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Use of Peer Collaboration in Enhancing Learners' Multilingual Competence in Vocational Education and Training Institutions in Temeke Municipality

Mdillah Osward[1]*, Michaela Mhagama[2], Raymond Ndomba[3]

[1] Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Vocational Education and Training Authority, Tanzania
[2,3] Educational Foundation Department, St. Augustine University of Tanzania.

Correspondence e-mail * : mwitallah@gmail.com

Abstract : This study examined the use of peer collaboration in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions in Temeke Municipality. The study was guided by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and employed a quantitatively dominant mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design. Data were collected from students and teachers using questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and documentary review. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings indicated that peer collaboration enhanced learners' opportunities to interact, exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, and practise multiple languages in meaningful learning contexts. Collaborative activities were also associated with improved communication skills, vocabulary development, learner confidence, and active participation in classroom activities. However, variations in learners' language proficiency, limited instructional resources, and inadequate opportunities for structured collaborative learning constrained the effective use of peer collaboration. The study concludes that peer collaboration is an important pedagogical strategy for enhancing multilingual competence among VET learners. It recommends that teachers integrate structured collaborative activities, such as peer tutoring, group discussions, and cooperative learning tasks, while VET institutions provide professional development and appropriate instructional resources to support multilingual learning.

Keyword : Peer Collaboration, Multilingual Competence, Vocational Education, Language Learning

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INTRODUCTION

The development of multilingual competence has become increasingly important in contemporary education because learners are expected to communicate and function effectively across diverse linguistic, cultural, and professional contexts. Globalization, international labour mobility, and technological connectivity have increased the demand for individuals who can use multiple languages and adapt their communication to different situations. Educational systems are therefore increasingly expected to prepare learners with linguistic skills that support employability, innovation, and participation in multicultural societies (Gao & Yang, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Multilingual competence extends beyond the ability to understand or speak two or more languages. It involves the ability to use different languages appropriately, transfer linguistic knowledge across contexts, negotiate meaning, and develop awareness of relationships among languages (Tonne, 2023). Within vocational education and training (VET), such competence is particularly important because learners are required to understand technical concepts, interact with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and communicate effectively in increasingly competitive workplaces. Consequently, pedagogical approaches that actively engage learners in meaningful communication are essential for strengthening multilingual competence.

Peer collaboration represents one such learner-centred approach that may contribute to the development of multilingual competence. Through collaborative activities, learners can interact, exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, assist one another, and practise language in authentic social contexts. Such interactions may create opportunities for learners to draw upon their existing linguistic resources while acquiring new vocabulary and communication skills. Learner-centred and socially interactive pedagogies are particularly relevant in multilingual classrooms, where interaction can support deeper understanding, critical thinking, and active participation in learning (Chkanikova, 2018; Rubinov, 2021).

In Africa, however, the development of multilingual competence within vocational and skills-based education continues to face several challenges, including linguistic diversity, limited teaching resources, inadequate teacher preparation, and insufficient support for contextually appropriate language-learning strategies (Chimbutane & Clegg, 2023; Atcero, 2025). In Tanzania, the coexistence of Kiswahili, English, and indigenous languages further creates a complex learning environment, particularly in vocational programmes where English is often required for technical content and assessment. This situation may affect learners' ability to

simultaneously master vocational knowledge and develop effective multilingual communication skills (Mashamba, 2020; Otundo & Reilly, 2023).

Despite the growing importance of multilingual competence, limited attention has been directed towards understanding how specific collaborative learning practices can enhance learners' multilingual abilities within VET settings in Tanzania. Existing discussions have largely emphasized broader language-learning strategies, such as scaffolding, task-based instruction, code-switching, and translanguaging, while the specific contribution of peer collaboration requires further empirical attention. Therefore, this study is titled "Use of Peer Collaboration in Enhancing Learners' Multilingual Competence in Vocational Education and Training Institutions in Temeke Municipality." The study examines how peer collaboration contributes to the enhancement of learners' multilingual competence within the VET learning context.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that learning and cognitive development occur through social interaction, cultural context, and active participation in meaningful activities. The theory is particularly relevant to the study because peer collaboration provides opportunities for learners to interact, exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, and support one another in developing multilingual competence. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) further explains how learners can achieve higher levels of understanding and language competence through collaboration with more capable peers and guidance from others (Vygotsky, 1978; McLeod, 2024). In vocational education and training (VET), where learners come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, peer interaction can therefore serve as an important mechanism for language learning, allowing learners to use their existing linguistic knowledge while acquiring new vocabulary and communication skills. Although Sociocultural Theory may pay less attention to individual cognitive processes and broader institutional constraints, its emphasis on social mediation, scaffolding, culturally meaningful interaction, and collaborative learning makes it an appropriate framework for examining the use of peer collaboration in enhancing learners' multilingual competence (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Donato, 2000).

