

# **Sheng, Mother Tongue Language and Academic Performance**

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## **Table of Contents**

Factors Influencing the Performance of Languages in Secondary School.....	PG 4
Influence of Sheng Language on Proficiency of Mastering English Language in Primary Schools.....	PG 17
The Use of Mother Tongue Language and Its Effect on Academic Performance in Public Schools in Kenya.....	PG 31
Impact of Language Frames in Advertising Effectiveness.....	PG 42

# Factors Influencing the Performance of Languages in Secondary School

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence students' performance of languages in secondary school.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). The first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on students' performance of languages from various data bases. The first search was done generally by searching the articles in the Article title, abstract, keywords. The study took an approach of English literature since it is common globally; thus, the focus was on students' performance of languages in secondary schools. After the filtration was done, the third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to students' performance of languages which was split into top key words. Analysis was done using Excel where the study presented the findings in form of themes.

**Findings:** Language policies in schools were found to hold the key to success in language learning. The findings indicated that schools especially district day schools continued to engage untrained and inexperienced personalities as teachers with no pedagogical skills in language. The findings indicated that schools especially district day schools continued to engage untrained and inexperienced personalities as teachers with no pedagogical skills in language. There is a relationship between poverty and academic performance of students. Children from non-poor families can afford to buy the reading materials required for language, can be able to take breakfast before they go to school and are able to pay school fees in time. Most children from rural schools speak in their mother tongues and hence do not get any interest in studying languages

even if they find it in school. The teachers also pointed out that children from rural areas do not get much encouragement in their education their parents as those from urban areas and hence end up performing poorly.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** On teaching quality, there is an urgent need by the government to employ more professional teachers of English as schools are unable to hire them due to the strain on finances. There is also a need to provide more textbooks, class readers, revision books and set books.

**Keywords:** *Performance, Languages, Learning, Education*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Improving the quality of education is a priority task for many countries in the world. Education and training are an investment for national development. It has been used to equip and prepare the youth with knowledge, skills and expertise necessary to enable them to play an effective role in society and to serve the needs of national development. Education also develops the individual talents, personality, attitudes towards work and prepares them for further formal education, training and employment. The report further states that there will be need to lay greater emphasis on quality and relevant education and training. It will also be necessary to intensify research as well as to develop science and technology, creative and performing arts and languages. The Koech Report (1999) postulates that providing quality education to increasing numbers of students, as expected and using the available resources, is both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a challenge because of the inadequacy of the available Government resources in providing quality education. It is an opportunity because of the possibility of viewing education as both a service and an industry, which is marketed in order to widen the resource mobilization base.

Language is a means of communication among human beings. This implies that without language communication will be a problem. Languages are indeed very important not only to those people for whom it is the mother tongue but also those for whom it is an official language. The ministry of education in Kenya has expressed concern over the apparent decline in the performance of learners in languages at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) National Examinations. (KNEC Report, 2016). It has also classified languages learning among the core subjects in the curriculum. This means that for one to obtain a better grade in national examinations and therefore gain admission to a public University, he/she must pass in compulsory languages such as English. Acquiring university education is critical for individual career development because it is at the university that one acquires higher education. Specialized skills acquired at this level are vital in securing gainful employment and improve one's living standards. This enables individuals to effectively contribute to the national economic development. This has led to a public outcry from parents, teachers, educational planners and other education stakeholders.

Recent research also shows that of those variables which are potentially open to influence in educational settings, factors to do with teachers and teaching

are the most important influences on student learning (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie 2009). For example, research suggests that teachers at the top of the quality distribution can get up to a year's worth of additional learning from students, compared to those who are at the bottom of the quality distribution (Hanushek and Rivkin, 2006). Chetty et al (2011) find that students assigned to high quality teachers (determined by test scorebased value-add measures) are more likely to attend college and earn higher salaries, and are less likely to have children as teenagers, suggesting policies to raise the quality of teaching are likely to have substantial economic and social benefits in the long run.

In Nigeria, Adenuga (2002) attributed the decline in education quality (students' achievement) to low and declining level of key inputs such as infrastructural materials, laboratories, libraries and teaching facilities and manpower (classroom teachers) among others. Studies on teachers' effect at the classroom level have found that differential teacher effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in student learning, far outweighing the effects of differences in class size and heterogeneity.

In Uganda, a baseline study showed that there was a correlation between examination results at the end of secondary schooling to instructional materials. In fact, a test of writing ability positively correlated with instructional materials. This means that in the case of literacy and numeracy it was likely that instructional materials had a significant part to play (Carasco et al. 1996). In the same country a study conducted in a poor region where the population had been visited by many adverse elements such as drought, civil strife and continued insecurity. Oluka and Opolot-Okulut (2008) found that performance of students was adversely affected compared to other regions mainly attributed to teacher factors, large classes, poor school facilities, lack of homework, lack of a reading culture among teachers and pupils, lack of sound leadership in the school administration and inadequate amount of time allocated to teaching and learning.

According to Sanders & Rivers (1996), the influence of teachers is the single most important factor in determining student achievement. The one factor that can make the most difference in improving a student's achievement is a "knowledgeable, skillful teacher" in front of the classroom. Parker (1971) notes that a teacher must function as a knowledgeable, caring adult, providing needed information, making evaluations when called for, aiding in negotiations and decision making when appropriate, adding to the richness of

the environment by bringing new things into it and so forth. At times he will, quite usefully, be taken as a language model.

Studies done by Purves (2003) demonstrate that teachers' experience and training have a significant bearing on students' performance in languages. Teaching upgrades by service training do not seem to improve the academic results of students. In contrast, the knowledge that teachers have of their subject, their experience in the use of didactic material and their expectations in terms of students are variables associated with improved student performance. With regard to the characteristics of each teacher, pedagogical practices including availability of time and homework are positively associated with students' performance.

Bitamazire (2005) notes that apart from provision of teaching - learning materials, they should be coordinated and used properly for effective teaching /learning to take place. These materials include audio - visual materials (diagrams, flipcharts, computer monitors, transparencies projected through overhead projectors, slides, pictures etc. and printed materials (handouts, textbooks, study guides etc). He also reported that availability of textbooks and other instructional materials have a positive correlation on student's performance because they facilitate understanding of abstract concepts & directing attention, guide thinking, provide feedback and help in class control. However in his research, he discovered that 68 types of different teaching aids supplied by Nigerian government were never utilized. The researcher concurs with the role of instructional materials but would like to know whether they are being used in language classes.

School climate is associated with safety, healthy relationships, engaged learning and teaching and school improvement efforts. The National School Climate Council (2007) defines school climate and a positive, sustained school climate as based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices .and organizational structures. A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Students and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision. Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits



of, and satisfaction from, learning. Each person contributes to the operations of the school as well as the care of the physical environment.

Research on safety in schools shows that apart from feeling safe - socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically- being a fundamental human need, it also promotes student learning and healthy development (Devine & Cohen, 2007). However, a great deal of research shows that many students do not physically and emotionally feel safe in schools. For example, a study found evidence that high school students are fearful about going to school because of the violence and personal victimization some of them experience during the school day.

The involvement of parents or other significant adults has a major impact on student achievement (Reeves, 2004). The impact of parental involvement on student achievement is known by teachers, school leaders, educational policymakers and parents; nevertheless, educational accountability systems fail to effectively acknowledge this fact (Reeves, 2004). What holds the school community together and conveys the sense that all the individuals involved with the school are members of a family is the knowledge that everyone is committed to achieving the same outcomes (Sagor, 2004). Comer (2005) reviewed the importance of parent participation in the schools their children attend. He found that if parents could be involved in ways that threatened neither the parents nor the teachers, parental involvement would reach a critical mass that could transform even the most dysfunctional school. Parents, school staff, and students all wanted to succeed (Comer, 2001). A strong linkage between the school and community is invaluable as the education of students must be a team effort.

The expectations of teachers regarding students' capabilities for learning have an influence on classroom practices and the performance of students. Researchers have found that students are aware of differential treatment by teachers and that teacher's low expectation and differential treatment are associated with lower student achievement (Williams, 2003). Students, when asked, can describe the qualities of good teachers. Students share that the good 20 teachers maintain order, have a willingness to help in ways that accommodate different students' learning styles, explain content until everyone gets it regardless of varying classroom activities (whole class, small groups and individual), and make an effort to understand the students by believing in them and letting students know they do (Waxman & Huang, 1997). Good teachers are effective teachers. Effective teachers set high expectations for

students and use a variety of strategies to actively engage students. These strategies may include using hands-on experiences, technology, and worthwhile tasks. Teachers must also be able to orchestrate classroom discourse in ways that challenge and engage students, causing them to question and revise their understanding (Corbett & Wilson, 2002). Effective teachers understand the cultures of students in their classrooms and adapt curriculum and instruction accordingly (Comer, 2005). Students report greater satisfaction when their differences are embraced as “a resource that enriches learning” (Schaps, 2003).

Downey (1995) after a lengthy research concluded that most differences in performance in English stem from the parents’ background characteristics. He found that children living in households with a stepparent present had fewer parental resources available, which can directly affect educational outcomes. These parental resources included talking about school with children, attending school functions, and knowing some of the children’s friends. Brown (2004) found out that adolescents living in families other than married two-parent biological situations were less engaged in school, though the differences between married and cohabiting biological parents was not significant. Family size also appears to affect achievement. A smaller family generally indicates that there are more resources, both personal and economic, available to each member. Therefore, it is possible for parents to spend more time with their child with regard to school, as well as have money to spend on educational materials, better schools, and the like. Downey (1995) as well found that family size affects educational achievement. This research found that the majority of measured parental resources available to any one child are related to family size. The more children, the more thinly spread the interpersonal (time) and economic (money) resources were.

