Learner Centered Instructional Methods and Observable Academic Competencies in Kiswahili Language among Secondary School Students in Mbarara Municipality, Uganda

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Abstract: *Effective use of instructional methods can greatly develop learners' observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language. The average pass falling between D1 to C4 in Kiswahili language stood at a pass-rate of 40 % and below out of the 89% pass-rate expected by UNEB (UNEB, 2017). This poor performance has been blamed on the poor teaching styles. However, no empirical study has been carried out to determine the effect of learner-centred instruction and observable academic competences in the Kiswahili language among secondary school students in Mbarara Municipality. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess the effect of learner-centred methods of instruction on learners' observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language in Mbarara Municipality secondary schools in Uganda. The design adopted in the study was a Quasi-Experimental. Stratified random sampling was used to select 6 schools from 36 schools. The 36 schools were put into 3 categories (strata); highly performing schools, moderate performing schools, and low performing schools as per Uganda National Examinations Board. Simple random sampling was then used to select two schools from each category. The tools used in the study were: the lesson observation schedule and Kiswahili examination tests (pre-test and post-test). Teachers were observed when teaching; before and after training on the use of learner-centred methods of teaching. Learner-centred methods of instruction were used at 34.4% before training the teachers on the use of learner-centered methods and after training the teachers it was used at 85.4%. The study established that there was a significant increase in learners' observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language subject. The study therefore recommends that teachers should be trained to adopt and practice more learner-centerd instructional methods to teach the Kiswahili language.*

Keywords: *Learner centered, Instructional Methods, Academic Competencies, Kiswahili*

1. Introduction

Learner-centered instruction is the method that shift the focus of activity from the teacher to the learners. These methods include active learning, in which students solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class. Observable academic competence is "a multidimensional construct consisting of the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of learners that contribute to success in the classrooms", Academic competence includes the domains of academic skills and academic enablers.

Kiswahili acts as a common language for people from different linguistic backgrounds. It enhances communication and breaks down barriers, fostering

understanding and cooperation among people who may speak different first languages. Kiswahili language is developing rapidly and currently is used globally. Mohammed (2008) noted that Kiswahili is taught in several African, American, European primary schools, secondary schools, and universities. At the regional level, it is spoken in East, Central, and Southern Africa. It is the national and official language in Tanzania and Kenya. He further noted that in Uganda, Kiswahili has not received wide popularity because the language has often been associated with the slave trade, police, and military and so civilians do not regard learning it to be important to learn unless one is planning to join the forces. Again, there are more than fifty local languages in Uganda and Ugandans love to teach their children in their local languages. English preference and limited research work in Kiswahili (Jagero, 2011) further aggravates the problem. Kiswahili is used in East Africa as a tool for regional integration and cohesion as well as a lingua franca for commerce (Mulokozi, 2002).

There is no doubt that Kiswahili has gained ground as a language of choice by millions of people in East Africa and its neighbors. It has been transported to different parts of Africa and the West due to migration, both voluntary and as a consequence of ethnic wars, including the fight against colonialism and apartheid. Refugees from neighboring countries learn Kiswahili during their short stay in Kenya or Tanzania and keep the language when they finally immigrate to England, the United States, or other western countries. This is evident in the increase in demand for Kiswahili translators for agencies like the American based Language Line Incorporated and Pacific Interpreters Inc. that offer services to law enforcement, hospitals, legal services, immigration services, airline companies, and schools. The number of people learning Kiswahili at institutions of higher education in the United States has also attained impressive numbers even though the enrolments are only high at the elementary and in special cases intermediate levels (Walters, Keith, and Brody, 2005).

At many of the European institutions of higher education, including private organizations, the study of Kiswahili is intense and purposeful. European institutions offer a more serious program of African languages, with Kiswahili topping the list. Many of their objectives are tied to development projects that are sponsored by the European Economic market, and specific agencies such as Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), to name only a few. Such examples offer some perspective of the power and potential for global use of Kiswahili (Legere & Karsten, 2005).

Today, there is no doubt that Kiswahili is one of the greatest indigenous languages in the continent whose role in development cannot be gainsaid (Mwenda, 2006). The countries that embraced the use and development of this language like Tanzania and Kenya stand an edge over other countries that have not made such a bold step; among them being Uganda. Today, the whole of the East and Central African region is using this language for wider communication, improving literacy, galvanizing unity, commerce, and many other roles.

In the East African scene, the countries are working towards a common language policy. This comes with the understanding that uniformity in language will lead to the unfettered flow of information, people, and capital across the borders. Out of this need, article 19 (d) of the Treaty of Establishment of the East African Community provides for the development and promotion of indigenous languages, especially Kiswahili as a regional lingua franca. Consequently, the 3rd East African Tripartite Commission held in November 2001 directed the secretariat to facilitate the formation of East African Kiswahili Council basically to oversee language issues like harmonization of vocabulary, promotion of Kiswahili literature, and advocacy of indigenous languages in the international forum (Mwenda, 2006).

According to the Ugandan Constitution, Kiswahili is the second official language to English. The government of Uganda has made a lot of effort to promote Kiswahili in the country. It has ensured that the language is taught in schools, trained Kiswahili teachers and has also provided instructional materials in schools where Kiswahili is taught. With the increasing use of the Kiswahili language in Uganda, it is imperative that educators understand how learner-centred instruction impacts on learners' academic achievement to be able to provide better instruction for students to achieve their Kiswahili vocabulary ability. Schools need this knowledge to support staff development, instructional management, and staff selection.

Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) Report (2016) indicated poor performance in the UCE Kiswahili examination. This situation was further characterized by lack of teachers who could teach Kiswahili. Ssekamwa (2000) stresses that it was expensive to produce teachers with good fluency in Kiswahili because, in addition to their regular training, trainee teachers were expected to stay in Mombasa for three months. While most of the Kiswahili textbooks and reference books used in the learning institutions are imported from Kenya and Tanzania (Mulokozi, 2009), on the other hand, there are few Ugandans on an individual basis who have, informally, attempted to write and publish English - Kiswahili materials such as the thesaurus, pamphlets, and charts that can visibly be seen in major towns being sold (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997).

