

Attitude Factors Affecting Students' Use of Short Stories in the Learning of Kiswahili Grammar in Secondary Schools in Nandi North Sub-County, Kenya

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IKISIRI:

The purpose of this study was to establish learners' attitude towards the use of short stories in Kiswahili grammar learning in Secondary Schools in the Nandi North Sub County. A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The target study population was 2326 form four students. Simple and stratified random sampling was done to arrive at 10% of the target population. 240 (n=240) secondary school students participated as respondents from public secondary schools in Nandi North Sub-County. Data was collected using questionnaires. Descriptive statistical methods like frequencies, means and percentages were used to analyse the data. The research found out that students' attitude towards the use of short stories in learning Kiswahili grammar was positive though they argued that time allocated for Kiswahili lessons was short thus hampering the use of the integrative method in the teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar. Based on the findings, the study provides an insight into the use of short stories for effective Kiswahili grammar skill learning by Kiswahili grammar learners embracing the use of the integrated approach in daily classroom interaction as pointed out in the annual Kenya National Examination Reports over the past years.

Key Terms: Kiswahili Grammar; Short Stories; Attitude

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Utangulizi/Introduction

The performance of Kiswahili in the national examinations is still below average even though the language plays an important role, both nationally as the official and national language in Kenya, and regionally and internationally in many of the East African Cooperation nations. This phenomenon can be attributed to the attitudes adopted by both teachers and learners. Kiswahili is considered as one of the official languages of the African Union. It is the official or national language in four countries – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kiswahili as a language is spoken by several communities living in the African great lakes region including Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique. Approximately five million people speak Kiswahili as their first language, although the language enjoys the *lingua franca* status in much of the southern half of East Africa. Ogechi, (2002) estimates that 150 million people speak Kiswahili worldwide.

In Kenya, Kiswahili plays a crucial role in national development; first, it's an official language, second a national language and third, a core compulsory and examinable subject for all candidates at KCSE in the Kenyan curriculum. The Kenyan education system is examination oriented; thus KCSE examination results are used to classify candidates by the grades on their certificates; hence decisions are made on who proceeds to the next level of education. Many courses at university level consider Kiswahili as an alternative to English; thus a good pass in Kiswahili is an asset for students aspiring for further education or employment. Conversely, the growth of the East African Cooperation to include new states like Rwanda and Burundi puts Kiswahili language at a higher status as a regional *lingua franca* to be taken keenly by all educational institutions in the region as they prepare the required human resource for regional development and integration. However, over the years, student performance in KCSE

Kiswahili Paper 2, which examines grammar, has continued to drop painting a grim picture on the future of this language in Kenya as illustrated in Table 1.0 and Table 1.1 below:

Table 1.0 Students performance in Kiswahili paper 2 (102/2) marked out of 80 Marks.

Year	Mean score	Standard deviation
2014	32.27	12.60
2013	29.92	12.68
2012	29.06	10.77
2011	43.45	13.18
2010	33.77	14.09

Source: (KNEC year 2014:5 KCSE Examination Report Vol. 1. Languages)

Table 1.1 Nandi North Student Performances in KCSE Kiswahili (KCSE 102) 2010 - 2014

Year	Candidature	Mean grade
2014	2335	4.6766
2013	2354	4.7755
2012	2085	4.7282
2011	2105	5.2295
2010	1764	4.5563

Source: Nandi North Sub-County DQASO Office – KCSE Result Analysis 2014

The Kenya Institute of Education (2002) considers Kiswahili as having the capacity to develop and nurture patriotism and national unity. Kenyan learners are taught Kiswahili as a second language. Even those speak Kiswahili as natives usually find the standard language as taught and examined in schools (standardised from the Kiunguja dialect originating from Zanzibar) variant from the local dialects in their locality. The Nandi-speaking sub-tribe of the Kalenjin ethnic group are the main occupants of Nandi County. Because of the linguistic differences that exist between Nandi and Kiswahili language, there are negative transfers in SLA. Mutugu, (2001) citing Tucker, Selinker, and Byan,

identifies the sounds like /b/ /d/ /j/ /z//g/ as being problematic to the Nandi speakers. They are challenging since they do not exist in the Nandi language. The same challenge is also encountered and transferred to second language learning.

Literature Review

Kiswahili is taught as a second language in Kenya. Ellis (1994) claims that the learner attitude has been identified as one set of variable of significant importance. The attitudes are shaped by social factors, which in turn affect the learners' outcome. The attitudes towards the L2 and the methods used like short stories can be both negative and positive. The positive attitudes are usually associated with the speakers of the languages in question and the culture represented by the speakers. These positive attitudes are expected to enhance learning because it is expected of the learners to desire to be able to communicate with the native speakers of the language being learned. This is to say that if students develop an interest in the countries where the languages are spoken, they are generally more inclined to learn the language (Noel et al., 2003).

