



## SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF A TRILINGUAL AT AGE FIVE

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### **ABSTRACT**

Being Trilingual is no longer a strange phenomenon as it may have been sometime back. In fact, in urban settings in Kenya, children are learning English as a third language (L3) rather than a second language (L2). Canale and Swain (1980), propose that communicative competence comprises four language competencies namely: linguistic, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse competencies. Of concern in this study is sociolinguistic competence of trilingual children at age five. Purposive sampling and snowballing were used to select six children: three boys and three girls. Data was collected through conversational technique where the children were prompted to express themselves in three languages: English, Kiswahili and Mother Tongue. It was found out that the children exhibited three main sociolinguistic competencies: code-mixing, use of colloquial Kiswahili and use of politeness forms. Lexical code mixing was the commonest and the children code-mixed two languages in their utterances. The findings of this study reveal that Kenyan children are on the path of trilingualism at age five and it affirms the current language in education policy which encourages the use of three languages at different levels of education. These findings are relevant to language policy makers today and in the future.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistic competence, Trilingualism, Code-mixing, Communicative competence, Age five

### **INTRODUCTION**

A number of studies have been carried out on Bilingual first language acquisition but very few deal with trilingual first language acquisition (Hoffmann 1991; Genesse, 2000; Harmers and Blanc, 2000). Most studies involving trilingualism have been carried out within the frame work of bilingual research. (Hoffman, 2001). Chavalier (2015) notes that the number of children around the world being raised trilingually is increasing but research in the field is scarce.

Hoffman (2001) distinguishes five groups of trilinguals taking into account both the circumstances and the social context under which people become users of three languages. Firstly, there are trilingual children who are brought up with two home languages which are different from the one spoken in the wider community. Secondly, some children become trilingual because of growing up in a bilingual community and whose Mother Tongue (either that of one or both parents) is different from the community languages. Thirdly, there are those bilinguals who acquire a third language in the school context. Fourthly, there are those bilinguals who become trilingual through immigration. Finally, there are those children who are members of trilingual communities and so they end up being trilingual. This last group is the most numerous group and common in Asia and Africa. Most trilingual children in Kenya fall in this last category and also the third category is quickly becoming a reality in urban areas. Their trilingual acquisition is simultaneous rather than subsequent. It is also natural though aided by pre-school experiences.

Most of the studies available on trilingual acquisition are Eurocentric (Hoffman, 2001). One such study was carried out by Dewaele (2000). He followed the trilingual acquisition of his daughter Livia from birth to about (4;3). Livia was brought up in a multilingual environment. Her mother's native language was Dutch and her father's was French and they lived in an English environment. Her father addressed her in French, her mother in Dutch and her friends and neighbours spoke to her in English. From the age of 5 months to 2; 6 she went every afternoon to a Pakistan child – minder who spoke English and Urdu with the children. Livia started producing her first words at the age of one year and two months (1; 2). She had a good passive knowledge of about 150 French, Dutch, Urdu and English words by then. Her first English words were produced at the child minder's house. She never got past the word stage in Urdu but had a passive knowledge of the language. At age 2 she produced mixed utterances usually involving two languages. She used English to communicate to her dolls and with her friends.

Livia's utterances in the three languages were all generally well formed and with relatively few grammatical errors. The errors she made were comparable to those made by monolingual children at the same age. They included the omission of the personal pronoun subject position in French; errors with the past participle in Dutch and an occasional third person for a first-person verb form in English. Most of these errors disappeared by the time she turned four. Dewaele concluded from this case study that a trilingual child can grasp language and use it appropriately according

to the situation. The contextual factors in this study are different from the Kenyan context, Again, the researcher does not provide the communicative competence of the subject at age five.

A study by Njis (2021) investigated the development of a two-year-old American toddler who was growing up since birth in a trilingual language environment of Spanish, English and French. It was found out that the child was developing active trilingualism though the child seemed to favour English over French and Spanish for spontaneous language production. These results agree with the results of the current Study.

Hoffman (2001) gives an overview of Eurocentric studies involving individual trilingualism. He analyses these studies with a view to considering linguistic competence in trilingual children. Competence can be looked at in terms of how it manifests itself and how it might be explained. According to him:

Trilingual language competence can be said to contain the linguistic aspects, that is, vocabulary and grammar, from the three language systems and also the pragmatic component, consisting of sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences pertaining to the three languages involved. In addition, it includes the ability to function in bilingual and trilingual contexts, which require decisions on code choice and code-switching. Trilingual competence enables speakers to create their own linguistic means in order to master particular communicative situations (Hoffmann, 2001:15).

