Impact of Interaction between Mother Tongue and Kiswahili: Philosophical Analysis of Performance of Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Nyakach Sub- County of Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract

Good performance can only be realized when learners understand language. People normally think by use of language. Language is therefore a vehicle that transports learning. Poor performances have been realized in Kiswahili in KCPE in Nyakach Sub – County of Kisumu County. The purpose of this study is to analyze philosophically the causes of poor performance in Kiswahili and recommend how these challenges can be overcome. The study involved 63 teachers drawn from 116 primary schools in Nyakach Sub-County, Kenya. The respondents were selected by purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and interview schedules. Data was analyzed philosophically using philosophical analysis. The study found that the historical factors that impacted negatively on the acquisition of Kiswahili language was that one of the consequences of trade at the East African coast was that the Muslims intermarried with the local Bantu and gave rise to the Swahili community at the coast. The mind plays a major role in the acquisition of language. The research also found that younger children had retained more accent free pronunciation when compared to adolescents just past puberty. The study recommended that the pupils should speak the language without being mindful of the grammar since people learn a language by speaking it.

Keywords: Interaction, Mother-Tongue, Kiswahili, Language, Acquisition

Introduction

The relationship between philosophy and language can be considered by understanding what philosophy itself is. According to Akinpelu (1982) philosophy is conceived as an academic discipline to which scholars devote their time and energy. It is characterized by logical consistent and systematic thinking so as to reach conclusions that are sound, coherent and

consistent in all their parts. Philosophy is also defined as a radical thinking about reality. Reality is what can be expressed by language. Language is the vital medium in philosophizing. Without language, people cannot communicate well. On the same note, philosophy would have shortfalls because language is the vehicle that transports philosophy. God created the universe using language (Genesis, 1:3) and (John, 1:1-3). This indicates that language is the most vital media in human thinking life.

Language plays a key methodological role in philosophy. It is this role that has explained the continued close attention paid to language in the past century by philosophers working in varied areas. These areas are epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, the philosophy of science and philosophy of the mind. The mind deals with thinking. If thinking can be said to be anything at all, then it would be certainly in words and that is language (Hirst, 1985). A philosopher is interested in nature of values. They want to know what goodness is. Philosophically speaking, good performance is the main objective of learning. Language is the vehicle that transmits learning. The languages that are normally learned in schools in Kenya are Kiswahili and English. These languages normally face challenges in performance. Nyakach is one of the districts located within Kisumu County. In this district Kiswahili has performed poorly compared to all subjects offered in the primary school Curriculum.

This has been followed closely by English which is also one of the languages taught within the curriculum. This poor performance has been evidenced in the result of K.C.P.E Exams since the introduction of 8 -4 -4 system of education. When Kiswahili is compared with other subjects like Mathematics, Social Studies, Christian Religious Education (C.R.E) and Science, its performance is lagging behind.

The mean score of Kiswahili in 85% of the schools have failed to reach pass mark and that is 50 and above. Despite the government efforts to post teachers to the district, Kiswahili language still continues to perform poorly. The Constituency Development Fund (C.D.F) has also been used to build classrooms to enable the learners to study in a conducive environment in most schools within the district. However, the performance of Kiswahili has not improved. The free primary education fund has also been used to buy textbooks for Kiswahili in order to enhance the teaching of Kiswahili. However, these efforts have failed to improve the standards as far as the learning of the languages is concerned.

What is it that makes the standards in Kiswahili not to improve? The researcher therefore wants to investigate the factors responsible for low achievement of marks in K.C.P.E. This has made him to sample some schools within the district from different divisions. The following are the results that he got in the performance of Kiswahili and other subjects for the last 10 years

Table 1. WEST NYAKACH DIVISIONANDING'O OLASI PRIMARY SCHOOL MEAN SCORE PER SUBJECT

YEAR	ENGLISH	KISWAHILI	MATHS	SST/CRE	SCIENCE
2003	40	31	65	61	56
2004	39	34	62	54	55
2005	35	30	67	52	60
2006	42	33	56	60	57
2007	37	30	59	63	60
2008	34	27	63	62	61
2009	44	39	66	63	58
2010	38	42	57	60	62
2011	43	40	64	61	60
2012	46	40	67	65	61

Source: Anding'o Olasi Primary School, Exam's file. (2014)

