



Evaluating Students' Attitudes towards Literature in English Subject in Public Secondary Schols in Babati Town Council, Manyara, Tanzania

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Abstract : This study evaluated students' attitudes towards literature in English subject in public secondary schools in Babati Town Council, Manyara, Tanzania. Literature in English plays a crucial role in enhancing language proficiency, critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness, yet its acceptance and effectiveness vary across contexts. Guided by Constructivist Learning Theory, the study employed a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design involving 150 participants, including education officers, school leaders, teachers, and students. Data were collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that while many students enjoy reading and analyzing literary texts, challenges such as language problem, irrelevant materials, limited teacher support, and minimal administrative emphasis reduce engagement and confidence. Most students also perceived the subject as less relevant to their future careers. The study concludes that attitudes are influenced by teaching methods, cultural relevance, and administrative support. Recommendations include adopting interactive, culturally meaningful teaching strategies, improving teacher preparation, and strengthening support from school leaders and policymakers to enhance motivation, reading habits, and performance in literature in English subject.

Keyword : Students' attitudes, Literature in English, public secondary schools, Tanzania

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INTRODUCTION

Literature in English plays a significant role in English language education by providing authentic language input, supporting vocabulary and grammar development, and fostering critical thinking and cultural awareness (Pedaveti & Jeyanthi, 2024). Students' attitudes, motivation, and reading habits are key determinants of learning success. Attitudes shape willingness and engagement, while motivation drives effort, either integratively (interest in culture and community) or instrumentally (exam performance). Strong reading habits enhance comprehension and language skills, with motivation positively influencing reading frequency (Salam et al., 2025).

Historically, Literature in English has evolved globally. In the UK and US, it became a formal academic discipline in the 19th century, enhancing language skills and critical thinking (Mugolozzi, 2019). In Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, India, and Malaysia, it is primarily seen as a tool for language development, with student engagement often limited by exam-focused approaches (Burazer & Skela, 2025; Ukat & Ismail, 2022). In Africa, the subject's introduction during colonial times aimed to promote English literacy and Western values. Post-independence reforms shifted its focus toward critical thinking and national identity (Bhebhe, 2024). Studies in Algeria and Rwanda indicate that while students recognize the

subject's benefits, challenges such as outdated teaching methods, insufficient resources, and limited teacher training hinder engagement (Malla & Touhami, 2023; Mpumuje et al., 2024). In Kenya, positive attitudes were linked to enhanced understanding, though resource constraints and inadequate administrative support reduced effectiveness (Chepkemboi, 2019).

In Tanzania, Literature in English transitioned from a component of English language studies to a standalone elective at the secondary level in 2010 (TIE, 2010). Further reforms in 2023 emphasized literary competence alongside 21st-century skills (MoEST, 2023). Despite these reforms, enrollment remains low, partly due to misconceptions about the subject's difficulty. In Babati Town Council, the subject enhances language proficiency and critical thinking, yet student engagement is influenced by teaching methods, classroom environments, teacher knowledge, and cultural relevance (URT, 2023; BEST, 2025). This study Evaluate students' attitudes towards literature in English subject in public secondary schools in Babati Town Council, Manyara, Tanzania.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical review

This study applied Constructivist Learning Theory, introduced by Jean Piaget in the 1970s, which emphasizes that learners build

knowledge through active interaction with their environment, with cognitive development progressing in stages through assimilation and accommodation, and teachers facilitating meaningful learning experiences (Chand, 2023). The constructivist movement in education, advanced by Piaget and Vygotsky, stresses active student participation, collaboration, and social interaction as central to meaningful learning, while the metacognitive constructivist model promotes self-regulation through planning, monitoring, and evaluation, with learning viewed as an interactive process shaped by internal and external factors (Efgivia et al., 2020). Vygotsky further underscored the social dimension of learning, introducing the "zone of proximal development" to show how students can achieve more with guidance and interaction (Alanazi, 2019). In this study, constructivist learning theory situates students' perceptions of learning Literature in English within its focus on active engagement, personal construction of knowledge, and collaboration, supporting positive attitudes through participation and connections to texts, enhancing motivation by making learning engaging and enjoyable, and strengthening reading habits by encouraging active interpretation, personal reflection, and discussion, thereby providing a strong foundation for addressing attitudes, motivation, and reading practices in the subject.

