

**THE IMPACT OF KIKUYU SPEAKING ON PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH IN
IYIEGO LOCATION, KANGEMA DIVISION, KENYA**

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DECLARATION

I STEPHEN A.G. KAMANGA, declare that this research proposal is my original work and has never been submitted for any academic award. Where the works of others have been cited acknowledgment has been made.

Signature........

Date...12/8/2008.....

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APPROVAL

I certify that the work submitted by this candidate was under my supervision. His work is ready for submission, to be evaluated for the award of a Bachelor of Education(Arts) at Kampala International University.

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Date...21 AUGUST 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My wife Susan Mwihaka, my children David Njoroge, Isaac Kamanga and Lillian Mugechi for their understanding and patience when i was away.

DEDICATION

To my late mother Lillian Mugechi Kamanga who taught me the virtues of hard work and love.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The performance of English in Iyego location, Kangema division, Kenya is way below expectation of the education officials, board of governors, teachers and parents.

English is a core subject and compulsory in the Kenyan system of education. It is, therefore, necessary to pass in English for one to be absorbed in the colleges/university or get a job (employment).

Most students, teachers and the family members speak in Kikuyu and have negative attitude towards those who speak in English. The students are abused and thought to be proud. English is looked upon as a foreign language difficult to comprehend (the locals say it came in by ship) signifying that the English came from far and therefore foreign.

Most students in this region are peasants. Mother tongue (Kikuyu) is predominantly used, unlike those who live in urban areas and both parents are educated therefore have an affinity to speak in English.

Poverty also plays a big role in enhancing the use of Kikuyu. Coffee is the main cash crop and is not doing well. Students, teachers and other stakeholders in education lack facilities like libraries, television and newspapers. What is available is scanty.

There are no role models to emulate unlike in urban areas where students can emulate journalists, lawyers and other professionals.

Teachers, therefore, find it an uphill task to make students performance improve. A lot of students complain that they cannot handle the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Lack of funding of seminars and workshops is another major problem contributing to the poor performance of English. The amount of money allocated to English departments needs to be increased.

Indiscipline is another major cause of poor performance in English. Most schools in the region articulate that the language of communication should be either English or Kiswahili but this is not possible since most pupils come from the same region thus lacks practice.

This case study, therefore, sought to investigate the views of parents, pupils and teachers concerning language as a means of achieving all-round education, the reason why a child is sent to school. The expression 'all-round education' is taken to encompass such important aspects as life skills and sexual maturation, for example. Life skills are defined here as attitudes, values, and social capabilities that a child must acquire to be functional in a community.

Data were collected from the Kikuyu community in Kenya. This community is one of the five largest language groups in the country and the investigation targeted members of the Kikuyu dialect. From this community, data were collected, analysed, and synthesised on the attitudes and views of parents in rural areas whose children were (or are being) instructed in mother tongue in lower primary school and parents whose children were (or are being) instructed in a language other than mother tongue. The perceptions of pupils who were instructed in mother tongue in lower primary school and are now being instructed in English and those of corresponding pupils who have all along been instructed in English were also sought. Teachers' perceptions of language policy and practice and current practices in Language of instruction, both in mono- and multilingual schools were investigated.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Iyego location, the performance of English over the past few years has not been very good. This research therefore aims at finding out the underlying causes of the problem

and the appropriate action. Failure to look into the poor performance would lead to continued wastage of resources and manpower.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to research on the impact of kikuyu speaking in Iyego location, Kangema, Kenya and to determine the solution to the problem.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To determine if kikuyu speaking influences performance in English
2. To determine the impact of family background on the use of kikuyu in school.
3. To determine which classes in the research group are affected most.
4. To find out what can be done to improve performance of English.

1.5 SCOPE

The research was in Iyego Location, Kangema division, Kenya.

I wish to find out the impact of Kikuyu speaking on performance of English in standard four and seven respectively. In standard four pupils are taught in English but in rural areas the first three classes Kikuyu is predominant. In class seven (7) teachers are keener to use English in instruction since pupils will be candidates in one year. Questions such as

- (i) Does family background influence performance?
- (ii) Which class (std 4) and (std 7) gives better responses to questions in English and why?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is meant to investigate the impact of Kikuyu speaking on performance of English in Iyego location, Kangema, Kenya. The study is aimed to be of help to all the schools in the division. administrators, students, teachers and parents will benefit from the research. Policy makers such as Kenya Institute of Education. Kenya National Examinations Council would use the research to formulate policies to curb the problem thus ensuring that more students go to university and get better job opportunities.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of the methodology used in this research is that its findings are based on self-reports, that is, what respondents say about their language behaviour. Sociolinguistic research has shown that self-reports do not always accurately reflect actual language behaviour (Milroy, 1987). Respondents' reports are often based on stereotypes and expectations concerning language X in situation Y, and are not an accurate account of what they actually do in these situations. The findings of this study, therefore, may need to be confirmed by further research that is based on observations that record actual language behaviour. Nevertheless, the findings from the study provide great insight to what is happening in many multilingual nations where policies have been formulated but little is happening toward 'the adoption and spread of the language form that has been selected and codified' (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 36).

