

The Effect of Level of Exposure of First Language on *KIIDAKHO* Speakers' Acquisition and Use of Kiswahili Second Language in Western Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines the effect of environment on the Kiidakho first language speakers' acquisition and use of Kiswahili second language. The study, which was descriptive by design, was conducted in Ikolomani Division of Kakamega District in Western Province of Kenya. Its target population comprised Form Two and Form Three students. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample of the study. Seventy Form Two students and seventy Form Three students from all the six selected schools were involved thus bringing the number of students who participated in the study to one hundred and forty. Data was collected by means of questionnaire and written tasks and was described in terms of percentages. From the learners' responses, it was deduced that the home environment exposes the learner to more Kiidakho than Kiswahili. Therefore, it was recommended that teachers of Kiswahili should be well versed with the theories of language learning and the theories on the effect of native languages on the target languages in the process of the second language learning. The study sensitizes teachers of Kiswahili on the causes of syntactic errors that students make to enable them come up with remedial framework on teaching of Kiswahili.

Keywords: Environment, Kiidakho First Language Speakers, Acquisition, Use, Kiswahili

1. Introduction

Grammar is a very important and central component of every language. The meaning and role of grammar is what makes it important. Grammar is defined by Chomsky (1957) and McArthur (1983) as an underlying system of rules that learners or speakers eventually utilize in their use of language for communication. It is derived from the input speakers receive from their environment (Krashen, 1985). Syntax is the backbone of grammar of a second language such as Kiswahili. The Mackay Report (RoK, 1981) of the presidential working party on the establishment of the second University in Kenya started the 8-4-4 system of education and Kiswahili became a compulsory subject. The second President of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi, decreed that Kiswahili be a compulsory and examinable subject in both primary and secondary schools, yet its performance has over the years been declining. There is need to have its performance improved. Grammar being an important and central component of languages, then there is great need to study the factors that influence second language learners from mastering the grammar of L₂. As a teacher of Kiswahili, the author of this paper had experienced the students' grammatical problems despite Kiswahili being given a lot of priority in the syllabus. It is allocated more time on the timetable. In the KNEC Kiswahili examination paper 102/2, grammar part is allocated 40 marks, comprehension 20 marks and summary 20 marks.

In marking the summary section, grammar is also marked out of 3 marks. In paper 102/1 composition (Insha), which tests competence in writing skills, 8 marks are set aside for grammar. This means that the candidate has to consider the use of correct grammar. Though grammar is not marked in paper 102/3 (Fasihi) Literature in Kiswahili, but it is essential as it enables students to understand and answer questions. This is backed by KNEC reports of 1989, 1991 and 1995, which say that KCSE candidates have problems in understanding and writing answers. The reports further cite the biggest contributing factor as being lack of mastery of grammar. Questions in Kiswahili are constructed on the basis of specific syntactic structures, which are different from those in English (Ashton, 1944; Polome, 1967; Kapinga, 1983; Mbaabu, 1985; Mochiwa, 1995). Kiswahili is a very important language. It is used to detribalize people in urban areas and ethnically heterogeneous settlement (Whiteley, 1969). It is a National language of Kenya and co-official language used with English in many communications, commercial, administrative, judicial and political spheres (Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2002).

Kiswahili enjoys prominence in both social and official functions. The total number of its speakers is estimated to be 80% of Kenya's population; as such, ability to produce correct syntactical structure is vital (Ipara, 2003). Yet a great number of Kiswahili users are unable to speak or write the language competently. Ipara (2003) cites the major reasons as being the manner in which the majority of Kiswahili users regard its grammar in a casual way in both spoken and written mode.

