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LANGUAGE PRACTICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

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Literacy is facilitated by the readiness to comprehend fluently written language and this requires accurate and fluent basic reading skills, good mastery of the language to be read and a lot of practice in reading the particular language. Basic reading skills involve the ability to pronounce written words accurately and this requires appropriate teaching instructions in a language most familiar to the pupils. Research has found that learning to read in transparent languages such as Kiswahili is easier than learning to read in English. For this reason the Ministry of Education in Kenya through the Kenya Institute of Education requires that the pupils be taught early reading instruction in a language that is most commonly spoken to them in their local communities. In addition the schools are required to emphasize the use of the language most familiar to the child in the classroom and within the school so as to facilitate better comprehension when learning reading.

In Kenya English is used as the official language of communication and Kiswahili is considered to be the National language. Nairobi being a multilingual province provides a setting where both these languages are used and consequently in the schools opaque and transparent alphabet codes and analytical and synthetic teaching methods collide. The aim of this study was to see whether the practices in the schools reflect the recommendations on language use for early reading instruction and whether the schools encourage the use of the most commonly spoken local language. A questionnaire was distributed to 221 teachers from 30 schools across Nairobi. The teachers were from public, primary and community schools which are the three main categories of schools in Kenya. The teachers were required to answer questions concerning the language of reading instruction, language use in class and outside class within the school as well as give their view on the general performance and preference of the pupils between English and Kiswahili.

The results indicate that there are conflicting practices with regard to language of early reading instruction and language use in the schools which have resulted from both English and Kiswahili being working recognized languages in Kenya. Therefore the schools especially the public and community schools in Nairobi are not able to adapt Kiswahili exclusively for reading instruction as is recommended by the Ministry of education.

Literacy, Kiswahili, English, Transparent languages, Opaque languages

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1 Introduction

A good quality education equips pupils with literacy skills for life and further learning; literate parents are more likely to keep their children healthy and send their children to school; literate people are better able to access their education and employment opportunities; and collectively, literate societies are better geared to meet development challenges. Achieving widespread literacy can only happen in the context of building literate societies that encourage individuals to acquire and use their literacy skills (UNESCO 2008). Literacy skills include reading and writing and are those skills that enable a learner to learn to read and write with independence, comprehension and fluency (Lingualinks 1999). To enable mastery of literacy skills reading and writing must be taught by well trained teachers with an understanding of the basic concepts of reading and how to effectively provide reading instructions.

There are many challenges that face literacy in the world today especially in Sub-Saharan Africa among them, the language of early reading instruction combined with inappropriate and poor teaching methods. This is because a majority of the population in this region is multilingual (List of multilingual countries and regions: encyclopedia 2009). Multilingualism can be defined as the ability of a person to speak more than one language at a level that can be understood by other persons speaking the same languages. A multilingual society can thus be said to be a society in which several languages are spoken. Multilingualism at a personal level always implies some degree of fluency in more than one variety. An example of a multilingual country in Sub-Saharan Africa is Kenya. Although multilingualism is a gift and a resource and it contributes to the reinforcement of one's own, local identity in order to permit healthy engagement with the rest of the world (Trudell 2009 pg 1-9) various complications can arise if its effect in education is ignored especially in Kenya

where in addition to the more than 40 tribes there is also English the official language and Kiswahili the national language (Kenyalogy 2010).

Neither English nor Kiswahili can be considered to be the true language of Kenya because not everybody in Kenya can speak the two languages and there is a large percentage of the population who do not speak these languages fluently. The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language estimates English-speakers in Kenya to constitute about 2.24 million people, while the BBC World Service estimates 3.4 million adult English speakers in the country. The general population in the towns and cities usually speaks some form of Kiswahili (not necessarily the correct one) although the native speakers are mainly in the coastal region.

Consequently, many Kenyans still view English and Kiswahili as foreign languages. However, we cannot underestimate the significance of the two languages in Kenya. English being the official language of communication, all Kenyans of school going age are required to learn it. It is the language of instruction in almost all upper primary schools and institutions of higher learning. It is the language of examination for all subjects other than other languages in all national examinations (Semali and Kincheloe 1999 pg 228-240). Kenya was a British colony from 1920 and became independent in 1963 after the 'Mau Mau' rebellion. English then became the official language although it was replaced by Kiswahili in 1974; in spite of this English is still an important language for the population of 28 million. Most official documents are written in English with some bearing a translation in Kiswahili (Fennell 2001 pg 251-252).

The Kiswahili language has increasingly become popular mainly due to its status as the national language. Further recognition of the language was legitimized when in 1985 it was made a compulsory subject for all students at both primary and secondary school levels. Therefore, most educated Kenyans are able to communicate with average fluency in Kiswahili, since it is a

compulsory subject in school from grade one. Ogechi (2002 pg 171-173) argues the case for more educational publications in Kiswahili as a good medium for educational and national development. His paper acknowledges that education is not only a capital investment in the development of human resources but it also immensely contributes to the development of a nation. However, educational development cannot be achieved without support services such as books in all fields and in a language that is readily understood by many people. Although we are acknowledging the increase in use of the Kiswahili language, we cannot ignore the fact that Kenya still remains a multilingual society and that this multilingualism has a significant influence on the education system especially when it comes to literacy.

A survey conducted between June and August 2006 by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) in collaboration with the department of Adult Education, UNESCO Nairobi office, revealed that there is high adult illiteracy. This survey was conducted by opinion polling and it was the first of its kind requiring adults to demonstrate their actual reading skill. In general the survey showed that the country had a national adult literacy rate of 61.5%, indicating that more people were more knowledgeable in computation than reading. It also revealed that only 29.6% of the adult population had acquired the desired mastery level of literacy. The critical finding was that on average 38.5% (7.8 million) of the Kenyan adult population was illiterate.

Literacy development is a process that is both componential and cumulative and this is because it starts before school entry and takes place throughout ones life into adulthood. It begins with early skills related to reading and writing such as oral language skills, familiarity and understanding the concepts of print, understanding of text structures and acquisition of knowledge. Learning how speech is represented in writing requires the capacity to analyze spoken language into smaller units and to learn the rules for representing these units into graphemes and for this reading and writing become the essential tools. It

has been pointed out that in Sub-Saharan African countries such as Kenya; lack of proper literacy instruction itself is an explanatory factor of poor student performance and inability to master literacy skills (August and Shanahan 2008 pg 28-33). For this reason it is necessary to understand the teachers' perspectives on language use in the schools as they are the people who give the literacy instruction in reading.

This study takes place in Nairobi which is the capital city of Kenya and in 1 surrounding rural district Kinoo. Nairobi is a cosmopolitan and multicultural city and is the most populous city in East Africa with a current estimated population of approximately 3 million (Kenya Statistics 2009). After independence the city grew rapidly due to urbanisation and people from all the 7 other provinces moved to the city to search for employment and greener pastures and this put much pressure on the infrastructure. The people from the 7 provinces all speak different languages and consequently the main languages spoken in Nairobi are English and Kiswahili and in recent years Sheng'. English is the legal, business and administrative language while Kiswahili remains the lingua franca (Pulse Africa 2010). There are approximately 65 primary schools in Nairobi although it is important to note that there are many other schools that are not registered and these mainly fall under the category of community schools (City Council of Nairobi: Education department 2008).

The primary schools are located in different parts of the city which is divided into 8 divisions and fifty locations that are named mostly after residential estates. In some locations for example Kibera, you have Kibera (the largest slum in East Africa) and affluent estates such as 'Karen', 'Westlands' and 'Lang'ata' neighbouring each other. English is mainly used among children who come from well to do families but the language generally spoken by most children is Kiswahili and Sheng' which is very popular in the Eastlands area which is home to about 1.6 million people. It is the poorest and the most populous section of the city (Microsoft 2006).

2 The basic concepts of teaching reading and writing

Learning to read is the initial and basic step towards literacy and therefore reading instructions should be taught correctly to enable children master literacy skills into adulthood. Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols for the intention of deriving meaning. It is a means of language acquisition, communication and sharing information and ideas. Being an invention that is only 6000 years old, there has not been enough revolutionary time for the human physiology of reading to be perfected. Consequently numerous researches have and continue to be done in this field. There is a fundamental difference between spoken and written language and over history humans have found ways to represent their spoken sounds with written symbols hence the development of written texts (Live Ink 2004).

Reading may be defined as the process of extracting and constructing meaning from written text in a language that is readily understood by the learner. Many children experience difficulty when learning to read because reading requires the mastery of a code that maps human speech sounds to written symbols. Although reading appears to come naturally the mastering of this code is not a natural process like the development of language and therefore requires instruction. Reading can be very difficult if students don't get good instruction in this code (Pressley 2006 Pg 66-71) in a language that is consistent with the one they are learning or have already learnt at home (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-207).

Writing is often considered as the representation of language in a textual medium through the use of set designs or symbols known as a writing system. A writing system is a set of visible or tactile signs used to represent the units of language in a systematic way with the purpose of recording messages that can

be retrieved by everyone who knows the language in question. They use sets of symbols to represent the sounds of speech and also have symbols for such things as punctuations and numerals. Writing systems are both functional and symbolic as they provide a visual way to represent language and they represent different cultures and different people (Ager 2010).

In order to learn to read and write one must learn the alphabet. The alphabet is a standardized set of letters which are the basic written symbol of language and each roughly represent a phoneme in spoken language. Phonemes are the basis of writing system for all languages with highly complex syllable structure and inconsistent phonological patterns, like European languages. Phonemes are spelt into print using graphemes (the basic units in written language). Alphabetic letters are examples of graphemes. There are more speech sounds in most languages than there are letters in the Roman alphabet, which is why some sounds need to be encoded with a combination of letters known as digraphs (McGuinness, 2004 pg 10 -35). The concept of grapheme includes both letters and digraphs that are used to symbolize speech sounds. For example, the word *ship* contains four graphemes (*s*, *h*, *i*, and *p*) but only three phonemes, because *sh* is a digraph (Crystal 2003).

When teaching reading of alphabetic languages both teachers and learners must understand the alphabetic principle which is that words are composed of letters that represent each speech sound (phonological recoding). In order to master basic reading skills one has to use systematic relationships between letters and phonemes (letter-sound correspondence) to retrieve the pronunciation of an unknown printed string or to spell words. Understanding the alphabetic principle is important for acquiring proficiency in phonological (letter-sound) recoding. As readers are taught to read the speech utterances it is expected that they will develop phonological awareness which is critical for development of decoding skills (Vellutino et al. 2004 pg 1-3).

