REACHING CHILDREN ACROSS THE GLOBE: THE EFFECT OF ENGLISH CHILDREN'S BOOKS ON TANZANIAN ORPHAN LITERACY

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Abstract

We found that there are disproportionately intractable challenges such as poverty and inequality in an area of Tanzania, Eastern Africa. There was a need to identify and develop the factors critical for their success. Data were collected in rural Iringa, Tanzania on a case study basis, using a semi-structured interview and communication with leaders in this area of Africa, and we analyzed data with a coded transcript. We identified ten factors that are critical for the success of the orphanage literacy. These findings advance understanding of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and have important practical applications for such enterprises. When the United Nations literacy decade (UNLD, 2003–2012) reached a mid-point, we decided to add to the global awareness of literacy. With initiatives and policy shifts providing a stronger basis for action on literacy, we reached out to Africa. Our concern is that the rise in the global adult literacy rate (15+) from 76 to 83.6 percent over the last two previous decades shows steady progress, with the rates in developing countries showing an even sharper rise from 68 to 79 percent (Richmond, Robinson, & Sachs-Israel, 2008). Thus, we focused on students from grades four to twelve to foster their literary progress as well. This study included 58 students who were also orphans in Kihesa-Iringa, Tanzania. By creating a Coalition of Children's Book Authors, we established a common ground for global literacy in the form of an NGO. However, the complication in literacy levels exists due to the digital-divide challenges coupled with the expense and delay of material delivered to Africa from the United States. Thankfully, our concern has succeeded to have influence even through the digital divide posed several objectives. Our course of action included a comprehensive plan to reach the 58 orphans, train their leaders, and create interactive learning modules. Thus, our contribution to the literature has reacted to the needs of an African community that could use help in not only literacy but also literacy-leadership communication and knowledge-management.

Keywords: Education, literacy, Tanzania, English language, Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION

There is growing interest in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which encompass any "voluntary group or institution with a social mission" operating in an area separate from the government. This is evident in the fact that interventions from non-governmental organizations that focus on children's literature have helped boost the English literacy rates of children in disadvantaged areas. "Child literacy is often taken for granted, but around the world, millions are growing up without

the ability to read or write. What many do not realize is that literacy has a direct effect on poverty. According to a study conducted by the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization, there are links between illiteracy and higher unemployment" (Fernandez, 2019, p.1). Fernandez (2019) captured the essence of three primary NGOs:

✓ **Room to Read:** Room to Read is an NGO founded in 1998 that began its work in Nepal. Room to Read's vision is to improve literacy and access to literature in low-income communities, with a special focus on gender equality in education. The NGO has now spread all over Southeast Asia and Africa and has benefited around 16.6 million children worldwide. The NGO has distributed 24.1 million books, trained 15,285 librarians and teachers, and has partnered with 30,337 schools to implement its literacy program.

✓ **World Literacy Foundation:** The World Literacy Foundation was founded in 2003 with the guiding mission to provide books, tutoring, and literacy tools to children in communities that otherwise would not have access to these resources. WLF began transporting books to Africa in 2005 and shortly after developed low-cost eBooks that could be distributed in local languages. In 2016 WLF designed and implemented "Sun Books," which are solar powered tablets that bring educational books to classrooms in Uganda without electricity or the internet. WLF has been active in more than 93 countries, has provided access to literacy resources to 250,101 children, and last year alone reached more than 350,000 children and adolescents.

✓ **Pratham:** Pratham was founded in 1995 in Mumbai, India with the goal of having "every child in school and learning well." Pratham is one of the largest NGOs in India, operating in 21 out of 29 Indian states and with volunteers in 300,000 Indian villages. Its mission is to improve literacy and the quality of education in India by supplementing government efforts and supporting teachers and parents. Pratham's lead program, Read India, was launched in 2007 and has reached more than 30 million children. The program also provided training for around 61,000 teachers to improve literacy all across the country.

Although this is an important contribution to literacy improvement, there are unanswered questions and reasons in which these unanswered questions are critical. "As necessary as reading is to the success of a child—and entire nations—many low-income countries overlook the fundamental duty of their school systems to produce readers (Amber & Peter, 2011, p. 66). According to Fernandez (2019), "There are still 124 million children and adolescents that are not enrolled in school and one in four children in developing countries is illiterate."

