

Application of Mother Tongue (Kenyan Sign Language) When Teaching English Writing Skills in Special Schools for Learners with Hearing Impairment in Kenya

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Abstract: English writing skills is a very important part of the English curriculum in primary schools in Kenya. English is taught in primary schools with an aim of enabling learners to acquire writing skills, which in turn enables them to express their own ideas legibly and meaningfully in English and to communicate effectively. Acquiring appropriate English writing skills poses a lot of challenges to learners with Hearing Impairment (HI). This study explored the application of Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) when teaching English writing skills to learners with Hearing Impairment in Special Primary Schools in Kericho County, Kenya. The study was informed by Noam Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar of 1977. The study adopted a multiple case study design within a qualitative research approach. The study was carried out in 2 Public Special Primary Schools for the HI in Kericho County. The study population comprised 48 informants (2 Curriculum Support Officers in charge of Special Needs Education drawn from each sub-County where the special school is located; 2 head teachers; 2 Heads of Language Department; 12 teachers of English; 3 parents with HI and 27 learners with HI in class 7). The sample of the study constituted 48 informants (100%) of the population. Purposive sampling was used to sample the two Special Primary schools for the HI while saturated sampling technique was used to sample all the respondents. Data was collected using interview schedules, focus group discussions, observation checklist and document analysis guide. Validity and reliability of qualitative data was ascertained through Lincoln and Guba's (1985), qualitative paradigm. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically to generate the findings of the study. The findings revealed that teachers of English used Kenyan Sign Language during English lessons which hampered acquisition of English writing skills. Teachers should use Signed Exact English during English lessons.

Keywords: English writing skills, Kenyan Sign Language, Special Primary Schools, learners with Hearing Impairment.

INTRODUCTION

1.1.BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Education is a very vital structure in any nation. The World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien-Thailand (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1990), made the right to education universal for every citizen and every society regardless of their conditions. According to UNESCO (2000), learners who understand the language they are instructed in are more likely to engage more meaningfully with content, question what they do not understand and even enjoy the challenges of new things. The importance of sign language as the medium of communication among the deaf should be recognized and provisions made to ensure that all deaf persons have access to education in their national sign language (UNESCO, 1994).

One of the sources of challenge for the deaf/hard of hearing (d/hh) students is that they are often learning to read and write in English while simultaneously developing a language for communicative purposes (Clark, Gilbert & Anderson, 2011). Thus, the need to carry out this study in primary schools where the learners with HI start to acquire and develop their first language (KSL) for communication and at the same time learning to write in English.

Niederberger and Prinz, (2005) reported a study carried out in Switzerland with 39 deaf students aged between 8 and 17 which showed that linguistic competencies necessary to support the learning of written language can be developed through a natural sign language, either as an alternative or complement to language skills developed orally. This shows the need to instruct students who are deaf in sign language which is supported by UNESCO, (2003a) which espouses that mother tongue is a means of improving education quality by building on the knowledge and experiences of the learners and teachers. Therefore, if learners with HI are competent in KSL, they can equally be competent in English.

In South Africa, Banda, (2007) attributes the problem of poor academic writing to students having no other option but to study in English, which is their 2nd, 3rd or 4th language. This view is also shared by Van Rensberg and Lamberti, (2004) in their research in South Africa on the language of learning and teaching in higher education in which they posit that students who have had poor schooling and study in a language other than their mother tongue are at a disadvantage academically.

Mweri, (2014) argues that by denying the deaf in Kenya the use of KSL- their mother tongue we are actually squandering a linguistic resource that can

be used to impart knowledge and skills necessary for their survival. However, there are still questions on whether the use of sign language mode of instruction is helping the learner with HI to write competently and undertake fluent and complex composition in Standard English (Wamae, 2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that KSL can impact on acquisition of English writing skills either positively or negatively

On the contrary, Lozanova and Savtchev, (2009) argue that if learners receive instructions in KSL all the time, they will be ill placed to write good English composition. Sign language has a grammar and syntax that is quite different from that of spoken languages, which can confuse learners (Lozanova and Savtchev, 2009). Further they argue that a learner who is pre-lingually HI cannot be immersed in the language around them because they cannot hear it. Learners with HI do not have a written or spoken language on which to pin their second language learning because sign languages are entirely visual (Lozanova & Savtchev, 2009). This could therefore mean that the use of KSL as a medium of instruction may influence proficiency in English writing skills in one way or the other since it is not a written language.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) is the first language for most people with Hearing Impairment. Before enrolling into school, children with HI have limited communication by using natural signs at home, which in most cases entail gesturing. The use of Kenyan Sign Language (which is the mother tongue for learners with HI) in teaching English to learners with HI is recommended by KICD. Since KSL is taken to be easier for learners with HI to understand and recall, it was thought to be logical to use it as a language of instruction in the classrooms for HI. Despite this recommendation, the performance in English as a subject is still worrying in Kericho County, Kenya. This study was therefore carried out with a view to explore the use of mother tongue (KSL) during English lessons and how this impacts acquisition of English writing skills.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the application of KSL when teaching English writing skills to learners with Hearing Impairment.

