

**INFLUENCE OF TEACHING METHODS ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN
KISWAHILI POETRY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LUGARI SUB-COUNTY,
KENYA**

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ABSTRACT: *The 2002 revised curriculum for Kiswahili for secondary school education in Kenya incorporated content on poetry. Students have continually performed poor in Kiswahili paper 102/3 in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) with the poetry section being the most failed. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of instructional methodology on students' performance in poetry in Kiswahili in Kenyan secondary schools, taking a case of Lugari Sub-County. The objective of this paper is to present and discuss the research findings on the methods and teaching resources used by teachers of Kiswahili in teaching poetry. The study was based on Dale's cone of experience theory which states that learners retain more information by what they "do" as opposed to what they "hear", "read" or "observe." The study adopted a survey research design. It targeted secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County, Kakamega County in Kenya. The researcher used stratified sampling to place schools into three strata; four schools per strata were sampled making a total of twelve schools with twelve teachers of Kiswahili from the sampled schools. Purposive sampling was used to sample Form Three students. Data were collected using two sets of questionnaires, observation checklist, and document analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the obtained data and findings placed under themes. It was found that oral questioning and lecture methods dominated poetry in Kiswahili lessons. Therefore, the research recommends that teachers of Kiswahili should explore a variety of interactive teaching methods to enhance students' mastery of content.*

KEYWORDS: influence, teaching methods, students, performance, Kiswahili Poetry, Secondary Schools, Lugari, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Kiswahili language has grown not only in East Africa but beyond boundaries of the African continent. Murunga (2013) states that, "It is a language that unifies the large multilingual society

as Kenya is. Typically, it is used in the nation's courts, parliament and administration. It also holds a significant position in the curriculum as a compulsory subject taught at the primary and secondary school levels and is examined in the Kenyan education system" (p. 16). According to Malilo (2014), Kiswahili is widely used in international media houses such as Radio Beijing, Voice of America, British Broadcasting Corporation, Cologne and Pretoria. The Kenyan constitution promulgated in 2010 recognizes Kiswahili not only as a national language but also as an official language (Syomwene, Nyandusi & Yungungu, 2017). The new constitution, in Chapter 2(7), declares Kiswahili as the national language of the Republic of Kenya. Section 7(2) states that the official languages of the Republic of Kenya are Kiswahili and English (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

Syomwene *et al.* (2017) outline the revised secondary school Kiswahili syllabus as one in which content has been organized in a spiral manner and is revisited progressively. However, they note, this content increases in complexity as one progresses; it includes oral literature, free verse in poetry, short stories and socio-linguistics. Its vocabulary has been incorporated into other areas such as comprehension. Emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender issues, child labour and technology among others have also been incorporated. It is also important to note that, the syllabus recommends the use of an integrated approach to teaching, where, content from areas such as poetry, oral literature; vocabulary and comprehension are taught in an integrated way. Poetry in Kiswahili is thus an essential component of the school curriculum. Kiswahili has three examinable papers; Kiswahili paper 1(102/1) which tests on composition, Kiswahili paper 2(102/2) which is concerned with language use skills and Kiswahili paper 3(102/3) that focuses on literature. Poetry in Kiswahili has a long history and is as old as oral literature and history of the Swahili people is (Shitemi, 2010). Maanga (2015) states that the first written Swahili poetry was called, "Swifa kwa Mwana wa Manga" also known as, "Tumsifu Yanga" closely related to Fumo Liyongo. Koross and Murunga (2017) are in agreement with Shitemi, ascertaining that poetry in Kiswahili is one of the oldest genres of oral literature. Kiswahili as a language is not only taught in East Africa, but also in other continents of the world, especially in the universities.

Poetry in Kiswahili is defined as poetry that is written or oral, which has been or is being produced in the Swahili language by East and some Central Africans (Masinde, 2003). This definition implies that this kind of poetry can only be found in these regions. This may seem bias but a closer look proves it to be true. For instance, basing on themes, Masinde continues to say that, each work of poetry or art is always related or identified to be of a particular region. For a better understanding of Swahili poetry, one has to put it into a historical context; therefore, poetry in Kiswahili has got no foreign origin.