Reading skills are specific abilities which enable a reader to read written texts with independence, comprehension and fluency and understand them as meaningful language (LinguaLinks 1999). Developing decoding skills is the first step towards acquiring reading skills. The alphabet is a reversible code that is used to turn speech into print. Spelling or encoding is the fundamental operation of turning sounds (phonemes) into symbols (graphemes, letters). The reading process is decoding those symbols back into speech sounds to recover the words. The process of spelling involves identification of each phoneme in a sequence in the mind, which in turn leads to remembering how each phoneme in that particular word is spelled, and then writing it down. In other words what one can spell one can read easily. (McGuinness 2004 pg 279-328)

In mastering reading and writing one must understand the orthography of the language. Orthographic awareness refers to the perception and recall of letter strings and word forms which also allows one to form a mental representation of the appearance of a letter or word. Orthographic sensitivity helps a person to become aware of the common spelling patterns that exist in a given language (Mather and Goldstein 2001). For example in English spelling the consonants 'csd' cannot be used in words without vowels in between them. Therefore sensitivity to orthography helps a person to know standardized spellings and knowledge of acceptable or unacceptable writing systems and enables us to identify spelling mistakes in print even if the words are not familiar to us. Orthographic awareness is often measured with reading or spelling pseudo words (words that do not mean anything but are structurally correct in a particular language) (McGuinness 2004 pg 279-344).

All writing systems are also based on the phonetics aspects of language (Aro 2003 pg 533) which therefore makes phonological awareness an important factor in reading. A phoneme is the smallest segmental unit of sound that is employed to form meaningful contrasts between utterances. They can therefore be described as a group of slightly different sounds which are all perceived to

have the same function by speakers of the same language or dialect. An example of a phoneme is the /k/ sound in the words 'keep' and 'skip'. Phonological awareness refers to an individual's awareness of the sound structure or phonological structure. It includes the ability to distinguish units of speech such as word syllables and syllables of individual phonemes by hearing them. The ability to segment and blend phonemes is critical for the development of decoding skills, reading fluency and spelling. It is a reliable predictor of later reading abilities and is demonstrated by awareness of sounds at three levels sound structure syllables, syllable fragments (onsets and rimes) and phonemes (McGuiness 2004 pg 279-328).

Phonological and orthographical awareness are reciprocally related cognitions that are both necessary in order to form sensitivity to the regularities and redundancies characteristic of alphabetic writing systems(e.g., "at" in "cat", "fat" and "rat" and "ing" in "walking" and "running" in English language) and children who have difficulty in acquiring phonological awareness and learning to map alphabetic symbols to sounds will consequently have difficulty acquiring orthographic awareness (Vellutino et al. 2004 pg 3-5) although the importance of phonological awareness is significantly smaller in 'transparent languages' (Holopainen, 2001 pg 401-404).

2.1   Phonetic and Synthetic teaching methods

Teaching a person to read requires that one has sufficient spoken language skill and know how the writing system of that language works (McGuiness, 2004 pg 211-247). In addition the appropriate teaching methods must be employed especially for those children who show difficulty in learning to read. In the past, teaching phoneme-grapheme correspondences has not been the basis of literacy teaching. For example, it was thought that readers memorize connections between the visual shapes of words and their meanings ("sight-words") (Ehri & McCormick 1998 pg 135). Early theories of learning acquisition assumed that

children must learn the order of letters in words by rote memory and memorize every word separately and there was no role for phonological knowledge or generalisations (Alcock & Ngorosho 2003 pg 635-636).

Adequate facility in word identification depends heavily on the reader's ability to acquire facility in alphabetic coding. Because of the heavy load on visual memory imposed by the high degree of similarity characteristic of words derived from an alphabet (pot/top; was/saw), sight word learning depends on the child's ability to acquire understanding and functional use of the alphabetic principle (Vellutino et al. 2004 pg 2-40). That is to say that, sight word reading is also done by using readers' general knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Ehri & McCormick, 1998 pg 167-188). When readers acquire sufficient knowledge of the alphabetic system, they are able to learn sight words quickly and to remember them long term: any word that is read sufficiently often becomes a sight word that is read from memory (Ehri 2005 pg 167-188). Automatic retrieval of letter-sound correspondences is the basis for sight word reading. This is supported by the growing consensus that the most influential cause of difficulties in learning to read is the failure to acquire phonological awareness and skill in alphabetic coding (Vellutino et al. 2004 pg 2-40).

In some countries like Italy for example, it is possible for teachers to choose whether they want to use analytical or synthetical approach to reading (European Commission, 1999, p.127). In Kenya the teachers do not have this luxury as the teachers themselves are not conversant with these teaching methods. Many use different codes to teach in class as they use a combination of different languages (Kiswahili, English and in some cases the local language) as was evident in the study by Bunyi (2001) (Lin and Martin 2005 pg. 131-159).

Research has shown that English is a difficult language to learn to read in than other European languages (especially when traditional, non-phonic, teaching methods have been in use) (Geva & Siegel, 2000 pg 1-30). There exists not a single empirical study that shows English children to be better in phonological

recoding than children who use any other alphabetic orthography (Landerl 2000 pg 239-257.). To solve the problem of the English language phonetics teaching methods have been recommended by numerous researchers.

Phonetics is the study of the sounds that people make when they speak.Some languages match the sounds to the writing of the language so that every letter or symbol is always pronounced the same way. These languages are called "phonetic" languages and most transparent languages such as Kiswahili fall into this category. The English language is not a phonetic language mainly because it does not have one on one grapheme phoneme correspondence. Many words are pronounced differently from how they are written. Many learners of English find it very difficult to pronounce some of the English sounds because these sounds are not in their own languages. To overcome many of these pronunciation problems every learner of English should first be taught, study and learn the international phonetic symbols used in the English language. (There are many international phonetic symbols for all languages). The phonetic symbols show how to pronounce English words while the letters of the alphabet show how to write English words (Celtic publications 2007).

However, in the realistic Kenyan situation how are the teachers to teach English and Kiswahili when they are also not conversant with the English language (Native speaker standard) and have also not received the right instruction during their teacher education for teaching reading in Kiswahili? In chapter 3 we will look at the education system in Kenya and the teacher education programme.

2.2 Challenges in teaching reading in transparent and opaque languages

Most important models of alphabetic literacy acquisition are presented as general models of learning to read in alphabetic orthographies. Unfortunately

these models are based on the research of acquiring the single orthography of English and consequently they are biased. Recent research findings suggest that there is considerable variation in the rate of reading acquisition among orthographies and that this variation is related to orthographic depth (transparency, regularity, consistency)

Reading is primarily a linguistic skill and normal reading ability assumes adequate language comprehension and fluent word identification. A child will have less difficulty in learning to read words that are in the child's speaking language (Vellutino et al. 2004 pg 3-11). Languages differ orthographically and in terms of their overall phonological patterns. It is important to be aware of not only which phonemes exist in the language, but also which combinations of these phonemes are permissible, and what constitutes an acceptable syllable, among other differences. Hence difficulties that exist for beginning English spellers may not exist for beginning spellers in other languages. Over the years English methodologies have been used to teach reading in other languages and as a result the children have developed many learning difficulties. Studies appear to show that the regularity of a language influences the ease of learning to read (Alcock & Ngorosho 2003 pg 638-639).Learning to read in regular languages such as Finnish has been found to be much easier than learning to read in English (Seymour et al. 2003 pg 143).

Kenya is a multilingual country with English and Kiswahili both being used as working languages. The emergence of Sheng' which has now found its way even among adults of respectable professions is clear proof of the interference between languages especially English and Kiswahili. Sheng' is a Kiswahili based slang language that originated in the 'Eastlands' ghettos of Nairobi, Kenya. It is influenced by the different languages spoken in Nairobi whose population is rapidly growing due to urbanisation. The word is coined from some of the letters of the names of the two languages (S)wa(h)ili and (Eng)lish but in practice it borrows words from other languages such as 'Kamba' , 'Kikuyu', 'Luo' and even from other European languages such as German.

Currently, many youths have adopted Sheng' as a vernacular language and many critics (especially primary and secondary school teachers responsible for language instruction) claim that it is undermining standard Kiswahili (Chege 2002 pg 159-181).

Like many other British colonies, Kenya adapted English as its official language after independence and therefore the significance of the English language in the country cannot be undermined. The rapid spread of education after independence and the continued use of English as the official language gave rise to the need for English speaking teachers because the native speakers of the language were now leaving the country. The attainment of independence also stripped English of some of the prestige it had enjoyed during the colonial period. There was more tolerance of non-native usage of English, as seen in the success story of the African independent schools.

The aspiration to speak like the British began to be associated with a colonial hangover and, therefore, was stigmatised. However, the internal norms of correctness and appropriateness with regard to pronunciation, grammar and semantics theoretically remained the British norm. It is partly this lack of concordance between practice and attitudes towards English on the one hand, and the British norm and its demands on the other hand that has had undesirable consequences for the use of the English language in education in Kenya today. Even after attaining a university level of education many graduates are still not conversant with the English language and a majority have not acquired the level expected for native English speaking. For the student, there is almost no model of the native speaker variety and so it is very difficult to attain the required proficiency (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-211).

Studies in English have found errors that can be accounted for on the basis of lack of orthographic knowledge, differing phonological representations, dialect differences, lack of knowledge about how grammatical differences are

represented in the orthography, and lack of word specific knowledge. English is of course one of the least regularly spelled languages and any conclusions about spelling development must take this into account (Alcock & Ngorosho 2003 pg 638-639).

The problem with English originates from the fact that English represents five languages with their different spelling systems superimposed on each other. Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norman French, Classical Latin and Greek and this makes English a language with more that 40 phonemes and about 176 ways to spell them and consequently there are not enough letters in the alphabet for all the phonemes, for example, there are only 6 vowel letters for approximately 23 vowel sounds. Because there are not enough letters to encode the phonemes, digraphs (letter combinations) are used for a single phoneme. This is the complexity that makes English an opaque language as there are multiple spellings for the same phoneme (McGuiness pg 55-56 2004).

Because of this complexity English has been taught starting with whole words first and then moving to smaller components of the words. For example, the expected process of learning in United Kingdom is described as 1) use and understand the organization of books, 2) knowing that words have a meaning and right direction of reading and writing 3) associating sounds with patterns in rhymes, syllables, words and letters 4) recognizing one's name and familiar words and 5) recognizing letters of the alphabet by their shape and sound (European Commission, 1999). In general, reading instruction regimes in English put more emphasis on whole word recognition and less on phonological decoding abilities than in most of consistent orthographies (Landerl 2000 pg 239-257).

English is generally said to be the most opaque alphabetic orthography, with complex and context-sensitive grapheme-phoneme pairings, multi-letter graphemes and inconsistencies. At the opposite end of the language continuum are orthographies such as Finnish, Italian and Spanish, where the

correspondences are more consistent, allowing reading acquisition simply by learning of letter-sound associations (Lyytinen et al, 2006a pg 517-519). This explicit difference between English and more transparent writing systems can be seen from the curricula of these countries as well. In Spain, teaching the grapheme-phoneme correspondences and teaching meaning of text appears simultaneously in the first cycle of primary education and the children are expected to identify meaningful written words before pre-primary education and working out meaning by applying the written code is expected from the age of six years (European Commission, 1999 pg 113).