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Communicative Language Teaching' (CLT) Theory**

Communicative Language Teaching has its origins in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s and more generally in the developments of both Europe and North America. It was postulated in 1972 by linguists D. Flymes (1972) and Wilkins (1972). This approach varies from traditional approaches because it is learner-centred. Communicative language teaching refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning. The identification of learners’ communicative needs provides a basis for curriculum design (Van Ek 1975). Also, linguists state that there is a need to

focus on communicative proficiency in language teaching and that Communicative Language Teaching can fulfill this need. Proponents of this approach state that the goal of language teaching is communicative competence. Another aim is the development of procedures for the teaching of the four language skills (writing, reading, speaking, listening). Moreover, the four skills build the basis of the interdependence of language and communication (Richards, Rodgers 1986). Language is viewed as a vehicle of conveying meaning, and knowledge is transmitted through communication involving two parts, for example, speakers and listeners, and writers and readers. Since knowledge and learning are viewed as socially constructed through negotiation according to socio-cognitive perspectives, another dimension of CLT is learnercentred and experience based. In other words, in CLT context, learners are seen as active participants.

The language teachers do not take a dominant role but share different roles such as communication facilitator, independent participant, needs analyst, counsellor, and group process manager -CLT procedures often require teachers to acquire less teacher-centered classroom management skills. It is the teacher's responsibility to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) to create more fascinating experiences for the learners. The teacher has a very important main role: to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The weakness of CLT is that some people contend it has not given an adequate account of EFL teaching despite its initial growth in foreign language teaching in Europe. Stem (1992) argued that one of the most difficult problems is making classroom learning communicative is the absence of native speakers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to students' performance of languages in secondary school. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study that is students' performance of languages in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. The first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles were based on students' performance of languages from various data bases. The first search was done generally by searching the articles in the Article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject of students'

performance of languages. A total of studies that were studied totaled to 30 articles. The filtration process was done basing on the currency of the articles (between the year 2014 and 2019). This section indicates the process that the study followed in analysis of the literature. The researcher reviewed the articles to eliminate duplicates; this ensured only unique studies for unique review. The study took an approach of English literature since it is common globally; thus, the focus was on students' performance of languages in secondary schools. After the filtration was done, the third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on the articles that related to students' performance of languages which was split into top key words. After an indepth search into the top key words (students' performance of languages), the researcher arrived at 10 articles that were suitable for analysis. Analysis was done using Excel where the study presented the findings in form of themes.

## **FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION**

School physical resources, many schools still lack the necessary teaching and learning resources especially Kiswahili course books, thus impeding academic performance. From the study findings, many schools did not have enough classrooms forcing some to have swelled class sizes which were a burden to teachers. Conspicuously absent in schools were the libraries meaning that students lacked the necessary reference materials thus depending on a teachers' words. According to Stanley et al (2000) Students' capability and notification to learn are determined by the quality of home and school environment and the students' health and nutrition status and the previous learning experiences, including the degree of parental stimulation. The principle source of children's capacity and motivation to learn is the family through domestic endowment and the direct provision of nutrients health care and stimulus.

Language policies in schools were found to hold the key to success in language learning. From the findings, it emerged that all schools had language policies, but what lacked was the will and vigor to enforce them within the school environment. The findings indicated that schools especially district day schools continued to engage untrained and inexperienced personalities as teachers with no pedagogical skills in language. It become also clear from the findings that even the trained teachers lacked the exposure as some school principals failed to sponsor them to symposiums, seminars and in - service training to polish up their prowess in language teaching and learning.

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There is a relationship between poverty and academic performance of students. Children from nonpoor families can afford to buy the reading materials required for language, can be able to take breakfast before they go to school and are able to pay school fees in time. All these according to the teachers contribute to the performance of a child in languages. The teachers added that children from the rural areas are the most disadvantaged because due to poverty children are required to work at home that is unpaid domestic labor. This labor results in frequent absenteeism, chronic fatigue and hence poor performance.

According to the teachers most children from rural schools speak in their mother tongues and hence do not get any interest in studying languages even if they find it in school. The teachers also pointed out that children from rural areas do not get much encouragement in their education their parents as those from urban areas and hence end up performing poorly. It was further found that most parents from rural schools were illiterate and therefore even if they were in support of their children's education they would not be able to help them in with their homework.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions were drawn. Although majority of the teachers of English are professionally trained and experienced they have high teaching load and very large classes to teach hence they are unable to effectively guide students in writing compositions, supervising the reading of set books, guiding them in class discussions and debates and marking and returning their assignments. On the availability of teaching and learning materials, it can be concluded that English textbooks, revision books, class readers, oral literature books and set books are grossly inadequate especially at times like now where schools are admitting many students as a result of free primary school and free day secondary programmes. On the school climate, it can be concluded that schools have very few traditions that support effective scholarship. Structures lack to supervise teachers hence majority are never punctual in class, teachers hardly show respect to students,

they never show sensitivity to individual differences, do not update themselves on current practices in the field and ashamed weak students. Teachers are also overburdened since there are no structures to reduce their workload and because of this, they may not be willing to help students at their own time. Students are also bullied and victimized by their colleagues and do not respect others who get good grades. Students also absented themselves without good excuses. Principals too hardly complimented teachers in public and were generally not good role models of hard work. Schools also hardly reward excellence, do not have well-equipped libraries and have inadequate security. On home factors, majority of the families were found to be large, majority of the students resided with both parents, majority of the parents had only basic education and therefore hardly talked to their children about the importance of English and were also hardly involved in the academic life of the students. Majority of the parents hardly attended PTA meetings or advised their children on course selection or provided their children with adequate books.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested: On teaching quality, there is an urgent need by the government to employ more professional teachers of English as schools are unable to hire them due to the strain on finances. The few PTA teachers may be unqualified, underpaid and therefore under ambitious. There is also a need to provide more textbooks, class readers, revision books and set books. Schools can come up with incomegenerating activities like selling seedlings, poultry keeping e.t.c in order to supplement the fees collection.

On home background, it is recommended that parents be aware of family planning methods, be encouraged to register for adult education and be encouraged to advise their children on the value of academic excellence. They should also be encouraged to attend PTA regularly in order to motivate their children and track their progress.

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# **Influence of Sheng Language on Proficiency of Mastering English Language in Primary Schools**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** to evaluate the influence of sheng language on proficiency of mastering English language in primary schools.

**Methodology:** This study further used a behavioral approach while researching and writing this article. A qualitative textual evaluation method was used in this research. Textual analysis consists of review and interpretation of scripts and articles and their inferential context in relations to the sheng language and proficiency of mastering English language.

**Findings:** Sheng influences word formation processes and patterns used in speaking and writing. Pupils used a lot of cutting-off of the final syllables of words and fixed coined syllables to complete the words by so doing, they altered the meaning of words. Pupils used words from other languages not acceptably borrowed by English language in speaking and writing affecting the choice and use of vocabulary in composition writing. Further, pupils also used vocabulary from sheng to explain a concept in English making grammatical errors. Teachers faced some challenges in curbing the use of Sheng in speaking and writing. These challenges were; lack of proper language policy in most schools, lack of proper guide books provided by KICD on teaching speaking and writing, lack of technical knowhow by teachers on tackling languages, large classes, inadequate time and the acceptance of sheng as a language to be used in the society.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** Schools should provide a language policy which should be strictly adhered to in order to minimize the negative influence of Sheng speaking and writing. Teachers should give pupils a lot of exercises to help in mastering of spellings and pronunciation in English. Some of the spelling strategies are filling in gaps,

checking up words in the dictionary extensive reading and locating correct spelled words in a text.

**Keywords:** *Sheng, English Language, Primary Schools*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In English language, the writing and speaking skill is very important, for one to communicate to an audience far from him or her. Not only is writing and speaking an important academic skill, but it is also an important skill that translates into any career field as nearly all professions require some form of writing on the job. The skill in English is facing a lot of challenges, therefore this study sought to look at one among the many problems which may be affecting English composition writing negatively and that is Sheng language.

Globally, educating a nation remains the most vital strategy for the development of the society throughout the developing world (Aikaman & Unterhalter, 2005). Many studies on human capital development concur that it is the human resources of a nation and not its capital or natural resources that ultimately determine the pace of its economic and social development. The principal institutional mechanism for developing human capital is the formal education system of primary, secondary, and tertiary training (Nsubuga, 2003).

Since education is an investment, there is a significant positive correlation between education and economic-social productivity. When people are educated, their standards of living are likely to improve, since they are empowered to access productive ventures, which will ultimately lead to an improvement in their livelihoods. The role of education therefore, is not just to impart knowledge and skills that enable the beneficiaries to function as economies and social change agents in society, but also to impart values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations important for national development. The straightforward linkage between education and development is through the improvement of labour skills, which in turn increases opportunities for well-paid productive employment. This then might enable the citizens of any nation to fully exploit their potential positively (Keith & Johnson, 2001).

Kenya has consistently developed its education system, since independence. Gross enrollment rates in primary schools have increased tremendously since the introduction of the policy of Free Primary Education (FPE). The goal of FPE is not only to increase equitable access, but also to improve quality and relevance of education being provided. Failure to expand access at primary education level will undermine the government efforts to sustain FPE, and the achievement of the education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Transition rates into the secondary level may fall unless access to quality primary schooling is expanded (World Bank Report, 1995). In addition, the competitiveness, especially in high value added and knowledge based

sectors of the economy, depends on knowledge, skills and competences associated with abstract reasoning, analysis, language and communication skills and application of science and technology which are most efficiently acquired through schooling (Lewin, 2001). The official languages designated to be used in schools are English and Kiswahili however, mother tongue and a code made up of Kiswahili, English and mother tongue known as Sheng language tend to infiltrate into the school setting. Sheng language is cited as being one among the factors that affect proper acquisition and use of the official languages and thus their performance (Njoroge, 2012).

