Empirical Article

# English language: the subtle force behind the demise of Mozambican higher education academic's aspirations.

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#### ABSTRACT

*It is contended that Lusophone universities are to a certain degree deprived access to American and European scholarships in the 21st century. We examine the validity of this statement, focusing on the barriers scholars often face when accessing scholarships using English. To explore the constraints English language imposes on Mozambican lecturers pursuing international scholarships, the study employed qualitative research methods using structured interviews. The sample of interviewees included university lecturers from Eduardo Mondlane University. The discussions of the study were guided by two dominant themes: language coloniality and academic oppression (Lack of accessibility). Participants had their unique experiences while attempting scholarship applications and this study also captured their challenges. Eighty percent of participants could not express themselves fluently in English and the researcher had to switch to Portuguese to get quality responses. The study contributes to International comparative higher education language policy development by presenting the impediments posed by the English language to Mozambican universities seeking European and American scholarships.*

*Keywords*: English language barrier, coloniality, oppression, European university, American university, scholarship, Mozambique

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#### INTRODUCTION

English is an important tool for communication in academia worldwide. Globally, there is a need to address challenges associated with English language practices across institutions. This has become imperative in order to improve the use of English in higher education especially among non-English speaking countries and for accessing scholarship opportunities for further studies (Maringe & Mourad, 2012; Robson & Wihlborg, 2019). The challenge often unfolds when lecturers are due for

academic career progression where English language competence is deemed a pre-requisite for scholarship applications in European and American universities. Some of the identified challenges in scholarship application processes experienced by lecturers include the financial expenses associated with English language translators during the application processes (Andrade, 2006; Hyland, 2016). It has been observed that the majority of these academics are in need of a structured support system from the university as a solution mechanism to address the English language phenomenon (Al Shobaki & Abu-Naser, 2017; Altbach, 2008; Baker, 2017; Hu & McGrath, 2011). In essence, University support systems are designed to ensure the success of the mandatory language proficiency requirement. In related studies for China scholarship, it is mandatory for recipients of scholarships to learn only the basics of the Chinese language for a specified duration (Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2016).

Research on English in higher education seems to focus more on teaching and the learning process, with less emphasis placed on the value-added opportunities especially within the Mozambican education sector (Lopes, 1998). Previous research mostly focused on English language requirements for scholarship applications. In most cases these studies have reported on English language proficiency (ELP) for admission procedures (Oliver et al., 2012); relationship between levels of English language proficiency and academic performance (Cloate, 2016; Grant & Li, 2019; Thorpe et al., 2017). In addition, some studies have indicated the importance of teaching resources and the need for English language support especially as it is relevant for non-native English language speakers (Lee & Buxton, 2013; Liu, 2009). However, studies investigating Mozambican university lecturers' experiences with English language usage are limited (Altbach, 2013; Benzie, 2010). The most prevalent challenge of English language as a teaching resource is often at the undergraduate level. This is because at the undergraduate level, teaching and educational support from the university lecturers are mostly held in Portuguese thus limiting English language comprehension and the pace of intake (Liphola, 1989; Lopes, 2004).

Also, other additional challenges include lack of up-to-date learning material and limited conducive environment for English language practice and adoption (Mohan et al., 2014). The contributing factor to the aforementioned challenges has been attributed to the interactions of university lectures and their departmental supervisors mostly when seeking academic support and guidance because interactions are often in Portuguese (Langa, 2014; Lopes, 2004). This implies that in the informal environment, the propagation or usage of English has not been adequately encouraged. English as a dominant international language in academia proves to be pervasive on historical African Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking African countries) higher education institutions, as evidenced by compulsory English proficiency as a pre-requisite for the scholarship application (Abimbola et al., 2016; Altbach, 2013; Bordean & Borza, 2013; Ding & Bruce, 2017; Hultgren, 2014). Although the demand for English as a pre-requisite for these scholarships is reasonable, it poses a degree of pressure on Mozambican applicants who then do not persevere with the process. To my knowledge, there has never been a similar study that explores the university lecturers' English language experiences during their scholarship application process in Mozambique.

