

Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of Mother Tongue as a Language of Instruction in Lower Primary Schools in Hamisi District, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines the attitudes of teachers towards the teaching and use of Mother Tongue as a language of instruction in lower primary schools based on a study conducted in Hamisi District in Western Kenya, East Tiriki Division. The research design was a descriptive survey selected because surveys gather information from relatively large areas by employing sampling procedures hence cutting down on costs. The study sample included 12 schools randomly selected from the 40 primary schools in East Tiriki Division. . The instruments used for data collection were observation, tape-recording and questionnaires. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that Mother Tongue is less valued than English. English is highly valued both for its instrumental and integrative purposes. It is recommended that there's need for the government to encourage the publication of instructional materials for the teaching of Mother Tongue and that the educational language policy makers review their position with regard to Mother tongue with a view to promoting it both as a language of instruction and a subject.

Keywords: Teachers, Attitudes, Mother Tongue, Instruction, Lower Primary Schools, Kenya

1. Introduction

The language policy in Kenya embraces a bilingual approach to education where the child's Mother Tongue (or the language of the catchment area) is used as the medium of instruction in the first three years of primary school, while English and Kiswahili are taught as subjects. Exceptions to this rule are: the Coastal inhabitants for whom Kiswahili is a Mother Tongue and the urban area pupils who owing to their diverse ethnic backgrounds cannot be taught in Mother Tongue as they have no uniform Mother Tongue. For both these groups, Kiswahili is the medium of instruction in the lower primary school. From class four, English and Kiswahili take over from the Mother Tongue languages as the language of instruction, but Mother Tongue does not enjoy the same reverse role as English did earlier on. After lower primary, Mother Tongue is not taught as a subject nor used as a language of instruction. Before looking at the details of the statement of the problem and the approach to this research, this study finds it necessary to discuss briefly the historical outline of language policy and use in Kenya for it is against such a background that the issue of Mother Tongue in schools can be understood.

The language policy in Kenya has been redefined severally since colonial period unfortunately the redefinitions have always been based on conflicting theories divergent attitudes, changing political ideologies, aspirations and indecisiveness. All these have had a great impact on the teaching and learning process. The current policies, though having benefited from the previous ones, still pose a lot of pedagogical challenges (Muthwii, 2001).

1.1 Mother Tongue and Other Languages in Kenya

Kenya's population is multilingual with about 40 community languages in addition to Kiswahili, English and other foreign languages. The community languages have received little recognition since post independence period. They are however officially recognized as a media of instruction in lower primary schools in rural areas. Community languages in Kenya play an insignificant role outside the community. They are not used in 'official' contexts but are only resorted to in law courts if some of the clients have no knowledge of English or Kiswahili or at the chiefs' 'barazas' (which are held within the community).

In the area of Education, UNESCO (1953) recommends the use of vernacular languages in education on the grounds that for a child's socialization and cognitive development, he needs his mother tongue.

It was therefore partly through the influence of UNESCO that Kenya's language policy makers came up with the recommendation that Mother Tongue be taught in lower primary school from class 1-3. UNESCO (1953) recommendation on *The use of Vernacular Languages in Education* states in part that 'On educational grounds we recommend that use of Mother Tongue be extended to as late as a stage of education as possible.'

One other reason for support of the use of Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools was also as a result of the need to preserve Kenyan cultures as stipulated in the national education goals (Sessional Paper No. 10, RoK, 1965). Although Mother Tongue has been encouraged (since colonial period,) it has been given a lukewarm reception in the post independence period. According to Kembo-Sure (1994, p. 22), "In some cases schools have decreed that children be taught in English even in areas where Mother Tongue should be used". (There is thus considerable use of English at the expense of Mother Tongue.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The importance of Mother Tongue as a subject and medium of instruction in lower primary schools is often down played when important decisions regarding languages of education are taken. Questions have been raised on the pedagogical appropriateness of Mother Tongue. Some have even doubted if teaching and learning in Mother Tongue would not damage the course of national unity and whether or not starting one's education in Mother Tongue would not jeopardize later learning in English (D'Souza, 1987). In the 8-4-4 system of education, the importance of English both as a medium of instruction and as a service subject across the entire curriculum has been re-emphasised (KIE, 1987). While English has been given exclusive attention by the language education policy (Kembo-Sure, 1994), the role of Mother Tongue has been down played .