The purpose of this paper is to provide an indicative connotation on how small groups of authors and individuals that are not part of the government can have an impact on the improvement of literacy effort in underdeveloped countries. For example, in Tanzania, Eastern Africa, specifically, literacy in English helps its orphans conduct higher level thinking while developing knowledge in a language usually used primarily in most countries. Thus, we found a way to help 58 orphans, ranging in ages 4 to 16, access a higher standard of education and an increased rate of success in their future working lives. By providing access to English, children's books specifically from authors around the globe, along with supplementary materials that complement the books gave the Tanzania orphans and surrounding community the chance to develop centers such as libraries and classrooms that helped engage children from underdeveloped countries to learn and grow in their knowledge of the English language more effectively. We published the names and ages of these children in the preface of our own authored books to ensure that people are aware of the need for the improvement of literacy. We then solicited several authors who sent their own books to Tanzania. Some authors read our books using social media platforms such as LinkedIn, and others are continuing to contribute. For example, a leading author joined our cause in 2023. We recently onboarded an author in London that will provide an array of children's books to the orphanage. The author's name is Rayner Tapia, and her shipment will include books from her series "The Adventures of Tom McGuire." This philanthropic

accomplishment will be the showcase of our advanced literary effort in 2023 as we continue to bring on more children's book authors to support our main cause—the Coalition of Children's Book Authors, a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded by Dr. Michael Provitera to support the orphans of Tanzania, Eastern Africa.

In our research effort to help the orphanage prosper, we gathered non-solicited communication from Majaliwa Mbogella, the Chairperson & Founder of the Children Care Development Organization (CCDO). In one form of communication published on the social media sites of LinkedIn and Facebook, Majaliwa indicated that the orphanage deeply appreciates humanitarian efforts to support the literary community of not only the orphanage in Tanzania, Eastern Africa, but also the surrounding community of Iringa Municipality in the Iringa Region of Tanzania.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore how Tanzanian children, orphans specifically, utilize children's storybooks from the United States to help them grow effectively and efficiently into knowledgeable and productive adults. NGOs can enhance English knowledge through many facets such as author-readings, storytelling, crossword puzzles, teaching modules, videos, and other learning modes. An example of a strong NGO that utilizes these modes of learning habitually is the National Geographic.

> The National Geographic is where education meets exploration. We are transforming the learning experience for young people and the educators who reach them with the tools, resources, and support they need to feed their curiosity and become the explorers of tomorrow. Through immersive experiences, interactive lesson plans, maps, and other free resources – there are endless ways to learn with National Geographic (https://www.nationalgeographic.org/society/education-resources/).

The structure of the paper is based upon a qualitative study that answers the research question and includes an interview with the founder of the Coalition of Children's Book Authors, comments from the founder and chair of the orphanage, methods, discussion, and the results of our study, followed by suggestions for further research, and a conclusion.

This research question in which this study aimed to answer is:

How have children's books from international sources affected Tanzanian orphans' development of learning the English language from a literacy standpoint?

When we created the Coalition of Children's Book Authors, we began sending books to Tanzania to help them build their small library, which has since grown from our first shipment and communication with the orphanage. We have pictures of the library from the leaders of the orphanage with our books on the shelf and their children reading them. This literacy project truly has enriched the lives of orphans in Tanzania. We not only sent books that we authored ourselves, but from others too. Then we dived deeper into the true effect of our advances to increase literacy levels, which proved very beneficial to the orphans and the surrounding community of approximately 350 people. Some scholars may question why we chose to reach out to Tanzania, Eastern Africa out of all places. The leaders of the orphanage first reached out to Dr. Michael Provitera on social media in response to his motivation book for adults. After Dr. Provitera explained how the book and workbook could enhance the leadership skills of the Orphanage executives, we noticed that there was an established need for children's literacy development expressed by the founder Majaliwa. Being that Tanzania is an underdeveloped area of Africa, we reached as many people as possible with a strong focus on the original 58 orphans. Sending books had a vast effect on their education, since materials regarding literacy are relatively inaccessible for them. Realizing this, we sent them much more than books. From pencils and supplies to stuffed animals, we reached their hearts and souls. Thus, our original quest was to develop the hearts and minds of these orphans through books, but we also found a different type of connection that needed nurturing and an abundance of love and compassion.

This project not only provided these orphans with English media as an established role of NGOs—we began furthering literacy from the resources offered to less developed areas and demonstrated how the existence of an NGO affects children's literacy from the learning process to building collaboration across continents. When we read an entire book to the orphans via social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, while they were on lockdown, the students felt a sense of nurturing and special attention. We then received information that the leaders at the orphanage in Tanzania are building the Michael Provitera library. The leaders also indicated that the books were indeed sent to them, and that this new library expansion would reach an entire community benefiting over 350 people overall.