Empirical Literature Review

Oliinyk et al. (2024) examined the impact of multilingual education on the development of communication skills among university students learning foreign languages in Ukraine. Using qualitative data from student

surveys and observations, the study found that exposure to multiple languages and the use of digital tools enhanced learners' linguistic adaptability, cultural awareness, and communicative fluency. The study recommended blended language instruction and cross-cultural collaboration; however, its focus on university learners and technology-mediated instruction leaves limited understanding of how peer collaboration enhances multilingual competence among vocational learners.

Tupas (2020) conducted a critical ethnographic study on English as a medium of instruction and mother-tongue retention in Singaporean VET institutions. The study found that English-dominant instructional practices created tensions between the development of English proficiency and the maintenance of learners' indigenous linguistic identities, with learners frequently using code-switching and translanguaging to negotiate meaning. Although the study emphasized the importance of inclusive pedagogies that recognize learners' linguistic repertoires, it focused primarily on language policy and identity rather than the specific use of peer collaboration as a strategy for enhancing multilingual competence.

Erling et al. (2021) conducted a multi-country study in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia to examine language-supportive pedagogies, particularly translanguaging, in linguistically diverse learning environments. Using classroom interventions and teacher-led experimentation, the study found that allowing learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoires improved confidence, reading fluency, and comprehension. While the findings demonstrate the value of interactive multilingual pedagogies, the study did not specifically isolate peer collaboration as a strategy for enhancing multilingual competence within vocational education and training institutions.

Mashamba (2020) investigated language-of-instruction policy in Mainland Tanzania through policy analysis and stakeholder interviews. The study revealed that the dominance of English in secondary and vocational education could disadvantage learners whose linguistic backgrounds were primarily rooted in Kiswahili and other local languages. It recommended more inclusive bilingual approaches that recognize learners' linguistic repertoires and promote multilingual competence. However, the study concentrated on policy-level challenges and did not examine classroom-based strategies, particularly how peer collaboration may enhance learners' multilingual competence.

Kanana and Mbaabu (2019) examined code-switching and multilingual identity in Tanzanian vocational classrooms using discourse analysis and learner narratives. The findings indicated that flexible use of Kiswahili and English facilitated

comprehension, strengthened learner agency, and supported the negotiation of meaning during vocational instruction. Although the study demonstrated the importance of interactive language practices in multilingual learning, it focused on patterns of language use rather than structured peer collaboration. Therefore, a gap remains regarding how peer collaboration can specifically enhance learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training institutions in Temeke Municipality.

Soh et al. (2021) investigated peer interaction among Malaysian ESL learners, focusing on negotiation of meaning, language-related episodes, and uptake of corrective feedback during classroom tasks. The findings demonstrated that peer interaction created opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning and attend to language through discussion and collaborative task completion. The study provides empirical evidence that interaction among learners can support language development by enabling them to clarify meanings, discuss linguistic forms, and respond to one another during learning activities. However, the study was conducted among Malaysian ESL learners rather than learners in vocational education, leaving a contextual gap concerning peer collaboration and multilingual competence within VET institutions.

Zabihi and Ghahramanzadeh (2022) examined the influence of learners' proficiency levels on engagement with language during collaborative peer interaction. The study involved 54 learners who completed joint composition tasks in different proficiency-pairing conditions. The researchers found that peer interaction generated opportunities for learners to engage with lexical and grammatical aspects of language through collaborative dialogue, although the nature of engagement varied according to the proficiency composition of the pairs. The study therefore suggests that the effectiveness of peer collaboration may depend partly on how learners with different proficiency levels are paired and how collaborative tasks are structured. While this finding is relevant to multilingual learning, the study focused on second-language learning rather than vocational education and did not examine multilingual competence in a Tanzanian VET context.

Kotkavuori (2024) investigated peer interaction in multilingual higher-education language classrooms involving 17 Spanish-language students and two native-language peers. The study examined how students and their peers acted as linguistic and cultural mediators during classroom interaction. The findings showed that peer interaction enabled learners to draw on dynamic linguistic and cultural resources while participating in meaning-making activities. The study demonstrates the

potential of peer interaction to support multilingual communication by allowing learners to learn from one another and use their available linguistic resources during interaction. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in higher education and focused on language classrooms rather than practical vocational training, leaving limited evidence regarding the contribution of peer collaboration to multilingual competence among VET learners.

Zhao and Ko (2024) examined collaborative learning in vocational education classrooms using a mixed-method approach involving 60 classroom observations and analyses of videotaped vocational lessons. The findings showed that teachers used small-group activities, structured instructions, real-life learning activities, and flexible classroom arrangements to enhance student engagement and collaboration. Students working in small groups exchanged ideas and practical knowledge related to their vocational fields. These findings provide direct empirical support for the relevance of collaborative learning within vocational education. However, the study primarily examined classroom engagement and vocational learning rather than multilingual competence, and therefore did not establish how peer collaboration contributes specifically to learners' ability to communicate and develop proficiency across multiple languages.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitatively dominant mixed-methods approach using an explanatory sequential design to examine the use of peer collaboration in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions in Temeke Municipality.