In the backdrop of the English language usage, the study aims to explore Mozambican lecturers' English language experiences on their international scholarship applications to European and American Universities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Various authors have discussed language barriers extensively and few definitions have been proposed. Some authors state that language barrier is a form of communication border, deficit, and opportunities prejudice toward foreigners (Kim & Mattila, 2011; Pudelko & Tenzer, 2019). It

generates negative emotional and cognitive responses, and prevents English as second language (ESL) customers from taking certain actions such as seeking necessary information or complaining about service failures (Tenzer & Pudelko, 2013; Tenzer et al. 2014). Similarly, language barrier is associated with notions of colonialism and language power, both of which are characterized by belief in the superiority of one's language over others, which is often interpreted as a symbol of language violence (Ibrahim, 2011; Veronelli, 2015, 2016). Coloniality does not only refer to racial categorization  but to a global bias  that fills all and every feature and situation of social existence to allow the distribution of hierarchies, places, and social roles are thoroughly racialized and geographically distinguished (Hsu, 2015; Veronelli, 2016). According to Feng (2020), coloniality is seen as the inequality of the power dimension, which generates language classifications and political construct instrumental for the control of diversity. It often results in implications regarding the relations between language and power (Veronelli, 2016). Equally, the use of language as a tool to exercise power over academics has been interpreted as a linguistic academic oppression (Mullet, 2018). Departing from critical discourse analysis approach (CDA) by Mullet (2018), it can be expressed through educational practices and social contexts.

According to Rosche (2019) and Kubota (2020), linguistic academic oppression is also portrayed as the intersection between language and race in multifaceted authority relations, affecting the professional experiences of scholars and students. In essence, this intersection is defined as discourse, knowledge, and social practices that, by means of inferiorization and exclusion, create and propagate imbalanced links of authority among groups of people distinct by professed ideology variance. In Mozambique, this perception is predominantly evident in both academic spaces and everyday interactions of professionals in their work places.

Of interest to this study is the ascribed status to English Language teaching and assessment tools such as the international English language teaching system (IELTS) and testing of English as a foreign language (TOEFL). These tools have been discussed by various authors on the basis of assessing individual competence in English Language. The teaching and assessment tools are formal and structured system and mandatory to be undertaken for evaluation (Dickinson, 2013). As a result, the divergent views on the standardization of English through IELTS and TOEFL tests. For instance, the role of IELTS and TOEFL tests has been commended because they have enhanced students' vocabulary and have helped students develop oral skills in English (Yang & Badger, 2015). On the contrary, there are some concerns that IELTS and TOEFL tests are simply taken by people who are interested in passing the exams, and who are not necessarily enthusiastic about the language, thus they represent superiority of the native speakers (Hamid, 2014).

In Lusophone countries such as Mozambique, these tests have been considered as revolutionary and language neo-coloniality (Le, 2016; Suraweera, 2020). With high failure rates among Mozambican academic, the mandatory pre-requisite of the IELTS and TOEFL tests is construed as the imposition of English as a colonial language (Dell'Olio, 2019; Veronelli, 2015). This is because  the English language does not enjoy the status of Mozambican heritage hence resulting in the difficulties on access to European and American universities. Although the relationship between the sponsor (European and American universities) and the recipient (Mozambican universities) has been robust, conflict of interest and divergent goals of partners have been reported as one of the inherent challenges (Kajevska, 2020). For example, the requirement and benchmark to pass IELTS is determined by the sponsor without the inputs of recipients or beneficiaries. In Lusophone countries, such conditional offers with minimal consultation from recipients is considered an English language trap (Yahya, 2015). This is because sponsored countries often feel constrained and less autonomous in their pursuit for their academic identity because they have to comply and satisfy the sponsors and

other associated power dynamics (Clare & Sivil, 2014; Tran, 2014). These imbalances create some bias towards sponsors who seem to be extensively represented in various publications while the recipients have limited coverage. This presents an ideal case for a language policy that would balance the relationship and the expectations between the sponsors and the recipients (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2016).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

