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CURRENT CHALLENGES OF STRATEGY USE IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CASE OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of this study was to examine how the teaching challenges affect strategy use in second language classrooms in Tanzanian public primary schools, mainly in Manyara region. In the process of teaching second language teachers use different strategies of teaching so they can help their students acquire a target language. There are some challenges that hinder the teaching process and caused the teaching strategies to be ineffective.

Methodology: This particular study has used the qualitative approach method of which the descriptive method was applied. The data were collected through observation and interviews to investigate on those challenges and how it affects the teaching strategies in the second language classrooms. The 24 teachers from 46 teachers who teach Kiswahili and English languages of the three primary schools were randomly selected from Acronis, Engonongoi and Looing'oswani located in Manyara region have been the participants of this research.

Findings: The results of this study revealed that second language teaching in the classrooms faces different challenges in the use of strategies of teaching. Challenges that are been found are overcrowded classroom, lack of teaching materials and teachers' poor knowledge on how students acquire second language.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: This study has found that teaching challenges are what make second-language teaching strategies to be ineffective. The results of this study will help language and education stakeholders to address these challenges in order the teaching strategies to be more effective when employed in the classroom. The study suggested that the general improvement of primary school classrooms should be conducted to fix this problem. The number of second language teachers should be increase to fit the number of students. These schools have divided their students in different classrooms but because there is shortage of teachers they have to put them in one classroom when they are teaching.

Keywords: *Second Language, Strategy Use, Primary Schools, Tanzania*

INTRODUCTION

Second language teaching is very different from acquiring the mother tongue or first language. This is because parental language activation occurs in a non-cognitive environment and the child does not need to be taught but the second language occurs in the cognitive environment and the one in charge of the whole process is the teacher. There is a hypothesis theory that claims that the process of acquiring a language is biological in relation to the age of the child. In the case of a second language, a second language learner who begins to acquire language at an adult's age will not be able to acquire all the essential elements of a language as a native speaker, and one of the basics deference is the competency in grammar and pronunciation language Teng & Reynolds, (2019) . However there are other studies that have proven that different language learners can master languages at different levels due to environmental factors and not the biological factors Hoque, (2017). There are a number of factors associated with success in second language learning which are the environments in which the child is raised, the character of the language learner, and other cultural aspects.

The use of second language teaching methods began to gain momentum in the 1970s. This was the time when various scholars began to see the importance of using second language strategies of teaching and learning (Jenny X. Montaña-González, 2017). Students have individual differences in how they learn. These differences are known as learning styles and learning strategies. The learning style a learner is born with and the one he or she relies on when engaging in language learning situation (Ghost Bear, 2012). The shift from teacher-centered to student-centered approach to language teaching and learning has been appeared in the field of applied linguistics (Riazi, 2007). In the late 1970s there were very good studies on methods of learning English as a second language and English as a foreign language. The concept of learning curve has been defined as the behavior, action or skill that a learner uses to facilitate language learning (Rubin 1987, Rigney, 1978). Other experts like Oxford have referred to such techniques as cognitive, emotional and social aspect of language learning strategies that enhance learners' language learning proficiency and self-confidence (oxford 1990). They described language learning strategies as specific actions, behaviors, steps or skills that a student regularly uses to improve the development of second language skills; these can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval or use of a new language.

Statement of Problem

Second language teaching is very important in Tanzanian education because it is used as a medium of instruction in different levels of education. Although the second languages are taught in primary schools but the language competency could not reach the expectations. It is suggested that using strategies in teaching is very helpful to the second language learners. It is found that second language teachers employ different teaching strategies in their classroom. This is why this particular study researched on the challenges face the strategy use in the classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the challenges of second language teaching is teaching in a multilingual environment. Second language proficiency for Tanzanian primary school students and alumni is defined in relation to the various aspects of teaching skills as described by (Wilson & Komba, 2012),

students' social background, lack of enough teaching and learning materials. Despite having a variety of teaching methods but the nature of second language teaching in Tanzania is that teachers conduct teaching without considering the student's learning style and strategies (Allen, 2010) and Roy-Campbell & Qorro (1997) and (Msuya, 2016) . According to various studies conducted on the language of instruction due to the debate of whether Kiswahili or English to be language of instruction has nothing to do with the students mastering the target language Rugemalira, (2005), MacIntyre & Baker, (2001) and Krashen and Terrell, (1983). This is because there are people who believe that using language as a language of instruction will enable students to master language easily which are not the right thing to do. This has been the topic of much debate in the country after education stakeholders argued that English has been chosen as the language of instruction to help students master the language. This is something that has been proven wrong in Tanzania. Krashen (1997) in his research attributed the success of the language of linguistic input and pedagogy used (Komba & Bosco, 2015).

