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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF KISWAHILI ORAL LITERATURE IN MARAKWET DISTRICT, KENYA

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Abstract

The study assessed the attitudes of teachers and students in the teaching and learning of Kiswahili oral literature in Marakwet District, Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The target population included Kiswahili teachers, heads of department and students from all the ten secondary schools in the District. From this, stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were 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. The study established that teachers do not have favourable attitude towards the teaching and learning process of Kiswahili oral literature. The authors established that Kiswahili oral literature teachers who, in most cases, also teach the other genres of Kiswahili prefer them more than Kiswahili oral literature. This kind of attitude has led to a negative attitude by students towards the subject in relation to other Kiswahili genres such as Kiswahili novel (riwaya) which has been established as the most favourite to the students. The study is significant in that it will be useful in guiding the implementation the new Kiswahili oral literature syllabus. In general, it will stimulate further research in the field of Kiswahili literature. The study recommends continuous in-service training through seminars, workshops, conferences, symposia and subject panel meetings for Kiswahili oral literature teachers. This will update them on the various effective approaches towards teaching-learning process of Kiswahili oral literature.

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Introduction

Edwards (1982, p. 20), quoting Sarnoff (1970), defines attitudes as 'disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects'. Learning attitudes can, therefore, in regard to Kiswahili oral literature, be described as disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to the language. Kiswahili oral literature in Kenya is taught to people who speak and identify with other languages. It is also taught to learners from different social and linguistic backgrounds.

The fact that it is taught as a compulsory subject in Kenya's school system does not in itself guarantee positive attitudes towards it. There is, therefore, need to establish, through research, the kind of attitudes that Kenyans hold towards Kiswahili language in general and the role that these attitudes may play in the learning/teaching process (Gardner, 1994).

Once this has been established, it might be necessary to find ways of promoting and sustaining positive attitudes towards learning of Kiswahili oral

literature. Besides establishing the attitudes of learners, it is important to find out the attitudes that teachers have towards teaching Kiswahili and how. This affects oral literature Kiswahili teaching and learning. Teachers are the curriculum implementers and it would be interesting to know how they perceive their role as oral literature teachers (Strong, 1984). How prepared and confident are the teachers in teaching the language? How motivated do they think they are in teaching Kiswahili oral literature? How highly do they regard their role as Kiswahili oral literature teachers?

It can be argued that the crucial problem at the moment is not establishing through empirical studies whether Africans have positive or negative attitudes towards teaching and learning of oral literature in African languages, but rather how to make them have positive attitudes towards the teaching and learning of such languages. Although this argument is compelling, it puts the cart before the horse. It is difficult to see any substitute for empirical research in matters of language planning. It is only when the nature of people's attitudes has been clearly established through research that one can begin to think of how to promote or sustain positive attitudes towards the learning of oral literature in African languages. Through research, the kind of attitudes that Kenyans hold towards Kiswahili language in general and the role that these attitudes may play in the learning/teaching process (Gardner, 1985) can be ascertained. Once this has been established, it might be necessary to find ways of promoting and sustaining positive attitudes towards learning of Kiswahili oral literature.

Simala (as cited in *Taifa Leo*, 2004, October 25), in a workshop of oral literature has observed that oral literature incorporates language, culture, philosophy and life in its depth and neglecting it is like selling our identity. Oral literature is supposed to be associated with the present, revived and improved on in order to attract attention. Ipara (2004), in the same workshop, has made the following observations, "Survey has shown although some teachers welcome the idea of incorporating oral literature in the Kiswahili syllabus they are some who do not like it and see it as being very difficult". As such, this paper examines the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature in secondary schools in the hope that why some teachers find it difficult may be revealed.

Need to Understand Teachers' and Students' Disposition to Kiswahili Oral Literature

It is now four 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 at the end of last year (2006) by the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). In the last eight years, the authors have taught Kiswahili literature in different schools before the curriculum review of 2002 and have observed that teachers handle Kiswahili oral literature with the least seriousness and this could be because this section was not examinable at the end of the four-year secondary school programme. The attitude of Kiswahili teachers towards Kiswahili oral literature was negative. Furthermore, teachers were not teaching using proper instructional methods to enable them achieve their objectives. Another issue of concern is that the syllabus was not piloted as the case ought to have been, but was only introduced to schools without preparing teachers.

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? Do students and teachers have negative attitude towards oral literature?