International scholarship and human capability theories (HCT) guides this inquiry (Campbell & Mawer, 2018). Scholarship theory (ST) as defined by the United Nation (UN) is focused on commitment towards enabling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by targeting developing countries in order to promote education (United Nations, 2015). However, the tenets of scholarship theory as propounded by the UN are limited in its level of consensus especially on the beneficiaries of scholarship programs. For instance, the scholarship theory or ST embraces engagement and participations of international higher education stakeholders in a sustainable future. Unlike the Scholarship theory, the human capabilities theory embraces education as the central anchor for individuals to understand their roles within a society and overall participation in a sustainable planet (Walker, 2012).The alignment of scholarship theory with human capability theory is such that both have the potential to facilitate individualized experience, harness resources within government structure through policies, technological innovation and  conservation science (Perna et al., 2015). Wilson (2015) suggests that expanding an individual's capabilities through education is a prelude to increasing capabilities for a wider population. Based on human capability frames, the SDGs can be enhanced through an integrated higher education scholarship mechanism. In essence, the beneficiaries could serve as change agents for the purpose of global connectedness, dynamisms, solidarity and addressing future global challenges (Tan, 2014).

The pressures of global achievements through international scholarship application have been responsible for higher education institutions to modify their academic languages. This has resulted in higher education dependence on European and American higher education institutions in order to foster collaboration and avoid nonconformity which may threaten their acceptability and promote global relevance through continued existence (Altbach, 2007; Campbell & Mawer, 2018). The concept of institutional dependence arises from coercive and linguistic normative forces to access International scholarships including coercive forces stanch from political/legal power and the longing for acceptability (Altbach, 2007). One of the tools of coercion adopted by sponsor institutions such as European and American universities include condition of scholarship acceptance which may often compromise the ethics of recipient institutions as in this case to receive benefits such as achievement of scholarships and consequently offer them acceptability (Altbach, 2004).

European and American higher education encourages professionals, such as foreign academics, to cope with the use of English to access scholarship from European and American public universities labelled to offer quality education (Luke, 2017). Non-English speaking foreign higher education institutions such as Mozambique, which experience these language challenges, seem to model themselves to resemble public European and American universities to enhance their acceptability. Standard power on the other hand relates to competence. Competence, as explained by Ansah and Swanzy (2019) means members of a particular profession cooperatively setting values and opportunities for practice. These practices, rules and principles are carried to academic fellows via deliberate practices such as the demand of IELTS or TOEFEL proficiency tests as a pre-requisite for the European and American scholarship application (Dickinson, 2013). Fellows of this community, such as university lecturers in Mozambique, are required to undertake similar exams in order to increase acceptability (Dickinson, 2013). This has influence on the higher education institutions these

academics work for since their qualifications and experiences can prove or not, the reliability of the organization (Mustapha & Zakaria, 2013). This theoretical alignment has been used as an interpretive structure to explain the international scholarship regime implemented in the Mozambican public higher education institutions.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study seeks to explore the impact of English language on international scholarship applications, with particular interest on lecturers' experiences at High School of Hospitality and Tourism of Inhambane, a branch of Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU). The university under study presents an ideal site for the study, often admired for its cultural diversity and languages; the home of lecturers and students from various tribes across Mozambique, and has more than 20 Bantu (native) languages (Liphola, 1989). Since the establishment of Eduardo Mondlane University (EMU) in 1968 by the Portuguese rulers, the medium of instruction at the university has been Portuguese, and to a large degree that has not changed because, Portuguese remains the official language of Mozambique (Lopes, 1998). The administered questionnaires used in this study are attached in the Appendix 1.

### Design

In order to achieve the aim of the study, a qualitative research approach was chosen (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rahman, 2017) and inductive content analysis was used to interpret the data (Bengtsson, 2016). This allowed the researcher to concentrate on the selected issues of meaning which relate to the overall research questions, and to build data from specific to general themes (Granehein et al., 2017). The study employed in-depth interviews with open-ended questions as the study looked for rich and more extensive information (Low, 2013; Rahman, 2017). The interviews helped describe and reveal the role of English and how EMU lecturers perceive it within the International scholarship application. The study was conducted under a constructive research tradition; data is seen as being constructed through interaction between the researcher and the interviewed participants, and analysis is regarded as a process informed by the researcher's a priori knowledge and experiences (Piirainen & Gonzalez, 2014, 2013; Rautiainen et al., 2017). A constructive research methodology is appropriate where the aim of the study is to understand the meaning-making of individuals, and their experiences or view points toward a specific situation (Oyekoke, 2011). Two major research questions were addressed:

1. In what ways do Mozambican lectures experience English Language on European and American scholarship applications?
2. In what ways does Mozambican lecturers' English language proficiency assist them in pursuing European and American scholarships?