The errors that learners make as they acquire a second language are significant; therefore, performance is related to languages categories (Corder, 1975; Taylor, 1974; Jain, 1974; Dulay & Burt; 1974). From the pedagogical point of view, the learner's errors provide evidence of what the learner knows and that which he does not know at a particular point in time. Simotwo (1993), in a study on error analysis, has found out that the learner's language is ridden with errors, as one cannot learn without making errors. Though Simotwo has dealt with semantics, it should be remembered that words cannot be studied in isolation. They are better analyzed in a sentence situation if an error has to be identified. Simotwo's (1993) error analysis points out that errors detract most of the learner's ability to communicate effectively. An error can make a sentence lose meaning. According to Simotwo (1993), error analysis provides data from which inferences about the nature of language learning process can be made and yield insights into second language acquisition process.

This paper focuses on the treatment of errors listed in comparison to the learner's native language and the target language. The differences between the two languages are thought to account for the majority of second language learners' errors. Kiswahili is a growing and dynamic language. Nouns in Kiswahili keep on increasing as is evident in Johnson's Dictionary (1939) which had 738 nouns. In 1987, the Russian panel came up with 1395 new nouns meaning that the number of nouns in Kiswahili had increased. To date, so many nouns have been created and included in the Kiswahili noun classification. Due to increased international recognition and use, Kiswahili language has expanded with additional nouns that did not exist fifty years ago. This calls for the need to find out how a Mwidakho student deals with the issue of pronominal structure in Kiswahili and provide the necessary remedy for the purpose of improving performance in Kiswahili. Competence in Kiswahili is determined by competence in grammar and weakness in grammar means weakness in all aspects of languages.

1.1 Acquisition of Second Language and the Influence that First Language

Chacha and Musau (2001, p. 1) say that language has a structure whereby letters must be arranged in a particular manner so that they can form a meaningful word. For example, /i/, /k/, /a/ and /p/ must be arranged in a certain way to form the word /Pika/ so that the word can have meaning. All words must be arranged in a certain order in a sentence so that the sentence makes meaning. Nevertheless, one learns the first language without mastering the rules (ibid.). One learns by hearing others talk and so when they learn the second language they transfer the knowledge without thinking about the rules that govern the structure of another language.

Once new meanings are acquired, they are of course available to the learner. This contributes to the student's subsequent additional learning or it will be for recall and utilization at some later point. In language, the noun determines the order of the words. The noun also controls the agreements in pronouns, adjectives, verbs, possessives and prefixes in the nouns themselves as shown in the example below.

Example:

- a) (1a) Zilianguka maji mtoto ndani hii ya.
- b) (1b) It fell water child inside this.
- c) (1c) Mtoto alianguka ndani ya maji haya.
- d) (1d) The child fell in this water.

The pronominal prefix **Zi** – in sentence (1a) refers to inanimate noun. The correct prefix that refers to animate is **a** –. This shows that in acquiring the second language, the learner must know and understand the meaning of the words and how to arrange them in a sentence in order to obey the rules of the accepted structure. Ability to use language is a complex but fundamental human skill, of which one of the goals is communication among individuals. In order for this goal to be fulfilled, speakers and listeners have to perform a number of distinct tasks among them associating words with their meaning (semantics) and conveying of inferring sense from the relationships among words in the sentence (syntax). Language plays so many roles in the life of human beings. Among these roles are, that: it helps to facilitate communication; it is used to express one's thoughts and desires; it is used in solving conflicts and disagreements, and language identifies people (Halliday, 1973). A child who learns the first language needs it seriously so that he/she can use it to express his/her thoughts and desires.

The child cannot tell the mother that she is wet but the moment she cries the mother starts checking on the baby's problem. This means there is the motivation for the baby to learn the first language. There is little motivation, however, in learning a second language, like Kiswahili. A student who learns the first language does it mainly for the purpose of passing the examination because such a student already knows the L₁, which she/he can use to solve her/his problems. With Ikolomani Division being highly homogeneous, everyone understands and speaks Kiidakho; therefore, there is no need to learn the second language for the purpose of communication. A child acquires the first language by listening to others talk and act. This child acquires language without learning the grammar of the language, but in learning the second language one must learn the rules of grammar. It can be said that one has discovered the grammar of a language when he has known the units and rules of that language and is able to produce grammatical sentences at will. Ausubel (as cited in Brown & Stephen, 1987) notes that most items are successfully learnt when they are related to knowledge acquired through experience. In learning of mother tongue, children use meaningful contexts to learn. They will communicate about things that are immediately important to them and will also begin associating results with their communication. Their mother tongue is thus an instrument of controlling their environment so as to best serve their needs.