2. Empirical Literature Review

This study is grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1970), emphasizing active learning, knowledge construction, and teacher-facilitated engagement (Chand, 2023). Vygotsky's social constructivist perspective highlights collaborative learning and the Zone of Proximal Development, showing how students achieve more with guidance (Alanazi, 2019). This framework supports exploring students' attitudes by linking engagement, motivation, and reading habits to meaningful interaction with literary texts (Efgivia et al., 2020).

Students generally had positive attitudes towards studying literature in English, with intrinsic motivation playing a key role. The study also revealed a strong correlation between students' motivation, their attitudes towards literature in English subject, and their performance in literature in English courses (Kasem 2020).

Anjorin-Ojewole (2023) conducted a study on the impact of students' attitudes towards literature in English subject on academic performance in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study revealed positive attitudes towards literature in English subject enhanced critical thinking and creativity. However, many students exhibited negative attitudes towards the subject, such as a lack of interest, motivation, and confidence, which affected their performance. The study recommended promoting positive

attitudes to enhance student engagement.

Tei (2019) studied Senior High School students' attitudes towards studying literature in English subject in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The research investigated how students' perceptions of the subject influenced their attitudes. The results revealed that most students held a negative attitude towards literature in English subject, citing factors such as home environments, textbooks, and teaching methods. Students expressed a preference for literature that reflected African cultural contexts. While some recognised the value of literature in improving English skills, many lacked interests in pursuing it at the university level. The study underscored the significance of teaching methods, textbooks, and cultural relevance in shaping attitudes. Additionally, gaining further insight into how these attitudes impacted students' long-term interest in literature and whether changes in teaching had positively influenced their attitudes was considered beneficial. Tei's study provided valuable insights into the importance of cultural relevance in literature instruction.

Adome (2022) conducted a study on students' attitudes towards literature in English subject at Unyama National Teachers' College in Uganda. The research aimed to assess attitudes, identify influencing factors, and examine the connection to academic performance. The results indicated

positive attitudes, influenced by lecturer experience, student backgrounds, and cultural traditions. Adom recommended the use of effective teaching strategies to enhance attitudes. Suggestions included incorporating modern teaching methods and diverse texts to increase student engagement. While the study's mixed-methods approach provided valuable insights, the small sample size of college students limited generalisability.

Ettyang et al. (2021) examined the correlation between students' attitudes towards the English curriculum and their academic performance in secondary schools in Emuhaya sub-county, Kenya. The analysis revealed a positive correlation (0.67) between students' attitudes towards English and academic performance. The researchers suggested incorporating more student-centred activities to enhance attitudes and performance in English.

Misana (2019) studied students' attitudes and motivation towards learning literature in English subject in Temeke Municipality, Tanzania. The findings revealed varying attitudes among students, with those studying literature in English subject as a separate subject showing higher motivation. Factors such as teacher knowledge, language skills, and material access influenced motivation.

Faustino and Ngussa (2019) studied the relationship between students' language competency,

preparedness, and attitude toward literature in English subject in Arusha City, Tanzania. They found that students had a positive attitude toward literature in English subject, attributing it to effective teacher preparation and English proficiency. The study emphasised the importance of teacher preparation in influencing students' interest in literature in English subject and recommended leveraging positive attitudes to encourage more students to choose the subject

