

**Aspects of Pragmabehavioral Errors in the Acquisition of a Second Language: A case study of Kimeru L1 Learners of L2 English**Caroline K. Kinuu<sup>1</sup>, Eliud K Kirigia<sup>2</sup>, Albert M. Rutere<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>English Department, Machakos Boys High School, Kenya<sup>2</sup>Senior Lecturer, Laikipia University, Kenya**\*Corresponding author**

Caroline K. Kinuu

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**Abstract:** This paper highlights the pragmabehavioral errors in English used by Kimeru L1 secondary school students. The study proceeded on the premise that pragmatic competence of Kimeru L1 learners of L2 English was previously unknown prior to this study because of lack of in-depth research in this area. Using a descriptive research design and a sample of ninety respondents the researchers isolated errors in apology as well as request and permission making and documented the seriousness of these errors. The main objectives of the study were to examine pragmabehavioral errors, their effects and causes and possible areas of intervention. The study was guided mainly by Murcia’s [1] Model of pragmatic competence. The sample was drawn from three selected CDF secondary schools in Meru Central Sub-county, Meru County. The main instruments of data collection were: a discourse completion test, a classroom debate, observation schedule, and a teacher questionnaire. Results indicate that kinesics, proxemics and voice modulation errors are grave among the subjects. These results are hoped to immensely benefit second language pedagogy, education policy makers, teachers and learners of English.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic competence, Pragmabehavioral errors, Pedagogy

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Pragmatic competence is an essential component of communicative ability. However, many students of English as a second language in Kenya exhibit varying levels of incompetence in communicative English. Existing research in this area is scanty, as most research in language tends to concentrate on grammatical competence.

Pragmatics is an area of study in applied linguistics focusing on the appropriate use of language in contexts in which it is used, taking into consideration referring expressions known as taking turns in conversation, text information packaging, presupposition and implicature. Pragmatics is the study of how language users comprehend and produce language [2]. Crystal [3] further defines pragmatics as the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using the language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participant. Lack of appropriate use of language is what constitutes “error” or “pragmatic failure”.

Pragmatic failure is a kind of error that occurs in cross-cultural communication when speakers make grammatically correct utterances, but untimely remark, improper expression or inappropriate ways of speaking in different cultural contexts. Pragmatic failure occurs when speakers violate the interpersonal norms and social stipulations, or don’t conform to time and space perspective. Pragmatic failures also occurs when a speaker disregards the occasions of speaking and the social status or psychological state of both sides, or even go against the peculiar cultural values of the target language, which accordingly causes the breaking of or failure of communicative activities and make the communication unable to reach the anticipatory or satisfactory results [4]. These observations have been corroborated by the current study.