Table 2. UPPER NYAKACH DIVISION OTHITH PRIMARY SCHOOL MEAN SCORE PER SUBJECT. YEAR ENGLISH KISWAHILI MATHS SST/CRE SCIENCE

YEAR	ENGLISH	KISWAHILI	MATHS	SST/CRE	SCIENCE
2003	36	27	52	60	52
2004	39	30	56	52	55
2005	41	28	53	50	51
2006	34	33	60	58	61
2007	38	35	60	61	63
2008	40	39	60	62	59
2009	42	34	58	57	51
2010	41	32	62	61	59
2011	39	30	57	61	58

2012	43	39	65	58	61

Source: Othith Primary School, Exam's file. (2014)

Table 3. LOWER NYAKACH DIVISION KANDIEGE PRIMARY SCHOOL MEAN SCORE PER SUBJECT.
YEAR ENGLISH KISWAHILI MATHS SST/CRE SCIENCE

YEAR	ENGLISH	KISWAHILI	MATHS	SST/CRE	SCIENCE
2003	44	33	56	58	52
2004	40	32	62	60	53
2005	42	36	67	55	59
2006	41	40	66	61	55
2007	39	32	61	63	56
2008	42	38	57	62	54
2009	44	40	63	58	58
2010	45	39	61	64	61
2011	45	37	60	61	58
2012	44	41	62	59	60

Source: Kandiege Primary School, Exam's file (2014)

Statement of the Problem
From the above data, it is clear that Kiswahili has not achieved a mean score of pass mark for the last 10 years. How can this problem be controlled in order to promote Kiswahili within the district? This problem of Kiswahili has also affected secondary schools within the district. This is so because the entry behavior of form ones that are normally selected to join secondary schools is normally low in Kiswahili. This normally affects the performance of Kiswahili in K.C.S.E Exams within the district. How can this problem be solved? This is why the researcher has shown concern to carry out his research work in this area.

Historical Factor that Hindered the Acquisition of Kiswahili Language
Historically speaking, according to Ndege (2011) one of the consequences of trade at the East African coast was that the Muslims intermarried with the local Bantu and gave rise to the Swahili community at the coast. Another impact was that Kiswahili emerged as a new language. Kiswahili is a mixture of Bantu and Arab languages. Swahili language is basically of Bantu origin. However, it has borrowed words such as Arabic probably as a result of Swahili people using the Quran written in Arabic for spiritual guidance.
Studies by Mazrui, (1995), opined that Swahili language originated from the Arabs and the Persians who moved to the African coast. Only the vocabulary can be associated with these
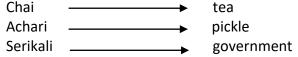
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groups but the syntax or grammar of the language is Bantu. Any language that has to grow and expand its territories must absorb some vocabularies from other languages in its way. There was the earliest document explaining the situation at the East African coast during the second century AD. This document was called the Periplus of Erithrean Sea. It was written by anonymous author. It says that merchants visiting the East African coast at that time from the southern Arabia used to speak with the natives in their local languages and they intermarried with them. This source points out that Kiswahili is an old language.

It's undeniable truth that Arabs and Persians culture had the greatest influence in Swahili culture and Swahili language. To demonstrate the contributions of each culture into

Swahili language Mazrui (1995) gives the example of the following words spoken in Kiswahili.

Moja	one
Mbili	two
Tatu	three
Nne	four
Tano	five
Nane	eight
Kumi	ten

On the other hand, there is

Sita	six
Saba	seven
Tisa	nine

These are borrowed from Arabic. The Arabic word tisa according to Ndege (2011) replaced the Bantu word kenda. Mazrui (1995) further says that Swahili words

Chai	tea
Achari	pickle
Serikali	government

Diwani councilor, are some of the words borrowed from Persians bearing testimony to older connections with Persian merchants.

Kiswahili language also borrowed some words from the Portuguese language that controlled the Swahili coastal towns during 1500 – 1700 AD. Some of the words that the

Swahili language absorbed from the Portuguese include: leso (hand kerchief), meza (table), gereza (prison) and pesa (peso, money).