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed method research approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative research methods within a single study. It also employed an explanatory sequential design by starting with the collection of quantitative data and analysing them, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. The sample size for this study was one hundred and fifty (150), which include one (1) DSEO, four (4) WEOs, four (4) head of schools, eight (8) literature in English teachers and one hundred and thirty-three (133) students who study literature in English subject. This sample size was reasonable to provide the requisite information for the research. In data collection for this study, the researcher employed questionnaires to collect data from students and semi-structured interviews to collect data from the DSEO, WEOs, head of schools and teachers. Quantitative data were

analyzed through descriptive statistic process using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and then presented in form of tables. While qualitative data were analysed thematically followed the steps outlined by Kumar (2020). The steps are: familiarising with data through translation, transcription, reading and re-reading, transcription of interviews, searching for meaning and generating themes, and finally writing the report.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' Attitudes toward the Teaching and Learning Process of Literature in English Subject

In order to explore students' attitudes towards the literature in English subject in public secondary schools, questionnaires were administered to students. Table 2 presents the questionnaire findings on this.

Table 2. Students' Response to Students' Attitudes towards literature in English Subject

Key: SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

Items	SA	A	D	SD
	F %	F %	F %	F %
I enjoy reading and analyzing literary texts	56 42.1	47 35.3	30 22.6	- -
I find literature in English enjoyable and engaging.	08 13.5	32 24.1	60 45.1	23 17.3
I feel confident when participating in English literature class.	20 15.0	52 39.1	20 15.0	41 30.8
I believe English literature is relevant to my life.	16 12.0	24 18.0	41 30.8	52 39.1
I think literature should be a compulsory subject for all students.	21 15.8	34 25.6	32 24.1	46 34.6

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 2 presents students' attitudes towards the literature in English subject using a scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Disagree Strongly. The results are outlined below:

Enjoy Reading and Analyzing Text

Table 2 shows students' views on reading and analyzing literary texts. The results revealed that 56 students (42.1%) strongly agreed and 47 (35.3%) agreed, making a total of 77.4% who enjoy the activity. On the other hand, 30 students (22.6%) disagreed, showing that a smaller group holds negative attitudes. Most students expressed a positive outlook on literature, though a significant minority showed disinterest. Enjoyment of reading and analysis is important because it promotes engagement, critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills.

However, the disinterest expressed by some students may be due to a language problem, limited exposure to relevant texts, or teaching methods that fail to capture their interest. This aligns with Anjorin-Ojewole (2023), who found that positive attitudes enhance creativity and performance, while lacking interest and motivation reduces achievement. These results highlight that enjoyment provides a strong foundation for developing comprehension and analytical skills in literature. Teachers can build on this strength by using

diverse, culturally relevant materials and interactive teaching strategies recommended by Faustino and Ngussa (2019) to further improve students' engagement and performance. It was discovered through interviews that students enjoy reading and analysing literary text. One of the interviewees was quoted as saying:

"Students' enjoyment of reading and analyzing literary texts resonates with my observations in the classroom, where I have seen that students who find joy in literature in English subject tend to be more engaged and do better in academic performance not only in literature in English subject but also in other subject where by literature subject helps student fostering writing skills, reading skills and even develop critical thinking of the student. When genuinely interested students are more likely to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of literary works." (Interviewee: LT 3: July, 2025)

This implies that students who enjoy reading and analyzing literary texts tend to be more engaged and perform better academically, as supported by constructivist learning theory. Through creating interactive learning environments, a supportive reading process and integrating texts that reflect students' realities, teachers can help transform even disinterested students into engaged participants. This theory, strengthening enjoyment while addressing disinterest will be

essential for improving overall students' attitude toward the literature in English subject. Additionally, Kasem's (2020) study revealed that intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in shaping a positive attitude towards literature in English and improving performance. Kasem found that students with genuine interest in the subject achieved higher results in literature and demonstrated improved skills applicable to other academic areas, echoing the teacher's observation that literature fosters writing, reading, and critical thinking abilities.