1.4. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish the application of KSL when teaching English writing skills to learners with Hearing Impairment.

1.5. Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question: How is KSL applied when teaching English writing skills to learners with HI?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The findings from the study may assist teachers and curriculum implementers to come up with appropriate ways of using KSL during English lessons and the most appropriate language to be used to teach English to enhance the development of appropriate English writing skills among learners with Hearing Impairment. The policy makers may also be able to review educational policies on language of instructions.

1.7. Scope of the Study

This study was carried out in only two special primary schools for the HI in Kericho County. The study was confined to the application of KSL while teaching English writing skills among learners with HI in public special primary schools in Kericho county. The study covered the two public special primary schools for the HI that exist in Kericho County where data was collected using interview schedules, focus group discussion guides, observation checklist and document analysis guide.

1.8. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Noam Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar of 1977. This theory states that language acquisition is innate therefore even people with hearing impairment have the capability to acquire language.

Universal Grammar is considered to contain a set of general principles and all the grammatical information needed to combine the grammatical categories. The child's task is just to learn the words of her language (Ambridge & Lieven, 2011) and apply the syntactic structures from the LAD to form sentences (Chomsky, 1965). Through Universal grammar, newborn babies have available to them the grammar of any language existent in the world. For instance, the language principle which accounts for the emergence of English, account as well for Vietnamese, Portuguese or any other language spoken in the world (McGillvray, 2005).

Chomsky does not argue in support of mother tongue instruction as the author holds that the LAD contains infrastructure of all languages which when exposed is learnt as first language (Chomsky, 1951). This means that children can equally learn and become competent in second or foreign language just as the first language, therefore it would not be difficult for learners to get formal education in second or foreign language.

The theory guides the teacher not to overuse mother tongue during lessons and only to use when necessary, to facilitate proficiency in English writing skills. According to this theory, children are expected to become fluent in any language they are exposed to and thereby becoming proficient in writing skills of such languages.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

In Europe, Naka (2014) conducted a study to investigate the advantages of mother tongue in English language classes. The study focused on the extent to which Mother Tongue should be applied as a language of teaching English language. 3 teachers of English and 77 students of pre-school program in Gjakova University participated in the study. Data were collected using questionnaires. The findings from the questionnaires revealed that code switching between L1 and L2 should be applied but teachers and students should be cautious to what extent Mother Tongue should be used in English lecturers. The study recommended further studies on the extent of Mother Tongue use in schools, how and when it should be used so that it is not applied excessively. While the above study collected data using questionnaires, the current study collected data using interviews, document analysis, focus group discussion and observation schedule, which provided more in-depth data. The current study also revealed how and when Mother Tongue (KSL) should be used when teaching English writing skills to learners with HI. The current study also filled the knowledge gap by involving CSOs for SNE, teachers, parents and learners.

Timor (2012) conducted a quantitative study in Israel to investigate the use of mother tongue in teaching a foreign language. The sample of the study constituted 112 teachers of English (60 elementary and 52 secondary school teachers) in Hebrew-speaking elementary and secondary schools. The sample was picked through simple random sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed descriptively using

SPSS. The findings of the study revealed that teachers' overall attitude towards mother tongue use in teaching foreign language classroom is positive. Contrary to the previous study, the current study deployed qualitative approach whereby saturated sampling technique was used to arrive at a sample of 48 respondents. Data for the current study was collected using interview schedules, focus group discussions, document analysis and observation checklist which provided more detailed information. In addition, the current study fills the gap in primary schools for the HI. The current study also fills knowledge gap by involving CSOs, teachers, parents and learners and analyzed data thematically.

In Turkey a study was conducted by Kayaoglu, (2012) to investigate the use of mother tongue in foreign language teaching from teachers' practice and perspective with the main aim to explore the theoretical and practical positions of English teachers in the use of First Language (L1) in their classroom instruction. A total of 44 teachers of English at Karadeniz Technical University were involved in the study. The data were collected by administering a questionnaire containing 35 items. The data were analyzed descriptively using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). There was also an in-depth interview with 12 participants to gain more insight into the teachers' current classroom practices. The results indicated that a great number of the teachers were found to take practical and pragmatic position in the use of L1 instead of adhering to popular beliefs on this topic that the role of L1 in second language acquisition gets in the way of or interferes with the learning of Second Language (L2). Nevertheless, the current study fills the gap in Primary schools for the HI. Besides, the previous study involved teachers only while the current study involved Curriculum Support Officers, teachers, pupils and parents thereby filling the knowledge gap. Turkey being a more developed country could invest more in education. This could influence the results since the current study was done in Kenya which is a developing country. The current study also collected its data through interviews, focus group discussion, document analysis and observation checklist which provided very detailed data.