### Sample

The target participants for this study were Mozambican lecturers at the High School of Hospitality and Tourism of Inhambane, who have applied for international scholarships to pursue Master and PhD degrees. In total, 19 participants were identified based on selected eligibility such as permanent EMU lecturers and scholarship applicants. From twenty-six volunteers, fifteen lecturers were randomly selected to reflect on their experiences in applying for international scholarship to American and European Universities. Another group of four lecturers participated in a group interview. The two groups varied in terms of gender, being (four women and fifteen men), age (30-64) and race (black African Portuguese language-speakers), this was to ensure the diversity of their scholarship application experiences. An important remark is that all the participants are from primary, secondary and tertiary Portuguese language education backgrounds.

Besides this, no additional explanation to the IELTS or TOEFL test procedure was available. Given lecturers challenges especially on readings, grammar interpretation and listening skills, most lectures could not comprehend the language to respond accordingly to the test, in most cases, they spent considerable time navigating the structure, trying to understand the content, in turn they could not even finish the assigned tasks. Despite the fact that IELTS or TOEFL evaluation is a critical part of the learning process, which has a significant impact on the lecturers, especially on the scholarship acceptance, there seems to be an unattended gap in literature focusing on the subject matter, hence this study seeks to fill the gap and enhance the understanding of lecturers' views and experiences.

The lecturers' experiences were observed at various time frames; from first attempt to fourth attempt. The application process observed at the end of the third year, linked basic English language competence and several learning activities were applied, e.g. formal intensive training and assessments (Bak et al., 2016; Rahman, 2017) and workshop they attended which provided a platform for lecturers to discuss their views of English language over the international scholarship application process (Fakeye , 2010). Of interest to the study is the intensive English language training courses that lecturers attended to overcome the challenges they faced while using English language for scholarship application. An average of two assessments was conducted as a routine language learning procedure by the English language teachers at the affiliated English language private schools and the lecturers were individually assessed. The first assessment entails written and oral activities diagnosis. To prepare the lecturers for their second assessment, an English teacher explained the motivation and course of action of assessments in an English language intensive training. The teacher also allowed lecturers to pose questions and present any concern they might have had.

**Data Collection**

Data collected for the research focused on the lecturers' English language lived experiences during their scholarship applications to European and American Universities. The application process involved: access to information from the websites, online application forms, writing the proposals, document translations and proficiency tests such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Data collection was conducted at High School of Hospitality and Tourism of Inhambane and it involved individual interview session and group interviews. The researcher considered two cohorts: (1) aspiring applicants and (2) those who have attempted applying for the scholarships once or twice with no success. The motivation for choosing these two groups was to explore the challenges encountered by those aspiring for scholarships as well as to get insights from those who had tried. Fifteen lecturers who had applied for scholarships for either first, second or third attempt and the researcher face to face at the university interviewed three aspirants. The additional group interview with four lecturers was conducted a week after their IELTS and TOEFL exams. The assessment tool was adapted from (Fan et al., 2018). Based on this tool, five participants revealed a fair level of English communicative competence (comprehensive contextual use of language), while fourteen revealed poor level of English communicative competence (unable to develop a conversation in English language). In table 1 below, the gender and age demography of participants is presented.

**Participants**

**Table 1: Participants' characteristics**

| Characteristics | | Number (19) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | | Male(15) | Female (4) |
| Scholarship application | | 15 | 4 |
| Attempt at English test (IELTS and TOEFL) | | 3 | 1 |
| English communicative competence | Fair | 4 | 1 |
| | Poor | 11 | 3 |
| Age (years) | 30 – 39 | 4 | 3 |
| | 40 – 49 | 9 | 1 |
| | 50 – 64 | 2 | 0 |

The rationale behind individuals and group interviews is to track consistent views and to observe collective tone. The key advantage of group interview is to allow for stimulation of the interaction among the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Orfanos et al., 2020). The interviews were conducted in a safe and conducive environment and the respondents were encouraged to contribute freely to the discussion. Each Participant was given forty-five minutes to an hour to share their experiences in both individual and group interviews.