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with review of related literature. The gravity of the issue of impact of Kikuyu speaking on performance of English is enormous.

Specifically the areas reviewed include:

- i) Poor performance of English affects all other subjects namely; mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, business education, history, religion, geography.
- ii) Students who do not perform well in English end up in low paying jobs. Most of them miss admissions in colleges and universities. They end up being dropouts. The vicious cycle of dropouts is repeated in families.

2.2 EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

To begin with both the primary and secondary school teachers of English are overworked. In primary schools one is supposed to teach 7 lessons per week from std 4-8 (lower primary they are 5), while in secondary schools form 1&2 have six lessons per week. Forms 3 & 4 have 8 lessons per week. The primary school teacher trainee is expected to teach all the 5 examinable subjects in the primary school curriculum. The content is too wide to master in the two year training period.

Creative art is not examinable. It comprises music, art & craft. Examinable include; English, Kiswahili, science, mathematics, social studies.

The curriculum should place more emphasis on child-centered approaches in order to enhance the quality of the teaching/learning process. However, the practice is quite different as teaching for quality is not the norm.

The current situation where there is free primary education has worsened things. Educational outcomes are determined by what is learned. Teachers need to go through in-service programmes and more funds need to be allocated to

i) seminars

ii) Libraries and English oriented issues.

Teachers need time to mark and prepare tests so that we do not compromise the quality of teaching.

Understaffing especially in Iyego is another great problem. Iyego is not classified as a hardship area yet the teachers need hardship allowance due to the poor roads and infrastructure.

There are many trained primary school teachers who have not been absorbed in the job market by the teacher's service commission. They are recruited locally and paid below teachers service commission salaries. This aspect affects their morale while teaching.

The availability of educational materials has a major bearing on educational outcomes. Surveys carried out in Kenya (SAQ MEC, 1999) showed that there was a critical shortage of textbooks, equipment and physical facilities. The availability of textbooks and learning materials is perhaps the most constraining resource to educational quality.

Parents have to buy textbooks in both primary and secondary. According to a world bank study (1994), the expenditure per learner was equivalent to \$4 as compared to a medium expenditure of \$52 for a number of developed countries.

Lack of libraries in most district headquarters is a major problem. In Kangema there is no library. There is no recurrent library budget. Iyego location is in a coffee zone and the poverty levels are high. The high cost of books puts off most of the parents who

are peasants. The pupils-book ratio was until recently pathetic with free primary education, the pupil book ratio is better.

Parents desire for their children to excel in K.C.P.E and K.C.S.E examinations. The syllabus is wide and the examinations are used mainly for selection. Teachers teach for exams, little time is left for students to study since curriculum is broad-based.

A lot of teachers take education courses for lack of an alternative. English is heavily affected since there is a mismatch. Understaffing in English among other subjects is critical.

At the local level, management of schools is vested in school committees, board of governors and parent teacher associations. They have little managerial skills leading to poor implementation of decisions especially those that affect English.

According to Mbiti (2004), discipline of learners is crucial in good English performance, school administration and management plays a great role in discipline of learners. Poor school administration may result to cases of indiscipline and this consequently affects performance. Drug abuse, failure to follow school rules and regulations and low motivation of learners can affect the performance of English.

Lack of an effective guidance and counselling department will impact negatively on performance of English in K.C.P.E and K.C.S.E examinations. Our schools need to strengthen guidance and counselling departments so as to take the role of the dying extended family and the weak family system during these times of HIV/AIDS (Koech, 1999). A well motivated staff will organize an active guidance and counselling department in our schools.

Planning for the status of languages in multilingual nations involves operations at two quite different levels: language selection and policy implementation (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). What it takes to achieve the goals of any of these levels in any

country has been shown to be a complex process (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Mbaabu, 1996). Many nations have been under a lot of pressure to undertake the process of language selection, but little effort and activity is seen afterwards to implement the policies that have been decided. The paper uses Kenya as an illustration, and shows the difficulties and possibly damage that failure of implementation brings to a system in spite of good intentions at policy level.

