

## **Internationalization and the Adoption of English Language as a Medium of Instruction at Somali National University**

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### **Abstract**

The adoption of English as a delivery language of instructions entails the utilization of English to deliver other subjects other than English itself in countries where the first language of natives is not English. However, the implementation of the same has been unsuccessful and this is partly due to lack of implementation framework. This study specifically aimed to investigate the influence of internationalization on the adoption of English language as a medium of instruction at Somali National University. The study was informed by the structural-functionalism theoretical approach. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Its target population comprised of lecturers, students, senior management staff and the Director of Higher Education. A sample of 88 lecturers and 30 students were sampled through proportionate stratified and simple random sampling respectively; while, purposive sampling technique was employed in coming up with 15 Senior Management Officers and the Director of Education. The data for the study was gathered using questionnaires, focused group discussions and interviews. The reliability of data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. Percentages and regression were utilized in the analysis. The study's results indicated that Somali National University lacked policies and frameworks for supporting the adoption of English as an instructional language. The study indicated that curriculums, equality and competitive advantages were among the aspects used to gauge internationalization. It concluded that there exists a positive and substantial link between internationalization and the adoption of English as an instructional language at Somali National University. The study recommended that language policies should be implemented effectively and adequate funds should be directed towards supporting the implementation process.

**Keywords:** *Internationalization, language of Instructions, Language and Education, English Language, Medium of Instruction, Somali National University*

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The adoption of English as an instructional language involves the utilization of English

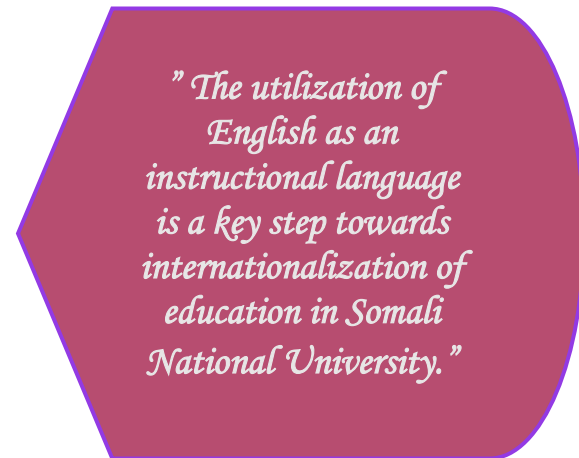
in the delivery of subjects other than English itself in countries where the first language of the natives is not English (Macaro et al., 2018; Macaro, 2017). This adoption is

evident in countries such as Japan, America, Europe, China, East Asia, Saudi Arabia, Netherlands, The United Arab Emirates, Sweden, France, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Aizawa & Rose, 2018; Macaro et al., 2018). This indicates the increased adoption of English as a language of instruction globally. The main reason for this increase is stated to be internationalization which fosters the adoption of international policies (Aizawa & Rose, 2018; Jibeen & Khan, 2015; Kruikow & Galloway, 2018). It has also been necessitated by accreditation of courses which are delivered in English through the Ministry of Education.

English is one of the most used and accepted language of instruction across various levels of education globally. This is because it is widely spoken and written, and it facilitates globalization where all people interact in various sectors of economy (Rao, 2019). The adoption of English as an instructional language is associated with some advantages. These benefits include: growth of universities, conforming to internationalism, standardization of public and private sector and conforming to international policies and standards (Macaro et al., 2017). English language has entered various professional areas such as education, medicine, engineering, international relations and

information communication technology (ICT) (Walsh, 2020). Despite the increased adoption of English as the delivery language of instructions, achieving the implementation of national policies continues to be a problem

in developed countries (Macaro, 2017; Aizawa & Rose, 2018).