The researcher employed the direct non-participant observation method (Ciesielska et al., 2018) to maintain a degree of independence during the data collection process. The choice of non-participant observation is such that it allows for non-bias from the researcher hence being objective both in the process of categorizations and evaluations (Ciesielska et al., 2018). The research was conducted through the national and international academic and research ethical guidelines, as it involved human subjects (research credential 936/ESHTI/2020, issued by the department of research and extension EMU, Mozambique). A written consent form was provided to all participating lecturers before data collection started. Finally, the entire interview were electronically recorded and transcribed accordingly.

**Analysis**

Data covering individual record and group interviews transcripts was examined using an interpretative and deductive approach (Morehouse, 2012; Soiferman, 2010). To counter the bias element the transcripts were exchanged amongst three readers to ensure that there is a common understanding of the respondents' articulations. The focal point of the interpretative analysis was on appreciating the explicit content shared by respondents during interviews and group discussions (Bengtsson, 2016). The interpretation of the records was stimulated by the analytical circle and during the analysis of the records, significance units (short paragraphs or sentences) were connected to the record set (Rowley, 2012; Silverman, 2015, 2019). The reliability of the analysis was validated by triangulation of the data collected (on two distinct moments and applying two procedures of data collection at each period) and investigator triangulation (with educational head of department and head of research and extension) (Carter et al., 2014). Moreover, a continuous comparison between the original data and the themes was part of the process to guarantee an appropriate fit between the records and findings. The themes presented below comprise the empirical findings of this research

and represent the experiences of the English language impact on European and American scholarship application process.

## FINDINGS

The findings indicate high levels of enthusiasm among all lecturers (participants), they appreciated the use of English as a means of communication in the context of international higher education. Participants seemed to have different experiences when responding to the issue of English language influence on the scholarship application. To elaborate on the gender and age demography of participants responses on the influence of English language in scholarship applications, 100 percent of participants expressed their struggles with scholarship application. This implies that for successful scholarship application, Mozambique scholars do not have the fundamental skills i.e. knowledge and understanding of English language. To put this in context, globally, a great number of universities deliver international study programs, and almost 80 percent of the scholarship opportunities require English language competence (de Wit, 2019). Also, the official academic language of communication in Mozambique is Portuguese because Mozambique is a former colony of Portugal. In addition, another contributing factor is the teaching and learning protocols. Participants were represented by male (79%) and female (21%). According to Bista (2015), the lack of women on international scholarship application should be related to gender, age, and academic performance in higher education (a high influencer in interest in English language proficiency learning). Also, psychological context in norms of communication is another factor (Horn, 2017).

Irrespective of IELTS and TOEFL application, from the total of 19 participants only 4 experienced the process being 75% male and 25% female respectively. According to Bista (2015), perhaps among other reasons the few experience in the proficiency tests should be related to the cognitive dimension including self-efficacy. The cognitive argument is justified on the fact that all the participants are surrounded by 20 bantu (native) languages including Portuguese which is rated as second and official language in the country (Liphola, 1989; Lopes, 2004). Finally, in the category of the proficiency tests experience, 15 participants (79%), did not apply for IELTS and TOEFL tests including both men and women. Based on their arguments individual and institutional financial support associated with the lack of English language proficiency contributed at large (Dang & Dang, 2021; Pearson, 2019). Concerning English communicative competence, the figures demonstrate less participation by women on the international scholarship application. The statistic reveal that in a group of 4 participants who applied for international scholarship only 1 woman showed fair English communicative competence representing 25% when compared to men who reveal 75% of fair English communicative competence.

Under English language communicative competence, 14 participants including 11 males (78.6%) and 3 females (21.4%) revealed poor level of English language communicative competence. However, one important aspect to state is that all 14 participants are aged 39-64 years old. According to DeKeyser (2013), age determines changes in cognitive functioning due to previous experience of individual variables such as motivation, attitude, identity and contextual variables such as quantity and quality of input, including extent of schooling in the second language. Affective factors such as language shock, culture shock and ego permeability to second language acquisition are also related to the problem of age in second language learning styles and strategies (Ehrman, & Oxford, 1990; Schumann, 1975).

