An assessment of the conditions requisite for learning Kiswahili language by learners with hearing impairment in Mumias Primary School for the Deaf in Kakamega County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: In Kenya, Kiswahili is important, not only as a national and official language in Kenya, but as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary school curricula. There has been an outcry by various stakeholders that learners perform poorly in Kiswahili in both local and national examinations. The focus of this paper is to assess the availability of the conditions requisite for excellence and educational resources used in teaching and learning Kiswahili among the hearing impaired learners. The study was carried out at the Mumias School for the Deaf in Kakamega County, Kenya. The school was purposively selected because all the pupils in the school had hearing impairment. A sample size of six teachers and thirty-two pupils was involved in the study. The study was guided by the behaviourist theory of language acquisition which emphasizes language learning through Stimulus-Response-Reward (S-R-R) chains. It employed qualitative approach as a major research methodology and was carried out in the form of a case study. Quantitative analysis was used to compare KCPE results between Kiswahili and other subjects in the school. The instruments used for data collection were: non-participant observation guide, three interview guides for the head teacher, Kiswahili teachers and learners with HI, document analysis and data sheets. Raw data collected was categorized into themes and data presentation was done using frequency distribution tables, pie charts, histograms line graph and descriptive passages. Interpretation of the study findings was done in the light of the tenets of the study guiding theory of Stimulus-Response-Rewards (S-R-R). The study found that performance in Kiswahili was poor due to several reasons, among them being the conditions at the school were not conducive to effective learning of Kiswahili. It was recommended that teachers should revert to the horse-shoe seating arrangement as this would inevitably shift the passive class atmosphere to one that is more interactive and cordial, allowing peer-peer learning to take place. Moreover, classrooms should be flooded with play things especially in lower classes to facilitate more Kiswahili language experiences. A change in policy that would provide KSL training for examination officials in order to improve examination standards and that teachers train learners with HI on how to tackle examination questions.

KEYWORDS: conditions, learning Kiswahili language, learners, hearing impairment, Mumias Primary School, Deaf, Kakamega County, Kenya.

1 INTRODUCTION

Kiswahili is rated among major languages of the world today (Chiraghdin & Mnyampala, 1977). It is broadcasted widely in the media and taught by many universities worldwide (Chiraghdin & Mnyampala, 1977). The language has continued to receive appraisal both locally and globally. In Eastern Africa, for instance, it is   lingua franca and as such facilitates communication among several people of diverse linguistic background. In Kenya, the teaching of Kiswahili dates back to 1909 when the then United Missionary Conference (UMC) decreed vernacular languages and Kiswahili to be used as media of instruction in classes four and five in African schools.

The conditions requisite for effective teaching of a language such as Kiswahili, especially to learners with hearing impairment, are discussed in this paper under the following categories:

- The learning environment
- Learning experience
- Evaluation
- Teachers' and learners' attitudes towards language learning
- Reinforcement

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The classroom arrangement should be adapted to suit learners' special needs in conjunction with the teaching/learning strategy in use. Learners should maintain eye contact with one another and with the teacher for ease of communication. UNESCO (1987) recommends horse-shoe arrangement for classes not exceeding ten. However, in Kenya, twelve is the number signed approved by the Ministry of Education. To facilitate speech reading, the teacher should sit at a low chair to have her face at the same level as the learners' faces. There should be enough light in the room, particularly on the learners as well as the teacher. Such seating arrangement will allow for better inclusion of learners with hearing impairment.

2.2 LEARNING EXPERIENCE

A child with hearing impairment largely lacks experiences that one would expect from children of the same age to have. They lack knowledge and many skills in language issues (UNESCO, 1987). In their early days in school, the teacher should flood the class with language experiences and other forms of communication. Children should be involved in activities like play with toys and other things from daily life. In a class for learners with hearing impairment, the type of activities selected should enhance both receptive and expressive skills of the learners. The activities should be relevant to individual learners' needs. The primary school syllabus for English (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE], 2004) outlines these learning experiences as receptive skills and expressive skills.

Receptive skills

A child with hearing impairment will be expected to develop and refine their listening skills through carrying out observations of poems, signed stories and short passages. Their response to signed comprehensions, participation in role play and understanding instructions, explanations, descriptions, visual materials, proverbs and announcements will go a long way in refining their receptive skills. Learning experiences are laid down with increasing complexity of content as the grade increases but basically each class has their own activities (KIE, 2004).