Learning a second language in Tanzania has been very challenging because it is not uncommon for learners of a second language to become proficient in the language. According to some studies, students' perceptions on the use Kiswahili or English in the classroom especially the study conducted by Komba (2015), 71.4% of students indicated that they would like to use both Kiswahili and English language during classroom teaching. (Komba & Bosco, 2015), and for their part, this will help them to master the language more easily. However, the poor results of the English language were due to a shortage of English teachers as well as a shortage of learning and teaching materials. This clearly shows that second language teaching is generally overshadowed by so many challenges that lead to learners failing to master the language as it should be. If you look at how English is taught and the challenges that arise and it is very difficult for a student to master the language as it should be. If we look at these challenges it also applies to students who are learning Kiswahili as a second language.

It is understandable that the environment in which primary school students learn helps in the use of techniques that teaches children reading techniques in Kiswahili as the first language before teaching them to read and write in English. An example was given to Canadian learners learning French (MacIntyre & Baker, 2001) and (Siegel 1997), where a study of French writing in which a second language was introduced in third grade after students acquired the basic knowledge of English as their first language (Rugemalira, 2005). It has been reported that secondary school students are not ready to learn or use English as a language of instruction because of the poor teaching methods used in primary schools. Teachers and students seem to struggle to express themselves in a language they are not fluent in. In many secondary schools in Tanzania Kiswahili is becoming an alternative language of instruction because many teachers have been seen changing the code in the classroom from English to the more comprehensible language which is Kiswahili Roy-Campbell et al (1997).

In the process of second language teaching in primary schools it has been found that there is a shortage of teaching materials as well as the number of classrooms compared to the number of students which is overcrowded. This becomes a challenge for those who have chosen a teaching method that will suit the number of students in the classroom and at the end of the day the teacher will choose a method that he or she deems appropriate and therefore the technique may not be suitable for his or her students. Procedurally every student should have his or her own

table and chair but you find that only a few students can find a table and chair and thus cause even a shortage of teaching materials. This situation forces the teacher to teach without giving any explanation by writing or drawing. Government regulations states that each class should not exceed 40 students but classrooms have more than 100 students. Teachers do not have the skills to teach a second language which makes the selection of appropriate techniques in that environment impossible. However these challenges have continued to be addressed but with little improvement for some schools Chacha, (2013). Teaching second language in Tanzania has become more theoretical than practical and does not focus on the learner's wishes but on political aspirations. What makes the second language learning and teaching of Africa in general and Tanzania in particularly is the use of inefficient teaching methods in classroom teaching, shortage of textbooks, and classroom assessments. Textbooks contain content that the average student will not normally understand Mtallo, (2015).

Second language teaching methods in primary schools shows how education policy addresses language issues. If the policy is flawed it means that it will affect the use of English teaching methods as a second language in primary schools. Studies show that there are challenges in language policy as an assessment feature that affects the teaching process. The examination questions were asked about the structure of the questions, how they look and what they measure. In the study of Sumra & Rajani, (2006) they looked at the exam to finish seventh grade and found that most of the test had multiple choice questions and most of them were measuring memorization of the students. Research shows that even in Kiswahili and English exams it did not require students to write a single sentence. The fact is that they do not measure how to solve students' problems nor do they measure the skills acquired. This condition causes them to forget everything shortly after the end of examinations Sumra & Rajani, (2006).

Another challenge of teaching a second language has been the teaching methods that the teacher chooses to use. Experts argue that when you decide to use English in the classroom as a teaching strategy, it is only those students who want to do well will have the positive effect of language proficiency (Abd-kadir & Hardman, 2007). Another challenge is that if the teacher allows the use of the mother tongue to be used in the classroom, it is likely that students' ability to learn a second language will be reduced and this has been a challenge for many educational systems that allow the use of languages other than the target language. In this context, it is recommended that especially for monolingual communities that reduce the use of the mother tongue instead use more of the second language. Allowing the use of other languages in the classroom will help the student to use the second language more and learn as well (Cholakova, 2015).