Pragmabehavioral errors are because of inappropriate use of body language (such as gestures, facial expressions) and other non-verbal cues, or misinterpretation of time and space. Second language learners concentrate on perfecting the grammar of a language with the assumption that language competence is synonymous to linguistic competence. However, pragmabehavioral errors can cause misunderstandings leading to communication breakdown. This paper discusses body language, kinesics behaviour and proxemics in relation to Pragmabehavioral failure.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Pragmatic competence is an essential component in the achievement of communicative competence in language learning. However, existing research in this area is scanty, as most research in the acquisition of English language in Kenya tends to concentrate on grammatical competence. This study set out to examine pragmabehavioral errors in English used by Kimeru L1 secondary school students, the variations in the errors as well as their effect on the student's L2 communicative ability. This paper also focuses on the causes of these pragmabehavioral errors and possible areas of intervention. Results from this study indicate that pragmabehavioral errors are endemic among the students under study. The students made the errors in the way they expressed apologies and requests, through gestures, facial expressions and body language.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to comprehend, construct and convey meanings that are both accurate and appropriate for the social and cultural circumstances in which communication occurs [5]. Blackman [6] identified pragmatic competence as one element of communicative competence, placing pragmatic competence as part of illocutionary competence, which is a combination of speech acts and speech functions along with the appropriate use of language in context [7]. The current study uses requests and apology speech acts to examine pragmatic competence in the second language learners.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei [8] claim that the development of pragmatic competence and grammatical competence are not parallel, and grammatical development doesn't necessarily lead to pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence is not easy to achieve or acquire. Bardovi-Harlig [9] argues that when a learner acquires a second language, he may carry the norms and social conventions from L1 to the L2 thus resulting to negative transfer. According to Bialystok [10], pragmatic competence encompasses a variety of abilities in the use and interpretation of language in context. This includes a speaker's ability to use language for different purposes; a listener's ability to get past language and understand the speaker's intended or implied meaning (indirect speech acts, irony and sarcasm); and the speaker's ability to follow accepted rules, the maxims for conversations and narratives. Bardovi-Harlig's study gives insight to the sources of pragmatic errors committed by the second language learners. These studies inform the current study, which is about sources of pragmabehavioral errors, committed by the Kimeru L1 learners of L2 English. Bialystok's study also gives insight to the current study on the types and variations of these errors.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [11] believe that pragmatic failure takes place, whenever two speakers fail to understand each other's intention. He Ziran [12] adds in by pointing out that pragmatic failure refers to failure to achieve the desired communicative effect in communication. He indicates that pragmatic failures are not errors in diction but those mistakes failing to fulfill communication because of incompatible expressions and improper habits. Pragmatic failure can also occur due to cross-cultural miscommunication by L2 learners. He Ziran [13] categorizes pragmatic failure into three categories: Pragmalinguistic pragmatic failure, sociopragmatic failure, and cross-cultural pragmatic failure. Communication involving culturally different speakers and interpreters are more likely to go wrong than those involving people who share the same cultural background. He Ziran's study categorizes the types of errors and their occurrence, which further gives important insight to the current study.

Guanlian [14] notes that pragmatic failure is committed when the speaker uses grammatically correct sentences but unconsciously violates the interpersonal relationship rules, social conventions, or takes little notice of time, space and addressee. SUN Ya and DAI Lin [15] distinguished pragmatic failure in a broad and narrow sense in their study of pragmatic failure in China. Pragmatic failure in broad terms refers to any errors committed in language use including spelling mistakes and ungrammaticalities. Pragmatic failure in the narrow sense refers to the unacceptable language use instead of the ungrammaticalities of sentences. These studies give insight to the current study on types and variations of pragmatic errors committed by the Kimeru L1 learners of L2 English.

Li-ming and Yan [16] sum up their study by defining pragmatic failure as such kind of errors that occur in cross-cultural communication when speakers unconsciously violate the interpersonal norms and social stipulations or do not conform to time and space perspective. Alternatively, communicators disregard the occasions of speaking and the social status or psychological state of both sides, or even go against the peculiar cultural values of the target language that accordingly cause the breaking off or failure of the communicative activities and make communication unable to reach the anticipatory or satisfactory result. This definition gives the study insight on cross-cultural communication. This is because the current study focuses on the Kimeru L1 Learners of L2 English, who are of a very different culture from the target language.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research was carried out in three public secondary schools in Central Imenti Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya. The schools were Katheri Girls' secondary School, Githongo Boys' secondary School and Kianthumbi mixed secondary schools. The study was carried out under a descriptive study design guided mainly by Murcia's [17] Model of Pragmatic Competence and Austin's [18] Speech Act Theory. A random sample of ninety respondents from the three purposively selected Constituency Development Funded (CDF) Secondary schools in Central Imenti Sub-county, Meru County was chosen for the study. Each student in each of the nine classes (there were three classes in each of the three chosen schools) randomly picked a number from a container. The students who had numbers one to ten in each class were included in the sample. This means that each class had ten respondents bringing to ninety respondents.

The respondents were Kimeru L1 learners of L2 English as a second language. The students were day students drawn from the local neighbourhood that would come to school in the morning, spend the whole day in school and leave for home in the evening. Their entry qualification is usually much lower than their counterparts who attend boarding secondary schools in the rest of Meru County and other parts of Kenya. In Kenya the preference is boarding schools to day schools. The boarding schools are more prestigious; more equipped and have better qualified teachers.

It is from a study of the students described above that the results of this study can be generalized for students in similar situations. It is the contention of the researcher that the sample was representative of the population. The research sample further comprised six English teachers, two from each of the three chosen schools. Data was drawn from the six teachers in respect of how they deal with pragmatic errors and other issues pertaining to the research. The main instruments of data collection were a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), a classroom debate, observation schedule and a teacher questionnaire. Once the data was collected it was classified and organized in such a way that it was easily readable and interpretable.