In terms of reading accuracy, English speaking children lag behind their peers who are learning to read in more consistent orthographies (Lyytinen et al, 2006a pg 515-522). The differences between reading in English compared to other languages was shown e.g. in a study made by Wimmer and Aro (2003). In this study the results showed that at the end of Grade 1, the reading accuracy levels of German, Dutch, French, Spanish and Finnish children were around 85%, and above 90% for Swedish children. The English children reached only 50% at that time and did not reach the accuracy levels of their Grade 1 counterparts until the end of Grade 4. For example, at the end of Grade 2, Swedish, Spanish and French children were already above 90% (and Finnish children at 89.6%) when English children had accuracy level of 71%. The English results were significantly poorer compared to the other languages at all grade levels.

In a research by Seymour et al. (2003) there was no significant difference between English speaking children and the Non-English in knowing letter-name connections, but speed and accuracy of reading familiar words was much poorer in the English sample than in the rest of the language groups. Same result was gained in reading pseudo words. It is also important to note that comparisons between English speaking and other children were not held back by social disadvantage: the English participants were making excellent progress according to UK norms. Still, the rate of learning to read was significantly

slower in English when compared to the other languages with more regular orthographies.

Another example of a language with a very regular orthography is Kiswahili which is spoken by a majority of the population in Kenya in comparison to English. It is a language of the Bantu group spoken in areas of East Africa, particularly Tanzania and Kenya, it is taught in schools in Kenya and Uganda and in addition is a trade language in a wider area of East Africa, including some areas of Zaire, Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique and Zambia. However, use as a first language is limited to coastal and island areas of Tanzania and Kenya. Like in many other Bantu languages, Kiswahili has only five vowels and it is therefore possible to write the language using the Roman alphabet. It also has one-to-one grapheme-phoneme correspondence meaning that it is possible to read the language using one-to-one simple grapheme-phoneme correspondences, with a few digraphs, but without any additional orthographic knowledge. It can therefore be classified as a transparent language.

Previous research (Alcock et al., 2000) has shown that children learning to read Kiswahili display the typical pattern for children learning to read a regularly spelled language, that is to say that they can decode all words including those they do not comprehend once they have grasped the grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Alcock and Ngorosho 2003 Pg 639-662). However transcription from phoneme to grapheme is not perfectly regular because Kiswahili has a complex grammatical system in which many parts of a sentence must share markings that refer to grammatical class (a feature of the language similar to grammatical gender as it exists in many European languages). In addition, dialect differences make some phonological differences that are preserved in the orthography but are irrelevant for beginning spellers for example /l/ and /r/ are often confused by younger speakers of Kiswahili and some Kiswahili speakers from Tanzania (Alcock and Ngorosho 2005 Pg 406).

3 The Kenyan education system

Traditional education in Kenya followed what was the norm in the traditional African societies and that is education was intimately integrated with the social, cultural, artistic, religious, and recreational life of the ethnic group (Marah 2006 pg 15). Western education was introduced by the missionaries in the 16th century. As the missionaries established themselves on the mainland they started schools as a means of converting the Africans into Christianity. Their acceptance was somehow based on the fact that they used these schools to rehabilitate the slaves who were returned by the Arabs. The Arabs had already established some schools at the coast where they taught the Koran. Later the British colonial government urged the missionaries to introduce a technical focus in addition to the religious studies in the schools. In 1909 the British government established the education board where the establishment of the department of Education was recommended.

The period beginning 1923 marked the beginning of the three-tier education system in Kenya. These were racially segregated schools for Europeans (whites), Asians, and Africans. It was also the starting point of a joint venture between the colonial government and the missionaries, whereby the missionaries paved the way for colonialism. After Kenyan independence was achieved, the three-tier system developed into three types of schools: government (public schools), private and/or missionary, and harambee/community (a grass-root movement of self-help schools). As of the early 2000s, the government schools have deteriorated and lost prestige due to lack of funding. The private schools seem to prosper most due to the hefty school fees they impose on the parents. In the government schools tuition is was waived; however, the government introduced a cost-sharing funding of the schools, whereby the parents contribute to the building facilities and supplies. Because most of the parents cannot afford their share, the schools started falling

apart. This created chaos in Kenya's educational system that has resulted in poorly trained personnel and loss of quality education (Education encyclopedia 2010).

The Kenya education policy was and is still implemented under the mandate of the Ministry of Education, which is also responsible for writing up educational curricula through the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), and setting and regulating national examinations through the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). Education takes up to 25 percent of the government expenditure (Education encyclopedia 2010).

3.1   Language of early reading instruction in Kenya

Language issues in education in Kenya were first discussed at the 1909 Missionary conference. Since then and after independence, language policy has been reviewed several times in Kenya. Certain factors have often characterized these reviews and they are that indigenous languages have never captured legitimate attention and the resulting revisions have been influenced by conflicting theories, divergent attitudes, changing political ideologies and aspirations and indecisiveness (Liddicoat 2007 pg 24-27). Even in the most recent commission report, Koech commission report 2000, which was mandated to recommend ways and means of enabling the education system to facilitate national unity, mutual social responsibility, accelerated industrial and technological development, life-long learning, and adaptation in response to changing circumstances language policy and language of instruction in school did not feature anywhere in the report. And yet it is evident that language of instruction is at the core of attaining literacy and mastering of literacy skills (Ngigi and Macharia 2006 pg1-7).

An examination of the language issue in Kenya reveals obvious contradictions in an education policy that has perpetuated suppression of indigenous

languages and supported the continued use of the English language as the medium of instruction and examinations in school. Kenya like many other states that gained independence from the British inherited the British language policy and continues to use it despite the many cultural and educational problems it has created. Language issues in education cannot continue to be ignored if the country is intent on eradicating illiteracy and improving education standards among its people (Semali and Kincheloe 1999 pg 228-231).

In the pre colonial period education was mostly offered by the missionaries whose sole purpose was to promote Christianity (Bloch et al. 2003 pg 236-240) and the language of reading instruction was taught in vernacular to enable the natives translate the bible. Kenya being a multilingual state, there are three main challenges facing language in education from the start of the colonial period, what language was to be used as the medium of instruction?; at what level in the educational system was this language to be introduced?; who were qualified to teach this language? (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201 -211). As the colonial government became more involved in education, the question as to whether English should be taught or used as a medium of education in the African schools became a big challenge to the then educators.

In 1909 there was general acceptance that English should be introduced in the African schools. Various committees and commissions sat to consider this challenge at various stages of the development of the Kenyan education system (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-211). They adopted a position whereby the local language of a school catchment's area would be used on the commencement of primary education. English could be introduced later on when the pupils had reached an approved standard of proficiency in their native language. Nevertheless, English could only be taught if recognised teachers of English were available.

This was followed by the Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924 which while recommending the use of indigenous languages as language of Instruction

(LOI), argued for teaching of English as a second language after the mastery of reading and writing skills in the first language but that Kiswahili should cease to be taught except in the coastal area where it is the vernacular. Further developments following the recommendations of the East African royal Commission Report of 1953 to 1955 saw English introduced as the language of instruction from class 1 in 1958 in some schools (Liddicoat 2007 pg 24-27). Different schools used different media of instruction at that time. There being no unified Kenya Preliminary Examination at the conclusion of primary education, this situation presented a problem to the education system. It was difficult to adopt a common syllabus because different languages were used as media of instruction (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-211).

The years 1945 to 1962 saw the spread of the use of English as a medium of instruction in teacher training colleges and in primary schools (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-211). After independence a highly centralized system of education was established in which government control was exercised through financing and regulating education although participation from the missions and volunteer organizations was welcome. During this period there was a strong rationalisation that all learners needed to learn in English to produce a skilled labour force to run government and industry. The Ominde commission of 1964 strengthened this position and instituted English as the Language of Instruction in all schools from class one. English had become the official language of learning and Kiswahili was recommended only as a subject in primary schools.

In the most recent review of education (Republic of Kenya, 1999 – popularly known as the Koech Commission Report), which did extensive work collecting information on how to improve the education system and given the contradictions and problems that Kenya continues to have with regard to the Language of Instruction in schools, one would have expected the language of

instruction issue to feature prominently in the review. Unfortunately, the language of instruction issue was not addressed at all (Liddicoat 2007 pg 24-27).

Currently the medium-of-instruction policy in Kenya is that in linguistically homogenous school neighbourhoods, the indigenous language of the area is to be used from class 1 to 3; in linguistically heterogeneous school neighbourhoods like in urban areas the national language Kiswahili or official language, English is to be used depending on where the school is located (Lower middle class Middle class/ Upper middle class and Rich areas. Where indigenous languages or Kiswahili is used as a medium of instruction from class 1 to 3 a switch to English is made at the beginning of class 4 (Bunyi 2001 pg 90).

The discrepancy in English language in education in Kenya is that the teachers and learners of English have very little or no contact at all with the supposed Standard British English and secondly English is not the first language of majority of the children and thirdly, the indigenous languages and Kiswahili have alphabet codes that conflict with the English alphabet code (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-211). Although the language policy in the end means that Kiswahili be used as the language of early reading instruction in most of the urban schools especially in Nairobi, there still exists a large percentage of these schools that use English instead (Mutua and Sunal 2006 pg 21). This poses a dilemma because English is not the first language of majority of the children.

Other studies have shown that an achievement gap exists between children who are educated in urban schools and those educated in rural schools. Differences in the two settings include differences in physical infrastructure and educational resources, differences in living conditions for both students and teachers and differences in language use and policy. The effects of unequal language experiences on school achievement in Kenya have been examined by

various scholars. The investigation of the relationship between early language experiences and overall scores on KCPE done by Mutuku (2000) reported a strong correlation between the children's early language experiences and performance on the test which determines the educational opportunities available to them after primary school.

The study reported highly significant differences between the performances of urban students and rural students on KCPE English and Kiswahili based on different early language experiences. The above studies show that the language of early reading instruction is a key element in the acquisition of proper literacy skills which are useful for the students in their secondary and tertiary education and subsequently employment in various fields
(Mutuku et al. 2006 pg 19-34).

3.2 Pre-Primary and Primary School Education in Kenya

The government assumed responsibility for pre-school (pre-primary) education in 1980 and has undertaken the training of preschool teachers, the preparation and development of the curriculum, and the preparation of teaching materials (Education Encyclopedia 2010). In 1984 the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) was established and its functions include developing and disseminating appropriate curriculum, and coordinating with external partners and other government agencies (Swadener, Karibu & Njenga 2000 pg 215 to 218).