According to the experts we quoted in the works, the challenges of second language teaching in Tanzania stem from many factors that also lead to poor selection of teaching strategies and the challenges of using those strategies in the classroom. This study focuses on how the various challenges of second language teaching pose challenges to the use of teaching strategies.

Research gap

According to the review of different literature the study has come up with this research gap. Different studies have been conducted on the use of strategies in second language teaching. Other studies have been conducted on the classroom challenges on second language teaching.

This study to the best of authors' knowledge is the first to relate the classroom challenges and the strategy use in second language classrooms.

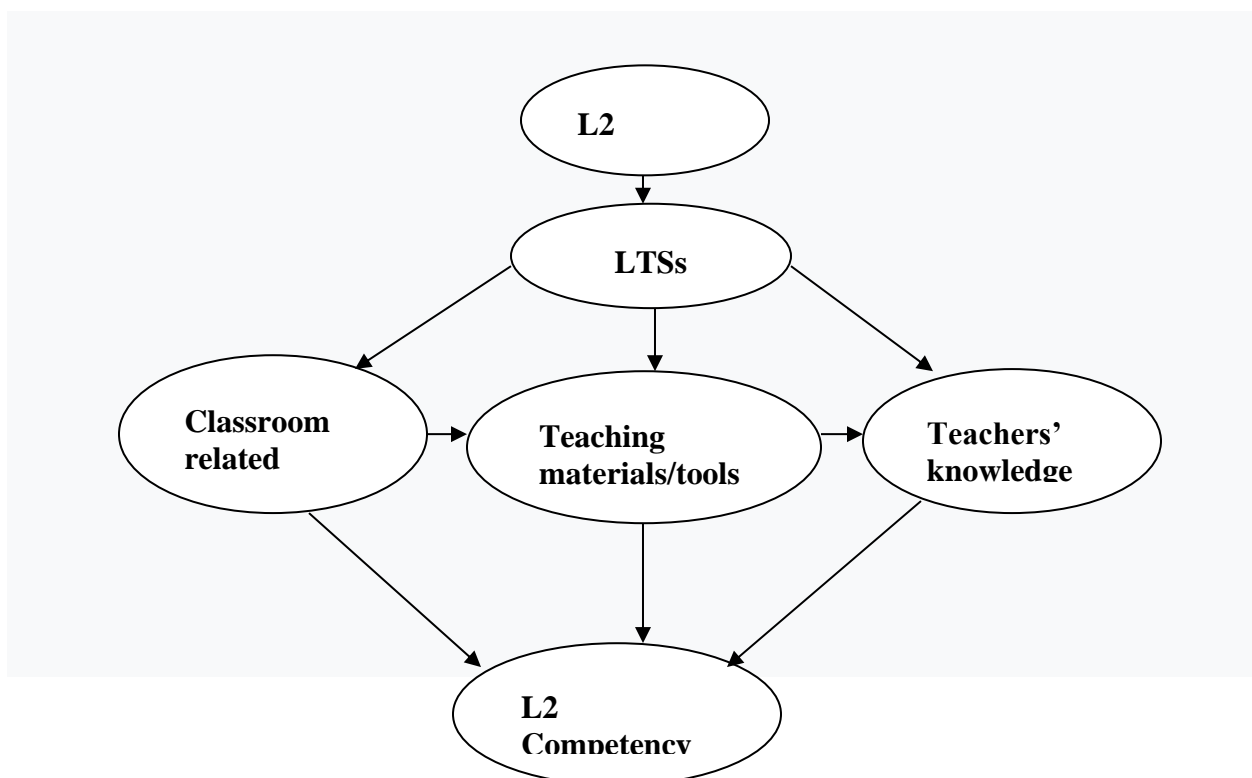
Theoretical framework

This research is grounded by Natural Approach Theory which was developed by Krashen and Terrell 1983. In Natural Approach Theory offers a foundation of strategy which teachers can employ in their second language teaching. This theory provides the strategies in different stages of teaching. This theory was employed in this study because it offers the procedure for teaching second language in the classroom which is being followed by second language teachers in Tanzania. Due to different challenges the strategy use is not successful as the language competency of students is very poor.

Conceptual framework

This study proposes a framework in figure 1 on how classroom related factors teachers' knowledge and the availability of teaching materials impacts on the strategy use.