Studies have shown that the natural language environment like home is a fertile ground for successful second language acquisition than formal classroom instruction. Whiteley (1974) in a research on language use has reported that mother tongue languages are reported to be strong in the "homestead." These are languages for communal exhaustions. Parkin (as cited in Whiteley, 1974) in a study of the language behaviour of residents of Bahati Estate in Nairobi has come up with the following findings: Bahati residents use Kiswahili at work place and Kikuyu in the neighbourhood since Bahati was unilingual; a few Kamba people who lived there eventually learnt Kikuyu and used it. This has denied Kiswahili a chance to be practiced. This case applies to the state of Kiswahili in Ikolomani Division. Most students in Ikolomani Division are day-scholars. Thus they spent more hours at home speaking Kiidakho compared to the number of six lessons taught at school per week. It is easier for them to master Kiidakho than Kiswahili. This poses a hindrance to the learning of Kiswahili as a second language.

Carroll (1967) has found out that there's a strong relationship between the duration one stays in a host country environment and one's performance in a language test. One's long stay in a host country offers a natural environment to test the target language structure learnt. This supports the fact about natural environment being a fertile ground for learning the second language. Kembo-Sure (1996) has researched on the language for children. He reveals that 62.6% of his respondents considered mother tongue as a language their children should learn first. This confirms the beliefs of many people (societies) that one who does not speak his community language is cultureless and sometimes considered as a social reject. This explains why most people in Ikolomani Division speak Kiidakho and this hinders them from learning and mastering a second language. Looking at Carroll's (1967) and Kembo-Sure's (1996) findings, it becomes difficult for a Mwidakho student whose parents insist that she/he should speak Kiidakho at home to master Kiswahili which is not spoken at home. Successful second language acquisition is a result of the interplay between the student's language acquisition device and the linguistic environment accorded to the learner. In this paper, the environment is perceived as being useful in enhancing the subconscious developments of the learner's mastery of the second language, Kiswahili.

We cannot totally ignore the formal classroom instruction for the learning of a second language. One way of ensuring that there is speaking of standard Kiswahili is by teaching it in all schools. Schools are the best catchment areas and they also offer a uniform syllabus. It is in schools that the amount of language a student has is tested, corrected and enriched. Speech precedes writing. People learn to speak and process oral language more easily and earlier than writing. Therefore, speech affects writing. It is important to study learner's errors because this reveals the hypothesis the learner may be testing out. The generalization that the learner makes about certain linguistic structures or rules and the progress that he/she makes towards native speaker competence will entail errors and assumptions about data being dealt with. This is because any form of learning a language will always entail errors. The learner's errors are largely eradicated or reduced as a result of feedback and input from the learner's target language environment. When a learner acquires a language, errors can occur in this circumstance because a learner has not internalized a general rule or has isolated particular rules governing the formation of certain constructions. This is expected from a Mwidakho student who is learning Kiswahili as a second language. From the findings of the research by many linguists on second language acquisition, there is common agreement on the factors that influence performance of second language.

In language acquisition, the level of fluency will vary among learners in different situations. This is because children will master the language system that is found in their environment. If the language system that is found in their environment deviates from the standard language, then this is what the children will acquire. This is supported by McLaughlin (1987) who states that “The frequency of certain forms in speech the learner hears can affect development sequence” (p. 34). Brown and Stephen (1987), in the same breath, say that when one is learning a second language, he/she tends to transfer many of the characteristics of their native language into the new language. Brown and Stephen (*ibid.*) call this inter-lingual transfer. Taylor (1975) emphasizes that one cannot ignore the influence of first languages on the second language acquisition. Taylor arrives at this conclusion after finding out that so many second language learners seemed to make errors which could be attributed to the native language.

