

Effect of Lukabarasi Morphology on the Quality of Written Kiswahili Among Secondary School Students in Kakamega North Sub County

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received August 08 2024

Revised November 19 2024

Accepted December 02 2024

Keywords

Keyword_1 Errors

Keyword_2 Elocution

Keyword_3 Politeness

Keyword_4 Acquisition

Keyword_5 Fossilization

ABSTRACT

Although there is a resemblance in some of the Lukabarasi and Kiswahili lexical items, some morphological structures are incompatible and, consequently, cause errors or mistakes. The main objective of the study is to analyze the effect of Lukabarasi morphology on the quality of written Kiswahili language among secondary school students in the Kakamega North sub-county. Specific objectives are to scrutinize the main agents of transfer of errors from L1 to L2 and how Lukabarasi affects the quality of written Kiswahili in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination. The study was analyzed within the framework of Interlanguage theory by Larry Selinker (1972), which stated that during the acquisition of a second language, the learner transfers the rules from the L1 to L2, and if the two have distinct structures, the errors occur in the L2. Questionnaires were channelled to 17 teachers and 76 form-one students who were selected purposively from 10-day schools until the saturation stage was attained. The oral interview was applied to 25 parents of some of the students who were selected based on the convenience sampling technique. The study revealed that to express politeness in communication, Lukabarasi speakers add the suffix (-kho) and (-nga) to the verbs in the present simple tense. When such rules are transferred from Lukabarasi to Kiswahili, morphological errors occur, and during prefixation in Kiswahili, some Kabarasi students use a instead of ha. This alteration of (-h-) renders the lexical items erroneous. The study further found that parents are the main agents of the transfer of errors from L1 to L2 in the early years, which makes it difficult to correct the learner at the secondary school level. Therefore, Lukabarasi morphology affects the quality of written Kiswahili negatively. It is not unique to Lukabarasi but also to other dialects of the Luhya speech community.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lukabarasi is one of the 19 Luhya dialects, which is widely spoken in the Kakamega North sub-county as the native language (Luvonga, 2023). Luhya is among the Bantu language groups that interacted with Arabic to give rise to the Kiswahili language (Ontieri, 2015). It is then assumed that students who speak Lukabarasi should do better in the Kiswahili language because there is a correlation between Kiswahili and Bantu languages. The study is set to explore the possibilities of the Lukabarasi language-speaking students' performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Kiswahili examination.

Kamau (2018) highlights that the Kiswahili language historically emerged as a pidgin between African languages and Arab traders in the coastal region in the 15th century, as evidenced by similarities between Kiswahili words and those of Arabic, then Kiswahili words with those of Bantu. It reiterates that apart from Kiswahili being spoken widely in the African continent by over 100 million speakers, it is used in Music as well. In light of Kamau's study (2018), there is a similarity between the Bantu language groups and Kiswahili, and so the study now seeks to investigate the sources of errors (agents) and correction of such errors. Choge (2017) classified Kiswahili as an agglutinating language, and the current study also found Kabarasi to be an agglutinating language. This similarity can cause positive transfer which the current study seeks verification. The current study seeks verification of the positive transfer and how it compromises the quality of written Kiswahili in the national examination.

If the Kiswahili language is widely spoken in the Kakamega North sub-county, whose main inhabitants are Kabras, how come the performance of the Kiswahili language in the Kakamega North sub county is below average? The study was set to investigate the effect of Lukabarasi morphology on the quality of written Kiswahili among the Kabarasi students in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county. Objectives of the study included determining the effect of Lukabarasi morphology on the quality of written Kiswahili language among the Kabarasi students in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county and establishing the main agent of the elements which are transferred from Lukabarasi to Kiswahili language among the Kabarasi students in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county. The study is carried out within the Kakamega North sub-county, where the Kabras dialect is widely spoken because the interaction between the children and the community affects the learning of Kiswahili (Barasa, 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Kiswahili

Trudgill (2003) spearheaded the study in this field by asserting that speakers tend to transfer syntactic, morphological, and lexical items from one language to the other during interaction. This information was echoed by Selinker (1972), who propounded that the interlanguage transfer theory describes the transfer of rules and performance from L1 to L2 and involves both positive and negative transfer. The current study investigates whether there is a positive or negative transfer of rules from L1 to L2. The study by Trudgill (2003) generalized all errors in the levels of linguistic analysis, while the current study narrows down to morphological errors. Selinker (1972) further elaborates that when learners find the features of L1 equivalent to those of L2, there is a positive transfer, while if there is a mismatch between the two, there are likely to be errors in L2. Such is one of the concerns of the study. However, they did not establish the agents of such errors. The current study establishes whether they are teachers, students themselves, or parents and guardians from the immediate environment.