In Kenya, government language policy requires that in lower primary school, mother tongue (MT) be used as the language of instruction (up to Grade 3). English (which is also Kenya's official language) and Kiswahili (the country's national language) are taught as subjects at this stage of learning, but from Grades 4–8, English is adopted as the language of instruction in all schools (Republic of Kenya, 1976). The use of MT as the language of instruction (LOI) is believed to facilitate the child's development of concepts that enable him or her to easily acquire knowledge in a second or third language, and to further help in exposing the child to the cultures of his or her community (Milon, 1992; Parry, 2000; Sifuna, 1980). In a significant way, the LOI is also the means by which learners can express their experiences in the learning process.

For several reasons, however, such a policy inadvertently creates serious dilemmas for parents, pupils and teachers in a multilingual country like Kenya. For example, many communities are linguistically heterogeneous, so they choose as Language of instruction either English or Kiswahili (Abdulaziz, 1982). Presumably those that choose English as Language of instruction from Primary One (P1) have a head start over those that use either mother tongue or Kiswahili in lower primary school. This is a situation that will most likely lead to inequity. There is also a contradiction between the policy of encouraging mother tongue as a language of instruction and the reality, increasingly evident as a child progresses through the education system, that English dominates all other languages. Mother tongues are virtually relegated to a less important role after lower school, and are even excluded from the national examinations that mark the end of primary education.

Children are faced with the fact that the language of their education in lower primary school does not have any further use, except in the home. As a result, the complementary role that should exist between the language of education and that of the pupils' wider socioeconomic context is lacking. Even in cases where efforts have been made to implement policy as stated, teachers in most communities find themselves unable to do so effectively because of a serious lack of instructional materials written in the mother tongue. Given this scenario, therefore, a pressing educational need in Kenya is to find out to what extent language policy and existing practices with regard to Language of instruction encourage or hamper the acquisition of desirable learning competencies.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed survey the use of language in school. It tested and sought responses of pupils through a questionnaire within a given time.

3.2 LOCATION

The study was carried out in Gatunduni primary school in Iyego location from a sample of 10 boys and 10 girls from class 7 random sampling using the class register.

3.3 SAMPLE RESPONDENTS

To arrive at a cross section of attitudes and views, 12 parents, 20 class six pupils, and eight teachers were interviewed. Because it was a qualitative study, this sample size was deemed adequate (cf. Milroy, 1987).

3.4 INSTRUMENTS

The researcher used questionnaires to collect information, one for class 4 pupils and the other for class 7. The tasks involved the four skills of language learning, reading, writing, listening and speaking. Teachers were also interviewed.

3.5 PROCEDURES

The researcher sought permission to carry out research in the school from the head teacher and education officials. The data was processed and analysed.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analysed after questionnaires were administered and different tasks given out.

In interviewing the pupils, two same-gender focused group discussions (FGDs) were used, for both the monolingual schools and the multilingual schools. Parents and teachers were interviewed individually. In both research areas, an effort was made to include illiterate and semi-literate as well as literate parents.

Communication between the researcher and respondents was often in Kikuyu or a mix of Kikuyu, English or Kiswahili.

The researcher identified and interviewed the following sets of respondents: six parents (three women and three men) with children in rural monolingual primary schools; ten standard 6 pupils (five girls and five boys) attending the rural monolingual primary schools; and four teachers in the rural monolingual primary schools. Iyiego location represented the monolingual area, while Kangema municipality was chosen to represent a multilingual setting. In Nakuru, two primary schools were visited and the same distribution of respondents was used allowing for six parents with children in a multilingual primary school; ten standard 6 pupils attending the multilingual primary school; and four teachers in the multilingual primary school.

In preparation for the interviews and the Focus Group Discussions, the researcher explained the problem being investigated to the respondents. Each interview took about one hour, while the Focus Group Discussions took at least two hours each. The pupils in multilingual schools easily discussed the issues raised and were comfortable using either Kiswahili or English. For the sake of the quiet ones among them, they were invited to use Mother Tongue if they so wished. Both the boys and girls participated well unlike the pupils in the monolingual schools. In one school, the boys tended to be too shy, necessitating the researcher to select a replacement group. Ultimately, the language factor was found to have been the problem. They could not easily express themselves in English. Kiswahili and Kikuyu proved better.

Most parents preferred communication in Kikuyu and or English.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter an attempt is made to interpret and explain the findings. Also key information enables to relate to the specific objectives and give a clear picture of the results.