This finding is supported by Lado and Fries (1974) who maintain that the success in the second language was impeded by a process of transfer. According to the two, foreign language materials needed to centre only on those aspects of the second language, which were different from those of native language. In this case, all the aspects of the second language, which were found in the native language, did not need to be dealt with. Similar to what other researchers on the effect of L₁ to L₂ found out, Richards (1971) cites one type of error as resulting from interference from mother tongue, which is termed as transfer or inter-lingual errors. Inter-lingual errors reflect the intrusion of features of the learner’s first language into second language.

This shows that the learner’s syntactic, phonetic, morphological or semantic features of the learner’s mother tongue can be reflected in his or her second language speech. This is proved by Odlin (1989) who, in a research on language acquisition, has noted a lot of transfer of linguistic features from any language that has been previously acquired into the target language. Odlin (*ibid.*) says that when two languages come into contact, transfer or diffusion of materials from one language to another takes place. This kind of spread of linguistic features from community to community or from class to class, presupposes communication by means of spoken or written words that is by learning or seeing, hence communication is a necessary condition for the spread of linguistic features. In this paper, the author argues that when Kiidakho comes in contact with Kiswahili then there will be transfer of linguistic features from Kiidakho to Kiswahili.

Odlin (1989) refers to this kind of transfer as borrowing transfer and substratum transfer. Borrowing transfer refers to the exerting of influence by the second language on the previously acquired language, while substratum transfer refers to the influence that a native language, which in this case is Kiidakho will have on the target language, which is Kiswahili. The substratum occurs when the brain has acquired some competence in the target language. In this paper, it was assumed that the Form Two and Form Three students had learnt a lot of content in Kiswahili and therefore have acquired some competence in relation to the use of concordial agreements. According to Lado *et al.* (1974), interference of structure transferred from one language to another is due to unfamiliarity with the learner’s second language. This means that the learner has not learnt the patterns of the target language. A student whose first language is Kiidakho will tend to transfer the patterns of Kiidakho to Kiswahili when it comes to learning unfamiliar Kiswahili linguistic aspects. Lado *et al.* (*ibid.*) say:

We know from the observation of many cases that the grammatical structures of the native’s language tend to be transferred to the foreign language. We have here the major source of difficulty or ease in learning the foreign language; those structures that are different will be difficult (p. 68).

Dulay *et al.* (1982) have come up with what they call “negative” and “positive” transfers. They look at transfer from a behaviourist psychologist point of view referring to the instances of structure which result in error because of the habitual behaviour which is different from the new behaviour that is learnt. Negative transfer is the inference of a mother tongue or any language in use on the target language in use. In this case, learners effectively speak the target language while using the grammar of another language either mother tongue or another familiar language. In this paper, “Negative” transfer means that the student has used the grammar of Kiidakho while speaking or writing Kiswahili. This paper was interested in negative transfer of Kiidakho features into Kiswahili. “Positive” transfer results in correct performance because the new behaviour is the same as the old (Lado *et al.*, 1974). According to Lado *et al.* (1974), “Those structures that are similar will be simple”. Taylor (1975), on the learning strategies of syntactic overgeneralization, has come up with the following conclusion:

Overgeneralization is the process in which a language learner uses a rule of the target language inappropriately when he attempts to generate a novel target utterance (p. 74).

In support on generalization, Musau (1992) agree on the types of errors in second language learning says that errors in Kiswahili occur as a result of overgeneralization strategy that learners employ in learning Kiswahili as a second language. Richards (1971) argues that lingual errors occur as a result of overgeneralization. According to Richards (ibid.), overgeneralization errors arise when a learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures of the target language. The student may have known the use of some concords of some noun classes and end up using them with different nouns. This will create a grammatical error because in Kiswahili there are rules that govern the use of concords in all noun classes.