Two themes, which represent different experiences, were thus identified as linguistic academic oppression and linguistic coloniality. Those who expressed the experiences in linguistic oppression context shared that the demand of English language to qualify for a scholarship was a form of academic discrimination. On the other hand, those who seemed to be more inclined toward

linguistic coloniality, their concerns were more about English language supremacy toward Portuguese language speaking countries. The difference between the two themes was to a certain degree determined by the level of perception and the decisions made by the participants regarding their involvement in the scholarship application process (see Table1). An appropriate introduction and simple guidance through the process on the websites were helpful for some lectures. This helped them concentrate on what each academic field requested for the scholarship application including those who needed to hire experienced translators and they could relate their previous background to different scholarship offers. Lack of thorough preparations for the proficiency tests contributed negatively to the lecturers experiences. A reasonable period of preparation, particularly with the help of experts in various streams of English language: Grammar, listening, writing and reading skills is highly recommended to boost the applicants' confidence as well as to identify areas of improvement before they sit for exams. It also appeared that lecturers became more accustomed to the challenges after they had dealt with various scholarship application processes. A detailed account of varied experiences shared by the participants is given below with original quotations.

**Table 2**
*An overview of the themes representing different forms of experiencing the influence of English language on the scholarship application*

| Theme | Focus | Perception towards role of English language | Scholars' reactions | Learning | Academic/linguistic utility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English language as an academic Oppression tool | The complexity and the excruciating demands of the scholarship application process | Academic tool for linguistic oppression | Diminished interest in the European and American scholarship and diversion towards Portuguese scholarships | Intention of a scholarship | Academically appealing but linguistically unattractive |
| English language as a linguistic coloniality | English language as an expression of permanent colonial system | A discriminatory approach towards the Lusophone Portuguese countries | A sense of deprivation and frustration | Learning proficiency tests, scientific competence | Academically unattractive and linguistically unattractive |

**Linguistic Academic Oppression**

Although some lectures perceived the scholarships as lifetime opportunity, their first attempt to qualify for the scholarship proved almost impossible due to the language barrier and to a certain degree, expectations were compromised. The linguistic academic oppression was more dominant among lecturers who were unsuccessful with their application due to their incompetence in English;

they strongly felt that English was a form of oppression. Lecturers felt academically oppressed and helpless as their language limitations rendered their knowledge irrelevant, as they could not express themselves in English. For example, those who failed the IELTS test often felt crushed and ashamed to even share the results with their colleagues. Confronted with the complexity of the European and American scholarships application, some lecturers even doubted the quality of English that they were taught during their earlier classes. According to the themes generated from Table 2, English language was perceived as a convenient oppressive tool over the Lusophone Portuguese speaking countries. For example, some lectures used words like "slaves" to describe their experiences. Expressing their deepest frustrations, lecturers indicated that the demands of these scholarship applications were even beyond the competence of sworn translators, a reflection of academic torture.

For instance, in non-English speaking countries such as Japan, Malaysia and Turkey, lecturers seemed to have a better understanding of the scholarship application process. This is because of internal mechanisms such as capacity development that are readily available and utilized. However, the scholarship application successes were not significantly higher in these countries (Ishikawa, 2009; Mahamood & Ab Rahman, 2015). In the absence of guidelines and translation assistance, lecturers found it almost impossible to cope with the technicalities of English during the application process. Expressing their discontentment towards oppressive language used in the scholarship process, some participants expressed their views vehemently. One Participant stated:

> I could not comprehend the material provided on the website because I had difficulties with the language, hence I found it boring and I had to frequently consult teachers of English. However, I appreciate the generosity expressed through availing these scholarships to support African universities.

Another participant shared "English language deprived me an entry to scholarship and I felt humiliated and less intelligent than other African applicants from English speaking countries." And another stated "I felt crushed but I found comfort in that this is not only oppressive to one but to all of us. My colleagues have equally been subjected to this torture; it is such a frustrating and heartbreaking experience."

**English as a Linguistic Coloniality**

In this context, English is subtly used to reincarnate the colonial system through academia. In this theme, the focus is on linguistics as a colonial presence with the primary objective of setting English language supremacy in African Lusophone countries. The supremacy narrative has fully manifested through the barriers English has created in Mozambican higher education. The internationalization of English language in higher education dictates that Lusophone African countries should also conform to the standards; this is a form of coerced compliance. With numerous partnerships between African Lusophone universities and European universities, we observed that the sustainability of partnerships thrives on the fact that English language remains a common medium of instruction, thus imposing an indirect colonial tone.