Figure 1: A conceptual framework of the factors affecting strategy use in the classroom



Note: L2 = Second language, LTSs = Language teaching strategies

This frame work shows that the use of teaching strategies in second language classroom have a direct relationship with the classroom related factors i.e. class size and classroom structure, availability of teaching materials like textbooks, dictionaries etc. it also have relation with teachers' knowledge on how students acquire second language. All these factors impact on language competency.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was employed for this particular study, interview and classroom observation was used for data collections. Face-to-face interview was conducted with second language teachers in three primary schools, and the observation of Kiswahili and English classes of about 20 to 30 minutes was conducted in respective schools. Focus group discussion with primary schools teachers of Kiswahili and English was also conducted to find out the challenges of teaching strategies in their schools.

The study setting was conducted in three primary schools; Looing'oswani, Acronis and Engonongoi primary schools in Manyara region, located in the northern part of Tanzania. Students of these primary schools are learning Kiswahili and English as their second language. Kiswahili is a medium of instructions in primary school and English is taught as subject. The total number of teachers who participated in this research was 24 teachers of Kiswahili and English (12 of Kiswahili and 12 of English language) were interviewed and provided data for this study.

We consider the ethics on the organization of the participants (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004) in which the teachers were informed about the permission given to the researcher by the college of teacher education and the university.

RESULTS

This study focused on the challenges of strategy use in second language classrooms of primary school students, in which the employed strategies tend to be ineffective. Through interviews and classroom observation, teachers who employed different strategies in their L2 teaching in classroom context face some challenges due to different reasons. The use of teaching strategies in the second language classroom needs supportive environment for the strategies to be applicable. Tanzania primary school classrooms are having some challenge that makes the employed strategies to be ineffective. Teachers failed to use some of the strategies and the one they are capable of using them they become ineffective due to those challenges. Many teachers mentioned big number of students, lack of teaching materials to be the most hindering challenges to the strategy use in the classroom. During the classroom observation researchers realized another problem of strategy use was teachers' knowledge on how students acquire second language. The study of Chacha, (2015) has also found that big number of students in the classroom to be challenge of many teachers in conducting lessons in the classroom.

Kiswahili teacher from Acronis primary school stated that “ni vigumu sana kutumia mbinu ya majadiliano ya makundi katika darasa langu kwa sababu idadi ya wanafunzinikubwa sana na hiyo mbinu ikitumika darasani kunakuwa hakuna kuelewana kabisa”

English translation “it is difficult to employ group discussion strategy in my classroom because the number of students is very big so when you employ this strategy the classroom became too noisy and difficult to handle”

The statement from Kiswahili teacher from Acronis primary schools proved that the challenges of second language teaching made some of the strategies of teaching to be skipped. However, some of the strategies are been forced to be employed so it make such strategy to be ineffective.

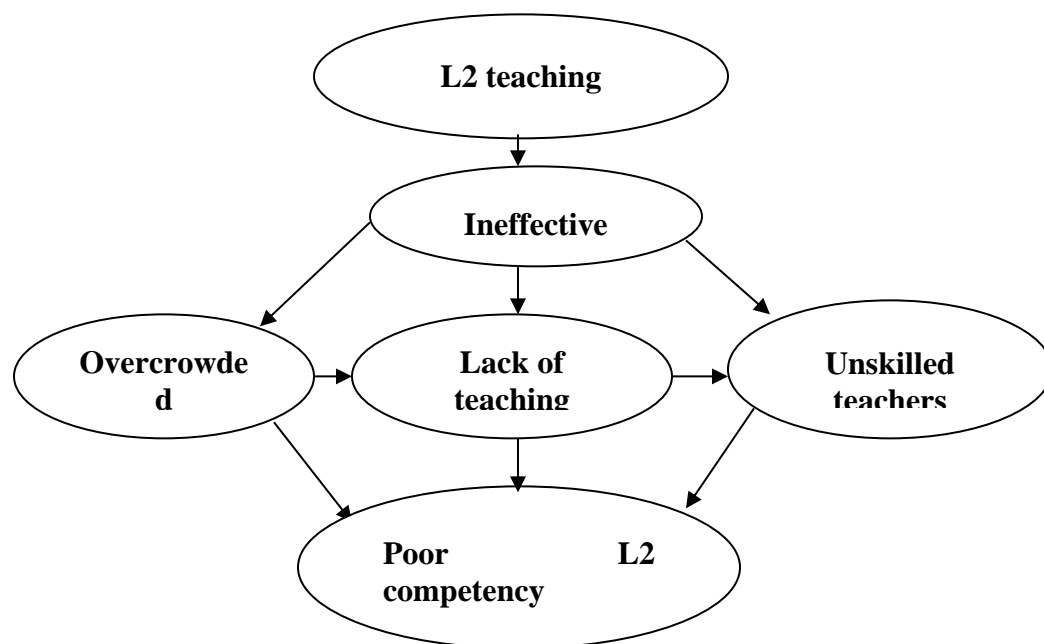
This is a very challenging situation because there some good strategies to help students acquire second language but due to some challenging environment those strategies were skipped to be used in the classroom. A teacher from Loorng'oswani primary school explained to the researcher that teaching second language in an overcrowded classroom is very difficult because you will find yourself lecturing in the classroom because that the only possible way of teaching can be used in such classroom. Many Tanzania primary school classrooms are overcrowded which makes the teaching materials like textbooks and dictionaries to be scarce in that matter.