Hoffman (2001) further points out that in young children; trilingual language acquisition largely follows the path of bilingual acquisition. He also notes that there is lack of sufficient numbers as well as a great variety of studies on trilingual acquisition, a gap which this Study aims to fill.

Factors that have been found to be important in trilingual language acquisition and active trilingualism in European settings include the use of the minority language at home (Arnaus Gil, Muller, Sette & Huppon, 2021), language exposure (Chavalier, 2015), parental language strategies and input load. Chavalier (2015) investigated two factors, that is, the role given to the societal language at home and the conversational style of the caregivers. These factors are present in the multilingual urban setting of the Kenyan society and they favour the development of trilingualism in children.

### **Sociolinguistic Profile: Domains and Concepts**

Linguistic diversity is an inescapable fact in most African countries. Kenya is no exception and as a multilingual country, one is bound to face the usual issues associated with multilingual situations all over the world. These include such issues as the social situations of the different languages, the functions that these languages serve and their place in the education system (Whitely, 1974). Majority of Kenyans speak three languages, that is, English, Kiswahili and Mother Tongue.

On the whole, most Kenyans acquire a mother tongue as a first language at home and use it for day-to-day communication in the home setting. It is also used in the rural areas among homogeneous communities. It is also the recommended medium of instruction in lower primary in rural schools (Republic of Kenya, 1981).

Being an Anglophone country, Kenya inherited a colonial legacy of English as the dominant language in the education system. Kenyans learn English in school and can speak it though the degree of fluency depends on the education level and is perceived as the language of literacy and upward social mobility (Micheka, 2005). Kenyans use English as an official language. Educated parents may also use English especially through code-mixing. Children are exposed to English in school right from lower primary to the university. Learning English in Kenya is quickly becoming a practice of learning a third language (L<sub>3</sub>) other than a second language as it has been in the past. English plays an important role as a language of instruction at all levels of education especially in the urban school setting (Micheka, 2005).

Kiswahili is widely spoken in its standard or colloquial form as a second language and lingua franca by Kenyans across different ethnic affiliations. In the new constitution it has been given the status of an official language to add to its role as the national language (New Constitution, 2010). It is a compulsory and examinable subject in schools (Republic of Kenya, 1981). In urban areas, some children acquire Kiswahili as their first language. An interesting aspect of Kiswahili language in Kenya is the existence of Regional varieties which are non-standard, for example, Luhya Kiswahili, Kikuyu Kiswahili, Kalenjin Kiswahili, Somali Kiswahili, Luo Kiswahili etcetera. (Muhati, 2015). These varieties are used in day-to-day interactions. Shinagawa (2007) identifies the Proto Bantu suffix morphemes [-

AG] and [-NGO] that have their corresponding forms [-ANGA] and [-KO] in the present vernacular Bantu languages to denote functions such as habitual aspect, imperfective aspect and emphatic modality varying from language to language. The insertion of Bantu tense morphemes into Kiswahili words produces local varieties of Kiswahili which are non-standard.

The concept of domain in language behaviour was first elaborated on by the students of language maintenance and language shift among Auslandsdeutsche in pre- World War II multilingual settings. Fishman (1972) has expounded on this. Fishman (1972) says that Schmidt-Rohr seems to have been the first to suggest that dominance configuration needed to be established to reveal the overall status of language choice in various domains of behaviour. Rohr suggested the following domains: the family, the church, literature, the press, the military, the courts and the government. In this study, three domains which are applicable to the children's choice of language. These are family, the peer group and school. Abdulaziz (1982) conducted research on language domains in both rural and urban Kenya. The urban location was Nairobi. He found out that there are two important factors that affect language acquisition and use. These are social-economic class cleavage and the ethnic group membership.

Gorman (1974) did a study on the patterns of language use among school children and their parents. His primary aim was to find out the pre-school knowledge of Kiswahili and English and the extent of the present use of the languages. He designed a questionnaire to find out what language the children spoke to various members of their families at home. He found out that mother tongue was used as language of communication with decreasing frequency. It was used in conversation with grandparents, parents, young brothers and sisters in that order. The children preferred to use English in certain speech interactions, for example, when talking to their closest friends about school.