It is important to note that, over the years, poetry in Kiswahili has taken a turn from the traditional rules of writing. In this view, poetry in Kiswahili has been expanding and in the process acquiring new forms and types in its artistic expression (Masinde, 2003). There is the popular form (Ushairi wa Arudhi) whose composers follow stringent rules laid down in its writing as handed down by history. The "Swahili-free verse" (Ushairi Huru), is the modern form of poetry in Kiswahili whose composers believe it is time for change by revolutionizing (wanamapinduzi) the genre. Both the popular form and the free verse are examined in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

(KCSE) examinations. The table below illustrates the distribution of free-verse and popular form poetry in Kiswahili Paper 102/3 in KCSE for the years 2013-2017.

Table 1: Distribution of the Free-verse and the Popular Form Poetry in Kiswahili Paper 102/3 in KCSE 2013-2017

Question	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
6	Popular Form	Popular Form	Free Verse	Popular Form	Popular Form
7	Free Verse	Free Verse	Popular Form	Popular Form	Popular Form

Source: The Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) Kiswahili paper 102/3, 2013-2017

The teaching and learning methods of poetry in Kiswahili are very crucial to the performance of poetry. The objectives of teaching poetry in Kiswahili are geared towards giving a learner an opportunity to practice reading and writing. In so doing, the learner is expected to be involved in various skills such as reading aloud and to gain competence in good writing. However, studies show that the teaching of poetry in Kiswahili has not been given due diligence. For instance, Murunga (2006) observe that teacher talk dominates most of poetry lessons. Isayi (2007), although he studied poetry in English, avers that learners in most schools are exposed to minimal practice in poetry. Isayi observed that this minimal exposure of learners to poetry leads to poor performance. Most teachers taught poetry because it could not be avoided and in some cases, poetry lessons were left to learners for them to read on their own and answer question. This made learners hate poetry. Although this was the case in English, the same could be true in poetry in Kiswahili as both teachers and students showed a general dislike of poetry (Murunga, 2006).

Instructional Methods and Performance

Instructional methods are an essential component in the teaching and learning process. Instruction refers to the process by which information is transmitted from one source to another through appropriately selected media or channels (Kafu, 2010). In this view, instruction involves content, media, teacher and learner for it to be a complete process. On the other hand, the term method originates from the Greek word ‘methodos’ which means, a way across, from one state to another, in other words, a means to the end and not the end in itself. An instructional method is thus a manner of procedure that is systematic in facilitating learning (Otunga, Odeo & Barasa, 2011). Instructional methods are, therefore, different ways used by a teacher in teaching learners. It is a channel that aids communication between the teacher and the learner. Since effective communication involves feedback, an instructional method should be one which gives room for interaction between the teacher and learner. The method of instruction chosen should be one that will be effective in the teaching and learning process.

According to Kithinji *et al.* (as cited in Wamokhela, 2012), when choosing a teaching method, there are some factors that a teacher should put into consideration. For instance, the natural teaching style of a teacher where by some teachers are authoritarian. This nature in turn determines the kind of method such teachers will employ. The approach to learning is another factor. Some teachers take the deep approach to learning; such teachers are confident and prepare well for the lesson. On the other hand, where a teacher is not confident concerning the teaching content, will certainly opt for shallow learning such as expository modes of teaching. The influence of

constraints such as time, resources and class size will always determine the type of method to teaching. It is also worth noting that objectives of a lesson cannot be overlooked when it comes to choice of a teaching method. Some teaching methods are more appropriate compared to others depending on the objectives at hand. The entry behaviour of learners, interests, social and cultural background cannot be overlooked.

The above-mentioned factors are also applicable to teaching of poetry in Kiswahili. For instance, poetry teaching should be interactive to elicit interest from learners. Wamokhela (2012) found that most learners agreed that group discussion enhanced learning. For those who were opposed to the method stated that teachers were not actively involved in the discussion thus contributing to a negative perception towards the teaching method. It is, therefore, important for a teacher to prepare well so as to give a learner an opportunity to enjoy the teaching and learning process.

Performance refers to how well an activity or a job is done (Cambridge Dictionary, 2013). Performance in this context is the production of desired characteristics by a learner after going through the process of teaching and learning. The desirable characteristics relate to attainment of good results in Kiswahili. Good performance in poetry in Kiswahili is dependent on the method of instruction that the teacher will use. Murunga (2006) states that when an inappropriate methodology that is chosen and used by a teacher in teaching poetry in Kiswahili, then learning is adversely affected. The method of instruction can either motivate or demotivate the learner in a poetry class. Teacher-centred methods have dominated the teaching of poetry in Kiswahili. Murunga still avers that teacher talk dominated the teaching of poetry in Kiswahili. Teachers of Kiswahili never bothered to give background information of the poem in question and students' ideas during poetry lessons were neglected. It is important for teachers of Kiswahili to understand that poetry teaching should be centred on the learner. Suggested ways of teaching poetry in Kiswahili include dramatization, role-play, recitation, discussions and writing up different types of poems.