Quantitative data were collected primarily from students through questionnaires to establish patterns and assess their experiences of peer collaboration and multilingual competence, while qualitative data were subsequently collected from selected teachers through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to provide deeper explanations of the quantitative findings.

The explanatory sequential design was appropriate because it enables researchers to first obtain quantitative results and subsequently use qualitative evidence to explain or elaborate those results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was conducted in Temeke Municipality, Dar es Salaam, among VET students and teachers from the selected institution. Students were selected through simple random sampling, whereas teachers were purposively selected based on their experience and involvement in supporting learners' language development. The use of probability and purposive sampling was

appropriate because different categories of participants required different selection procedures based on the purpose of the inquiry (Kothari, 2004).

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while qualitative data were analysed thematically to identify patterns related to peer collaboration and multilingual learning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study ensured the validity and reliability of its research instruments through methodological triangulation, expert review, and pilot testing. Questionnaires, interviews, observations, and relevant documentary sources were used to generate complementary evidence regarding the role of peer collaboration in multilingual competence development. The use of multiple data-collection techniques strengthens the credibility of research findings by allowing evidence obtained through one method to be examined alongside evidence obtained through other methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Content validity was established through the review of research instruments by experts in language education and vocational training, while reliability was assessed through pilot testing and the test–retest technique. Pilot testing is important for identifying weaknesses in research instruments and improving their consistency before the main data collection process (Kothari, 2004).

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study by ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and the use of collected information strictly for academic purposes. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of how peer collaboration contributes to enhancing learners' multilingual competence within the VET context of Temeke Municipality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to examine the use of peer collaboration strategies in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions in Temeke Municipality. The study aimed to establish how collaborative learning activities among students contribute to the development of multilingual communication skills within the Electrical Installation programme. Data were obtained from student and teacher questionnaires to provide quantitative evidence, while interviews with teachers and classroom observations generated qualitative insights into the implementation of peer collaboration strategies during classroom instruction.

The findings are presented according to the major themes that emerged from the data, with

quantitative results summarized in tables and qualitative findings supported by direct quotations from teachers and evidence from classroom observations. The results are presented, interpreted and discussed basing on two key aspects: students' responses on the use of peer collaboration strategies in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions and teachers' responses on the use of peer collaboration strategies in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions in Temeke Municipality.

Students' Responses on the Use Of Peer Collaboration Strategies in Enhancing Learners' Multilingual Competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) Institutions

The first aspect explored the use of peer collaboration strategies by students in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions. Students were asked to indicate the level of agreement SA, A, N, D and SD against the statements given in Likert scale. Their responses on the influence of peer collaboration strategies on enhancing multilingual competence presented in Table 1.

Key: SA-Strong Agree; A-Agree; N-Neutral; D-Disagree; SD-Strong Disagree

Table 1.
Students' Responses on the Use of Peer Collaboration Strategies (N = 46)

S/N	Statement	SA F (%)	A F (%)	N F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)
i.	Working with classmates (peer collaboration) helps me improve my multilingual skills.	7 (15.2)	36 (78)	2 (4.3%)	1 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
ii.	Vocabulary-building activities help me learn and use different languages effectively.	8 (17.4)	35 (76)	2 (4.3)	1 (2.2)	0 (0.0)
iii.	Learning vocabulary together with classmates makes learning easier and more enjoyable.	6 (13.0)	37 (80)	2 (4.3)	1 (2.2)	0 (0.0)

Table 1presents students' responses regarding the use of peer collaboration strategies in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions. The findings generally indicate that students held positive perceptions about the contribution of peer collaboration to multilingual learning. Across all three statements, the majority of respondents selected Agree, while a smaller proportion selected Strongly Agree. Very few students remained neutral or disagreed, and none of the respondents strongly disagreed with any of the statements. This overall pattern

suggests that peer collaboration is widely recognized by learners as an effective instructional strategy for improving communication and language learning within the Electrical Installation programme. This finding is broadly consistent with Soh et al. (2021), whose empirical study demonstrated that peer interaction creates opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning and engage with language during collaborative classroom tasks.

Working with Classmates (Peer Collaboration) Helps Me Improve My Multilingual Skills

Regarding the statement, "Working with classmates (peer collaboration) helps me improve my multilingual skills," the findings revealed that 36 students (78.3%) agreed and 7 students (15.2%) strongly agreed with the statement, making a combined positive response of 93.5%. Only 2 students (4.3%) were neutral, while 1 student (2.2%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. These findings indicate that most students perceived peer collaboration as an important strategy for developing multilingual competence. The high level of agreement suggests that interacting with classmates exposes learners to different ways of expressing ideas, allows them to practice communication in more than one language, and provides opportunities to learn from one another in a supportive environment. In vocational education settings, where learning often involves teamwork and practical tasks, collaboration among students appears to strengthen not only technical understanding but also language use. Through discussions, explanations, and joint problem-solving, learners become more confident in communicating with peers using different languages or language varieties encountered in the classroom. These findings concur with the findings by Ngugi and Wanjohi (2022) who found that learners exposed to interactive and context-based language strategies demonstrated improved fluency in multiple languages and greater confidence in vocational communication.