## **RESULTS**

### **Pragmabehavioral errors**

In real communication a large number of pragmatic failures are due to inappropriate use of body language (such as gestures, facial expressions), voice modulation or misinterpretation of time and space, [19]. Language learners tend to ignore the fact that non-verbal communication is essential in their day-to-day communication. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of these non-verbal cues can lead to communication breakdown. This section discusses body language, kinesics behaviour and proxemics in relation to Pragmabehavioral failure.

### **Kinesics Behaviour**

This is the interpretation of body language in communication.

Body language in this study included use of gestures, and use facial expressions. Results from the debating sessions indicated that majority of the respondents used body language incorrectly. The speakers overused gestures as they tried to explain a point. For instance in the debating session, a speaker was explaining about a girl becoming pregnant but instead of saying pregnant the speaker rubbed his stomach in circular motions with the assumption that the listeners understand the gestures. The act of rubbing the stomach could be misunderstood by the listener thereby causing misunderstandings in that there would be many ways of interpreting the rubbing of the stomach in circular motion, to mean stomach upset, pregnant, discomfort etc. This shows that some of the gestures the speakers used were ambiguous. A more appropriate and accurate gesture for pregnancy would have been raising ones hands just above the stomach to indicate a bump.

Some gestures did not also communicate the intended meaning. During the debating session when one of the respondents was giving an apology for using offensive language, his facial expressions and other gestures contradicted his intention and words. The respondent looked away from the audience and loosely threw one hand in the air. This clearly indicated that the apology was not sincere and he did not seem to care about the feelings of the audience. Much as the respondent's words were apologetic, his body language did not match up his words. He was supposed to maintain eye contact and show remorse for his actions through his facial expressions.

Non-verbal language communicates as much or sometimes much more than words. For communication to be effective learners, need to learn appropriate non-verbal cues. Results from the study indicated that majority of the respondents used body language inappropriately to communicate. Findings from the researcher's observations indicated that the respondents did not maintain eye contact with the teachers. Eye contact in the English language is a sign of honest conversation and active listening. However, in the Kimeru context eye contact with a person of high status is interpreted as lack of respect. In this case, the respondents could not maintain eye contact with the teachers for fear of the

teachers misunderstanding it as being rude and disrespectful. Therefore, the respondents bowed their heads while conversing with the teacher, which is against the English culture.

In the mixed schools, findings from the debating sessions revealed that the girls constantly kept adjusting their skirts and blouses. The girls also fidgeted and did not maintain eye contact with the audience. This could be misunderstood by the audience as nervousness and lack of sufficient content on the topic that they were discussing. However, the girls in the Kimeru culture are taught to be conscious of how they are dressed i.e. the length of skirt, the size of blouse and how much it exposes their chests; while in the company of men. In addition, Kimeru culture dictates that the women should be submissive to men and respect them. For this reason, the girls in the mixed schools did not maintain eye contact with the audience because it would be misconstrued as disrespecting the men (male students).

However, the single girls' schools maintained contact with the audience and articulated their points much better than those in the mixed schools. It was also noted that the boys in the mixed schools used few facial expressions during the debating session. Their faces were expressionless and non-communicative. They were also somewhat stiff and used fewer gestures than the girls use. Their body language did not communicate much. An English native as lack of interest and boredom could interpret this. However, this is not the case in the Kimeru culture. Murcia, [20] noted that it was easy for the second language learner to be linguistic competent, but very difficult for an L2 learner to learn the culture of the target language yet this is the most important in language use. In Kimeru, culture men do not show emotion to women especially for fear of being misunderstood as weak in character. The boys in the single boys' schools on the other hand used more gestures and facial expressions since there were no girls around.

Some respondents had inappropriate body postures. Findings from the study indicated that the respondents who were not fluent in English language stood in a stoop as they presented their points. This already created an impression to the audience that they were not confident of themselves and that they were nervous.