The primary school curriculum is tailored to facilitate learning of knowledge, skills and attitudes through formal, non-formal or informal education. Formal education is composed of subjects outlined in the syllabus, majority of which are subjected to an end of course national examination. The subjects include: Mathematics, English, Kiswahili, Science and Social and Religious studies. Great importance has been placed on the development of the English language as it is a language of instruction and also a subject in itself. It has always been a compulsory subject in Kenya's system of education. In the class, it is allocated more lessons; five lessons alongside mathematics in lower primary and seven lessons in upper primary per week (KIE, 2002). The Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) considers mastery of English crucial in the performance of any examination (KNEC, 2010). From the above statement; it is clear that proficiency in English is the key to success in the other subjects in the school curriculum. The primary English syllabus states that writing skills acquired in primary school should enable learners to express themselves in written English using appropriate punctuation, spelling, grammar and vocabulary (Indagasi, 2008).

Sheng is a hybrid linguistic code that is believed to have evolved in Nairobi in the 1960s and 1970s. Its evolution and use has been attributed to a variety of factors ranging from language contact to inadequate knowledge of standard languages, (Swahili and English), identity (Samper, 2004), obfuscation of meaning (Mbugua, 2003) and cognitive efficiency among others. According to Mazrui, (1995), Sheng defies the classification categories such as pidgin, creole, slang (in spite of the acronym), or jargon. This is because although it exhibits features that characterize all these categories, none can be said to exhaustively capture its various peculiarities. It is unanimously believed that Sheng began in the poor residential areas of Nairobi's East lands, before gradually spreading to other poor residential areas of Nairobi and its environs. Today, it has become a characteristic linguistic phenomenon of Nairobi and

other multiethnic urban areas in Kenya, though the degree of competence and participation differs from individual to individual and region to region among different categories of speakers (Wagikondi, 2004). Sheng as a language can therefore manifest itself in pupils' thoughts and how they express themselves in writing and speaking. This is the basis upon which this study is pursued in order to establish the relationship between Sheng and English and how the influence of Sheng on writing and speaking can be minimized.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Language Transfer Theory**

This study was based on Language transfer theory as cited by Chang (2012). The language transfer theory proposes that the learner's mother tongue- MT will positively or negatively affect his learning of a foreign language in second language acquisition- SLA. He further observes that when there are differences between the learner's MT and Target Language- TL, the MT will negatively aid the TL learning. On the contrary, when the learner's MT and TL are similar, the native language will actively aid foreign language learning. Language transfer, also known as LI interference, linguistic interference or cross meaning, means that speakers or writers apply knowledge from their native language to the second language. It is most commonly discussed in the context of English language learning and teaching but can occur in any situation when someone does not have a native command of a language, as when translating into the second language.

Language interference is most often discussed as a source of errors known as negative transfer, it occurs when speakers and writers transfer items and structures that are not the same in both languages. In lexicology, words get their different ways of expression in different languages. Generally speaking, every language has their unique word formation, collocation and so on. As foreign language learners, especially beginners, they always first cope with the meanings. In some specific sense, they translate the words from negative language to target language equivalently. Thus all the results will lead to ambiguous or meaningless in the TL. The connotation associative meaning and effective meaning will be different as well. Words act as basic units of communication among people and are loaded with different cultural meanings and implications. Gives us an example of the word "dog," that in western countries, dogs are treated as companions while to the Chinese, they are associated with negative meanings

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When the negatively transferred errors are discouraged in the learning classes, we are going to have the correct form of the English language being learned, and it not the errors transferred will affect the correct learning of English, thus a poorly done writings and language in terms of word order, spellings, vocabulary and poorly formed words.

### **Language Policy in Kenyan Schools**

While barely a quarter of the Kenyan population can adequately use English, it remains the advantaged official language and the medium of instruction in the education system, unlike Kiswahili, the co-official language (Ogechi, 2005). However, while the leadership appears comfortable with this linguistic situation and would wish to have the status quo maintained, the linguistic situation among lay Kenyans demonstrates that not all is well on the ground. Historically, English came to Kenya through British colonialism, while Kiswahili initially spread throughout the country as a trade language from the coast. Although English is now considered to be a Kenyan language by some (Webb & Kembo-Sure, 2000), to a large extent it has to be learnt formally.

On the other hand, though Kiswahili is widely spoken and acquired on the basis of informal exposure to this language, Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) argue that Kiswahili itself is as alien to most rural people as is English, and even among those who claim to speak it, only a small proportion are fluent enough to engage in serious discussions. The other Kenyan languages are only used in restricted areas largely for intra-ethnic interactions. Practically, therefore, Kenyan children do not have a single, uniform language that they all speak

when they enroll in Grade 1. In addition, broadly speaking, there exist three linguistic zones in Kenya, namely; rural areas that are typically inhabited by ethnically homogenous communities and use local native languages, peri-urban areas, which, though rural, have ethnically diverse occupants and thus use Kiswahili as a language of wider communication, and urban areas that comprise large towns and cities with people from a multiplicity of ethnicities, in which Kiswahili and English are the languages of wider communication (Webb, & Kembo-Sure, K2000).

The official language policy in education prescribes the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in rural areas for the first three years of learning, whereas either Kiswahili or English is used in the urban schools KIE, 2002). No clear policy exists for peri-urban schools, although they usually use Kiswahili to introduce education. However, from Grade 4 onwards, the teaching of and in mother tongue ceases. In Grade 4, Kiswahili continues as a subject whereas English becomes the medium of instruction as well as the language in which national examinations are written except (obviously) for examinations on Kiswahili. What this means is that the process of preparing the learners to sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education starts in Grade 4, regardless of whether or not the learners are able to use English at that stage. At the end of the primary English course, all learners are expected to have a sufficient command of English in spoken and written forms to enable them to communicate fluently, follow subject courses and textbooks, and read for pleasure and information (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002).

### **English Speaking and Writing**

Vocabulary knowledge is important because it encompasses all the words we must know to access our background knowledge, express our ideas and communicate effectively, and learn about new concepts. “Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas and content together making comprehension accessible for children” (Rupley, Logan & Nichols, 1999). Students’ word knowledge is linked strongly to academic success because students who have large vocabularies can understand new ideas and concepts more quickly than students with limited vocabularies. The high correlation in the research literature of word knowledge with writing composition indicates that if students do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, writing composition will be affected (Chall & Jacobs, 2003).

Recent research shows that vocabulary growth is largely determined by parental practices, particularly before the age of 7 (Biemiller, 2003). Children

mainly use words their parents and other adults use with them in conversation, and acquire larger vocabularies when their parents use more words Vocabulary is a strong indicator of writing success. It has been established that children's declining writing composition largely resulted from a lack of vocabulary knowledge and that this was primarily caused by a lack of learning opportunities, not a lack of natural ability (Biemiller, 2003).

### **Sheng Language**

Sheng has become the basic urban vernacular for the youth in Kenya today. Indications are that the young people in the rural areas now also commonly use it together with a sizeable portion of the adult population, who grew up with 'old school' Sheng - the Sheng in their days of youth. Sections of the electronic and print media regularly use Sheng and popular music features Sheng as a language of choice. With approximately 40 living languages in Kenya today, two of them, Swahili and English, arguably co-official (Skandera, 2000), one wonders where this new language came from and why it arose. Mazrui, (1995) has stated that the foundation of Sheng lies at the traditional code switching between Swahili and English (hence the term sh-eng) while others credit Sheng to the demand for a lingua franca in the colonial period during the beginnings of urbanization in the country.

Karanja, (2010) in her paper, Homeless At Home, informs us on how Sheng is formulated and its use among the Kenyan urban youth. She tells us that Sheng was started in an attempt to bridge the ethnic divide and that between the perceived traditional values and the urban modernized values. She also tells us how Sheng words are formed by word borrowing, coining and truncation. The research informs the current one especially on Sheng word formation and on what the language is used for. However, it does not tell us its effects on English language.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study further used a behavioral approach while researching and writing this article, which involved evaluating the meaning embedded in a silence by considering the environment and the situation at hand in that very moment. The drawing and interpretation of research findings and sense which is not a quantitative impact evaluation, was important in this context, which implies that qualitative and thematic analysis was most suitable in this study. A qualitative textual evaluation method was used in this research. Textual analysis consists of review and interpretation of scripts and articles and their inferential context in relations to the sheng language on proficiency of



mastering English language. Cutting (2008), nevertheless, reaffirmed its reliability and adequacy, in particular when the researcher pays attention to text itself. In this regard, there should be more interpretation of the texts and their targeted discussion environment in view of the time and situation in which they were written.

## **FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

The study findings showed that sheng had influenced sentence construction in speaking and writing in English and therefore students are not able to construct their sentences well at the same time there is clear distortion of the meaning of the sentences making the composition not to be clearly understood. According to Indagasi, (2008) presentation of sentence patterns in upper primary is done both orally and in written form. Sentence structure must first be identified and then presented in a context which brings out the meanings. On the contrary, it was found out that sentence construction in composition writing has been influenced by Sheng to an extent that they are presented in context which do not bring out their meanings clearly. On one hand Bosire, (2006), points out that structure formation in structure of Sheng may influence linguistics as pointed out in this research. Further, Bosire (2009) found out that Lexical manipulation is a tool that distorts and re-engineers the structure and meaning of words in a way that uniquely identifies them as Sheng. Distortion may be structural or semantic. There are two main structural distortions; syllable methathesis and truncation.

The study findings indicated that Sheng had an influence on word spelling in English. This was found to concur with Mutiga (2013), who argued that speakers of Sheng substitute 'foreign' sounds found in English with the closest sounds found either in Kiswahili or any other indigenous languages making it difficult for learners to distinguish the different English vowel sounds and their qualities thus leading to inaccurate pronunciation and spelling of English words. Further Njuguna (2013) reported that Kenya National Examinations Council had revealed that some candidates who sat 2012 Standard Eight exams failed flat in writing compositions. A postmortem report showed that some of the candidates could hardly write simple words correctly, mainly because of strong mother-tongue and 'sheng' influence. According to the report, some candidates hardly communicated because any attempt to do so was hampered by multiple errors in spelling and sentence structure. This clearly shows that Sheng has influenced the use of correct spelling in composition writing in public primary schools. On her part Mutiga (2013) pointed that teachers of

English specifically complained that speakers of Sheng' substituted 'foreign' sounds found in English with the closest sounds found either in Kiswahili or any other indigenous languages.