4.1.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND PROCESSING

Table 1 language use in rural monolingual schools

School	School's location & brief description	School's composition by ethnicity	Language of instruction	Language of instruction in P1	Language of instruction in P2-P3	Language of instruction in P4-P8	Language at playtime outside classrooms
Iyego primary school	A day school in Iyego location with average facilities	Kikuyu speakers	Kikuyu	English but everything is again explained(translated)in kikuyu	English but explain issues in Kikuyu gradually, the translation of knowledge into Kalenjin is reduced	English but an occasional translation to Kikuyu to 'get a point across'	Kikuyu
St James primary school	A day sch in Iyego location with average facilities	Kikuyu speakers	Kikuyu	English but everything is again explained(translated)in Kikuyu	English but explain issues in Kikuyu.Gradually; the translation of knowledge into Kikuyu is reduced.	English but explain issues in Kikuyu.Gradually,the translation of knowledge into Kikuyu	Kikuyu

Source; primary data (2008)

Table2

School	School's location and brief description	School's composition by ethnicity	LOI in Nursery	LOI in P1	LOI in P2-3	LOI in P4-8	Language at playtime/outside classrooms
Nyakahura primary school	A day school in kangema division with very poor facilities	Gikuyu, Meru, Aembu speakers	Kiswahili	Kiswahili and 'a' word or two" in English	Kiswahili but English is used at P3	English but an occasional translation to 'get a point across'	Kiswahili but Kalenjin for most children in lower school
Bishop Kairu	A boarding school in kangema division with excellent facilities	Gikuyu, Luo, Masai, Meru speakers	Kiswahili and English	English	English	English	Mainly Kiswahili but sometimes English

Source; primary data (2008)

4.1.2 The Findings

Language practices, attitudes and views in monolingual and multilingual populations were found to be radically different in some cases (Tables 1 and 2). The tables present the full range of languages and language situation in the sample of respondents schools we studied. The schools themselves are characterized in the first three columns of the tables, and in the following columns the language situation is

kairu are given an early start in using English. They could easily express their views in the language during the interviews.

4.1.3 The language used in advising pupils

The language used in school assembly by the head-teacher and that used by teachers and counsellors in advising pupils is an important aspect in the conceptualization of life skills and sexual maturation. Often there is important information, advice or even warning to be communicated to pupils either in small groups or individually. For this purpose, Nyakahura primary School uses Kiswahili to address all pupils in such groupings. If the meeting is meant for the upper primary classes alone, then English is used but with some words in Kiswahili to 'drive the point home for the benefit of those who do not follow English well'.

The situation is not very different in Bishop Kairu where Kiswahili was seen by some teachers as the best language for advising pupils because it is the vernacular of most of the children. The difference between the two schools is that those pupils who may not be good enough in English in Bishop Kairu are not necessarily those from the lower primary classes, but pupils who have joined the school from rural contexts where English is not used as much.

Both monolingual schools, Iyego and St. James, use Mother tongue to address lower primary pupils while they use Kiswahili and English to address the upper school. Although St. James has a similar situation to that of School Iyego, pupils interviewed seemed to have problems understanding English. When the pupils were asked what they did when they didn't understand their teacher, the children said they 'leave alone' what they had not understood but imitate what other children did. They reported that sometimes they also requested that the teacher repeat 'it' in Kikuyu. For these kinds of schools, Kiswahili and Mother tongue seem to be the best two languages for communicating adequately with the pupils. The natural language of their environment, rather than English, would be a faster and sure means to get information to them.

4.1.4 Teachers' dilemmas in using Mother tongue as Language of instruction

Teachers who teach the lower primary classes gave a catalogue of problems faced in teaching the various subjects in Mother tongue or Kiswahili. These are expressed in summary form below. Some solutions were also suggested and are shown in italics.

(1) Because of lack of books written in Mother tongue or Kiswahili for the various subjects, teachers felt they were abandoned by the education system. They felt left alone to wrestle with the hard task of translating everything into the Mother or Kiswahili. Some teachers did not even feel very competent in using Kiswahili. [Books should be written in the mother tongue. This will remove the need for translation.

(2) Vocabulary in mother tongue is said to be very limited. It is hard to be expressive in mother tongue due to lack of vocabulary. [mother tongue should not be used. In its place, Kiswahili should be used.

(3) Kiswahili is richer in vocabulary than mother tongue so it is preferred. Unfortunately, it is not the mother tongue of the monolingual area so its use creates more problems for the children in P1. [The Ministry of Education should hold seminars, especially in monolingual areas, with the aim of encouraging people in the various areas to use Kiswahili.