Expressive skills

Learning experiences for the expressive skills have a wider scope of operation as outlined in the syllabus (KIE, 2004). Learners are engaged in signing as a form of "speaking" in response to what they are involved in. Participation in discussions, debates, interview, asking and answering oral questions or even storytelling, among other activities, can be done through signing. For advanced grades, learners can write down their responses such as letter writing, composition writing, compiling of school magazines and others. Reading of instructions and directions, library books or comprehension passages will also be a learning experience for the learners. The learners can therefore either sign, finger spell, write or read to express themselves. Drawing plays an important role in expression and appreciation of the children's creative ability (Kithure, 2002). Kithure (ibid.) further identifies demonstration, note taking, tracing, modelling, mimicry and pantomime as learning experiences for these learners in addition to what is laid down in the syllabus.

Learning experiences are suggested for each language skill, reading and writing, listening and speaking. For the learners with hearing impairments, these skills are modified into expressive signing, receptive signing, writing and observation; finger spelling supplements signing where signs are not available. Pupils' ability to sign fluently depends on language exposure. Constructive classroom signing and observation should be encouraged. As such, learners should be granted ample opportunities to sign and observe about themselves, express their ideas and opinions, sign stories, discuss events and describe their experiences (KIE, 2004).

2.3   EVALUATION

Evaluation is a general term used to determine any learning process. It is an approach of determining student achievement during implementation of the curriculum in the school (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). Kissock (1981) asserts that evaluation is the process through which students' performance and program effectiveness are assessed. It presents students, teachers and curriculum developers with feedback on their success in achieving programme objectives. This forms the basis for making sound decisions on which to modify and improve the programme. The central concern of evaluation is determination of outcomes. Evaluation can either be formative or summative. The former is informally carried out by teachers during implementation of the curriculum. The latter is carried out formally, at the end of the course by KNEC which works closely with the DQAS and KIE. Part summative evaluation is, however, done at the end of every year for promotion of learners to higher grades (Kilei, 2003).

In evaluation of student performance, a number of evaluation tools can be applied depending on the purpose for which it is done, whether formal or informal. Shiundu and Omulando (1992) identify several tools for formal evaluation. Continuous Assessment Tests (CATS) can be organized by teachers on a weekly, fortnightly, monthly, mid-termly or termly basis. This is referred to as formative evaluation. Tools used include essays, short answer questions, objective test items or examination of actual product. Informal approaches include interviews, questionnaires and observation in assessment of personal and social adjustment. Summative evaluation for SNE learners is carried out by the KNEC in conjunction with QAS and KIE. Considering the needs of learners with hearing impairments, adaptations carried out on their examinations include offering instructions in sign language, and giving extra time for them.

2.4   TEACHERS'/LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE LEARNING

Teachers' attitude towards both learning and use of skills of simultaneous communication, whether positive or negative will affect performance in developing and using communication skills. Ranklin (1991) notes that the biggest question in the effective use of Manual English or American Sign Language, other than skills, is that of attitude. A teacher of English should first and foremost possess positive attitude towards the learner with hearing impairment, then the teaching of English (KIE, 2004). The right kind of attitude is mandatory in teaching of Kiswahili language as well. A teacher who possesses a positive attitude towards the learner and the subject imparts a similar attitude to them. The contrary is true as well: a teacher possessing a negative attitude towards Kiswahili will impart it to the learners. Both the teacher and the learner need a positive attitude to be able to teach/learn the language well.

2.5   REINFORCEMENT

Reinforcement or rewarding of desirable pupil behaviour is a frequently used teaching skill. When a pupil gives a correct answer to a question, the teacher would respond by saying some encouraging remarks, smiling or nodding while looking at the pupil (Shaffer, 2000). According to Shaffer (ibid.), various aspects of praise, issuance of corrective feedback are positively correlated with pupils' achievement and positive attitudes. Farrant (1980) postulates that rewards should be used to either acknowledge success and effort or as incentives. They should never be so easy to get or else they lose their worth.