The Arab traders from the Coast did not interact with the people in the interior of Kenya especially the current Kisumu County. The fact that Kiswahili originated from them is a Historical factor that made the people in this region to lack basic skills and knowledge in speaking Kiswahili. After the scramble and partition of East Africa, Kenya was taken by the British. The British introduced English as a medium of communication. The people in this region therefore learned to speak English better than other foreign languages due to their interaction with the British. All these are Historical factors that disadvantaged the people under investigation from speaking their language. The same problem also affected Uganda. After her colonization by the British, English language was introduced to them. Uganda as a nation has made English to be their national language due to Historical factor. On the same note, most of the countries in West

Africa like Senegal that were colonized by the French also speak French as a language. This is due to the Historical factor.

For a language to pick up well in a given society, the inhabitants should be able to speak it for the young generation to learn from them. The fact that Kiswahili language started at the East African Coast and later spread to other areas is a possible historical factor that has made other parts of Kenya to have in adequate knowledge in speaking the language.

For example, the inhabitants of Nyakach in Kisumu County can speak English and mother tongue better than Kiswahili.

There is no transition from home to school. All these are challenges that are associated with Historical factors that hindered the people in the area under investigation from speaking Kiswahili language. Subsequently, the problem has been passed to the younger generation.

The Impact of the First Language on the Acquisition of the Second Language

There is a close relationship or unity of language and idea because what is in the idea is what is expressed in language (A.P.A 2001). The idea helps in academic exploration of critical issues by use of language philosophers ponders over many things and this makes them to ask questions, some of these questions are what language is? What is a particular individual language? Language is the mere manipulation and use of symbols in order to draw attention to signified content (A.P.A 1957). Of language). What is it that distinguishes one particular language from the other? What is it that makes "English" English? What is the difference between Kiswahili and mother tongue? Philosophers have indicated that the search for what it means to be a language must begin by with the study of internal language of persons which are based on certain rules or principles and parameters (A.P.A 2001).

However, what is second language acquisition? What is first language acquisition? These are some of the philosophical issues that the researchers want to throw light on. According to Krashen, (1981), the first language is the language which is spoken by the parents especially the mother. This is why it is called "mother tongue". On the same note, second language acquisition is the process whereby people learn a second language. Second language refers to any language learnt in addition to a person's first language. Although the process is named second language acquisition, it can also incorporate the learning of third, fourth or subsequent languages.

The topic of first language interference has had unusual history in second language acquisition research and practices. According to Duskova (1969), error in second language acquisition are traceable to the first language. This problem affects different communities of the world from different linguistic backgrounds. It's evidenced that first language influences some errors that exists in second language acquisition. For example, letter "D" is missing in the first language in some communities. This make them cause some pronunciation problems in second language acquisition. The syllable "sh" is also missing in some communities especially where the researcher carries out the study. The absence of such syllables causes problems in second language acquisition like Kiswahili language, which is under investigation by the researcher.

More importantly, first language influence appears to be strongest in complex word order and in word for word translations of phrases. Evidence for the above influence comes from Duskova (1969) who studied written errors in the compositions of Czech post graduate students and

concluded that the interference from the mother tongue was plainly obvious in errors of word order and sentences construction. A common example being the placement of the direct object after the adverbial, as in "*I met there some Germans instead of I met some Germans there*". Lococo (1975) in a study of American college students learning Spanish and German in U.S, a foreign language situation reported that the high incidences of interlingua among Germans were due to word order errors. For example, "Happy *I am here instead of I am happy to be here*". What Lococo investigated in U.S among students learning to acquire second language is very similar to the problems in Nyakach District of Kisumu County where the influence of the mother tongue continues to affect the performance of Kiswahili. In summary, first language therefore has a lot of influence positively and negatively on the acquisition of the second language.

The Role of the Mind in the Acquisition of Language

According to Lightfoot (2010) language acquisition is a process whereby human beings acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate. Language acquisition is one of the most important characteristics of human beings because all human beings communicate by use of language. Philosophers of language normally ask questions such as "is language acquisition a special faculty of the mind? What is the connection between philosophy and thought?" philosophers draw a triangle in which lines connect language, mind and the world and the triangle represents relations that are key to understanding our place in reality hence these relations constitute the meaningfulness of language (A.P.A1957,p.15). When children acquire first language, they build on what they know using the mind. This provides the starting point for language development. Between one to two years, children learn the language of their community and this is the mother tongue. Language acquisition does not occur in a vacuum but through the mind.