Since Lukabarasi and Kiswahili share most syntactic, phonological, and lexical items, there is a likelihood of minimal negative transfer of rules and, consequently, a need to establish the course and main agent of low performance of Kiswahili in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county among Kabarasi students. Bakari (1985) had

already noted that dialectal variation in terms of morphology and phonology of 7 Kenyan Swahili dialects is prevalent. Such variation can cause negative transfer to the learners' written Kiswahili. If such negative transfer occurs among Swahili dialects, it can be worse in another language and so the current study seeks verification through investigation into the effect of Lukabarasi morphology on the quality of written Kiswahili.

Muhati (2015) established that despite the fact that Kiswahili is an examinable and compulsory subject in both primary and secondary schools of Kakamega County, Luhya suffixes -anga, -ko, -nge and -ngi, have affected the Luhya written Kiswahili negatively and attracted penalties in their examination. Muhati (2015) interviewed the informants from Kakamega Central, who speak majorly Kiswahili because it is a metropolitan community, and recommended that KICD and language planners should adopt nonstandard Kiswahili in all settings to boost its performance in Kenya's national examination. The study has not provided the tactics for improving the performance and has left out such errors in written Kiswahili. The current study seeks to investigate whether all the parties contribute to the transfer of errors and how to minimize them. The current study seeks to verify if such negative transfer occurs in the written Kiswahili of Kabarasi students in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county, which speak Lukabarasi. However, the Lukabarasi-speaking students may not be the only culprits but other Luhya dialects within the region. The fact that Muhati's study found the sources of errors in spoken Kiswahili by Kakamega dialect speakers, the current study investigates agents of transferring errors from L1 to L2 among high school students in Kakamega North sub-county where Kabra's dialect is widely spoken.

Guo (2022) expounded on Selinker (1972) that fossilization occurs when the L1 learners fail to reach target language competence by stopping to learn when their Interlanguage still has rules or items different from those of target language. The current study seeks verification of such anomaly between Kiswahili and Lukabarasi, the cause of such errors and their treatment. Mangwa (2005) used Kiswahili composition as the basis of the study, which later on revealed that both grammatical and lexical errors that originated from Ekegusi as L1 contributed to poor performance in Kiswahili language examination. The current study focused on whether phonological errors affect the quality of written Kiswahili among the Lukabarasi-speaking students in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county. It also targets establishing the main agents of transferring errors to the learners.

Massamba (1986) found out that in Tanzania, where Kiswahili is widely spoken better than in other countries in Africa, it has been affected by other local languages lexically and phonologically by suffix insertion and lexical transfer, which lowers the quality of Kiswahili in Tanzania. The study at hand investigates how Lukabarasi affects Kiswahili's written work and the agents of transferring errors from L1 and L2. Barasa (2015) found that interaction between the children and the community impacts the learning of the Kiswahili language. It is necessary in the current study because it lays the foundation for the investigation of whether or not the Kabarasi community affects the quality of written Kiswahili in the final KNEC examination.

2. 2 Public Interest Statement

It is necessary to carry out the study on the effects of Kabras morphology on written Kiswahili because it affects the quality of written Kiswahili in the national examination. The fact that other scholars in the same field, such as Massamba, Mangwa, and Muhati, have done a lot to verify the negative transfer between Kiswahili and Luhya, there is need for further study in specific dialect such as Lukabarasi. Moreover, after a number of years, language tends to either grow or die (Wanjala, 2014). Given that Lukabarasi and Kiswahili language are correlated, there is a need to establish whether the L1 affects L2 negatively or positively.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study population includes Kabarasi-speaking students in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county and their Kiswahili compositions, their parents and guardians. This implies that all people and objects that possess the qualities of being investigated form the population (Kumar, 2011). Of the sample of 17 teachers, 76 form one student from 10-day schools because they interact with parents and the community in the neighborhood. The home domain is the best for language acquisition of children (Wanjala, 2014). Twenty-five parents were selected purposively depending on their willingness and availability to participate in the interview. The data was drawn from the Kiswahili compositions of high school students and interviewed their parents orally. Teachers of the Kiswahili language from sampled schools were the key informants in the provision of reports and consultation. The data was presented and analyzed in tables.