### **Proxemics**

Proxemics deals with the amount of space individuals feel should be set between themselves and others. The distance could vary due to various reasons. This could be the relationship the two interlocutors share; levels of familiarity, age, social status, or the cultural beliefs of a person. Personal and physical space also varies by culture. Physical distance between communicators indicates the type of relationship they have and their level of familiarity. Proxemics is learned through observation rather than instructions from a teacher or instructor. Results from the observation data indicated that the respondents were not able to keep an appropriate distance between themselves and the teachers. Most of the male respondents maintained a too far distance with the female teachers out of a culturally expected norm of behaviour but impractical in a school setup. The girls also maintained a too far distance with the male teachers. The Meru culture affected the relationship of a teacher- student and teacher-teacher.

This far distance to the English native speaker would be misunderstood as being cold and aloof. However, Kimeru culture dictates a young man should maintain a far distance when talking to older women, who are the age of their mothers, as a sign of respect. The boys maintained a far distance with their female teachers as a sign of respect but also affected the learning experience especially in the learning of English. The same case applied to the girls and their male teachers.

The girls are also not supposed to interact with boys freely. This distance was observed in the mixed schools. This hampered class discussions, role play and other class activities that could promote pragmatic competence because of different gender expectations.

### **Voice modulation**

Voice modulation focused on tonal variation, pitch, and tempo and voice projection. Voice modulation is a way a speaker fine-tunes or varies the pitch, tone and tempo of their voice to achieve communication. Findings from the debating sessions indicated that the respondents had errors in the way they used their voice to communicate. Majority of the respondents did not vary their voices as they articulated their points. They used the same tone, which hindered the audience from establishing the end and beginning of a new point. Tone variation can be used when a speaker wishes to emphasize a particular point. A speaker could use a higher tone or speak louder to emphasize a point.

However, the majority of the respondents did not achieve this. This is because Kimeru culture discourages the youth from being overloud when communicating to elders since it denotes lack of respect. Some respondents spoke either too fast or too slow to indicate that they did not understand the importance of tempo. Some were too fast which a listener could interpret as lack of confidence or lack of adequate content. These respondents spoke hurriedly and somewhat

incoherently which ultimately resulted to communication breakdown. The respondents that were too slow tended to add too many types of filler such as *aahh*, *er*, *uumm* and stammers indicating that they did not have enough content on the topic they were discussing. It could also be interpreted as a speaker who has little interest in the topic of discussion.

Audibility of the speaker sustains the audience's attention. Findings indicated that some respondents' voices were not loud enough creating the impression that they were not confident about their use of language or the content of the topic at hand.

### **Effects of Pragmabehavioral errors**

Various effects were brought about by pragmabehavioral errors as observed by the researcher through the results from the findings of the data collection instruments.

### **Communication breakdown**

Amaya [21] observes that lack of pragmatic competence on the part of L2 students can lead to pragmatic failure and more importantly to a complete communication breakdown. Results from the findings indicate that pragmabehavioral errors lead to communication breakdown. Respondents used gestures inappropriately while other gestures were misinterpreted. According to Lihui and Jianbin [22] English learners can hardly avoid committing pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication. This sets up barriers to the success of cross-cultural communication. Communications that involve different speakers and interpreters are most likely to go wrong than those involving people who share the same background.

Tauguchi [23] argues that as language and culture are closely interrelated, the ability to interact efficiently with people who are from different cultures is the key to achieving successful cross-cultural communication. The results indicated that the learners were not keen on learning the target language culture thus transferred most of their L1 non-verbal communication to the target language causing an almost communication breakdown. Majority of the respondents were observed too keep a too far distances with their interlocutors due to cultural obligations. The female students kept a too far distance from the male teachers and this applied to the male students and the female teachers. A native of English could interpret this student teacher as aloof and cold. This interpretation could lead to communication breakdown.

Findings also indicated that there was non-verbal communication breakdown. Majority of the learners used body language that was ambiguous, confusing or had no precise and clear communication. Data from the debate show that learners used various non-verbal cues that were ambiguous causing confusion. Respondents did not have eye contact with the audience that is not acceptable in the English culture. They talked while eyes focused on the walls, the ground or the floor. This caused poor voice projection making it difficult for the speaker to be audible. It could also be misunderstood for lack of interest or inadequate content on the topic. This caused communication breakdown since the listeners were seen talking.