The findings imply that peer collaboration creates a learner-centred environment where students actively construct knowledge rather than relying solely on teacher explanations. These findings concur with the finding by Erling et al. (2021) who lamented that during collaborative activities, students are able to ask questions freely, clarify unfamiliar vocabulary, and receive immediate feedback from classmates. That during collaborative activities, students are able to ask questions freely, clarify unfamiliar vocabulary, and receive immediate feedback from classmates. Such interactions reduce anxiety associated with language use and encourage learners to experiment with new words and expressions without fear of making mistakes. Since multilingual

competence requires continuous practice in authentic communication situations, the opportunity to engage with peers during classroom activities contributes significantly to language development. The results therefore demonstrate that collaborative learning provides meaningful opportunities for learners to improve both receptive and productive language skills while simultaneously enhancing their understanding of vocational concepts.

Vocabulary-Building Activities Help Me Learn and Use Different Languages Effectively

With regard to the second statement, "Vocabulary-building activities help me learn and use different languages effectively," the findings show that 35 students (76.1%) agreed while 8 students (17.4%) strongly agreed, representing an overall positive response of 93.5%. Only 2 respondents (4.3%) remained neutral, whereas 1 respondent (2.2%) disagreed and none strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that vocabulary-building activities play a significant role in strengthening learners' multilingual competence. Students recognized that acquiring vocabulary enables them to understand classroom instructions, communicate with others, interpret technical concepts, and express ideas more accurately in different languages. Since vocabulary forms the foundation of communication, learners who possess a wider range of words are more capable of participating effectively in classroom discussions and practical learning activities. This interpretation is consistent with Zabihi and Ghahramanzadeh (2022), who found that collaborative peer interaction generated opportunities for learners to engage with lexical and grammatical aspects of language through dialogue and joint task completion.

The findings indicate that vocabulary learning supports both academic achievement and vocational competence. In Electrical Installation training, learners frequently encounter technical terms, safety instructions, equipment names, and operational procedures that may be presented in English, Kiswahili, or other languages. Vocabulary-building activities therefore help students bridge language barriers that could otherwise limit their understanding of technical content. By expanding their vocabulary, learners become more confident in reading manuals, following demonstrations, communicating during practical sessions, and interacting with instructors and fellow students. This suggests that systematic vocabulary instruction should remain an integral component of vocational education because language proficiency directly influences learners' ability to master occupational skills. This interpretation is supported by the findings of Soh et al. (2021), which demonstrate that peer interaction during classroom tasks provides opportunities for learners to

negotiate meaning and engage with language in meaningful contexts.

The positive responses also demonstrate that students appreciate instructional practices that intentionally integrate vocabulary development into classroom learning. Rather than memorizing isolated words, learners appear to benefit from contextualized vocabulary activities linked to practical classroom experiences. Such approaches allow students to understand meanings, pronunciation, usage, and application simultaneously. These findings support communicative language learning approaches, which emphasize meaningful language use in authentic contexts instead of rote memorization. They further suggest that strengthening learners' vocabulary contributes directly to the broader goal of developing multilingual competence required in increasingly diverse educational and workplace environments (Soh et al., 2021; Kotkavuori, 2024).

These findings are consistent with Mokibelo (2020), who reported that multilingual strategies fostered deeper understanding and practical skill acquisition in vocational settings, as learners relied on translanguaging and peer support to navigate technical content. Similarly, Muthwii and Kioko (2017) found that mother tongue instruction improved learner engagement, reduced dropout rates, and enhanced comprehension of vocational content, emphasizing the importance of language support for technical learning. Furthermore, Otundo and Reilly (2023) observed that translanguaging practices enhanced learner participation, identity formation, and conceptual understanding in multilingual classrooms, supporting the view that vocabulary development facilitates both academic and practical competence. In the Tanzanian context, Kanana and Mbaabu (2019) demonstrated that code-switching between Kiswahili and English facilitated comprehension and bridged cultural gaps in vocational instruction, reinforcing the present study's finding that vocabulary training enables learners to navigate technical content across languages. These studies collectively affirm that systematic vocabulary instruction and contextualized language support are essential for strengthening multilingual competence and vocational achievement.

Learning Vocabulary Together with Classmates Makes Learning Easier and More Enjoyable

Concerning the statement, "Learning vocabulary together with classmates makes learning easier and more enjoyable," the findings revealed that 37 students (80.4%) agreed and 6 students (13.0%) strongly agreed, producing an overall positive response of 93.4%. Only 2 students (4.3%) were neutral, while 1 student (2.2%) disagreed, and no respondent strongly

disagreed. These findings indicate that collaborative vocabulary learning creates an engaging classroom environment that encourages active participation among learners. Students appear to enjoy learning languages when they work together because group interactions make lessons more interactive, reduce learning pressure, and provide opportunities for mutual assistance. Sharing ideas, discussing meanings of unfamiliar words, and correcting one another's language use make vocabulary learning more meaningful and memorable.

