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Factors Affecting the Mastery of English Language Skills Among University Students in Somalia: A Case at Benadir University

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors influencing the mastery of English language abilities among university students in Hodan district, Somalia, with Benadir University serving as the case study. The study was fully qualitative, with respondents being first-year students engaging in the English proficiency program at Benadir University's Centre for Languages. Using the saturation principle, the researchers selected a sample of 17 respondents to provide firsthand opinions based on their experiences as students in Somali educational institutions. Findings show that many students have low command of the English language despite efforts to teach them English due to factors emerging from their educational background, learning environment, culture, society, English policy, and teachers. However, the most frequently reported barrier is the influence of Somali, which trumps English not only in class but also in the community. As a result, students are taught English in Somali, and they lack opportunities to practice English because everyone around them speaks Somali. The language of instruction is also not streamlined, as lecturers continue to deliver lectures primarily in Somali, with the exception of a few cases, the majority of which are for international lectures who do not speak Somali. These factors undermine efforts to create equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for Somali students both nationally and internationally. Finally, the researchers recommend a policy review to streamline the language of instruction, monitoring, and regulation. Innovations, such as using Literature to improve English language abilities, should be implemented. Finally, there is a need to embrace teacher refresher workshops, substantial research, sensitization, and international benchmarking for best practices in managing English proficiency programs. These recommendations could create more inclusive and equitable learning environments for Somali students.

Keywords: Mastery of English Language Skills, University Students, English Proficiency, Teaching, Education Equity and Inclusivity

Introduction

English is the most extensively used international language, spoken by almost 1.5 billion people worldwide (Ethnologue, 2023; Dyvik, 2024; Simon & Simon, 2024; Statista, 2024). Over the years, English has spread to very many countries, becoming the most widely spoken language in the world today (Simon & Simon, 2024). A report by Entnologue (2023) reveals that over 1.46 billion people speak English around the World, amounting to an incredible 18.07% of the global population, or almost 1 in 5 people. Therefore, today, more people speak English than any other language, and by 2050, the total number of English speakers is anticipated to grow to 2 billion people or more. English has become so spread that it is taught in over 118 countries, holding immense value as a language to learn (Dean, 2023; Entnologue, 2023; Pareeshti, 2023; Raj, 2023). Due to such statistics that make English an important global language, many countries have rushed to associate themselves with it, either making it an official language, a subject in school, or a language of instruction. One of these countries is Somalia, whose association with English dates back to the British colonial days. Language policies in Somalia have since favored English as a subject or language of instruction from primary to university, though English faces competition from Somali and Arabic (Altai Consulting, 2018; DCG, 2021; MOECHE, 2017; Unicef, 2016). Such a background in English has attracted the attention of researchers from a global to a national perspective (Zahra, 2024).

However, university students still demonstrate low mastery of the basic English skills – writing, reading, listening, and speaking, much as they are exposed to English right away from primary school (Ali, 2020; Mohamed, 2018; Zahra, 2024). This limits opportunities for Somali students to access quality education, especially internationally, undermining global efforts to achieve education equity, diversity, and inclusivity. Despite this challenge, students' perspectives have not been fully captured in studies, yet they are the most affected party. Consequently, universities in Somalia have desperately attempted to fix this English language gap by establishing language centres to equip students with the necessary language skills. However, the majority of the students at these centers still struggle to participate in academics due to the language barrier where English is used as a language of instruction. Such students quickly switch back to Somali for easy participation and understanding (Zahra, 2024). Such trends undermine efforts to make English a language of instruction in Somali universities, affect students' academic performance, limit participation in academic activities, and have a long-term impact on the career growth of the students (Abdishakur, 2020; Zahra, 2024). As part of the

result, Somalia registers miserable rankings relating to English usage. According to the EF English Proficiency Report (2023), Somalia is among the countries posting a very low proficiency index, while the World Population Review (2024) ranks Somalia in position eight from the bottom of the literacy table, only posting 41% literacy, yet it is important to mention that many studies have found a positive relationship between literacy and career success (Achmad, 2021; Schmeiser, 2009); and English proficiency and career opportunities and growth (Dodo et al., 2023).

