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Strategies for Improving Effectiveness in Teaching and Learning English Language in Public Primary Schools: A Case of Bagamoyo District, Coast Region, Tanzania

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Abstract : This article reports findings from a study that investigated strategies for improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning English language in public primary schools in Bagamoyo District, Coast Region, Tanzania. The study was guided by three objectives: to examine how inquiry-based teaching could improve English language learning; to assess the role of visual mode teaching; and to explain how problem-based teaching could improve English language learning in public primary schools. The study was guided by Social Constructivism Theory and employed a mixed-method approach with a cross-sectional research design. The target population comprised head teachers, English language teachers and pupils in public primary schools. The study initially targeted 122 respondents and obtained data from 112 respondents, comprising four head teachers, seven English language teachers and 101 pupils, giving an overall response rate of 92%. Questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and documentary review were used to collect data. Quantitative data were summarized using descriptive and inferential procedures, while qualitative evidence was analyzed thematically and through content analysis. Findings showed that teachers generally reported using inquiry-based practices, but documentary and classroom evidence indicated limited implementation of key activities such as field trips, projects, debates and group work. An inquiry-based intervention was associated with improvement in pupils' writing, with the mean score increasing from 28% in the pre-test to 33% in the post-test. Visual resources were limited: wall charts were available in two of four schools, pictures and drawings in three of four schools, while no visited school had a television or projector. Teachers also expressed support for problem-based teaching, but classroom observation indicated that its practices were rarely implemented consistently. The study concludes that teacher training, instructional resources, classroom monitoring and practical support are necessary to strengthen effective English language teaching in public primary schools.

Keywords: English language, teaching strategies, inquiry-based teaching, visual mode teaching, problem-based teaching, public primary schools, Bagamoyo District.

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INTRODUCTION

English language competence is important for pupils' academic development and for participation in wider social, educational and economic activities. In Tanzanian public primary schools, teachers are expected to employ teaching strategies that engage learners, support understanding and promote retention of knowledge.

The dissertation on which this article is based identifies inquiry-based teaching, visual mode teaching and problem-based teaching as important strategies for improving English language learning.

Teaching strategies refer to the methods, techniques, procedures and processes used by teachers during instruction. Their effectiveness depends on the context in which they are applied and on the extent to which they respond to pupils' learning needs. Inquiry-based teaching emphasizes active participation, questioning, investigation and the construction of knowledge. Visual mode teaching uses resources such as pictures, drawings, wall charts and audio-visual materials to make concepts more accessible. Problem-based teaching engages learners with problems that require analysis, communication, collaboration and possible solutions.

The study context is important because Bagamoyo District is an area where English language competence has particular practical relevance, including in tourism and interaction with visitors. The dissertation reports persistent concerns about pupils' English language performance. It cites 2022 and 2023 examination results in which 59% and 57% respectively of the reported candidates scored grades D and E in English language. These results raised questions about the effectiveness of teaching strategies in public primary schools.

Although previous studies have reported positive contributions of active, inquiry-based, visual and problem-based approaches, the dissertation identified a need for a context-specific investigation in public primary schools in Bagamoyo District. The present article therefore synthesizes the study's evidence on the extent to which the three strategies were practiced and how they related to pupils' English language learning.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to assess strategies for improving effectiveness in teaching and learning English language in public primary schools in Bagamoyo District. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine how inquiry-based teaching could improve English language learning in public primary schools in Bagamoyo District;
2. assess the role of visual mode teaching in improving English language learning in public primary schools in Bagamoyo District; and
3. explain how the practice of problem-based teaching could improve English language learning in public primary schools in Bagamoyo District.

Theoretical Perspective

The study was guided by Social Constructivism Theory as presented in the dissertation and attributed to Jean Piaget (1896–1980). The perspective emphasizes meaningful learning through pupils' active engagement and interaction with learning

experiences. In relation to English language teaching, the theory supports approaches in which pupils participate, ask questions, interact with materials, solve problems and construct understanding rather than relying only on teacher exposition. This theoretical perspective therefore provides a useful lens for interpreting inquiry-based, visual and problem-based teaching practices.