Wangia (1991) did a study on language choice and use by lower primary school children in a multilingual urban setting. Her subjects were aged between 4 and 9 years. The aim was to find out how the three languages English, Kiswahili and Mother Tongue were used in different environments. She considered the three domains, that is, home, the school and the peer group. The research was conducted in nine schools selected on the basis of the social economic class. Three were from low-income areas such as Kibera and Line Saba. Three were from middle income areas such as Golf course and three from affluent areas like Lavington. The conclusion from the study was that of the three languages, Kiswahili appeared to be one used by most children in the different domains. Children from high income families tended to use English. It was also evident that there were children whose first language was either English or Kiswahili. Others were able to use the three languages fluently depending on how they had been exposed to them.

The home environment is a very important domain for language interaction. Language is first developed in the home. This is where children learn to talk. Interaction within the family involves parents, brothers and sisters, possibly uncles and aunts, grandparents, house helps and even visitors. In the school environment, the children interact with fellow children but from different backgrounds. In school they are also taught English and Kiswahili to add to their first language if it happens to be a different language. The peer group refers to the age group that generally fell within the prescribed ages in the study. Children assume special relationships when they are with their peers. It was not very easy to observe peer group relationships in the school compound because children tend to interact freely. In order to capture the peer group clearly, the researcher used school routes, bus stops and playgrounds in the estates.

The school language pattern seemed to be determined by the language behaviour of the home environment that the children came from. The schools were either Kiswahili or English speaking environment. The children's choice of language was influenced by the environment and by adults. For example, the children from the low income group spoke little English because their parents do not use English. In the current study, the researcher will capture children from the middle class who have been exposed to the three languages.

Given the above discussion, it is evident that either at home, in school or even in the peer group, there is use of code switching and code mixing. This can occur among the children or the adults and these are patterns of language that are likely to be used by children at age five. These two concepts will be discussed in Section 2.

### **Code-Mixing and Code -Switching**

Though the two concepts are not clearly distinguished in sociolinguistic literature, they are different. Code mixing is the deliberate mixing of two languages without an associated topic change. Conversants use two languages together to an extent that they can change from one language to another in the course of single utterance (Wardhaugh, 2010).

This definition is similar to that given by Bhatia and Ritchie (2004). Wardhaugh notes that conversational code mixing is not just a haphazard mixing of two languages brought about by laziness or ignorance or some combination of these. Rather, it requires conversants to have sophisticated knowledge of both languages and to be accurately aware of community norms. It is a source of pride in bilingual and multilingual communities. The mixing occurs in form of morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases clauses and sentences. Utterances containing code-mixing have discourse unity just like those that are in the linguistic varieties.

Code switching is a shift from one language to another and this shift lasts for a long period. It is a conversational strategy used to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries. It is also used to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations. According to Myers Scotton (1995), code switching functions as a communicative strategy for facilitating communication by lowering language barriers as well as by consolidating cultural identity. It is a versatile strategy to meet the complex communicative demands placed on urban settings. Crystal (1997) gives three reasons why speakers switch from one language to another. If the speaker cannot express themselves adequately in one language, they switch to the other to make good the deficiency. Switching to a minority language is very common as a means of expressing solidarity with a social group. A switch between languages can also signal the speaker's attitude to the listener.

According to Savans and Muchnik (2008) there is a difference between switches and mixes effected by bilinguals and Trilinguals. For trilinguals there is a third language system involved making the switches/mixes more explicable as a universal multilingual processing rather than a language specific multilingual processing.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The communicative Model by Canale and Swain (1980.) informed the data analysis in this research. In this Model, Sociolinguistic competence is one of the competencies that show communicative competence. Sociolinguistic competence includes knowledge of rules and conventions which underlie the appropriate comprehension and language used in different sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts. Sociolinguistic competence can be seen in the use of forms of politeness, change of register, change of style, code switching, code-mixing, use of correct dialect, idiomatic expressions

