

Challenges other Languages Spoken in Upper Primary Schools have on the Teaching and Learning of English in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence Kiswahili and local languages have on the instruction of English. Specifically it examines how languages exposed to the learners in public primary school setting influence the manner in which they learn and use English. These are the underlying issues that emerge out of a research that was conducted in Marakwet District of Kenya, 2010 -2011. The study adopted Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory. It postulates that people use language influenced by various social factors and that the adult is a major facilitator and determiner in language acquisition and use. The study used the mixed method approach and descriptive survey design to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The study focused on public primary schools because they use mother tongue as the medium of instruction in lower primary, while English is used in upper primary as required by the Kenyan language policy. Simple random and purposive sampling was used to select 21 public primary schools from 70. Twenty standard seven pupils and one teacher of English were randomly selected from each of the sampled schools. The interview schedule and questionnaire were used for data collection. Data was coded and analysed with the help of SPSS through descriptive statistics, presented in frequency tables and thematically discussed. The study established that other languages: Kiswahili and mother tongue find their way into the classroom discourse, other languages used in school affect the learning of English, pupils' use of other languages other than English affects their pronunciation, finally other languages spoken cause incompetence in spoken and written English. The study recommends: teachers as role models should strive to use English all the time in their interaction with learners; teachers promote language proficiency among pupils in order to enhance the learning of English; schools should formulate school language policies to allow for meaningful learning of English.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Mother tongue, Challenges, Other languages, Learning of English

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