Literature Review

1. Inquiry-Based Teaching

Inquiry-based teaching is a pupil-centred approach in which learners participate in questioning, investigation, discussion, problem solving and reflection. The literature reviewed in the dissertation indicates that inquiry-oriented English lessons can provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to use language while exploring topics. Mutammimah (2019), for example, reported that inquiry-based English teaching could support meaningful activities, child-centred learning, teamwork and durable understanding. Mkimbili (2023) similarly reported that inquiry-based teaching encourages active participation, investigation and learner responsibility. The present study extends this discussion by examining the actual implementation of inquiry practices in Tanzanian public primary schools.

2. Visual Mode Teaching

Visual mode teaching involves the use of pictures, drawings, charts, models, maps, projectors, television and related materials to support learning. Visual resources can provide contextual meaning for vocabulary and concepts and can help learners connect words with concrete representations. Philominraj et al. (2017) describe visual learning as a learner-centred approach that can enhance English language teaching, while Mantiri et al. (2019) reported benefits of picture-based approaches for reading comprehension. However, the dissertation notes that availability of visual resources in Tanzanian public primary schools remains a challenge, making it necessary to examine not only teachers' attitudes toward visual teaching but also actual classroom availability and use.

3. .Problem-Based Teaching

Problem-based teaching places learners in situations where they must analyze information, consider alternative viewpoints, communicate with peers and develop responses to problems. Hadi and Izzah (2018) and Sheeba (2019) describe problem-based learning as a student-centred approach that can strengthen participation and communication in English learning. Robert et al. (2022) also reported that problem-based teaching can promote active engagement, critical thinking, collaboration and knowledge integration. The present study examines whether these principles were reflected in everyday English language lessons in Bagamoyo.

4. Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates the pedagogical value of inquiry-based, visual and problem-based strategies, but evidence from Tanzanian public primary schools, particularly Bagamoyo District, was limited in the dissertation. The gap was therefore not simply whether these strategies were theoretically useful, but whether teachers were able to implement them consistently within the constraints of public primary school classrooms, including limited resources, limited lesson time and classroom-management challenges. The study addressed this gap by combining teacher reports with classroom observation and documentary evidence and by assessing pupils' writing performance before and after the inquiry-based intervention.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-method approach and a cross-sectional research design. The qualitative component was used to obtain detailed explanations of teaching strategies and classroom practices, while the quantitative component provided a general picture of respondents' views and pupils' learning outcomes. The study was conducted in Bagamoyo District, Coast Region, Tanzania. The dissertation reports that the district covers 945 km² and is surrounded by Chalinze, Kibaha, Kinondoni and the Zanzibar Channel; Bagamoyo was selected partly because of the importance of English language communication in its tourism context.

The target population consisted of heads of schools, English language teachers and pupils from public primary schools. The district had 35 public primary schools. The planned sample was 122 respondents: four heads of schools, eight English language teachers and 110 pupils. The achieved sample was 112 respondents: four heads of schools, seven English language teachers and 101 pupils. This represented an overall response rate of 92%.

Table 1. Sample And Response Profile

Respondent category	Population	Planned sample	Actual respondents	Response rate
Heads of schools	35	4	4	100%
English language teachers	70	8	7	87.5%
Pupils	548	110	101	92%
Total	653	122	112	92%

Purposive sampling was used for heads of schools and English language teachers, while pupils were selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations

and documentary review. Documents reviewed included schemes of work, lesson plans and pupils' progress records. Instrument validity was addressed through expert review, while reliability was assessed through a pilot study and test-retest procedures in a public primary school outside the study sites.

Quantitative evidence was summarized using descriptive procedures and comparison of pupils' pre-test and post-test performance. Qualitative evidence from interviews, observations and documents was examined thematically and through content analysis. Ethical procedures included obtaining permission from relevant authorities and protecting participants' identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inquiry-Based Teaching and English Language Learning

Teacher responses indicated strong support for inquiry-oriented classroom participation. All seven English language teachers (100%) strongly agreed that they actively encouraged pupils to engage in lessons. Two teachers (28.6%) strongly agreed and five (71.4%) agreed that they recognized and appreciated pupils' thoughtful questions and inquiries. All seven teachers (100%) strongly agreed that they incorporated activities intended to make pupils active in their lesson plans.

