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ROLE PLAY TEACHING METHOD AND KISWAHILI LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KIRINYAGA CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KIRINYAGA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Effective instructional process is reliant on suitable methods used during instructional process. Teaching and learning methods used in language learning should thus be chosen appropriately to realize educational goals in every curriculum. The study therefore sought to establish the influence of role play method on Kiswahili language instruction in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, Kirinyaga County, Kenya. The study sought to find out activities in role play teaching method used in Kiswahili language instruction, establish the extent to which role play teaching method is being used in Kiswahili language instruction, determine the influence of role play teaching method on Kiswahili language instruction and to find out challenges that teachers encounter when using role play teaching method in Kiswahili language instruction in secondary schools. The study was guided by Discourse theory of language and Noam Chomsky language acquisition theory. Descriptive survey research design adopted targeted 4345 subjects comprising of 4125 form three students, 180 Kiswahili language teachers and 40 Heads of Kiswahili Subject from 40 secondary schools. A sample of 367 respondents that included; 321 form 3 students, 38 form 3 Kiswahili teachers and 8 Kiswahili Heads of Subject was determined based on Slovin's formula. Multistage sampling involving stratified, simple random and purposive sampling methods were used. Questionnaires and interview schedule were used to collect data from sampled respondents. Data obtained was analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings showed that Kiswahili language teachers use various role play teaching activities in Kiswahili language instruction. Use of role play teaching method was also found to significantly influence Kiswahili language instruction. It is therefore recommended that Kiswahili language teachers should innovate to integrate more role play teaching activities in Kiswahili language instruction to facilitate better conception of the abstract concepts in the subject. The results from the study are significant in that they will add more insights on the instruction process of Kiswahili language in secondary schools.

Key words: Role play; Kiswahili Language Instruction; Teaching Activities; Teaching Methods; Improvisation

INTRODUCTION

The utilization of role-playing as a pedagogical tool enables students to engage in simulated scenarios, where they

can interact with others in a regulated setting, to acquire practical knowledge and experiment with diverse tactics within a secure environment (Chesler and Fox, 2016). The utilization of role play in the classroom setting can be a highly effective instructional strategy, as it offers students the opportunity to engage with real-world scenarios in order to enhance their learning outcomes. As per the findings of Carleton College (2015), role-playing is an educational framework that enables learners to promptly implement knowledge by assuming the position of a decision-maker who is tasked with making a finding concerning a policy, resource distribution, or any other consequence. (Chesler and Fox 2016) posit that role playing is a teaching method that caters for these requirements, whereby participants adopt the personas of others and simulate their emotions, cognitions, and actions. In some years back, the demand for foreign language educators has been increasing, such as those teaching Kiswahili, to adopt a communicative methodology for language pedagogy. An instance of this phenomenon is evident in the implementation of role-playing exercises, wherein learners assume a persona distinct from their own in order to accomplish a task in the language being studied. Despite the abundance of anecdotal evidence and isolated research studies highlighting the advantages of integrating role plays into the language learning environment, few, if any research studies have examined the actual state of affairs, particularly in the context of less commonly taught languages like Chinese (Salies,2017). Another advantage of utilizing role-play in education is the opportunity for learners to simulate authentic situations that are likely to be encountered in their future experiences. Role-plays are a pedagogical tool that simulates the unpredictability and challenges that learners are likely to encounter. Through affording students, the chance to address these concerns within the educational setting, teachers can enhance their ability to communicate proficiently in the desired language at a later stage.

Role-play is an effective method to animate the teaching and learning atmosphere, arouse the interests of learners, and make the language acquisition impressive. Role play is very important in teaching languages like Kiswahili because it gives students an opportunity to practice communication in different social contexts and in different social roles. In addition, it also allows students to be creative and to put themselves in another persons' place for a while. According to Stephen (2014), based on his observation in the conversation class in Lawrence University in the USA, the role play would seem to be the ideal activity in which students could use their Kiswahili creatively and it aims at stimulating

a conversation situation in which students might find themselves and give them an opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill. In South Africa, during role play, Kiswahili learners explore particular interactions in a distinct setting observing the implicit guidelines of daily life. Students may use role play method which gives them an opportunity to engage in activities that develop individual private study on internal logic or dynamics of language use setting (Johnstone 2016).