1.3 English in Kenya

English is the medium of instruction from class four of primary education. It is also taught as a subject from the first week of a child's life in school. As a medium of instruction in Kenya's education system, English has rarely been challenged. On the contrary, it has always been given exclusive attention by the language educational policy. Thus it is not only used as a medium of instruction and taught as a subject, but it is also a language of examinations. All national examinations except those for Kiswahili and foreign languages are set in English; and for certification, a candidate is required to have passed a language, which may be English or Kiswahili. In addition to being a language of instruction and examinations, English is a language of work. In most jobs, a reasonable level of competence in English is essential; in fact at most job selection interviews, English is the medium of communication. In Kenya, English is very important because: first, a good command of English is a passport to social and economic advancement; secondly, the successful user of English identifies himself as a successful integrated member of the elitist language community.

Therefore, it is not surprising that most schools choose English as a medium of instruction; there are compelling reasons that justify their choice of English from class one even in areas where schools are homogeneous and are required to use Mother Tongue for instruction.

English is also the official language of Kenya and as such it is widely used as the language of government administration. It is the language used in law and high courts and on all official accounts and documents. In politics, English has for a long time been the language of parliamentary debates. It was not until 1974 that parliamentary debates were reported both in English and Kiswahili. It is also a requirement that for a person to vie for the seat of a member of parliament, he must have some level of competence in English (Whiteley, 1974). English is also a language of both the print and electronic media. Newspapers, magazines and other publications are written in English. There are numerous radio and television networks that broadcast in English. English is also used as the main language through which Kenya communicates with the world. Finally, English is the medium of instruction in schools from upper primary school to secondary schools. It also takes the centre stage in higher institutions of learning as a medium of instruction.

1.4 Kiswahili in Kenya

Kiswahili is Kenya's national language and there are various factors that might have led to its choice as a national language. First, Kiswahili is a Bantu language in structure and vocabulary and as such it is closely related to many of Kenya's local languages although it has also borrowed a great deal of its vocabulary from Arabic due to influence from Islam and Coastal trade (Brock-Utne, 2005).

Secondly, being a *lingua franca* among people from diverse ethno linguistic backgrounds, it acts as the only indigenous language through which national unity can be realized as it is viewed as ethnically neutral. Its choice as a national language meant that no one ethno linguistic group was favoured. The consideration of Kiswahili as a national language also came in the wake of independence and nationhood when many African governments were looking for a national language they would call their own. Kiswahili for Kenya, therefore, became a 'symbol of political independence and cultural authenticity' (Kembo-Sure, 1994).

Although it is not the official language, Kiswahili is widely used within the government administration. The previous provincial administration and now the counties and some departments from various ministries use Kiswahili. They find Kiswahili the most appropriate language to use to explain and execute government policies as it enables them to reach both the educated and illiterate people.

In recent times, Kiswahili has gained recognition in many spheres other than being a national language. It has been accorded the same status as English in the Kenyan parliament where now parliamentary proceedings can be carried out in Kiswahili and for a person to vie for a parliamentary seat passing proficiency test in Kiswahili is just as good as in English. In addition media houses have found Kiswahili a very "efficient medium in broadcasting". Kenya's television network and the radio provide numerous programmes in Kiswahili. There is also a lot of use of Kiswahili in the print media.

In education, Kiswahili has gained more recognition than vernaculars since it was declared a compulsory subject from primary to secondary school and accorded the same status as English in grading candidates. For a candidate to qualify for any course, a pass in Kiswahili is just as good as a pass in English. Kiswahili is also used informally in schools as a media of instruction. In urban centres, Kiswahili is widely used in informal conversations because the populations are made up of people with different linguistic backgrounds. But in rural areas where populations are homogeneous vernacular languages are preferred.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation was with methodology used in this research. The findings were based on observation and recording of the teaching and learning process as it happened in the classrooms, therefore the behaviour of teachers and the pupils might have been unnatural in the presence of an intrusive researcher. Secondly, the study was limited to the languages used in the various classrooms during the lessons observed and responses that were obtained from the questionnaire. This actually formed the bulk of the data upon which the analysis and findings were based. Therefore, the study cannot claim to have covered all that happened outside the classrooms and within the school setting and other aspects outside the classrooms that affect the teaching and use of Mother Tongue.