The linguistic colonialism is also reflected in higher education language policy that guides the interaction between the lecturers in African Lusophone universities and European universities. The language policy in higher education is mainly developed by European and American universities with minimal influence from the African Lusophone countries, the latter are merely recipients. We have observed that the language policy has little regard for the native languages, which are extensively embraced and understood by most lecturers. Imposing English language in non-English speaking countries is a form of exclusion especially to those from under-privileged background who cannot afford to cope with the demands of the scholarship. Though lecturers appreciated the value of English

language, they perceived it as an exotic language beyond their comprehension. The lecturers described English as highly insensitive and irrelevant, as the Portuguese language, historical context was neglected, thus distancing most lecturers academically and economically. The other area of contention pertains to the scope of English which was perceived as limited as it focus mainly on the IELTS an TOEFL proficiency tests which tends to only evaluate technical competence. The quotations below describe how English was experienced as linguistic coloniality:

> Perhaps the first thing when European and American countries assign scholarships to Africa should recognize and acknowledge the historical official languages of the African countries, particularly those which were not colonized by Britain as they have unique language background. […] secondly, the scholarship providers should revise the selection criteria to ensure equal language rights or inclusive scholarship across all African universities without leaving behind non-English speaking universities such as those in Lusophone countries

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was to explore the increased demand for English competence and scholarship access in Lusophone African countries, with a particular focus on public higher education institutions from non-English speaking countries and the implications on the less developed countries' future higher education situation, such as Mozambique. Our findings demonstrate that lecturers found English important for their lives though experienced it differently. One hundred percent of the lecturers interviewed found that English was a barrier on their scholarship applications, and the focus was on their feelings of anxiety to study abroad. These lectures described the whole process as overwhelming but on the other hand, others viewed it as a learning curve with an opportunity to improve from one application to another. A majority of lecturers found the English language challenge as a part of the profession, and realized its significance for their lives. These lecturers learned about the global value of English and how Universities in Mozambique have embraced it in their institutional architecture and policy framework. Most lecturers found English for further studies in America and Europe academically challenging, and some thought it was brutally demanding. The strong difficulties and challenges portrayed about the English language on the scholarship application process should be dealt with in order to address Mozambican academics and University support staff members training in European and American Universities. English language barrier, limited organizational support interchange and strong negative feelings, such as academic discrimination have been identified as stumbling blocks thus inhibiting learning and training (Gumbus & Grodzinsky, 2016).

The findings of the study also revealed that lecturers adapted English language challenges and designed personalized strategies to cope with the pressures associated with the scholarship application process (Darabi et al., 2017; Menken, 2010). Lecturers who experienced English as linguistic academic oppression seemed to shift their focus after their various attempts at scholarship applications. They perceived the scholarship application as a practical English exercise and realized how English influences their academic trajectory. As linguistic academic oppression, the process does not seem to have a relationship between the scholarship application and the English language practice, and at last as a part of the academic work of the University lecturers. It is more probable that lecturers' experiences of scholarship applications depend on what aspects they focus on (for example scholarship application process or merely exercise the English Language usage). However, some issues became part of the foreground of their experiences, and other aspects remain in the background. Lecturers tend to contextualize the same situation in different angles and the facts they pay attention to influence their hermeneutics of the situation and their gain from the experiences. The themes

described are actually different in terms of various aspects of scholarship application lecturers' focus on, and that these issues can change over time, though we do not see the themes at different developmental stages that lecturers go through.

The features of attractiveness and unattractiveness are present in all two themes, though in different forms. All the interviewed lecturers found the scholarship application process boring and challenging both academically and professionally.  Seventy-five percent of the interviewed lecturers became reluctant and withdrew from the scholarship application process and the English language examination, consequently distancing themselves entirely from academic English. On a positive note, all the interviewed lecturers interpreted the scholarship as an opportunity for further studies. The lecturers who experienced the scholarship application as an English language engagement opportunity appeared to be academically inclined towards the scholarship application process. They focused on specific language skills and at the same time maintained a professional closeness based on the conviction of their objectives and will to succeed in the process. The same pattern of being professionally unattractive but academically attractive could be found with lecturers who experienced the scholarship application as an opportunity to see how English language works in higher education academia. Twenty-five percent of the lecturers who participated in this study struggled to manage their academic trajectory, but at the same time allowed themselves to invest on their English language skills.