Engaging in Literature in English Subject

Students were asked whether they find literature in English enjoyable and engaging. The results showed mixed attitudes. Out of 133 respondents, only 18 (13.5%) strongly agreed and 32 (24.1%) agreed, while 60 (45.1%) disagreed and 23 (17.3%) strongly disagreed. This means that although some students enjoy the subject, most hold negative views. The negative perception may be linked to challenges such as language difficulties, long texts, confusing exam questions, limited learning resources, unqualified teachers, and low support from teachers and school administration. While some students value the subject, the larger group's disinterest could lower motivation and affect academic performance. These results are consistent with Tei (2019), who found that many students develop

negative attitudes toward literature due to teaching methods, unsuitable textbooks, and a lack of cultural relevance in the materials. The same was raised in an interview with a respondent who pointed out that:

"In my school, many students find literature in English subject to be challenging due to several obstacles they encounter during their studies. These obstacles include lack of support from teachers, parents, and peers and disappointing exam outcomes. Moreover, the language problem poses a significant challenge, preventing students from fully immersing themselves in the subject." (Interviewee: LT 6: July, 2025)

This implies that students face significant challenges when learning literature in English, including a lack of support from key stakeholders (teachers, parents, peers), poor exam results, and language barriers. These obstacles can lead to decreased motivation, low self-confidence, and disengagement from the subject, ultimately affecting academic performance and interest in literature. The lack of support highlights the need for improved collaboration among teachers, parents, and peers to create a supportive learning environment. Additionally, language problems suggest that students may benefit from additional language proficiency support and customized teaching methods to enhance their understanding and appreciation of

literature in English. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active engagement with content relevant to students' lives. Teacher-centered lessons that lack interactivity can make the English literature subject seem abstract and less engaging, reducing student motivation. Also, Misana (2019) and Anjorin-Ojewole (2023) showed that limited teacher support and low motivation contribute to students' English literature struggles. These studies underscore the importance of comprehensive support systems and targeted interventions to help students overcome challenges in learning literature in English subject.

Participation in Literature in English Class

When students were asked about their confidence in participating in literature in English classes, 20 (15.0%) strongly agreed and 52 (39.1%) strongly agreed, making up 54.1% who felt confident. However, 20 students (15.0%) disagreed, and 41 (30.8%) strongly disagreed, resulting in 45.8% lacking confidence. This shows that almost half of the students do not feel confident enough to participate in class actively. The lack of confidence may be linked to limited teacher support, inadequate learning resources, and low motivation during the teaching and learning process. These findings align with Tei (2019), who found that negative attitudes and low confidence often arise from unengaging teaching

approaches and culturally irrelevant materials, discouraging students from participating. Similarly, Anjorin-Ojewole (2023) noted that low confidence is closely tied to poor motivation and low self-esteem, which prevent students from contributing effectively in class. One of the interviewees reported that:

"In my school, some students feel confident participating in the literature English class due to the close relationship between teachers and students during the teaching and learning process. As the head of the school, I encourage my students to study literature in English by emphasizing the importance of the subject for their academic performance. Literature in English is a subject that helps students develop written, reading, and listening skills and fosters creativity and critical thinking."
(Interviewee: HoS 2: July, 2025).

This study highlights the importance of a positive teacher-student relationship and administrative support in enhancing students' confidence and participation in the literature in English subject. When students feel supported and valued by their teachers and school leaders, they are more likely to actively engage in class activities, develop a deeper interest in the subject, and improve their academic performance. Emphasizing the broader benefits of literature, such as enhancing writing, reading, listening, creativity, and critical thinking skills, can motivate

students by demonstrating the subject's relevance to essential life and academic skills. Therefore, creating an emotionally supportive learning environment and clearly communicating the subject's significance are effective strategies for improving learning outcomes. As it's supported by constructivist learning theory, low confidence can lead students to avoid participation, refrain from expressing their opinions, and rely heavily on the teacher, limiting opportunities for critical thinking and peer learning. Factors contributing to low confidence may include language barriers, limited exposure to reading, or fear of making mistakes in front of peers. Additionally, Faustino and Ngussa (2019) emphasized that teacher preparedness and students' language proficiency are crucial factors in boosting confidence and cultivating positive attitudes toward the English literature subject.

