Materials and Instructional Approaches Used By Secondary School Teachers of Kiswahili Oral Literature in Marakwet District, Kenya

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Abstract

The study examined the materials and the instructional approaches employed by secondary school teachers and students in the teaching and learning of Kiswahili oral literature in Marakwet District, Kenya. The need for the study was based on the fact that undertaking the new task of teaching/learning Kiswahili oral literature, whose syllabus was introduced by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) in 2002, is likely to be faced with challenges. The study was based on Gagne's conditions of learning theory, which states that effective learning only occurs in specific conditions. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The area of study was Marakwet District. The target population included Kiswahili teachers, head of departments and students from all the ten secondary schools in Marakwet District. From this, stratified, purposive and simple random sampling was used to get a sample from the population. The study used both primary and secondary data. Data was gathered through observation, interview schedules and questionnaire. Questionnaire was the main source of primary data. Data from questionnaire was analyzed in frequencies, tables and percentages using SPSS.

From the findings, majority of teachers and most students agreed that students’ text books were available. Moreover, majority of the respondents agreed that discussion was one of the most frequently used methods to maintain interest in Kiswahili oral literature classroom. The study was conducted because the authors were not aware of any study that had been conducted in relation to the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature in the District. On this basis, the authors were inspired to investigate the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature in secondary schools in Marakwet District. The study helps promote Kiswahili oral literature and improve its teaching methodology among both scholars and general readers. The study is also useful to curriculum developers in the implementation of the new Kiswahili syllabus.

Keywords: materials, instructional approaches, secondary school teachers, kiswahili oral literature, Marakwet District, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

It is now ten years since Kiswahili oral literature was given prominence in the Kiswahili syllabus (KIE, 2002). Initially, it was not treated with the seriousness it deserved, but today it has been given emphasis. It was examined for the first time in 2006 by the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). The authors having taught Kiswahili literature in different schools before the curriculum review of 2002 has observed that teachers handled Kiswahili oral literature with hardly any seriousness and this could be because this section was not examinable at the end of the four-year secondary school programme. Furthermore, the teachers were not using proper instructional methods to enable them achieve their objectives. In addition, the syllabus was not piloted as the case ought to be but was only introduced to schools without preparing teachers and having necessary facilities.

The teacher was not given enough preparation especially in handling new aspects of the syllabus. That is, the teacher was not prepared through workshop and in-service courses. Furthermore, nothing was done to ascertain the practicability of the new curriculum through piloting before implementation such as assessing availability of necessary facilities in schools. Such factors force some of the teachers to resist some changes when they are introduced. It is also unfortunate that majority of the teachers did not study oral literature and how to teach it in teacher training colleges or at the universities.

Teacher preparation at colleges and universities has not catered for all aspects that have been included in the revised curriculum. It is quite unfortunate that majority of teachers did not study oral literature and how to teach it in teacher training colleges or while at the university. Moi University offers oral literature as a core course but others like Kenyatta University do not and yet they are expected to prepare teachers to handle oral literature in Kiswahili in the field. In support of this Materu (1987) says that although oral literature is an important genre, its teaching has a very short history in our secondary schools and that the major problem teachers have after introducing oral literature in class
is how they should teach it. So how do these teachers teach Kiswahili oral literature? Are they teaching using proper teaching methods? Do they have enough materials to use? The performance of Kiswahili language in general in Marakwet District is low; statistics from the District Education Office show that Kiswahili has had the lowest mean grade in KCSE for some time now. For example in 2004, Marakwet District had a mean score of 3.002 and 3.561 in 2005 in Kiswahili compared to 3.215 and 3.654 in English during the same period. So, how will the performance of Kiswahili oral literature be after introducing oral literature? In view of the above, the authors sought to investigate the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature and go further to describe the situation the way it is at the moment and offer recommendations.

Materials and Instructional Approaches in Teaching/Learning Kiswahili Oral Literature

The study of education may be seen as dependent in a large measure upon communication between people. To be effective, communication in the classroom must pass both ways, that is, both teachers and learners should alternatively function as transmitters and receivers of information. The code by which such information is transmitted in the classroom may be verbal or non-verbal. The effectiveness of this transaction may be limited or enhanced by the readiness of the receivers and the organization of the environment where this communication has to take place. Communication patterns expected in language lessons should be multi-way in order for them to allow oral interaction. The sources of information include the teacher, an individual pupil, a group of pupils and the whole class. In order to get information coming from all these sources, the teacher should address the whole class, a group of pupils and an individual pupil. It is expected that student-student, student-group of students and the whole class interaction should take place in a language lesson. Inter-group interaction is also possible by use of group work presentations as noted by Mathews et al. (1989).