The oral interview was used as a tool to interview parents, questionnaires to teachers, and sample Kiswahili compositions were administered to students as interview schedules. Kothari (2011) asserts that the validity and reliability of research instruments guarantee the best results. The study is limited to the Kakamega North sub-county, where the Kabras dialect is spoken and targets only Kabarasi students and parents who speak Lukabarasi. The wordlist contains the only lexical items among the errors in students Insha.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Data Findings

The study aimed to investigate whether Lukabarasi morphology affects the quality of written Kiswahili in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county among the Kabarasi-speaking students and collected the following data:

Table 1. Morphological effects

No	Lukabarasi Lexical Items	Incorrect Kiswahili Language	Correct Kiswahili Version	Gloss
1	Mbeekho	Nipeko	Tafadhali nipe	Kindly give me
2	Khonyaakho	Nisaidieko	Tafadhali nisaidie	Please help me
3	Lenjelakho	Angaliako	Hebu angalia	Please look
4	Njorirakho	Nichoreeko	Tafadhali nichoree	Please draw for me
5	Murunjileekho	Mlipieko	Tafadhali mlipie	Please pay for him /her
6	Yitsakho	Kujako	Hebu kuja	Please come
7	Chendakho	Tembeako	Hebu tembea	Please walk

8	Rulakho	Tokako	Hebu toka	Please come out
9	Endiekho	Nikuleko	Tafadhali nile	May I eat
10	Tavakho	Kimbiako	Tafadhali kimbia	Please run
11	Sukumilakho	Nisukumieko	Tafadhali nisukumie	Please push for me
12	Ndasomakho	Nimesomako	Tafadhali nimesoma	Please, I have learned
13	Mulaliakho?	Mtakulako?	Tafadhali mtakula?	Please, will you eat?
14	Ndayilaakho	Nichoteeko	Tafadhali nichotee	Please fetch it for me
15	Nsitsanga	Nakujanga	Huwa nakuja	I come
16	Entitsanga	Nakulanga	Huwa nala	I eat
17	Leraanga	Letanga	Uwe ukileta	Be bringing
18	Efulasianga	Nafunganga	Huwa nafunga	I close (eyes)
19	Vasievaanga	wanachezanga	Huwa wanacheza	They dance
20	Vevaanga	Wanaibanga	Huwa wanaiba	They steal
21	Yamoonyanga	Ananisengenya	Hunisengenya	He /she back bites me
22	Akusianga	Anauzanga	Huza	He /she sells
23	Avula	Ana	Hana	He /she does not have
24	Salatsia ta	Ataenda	Hataenda	He /she will not go
25	Sikhutsia ta	Atuendi	Hatuendi	We are not going
26	Sindevaanga ta	Siulizingi	Huwa siulizi	I do not ask
27	Sinsitsanga ta	Siendingi	Huwa siendi	I do not go
28	Simbangwangwa ta	Sipangwingwi	Huwa sipangwi	I do not get planned
29	Sinduvaanga ta	Sipoteingi	Huwa sipotei	I do not get lost
30	Singoswanga ta	Sishutuliwingi	Huwa sishtuliwi	I do not get ambushed
31	Sisangalangakho ta	Huwa sifurahiko	Huwa sifurahi tafadhali	I do not get fascinated please
32	Olitsangakho	Unakulangako	Tafadhali huwa unakula	Please you eat
33	Yambetsangakho	Ananipatiangako	Huwa ananipa	He kindly gives me

From the above table, it is found that in Lukabarasi, the suffix *kho* is used to indicate politeness in communication, while in Kiswahili, there is no suffixation for politeness but addition of words such as *tafadhali*, *hebu*, *naomba*. The Lukabarasi-speaking students tend to transfer *kho* in the form of *ko* to Kiswahili as a suffix, hence making it ungrammatical.

In the present simple tense for habitual action, the Kabarasi speakers add the suffix *nga* to the verb and transfer the same suffix to Kiswahili directly, making it erroneous. According to Selinker (1972), there is a mismatch between the two languages, which leads to a negative transfer of rules from L1 to L2. The trend also occurred in the findings of Muhati (2015) when he revealed that in the Luhya community, there is a transfer of *the* suffix *Ko* for politeness into Kiswahili alongside *nga* for habitual action. The current study differs a bit from the former by research on students' written Kiswahili rather than spoken and makes the addition of other morphological errors apart from that of politeness.