Wai (2007) defined learner-centred instruction as highly interactive instruction between students and a teacher, or students and classmates, in a nurturing classroom environment where the teacher serves as a mentor and advisor. Many educators agree that learner-centred instruction promotes student participation, resulting in increased achievement (Gonzalez & Nelson, 2005; Ahmad & Aziz, 2009; Cummins, 2007; Au, 2009). Learner-centred instruction when used during learning is an effective means of enhancing learning outcomes, that is, skills and knowledge outcomes (Morzano, 2007). He further points out that when learner-centred methods are used during learning, the teacher becomes a facilitator and there is a high level of activation among the learners hence improved academic achievement.

The learner-centred methods involve students' participation and encompass a range of instructional methods, including brainstorming, discussion, question-answer session, and so on. These methods have many features in common, besides the fact that they all qualify as cooperative. Koppenhaver (2006) defines cooperative learning as student-centred learning that includes the attainment of educational goals beyond information transfer, such as the development of critical thinking, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. It involves small groups where students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning.

This study investigated the effect of learner-centred methods of instruction on learners' observable academic competencies (speaking, listening, grammar, writing, and comprehension). All instructional learner-centred methods impose more responsibility on students for their learning compared to the (traditional teaching methods that are) teacher-centred. These methods can all be characterized as constructivist methods, building on the widely accepted principle that students construct their versions of reality rather than simply absorbing versions presented by their teachers. Considerable research demonstrates that learner-centred methods produce higher achievement, more positive relationships among students, and healthier psychological adjustment than do competitive or individualistic experiences.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Despite all the efforts by the government, through posting teachers of Kiswahili countrywide, providing instructional materials like textbooks to all schools, instituting a language policy, and making Kiswahili language compulsory in primary schools and secondary schools for senior one and two and three recognizing the fact that Kiswahili has got strong local and regional cultural base cutting across the East African region, the development of

academic competencies in Kiswahili language remains low.

Mbarara Municipality Kiswahili Teachers Association report of 2017 indicated that for the two years of 2015 and 2016 in Mbarara Municipality, the average performance of S.3 students who were getting promoted to S.4 stood at 38.8% and 40.3% respectively all of which is below the average pass mark of 79% as expected by the association.

Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) Report (2016) indicated that limited vocabulary and expressions, poor translation skills, poor comprehension skills continue to be the major challenges experienced by candidates that might affect their achievement in the Kiswahili language. According to the report the national failure rate stands at 8.8% where some districts recorded more than twice the failure. It further clarifies that some teachers make students cram passages from books, making learners produce textbook answers when responding to questions requiring imaginative compositions. More still the minister of education said in 2018 when releasing the 2017 Uganda certificate of education UNEB results, that, Uganda's greatest challenge is improving the quality of education through instruction to empower learners with skills needed in the world of work. This confirms the fact that, the continuous failure to achieve good results in Kiswahili language at secondary school level is attributed partly to the methods of teaching. No known study has been carried out to determine the effect of learner-centered instruction and observable academic competences in the Kiswahili language among secondary school students in Mbarara Municipality. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the effect of learner-centered instruction on learners' observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language among secondary school students in Mbarara Municipality Secondary Schools.

The purpose of the study was to assess the effect of learner-centered methods of instruction on learners' observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language in Mbarara Municipality secondary schools.

1.2 Research questions
1. Which methods of instruction are being used by Kiswahili language teachers in Mbarara Municipality secondary schools?
2. To what extent are learner-centered methods of instruction being used in teaching the Kiswahili language in secondary schools in Mbarara Municipality?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Learner Centred methods of instruction of teaching Kiswahili language in secondary schools

The learner-centered methods are those instructional methods that take into account the learners' experiences, talents, personalities, social background, and needs. They include Brainstorming, think pair share, numbered heads together, group presentations, discussions, etc. (YouTube, UNC Charlotte) center for Teaching, June 2017. It also refers to using current knowledge about learning to help learners able to cope with the rapidly changing world of the time. It places the student at the center of learning, (YouTube. Dr. Andy Johnson June 3, 2010).

Eken (2000) noted that in a student-centered class, teachers are mere facilitators and students take on the discussion role. Students are seen as being able to assume a more active and participatory role vis-à-vis traditional approaches. This teaching method promotes the active participation of students in classroom activities. Teachers facilitate students discussions and intervene when necessary, allowing students to put the language to use and to explore the aesthetics of the texts (Ahmad & Aziz, 2009). The above-mentioned studies only sought student's participation and their teacher's communication in classrooms on teaching styles as they are both key participants in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this study looks at the learner-centred methods of instruction and learners' observable competencies that is to say the writing, reading, speaking, grammar, and comprehension competencies in Kiswahili language classrooms.

Dufresne, Gerace, Leonard, Mestre, and Wenk (2010) in their research found class talks to be a useful tool not only for engaging students in active learning during the lecture hour but also for enhancing the overall communication within the classroom as compared to traditional lecture. Class talk in this case involved facilitating the presentation of questions for small group work as well as the collection of student answers and the display of histograms showing how the class answered. Students were positive about class talk facilitated instruction and believed that they learned more than they would have during a traditional lecture. This did not involve other student-centered modes of teaching and learning such as the incorporation of media, use of examples, and the involvement of students in field trips and excursions.

Wolk (2010) also reports that in student-centered learning, students play a significant role in designing their curricula.

The teacher plays the role of a facilitator or guide who helps students achieve their goals. In their article, Ng and Lai (2012) presented an exploratory study that examined whether a wiki-based project could foster student-centered learning. They concluded that wiki could facilitate student-centered activities.