English supports national and international movements, research, studies, work, and business. Mastering English as an international language will provide Somali students with equitable and inclusive access to quality education worldwide, as well as opportunities for international collaborations that promote sustainable development. Therefore, the poor English language skills of most Somali students should worry all stakeholders in Somali education and sustainable development (Ahmed, 2022; Ibrahim, 2022; Pareeshti, 2023). Consequently, studying the factors affecting mastery of English language skills among university students in Somalia is necessary and a contribution to already existing literature on the issue, and the efforts addressing the poor English language skills among university students to pave a clear career path for them. The study, therefore, sought to identify the factors affecting the mastery of English language skills from the students' perspective and suggest possible and sustainable solutions so as to contribute to the improvement of the English proficiency program, the overall quality of education in Somalia, and the success of Somali students after university. This will create inclusive and equitable learning environments and opportunities for Somalia. The findings of the study are necessary to empower the Centre for Languages at Benadir University and other language centers in Somalia to make a significant contribution to English language development.

Literature Review

The study was based on the Sociocultural Learning Theory developed by Leo Vygotsky in the 20th century (McLeod, 2024; Vygotsky, 1978). According to this view, language emerges as a direct result of a culture's symbols and tools. Individuals can learn language through a number of social events, contexts, communication, and processes that all lead to language acquisition (McLeod, 2024; Vygotsky, 1978). Several scholars investigating language development have employed the theory and found it useful in understanding how cultural, environmental, personal, and

classroom aspects influence foreign language learning (McLeod, 2024; Nguyen, 2019; Ozfidan et al., 2014). The theory's propositions, such as communicative and peer-to-peer language acquisition, apply to contemporary EFL teaching and learning. All of this promotes linguistic contact, which translates into language learning. Vygotsky thought that language evolved from social interactions to achieve communication goals. As a result, the theory is useful in understanding the factors that influence language development in students studying English as a foreign language, as the majority of them rely on it for communicative and social activities. The theory proved useful in examining cultural, contextual, classroom, motivational, and instructional aspects that influence English language proficiency. The theory was also useful in making practical recommendations for designing efficient learning settings.

On the other hand, the researchers acknowledge that there are many studies from a global to a national perspective that have delved into the issue of poor English language skills among university students. Bazimaziki (2019) conducted a qualitative study on university students' perceptions of using literary genres to enhance language proficiency among university students in Rwanda. It was found that most of the students who had been exposed to Literary genres underwent an increase in language proficiency at various levels each in the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Therefore, Literature was used to enhance language communication skills, critical thinking, and creativity in language learning as they expose learners to contexts that can enable them to use language in describing various things and situations, hence developing their communication competencies. The view by Bamazaki (2019) is supported by many other researchers (Chen, 2022; Padmavat, 2022). Chen (2022) asserts that adopting the teaching method that focuses on the development of communicative competence in English Language and Literature is helpful to students in China and enhances their comprehensive English skills.

The study by Bazimaziki (2019) offers insightful information about how literary genres help Rwandan university students improve their language skills. However, its scope is restricted to Rwanda which would limit how broadly its conclusions can be applied in other situations. Furthermore, although acknowledging that proficiency problems persist despite the availability of English classes, the study does not go into great detail about the particular difficulties or impediments that make these courses less effective. It is important to note that a significant study gap exists regarding the transfer of these findings to other EFL countries, such as

Somalia, despite the fact that Bazimaziki (2019) and other studies (Chen, 2022; Padmavat, 2022) highlight the positive effects of literature on English language proficiency. Specifically, there is a lack of studies exploring how the integration of literary genres into English language foundation programs can address proficiency challenges in Somali universities, where literature is not typically included in the foundation curriculum (Mohamed, 2022). Future research could investigate the potential benefits and practical implementation of incorporating literary genres into English language teaching in Somalia and other EFL countries that do not teach Literature in language foundation programs at universities, providing a comparative analysis with the Rwandan context.

Studies have also revealed issues related to inadequate teaching resources, methods, and technology, negative attitudes of students, and ineffective implementation of the English language curriculum reported in Nigeria and Pakistan (Tayyab et al., 2023; Tom-Lawyer, 2014). Other critical issues identified are language anxiety, poor classroom environments, low exposure to English, low self-confidence, lack of involvement of other stakeholders, and lack of motivation (Çayak & Karsantik, 2020; Kostadinova, 2012; Lamphaiphanh et al., 2024; Nevenglosky et al., 2019; Nhan, 2024). Such studies could be done in the context of Somalia for context rich findings.