Negative perceptions, on the one hand, have been shown to inhibit language learning, because one usually acquires such an attitude when they are not interested or have challenges with the teacher (Ellis 199). Although negative attitudes have a negative effect on the learners, this may not always be the case. They can also lead to a net positive effect on L2 learning in case the students are determined to learn the language. In some instances, the learners who struggle with their attitudes are the true fighters. They usually work harder because their desire to earn a good grade pushes them to have a strong will to learn.

A student who has a positive attitude towards a L2 will be motivated to learn the language. Savile Troike (2006) claims that individual motivation is another major factor

that is used to explain why some L2 learners are more successful than others. The level of effort that the learners expend at various stages in their L2 development depends on how motivated they are to learn. The more motivated students are, the easier they will learn a new language. Motivation is often one of the keys to the ultimate level of proficiency. Troike (2006), states that motivation is usually recognised as being of two types. One of them is integrative motivation, which is based on learners' interest, that is, to what extent the learner is interested in the country or culture represented by the target language group. To be interested in learning a L2 and to have the desire to learn about or associate with, the people who use the language you are learning could be an example of integrative motivation.

The other motivation type is instrumental motivation, which is connected to the desire to learn a language to increase occupational or business opportunities, but also to get prestige or power (Ibid 87). The potential power of motivation can be seen in some cases where even older learners may overcome the "odds" of not acquiring native-like pronunciation if it is important enough to sound native (ibid 87). Ellis (1997:76) claims that motivation is not something that learner has or does not have, but preferably something that varies from one moment to the next, depending on the learning context or task. The types mentioned above of motivation should be seen as complementary to each other, rather than oppositional or distinct since learners can be both instrumentally and integratively motivated at the same time. (Ibid 76)

Since the objective of EFL teaching is to help students to communicate fluently in the target language, teachers should provide an authentic model of language use. To do it, she/he should focus not only on linguistic but also on literary and cultural elements. Since short stories offer these elements, they are highly beneficial to use in ESL/EFL teaching programs. However, the selection of short stories

should be done about the course objective, the learners' profile, and the story content to make the best of it. Since every teaching situation is unique, the use of one single piece of literature varies from classroom to classroom and from teacher to teacher. Like what the discussion in this proposal shows, short stories can be used to provide different activities for reading, listening, writing and speaking classes. While some teachers or instructors may still believe that teaching language encompasses focusing on linguistic benefits only, those who have integrated literature in the curricular have realised that literature adds a new dimension to the teaching of language. Short stories, for instance, help students to learn the four skills- listening, speaking, writing and reading more effectively because of motivational benefit embedded in the stories. In addition, with short stories, instructors can teach literary, cultural and higher – order thinking aspects, for instance, analysis and synthesis. The instructor thus should understand the benefits of short stories and their effect on learning these skills and therefore plan classes that meet the needs of their student. The short story creates a meaningful context to teach different language focuses and to improve the students' interpretative strategies. Last but not least, the same story may also serve for some other language focuses or skills such as vocabulary development.

The use of short stories in teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar skills will help make learning more relevant to the learners' background and experiences by anchoring learning tasks on meaningful, authentic and highly visual situations. The use of short stories will also address motivational problems through interactive activities in which the learner must play an active rather than a passive role.

Methodology

The study used descriptive survey design. Stratified random sampling method was adopted for selection of the percentage of schools included in the study Nandi North

sub-county has mixed and single, sub-county schools and county that are either day or boarding. Two strata sampling was used for the study. It included the gender status of the school and size of the school as in terms of the number of students in every class. A total of 12 schools (30%) out of 36 schools that had sat for KCSE for the previous five (5) years with 2326 students were sampled. The sampling was done as follows: 2 girls boarding, 2 boys boarding, and 8 mixed day secondary schools. 12 classes were used in the study where an equal number of students (20) were selected through raffles, (folding of papers which were labelled Yes and No). Students picked, and those with 'Yes' were included in the study from each of the form four classes. The total sample size was 240 (n=240) Form four students participated as respondents representing (12%) of the total number of students from the 12 sampled schools.