The Pre-School Education Program is run on a partnership policy between the Central Government, the District-based partners such as local authorities, parents & local leaders and external agencies. The official age for entry into Pre-primary is 3-6 years, after which a child joins primary class one (Kenya-Brussels 2009). Before pre-primary education was exclusively the responsibility of local communities and nongovernmental organizations such as churches, voluntary

organizations, local authorities, and individual investors. However, the costs of teachers' services continue to be met by the community and other non-governmental agencies (Education Encyclopedia 2010).

Some of the objectives of Early Childhood Development Program in Kenya include: To provide education geared towards development of the child's mental and physical capabilities; to improve the status of the child's health, care and nutritional needs, and link him/her with health services such as immunization, health check-ups and growth monitoring and promotion; to enrich the child's experiences to enable him/her cope better with primary schools life (KIE 2007 pg. 3-4). Not all primary schools have the pre-unit classes and some pre-units are part of Kindergartens or nursery schools.

Primary education begins the first phase of the formal educational system. It starts at six years of age and runs for eight years while ensuring the provision of a more functional and practical education that largely meets the needs of the majority of the children who terminate their formal education at the end of standard eight. It also caters for those wishing to join secondary schools (Kenya-Brussels 2009). The main purpose of primary education is to prepare children to participate fully in the social, political, and economic well being of the country. The primary school curriculum has therefore been designed to provide a functional and practical education that caters both to the needs of children who finish their education at the primary school level, and to those who wish to continue with secondary education.

Before independence, primary education was almost exclusively the responsibility of the communities or non-governmental agencies such as local church groups. Since independence the government has gradually taken over the administration of primary education from local authorities. At the conclusion of primary school, pupils take a national examination and receive a Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Graduates either proceed to a secondary school for four years or join tertiary institutions such as Youth

Polytechnics, a technical training institute, or the job market. But in recent years it is almost impossible to find employment with a primary school certificate alone (University of Phoenix 2010).

Candidates for the KCPE are tested in seven subjects. Kiswahili, English, Mathematics, Science and Agriculture (SCA), Home Science and Business Education (HSBE), Geography, History and Civics (GHC) and Art, Craft and Music (ACM). Each subject is awarded 100 marks and all the examinations with the exception of Kiswahili are in English. After successful completion of these examinations, two certificates are awarded to students: The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education awarded by the Kenya National examination council (KNEC) and The Kenya Primary school leaving certificate issued by the head teacher of the school with authority of the Director of Education (Kenya High Commission: Education 2007)

In 2003 Primary education became free and compulsory during which time "gross enrolment increased to 104%" (IPS 2008) and while this has increased participation, it has brought with it considerable problems. As a result of the high influx of new pupils, classrooms are congested and this has exacerbated the problem of teaching and learning facilities not to mention the teacher to pupil ratio as many of the schools are understaffed. The consequence of this is poor quality education as a result of overcrowding, lack of teachers and of learning materials. With these challenges, similar to those faced by previous governments, the attainment of Universal Primary Education will continue to be an illusion (Sifuna 2005).

 Currently, there are approximately 18,000 primary schools in Kenya (Education encyclopedia 2010). Therefore the Government is faced with budget constrains and the available resources need to be allocated efficiently in order to realize the education targets (Kimenyi 2004). Particularly, emphasis needs to be placed on the Language of Instruction and programs should be put in place to aid in

reinforcing the language policy. At present, students undergo eight years of primary education, four years in secondary school and an additional four years at the university. This is what constitutes the 8-4-4 system of education which has been in place for more than fifteen years. Initially 8-4-4 required primary school children to tackle thirteen subjects a year and secondary school students twelve subjects. After protests from teachers this was reduced to eight and seven subjects respectively (Inter Press Service 2003).

3.3   The Primary school curriculum

The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) is charged with the responsibility of curriculum development for schools and post schools institutions by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The school curriculum is made for primary education from Pre-school to Class 8 as well as secondary education (Form I to Form IV). The post-school curriculum is basically for courses offered in tertiary institutions which include polytechnics, primary teacher training colleges, teacher certificate in adult education colleges etc. KIE is also involved in quality assurance in education by ensuring that needs assessments are carried out often to align the curriculum with current trends in education as well as developing a curriculum that is driven by provision of quality education with respect to market demands (Kenya Position Paper 2004).

The curriculum in primary schools throughout the country is similar and is developed in English by national panels at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). Kiswahili and English are both taught in Kenyan schools. Kiswahili is supposed to be the language of instruction in grades 1 through 3, in urban schools and in the rural schools (mother tongue) local language is to be used while English is taught as a subject (Kenya Position Paper 2004). In the lower grades (class1, 2 and 3) the pupils are required to learn three language subjects. The main subject should be the Mother tongue (which should be the language

for reading instruction) while English and Kiswahili are taught as subjects in rural schools.

In grade 4, English replaces Kiswahili/local language as the language of instruction and Kiswahili is taught as a subject until grade 12 (Kenya position paper 2004). The Kenya Institute of Education requires that this reading instruction be followed and reinforced in all the schools but the reality of multilingual society in Kenya poses many challenges. In some of the rural schools literacy becomes a challenge because even after the third year of school as required by the Kenya Institute of Education, reading instruction is not given in English. It continues to be given in the local language with no regard to the fact that the final examination at the end of the eighth year of primary education is in English. In addition many of the teachers use the English alphabet and English alphabet sounds to teach the local language (Personal observation 2008).

The curriculum since the 1970s has continually been criticized for not comprehensively addressing the needs of Kenyan pupils. The overriding criticism has been that the content is irrelevant and inappropriate; that is it emphasizes passing of examinations at the expense of the acquisition of knowledge and skills and developing attitudes appropriate for effective living. It also does not address the fact that the language of instruction has now been switched from English to Mother tongue/Kiswahili. Clearly there is need for the curriculum planners and developers to address more seriously the cultural and social realities of the learners in the curriculum. Central to the learners' cultural and social experience are the languages they use in their everyday interactions. Lack of accommodation of language issues into the curriculum has far reaching pedagogical implications (Semali and Kincheloe 1999 pg 230-232).

Following the recommendations by the KIE the language for early reading instruction should be Kiswahili for almost all schools located in Nairobi. Children of majority of the lower middleclass to urban poor who form majority

of the population have little access to English outside the school as Kiswahili is the language spoken in most of their communities (Lin and Martin 2005 pg 135-157).

3.4   Pre-Primary and Primary School Teacher Education in Kenya

In 1984 the national Center for early Childhood Education (NACECE) was established in part for pre school teacher education. These teachers are not hired through the Kenya government like is the case for teachers of public primary schools even though their education is facilitated by NACECE and DICECE (District Centers for Early Childhood Education). Most of the rural pre schools function on Community (harambee) basis with the local community charged with the responsibility of hiring the teacher (Garcia et al 2008 pg 407-420).

Primary teacher education is mostly offered in teacher education colleges known as TTC (Teacher Training Colleges).There are several levels of teacher certification—P1, P2, and P3. Because of the increased demand for teachers, with some private schools not wanting to pay the full salaries of trained teachers there are some unqualified teachers (UQT) who are employed without certification and pursue certification as they teach. For P3 qualifications, a teacher must have completed seven to eight years of primary education, depending on when they attended school, plus two years of teacher education. In order to be promoted to P2, a P3 teacher had to pass a required national exam, the Kenya Junior Secondary Examination (KJSE) (Education Encyclopedia 2010).

The Kenya Institute of Education also offers a Primary Teacher Certificate through the continuing education program. The certificate takes three years to complete. Required courses for the first two years include professional studies, English, Kiswahili, Mathematics, Science, and Music. Second year courses

include the addition of Art and Craft, Agriculture, Geography, History, and Civics. The third year includes the subjects of professional studies, Religious Education, Physical Education, Geography, History, Civics, and Home Science. All courses are taught in English and the media and methods employed are printed text, radio broadcasts, and residential schools (approximately seven weeks per year).

Candidates are awarded the Certificate of Primary Teacher Education only when they have successfully completed three full years of the prescribed course of study. A student who fails to meet the certificate's requirements is allowed to repeat either the examination in the subjects in which they failed to meet the requirement, or perform practical teaching, or both. Grades are accumulated until the requirements for the certificate are met. The certification for teachers is in two classifications: teaching and training skills in general and primary education, which includes preschool (Education Encyclopedia 2010).

Pre-primary and primary school teacher education faces many challenges among them, the low academic qualification requirement for the teachers joining the education programme and an attempt by the government to raise the entry grades has only resulted in there being a shortage of the student teachers (Garcia et al 2008 pg 407-420). In addition teachers are paid very low salaries compared to the amount of work they are required to do and many of them lack course books and other teaching material.

The primary-teacher education programme is also overburdened. In a two year programme teacher education students have to take all 13 primary school subjects plus professional studies and teaching practice (Bunyi 2001 pg 90- 144). This means that there is not enough time for them to acquire the relevant competencies needed for teaching primary school children. Professional assistance from school inspectors is also seldom available and with free primary education it is almost impossible for these teachers to perform the superhuman

task of ensuring all their pupils master literacy skills. "As a result, the situation of the teaching force in most of the districts is generally bad. Teachers complain of increased pupil teacher ratios. Many primary schools are understaffed and this does not augur well for the quality of education being delivered". Because of all these difficulties the teachers are not given specialised language education and consequently they are not able to give the appropriate reading instruction (Sifuna 2003 pg 201-205).

Several studies have been conducted to observe teachers' language practices in the classroom. In one earlier mentioned study of rural schools by Grace Bunyi (2001 pg.144) it was observed that learning language in rural schools ('Gicagi' schools as they are referred to in Central province)' was not a simple matter. Teachers often translated difficult English and Kiswahili lexical items into Kikuyu (the local language) but when the students did the same the answer was only accepted as partially correct. She observed that language practices such as code-switching, overlapping speech routines in English, Kiswahili and Kikuyu existed. She also observed that outside the classroom Kikuyu (the local language) was the main language of communication.

Kenya being a multilingual state the question of what language(s) should be used to teach early reading is constantly being debated upon. The language policy differs depending on the region in which the school is situated and for this reason, there are various classroom practices that emerge among the teachers that affect effective acquisition and mastering of literacy skills among the pupils. In the research by Muthwii (2002) she concluded that most of the teachers her case study researchers talked to seemed to think that since examinations are in English, they were expected to teach in the language as early as possible. In addition they also felt they could exercise flexibility and use as many languages as possible to make sure that the children understood.

The study by Bunyi (2001) also indicated that the teachers in the rural schools who had presumably received teacher education lacked the competence to provide meaningful teaching/learning activities for their regular classes. This did not come as a surprise given the primary school teacher recruitment policies and practices and the quality of teacher education and teacher professional support services that exist in Kenya. Primary-school student teachers are not always the academically superior. They are recruited from secondary school graduates who may have attained grades as low as D- (the Kenya certificate of Secondary School (KCSE) examination is graded from A to E and a grade of D- is considered a poor performance by the Kenya National Examinations council (KNEC).