### **Lack of Confidence**

It was noted during the debating sessions that the learners who were not competent in communicating ideas and points in English lacked confidence while speaking. Data highlighted that majority of the speakers were not competent in their communicative ability. They had limited knowledge of sentence constructions, a variety of vocabularies and their use, and paralinguistic features. The researcher through non-verbal communication observed lack of confidence.

It was observed that these students fidgeted, had no eye contact with the audience, and were inaudible and some spoke incoherently. Speakers also used body posture to communicate lack of confidence. Some of the speakers either stood with a stoop or kept swinging and swaying as they presented their points. It was evident that the speakers whose body postures were in a stoop did not present or argue out their points clearly. They had various errors in their speech hence lacked confidence. These ranged from lack of appropriate words and vocabulary, inappropriate gestures and poor pronunciations. The same respondents did not maintain eye contact with the audience. Some spoke with their eyes fixed on the floor or on the wall. In an instance, a respondent who stood in a stoop, eyes focused on the floor, presented his points but he was not confident enough to finish his point.

By fixing his eyes on the floor the audience lost interest in what he was saying and they stopped listening. The reaction of the audience towards his communicative incompetence lowered his confidence and eventually was not able to complete his argument. Communication was thus not achieved because the speaker did not communicate his argument fully.

In another instance two speakers who do not stammer while using their first language, stammered as they explained their points. This is because they were nervous. The nervousness was brought about by the knowledge of the speaker that he/she was not competent in verbal and non-verbal communication. This resulted to unnecessary clearing of throat and scratching of the head as was observed. Ten percent of the speakers scratched their heads each time they were not sure of what they wanted to say. The instance below depicts a speaker who was struggling to bring out a point and on the process, kept clearing his throat nervously, and scratching his head.

*The mboy is more (clearing throat) enducatend and the (clearing throat and scratching the head) ngirlndoes not need much enducatend. (Clearing throat) There is the work of amboy and is rearning and (clearing throat) a ngirl is caring for the home (scratching the head).*

The speaker above exhibits poor communicative ability. He has phonological errors, sentence structure errors and word formation errors. The speaker already feels that he is not competent enough thus the lack of confidence seen by the use of non-verbal cues. Hence, the cues in this case have not been used by the speaker to enhance communication, as is their use. The fear of a second language learner to feel they are not competent and they don't fit in an English speaking set up may cause the speaker to shy away from having any conversation or even making any effort for small talk especially with the competent speakers of the target language. This fear causes lack of confidence in the speaker, which in turn may hinder him/her from becoming competent in the target language.

### **Stigmatization**

It was observed that as the speakers presented their arguments, the others listened and followed keenly. It was noted that anytime a speaker made an error the other students listening would laugh, jeer or make faces thus discouraging the speakers. Out of these students, some of the respondents who felt that they were not competent enough in the target language opted not to participate for fear of stigmatization. Results from the findings of the debating sessions indicated that the respondents who used appropriate body language and had fewer pragmabehavioral errors were more accepted by the audience and were more confident than the ones who had many errors. The listeners were also more attentive to the respondents who had better non-verbal communication skills and gave them time to express themselves.

Learners who have poorly kinesics and poor voice modulation were normally misunderstood. They lose face to peers, who seem to laugh at them and eventually ignore them when they talk. This makes these learners lose confidence and self-esteem and finally withdraw from the rest. Findings reveal that majority of the learners who withdrew from the debating sessions felt that the other learners would ridicule them because they were not pragmatically competent. So they preferred to be silent because they already felt stigmatized.

### **Causes of Pragmabehavioral errors**

There are varied causes of pragmabehavioral errors namely: poor exposure of the students, mother tongue and cultural influence, teacher sources, and multilingualism.

#### **Poor exposure: inadequate or no knowledge of pragmatics**

Exposure to good spoken English classes and suitable textbooks are the main sources of English culture and pragmatic knowledge but they are lacking in our school. Learners therefore have limited exposure to the English language. At best learners rely on the only provided books, most of which are theoretical in approach. This has caused the learners' communication in English to be termed as mechanical and bookish.