Wasike (2011) observes that when dramatization and role-play are used in teaching poetry, sight, sound and movement are enhanced in the content learnt. This demystified the learners' negative perception on poetry. Teaching poetry in Kiswahili using role-play requires one to assign learners different roles basing on the content to be learnt. When well done, learners are able to understand the emotions of the poet and his/her cultural background. Dramatization involves characters who are facing problems and getting into conflicts. As a method of teaching poetry, it involves real-life situations that learners can put themselves into (Vodickova, 2009). Learners tend to retain much when dramatization is used (Wasike, 2011). It is, therefore, important for a teacher to first select poems that are relevant to the needs of the learner. Poems selected should be related to what the learner already knows. He recommends that when choosing content for poetry, the poem chosen should not have the kind of vocabulary which makes it difficult for a learner to understand even the surface meaning of a poem. This appreciates the fact that the kind of language used in poetry in Kiswahili may at times be obscure to the learner. Therefore, there is need to put this into consideration while choosing a poem to teach. Murunga (2006) notes that poems chosen by teachers of Kiswahili had little relation with the students' day-to-day life. Teachers are, therefore, encouraged to choose poetry books carefully bearing in mind that some books are published with

a purely commercial view with no academic value. Older books contain poems composed by writers who used classical Swahili dialects (Lahaja) making it difficult for learners to comprehend meaning.

Wasike (2011) recommends that poems chosen should not be so intricate to the point the learner is left puzzled causing the learner to give up. This is in agreement with Murunga (2006) that tasks given should not be so challenging making the learner to lose interest. Dramatized poems need to reflect a friendly impression to the learner. It should be interesting. It should be the kind that gives learners a chance to learn, practice and review specific language material, and by doing so, it gives all learners a chance to participate actively. Isayi (2007) is in agreement with Wasike's view; he recommends exposure of learners to dramatized and recited poetry in the drama and music festivals. The poems should also have meaningful bearing on experience of learners. It should also vary in subject matter and style in order to enable the growth of learners in experience and awareness. In conclusion, dramatized activities touch the cognate, psychomotor and the affective domains. This enables learners to socialize and in the process make learning enjoyable and less formal (Wasike, 2011).

Wamokhela (2012) looked into discussion as an effective way in teaching literature in Kiswahili. Wamokhela recommends that, for one to effectively use group discussions, prior adequate preparations should be made. This includes putting into considerations factors mentioned earlier such as time, resources and class size. By understanding learner's ability and interests, the teacher will be able to group learners accordingly. Although Wamokhela based on the teaching of literature in Kiswahili, the information is relevant to teaching poetry in Kiswahili. It is important to note that poetry in Kiswahili is tied to the culture of the Swahili people. Wasike (2011) agrees that poetry is present in every culture. Poetry is a tool that a writer uses to express his/her innermost feelings which learners need to identify for them to comprehend. Therefore, learner-centred activities help learners to visualize these feelings and even understand them. Where the teacher dominates the lesson, it is likely that learners will not understand the meaning of the poem in question, thus continued poor performance in poetry.

Effective instruction involves training learners to acquire the skill of learning so that they can learn on their own, and this is achieved through continuous practice. A teacher of poetry will begin by discussing the surface meaning of a poem before taking learners to its deeper meaning. This is why Kiswahili syllabus is arranged in a spiral manner, where the teacher is expected to teach it progressively (Otunga, Odeo & Barasa, 2011). If learners will be taught the fundamental basics of poetry reading, interpretation and writing, learners will gain interest in poetry and will go an extra mile to look for poems by themselves (Isayi, 2007). Having looked at how instructional methods are an essential component in teaching poetry in Kiswahili, it is worth noting that, scholars have not given specific methods suitable for teaching poetry in Kiswahili. For instance, Isayi (2007) and Wasike (2011) have specifically looked at dramatization while Murunga (2006) recommends learner-centred methodology in teaching poetry in Kiswahili. This is what motivated the researchers to find out the teaching methods used by teachers of Kiswahili and recommend several teaching methods that will help in the instruction process.