(4) Because of the use of mother tongue, Kiswahili is not used as much and thus its standards deteriorate.

(5) No examinations are set in the mother tongue and for this reason students fail to understand questions written in English. [Children should learn English early]

(6) English and Kiswahili are suddenly introduced in P1 thus children are faced with many new and unfamiliar words. Often the children are not able to distinguish between the two new languages.

(7) Children have a problem in reading English if they have first learned to read in mother tongue or in Kiswahili.

(8) There may be various dialects of the mother tongue in the community and it is not clear which words to use.

(9) Teachers in the community sometimes end up using mother tongue too much during lessons.

(10) Often, parents do not or cannot buy the few books available in mother tongue.

A look at these problems suggests that their genesis is the lack of resources on the one hand and on the other hand a policy situation that causes conflicts or contradiction in the teaching and learning environment. The suggested solutions by teachers indicate a desire to move away from mother tongue as the Language of instruction toward the languages of wider communication.

Problems in understanding instruction in the curriculum were partly due to the unfamiliar vocabulary used by the teachers in the Language of instruction and also to unfamiliar concepts in some technical subject areas like the theory of music. Consequently, pupils reported that they either failed to understand the whole piece of instruction or just slightly got the general idea of the instruction. Some claimed that these problems were especially encountered when Kiswahili was used. There were indications that pupils expected translation to mother tongue to provide a universal method of learning, even when the problem for the pupils was the mastery of a new notation, in science or music, for example.

The section below provides an in-depth analysis of the attitudes and reactions of pupils and parents toward the problems in pupils' understanding of instructions.

4.2 Pupil and Parent Attitudes

When pupils were asked if they thought that they would understand topics in the curriculum better if it were taught in mother tongue, they immediately objected to such a suggestion, except for a few pupils from a monolingual school. The latter preferred mother tongue for the reason that it was the language they had been learning longest. The rest of the pupils had no favourable thoughts for mother tongue.

Numerous reasons were given. For example, they claimed that if mother tongue were used, there would be problems in sitting examinations set in English, and also in teaching the sciences unless text books were written in the mother tongue. For some, it should not be used because they were not fluent in it; they had not lived in rural areas and did not know their mother tongue well enough. Some 'things' were said to be difficult to understand in Kikuyu. Some claimed that they were used to English due to having been instructed in it throughout their learning experience or that they were raised in town and therefore mainly understood English.

Pupils in Bishop Kairu said that they would only do well in examinations set in mother tongue if they were thoroughly taught the mother tongue. Most of the pupils, therefore, preferred being taught in both English and Kiswahili because of the advantages they saw in their use.

Most parents' preferences concurred with those of the pupils. Few favoured mother tongue, and they had similar, albeit, better thought out reasons for preferring English and or Kiswahili. For example, multilingual parents were not convinced that the children would necessarily perform better in mother tongue. To them, pupils would not take education seriously if it was taught in Kikuyu, and they would put more effort into schoolwork when English was used. While decrying the insufficient vocabulary in mother tongue, English was seen to be necessary even in P1, so that their children could be at par with those in 'progressive' schools.

Such parents preferred English throughout the school system because of the advantages they saw English providing their children in the long run.

The parents who did not favour English were of two kinds. There were those who clearly articulated what they saw as the benefits of learning in mother tongue throughout primary education. However, their enthusiasm for mother tongue was tempered with caution. They regretted that learning in mother tongue would cut their children off from future participation in national projects and higher education.

The other kind of parents were those who argued for Kiswahili as a better choice for lower primary since they believed the children understood it better than English. Kiswahili being the language of the community would enable the children not only to communicate with other people in the neighborhood but also to gain more knowledge. Significantly, therefore, some parents of the monolingual schools preferred Kiswahili mixed with mother tongue in nursery and a mixture of Kiswahili with English in lower school. English featured prominently as the only preferred Language of instruction in upper primary classes by virtually all parents.

Many teachers were convinced that pupils would perform better if taught and examined in mother tongue. They reckoned that under usual circumstances, children think in mother tongue and then translate to English; it was the child's language, which could be continued once the child had learned to read and write in it. Some saw the possibility of the children completing primary education successfully but considered this as another kind of failure, which in the words of one of the teachers 'could be likened to killing the children, more like taking them through darkness where they will never benefit'.

On the related question of whether mother tongue should be taught and examined in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), pupils in the multilingual schools had strong objections because of mixed language groups in urban and semi-urban contexts. They conceded however that it would also be good so that they could

understand their language better, especially if taught from the lower classes. Moreover, pupils in School T added that if taught the language, the non-Kikuyu in their school would not claim to be gossiped about.