2.1.1 Group discussion

According to Nasibi (2003), the discussion is a learning activity where the teacher and the learners talk together to share opinions, views, or information about a topic or issue. Through it, learners make a fundamental contribution to learning since it attempts to elicit their opinions and knowledge. MIE (2004) describes discussion as a method that permits open interaction between the teacher and the learner as well as between the learner and the learner.

Nasibi (2003) explores two approaches to the discussion: expository-oriented and inquiry-oriented discussion. In expository, the teacher defines objectives of the lesson, explains learning activities, allows discussion, and invites questions before concluding the activity. In inquiry discussions, the teacher arranges the discussion on a given issue in an open-ended way and serves as a leader while the learners carry out the discussion. The group discussion focused on this study is inquiry-oriented in those implicit methodologies pre-supposes learning as an outcome of creative inquiry and active student participation (Tutunnis, 2012).

2.1.2 Group presentation

Concerning learner participation, KIE (2006), observed that the methodology entails dividing the learners into small groups of 5- 10 students then giving them a task related to the lesson topic. Through the method the learners can make their contributions through giving points, performing an exercise, giving their background experience, and improving their interdependency and cooperation. If this methodology is appropriately used in KCW it motivates the learners and makes them enjoy the lesson. This methodology is collaborative and interactive thus exposes learners to connect new information to previous knowledge and critical thinking.

The pedagogy is interactive learning (Odundo & Gunga, 2013). The methodology can be considered appropriate for teaching KCW for some reasons; one, the teacher does not become the only source of information but the learners who engage dialogically to get ideas and knowledge. The methodology also focuses on the student as center of the instructional process thus learner-centered while the teacher directs the process. In support of this Ahmad and Aziz (2009) assert that, the method allows learners to take on a participative role while the teacher becomes a

facilitator. In KCW the methodology also creates a competitive environment among the participating groups thus making the lesson more enjoyable. In terms of learner engagement, the methodology provides an opportunity for every learner to articulate his/her ideas, views, and opinions thus making them feel appreciated in the lesson development.

2.1.3 Think pair share

The think-pair-share strategy is a strategy designed to provide students to think a given topic by enabling them to formulate individual ideas and share these ideas with another student. This strategy is a learning strategy developed by Lyman to encourage student classroom participation. The think-pair-share strategy is a cooperative discussion strategy to help students work in groups. In applying this strategy, the teacher poses a question, preferable one demanding analysis, evaluation, or synthesis, and gives students about a minute to think through an appropriate response (Lyman, 1987). The students can share their ideas that appear in their minds as the responses to the teacher's questions in the teaching and learning process. Students then turn to a partner and share their responses with others. During the third step, student's responses can be shared within a four-person learning team, within a larger group, or with an entire class during a follow-up discussion. The caliber discussion is enhanced by this technique and all students have an opportunity to learn by reflection and by verbalization (Jones, 2006).

Each child is an individual with individual learning needs. However, most human learning is a social process. Students can benefit from learning in groups and pairs. Students can learn better when they are engaged in working together. One of the forms of the learner-centered learning is the think, pair, share strategy. Think, pair, share is considered as one of the strategies used to activate learner's background about the instructional situation. It is a strategy designed to get many students' activity involved in classes of any size. It is a learning strategy developed by Frank Lyman and associates to encourage student classroom participation. Rather than using a basic recitation method in which the teacher poses a question and one student offers a response, Think-Pair-Share is a multi-response strategy, applicable to all learners (Fisher, 2005, p.96).

Lutfullah (2004) cited the definition from (Jones, 2002) for Think-Pair-Share strategy: It is one of the cooperative learning strategies. It consists of three steps: 1- Think: Students think about the problem or the question that is posed to them. 2- Pair: Each student discusses with his/her colleague and they put together their thoughts. 3- Share: Students share with the whole class in groups what they have reached of ideas.

Fisher (2005, p.96) and Preszler (2006, p.12) present the stages of think-pair-share as follows: 1- Students listen while the teacher poses the question or a problem. 2- Students take a few moments just to think about the question, forming ideas of their own. 3- Using designed partners, nearby neighbors, or a desk mate, student's pair up to talk about the answer each came up with. 4- The instructor calls for pairs to share their thinking with the rest of the class. The teacher can do this by calling randomly on a few students to summarize their discussion or give their answer.

There are many advantages to Lyman's technique. Personal interaction motivates students and engages the entire class. Quiet students are also able to answer the question or complete the task with a partner instead of having to stand in front of the entire class. The instructor can easily assess student understanding by listening to several groups during the activity, and by collecting responses at the end (Karger, 2011).

2.1.4 Numbered heads together

The teaching process will be significant in case teachers can create a learning atmosphere that can activate students to learn (Bruhn, et al., 2016). Many methods can be employed to make students active in the teaching and learning process and one of them is the Number Heads Together (NHT) method. NHT method can be interpreted as the attempt conducted by teachers to engage students in the teaching and learning process (Haydon, et al, 2010). Teaching and learning activity with the implementation of the NHT method affecting the student's outcome in the teaching and learning process (Hunter, et al., 2016). The participation is manifested in the three stages of learning activities, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation programs.

NHT technique is one of the cooperative techniques that can be applied for an ESL/EFL reading activity (Kagan in Richard and Renandya, 2002). NHT includes a simple four-step technique that can be utilized repeatedly with a variety of curriculum materials and be applied to almost all subject areas, to every grade level, and any place in a lesson (Olsen & Kagan in Yeh, 2004). NHT technique encompasses dividing the class into small 4 members, heterogeneous learning groups within which students' number themselves (1 to 4). The number given to students is intended to help students concentrate on doing their task since they will be called upon by the teacher to give the answer based on the number they have. Next, the teacher gives questions based.

NHT can motivate students since the technique has a sense of competition and fun for students. Besides, students will be motivated because they are helped by their teammates.

Being motivated, students will participate actively during the lesson. It encourages peer tutoring from smart students who know the answer to the other team members who do not. Having to tutor peers and receive peer-tutoring renders the exchange of information much more dynamic than rote memorization and individual textbook work (JALT presentation 2006 in Backwell, 2006).

