were employed to gather required information. Online interviews were conducted with selected teachers and

students to delve deeper into their experiences and to gain qualitative insights. Classroom observations were also conducted to observe communication dynamics, language patterns and teaching strategies employed by teachers in multilingual classrooms. The data collection methods provided a holistic view of the communication practices and challenges in the educational context.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To enhance the validity and reliability, rigorous measures were implemented throughout the research process. Careful random selection of schools using the simple random technique was employed to provide a representative sample that could be generalized to the broader district, contributing to external validity. Additionally, the purposive selection of English language teachers and students from each chosen school ensured internal validity by including participants with direct experience in the language-learning dynamics under investigation. Standardized interviews were used for data collection to maintain reliability by ensuring consistency.

### **Treatment of Data**

During analysis, transcripts and field notes underwent the systematic coding and categorization to discern recurring themes and patterns associated with language barriers and communication strategies. This rigorous qualitative methodology aimed to unveil nuanced insights into the Tanzanian secondary education. The process involved a thorough exploration and interpretation of participants' perspectives to establish the impact of language on students' engagement, interaction and overall learning experiences. The outcomes provided valuable guidance for educators, policymakers and researchers interested in improving communication and inclusivity in Tanzanian classrooms.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time was granted. Confidentiality measures were implemented to protect participants' identities and data. The researchers maximized benefits and minimized harms, maintaining respect for cultural sensitivity throughout the research.

## Findings and Discussions

This section presents the results of the study, guided by specific research questions.

**Research Question:** How does language diversity affect education in Nyamagana District?

Regarding linguistic diversity, the interview with students and teachers, along with classroom observations, uncovered a rich linguistic diversity within the Nyamagana District. Students representing various ethnic backgrounds brought an array of languages, including local ethnic languages like Sukuma, Kuria, Zinza, Jita, Kerewe as well as the official languages of Swahili and English. This intricate linguistic tapestry reflects the broader context of language diversity in Tanzania. While Swahili serves as a national language and English as a key medium of instruction, students' multilingual backgrounds often led to code-switching, where there was a transition between languages.

In a bustling Tanzanian classroom within the Nyamagana District, where a myriad of ethnic backgrounds converge, a teacher, fluent in both Swahili and English, addressed the students. The atmosphere was charged with the vibrant energy of learning. The teacher, utilizing Swahili, articulated, "Tunahitaji kumaliza exercises hizi kabla ya mwisho wa darasa." (Translation: We need to complete these exercises before the end of the class.) However, recognizing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the students, the teacher seamlessly code-mixed, transitioning into English for clarity and formality, "We need to complete these exercises before the end of the class." This code-mixing strategy sought to ensure that all students, regardless of their mother tongue, grasp the instructional content effectively.

One student, reflecting on the previous day's class, shared in English, "I really enjoyed the class yesterday; it was amazing!" In response, another student, comfortable with both Swahili and English, code-mixed effortlessly, "Jana darasa lilikuwa poa, na ile darasa lilikuwa good!" (Translation: Yesterday's class was a good one, and that class was the best!) This conversational code-mixing reflects the dynamic language practices within the students' social interactions. The blending of Swahili and English adds a layer of expressiveness and cultural resonance to the conversation. It also showcases the adaptability of language use based on personal preferences and the informal context of the discussion. In both instances, code-mixing emerged

as a natural and flexible communication strategy, allowing individuals in this linguistically diverse environment to navigate seamlessly between languages for effective expression and for comprehension. The fluidity of language use becomes a testament to the rich tapestry of linguistic diversity within the educational landscape of the Nyamagana District.

The provided examples illustrate instances of code-mixing in a classroom setting and a conversation, revealing the adaptability of language use in multilingual contexts. In the classroom setting, the code-mixing involved a transition from Swahili to English, where the speaker seamlessly switches languages to convey the message. This adaptation may occur to accommodate the formal nature of the classroom setting where English is commonly used. In the conversational example, the code-mixing involves a switch from English to a blend of Swahili and English, emphasizing the speaker's comfort in integrating both languages for a more expressive and culturally resonant communication style. These instances of code-mixing reflect the dynamic nature of language use, suggesting that individuals navigate between languages based on contextual demands and personal preferences, contributing to a fluid and inclusive communication environment. Code-mixing in the classroom and conversations can positively enhance comprehension, foster cultural inclusivity and offer expressive flexibility. However, challenges may arise, including potential impacts on language proficiency, consistency in learning and assessment standardization. Balancing the benefits and challenges is crucial, requiring educators to manage code-mixing judiciously to maintain a supportive multilingual learning environment.

This phenomenon aligns with the literature's observation that code-switching is a common practice among students in multilingual contexts (Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010). This insight contributes to the concern on how language diversity affects the education in the Nyamagana District.