The major findings of this study yield substantial success in learning English by utilizing multi-modality learning, communication with the members of the NGO, and the techniques used by the orphanage to implement English, when faced with the resource-barren conditions of educational levels in Tanzania. Our research revealed a positive correlation between the implementation of NGOs and the Tanzanian orphan community, influencing their literary skills positively from the materials we have provided them. As we further our research, we are weighing the various options of how best to offer English literary materials to disadvantaged children and their communities. Thus, the effects of different types of interaction on learning achievement, satisfaction, and participation in video or web-based instruction helped not only during the COVID-19 crisis but well before that problem existed. We felt that we had an opportunity to make an impact on the orphans and surrounding community using web-based instruction, and we were able to make that possible. Jung, Choi, Lim, and Leem (2002) found that the effects of different types of interaction on a learning achievement, satisfaction, and participation in web-based instruction are tantamount to the success of learning and literacy development.

Literature Review

Although prior research has covered how children from struggling areas, such as Africa, utilize certain techniques to increase their literacy, it very rarely shows a connection between English children's books specifically and how books have strengthened children's knowledge of the language by using them. Prior research explores themes such as how NGOs impact literacies in developing schools, how English can be incorporated into the classrooms of underdeveloped countries, and how books can strengthen children's literacies in developing countries, but usually only in their native tongues. This indicates a need for more research veered towards the role of foreign NGOs in offering English media specifically, not just the furthering of children's literacy development in their own languages.

It is undeniable that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a substantial part to play in offering literary services to children and their communities with little to no access to educational materials. Education and NGOs, according to Lorraine Pe Symaco, (2016), in assisting governments for development has been highlighted in past literature (Edwards & Hulme, 1996; 1998; Zaidi, 1999; Rose, 2009; Hicks, 2014), much to the ideal that NGOs, given their perceived altruistic intentions, can provide the needed 'complementing' projects that are otherwise compromised in inefficient and ineffective governments.

Anyanzo (2017) explored how contributions by various agencies support the literacy of Tanzanian school children when their learning opportunities are usually close to none, due to the poor economic conditions that exist in their area. He examined a multitude of corporate and non-governmental organizations that opened opportunities to school children with literacy projects like providing books in the children's various native languages, constructing schools and libraries, and various involvement in the community to engage primary school children, and therefore, improve their quality of education. Other literary projects that established libraries such as the RTR program and the Tusome Vitabu Project "offered more opportunities for readership, hence, inculcated the culture of reading for both pleasure and information among children" (Anyanzo, 2017, p. 21). This study asserts that intervention by NGOs in these resource-barren countries is not only essential for providing literary materials for its young students, but also in sustaining pre-existing literacy practices and turning activities like reading into a healthy educational habit.

Much like the goals and incentives of the NGOs mentioned by Anyanzo (2017), other studies highlight the importance of having more interactive NGOs with engaging literacy projects that reach out globally to children to increase their literacy levels. Bloch (2014) expands upon the prior research by using an independent development organization called The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), which worked toward providing learning opportunities by storytelling for young children in South Africa. This method embraces community, with PRAESA's team of literacy activists working "to set up and support a network of reading clubs who engage communities in children's literacy development" (Bloch, 2014, p. 158). This furthers the idea that storytelling, as a form of learning literacy, can be used in a way that children not only can develop their literacy skills, but also cultivate enjoyment in reading. Scholars also found that book reading becomes an up close and personal experience and yields a positive experience in learning language (Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2012).

However, an interesting concept that surfaces in this research is the fact that this organization incorporates both books in the children's African home languages, but also in English—thus, attempting to broaden global literacy skills. PRAESA works to "promote mother tongue based bilingual approaches to language use, in formal and non-formal education" (Bloch, 2014, p. 157). Throughout their work, Bloch's team of educators and authors suggest that English, when paired with a child's knowledge of their first speaking language, results in a higher literary understanding when utilized in projects and activities. Therefore, there exists a need for more research detailing how specifically English media from NGOs helps develop literacy in the language for children in developing areas, not just in their own various mother tongues.