### **Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

Purposive sampling and snowballing were used to get a sample for this study. The subjects of the study were selected purposively so that they met the desired characteristics, that is, age and being multilingual. The researcher made contacts with parents whose children were aged between 4;5 and 5;5 and who used English, Kiswahili and Gichuka (or any other Kimeru dialect) in various domains in their interactions. The age was chosen because it is considered a frontier age in Child Language Research (Karmiloff-Smith, 1986). The first contact directed the researcher to other parents whose children were around the same age. Six children formed the sample size for this study; three boys and three girls.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The children's utterances were analysed for the components of sociolinguistic competence as described in Canale and Swain's Model (1984). Sociolinguistic competence (SC) includes knowledge of rules and conventions which underlie the appropriate comprehension and language used in different sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts. Sociolinguistic competence can be seen in the use of forms of politeness, change of register, change of style, codeswitching, code-mixing, use of correct dialect and use of idiomatic expressions.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Three sociolinguistic competence components were found in the children's language: use of code -mixing, use of colloquial Kiswahili and use of forms of politeness.

### **Kiswahili /English Lexical Embedding**

In the children's utterances extracted and presented in Table 1, Kiswahili is the matrix language and English is the embedded language. Free English translation is provided after the utterance and the lexical word that is embedded from English is indicated.

Table 1: English Lexical Items Embedded in Kiswahili

Kiswahili Utterances	English Translation	Lexical Item(s)
Alafu siku hio ingine birthday ilikuwanga	Then the next day there was birthday	Birthday
Kirimi- nani wa <b>class seven</b>	Kirimi -and he is in class seven	
Eee- nilisikia kwa <b>TV</b>	Eee- I heard it on TV	Class seven
Anakuwanga na <b>muscle</b> mingi	He has a lot of muscle(body-buider)	TV
	The way it is blue	Muscle
Sii vile inakuwanga ya <b>blue</b>	Because you were in this class	
Juu ulikuwanga hii <b>class</b>	Even a small monkey	Blue
Hasa <b>monkey</b> yenye kadogo	It has a lot of lace (material)	Class
Iko na <b>net</b> mingi	A very beautiful green trouser	Monkey
Mfuto yenye iko nzuri sana ya <b>green</b>	A good dress; another dress	Net
<b>Dress</b> nzuri, <b>dress</b> ingine	It is covered by a pillow	Green
Imefunikwa na <b>pillow</b>	Yesterday we went to the supermarket	Dress
Jana tulienda <b>supermarket</b>		Pillow
		Supermarket
Juu tulikula <b>glucose</b> bila maji tukagonjeka	Because we ate undiluted glucose and we	Glucose
<b>tonsils</b>	got tonsilitis	
Niko na miaka <b>five</b>	Iam five years old	Five
Unaenda hivi <b>straight</b>	You go straight	Straight
Anaumba <b>boy</b>	He is modelling a boy	Boy
Nilicheza <b>game</b>	I played a game	Game
Nikaona <b>bus</b> imekuja	I saw the bus had come	Bus
Nitakaa tuu chini nichukue <b>modelling</b>	I will sit down and start modelling	Modelling
Na <b>brother</b> yangu	with my brother	Brother
Alafu unafungulia <b>gas</b>	then you start the gas (oven)	Gas
Ningeenda nifike <b>town</b>	I would go to town	Town
Alafu ningekuwa na <b>powers</b>	Then I would have powers	Powers
Alafu twende <b>home</b>	Then we go home	Home
Naonaga kwa <b>movie</b>	I see it in the movies	Movie
Alafu tunafunga <b>church</b> tunaenda <b>home</b>	Then we leave church and go home	Church
Huwa ananunua vitu analeta <b>home</b>	usually he buys things and brings home	Home
		Home
Alafu saduku ikawekwa flowers	then they put flowers on the coffin	Flowers
jeneza	We will go back to our home	
Tukarundi <b>home</b> kwetu	Because they are friends	Home
Juu wanakuwanga <b>friends</b>	I usually do homework	Friends
Huwa nafanya <b>homework</b>	He dropped the dustbin	Homework
Akangusha <b>dustbin</b>	There is a beautiful gate there	Dustbin
Kuna gate poa hapo	And it had a swing	Gate
Na ilikuwa na <b>swing</b>	He said that and then the movie went on	Swing
Alisema hivyo, story ikaenda <b>break</b>	a commercial break	Break
		Break
Nikakunywa <b>breakfast</b>	I took breakfast	Breakfast
Nirudi tena kwa nyumba niambie Mum	I would go back and tell my MUM that I	<u>Dog</u>
nimeona <b>ndongi</b>	have seen a dog	

The results of Kiswahili/English lexical embedding show that except for the verb 'modelling', all other embedded lexical items are nouns. The acquisition of English starts through exposure to a multilingual context where codemixing is the norm. The lexical items embedded were from very varied domains and the explanation for the embedding is that the children acquire the three languages simultaneously. In pre-school, they are taught to name items in English and at home their parents also refer to some items by their English names. It is a type of borrowing as well. The word

birthday is always borrowed when speaking in MT or Kiswahili. Their mental lexicon has terms from all three languages and that is why they are able to use English lexical items in Kiswahili grammatical structure with ease.