An English teacher from Loorng'oswani primary school said that "there are two dictionaries available in my classroom with 93 students. Some of my students have never used dictionaries in their learning"

This statement makes clear that the big number of students in one classroom make the teaching materials to be very limited. We further investigate why most of the classrooms are overcrowded the reasons could be the shortage of classrooms and the number of teachers are very few. The teaching of second language should be considered seriously in Tanzania because the situation especially in primary schools is very worse.

During the observation conducted of Kiswahili and English language classes we found that many teachers are not skilled enough and they don't have knowledge on how students acquire second language. The study of Facella (2005) proves that it is necessary for teachers to have some knowledge on how students acquire second language and that will help them choose strategy that will help his or her students. This study found that many second language teachers in Tanzania doesn't have a knowledge on how second language learners acquire language. This is very challenging because if teachers don't have a required knowledge on teaching second language, it is obviously that the teaching will not have positive outcomes. Teachers' knowledge on how second language learner acquire language they will teach without considering which strategy will help students better. Msuya (2016) explore the idea that strategy use depend on the nature of the students on learning strategy and styles. He concluded that one teaching strategy cannot be suitable for all learners. All this depend on the knowledge of teacher on how his or her students would acquire the target language.

Diagram 2: *Impact of different challenges on second language teaching strategies*



This diagram shows that the language teaching strategies which were employed by Acronis Loorng'oswani and Engonongoi primary schools teachers to teach Kiswahili and English second languages have become ineffective due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials and the presence of unskilled teachers which as a result caused poor L2 competency (see diagram 2 above).

Overcrowded classrooms

One of the most challenging factors in second language classrooms is number of students in one classroom. Tanzanian second language classrooms have more than 50 students which is very big number for second language classroom as requested by scholars. Teaching second language in a classroom with a big number of students is very challenging in the use of teaching strategies in a way that some of the strategies are been skipped in the classroom. Many teachers mentioned strategy like group discussion, pair work, and solving students' problem to be skipped. They skip these strategies of teaching second language because creating groups in a classroom of many students is very difficult as the classroom will become very noisy.

A Kiswahili teacher from Engonongoi primary school said “wanafunzi wanakuwa na ujasiri wa kuzungumza na kuuliza maswali wanapokuwa na wanafunzi wenzao tofauti na wakiwa na mwalimu. Mbinu ya majadiliano ya makundi inasaidia sana ila haiwezekani kutumika kwa sababu ya idadi kubwa ya wanafunzi darasani”

English translation “students used to have confidence when communicating with their fellow than with their teachers. Group discussion is very helpful but it is difficult to use it because of the big number of students in one classroom”

Strategy use in the second language teaching is proven to be helpful to learners in the classroom context. Teachers who participated in this study have mentioned some challenges that caused the use of strategy in teaching second language to be ineffective. Most of the teaching strategies that were employed by primary school teachers were been ineffective due to different challenges as explained below; Using teaching strategies in the classroom context it depends on the different factors related in the classroom. Many classrooms in Tanzania have a big number of students which make it difficult in teaching. Kiswahili teacher from Engonongoi explain to the researcher that how difficult it is when trying to use strategies in an overcrowded classrooms. It is difficult to use some of the strategies and the one that are been used became ineffective.