Reinforcement techniques (Cannon & Palmiter, 2003) fall into two main categories: verbal and non-verbal. The most common verbal reinforcers are one-word or brief phrase responses such as "good, well done", among others. A verbal reinforcer such as praise, not only changes behaviour but develops confidence and a positive self-image. Jacinta and Regina (1981) concur that praise is always positive reinforcement. The learner is said to associate pleasure and satisfaction with getting a problem right or answering a question correctly followed by praise. This motivates them to try harder in future.

Verbal reinforcement could also compromise a teacher's response to ideas learners express by accepting them, building on them or asking questions based on them (Cannon & Palmiter, 2003). It has been proven in classes where such reinforcement techniques are applied, pupils have more positive attitudes and higher achievement than in classrooms where pupils' ideas are not incorporated in lesson development. Such verbal reinforcement can be a powerful motivation for increasing a pupil's desire to participate.

Non-verbal reinforcement, on the other hand, refers to the physical messages sent by teachers through cues such as eye contact, facial expression and body positions (Cannon & Palmiter, 2003), like frowns and impassivity from the teacher. A smile, a nod of the head and friendly eye contact can be used to encourage participation. Cannon and Palmiter (ibid.) further postulate that rewards if used indiscriminately become inappropriate use of reinforcement. If given too quickly they may interfere with complete development of pupils ideas. It becomes paramount that the teacher reinforces intermittently and

appropriately. Different individuals respond to different kinds of reinforcement. Some pupils, for example, find intensive eye contact rewarding while others find it uncomfortable. In this paper, the challenge was identification of appropriate reinforcement for the learner with hearing impairment. Issuance of the reinforcement should not be done indiscriminately. Special consideration should be made for the attempts made towards learning of Kiswahili by the learner with HI.

2.6   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the review of past studies, it is evident that Kiswahili has increasingly become prominent due to its demand and use not only as a national and international language but also as a medium of instruction in lower primary and as a compulsory examinable subject (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). Since the existing curriculum does not give special preference to children with hearing impairment, it poses many challenges to the teaching/learning of the subject. As such, the study focused on challenges to learning of Kiswahili among children with hearing impairment as was necessitated by the fact that performance in Kiswahili had remained dismal (Kilei, 2003). This paper examines the prerequisite conditions that need to be addressed within the academic curriculum to make it possible for the learners with hearing impairment to compete favourably.

3   MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Mumias School for learners with HI in Kakamega County in western Kenya. This is one of the oldest schools for learners with HI. The school is representative of a homogeneous target population existing as an integral part of the school community. The learners have to face a number of challenges as they contend with the regular school curriculum put in place for all learners. Mumias School for the Deaf is a public mixed boarding primary school. It is also known as St. Martin DE Porres. The school is situated in Mumias Nabongo location in Kakamega County. It was founded by Ursuline Sisters from Holland, way back in 1961, with an enrolment of five pupils only. The figure remained static until in eighties when it started posting a commendable rise.

Mumias was the first school to offer education to learners with hearing impairment locally. Today, it is an international school, admitting pupils from the entire nation of Kenya as well as the neighbour countries such as Uganda, Burundi and Sudan among others. The school follows the 8-4-4 school curriculum marked by the national KCPE examination. At inception, Luhyia language was used as a medium of instruction. The rationale was to integrate children back to the hearing community. Later, with the extension of the catchment area to include pupils from other parts of the country, this tradition was relinquished. Presently, Kenyan Sign Language is used to accommodate learners in the school.

Mumias Primary School for the HI is divided into four sections: the pre-school admits children aged between four and six years. The primary section comprises classes one to eight. The third section is that of children with multiple handicaps, mainly hearing impairment and mental challenges. The vocational unit admits big girls that have academic challenges. They are introduced to skills like dress making, knitting, handicraft, gardening and cookery among others as they await placement at St Angela vocational institute, just adjacent.

The study adopted a qualitative approach, to explore in detail teaching and learning of Kiswahili among children with hearing impairment. In the study the conditions requisite for excellence were independent variables. These were the vehicles through which effectiveness in learning of and academic performance in Kiswahili was gauged. Learning of Kiswahili was the dependent variable.