*"The utilization of English as an instructional language is a key step towards internationalization of education in Somali National University."*

The increased adoption is due to the need to attract foreign students from different nations in order to achieve competitive advantage internationally (Brown, 2016; Luanganggoon, 2020; Macaro, 2017; Fenton et al., 2017; Kruikow & Galloway, 2018). Tang (2020), Luanganggoon et al. (2018), and Luanganggoon, (2020) further argued the advantages for adoption to include increased career opportunities, quality education and implementation of internationalization policies.

However, the adoption of English language as an instructional language faces a lot of challenges even in the existence of some studies carried out on the adoption of English as an instructional language (Aizawa & Rose, 2018; Jibeen & Khan, 2015; Kruikow & Galloway, 2018). In Japan, adoption of English as the language of instruction has been weakened by lack of policy frameworks for implementation (Brown, 2016; Aizawa & Rose, 2018). However, in Africa, these challenges were experienced in greater dimension and they were linked to reliance

on international policies in adopting English (Wilinska et al., 2020; Gwakwa, 2016).

Locally, the government of Somali experienced decades of civil war in the 1990s that affected various sectors of the economy and the most affected was the education sector. This resulted in destruction of educational infrastructure and lack of teaching materials which forced the unqualified teachers to teach using whatever language and available teaching materials (The Dexis Consulting Group, 2021). The main languages used in school settings were Arabic and Somali. In primary schools, the language used is Somali whereas in secondary schools, English is taught as a subject and also used as a language of instruction for science subjects. However, at tertiary level, the institutions lack clear policies for addressing the language of instruction and the extent to which available policies had been adopted is also unclear (Yusuf, 2021; The Dexis Consulting Group, 2021). A few studies have been conducted in Somali on the adoption of non-native language in university setting. However, there is a dearth of research on challenges affecting full adoption of the language, hence the need for this study.

Internationalization refers to the process where students from foreign nations study in a particular country (Aizawa & Rose, 2018; Jibeen & Khan, 2015; Kruirow & Galloway, 2018). It is characterized by shifting from traditional education systems that are cultural bound and adopting a more modern one. It involves making changes and modifications of an existing higher education system by introducing foreign policies and

implementing an international curricula (Shimauchi, 2018).

### ***Statement of the problem, purpose and hypothesis of the study***

A lot of policies have been developed concerning the language of instruction across all levels of education by the government of Somali, with an emphasis on using Somali. However, the languages of instruction that have continued to be used in Somali include Somali, Arabic and English (MOECHE, 2017; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2016). Notably, English is tackled as a subject at primary level, at secondary level, and is used as a language of instructions for sciences in several universities in Somali (The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education [MOECHE], 2017; Yusuf, 2021; Ahmed, 2018). Somali National University is a government sponsored university that provides language proficiency training for teachers; hence, better placed at utilizing English as the instructional language.

However, the implementation of the same has been unsuccessful and this is partly due to lack of implementation framework. Decades of war may explain why the country has not come up with a framework. Previous studies conducted locally were majorly based on aspects of language proficiency, students' challenges, academic achievement, perception towards English language, English teaching methods, learners' satisfaction and the history of languages adopted in Somali (Addow et al., 2013; Yusuf, 2021; The Dexis Consulting Group, 2021; Eno, 2017; Aziz & Yasin, 2017; Ahmed, 2018). There is a gap on

comprehensive implementation language framework; hence, the need for this current study whose purpose was to assess the linkage between internationalization and the adoption of English as an instructional language at the Somali National University. It aimed to test hypothesis that, there is no substantial link between internationalization and adoption of English language as language for instruction delivery at Somali National University.

### ***Theoretical Review***

The study on internationalisation was guided by structural functionalism theoretical approach. This theory was developed by Emile Durkheim in 1975 which explains the society as a complex system which requires that its parts work together to achieve solidarity and stability. The social systems are interrelated, interdependent and interconnected, and work mutually together. However, the implementation of social institutions may be hindered and this necessitates enactment of different policies and frameworks from adopting English as either a subject, or a language of instruction. The successful implementation of the policies will result in tapping global market and internationalization.