In 2012, Khati examined when and why mother tongue was used in English classrooms in Nepal, South Asia. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select 10 students studying at the secondary level and 10 teachers teaching at the same level of Nepali medium schools in

Ramechhap district. The study used lesson observations, interview and focus group discussion to collect data. The findings revealed that learners from government-aided school feel more need of mother tongue, teachers generally use Nepali to explain difficult concepts, grammar rules, new words and they use it to give instructions. It also shows that teachers use Nepali language to make students feel comfortable and confident inside classroom. The teachers and students from private schools on the other hand do not use Nepali so frequently. It was also revealed that L1 is used because of pronunciation difficulty and fear of losing face in the classroom on the part of students. Students also lack sufficient oral practice in English in the classroom because of large class size, uneven participation of students and teachers' focus on writing skills. While this study was conducted in South Asia, a developed country, the current study was conducted in Kenya, a developing country where much may not be invested in education of students with HI. The current study also employed saturated sampling techniques. In addition, the current study fills the knowledge gap by involving CSOs for SNE, Head teachers, teachers, parents and learners.

Karakas, (2016) conducted a study on Turkish lecturers' views on the place of mother tongue in the teaching of content courses through English medium. The study employed a case study design within a qualitative approach. The study sampled 13 lecturers teaching in 3 long established English Medium Instruction universities using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings of the study showed that lecturers are largely supportive of integration of Turkish into classes to varying degrees and of letting students to use it for certain purposes. In contrast to the above study, the current study fills the gap in primary schools for the HI and fills the knowledge gap by sampling teachers, CSOs, parents and learners. The current study also collected data using interviews, document analysis, focus group discussions and observation checklist which provided more in-depth information.

In South Korea, Kelleher, (2013) conducted a study on overcoming the first language taboo to enhance learning a foreign language. The study used a sample of 162 university students. The quantitative study collected its data using questionnaires and analyzed its data using SPSS. The results of the study showed that majority of

learners use mother tongue despite the negativity surrounding its role. Whereas the above study only used learners as respondents, the current study involved teachers, CSOs, parents and learners. This aided in filling the knowledge gap. The current study also fills the gap in primary schools for the HI since the above study was conducted in universities. Moreover, the current study collected its data through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis and observation schedules. These instruments for data collection provided very detailed data.

Aydin and Dogan, (2019) did a quantitative research on teacher attitudes towards mother tongue education in Turkey. The study employed survey research design. Snowball sampling technique was used to sample 150 teachers employed in public schools. Data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 18.00. The results of the study revealed that teachers have positive attitude concerning multilingual education policies. The current study on the other hand, employed case study design within a qualitative approach. The current study begot its respondents using saturated sampling technique and collected data through focus group discussion, interviews, document analysis and observation schedule which provided more detailed data. The current study also fills knowledge gap by using CSOs, teachers, parents and learners as opposed to the above study.

Mahroof, (2015) using a qualitative research approach conducted a study on using learners' mother tongue in teaching English as a second language in Ampara district, Sri Lanka with an aim of exploring the extent to which the junior secondary learners are provided target language via teacher talk to facilitate L2 learning. Data was collected through classroom observation and the classroom discourse was audio recorded. The study findings showed that L1 use was 23-83 % which shows an average of 72% of the selected lessons observed. The study concluded that the target language should be the language of the classroom and mother tongue could be used sparingly, where necessary to make meaning clear. For the purpose of getting detailed data, the current study collected data through interviews, document analysis, focus group discussions in addition to observations. The current study also filled the gap in Primary Schools for the HI.

In Zambia, Kafata, (2016) investigated the impact of teaching in local languages on pupils and

teachers using descriptive cross-sectional survey design within the mixed method approach. The sample of the study constituted a total of 45 informants (20 headmasters, 20 teachers and 5 grade 4 and below pupils from 20 primary schools of Kitwe district). The samples were selected using simple random sampling technique. Data collection instruments were questionnaires and interview schedules. The data was then analyzed using statistical software called STATA. The findings of the study showed that issuing instruction in local language is more beneficial as the pupils grasp things faster, pupils' participation in classroom improves greatly however some pupils may face language barrier especially those transferred from other regions. The results also showed that there was the challenge of lacking teaching materials in local languages. Nevertheless, the current study was purely qualitative and employed case study design which provided very in-depth data. The current study selected its respondents through saturated sampling which enabled the whole population to participate in the study. Apart from interviews, the current study also utilized focus group discussions, document analysis and observation checklist in data collection. These yielded more detailed data. Furthermore, while the study was concerned with teaching in general, the current study was concerned with English writing skills in particular.

Mulenga, (2017) conducted a study in Zambia to investigate the role and effects of the introduction of Zambia local languages on the provision of quality education in selected primary schools in Lusaka urban. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed. The target population was 60 involving teachers, head teachers, pupils and parents. The sample size of the study was 35. Data for the study was collected through questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussions. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically while quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The findings of the study revealed that the issue of using Zambian local languages was a welcome because it would promote learning. Contrary to the above study, the current study filled the knowledge gap by also involving CSOs for SNE as informants. In addition, the current study was purely qualitative. Moreover, the current study collected data using focus group discussion, interview, and document analysis and observations.