Mumias School has a teaching staff of thirty-six members: twenty-five females and eleven males. Thirty-five among them are employees of the Teachers' Service Commission and one male is a Peace Corp from the USA. Majority of the teachers have taught in the school for many years. The target population in the study comprised a total of four hundred and two pupils enrolled in Mumias Primary School for children with HI. Out of these, two hundred and twenty-one were boys and one hundred and eighty-one were girls. The results would be generalized to the learners in thirty-four primary schools for learners with HI across Kenya due to the homogeneity of their characteristics.

In the study, purposive sampling was used to select the school, the head teacher, Kiswahili teachers and pupils for focus interview groups and observation classes. Focus interview groups were purposively selected by gender and academic performance in Kiswahili. The sample size for the study comprised one head teacher, five Kiswahili teachers and thirty-two learners with HI in Mumias Primary School for the deaf. There were four focus groups for discussion selected as follows: by gender, eight boys, eight girls, and by academic performance, eight high performers and eight low performers in Kiswahili, bringing the total sample size to thirty-eight (six teachers and thirty-two pupils).

Data collection adopted three methods: observation, interview guide and document analysis. Triangulation of six instruments was employed to increase chances of depth and accuracy of data. Raw data collected was categorized, ordered,

coded and then tabulated. This was done according to themes from which objectives were generated as follows: analyzing academic performance, teaching/learning methods, conditions requisite for excellence and educational resources. Qualitative data collected using observation guides was categorized under the last three themes indicated above.

Data gathered from the head teacher's interview guide was categorized under conditions requisite for excellence in Kiswahili and educational resources. Specific sub-themes under this theme were the learning environment, learning experiences, evaluation modes, attitude and reinforcement. Data gathered from teachers' interviews was categorized under: teaching and learning methods, educational resources and conditions requisite for excellence whereas data from the focus groups discussion was categorized under all the four themes. From the document analysis, data gathered was categorized under analyzing academic performance of Kiswahili by learners with HI. Quantitative data gathered from data sheets was categorized under the first objective: academic performance of Kiswahili by learners with HI. It was later analyzed using a measure of central tendency-the mean score.

After categorization of the raw data, analysis was done in descriptive nature. Data interpretation was done in light of objectives of the study and on the basis of the three tenets of the guiding theory of the study: Stimulus-Response-Reward. The findings of the study were presented descriptively through narrative passages as well as in frequency distribution tables, pie charts and histograms.

In the study, ANOVA was run to statistically assess whether the observation that Kiswahili was poorly performed compared to other subjects in KCPE was indeed a pattern or just a phenomenon that occurred by chance. Since ANOVA showed that the means between the KCPE subjects were indeed statistically significant with Kiswahili having a lower mean than the other subjects, it was concluded that Kiswahili more than any other subject was indeed poorly performed amongst learners who are hearing impaired.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several factors affect an individual's learning process. The classroom environment can have a big effect on the amount of learning that occurs, hence the study evaluated the environmental conditions at the school to ascertain whether they enhanced or inhibited learning, particularly amongst learners with HI. The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) has established the following to be conditions that need to be optimized for effective learning amongst all learners: learning environment, learning experiences, evaluation, reinforcement, and teachers and pupil's attitudes. Table 1 below demonstrates the learning environment at the school as per pupils' responses.

Table 1: Pupils' responses on "learning environment" and "learning experiences" as Conditions Requisite for Learning

Learning Environment	Preferred conditions	Conditions present at school
Seating Arrangement	Horse-shoe arrangement	Seating in rows
Appropriate lighting	Sufficient lighting	Sufficient lighting
		Finger spelling (32/32)
		Signing (16/32)
		Writing (19/32)
Learning Experiences	Total Communication	Story-telling (22/32)
	IEP	Answering questions (16/32)
		Observing (16/32)
		Discussing (6/32)

As shown in the table above, the conditions at the school fall short of those recommended by the KIE in the following aspects:

4.1 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The horse-shoe seating arrangement has been recommended as the best way to organize a classroom because:

i) It fosters acquaintance of pupils with their peers
ii) Gives a new perspective on learning activities by encouraging pupil's to sit in different positions
iii) It encourages participation by allowing eye contact between the teacher and all learners

iv) Allows each pupil to consistently have access and proximity to the teacher, and allows the teacher to move closer to each learner

However, at this school pupils sit in rows, an arrangement that does not allow for pupils or teachers to interact with everyone in the classroom. Particularly, the pupils are not able to follow each other's responses and contributions thus not optimising their learning experience.