Insights from interviews and observations underscored that those students with limited English proficiency encounter obstacles in accessing education, substantiating the research inquiry on the influence of language diversity on the education in Nyamagana District. For instance, a student expressed, "Understanding lessons in English is

challenging and sometimes I feel left behind." Observation of classroom interactions revealed instances where students struggling with English had difficulty actively participating in discussions. This aligns with existing literature (Watkins et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2005a) suggesting that language barriers can impede educational access. Comparatively, studies in similar contexts emphasized the importance of language support initiatives to mitigate such challenges and enhance educational inclusivity. The identified barriers echo broader concerns, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies to address language-related impediments to education in diverse settings.

The interviews and observations brought to light multifaceted impact of the prevailing linguistic diversity in the district, which reflects the real situation in the whole country with over 120 ethnic groups. In such a situation, students often grow up using their local languages, which can vary significantly from the official languages of instruction to Swahili and English. This linguistic diversity results in limited proficiency in English, code-switching and vocabulary gaps among students, which impact students' ability to comprehend and engage effectively in classroom activities

In the heart of Nyamagana District Secondary School, where students from diverse linguistic backgrounds converge, the struggle with English proficiency becomes apparent. In an intimate interview, a student opened up about the challenges, expressing, "English is difficult for me; sometimes I don't understand what the teacher is saying." This candid admission encapsulates the hurdles faced by students grappling with the language of instruction. As the research unfolded, classroom observations revealed the tangible manifestations of limited English proficiency. During lively class discussions, students often found themselves wrestling with responses to questions posed in English. The struggle is palpable, reflecting the gap between the language used in the classroom and the linguistic comfort zone of the students.

### **Code-Switching**

In another interview, a student shed light on the coping mechanisms adopted, stating, "We use Swahili at home and in class, we mix it with English. It's just easier that way." This code-switching phenomenon becomes evident not only in students'

informal interactions but also in the dynamic exchanges between teachers and students. The fluid transition between Swahili and English introduces an element of flexibility but simultaneously impacts the consistency of language use within the classroom. The complex dance between languages unfolded as students navigated the academic terrain.

### **Vocabulary Gaps**

Further exploration into vocabulary challenges amplified the narrative. Another student articulated, "I know the words in my language, but in English, I can't find the right words, sometimes." This struggle with vocabulary became apparent during class activities that demand the expression of complex ideas in English. The linguistic hurdle results in instances where students offered simplified or incomplete responses, highlight the impact of language disparities on effective communication.

### **Impact on Learning**

As the researchers keenly observed classroom dynamics, the impact of limited English proficiency on the learning process became evident. Code-switching, while a coping strategy, occasionally disrupted the flow of lessons, necessitating brief pauses for clarification. In an insightful interview quote, a student reported, "When the lesson is in English, I focus more on understanding the words than the actual content." This shift in focus underscores the intricate relationship between language barriers and the cognitive engagement of students. The struggle to decipher language nuances detracts from the core learning objectives. In essence, these examples vividly portray the multifaceted challenges associated with limited English proficiency in the Nyamagana District Secondary School. The language struggles not only permeate academic interactions but also shape the broader learning experience, warranting targeted interventions to bridge the linguistic gaps and promote a more inclusive educational environment.

The gathered interview quotes and observational insights highlight pervasive challenges related to linguistic diversity in the educational context. The acknowledgment by a student that "English is difficult" and the admission of struggles in understanding teachers' instructions underscored limited proficiency in English. The observed frequent code-switching, as expressed by a student mentioning, "We mix Swahili with English; it's just easier that way," indicates a coping mechanism but

also reflects the inconsistency in language use within the classroom. Additionally, students grappling with vocabulary gaps, as voiced by a participant stating, "I know the words in my language, but in English, I can't find the right words," suggests a potential hindrance in expressing complex ideas. The observed disruptions in the flow of lessons due to code-switching and the student's focus on understanding words rather than content during English lessons further underscore the impact of linguistic challenges on the learning process. These findings align with broader literature on multilingual education, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to bridge language gaps and enhance comprehension in diverse linguistic settings.

### **Comparison with Previous Studies**

These findings align with previous studies (e.g., Cummins, 1981) emphasizing that linguistic diversity can contribute to varied proficiency levels, code-switching tendencies and vocabulary gaps. Scholars such as García (2009) have highlighted the potential impact of language differences on comprehension and engagement in multilingual classrooms. The current study reinforces these trends, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to address language-related challenges in educational settings with linguistic diversity.

The research findings highlight a significant concern regarding teachers' fluency in English as revealed in both interviews and classroom observations. One participant expressed, "Some teachers find it hard to explain complex topics in English during class." This sentiment was further substantiated by observations, where instances were noted of teachers struggling to articulate concepts clearly in English, leading to potential miscommunication with students.

This issue of teachers' fluency in English had a discernible impact on the learning process, particularly affecting students with limited language support and those with disabilities. The observed miscommunication heightened frustration levels among students, as one interviewee noted, "When the teacher speaks English, it's difficult to understand, and I feel left behind." This frustration, coupled with the challenges in comprehending lessons due to language barriers, contributed to diminished interest in education.