When students are introduced to a form of secondary-language teaching and learning in low-access classrooms, English is made a priority to utilize for communication, thus expanding both knowledge and use of literacy. Prior research has focused on the importance of English as a foreign language for students, and the techniques in which teachers can enhance the use of language across continents effectively. Malini and Sankaran (2019) specifically analyzed how students and teachers alike in a Rohingya school perceive the process of learning English and its literacies. Though this research did not use techniques focusing on reading English stories, the skills obtained by the students were the same: vocabulary, reading comprehension, and pronunciation. Detailed observations of techniques for these students to learn English included "activating their background knowledge to make sense of what they read and hear," and utilizing a practice usually not used in mainstream English classes; using a known second language Bahasa Melayu to communicate and guide English lessons (Malini & Sankaran, 2019, p. 129). Throughout the process, the student collaboration seen from utilizing this language to learn English is what really helped cement their English teachings that they can then utilize throughout their lives. The theme of practicing teamwork through another language to understand English is the essence of another case study from Makoe and McKinney (2009), where one student's peer techniques were analyzed in how she learned English in a multilingual South African primary school. Tumi, a seven-year-old girl, used her known second language, Sepedi, to help her teacher guide lessons, and for the classroom to understand specific English words. This study highlights that by noting "her strategic choice of a different linguistic code from the English used by her teacher, served to enhance the educational outcomes" (Makoe & McKinney, 2009, p. 87). With Tumi's help, her classmates were brought together as students, all well-versed in Sepedi, proving that the choice of implementing this language in lessons helps them attain heightened literacy in the English language. Thus, prior research has indicated that the English learning experience for students is possible in the classroom setting with little to no knowledge of the language—but there still exists a need for more research focusing on orphans, rather than enrolled schoolchildren, and their unique conditions and communities, specifically with learning English.

Trends in past research either depict libraries in classrooms offering literacy development in the children's own languages, or detail on the conditions surrounding teaching English as a whole. Most importantly, the research shows that how educating and training teachers from these areas in English

is just as important as it is for its children learning it. However, studies in the future need to explore how orphans and their communities utilize different forms of learning and strategies to understand English and its literacy. By focusing on the orphanage and its related school, which are the same, future research should focus on how disadvantaged communities learn and thrive (Philip, 2017). Specifically, NGOs and their role in facilitating English media to these areas and the affect it has on how they learn is also an effective area to research in the future. Our study fills this gap of research by offering a focus on a specific orphanage in Tanzania, and how an NGO from the United States of America affect that unique community, in offering children's books for its orphans and complementary study material. Since Tanzania, in general, is not very well equipped with literary materials and resources to learn English, our study aims to investigate how English media can shape these orphans' learning process and use their newfound literary knowledge to ensure heightened educational success by using the English language in their future.

METHOD

Model of Research

Our research question consisted of the following:

"How have children's books from international areas affected Tanzanian orphans' development of learning the English language and its literacies?"

In selecting our model of research, we read the work of Buckley and Chiang (1976), who define research methodology as "a strategy or architectural design by which the researcher maps out an approach to problem-finding or problem-solving." We felt that this method of research was better used in business. We then reviewed research posed by Crotty (1998), who argues that research methodology is a comprehensive strategy "that silhouettes our choice and use of specific methods relating them to the anticipated outcomes, but the choice of research methodology is based upon the type and features of the research problem." This was too cumbersome for us to determine its use for our study. Qualitative research methodology is considered to be suitable when the researcher or the investigator either investigates new field of study or intends to ascertain and theorize prominent issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007).

After a review of the most appropriate qualitative model, we decided that our research consisted of a semi-structured interview which was in-depth, and our respondents answered preset open-ended questions. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews are utilized extensively as an interviewing format possibly with an individual or sometimes even with a group (Corbin, 2007). Thus, our semi-structured interview was conducted once only, with an individual and cover the duration of 30 min to more than an hour. This method of research is well noted in the qualitative studies by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006). Thus, Janet Provitera, the interviewer, used the semi-structured interview process guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions to be explored and answered by interviewing Dr. Michael Provitera, the Founder of the Coalition of Children's Book Authors.

To achieve the optimum use of interview time, Janet used an interview guide which served a useful purpose of exploring each question from Dr. Michael Provitera more systematically and comprehensively as well as to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The questions in the interview guide comprised of the core question and many associated questions related to the central question, which in turn, improved not only due diligence but also allowed room for personal reflection by both the interviewer and interviewee (Janet and Michael). Responses of the questions were captured using a taped interview session (DiCicco-Bloom, 2006), and were captured with twelve pages of transcribed, typed out notation. Research contends that verbal prompts from taped interviews enables the transcriptionist to generate "verbatim transcript" of the interview (DiCicco-Bloom, 2006).

The coded transcript began developing questions' themes around the following concepts in order: Cultural Background of Michael Provitera

Academic Experience
Experience with Children
Determination
Connection
Collaboration
Communication
Genuine Generosity
Variety of Learning
Struggles of Underdevelopment
Learning Literacies
Necessity of English

Based on the transcript, the cultural norms of the interviewee coupled with the questions led to the codes indicated in the findings section below.