The findings further suggest that collaborative vocabulary learning promotes learner motivation and sustained engagement. When students learn together, they become active participants rather than passive recipients of information. Group discussions encourage learners to negotiate meanings, compare language expressions, and practice pronunciation in a natural setting. Such experiences increase learners' willingness to communicate, which is a key indicator of multilingual competence. Furthermore, collaborative learning promotes social relationships among students from different linguistic backgrounds, creating an inclusive classroom atmosphere where diversity becomes a resource for language learning rather than a barrier (Kotkavuori, 2024; Zabihi & Ghahramanzadeh, 2022).

Generally, the findings from Table 4.3 demonstrate that peer collaboration strategies positively influence learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training institutions. The consistently high levels of agreement across all statements indicate that collaborative learning, supported by vocabulary-building activities, provides learners with valuable opportunities to practice languages, improve communication skills, and build confidence in multilingual interactions. These findings imply that instructors should continue integrating peer collaboration into classroom instruction through group discussions, pair work, cooperative problem-solving activities, and collaborative vocabulary exercises. Such strategies not only facilitate language acquisition but also prepare vocational learners to communicate effectively in multilingual workplaces where teamwork, interpersonal communication, and continuous learning are essential for professional success (Soh et al., 2021; Zhao & Ko, 2024).

These findings are consistent with Oliinyk et al. (2024), who found that multilingual learning environments significantly improve learners' communication skills, linguistic adaptability, and confidence through interactive learning experiences. Although their study focused on university students and technology-supported multilingual education, the present study similarly demonstrates that collaborative

learning environments encourage learners to communicate actively and strengthen multilingual competence through meaningful interaction with peers.

While the students' responses provide important insights into their experiences with peer collaboration strategies, it was also necessary to obtain teachers' perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of these strategies in the classroom.

Teachers' Responses on the Use of Peer Collaboration Strategies

Teachers, as facilitators of teaching and learning, possess firsthand experience regarding how peer collaboration influences learners' multilingual competence during instructional activities. Their responses help to complement and validate the students' perceptions by highlighting instructional practices, observed learner behaviors, and the effectiveness of collaborative learning in promoting multilingual communication. The teachers' questionnaire findings are therefore presented in Table 2 to determine the extent to which their views correspond with those expressed by the students.

Key: SA-Strong Agree; A-Agree; N-Neutral; D-Disagree; SD-Strong Disagree

Table 2. Teachers' Responses on the Use of Peer Collaboration Strategies (N = 2)

S/N	Statement	SA F (%)	A F (%)	N F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)
i.	I frequently use peer collaboration techniques (e.g., group work, pair work) to support multilingual competence.	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
ii.	Vocabulary training activities (e.g., word lists, vocabulary games) effectively support students' multilingual development.	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
iii.	Combining peer collaboration and vocabulary instruction improves students' ability to use multiple languages in class.	2 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

Table 2 presents teachers' responses regarding the use of peer collaboration and vocabulary training strategies in enhancing learners' multilingual competence. The findings reveal an overwhelmingly positive perception among the participating teachers concerning the effectiveness of these instructional strategies. All responses were confined to either Agree or Strongly Agree, with no

teacher selecting Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree for any of the statements. Although the study involved only two teachers, the consistency of their responses demonstrates a shared understanding of the value of collaborative and vocabulary-based instructional approaches in promoting multilingual competence among learners enrolled in the Electrical Installation programme. This finding is consistent with Zhao and Ko (2024), who found that collaborative and small-group-oriented approaches were important features of vocational classroom practice and student engagement.

Frequently Use Peer Collaboration Techniques to Support Multilingual Competence.

Regarding the statement, "I frequently use peer collaboration techniques (e.g., group work, pair work) to support multilingual competence," one teacher (50.0%) strongly agreed while the other teacher (50.0%) agreed. This unanimous positive response indicates that both teachers intentionally integrate collaborative learning techniques into their classroom instruction. The findings suggest that peer collaboration has become an important pedagogical practice within the programme because it provides learners with opportunities to communicate, exchange ideas, and support one another during learning activities. Through group discussions, pair work, and cooperative practical exercises, learners are encouraged to use language actively while simultaneously developing technical competencies. Such classroom practices create authentic situations where students communicate naturally, thereby strengthening their multilingual competence alongside vocational skills (Zhao & Ko, 2024; Soh et al., 2021).