Language of Instruction is at the heart of literacy acquisition and it goes hand in hand with the teacher's ability to offer proper instruction. The teacher is therefore most critical part in any educational reform. Teachers need adequate education for their profession and well designed curricula that their work can rely on. To teach someone to read requires profound knowledge about the process of reading and language acquisition (Lin and martin 2005 pg 135-150).

4 Research questions

As mentioned earlier the recommendations for language of early reading instructions in school are given by the KIE (Kenya Institute of Education) who have been accorded this mandate by the MOE (Ministry of Education). Currently the medium-of-language of early reading instruction policy in Kenya is that in linguistically homogenous school neighbourhoods, the indigenous language of the area is to be used from class 1 to 3; in linguistically heterogeneous school neighbourhoods like in urban areas the national language Kiswahili or official language, English is to be used depending on where the school is located (Lower middle class Middle class/ Upper middle class and Rich areas). This means that in Nairobi whose majority of the population fall in the categories of lower middle class to poor when it comes to social status the schools with few exceptions should be teaching early reading in Kiswahili which is the language commonly spoken in most of these communities. Kinoo being a rural area in Central province the language most commonly spoken in the community is Kikuyu and therefore reading instruction should be taught in the same language. This brings us to our three research questions.

1. Do the teacher perspectives on language use in primary schools reflect the recommendations on the language of early reading instruction?

2. Do the schools' language practices depend on them being public, private or community schools?

3. Do the teacher perspectives on the pupils' language preference and performance reflect the language commonly spoken in the communities surrounding the schools[1]?

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[1] Note that the present data is based on Nairobi and surrounding areas only but the communities here represent users of different languages.

5 Methods

This research is based on a quantitative survey which was done by distributing questionnaires to the teachers of lower primary from 7 areas across Nairobi. Nairobi is divided into a series of constituencies namely Makadara, Kamukunji, Starehe, Langata, Dagoretti, Westlands, Kasarani and Embakasi. Some schools form Kinoo (a rural district that is in the Central province of Kenya but borders Nairobi) were also included. Kinoo district was chosen in order to give a comparison of the urban and rural setting of the schools. Most of the up market suburbs are situated to the west of Nairobi (Westlands), where most European settlers lived in colonial times. The city's colonial past is demonstrated by many English place-names. Most low and lower-middle income estates are located in eastern Nairobi (Eastlands) (Nairobi city.org 2007). The areas covered by the research are namely Kinoo, Kawangware, Kibera, Westlands, City Centre, Kahawa, and Eastlands. These areas represent the differences in the average use of languages across the city.

The questionnaire was given to teachers of English and Kiswahili. These were teachers of pre-unit (the pre-primary class), class 1, 2, 3 and 4 (lower primary classes). Before distributing the questionnaires however, following the national rules of research permission was obtained from the Kenya National Council for Science and Technology, where it takes one month to get a research permit, and from the city council and the head teachers of the various primary schools where the research was conducted. In total the questionnaire was answered by teachers from 30 schools, in the end there was a total of 221 respondents.

5.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to ask questions concerning literacy teaching in both English and Kiswahili because although Kiswahili is the national language, English is the official language used in schools and offices. Kiswahili

is the language recommended for early reading instruction in Nairobi as a result of the increased international interest in using local languages in education in Africa and Kenya is also a strong supporter of this policy. The questions were designed to find out whether language practices in the schools reflect the recommendations for language of early reading instruction.

In the first section of the questionnaire the teachers were supposed to give personal information about their teacher education background, age group (age group was chosen as opposed to the actual age because in the pilot questionnaires most of the teachers omitted this question and it was suspected that they were not comfortable to give their exact age), length of teaching experience, what classes they teach and indicate whether or not they have received language specialization during their teacher education and in addition in what language they prefer to teach.

In the second section the teachers were to indicate the school category. This is because in Kenya schools can be divided into numerous categories depending on the location e.g. rural/urban, or according to type low cost/high cost etc. But the three main categories are public, private and community schools. They were also supposed to show whether they rate their school performance in English and Kiswahili as average, below average or above average.

In section 3 the teachers were to give their perspective of the use of language within the schools. The teachers were supposed to indicate the language they use for early reading instruction, the number of English and Kiswahili lessons they teach in a week, the languages they use to teach in class, the languages they use to address the pupils outside the classroom, the official language of the school as well as the informal language spoken in the school. They were also supposed to give an indication and brief description of the kind of policies they have to emphasize the use of the correct language within the school. In addition they were to show availability of reading material and the pupil language preference and performance between the two languages.

In section 4 the teachers were to indicate their response (by either agreeing or disagreeing) to certain statements concerning the use of English and Kiswahili and give any additional comments on issues that might not have been addressed by the questionnaire but that are critical to language use and reading instruction in their schools.

5.2 Participants

The teachers who participated in this research were required to answer questions concerning the language practices in and out of the classrooms in their schools. In answering the questions they were able to reveal whether their language practices are in sync with the requirements from the Kenya Institute of Education which in addition to the syllabus also offers in service education to teachers who want to upgrade their qualifications. Kenya being a multilingual state the language practices varies depending on the location of the school and nature of the school administration. Sometimes, teachers may decide on the language policy for the school based on their teaching skills and experiences and disregard the requirements.

There were only 35 male teachers out of the 221 respondents who answered the questionnaires. This reflects the current situation that there are more female than male lower primary school teachers in Kenya.Most of the teachers seem to fall in the age bracket of 30 to 40 years. This may be because the teaching profession especially primary schools in Kenya pays very low salaries and teachers are constantly leaving or going on endless study leaves to pursue higher education so as to get better paying teaching jobs in either private schools or institutions of higher learning.

Almost 80% of the teachers have received teacher education although only 9% had received this education from the universities. The university does not provide education for primary school teachers except if they want to advance their education to gain a degree in a specialized field such as special education.

But due to the lack of employment opportunities for teachers some of the university graduates educated to be secondary school teachers seek employment as primary school teachers especially in the private schools because the pay is significantly higher than in the public schools.

67 % had received their education in teacher training colleges while 5 % had gone to CICECE which offers education to aspiring teachers of pre-unit classes.

Only 40% of the teachers who answered this particular question have received language specialization (meaning that they have received courses on how to teach the specified languages). This is a low figure considering that language is at the heart of early reading instruction and its teaching methods. The table below shows the languages that the teachers have specialized in. The missing number also includes the teachers without language specialization. There was no significant difference in the education and language specialization between class 1 and 2 and class 3 and 4 teachers.

Table 1. Teachers' specific language of specialization

Language	No. of teachers	%
Kiswahili	18	8,1
English	26	11,8
English and Kiswahili	27	12,2
Other	5	2,3
Missing	145	65,6
N	221	100

Pre-unit (Pre primary education) in Kenya is not compulsory and therefore many primary schools especially public schools do not have pre-unit classes. The Ministry of Education requires that the teachers of lower primary schools are separated so that there are teachers for Class 1 and 2 and for class 3 and 4 mainly because in Class 4 there is the introduction of English and other subjects. The teachers who participated in this research were equally distributed in class 1 and 2 and class 3 and 4. But there were 15 % who did not fall into either class

category because in some schools there is a shortage of teachers and therefore 1 teacher may be forced to teach all the lower primary classes.

The ratio of public, private and community schools in Nairobi is not available as some schools are not registered at the Department of Education but generally public schools are the most followed by Community schools which have increased recently due to the sudden increase in HIV/AIDS orphans and Private schools are the least.

Table 2. The number of teachers in each school category

Category of the schools	No. of teachers	%
Public	89	40,2
Private	64	29,0
Community	68	30,8
N	221	100

5.3   Reliability and validity

The information that was collected by the questionnaire was highly structured and therefore its content is likely to be valid because it is based on the teachers' personal information such as age and sex, education experience and teaching practices. In addition the validity was based on the average response of the total group and not the response of an individual teacher. The questions that were asked concerning the institution of teacher education and the language specialization give a clear representation of all other teachers who have received teacher education from these institutions. However the selection of the schools was not optimal but this did not have statistical significance on the results.

The validity of the questionnaire was checked by officials from the Kenya Institute of Education who recommended that further review by teachers from various teacher training colleges (TTC) should be done. However this was not

done as most of the teachers declined claiming that they were not experts and suggested that the questionnaire should be referred to the MOE. The questionnaires were first distributed to two schools from each category to check how reliable they were and how well the teachers understood the questions and the language use and consequently some modifications were made before the actual study was done.

6 Results

In this section the results have been given following the order of the research questions.

6.1 Language use in the schools with regard to the recommendations

The language of reading instruction is the language that the teachers use to teach reading in the classes that they teach. Only 0,5 % of the teachers are using Kiswahili and 2 % are using a combination of languages. However 18 % did not give the answer to this question.

Table 3. The number of teachers using the specified language of reading instruction

Language of reading instruction	No. of teachers	%
Kiswahili	1	0,5
English	175	79,2
A combination	5	2,2
Vernacular (Mother tongue)	0	0,0
Missing	40	18,1
N	221	100

Some of the English teachers indicated that they use English and Kiswahili to teach during the English lesson. Although the number is significantly small it may yield poor results for numerous pupils in reading given that 1 teacher may be teaching up to 50 pupils. Table 4 shows further details of the teachers' language practices during lessons. Kikuyu is the most common local language in Kinoo area where some of the schools are located. There was no significant difference between class 1 and 2 and class 3 and 4 teaching and language practices

Table 4. Teacher language use during lesson

Class	Subject	No. of teachers	Teachers using subject language	Teachers using Eng and Kiswa	Teachers using Eng Kiswa & Kik
1 and 2	Kiswahili	15	15	0	0
	English	22	20	2	0
	English and Kiswahili	48			2
3 and 4	Kiswahili	21	20	1	
	English	25	23	2	
	English and Kiswahili	40			

In Class 1 and 2 a total of 38 % of the teachers felt that English has more reading material than Kiswahili available to the school while in class 3 and 4, 40 % of the teachers felt that English had more reading material than Kiswahili. 17 % of the Kiswahili teachers felt that English has more reading materials than Kiswahili. In general all teachers felt that English had more reading material than Kiswahili. These reading materials are provided by the government to the public schools. The private schools provide their own books while the community schools depend on donors and well wishers. There was no teacher who indicated that Kiswahili has more reading material than English in any of the classes or the schools. 11 teachers did not answer this question.

English is used more exclusively by the teachers as compared to Kiswahili across all the schools with a few teachers using kikuyu when communicating. Table 5 shows the details of the teachers' language use outside class. There was no significant difference between the class 1 and 2 and class 3 and 4 teachers with regard to language use outside class within the schools.