Several studies have shown that teachers do not encourage inter communication in the classroom. For instance, Flanders (1970) has found out that mostly one-way pattern of communication, where the teacher solicits a response from the pupil and then the pupil responds to the teacher (teacher-pupil, pupil-teacher), interaction exists in American classrooms. The same case also applies to Kiswahili oral literature teachers. Learners should be actively engaged orally in the lesson. This can be done by restructuring language lessons to include more communicative activities such as role play, panel discussion and dramatization. Therefore, learners have to be fully equipped with oral communicative abilities. Pupil-pupil interaction has been considered by Krahnke & Christison (1983) as being very beneficial even at low levels of language competence. This gives learners chances of giving self-correcting feedback to each other.

There is need for Kiswahili teachers in Kenya to be aware of the two approaches to any second language teaching. Any second language teaching can be either fluency-based teaching which lays instructional emphasis on open-ended communication that takes place in real life situations. This approach is likely to promote Kiswahili language learning unlike the accuracy-based approach to instruction where emphasis is placed on the inculcation of correct linguistic forms. Dramatization as a method of teaching Kiswahili can easily enhance oral interaction. Shumaker (as cited in Froese & Straw, 1981) views dramatization as:

... one representing an integration of self expression, helping students self actualization and promoting the development of and integration of students' cognitive abilities (p. 79).

Dramatization is viewed as one of the best methods of teaching spoken skills as it allows learners to orally participate in the lesson. Dramatization allows learners to use their own words in sharing their literal heritage through story-telling, playing games, singing songs and utilization of taped stories. In addition to dramatization, Froese and Straw (1981) suggest group work to be the clue to productive oral language activities. When using group work the teacher should stay in the background and act as a resource person offering guidance where necessary. The teacher should also allow for maximum peer planning and cooperation in small groups. Though oral communication arising from interaction of pupils in groups is known to be efficient, it should not be taken as the most convenient method since it has a limitation as Byrne (1976) has noted that:

Small group work is the most efficient method of teaching oral language ... but it has not been possible to provide effective oral language practice especially in large classes due to shortage of time and space within the classroom (p. 183).

For a Kiswahili teacher to sustain a meaningful discussion in class which can enhance oral interaction, it is suggested in this paper that there is need for clarity of speech, tact in handling learners, encouragement of learners’ participation, positive approach to students’ contribution, the use of simplified questions and explanations, encouraging sharing ideas and the teacher should elaborate on the students’ ideas. This can only be possible where piloting is done to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of e areas to be introduced such as the case of Kiswahili oral literature. The teacher can
make a discussion more worthwhile by planning for it in advance, setting the pace of discussion by, for instance, acknowledging students’ contributions and summarizing the points raised. A worthwhile class discussion should have a planned ending after satisfying learners’ curiosity, emphasizing and clarifying related points and establishing links between discussion sessions.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY
The study focused on the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature in a rural setting among secondary students who are homogenous in culture, character and socio economic expositions. The findings may, therefore, only apply to similar population and may not be generalized to mean that the problems revealed here are the same among all secondary school students. The research should have covered the whole nation. The fact that it only covered one district with only 26 schools compared to other districts is in itself a limitation. This is due to limited time and finances that made the researcher to limit the area of study. Kiswahili oral literature lacks sufficient literature. However, literature on English oral literature was borrowed to supplement that available on Kiswahili oral literature.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The study was carried out in Marakwet District of Rift Valley Province in Kenya. The District is one of the nineteen (19) districts of Rift Valley Province. It has seven administrative divisions and two political constituencies. Its headquarters is Kapsowar Centre. It is situated on the Northern part of the Rift Valley. It borders Pokot district to the North-West, Baringo to the East, Trans Nzoia to the West and Keiyo to the South. The District covers an area of 2784KM² with a population of approximately 140,629 people (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2000). The research adopted a descriptive survey study design targeting secondary schools in the District. According to the Ministry of Education data bank (Marakwet DEO's Office) there are four boys’ boarding, four girls’ boarding, twelve mixed boarding and six mixed day schools. Therefore, there are twenty-six secondary schools. Of these, two are Provincial, twenty-four are District secondary schools. The target population of the study included all trained Kiswahili teachers. These teachers were both diploma and graduates.