It emerged from the study findings that sheng influenced word formation processes and patterns used in composition writing in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. This was found to support the findings of Bosire (2009) who noted that sheng causes semantic manipulations in English. These manipulations are seen in processes employed to extend, invert or radically change the meaning of lexemes appropriated from Swahili, English or any of the source languages that Sheng takes vocabulary from. The study further showed that there is language interference as pupils apply knowledge from Sheng language to the 2nd language influencing word formation processes and patterns in English. It was further established that Sheng has been shown to be responsible for linguistic change (Aitchison, 2001) since word formation has been achieved through either borrowing, arbitrary coinage or re-lexicalization (Ogechi, 2005). Most of the words used by pupils are formed in the Sheng structure, showing a lot of coinage and reduplication as found in Sheng language.

The study findings noted that there was lack of language policy in public primary schools and this has been a major challenge in curbing the use of Sheng in composition writing in public primary schools. The study findings concurs with that of Momanyi (2009) who pointed out that the emergence of 'Sheng' may have to do with the lack of clarity in Kenya's language policy especially by providing speakers with a code that makes good use of all the major languages spoken in the country. To some extent this may be true because while Kenya boasts of having English as its official language, there are no deliberate efforts to make this a reality through policy formulation. Furthermore, the study reflected what Kagure (2010) noted on challenges associated with implementing English language policy in multilingual learning in ethnically homogenous schools where national languages are not the main languages spoken at home. The emergence of Sheng in the poor residential areas of Nairobi and its adoption as the youth's secret code accounts for the stigma associated with its speakers. It has since spread its tentacles out of the inner city to various parts of the country in addition to becoming increasingly popular in the media and popular culture (Samper, 2002) Sheng's pervasiveness in the daily discourse of the Nairobi people is demonstrated by the irony exhibited by many people who use it unconsciously while denying its knowledge or use. Outright condemnation, therefore, would not only

amount to self-condemnation, but would also be ignoring the reality regarding the function the code serves in Kenya's linguistic market, especially amongst the youth in their identity project and some criminals who use it as a secret code (Githiora, 2002)

In spite of these functions, its negative effect on school performance in English language in both primary and secondary school levels has been a thorn in the flesh for the parents and language pedagogist's (Samper, 2002). Driven by need to prevent the corruption of languages and to endeavor to teach 'proper' languages that enhance the learners' career opportunities, such stakeholders are usually harsh in their evaluation of Sheng and its speakers. Among the speakers, on the other hand, effects of Sheng fluctuates depending on whether they are peripheral or core speakers, and their motivations for using Sheng. 'Sheng' is based primarily on Kiswahili structure. It uses Kiswahili grammar with lexicon drawn from Kiswahili, English and the various ethnic languages mostly spoken in big towns. Initially, this mixed code was unstable, random and fluid, but it gradually developed more systematic patterns of usage at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. For example, the word 'father' started as 'fadhee', later it changed to 'buda or budaa' and now it is 'mbuyu'. According to Githiora, (2002), the word 'buda' has its origin in Gujarati and Hindi which means an old man. But in the new coinage 'mbuyu' there seems to be no explanation as to its origin. The code dominates the discourse of primary and secondary school children outside their formal classroom setting, and is widely spoken also by street hawkers, street children, public service vehicle drivers and conductors and small scale business communities in market places.

## **Conclusion**

Sheng influences the use of correct spelling and pronunciation by distorting the structure of words in English making it difficult for learners to distinguish between English vowel sounds and their qualities thus leading to inaccurate pronunciation and spelling of English words. Sheng influences word formation processes and patterns used in speaking and writing. Pupils used a lot of cutting-off of the final syllables of words and fixed coined syllables to complete the words by so doing, they altered the meaning of words. Pupils used words from other languages not acceptably borrowed by English language in speaking and writing affecting the choice and use of vocabulary in composition writing. Further, pupils also used vocabulary from sheng to explain a concept in English making grammatical errors.

Teachers faced some challenges in curbing the use of Sheng in speaking and writing. These challenges were; lack of proper language policy in most schools, lack of proper guide books provided by KICD on teaching speaking and writing, lack of technical knowhow by teachers on tackling languages, large classes, inadequate time and the acceptance of sheng as a language to be used in the society.

### **Recommendations**

Schools should provide a language policy which should be strictly adhered to in order to minimize the negative influence of Sheng speaking and writing. Teachers should give pupils a lot of exercises to help in mastering of spellings and pronunciation in English. Some of the spelling strategies are filling in gaps, checking up words in the dictionary extensive reading and locating correct spelled words in a text. There should be censorship on the language used in the media to curb the spread of Sheng language.

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# The Use of Mother Tongue Language and Its Effect on Academic Performance in Public Schools in Kenya

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to assess the use of mother tongue language and its effect on academic performance in public schools in Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to mother tongue language and its effect on academic performance in Kenya. The review on how to rethink and reorganize what is being done to solve mother tongue language challenges in Kenya by policymakers was done.

**Findings:** The findings show that language used by teachers influenced students' performance in English. Therefore, since the prevalence of switching language is high as indicated earlier, then this influences academic performance in secondary schools. Therefore, the findings imply that language used by teachers in classroom influences the academic performance. Speaking skills using language of instruction both by teachers and students have an impact on classroom participation and thus performance of English. Among other challenges identified is that use of mother tongue leads to inability to pronounce words. Use of mother tongue also leads to lack of confidence hence inhibit interaction. Students too noted that they were unable to understand questions written in English.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** Use of mother tongue is prevalent among students in secondary schools. Thus it was concluded that the prevalent use of mother tongue adversely influenced academic performance. The perception of teachers and students regarding influence of mother tongue on academic performance is equally important. Teachers and students hold the perception that use of mother tongue has a negative influence on academic performance. To curb use of mother tongue, proper measures

need to be put in place. Language policies can reduce the use of mother tongue if they are implemented in the right way. An established mechanism that ensures students are rewarded and punished in equal measure can help to deter use of mother tongue and encourage use of English.

**Keywords:** *Mother Tongue, Academic Performance, Public Schools, L1, L2*



## **INTRODUCTION**

Kenya is a linguistically heterogeneous and diverse country with many indigenous (mother tongues) and exogenous languages. Basically, Kenya has at least 42 indigenous languages. English is one of the exogenous languages. Other exogenous languages include: Arabic, French, German, Hindu, and Chinese while some of the indigenous languages include are Kalenjin, Dholuo, Kikuyu, Luhya, and Kisii among others. Use of English has a long history in Kenya.

When Kenya attained self-rule in 1963, English was declared the official language (Republic of Kenya, 1964). It was to be used in all important government sectors including education. This policy re-emphasized what was already in place as a result of colonial language policy. At this particular point in time, the Ministry of Education took steps in line with language policy. In 1964, the Kenya Education Commission mounted a survey to establish the interests of the citizens with regard to language use. The findings revealed that most people wanted a trilingual approach to education (Ministry of Education, 2012). During this period, mother tongue was preferred for verbal communication especially in rural areas, while English and Kiswahili were preferred for education from lower primary to the university. Kiswahili was especially favored in education for purposes of national and regional unity. However, unlike English, mother tongue languages were not anchored into the school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Schools have been known to come up with internal language policies that aim at helping the students to be proficient both in spoken and written English and improve their performance in English (Ministry of Education, 2012). These policies are implemented by teachers who believe that if students speak in English, their written English will improve and thus their performance in English. Apparently, teachers and some parents believe that early exposure of learners to English will enhance the learning process since English is the medium of instruction in Kenyan schools; thus speaking in English is encouraged while use of mother tongue is discouraged (Kimani, 2012). In a study done on factors influencing students' performance in English in KCSE in secondary schools in Meru North District, Kenya, Mwangi (2009) identified the problem that arises from having 100% of enrolment of students in their native district as is in the case of day district schools. This according to Mwangi (2009) contributes to poor performance in English as such students use their mother tongue during conversation. Parents should encourage their

children to speak English while at home and school. Additionally, mother tongue as one of the challenges that influences performance of English.

Gacheche (2010) emphasizes the importance of English language acquisition as a stepping-stone for proficiency in other school subjects in the Kenyan education system and argues that use of mother tongue in secondary schools is a challenge in performance of English. In addition, Ouma (2010) researched on factors that affect performance of English in Gucha District, Kenya and found out that low proficiency and performance in English was associated to limited resources and students' use of mother tongue. He discourages the use of mother tongue in schools. Moreover, it is a requirement for students to pass in English language before entering the university since English is considered in various clusters that are a requirement for entry to various courses.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a surge in expansion of secondary schools in the country (Kamano, 2011). Most of the emerging secondary schools are in the rural areas where learners prevalently use mother tongue at home and school. This prevalence of use of mother tongue especially in day secondary schools is an issue of concern since it is a challenge that influences the performance of English. The performance of English in the country has been declining. For instance, English was the subject with the highest decline in 2011 KCSE.

### **Objective of the Study**

The aim of the study is to assess the use of mother tongue language and its effect on academic performance in public schools in Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Acculturation Theory**

This is an environmental-oriented theory proposed by John Schumann in 1978. It was used in 1980 in the field of Linguistics, precisely, Second Language Acquisition. It states that Second Language Acquisition is the result of acculturation, which he defines as “the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language (TL) group” (Schumann, 1978). The major claim of the theory is that acculturation, which is a cluster of social-psychological factors, is the major cause of Second Language Acquisition (Schumann, 1990). Schumann states that any learner can be placed along a continuum ranging from social-psychological distance to social-psychological proximity with the speakers of the target language. The degree of language

acquisition, then, would correlate with the degree of the learner's proximity to the target group. Thus, the acculturation theory argues that learners will be successful in Second Language Acquisition if there are fewer social and psychological distances between them and the speakers of the second language.