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 be after introduction of Kiswahili oral literature? In view of the above, the authors in this paper assess the attitudes of teachers and students towards Kiswahili oral literature syllabus based on a study of schools in Marakwet District.

Limitations 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 populations 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. 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 schedules and engaged the participants in a general discussion about the attitudes 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 AND DISCUSSION

Attitude in Teaching and Learning of Kiswahili Oral Literature

The purpose of the study was to investigate the teaching of Kiswahili oral literature and one aspect of concern to the researcher was to assess the attitude of teachers and students in teaching and learning of Kiswahili oral literature. Many researchers have argued that a favourite attitude towards learning/teaching a certain subject is

a positive aspect towards development and sustainability of such a subject. In this paper, the authors understand that a positive expression from the teachers towards learning and teaching of Kiswahili oral literature will serve as a boost of the subject to the students because of the enthusiasm that the teacher will be communicating the subject matter to the students in classroom.

According to the major findings of the study, the majority, 18(90%), of the teacher respondents feel that Kiswahili oral literature needs to be taught in secondary schools as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Kiswahili Oral Literature is Necessary to be taught

Necessary	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	18	90.0
No	2	10.0
Total	20	100.0

This implies that teachers on their part have a favourite attitude towards the subject. The researcher understands to be the first step towards a successful implementation of the subject and eventually quality education will be realized. Kiswahili as a language is one of the major disciplines in the school curriculum and one, which must be taught effectively. More so, every oral literature teacher must bear in mind the fact that whenever he/she is teaching a language he/she is trying to develop the child's ability to express himself or herself meaningfully as well as to discover and appreciate meaning as recorded in the great literature composed in that language.

Importance of Kiswahili Oral Literature

For every subject being taught in any curriculum say in Primary, secondary or tertiary education level, there are goals, aims, and objectives that guide the learners and teachers in their day-to-day activities towards achieving them in the long-run. As a result, the authors sought to establish from the subjects themselves, teachers, who are the main implementers of the curriculum, the benefits that could accrue from effectively teaching Kiswahili oral literature in secondary schools. According to the major findings of the study, the majority, 15(75%), of the respondents said that Kiswahili oral literature acts as a form of entertainment as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Advantages of learning Kiswahili oral literature

Advantages	Frequency	Percent (%)
Acquisition of practical language skills	14	70
Educates and creates awareness	12	60
Acts as a means of social control	6	30
Acts as a form of entertainment	15	75
Plays a role in cultural continuity	11	55

The findings bring home the fact that many teachers know the main importance of studying Kiswahili oral literature. Oral literature in Kiswahili can serve as a form of entertainment because oral literature in its entirety concerns oral use of a language creatively. In this same breath, of definition comes another importance; that is, acquisition of practical language skills because oral literature as the term implies is rendered orally hence sharpening the speakers practical language skills. According to the findings, the majority, 14(70%), of the teacher respondents felt that learning and teaching of Kiswahili oral literature leads to acquisition and mastering language skills. Hence there are fewer tendencies of students stammering as they speak because of lack of vocabulary in Kiswahili language.

One of the major objectives in the learning of Kiswahili oral literature is that the students should be able to express themselves clearly. The syllabus stipulates that verbal speaking skills should be emphasized in the teaching-learning process. As a result, Kiswahili oral literature educates and creates awareness in the process. In addition, in the definition of Kiswahili oral literature there is emphasis on creativity and it is important to note that Kiswahili oral literature involves narration in form of stories, jokes, sayings, myths, tales, riddles, songs and proverbs. This form of narration plays a major role in cultural continuity which was also acknowledged to be an advantage of studying Kiswahili oral literature by at least half the majority 11(55%). Their responses above indicate that on average Kiswahili oral literature is of importance to the learners.

This led the authors to seek the views of teachers towards the introduction of Kiswahili oral literature in secondary schools. The major findings of the study indicate that a significant 12(60%) of the respondents agreed that Kiswahili oral literature is important as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Views of Teachers towards Introduction of Kiswahili oral Literature

Views of teachers	Frequency	Percent (%)
Important	12	60.0
Difficult to learn	2	10.0
Easy to learn and teach	6	30.0
Total	20	100.0

This portrays lack of hypocrisy as far as teachers are concerned because earlier findings indicate that they viewed Kiswahili oral literature as bringing many benefits to the students and the society at large. These teachers can be viewed as the right cohort to make the teaching and learning of Kiswahili oral literature exciting to the students by communicating with enthusiasm the subject matter in classroom. One of the major objectives of any education system in existence is to prepare the student for life. This is made possible in Kiswahili oral literature by the practical skills cultivated in the students during the teaching-learning process.