### ***Internationalization and Adoption of English Language***

The internationalisation of higher education is associated with international competitions, international markets and trends, career prospects and diffusion of technology

(Rebecca & Andres, 2015; Finardi & Tyler, 2015; Kathae, 2015; Gundsambuu, 2019). The internationalization of higher education in Russia was greatly affected by the language of instruction and particularly English language (Elena and Richard, 2012). The findings of the study concurred with Dang et al. (2013) who argued on the importance of English language in internationalization of Vietnam higher education.

In Africa, studies conducted on the challenges affecting internationalisation challenges included language and technology (Neale-Shutte & Fourie, 2006). According to Kathae (2015), universities establish strategies to facilitate the internationalisation process. These strategies included improving infrastructures in the university, increasing international publications and journals, and aggressive marketing of the university. In Somali, Eno (2017) argued that students experience difficulties in speaking and writing English language, with much difficulty on writing. This posed a challenge on internationalizing the education in Mogadishu University.

### **2.0 Materials and Methods**

The study aimed to examine how internationalization influence the adoption of English language as a medium of delivery of instructions. The study adopted descriptive survey research design which involved deep interrogation; hence, the study gave a clear explanation on the phenomenon under investigation. The study was conducted at Somali National University, which is a public university. The study population included lecturers, senior university management, the

Director of Higher Education and students. Purposive sampling technique was used in coming up with 15 University Management Officers; whereas, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling was utilized in selecting the sample size of both lecturers and students at 88 and 30 respondents respectively.

The Director of Higher Education was also interviewed for this study. Data from the respondents were collected through questionnaires, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and interview guide. Piloting was conducted at Mogadishu University as it had similar characteristics to Somali National University in terms of population and programs offered. The reliability and validity of the data was tested. The data gathered was keyed into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26 to calculate frequency and percentages, and conduct correlation analysis. The information was presented using tables and narratives.

### **3.0 Results and Discussion**

#### *Reliability Results*

The data collected was measured for reliability using Cronbach’s Alpha which evaluates how the instrument is persistent in measuring the intended purpose. A Cronbach’s Alpha value greater than 0.7 was recorded, hence the data was dependable for analysis.

#### ***Response Rate***

An overall response rate of 82% was recorded where 69 (78%) lecturers, 23 (77%) students, 11 (73%) and 1 Director of Education responded for the study. The response rate was high and this was attributed by good prior arrangement, organization and communication.

#### ***Adoption of English as an Instructional Language***

The study sought to investigate the extent to which teachers appreciate the utilization of English language as a delivery for instructions at Somali National University. The results were tabulated on a 5-level Likert scale where, VSE (1) represented to a very small extent, SE (2) to a small extent, ME (3) to a moderate extent, LE (4) to large extent, and VLE (5) to a very large extent as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*The adoption of English as a medium of delivery*

| Statement on adoption of English as a medium of instructions (n = 69)                           | VSE(1)     | SE(2) | ME(3) | LE(4) | VLE(5) |
|---|------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| a) Our university has English language policies which address it as the language of instruction | 69(100.0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%)  |

|   |           |           |           |           |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| b) Due to the presence of a common language of instruction, we experience an influx of foreign students admitted to undertake respective courses at SNU | 68(98.6%) | 1(1.4%)   | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     |
| c) Our university has responded to the internationalization by offering numerous courses in the English language  | 0(0%)     | 36(52.2%) | 33(47.8%) | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     |
| d) Students' attributes affect the adoption of the English language as an instructional language at SNU   | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 14(20.3%) | 55(79.7%) |
| e) The attributes of the teaching staff affect the English adoption as language of instructions at SNU  | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 67(97.1%) | 2(2.9%)   |
| f) Internalization affect the adoption of the English language as a language of delivery at SNU   | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 63(91.3%) | 6(8.7%)   |
| g) Multiculturalism affect the adoption of the English language as delivery language for instructions at SNU  | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 67(97.1%) | 2(2.9%)   |
| h) The adoption of the English as a language of instructions at SNU is essential  | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)     | 63(91.3%) | 6(8.7%)   |