Table 5. Teacher language use outside class within the schools in general

Language	No. of teachers	%
Kiswahili	42	19,0
English	53	24,0
English and Kiswahili	123	55,7
English, Kiswahili and Kikuyu	2	0,9
Kikuyu	1	0,5

It is important to note that the age and gender and years of teaching experience of the teachers did not have any statistical significance to their language preference. Table 6 shows details of the two class categories.

Table 6. Teacher language use outside class

Class	Subject	No. of teachers	Teachers using subject language only to address pupils outside class	Teachers using both English and Kiswahili to address pupils outside class
1 and 2	Kiswahili	15	11	4
	English	23	14	7
3 and 4	Kiswahili	21	17	4
	English	26	17	8

There are some schools in which pupils are punished for not using the official language of communication for general communication even with the other pupils in the school. These practices clearly conflict with the recommendations for language use as all pupils are encouraged to use Kiswahili within the Nairobi area. For more details refer to table 7 below.

Table 7.Teachers practices to encourage use of the 'right' language

Practices encouraging use of language	No. of teachers	%
Rewarding students who use the official language	39	17,6
Punishing students who do not use the official language	20	9
Rewarding students who use the official language and punishing those who don't	36	16,3
Encourage them to speak English	1	0,5
Did not answer question	125	56,6
N	221	100

6.2 Language practices in the schools and their relevance to school categories

Table 8. Number of teachers who prefer English or Kiswahili across the schools

School category	No. of teachers					
School category	English	%	Kiswahili	%	Missing	%
Public	50	22,6	36	16,3	3	1,4
Private	35	15,8	18	8,1	11	5,0
Community	30	13,6	34	15,4	4	1,8
N	115	52	88	39,8	18	8,2

In all the public and private schools more teachers prefer to teach in English than in Kiswahili while in the community schools more teachers prefer to teach in Kiswahili although the number is not significantly higher. Only 1 teacher from a public school has indicated that Kiswahili is the official language used in the school even though 19 % observe Kiswahili as the informal languages spoken in their schools. Only 2 % of public school teachers have both English and Kiswahili used as the official languages while there are 11 % who indicate English and Kiswahili as the informal languages spoken by the pupils. However, 1 teacher from a public school indicated that Kikuyu was spoken as the informal language meaning that this public school may be located in the rural area of Kinoo. There were four community schools which used Kikuyu for official communication and this falls in line with the recommendations by the Ministry of education.

All private schools use English only for official and informal communication. 20 % of the teachers who are from community schools indicate that their schools use Kiswahili as the official language and only with 10 % indicating that

Kiswahili is the language used exclusively for informal interaction among the pupils. There is no significant difference in the use of languages across the schools although the dominance of English is evident especially when it comes to languages used for official communication in the schools.

6.3 The language uses and performance in the schools and how they reflect the language commonly spoken in the local communities.

10 % of the teachers rated their school performance in English as below average. 67 % placed their schools at above average and 20 % at above average. In Kiswahili only 2 % rated their school performance at below average and 79 % and 18 % rated their schools at average and above average respectively. In general pupils seem to be performing better in Kiswahili than English although the difference is not statistically significant.

Table 9. The teachers' views on the overall language performance of their schools in the KCPE

School category and Subject	Below average	Average	Above average
Public			
School performance in English	1	61	27
School performance in Kiswahili	1	68	19
Private			
School performance in English	0	43	21
School performance in Kiswahili	0	43	21
School performance in other language taught	0	0	10
Community			
School performance in English	23	44	1
School performance in Kiswahili	4	64	0
Missing			

With the exception of singing, pupils prefer to use Kiswahili to English in all other class activities and are performing better in reading and writing in Kiswahili than in English in the public schools. Although private schools insist on the use of English pupils still prefer reading and story telling in Kiswahili and also perform better in reading and writing in Kiswahili than in English. In the community schools more pupils generally prefer Kiswahili to English for all class activities and significantly more perform better in Kiswahili than in English. This clearly reflects that the language most commonly spoken in the local communities around the schools is Kiswahili.

6.4 Summary of the results

All of the teachers indicated that they use English as the language of reading instruction with the exception of 4 teachers from a community school who indicated that they use a combination of languages to teach reading and 1 teacher from a public school who indicated Kiswahili as the language of reading instruction. 18 % left this question blank which means that there is a possibility that the teachers do not know the language that is supposed to be used for reading instruction for their classes and therefore did not want to answer the question. Although Kiswahili is recommended as the language of early reading instruction for most urban schools in Nairobi most of the schools appear to be using English see table 3.

Although Kiswahili is considered an official national language in Kenya, some school policies insist on English as the only official language and pupils are punished when they speak Kiswahili. Most of the teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) do not offer specialization in languages and the teachers learn all

subjects then teach Kiswahili and English or any other subject depending on the demand in the schools see table 7 for details.

All the pupils in the schools (even in the private schools) appear to prefer using Kiswahili to English for class and school activities (singing, story telling, poetry, riddles and jokes) however more emphasis is given to English by the teachers and many schools still use it as the official language and almost all teachers from the participating schools as the language of early reading instruction. English also appears to be having more reading material than Kiswahili. There appears to be code-switching in class with a few teachers with the teachers using English and Kiswahili during Kiswahili lessons and vice versa.

The pupils in the Eastlands area of Nairobi seem to prefer Sheng' as the language of communication amongst them. Sheng' is a slang language resulting from a combination of English and Kiswahili. It originated in the Eastlands ghettos of Nairobi in the 1990s according to Chege (2002). See appendix 6 for details.

Although there is provision for mother tongue in the KIE syllabus and it is recommended that the mother tongue most commonly spoken in the local community should be the same language for reading instruction in the local school, no teacher in the schools in the rural district of Kinoo taught early reading instruction in mother tongue.

7 Discussion

The main objective of this study was to determine whether the attitudes and practices of the teachers in class and within the school with regard to language reflect the recommendations that the local languages most commonly spoken by the pupils should be emphasized and used to teach the pupils how to read.

7.1 Benefits and setbacks of this study

The selection of the schools was not optimal mainly because the records of all the primary schools were not available at the Nairobi City Council department of education. In addition some of the community schools are not registered with the department of education in Nairobi. For this reason the numbers of teachers who have answered the questionnaire represent only a small population of all the schools and teachers in Nairobi and therefore careful considerations have to be made when making the generalisations.

English is considered as the official language and many in Kenya and Nairobi as such associate it with prestige and success (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-207). Consequently teachers may posess a tendency to answer in favour of English more to look sophisticated than to give a clear picture of the realistic situation in the schools. However I feel that most of the questions were answered honestly and they paint a realistic picture of what is happening in the schools.

After completion of the analysis it is clear that further study should be conducted to give more details of the root of the conflicting language practices so that solutions can be sought. However for subsequent studies I would not recommend the questionnaire as the most appropriate tool as it only gives a general overview of the language practices and important relevant details such as the specific difficulties the teachers experience with regard to language in teaching are not expressed. In case the questionnaire is used it should have an

additional section where teachers can display how conversant they are with the letter-sound correspondences of the languages in which they teach reading. Secondly the questionnaire should be accompanied by an interview so that the teachers are given an opportunity to express themselves further. In addition it may be necessary to get the opinions of the pupils concerning language difficulties they experience when learning to read.

7.2   Why are there conflicting practices and attitudes in language use among the teachers in the schools?

The first research question was: Do the teacher perspectives on language use in primary schools reflect the recommendations on the language of early reading instruction? In this study the teachers overwhelmingly indicated English to be the language of reading instruction in the classes they teach. It may be that the teachers chose English because they are using it as the language of instruction or this may also mean that they simply do not know the language of instruction. The reasons are not clear as this question was not explored further in the questionnaire. All the same this result paints a grim picture on the language of instruction situation for primary schools in Nairobi and clearly shows that the recommendations by the Ministry of Education are not clear and for this reason are not clearly adhered to and implemented in the schools. In addition there are some teachers of English who are using both English and Kiswahili to teach in class indicating that English alone does not suffice when teaching the children reading. English can therefore not be seen a second language (ESL). It may be a third or fourth language to some pupils given that Kenya is a multilingual country (Lots of essays 2010).

In addition the schools do not seem to be putting the categories of the school, the locations or the language commonly spoken by the local communities around the school into consideration when addressing the language of instruction or the official languages of communication (The language spoken by

general population of the pupils almost always indicates the language of the parents) they choose for the schools and this answers the second research question which is: Do the schools' language practices depend on them being public, private or community schools? There are a total of 166 teachers who indicate that their schools use English only for official communication this means that during Parent teacher associations (PTA) meetings, they are using English with no regard for the pupils' or parents' preferences or competence in the language.

The third research question was: Do the teacher perspectives on the pupils' language preference and performance reflect the language commonly spoken in the communities surrounding the schools? The Ministry of education based the directive on language use on the consideration of the local language commonly spoken in the place where the school is situated. The assumption was that most pupils attending the school will reside in the local areas and will therefore speak this language at home or among their peers.

The pupils display a language preference for Kiswahili especially when it comes to activities which involve knowledge in the use of native language such as story telling and telling of jokes. It is also evident that they prefer to read texts that are in Kiswahili when given a choice which is evident in their performance in reading. Surprisingly even the pupils in the private schools prefer reading in Kiswahili and are also performing better in reading in the Kiswahili language even though the schools are rigidly insisting on the use of English. In the private schools however parents dictate a lot on the language they prefer to be used for reading instruction for the pupils and many times the teacher or head teacher or the ministry of education has no say in the matter and given that the final examination is in English most people feel that learning in English is what counts (Bunyi 2001 pg 144-146).

One disturbing revelation however is the fact that students are punished for using Kiswahili simply because it is not recognised as the official language of some schools whereas the Ministry of Education directive recognises it as a legitimate and significant language in education and in reading. Even if Kiswahili is not the official language it is compulsory in all the schools and is taught as a subject that is examinable in the main national examinations at the end of the four years therefore why pupils should be punished for speaking the language in school is a matter that the Ministry of Education needs to address.

7.3   Recommendations for further studies

The question to ask is why do the teachers prefer to teach in English although the pupils perform better in Kiswahili? The problem begins with the process of teacher education in Kenya. The Kenya Institute of education teacher education syllabus indicates that mother tongue and Kiswahili are taught to the student teachers but incidentally not much emphasis is given to these local languages and their significance in early reading instruction. Consequently when the teachers begin their teaching profession they are already in doubt as to the importance of the language of early reading instruction which in turn reflects on the pupils.