Teachers and parents in multilingual contexts held views similar to those of their children. Moreover, they thought introducing mother tongue as a subject in the curriculum, apart from there being no Kikuyu teachers, would only confuse the child and was only applicable in monolingual situations where the rural child taught in Kikuyu was seen as 'dull', while 'ours are active'. Interestingly, the 'active' child is seen as a product of the language used as a Language of instruction.

Monolingual parents and teachers argued that there was no need to teach mother tongue as a subject since the children already knew the language and would not forget it. Some reasoned that it was not necessary because the children learned it at home. Some saw it having no place in the learning process and would only serve to confuse the child since s/he will occasionally opt to use some words in mother tongue, hence increasing incidents of 'sheng' (that is, extreme code-switching between Kiswahili and English). Some parents felt it was not necessary to teach mother tongue from P1 but perhaps at P 4–8 or P 5–6. Some feared that if mother tongue were made a compulsory subject, then many would fail because children don't know the language, as it is hard to instruct in it. Some parents, however, said that mother tongue should be taught because some words in English are not understood; children would understand Kikuyu words easily. Moreover, it should be examined like other subjects in the curriculum since if it is left optional, many schools would ignore it. It needs to be noted that even the few parents in monolingual contexts, who thought that mother tongue should be given a chance, qualified their position by saying that Kiswahili and English should still be introduced at P1 and their amounts increased gradually until they replaced mother tongue completely in P3. Some teachers from this context saw no need to teach mother tongue, arguing that when pupils learn to read Kiswahili they also are able to read mother tongue. For some teachers, mother tongue as a Language of instruction 'spoils' the learner and is responsible for 'bad habits'.

It can be seen from the numerous reasons given for or against mother tongue and English that the question of which language to be used for instruction in P1–3 is a very difficult one to resolve. The views and attitudes of the stakeholders, especially the terms used to express them, also reveal the value they apportion each of the languages in their repertoire. What emerges from this debate, clearly, is that English still comes out as the most preferred Language of instruction, while the mother tongue is largely vilified. English appears to have found itself a definitely favourable place in the values and judgements of all stakeholders.

The following discussion on English further highlights these tensions between it and the African languages.

4.3 High stakes for English

All respondents could immediately cite specific advantages they saw in learning and using English. In many cases, especially among the children, they saw no disadvantage at all in using English. It was only after a bit of probing that some pointed out a few areas of concern for their mother tongue. Parents, for example, saw English helping their children operate better in society in such special aspects as taking interviews, reading and writing letters, reading material written in English, and travelling the world.

Tables 3 and 4 capture the responses of the pupils and parents or teachers, respectively. The responses are categorised for ease of reference. The advantages seen in the English language could be broadly grouped into the following categories:

- (1) Access to the large body of knowledge found in written English;
- (2) Increased opportunities for employment that it opens up;
- (3) Communication with a wider population, nationally and internationally;
- (4) Access to higher education;
- (5) The national outlook of English;

- (6) English as a motivating force in Education;
- (7) The richness of English as a modern language.

The disadvantages were few and mainly centred on difficulties in learning the language, such as its many new words and its phonic system; this made it hard to read and understand. It was also seen as culturally alienating the young people from their African cultural heritage.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 DISCUSSION

Although Kenya's language policy is clear on the place of mother tongue in the curriculum, its relationship with the other languages in P1–3 has never really been addressed publicly and systematically. The experiences and perspectives that have been presented in this case study point to certain pertinent issues affecting policy and practice of language in education. Some are related to the experiences brought about by the different points at which English is used as Language of instruction; others, the way English is used alongside Kiswahili and Mother tongue in lower primary school; and still others, the perceived usefulness of the three languages involved in the education process.

Our study show that the burden teachers and children have to carry in the use of three languages is tremendous. They have to sort out the acquisition of the new skills of reading and writing in three different languages, simultaneously. We have observed how the curriculum content is taught in the languages of wider communication and then translated into the vernacular for the pupils to understand. To make the children understand what is taught, Mother tongue is used to 'instruct'. Although it is intriguing to imagine how the two terms 'instruct' and 'teach' are taken to be two different notions by the monolingual teachers who use the translation approach, their dilemmas and concerns in implementing the policy need to be given the serious attention they deserve. Moreover, more research needs to be done to understand the role of translation as an integral part of teaching and learning in multilingual settings such as those in Africa.

It would appear that the introduction of many languages in P1–3 creates many problems for the child especially when the languages are all structurally different.