The mind therefore helps in language development. Due to this fact, the pupils of Nyakach District in Kisumu County use their mind to develop the language of mother tongue from the community hence the language is cemented in their mind.

The capacity to successfully use language requires one to have a range of materials or tools including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and extensive vocabulary.

According to Miller (1997), the human language capacity is represented in the mind (Brain) and even though this capacity is finite one can say and understand an infinite number of sentences which are based on the syntax principles called Recursions.

The capacity to acquire and use language is a key aspect that distinguishes human beings from other animals. According to Tomasello (2008) many animals are able to communicate with each other by signaling to the things around them but this kind of communication lacks the arbitrariness of human vernaculars in that there is nothing about the sound of the word "dog" that would hint at its meaning. Other forms of animal communication may utilize arbitrary sounds but are unable to combine those sounds in different ways to create messages that can be understood by one another.

However, human beings combine syllables that form language and this language can be understood by another human being. The only problem is that some human beings lack certain letters or syllables in their mother tongue and this make them to write and speak second language with a lot of mother tongue interference. This is one of the problems facing a lot of

learners in Nyakach District in Kisumu County which has been resulting to poor performance in Kiswahili.

Another debate in understanding language acquisition is how these capacities are picked up by infants from the linguistic input. According to Chomsky (1975, p.11), input in linguistic context is defined as all word contexts and other forms of language to which a learner is exposed, relative to acquired proficiency in first or second languages. Infants are able to acquire most aspects of languages without being taught. Children within few years of birth understand the grammatical rules of their ethnic languages without being taught as one learns grammar in school. With reference to (A.P.A 1952), Philosophers in ancient societies were interested in how human acquired the ability to understand and produce a language well before empirical methods of testing those theories were developed. However they seemed to regard language acquisition as subject of man's ability to acquire knowledge and learn concepts using the mind (Tomasello, 2008). Some early observation based ideas about language acquisition were proposed by Plato who said that word meaning mappings in some form are innate and God given (Pailler, 1977). Proponents of behaviourism argued that language may be learned through a form of operant conditioning. According to Skinner (1957), the successful use of a sign such as a word or lexical unit, when given a certain stimulus reinforces its momentary or contextual probability. Skinner (1957) further says that since operant conditioning is contingent on reinforcement by rewards, a child would learn that specific combination of sounds that stand for a specific thing through repeated successful associations made between the two. A successful use of a sign would be done in which the child would be understood. For example, the child saying up when she wants to be picked up and rewarded within the desired response from another person thereby reinforcing the child's understanding of the meaning of the word. Similarly, the pupils of Nyakach District have been conditioned since they speak mother tongue when they are in the school or outside the school. They speak it repeatedly among themselves hence the mind rewards itself to have it by understanding the meaning. The successful use of mother tongue in school and at home has been very significant in affecting the performance of Kiswahili language negatively. Language is an impressive and fascinating human capacity.

Human languages are strikingly powerful and complex systems. The science of this capacity system is linguistics. With reference to (A.P.A 2001). Linguists when studying human languages seek systematic explanation of language syntax (the organization of languages.

Properly constructed expressions such as phrases and sentences), its semantics, (the way expressions contribute to the meaning) and its pragmatics (the practice of communication in which the expressions find use) as stated above, the learners must have adequate knowledge and skills in using syntax, semantics and pragmatics because the learners in the said district under study over use mother tongue in communication, problems in pragmatics results. This is followed by problems in syntax and semantics which eventually result into poor performance in Kiswahili.

Challenges that make the Acquisition of Second Language difficult
Philosophers of language inquire into the nature of meaning and seek to explain what it means to mean something (A.P.A 1957). They try to understand what speakers and listeners do with language in communication and how it's used socially. What is second language acquisition?

Why should children acquire second language? What is the importance of second language? These are some of the philosophical questions that the researcher will be dealing with. To begin with, second language acquisition is concerned with the study of the way in which an individual becomes able to use one or more languages that are different from his/her first language (Collier, 1988).

This process can take place in a natural setting or through formal classroom instruction.

Second language learning has become an important factor in work place because they are used in offices both government and non-governmental organizations. Assessment has been done to determine language difficulty based on the way in which children learn a particular language as their first or second language. Why do some people struggle learning a second language and never achieve full proficiency as it happened to them when they were learning first language? According to Guirrora (1975), the hardest part of learning a new language is pronunciation which can result in a foreign accent. The accent is caused by transfer between the sounds of the first and the second languages.