2. Materials and Methods

This study was carried out in selected primary schools in East Tiriki Division, Hamisi District Western Province, Kenya, using a descriptive survey design. East Tiriki has 41 primary schools. A sample of 12 schools was selected from the 41 schools; of these 2 schools, a boy's day and boarding school and a girl's day and boarding school were purposively sampled to be included in the study. The other 10 schools were selected from the remaining 39 schools through simple random sampling technique. This gave the researcher a total of 12 schools which provided the actual sample population used in the study. Teacher respondents and learners were drawn from the 12 schools.

The teachers that were included in the study population were obtained through simple random sampling from the sampled schools; this eased the administration of one of the data collection instruments, that is, the questionnaire. Three teachers from each of the 4 subjects to be observed in each of the selected schools were purposively selected. This provided a total of 36 teachers. The purposive sampling technique was used to select only the teachers dealing with lower primary classes. All the schools sampled had 3 teachers for lower primary classes. The pupils who were included in the study were 630 Class Three pupils from the 12 schools on the assumption that their language mannerisms were a bit more developed than those of classes One and Two. The other classes, class four to class eight, are not taught Mother Tongue neither are they instructed in Mother Tongue.

Three instruments were used in data collection, namely observation, tape-recording and questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, based on measurements such as frequencies percentages mean and mode, were used to analyse data.

These measurements were generated using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). For open-ended items information was analysed qualitatively.

3. Results

3.1 Value and Use of Mother Tongue in Relation to English

The value placed on a given language determines the attitude towards that language and the way that language is used in various ways and situations. The amount of attention given to a particular language is greatly influenced by the value placed on that language. Therefore, to establish the attitude teachers hold towards Mother Tongue, the study sought to find out the value they place on it and, therefore, to establish what value the teachers held towards Mother Tongue the author sought to find out the languages teachers would like the learners to use during lessons and why. The responses are presented in Figure 1.

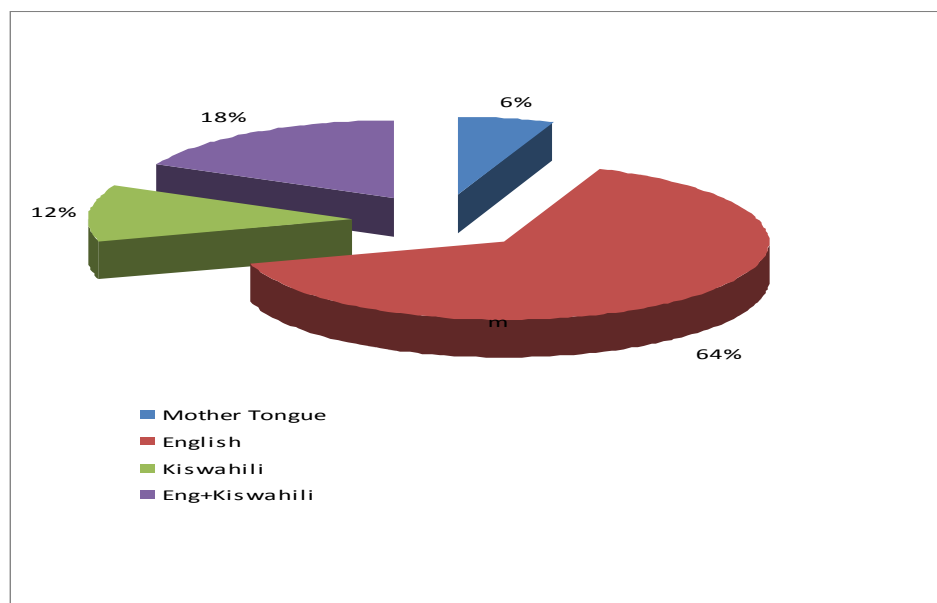


Figure 1: Languages Teachers want Learners to use during Lessons

As shown in Figure 1, 2(6%) of the respondents preferred their learners to use Mother Tongue during lessons; 22(64%) preferred their learners to use English and 4(12%) preferred their learners to use Kiswahili and 6(18%) preferred learners to use both English and Kiswahili. Therefore, from these responses it is evident that the majority of the teachers, 22(64%) prefer their learners to use English during instruction. It can also be concluded from the results that very few teachers 2(6%) want their learners to use Mother Tongue during instruction. It can therefore be concluded that Mother Tongue holds very little value in comparison to English.