In 2016, Ochieng discussed analysis of the influence of Mother Tongue on English performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education: A case of Ndhiwa sub county, Homa Bay County, Kenya. The researcher has used philosophical analysis to analyze the factors that make the transition from Mother Tongue to second language (English) difficult. The major findings and contributions of this research to education are also analyzed. The current study analyzed data thematically. The current study collected rich and detailed data through interviews, focus group discussion and observations. Finally, the current study attempted to fill the gap in primary Schools for the HI in Kericho County.

Njogu, (2015) investigated the influence of mother tongue on pre- school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County. The study used a descriptive survey design which used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect the data. The participants included head teachers, pre-school teachers and pre-school parents from eight pre-schools. Data was collected using questionnaires for the head teachers and pre-school teachers while interviews were used for pre-school parents. Data was analyzed using percentages and frequencies and presented in tables and charts. The study revealed that mother tongue contributes positively towards the learning of the English language in pre-schools. It further revealed that parents had a negative attitude towards the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The current study is distinct from the above study since it employed a case study design which enabled the researcher to have a very detailed and in-depth investigation of the problem thereby getting a very rich data. The current study filled the knowledge gap by involving CSOs for SNE, Head teachers, HODs, teachers, parents and learners. The current study also collected data through interviews for the CSOs, head teachers, HODs and parents; document analysis; focus group discussion for teachers and learners and observation checklist which provided very detailed data. Finally, the current study analyzed data thematically.

3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a multiple case study research design within a qualitative approach. According to Stake, (2006) a multiple case study design is whereby single cases are meaningful in relation to the other cases cited. Using a multiple case study

allowed for more in-depth understanding of the cases as a unit, through comparison of first language acquisition and English writing skills (Stake, 2006). Multiple case study was preferred because the current study focused on proficiency in English writing skills among learners with HI in each of the two cases (schools), each existing in its real operational context. Evidence from a multiple case study is also stronger and reliable than from a single case study therefore, it made the results from the current study stronger and more reliable.

3.2. Location of the Study

The study was carried out in two Public Special Primary Schools for the Hearing Impairment in Kericho County, Kenya.

3.3. Target Population of the Study

In this study, two special primary schools for the HI in Kericho County gave the target population. The population for this study therefore comprised a total of 48 informants including 27 learners with HI in class seven, 12 teachers of English, 2 HODs (Heads of Language Department), 2 head teachers, 3 parents with HI and 2 CSOs (Curriculum Support Officers) in charge of SNE from the two sub-counties where the two special schools for the HI are located.

3.4. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

In this study, the sample comprised of two CSOs for SNE, two Head teachers, two HODs for language departments, twelve teachers of English, three parents with HI and 27 learners of class seven. These added up to a total of 48 respondents. Saturated sampling technique was employed to get the sample.

3.5. Research Instruments

The instruments that were used for data collection for this study included interview schedules, focus group discussions, document analysis guide and observation checklist.

3.6. Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data

Validity and reliability of qualitative data was ascertained through Lincoln and Guba (1985) qualitative paradigm: transferability, conformability, credibility and dependability.

3.7. Data Analysis

Data collected in this study was analyzed using thematic analysis approach.

3.8. Ethical Consideration

The researcher upheld the ethics of research such as accessibility, acceptability, protecting participants from harm, obtaining informed

consent from participants, anonymity, confidentiality and respecting participants' privacy.

4.0. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the use of KSL during English lessons and the impacts of its use on acquisition of English writing skills when teaching learners with hearing impairment. The themes that were: extensive use of KSL, limited use of KSL and no use of KSL during English lessons.

4.1. Extensive use of KSL

It was noted that most teachers use KSL during English lessons as much as it disadvantaged acquisition of English writing skills, some to a large extent while others only made limited use of it. Though most of the participants were not for extensive use of KSL or code switching from English to KSL during English lessons, a few felt that sometimes teachers are forced to code switch to explain some terminologies. Therefore, there was a lot of concern and controversies about extensive use of KSL during English lessons and whether it is actually right. One of the Curriculum Support Officers stated:

I think they should code switch so that they can implement and drive home whatever they want to enable the learners to understand so I think it is better when there is code switching. However, when it comes to writing, mmm.... that now...that is now hard since they may not be able to...eee... write the correct English even when they have understood using KSL. So KSL will only help them to understand but not writing. So there will be a challenge there, when teaching writing I prefer the use of Signed Exact English. (CSO 2)

The heads of department also had varied opinions on How KSL should be used during English lessons. One of them noted:

Mostly our teachers use KSL when teaching English because it's like a shortcut, they understand it better but now we give notes in English. So when explaining something we should use KSL because they tend to get. It is a shortcut, better than English. English is long and tiring using the articles, the conjunctions, the what what, they get bored. The only problem will be getting the right writing skills because now KSL structure is different from English, so the learners will not learn how to write good English. So for the sake of acquiring the correct English writing skills let teachers just use Signed Exact English (SEE). (H.O.D 1)

One of the parents with Hearing Impairment argued:

Teachers can Code switch as long as they explain well and take care not to omit anything. But I will encourage the teachers to Sign Exact English instead of KSL when they are teaching English to ensure that learners get the English rules and structures. (P 1)

Some learners in focus group discussion noted:

Teachers sometimes change from English to KSL and you know KSL help us to understand English because it is easy for us to understand so teachers can change from English to KSL small not a lot. (LFGD 4)

Another group of learners observed:

The teachers use both KSL and English, when teaching us they use both. When they are signing, giving instructions they always teach us in KSL. But sometimes they explain well well in KSL we understand well but writing is hard, why? Because we understand the KSL so we want to write in KSL but English is different, sentences are long following well is hard. So we brake brake English. (LFGD 1)

A teacher with hearing impairment argued:

When teaching English, you can code switch to KSL to explain something hard for them to understand but don't use KSL to teach English because it will change the English, the deaf will write in KSL but English is different, why? Because you start with the subject in English and then the other words will follow not like KSL where you start with the object. (TFGD 2)

The heads of department also shared the opinion that KSL should not be used when teaching English. One of them observed:

At times you find teachers switching from English to KSL during English lessons, could be they are translating the concepts for the learners to understand better since they understand L1. But now me I discourage that one a lot. Because now when they go for English, it is no longer KSL but English lesson. So there is no room for code switching. So if it is English, let it be English. Not switching from English to KSL, then KSL English...I mean...it is not okay. (H.O.D 2)

One of the Curriculum Support Officers stated:

I think they should use it throughout the lesson because the teachers will be implementing and trying to drive whatever they want to drive so that the learners are able to understand so I think it is better when it is used throughout the lesson. When

it comes to writing, mmm.... that one now...that is now hard because they may not be able to...eee... write the correct English now. KSL will only help them to understand but not writing. Understanding part of it will be OK, but now for the correct English now, that will be a challenge now. There is that blend of both of them... yes, Kenyan Sign language for understanding and the others for proper English...eee... communication in proper written English. Where the other one is Signed Exact English (SEE). (CSO 2)

Other learners in a focus group discussion stated:

Sometimes the teacher will change from English to KSL in English lesson when comparing things. This makes us to understand better but you know KSL words are not arranged like English. so teachers should not change from English because it will confuse us. The teachers just use English so that we master it and understand well the same way we understand KSL. We must practice a lot so that we understand. So it is better the teachers don't use KSL in English lessons. (LFGD 2)

Another curriculum support officer said:

Mmmm... of course I think they code switch because that is the main area and...I think because KSL is L1 for HI and in most cases teachers feel comfortable to explain what they think is difficult for the HI learners. I don't encourage the switching because two languages are different and therefore have different rules when it comes to sentence construction and other aspects of English. I think ... code switching or extensive use of KSL during English lessons can lead to confusion. (CSO 1)

Other learners in another focus group discussion reported:

Some teachers always use KSL a lot in English lesson when explaining somethings and giving examples. KSL help us understand hard things but sometimes when teachers use a lot we confuse time we are writing in English, some of us mix English with KSL when writing English because we are confused. Some of us follow KSL sentences. Better we just practice using correct English to help us write well in English. If we practice, we will start understanding English better. (LFGD 4)

From the excerpts above, it can be reported that most teachers code switch from English to KSL and vice versa. It can also be concluded that as much as KSL aids in better understanding it does not add any value to nor aid in acquisition of English writing skills therefore, should not be used

during English lessons so as to enable the HI learners write good English. Instead, teachers should use Signed Exact English. The lesson observation checklist corroborates the information given by the respondents that teachers use KSL

extensively during English lessons. Figure 1 shows a section of the lesson observation checklist that shows that teachers code switched from English to KSL from time to time.

Leading questions	Researcher's comments
How is KSL used during English lesson? For example to explain or clarify something, to give notes, when giving assignment.	Notes are written in English then KSL is used throughout when signing explanation and teaching the whole lesson.
What is the extent of KSL use during the English lesson? KSL is used throughout the lesson, to introduce the lesson, to conclude the lesson	KSL is used extensively with code switching from time to time.