On the other hand, some researchers reveal a number of factors that can enhance language proficiency. Such factors include qualified teachers, quality learning materials, supportive environments, early language acquisition, stakeholder involvement, and strong pre-university foundations (Çayak & Karsantik, 2020; Kostadinova, 2012; Nevenglosky et al., 2019; Reiser et al., 2021; Scott, 2022; Irakoze & Sikubwabo, 2024). Extensive reading activities were also found to have enhanced mastery of other language skills in Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan (Mulatu & Regassa, 2022; Raqqad et al., 2019; Salamuddin et al., 2022; Wendaferew & Berlie, 2024). However, this does not explain why some learners still fail to master the language even when they are exposed to such factors. Therefore, incorporating more student perspectives would enrich findings. There is also a need to study the possibility and impact of comprehensive language programs and authentic English materials in improving students' proficiency, especially considering all four skills.

Related studies have also been done in Somalia acknowledging that much as English language programs significantly improved students' proficiency, the persistence of low mastery of English skills is a problem to worry about (Zahra, 2024). Studies also highlight critical issues that hamper the mastery of English language skills,

such as teacher-related problems like low motivation, the civil war and anarchy, economic and social hardships, low pay, lack of specialized training, and in consideration for professional development programs. Such factors lead to the diminishing value of teaching, consequently affecting the quality of students graduating from academic programs (Mohamed, 2018; Zahra, 2024). Other factors identified are limited school resources, uncertainty, ineffective service delivery, negative attitudes of students, social-cultural gender issues, lack of effective regulation in the education sector, and coordination challenges as limiting learning outcomes and student capacities (Mohamed, 2018; Mohamed, 2022). For Somali students studying outside Somalia, issues like language barrier, slow adjustment to foreign cultures, different education systems, the influence of L1, and unfamiliarity with resources in host environments affect acquisition of English language skills (Aderi et al., 2013; Ahmed, 2021; Akua-Sakyiwah, 2016; Ali, 2020; Bulhan, 2020; Gebhard, 2012; Mekarini, 2024; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Rienties, 2012;).

Consequently, as researchers delved into the issues affecting mastery of English language skills, significant research gaps still exist that need to be addressed through further empirical investigation. Many studies were done outside Somalia, and even in Somalia, some studies were in other states or regions, making Benadir relevant in addressing such gaps. Some researchers studied Somali students in foreign environments, yet factors such as cultural influence could be different if students were studied in their home countries. In addition, most significantly, many of the reviewed studies used the quantitative approach, while others used teachers as the population. This created a gap that could be addressed by the current qualitative study on students as key respondents so as to explore their perceptions of the issues limiting their mastery of language skills. This gave an in-depth insight.

Methodology

The study used a case study design and employed a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data. The case study design and qualitative approach were used because they were relevant and suitable to the research instrument used such as interview guides. According to Steven (2013), the qualitative research approach provides an in-depth explanation of the issue at hand and allows participants to freely express themselves. Qualitative research enabled the researchers to collect the data needed to meet objectives. Therefore, the study used semi-structured interviews designed to generate explanatory and deeper responses. This gave the researchers

an opportunity to peer deep into the responses of the respondents and discover detailed information that could have been missed by close-ended questionnaires previously used by other researchers.

The study population was first-year students of Benadir University who were registered for the English Foundation course at the Centre for Languages. The sample size was determined using the saturation principle. Data saturation demands that the researcher stop interviewing respondents after getting sufficient data and hoping not to find new data (Francis et al., 2010; Guest et al., 2020; Moura et al., 2021). Therefore, after conducting 17 interviews, data collection stopped because the researchers realized that sufficient data had been collected to draw the necessary conclusions, and collecting any further data would not produce value-added insights because no new insights were being given by more interviewees but rather respondents repeating the same data already provided. The researchers used purposive sampling to select participants who could provide valuable insights into their research question. This method was advantageous when studying groups with experiences related to the research problem, so a random selection of participants would yield different results. For example, only participants who had studied their primary, secondary, and or high school in Somalia while exposed to English were recruited (Webster, 2024).

The researchers employed the interview method and were guided by interview guides. Data from the interviews were interpreted, and their validity was strengthened using qualitative information got. As a result, the qualitative material gathered was transcribed and subjected to a thematic analysis to assess its sufficiency, reliability, utility, and consistency. Therefore, the study employed a thematic analysis by first familiarizing with the data, initial coding followed, generating and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes then writing the report followed.