The main advantage of role plays is that they allow learners to experience with new co and behaviors in an environment that mimics the activities of language learners. Students can learn by performing activities, blending legal policies and guidelines, their values and views, and hands-on skills such as negotiation, designing, debating and investigation. Role play can be used to present themes by demonstrating, for instance, how a procedure or process progresses; explain the practical effects of linguistic rules, subject learners to ethical issues and help learners to build pragmatic abilities (Johnstone, 2016). According to a study conducted in Burundi schools, role play is a successful method for winning learners' attention and offering opportunity for rehearsal and feedback in Kiswahili. Asking pupils to role-play a circumstance in which the highlighted ability is lacking is one technique to build motivation and introduce some humor into the learning process. It provides opportunities for students to take on roles, provide feedback to one another, and practice new skills. Role playing can provide a chance for children with intellectual disabilities to rehearse proper minor dialogue which is a social skill that is essential for classroom acceptability (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2018,).

When employed during Kiswahili language instruction, role play effectively allows for the achievement of the lesson's objectives. "Education and life are two different names for the same phenomenon," writes Raghian, (2014). "Education that does not prepare students for life is meaningless." There is no royal way to gaining knowledge or achievement. Teachers should be able to employ a variety of methods, devices, and tactics to make the subject engaging, dynamic, and alive. According to Gathumbi and Masembe (2015), role play promotes the process of instruction at various stages of education by enhancing learners' inspiration, memory and lively engagement in Kiswahili language classrooms in Tanzania. Furthermore, games meant to improve speaking skills are beneficial and therefore a teacher should make every effort to guarantee that that aspect of the game is felt in order to provide context for accurate speech. Role play gives students the opportunity to debate specific issues. During a crisis, an

actual discussion is held in order to achieve a decision. When learners are given repeated practice in a comfortable environment, they learn to pronounce troublesome sounds correctly, discriminate the sounds, and are motivated to study. Role play is an activity used to improve speech skills and help learners become better communicators particularly in Kiswahili language in Tanzanian.

Role play is an effective method for young native speaking pupils to learn Kiswahili oral language, particularly the forms and functions of Kiswahili (Kemboi, 2007). Role play is even more vital in some relationships. Students act out the parts of others in a role play, such as taking the role of a waiter, or even acting as a monster. Usually, the setting is provided as well as suggestions for what one is required to say. For example, the setting could be a restaurant and one is required to place an order. Role play is considered an effective method of language learning in the classroom for a variety of reasons. Students enjoy engaging in role play and are often observed speaking openly in the role assigned to them. During role plays, students are motivated to communicate freely and be imaginative and are given the chance to employ language beyond the class setting (Corsaro, 2013). As a result, the purpose of this research was to determine how to achieve better results in Kiswahili language teaching and learning. The research will offer teachers with knowledge that will allow them to use collaborative teaching methods that empower learners to actively participate and contribute to the learning process rather than depending just on teachers' largely monologic input. As a result, it was critical to undertake this research in light of the need to improve learning outcomes and the most prevalent teaching methods being teacher-centered in this context of students learning Kiswahili.

Role play is categorized into three, that is, fully-scripted role play, semi-scripted role play and non-scripted role play. The three categories of role play have elaborate activities that make learning real and practical. In role play, activities vary with the level of learners. In a fully scripted role-play, the text is provided and every learner is expected to comprehend and internalize their roles (Harper-Whalen & Morris, 2015). Such kind entails explanations of the conversations in the suggested textbooks with the aim of making items of the language sensible and simple to recall. Byrne (2016) cites that role play in this kind is most suitable for younger learners who may have difficulties in semi-scripted role play. The semi-scripted role play comprises conversations where some words have been omitted and learners are expected to complete the statements with correct words within the context (Livingstone, 2013). Therefore, learners are allowed to alter conversations to some extent in order to create their personalized conversation. This type of role play can be used by learners in the intermediate levels of education. The third type of role play is non-scripted, where learners are provided with the keywords of conversations (Dickson, 2019). The information, settings and goals are usually in uncontrolled and unstructured activities. In addition, Pi-Chong, (2020) observed that non-scripted role play, learners create conversations around the keywords provided. According to Davies (2010), learners can use their ideas to create language thus performing in varied contexts as per their comprehension. Non-scripted role-play is usually applicable for higher level learners since sometimes it requires special skills like problem-solving especially when in a free and structured way.

Role play may differ in terms of timespan and level of complexity. According to Al-Arishi (2014) cited in Kusriennek (2014) there are two major types of role play that is, real and surreal play. The real play refers to one which involves rehearsal for real world. Therefore, the learner is coached to know how to handle different circumstances which present a series of difficulties that the one may come across in real life. Besides, real play satisfies the desire for realism since it offers students the chance to practice in real life situations such as: ordering food, welcoming, travel agency among others. In these two types of role play, learners have opportunity to rehearse these activities and then in the future they are likely to experience fewer problems because they will have rehearsed in the classroom.