Statement of the Problem

The Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) of 2017 report outlines that majority of learners tend to avoid the question on poetry and even the few who tackle this question, they score poorly (Kenya National Examinations Council [KNEC], 2017). It was also noted that basic components of Kiswahili poems are not taught and as a result, questions testing these components are poorly performed (KNEC, 2017). In 2018, KCSE report showed that Kiswahili paper 3 dropped in performance (KNEC, 2018). The question on poetry, which was compulsory in 2018 KCSE was poorly performed by students who have continually avoided poetry questions. Those who choose to handle questions in poetry score poorly. This has been attributed to failure in basics of poetry.

Murunga (2006) found that students avoid answering questions on poetry in Kiswahili, and for those who attempted the questions the outcome was dismal compared to other genres of literature in Kiswahili. Murunga also observes that some teachers did not enjoy teaching poetry and some boldly indicated so. Isayi (2007) also argues that although most teachers had poetry in their schemes of work, they only did so since it could not be avoided. They also schemed for poetry since they had questions and marking schemes for the specific poems they intended to teach. Also, learners in most schools were not exposed to practice in poetry. It was also observed that majority of teachers preferred the novel to poetry and whenever teachers met poems, they asked colleagues to teach on their behalf. This could be the case in poetry in Kiswahili. Makokha (2009) equally reports that the preparation of teachers on using resources in teaching poetry in Kiswahili in training institutions was not well done. Wasike (2011) holds the view that teachers shy away from teaching poetry in English since poems are written in obscure language. Although this was the case in English, it is possible the same could be the case in Kiswahili.

The above views led the researchers to seek to establish what teaching methods used by teachers of Kiswahili in instructing learners in poetry. Why were learners still avoiding questions on poetry to this day? Could the methods of instruction be the problem? As such, this paper examines the influence of instructional methodology on students' performance in poetry in Kiswahili in Kenyan secondary schools, taking the case of Lugari Sub-County.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research study was carried out in Lugari Sub-County in Kakamega County, Kenya. The study was based on survey research design. It targeted Form Three students and their teachers of Kiswahili in secondary schools in the Sub-County. However, only a sub-population of Form Three students and teachers of Kiswahili was used. Out of thirty-four secondary schools in Lugari Sub-County, twelve were used as respondents, five hundred and forty students and twelve teachers of Kiswahili were also used. The researcher used stratified sampling to place schools into three strata, that is, North, Central and South zones, so as to ensure equal representation to avoid bias. Four schools were then selected from each stratum making a total of twelve schools. Twelve teachers of Kiswahili from the sampled schools were used as respondents in the study. Purposive sampling was used to sample Form Three students. Where schools had more than one stream of Form Three classes, simple random sampling was used to select the stream to be used. A total of five hundred and forty students (forty-five from each school) was sampled. The research instruments used in

the study included two sets of questionnaire, observation checklist, interview schedule and document analysis. The researcher used descriptive statistics and content analysis procedures in analysing data. The data obtained was coded, sorted and analysed. Data from each instrument was analysed separately. The data was tabulated into frequency distribution tables and bar graphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research sought to establish the methods used by teachers of Kiswahili in teaching poetry. The findings from the questionnaire for teachers, the 12 lessons observed and document analysis guide were as shown in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4, respectively.

Table 2: Kiswahili Teachers' Teaching Methods (from the Teachers' Questionnaire)

Teaching Methods	Available		Not Available		Total
	Available	Percentage	Available	Percentage	
Oral Questioning	12	100%	0	0%	12 (100%)
Lecture Method	11	91.70%	1	8.30%	12 (100%)
Discussion	10	83.30%	2	16.70%	12 (100%)
Group Work	7	58.30%	5	41.70%	12 (100%)
Recitation	6	50%	6	50%	12 (100%)
Dramatization	2	16.70%	10	83.30%	12 (100%)
Role-play	0	0%	12	100%	12 (100%)
Simulation	0	0%	12	100%	12 (100%)

The findings from teachers' questionnaire showed that all the 12(100%) teachers of Kiswahili used oral questioning as a method of teaching, 11(91.7%) out of 12 respondents used lecture method, 10(83.3%) used discussion, 7(58.3%) used group work, 6(50%) used recitation, 2(16.7%) used dramatization, 0% used role-play while 0% used simulation.