As a matter of facts, what makes the acquisition of the second language difficult? Lack of motivation is one of the factors that make the acquisition of the second language difficult. (A.P.A, council of editors, 1952, p.445). Achieving motivation makes the learner to desire to learn a second language. When the learners lack motivation, they are discouraged to learn. This is very similar to the situation in Nyakach District of Kisumu County. The learners lacked motivation in Kiswahili as a second language and this has impacted negatively on the performance of K.C.P.E. The effect of age on second language acquisition is also of major importance. A learner's age is one of the vital factors affecting the process of second language acquisition. Collier (1988, p.10) expresses that successful language acquisition depends on age. In one of the earliest studies on second language acquisition, Lenneberg (1976) claims that there is a certain period in the acquisition of the second language. In this period which is identified as critical period of hypothesis in language acquisition, Lenneberg theorizes that the acquisition of language is an innate process determined by biological factors. In the study of assessing students acquisition of pronunciation after three years of exposure to the second language, Fathman (1975) found that younger children had retained more accent free pronunciation when compared to adolescents just past puberty. The situation is similar to Nyakach District of Kisumu County because an informal research carried out by visiting some primary schools within the district showed that some class eight candidates were between 17 – 20 years of age. Such candidates performed poorly in the languages especially Kiswahili which is under investigation. Their teachers said that they were only interested in playing football and come to school in term one after which they disappear doing fishing activity waiting for another term one the following year.

When learners are willing to make grammatical mistakes in a language, they are likely to get corrected by the teacher or a fellow learner. This is one of the shortfalls facing Nyakach District of Kisumu County.

Methodology
To begin with, what is philosophical analysis? What is it that is being analyzed? What sort of things are the objects of analysis? Under what conditions are the analyses correct?

How can a correct analysis be informative? What is the difference between the first language and the second language? The above questions form the basis on which the researcher has based his analysis on second language acquisition. Philosophical analysis is a method used by the philosophers to analyze or break down crucial concepts for the purpose of understanding them (Sifuna, Chege and Oando, 2006). First language is normally referred to as the mother tongue while second language is always acquired through learning. How is second language learned? There are three general …..Pictures on the issue of language learning. The first is the behaviorists perspective which dictates that not only in the solid bulk of language learned but it is learned via conditioning (A.P.A, Council of editors, 1952).

The second is the hypothesis testing perspective which understands the child learning of syntactic rules and meanings to involve the postulation and testing of hypotheses, the use of the general faculty of intelligence. The final explanation is innatist perspective which states that at least some of the syntactic settings are innate and hard wired, based on certain modules of the mind (A.P.A, Council of editors, 1952).

When formalists and structuralist thinkers analyze second language acquisition, what they ask is, how does the meaning of a sentence emerge out of its parts? The principle of compositionality asserts that a sentence can be understood on the basis of the meaning of the parts of the sentence along with the understanding of its structure (A.P.A, Council of editors, 1952). When acquiring the second language, learners are expected to practice speaking it so that the language can become familiar to them because language fluency is adopted through speaking.

Results and Discussions
The pupils of Nyakach District of Kisumu County have latent ideas that are present in their mind. These ideas must be brought to consciousness so that improvement in the performance of Kiswahili in K.C.P.E can be realized. The goal of education according to idealism is to help the learners to arrive at abroad, general and unifying perspective of the universe. The process of education is to aid the learners to discover the knowledge thorough their own reasoning process. In fact, it is more the rediscovery of a previously acquired knowledge. The theme of education held by metaphysical philosophy of idealism according to Plato is that man's soul had a previous existence in an ideal world (Akinpelu, 1981).In this world of ideas, the soul had perfect first- hand knowledge of all that exist in this world. Our world is an imperfect copy of this world of ideas. When the soul was detached from the perfect world of ideas and planted in the body of a man, it lost that knowledge.

Recommendations
Based on the findings and conclusions this study recommends that; A part from the certificate which is normally given at the end of every course, another factor that proves that a person has gone to school is language. A learned person should be able to speak a second language whether it is English, French, or Kiswahili among others as proof that they went to school.

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