From the findings of the above scholars, it is evident that language learning is a conscious process that results in “knowing about the language” (Krashen, 1985). This process involves guiding, tutoring, teaching and learning whereby the learner is instructed on what to do and how to do it. This is done in a formal classroom. There is a curriculum which stipulates the content to be taught. The curriculum selects and grades the items to be taught carefully and arranges them so that it is taught sequentially in bits in order of their difficulty and relevance to the learner’s needs so that his linguistic input is supplied in a digested form (Klein, 1986). The above explanation sums up the argument, that the second language is learnt, and not acquired like the first language. Since Kiswahili is the second language to most students in Ikolomani Division, then the only way it is mastered is by learning it formerly in a school setting.

1.2 Limitations of the Study

The study focused on the effect of L_1 on L_2 , specifically on how Kiidakho affected Kiswahili at syntactical level. The main focus of this paper is on the effect that the use of Kiidakho, as a first language for most learners in Ikolomani Division, in different environments, affects the learners’ acquisition and use of Kiswahili. The research method was designed to collect errors that Idakho first language learners made that affected Kiswahili and describe them so as to provide the necessary solutions. The study was limited to completing of the questionnaire and the written task as means of collecting data. Relying on written data carries with it the drawback of external and internal constraints. Another limitation was that the study relied on the answers given by the students. It was thought that the written task was likely not to be taken seriously by the students especially if they discovered that, the marks they were going to attain were not going to contribute to their final performance at the end of the term. The identification of these limitations and the attempts to minimize their effects were to enable the findings for Kiswahili grammar to be generalized in other areas with similar situations.

2. Materials and Methods

The research evaluated how Kiidakho affects Kiswahili by describing the syntactical errors a Mwidakho student makes and the reason for making such errors. The study was a descriptive survey by design conducted in Kakamega District’s Ikolomani Division in Western Province, Kenya. The target population of the study was Form Two and Form Three students. Form One and Form Four students were left out because, according to KIE (2002) syllabus, it is believed that in Form One the student has just been introduced to the linguistic structures on the use of language and in Form Two and Form Three the student has been adequately exposed to syntactical structures of a sentence including noun classification. The Form Four were left out because it is thought that, being an examination class, the teaching at this level would suffer from the “backwash” effect of Kenya National Examinations (Hawes, 1999).

The sample size for the study was limited to 140 students in both Form Two and Form Three students from six selected schools. Selection was based on the number of streams per school. Category “A” had only one Boys Boarding School with five streams in Form Two and Form Three respectively. Due to the highest number of streams and population in this school, two streams from Form Two and two streams from Form Three were selected for the study. Ten students were selected from each of the two streams that were selected in both Form Two and Form Three. This brought the total number of students who participated in the study in this category to 40 students. Category “B” had three schools. One school was selected for the study. One stream from Form Two and Form Three participated in the study. Ten students were selected from each stream making the total number of students who would participate in the study from this category to be twenty. From category “C”, one school was selected. One stream from Form Two and one stream from Form Three were selected with ten students being selected from each stream, bringing the total number of students to twenty.

Category “D” had the highest number of schools, therefore three schools were selected. All the schools in this category are single streamed. Therefore, from each of the three schools selected ten students were selected from Form Two and ten from Form Three making the total population to be sixty students. The sampling procedure was done at two levels. These included stratified sampling technique and proportionate random sampling technique. The instruments and techniques used for data collection were questionnaire and written task.