The findings further imply that teachers recognize the importance of learner interaction as a mechanism for improving communication skills. Rather than depending exclusively on teacher explanations, collaborative learning enables students to construct knowledge collectively through questioning, explanation, and mutual feedback. This approach is particularly relevant in vocational education where practical activities frequently require teamwork and effective communication. By encouraging students to work together, teachers provide opportunities for learners to practice multiple languages within meaningful learning contexts, thus enhancing confidence and communicative competence. These findings correspond with social constructivist perspectives, which emphasize that knowledge and language are developed through interaction with others in socially meaningful environments (Soh et al., 2021; Zhao & Ko, 2024).

In addition, these findings are consistent with Ngugi and Wanjohi (2022), who found that learners

exposed to interactive and context-based strategies demonstrated improved fluency in multiple languages and greater confidence in vocational communication. Similarly, Oliinyk et al. (2024) reported that multilingual education fosters communicative competencies, linguistic adaptability, and real-world communicative fluency through interactive learning experiences. In the Tanzanian context, Kanana and Mbaabu (2019) demonstrated that code-switching and flexible language use in vocational classrooms facilitated comprehension and fostered learner agency, supporting the present finding that peer collaboration enhances multilingual competence. Furthermore, Erling et al. (2021) observed that language-supportive pedagogies increased learner confidence and classroom participation in multilingual African classrooms, reinforcing the value of collaborative learning environments. These studies collectively affirm that peer collaboration creates meaningful opportunities for multilingual communication and strengthens learners' confidence in using multiple languages within vocational education settings.

Vocabulary training activities effectively support students' multilingual development

Concerning the statement, "Vocabulary training activities (e.g., word lists, vocabulary games) effectively support students' multilingual development," one teacher (50.0%) strongly agreed while the other (50.0%) agreed. These findings indicate that both teachers acknowledge vocabulary development as a fundamental component of multilingual competence. The teachers recognized that learners require an adequate vocabulary base before they can communicate confidently across different languages. In vocational education, students regularly encounter technical terms, workplace instructions, equipment names, and occupational concepts that require clear understanding and accurate usage. Consequently, structured vocabulary instruction equips learners with the linguistic resources necessary to comprehend instructional materials, participate in classroom discussions, and communicate effectively during practical training sessions (Zabihi & Ghahramanzadeh, 2022; Zhao & Ko, 2024).

The findings also suggest that vocabulary instruction should not be viewed as an isolated language activity but rather as an integral component of vocational teaching and learning. Teachers appear to appreciate instructional methods that contextualize vocabulary within practical classroom experiences instead of relying solely on memorization. Vocabulary games, collaborative word-learning activities, demonstrations, and repeated exposure to technical terminology provide learners with

meaningful opportunities to understand and apply new words in authentic situations. Such practices contribute to long-term vocabulary retention while simultaneously strengthening learners' confidence in using multiple languages for academic and occupational purposes. These findings support communicative approaches to language teaching, which advocate learning vocabulary through meaningful interaction and contextual application rather than through mechanical repetition (Soh et al., 2021; Kotkavuori, 2024).

Peer Collaboration and Vocabulary Instruction On Students' Ability to Use Multiple Languages in Class

With regard to the third statement, "Combining peer collaboration and vocabulary instruction improves students' ability to use multiple languages in class," both teachers (100.0%) strongly agreed. This complete consensus represents the strongest level of agreement recorded in the teachers' questionnaire and demonstrates a firm professional belief that integrating collaborative learning with vocabulary instruction produces better multilingual learning outcomes than applying either strategy independently. The findings imply that teachers perceive these two instructional approaches as complementary, with peer collaboration providing opportunities for language practice while vocabulary instruction supplies the linguistic knowledge required for effective communication. Together, these strategies create a supportive learning environment in which learners actively use newly acquired vocabulary during interaction with classmates, thereby reinforcing both language acquisition and communication competence (Soh et al., 2021; Zabihi & Ghahramanzadeh, 2022).

The teachers' strong agreement further indicates that, successful multilingual learning depends on instructional approaches that promote both knowledge acquisition and active language use. While vocabulary provides the building blocks of communication, peer collaboration offers authentic opportunities for learners to apply those linguistic resources in meaningful social interactions. This combination enables learners to develop fluency, confidence, pronunciation, comprehension, and interpersonal communication skills simultaneously. In vocational classrooms where practical activities dominate the learning process, integrating collaborative language tasks into technical instruction enhances students' readiness for multilingual workplace environments characterized by teamwork, customer interaction, and communication with individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Furthermore, the findings from Table 4.4 demonstrate that teachers hold highly positive perceptions regarding the contribution of peer

collaboration and vocabulary training to learners' multilingual competence. The consistency of responses across all three statements reinforces the student findings presented earlier, indicating a shared understanding between teachers and learners about the value of collaborative language learning strategies. The convergence of these quantitative findings suggests that peer collaboration and vocabulary instruction constitute effective pedagogical practices for strengthening multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training institutions. The findings therefore imply that VET instructors should continue integrating collaborative learning activities, structured vocabulary development, and interactive classroom practices into their instructional programmes to prepare learners with the communication skills required for both academic success and professional performance in multilingual working environments (Soh et al., 2021; Zhao & Ko, 2024).