Secondly the teachers have no knowledge of how to give teaching instruction in the local languages. Although Kiswahili uses the same alphabet as the English language the phonetic sounds are completely different and therefore English phonetics cannot be used to teach Kiswahili or any other local language for that matter. In addition African languages usually have an extremely low status. Those who speak them do not believe that they can be used in public or as instruments of learning, for economic activities, social mobility or for any serious public business by arguing that the local languages do not have the necessary vocabulary, speech styles or sufficient status to be put spontaneously

in public domains and consequently should not be studied in school either (Webb and Kembo-Sure 2006 pg 1-15). Because of this lack of knowledge and expertise in the local languages there is a lot of code switching in class among some of the teachers in attempt to make the children understand what they are being taught. They will use English, Kiswahili and sometimes Kikuyu to explain complex terms to the pupils.

In addition it is either that the teachers do not know what the language recommended for early reading instruction in their classes is or that they are all using English to teach reading in Kiswahili. This is not surprising most teachers use the English alphabet for early reading instruction in Kiswahili owing to the lack of language education and specialization which also forces many English teachers to teach Kiswahili in the schools. The ministry recommends that teachers should address the pupils outside class within the school in the languages that they teach strictly. That is to say a teacher who is teaching Kiswahili only at the school should not address the pupils in any other language other than Kiswahili so as to give the pupils better practical example of using the language. Clearly although the results indicate that a majority of the teachers are following these instructions there are those teachers who use all languages as long as the pupil understands what they are being told.

The main results have indicated just how much the use of the English continues to influence language of early reading instruction and general language use for schools in urban areas like Nairobi. English is not the first language or mother tongue of most of these pupils. In addition to the fact that English is a difficult language to learn to read in, the English variety available in Kenya is not the native speaker standard. Claims based on sociolinguistic research indicate that the actual models that speakers of English use in non-native contexts are not the British or American ones (Kioko and Muthwii 2001 pg 201-207). Therefore as a result the pupils are having difficulty in reading and are also not learning the foreign language (English) correctly.

Emphasis on the importance of Kiswahili in early reading instruction should be made especially to the teachers who will in turn act as the re-educators of the parents and pupils alike so that all the teachers and education institutions concerned with primary school education and the ministry of Education are one page concerning the language of early reading instruction and language use in primary schools. Though the use of English should not be discarded, it is necessary that there is a change in attitude so that in Nairobi area early reading instructions is taught in Kiswahili because it is the language most familiar to the pupils and thereafter when the children have mastered the reading skills and are able to read fluently they can learn to read in English as well as any other languages they desire. In conclusion more studies need to be conducted to explore the nature of the language and reading problems the teachers and pupils encounter so that permanent and effective solutions can be found once and for all.

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Acronyms

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organisation

KCPE- Kenya Certificate of Primary Education

KCSE- Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

KNEC- Kenya National Examination Council

LOI- Language of Instruction

KIE- Kenya Institute of Education

MOE- Ministry of Education

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

My name is <u>Carol Suzanne Adhiambo Otieno. I am a Masters Degree student at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland.</u> I am carrying out a research on the topic "**Literacy teaching in Kenyan Primary schools with a focus on the school and classroom language practices."** The research will be carried out in public pre-primary and primary schools and it will involve conducting a survey of **teachers of pre primary, class 1, 2 and 3 and 4 (lower primary), language preferences using the questionnaire attached.**

Your identity or personality will not be revealed in any way during this process and throughout the research. Because this is purely an academic research, no individual information will be reported. This data will be kept in a safe location when the research process is complete.

SECTION 1 (a): PERSONAL INFORMATION (Please TICK the appropriate box.)

I. **Sex**

Male ☐   Female ☐

II. **Age group**

Below 20   20 to 30   30 to 40   Above 40

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

III. **What classes do you teach?**

Class 1 ☐   Class 2 ☐   Class 3 ☐   Class 4 ☐

IV. **How long have you been teaching?**

Below 10 years   10 to 20 years   20 to 30 years   above 30 years

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

IV. **Are you trained as a teacher?**

Yes ☐

No ☐

   a) **If yes, where did you receive your training?**

   University   ☐

   Teacher Training College (TTC)   ☐

   Other (Specify) _____

   b) **Was language one of your areas of specialty in your training?**

   Yes ☐

   No ☐

       If Yes, Which of the languages did you specialize in?

   Kiswahili   ☐

   English   ☐

   English and Kiswahili ☐

   Other (Specify) _____

   c) **What subjects do you currently teach?**

   English   ☐

   Kiswahili   ☐

   English and Kiswahili ☐

   Other (Specify) _____

   d) **Between English and Kiswahili which one do you prefer to teach?**

   English   ☐

   Kiswahili ☐

SECTION 2: SCHOOL INFORMATION (Please TICK the appropriate box.)

V. School category

Public school ☐

Private school ☐

Community school ☐

VI. School performance in English

TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX	Below Average	Average	Above Average

VII. School performance in Kiswahili

TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX	Below Average	Average	Above Average

VIII. School performance in any other language taught

TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX	Below Average	Average	Above Average

SECTION 3: SUBJECT INFORMATION (Please TICK the appropriate box)

IX. What is the language of reading instruction in your class?

English   Kiswahili   Vernacular   A combination of the languages

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

X. How many English lessons do you teach in a week?

Less than 5   5 to 10   More than 10

☐   ☐   ☐

X. How many Kiswahili lessons do you teach in a week?

Less than 5   5 to 10   More than 10

☐   ☐   ☐

XI. How many lessons do you teach in ANY other languages in a week?

Less than 5   5 to 10   More than 10

☐   ☐   ☐

XII. What language do you use to teach in class?

English   Kiswahili   English and Kiswahili

☐   ☐   ☐

Other (Specify) _____

XIII. What language do you use to address the pupils in school?

English   Kiswahili   English and Kiswahili

☐   ☐   ☐

Other (Specify) _____

XIV. What is the informal language spoken in the school?

English   Kiswahili   English and Kiswahili

☐   ☐   ☐

Other (Specify) _____

XV. What is the official language spoken in the school?

English   Kiswahili   English and Kiswahili

☐   ☐   ☐

Other (Specify) _____

XVI. What policy is there in the school to ensure that the pupils use the official language of communication?

Rewarding the students who use the official language only   ☐

Punishing the students who do not use the official language only   ☐

Rewarding the students who use the official language and

Punishing the students who do not use the official language ☐

Other (Specify) _____

XVII.How many storybooks in Kiswahili are available for class?

Less than 3   3 to 5   5 to 8   More than 8

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

XVIII.How many story books in English are available for the class?

Less than 3   3 to 5   5 to 8   More than 8

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

a. **Which of the two areas appears to have more reading material within the school?**

English   Kiswahili

☐   ☐

XIX.Which of the languages do children prefer to use when the following activities are to be performed in the school

Singing   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

Story telling   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

Poetry   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

Riddles   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

Jokes   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

XX.In your class which subject is performed relatively better?

Reading   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

Writing (dictation)   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

Grammar (Lugha)   Kiswahili ☐ English ☐

XXI.Do you think the literate game in Kiswahili can assist in literacy acquisition?

Yes   ☐

No   ☐

SECTION 4: PERSONAL OPINION

Please read the statements carefully and tick the box you agree with most.

TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX					
	Strongly disagree	**disagree**	**agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Don't know**
XXI. Kiswahili is a better language for literacy teaching than English.					
XXII. Pupils should only use Kiswahili during the lesson and should speak English the rest of the time.					
XXIII. School policy is a more effective tool for the pupils to learn Kiswahili than motivational tools like songs, riddles and story telling.					
XXIV. School policy and motivational tools like songs; riddles and story telling should be used to maximize effectiveness of Kiswahili the use of the official language in school.					
XXV. There is more reading material available for English literacy than for Kiswahili literacy teaching					
XXVI. There is interference in writing and speech between the two languages(English and Kiswahili)					

7

PLEASE GIVE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE LITERACY TEACHING IN KISWAHILI IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA.

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Appendix 2: A summary of the lower primary school Kiswahili syllabus

The new syllabus was implemented in schools in the year 2003. The aims of teaching Kiswahili in primary schools as elaborated in the new syllabus are to enable the student:

1) Speaking Kiswahili language correctly.
2) To read and understand the Kiswahili language
3) To express oneself clearly in writing in the Kiswahili language.
4) To compose poems and compositions according to the student's level.
5) To perfect reading skills.
6) To develop an interest and to pursue the Kiswahili language further after primary education.
7) To take pride in developing Kiswahili language in communication.
8) To praise and work towards continuance of correct Kiswahili language in life.
9) To value, appreciate, and to take pride in Kiswahili as a national language and a language of many nations.
10) To identify and participate in finding solutions to challenges facing the community like HIV/AIDS, corruption and greed, environmental conservation among others (Wallah 2003)

The students have certain responsibilities in learning Kiswahili. They include:

❖ To answer and ask questions in class.
❖ To read the books required.
❖ To have class discussions, to solve riddles in Kiswahili, to tell stories, myths and legends and to recite poems in Kiswahili.
❖ To use various learning tools such as posters.

❖ To emulate various persons.

❖ To listen to their classmates and other invited professionals reading or speaking.

❖ To write down the answers to various questions.

The teacher also has various responsibilities in ensuring the aims of the syllabus are met. The teacher should put into consideration the environment of the school and should give relevant examples of things or people who can be found within the environments of the school. There are urban and rural environments. The teacher should prepare for the lessons in time and should ensure that he or she has all the necessary tools to be used for the lesson. These tools should be affordable and easily available.

The teacher should use the teacher's guide and the pupil's book and any other resources that will ensure the success of the lesson and should not depend solely on the teacher's guide and does not necessarily have to follow page after page but should be innovative in accordance with the student's ability and the available resources. He or she should ensure that the students participate fully in the lesson. By participation the students should improve their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The examples given in class should be simple, correct and involving day to day activities that the students can relate to. They should also involve issues of corruption, children's rights, HIV/AIDS, development and technology.

The main role of the teacher is to develop the interest of the student in learning reading and writing Kiswahili correctly. This indeed is the main role of any Kiswahili teacher. The teacher should work by example and be a role model for the students. They should love the Kiswahili language and take pride in it so as to motivate the students to emulate him or her in loving the language. An effective teacher is one who tries to put himself at the student's level for example if it is singing during the lesson the teacher should sing with the students. The teacher should be cheerful so as to cheer up the students and should offer real life examples that the students can identify with (Wallah, Kobia 2003)

There are more factors that should be put into consideration for effective learning of Kiswahili. They are that:

a) Learning should be accompanied by actions so as to grab the pupils' attention.

b) Learning should be accompanied with motivational tools such as story telling, songs, riddles, jokes and competition.

c) Learning should bring progress to every student.

d) Corrections should be made appropriately and should not demoralize the pupil.

e) Compliment students who are making an effort.

f) Class exercises should be done in groups and the teacher should avoid grouping together pupils with similar problems.

g) The teacher should choose good group leaders.

h) The teacher should keep record of the pupil's attendance and performance for future reference.