Data Collection Tool
Our data collection tool consisted of predetermined questions created by Janet, the interviewer. The questions were then approved for validity by her literature professor to utilize in this study. A scheduled appointment for sixty minutes was created with the interviewee, Dr. Michael Provitera. The face-to-face interview took 20 minutes and 38 seconds using phone dictation and a coded transcript. "Qualitative coding is a process of systematically categorizing excerpts in your qualitative data in order to find themes and patterns. It enables you to take unstructured or semi-structured data such as transcripts from in-depth interviews or focus groups and structure it into themes and patterns for analysis," (Saldana, 2009; Given, 2008; Clarke & Braun, 2013). The interview date was on October, 24, 2021, and was conducted in Power's Hall, Barry University, Miami Shores, Florida, USA. Michael Provitera was the chosen interviewee because he is an author of children's books and a professor of organizational behavior. He was also selected because of his expertise as founder of the Coalition for Children's Book Authors. He provided his disclosed knowledge gained not only by sending his books to the Tanzania Orphanage, but also by sending other authored books by coalition members. We wanted to investigate the effect that he had, and continues to have, on the Tanzania orphans' literacy skills.

In the interview, Michael was asked basic demographic questions first along with ones inquiring his educational skills, then we dove deeper into its relationship to his Tanzanian research project later. As the interview progressed, questions evolved into topics exploring how Michael perceives that the orphans have improved in English, how and why he sends books to them and their area, and more insightful questions toward the end on how he sees his project expanding in the future and what that means for providing Tanzanians more resources to enhance their English literacy. Through the interview, we hoped to gain a sense of knowledge on how Michael's NGO has changed the way these orphans learn English, and the techniques in which it has done so. Selected questions were:

1. What influenced you to send over your children's books to Tanzania out of all places?

2. How do you perceive the progress of the literacies of the Tanzanian orphans you sent books to now, versus the time you started?

3. Is it true that the orphanage leaders built a library in your name in Tanzania? If so, how does that escalate their learning of the English language even further?

4. So, speaking of communication, what challenges have you faced when communicating with the heads of the Children Care Development Organization (CCDO) in Tanzania?

5. So, speaking about LinkedIn and the Coalition of Children's Book Authors, how has leading that effort helped you become more enlightened about the conditions in Tanzania?

6. Knowing that Tanzania is an undeveloped and uneducated area, how does that factor into the importance of sending over your books there?

7. Have the leaders of the children in Tanzania ever notified you about the children's progress, the orphans' growth, and comfortability with English?

8. How do you feel that the orphans will benefit in the future and in their work lives from reading your children's books?

9. Why do you believe that kids from undeveloped areas like Tanzania should be provided with English media, like books to enhance their understanding of the English language?

10. Do you feel that providing audio of the book in the form of reading it to them benefits them more than them reading it alone?

11. Do you think that you can expand or improve the literacy program that you developed in Tanzania?

12. What is your vision of the Coalition of Children's Book Authors, and could you expand this program in the future?

Analysis Techniques

Qualitative techniques were used in the analysis. The analysis technique used in the research was based upon a citation of all questions and answers with a side column that searched for themes based upon reflexivity and alignments. Blair (2015, p. 1) determined that the best coding technique reflects the research. For example, Blair's exploration found there was no clear-cut 'best' option but that the data coding techniques needed to be reflexively aligned to meet the specific needs of the project. We were methodically sensitive to the data collection and ensured that we captured every word or inflection as we conducted in the interview. As Blair (2015) contends, this type of reflection suggests that, when coding qualitative data, researchers should be methodologically thoughtful when they attempt to apply any data coding technique; that they do not assume pre-established tools are aligned to their particular paradigm; and that they consider combining and refining established techniques as a means to define their own specific codes. We followed Blair's advice accordingly.

FINDINGS

The qualitative study analyzed transcripts using the following *codes*:

- *variety of learning*
- *connection*
- *collaboration*
- *communication*
- *struggles of underdevelopment*
- *necessity of English.*

Based upon the questions developed above and the interviewee, Michael Provitera, we found that there was a plethora of data collected. For example, after a descriptive qualification of Michael, we delved into the questions. Below is a sample of a question and answer between the encoder and decoder.

What influenced you to send over your children's books to Tanzania out of all places?

Excellent question. Thank you, Janet. Well, it started out as a LinkedIn connection in which I had someone ask me about my motivation book. So, I sent my motivation book, and I sent my free workbook and the Tanzania officials at the orphanage were using it to see how it could

help their community. Once it helped them to a certain extent, they were telling me that in their area, there is a lot of poverty and it is not accepted as well because there are other problems like AIDS, and starvation, and poor water and sewage, things like that. So, I said, well maybe there is another way I could help. I have a children's book and perhaps I could send books to the orphanage, and I could send a coloring book, teaching notes, and classroom exercises. So, they were very excited about that. And that is how it all started. So, I have a Coalition of Children's Book Authors, and we sent over five hundred books to Tanzania, Eastern Africa.

