Research has shown that attitude towards a language affects performance in the language. Positive attitudes towards Kiswahili have been found to contribute to students readiness to learn. While the poor performance of Kenyan students in Kiswahili examinations is frequently raised, information about specific weak points of candidates is never forthcoming, and remains general. The study also sought to determine the relationship, if any, between one’s linguistic background and attitude towards Kiswahili. This study was based on Edward Thorndike’s identical elements theory of the transfer of training. The study concluded that there is a difference in attitudes held towards Kiswahili by Bantu and non-Bantu students in Uasin Gishu County. It is recommended in this study that an effort should be made to incorporate remedial work in the teaching of Kiswahili especially for the non-Bantu speaking students so as to uplift their mean scores. Teachers should also be made aware of factors such as climatic, financial or social conditions that could contribute to the differences in mean scores.
Background to the Study

For over ten years, this researcher was involved in teaching Kiswahili as a second language to secondary school students in mainly non-Bantu speaker-dominated areas. The researcher encountered numerous situations of hopeless apathy towards Kiswahili as a subject. Yet it was a compulsory examinable subject. Occasionally, the researcher encountered flashes of enthusiasm and remarkable performance but on the whole, general indifference was frequently observed. Could it be a case of attitude, linguistic background, and gender or physical and social environment?

Research has shown that attitude towards a language affects performance in the language. For example Mwangi (1995) argues that a representative sample of Luo-speakers (who are non-Bantu) he studied had a negative attitude towards Kiswahili because they considered the language "foreign". Mwangi discovered a positive relationship between attitude and performance. But the sample was homogenous. That is, he did not compare the Luo speakers to any other group.

Positive attitudes towards Kiswahili have been found to contribute to students readiness to learn the language (Omondi et al., 1985). According to these researchers, 91% of the students they interviewed for a study listed Kiswahili as one of the languages that they knew. In that same study, all parents interviewed reported that they wanted their children to learn Kiswahili. Many respondents in that study spoke about Kiswahili with a lot of patriotism saying it was "the language of Kenya". In their survey, Omondi et al. were not concerned about performance. Yet their findings reveal a general positive attitude towards Kiswahili.

It has been argued that performance in a second language is affected by one's attitude. Lambert (1967) found that the attitudes of learners towards a linguistic group have a significant effect on the learning of that language. Oilier (1977) found a relationship between attitude and second language acquisition. Chinese speaking foreign students in the United States of America who had generally positive attitudes towards the target language group were found to be more proficient in English as a second language.

Kiswahili characteristically lament poor performance in Lugha ya Kiswahili (Kiswahili language). According to the reports cited, the majority of the candidates who attain low marks are neither able to write suitable vocabulary, correct grammar nor to write sustained essays. However, since it is not their primary objective, the KNEC reports do not attempt to attribute the weaknesses detected to any specific cause except for reference to the most obvious; the teacher and teaching methodology. For example, it is never clear from those reports whether candidates sitting the Kiswahili examination all over the Republic make the same type of errors, given that Kenyan students belong to different linguistic groups. It is also never clear whether the sample scripts that they use for reports are representative of all linguistic groups of students.

Further, the reports neither specify the type of schools nor indicate the physical or social environment which produces the poorest results in Kiswahili. Very little is said about the possible causes of poor performance in Kiswahili. Nothing is said about the differences in performance in Kiswahili between the linguistic groups of students.

Socio-linguists have shown that the social and linguistic background of a learner will influence the learner's mastery and performance of that language (Dulay et al., 1982; Ervin-Trip, 1979). The social milieu, that is, one's native language or the language which is commonly spoken in an area, the family and the school often influence the laming of a second language.

Gouala (1981) found that students encountered difficulties in the pronunciation and construction of English because of incompatibility with the first language. Earlier, Gouala (1981), Lado and Fries (1957) had stated that second language learners made errors that could be attributed to the native language structure. They noted that a process of negative transfer impedes success in second language acquisition.

The results of a research by Kembo-Sure (1996) augment the importance of the social milieu in language learning. Kembo - Sure found that the school, the family, friends, films and television, and one's mother tongue, influence the way learners speak English. Does the linguistic background and social environment affect students’ performance in Kiswahili?

Polome (1967) and Whiteley (1969) describe Kiswahili as a Bantu language with origins
from among several Bantu languages. Even then, standard Kiswahili is, for instructional and learning purposes, a second language for the great majority of learners notwithstanding their mother tongue. If it is granted that Kiswahili is a second language for most students, then it should be true that problems encountered in the course of learning and examination should be similar for all. On the other hand, it is possible for Bantu speaking students, whose first languages are closer to Kiswahili, to enjoy comparative advantage and perform better than their non-Bantu counterparts. Thus, the researchable question is whether Bantu speaking students enjoy any advantage in the course of language production over their non-Bantu speaking compatriots. Do the Bantu-speaking students perform better in Kiswahili essay (insha) than the non-Bantu students?