The study further sought to investigate the reasons for the respondents' language preferences for their learners. Based on their responses, the author grouped the respondents into four groups: A, B, C, and D. Those who preferred their learners to use Mother Tongue formed group A, those who preferred English group B, Kiswahili group C, and Kiswahili and English group D.

Those who made up group A were the least in number only 2(6%). They both indicated that the learners understood and expressed concepts better in Mother Tongue, besides; their minds were not so well developed, at this level, to cope with a foreign language. They also indicated that at this level, learners were more competent and fluent in Mother Tongue than English and pointed out that even those who encouraged the use of English during lessons still ended up translating content into Mother Tongue in order to encourage more participation in the lesson by learners. One respondent in this group indicated that the use of Mother Tongue enabled parents to take part in guiding the learners and monitoring their progress. From his point of view, it can be concluded that the main reason for his suggestion was the recognition of the learning process as a continuum between school and home environment.

Those who made up group B were the most in number: 22(64%). They indicated that they preferred learners to use English during lessons.

They raised the following reasons: 8 indicated that learners were exposed to the language earlier and this was to their advantage, 6 indicated that all learning materials including books and wall charts were written in English, 5 indicated that all examinations were set in English except those for Kiswahili, therefore learners would perform well if they knew English well, 3 were of the view that English has a wide range of vocabulary and enables the teacher to teach without having to search for the right terms to use in the lesson.

Those who fell under Group C were 4(11.7%) and they preferred their learners to use Kiswahili during their lessons. Two (6%) indicated that Kiswahili is closer to Mother Tongue as such learners understand concepts better. Another 3 said Kiswahili has the vocabulary necessary at this level and 4 indicated that Kiswahili is examinable.

Group D were 6(18%) and they preferred both Kiswahili and English to be used by learners during their lessons. Out of these, 3 indicated both English and Kiswahili were compulsory and examinable and 3 said both English and Kiswahili had the necessary resources, i.e. text books.

To further establish the value held towards Mother Tongue, the author sought to find out what the respondents saw as advantages and disadvantages of Mother Tongue.

The responses revealed that respondents saw more disadvantages than advantages in the teaching and use of Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction in the education system. Only 8 items were raised as advantages against 14 items as disadvantages. A good number of respondents, 24(70.5%), indicated that Mother Tongue enables pupils to express themselves confidently since it is their first language; 10 (29%) indicated that Mother Tongue is a language that makes it easier for learners to grasp difficult concepts yet another; 14(41%) respondents felt that learners understand better when taught in Mother Tongue since it is their first language. Seventeen (50%) respondents indicated that Mother Tongue helped learners to learn other languages; 7(20.5%) were of the view that it creates good relationship between learners and teachers and a small number, 5(14.7%) saw Mother Tongue as contributing to a smooth transition of learners from home environment to school.

There were more disadvantages than advantages. The disadvantages given were a pointer towards the low esteem held towards Mother Tongue. A good number, 14(41%), indicated that Mother Tongue was not used by KNEC in testing candidates nor was it tested as a subject by KNEC; 12(35.2%) indicated that Mother Tongue is inappropriate because learners cannot use it to communicate to people from other communities. Another group of 11(30%) respondents indicated that Mother Tongue has limited vocabulary and 7(20.5%) felt that some concepts cannot be explained in Mother Tongue. Nine (26.4%) were of the view that Mother Tongue interferes with English. This group did not only show disregard for Mother Tongue but was indirectly suggesting that English is more important than Mother Tongue. Some, 11(32.4%), indicated that Mother Tongue limits pupils' interaction and communication with other pupils across the country and the world. There was also a good number of respondents, 8(23.5%), who pointed at lack of resources to teach Mother Tongue as a disadvantage.