English language barriers have a strong negative impact on the lecturers' appetite for further studies in higher education. Sadly, English language barriers and academic oppression remains an individual burden, without structured support from the University. Lack of institutional support has eroded most lecturers' confidence to explore scholarship opportunities, and in some instances, lecturers completely surrender and give up on pursuing further studies and thus compromise their progression and contribution in higher education (Pudelko & Tenzer, 2019). The persisting English language barriers have been the demotivating factor for most Mozambican lecturers who have almost lost interest in the European and American scholarships (Andrews & Okpanachi, 2012). Eighty percent of the interviewed lecturers perceived the application process as outright colonial disguised as empowerment for academics in Lusophone countries (Becerra, 2012). The participants of this study appreciate the virtues of international scholarship as it provides opportunities for further studies and help lecturers to improve their academic research and English language skills (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). Moreover, the scholarship provides an incredible   opportunity for the lecturers to learn about American and European systems as well as to appreciate the academic and scientific competence of American/European Universities.

In order for Mozambican lecturers to compete fairly for American and European scholarships, there is a need to consider the country's language context in the selection process (Makinda & Turner, 2013). We need to bear in mind that countries like Mozambique were not British colonies and hence English is a third or fourth language (Coleman, 2011; Plonski et al., 2013). Mozambican University or higher education institutions should assist the applicants through an English language skills training programs to prepare them for the application process (O'Meara et al., 2015; Renandya et al., 2018). In this research, some English lecturers and English to Portuguese Sworn translators assisted the applicant lecturers by guiding them during the scholarship application process and clarifying the purpose of each step. The support system proved invaluable as it enhanced participants understanding. They engaged constructively, shared notes among their peers and their level of motivation and optimism towards the international scholarship increased. There is a need for both parties (lectures and Mozambican Universities management) to discuss issues concerning the American and European scholarship application process, identify key challenges and propose relevant solutions. Fully

engaging the lecturers in this process will ensure that the root causes of the challenges are constructively interrogated because lecturers have tremendous experiential knowledge of the issues.

## Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study is deliberate bias towards a selected number of the participants who command a certain level of understanding and relevant experience in the international scholarship application process. This bias is acceptable within the context of purposive sampling. To ensure the credibility of the study there was an attempt to include all lecturers with Honors and Master degrees and a minimum of five years lecturing experience across departments. During the data collection, it was apparent that participants could not express themselves fluently in English as most of them are not fluent and the researcher had to switch to Portuguese to ensure quality responses. Subsequently, the interview records were translated into English. However, there was conscious effort from the authors to ensure that inter-code textual data was preserved during the generation of the themes. This was a challenge because Portuguese spoken by participants was translated into English by the authors.

## CONCLUSION

The overall challenge is such that both males and females do not benefit from successful scholarship application. The gender demography in this study showed that the ratio of female to male varies but females faced more scholarship challenges than males. Also, the financial implications of preparing for scholarships are beyond the affordability of participants irrespective of gender. The perception of English as an oppressive language was a critical factor among participants especially towards exploring scholarship opportunities.

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**Appendix 1**

Interview questions

Please your time and availability for this interview is highly acknowledged. The researcher will take all precautions to protect your confidentiality and anonymity.

1. Have you ever applied for an international scholarship? If yes, when and where to? If no, why not?

   a) What degree were you applying, Master degree or PhD degree?

   b) If you have applied for an international scholarship, what support did you receive from your department or University to stimulate your success on the application?

2. Tell me about the challenges encountered when applying for American and European scholarships.

3. What are your thoughts about English language selection criteria for the scholarships you applied?

   a) Do you agree with the English Language proficiency tests' (IELTS & TOEFL) selection criteria by the European and American Universities to Mozambican applicants? If yes, Why? If not, why not?

4. What are your views regarding training Mozambican lecturers in European and American Universities?

5. What do you think English Language represents for Mozambican lecturers over the opportunities for further studies in European and American universities? Elaborate your answer.

In advance, I acknowledge your collaboration.