We investigated how Michael utilized his prestige, writing, and connections within his coalition to conduct his projects in Tanzania, and how that communication benefitted the Tanzanian orphans in not only learning English but building collaboration and engagement. In analyzing how Michael's commitment to carrying out his research project and the generosity of his service contributed towards an elevated learning environment for the Tanzanian children, we noticed that repeated phrases emerged when Dr. Provitera discussed communication with his coalition and Tanzania, the lack of quality and quantity of literacy based upon the conditions in that area, and whenever he mentioned sending over different literary resources as a strategy to increase literary knowledge among the orphans. The major findings indicate that children's books from international areas help Tanzanian orphans improve in learning English by giving them multiple modes of learning, a stronger connection with American authors and the people portrayed in the stories, a stronger knowledge of the English language, and access to educational materials they would not have been able to gather for themselves alone.

Relating to the effect of international children's books and media for children in Tanzania, it is evident that a variety of literary resources, geared to engage students, helps children learn English at a higher level. Throughout the interview, Michael explained how he not only focuses on sending his children's books to Tanzania, but also on "different ways for them to engage" like workbooks, author-reading of chapters on video, educational exercises, and crossword puzzles that he has taken the time to create himself to pair with the readings. Michael also mentioned in the interview how most students in Tanzania "are illiterate" and "can't read a sign that may lead them to doctors to ascertain their medication," meaning these children need resources that can not only stimulate their minds, but also improve their quality of life and their safety. Visual stimulation and activities, such as completing a crossword puzzle related to a book after it is read, helped the orphans learn new English words found in Michael's books—allowing them to strengthen their literacy in the English language in different and new ways.

We found that the variety of teaching modalities can also refer to an array of topics to provide a unique reading form for the orphans. In multiple occasions throughout the interview, Michael reaffirms the importance of having a coalition of children's authors to aid him in his efforts to send books to Africa. Michael explained that his own storytelling is aimed to help whoever reads his work "to be more creative and thinking about entrepreneurship and all the concepts of management, leadership, and especially, motivation." Meanwhile, different members in his coalition sent books over to Tanzania covering different informative topics such as, but not limited to, dyslexia and other attention deficit disorders, developing the orphans' literary skills in different areas of focus. This variation of topics not only provides the orphans in Tanzania with the actual English words to grasp throughout their reading, but also creates a better sense of basic vocabulary and understanding overall. Mutua (2023) found that the acquisition and retention of vocabulary is an important step in attaining the proficiency of the English Language as a second language. And as Michael mentions, their works embedded with this vocabulary "give them the information they need to be more successful in their life endeavors." Michael's work to diversify the subject matter from the literary resources through multiple modalities proves efficient and effective in developing and strengthening English literacy in Tanzania's orphans.

We observed that direct and unwavering communication with the providers of the literary materials that the Tanzanian orphans receive helps form an essential connection that not only fosters a higher

understanding of English through exposure to its speakers, but also helps create a more personalized learning experience—since each of the 58 orphans are provided with their own literature and complementary material. Throughout multiple spots in the interview, Michael mentioned how he maintains a strong sense of collaboration with the members of his coalition, and the representatives and children of the Tanzanian orphanage that he provides the books to. In several instances, Michael has conducted seminars in which the audience either directly or indirectly collaborates with each student by sending them a colorful note or creating a video with words of love and confidence in their success. This deliberate process is one where it makes every individual orphan receiving these materials feel special, when there is very little else done to help them feel special in their daily lives. The existence of communication throughout his project is so strong that whenever anyone in the community wants to send books to the Tanzanian children for Michael's Coalition, he would "put the names of each orphan, their gender, and their age directly in each book" so that the sender of any book knows more about the exact child's age and gender in which they are helping out. Also, in the interview, Michael mentioned how he offers personal connection through his YouTube videos— giving the students "a sort of a comradery of a professor, an author, and motivational speaker who took his time out to directly read the book, chapter by chapter, for free." When communicating the best that we can where face-to-face meetings are rare, we found social media to be the only successful outlet. While face-to-face communication allows the process to become more personal, the alternative video and reading to an audience adds a television-type touch to the communication in a world where electronic communication veers towards becoming the norm. As the children of the orphanage began to realize that Michael, and the volunteers of the coalition, are not just complete strangers offering them literary resources, the project does not feel like an unknown international entity offering them help anymore, but rather fosters companionship and connection—making their experiential learning of English one they will remember for a lifetime. Thus, it is evident that communication is an essential part of learning English, and its incorporation in several aspects of the process of understanding the language yields many literary benefits for the orphans.