### Mother Tongue /English Lexical Embedding

In this type of code-mixing, Mother tongue provides the grammatical structure into which English lexical items are embedded. In the process of embedding, the embedded lexical items are pronounced with a mother tongue tonal inflection but they remain distinctly English.

Table 2: English Lexical Items embedded in Mother Tongue

Mother tongue	English	Lexical item
Nĩ biscuit, theremende na <b>roripop</b>	It is a biscuit, a sweet and a lollipop	Lollipop
Na <b>balloon</b> mingi	And many balloons	Balloon
Tũgũraga <b>candle</b>	We buy a candle	Candle
Nĩ cietu cia <b>Kitchen</b>	They are for the kitchen	Kitchen
Ndethĩrire Kitchen indugure	I found the <b>Kitchen</b> door open	Kitchen
Agatũbe mabuku makwandĩka <b>date</b>	She gives us the books to write the date	Date
Agatũbe <b>mathematics</b> book	She gives us the Mathematics book	Mathematics
Twarĩa <b>snacks</b>	We ate snacks	Snacks
Twanyua <b>porridge</b>	We drunk porridge	Porridge
Mum athĩ <b>job</b>	Mum went to work	Job
Twona <b>Music</b>	We watched a music video	Music
Twathire-rĩ <b>outing</b>	We went for an outing	Music
Abinyire <b>button</b> ãmwe ya <b>red</b>	He pressed one red button	Outing
<b>Colour red</b> yaũka	The colour red appeared	Button. Red
Na <b>macousin</b> makwa	With my cousins	Colour red
<b>Mattress</b> ka ãngĩbĩa	The mattress would get burned.	Cousin
		Mattress

### Kiswahili/ Mother Tongue Lexical Embedding

Table 3: Mother Tongue Lexical Items in Kiswahili Grammatical Structure

Kiswahili	Mother tongue	Lexical item
Nikamtumia <b>kavideo</b>	I sent him a small video	<b>Kavideo</b>
Ananipikianga <b>githeri</b>	She cooks for me githeri	<b>Githeri</b>
Tunapanda <b>mbooco</b>	We plant beans	<b>Mbooco</b>
But siku hizi hanipikii <b>mukimo</b>	But these days she does not cook for me mukimo	<b>Mukimo</b>
Tunakula mchele tamu una <b>ndengu</b> tamu na <b>mbooco</b> tamu	We eat delicious rice, delicious greengrams and delicious beans	<b>Ndengu</b>
Ndarutha <b>makosa</b>	I did some mistakes	<b>makosa</b>

### Embedding of English (ENGL) into Kiswahili (KISW) Grammatical Structure

The language structures presented in this section show the children's ability to combine morphemes from different grammatical structures and form novel utterances that are grammatically correct.

1. KISW: Huko tulienda **tukaswim**

ENGL: There we went and swam

tu-ka-swim

IPL-PRS-VERB

'We swam'

2. KISW: Alafu tukaenda **ku-swim** tena

ENGL: Then we went back to swim

Ku-swim

INF-VERB

'to swim'

3. KISW: **A-na-m-shout-ia**

ENGL: She shouts at her

A-na-m-shout-ia

3sing-PRS-OBJ-VERB-FV

'He shouts at her'

4. **KISW: Ni-ka-watch** cartoon

ENGL: I watched cartoon

Ni-ka -watch

1SING-PRS-VERB

'I watched'

5. **KISW: Ku-watch** TV

ENGL: Watching the TV

Ku-watch

INF-VERB

'to watch'

6. **KISW: A-na-ni-buy-ai-nga** sweet

ENGL: She buys sweets for me

A-na-ni-buy-ai-nga

1SING-PRS-OBJ-VERB-FV-PROG

'She buys me'