According to the findings on Table 1, all respondents agreed that the university had no policies on adoption of English as the instructional language. However, the adoption of English language was greatly influenced by students' attributes 55(79.7%), teachers' attributes 67(97.1%) and multiculturalism 67(97.1%). The challenge of English language adoption was traced back to primary and secondary schools where English is not taught. This leads to poor proficiency on students who join universities. According to Yusuf (2021), Somali masters' students lacked proficiency in English

attributable to poor background in English, as English is ranked third after Arabic and Somali.

The faculty members appreciated the value of English as a medium of instruction by 91.3%, but it has not been embraced at Somali National University. These findings are supported by Fuad (2018) and Mohammed (2018) who argued that Somali teaching staff showed interest in having a standard language for teaching, although the education system lacked regulations for adoption of English. Lack of commitment in

implementing language policies leads to the decline in internationalizing of education at Somali National University.

***Internationalization and utilization of English as a delivery language***

The study mainly aimed to investigate how internationalization influences the adoption

of English language as an instructional language at Somali National University. The aspects of internationalization investigated included quality of education, curriculum, international employment, competitive advantage, equality and support from the government. The results were tabulated on a 5-level Likert scale and presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

***Internationalization and utilization of English as a delivery language***

| Statement on internationalization (n = 69)   | VSE(1)     | SE(2) | ME(3)      | LE(4)     | VLE(5)     |
|--|------------|-------|------------|-----------|------------|
| a) Our curriculum and the courses we offer attract many students from other counties   | 69(100.0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%)      | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)      |
| b) Internationalization is a great step towards the achievement of quality education at SNU  | 0(0%)      | 0(0%) | 0(0%)      | 63(91.3%) | 6(8.7%)    |
| c) The English language has been a major contributor to internationalization of education at SNU   | 69(100.0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%)      | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)      |
| d) The internationalization of our university courses has earned our graduates numerous avenues of international employment  | 0(0%)      | 0(0%) | 0(0%)      | 0(0%)     | 69(100.0%) |
| e) Internationalization through the use of English as a delivery language for instruction contributes to equality in education   | 0(0%)      | 0(0%) | 69(100.0%) | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)      |
| f) Internationalization by offering university courses in the English language has contributed to the university earning competitive advantage over other universities | 69(100.0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%)      | 0(0%)     | 0(0%)      |

|   |       |       |       |         |            |
|---|-------|-------|-------|---------|------------|
| g) The University management at SNU supports the internationalization of university education | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 4(5.8%) | 65(94.2%)  |
| h) The government supports the internationalization of university education in Somali         | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%)   | 69(100.0%) |

The results from Table 2 indicated that teachers disagreed that the curriculum and courses offered attract students from other countries, English language is a major contributor to internationalization of Somali National University, and internationalization by offering courses in English language has contributed to competitive advantage over other universities. The results indicate that failure to adopt English as a language for instruction at SNU posed a threat to quality and internationalization, hence reducing the competitive advantage of the university.

This is in contrary to other countries where students travel from their own countries to other nations to study, including some Somali students (Saha, 2018). According to Faqih (2021), Somali education systems faced a lot of challenges, such as low academic achievements, inadequate instructional resources, financial constraints, poor infrastructural resources and lack of policies. All these fore-mentioned challenges affected internationalization. However, the University Management proposed two initiatives aimed at enhancing international reputation of Somali National University. The initiatives were to embrace English as a language of instruction with a view to attract international students and to establish comprehensive

English learning and teaching module for the country to copy.