According to 7(20.5%) respondents, Mother Tongue discourages national unity. This group were of the view that Mother Tongue encourages pupils to view themselves as tribes and not as a nation from an early age. 3(8.8%). respondents saw Mother Tongue as an impediment to smooth transition to upper primary school. Three (8.8%) respondents indicated that some pupils regard Mother Tongue as an inferior language and did not want to be associated with it. They also pointed out that some parents discouraged learners from using Mother Tongue and encouraged them to use English instead. Another 3(8.8%) respondents were of the view that the writing system of Mother Tongue is different from English therefore Mother Tongue does not help in the learning of English.

The research further sought to establish the value the teachers hold towards English through finding out what they saw as advantages and disadvantages of English. Their responses revealed a catalogue of advantages, which pointed at a favourable attitude towards English.

According to 18(52.9%) respondents, English enables learners to perform well in national examinations as the exams (KNEC) are set in English. Another view held by 13(38.2%) respondents, showed that English helps arrest Mother Tongue influence at an early age. Their response showed utter disregard for Mother Tongue and a favourable attitude towards English. Some, 9(26.4%), pointed out that most textbooks for majority of the subjects are written in English. This group also indicated that English was a language with abundance of resources including audio and visual aids. Another view held by some, 8(23.5%), respondents indicated that English gives pupils a strong foundation for further studies. They considered being instructed in English as more motivating in view of its future use in subsequent classes.

Another group of 7(20.5%) respondents considered English rich in vocabulary making it easier for teachers to select the appropriate terms to use from a variety. 8.8% of the group indicated that English gives pupils a strong foundation for further studies.

From the findings, 16(47%) respondents singled out the idea of communication with a wider population nationally and internationally as one of the advantages of English. This group indicated that English enables pupils to communicate not only with other pupils from other communities but even with people from other countries and races. Three (8.8%) respondents viewed English in relation to job prospects and competitiveness in the job market where one's proficiency in English is a decisive factor. According to this group, English enables learners to secure jobs after completing their education.

Other respondents, 13(38.2%), saw English as a national language, which is spoken by many Kenyans and as such unites people. There were those, 16(47%), who viewed English as a language that accords a person prestige. They indicated that through English, learners look civilized they also pointed out that pupils are eager to learn English because to them, it is a new language and is associated with success. A small group of respondents, 4(11.6%), associated English with modern technology and indicated that one of the advantages of English is that it makes it easy for one to cope with modern technology.

There were fewer disadvantages of English than the advantages: only 7 items were raised compared to 12 advantages indicated. The seven items have been grouped into five major views.

The first view that was raised as a disadvantage of English dealt with loss of culture and identify. Sixteen (47%), respondents were of the view that English as a medium of instruction in education promoted aping of foreign culture and erosion of African culture. They also indicated that English alienates pupils from the community. Other responses pointed to demotivation in education. Twenty (58.8%) respondents indicated that English was difficult for learners to learn as it is a foreign language besides being difficult for learners to grasp some concepts in English. Some, 6(17.6%), respondents said English leads to less participation by learners in the lesson as few learners are able to communicate fluently in English. Fourteen (40.6%) respondents were of the view that young learners who are still learning Mother Tongue get confused and have little chance of ever learning Mother Tongue. According to this group, English interferes with the learning of Mother Tongue and other subjects. There was a very small group that pointed out that English undermines the African culture. This group consisted of 2(5.8%) respondents.

Generally, as evidenced in the findings, Mother Tongue was less valued as a subject and language of instruction in relation to English.

3.2 Attitude towards Mother Tongue

The study also sought to investigate the teachers' attitude towards the teaching and use of Mother Tongue as a language of instruction.

The attitude and views the teachers have towards a given language, the way they regard the language, influence language use and behaviour. Therefore, to find out the teachers' attitudes towards Mother Tongue as a language of instruction the author sought to establish through which language learners found it easier to learn various subjects from the point of view of the teachers. The results obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Languages through which learners find it easier to learn

Language	Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Mother Tongue	No. of Resp.	6	14	0	7	7	34
	%	17.6	41	0	20.5	20.3	100
English	No. of Resp.	7	16	0	2	9	34
	%	20.5	47	0	5.8	26.4	100
Kiswahili	No. of Resp.	16	18	0	0	0	34
	%	47	52.9	0	0	0	100

The results in Table 1 indicate that most teachers agreed that their learners found it easier to learn various subjects through Kiswahili. Among them, 16(47%) strongly agreed. This was followed by 7(20.5%) teachers who strongly agreed that their learners found it easier to learn various subjects through English. Only 6(17.6%) teachers strongly agreed that their learners found it easier to learn various subjects through Mother Tongue.