These findings resonate with the work of Coelho (2009) who explored the challenges faced by

students in linguistically diverse educational settings. Coelho's insights align with the observed psychological and emotional repercussions on students in our study. The documented impact of teacher language proficiency on effective communication and learning outcomes echoes broader concerns in the literature (Gibbons, 2002; Menken & Antunez, 2001). Therefore, addressing teachers' fluency in English emerges as a critical factor in promoting inclusive and effective education in linguistically diverse settings.

While specific data on language challenges in student participation and discussions in Nyamagana Secondary Schools may not be available, potential issues identified through this study encompass varying language proficiency, anxiety, vocabulary gaps, cultural and local context differences, code-switching, unequal participation, limited teacher support and the importance of inclusive strategies to facilitate effective communication and participation in a diverse classroom environment. These observations were substantiated by interview quotes, where one student expressed, "Speaking in English during discussions makes me anxious and sometimes I avoid participating." Another participant highlighted vocabulary gaps, stating, "I struggle to find the right words in English to express my thoughts." These sentiments align with literature on language-related challenges in education, such as Coelho's (2009) exploration of the impact of language difficulties on student engagement. Gibbons (2002) similarly emphasized the importance of addressing varying language proficiencies for equitable participation. The findings from this study underscore the need for tailored strategies to mitigate these challenges and foster an inclusive learning environment.

Comprehension challenges, as illuminated through interviews with students and teachers, vividly demonstrate the pronounced impact of language diversity on the learning process. The research uncovered that language barriers, specifically limited proficiency in English, created substantial hurdles for effective comprehension. One student poignantly expressed, "Understanding lessons in English is challenging, and sometimes I feel left behind," encapsulating the struggles faced by students. Additionally, teachers highlighted instances where students had difficulty comprehending instructions and fully grasping subject matter due to language disparities. This aligns squarely with the research question probing



into the repercussions of language diversity on learning.

This difficulty in comprehension echoes the concerns raised by Mongula (2016) who emphasized the potential consequences of limited language proficiency, including misconceptions and lower retention of information. The literature thus substantiates our findings, portraying a consistent narrative regarding the intricate relationship between language barriers and compromised comprehension. Furthermore, the literature also recognized the compounding effect of limited access to English-language educational resources, adding an additional layer of complexity to the challenges posed by language diversity in the learning environment.

Reduced participation and engagement emerged as significant consequences of language barriers, evident through observations and discussions with students and teachers. Students, grappling with limited English proficiency, expressed feeling inhibited in actively participating in classroom discussions, as one student emphasized, "I often stay quiet because I'm not confident in my English." This hindrance not only impeded language practice opportunities but also thwarted critical thinking development. Schur and Braveman's (1993) observations resonate with these findings, underscoring the inhibitory effects of language barriers on active engagement in the learning process, contributing to feelings of isolation among students. The impact on academic performance was evident in interviews, classroom observations and was supported by Alqahtani and Al-Shehri's (2015) study, demonstrating how limited English language proficiency affected academic outcomes, particularly in English-based assessments.

Emotionally, students experienced stress, anxiety and diminished self-esteem, as highlighted by one student, "English classes make me anxious, and I feel like I'm not as smart as others." This emotional toll could potentially lead to increased dropout rates, a concern particularly relevant to Nyamagana District. Additionally, this study indicated that limited English proficiency not only affected academic performance but also imposed constraints on students' future educational and career prospects, aligning with broader literature recognizing the pervasive implications of language barriers on students' educational and career trajectories. These findings underscore the urgent

need for comprehensive strategies to address language-related challenges in diverse educational settings.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This section presents conclusions and gives the corresponding recommendations of the study, based on the findings.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the study underscored the intricate dynamics of language diversity in Nyamagana District and its profound impact on the learning process. The rich linguistic tapestry, marked by code-mixing and multilingual backgrounds, highlights the adaptability of students to diverse language contexts. Challenges such as limited English proficiency, code-switching and vocabulary gaps pose significant barriers to effective comprehension and engagement. The observed struggles in teachers' fluency in English further exacerbate these challenges. These findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to address language-related obstacles in education. To foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment, tailored interventions must be implemented, recognizing the diverse linguistic landscape in Nyamagana District and ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the comprehensive findings, recommendations to address language diversity challenges in Nyamagana District and enhance the learning process include implementing targeted Language Support Programs to improve students' English proficiency, providing Teacher Training programs to enhance educators' fluency, adopting Inclusive Pedagogical Approaches, accommodating diverse linguistic backgrounds, ensuring the availability of Multilingual Resources to bridge vocabulary gaps, and conducting Cultural Sensitivity Training for educators. Other recommendations include initiating Peer Support Programs for collaborative learning, implementing regular Assessments and Monitoring to identify and support struggling students, advocating for Policy Changes recognizing and addressing language diversity, promoting Parental Involvement in supporting language development at home and encouraging continuous research and evaluation for refining interventions based on the evolving linguistic landscape. These recommendations collectively aim

to create an inclusive environment that embraces linguistic diversity, ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students in Nyamagana District.

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