A questionnaire was used to collect data on students' attitudes towards the teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar using short stories. It had 13 items (statements) seeking students' views on the use of short stories to teach Kiswahili grammar. Learners to respond to the statements in a structured format: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Uncertain (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). After collecting all the interview schedules and questionnaires, the data was appropriately coded and inserted into the computer for analysis. Thematic analysis was then done for the qualitative data obtained. This was accomplished by organising the data into categories, themes and patterns pertinent to the study and tabulation used to present the findings. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed in the coding and analysis of the quantitative data obtained, which was then presented using means, percentages, pie-charts, frequency distribution tables and bar graphs. Findings were then thematically reported in consideration with the research objectives. The trends observed from analysis of the data allowed for making inferences, drawing conclusions and making generalisations regarding population

characteristics basing on the data gathered from respondents.

Results and Discussion

The objective of the study was to find out learners' attitude towards the use of short stories in learning Kiswahili grammar. An attitude scale was used to depict reactions of students on a range of issues regarding Kiswahili grammar. The study was to establish the attitudes of students on the use of short stories in learning Kiswahili grammar skills. They were supposed to rate their feelings on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Learners' attitude towards the use of short stories in the learning of Kiswahili grammar

When asked to indicate if they enjoyed reading short stories, 55.2% of the respondents strongly agreed, 34.5% agreed, 2.6% were uncertain 3.4% disagreed and 4.3% strongly disagreed. It was clear that 89.7% enjoyed reading short stories while 10.3% were of contrary opinion. Learners were asked to give their expressions on whether they found short stories interesting even if they read several times and their responses were: 50.4% strongly agreed, 35.8% agreed, 4.3% were uncertain, 4.3% disagreed and 5.2% strongly disagreed. In addition, students were asked whether they often read short stories though they were not assigned to do so (not compelled), the responses were: 25.9% strongly agreed, 47.4% agreed, 6.0% were uncertain, 12.9% disagreed while 7.8% strongly agreed.

On whether practising pronunciation by reading short stories aloud was interesting, 23.7% strongly agreed, 23.3% agreed, 6.4% were uncertain 19.4% disagreed while 27.2% strongly disagreed.

Asked to give their opinion on whether when they start reading a short story, they would not stop reading until they finish, the responses were: 23.3% strongly agreed, 34.5% agreed, 9.9% were uncertain, 23.7% disagreed while 8.6% strongly disagreed. Asked whether they read short

stories to enrich their vocabulary 56.0% strongly agreed, 29.3% agreed, 7.3% were uncertain, 3.5% disagreed while 3.9% strongly disagreed. This indicated that learners read short stories to add to their vocabulary as reported by 85.3% of the respondents.

On whether they enjoyed reading short stories to study new expressions for conversation, their opinions were; 46.6% strongly agreed, 40.5% agreed, 2.6% were uncertain, 6.0% were undecided while 4.3% strongly disagreed. The researcher wanted to know whether students liked to read short stories to generate ideas for writing and 41.4% strongly agreed, 36.2% agreed, 6.9% were uncertain, 9.5% disagreed while 6.0% strongly disagreed.

On whether it was time-consuming to read short stories 8.2% strongly agreed, 8.6% agreed, 6.9% were uncertain, 24.1% disagreed while 52.2% strongly disagreed. This indicated that most students felt that reading short stories was not time-consuming. Students were asked whether they thought short stories provided suitable rhetoric modes for writing and responded as follows: 26.7% strongly agreed, 38.8% agreed, 20.7% were uncertain, 6.0% disagreed while 7.8% strongly disagreed. When students were asked whether recorded short stories should be included in classes of listening, 31.9% strongly agreed, 40.1% agreed, 9.1% were uncertain 9.9% disagreed while 8.2% strongly disagreed.

On whether students found short stories very useful in identifying aspects of grammar; 37.1% strongly agreed, 43.5% agreed, 10.3% were uncertain, 5.6% disagreed while 3.5% strongly disagreed. From the reactions, the researcher deduced that students were positive concerning the use of short stories in identifying aspects of grammar. When students were asked whether short stories should be used to teach grammar 24.6% strongly agreed, 34.9% agreed, 16.8% were uncertain, 13.8% disagreed while 9.9% strongly disagreed. From the findings, it is clear that a more

significant percentage of schools did not have adequate short stories for teaching/learning Kiswahili grammar.

Conclusion

From the findings presented, student's attitude towards the use of short stories in learning Kiswahili grammar was generally positive. When they were asked whether they liked reading short stories to generate ideas of writing, majority of them agreed. On whether short stories should be used in teaching Kiswahili grammar skills, majority of the learners agreed. This was a clear indication that students had a positive attitude towards using short stories in learning grammar skills.

The findings from the study were similar to those of Akey, (2006) who carried out a longitudinal study among high

school students and found out that perceived academic competence (attitude) had a positive influence on academic achievement. These findings also correlate to those of Meenakshi, (2008) who found that an individual's perception of the peer group, class teacher, syllabus and his/ her awareness for future needs affect his/her desire for language learning.

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