Some, 2(5.8%), teachers strongly disagreed and 7(20.5%) also strongly disagreed that their learners found it easier to learn through English and Mother Tongue respectively. Nine (26.4%) teachers disagreed and 7(20.3%) also disagreed that their learners found it easier to learn through English and Mother Tongue respectively. None of the teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed that their learners found it easier to learn through Kiswahili.

It should be noted that those who agreed and strongly agreed that their learners found it easier to learn through Mother Tongue were those who taught Mother Tongue as a subject. In relation to these responses, the study further sought to find out the respondents' views on whether or not pupils would understand better and achieve higher KCPE grades if they were taught in Mother Tongue throughout primary school and examined in the same language. Table 2 shows their responses.

Table 2: Pupils' Understanding and Achievement would be enhanced if Mother Tongue is LOI and Exams are Set in the Language

<i>Response</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Strongly Agree	2	5.8
Agree	5	14.7
Undecided	2	5.8
Strongly Disagree	15	44.2
Disagree	10	29.4
Total	34	100

The results in Table 2 indicate that most teachers, 25(73.6%), disagreed that pupils' understanding and achievement in KCPE would be enhanced if Mother Tongue is a language of instruction and examinations are set in Mother Tongue. Among them, 15(44.2%) strongly disagreed and 10(29.4%) disagreed. Two teachers strongly agreed that pupils' understanding and achievement in KCPE would be enhanced if Mother Tongue is a language of instruction and examinations are set in the language whereas two teachers were undecided.

4. Discussion

The study sought to find out the attitude of teachers towards the teaching and use of mother tongue as a language of instruction. The attitude towards a language, the way a language is perceived, is determined by the value placed on that language. This in turn influences the way that language is used. Concerning values, Bloom *et al.* (in Brown, 1993), in his extended definition of the affective domain, discusses three levels of affectivity and the third of this has to do with values. He states that:

The third level of affectivity involves valuing or placing worth on thing behaviour or a person. Valuing takes on the characteristics of beliefs or attitudes as values are internalised. Individuals do not merely accept a value to the point of willing to be identified with it, but commit themselves to the value to pursue it to seek it out, and to want it, finally to point of conviction.

The study sought to understand how much value was placed on Mother Tongue as a subject and a language of instruction.

From the findings of the study, it was revealed that teachers recognized Mother Tongue as a tool that helps learners appreciate their culture and as a language that creates a closer relationship between them and learners. Teachers also viewed Mother Tongue as a language that encourages and enables learners to express themselves confidently in class since it is their first language. They also saw it as a language that enables all pupils to participate in the lesson and a good number raised the notion that Mother Tongue makes it easier for learners to grasp difficult concepts. A few teachers saw Mother Tongue as contributing to a smooth transition of learners from home environment to school.

However, despite the advantages associated with Mother Tongue, teachers generally felt Mother Tongue is not appropriate as a medium of instruction. A look at the catalogue of disadvantages raised against Mother Tongue is a pointer at the little value or worth placed on Mother Tongue as a subject and a language of instruction. Among the recurrent points raised was that Mother Tongue has limited vocabulary.

This notion was in line with information obtained from observation and tape recordings where some teachers could not access the appropriate Mother Tongue vocabulary during instruction. This was evident in a Creative Arts lesson and a Mathematics lesson.

In addition, to its limited vocabulary, the dominant item raised was that Mother tongue is not used by Kenya National Examination Council to test candidates nor is it tested as a subject. Passing of examinations is a dream of every pupil and parent. It is regarded as very important because the pupils' prospects for further education and employment are dependent on their performance in the examination. Therefore, given the importance attached to the passing of examinations and based on the findings of this study, it could be argued that the setting of examinations in English and not in Mother Tongue, affects the market value of mother Tongue. This is in relation to the reasons given in favour of English against Mother tongue have a lot to do with peoples' future aspirations and not concerns of conceptualization and understanding.