The syllabus involves reading, listening, speaking and writing (Mchangamwe 2006) and should cover the following topics:

I. Comprehension (Ufahamu) - This involves interesting stories and answering questions in relation to the stories.

II. Syllables (Sarufi) - Formations, singular and plural, past tense, opposites and articles among others.

III. Language use (Matumizi ya lugha) - Proverbs, riddles and vocabulary among others.

IV. Reading (Kusoma) - Stories and difficult words.

V. Composition (Mtungo)- Short explanations

VI. Exercises (Mazoezi) - answering questions involving all the topics learnt (Mchangamwe 2006).

Appendix 3: Tribes of Kenya and their languages

Language group	Tribe	Language spoken	%
Nilotes	Luo	Dholuo	12,38
	Kalenjin		15,46
		Keiyo	
		Kipsigis	
		Marakweta	
		(Marakwet)	
		Nandi	
		Pokot	
		Sabaot	
		Terik	
		Tugen	
		Sebei	
	Turkana	Nga Turkana	1,52
	Maasai	Maa	1,76
	Samburu	Samburu	0,50
Bantu	Taita	Taita	0,95
	Waswahili	Kiswahili	0,60
	Kikuyu	Kikuyu	20,78
	(Agĩkũyũ)		
	Luhya	Luhya languages	14,38
	Kamba	Kikamba	11,42
	(Akamba)		
	Kisii	Ekegusii	6,15
	Ameru (Meru)	Meru	5,07
	Aembu (Embu)	Embu	1,20

Minority groups: Aweer, Banjuni, Bukusu, Dalaho, Giriama, Isukha, Kore, Kuria, Maragoli, Marama, Miji kenda, Ogiek, Orma, Pokomo, Rendille, Sengwer, Suba, Tachoni, Taveta, Watha, Yiaku

Non-Kenyan ethnic groups: Oromos, Somalis, (Gujaratis, Baluchs, Punjabis and Goans) from India, Britons, (Hadhrami and Omani) Arabs, Italians

Appendix 4: Comparison between English and Kiswahili alphabet

	English letter name and pronunciation	Kiswahili letter name and pronunciation	Kiswahili phoneme	Kiswahili phonemes in English words
A	ay [ei]	A [a:]	/a/	as a in father
B	bee [bi:]	B [be:]	/b/	as b in babble
C	see [si:]	C [che:]	/tʃ/	as ch in chin
D	dee [di:]	D [de:]	/d/	as d in doubt
E	ee [i:]	E [e:]	/e/	as e in elbow
F	eff [ef]	F [ef]	/f/	as f in find
G	gee [d3i:]	G [ge:]	/g/	as g in good
H	aitch [eitʃ]	H [he:]	/h/	as h in hat
I	eye [ai]	I [i:]	/i/	as ee in meet
J	jay [d3ei]	J [je:]	/d3/	as j in joke
K	kay [kei]	K [ka:]	/k/	as k in kid
L	el [el]	L[le]	/l/	as l in last
M	em [em]	M [em]	/m/	as m in mood
N	en [en]	N [en]	/n/	as n in near
O	ou [u]	O [o:]	/o/	as o in boss
P	pee [pi:]	P [pe:]	/p/	as p in puppy
Q	cue [kju:]	No Q in Kiswahili		No Q in Kiswahili
R	ar [a:*]	R [re]	/r/	as r in sorry
S	es [es]	S [se]	/s/	as s in sun
T	tea [ti:]	T [te:]	/t/	as t in toe
U	u [ju:]	U [u:]	/u/	as oo in boot
V	vee [vi:]	V [ve:]	/v/	as v in verse
W	double-v [dʌb lju:]	W [we:]	/w/	as w in we (or wh in white)
X	eks [eks]	No X in Kiswahili		No X in Kiswahili
Y	why [wai]	Y [ye:]	/j/	as y in you
Z	zed [zed]	Z [ze]	/z/	as z in zoo

Appendix 5: Example of Bantu language (Kikuyu) alphabet and pronunciation

Kikuyu letter name	Kikuyu phoneme in English words
Aa	as in 'a' in art
Ee	as in 'e' in ebb
Ii	as in 'i' in it
Oo	as in 'o' in option
Uu	as in 'u' in ululation
Ĩĩ	as in 'a' in ate
Ũũ	as in 'o' in oat.
Consonant sounds	
ca	like the 'sa' in Saturday
ba	like in the 'fa' in father
ga	like the 'ga' in agar
ha	like the 'ha' in hat
ka	like the 'ka in kaput
ma	like the 'ma' in mat
na	like the 'na' in nag
ra	like the 'ra' in rag
ta	like the 'ta' in tag
wa	like the 'wa' in wag
ya	like the 'ya' in yam

Note

Here are certain rules that need to be observed.

1. A word can be formed of a single sound or multiple sounds.

2. A word can begin with a consonant or vowel, but IT ALWAYS ENDS WITH A VOWEL.

3. A vowel is a sound by its own right.

4. No consonant can make a sound.

Here are some examples:

A vowel and a vowel:

a-i (No)
A vowel and a sound:

a-ca (No)

A sound and a sound:

hi-ti (hyena)

Unusual sounds:

nguacĩ (sweet potato)

Short forms:

gĩkwa (yam).

Appendix 6: Example of Nilotic language (Luo) alphabet and pronunciation

IPA	Dholuo Orthography	Example in Language use
/ p /	p	pi 'water'
/ b /	b	.bur 'hole'
/ m /	m	.mór 'happiness'
/ mb /	mb	mbáká 'story'
/ w /	w	wích 'head'
/ f /	f	fúó 'stupid'
/ t͡θ /	th	thûl 'snake'
/ d͡ð /	dh	dhok 'mouth'
/ nd͡ð /	ndh	ndhíayó 'far'
/ t /	t	tedo 'to cook'
/ d /	d	.díél 'goat'
/ n /	n	nendo 'sleep'
/ nd /	nd	ndiko 'to write'
/ r /	r	.réch 'fish'
/ l /	l	lum 'grass'
/ s /	s	.súná 'mosquito'
/ c /	ch	chak 'milk'
/ ɟ /	j	ji 'people'
/ ɲ /	ny	nyakó 'girl'
/ ɲɟ /	nj	njofní 'tapeworm'
/ j /	y	.yath 'tree,medicine'
/ k /	k	.kâ 'here'
/ g /	g	gi 'thing'
/ ŋ / ng'	ng'	.ng'á 'who'
/ ŋg / ng	ng	.ngégé 'tilapia'
/ h / h	h	.higa "year"

Dholuo possesses a typical 'five-vowel' system. It has the following sounds:

• A high front vowel: / i /

• A mid front vowel: / e /

• A low central vowel: / a /

• A high back vowel: / u /

• A mid back vowel: / o /

However, for each of the five 'vowel spaces' above, Dholuo makes a further sub-distinction, between vowels that are (so-called) "+ATR" and ones that are (so-called) "-ATR".

What is "ATR"?

This is actually something of a complex and controversial issue. As a first pass, though:

(a) "ATR" stands for "Advanced Tongue Root".

• A vowel that is "+ATR" is pronounced with 'advanced tongue root'.

• A vowel that is "-ATR" is **not** pronounced with 'advanced tongue root'

(b) 'Advanced tongue root' occurs when the speaker 'expands' their pharyngeal cavity, usually by *advancing* their *tongue root*.

(c) The effect this has on the quality of the resulting vowel is complex.

• However, luckily (or perhaps unluckily) for us, the resulting distinction is kind of similar to the distinction in English between so-called 'tense' and 'lax' vowels.

• That is, to a first approximation, +ATR vowels sound tense, and –ATR vowels sound lax.

(d) That is, you may sometimes hear the following rough equivalences in the vowel sounds of Dholuo:

/ i̱ / :: / i /
ii. / i̱ / :: / ɪ /
iii. / e̱ / :: / e /
iv. / e̱ / :: / ɛ /
v. / a̱ / :: / æ /
vi. / a̱ / :: / a /
vii. / u̱ / :: / u /
viii. / u̱ / :: / ʊ /
ix. / o̱ / :: / o /
x. / o̱ / :: / ɔ /

However, these are only rough (and sometimes unstable) similarities. You may well often times have great difficulty hearing whether a given vowel is "+ATR" or "- ATR".

The Dholuo Orthography for "ATR"

How do we represent in the Roman orthography for Dholuo whether a vowel is ATR or not?

The official Roman orthography for Dholuo actually doesn't represent the ATR value of the vowel. That is, all high front vowels are written as "i", whether or not they are ATR.

• "You may have noticed that many of the words above are preceded by periods".

• This is a rather handy method Omondi (1982) uses to indicate the ATR status of the vowels.

• It relies on the Crucial Fact: 'ATR Harmony'

In a given word of Dholuo, all the vowels have to have the same value for ATR.

That is, all the vowels are "+ATR" or all the vowels are "-ATR"

Dholuo allows vowels to occur side-by-side. Some such combinations are illustrated below:

Adjacent Vowels in Dholuo Words

IPA	Dholuo orthography	In English
/ lìe̯t /	liet	'hot'
/ ɗɗía̯ŋ /	dhíàng'	'cow'
/ gùe̯nò̯ /	. gueno	'hen'
/ mùa̯ndà̯ /	muanda	ˈantelope'
/ cúò̯ /	. chúo	ˈmen'

The Tonal Melodies of Dholuo

Dholuo is a tone language. There are four 'tones' or 'tonal melodies' that a vowel in Dholuo can bear.

	IPA	Dholuo orthography	In English
High	/ mɔ́ɲ /	mɔ́n	'women'
Low	/ lùm /	lum	'grass'
Falling	/ ɲâɲâ /	. nyânyâ	'tomato'
Rising	/ lǎw /	lǎw	'dress'

Note that tones in Dholuo are represented just as they are in IPA, except that a low tone is indicated by the *absence* of any tonal diacritic.

Appendix 7: Examples of common words and phrases in Sheng' language adapted from other languages

Sheng' word	Meaning	English/European language origin/original word	Kiswahili/Local language origin/ Original word
Morgen	Good morning	German/Morgen	
Dame	Lady	French/Dame	
Madha	Woman	English/Mother	
Dough	Money	English/Dough	
Poa	Cool		Kiswahili/ Poa
Mburungo	Cargo/Things		Kiswahili/ Mburungo
Brathee, Bro	Brother	English/ Brother	
Mdishi	Food	English/ Dish	
Kudishi	To eat	English/ Dish	
Kamu	Come	English/ Come	
Kugo	To go	English/ Go	
Mbuku	Book	English/ Book	
Kudoz	To sleep	English/ Dose	
Gava	Police	English/ Government	
Mtichee/ Odijo	Teacher	English/ Teacher	
Moti	Car	English/ Motorcar	
Hepi	To go out for fun or a party	English/ Happy	
Keja	House	English/ Cage	
Wadhi	People	Dholuo/ Wadhi	

Note

The sheng' language varies depending on the region and neighbourhood.