2.2 Extent to which learner-centered instructional methods are being used in teaching Kiswahili language in secondary schools

Chika (2012) noted that learning occurs most in collaborative classrooms where students are encouraged to ask questions, define problems, and lead conversations. His study used Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) system as an instrument for classroom observation and found that teacher talk dominated most classrooms. Similarly, this study adapted the FIAC system of classroom observation and found that teachers did not actively engage learners in the communicative process of teaching and learning the Kiswahili language. Teachers should therefore shift their role primarily from information givers to facilitators.

Constructivism supports learner-centered pedagogy which benefits students' achievement (Hsieh & Sun, 2006). Researchers like Bush (2006) and Kumar (2006) noted that constructivist-based instruction connects students' world with learning pursuits in the classroom. Sunderman (2006) recommended that teachers should use the constructivist instruction model to motivate student learning. Brad (2000) in his research found that when constructivist approaches are employed to learning, students post an improvement in their academic performance.

Learner-centered pedagogy raises student achievement, promotes democratic classrooms, complex thinking, and meets student's communication goals (Cummins, 2007). Doherty and Hilberg (2007) pointed out that learner-centered pedagogy promoted student achievement. Zekia (2009) found that gesture as a non-verbal teaching technique was an important source of motivation and concentration for students' learning as well as a tool for maintaining attention. The above-mentioned researchers give a general picture of the relationship between teaching styles and academic achievement. The influence of learner–centered teaching methods on observable academic competencies on learners in the Kiswahili language remains unknown. The current study thus seeks to establish whether learner – Centered methods influence learners' observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language. Similarly, a study carried out by Arbab (2003)

for two weeks on general science students also proved that those taught with learner-centered methods have improved results than the control group.

Additionally, Kousar and Perveen (2003) have presented in two separate studies on 7th and 8th graders in 2003 that students who were taught social studies with the learner-centered method have scored high grades than others. It is clear from the above citation that research on cooperative learning in local context had been carried out either in a science subject, English language learners or on school students, this study is different in both aspects; one it has dared to choose the subject of "education" which is considered an arts subject and is taught generally through lecture method, two the participants of the study are college students, who are usually not taken as sample due to multiple reasons, including the burden of course work and short time.

Kang'ahi, Indoshi, Okwach, and Osodo (2012), investigated the influence of teaching styles on learners achievement in Kiswahili language in government secondary schools. The study found a positive relationship between teaching styles and learners' academic achievement. Besides, learning achievement was seen to increase with more learner-centered teaching styles. Furthermore, Muraya and Kimano (2011) found that the cooperative learning (learner-centered) approach resulted in significantly higher mean achievement scores compared to the regular teaching (teacher-centered) method.

2.3 The effect of learner-centered instructional methods of teaching on observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language among secondary school students.

Farkas (2003) investigated the effect of teaching styles on two groups of seventh-grade students. Students in the experimental group preferred similar learning styles and were taught according to their preferences, while the control group was taught with a conventional teaching style. In this study, the students in the experimental group, who received a teaching style that matched their preferred learning styles, outperformed the control group academically. The experimental group also showed more positive attitudes towards learning, more understanding of people's feelings, and an increased ability to transfer what they had learned from one area to another.

Hyvonena et al., (2014) found out those interactive and learner-centered methods in an authentic classroom

environment can produce deeper knowledge about children's efficacious agency in learning contexts. In second language classrooms, reading and writing provide a wide opportunity in which learners can interact with the target language, hence providing for active engagement. Reading and writing also provide learners with opportunities to get involved with language that is somewhat more mature than what they currently use (Farris, 2001). It is believed that learners learn more words quickly and incidentally through repeated exposure during reading and writing than through direct instruction.

Curtin (2005) studied a group of English Second Language (ESL) learners and their teachers and categorized teaching styles as didactic and interactive. Didactic teachers make most of the decisions in the classroom, emphasize teaching the content, and put students in a passive role. On the other hand, interactive teachers allow for the diverse learning styles of their students, place much emphasis on the teaching and learning process, and expect students to be active learners. The findings of Curtin's (2005) study suggest that teachers who adopt an interactive teaching style can better meet the unique needs of their ESL students. The interactive instructors utilized more learner-centered learning strategies along with numerous activities that worked best with ESL students. Smith, Lee, and Newmann (2001) analyzed whether didactic or interactive teaching methods are more effective in teaching elementary school children and found that interactive teaching is associated with higher gains in test scores.

Parthiba (2015) introduces some activities that could be used to develop observable academic competencies; she puts that in Roleplay activity, students are chosen to play some roles, it may be between 3 or two students to familiar roles which should be chosen to practice speaking competencies, and this helps students not to hunt for ideas but to create them. She continues to mention that learner centred methods involve the learner in a group discussion to effectively exploit oral skills, reading skills, and writing skills because it requires a quick perception on the topic which yields to the arguments of the others hence developing grammar competency.

Partiba's study still looks at Pair work as another learner-centered instructional method that takes into account the learner's experiences, talents, personalities, social background, and all the four language competencies that are developed. She continues to elaborate on how the method works; students are set in pairs and an attack is given to them they have to discuss, write down, compile and present the task in a seating arrangement that will facilitate pair work. Her study was similar to the current study which is looking for the relationship between the learner-centered methods of teaching and the observable

academic competencies in the Kiswahili language across selected schools.

Smialek and Boburka (2006) investigated the effectiveness of learner centered learning on college students' development of musical skills and found that learner-centerd interventions proved to be more effective than traditional lectures or occasional group work. Gilles and Ashman (1996) investigated the effects of learner centered learning on primary pupils' behavioral interactions and academic achievement (verbal comprehension, verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and figural reasoning) and found that children in the intervention group showed more autonomy and significantly higher academic achievement after the intervention. Similarly, the current study tried to find out earner learner-centered method of instruction (brainstorming, think pair share. group discussion, group presentations) and the observable academic competencies (speaking, writing, listening, grammar and comprehension) among secondary students in the selected schools in Mbarara municipality.