The most important reason that teaching process has to be exciting is to cultivate interest in the learners. This is because it is only when the learners are interested in the subject matter that learning can take place. In relation to other literature aspects of Kiswahili, there is need for cultivation of interest in Kiswahili oral literature to make sure that students do not ignore Kiswahili oral literature at the expense of other genres such as *riwaya* (novel), *hadithi fupi* (short story), *fasihi simulizi* (oral literature) and *tamthilia* (play). The major findings of the study indicate that majority 102(63.75%) of the students respondents enjoy reading Kiswahili novel (*riwaya*) as a Kiswahili literature as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Kiswahili Literature aspect I enjoy Reading

Literature aspect	Frequency	Percent (%)
Kiswahili novel (<i>Riwaya</i>)	102	63.75
Short stories (<i>Hadithi fupi</i>)	30	18.75
Kiswahili oral literature (<i>Fasihi simulizi</i>)	12	7.5
Kiswahili play (<i>Tamthilia</i>)	16	10
Total	160	100

The findings above confirm our worst fears, that students do not have a positive attitude towards Kiswahili oral literature as compared to other literature aspects of Kiswahili. The author interprets this to mean that teachers have not been positive enough to change the student attitude towards Kiswahili oral literature. The situation could have been made worse by the teachers who earlier used to ignore Kiswahili oral literature before it was introduced as an examinable subject in 2002. These teachers are yet to face reality, that the once scorned off Kiswahili literature aspect is now to be examined at the end of the four year course. In addition, the 'don't care' attitude of teachers have led to non-usage of instructional media in teaching to cultivate interest in the students which leads the student to enjoy other Kiswahili literature aspects than oral literature. One of the most valuable contributions of instructional resources to teachers' activities as instructors is the stimulation they give to teachers' creative abilities. Media activate students as they learn actively, and enjoy the evidence of their progress. Lack of the above approaches creates a negative attitude in the students and within no time the students come to hate the subject and only study it because it will have to be examined. This is the last impression that can be created in the implementation of Kiswahili oral literature in the syllabus. According to the findings of the study, the majority, 96 (60%), of the students respondents reported that they read Kiswahili novels (*riwaya*) during their leisure time as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Read Kiswahili Literature Books during Leisure Time

Literature books	Frequency	Percent (%)
Play (tamthilia)	40	25
Novels (Riwaya)	96	60
Oral literature (Fasihi Simulizi)	20	12.5
I don't read	4	2.5
Total	160	100

This culture has been cultivated in the classroom situation and the researcher is of the view that these same teachers who, in most cases, also teach the other literature aspects of Kiswahili have portrayed Kiswahili oral literature as inferior. Reading widely requires a student who has the ability to read materials willingly and without any difficulty. A student will acquire different types of materials that are not just concerned with vocabulary but should be interesting as his/her age demands, environment, experiences demand and, his view concerning various issues. In short, the students must have developed self-interest in the subject matter itself.

There is a disagreement on the role of attitudes in language learning. For instance, some researchers (Gardner, 1985, p. 5) claim that learning comes from an individual's need to understand and express oneself and has nothing to do with an individual's attitude towards a language or people who speak it. Others, like (Gardner, 1985, p. 41) claim that favourable attitudes would be expected to result in a better performance than negative attitudes. Yet other researchers (Strong, 1984) suggest that success in second language learning contributes to heightened motivation to learn a second language; in other words, the mere satisfaction a learner derives from the achievement of the learning task may influence his/her attitude towards learning a particular language. The foregoing argument clearly shows that there is no agreement on the role that attitudes play in language learning. These views notwithstanding, it does appear that for purposes of learning, attitude does influence acquisition of knowledge either positively or negatively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that teachers do not have favourable attitudes towards the teaching and learning process of Kiswahili oral literature. The authors established that Kiswahili oral literature teachers who, in most cases, also teach the other genres of Kiswahili prefer them more than Kiswahili oral literature. This kind of attitude has led to a negative attitude by students towards the subject in relation to other Kiswahili genres such as Kiswahili novel (riwaya) which has been established as the most favourite to the students. 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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