We must convey that the poor conditions that Tanzania, and its children, face play a key role in how they learn and apply English and its literacies throughout their lives. During the interview with Michael, the topic he mentioned throughout most of his answers were the ones that mentioned the conditions in an undeveloped area like Eastern Africa, including problems like poverty, a lack of funds, insufficient healthcare, and relatively no access to books, or any educational and literary materials at all. COVID-19 has only exasperated their stock of learning materials even further, where becoming digitalized and readily supplied with technology was a necessity to learn in developed countries. Though, in an under-developed country like Tanzania, its schools and orphanages were simply not able to be equipped with the technology needed to learn so quickly. According to Upor (2023), who found examples from language learning in Tanzania, revealed challenges of the unbalanced technology ecosystem for language teaching and lessons that can be drawn from the experience. And as technology does not seem to become implemented in the area anytime soon, books have an elevated necessity to be placed in the hands of learners that may last well into the future. Unfortunately, these physical factors and digital discrepancies result in a lot of students in the Tanzanian area not only being illiterate, but in some cases, faced with danger when not being able to read signs on the streets or travel and obtain needed medicine and groceries. Michael, in one portion of the interview, specifically addressed these problems for the orphans, including the fact that Majaliwa, the founder of the orphanage, expressed these real-life concerns to him explicitly. Thus, when Michael and his coalition sent over books and other various literary resources, the Tanzanian orphanage created a small library in his name to not only ensure the books are in safekeeping, but also to create and utilize their own version of a library for studying, where few libraries are found there. The necessity of having these books in their hands also comes from the fact that English is used very widely across almost all nations as a primary language, and learning it is usually a requirement for these children when they pursue their education, making it important to not only learn but also implement the knowledge gained in their futures.

In the interview, Michael mentioned that the orphanage he sends books to contain students that are "deprived of having the money and the resources" to learn. Therefore, with the books Michael and his coalition send to, "the orphanage and the community … are utilizing the library and its books," giving the orphans, and the surrounding community, crucial information so that "when the literacy increases for each individual, this knowledge will actually save lives." Thus, by using simple children's book stories and the knowledge gained from them, these Tanzanian orphans can not only strengthen their connection with English, but also use the language to learn important concepts to foster their creativity and the level of success in their working lives. Therefore, we found that when the necessity of receiving literary materials is incorporated into the learning process, Tanzanian children utilize what NGOs offer in unique ways that essentially work to boost English literacy globally.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

Books from international NGOs not only help Tanzanian children improve in their learning of English, but also give them the skills they need to succeed in their lives, making the literary knowledge they gain last for a lifetime. With the challenges Tanzanian children and their communities face due to their location and environment, the existence of educational materials such as books, workbooks, and even basic stationery such as pencils, crayons, and pens make a positive difference in how they learn English. As their knowledge of English improves, the children are better equipped to learn through international books that they would otherwise not have. Thus, these children can utilize their newfound intelligence and literary skills through the educational endeavors that they may pursue in their futures, where English is often needed to learn and grow. English language skills can also cross into other areas of expertise, making it an additional benefit for the orphans to learn when going into any industry. An interesting find from an aviation program provides evidence of the impact of the English language. "Proficiency in English has become the standard language in the international aviation industry. To avoid accidents, all aviation personnel need to communicate in English," (Mahmood, Saad, & Nur, 2003). Thus, the communication skills of the Tanzania orphans and surrounding community may be enhanced during reading and study of the English language.

Reading storybooks to children maximizes the kinds of experiences that predict language learning and may even exceed the power of oral conversations at times. There are at least three ways in which book reading influences language learning. According to Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff, and Hirsh-Pasek, (2012), reading storybooks offers children the opportunity to hear new vocabulary items embedded in varied grammatical sentences. Books written for children use well-formed, relatively short sentences that are rich in varied vocabulary. The second way in which book reading enriches children's lives and language is that it promotes joint attention and interest. Children are able to draw an adult's attention to interesting pictures using a broad range of cues including gestures, sounds, and words. Third, book reading helps children learn language because it requires the participants to be active and engage in responsive interactions about word meanings. Thus, the children of Tanzania are able to benefit in the same way from their use of English children's books and may implement these ways of learning the language in the process.

These benefits from learning English shed light to the fact that future research in this area is important because Tanzanians are not the only ones who can benefit from having an improved English literacy. There are many other different undeveloped areas throughout the globe that have similar problems of not being able to afford simple educational materials necessary for their students to learn both effectively and efficiently. In some cases, it is not the children's fault that there are literacy problems in their community. Mutua (2023) found that parents from low-income households in Kenya only afford to enroll their children in public schools. The author indicated that most parents from such households lack time to show affection to their children, which may influence their verbal acquisition process at home and in school. Furthermore, the author found that learners' performance suffers as a result of insufficient supervision, making it harder to acquire appropriate English vocabulary. This

adds to the stress of the need develop a strong or stable literacy in any under-developed area where this happens so that its children are able to prosper.