Findings of Walsh and Vandiver's (2007) study indicated that students performed better academically because they had a say in what they learned, and the teachers only acted as facilitators to allow the students to learn actively. Learner- centered method also provides students with opportunities to learn among themselves through pair work, demonstrations. Group presentations hence developing competencies in speaking, writing, grammar, and listening especially when peer interaction is incorporated in Kiswahili language comprehension, the students have the opportunity to generate ideas, understand sentences and help each other. Other advantages of learner-centered instruction approach in relation to the observable competencies are that it offers learners active learning experiences, equal access to learning in a more supportive social environment (Killen, 2007).

Learner-centered learning approach, students are organized into small teams of three to five members. Each team member, from the fastest to the slowest learner, has a contribution to make (Slavin, 2010). Rather than putting the students against one another in competition for attention and grades, educators can select an appropriate CLA that effectively complements more conventional teaching styles and addresses their students' needs (Manning & Lucking, 1991). Using CLA as a teaching approach, the students tutor one another and are likely to acquire greater mastery of the material than in the common individual learning.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test research design was used to compare the performance of learners in a control group with those in the treatment group in secondary schools in Mbarara Municipality. The conventional teaching methods (the teacher-centered instructional method) was used on the control group while the learner centered method of instruction was used on the treatment group. The design was considered appropriate for this study because of its ability to test causal relationships between two variables (Shadish, Cook & Campel, 2010). The research aimed at establishing the causal effect of learner-centered methods of instruction on the targeted academic competencies, with no full control over the allocation of participants to the different levels of the independent variables.

A pre-test was administered to both experimental and control groups to measure the level of competence in vocabulary, reading, speaking, writing, and grammar in the Kiswahili language, and then a post-test was again administered to determine whether the teaching methods used influenced any change in the level of competence.

3.2 Study area and study population

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools in Mbarara Municipality that offer Kiswahili language as a subject.

The study population comprised of 36 secondary schools that offer the Kiswahili language in Mbarara Municipality (Mbarara District education office, 2015). The average size of Form three classes of Kiswahili language was 50 students. This resulted in a total population of 1800 form three students that offered Kiswahili language.

3.3 Sample size

The total number of Form three students that offered Kiswahili language in Mbarara Municipality in 2018 was 1800. Therefore 1800 was our study population. Using Krejcie and Morgan's table, a sample size of 317 for a study population of 1800 was reached at (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Six schools were selected each with an average of 50 form three students making up 300 students.

Table 1. Sample size and sampling techniques

Category	Population	Sample size	Sampling technique
Schools	36	6	Stratified random sampling
Students	1800	300	Census sampling of all students in Form 3

Source: Primary data

3.4 Sampling

The sampling was undertaken using multiple techniques. The sampling techniques included stratified random sampling, where simple random sampling was done within the strata (categories) to come up with the participating schools, then within each school census sampling of all students in form three was carried out in selected schools as shown in table 2.

3.4.1 School selection using stratified random sampling

Stratified random sampling was used to select 6 schools from 36. The schools were grouped into three categories (strata); high performing, moderate performing, and low performing schools. The categories were based on UNEB performance in Kiswahili language using results of 2015 and 2016 at percentage pass of D1 to C4. Schools with 70% to 90% pass were categorized as high performing schools, those with 20 – 69% pass as moderately performing, and those with below 20% pass as low (UNEB, 2017). Six schools belonged to the category of high performing schools, 12 to the category of moderately performing while18 belonged to the category of low performing schools.

The table below presents data of Mbarara Municipality secondary schools in UNEB performance in Kiswahili language from Distinction 1 to Credit 4 for 2 years (2015 and 2016).

Table 2: Schools' UNEB performance in Kiswahili for the years 2015 and 2016

Performance level Category	Percentage of performance at distinction 1 to credit 4	Number of schools	Sample size
High performing	70-100	6	2
Moderately performing	20-69	12	2
Low performing	Below 20	18	2

Using simple random sampling, two schools were selected from each stratum. The two selected schools in each category were further categorized as treatment and control schools using random assignment. The results are as shown in table 3..

Table 3: Schools selected from the different strata

School	2015 (%)	Group category	2016 (%)	Average (%)	Performance Category
School – 1	81.4	Control	89.6	85.5	High
School – 2	84.7	Treatment	80.8	82.8	High
School – 3	65.4	Control	56.9	61.2	Moderate
School – 4	5.0	Control	3.1	4.1	Low
School – 5	7.8	Treatment	7.2	7.5	Low
School – 6	22.2	Treatment	23.8	23.0	Moderate

Student selection

After the selection of the schools into treatment and control groups, census sampling was used to select the form three students. To implement this, all students in a given class in the selected schools were subjected to pre and post-tests.

Table 4: Students Selected from the different strata

Number of schools in each category	Category of school in performance.	Number of form three students.
2	High performing	99
2	Moderate Performing	99
2	Low Performing	102
Total=6		Total =300students

3.5 Data collection Instruments

The instruments used to collect the data included lesson observation schedule, and written pre and post Kiswahili tests

3.5.1 Classroom lesson observation schedule

The classroom observation schedule was used by the researcher to collect data on the teaching and learning methods used in Kiswahili language classrooms. Classroom observation schedule adapted Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories system (Flanders, 1970).

Flanders' system was adopted for the study because it analyses classroom interaction concerning the teaching methods employed. learner-centered instructional methods were represented by the following categories; group discussions, think pair share, group presentations, numbered heads together while conventional or teacher centered methods were represented by lecturing.

3.5.2 The pre and post-tests

Comprehensive standardized Kiswahili language tests covering aspects of writing, reading, grammar and comprehension were used as tools to measure the achievement of competencies by the students in the Kiswahili language after using the learner centred

methodologies. These tests were developed by the researcher and validated by three senior teachers of Kiswahili language who are UNEB examiners and supervisors.