Figure 1: A section of lesson observation checklist

This study does not agree with Naka (2014) who supports code switching between L1 and L2 as a technique of teaching writing skills for L2. Naka advocates for the use of code switching for easy learning of L2. The findings also disagree with a study by Mulenga (2017) which revealed that the issue of using Zambian local languages was a welcome because it would promote learning. The findings further disagree with Njogu (2015) who investigated the influence of mother tongue on preschool children's performance in English language and reported that mother tongue contributes positively towards the learning of the English language in preschools. The findings of the study are in agreement with the study by Njogu (2015) who revealed that parents had a negative attitude towards the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

4.2. Limited use of KSL

It was noted that most teachers use KSL during English lessons as much as it disadvantaged acquisition of English writing skills, some to a large extent while others only made limited use of it. Most of the respondents were for the idea that KSL should never be used during English lessons except when need arises should it be used sparingly so as to ensure that KSL is not used at the expense of English. One of the heads of department informed the study:

Actually my teachers use it but sparingly when teaching English, but in other subjects, extensively because the deaf learners get it faster and better. But I feel they should not use KSL when teaching

English because to avoid... to avoid the confusion. May be when pushed to the wall they can use it very sparingly to explain something that is not yet well understood... anyway it's a challenge because this is an English lesson where English language should be used, that is Signed Exact English. Anyway, it's a challenge because sometimes you want the concept to reach home and there is no any other language, no any other way but you are after that concept reaching home. So may be for a start on using purely English- Signed Exact English during English lessons there will be challenges but with consistency and a lot of practice these learners will get used and there will be no need code switching and mixing, hence no confusion when writing English. (H.O.D 1)

One of the Curriculum support officers noted:
It should be used sparingly not extensively. I think if they must use KSL it should be used when stressing whatever they want to stress... yeah. Teachers should use KSL when explaining something but now when it comes to writing, the sentence construction they get back to Signed Exact English (SEE). (CSO 1)

Teachers in a focus group discussion reported:
Yes, we use it but minimally, because when you apply KSL as you teach English then it will bring some problems because when you are teaching English you have to use SEE. So when you bring KSL, in the process the HI learners will confuse the two. They will now for example, when you are teaching may be a passage, they will tend to change it to KSL because that is what they

understand more. So when teaching English, the use of KSL must be minimized if it must be used, for instance, it can be used when you want to reinforce or emphasize some point so as to make them understand. Though it does not help, in fact it will actually bring a lot of confusion. It brings a lot of confusion. Therefore, if KSL must be used in an English lesson then its use must be very limited, otherwise let teachers use SEE when teaching English. (TFGD 1)

One of the head teachers noted:

KSL should be used very sparingly if it must. Otherwise, it should not be used at all if possible because it does not assist in writing English correctly, SEE is the best for teaching English. On the contrary, it makes learners deviate from English rules and follow KSL way of writing because it is their language, they have mastered it and it is easier for them. (HT 1)

The learners in one of the focus group discussion stated:

Teachers use KSL mostly when teaching English. They use it when explaining English words. When they use KSL a lot it confuses us and we write KSL in English. So better the teachers use KSL small only to explain hard things but use English more. When we practice we practice using English only then we will understand and write correct English. (LFGD 1)

Some teachers in a focus group discussion observed:

When teaching English sometimes you are forced to use KSL. For example, when you are explaining something and it becomes difficult for the learners to understand in English, that's the time you are forced to use KSL to help the deaf learners to understand the concept you are teaching but not that you use the KSL for a long time. You must have a limit, only for them to understand. Another example, may be you are reading a passage that has a lot of abstract words or that is too difficult for the learners to understand. You can explain what the story is about in KSL after reading it with learners. So KSL use during English lesson should be very limited but the best language for use is SEE. (TFGD 2)

Other learners in another focus group discussion reported:

Some teachers always use KSL a lot in English lesson but some use KSL small. KSL help us understand hard things but sometimes when teachers use KSL a lot we confuse time we are

writing in English, some mix English with KSL small. Some follow KSL sentences. (LFGD 4)

When asked how KSL should be used during English lessons, another Curriculum Support Officer stated:

OK, if they must use it, they are supposed to use it at the initial stage when introducing the lesson so that learners can get exactly what is to be given out. Later on in the lesson KSL should not be used. Teachers should stick to SEE so that the English structure and rules are adhered to. (CSO 1)

From the excerpts above, it is clear that teachers use KSL during English lessons and that its use is acceptable but to a very limited extent, only for clarification or explanation of a concept. All respondents are in agreement that KSL use is harmful to acquisition of English writing skills, therefore should never be used unless when it cannot be avoided-to give explanation to a very difficult concept. Otherwise it should not be used at all but instead Signed Exact English should be used throughout English lessons. This is in agreement with Mahroof, (2015) who conducted a study on using learners' mother tongue in teaching English as a second language in Ampara district, Sri Lanka with an aim of exploring the extent to which the junior secondary learners are provided target language via teacher talk to facilitate L2 learning. The study concluded that the target language should be the language of the classroom and mother tongue could be used sparingly, where necessary to make meaning clear. The findings are also in line with Kayaoglu, (2012) who reported that teachers were found to take practical and pragmatic position in the use of L1 instead of adhering to popular beliefs on this topic that the role of L1 in second language acquisition gets in the way of or interferes with the learning of Second Language (L2). The findings further agree with a study conducted by Khati, (2012) who reported that teachers generally use Nepali to explain difficult concepts, grammar rules, new words and they use it to give instructions and that teachers and students from private schools do not use Nepali so frequently. Finally, the study agrees with Kafata, (2016) who supported limited use of L1 and revealed that issuing instruction in local language is more beneficial as the pupils grasp things faster and pupils' participation in classroom improves greatly.