Table 2. Teachers' Reported Inquiry Based Practices

Teacher practice	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Actively encourage pupils to engage in lessons	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Recognize and appreciate thoughtful questions	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Incorporate activities that make pupils active	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

However, documentary evidence revealed a substantial difference between reported intentions and recorded practice. Among the seven teachers, no field trip or project was recorded. Only four of the minimum 14 expected classroom/school debates were recorded (29%), while six of the minimum 14 expected group-work activities were recorded (43%). Teachers explained that field trips were difficult to organize because of the fee-free education policy and the absence of funds for

activities requiring contributions. Debate activities were also affected by timetable interference, while group work was reported to consume considerable time and could be dominated by only a few pupils.

Table 3. Recorded Inquiry-Based Activities

Inquiry activity	Minimum expected	Recorded	Percentage
Field trips	7	0	0%
Classroom/school debates	14	4	29%
Projects	7	0	0%
Group work	14	6	43%

The evidence suggests that teachers understood the value of active learning but faced practical barriers in translating the approach into routine classroom practice. This distinction is important because inquiry-based teaching depends on learners having opportunities to question, investigate, discuss and reflect. The findings are consistent with Mutammimah (2019), who found positive effects of inquiry-based English teaching when pupils were actively involved in meaningful activities, but they also highlight implementation constraints that can reduce the frequency and depth of inquiry practices.

Inquiry-Based Teaching and Pupils' Writing Performance

The study also compared pupils' writing performance before and after the implementation of inquiry-based teaching. The results showed improvement in all assessed dimensions. Content increased from 23% to 34%, organization from 31% to 37%, vocabulary from 28% to 30%, and language use from 30% to 32%. The overall mean increased from 28% to 33%, representing a five-percentage-point improvement.

Table 4. Pupils' Writing Performance Before and After Inquiry-Based Teaching

Writing dimension	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
Content	23%	34%	+11 percentage points
Organization	31%	37%	+6 percentage points
Vocabulary	28%	30%	+2 percentage points
Language use	30%	32%	+2 percentage points
Mean score	28%	33%	+5 percentage points

Classroom evidence indicated that before implementation, pupils experienced difficulties with detail, vocabulary selection, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling and paragraph organization. After implementation, pupils were more able to formulate questions, collect relevant information, organize ideas and produce more detailed writing. The improvement supports the proposition that inquiry activities can connect language production with thinking and information gathering rather than treating writing as an isolated exercise.

Role of Visual Mode Teaching

The assessment of visual mode teaching showed substantial limitations in the availability and classroom use of visual resources. Wall charts were available in two of the four visited schools (50%), but in one school they were located only outside the classroom. Pictures and drawings were available in three schools (75%), although in two schools they were mainly outside the classroom. None of the four schools had a television or projector.

Table 5. Availability of Visual Teaching Resources in Visited Schools

Resource	School A	School B	School C	School D	Overall availability
Wall charts	Outside class	Inside & outside	Not available	Not available	2/4 (50%)
Pictures/drawings	Outside class	Inside & outside	Not available	Outside class	3/4 (75%)
Television	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	0/4 (0%)
Projector	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	0/4 (0%)

Teachers and heads of schools nevertheless recognized the potential value of visual resources. Teachers explained that pictures, videos, charts and graphic organizers could help pupils understand vocabulary and grammar, while a head teacher reported that plans to acquire television equipment were constrained by funding. Classroom observation further showed that lessons could have benefited from maps, pictures and diagrams. During a lesson involving directions, for example, the teacher explained north, east, west and south without using a visual representation of the earth's surface. The evidence therefore indicates that the limitation was not primarily a lack of awareness of the value of visual learning, but inadequate access to and classroom use of appropriate resources.

These findings are broadly consistent with the literature cited in the dissertation. Mantiri et al. (2019) reported that visual materials can support reading comprehension, while Philominraj et al. (2017) emphasized the learner-centred contribution of visual learning. The Bagamoyo findings add an important contextual

point: even where teachers value visual resources, their pedagogical contribution is constrained when resources are unavailable or positioned outside the classroom.

Problem-Based Teaching and English Language Learning

Teacher responses showed positive perceptions of problem-based teaching. Three teachers (42.9%) strongly agreed and four (57.1%) agreed that they provided constructive feedback encouraging pupils to analyze and evaluate information. All seven teachers (100%) agreed that they valued pupils' consideration of multiple perspectives. Six teachers (85.7%) strongly agreed and one (14.3%) agreed that teaching strategies enhanced pupils' problem-solving abilities. Similar positive responses were recorded for curiosity, evidence-based solutions and the value of teaching strategies for academic success.