On the contrary, a surreal play inspires creativity and imagination among the students. In this type of role play, the learner aims at exploring feeling and attitude. Surreal play is also referred to imaginative role play. This study highlighted different ways on how role play boosts adaptability, eloquence and communicative ability. The study intended to show how role play contextualizes Kiswahili language by offering learners the experience of achievement in actual conditions. Surreal play equips learners with self-assurance for handling reality beyond the school. This study examined the usage of role play in teaching Kiswahili language. Since engaging in student-initiated activities promotes retention and have more meaningful instructional conditions, student participation in role play takes the center of the current study.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study focused on Form three students, their Kiswahili language teachers and heads of Kiswahili subject. A sample of 367 respondents constituting 8 HOS for Kiswahili, 38 Form 3 Kiswahili teachers and 321 form 3 students taking Kiswahili was sampled from target population of 4345 to respond to the research instruments. Sample size was determined using Slovin's formula (Slovin 1960). Data was collected using questionnaires for both teachers of Kiswahili and students while Interview schedules were used to collect data from Kiswahili heads of subject (HOS). Data obtained from the data collection instruments was edited, coded and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively based on study objectives. Qualitative data was analyzed in themes based on the study objectives. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 computer software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to assess Kiswahili language instructional practice to establish whether role play teaching method was in use. Specifically, it sought to determine the various role play teaching activities used in instruction of Kiswahili language. Teachers of Kiswahili language and their learners were given a set of statement to assess their conception of use of different types of role play teaching activities in Kiswahili language instruction. Table 1 presents findings on use of the various activities during various phases of classroom instruction.

Table 29: Role Play Activities used in Kiswahili Language Lesson (Teachers' View)

Item	Kiswahili Language Lesson					
	Introduction		Lesson Development		Conclusion	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Memorizing the roles	92.1	7.9	94.7	5.3	97.4	2.6
Filling in the role gaps	28.9	71.1	76.3	23.7	92.1	7.9
Spoken dialogue /Conversation	92.1	7.9	97.4	2.6	94.7	5.3
Repetition of activities	86.8	13.2	86.8	13.2	89.5	10.5

Data obtained from Kiswahili language teachers show that a majority use memorization of the roles during introduction (92.1%), lesson development (94.7%) and in concluding the lesson (97.4%). Similar observation was made with regard to use of spoken dialogue and repetition of activities, each activity being used by a majority of the Kiswahili language teachers (92.1%, 97.4% and 94.7% for spoken dialogue and 86.8%, 86.8% and 89.5% for repetition of activities during introduction, lesson development and during conclusion respectively). However, it was indicated by a majority of the Kiswahili language teachers that filling in the role gaps was mainly useful during lesson development (76.3%) and in concluding the lesson (92.1%). Findings therefore imply that a majority of the Kiswahili language teachers confirmed applying memorization of roles, spoken dialogue and repetition of activities in the entire Kiswahili language instructional process while filling in the role gaps was mainly used in lesson development and in concluding the lesson. Table 2 presents findings from form three Kiswahili students.

Table 30: Role Play Activities used in Kiswahili Language Lesson (Students' View)

Item	Kiswahili Language Lesson					
	Introduction		Lesson Development		Conclusion	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Memorizing the roles	61.0	39.0	68.0	32.0	78.0	22.0
Filling in the role gaps	62.3	37.7	59.3	40.7	66.0	34.0
Spoken dialogue /Conversation	75.3	24.7	67.0	33.0	65.7	34.3
Repetition of activities	62.8	37.2	68.0	32.0	70.7	29.3

Information from the students show that more than half of them confirmed being taught through memorization of the roles during introduction (61.0%), lesson development (68.0%) and in concluding the lesson (78.0%). Similar observation was made with regard to use of filling in the role gaps, spoken dialogue and repetition of activities, the use of each activity being confirmed by a majority of students (62.3%, 59.3%, and 66.0% for filling in the role gaps; 75.3%, 67.0% and 65.7% for spoken dialogue and 62.8%, 68.0% and 70.7% for repetition of activities) indicating use of these role play activities during introduction, lesson development and during conclusion respectively. Table 3 presents data obtained from Kiswahili language teachers utilization of role play activities.