The findings indicated that English as an instructional language had an impact on internationalization of education at SNU. This is supported by Khatri (2019) who examined the value of adopting English as a delivery language on internationalization. All faculty members agreed that use of English language moderately affects equality in education. It does this through enabling consensus and fairness in multicultural society where none of the mother languages will be approved. The results also indicated that the government and the university supported and acknowledged the value of English language in achieving internationalization of SNU education and in the nation. However, the government’s support was limited due to lack of clear framework for implementing English language as a medium of instruction at Somali National University.

The adoption of English was easily accepted by teachers and students, but the mantle for policies and framework for the adoption was upon authoritative bodies. This relied heavily on legal system and policy regulatory bodies. This study reported that internationalization of Somali National University education relied on enacted policies and operational



frameworks as was indicated by the Director of Education. Several opinions were received from the senior university administrators on the significance of these initiatives which were hence categorized into four thematic statements. These were:

- i. Fair competition for international jobs
- ii. Equality in the international realms / platforms and

- iii. Equal access to opportunity for research and education advancement in the world
- iv. Achievement of duality on language of instructions in SNU and Somalia at large

A correlations analysis *on antecedents for adopting English as a language of instruction* was conducted and results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

***Correlations analysis on antecedents for adopting English as a language of instruction***

|    |                         | X1     | X2     | X3     | X4     | X5     | Y     |
|----|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| X5 | Correlation Coefficient | .530** | .621** | .715** |        |        |       |
|    | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000   | .000   | .000   |        |        |       |
|    | N                       | 69     | 69     | 69     | 69     |        |       |
| Y  | Correlation Coefficient | .605** | .792** | .678** | .775** | .581** | 1.000 |
|    | Sig. (2-tailed)         | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .     |
|    | N                       | 69     | 69     | 69     | 69     | 69     | 69    |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The hypothesis for the study predicted that there is no substantial link between internationalization and adoption of English language as the language for instruction delivery at Somali National University. The results from Table 3 indicate a Spearman correlation value of .581\*\* and corresponding coefficient value of less than 0.05. This indicated a significant positive relationship between internationalization and the utilization of English as an instructional language, ( $r = .581, p < 0.05$ ). This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a positive linkage

between internationalization and English adoption as a language of instruction at Somali National University. Thus, an increase in predictor factor (internationalization) leads to an increase in the outcome factor (adoption of English as an instructional language). These findings collaborated with Saha (2018) who indicated that the link between internationalization and using common language in teaching and learning is substantial and positive.

The results underscored that internationalization influences positively the

utilization of English as instructional language at Somali National University. Therefore, there was need to revamp the education teaching curriculum at SNU, which will lead to high chances of achieving international employment, equality, competitive advantage and support from the government. This justifies the need for SNU to adopt comprehensive policies on internationalization of education.

The policies on national language and admission of international students should be clear. For this to be achieved, there should be collaborative trainings, financial budgeting mechanisms to ensure adequate qualified staff, professional development, and evaluation and monitoring systems. The findings of this study corroborate with Khatri (2019) who outlined the advantages of adoption of English as a language for instructions. The benefits listed included standardization of education, improved employability skills for learners and attraction of foreign students.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

The study noted the need for accommodating students from different backgrounds in higher learning institutions. The utilization of

English as an instructional language is a key step towards internationalization of education in Somali National University. Internationalization was characterized in aspects such as curriculums, language of instruction, quality of education and international markets. The study concluded that there exists a statistically substantial and positive link between internationalization and the adoption of English as the language of instruction at Somali National University.

### **4.0 Recommendations**

The study recommended the need to implement all language policies developed by the Ministry of Higher Education in Somali, internationalize education. The university administrators should revise the curriculum, and ensure strict vetting of teaching staff. The Ministry of Education should also introduce training and development programs, English proficient capacity-building programs, and professional development for the existing faculty to foster internationalization of Education. Therefore, the government should allocate more funds towards the implementation of English as an instructional language at tertiary education level.

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