The study adopted purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified sampling technique was used to categorize schools on the basis of school type into boys’ only school, girls’ only and mixed schools. Out of the twenty-six secondary schools in the District, two boys’, two girls’ and six mixed schools were selected to participate in the study. The authors selected a total of ten schools out of twenty-six schools because this represented a 38.4% of the target population. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of one hundred and sixty students from Forms Two and Three classes in the ten secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to sample heads of department in all the sampled schools in order to get vital information about the implementation of Kiswahili oral literature. In the study, Forms Two and Three students were chosen on the basis of long exposure towards Kiswahili oral literature in terms of time and content coverage.

The collection of data for the study involved the use of questionnaire, observation and interview schedules. From the 10 secondary schools, 20 Kiswahili teachers were selected to fill the questionnaire while 16 students in each school were selected to fill the questionnaire. The authors personally observed each school environment such as the classrooms, the libraries and other learning sites. Two lessons were observed in each school, one in Form Two and one in Form Three giving a total of twenty lesson observations for the purpose of the study. The authors administered the interview schedule personally and engaged the participants in a general discussion about the implementation, attitude of teachers and students towards Kiswahili oral literature to create rapport before administering the interview schedule. Therefore, ten Kiswahili oral literature teachers were interviewed to solicit information about implementation, facilities and resources, attitude of teachers and students towards Kiswahili oral literature.

Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists) Computer package. Descriptive methods were employed in analyzing data where frequencies and proportions were used in interpreting the respondent’s perception of issues raised in the sets of questionnaire so as to answer the research questions.

RESULTS
Materials Used in Teaching and Learning of Kiswahili Oral Literature
The purpose of was study was to investigate teaching of Kiswahili oral literature in secondary schools. One of the objectives of the study was to examine the materials used in teaching and learning of Kiswahili oral literature in secondary schools. These materials include course materials such as students’ text books, teachers’ reference books, and instructional resources employed to aid the teaching methods applied by the teacher.

Although acquiring a high level of Kiswahili proficiency has no short cut, it does not have to be a difficult and tortuous task if learners have a battery of effective strategies. Current research suggests that the persistent use of a
comprehensive set of strategies for language learning is among the main factors that determine how well learners ultimately acquire and learn how to use Kiswahili orally and at the same time creatively. This creativity in use of language is all about Kiswahili oral literature and applies whether the student is in a traditional Kiswahili classroom or working through a self-study programme.

According to the major findings of the study, majority, 18(90%), of teacher respondents and 96(60%) of student respondents agreed that students textbooks are available. It is, therefore, evident that to a larger extent only students’ text books are the adequate teaching materials available for Kiswahili oral literature. This indicates that teachers are still conservative relying on students' text books alone. Only a small proportion, 30(18.75%), of the students’ population acknowledged the availability teachers’ reference books for Kiswahili oral literature. This means that teachers might be inadequately prepared when going to teach in class. In addition, teachers do not make handouts that can assist students grasp concepts such as tales and songs. Interestingly, there were conflicting responses involving availability of Kiswahili oral literature materials in the library. A significant number, 72(45%), of the students and 6(30%) teachers agreed that there were Kiswahili oral literature materials in the library. The disparity in responses was that students confuse the issue of Kiswahili oral literature as an entity on its own and still view Kiswahili text books such as grammar and Fasihi (Literature) as part of it; hence the higher population acknowledging that there are books. The authors agree with the minority teachers that there are hardly any Kiswahili oral literature books in the library. The authors interpret this to mean that because it is a new concept there might not have been enough time and resources for purchase of the books. In another perspective, bearing in mind that it is four years down the line since introduction of Kiswahili oral literature as an examinable subject, it could mean that the school administration and teachers do not value Kiswahili oral literature greatly like other subjects in the school curriculum such as sciences and hence the reason why there has been laxity in buying Kiswahili oral literature books for secondary schools.

Instructional approach towards the teaching of any subject has been hailed as an aid to the conservative approach to education. Instructional approach in teaching makes Kiswahili oral literature lively. Different types of educational experiences exist from hands-on apprenticeships to role-playing, from demonstrations to reading printed text. Some educators believe that different experiences are more or less effective for achieving different types of instructional out comes. Therefore, the major issue as concerns instructional teaching approach as a method of teaching is to know the purpose of the subject area and hence utilize the best approach geared towards achieving the objectives set in the syllabus. The major findings of the study indicate that majority, 14(70%), of the respondents agreed that discussion is one of the most frequently used methods to initiate and maintain interest in Kiswahili oral literature.