Findings and Analysis

The respondents were asked about the factors affecting their mastery of English language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The question was thorough enough to give respondents the freedom to delve into any factors they had experienced that were limiting their mastery of language skills. The nature of the question also allowed respondents to give a detailed account, drawing from their experiences in learning English in the different levels of education to they had been exposed. The thematic analysis of their responses revealed that most of their

factors were related to insecurity, culture, quality of the teachers, the Language of Instruction policy in Somalia, teaching and learning methodologies and resources, attitudes towards English, and influence of the Somali and Arabic languages. While some of these findings were consistent with the ones of previous researchers (Abdishakur, 2020; Akua-Sakyiwah, 2015; Amina & Guled, 2019; Mohamed, 2022), some views diverged from those in other studies (Sharif, 2018).

The Influence of Arabic and Somali

Many respondents pointed to the fact that they were exposed to many major languages almost at the same time, hence limiting their concentration on English. Less concentration meant poor mastery of English language skills. All the respondents mentioned the fact that they are always taught in Somali, and this limited their exposure to English, hence limiting their mastery of basic English skills. One of the respondents had to say:

In primary, we learnt much Arabic and Somali. In secondary, we learnt Arabic, Somali and English. At university, we are learning English and Arabic but also having our lectures in Somali. There are many languages we are learning or using at the same time and sometimes I forget what I have learnt in another language. (Respondent F)

Another respondent had a similar view:

We are learning and using many languages at the same time; therefore, others are overshadowed by others. When we learn English in class, outside class we speak much Somali and by the time we come back to the English class, we have forgotten and we have to start afresh. I wish I was learning only English; I would be very good at it. (Respondent G)

Another respondent was concerned about being taught in Somali:

Our teachers in primary and secondary used to teach us English but using Somali. They would explain to us English using Somali and translate everything to Somali language. They helped us to understand English grammar but they did not help us to polish our speaking skills. I used to pass grammar but when I came to university and found that in class you have to speak English, I failed completely. At the university, I met foreign teachers who don't know Somali so I am forced to speak English if I want to learn from them. They even discourage speaking Somali in class and this is helping us because most of us are now improving our speaking skills. (Respondent K)

However, Sharif (2018) has a different view as he highlights the importance of the mother tongue or first language in the success of education. Sharif (2018) posits

that the Somali language is very important and should be upheld as a language of instruction to fix the education problems of Somalia. Yet Awompentu (2016) notes that the use of the mother tongue in early childhood classrooms was effective in fostering children's learning abilities. The mother tongue can influence a child's second language learning by affecting their pronunciation, fluency, and ability to concentrate on stress, intonation, and pronunciation. For mature learners, Elif (2017) notes that mother tongue interference affects second language learning in various aspects, with the biggest impact on speaking and grammar skills (Civan & Coskun, 2016).

The Environment

According to the responses got, many respondents pointed out the issue of the environment under which they study, work or stay. Some respondents think the environment has encouraged them to develop language skills while others think their unfavorable environment has affected them negatively.

Arabic is my favourite language because I am Muslim, and Somali is my mother tongue. What about English? It is left there in space. Sometimes it becomes hard for me to focus on it. I do not have anyone at home who speaks English so I cannot practice with anyone. But my sister who is in Canada speaks English because she has spent there many years. Actually, she is the only one who encourages me and whenever she calls me, she asks me to speak to her in English. I can say that that is the only time I practice English when I am not at school. (Respondent B)

Another respondent who was working and at the same time studying said:

When I got a small job, I realised that we were getting customers who don't know Somali and they wanted to be talked to in English. I changed my view about English and even paid money at another school to have extra English lessons in weekends and evenings. I am now improving my English because I have to meet my job demands. (Respondent E)

Another respondent said:

Here the environment does not favour English because everyone speaks Somali so there is no one you practice with. I do not speak good English even after studying English for many years because I do not get an opportunity to practice speaking it. Here at the university, we practice in class and they tell us to use only English in class. They punish you when you use Somali in class. This is okay because it helps us to speak English and learn. But we only do that in class. Most of the time we are in the compound or at home or in town speaking only Somali. The people around don't know English. (Respondent Q)

These views are supported by many earlier researchers who posit that the environment can have a significant impact on learning the English language and developing its skills. Factors such as societal, home/family, and school/classroom variables can influence students' academic performance and achievements in English (Amiri & El Karfa, 2021; Iman, 2019). Other researchers hold that the language environment plays a crucial role in students' speaking skills, and the implementation of a conducive language environment can improve students' speaking abilities (Zuzhi & Gengsheng, 2022). However, some disagreement is that a suitable school environment, along with positive student-teacher and teacher-parent relationships, can significantly contribute to English language learners' performance and skills accomplishments (Muhammad et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be noted that a learning environment has an impact on mastery of English language skills, and this impact can either be positive or negative.