English being an examinable subject encourages teachers to concentrate more on grammar and vocabulary at the expense of its practical use; the teachers' main goal in teaching English is for the students to pass their exams. Apart from the textbooks, learners of English rely on teachers to learn pragmatics. The teachers are expected to complement the textbooks in order to expose the learner more on the English culture. The teacher's own observation points to the fact that they not keen on teaching practical English use, the source of pragmatic knowledge. Moreover, the teachers themselves are not efficient communicators especially when using non-verbal features.

Results of this study indicate that the respondents are insufficiently exposed to English pragmatics. They have little knowledge of the culture of the target language and how the culture is expressed through English. For non-native speaker to be competent in a target language, they have to be conversant with the culture of the target language. Ensuring that the second language learner is sensitive and can accommodate the culture of the target language is one way of ensuring that pragmatic errors do not occur.

Results further indicate that the respondents had inadequate or little knowledge of pragmabehavioral strategies partly because of lack of native speaker models. The learners did not seem aware of the importance of voice modulation, eye contact and other non-verbal cues during the debating sessions. Reasons range from poor teaching, poor models and outdated and inadequate reference materials. It is the contention of this study that for a second language learner to be competent in pragmatics, and consequently good communicative ability, they have to be well exposed to the target's language culture through a native like environment. The environment in which learning of English is taking place should be motivating enough for the learners to pay close attention to pragmatics more so non-verbal communication, which is ignored by the teachers. The learners should have sufficient opportunity to practice what they have learnt.

### **Mother Tongue and Cultural Influence**

Thomas [24] noted that different cultures have different ways of thinking, rules of speaking and social values. This is true of Kimeru culture and English culture. The speech act strategies and non-verbal cues in the Kimeru culture are different from those of the English culture. Whenever there is a cultural clash whenever second language learners transfer their L1 pragmatics and cultural knowledge to the target language, errors are bound to occur.

Kasper [25] uses the term "pragmatic transfer" to refer to the influence of the learners' knowledge of other languages and cultures on their pragmatic use and development on the use of L2. Cultural influence was mainly manifested in kinesics and proxemics with regard to use of body language and appropriate distance between parties. Male students tended to use few facial expressions and gestures especially those who were in the mixed schools. Results from the debating sessions reveal that their faces were mostly expressionless and wore very serious like faces. However, they maintained eye contact with the audience. In Kimeru culture, the men do not give away their feeling especially to women. This is normally interpreted as weakness and not manly. On the other hand, English culture views body language or any other non-verbal cue as part of communication. Therefore, English L1 speakers do not rely on words only but are also very keen on the non-verbal cue. An English native would thus misinterpret the boys' body language as bored or disinterested.

One the other hand the girls in the mixed schools did not maintain eye contact with the audience, which included boys. Eye contact is a very important non-verbal cue in English culture. Lack of eye contact can be misinterpreted as dishonesty and one who is not sure of what they are saying by the English native. However, due to cultural influences the girls could not maintain eye contact with the audience because culturally the girls are expected to be submissive to men. Maintaining eye contact would thus be misunderstood for disrespect.

### **Teacher Sources**

The assumption in Kenya is that in all the school levels, the teachers, who are the learners' main linguistic models, have an excellent command of correctness and appropriateness with regard to pronunciation, grammar, pragmatics and that such teachers can teach the British standard English variety [26]. Results of this study raise doubts on this assumption since many of the errors cited have a teacher basis. Findings from this study indicate that the teachers under study were not competent in pragmatics. 33% of them were not able to identify any pragmabehavioral errors their students frequently made. 50% identified the errors but some of them were unable to correct the errors. The teachers also used confusing and inappropriate non-verbal cues.

The learners listen and observe the teachers as they speak and at times, as they explain some rules of the language, they also observe the mannerisms the teacher has and the learners assume that, that is part of learning English. Consequently, if the teacher is teaching an English lesson and using different mannerisms from what is expected, the same is transferred to the learners. This is evident in the apology DCTs. The learners show the harshness of the teacher towards the student who is apologizing. If teachers do not follow the appropriate voice modulation and gestures in English yet they are addressing students in English, the students acquire the same as revealed in the current study.