This implies that discussion in classroom is the most appropriate teaching method in oral literature as expressed by the teachers. The authors interpret this to mean that the easiness of arranging a discussion in class with few practicalities makes it popular with the teachers. Questioning and use of models as methods of teaching in Kiswahili oral literature are not used at all. This could be attributed to the required rigorous procedure of employing them. For example, as concerns guest speaker, the teacher has to look out for a suitable model out there that can be of maximum benefit to the students and can serve as a role model. As of questioning, bearing in mind the vast experience of the authors, teachers' view them as being above students' conceptualization and according to them should be used at a higher-level say in college or university.

Role play, drama, use of questions and dialogue also seemed to be attractive methods for teaching Kiswahili oral literature in the classroom. This could also be pegged to their easy applicability in a classroom setting. Some of the genres in Kiswahili oral literature revolve around role play, discussion, dialogue, illustration, and drama. This is due to the fact that Kiswahili oral literature itself involves orally use of Kiswahili language creatively.

Some of the teachers have been accused of using the same teaching method year in, year out despite changes in technology because their older colleagues do riot use a variety of them. As a result, many teachers are too boring to listen to. Some teachers enjoy talking and even punish students who doze when they are teaching. Some tell students to run around the school and others are told to stand up in class for the rest of the lesson just because they were caught dozing. Teachers should not rely on word to explain ideas, facts and concepts. The use of a variety of teaching methods such as role plays, discussion, illustration, dialogue, improvisation make teaching both lively and interesting to the students bearing in mind that Kiswahili oral literature is all about using Kiswahili creatively and orally, even though it can be in written form as long as it was originally expressed orally.

**Instructional Approaches in Teaching Kiswahili Oral Literature**

One of the objectives of this study was to find out the instructional approach as employed by secondary
schools teachers in teaching Kiswahili oral literature. Being a new phenomenon to secondary students, there is need for the right instructional media to be employed to create interest and make the learning process exciting. Instructional media are used also to give feedback to the teacher about the students’ progress. After the lesson, for example, a geography teacher may ask the students to draw the map of Kenya as he taught them and label all the lakes of Kenya. A Kiswahili teacher may also ask students to draw a certain scene from a literature book they had been analyzing. At the University level, students may be asked to use media to produce their own short lesson such as radio or television programmes. In these ways, the teacher, as well as the lecturer is evaluating the cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities of the learner to see if what she taught theoretically/verbally is transferred to physical medium.

As a rule, educational experiences that involve the learner physically and that give concrete examples are retained longer than abstract experiences such as listening to a lecture. Instructional media help add elements of reality for instance, including pictures or highly involved computer simulations in a lecture. According to the major findings of the study, the majority, 13(65.0%), of the teachers and 73(45.6%), of the students utilize group work as an instructional method in the Kiswahili oral literature classroom as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Instructional Methods used in Teaching Kiswahili Oral Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional methods</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional methods (teachers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel discussion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional methods (students)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatization</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel discussion</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This implies that teachers and students find it easy to use group work as an instructional method than other instructional modes. Group work enhances the learning planning by ensuring that students work as a team and pull share knowledge together so that they can experience what they have with others and at the same time learn what they did not know from their colleagues. In addition, dramatization, role play and panel discussion are also used but rarely in the classroom to encourage participation and interest in the subject matter of discussion. The researcher understands that an improper teaching method together with lack of instructional approach to teaching Kiswahili literature has an effect on the teaching-learning process. The major findings of the study indicate that majority 20(100%) of the respondents agreed that poor students’ performance would be the aftermath as shown in Table 2.

The findings in the table below are a true indication of what a poor teaching and learning process yields. The respondents unanimously agreed that poor student process was the aftermath. The authors interpreted this to mean that people in Kenya and to a larger extent the developing world continue adopting the destructive result oriented education system.

Table 2: Effects of Improper Teaching Methods and Instructional Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improper teaching methods</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor student performance</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor student and teacher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation (both teachers and student)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitudes (both teachers and students)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is need for a far-away move from this perspective because oral literature teachers will not be teaching students so that they become productive members of the society but teachers would not to produce ‘A’ students after “0” level examinations. It is possible to have ‘A’ students who can barely speak proficiently in Kiswahili language. In effect, such a student cannot be able to use Kiswahili creatively orally with confidence which is all about Kiswahili oral literature. Therefore, learning will not have taken place and the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature as a subject will have erred making attainment of set objectives difficult. Therefore, learning will not have taken place and the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature as a subject will have erred making attainment of set objectives difficult.