4.3. No use of KSL

Most of the participants expressed their displeasure with the use of KSL during English

lessons. On whether KSL should be used during English lessons or not, the Curriculum Support Officers felt that KSL should not be used when teaching English. One of them stated:

I believe it should not be used. I believe English language is taught differently from KSL that is why I believe when it comes to may be teaching English it should be taught English as just English. But in the first place I believe KSL should be taught until they have mastered the language and then now they move to English. But not now using KSL to teach English and vice versa. When teaching English let teachers use SEE so that the learners can master the structure of English sentences since each and every word is signed. (CSO 2)

One head teacher informed:

My teachers prefer not to code switch since it brings confusion to the learners. When they use KSL it confuses the learner from learning the right sentence patterns. May be some use I can't deny, that is why some children do not write good English. Myself I do not encourage KSL use during English lesson because it does not assist in learning to write English correctly. I always encourage my teachers to use Signed Exact English. Therefore, KSL should not be used during English lesson at all. (HT1)

Some students in focus group discussion noted:

Teachers should not use KSL when teaching us English. You know KSL follow different order when you are writing or signing, English also follows a different order so when it is used a lot, it confuses us and we may write KSL sentences in English. Teachers to look for other ways to help us understand English instead of using KSL. (LFGD 4)

The heads of department also shared the opinion that KSL should not be used when teaching English. One of them observed:

At times you find teachers using KSL during English lessons, could be when they introduce the lesson. They go there could be they introduce English with KSL, but now me I discourage that one a lot. Because now when they go for English, it is no longer KSL but English lesson. So there is no place where I should agree with them that English should be introduced with KSL because they don't marry anywhere. So at times when you are introducing English with KSL when you are starting with that and then you pull them with that, they'll tend to stick to KSL, now when you go back to English, them they remain that side of KSL. So

that one is a challenge also. So am for the idea that when am going for English or these other people going for English, the English should just be English; it should be Signed Exact English. You work hard to see to it that you are just teaching English. No introduction in KSL because I want to believe that when they are going for KSL, they have never introduced KSL in English. So there is no need of introducing English with KSL because that is not a good idea... we are short cutting. (H.O.D 2)

Other learners in a focus group discussion stated: *Sometimes the teacher uses KSL in English lesson when giving instructions but you know KSL words are arranged differently from English sentences so KSL should not be used time you are teaching English because it will confuse us. It is better the teachers just use exact English so that we master it and understand well the same way we understand KSL. We must practice a lot so that we understand. So it is better the teachers don't use KSL in English lessons. (LFGD 2)*

Another curriculum support officer said:

Mmmm... of course I think they use, definitely they use because that is the main language that the HI understand faster and...I think because that KSL in most cases of course is usually in all areas that are being taught so I think it is also used though I don't encourage it especially when teaching English because these are two different languages with different rules when it comes to sentence construction and other things so there would be a lot of confusion when now KSL is used during English lessons. May be the best thing they would do is to use the exact English, so that they sign exact English. Yeah, if they use it always with time the learners will get used to it and will start understanding it well and I think they will even get to master the rules in writing English. (CSO 1)

One of the parents with Hearing Impairment informed:

Sign language should only be used as a medium of instruction but should follow English structure without any omissions. That is to say that Signed Exact English should be used instead of KSL when you are teaching English. So KSL should never be used in English lessons because it affects writing skills in English. Because KSL is their language they love it so much and when used during lessons the do not write correct English, they go for KSL which are broken English as such they end up with poor English writing. (P 1)

Another head of department noted:

When it comes to English and English composition, we have to use the English, Signed Exact English (SEE). Now that is where we totally don't use KSL but remember these other subjects were explained in KSL. Bado hako kashida kanaingia kidogo kidogo. But as a teacher of English now we don't use KSL at all at all when teaching English. Though sometimes we do use KSL, we are just saying but practically ni ngumu, it's hard but we are not supposed to. On the ground, it happens, mostly it happens but truly we are not supposed to. But sometimes you know these learners are disadvantaged madam. There is no way you try you try mpaka unasema wacha nitumie KSL bora waelewe...hahaaa. But you do this at the expense of English. (H.O.D 1)

One head teacher informed:

My teachers prefer not to use KSL because when they use it, it confuses the learners from learning the right sentence patterns. May be some use, that is why some children do not write good English. Myself I do not encourage KSL use during English lesson because it does not assist in learning to write English correctly. Therefore, KSL should not be used during English lesson at all but Signed Exact English. (HT1)