7. **KISW: Alafu a-na-tu-mark-ia** vitabu

ENGL: She marks our books

a-na-tu-mark-ia

3SING-PRS-OBJ-VERB-FV

8. **KISW: Narundi na-watch** cartoon

ENGL: I then watch cartoon

na-watch

1SING-VERB

'I watch'

9. **KISW: Tuliambiwa tu-make a line** turudi shule

ENGL: We were told to make a queue so that we could go back to school

tu-make

1PL-VERB-

'We make'

10. **KISW: Aliniachia TV ni-watch**

ENGL: He gave me a chance to watch TV

Ni-watch

1SING-VERB

'I watch'

11. **KISW: Bangĩ ba-kĩ-swing**

ENGL: Others were swinging

ba-kĩ-swing

3PL-PROG-VERB

'They swung'

12. **KISW: Bangĩ Ba-kĩ-slide**

ENGL: Others were sliding

Ba-kĩ-slide

3PL-PROG-VERB

This pattern of codemixing involves the Kiswahili verb. An English verb such as swing is embedded into Kiswahili grammatical structure to form the word 'anatumarkia' meaning 'she/he marks for us.' The subject, tense and final vowels are provided in Kiswahili. This is made possible because of the agglutinating morphological nature of Kiswahili grammatical structure. Similarly, the construction in Gichuka (which is also an agglutinating language) follows the same pattern as can be seen in N0. 11 and 12 (bakĩswing and bakĩslide).

### Use of Colloquial Kiswahili

Colloquial language is related to language that is most suited to informal conversation and a style that is informal. Kiswahili verb forms such as 'napikaanga, nilikuwanga, ananipiganga' were use very frequently by the children. The addition of -nga- to the verb form is a common practice in the colloquial Kiswahili spoken around the Mount Kenya region. Colloquial Kiswahili is considered wrong in formal contexts. Some examples of these utterances are the following:

1. KISW: Juu ulikuanga hii class  
ENGL: Because you used to be in this class,  
Ulikuwanga should be ulikuwa
2. KISW: Kuku kwani zinakamuliangwa?  
ENGL: Do you mean to tell me that chicken are milked?  
Zinakamuliangwa should be zinakamuliwa
3. KISW: Tunakuanga na mnyama mkubwa  
ENGL: We have a dog  
Tunakuwanga should be tunakuwa
4. KISW: Mmm ...kuku haikamuliangwi ni ng'ombe  
ENGL: Yes, it is cows that are milked not chicken  
Haikamuliangi should be haikamuliwi
5. KISW: Lakini ile yenye ilikuwanga hapa  
ENGL: yes, the one that is usually here  
Ilikuwanga should be ilikuwa
6. KISW: Ndio maana anachapangwa kila siku  
ENGL: that is why she is disciplined everyday  
Anachapangawa should be anachapwa
7. KISW: Mama yangu analalanga shule  
ENGL: My mother spends the night in school compound.  
Analalanga should be analala
8. KISW: Na ilikuanga ya mama yake  
ENGL: It was for my mother  
Ilikuanga should be ilikuwa

The common pattern of inflecting verbs with -nga or -ngwi as in anachapangwa (he is usually beaten) to indicate tense (progressive and modality) is an indication of a variety of colloquial Kiswahili spoken by ethnic groups residing around the location of the study, that is Chuka town and its environs. The indigenous languages spoken in this region are Kimeru Dialects. The morphemes [-NGA]and [-NGWI] indicate habitual marker. The above examples show that the children have acquired colloquial Kiswahili from the sociolinguistic context in which they are growing up in. This is a strong indication of sociolinguistic competence.

### Use of Forms of Politeness

When asked how they would ask for items from their parents or teacher, the responses were as follows:

1. KISW: Nilimwambia **excuse me** mum, **may I borrow** na akaitikia  
ENGL: I asked her politely to lend me and she agreed
2. ENGL: **Excuse me** mom, may I have a remote  
ENGL: I politely asked her to give me the TV remote.
3. Excuse me, **may I** have a phone
4. **Excuse me**, I borrow a pen
5. Daddy **naomba** unisaidie simu

Daddy...I kindly request that you help me with a pen

The terms excuse me, may I borrow, naomba (Kiswahili for please) are some of politeness forms that the children used. This is a sign of sociolinguistic competence. Again, the children showed their ability to use politeness forms from different languages.

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