3.6 Data collection procedure

The introductory letter from the university enabled the researcher to obtain research permission from the relevant Municipal authorities before conducting the research. Subsequent clearance was sought from the Municipal Education Officer Mbarara as well as the headteachers of the participating schools. Upon clearance, the researcher visited the sampled schools to conduct the research. Before engaging the Form three students in the study, a one-hour meeting was organized to orient them on the nature of the study.

3.6.1 Lesson observation

To identify the teaching methods that were being used in teaching the Kiswahili language in the secondary schools in Mbarara municipality, the researcher attended a normal Kiswahili lesson and observed the teachers in all the selected schools while teaching. The researcher sat at the back center of the classroom to have a wider view of the happenings without obstructing the teacher or the students. The researcher observed the teaching basing on various categories of teaching styles on the FIAC system (Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories) that occurred during the teaching and learning process. Teaching styles were coded on a blank sheet of paper at an interval of 5 minutes in a normal 80-minute lesson. The researchers did not interfere in any way, nor exercise any control over the teacher, the learner, or the lesson content. After the process of teaching the researchers assessed the level of application of various teaching methods categorized as learner-centered methods (group discussion, group presentation, numbered heads together, think pair share) and conventional methods (lecturing). Tallies of each instructional method were made to indicate the frequency with which teachers used a certain instructional method. Results of lesson observation and their percentages were computed to determine the extent to which teachers were using the methods.

To establish the effect of learner-centered instructional methods of teaching on observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language among students in Mbarara Municipality.
The researchers formed two groups (experimental and control groups) for the students and administered a pre-test to both groups which were done in two and a half hours, the tests were marked and test scores recorded. After the pre-test had been administered, teachers who were to teach the learners in the experimental group were given the teaching guide and trained on how to teach using the

learner centered methods for two days in a session of 80 minutes per day. The learners in the control group were taught using conventional teaching methods while learners in the treatment group were taught using learner centered methods and teaching went on for five weeks.

In the lesson preceding the post-test, the second phase of lesson observation similar to the first one was done on teachers for the treatment group to establish how much improvement the teaching methods had been achieved. A second test (post-test) was also administered to all learners in both experimental and control groups after applying learner centered methodologies in the treatment group to determine whether there was any significant difference between the two groups in the mean scores.

3.7 Data analysis

The pre-test and post-test scores were then entered into Ms. Excel, cleaned, and imported to the SPSS program for analysis. Frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviation were computed. The comparison between pre and post-test results in each category was determined using paired samples t-test. The difference in performance between students in control and treatment groups was determined using an independent sample t-test. Both tests were computed at a 95% confidence level. Only learners who had done both pre and post-intervention tests were considered in the analysis.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee. This research was carried out with an acceptable level of integrity, taking into account the guidelines provided by the Research Ethics Committee of the University. In this regard, respondents were encouraged to participate voluntarily, information collected was kept confidential, collected data was used for academic purposes only among others.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of lesson observation

To identify instructional methods of teaching the Kiswahili language being used in Mbarara Municipality secondary schools. Six Kiswahili language teachers were observed while teaching before training on the use of learner-centered instruction. It was evident that, before the training of teachers on the use of learner- centered methods, most teachers used conventional methods in most of the lesson time, as presented in lesson observation schedule in selected schools.

Table 5: Frequency table for use of instructional methods by teachers from the selected schools before training

Time Range	Conventional (Lecture) method	Thinkpairshare	Numbered heads together	Group presentation	Group discussion
0-5	1,2				3,4,5,6
5-10	1,2,3,4,5,6				
10-15	1			3,4,5,6	2
15-20	2				1,3,4,5,6
20-25	1,2,3,4,5,6				
25-30	1,2,3,4,5,6				
30-35	3,4,5,6		2	1	
35-40	1,2	3,4,5,6			
40-45	2,3,4,5,6				1
45-50	1,2,3,4,5,6				
50-55	2,3,4,5,6	1			
55-60	1	6			2,3,4,5
60-65	1,2,3,4,5,6				
65-70	2,3,4,5,6		1		
70-75	1,2,3,4,5,6				
75-80	1	2,3,5,6			4
Total count	63	10	2	5	16
Total minutes	315	50	10	25	80
Percentages	65.6	10.4	2.1	5.2	16.7

Table 6: Summary of use of teaching methods by teachers before training

Teaching method	Percentage (%)
Conventional methods	65.6
Learner-centered methods	34.4

KEY

Time; 5minute interval per teaching method

Teachers; 1, 2,3,4,5, and 6.

Instructional methods; learner-centered methods (group discussion, Group presentation, think pair share, and Number heads together)

Conventional methods (lecturing)

In Table 5: we have the nature of Teaching Style in Kiswahili Language Classrooms. Time allocated to teach, and the number of teachers teaching a certain method and their Percentages (%) Group discussion was used 16.7%. Group presentation 5.2 % Lecturing 65.6% number heads together 2.1%. Think-pair-share 10.4%. Conventional methods (Lecturing) were observed the most (65.6%), followed by learner-centered methods (discussion, group presentation, think pair share, and number heads together).

The high occurrence of (lecturing) means that Kiswahili language classrooms before training were tied to the traditional mode of teaching (conventional) where teachers view themselves as sole sources of knowledge. Learners are therefore passive participants who are expected to participate when called upon. This confirms Flanders's two-thirds rule which serves to substantiate that typically teachers verbally dominate the classroom which in turn conditions students to become passive and dependent on the teachers (Flanders, 1970). The conventional (lecture) method dominance in Kiswahili language classrooms was due to lack of training on the use of learner-centered

methods in schools that would enable teachers to actively engage learners in the learning process.