Some of the factors that account for the acquisition of second language according to the theory include: motivation and attitude of the learner, limited integration of cultural groups and how tight-knit the group is. This theory applied to this study because this study endeavored to find out how use of a language in a social context influences second language acquisition. The theory also indicates that learners will be successful in Second Language Acquisition if there are fewer social and psychological distances between them and the speakers of the second language. This study sought to establish the influence of use of mother tongue (which is a social factor) and the attitude towards use of mother tongue (a psychological factor) and how the distance created by use of mother tongue (Kikuyu) influences acquisition and thus performance in second language (English). Acculturation theory's strength lies in the fact that it considers motivation to be instrumental and integrative. The motive for learning second language is important, however, the theory assumes that there will always be a group which is familiar with the second language; this is not always the case.

### **First Language Influence on Second Language**

There is a divergent view by scholars about use of mother tongue in education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report of 1953 articulated the significance of using mother tongue as language of instruction in early schooling. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) advocate for the use of mother tongue on psychological, sociological and educational grounds. Mother tongue education is supported by educationists due to its applicability to the cognitive development of a child. Learners have difficulties in developing cognitive skills when taught through the medium of a second language especially if it is not related to the learners' mother tongue (McNab, 1989). UNESCO advances the point of view that pupil's mother tongue is the best for expressional and understanding of concepts. This is compared to exogenous languages like English, which the pupil has to learn the subject before being instructed in the language. Educationists support the view that

learners best learn from simple to complex, known to 18 unknown. The known language that a child encounters in his/her life is mother tongue.

Bartoo (2004) investigated on the acquisition of English syntax by Keiyo mother tongue speakers. In her study, she looked at the syntactic errors that result from First Language (L1) transfer in the process of acquiring English as a Second language (L2) by Keiyo speakers of English. She equally looked at the effects of the errors on performance of students. In her investigation, she found out that syntactic errors found in first language inhibit acquisition of English skills and thus performance of learners in English. This was important to this research since the researcher endeavored to analyze the influence of L1 (mother tongue) on L2 (English).

Krashen (1985) claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to form a mental block that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In addition, Krashen (1985) emphasis seems to be that classroom learning does not lead to fluent, native-like speech. This is important in this study since the researcher asked whether students who used mother tongue were punished and whether those who used English were rewarded. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to know whether the punishment deterred the students from using mother tongue.

Adebayo (2008) uses a survey design to examine the influence of mother tongue on performance of English language in Junior School Certificate Examination in Western Nigeria. He found that mother tongue influences the students' performance in English language in Junior School Certificate Examination in Western Nigeria. He recommends that English language should be used as a medium of communication within and outside the classroom and both teachers and students should endeavor to improve their proficiency level of the language which will eventually lead to improved performance. Adebayo's study does not explicitly indicate to what extent mother tongue influence the performance; this sought to establish what Adebayo (2008) failed to capture in his study by analyzing the extent to which mother tongue influences performance of English.

Kolawole (2002) also confirmed that students' performance in English language in secondary schools of Nigeria was very poor. He stressed further that the standard was poor due to a number reasons such as the use of mother tongue; some students do not understand the grammar because their teachers

themselves do not know it and in most cases English language teachers in the senior primary and junior secondary schools resort to the use of mother tongue to teach (code switching); they use mother tongue to explain concepts. This might be true to Kenyan case especially in day schools where learners are drawn from a local context of a familiar native language.

Ayodele (1988) and Kolawole (2002) recommend that pupils should have exposure to the English language quite early in primary school irrespective of the perceived advantages of mother tongue. These scholars emphasize on firm foundation in English language for better performance in the subject in future and argue that a solid foundation in English essentially provides students with fundamental skills of English language.

Njoroge (1987) studied the acquisition of Six Morphosyntactic Structures of English by Kenyan School Children and looked at how First Language (L1) of students from different mother tongues in Kenya interfered and affected learning of English. He found out that children's First Language (L1) usually interferes with acquisition of Second Language (L2) skills. Njoroge's study is important to this research in that it is looking at errors that are as a result of mother tongue influence on the performance of English.

Wagikondi (2004) did an investigation into factors contributing to poor achievement in English in Kirinyaga District, Kenya and identified that when language of communication at home and school is mother tongue, then acquisition of English skills is inhibited and thus the performance of English is affected. Wagikondi (2004) also recommends that there is need to carry out a research to investigate the influence of mother tongue on student's performance in English.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to mother tongue language and its effect on academic performance in Kenya. The research involved literature search and paper review of information on mother tongue language and academic performance with respect to the value of archival materials (Creswell, 2014). This article reviewed recorded sources to present the current state of mother tongue language in Kenya. In line with Creswell's assertion that observations are important for obtaining first-hand knowledge that enriches analysis results, under different themes, the study revealed observations were made from the recorded sources. Where appropriate, the review on how to

rethink and reorganize what is being done to solve mother tongue language challenges in Kenya by policymakers was done.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings show that language used by teachers influenced students' performance in English. Therefore, since the prevalence of switching language is high as indicated earlier, then this influences academic performance in secondary schools. Kolawole (2002) has a similar view when he talks about the language that teachers use and argues that some students do not understand grammar because their teachers themselves do not know it and in most cases English language teachers in the senior primary and junior secondary schools resort to the use of mother tongue to teach (code switching); this leads to poor performance of English. Therefore, the findings imply that language used by teachers in classroom influences the academic performance.

These findings show that academic performance is influenced when teachers use mother tongue. This agrees with Setati et al (2002) who argues that when a teacher uses mother tongue or code switches in class the student may understand or access meaning at the expense of linguistic grammatical concepts, thus influencing performance of English. Teachers' use of mother tongue leads to persistence of errors that come from first language (mother tongue) shown through direct translation; this has adverse influences academic performance. It can therefore be concluded that students perceive that use of English in conversations by teachers eventually influences the performance in English. Kamano (2011) studied the influence of instructional language choice on secondary school students on academic performance in Kikuyu District, Kenya and concurs that speaking skills using language of instruction both by teachers and students have an impact on classroom participation and thus performance of English.

Use of mother tongue has a negative influence on academic performance. Hasindu (2011) argues that poor performance in English is as a result of students' use of mother tongue during conversation. Thus, the poor performance of English in secondary schools can be attributed to high prevalence of use of mother tongue. Use of English in conversations enhance performance of English while use of mother tongue in conversations negatively influences performance of English in secondary schools. These findings concur with Mwangi (2009) who argues that poor performance in English is as a result of students using their mother tongue during conversations; he discourages use of mother tongue and encourages use of

English in conversations. Thus secondary schools have to encourage the use of English in their schools.

Among other challenges identified is that use of mother tongue leads to inability to pronounce words. Use of mother tongue also leads to lack of confidence hence inhibit interaction. Students too noted that they were unable to understand questions written in English. Another challenge identified is that students had a problem expressing themselves and had poor public speaking skills. This also contributed to lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, students lacked understanding of contextual use of English language. Findings show that use of mother tongue hinders critical as well as creative thinking in English. The use of mother tongue as an inhibitor to fluency in speaking. Findings reveal that use of mother tongue thwarted students' interpretation of questions correctly during classroom sessions forcing teachers to switch languages.

### **Conclusion**

Students and teachers code switched for various reasons. Use of mother tongue is prevalent among students in secondary schools. Thus it was concluded that the prevalent use of mother tongue adversely influenced academic performance. The perception of teachers and students regarding influence of mother tongue on academic performance is equally important. Teachers and students hold the perception that use of mother tongue has a negative influence on academic performance. The perception that use of mother tongue influence negatively academic performance is the general conclusion drawn from the research.

To curb use of mother tongue, proper measures need to be put in place. Language policies can reduce the use of mother tongue if they are implemented in the right way. An established mechanism that ensures students are rewarded and punished in equal measure can help to deter use of mother tongue and encourage use of English. It was thus concluded that teachers reward for students who use English and punishment for those who use mother tongue is important to encourage students to converse in English and deter those who intend to converse in mother tongue. Challenges that are as a result of use of mother tongue are varied. Use of mother tongue brings about challenge in pronunciation and writing in English. Students also exhibit a challenge of lack of confidence and poor communication skills as a result of use of mother tongue. The challenges that can arise can be eliminated by provision of a conducive environment for learners to use English. Therefore, it was deduced

that use of mother tongue influences writing and pronunciation of English words and thus performance of English. Finally, strategies to be used to improve the performance of English are of importance. Consequently, the general conclusion was that teachers have to provide students with an environment to cultivate their reading skills and spoken English. It was also deduced that using English as the language of interaction through debates and discussions in class was important.



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# Impact of Language Frames in Advertising Effectiveness

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** the purpose of the research is to assess the impact of language frames in advertising effectiveness.

**Methodology:** This study used a behavioral approach while researching and writing. A qualitative textual evaluation method was used in this research. Textual analysis consists of review and interpretation of scripts and articles and their inferential context in relations to the language frames and advertising effectiveness.

**Findings:** the function of language is as a tool of communication naturally, to build collective social understanding in society. Advertisements are social communications. Like other communications, they are intended to inform and, in many instances, to persuade recipients to adopt a certain attitude or behavioral disposition. Aesthetic representation of advertisement has been very fast growth by using esthetics values. But, sometimes the usage of language in advertisement tends to increasingly badly with a reason to increase profit or product sale. The choice of words are not selected appropriately and it will give boomerang for advertisement itself so that it will be slandered by many people.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Language represents communication means and it is so effective in every human activity especially in advertisement. Language has magical energy which if it is stringed up well it will be able to hypnotize audience. So, the role of language in advertisement is so important and therefore the language used in the advertisement should be considerate and objective in reference to the audience.