These findings are strongly supported by Ngugi and Wanjohi (2022), who concluded that interactive and context-based language learning strategies significantly improved multilingual proficiency among vocational learners, emphasizing the importance of combining communicative approaches with vocabulary development. Similarly, Oliinyk et al. (2024) found that multilingual education, when integrated effectively with interactive learning experiences, improves foreign language proficiency and equips students for intercultural engagement. In the African context, Erling et al. (2021) demonstrated that language-supportive pedagogies encouraging learners to use their full linguistic repertoires increased learner confidence, comprehension, and classroom participation. Furthermore, Kanana and Mbaabu (2019) observed that code-switching and flexible language use in Tanzanian vocational classrooms facilitated comprehension and fostered learner agency, supporting the complementary relationship between collaborative interaction and vocabulary knowledge. These studies collectively affirm that integrating peer collaboration with vocabulary instruction creates a powerful pedagogical approach that strengthens multilingual competence, enhances communication skills, and prepares vocational learners for effective performance in diverse multilingual workplaces.

The interview findings complemented the questionnaire results by providing deeper insights into how peer collaboration strategies were implemented to enhance learners' multilingual competence in the Electrical Installation programme. Analysis of the interview data revealed one dominant theme, namely the use of collaborative language practices to facilitate multilingual learning. Both teachers explained that although English was the official medium of

instruction, they strategically allowed collaborative interaction among students to improve understanding while gradually strengthening learners' ability to communicate in English and Kiswahili. The teachers emphasized that peer interaction created opportunities for learners to discuss concepts, clarify difficult vocabulary, and support one another during classroom and practical activities (Kotkavuori, 2024; Soh et al., 2021).

Teacher 1 explained that English remained the official language of instruction but acknowledged that students often experienced difficulties understanding technical concepts when English was used exclusively. To address this challenge, the teacher occasionally incorporated Kiswahili during explanations and encouraged students to communicate with one another while working in groups. As the teacher said:

> "*The medium of instruction is English but most of students are incompetent. When I teach, I also use Kiswahili. Students in groups they used both Kiswahili and English. No indigenous language is used in either teaching or discussion or communication.*" (Teacher 1, Interview, 2026)

The quotation demonstrates that peer collaboration extended beyond simply working together to complete classroom activities. Instead, collaborative learning provided students with opportunities to negotiate meaning by switching appropriately between English and Kiswahili whenever necessary. Such interaction enabled learners with varying language abilities to explain technical concepts to one another using familiar language before attempting to express the same ideas in English. This approach appeared particularly beneficial in Electrical Installation lessons where students frequently encountered unfamiliar technical terminology requiring repeated explanation and clarification. Consequently, peer collaboration reduced communication barriers while creating an environment that encouraged active participation among learners with different levels of English proficiency (Soh et al., 2021; Kotkavuori, 2024).

Teacher 2 shared a similar perspective, emphasizing that although institutional policy required English to be used as the language of instruction, practical classroom realities demanded flexibility to ensure meaningful learning. According to the teacher, learners were predominantly Kiswahili speakers, and practical sessions required continuous interaction between teachers and students to guarantee safety and understanding of technical procedures. The teacher stated:

> "*Most of students are Swahili speakers. However, the policy insists the use of English as medium of instruction. Nevertheless, during practical sessions in Electrical Installation, we communicate in*

English for better understanding."
(Teacher 2, Interview, 2026)

Although English remained the principal language during instruction, the teacher acknowledged that learners' multilingual backgrounds influenced classroom communication. Practical sessions naturally required learners to interact continuously with classmates while assembling electrical components, identifying equipment, interpreting instructions, and solving practical problems. These collaborative interactions created authentic situations where learners repeatedly practiced technical vocabulary and communication skills. Through teamwork, students became increasingly confident in expressing themselves, asking questions, and clarifying instructions using both English and Kiswahili where appropriate. Such collaborative experiences contributed significantly to the gradual development of multilingual competence because language learning occurred alongside practical skill acquisition rather than as a separate classroom activity.

A closer examination of the interview data provides insight into the mechanisms through which peer collaboration enhanced multilingual competence. While the questionnaire findings showed that the majority of respondents agreed that peer collaboration enhanced multilingual competence, the interviews explain how this improvement occurred in actual classroom practice. The findings indicate that peer collaboration provided learners with opportunities to exchange ideas, explain concepts using familiar language, practise newly acquired vocabulary, and gradually develop confidence in communicating through English during instructional and practical activities. Rather than viewing multilingualism as a challenge, both teachers regarded learners' linguistic diversity as a valuable resource that supported collaborative learning and improved comprehension of vocational content (Kotkavuori, 2024; Soh et al., 2021).