This implies that it is not only for Lukabarasi, but most Luhya dialects since Muhati's study revolved around Kakamega Central which is a municipality with mixed groups of Luhya dialects. The current study also found that when negating the verb, they add the suffix *nga*, and in Kiswahili, they transfer it in the form of *ngi*, which is the allomorph of *nga*. *Siendangi* (huwa siendi) (*Sinsitsanga ta* -Lukabarasi) – I do not go.

Furthermore, instead of Kiswahili negative *hana* (doesn't have), some Lukabarasi-speaking students tend to say *ana* by deletion of *h*. This is because most of the Kabarasi speakers avoid *h* to reduce the speaking effort and transfer of rules from L1 to L2.

The study finds that there is a morphological mismatch between the Lukabarasi and Kiswahili languages despite the fact that the two languages bear a resemblance. The data also reveals that though there is some resemblance in lexical items of Lukabarasi and Kiswahili, most of it exhibits a high rate of lexical mismatch between the two.

The current study also found that in most of the homes where parents use Kiswahili as a medium of communication, there was a high chance of errors in their children's written Kiswahili. The homes where Kiswahili was minimal or none, there was a higher chance of quality written Kiswahili among their children's academic work than vice-versa. Trudgill (2003) still agrees that speakers tend to transfer syntactic, morphological, and lexical items from one language to the other during interaction. However, he was too general since the current study narrows down to morphological errors in written Kiswahili among the Lukabarasi-speaking students in secondary schools of Kakamega North sub-county.

5. DISCUSSION

The study revealed that Lukabarasi morphology affects the quality of written Kiswahili language negatively by transfer of rules from L1 to L2 that compromises the quality of written Kiswahili. They transfer the suffix *kho* in the form of *ko*, *nga*, and *ngi* as the allomorph of *nga* from L1 to L2 and apply the deletion of the *h* sound from the negative verb in Kiswahili *hana* as *ana*. Most of the lexical items have a mismatch between Lukabarasi and Kiswahili language. Such a mismatch in lexical items and suffixation (morphology) leads to negative transfer of rules from L1 to L2, leading to errors. Selinker (1972) sufficiently explained that if there is a mismatch between L1 and L2, errors are likely to occur in L2 as a result of a transfer of rules from L1 to the target language. Interlanguage theory by Larry Selinker (1972) affirms that if there is a mismatch between L1 and L2, there is a likelihood of negative transfer, which occurs when there is a variation between the sounds of two languages.

6. CONCLUSION

From the above findings, it is concluded that Lukabarasi morphology affects the quality of written Kiswahili language negatively by transfer of rules from L1 to L2 that leads to multiple errors in written Kiswahili. There is a mismatch between Lukabarasi and Kiswahili language morphologically that results in morphological errors in written work. Kiswahili and Lukabarasi languages are both of Bantu origin but differ significantly in terms of lexical items and morphology and if the rules are transferred from L1 to L2, errors occur. The main agents of transferring errors from L1 to L2 are Lukabarasi-speaking guardians and parents who speak Kiswahili language with such errors to the children in their early years alongside Lukabarasi. The learners tend to acquire such errors and continue with the trend in secondary schools as students. It then becomes difficult to correct. Such a situation is fossilization. The Lukabarasi-speaking students in secondary schools of Kakamega North Sub County do not get exposure to academic events such as news reading, newspaper reading, elocution, and radio or television programs that promote proficiency in Kiswahili. Guo (2022) highlights Selinker (1972) that during fossilization, the learners become adamant about what is being corrected and it becomes difficult to

change. Consequently, errors occur in written Kiswahili and compromise with the performance.

Recommendations

Most of the errors are transferred from L1 to L2 by parents and guardians at early years so it is recommended that parents should desist from using Kiswahili alongside Lukabarasi but to use only Lukabarasi as the medium of communication at home. Kiswahili should only be introduced at school because it is refined. Kabarasi-speaking students should focus on Kiswahili reading and conversation at school rather than assuming that it resembles Lukabarasi, hence warranting less effort in study. Secondary schools in the Kakamega North sub-county should create a situation that can expose students to both written and verbal communication in Kiswahili, such as Kiswahili verse recitation, public speaking competitions, essay writing, and newspaper reading to supplement course books. The current study differs a bit from Muhati's recommendation that substandard Kiswahili should be adopted by KICD in the syllabus and be examinable. Standard Kiswahili should be taught and examined in national examination for the improvement of its quality.

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