A second language classroom with more than 20 students, challenges of teaching start to rise. It is because of the big number in the classrooms that some strategies are being skipped by the teachers and student-centered approach cannot be applicable. If the teaching of second language is facing some challenges like this it is clear that the resulting outcome could not reach the expectations.

Teachers' knowledge on how students acquire second language

It is important for second language teacher to have knowledge on how second language learner acquire language Facella, (2005). Knowledge on language acquisition is very important to second language teachers as it will help them use different techniques of teaching so they can help their students. According to the interview and classroom observation conducted for this study we found that Kiswahili and English language teachers who participated in this study have

a very little knowledge on how students acquire second language. A teacher was seen in the classroom lecturing students by mentioning some words with their meaning. He was doing that without considering if the students get the meaning or try to ask them questions about that.

During the interview conducted a teacher from Acronis primary school was asked by researcher “how do you teach Kiswahili to students who are fresh from home” a teacher was confidently said “I just teach them as any other subject”. This proves that this teacher doesn’t have any idea about how students acquire language. It is clear that teaching a second language is very technical you cannot teach as any other subject. Some teachers were confused with the idea of teaching strategies that they are employed in teaching second language. This proved that they are not using any strategies on teaching second language.

Lack of teaching materials/tools

Teaching a second language needs materials like dictionaries, textbooks, pictures, real object etc. which will facilitate the teaching. In Tanzanian context, teaching of second language is facing the challenge of unavailability of teaching materials. Second language teachers are conducting their teaching in very challenging conditions. It is difficult to teach well even if you employ suitable strategies for teaching; it cannot be successful if the teaching materials are not available.

A teacher from loorng’oswani primary school said “the scarcity of teaching materials it’s also because the number of students in one classroom is very big”

It is not possible to conduct teaching without considering the teaching materials. A second language learner need dictionary to search some words and its meaning, they also need textbooks for references. Second language classroom needs some music system for students to listen music it also need an internet for searching some things on the internet for references. ICT is very important in second language classroom but many developing countries do not fulfill this need to their learners. In Loorng’oswani, Engonongoi, and Acronis primary schools, this problem of teaching materials is very serious because it affects students’ performance.

DISCUSSION

This study has intended to investigate about the challenges of teaching of second language that hinder the use of strategies in the classrooms. Kiswahili and English teachers from Loorng’oswani, Engonongoi and Acronis primary schools participated in this study. The results proves that there some challenges of teaching that makes the use of strategies in the classroom to be difficult. The result of this study is not different from the result of the study of (Chacha, 2013) he found some teaching challenges which cause problems in the classrooms. He found the challenge of unskilled teachers in the second language classrooms. The study of (Mtallo, 2015) mentioned lack of teaching materials as the common challenge of teaching in Tanzania.

This study to the best of the authors’ knowledge is the first to investigate how challenges affect the teaching strategies that are employed in second language classrooms. The classroom challenges hinder the use of strategies in teaching which makes the poor acquisition of second language. Challenges like lack of teaching materials, unskilled teachers and overcrowded classrooms are making some of the teaching strategies to be inapplicable. Strategies like group discussion and working in pair are difficult to be employed in overcrowded classrooms, because

when the classroom have a big number of students group discussions will make the classroom very noisy and difficult to handle. Second language teachers who participated in this study confirmed to the researcher that these challenges are making the teaching strategies to be ineffective. It is difficult to conduct teaching of second language under this challenges, this is why the teaching of second language in Tanzania is not successful. Many studies have researched on these challenges and how it affects the teaching process but there is not changes made. The challenges that are found in this study are very known challenges that government and education stakeholders should deal with by now.

CONCLUSION

The teaching challenges of second language in the classroom have caused the poor acquisition of second language to the learners. We recommend that the government to take extra care on the issue so they can help teachers as well as students. If these challenges will not be solved, the teaching of second language in Tanzania would not succeed. The teaching challenges are not only in second language classrooms but in all subject are facing lack of teaching materials, unskilled teachers and big number of students in one classroom. So through this study we are suggesting that the government of Tanzania to check these challenges and solve them so the teaching to be conducted in a successful way. We concluded that the teaching of second language is not successful as it supposed to be due to these classroom challenges.

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