These findings were further supported by classroom observations conducted during Electrical Installation lessons. The observations revealed that, students frequently worked in pairs and small groups while completing practical activities such as identifying electrical tools, interpreting circuit diagrams, and assembling electrical components. During these collaborative activities, learners actively discussed tasks, asked one another questions, explained unfamiliar technical vocabulary, and corrected each other's mistakes before seeking assistance from the teacher. Most group discussions involved both English and Kiswahili, with English predominantly used for technical terms while Kiswahili was employed to clarify difficult concepts. The study also observed high levels of learner participation, cooperation, and confidence during collaborative activities, indicating that peer

interaction created an enabling environment for multilingual communication. These classroom observations therefore corroborate both the questionnaire and interview findings by demonstrating that peer collaboration was consistently integrated into classroom practice and contributed positively to the development of learners' multilingual competence within the Electrical Installation programme. These findings further support those of Kanana and Mbaabu (2019), who reported that code-switching between Kiswahili and English enhanced learners' understanding of vocational concepts and promoted effective classroom communication. Similar to the present study, learners used both languages strategically to negotiate meaning, clarify technical concepts, and facilitate learning rather than treating multilingualism as a barrier to instruction.

Furthermore, during the classroom observation sessions, students frequently worked in pairs and small groups while completing practical activities such as identifying electrical tools, interpreting circuit diagrams, and assembling electrical components. The observations revealed that collaborative learning was a consistent feature of classroom practice, with students actively discussing tasks, asking one another questions, explaining unfamiliar technical vocabulary, and correcting each other's mistakes before seeking assistance from the teacher. Most group discussions involved both English and Kiswahili, with English predominantly used for technical terms such as "circuit breaker," "resistance," "voltage," and "conduit," while Kiswahili was employed to clarify difficult concepts and provide instructions to one another. For instance, during one session, a student was observed explaining the function of an MCB (Miniature Circuit Breaker) in Kiswahili to a peer who appeared confused, saying, "Hii ni kama switch inazima umeme ikizidi," before the peer responded in English, "So it protects against overload?" This demonstrated how learners naturally alternated between languages to negotiate meaning and support one another's understanding.

The findings also concur with those of Ngugi and Wanjohi (2022), who concluded that interactive and context-based language learning strategies significantly improved multilingual proficiency among vocational learners. While their study focused on hospitality training institutes in Kenya, both studies demonstrate that learner-centred instructional approaches create authentic opportunities for multilingual communication and better prepare learners for workplace interaction. This consistency strengthens the argument that collaborative language learning is an effective strategy for developing

multilingual competence within vocational education.

The findings presented demonstrate that peer collaboration strategies provide learners with meaningful opportunities to interact, exchange ideas, and practice multiple languages during classroom and practical activities. However, successful multilingual competence extends beyond collaborative interaction and also depends on learners' ability to acquire and effectively use an adequate range of vocabulary. While peer collaboration creates opportunities for communication, vocabulary training equips learners with the linguistic resources necessary to comprehend technical concepts, express ideas accurately, and participate confidently in multilingual learning environments (Soh et al., 2021; Zabihi & Ghahramanzadeh, 2022). Therefore, the study sought to evaluate the influence of vocabulary training on the development of learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions in Temeke Municipality. The findings are presented using data obtained from student and teacher questionnaires, teacher interviews, and classroom observations to provide a comprehensive understanding of how vocabulary training contributes to multilingual competence among learners in the Electrical Installation programme.

Summary

The study examined the use of peer collaboration in enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training institutions in Temeke Municipality. The findings showed that peer collaboration provided learners with meaningful opportunities to interact, exchange ideas, clarify technical vocabulary, negotiate meaning, and practise English and Kiswahili during classroom and practical activities. Students and teachers generally reported positive experiences with group work, pair work, vocabulary-building activities, and collaborative learning, while classroom observations confirmed that learners frequently used peer interaction to support understanding of vocational concepts. Overall, the study indicates that peer collaboration, particularly when combined with structured vocabulary development, can strengthen learners' communication, confidence, vocabulary use, and ability to participate effectively in multilingual vocational learning environments.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that peer collaboration is an important strategy for enhancing learners' multilingual competence in Vocational Education and Training institutions in Temeke Municipality. Through collaborative learning activities, learners gain opportunities to interact, exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, support one

another, and practise different languages in meaningful learning contexts. The findings further suggest that peer interaction can enhance learners' confidence, communication skills, vocabulary development, and ability to use multiple languages when learning vocational and technical content. However, the effectiveness of peer collaboration may be influenced by challenges such as differences in learners' language proficiency, limited instructional resources, and inadequate opportunities for structured collaborative activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that VET teachers should integrate structured peer-collaboration activities, including group discussions, peer tutoring, cooperative tasks, and group projects, into teaching and learning processes to provide learners with greater opportunities to practise and develop multilingual competence. VET institutions should also support teachers through professional development on collaborative and multilingual teaching approaches and provide appropriate learning materials that encourage interaction across languages. Furthermore, institutional administrators and curriculum developers should recognize peer collaboration as an important pedagogical strategy for supporting multilingual learning and create learning environments that enable learners to draw upon their diverse linguistic resources effectively.

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