Table 6. Teachers' Reported Problem-Based Teaching Practices

Problem-based teaching statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree
Constructive feedback for analysis/evaluation	3 (42.9%)	4 (57.1%)	0 (0%)
Value multiple perspectives	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)
Teaching strategy as lifelong-learning skill	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
Foster curiosity and exploration	3 (42.9%)	3 (42.9%)	1 (14.3%)
Appreciate evidence-based solutions	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	0 (0%)
Enhance pupils' problem-solving abilities	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
Valuable for academic success and beyond	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	0 (0%)

Classroom observation, however, provided a more cautious picture. In a lesson on expressing views, pupils were asked to practice a dialogue, but they had difficulty following the activity and the teacher did not consistently provide the constructive feedback needed to encourage analysis and evaluation. The teacher also remained relatively dominant, while opportunities for curiosity, exploration and independent problem solving were limited. Thus, as with inquiry-based teaching, the findings point to a gap between teachers' recognition of the value of a strategy and its consistent classroom implementation.

This finding differs from the positive implementation evidence reported by Robert et al. (2022), which associated problem-based teaching with active engagement, critical thinking, collaboration and knowledge integration. The difference suggests that the potential benefits of problem-based teaching may depend on teachers' methodological competence, classroom conditions, time and access to suitable learning materials.

Discussion

The combined findings demonstrate that effective English language teaching in public primary schools depends not only on teachers' knowledge of recommended strategies but also on their ability to implement them under real classroom conditions. Teachers in Bagamoyo generally expressed positive attitudes toward inquiry-based and problem-based approaches, yet observations and documentary evidence showed that several core practices were infrequent. This is particularly evident in field trips, projects, debates and group work.

The inquiry-based intervention provides the clearest evidence of potential learning benefit. Pupils' mean writing score increased from 28% to 33%, and improvements occurred in content, organization, vocabulary and language use. The result is consistent with the learner-centred assumptions of Social Constructivism Theory and with the literature reviewed in the dissertation, which emphasizes active participation, interaction and meaningful learning.

Visual teaching presents a different challenge. The schools had some charts and pictures, but the resources were often outside classrooms, and television and projectors were absent from all four schools. This limits pupils' opportunities to connect language with visual context. The finding reinforces the argument that instructional resources are part of the practical conditions through which teaching strategies become effective.

Problem-based teaching showed a similar implementation gap. Teachers strongly endorsed principles such as feedback, multiple perspectives, curiosity and problem solving, but classroom observation indicated that these practices were not consistently enacted. The implication is that professional development should move beyond introducing the names of teaching strategies and instead provide teachers with practical lesson-planning skills, classroom-management techniques, examples of activities and opportunities for peer support.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public primary schools in Bagamoyo District and therefore the findings should be interpreted within that context. The achieved sample was relatively small, particularly for the teacher component, and the inquiry-based writing comparison was conducted within the study setting. The

findings nevertheless benefit from methodological triangulation through questionnaires, interviews, observations and documentary review.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that inquiry-based, visual and problem-based teaching strategies have potential to improve English language learning in public primary schools, but their effectiveness is strongly shaped by the conditions under which teachers implement them. Inquiry-based teaching was associated with improved pupils' writing performance, while visual resources were insufficiently available and problem-based teaching was inconsistently practiced. The overall evidence points to a need to strengthen teachers' practical competence, provide appropriate instructional resources and improve school-level monitoring and support.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education and relevant education authorities should provide regular in-service training focused specifically on practical English language teaching methodologies, including inquiry-based, visual and problem-based teaching.
2. School administrators should establish cluster-based professional learning sessions in which teachers can share lesson plans, classroom experiences and practical solutions to common teaching challenges.
3. Schools should strengthen the provision and classroom use of low-cost visual materials such as locally produced charts, pictures, cards, diagrams and word walls, alongside digital resources where feasible.
4. Academic and school leaders should routinely monitor English language lesson plans, teaching aids, pupils' exercise books and classroom practices and provide constructive feedback to teachers.
5. Teachers should create more opportunities for pupils to use English through discussions, debates, group activities, storytelling, role play and problem-solving tasks both inside and, where possible, outside the classroom.
6. Further research should examine similar teaching strategies at secondary-school level and in other Tanzanian districts to establish whether the observed implementation challenges and learning patterns are widespread.

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AUTHORSHIP NOTE

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