Tanner (2009) similarly found that teacher talk dominated classroom talk and students talked only when they were called upon like in the case of a group presentation. Only that his study was on approaches to teaching and learning of life sciences while the current study focused on the teaching and learning of Kiswahili language. From the observation schedule, learner-centered methods were not given much consideration. Similarly, students rarely initiated what they were to learn, expressed ideas, initiated a new topic, or developed opinions. Out of the 480 total minutes used in all sessions 315 minutes were used on conventional methods(lecturing) to teach a Kiswahili language lesson and 165 minutes were used on the learner-centered methods (group discussion, presentation, think-pair-share, numbered heads to gather). This indicated that Kiswahili teachers use conventional methods most of the time during teaching. However, after the training of teachers on the use of learner-centered methods, there was a significant difference (among the treatment schools) after the observation as shown in the Table 7 below.

Table 7: Frequency table for use of instructional methods by teachers after training

Time Range	Conventional (Lecture)	Think pair share	Numbered heads together	Group presentation	Group discussion
0-5	1	3	1	2	1,23
5-10		2,	1	3,1,2	
10-15		3	3,1	3	1,2
15-20	3		2	1,2,	3
20-25		2	1,2,3	3,2	
25-30				1,3	2,3,1
30-35	3,		2	1	1,3
35-40	2,1		3	1,3	2
40-45	1,3		2	2,1,3	3
45-50		3	1,2,3		1,2
50-55	2,1	2,3	2,1		1
55-60	1,2,3	3			3,2
60-65	3		1	2.1	1,2,3
65-70	1		2	1,3,2,	
70-75		2	1,2	2	3,2
75-80		2,1	3	2,3	1
Total count	14	12	21	25	24
Total minutes	70	60	105	125	120
Percentages	14.6	12.5	21.9	26.0	25.0

From the observation schedule above three teachers had been trained on how to teach using the learner-centered methods. It is evident that, after training teachers, they effectively involved learners in the teaching and learning process for example 480 minutes used by the teachers to teach in all sessions. 410 minutes were used on learner-centered methods (group discussion, group presentation, think-pair-share, and numbered heads together) while 70 minutes were used on the conventional methods, learner-centered methods (group discussion, group presentation, number heads together, think pair share) were given much consideration. Three teachers gave directions to students in group presentations (26.0%), which improved their speaking competence. Similarly, students initiated what they were to learn, expressed ideas, initiated a new topic, or developed opinions in group discussion (25.0%) hence

improving their grammar skills, and teachers accepted and used pupils' ideas in think pair share (12.5%). Students contributed their ideas and were confident to ask teachers in number heads together (21.9) even those learners that were shy were engaged hence enhancing speaking skills. Therefore, the total percentage used by teachers on learner-centered methods was 85.4%. As teacher 1 stated, "Students responded to the questions and asked teachers without fear to pronounce words that would lead to teacher criticism." Besides, teachers had enough time to engage students. It was therefore important for teachers to involve learners during the classroom communication process in the teaching and learning of the Kiswahili language, Besides, Students understood when the lecture method was used at 14.6%. Students liked Kiswahili radio lessons in think-pair share method because it improved their listening competence. Student's best understood set books when dramatized in group presentations while other students preferred group work in think pair share for example two teachers invited Kiswahili guest speakers and got students involved hence improving their speaking skills. Teachers used examples while teaching making students recite poems during Kiswahili poetry lessons. The observation results for teachers' methods of teaching after training and using the learner-centered methods indicated an improvement in the use of the learner-centered methods at 85.4% while conventional methods were used at 14.6%. This indicated a significant difference and much

improvement between the teachers using learner-centered methods and those using conventional methods as shown in the tables above.

4.2 Results of pre and post-tests

Two tests were administered; pre-test and post-test to all the learners in the selected schools; both for the control and treatment groups tests

4.2 .1 Descriptive statistics for both the control and experimental group

To establish the effect of learner-centered instructional methods of teaching on observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language among secondary school students in Mbarara Municipality. Six schools in both the control and experimental group had a student sample of 297 students whose results were complete. The three schools in the control group had a sample of 150 students while the three schools in the treatment group had a sample of 147 students. Both groups did pre and post-tests.

The mean and the corresponding standard deviations for both pre and post-test for each selected school were computed as presented in Table 8

Table 8: Test scores in Kiswahili language for pre and post-tests in the selected schools

	Control schools			Treatment schools		
School codes.	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6
Number of students	47	48	55	42	51	54
Mean score, pre test	44.96	42.67	34.25	44.95	39.92	38.61
SD for pre test	15.20	11.85	12.23	16.52	15.07	14.71
Mean score, post test	46.57	42.72	37.53	64.57	64.45	60.91
SD for post test	14.76	9.64	11.10	10.46	12.14	10.50

Table 9: Summary statistics of scores in Kiswahili language for pre and post-tests for both control and experimental groups

	Control Group		Experimental Group	
Tests	Pre-test	Post Test	Pre-test	Post Test
Mean Scores	40.62	42.26	41.16	63.19
Standard deviation	12.94	11.83	15.42	11.03

Source: Primary data

The mean scores for the pre-test in experimental and control groups were 40.62 and 41.16 with standard deviations of 12.94 and 15.42 respectively. The mean scores for the post-test in the control and treatment groups were 42.26 and 63.19 with standard deviations of 11.83 and 11.03 respectively, both groups had almost similar pre-test results before training of teachers on the use of learner-centred methods. The post-test performances between the two groups were significantly different after training of teachers. Likewise, the mean scores for the pre-test and post-test for the experiment group were much different. An indication that student's best understood teachers using learner-centred methods hence achieving the observable academic competences.

4.2.2 Paired sample t-test results

The difference in performance in the pre-and post-tests for the control group was done with the paired sample t-test. The results are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10: Paired sample t-test results for the control group

	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed	Mean difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Post-test - Pre – test	1.323	149	0.188	0.56	-0.276	1.396

Source: Primary data

The average difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically insignificant (t = 1.323, df= 149, p = 0.188). On the average post-test results were 0.56 mean difference points higher than pretest results. It can therefore be concluded that the means for pre-and post-tests for the control group were similar and individual student performances were not different.