3. Results and Discussion

The study gave consideration to the learner’s language use as a means of oral communication with the immediate members of the family, in the neighbourhood, in the previous primary school both in and outside the classroom, and finally the language used by the learner outside the classroom in secondary school. The languages known to the learners were Kiidakho, Kiswahili, English and Sheng. This aimed at eliciting data concerning the learner’s exposure to Kiidakho and Kiswahili in different places. The objective here was to find out and analyze the learner’s use of language. This aimed at establishing whether or not there is indeed any relationship between being exposed to a particular language and learning it. In addition, this was also meant to find out whether or not too much exposure to Kiidakho affects a learner’s mastery of standard Kiswahili as a second language.

3.1 Learner’s Language Use in the Home Environment

Data on the preferred language used by the learners to communicate orally with the immediate members of the family is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Preferred Language used with Immediate Family Members

Language	Percentage
Kiidakho	86
Kiswahili and Kiidakho	6
Kiswahili	5
Kiswahili and English	3
English	0
Kiidakho and English	0
Kiidakho, Kiswahili and English	0
Sheng	0
Total	100

From the information in Table 1, the findings revealed that Kiidakho is the most popular vehicle of oral communication in the home environment. One hundred and twenty-one respondents (86%) indicated that they used Kiidakho to communicate with family members. This was followed by 8 respondents (6%) who used both Kiswahili and Kiidakho, while seven respondents (5%) used Kiswahili for oral communication at home. Data on the learner’s preferred language for oral communication in the neighbourhood is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Learners Preferred Language used in the Neighbourhood

Language	Percentage
Kiidakho	70
Kiswahili	21
Kiswahili and Kiidakho	8
Sheng	1
English	0
Kiswahili and English	0
Kiidakho and English	0
Kiidakho, Kiswahili and English	0
Total	100

From the information in Table 2, Kiidakho stood out again as the most preferred language of oral communication by most students in the neighbourhood. Ninety eight respondents (70%) indicated that they used Kiidakho to communicate orally with members of their neighbourhood. Thirty respondents (21%) used Kiswahili, eleven respondents (8%) used Kiswahili and Kiidakho and only one respondent (1%) used Sheng for communication. What emerges from this data is that most learners while in the home environment prefer to use Kiidakho than Kiswahili.

3.2 Learner's Language Use within the School Environment

The learner's language use within the school environment was looked at right from the primary level up to the current academic level of the learner. Concerning the learner's use of language in the previous primary school within the school environment, both in and outside the classroom, it was felt that for the learner to have been in primary school for a minimum of eight years, then it was better to find out the language which she/he used in and outside the class in his previous primary school. This was meant to ascertain the fact that in acquiring language the learner usually begins from the simple structures to the complex structures. The learner who was not introduced to the simple structures in primary school would find it extremely difficult to comprehend the complex structures at secondary school level. Data on the learner's use of language in the previous primary school both in and outside classroom is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Learner's preferred Language in the previous Primary School

Language	% in the classroom	% outside the classroom
Kiidakho	10	32
Kiswahili	11	30
English	33	5
Kiswahili and Kiidakho	2	22
Kiswahili and English	40	9
Kiidakho and English	1	1
Kiswahili, Kiidakho and English	3	1
Sheng'	0	0
Total	100	100

From the information given in Table 3, fifty-six respondents (40%) indicated that they used both Kiswahili and English at the same time in class in their previous primary school. Forty-six respondents (33%) indicated that they used English to communicate. Fifteen respondents (11%) used Kiswahili, fourteen respondents (10%) used Kiidakho, five respondents (3%) used Kiidakho, Kiswahili and English. One respondent (2%) used Kiswahili and Kiidakho and one respondent (1%) used Kiidakho and English.

Outside the classroom, Kiidakho enjoys the privilege of being the most popular language used by the respondents in their previous primary school. Forty-three respondents (32%) said that they used Kiidakho as a means of communication outside the class room. It was followed by Kiswahili, which had 42 respondents (30%). Kiswahili and Kiidakho had 31 respondents (22%). Kiswahili and English had 13 respondents (9%). English had 7 respondents (5%) Kiidakho and English had 2 respondents (1%) and finally those who said that they used Kiidakho, Kiswahili and English were 2 respondents (1%). From the information in Table 3, it is evident that Kiidakho was competing with Kiswahili at the same level in the respondent's previous primary school within the school environment both in and outside class. When Kiidakho was used in a classroom and where another language was used, then Kiidakho was also used alongside that particular language as indicated in Table 3.