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While the poor performance of Kenyan students in Kiswahili examinations is frequently raised, information about specific weak points of candidates is never forthcoming, and remains general.

The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) report of 1992, for example, stated that overall, many candidates were unable to use correct vocabulary, sentence structure, spellings and grammar. The KNEC report of 1993 also highlights poor performance in Kiswahili. The reports, however, do not go deeper to pinpoint individual differences in performance between candidates, which could be attributed to the candidates’ linguistic backgrounds. Practising teachers who prepare the candidates for examination would be happy to note the specific types of errors made by candidates in schools in different regions of the country.

Within the various regions that make up Kenya, the people who live in them are either Bantu or non-Bantu. The classification is significant because Kiswahili is placed in the category of Bantu languages (Polome, 1967; Whiteley, 1969). So far, no studies have been conducted to assess the magnitude of the possible relationship between a student’s first language and performance in Kiswahili. Similarly, no studies have been conducted to find out the exact type of errors learners of Kiswahili make—they grammatical, syntactical or vocabulary and whether these errors may be attributed to one's linguistic background.

A number of studies have been done on attitude and performance in Kiswahili but there are none which compare the attitudes of Bantu speaking students towards Kiswahili and their non-Bantu counterparts towards the same. Only closely related is the study by
Mwangi (1995) who found a relationship between attitudes of non-Bantu speakers and their performance in Kiswahili in Maseno Division. However, Mwangi’s study did not compare groups and the results could be attributed to a host of other factors. While Mwangi states that Dholuo speakers harbour a negative attitude towards Kiswahili regarding it as a foreign language only taught in schools, Omondi et al. (1985) had earlier established that many non-Bantu speakers fondly described Kiswahili as a national language thus, negating the Mwangi’s conclusion that Kiswahili was foreign to Luos.

Literature reveals several studies conducted to determine the relationship between attitude of a learner toward a target language and its effect on his/her performance (Lambert et al, 1972; Larsen et al., 1994; Ellis, 1995 and Kembo-Sure, 1996). Few have sought to compare performance on the basis of linguistic background, subdivided into gender, location of school (and therefore exposure to the language) and attitude as variables. Definitely, no study has been reported with regard to how differently or similarly students in Kenya who are either Bantu or non-Bantu fair on a given writing task. Does the fact that Kiswahili is a Bantu language favour speakers of Kikuyu, Luyia, and Gusii when asked to write insha? Do non-Bantu speaking students suffer any disadvantage when writing simply because their first languages are further removed from Kiswahili in origin?

It became necessary to investigate the possible difference, if any, in performance between Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students when given a similar writing task. The specific problem investigated was stated as:

Is there any significant difference in performance between Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing among form four students within Uasin Gishu District?

**Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine, the influence that a student’s linguistic (Bantu or non-Bantu) background and also within those broad parameters the influence that the location of a school, gender and attitude have on performance in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing. The study also sought to determine the relationship, if any, between one’s linguistic background and attitude towards Kiswahili. Attitude subsequently became an independent variable in relation to insha
scores and an attempt was made to find out its relationship with performance in *insha*.

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

i) To determine the relationship between linguistic background and attitude towards Kiswahili language among secondary school learners in Uasin Gishu County of Kenya

ii) To determine the relationship, if any, between linguistic background (Bantu or non-Bantu) and performance on an *insha* test.

**Research Hypotheses**

To realise the objectives of the study, the following research hypotheses were set to be tested.

a) **HOI** There is no significant difference in performance scores in Kiswahili essay (*insha*) writing between Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students.

b) **Significance and Justification of the Study**

c) The rationale for carrying out an investigation into the possible differences in performance in *insha* writing between Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students was to create awareness among educators and educationists concerning the factors that may contribute to students excelling or not excelling in Kiswahili. Kiswahili essay (*insha*) writing provided an appropriate medium for assessing the language production skills.

d) **Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on Edward Thorndike's identical elements theory of the transfer of training. According to this theory, learners will respond to a new situation much as they would to a similar one that they are familiar with (Thorndike, 1913 in Hemgenhahn B.R., 1976). Thorndike stresses the importance of 'identical elements' in the transfer of training. Thus, the number of elements that the two situations have in common determines the amount of transfer between the familiar situation and the unfamiliar one. This theory cast the framework of the study since it would help in finding out whether Bantu speakers transferred the elements of Bantu languages identical to those of Kiswahili into Kiswahili and whether this therefore, could positively affect performance in Kiswahili. It was also sought to show whether the non- Bantu speakers who transferred elements that were not identical to those of Kiswahili from their languages were negatively affected in their performance in Kiswahili.