The difference in performance in the pre and post-tests for the treatment group was done with the paired sample t-test. The results are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11: Paired sample t-test results for the treatment group

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed	Mean difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Post - test - Pre test	24.54	146	0.000	22.31	20.51	24.10

Source: Primary data

The average difference between pretest and post-test scores was statistically significant (t = 24.54, df = 146, p = 0.000). On the average, post-test results were 22.31 points higher than pretest results. It can therefore be concluded that the means for pre-and post-tests for the treatment group were different and individual student performances were different.

4.2.3 The independent samples test results

The difference in performance between the control and treatment groups was determined using the independent samples t-test. The results are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: The independent samples t-test results

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed	Mean difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Treatment - control	15.41	295	0.000	21.12	18.46	24.10

Source: Primary data

One of the assumptions of independent samples t-test is the homogeneity of variances that is equality of variances across groups. This assumption was not violated that is the variances for the control and treatment groups were equal

(F= 1.70, p = 0.194). Therefore, the t value is trustworthy and valid.

There was a significant difference in performance in the post - test between students in the control and treatment groups (t = 15.41, p = 0.000). The average mark score for students in the treatment group was 21.12 points higher than the marked score for students in the control group. It can therefore be concluded that students in the treatment group performed better than those in the control group.

Discussion of results

To identify instructional methods of teaching the Kiswahili language being used in Mbarara Municipality secondary schools.

The study revealed that group discussion, group presentation, think-pair-share, and numbered heads together were the learner centered methods being used in Mbarara Municipality secondary schools before training while the conventional (lecture) was the most instructional method being used.

To establish the extent to which the learner-centered methods of instruction are being used in teaching the Kiswahili language in secondary schools in Mbarara Municipality, it was observed that, teachers dominated most of the lesson time before training them on the use of learnercenterd methods and later on after training teachers on the use of learnercenterd methods it was revealed in the table above that, learnercenterd methods dominated the teaching and learning process. Similary the study is in agreement with Smialek and Boburka (2006) study which investigated the effectiveness of learner centered learning on college students' development of musical skills and found that learner-centerd interventions proved to be more effective than traditional lectures or occasional group work.

The study further revealed that before training of teachers on the use of learner-centered methods, teachers dominated most of the lesson time in Kiswahili lessons. Conventional (lecture) methods of teaching were most frequently used (65.6%) while learner-centered methods of teaching were least used (34.4%). The high occurrence of conventional methods meant that Kiswahili language classrooms were tied to the conventional mode of teaching where teachers view themselves as sole sources of knowledge. Learners are therefore passive participants who are expected to participate when called upon. This confirms Flanders' two-thirds rule which serves to substantiate that typically teachers verbally dominate the classroom which in turn conditions students to become passive and dependent on the teacher (Flanders, 1970).

Tanner (2009) similarly found that teacher talk dominated classroom talk and students talked only when they were called upon like in the case of answering questions. Only that his study was on approaches to teaching and learning of life sciences while the current study focused on the teaching and learning of Kiswahili language.

After the training of teachers on the use of learner-centered methods, learner-centered methods of teaching were now given much attention and consideration.

The table below shows the extent to which learnercenterd methods were used after training of teachers on the use of learnercenterd instructional methods.

Learner-centered methods of teaching were now used at 85.4% while conventional methods were used at 14.6%. This indicated that teachers accepted to use learner-centered methods. Doherty and Hilberge (2007) pointed out that, learnercenterd pedagogy promoted student achievement in terms of Kiswahili language pedagogy. The results of this study imply that teaching styles play a crucial role in determining students' academic achievement and are in agreement with Doherty and Hilberge findings that pointed out learnercenterd pedagogy to promote student achievement. This shows that learning occurs through learnercenterd classrooms rather than teacher centred. students must be allowed to exhibit what they have learnt in different ways not just in testing and examination. Hence improving student's observable academic competences.

To determine the effect of learner-centered instructional methods of teaching on observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language among students in Mbarara Municipality Secondary Schools.

A paired sample t-test on both the control and treatment group was performed. It was evidenced that, there was no significant difference in performance between the pre and post tests for the control group while there was a significant difference in performance between the pre and post tests for the treatment group. To further confirm the effect of learner-centered instructional methods of teaching on observable academic competencies, an independent t-test was performed using post-test results on both control and treatment group. The test revealed that learner-centered methods of instruction improved learners' academic competencies in the Kiswahili language in Mbarara Municipality. The findings of this study agree with the results of Banda et al. (2014), Tababal & Kahssay (2011), Sogoni (2017) whose results favor learner-centered instructions.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Students taught using learner-centred methods performed better than those taught using conventional methods. The hypothesis that learner centred methods of instruction improve learners' observable academic competencies in the Kiswahili language was accepted. This shows that learning occurs through learner-centerd classrooms rather than teacher centred and students must be allowed to exhibit what they have learnt in different ways not just in testing and examination. This suggests that the use of learner-centred methods in teaching Kiswahili language has the potential of improving learners' observable academic competencies.

5.2 Recommendations

Teachers need to embrace the use of learner centered methods of instruction as a way of improving observable academic competences in Kiswahili language. As Sunderman (2006) recommends that teachers should use constructivist instruction model to motivate student learning. Doherty and Hilberge (2007) pointed out that learner-centerd pedagogy promoted student achievement in terms of Kiswahili language pedagogy the results of this study imply that teaching styles play a crucial role in determining students' academic achievement in line with the recommendations of Sunderman (2006). Conventional methods of teaching do not bear good results and therefore integration of learner- centered methods of instruction in teaching and learning process aims at helping learners improve their academic performance. Therefore, there is a need to train teachers on the learner-centred methods of teaching for effective content delivery, this will help students improve their performance. The Ministry of Education and Policy makers should ensure that Kiswahili teachers adopt new methods of teaching and strategies which are learner-centered to improve performance in Kiswahili language.

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