Other teachers were also not comfortable with the use of KSL during English lesson. One of them stated:

Normally me here is where I get problems. Now you are saying to what extent do we use KSL during the teaching of English. Normally me I get it so hard to use that KSL during English lesson because the moment we introduce that KSL the concept will be of KSL. When we use it to explain meaning of words it does not help. For example, may be the word 'dark' and 'night'. Something dark... night. It's the same sign, dark and night... You see now when you are talking of 'dark', in KSL we don't have 'dark', it will always be like 'night'. So they see night. So when you are explaining now the use of the 'dark'... this colour is dark so you use the sign for 'night'. So you are going to tell them the colour of the night is dark...heheee... You see, the dark is itself is not coming...heheee... So total confusion, in fact it doesn't help. (TFGD 2)

The head teachers were of the opinion that KSL should not be used during English lessons but if need be, then it should be used very sparingly: one of them informed:

KSL should only... in English lessons, it should be used only when you are explaining something that is soooo... that is not understood by the children. Otherwise it should not be used in English lessons since it a totally different language with totally different rules, only that it uses English words. Therefore, when used it will impair the learners writing such that they will not be able to even construct correct English sentences. It will be better for the teachers to use Signed Exact English because this one ensures that you sign every word meaning it will follow the English structure and when the learners master it they can be able to write good English. (HT 1)

A teacher with hearing impairment argued:

When teaching English, you only use KSL to explain something hard for them to understand but don't use KSL to teach English because it will change the English, the deaf will write in KSL but English is different, why? Because you start with the subject in English but in KSL you start with the object. Meaning the deaf will follow the KSL word order. The teachers can just use Signed Exact English always so that they can learn to understand and remember because I believe with time and a lot of practice they can try. (TFGD 2)

One head of department informed:

It should not be used, in fact I'll not advocate for that, because now how do we use it? Am going to teach English surely, which lesson am I going to teach? It should be English, then I start from the word go, it should be English to the latter. Then when I'll be going for KSL, let it be KSL from the start to the end, yeah, it will be wrong to mix. It's like now saying that I am in a school then being that am in Kisumu for instance, then I go there am teaching English, then I go introduce English in Dholuo then after could be ten minutes I switch again, surely, I come back to English. Some learners will remain in Dholuo. So that's what will be happening in KSL. So when they go there so the students remain there and then the teacher will not have pulled them back to English because in the first place, you have given them a ride, an enjoyable ride and then finally you moved. Let's just stick to Signed Exact English and may be when the learners see the consistency from all teachers and they realize we are not relenting; they will have to learn to understand SEE. Am sure they will. In fact, it should be an agreement and effort made by all teachers except those teaching KSL. So that they don't hate the subjects taught in SEE and love those taught in KSL. I think with this

combined effort we can achieve some good English writing from these learners. (H.O.D 2)

Some teachers in a focus group discussion observed:

You know normally the learning of English is always affected by KSL which learners acquire at pre - primary 1 and 2. So it is better to teach these HI learners in KSL up to some grades then we leave it behind so that in grade 4 when the learners start learning serious writing skills in English, KSL is no longer used for instruction during English lessons. So it will actually be very good if KSL is left much early such that the learning of English will not be affected by KSL which they continue learning as a subject. So it is good to abolish this KSL. In other words, we are saying that KSL should not be used in English lessons especially in the upper classes. All teachers a part from KSL teachers should use SEE only. (TFGD 1)

From the excerpts above, it is evident some teachers still use KSL sometimes as much as it does not add any value to acquisition of English writing skills. It can also be concluded that KSL should not be used at all in English lessons and that teachers should consistently use Signed Exact English as this will enable the learners to master English sentence structure and rules therefore, they will be able to write good English with time. This study is not in agreement with Timor, (2012) who carried out a survey on the use of mother tongue in teaching second language and reported that teachers' overall attitude towards mother tongue use in second language classroom is positive. The findings agree with a study by Kelleher, (2013) who revealed that majority of learners use mother tongue despite the negativity surrounding its role. The findings further confirm a study by Njogu, (2015) who reported that parents had a negative attitude towards the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

5.0. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The study investigated KSL application when teaching English writing skills to learners with hearing impairment. The findings were summarized into the following themes: extensive use of KSL, limited use of KSL and no use of KSL. Most respondents were displeased with the use of KSL during English lessons since it did not add any value to acquisition of appropriate English writing skills.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that the use of KSL during English lessons did not aid in proficiency in English writing skills in any way. However, it had a negative impact on the acquisition of English writing skills. Therefore, Signed Exact English is the most appropriate language to be used during English lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers should stick to Signed Exact English when teaching English writing skills to avoid confusing the learners so that learners can master the right English structures. Teachers should avoid using KSL during English lessons at all costs

Suggestions for Further Research

1. A study should be carried out on the most appropriate language to be used when teaching English writing skills.
2. A study should be done on how best to use L1 to facilitate proficiency in L2

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