Table 31: Role Play Activities used in Kiswahili Language Skills (Teachers' View)

Item	Kiswahili Language Skills							
	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Memorizing the roles	92.1	7.9	86.8	13.2	94.7	5.3	86.8	13.2
Filling in the role gaps	34.2	65.8	68.4	31.6	81.6	18.4	92.1	7.9
Spoken dialogue/Conversation	92.1	7.9	97.4	2.6	97.4	2.6	97.4	2.6
Repetition of activities	68.4	31.6	92.1	7.9	92.1	7.9	86.8	13.2

With regard to Kiswahili language skills, data obtained show that a majority use memorization of the roles to teach listening (92.1%), speaking (86.8%), reading (94.7%) and writing skills (86.8%). Similar observation was made with regard to use of spoken dialogue and repetition of activities, each activity being used by a majority of the Kiswahili language teachers in teaching listening (92.1% and 68.4%), speaking (97.4% and 92.1%), reading (97.4% and 92.1%) and writing (97.4% and 86.8%) respectively. However, it was indicated by a majority of the Kiswahili language teachers that filling in the role gaps was mainly useful for teaching speaking (68.4%), reading (81.6%) and writing (92.1%). Findings therefore imply that a majority of the Kiswahili language teachers confirmed applying memorization of roles, spoken dialogue and repetition of activities in teaching all the Kiswahili language skills while filling in the role gaps was mainly used in teaching the four language skills. Table 4 presents findings from form three Kiswahili students.

Table 32: Role Play Activities used in Kiswahili Language Skills (Students' View)

Item	Kiswahili Language Skills							
	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Memorizing the roles	63.7	36.3	72.0	28.0	72.7	27.3	78.3	21.3
Filling in the role gaps	65.7	34.3	68.3	31.7	67.3	32.7	68.7	31.3
Spoken dialogue/Conversation	76.2	23.8	69.7	30.3	65.7	34.3	69.0	31.0
Repetition of activities	60.5	39.5	65.7	34.3	68.7	31.3	70.3	29.7

Results of analysis of data from form three Kiswahili students' show that a majority of them confirmed being taught listening (63.7%), speaking (72.0%), reading (72.7%) and writing (78.3%) through memorization of the roles. Similar observation was made with regard to use of filling in the role gaps, spoken dialogue and repetition of activities, the use of each activity being confirmed by a majority of students (65.7%, 68.3%, 67.3% and 68.7% for filling in the role gaps; 76.2%, 69.7%, 65.7% and 69.0% for spoken dialogue and 60.5%, 65.7%, 68.7% and 70.3% for repetition of activities) indicating use of these role play activities in learning all the language skills.

Findings therefore confirm the use of role play activities during the instructional process of Kiswahili language instruction in all the phases of the instructional process to teach various language skills. Thao (2013) carried out a study on "Applying role-play in increasing students' interest in learning speaking to grade 11 students at Lai Vung 2 high school" in China. The aim of the study was to find out the learners' interest and the influence of role play during instruction. The study used descriptive method of data collection. Role play was described as an instruction method which involves imagining to be somebody else or self in a particular context and using dialogue to create the actual situation. The findings revealed that role play activities stimulated thinking and creativity in students, aided students to develop and practice new language and behavioral skills in a rather non-threatening context, and promoted learner motivation and participation which are essential for learning to occur. Role play activities encouraged students' thinking and creativity, helped students develop and practice new language and behavioral skills in a relatively non - threatening setting, and created the motivation and involvement necessary for learning to occur. Chesler and Fox (2016) observed that role-playing is a method that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a controlled manner to gain experience and test different strategies in a safe environment. According to the researcher, role play can be effectively used in the classroom to provide real-world scenarios to help students learn. Similarly, Carleton College (2015), cites that role play is an instruction technique in which learners are allowed to immediately apply content learnt as they are placed in the position of a decision maker who must make a choice concerning a procedure, resource distribution, or some other outcome. According to Chesler and Fox, "Role playing is a method of instruction that meets these needs; individuals take on the roles of other people and act out the others' feelings, thoughts, and behavior."

CONCLUSION

The study sought to find out various role play teaching activities used in instruction of Kiswahili language. Findings indicated that memorization of roles, filling in the role gaps, spoken dialogue and repetition of activities are the role play activities used in Kiswahili language instruction. It can therefore be concluded that memorization of roles, filling in the role gaps, spoken dialogue and repetition of activities are the role play activities used in Kiswahili language instruction in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, Kirinyaga County, Kenya.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings revealed that use of role play teaching activities such as memorization of roles, filling in the role gaps, spoken dialogue and repetition of activities have a significant influence on Kiswahili language instruction. The study therefore makes the following recommendations:

- i. Kiswahili language teachers should innovate to integrate more role play teaching activities in Kiswahili language instruction to facilitate better conception of the abstract concepts in the subject.
- ii. Kiswahili language teachers should enhance the use of role play teaching activities to facilitate better conception and ultimately improve learner performance in Kiswahili language.
- iii. Schools administration should strive to capacity build Kiswahili language teachers to enable them better implement role play teaching method along with other learner-based instructional methods for improved instructional process.

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