Among the points raised against the use of Mother Tongue as a language of instruction was the fact that it interferes with the learning of English. The fact that Mother Tongue is seen as an impediment to the learning of English does not only place English on a pedestal but places Mother Tongue in jeopardy. It indicates that Mother Tongue is regarded as a liability rather than an asset in the educational process and actually inadvertently advocates for the elimination or subjugation of Mother Tongue. Arguably teachers may not be well informed about the advantages of bilingual education in general and the connection between the mastering of Mother Tongue and the learning of English or any other second language in particular.

A related disadvantage raised by the respondents was that the system of writing of Mother Tongue is different from that of writing English; therefore, Mother tongue does not help the learning of English. These teachers in this case referred to the Luhya style of writing that uses the conjunctive system of presentation of sentences just like some other Bantu languages. Luhya language is agglutinative where the units of meaning are attached to each other unlike English language, which uses the disjunctive system where units of meaning are not attached to each other. This notion is in line with the information obtained from observations where in a Mother Tongue lesson, it was noted that the teacher was at pains to explain to learners how to present Mother Tongue words and phrases in written form. This was as a result of the errors the learners had made in the presentation of certain Mother Tongue words and phrases in their work.

Another important item that was raised by the respondents was the lack of resources, particularly books written in Mother tongue. This information tallies with the findings of the observations and tape-recording schedules which revealed that all text books are written in English and that the use of language translation as a teaching strategy was partly due to absence of books written in Mother Tongue. The findings from observations and tape-recording schedules revealed that 30 out of the 48 lessons recorded had an aspect of language translation as a teaching strategy.

The disadvantages of using Mother Tongue that the respondents indicated in the study were more compared to the advantages. In contrast to the advantages of Mother Tongue are the advantages of using English. The many advantages seen in English language emanate from instrumental motivations and this explains why teachers have a high regard for the English language. Among the emphasised advantages of English was that it enables learners to perform well in national exams particularly examinations set by Kenya National Examination Council. From this finding it can be concluded that English gives pupils a strong foundation for further studies. Thus, teachers see English as more motivating in view of its future use in subsequent classes and by extension in terms of job prospects and competitiveness in the job market. The findings also indicated that English has an abundance of resources including textbooks audio and visual cassettes and other instructional materials. The appropriateness of English for wider communication and its appropriateness for instruction because of its richness in vocabulary were also cited as a factor for its preference.

Some respondents viewed English as a language that accords one prestige and a language that not only made pupils look civilized but also encouraged learners to learn it because, as a new and foreign language, it is associated with success. The integrative as well as instrumental motivations make English more valuable in the eyes of teachers and learners.

The advantages enumerated by the respondents show why English is preferred to Mother Tongue. Teachers are instrumentally motivated to teach using English because of its economic advantages and they are integratively motivated to teach it because it is a language that will guarantee learners a ticket to a social group that is associated with success in the society.

The use Mother tongue y lacked instrumental motivations. The many items raised in the study as disadvantages of Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction disqualify it as a classroom language. Yet the observations and tape-recording findings showed that Mother Tongue and Kiswahili are used in classroom instruction. The author noted that the use of these languages interchangeably was done for a purpose. While English and Kiswahili were used for content delivery, Mother Tongue was used for creating an amiable relationship with learners, for making explicit the concepts taught in English and for development of confidence and control during the lesson.

4.1 Language Use in Relation to Attitudes to Mother Tongue and English

Attitude to language is particularly important in the learning process because it affects the outcomes of education. As Baker (1992) states:

... attitude is considered both as input and output. For example a favourable attitude to maths or to language learning may be a vital input in maths or language achievement. In this sense, attitude is a predisposing factor, or affecting the outcomes of education (p. 12).

Values and attitudes are some of the basic components of motivation in any given situation, language use included. Motivation in this case refers to what Keller (as cited in Omulando, 2004) describes as “the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect” (p. 39).

The way teachers feel about the languages they are exposed to within the school setting influences how they use these languages during classroom instruction. How they use these languages also influences how their learners use the languages. Basically, when an individual is confronted with more than one language, it leads to a consideration of linguistic attitudes of the individual (Omulando, 2004, p. 116). The attitude towards a language, the value placed on a language determines the way a language is received and used by an individual or group of individuals. It can therefore, be concluded that the higher the value of language, the warmer the reception and the more the patronage of the language; the lower the value the colder the reception and the less the patronage of the language.

