

Digital Solutions for Multilingual Learning Environments the Case of GraphoGame Adaptations in Kenya

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Abstract

In Kenya, poor infrastructure and a lack of resources have led to low literacy levels. Inadequate teacher training programs lack focus on the key areas related to language and learning, which are essential in multilingual learning environments such as those found in Kenya. Multilingualism in the country means that there is a great deal of language code-switching in everyday language use, which is reflected in the classrooms. The country's language policy states that early reading should be taught in a child's mother tongue or in the language of the school catchment area, but it is difficult to implement this in reality. Consequently, the situation in the classroom does not reflect the Ministry of Education's language policy. Furthermore, the teacher training falls short on methodological training regarding the teaching of initial reading acquisition in indigenous language. The present research explored the current status of teachers' language competence, pupils' early literacy skills, and the plausibility of using GraphoGame as an intervention tool to assist pupils acquire early reading skills. The research was divided into three studies. Study 1 investigated teachers' perceptions regarding teaching early reading in indigenous languages and their knowledge of metalinguistic skills in Kikuyu and Kiswahili languages. Study 2 examined the orthography skills of first-grade pupils in the two languages and investigated GraphoGame Kikuyu and Kiswahili language adaptations as plausible intervention tools. Study 3 investigated the spelling skills of Kiswahili early readers and the effectiveness of GraphoGame Kiswahili adaptation in second-language acquisition. The study's results indicate that both teachers and their pupils lacked basic knowledge in letter-sound knowledge, syllable knowledge, and spelling, both in Kikuyu and Kiswahili languages. Analysis of the post-assessment tasks shows that children who received the GraphoGame Kikuyu and Kiswahili intervention in the second study and GraphoGame Kiswahili intervention in the third study improved in letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, and spelling. These findings further support the use of GraphoGame as a tool to assist in early reading acquisition in multilingual learning environments.

Keywords: reading acquisition, GraphoGame, multilingual learning, teacher training, Kikuyu, Kiswahili

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