**Keywords:** *Language Frames, Advertising, Communication*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Media occupies the strategic position in society. Media becomes a space for various represented ideological. Media can become an equipment to build cultural and dominant ideology for the dominant class's interest, all it once it is also able to become the struggle instrument for the oppressed class to build cultural and ideology competition, and media is the battle ground for competing ideologies. As a means of communication in giving news, assessment, or general view about something, media has an important role as an institution which form public opinion because media also can develop into the group of pressure or imagery which is put into the life context more empirically. Media can give negative or positive influences (Sobur, 2006). Of course, this normative attributes is very relative, depends on the represented interest dimension. Through a media, people can learn to adapt with their environment. Media has become a tool to send a message. the medium is the message. When language is used by mass media, then actually it has more responsibility toward the influence dissemination, certain prejudice and stereotype. Therefore, the choice of words which is used by journalists or advertisement makers need to be paid attention to because it is able to become people's choice in extending their knowledge (Featherstone, 1991).

The specific issues addressed in research on language and advertising are quite diverse. However, many of the variables of concern in this research may have their impact at two stages of information processing: the attention to and comprehension of the information's implications, and the elaboration of these implications once they have been identified and understood. Elaborations in response to advertisements, for example, could include either thoughts about positive attributes of the product being advertised or counterarguments (reasons why the information is incorrect, or why the product might be undesirable despite the claims made in the advertisement itself. information presented).

Several interesting aspects of this conceptualization derive from the fact that many situational and individual difference factors (intelligence or knowledge of the subject matter, motivation, situational distraction, etc.) can simultaneously influence both the likelihood of comprehending a message and the likelihood of elaborating its implications. This is particularly interesting when the message is counter attitudinal, and so the likelihood of elaborating positive implications of the message is low (Razak & Asma'Amran, 2017).

Advertisements, of course, are often conveyed under conditions in which recipients are not particularly motivated to refute their implications or, for that matter, to think much about them at all. Equation 1 nevertheless provides a conceptual device for understanding the role of both linguistic and individual difference variables on communication impact. Several of the variables considered in the research reported in this volume may exert their influence on comprehension. In many instances, however, they are likely to influence the amount and type of cognitive elaboration that is performed subsequent to comprehension.

Language is a vital communication means which is used by human to interact with others. Through language, someone creates reality and arranges it. Language lift to surface of the hidden things therefore becomes reality. Language is also used to depict experience of someone. Experience talks about an event, processes, people, objects, abstractions, quality, situation, and social relations around. In language, we do not only talk about symbol system in culture of human whom in the form of written language and or oral language. But also it talks about social phenomena of broader culture in society, like clothes, food menu, ritual, and others. Discourse in mass media is also meant as one of language phenomena (Featherstone, 1991). The discourse has bearing with effective and intensive communications system therefore the culture of human can be built and defended the existence. Language is also used to give information to others about a thing, assure others about a truth or a thing and affects others' behavior and others opinion. Language is also used to depict or tell how to form or to present a goods or objects, and to describe the taste of an object. Language is also able to be used to tell about the events which happened to others (Sobur, 2006). So, language must be in its context and situation, as said that "language as only meaningful in its context of situation."

In the world of advertisement, language also has an important role. Language is considered as mediation equipment in advertisement production process, as Tarigan (1993:23) said that there are four purposes of language usage, they are oneself expression, exposition, art, and persuasion. Language in advertisement uses transactional language which prioritizes the content of communication. Language also can be conceived as interactional language which has the priority in interrelationship between addresser and addressee.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

It might seem reasonable to assume that the size and style of the typeface in which information is conveyed in an advertisement will influence the ease of

comprehending the information and, as a result, will affect the favorableness of one's reactions to it. As McCarthy and Mothersbaugh's (this volume) research points out however, the impact of these variables is much more complex than this assumption implies. For example, although attention to a communication might be intuitively expected to increase with print size, this is true in only limited circumstances. That is, chronically slow readers sometimes read a print ad more quickly when it is conveyed in larger typeface, but this occurs only when the style is aesthetically appealing (i.e., serif). Moreover, habitually fast readers appear to read large print more slowly under these same conditions

(Kasiyan, 2008). On the other hand, in neither case are recipients' attitudes toward the ad influenced in a way one might expect on the basis of these differences. The aforementioned differences could result in part from differences in reading style. Fast readers may process verbal information in "chunks." This processing might be facilitated by small print, which permits larger amounts of information to fall within one's visual field. In contrast, slow readers may process words individually, and this processing may be facilitated by print that makes the individual words prominent and easier to discriminate. Although this explanation seems plausible, however, it would not account for the restriction of the effects to a particular style of type (Razak & Asma'Amran, 2017).

Moreover, the explanation would not account for participants' evaluations of the ad as a whole. When the ads were presented in serif, for example, chronically fast readers read them more quickly when they were in small print than when they were in large print, and liked the ads better in the former case as well. In other words, they appeared to have more favorable reactions to ads they could read and comprehend more easily. When the ads were presented in sans serif, however, fast readers liked them better when they were large print than when they were in small print, despite the fact that they took the same amount of time to read the ads in the two cases. The effects of type style characteristics on reading speed and attraction in chronically slow readers were also not parallel. Thus, differences in attention and comprehension are not sufficient to account for these findings. Cognitive elaboration may play a role as well. In fact, the assumption that the effects of typeface on attitudes are a reflection of its influence on ease of comprehension may be incorrect (Featherstone, 1991). Rather, both reading time and attitudes may be independently influenced by the amount of cognitive elaboration that participants performed in the course of reading and thinking about the ad. For

example, suppose typeface that people consider appealing stimulates them to pay more attention to the information being conveyed. As a result, they may not only increase their liking for the ad but also increase their tendency to elaborate implications of the ad's content as it is presented. This on-line cognitive elaboration could decrease the speed with which the message is read and, therefore, could offset the effects of typeface on comprehension time per se. Although a detailed analysis of McCarthy and Mothersbaugh's findings in light of this possibility is beyond the scope of this article, such an analysis might be of heuristic interest (Sobur, 2006).

The syntactic structure of a communication can clearly have an impact on the comprehension of the communication and, in some cases, the interpretation that is given to it. To this extent, the syntactic aspects of a message are often intertwined with its semantic aspects, and so the effects of the two factors are hard to isolate. Lowrey (1998) provide examples of the impact of syntactic features of a message on comprehension and memory. At the same time, he underscore the fact that the way in which these features combine to influence attitudes toward the products being advertised is more complex than might be expected, and that an understanding of this influence may need to take into account semantic factors as well. Some of this complexity arises from the failure to distinguish between the impact of syntactic features on comprehension and their impact on the cognitive elaboration that occurs subsequently. Increasing the grammatical complexity of a message, for example, not only may decrease comprehension but also may distract recipients from cognitively elaborating the message's implications once the message is understood. If this cognitive elaboration is positive, syntax which decreases both comprehension and elaboration should decrease communication impact. However, if the cognitive elaboration that is likely to occur is negative (e.g., counter arguments), the effects of syntactic complexity are harder to predict for reasons suggested in our earlier example. That is, suppose both the likelihood of both comprehending a syntactically simple message and the likelihood of counter arguing it effectively is high. Then, an increase in complexity that decreases both comprehension and counter arguing, could increase communication impact (PI). On the other hand, suppose the likelihood of comprehending and counter arguing the message effectively is relatively low despite its simple syntactic structure. In this case, adding complexity that further decreases these processes should decrease communication impact.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used a behavioral approach while researching and writing this essay, which would involve evaluating the impact of language frames in advertising effectiveness. The drawing and interpretation of research findings and sense which is not a quantitative impact evaluation, was important in this context, which implies that qualitative and thematic analysis was most suitable in this study. A qualitative textual evaluation method was used in this research. Textual analysis consists of review and interpretation of scripts and articles and their inferential context in relations to the language frames and advertising effectiveness. As a tool of interpretation and significance, an observer is likely to misunderstand the original intent of the message writer. Cutting (2008), nevertheless, reaffirmed its reliability and adequacy, in particular when the researcher pays attention to text itself. In this regard, more interpretation of the texts and their targeted discussion environment in view of the time and situation in which they were written.

## **FINDINGS**

Language is a symbol system in human culture. As Levi-Strauss (in Kasiyan, 2008:133) stated that language symptom is not only limited to the meaning of written language or oral language, but also all social phenomena of broader culture in society, such as clothes, food menu, ritual and others. In this case advertisement discourse in mass media is also seen as one of language phenomena.

In the beginning, the function of language is as a tool of communication naturally, to build collective social understanding in society. Then, the existence of language is known as cultural text and will give a description of socio-cultural reality. Language is no longer limited about meaning as a reflection of social reality, but having ability (power) to form or to construct social reality. As Razak and Asma'Amran (2017) stated that there is few people who observes that language has a big impact to our perception and point of view about something. In its development, language is not solely as a means of communication or a code system toward values which refer to one of monolithic reality meaning. Socially, language continuously is constructed in a certain social setting. As the representation of certain social relations, language always forms subjects, strategies, and certain discourse themes. Language is visual which is in the form of visual picture or symbol and has a power to construct certain ideology which will also affect and form subjectivity and our awareness. Visual language is as also very effective as



written language and oral language. In advertisement, language has a role to reflect the naturality of use value toward product commodity or service which are advertised. Here, language is also as a media to spread capitalistic consumerism ideology to society. The power of language which has brought the colonization of human cultural symbolic in advertisement, actually, is one of prove that the friction of language represent of one potency which can poison the existence of civilization at the present and the future. As Stanley Baldwin (in Kasiyan, 2008: 144) stated that although the use of words may be abused and the fight for their honour may at times seen hopeless, we must never give up the struggle to use them solely in the service of truth. Let us aim at meaning what we say and saying what we mean.