4.2 LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The pupils reported on the learning experiences they have in the classroom and it was established that the learning experiences at the school do not involve all aspects of TC (Figure 1).
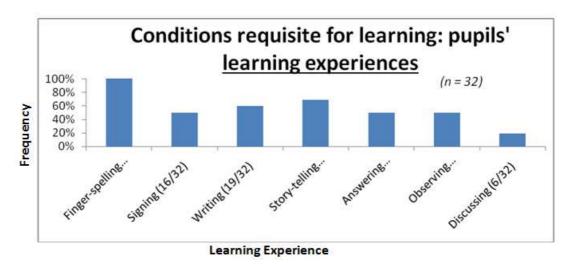

Figure 1: An analysis of conditions requisite for learning shows that pupils prefer learning by finger spelling, writing, and story-telling

Learning experiences should be both receptive and expressive. On the contrary, the author found that the pupils at the school were limited in their expressive capabilities. This stems mainly from two factors:

i) There was a shortage in materials such as toys, playthings, poems and sign stories that learners could use to acquire the necessary expressive skills.

ii) Learners were not exposed to Kiswahili prior to their enrolment into formal schools, an aspect that greatly slowed down their learning compared to their counterparts with no hearing impairments.

The research also analyzed teachers' and pupils' responses on reinforcement, attitude, and evaluation as factors that affect teaching and learning of Kiswahili. The results were as presented in Table 2 (pupils' responses) and Table 3 (teachers' responses')

Table 2: Pupils' responses on other Conditions Requisite for Learning

	Preferred conditions	Conditions present at school
Reinforcement	Verbal and non-verbal, continuous reinforcement	Verbal i.e. compliments (22/32) Non-verbal i.e. tokens, hand claps, body language, facial expressions (10/32)
Attitude	Positive attitude	Positive (10/32)

Table 3: Teachers' responses on conditions requisite for learning

	Preferred conditions	Conditions present at school
Evaluation	Summative and formative evaluation	Oral/signed questions (6/6) Short answer questions (6/6) Essays (1/6) Observation (5/6) Continuous Assessment Tests (6/6)
Reinforcement	Verbal and non-verbal, continuous reinforcement	Verbal i.e. compliments (6/6) Non-verbal i.e. tokens, hand claps, body language, facial expressions (6/6/)
	Positive attitude/empathy	Empathy/positive (4/6)
Attitude		Sympathy/negative (2/6)

4.3   EVALUATION

The research noted that although teachers performed both formative and summative evaluation as was expected of them (Figure 2), they could not conduct summative evaluation in a manner that allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the pupils' performance in Kiswahili. This was because the KIE dictated the conditions in which to organize the summative evaluation but these conditions were not tailored to learners with HI. Firstly, learners with HI were allocated thirty extra minutes during examinations but the teachers argued that this time was not sufficient. Secondly, although the examination invigilators were trained in special education and KSL, the supervisors were not necessarily trained in the field. This discrepancy inhibited proper administration and evaluation of examinations taken by learners with HI since the supervisors were not aware of the nuances that govern KSL and communication with HI learners.
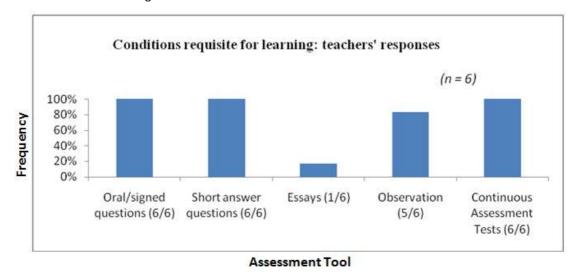

Figure 2: Teachers' responses on conditions requisite for learning show that teachers evaluate pupils formatively (in-class) and summatively (end of term and/or year exams)