The near similarity in the sound systems and phonics of Kikuyu and Kiswahili is deemed helpful, relative to that of English, but it causes teachers to assume that once a child can read and write in Kiswahili, there is no need to teach the Mother tongue any more. This is partly the reason teachers find the teaching of Mother tongue a waste of time and would rather emphasise the teaching of Kiswahili and English. In the process, sadly, the arguments for MT being used as a Language of instruction for P1-3 are completely lost. If there is any merit in the arguments put forward for Mother tongue in bilingual studies (Lopez, 2000; Milon, 1992; Parry, 2000; World Bank, 1988) then the main loser, in the Kenyan case, is the child who is left to find a way of coping.

This leads us to the next point; namely, the use of code-switching or code mixing in school instruction. Mixing of languages occurs in all schools from an early age (cf. Abdulaziz, 1982). Since it is allowed in most classrooms, there is no reason not to think that the children are merely imitating their teachers.

It is necessitated first by the lack of materials to teach all subjects in Mother tongue and subsequently the children's inability to understand the English used in the school texts. What makes this situation more complex for the child is that the teacher is allowed to switch codes to sort out the language problems in class but the child is not allowed to perform similar gymnastics in the many examinations in the school system. Some teachers felt that if this confusion is not well handled it produces timid children who fear expressing themselves.

Certainly the coordination of the various languages and their usages is a vital task at this point in the children's education.

The following two suggestions were put forward by teachers to solve problems of code switching in the language of the children. Firstly, other means of making the child understand a concept, other than using code switching should be used. For

understanding skills. One's own language enables one to easily express oneself without fear, as there is no fear of making mistakes. (Udaet, 1992: 183)

It must be mentioned here that all the parents in the monolingual context unanimously preferred Mother tongue as Language of instruction for their children in nursery or pre-school for reasons to do with continuity of home and school and the need to make a favourable transition from one to the other. Beyond this point in Kenya, the battle for the stage between the three languages is so fierce that the language with least support in terms of resources and goodwill inevitably is made to bow out of the race (Abdulaziz, 1982; Muthwii, 2002).

Thus, in some multilingual schools, the role of Kiswahili emerges as the language fit for 'driving the point home'. It may be the language of the social environment of the child, which also brings all the ethnic groups together but because English is regarded so highly in the system and has better resources, children sometimes look down on Kiswahili. Often in such contexts, its performance also goes down.

To counter this, for example, Bishop Kairu school has introduced one day in the week when all activities except teaching in class are carried out in Kiswahili by everybody in the school. In essence this is a situation where the language struggles are sorted out in a given way by a given institution. The users know the rules and they all work towards accepted and appropriate language behaviour, which, in fact, is in consonance with their expressed attitudes and views.

It is what McGregor (2000: 6) calls 'reasoned commitment to a course of action'. Unfortunately in Kenya, this commitment to a course of action has been left to individual institutions. Those who have the muscle and know how to resolve the language dilemmas in favour of better practices that reduce confusions and inculcate an all-round quality education, are the ones who do not waste the child's best learning years.

The views, attitudes and preferences on the subject of language for education expressed by the stakeholders in this study suggest that Kenyans are 'volunteering to be compelled' (McGregor, 2000: 6) into using English from P1. If the perspectives discussed in this paper are representative of others in this country, then Kenyans appear to have made their choice. As the situation is at present, they cannot be forced to use Mother tongue as the Language of instruction in lower school.

Nevertheless, a responsible government, convinced of the benefits of using and developing its native languages may also want to take the cues on what stakeholders think about the teaching and examining of Mother tongue as a subject in the school curriculum. As we saw earlier, most respondents supported such a move except when it conflicted with their aspirations as members of a wider community.

Given the poor performance of English in national examinations in Kenya (Kenya National Examinations Council, 1993 report), the question asked by McGregor (2000) could be posed for this country, namely 'are we wasting our children's best language learning years?' In Kenya, this is to raise issues like the methods used in teaching in a bilingual education system, and the language norms of the teachers who teach in many primary schools (Kioko & Muthwii, 2001). In a teacher's struggle to sort out the three languages in education she or he needs to be well equipped with the latest research-based information on how to introduce a child to one or two new languages, simultaneously. What role does translation have in this, if any? Are his or her current methods hampering or enhancing pupils' conceptualisation of life skills? On the question of language norms, how does the English language behaviour of the teacher and that within the school diverge from or converge with the norm suggested by the education system, namely the British standard norms, the language of the textbooks?