Advertisements are social communications. Like other communications, they are intended to inform and, in many instances, to persuade recipients to adopt a certain attitude or behavioral disposition. To predict the impact of these communications, one must understand the factors that influence a recipient's attention to various aspects of the message, the comprehension of its contents and the manner in which its implications are construed. To obtain this understanding, one must consider not only characteristics of the communication itself but also the knowledge and objectives of the recipient. Indeed, as Krauss and Chiu (1998) point out, the two sets of factors are highly interactive, and the impact of one set cannot be evaluated without considering the other set as well. The research and theory presented in the preceding articles reflect this dual concern. The articles are focused on the linguistic features of advertisements that can influence their effectiveness (Noriega & Blair, 2008). However, the contingency of these effects on recipient characteristics is both implicitly and explicitly recognized. Luna and Peracchio, for example, shows that the effect of a message is a joint function of both individual differences in motivation (e.g., need for cognition) and the extent to which the message is conveyed in one's native language or in a second language that was acquired later in life. McCarthy and Mothersbaugh provide evidence that the typeface in which an advertisement is written can have quite different effects, depending on whether the recipient's typical reading speed. Lerman and Garbarino note that differences in memory for brand names can often depend on the previously formed associations that individuals have formed between these names and product attributes that are both mentioned in the advertisement and unspecified. Bradley and Meeds's analysis of the role of grammatical complexity on communication effectiveness implicitly assumes that recipients' prior familiarity with different

grammatical structures can influence the ease with which the communications are comprehended and their implications construed.

## **CONCLUSION**

These days, the existence of advertisement has very fast development. Aesthetic representation of advertisement has been very fast growth by using esthetics values. But, sometimes the usage of language in advertisement tends to increasingly badly with a reason to increase profit or product sale. The choice of words are not selected appropriately and it will give boomerang for advertisement itself so that it will be slandered by many people. Language represents communication means and it is so effective in every human activity especially in advertisement. Language has magical energy which if it is stringed up well it will be able to hypnotize audience. So, the role of language in advertisement is so important and it cannot be seen into one side only.

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# Impact of Sheng Language in Kenya

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of sheng language in Kenya

**Methodology:** The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to sheng language and its effect in Kenya. The research involved literature search and paper review of information on impact of sheng language with respect to the value of archival materials. Where appropriate, the review on how to rethink and reorganize what is being done to solve sheng language challenges in Kenya by policymakers was done.

**Findings:** Sheng is pervasive among Kenyan youths and they have adopted it as an identity marker. It is a variety that unifies them, creating in-group solidarity against outsiders. Sheng has now transcended socioeconomic class boundaries and is used by many youths irrespective of social class or gender. It is possible for a multilingual society to employ different languages in a diglossic manner and have all of them co-existing and enriching one another as they function in their different contexts. When this is put into practice, then the spread of Sheng' will no longer be perceived as a threat to the phenomenology of its' speakers because the users will be able to balance its use and to integrate its values with those they draw from other languages through language enriching process of multilingualism.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy, and Practice:** Sheng' be nurtured in the same manner other Kenyan languages are nurtured. After all, it has one of the largest and growing speech communities in the country. In today's world, knowledge societies are pluralistic and inclusive; Sheng' therefore should be allowed to add another 'feather' to the Kenyan pluralistic hat.

**Keywords:** *Sheng, Multilingualism, Community Language*

## INTRODUCTION

Sheng is an East African patois originating from English, Swahili and other African languages. The slang started way back in the 1950s at the Eastlands slums of Nairobi city. Although initially the language was coined from Swahili and English only, Nowadays it has embraced other African languages mostly from the bantu group. Currently sheng is the first language for most people born in urban centers across the whole of East Africa region. The language is spoken in the streets, some radio stations and even at school which raises the question, does it have any effect on the mainstream languages like English and Swahili (Kiama, 1990).

Sheng', an evolving Kenyan language has been blamed for a myriad of things by parents and teachers in the local communities. Among these are: Loss of paternity and patrimony, these being the identity and connection to any particular roots among the youth, especially the urbanite youth. This Kiswahili-based pidgin-like language is blamed for having negatively impacted its speakers' affinity to their past, the feeling of their continuity and their ethnic legacy as passed on from one generation to another (Samper, 2000). There is evidence too, that speakers of Sheng', especially those of the second generation, meaning those whose parents also speak it, have developed monostylism thus reducing the number of stylistic variants in their linguistic repertoire. Sheng' has also been blamed for its speaker's poor learning and mastery of other languages (Mbaabu, Ireri & Nzuga, 2003).

These researchers all agree that Sheng' is based primarily on the Kiswahili structure and grammar with lexicon drawn from Kiswahili, English and the various ethnic languages of Kenya that are mostly spoken in towns and other urban areas. Initially, this mixed code was unstable, random and fluid, but it gradually developed more systematic patterns of usage at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels (Kiarie, 2004). Our observation agrees with these definitions and findings that Sheng' is indeed a hybrid of English, Kiswahili and many other major indigenous Kenyan languages such as; Gikuyu, Kikamba, Dholuo and the Luhya dialects. Sheng' is thought to be a form of Kiswahili because its grammatical structure is majorly based on that of Kiswahili and other Bantu languages, and also because much of its vocabulary which, although incorporated from other languages, is adapted to Kiswahili both in sound and structure.

According to Githiora (2002) published research discussions today, show that Sheng' may have originated as different varieties in different residential estates

in the Eastlands region of Nairobi. The variety spoken in Kaloleni Estate, for example, is different from that of Bahati Estate, which in turn, is different from the one spoken in Jericho Estate. However, each neighborhood feels that their variety is the authentic Sheng'. Today, *Sheng'* is no longer restricted to the Eastlands. It has grown in leaps and bounds, and has become the basic urban vernacular for the youth in Nairobi and generally in other parts of the country as well. It has spread to all the other urban centres and is also spoken in the rural areas too. However, Sheng' is more widespread in the city of Nairobi including its densely populated peripheries such as Githurai, Kangemi, Kawangware and Uthiru areas, and thrives in such slum areas as Mathare and Kibera.

Local television and radio stations have also given space to Sheng' where certain specific programmes use this code to broadcast some of their programmes alongside Kiswahili or English. These broadcasts have a lasting linguistic effect on school children and the youth since some of these young people tend to identify with certain characters in these programmes through the use of this code. Commercial advertisers have also recently turned to an extensive use of Sheng' to market their products (Abdulaziz & Osinde, 1997). The entrepreneurial class in Kenya has now woken up to the economic advantages that Sheng' presents as the language of the youth. With more than 60% of Kenyans being young persons, the advertising industry has turned to Sheng' to lure them. In particular, the two competing mobile telephone service providers, Safaricom and Airtel, have continually used 'Sheng' in their advertisements.

Speakers of Sheng' are proud to speak it and some non-speakers too approve of it as suitable for the youth and the youth at heart (Mbaabu, Ireri & Nzuga, 2003). Many assert that it is good for street smartness. Sheng' is more accepted because it embraces and incorporates elements from different languages; representing many Kenyan linguistic groups and this makes it devoid of ethnicity. Therefore, its speakers view it as an inclusive and accommodative language which does not discriminate among its users, and which cuts through the national social strata, age and gender. The underworld media, including the alternative press enjoy writing in news and information in

Sheng' and have a very big readership among the youth and other Sheng' speakers. Book writers who write in Sheng', for the example, Kwani? Publishers, as cited earlier, say that Sheng' is a beautiful language that gives its speakers a medium of communication that they can relate to and which is

originally truly Kenyan (Samper, 2000). Our observation, however, reveals that Sheng' has produced and nurtured a mass culture among its speakers. According to Fishman (1966:408), mass culture induces antagonistic attitudes and behaviors towards particularism and traditionalism, by standardizing products and homogenizing tastes. In a society where mass culture is rampant through the ethnic vehicle, a shift in ethnic allegiance thrives.

Further, Fishman reinstates that "the adolescent period appears to be the juncture at which the impact of mass culture on ethnicity-based language maintenance is best felt" Fishman (1966:409). He describes a situation where non-institutional transition takes place, replacing values, patterns, behaviour and skills; especially those of the middle class society. This happens because the culprits seek identification and acceptance outside of the family and the status they belong to. It has been observed that, many urban youth who are Sheng' speakers do not know or at best are not fluent in the languages of their ethnicity (Momanyi 2009), the languages in which their family values, behaviour patterns, skills and the whole cultural output is coached.

Sheng' speakers, especially the urbanites below 35 years of age, and whose parents speak Sheng' too, have abandoned the languages of their ethnicity. For some, it is due to a situation where they did not acquire the ethnic language in childhood, since they did not get exposure to it for the simple reason that their parents spoke Sheng' and other languages at home. There are also other speakers who acquired Sheng' by picking it up alongside other languages (Bosire, 2006). This fact of not learning and speaking the ethnic languages has created language shift in a generation (of children and their young parents), from ethnic languages to Sheng'.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Language is useful as a tool for communication when it is widespread in usage and people, children included, will not bother to learn a language simply to be patriotic to their extended families. Rather, they would learn a language that is widespread in usage and whose image is attractive to them in a personalized way (Mazrui, 1995). This reluctance to learn or teach or even use mother tongue to the next generation encourages the learning and using of another language; one that is viewed as more socially prestigious, economically powerful or one that promises upward mobility and a better future.

Language shift, also known as language transfer, is a process whereby an individual or a speech community reduces the functions of their native

language or even stops using it all together and replaces it with another language. This other language is usually the language of prestige and upward mobility in society or that of peer identity (Ogechi, 2005). These could well be languages of wider communication but could also be the languages of the neighbouring communities. The most severe form of language shift is known as assimilation. This happens when a community of speakers of one language becomes bilingual in another language and progressively stops using their own language in favour of that other language.