Cultural Factors

For factors relating to cultural issues, many respondents mentioned that some aspects of the culture were limiting their participation in English lessons, hence limiting what they were able to benefit from the learning process in class. Other respondents said the content in some English textbooks does not appeal to their culture because they are not used to their content. Some of such content becomes strange to them and limits their understanding of the skills supposed to be acquired through them. Respondents A and C said:

My parents always told me and my sisters to be reserved women, respect people and do not talk anyhow when we are in public. So, I grew up reserved and in class I prefer keeping quiet and not participating. I also do not feel comfortable speaking in class when boys are around. During class presentations and debates, I'm engulfed by fear especially when boys are around. But when I am with my fellow girls, we speak freely. I would study better and freely practice English skills like speaking if I were studying in an only-girls class. Also at home, my mother encourages my sisters and I to always do housework. Most of this time the boys are reading their books. (Respondent A)

Some of the things that these curriculum books teach us are haram. For example, some books talk about music, boyfriends or girlfriends. The stories are about England and America so I do not understand such examples because I have never been to America. Some of the things talked about in some English books are disgusting and I would rather not read about them. (Respondent C)

This view is in agreement with most researchers about the Somali culture. For example, Amina & Guled (2019) hold that social-cultural gender issues limit access to education and participation in lessons among female students in Puntland, Somalia, hence limiting the acquisition of English language skills. Akua-Sakiyawah (2015) also noted that the norms of Somali patriarchal society exclude both girls and women from education, leading to illiteracy in English and, for most of the participants, in the Somali language. Again, according to another earlier study, Somali culture is cited as a general barrier to girls' education as priority is given to boys, leaving girls to do housework all the time (Jamal et al., 2009)

Instability and Lack of Safety

Some respondents thought the instability in Mogadishu was limiting their concentration on studies. Although this was seen as a general factor relating to all subjects, it also affected concentration on English because sometimes they “*missed lessons due to road blocks and cordoning off some areas*” (Respondent D). Another respondent said,

It has been hard for me to concentrate on anything because my area is not safe. Sometimes I do not go to the university and miss out on school activities such as debates that would have helped me to improve my speaking skills. Whenever there is a threat around, my mother stops me from going to the university. It also psychologically affects me. (Respondent J)

However, respondent E disagreed with this view saying:

We are already used to the security situation and I cannot say it affects me when I am learning English. It might affect those who are not serious and focused on their studies. I am always focused and nothing sways me. (Respondent E)

Abdishakur (2020) also notes that the civil war in Somalia has had a negative impact on education. Somalia had almost lost hope but now trying to rebuild.

Attitudes Towards English

Respondents also pointed out the issue of attitudes of both learners and teachers towards English as a subject and also as a language spoken in society. The A respondent said, “*I have developed some English skills because I love the language. I even paid money to study it privately,*” (Respondent H), while another respondent said, “*Some students don't like the subject. They say they are studying it because it is forced on them.*” (Respondent N) Another respondent said,

Some students do not have the passion for English. Therefore, they do not practice or read it. They do not even make research. Whenever they finish their lessons, they go to play or sleep. This affects their grades because they do not get the content. (Respondent L)

Another respondent said:

Some students believe they cannot learn English from Somalia because of what they went through in primary and secondary. They say they will learn better English when they go to other countries like Canada. Therefore, when they are here, they are not interested in the lessons. (Respondent P)

Whereas Herwiana and Laili (2019) agrees with the views that students can have positive attitudes towards English learning, such attitudes might not help them improve their language skills without other factors. A study done in Indonesia found that most of the students had a positive attitude towards English yet the students' competence in learning English was still poor. Positive attitude did not influence their competence in acquiring English. Suggestions were made that government makes a teaching guide or curriculum such that teachers guide the students well (Herwiana & Laili, 2019). However, Al-Sobhi et al. (2018) found out that student attitudes towards learning EFL in the Arab world was a key motivational component and an important nonlinguistic factor that influenced second-language learning. His research findings indicated that the students' attitude toward the social use of English had a significant positive relationship with spelling and writing.