Relevance of Literature in English Subject to Life

The findings showed that only a small group held positive views on the relevance of literature in English subject to students' lives. Specifically, 16 students (12.0%) strongly agreed and 24 students (18.0%) agreed that the subject is meaningful as it reflects people's lives, making a total of 30% with positive attitudes. However, the majority expressed negative perceptions, with 41 (30.8%) disagreeing and 52 (39.1%) strongly

disagreeing. Altogether, 69.9% of respondents felt that literature in English subject was not relevant to their lives. These results suggest that most students do not see a direct connection between literature in English subject and their personal experiences, future careers, or daily language use. The small number who find the subject relevant indicates that the content often fails to relate to students' real-life situations. This disconnect may be caused by limited emphasis from school leaders, peers, and teachers, making it harder for students to value the subject. As a result, many show low motivation, limited engagement, and declining interest, which may affect their academic performance. Likewise, Tei (2019) observed that teaching methods and the cultural relevance of texts strongly influence students' attitudes toward literature in English subject. Students often prefer literature that reflects their own culture, and their interest and participation tend to decrease when this connection is missing. Besides, one of the interviewees said that:

"In my class, I emphasize the importance of studying literature in English subject by explaining how it reflects social realities and enhances language proficiency. Despite its significance, school administrations sometimes undervalue literature, perceiving it as an art subject for students with lower IQs, while prioritizing science subjects. This discrimination among subjects is

unfair, as school administrations should support students in all subjects they choose to study. (Interviewee: LT 1, July 2025)

Despite the potential benefits of literature in English subject for understanding social issues and enhancing language skills, many students fail to recognize its value in their daily lives. One contributing factor is the tendency of school administrations to prioritize science subjects over literature in English subject. This lack of emphasis on literature in English subject can lead students to perceive it as less important or relevant to their future. Consequently, they may lose interest and motivation and fail to see how literature connects to real-world situations, resulting in poor performance and diminished confidence in the subject. This underscores the importance of highlighting literature's practical relevance to students. Likewise, according to constructivist learning theory, meaningful learning occurs when students can relate new knowledge to their experiences. Additionally, research has shown that teachers' knowledge, language skills, and access to relevant materials influence students' motivation. Therefore, students are less likely to engage with the subject without adequate support and relatable content. In conclusion, undervaluing literature in English subject and neglecting to make it relevant to

students' lives can foster negative attitudes, as evidenced in the teacher's interview.

Literature in English as a Compulsory Subject

This is the final item in the first objective, where students were asked if they think literature in English subject should be compulsory for all students. The findings indicate that 21 (15.8%) students strongly agreed and 34 (25.6%) agreed, totaling 41.4% who believe that literature in English in English subject should be compulsory for all students. On the other hand, 32 (24.1%) students disagreed, and 46 (34.6%) strongly disagreed, bringing the total opposition to 58.7%. This suggests that most students do not see the subject as directly relevant to their future career paths, especially those pursuing science, business, or technical professions. This perception implies that literature in English subject should not be compulsory, as many students do not consider it essential to their education. This lack of connection may stem from a disconnect between the subject content and students' real-life experiences and limited exposure to culturally relevant texts. Like Tei's (2019) findings in Ghana, when literature in English subject does not resonate with students' cultural and social realities, they tend to dismiss its importance. Additionally, Anjorin-Ojewole (2023) demonstrated that a lack of interest, motivation, and self-confidence in studying literature in

English subject leads students to undervalue the subject. Moreover, in Tanzania, Misana (2019) emphasized that factors such as teacher competence, language problems, and inadequate resources can diminish students' appreciation of literature. If these challenges persist, students are unlikely to support making the subject compulsory, potentially resulting in decreased participation and performance. During an interview, one respondent noted that:

"Some students believe literature in English subject is not essential for everyone, especially those interested in science subjects. They perceive literature in English as a subject that requires high intelligence to interpret and should only be studied by those who enjoy reading stories or poems. They argue that it does not benefit them in their future careers, particularly in science-related fields."
(Interviewee: LT 8: July, 2025)

Many students do not view literature in English subject as a relevant or necessary subject, especially those motivated towards science subjects. This perception can result in a lack of motivation and engagement, leading to negative attitudes towards the subject. Teachers and school administrators should raise awareness about the broader benefits of studying literature, demonstrating its relevance beyond the arts or humanities. Students may better understand its value and develop a more positive attitude by

connecting literature to real-life contexts and career paths. Furthermore, Anjorin-Ojewole (2023) also emphasized the importance of promoting positive attitudes to enhance student engagement. Tei (2019) highlighted the significance of making literature in English subject culturally relevant and meaningful to sustain student interest and improve attitudes towards the subject.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study revealed that students in public secondary schools hold varying attitudes toward the teaching and learning process of literature in English subject. While a considerable number of students demonstrated enjoyment and interest in reading and analyzing literary texts, a significant proportion expressed low confidence, limited engagement, and perceived the subject as irrelevant to their daily lives and future careers. These results suggest that although literature in English subject possesses great potential to develop essential skills such as language proficiency, creativity, and critical thinking, its impact remains constrained by various pedagogical and secondary schools' challenges.

The study established that students who enjoy reading and analyzing literary texts tend to be more engaged and perform better academically. Their positive attitudes enhance motivation, foster deeper understanding, and improve analytical

abilities key aspects emphasized by the constructivist learning theory. This theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge when they interact meaningfully with content that connects to their experiences. Hence, enjoyment and active engagement in literature lessons provide a foundation for meaningful learning and improved academic performance. However, a notable number of students viewed the subject as unengaging and difficult. Contributing factors included language problem, limited teacher support, unrelatable content, and traditional teacher-centered instructional methods that restrict student participation.

Additionally, the findings revealed that the majority of students perceived literature in English subject as irrelevant to their personal experiences and future aspirations. This perception is further reinforced by inadequate emphasis from teachers, parents, and school administrators who often prioritize science subjects. Consequently, students may regard literature in English subject as a subject with little practical or career value. Similarly, most respondents opposed making the subject compulsory, arguing that it should be reserved for students pursuing arts-related fields. This reflects a lack of awareness about the subject's broader educational significance, including its role in developing communication, empathy, and critical reasoning skills applicable to all disciplines.

These findings underscore the need for intensive efforts to improve students' perceptions and learning experiences in literature in English subject. Addressing the identified challenges will require collaboration among teachers, curriculum developers, school administrators, and policymakers.

Implications

The implications of these findings suggest that improving students' attitudes toward the teaching and learning process of literature in English subject requires a collective and multi-level effort involving teachers, curriculum developers, school administrators, policymakers, and students themselves. Teachers should adopt interactive and student-centered teaching approaches that make learning more engaging and relatable, such as discussions, dramatization, and the use of culturally relevant texts to connect lessons to students' real-life experiences. Curriculum developers should ensure that literature syllabus include diverse and contextually appropriate materials that reflect students' cultural and social realities, as this enhances comprehension, motivation, and appreciation of the subject. School administrators and policymakers, on the other hand, need to recognize the academic and developmental importance of literature in English subject by providing adequate teaching resources, supporting teacher training, organizing

reading programs, and integrating literature across the curriculum to encourage critical thinking and holistic learning. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to cultivate intrinsic motivation, positive reading habits, and active participation in class activities, which can enhance their language proficiency, confidence, and analytical skills. Strengthening collaboration among these stakeholders can create a more supportive and motivating learning environment where students perceive literature in English subject as not only an academic subject but also a vital tool for personal growth, communication, creativity, and critical reasoning.

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