4.4   REINFORCEMENT

Reinforcement at the school was done during both formative and summative evaluations. Formative reinforcement occurred in the classroom during the lessons while summative reinforcement occurred at the end of the term and/or year. The research noted that very few pupils reported that they ever received positive reinforcement (in the form of awards) for their performance in Kiswahili (Figure 3). The pupils who received reinforcement were interested in pursuing Kiswahili further as learners and eventually as teachers. As a result of this observation, the research concluded that positive reinforcement is key in getting learners interested in Kiswahili and consequently improving their performance in the language.
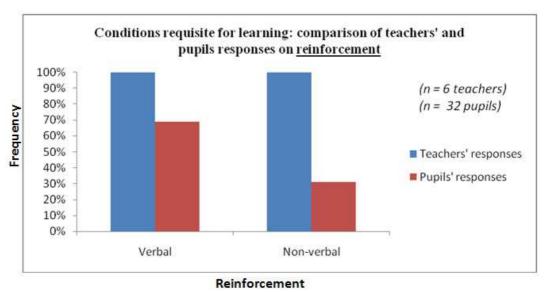

Figure 3: A comparison of teachers' and pupils' responses on reinforcement as a condition that is important to enhance learning of Kiswahili

4.5   ATTITUDE

Majority of the pupils had a negative attitude towards Kiswahili (Figure 4). They believed that it was a difficult language and were more interested in learning Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) because it was their natural language and easier to learn and communicate in it. The few students keen on learning Kiswahili were mainly interested because a proficiency in the language would allow them to get by in their communities. Particularly, an understanding of the language would allow them to read public warnings and signs, communicate with people in market places, and interact with people without HI who do not understand KSL. As such, for these students being proficient in Kiswahili would allow them to become more independent.

Most of the teachers had a positive attitude and empathized with the learners (Figure 4). They encouraged the pupils to learn Kiswahili as the language would become imperative for them to integrate into the community. In addition, two of the teaching staff that had HI were especially interested in having the learners pursue Kiswahili and eventually becoming teachers of Kiswahili themselves as they would become role models to future learners with HI. A few of the teachers mainly sympathized with students and had a negative attitude towards teaching Kiswahili. They argued that the pupils would be over-burdened if the curriculum demanded that they learn English, Kiswahili and KSL. As a result, these teachers were not keen on having their pupils master the Kiswahili language, an aspect that in turn negatively affected pupils' attitudes towards learning Kiswahili.
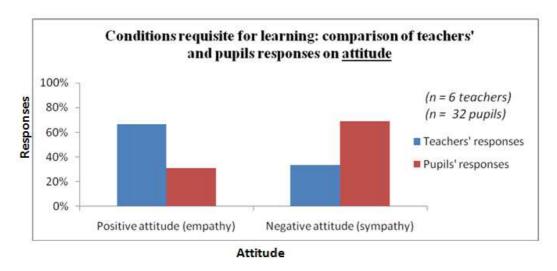
Figure 4: Teachers and pupils attitude towards teaching and learning of Kiswahili

5   CONCLUSION

5.1   LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

It was observed that the learners' seating arrangement in the classroom was the traditional row arrangement as opposed to the recommended horseshoe arrangement. The horse-shoe seating has been recommended as means to facilitate maintenance of eye contact between learners-learner and between teacher-learner, thus enhancing learning from both the teacher and other peers. Contrary to this, the seating arrangement at this school allowed pupils' eye contact with the teacher but not with one another. It was therefore difficult for the learners to follow each   other's responses during lessons; consequently, learning amongst peers was greatly inhibited.

5.2   LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The research established that the learners' most preferred expressive activities were finger spelling, storytelling, writing and signing, while observation was the most preferred receptive activity. It was noted that discussions were least popular amongst learners due to their limited Kiswahili vocabulary. This led the research to conclude that not all elements of TC were used to enhance learning of Kiswahili and was a factor that would contribute to the poor performance.

5.3   EVALUATION

Student's performance and programme effectiveness are assessed through evaluation. In line with this, the researcher established that the school was involved in both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation was carried out daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly by individual teachers in different classes whereas whole school evaluation was done at the end of each term and each year. It was established that the most frequently used evaluation tools were short answer questions, Continuous Assessment Tests, essays and observation. Summative evaluation was carried out annually by KNEC in which evaluation of learner's performance in class eight in KCPE and the curriculum effectiveness were both assessed.

