

ARE NOUN CLASS MARKERS IN KISWAHILI REALLY SUCH A LEARNING DIFFICULTY? A STUDY OF THE USE OF NOUN CLASS MARKERS BY PUPILS OF THE BUSIBI PRIMARY SCHOOL IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which the Standard Seven pupils of the Busibi Primary School in the Samia District in western Kenya would misuse the pairs of noun class markers A-WA-, LI-YA-, KI-VI-, IZI- and U-ZI- in their written Kiswahili. A sample of thirty pupils was used in the study. A grammar test consisting of nineteen sentences containing a total of forty mistakes was used. The respondents were required to write the correct version of each sentence in the spaces provided on the questionnaire. The study tested the hypothesis that the respondents would make over 50% mistakes for each of the five pairs of noun class markers. The hypothesis was based on the widespread belief, but yet to be tested, among users of Kiswahili in Kenya that the five pairs are a source of great difficulty in achieving agreement between them and the nouns they refer to. So, the study assumed that the difficulty would definitely manifest itself in the Kiswahili of primary school pupils, especially those from an area of Kenya far away from the main towns where Kiswahili is used on a daily basis. However, the results did not support the hypothesis. The highest number of non corrected mistakes made was actually only 41%. The average was just 31%. These unexpected results may have to do with the type of test used.