Table 3: Kiswahili Teachers' Teaching Methods (as observed in 12 lessons)

Teaching Methods	Observed		Not Observed		Total
	Observed	Percentage	Observed	Percentage	
Oral Questioning	10	83.30%	2	16.70%	12 (100%)
Lecture Method	9	75%	3	25%	12 (100%)
Discussion	0	0%	12	100%	12 (100%)
Group Work	0	0%	12	100%	12 (100%)
Recitation	1	8.30%	11	91.70%	12 (100%)
Dramatization	0	0%	12	100%	12 (100%)
Role-play	0	0%	12	100%	12 (100%)
Simulation	0	0%	12	100%	12 (100%)

The findings from lesson observation schedule showed that out of the 12 lessons observed, in 10(83.3%) lessons, oral questioning dominated followed by lecture method where 9(75%) out of 12 teachers used lecture method to teach poetry in Kiswahili. Recitation came third, where 1(8.3%)

teacher used recitation as a method of teaching poetry. None (0%) used discussion, group work, dramatization, role-play and simulation.

Table 4: Kiswahili Teachers' Teaching Methods (from Document Analysis Guide)

Teaching Methods	Teaching Available		Not Available		TOTAL
	Available	Percentage	Available	Percentage	
Oral Questioning	7	58.30%	5	41.70%	12 (100%)
Lecture Method	3	25%	9	75%	12 (100%)
Discussion	4	33.30%	8	66.70%	12 (100%)
Group Work	1	8.30%	11	91.70%	12 (100%)
Recitation	3	25%	9	75%	12 (100%)
Dramatization	2	16.70%	10	83.30%	12 (100%)
Role -play	0	0%	12	12 (100%)	12 (100%)
Simulation	0	0%	12	12 (100%)	12 (100%)

The findings from the document analysis guide showed that 7(58.3%) out of 12 teachers had planned to use oral questioning as a teaching method as indicated in the schemes of work and lesson plans. Moreover, 3(25%) out of 12 teachers had lecture method appearing as a method, 4(33.3%) out of 12 had discussion as a method of teaching poetry while 1(8.3%) had planned to use group work. Another 3(25%) had recitation as a method whereas 2(16.7%) had dramatization whereas role play and simulation did not appear in any of the documents analysed.

As observed in the research, poetry in Kiswahili lessons in Kenyan secondary schools were dominated by oral questioning and lecture method. This is in agreement with what Murunga (2006) has previously observed; that teacher talk dominated the teaching of poetry in Kiswahili. This influenced performance of learners negatively in the 12 lessons observed. It was difficult for learners to comprehend the meaning in the poem when asked oral questions. This was evident by the few hands raised to volunteer in explaining meaning in the poem. Among those who raised their hands to give the meaning in the poem, only a few got it right. The findings agreed with what Wasike (2011) has also reported, that when a teacher dominates the lesson, learners were unable to understand the meaning in the poem.

It was also observed that, in lesson 10, the teacher led students in singing the first stanza of the poem. The students then followed suite and sung the rest of the poem. This positively influenced the performance of learners as they enjoyed the poem and were able to engage with ease in answering comprehension questions as guided by the teacher. It was also observed that, although dramatization and discussion were schemed for, there was no evidence that the methods were being used in a normal classroom set-up in teaching of poetry. Wasike (2011) observes that when dramatization is used as a method of teaching poetry, sight, sound and movement were put in the content learnt and learners retained much. This is in agreement with Davies and Summers (2015) who advocated for perceptual learning styles where senses are involved as students go through action learning. Vodickova (2009) argues that dramatization involves real-life situations that learners can put themselves into.

Dale's (1969) cone of experience places dramatization at the bottom of the cone where when used, 90% of what has been dramatized is likely to be remembered. Learners are likely to retain more of what they do as compared to what they are shown or being told. By teachers scheming for dramatization showed that they understood it to be an effective method for teaching poetry. However, for them not using dramatization as schemed for, meant that learners retained less as evidenced by the few hands that volunteered to explain the themes in the poem in the 11 lessons observed. It was, therefore, observed that teachers had inverted the DCE, where, they placed a lot of importance on the abstract experiences by using oral questioning and lecture method in teaching poetry which lie at the apex of the cone while ignoring the more concrete experiences such as dramatization and role-play that lie at the bottom of the cone.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to identify the teaching methods used by teachers of Kiswahili. From the research results, it is evident that poetry in Kiswahili lessons are dominated by oral questioning and the lecture method. As such, it is recommended that Kiswahili teachers should also explore a variety of methods in teaching poetry in Kiswahili so as to make the lesson as interesting as possible. The use of oral questioning and lecture method on their own is not effective. Basing on Dale's cone of experience, teachers should employ interactive methods of teaching such as dramatization. Such interactive methods enhance learners' memory and mastery of content leading to permanent knowledge.

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