However, three main shortcomings associated with evaluation of learners with HI were the limited time allocated to the examination, a shortage of KSL-trained examination officials, and lack of skills on tackling examination questions as reported by pupils.

5.4   REINFORCEMENT

It was established from the informants as well as by observation that both verbal and non-verbal reinforcement was used in the Kiswahili lessons. Teachers offered compliments or tangible reinforcement such as food whenever positive efforts or correct responses were elicited by learners. Learners would clap hands to those who deserved to be rewarded. Physical messages such as facial expressions, eye contact, nodding of the head in approval and body positions were used as well. It

was reported that at the end of term, tokens like text books, pens and utensils such as glasses were presented to a few learners who merited for them. Those who received reinforcement were interested in pursuing Kiswahili further as learners and eventually as teachers. As a result of this observation, the researcher concludes that positive reinforcement is key in getting learners interested in Kiswahili and consequently improving their performance. This finding concurs with the fact that various aspects of praise and issuance of corrective feedback are positively correlated with pupils' achievement and positive attitude. It is notable that reinforcement is a great determinant of success in the learning process.

5.5 ATTITUDE

Amongst the learner informants, majority (three focus groups) had a negative attitude towards Kiswahili. They conceded that learning Kiswahili was too hard for them no matter how much they tried to learn it. They preferred learning KSL. The groups cited comprehension, long answer questions in examinations and interpretation of English signs into Kiswahili as the most difficult aspects of learning the language. These informants wished Kiswahili scrapped off the curriculum for them to excel in other languages.

One of the focus groups had a positive attitude towards learning Kiswahili. In fact, they showed interest in pursuing Kiswahili to higher levels in order to become teachers, like two of their own teachers that have HI or to be able to interact in the community. This group wished that the curriculum continues to be inclusive of Kiswahili for them to learn more of it.

The teacher informants looked at learning of Kiswahili as two sides of the same coin. They were sympathetic to the learners' burden of learning three languages: English, KSL and Kiswahili at the same time, especially for the prelinguals. They argued that the prelinguals should be exempted from learning of Kiswahili. On the other hand, they were empathetic to the postlinguals and hard-of hearing learners for whom they argued that they needed to learn Kiswahili to be able to integrate into the society, or for job placements in the teaching fraternity or to embrace the national and official language of the nation. This finding affirms the claims that teachers' attitudes towards both learning and the learner, whether positive or negative will affect the learner's performance.

The findings of the study confirmed that learning of Kiswahili needed a positive attitude. Those learners whose attitude was negative towards Kiswahili could not be convinced to learn it for whatever benefits and given an optional language to study, they would readily embrace it. Those learners whose attitude was positive were intrinsically motivated to study the language in addition to other languages.

When teachers sympathised with the learners for their burden of three languages to study, this attitude did not motivate learners to learn Kiswahili. On the other hand when they empathized with them this impacted positively on the learners and encouraged them to learn the language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the conditions and ensure effective teaching of Kiswahili among the hearing impaired, the following recommendations are made:

Learning environment: Encouraging teachers to revert to the horse-shoe seating arrangement as this would inevitably shift the passive class atmosphere to one that is more interactive and cordial, allowing peer-peer learning to take place.

Learning experiences: The classrooms should be flooded with play things especially in lower classes to facilitate more Kiswahili language experiences.

Evaluation: A change in policy that would provide KSL training for examination officials in order to improve examination standards and that teachers train learners with H.I on how to tackle examination questions.

Reinforcement: Teachers find out ways to incentivize each pupil in order to inspire them to work harder to improve their Kiswahili skills.

Attitude: Teachers adopt an empathetic attitude rather than a sympathetic one such that they can encourage their pupils to learn Kiswahili in order to improve their performance in national examinations and embrace it as a national as well as an official language.

The MOE has made Kiswahili an optional subject at the KCPE level. However, some teachers were noted to argue that learners were over-burdened by being required to learn three languages (English, Kiswahili and KSL). It is highly probable that most schools might even remove Kiswahili from the syllabus altogether. This is problematic since Kiswahili has been declared both a national and an official language. Further research should be done to understand the policy-making process in order

to stir advocacy work that would influence the policy makers to revert the decision that would potentially exclude Kiswahili from the curriculum.

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