In Kenya, are pupils examined on language structures that they hardly hear used in their environment, and penalised for language behaviours routinely used by their teachers? These issues urgently need to be investigated and addressed in most

multilingual contexts where education systems advocate for seemingly simple language policies that must be applied in very complex language contexts. Only then, can the teaching of languages be successfully carried out by competent teachers equipped with methods of teaching English or Kiswahili, which often have very different linguistic structures from the pupil's Mother tongue. And only then can pupils start being participants and stop being spectators in a game that, in some cases, only the teacher knows how to play; then they can positively benefit from the teacher acting as their role model.

As indicated elsewhere in this paper, the disadvantages that respondents see in English are few. The main complaints against Mother tongue could be minimized if better methods of teaching are used and the training needs of teachers met periodically. As for cultural considerations, the culture is only as useful as perceived by its owners and when a language policy is put in place in a nation, it is ultimately meant to benefit the people for whom the system is set up. The perspectives of the people, therefore, must count, even on what happens to their culture given the sum total of all their aspirations.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

This paper has indicated that the reasons given in favour of English or Kiswahili and against Mother tongue have a lot to do with a people's future aspirations, not purely concerns of conceptualisation and understanding. Although the push for English is a pragmatic one, it is biased toward language for gains such as jobs and fitting in the wider Kenyan or international community. In this regard, therefore, we observe that the aspirations for acquiring English have not changed much in Kenya from pre-independence till today (cf. Abdulaziz, 1982; Whiteley, 1974). The only difference in the aspirations for English, perhaps, is in the patterns that emerge. Some rural schools desperately reach out for English but with little resources and complex language problems to resolve.

Some may have given up on ever really catching up with English and as a result constantly look back for help from the languages they are 'comfortable with', namely, Kiswahili and Mother tongue. Others still, with the resources and resolve to get what they want, go straight for English. It is worth noting, therefore, that Kiswahili and English were preferred for different reasons by the different respondents and not many respondents preferred Mother tongue to the two languages of wider communication even though Mother tongue is by policy designated as the Language of instruction in Primary 1–3.

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APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE

IMPACT OF KIKUYU SPEAKING ON PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH IYEGO LOCATION, KANGEMA DIVISION, KENYA

The response in the questionnaire will be kept confidential

Please answer all the questions with all honesty by ticking the correctly alternative in the table provided using the following option scale.

Strongly agree	SA
Agree	A
Undecided	U
Disagree	D
Strongly disagree	SD

	SA	A	U	D	SD
Mostly student speak/Kikuyu in school					
This is due to family background and lack of educated/learned role models					

1. Do you read newspapers?

Yes

☐

No

☐

.How often do you read newspaper?

.....

3. Do you watch T.V?

Yes

☐

No

☐

4. What programmes do you enjoy?

.....

Give reasons why you watch those programs

.....
5. Do you have a library in school or near where you live?

Yes

☐

No

☐

6. How many books do you read in a week from the library?
.....

7. Do teachers use Kikuyu while teaching?
.....

8. What do you suggest are possible solutions to the problem of Kikuyu speaking?

Give reasons

i)

ii)

iii)

iv)

APPENDIX B (FOR TEACHERS)

Name Male ☐ Female ☐

Years of experience

Below 1 year

1 - 5 years

5 - & above

Role in school/duties

1. What is your opinion students to speak in Kikuyu?

.....

2. Does indiscipline and Kikuyu speaking go hand in hand? Give reasons

.....

.....

.....

3. Do you have enough text books for your class?

Yes ☐ No ☐

How often do pupils read novels

Plays

Newspaper.....

4. Guidance and counseling

5. Give solutions to curb the problem of Kikuyu speaking

.....

.....

APPENDIX C

BUDGET

NO.	ACTIVITY	COSTS	
		Kshs	Ushs
1.	STATIONARY	3,000	100,000
2.	TYPING AND PRINTING	2,500	62,500
3.	TRANSPORT	2,500	75,000
4.	MEALS	2,000	70,000
5.	PHOTOCOPY	1,500	37,000
6.	INTERNET AND AIRTIME	1,000	25,000
7.	MISCELLANEOUS	5,000	125,000
TOTAL		17,500	424,500

KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

NAME: STEPHEN A.G.KAMANGA
REG NO: BED ARTS/1333302/61/DF

DEAR Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH

This is to certify that the bearer of this letter is an in -service student at Kampala International University department of education.

For successful completion of the programme, all students must carry out research that culminates in the writing of a report.

The purpose of this letter is to request you to assist the student to gather data/information for his research project.

Thank you

Yours faithfully,

Supervisor