Today, however, native languages are shifting for the single reason that they are not passed on to the next generation by their speakers. No matter how large the adult-speaker population is, the fate of these languages is already sealed if they are not passed on to the next generation (Mbaabu, Ileri & Nzuga, 2003). The language is moribund as soon as the child and consequently the youth populations shift from it. Political and economic dominance by larger communities and western languages too, plays an enormous role in the process of language shift while peer acceptance seems to dominate the social scenario.

These languages of wider communication, be they Kiswahili for East Africa or English for the World can and do co-exist with local languages. However, more often than not, the languages of wider communication replace the local ones as older speakers die and younger ones adopt the more 'useful tongue'. In the case of Sheng', social pressure, the secrecy and the need to fit with the urbanite, seem to be the driving force for the shift (Bosire, 2006).

When speakers lose their language they lose their symbol of identity and this impacts negatively on their social-psychological well-being because language is not only an instrument of communication; it is the carrier of cultural norms and values of a people. The transmission of a language from one generation to another ensures the transmission of their culture and value systems to the next generation. In the event where this fails to happen, these norms and values are lost with the dying of the last generation that carried them. In the case of Kenya, it is evident that Sheng' is fast spreading and in certain domains and areas replacing the native languages of its speakers, especially those of the second generation whose parents spoke it at home as the primary language of the home. These speakers have therefore shifted from their native language and have broken away from the feelings of loyalty and solidarity with the native languages of their parents.



The Kenyan language policy for education stipulates that in the first three years of schooling, pupils be taught in the language of the catchment area of the school (Mbaabu 1996). This essentially translates into using the languages of the ethnic communities in the linguistically homogenous rural areas. Kiswahili is used in regions of linguistic heterogeneity, such as urban centres and ethnically mixed settlement areas. The education policy states that, from Standard Four, school instruction be conducted in English as the medium of instruction. Also, both English and Kiswahili are compulsory and examinable subjects at primary and secondary school level. So, there is a big premium placed on English and Kiswahili because, Kiswahili which was previously Kenya's national language is now both the national and one of the official languages. As a national language, Kiswahili is the carrier of the people's national heritage and identity. Both English and Kiswahili are now the official languages to be used for carrying out national official business and for international communication. A good mastery of these two languages ensures a good grade at national examinations and a placement in a good school or college. According to the Universities' Joint Admission Board, a candidate must have a strong grade in either English or Kiswahili for them to get an admission to a public university (Mbaabu, Ileri & Nzuga, 2003).

The stakes in these languages are thus very high and because of this, Sheng' has then been blamed for undermining the learning and mastery of the two school languages; English and Kiswahili as observed in school meetings and other educational forums (Mazrui, 1995). Primary and Secondary School teachers responsible for language instruction claim that the acquisition of Sheng' by the youth, especially the school-going youth, has impacted negatively on the learning and good usage of standard Kiswahili and English. The very nature of Sheng' as a hybrid language, creating its vocabulary by mixing English, Kiswahili and many other languages is the basis for this reasoning and effort to make it the culprit here (Ogechi, 2005).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to sheng language and its effect in Kenya. The research involved literature search and paper review of information on impact of sheng language with respect to the value of archival materials (Creswell, 2014). This article reviewed recorded sources to present the current state of sheng language in Kenya. In line with Creswell's assertion

that observations are important for obtaining first-hand knowledge that enriches analysis results, under different themes, the study revealed observations were made from the recorded sources. Where appropriate, the review on how to rethink and reorganize what is being done to solve sheng language challenges in Kenya by policymakers was done.

## **FINDINGS**

Sheng' is an evolving language with a grammatical structure that keeps growing and changing. Due to the allure of making its speakers fit and get acceptance in urban social circles, it has acquired a very large population of speakers and has rapidly spread throughout Kenya and in the East African region. Many of its speakers use it as their primary language and have shifted either from using Kiswahili or the language of their ethnicity. Because of this shift it has delineated its speakers from their cultural orientations and value systems. Sheng' has therefore been blamed for raising a Kenyan generation devoid of culture and cultural values. It has also been blamed by school teachers and parents for interfering with the learning and mastery of both English and Kiswahili; the official languages of education in Kenya. However, Sheng' as a mass language, cannot be wished away. Its influence is felt throughout the country and Kenyans must live with it as it is one of the indigenous languages of the country. It must be accommodated.

Sheng has now transcended socioeconomic class boundaries and is used by many youths irrespective of social class or gender. It is now gradually spreading to some rural areas by way of radio and young people who travel between urban and rural areas. This variety has also attracted the attention of business people and politicians who use it to promote their products and policies to young people. The spread and appreciation of Sheng has also been made possible due to avenues that are usually appealing to the youths and the public in general. For example, young people especially in Kenya and to some extent in Tanzania and Uganda, have adopted hip hop music that is usually sung in Sheng or Swahilinglish as this hybrid form is referred to in Tanzania (Higgins, 2007). During recent national elections in Kenya, politicians have been capitalizing on hip hop music to show that they are trendy and that they identify with the youths. Such instances usually affect people's attitudes towards Sheng even though it is not a legitimate code in formal institutions.

The rise, development and present status of Sheng is a reflection of a larger social process and internal social relations, such as class division, age and gender within a highly multilingual context. It was pointed out by Spyropoulos

(1987) that 'the emergence of Sheng may also have to do with the lack of clarity in Kenya's language policy' by providing speakers with a code that makes good use of all the major languages spoken in the city. I think that Sheng's most important function is to empower a certain group of speakers by providing a 'closed' in-group means of communication.

In this way it also acts as a means of establishing group identity, expressing solidarity and creating prestige among insiders. Sheng's widespread use and its acceptance among Nairobians are on the rise first and simply because of the great numbers of its speakers -the young and underprivileged residents of Nairobi. Out of its own dynamism, it has permeated all levels of society and gained much media and scholarly attention such as letters to editors, newspaper columns, advertisements, official health warnings on AIDS, and so on.

Sheng is moving out of the estates because of a growing perception of 'coolness' especially among young males, i.e. a covert prestige that is associated with toughness, masculinity and local solidarity. This is taking place in part because of Sheng's increasing use in mainstream media, but more significantly because of music and popular youth culture. 'Rapping' and singing in Sheng is currently enjoying great success among the youth across all socio-economic classes of Nairobi.<sup>8</sup> For example, some upper class adolescents we interviewed claimed to speak the code without actually being able to do so. In fact, an analysis of my interviews with them revealed that they speak 'slang'<sup>9</sup> the version of Nairobi English spoken by the upper classes, not Sheng as we have described it. Such attitudes are produced by the effect of those qualities of covert prestige and 'street smartness' embodied by Sheng and transmitted through popular music.

Sheng's prestige remains covert because it is the non-standard language of an otherwise unprestigious section of society. This would explain the gender differences noted among respondents. Amongst young adults, women, especially female university students, reported less use of Sheng than their male counterparts. Most of them claimed to be speakers of 'slang' rather than 'Sheng', despite, for example, their family residence and background being in predominantly Sheng-speaking areas of the city. Similar conservative linguistic behaviour of women is documented (e.g. Labov 1972; Milroy 1980) in urban communities of the USA and the UK respectively. The linguistic conservatism is often manifested by females' lesser use of local, nonprestigious forms, reflecting their status consciousness. Young adult females in Nairobi are therefore more aware of the (negative) social significance of using Sheng. In

the future, Sheng is likely to increase in use and in the number of speakers, as more young Nairobians identify with its dynamic and innovative culture. The conditions for its existence are likely to continue to prevail, such as the socio-linguistic distance between classes and generations. Sheng will probably continue to be the favoured code of the urban masses that do not fit in to the world of Standard Swahili -being ethnically non-coastals, and having low levels of formal education. Sheng could eventually establish itself firmly as an urban dialect of Swahili with certain implications for language in Kenya.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In summary, Sheng is pervasive among Kenyan youths and they have adopted it as an identity marker. It is a variety that unifies them, creating in-group solidarity against outsiders. Rural youths also attempt to align with their urban counterparts because they view their way of speaking to be trendy. Although these rural youths can hardly speak like their urban counterparts due to their lack of knowledge of English and exposure to a variety of mass media, their temporal identification with them is something that most rural youths would like to project in non-threatening situations. The code has also caught the attention of the print and electronic media especially in advertisements, official health warnings on HIV/AIDS, and other commercials.

While some people have advocated the growth of ‘Sheng’ as an indication of societal growth in Kenya, others, including scholars, researchers and educationists are on the opinion that the spread of this code impacts negatively on the learners in Kenyan schools and colleges. They base their arguments on the fact that other international languages did not achieve their sophistication through breaking their morpho-syntactic or grammatical rules at the pace in which ‘Sheng’ is infiltrating Kiswahili.

It is possible for a multilingual society to employ different languages in a diglossic manner and have all of them co-existing and enriching one another as they function in their different contexts.

When this is put into practice, then the spread of Sheng’ will no longer be perceived as a threat to the phenomenology of its’ speakers because the users will be able to balance its use and to integrate its values with those they draw from other languages through language enriching process of multilingualism. This would help them avoid operating in subtraction and exclusion but rather, in addition of their cultural orientation and linguistic repertoire.

It is our suggestion that, Sheng' be nurtured in the same manner other Kenyan languages are nurtured. After all, it has one of the largest and growing speech communities in the country. One of the most effective means of nurturing it is by using it and sharing in it; 'language like love is the only other thing that grows as it is shared'. Writing and publishing in the language would also nurture it to grow, because this would open it up for wider communication and international accessibility. Media houses would attract the growing speech community if there is literature in Sheng' in the print and electronic media. If this were the case, Sheng' would then be viewed as a resource and not a problem. Kenya is multilingual and multilingualism is not a problem, it is a resource since there are many benefits to being multilingual with cultural diversity and flexibility being one of them. In today's world, knowledge societies are pluralistic and inclusive; Sheng' therefore should be allowed to add another 'feather' to the Kenyan pluralistic hat.

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