f) **Research Design and Methodology**
Population and Sampling Procedure

There are 82 secondary schools and about 3,000 form four students in Uasin Gishu District (District Education Office, 1995; Moi University Teaching Practice records 1997). Eldoret urban centre forms the Headquarters of the District. The surrounding areas are inhabited by heterogeneous groups. The rural areas are predominantly occupied by the non-Bantu speakers of the Kalenjin language. Even then, there are some settlement schemes which have for a long time been occupied by the Bantu speakers of the Kikuyu and Luhya languages, e.g. Burnt Forest, Matunda and Soy areas (District Development Plan, 1988-92). Six secondary schools were selected for the study using purposive sampling type of the non-probability sampling technique. Three of the schools used were rural and the other three schools were urban. The rural schools were selected (using a cluster sampling technique) on the basis of location to enhance the likelihood of meeting the target subjects. The urban schools were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Schools selected were those which were most likely to have both Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students. A sample of 160 students from the six secondary schools was used in the study.

After six participating schools had been identified, the next task involved selecting one stream only to take the test in each school. However, in one of the schools, two streams took the test. The subject teachers assisted the researcher in picking the class ‘blindly’. This approach does not appear to have affected the results of the research because none of the schools used place students in streams following ability.

Data was collected from a total of 280 students. However, this was reduced to the required number of 160. The excess questionnaires were eliminated on the basis of: those which were found incomplete, a) those whose accompanying Kiswahili essays (insha) appeared incomplete or in which the subjects appeared to have ignored instructions.

After the two steps above, there still remained 178 questionnaires. These were divided into two groups of Bantu and non-Bantu following the background information given. Then 18 questionnaires were eliminated (blindly) after counting 40 female subjects and 40 male subjects of each linguistic group. The final sample consisted of the following students as shown in Table 3.1. For all statistical
purposes, it was assumed that the population and sample were normal in distribution.

**Table 1 Distribution of Subjects by Linguistic Group, Location, Type of School and Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bantu</th>
<th>Non-Bantu</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Boys</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Girls</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Boys</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Girls</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding Boys</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding Girls</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day School Boys</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day School Girls</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology and Statistical Procedures used in Data Analysis

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire which included a Kiswahili essay (insha) writing task. These were analyzed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics. First, the objective was stated. Then the questionnaire items relevant to the objective were isolated and described using frequency distribution and percentages. The subjects were divided into Bantu and non-Bantu speakers. From the scores obtained in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing, a mean score for each group was calculated and a standard deviation derived. A one way Analysis of Variance was used to determine differences, if any, in performance between the two groups.

In the analysis reported here, the F-test and the chi-square ($\chi^2$) test were used in testing hypotheses. The F-test was preferred to other tests used for interval and ratio data because it is easier to perform and allows comparison of three or more means at the same time (Broota, 1989). The $\chi^2$-test is ideal in situations where data is ordinal (Kerlinger, 1983).

In analyzing data obtained from the attitude scale, frequency distribution and percentages were used. Standard deviations and variances were worked out. The 2x2 contingency tables were drawn and the $\chi^2$-test was administered to determine the relationship between a linguistic group and attitude towards Kiswahili. After computations, the computed values were compared to the table values. The null hypothesis was rejected if the computed value was greater than the table value; in which case the alternative hypothesis was assumed to be true.

Relationship between Linguistic Background and Attitude

One of the objectives of this study was to establish the relationship, if any, between subjects’ linguistic background and their attitude towards Kiswahili. To work out the linguistic background as an independent variable and attitude towards Kiswahili as a dependent variable, contingency tables were extracted from the master Table 4.4.

Table 2: (Summary Responses of Bantu and non-Bantu students’ Attitude towards Kiswahili is an extraction from Table 4.4. Using the information in the table (Table 4.9) a chi-square ($\chi^2$) test was administered. Degrees of freedom were worked out and decisions taken at 0.05 level of confidence within 1 degree of freedom. In this case the computed $\chi^2$ value was found to be 4.44.
against the critical $x^2$ value of 3.84. In view of the result, it was not possible to retain the null hypothesis: that there is no relationship between linguistic background and attitude towards Kiswahili. Instead it was concluded that there is a difference in attitudes held towards Kiswahili by Bantu and non-Bantu students in Uasin Gishu District.