3.3 Learners' Language Use in Secondary School outside Classroom

Kiidakho crept into the learners' second language use even at the secondary school level. This was evidenced in the learners' responses about language use in secondary school outside the classroom as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Learners' preferred Language in Secondary School outside Classroom

Language	Percentage
Kiidakho and Kiswahili	33
Kiswahili	29
English	14
Kiswahili and English	08
Kiidakho, Kiswahili and English	06
Kiidakho	05
Kiidakho and English	03
Sheng	02
Total	100

The information in Table 4 indicates that the highest number of the respondents uses Kiidakho and Kiswahili at the same time while outside the classroom.

Forty-six respondents (33%) indicated that they use both Kiidakho and Kiswahili at the same time for oral communication outside class. Seven respondents (5%) indicated that they use Kiidakho alone to communicate while outside the classroom. The respondents who said that they use Kiidakho, English and Kiswahili at the same time were 8(6%). Those who said that they use Kiidakho and English were 4 respondents (3%). Forty-one respondents (29%) indicated they used Kiswahili alone. Twenty respondents (14%) use English. Eleven respondents (8%) use Kiswahili and English. Finally, those who indicated that they used Sheng were 3 respondents (2%).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the learners responses about the language used in the home environment with the immediate members of the family and with members in the neighbourhood, it can be deduced that the home environment exposes the learner to more Kiidakho than Kiswahili. The findings here have shown that the learner is less exposed to Kiswahili and more exposed to Kiidakho while at home. Children who are learning language will always master the language system that is found in their environment. In this case, it becomes difficult for a learner to master Kiswahili language system, which is rarely found in his environment.

In acquiring language, the learner usually begins from the simple to the complex structures. The learner who was not exposed to the simple structures will find it difficult to comprehend the complex ones. From the findings, it was revealed that the use of language by respondents in their previous primary schools in class did not give Kiswahili language speakers in the sample better linguistic competence prominence. These findings suggest that Kiswahili is competing with English and Kiidakho in the learner's primary school. This gives the learners less exposure to Kiswahili hence less practice to master it. This problem was also identified at the Secondary school level. The highest number of respondents revealed that they used Kiswahili and Kiidakho in school while outside the classroom. Due to high linguistic homogeneity and given that the highest student population is day-scholars the learner is exposed to more Kiidakho than Kiswahili.

These findings have revealed that too much exposure to the use of native language negatively influences the syntax of the target language. That is why Kiidakho syntax has spilled over into Kiswahili because of its popularity. A language scenario like this is evident of the fact that the learner's major problem in Kiswahili syntax is as a result of too much exposure to the native language and less exposure to the target language hence the native language influences the target language negatively. It is conclusive enough that transfer of features of first language prohibits second language learning. These errors have an impact on both the spoken and written Kiswahili language. Wrong use of prefixes can affect the meaning of the noun in the sentence hence hindering communication.

The learners of Kiswahili should aim at using impeccable Kiswahili grammar both in oral communication as well as in the written language. This will enable the students to attain linguistic competence that will enable them to perform well in their examinations. It is the view of the author that teachers of Kiswahili should be well versed with the theories of language learning and the theories on the effect of native languages on the target languages in the process of the second language learning. Understanding these theories can help teachers develop appropriate instructional strategies and assessments that will guide students in language development. This is also useful to the teachers as it directly influences their ability to provide content instruction. The teachers of Kiswahili should ensure that there is enriched teaching of Kiswahili. They should do this through the use of proper use of Kiswahili and use of instructional resources that will increase the source of language that students hear like the use of the radio.

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