Subject Insecurity/Lack of Confidence

Some students had a view that they lack confidence to express themselves in English which affects the way they learn it and master all skills. A respondent said, *"I fear making a mistake therefore I usually dodge speaking tasks."* (Respondent M) Another respondent said, *"Learning with boys in the same place affects me and makes me shy but when I am with girls I can speak."* (Respondent I) while another said,

I feel insecure when I say something and they laugh at me in class. It affects my confidence and I usually fear speaking again because I don't want to make another mistake and be a laughing stock. I think in the end I miss a lot because of dodging practice sessions. (Respondent H)

Many researchers have agreed with the view that linguistic insecurity limits a student's chances of learning (Elizaventa, 2016). In a study done among college students in South-Western Nigeria, it was found out that linguistic insecurity or lack of confidence in English language had negative effects on the English oral

productivity of students of resulting in many of them speaking their first language more than they did speak the English language while in school (Okedigba et al., 2023).

Quality of Teachers

Many respondents thought that they were doing poorly in English because of the quality of teachers they faced. A respondent said:

I believe some teachers are not good enough and lack the skills of teaching. They are harsh and scare students away from their lessons. Students end up hating them and even dodge their lessons. If teachers cannot guide the students well, the students will not understand the lesson. Also, strict teachers are good because the students follow them. If a teacher says don't speak Somali in my class and they become serious, students will speak English. So, a good teacher should use good methods to make sure the students practice, enjoy the lesson and get a lot of knowledge about the subject (Respondents K)

Mohammaditabar et al. (2020) agree with the notion that a good teacher of English is a prerequisite to effective language skills development. Accordingly, a good language teacher is one who has knowledge of pedagogy, rapport, critical thinking, empathy, rhetoric, knowledge of subject matter, enthusiasm, respect, humor, consciousness, fairness, and authenticity among others (Mohammaditabar et al., 2020).

Lack of Practice

Many respondents brought out the issue of insufficient practice time. They believed that they could grasp the skills better if they had enough time to practice them. For example, a respondent said:

The time they give us to practice in class is not enough. We practice in the last hour of the lesson and we are usually many so each one of us takes like two minutes which can't be enough to improve speaking. My problem is speaking because I can listen and understand but I cannot speak well. It was even worse in primary and secondary. We need more time for practice. (Respondent O)

Thuan (2023) agrees with the notion that practice is important in learning a second language. Indeed, in the globalized world, mastering English as a second language is crucial but it has to depend on how best students practice. A number of researchers acknowledge that even when practice is important in improving language skills,

many learners face a significant obstacle: the lack of practice (Nghì & Khuong, 2021; Nghì et al., 2019; Thuan, 2023).

Conclusion

There exists a significant disparity between the efforts invested in teaching English and the outcomes achieved (Ali, 2020; Mohamed, 2018; Zahra, 2024). Despite substantial efforts, many students still lack proficiency in language skills, even after several years of studying English from primary to university. This disadvantages most students, excluding them from global education opportunities where English is the mode of instruction. Many students still lack in speaking and writing much as they have achieved some level of competence in listening and reading. From the students' perspectives, this is due to many factors, but most importantly the fact that they are always taught in Somali, which limits their exposure to English and their mastery of the language. Respondents also noted that being exposed to multiple languages at the same time (Arabic, Somali, and English) interferes with their ability to focus on English. Cultural concerns and inappropriate content in English textbooks further restrict their learning. The environment is important, and a lack of opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom is a considerable challenge. Somalia's instability impairs focus, and a lack of practice time has been identified as an obstacle to developing speaking and writing abilities. Negative attitudes of students towards English, the quality of teachers, and lack of confidence when practicing English also pose a considerable threat to English learning efforts. Much as these findings are consistent with some earlier research, they also highlight issues unique to Somalia.

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education should revise the education policy to streamline regulation, policy implementation, and the language of instruction at all levels of education. The education policy should encompass wider concerns like sensitisation, introducing Literature in English as a subject to enhance language skills, and synchronizing practices in all education institutions and levels. However, efforts to promote English should not disadvantage Somali. The two languages should coexist because there is a need to preserve Somali, a language with cultural significance to Somalis. Other interventions for the ministry and academic institutions at all levels include international benchmarking for best practices, policies, and curriculum to enhance English language teaching and learning and implementing effective

capacity-building programs for staff so they can use English effectively as a language of instruction. The best curriculum should balance between an appeal to the local experiences of Somali students and contemporary international trends. Further extensive research is needed to address emerging issues relating to the teaching and learning of English in Somalia. These recommendations will strengthen English language mastery and create inclusive, equitable learning environments, making Somali students competitive for global education opportunities.

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