We also would like to present the value of teachers and the help that they offer the many children attempting to develop their literacy skills, since it is them that put in most of the time to help a child learn literacy apart from their parents. An interesting study focused on teachers and teacher motivation as a way of enhancing learning of children. A study discovered that the issue of teacher absenteeism and poor learning outcomes can be resolved by providing extrinsic motivation, such as a financial incentive for teachers based on their teaching effort and appreciating the intrinsic motivation at the same time. The study recommends that the government should prioritize teacher motivation as suggested by Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Juma and Stonier, 2023). From governments around the world, to leaders like the ones in the Tanzanian orphanage, to parents, and to teachers, everyone has to be involved in a child's educational pursuit for them to flourish.

Conclusion

The Tanzania Orphan Literacy Project set a common ground for educators who met virtually and maintained a cohesive relationship that is still viable and prosperous today. We addressed a complication that occurs not only in the digital divide of literacy, but also in the underdeveloped countries that exist—not to mention the effects of COVID-19 and the lockdown that did not let the orphans go to school or leave the orphanage for more than a year. Thus, our concern raised the bar in global literacy with a method of increasing literacy by sending books and other resources from multiple authors worldwide. We encourage more scholars to step up and help the underdeveloped countries to become more aware of the English language so that they can learn and grow similar to the developed countries.

Suggestions for Future Research

Our suggestions for further research in this area of literacy and underdeveloped countries would first include the investigation of diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, our course of action is simple. Seek volunteers, in our case children's book authors, but this can be expanded to reading professors and educators that can contribute to the cause of underdeveloped country literacy. We suggest that researchers find a need and meet that need by incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusiveness throughout their profession. The wide diversity among the orphan children, inadequate equity, and lack of inclusiveness in world literature led us to step up to the challenge of teaching across continents via social media, mail, and publishing sources such as Amazon. Our contribution to world literacy is encapsulated in this article and we encourage more people to reach out and help the Tanzanian Orphans. Another suggestion we would include for future research is to clearly establish what digital learning should encompass and provide for educational institutions and the future of schools as we veer towards technology to meet our learning needs. We believe that there are too many versions mentioned of how digital learning occurs in societies, that it becomes unknown what exactly digital learning is defined as. For instance, Marin and Castaneda (2023) found an array of terms such as remote learning, distance learning, open learning, e-learning, flexible learning, hybrid learning, blended learning, web-based learning, online learning, mobile learning, and technology-enhanced learning—all terminologies that may be confusing for many readers to understand. These authors provided their own solution to this in their book titled "Open, Distance, and Digital Education" (Marin and Castaneda, 2023). Marin and Castaneda (2023) condensed this plethora of terms into just three: open and distance education to clearly mark the historical origin of recent online education, and digital education to capture newer manifestations of teaching and learning with digital media in the process of the digital transformation of educational institutions. While Tanzania, Eastern Africa might not be ready for technological implementations like digital learning, we want to point out that this may be the direction of the future of learning modalities and that it is important to qualify exactly what it means. The last suggestion for future research is to create projects like the Coalition of Children's Book Authors or implement this research to inspire others to strengthen literacy in the English language for undeveloped areas and children globally.

Limitations of the Study

A lack of technology in the area of Tanzania prevented us from conducting an online interview with the leaders there, while a lack of resources in the area held us back from meeting the leaders for a physical interview. Therefore, any communication between the Coalition of Children Book Authors and the Tanzania leaders had to be channeled digitally through email and social media.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

We declare that we, as researchers, acted in accordance with ethical principles throughout the research process. Since we have multiple authors, we declare that there is no conflict of interest between the researchers. For example, Janet began this project as a term paper for a professor in an English course at a private college and the professor did not want to be recognized, although we do acknowledge her guidance and respect her contribution and expertise. Michael is the founder of the Coalition of Children's Book Authors and continues to work closely with the Tanzania orphans and leadership in Africa. Mostafa, a well-recognized researcher, managed the production and the publishing process. Thus, ethical principles were followed throughout the research process. No information was solicited from the Tanzania founders and leaders through interviewing, and the only information that they provided for use in this study was through the communication of thank you notes and their recognition as we had a working relationship. The children of the orphanage were not asked any questions and only received the books, supplies, and other things that they can use for fun and learning. We did receive a large number of pictures of the children, and this was also an indication of the satisfaction that can only be seen and not recorded in our research. Photos can be available by request through the authors. The photos came to our research investigation free of copyright and are part of the public domain.

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