### **Liberal Media**

The media plays a big role in the learning of English in Kenya. Today most learning occurs outside the classroom. The information conveyed by media by far exceeds what the learners get in class. The learners have great access to media more than they do to school reading material and texts. This is another source used by learners to get exposure in current affairs but also in language. This can be through music, news, talk shows, interviews, drama and films. Media generally includes newspapers and magazines, television and radio and social media. It was discovered that most of the learners rely on media for entertainment, socializing and current affairs. The most commonly used form of media by the learners in Meru County was radio and television. Apart from the teachers and school textbooks, radio and television played a big role in exposing the learners to English. The learners will easily acquire the language used on television and radio because of the interest they have in the media personalities. The media personalities serve as a

motivation to the students who would want to emulate how they speak. However, data showed that the learners were not exposed to the English language and this was attributed to the fact that the learners were only interested with the vernacular radio and television stations. The population in the area of research mostly listened to the following radio stations: *Muuga FM, Thiiri FM, Mwariama FM, Mwago FM, Meru FM*, and watch the following vernacular television stations: *Baite TV, Meru TV, Mwariama TV and Weru TV*.

Understandably the mass media targets to reach everyone so as to disseminate news and other programmes, however in this kind of environment, where there is no motivation to learn English, the learners are not able to acquire communicative competence in English. Findings from the debating sessions indicated that the learners were not fluent in speech, and a number used non-verbal communication in place of a word in English that was not readily available. The form four learners who were expected to have gained pragmatic competence were seen to fumble with words and seemed unaware of politeness during interruptions and disagreements. This is because of lack of exposure to the language and its culture. The learners have no role models in the media personalities whom they can use as a source of motivation to learn English. All the presentations, music and drama are all in Kimeru thus the learner finds it unnecessary to learn and communicate in English. Media then does not provide a platform for the acquisition of English as a second language in Meru County.

Besides the vernacular stations, the stations that use English as their medium of communication use different varieties of English dialects depending on the presenter. Most of the presenters or journalists do not use the Standard English that is recommended in the Kenyan syllabus. This case applies to the films, comics, cartoons or music they watch and listen. They range from American variety, Australian, South African, Jamaican, and very little of the Standard English. The films especially expose the learners who are also the audience to a variety of cultures, which is not the British culture. This causes confusion to the second language learner. The exposure to different cultures through the same language English that has different varieties means that the learners are unable to identify the appropriate dialect or cultural strategy to use. This

### **Multilingualism**

Kenya is a multilingual country. English therefore is learnt and used in a multilingual environment. According to Kecskes [27] it is assumed that the bilingual already have an L1 governed competence at place which will be adjusted to accommodate the socio-cultural requirements of the new language. The author argues that socio-pragmatic norms and conventions concerning appropriateness developed through L1 are very influential and difficult to change them. This argument suits this research in that the learners in the Kenyan environment are multilingual meaning that they have to accommodate requirements of many languages apart from English. Most learners have more than three languages in use. For example, a learner can speak Kimeru, Kiswahili, English, and also French or German. It is thus difficult to expect a learner of English in high school to abandon his or her own cultural world.

Code mixing also is because of multilingualism. Findings of the debating sessions indicate that the learners were code switching when they did not have an equivalent word in English readily available. They used either Kiswahili or Kimeru words to replace an English word. Code switching adversely affects a second language in that the learners do not have to struggle to learn a target language accurately. Code switching seemed to the respondents as 'a way out of a sticky moment'.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of this study clearly prove that pragmabehavioral errors are endemic among the Kimeru L1 learners of L2 English. These errors among the students are because of poor and inadequate exposure to pragmatics, mother tongue and cultural influence, media and multilingualism and lack of motivation to be competent in English pragmatics. English being a global language, the significance of pragmatic competence cannot be underscored. For this reason, hiring of native English speakers to train the teachers of English in both primary and secondary schools would ensure that the teachers, who are also second language learners of English, are also competent and comfortable enough to teach pragmatics. Language teachers should also be vetted to ensure that the standards of language competence are not compromised. Vetting should involve pragmatic competence rather than linguistic competence since the teacher has already gone through the written exams and passed. This will ensure that the teachers are pragmatically competent. The study further recommends a study on the second language acquisition of pragmabehavioral competence focusing on the role of kinesics and proxemics in inter-language pragmatics.

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