DISCUSSION

The teaching of Kiswahili oral literature in Kenya is affected by the lack of learning resources in both primary and secondary schools. A survey done in some of the best-rated secondary schools shows that there are few recommended text books compared to the number of students. The average ratio appears to be one textbook for every three or four students (Bukenya et al., 1996). In many privately owned secondary schools, the situation is even worse because only teachers’ copies of the recommended books are available. The scenario is not any better in the Primary schools. To make matters worse for Kiswahili oral literature learners, there are generally...
few or no supplementary readers in most schools although there are many books that could be used as class readers in the book market. While in secondary schools there are four compulsory literature books that can act as class readers for four years, in most Primary schools there are no readers at all. Besides class readers, there are no other support materials such as newspapers, magazines, radio-cassettes and the like.

Too (1996) has surveyed the availability and use of media resources in Mathematics instructions in Nandi District in Kenya. The survey established that books recommended by Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) were not available and where the books were found to be available, they were not effectively used by the teachers because of their shallow content coverage. Teachers instead resorted to textbooks they found more relevant and well prepared and detailed. This raises the question of quality of education in that region. An assessment of the recommended Kiswahili text books also shows that they leave a lot to be desired. In some books, the content is not well graded (Mulokozi, 1989). In a survey done by Ipara (2004), for example, a Kiswahili teacher from one of the Kenyan Provinces or regions thought that one of the recommended books was too simple for a particular level while his colleague from another province thought that the same book was too complex for the same level. The simple vocabulary selection criteria advocated by Graves (1983) involving, 'frequency', 'availability', and 'regularity' is not adhered to consistently in the grading of textbooks.

Apart from that, Bennars et al. (1994) have observed that instructional resources are very important in the teaching of any subject. Teachers are trained to prepare and use instructional resources because they are essential ingredients in teaching and learning. Developmental psychologists stressed the role of concrete operational experience for children. Bruner (1966) has distinguished between iconic and symbolic modes of representation. Bruner’s (ibid.) study asserts that children's mental constructs are developed through representation. When instructional resources are well used, there is maximum learning achieved by each individual learner. Today, much more improvement in the development and use of instructional resources has been done because of the advancement of technology. Teachers select, plan and present their instructional materials basing on many factors that can help them realize their instructional objectives (Mukwa, 1988).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that the learning of Kiswahili in Kenya and to a larger extent Kiswahili oral literature is not supported by the necessary resources such as well-selected books, supplementary readers and other materials. The absence of these materials limits what teachers and pupils can achieve in the learning of Kiswahili oral literature. In particular, there is little interaction between the learners and relevant materials that can enhance the effective learning of Kiswahili oral literature. In such circumstances, most of those who complete their Kiswahili oral literature course in secondary schools cannot be said in all fairness to have mastered the language orally and in writing as prescribed by the syllabuses.

As a rule, educational experiences that involve the learner physically and that give concrete examples are retained longer than abstract experiences such as listening to a lecture. Instructional media help add elements of reality for instance, including pictures or highly involved computer simulations in a lecture. Although it would be difficult at present to imagine an immediate allocation of more resources by the government of Kenya for the procurement of the vital resources needed for effective Kiswahili oral literature learning, it is possible to do something about the suitability and relevance of teaching materials. For instance, there is need for careful selection, piloting and testing of recommended Kiswahili oral literature textbooks to ensure that they are both suitable and relevant for learning Kiswahili oral literature at various levels of education.

One of the most important missions that a qualified Kiswahili teacher should undertake is to teach students strategies for effective learning. Put simply, strategies-based instruction focuses on teaching learners the Principles of successful teaching and learning and helping to develop strategies for success. Some people say that many teachers are simply "teaching for tests," but students undeniably do acquire at least some knowledge from even the worst Kiswahili oral literature teachers. To continue learning and achieve success in Kiswahili oral literature proficiency, students need to develop their own strategies for lifelong learning. This must happen while they are still in the classroom. This is basically the core philosophy of strategies-based instruction. In other words, though making great effort to teach Kiswahili oral literature in the classroom, teachers should not neglect one more important duty – helping students to ultimately become independent learners. In so doing, it is compulsory for a teacher to teach students effective strategies for continuous learning.

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