Therefore, in relation to the languages teachers are exposed to, evidence from the findings show that the value placed on English in relation to Mother Tongue by teachers has a bearing on the attitude they have towards Mother Tongue and English. Baker (1992) points out that ‘The status value and importance of a language is most often and mostly easily ... measured by attitudes to the language’ (p. 10).

From the teachers’ responses, Mother Tongue is disregarded for its lack of instrumental motivations while English is preferred for both its instrumental and integrative motivations. In this paper, teachers’ preference for English is in recognition of its utilitarian as well as its economic value. As a result they are motivated to use English for instruction and to want their learners to use it. On the other hand they disregard Mother Tongue and would want to dissuade learners from using it because of its lack of utilitarian and economic advantages.

The opinions of teachers on languages through which learners find it easier to learn yielded the following results: Over half of the respondents agreed that learners found it easier to learn through Mother Tongue some of them agreed that learners found it easier to learn through English and majority of the respondents agreed that learners found it easier to learn through Kiswahili. This explains why the majority of the lessons are conducted in Kiswahili. On whether or not understanding and achievement would be enhanced if Mother Tongue were used as a medium of instruction and examinations were set in it, many of them strongly disagreed with the statement and some disagreed. A small number strongly agreed and a few agreed as fewer still were undecided. It therefore follows that the majority of the teachers disagree that if Mother Tongue were used as a medium of instruction and examinations were set in it, learners understanding and achievement would be enhanced. However it should be noted that the majority of the respondents seemed to have a bias for Kiswahili and English therefore their responses may not have been objective. The teachers’ attitudes towards Mother Tongue were negative as they did not perceive it as an appropriate medium for instruction. However, Mother Tongue still featured during classroom instruction and was also taught as a subject.

Krashen's (1985a) theory of input hypothesis which informs this study can best explain the situation of Mother Tongue as a subject and a language of instruction. Krashen states that language acquisition only occurs when the learner is exposed to comprehensible input. This input, according to Ellis (1985), may be in the form of spoken or written language. He argues that 'Although the learner is supposed to be an active participant in the process of language acquisition, he is also dependent on the provision of comprehensible input'. The view of this paper is that if the teachers on whom the learners are dependent for provision of Mother Tongue content (which will form the comprehensible input) have a negative attitude towards the language, then they are not in a position to use the best means of instruction in Mother Tongue to ensure the supply of comprehensible input to the learner hence Mother Tongue is suppressed for lack of comprehensible input.

5. Conclusion

The study sought to find out the attitude of teachers towards the teaching and use of Mother Tongue as a language of instruction. Evidence from the study shows that English, Kiswahili and Mother Tongue are used for instruction but Mother Tongue is least preferred for instruction. In addition, teachers want learners to use English during instruction and not Mother Tongue. Mother Tongue is even viewed as interfering with English and teachers do not think that learner's achievement and understanding would be enhanced if Mother Tongue were used as a language of instruction. The attitude towards Mother Tongue is therefore negative in relation to English. The disadvantages raised against Mother Tongue are numerically more than those of English and the advantages raised for English are more than those for Mother Tongue. This is basically because English has both integrative and instrumental motivations most of which are seen to be lacking in Mother Tongue. In addition to its appropriateness as a language of instruction, English is seen as offering a learner a ticket to a social group that is associated with success in the society.

It can therefore be concluded that the value placed on English in relation to Mother Tongue, determines the way the two languages are used during classroom instruction. Teachers are motivated to teach in English because of its accruing economical advantages and underrate Mother Tongue for its lack of these economical advantages. The attitude towards Mother Tongue is therefore negative

6. Recommendations

A teacher's academic and professional qualifications are important predictors of the quality of teaching because effective teaching depends on the ability of the teacher to set up desired educational outcomes therefore the government should ensure teachers are well equipped with the skills to handle bilingual education.

To reverse the attitude of teachers and learners towards Mother Tongue, the school administration should sensitise the teachers on the importance of Mother Tongue and its role in the curriculum.

The language policy tends to disadvantage the pupils in the rural settings. It does not seem to care about equity of standards and educational opportunities for all children. Therefore the ultimate solution to the language scenario in lower primary schools should come from the policy makers who should find out what teachers and other stakeholders think about Mother Tongue as a subject in the school curriculum and a language of instruction.

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