Table 3: Summary Responses of both Bantu and Non-Bantu Students’ Attitude towards Kiswahili

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bantu</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Bantu</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data from Part II of the Questionnaire - *insha* Writing Task

This part of the questionnaire required respondents to write a continuous prose in Kiswahili of between 500 and 700 words on the given topic. The essence of the question was to write a letter to a newspaper editor giving suggestions on what ought to be done to control and reduce spiralling road accidents. Marks were awarded on sentence structure, spellings of words, use of vocabulary, mastery of content and use of grammar.

The independent variables were taken to be a subject's linguistic background while the scores on the *insha* writing task were the dependent variables.

The respondents were divided into Bantu and non-Bantu speakers. Overall, the Bantu speakers attained a mean score of 74.6 in *insha* writing while the non-Bantu speakers attained a mean score of 50.4. On all sub-scales of the *insha* writing Bantu speaking subjects appear to attain a superior average score. Whether or not the reported means are significantly different was only ascertained after the figures were subjected to statistical tests.

Testing Hypotheses

The main purpose of the study reported here was to find out whether or not differences in performance in Kiswahili essay (*insha*) writing exist between Bantu speaking and non-Bantu speaking students. Several hypotheses were set to be tested and either accepted or rejected. The decision to accept or reject a hypothesis was made following the results of a statistical test. In the subsequent pages, the objectives are first stated followed by testing of related hypotheses and the results of the tests presented and finally discussed.
The first objective was:

To describe the form four students in six selected schools of Uasin Gishu District in terms of whether they are Bantu or non-Bantu and show the relationship, if any, between linguistic background and performance on an insha test.

Frequency distribution and percentages were used to describe the demographic items number 6-11 in Part IA of the questionnaire. Each subject was given a rank number (1-160) for identity. The subjects were divided into two groups: Bantu and non-Bantu. A mean score for each group was calculated. A standard deviation was derived. One way Analysis of Variance was used to establish whether or not performance in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing was basically the same between Bantu and non-Bantu students.

The related hypothesis HOI was then tested using F-test at 0.05 level of significance within n-1 degrees of freedom.

**HOI: There is no significant difference in performance scores in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing between Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students.**

The results of this hypothesis are shown in Table 4.10. Bantu and non-Bantu groups of students were isolated to constitute independent variables. Using raw scores performance in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing, the mean score was calculated for each group. The resultant mean scores became the dependent variables. The Bantu-speaking students had a mean score of 74.6 and the non-Bantu speaking students had a mean score of 50.4. The standard deviation for the Bantu speakers was 11.9, and for the non-Bantu speakers was 11.4. The variance for the Bantu speakers as group one was 142 and the variance for the non-Bantu speakers as group two was 128.9. Using the formula for the F-test, the computed value of F was found to be 1.11. On the other hand, the critical value of F arrived at by extrapolation was 1.43. In view of the fact that the computed value of F was less than the critical value of F, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in performance scores on performance in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing between Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students.
Table 5: Mean Scores of the Bantu and non-Bantu linguistic groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bantu</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Bantu</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>128.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computed value of $F = 1.11$ Critical value of $F = 1.43$

**Conclusions**

The present study compared performance of Bantu and non-Bantu speaking students in Kiswahili essay (insha) writing. Data from respondents and findings resulting from the analysis of the data were presented, analysed and discussed. Conclusions in this study were made in the context of the objectives, research hypotheses set to be tested and the corresponding findings.

As stated in the objectives of the study section, the study sought to find out the relationship, if any, between linguistic background and performance in an *insha* test. It was hypothesised that no differences existed between Bantu and non-Bantu speakers in *insha* writing. The statistical testing revealed no significant difference in the mean scores of the two linguistic groups in *insha* writing. In view of this, the hypothesis was accepted. The apparent difference observed may be due to factors other than linguistic background.

For example, the difference in performance scores noted in this study were between Bantu female and non-Bantu female students. It is the conclusion of this study that the factors responsible for this difference are not linguistic. They were presumed to be psychological or cultural because a number of hypotheses around differences due to linguistic background were tested and all proved that no difference in performance scores existed. It was also established that of all the Bantu female students none expressed a negative attitude towards Kiswahili but non-Bantu female students were negative towards Kiswahili. Therefore, the difference in performance could also be a matter of attitude.
Recommendations

Given these findings, it is recommended in this study that an effort should be made to incorporate remedial work in the teaching of Kiswahili especially for the non-Bantu speaking students so as to uplift their mean scores. Teachers should also be made aware of factors such as climatic, financial or social conditions that could contribute to the differences in mean scores.

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