



# Factors Leading to Kiswahili Poor Speaking Skills in Kicukiro Secondary Schools, Rwanda

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**Abstract:** *This study aims at investigating factors that lead to Kiswahili poor Speaking Skills in Kicukiro Secondary Schools, Rwanda. The study was guided by constructivism theory by Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Different methods were used to collect data, including interview, classroom observation and document analysis. As a result, this research used three Kiswahili teachers from three different secondary schools and twelve students from those schools. Data from the research were analyzed qualitatively. The target population was selected purposively. Findings showed that students do not speak Kiswahili effectively owing to different reasons, namely: shyness of students while speaking Kiswahili, lack of motivation, fear of speaking Kiswahili in public, lack of Kiswahili spoken vocabulary as well as lack of confidence in speaking Kiswahili language. Therefore, this study recommends various educational institutions, including the ministry of education and its stakeholders to provide enough teaching resources in schools, cooperation of learners with parents' involvements in learning development of their children, teachers must be well equipped in strategies that help students acquire Kiswahili speaking skills.*

**Keywords:** *Factors, Kiswahili, Speaking, Teaching, Learning, Poor speaking skills*

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## 1. Introduction

Kiswahili is an African language which is among four official languages in Rwanda. Thus, this language is taught as second language in various Rwandan secondary schools. As a result, it is taught in ordinary level as well as in some linguistic combinations and at universities. In addition to that, Rwanda strengthened teaching and learning this bantu language after observing that Kiswahili had been marginalized for many years. Various reasons led to this marginalization, namely: Catholic missionaries, culture, hostility of Rwandan citizens as well as Swahili speakers' numerical weakness (Munyakazi, 1984). As a result, these factors have resulted into Kiswahili poor speaking skills. Apart from that marginalisation, integration of Rwanda in East African community was the root cause to speed up the teaching and learning of Kiswahili language. Thus, this language was obliged to be taught to Rwandan students so

as to be equipped with Kiswahili proficiency. Therefore, those students are taught Kiswahili language to compete at international labor market, specifically east African labor market which uses that language in various domains.

## Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors lead to Kiswahili poor speaking skills?
2. What are the strategies to overcome factors that cause Kiswahili poor speaking skills?

## 2. Literature Review

Speaking is an art, which is something the teacher ought to be aware of. It requires the use of many communicative abilities across a variety of topics. A method of human

communication known as language makes use of arbitrary signals such as speech, noises, gestures, or written symbols (Yimam, 2019). Thus, speaking is the act of conveying information or verbally expressing our thoughts, emotions and feelings. This idea was stated by Diep (2017) whereby he stated that the speaking skill is the ability for conveying thoughts, emotions and ideas to your audience. Therefore, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency besides self-confidence are the most important elements for measuring learner speaking skill.

Students often struggle when they are asked to give a speech in front of their classmates in class despite scoring highly on grammar tests and reading comprehension (Hamad, 2013). In fact, many students hesitate while speaking which is caused by missing the appropriate words. According to Fauzan (2016), speaking is referred to as the use of language verbally and it is seen as a complicated competence. Speaking acts as the central skill of humankind as it's the sign of communication ability by conveying our thoughts and ideas. While communicating by speaking, we have the intended message that we need to forward to the receiver.

Lukitasari (2003) studied learners' strategies in overcoming their speaking problems. The results indicated that students are challenged by speaking barriers like shyness, lack of appropriate vocabulary while speaking, fearing participation and the use of mother tongue. The search also revealed that when learners have not learnt vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation well, they cannot perform better in speaking skill.

Rababa'h (2005) stated factors that cause poor speaking skill among learners as learners' abilities, teaching and learning methods, curriculum planning and the context. In fact, all stakeholders in education are pillars that can help learners in their learning, that is why if they don't work hand in hand, the learning goals and objectives cannot be achieved. Qasim (2021) conducted a study of the factors affecting the learning of English-speaking skills and found that lack of self-confidence, anxiety, poor grammar and pronunciation are factors that affects English speaking skill among learners. In his study, did not indicate strategies for overcoming these challenges faced by teachers as they teach languages.

Ahmed (2016) probed the problems and difficulties of speaking that encounter English students at Al Quds Open University. The findings revealed that some students had challenges speaking for various reasons, including shyness, nervousness, and lack of confidence. The findings from the two studies are closely similar.

Urrutia & Vega (2010) conducted a study on encouraging teenagers to improve speaking skills through games. They revealed learners' lack of vocabulary, reticence, and fear of being rejected. Additionally, it was discovered that the ambiance of the classroom, the learners' collaboration, self-confidence, grammar knowledge, and other factors forced them to improve their speaking abilities. Therefore, the speaking skill receives less training focus since it is the sole skill that is excluded from examination. Along with grammar and vocabulary, reading and writing are the primary areas of emphasis. Speaking skill may be included into the teaching of other skills, but tutors believe that there isn't enough time for that, and speaking is undermined by other skills because they are counted in exam, but speaking isn't (Urrutia & Vega, 2010). What teachers must know is that learners learn speaking skills by speaking. That is why the role of teachers is to guide learners in teaching and learning a language. Different experts have done research on the factors that lead to the poor speaking skills among learners, but few have been done on Kiswahili language. Many of those studies were conducted in English subjects and written in the same language.

## 2.1 Factors causing poor Kiswahili Speaking Skills

**Shyness:** According to Gebhard (2000) shyness is the feeling that many students face as they are obliged to speak any language. This statement is in line with Kiswahili poor speaking skills. Meaning that, students who learn Kiswahili language, encounter that speaking problem when they are requested Kiswahili. Shyness starts when learners are asked to comment on learning activity such dialogue or group presentation in in front of the class. This makes learners to forget some words while they need to say in speaking performance (Suryani, Suarnajaya & Pratiwi, 2020). The speaking performance is already seen in understanding subjects and how learners perform while speaking. Learners must understand that speaking skill helps them to perform better in front of the class by convincing the audience.

**Anxiety:** Anxiety is defined as the feeling of mind associated with learning situation of a foreign language (Horwitz, 2012). This statement means that, anxiety is the major factor that prevent students from speaking a foreign language. We totally agree with this argument, saying that anxiety is a big challenge for Rwandan Students, who learn a foreign language, which is Kiswahili. It has been seen that anxiety has a negative impact on students and makes them nerve-wracking. According to Alhmadi (2014) anxiety happens while learners is learning speaking skills in class. Learners continue to be unprepared for risk-taking

and so find themselves in a problematic scenario. This was stated by Alrasheedi (2020) where he said that learners who encounter obstacle like anxiety are forced to refrain from taking part in speaking activities. Thus, learners' anxiety has negative impact on their oral performance that is why learners must be given freedom to the topic chosen so as to be feel contented and dare to speak in target language.

**Lack of Confidence:** Students are not confident in speaking a language. Some of them fail to converse as well as listen to other people, who are interacting with them (Nsengiyumva, 2019). This argument goes hand in hand with Kiswahili poor speaking skills. This is because, lack of confidence a big impediment for speaking Kiswahili. That occurs, as students are not confident in whatever they are speaking. In this case, they choose to keep quiet rather than expressing themselves. The low self-confidence obstructs a learner's ability in succeeding in class. Sometimes learners feel low self-confidence by pretending that there are learners who perform better than them especially in speaking skills (Fatmawati, Hauna & Supiani, 2020). In addition, they feel to be mocked and ridiculed by their peers when they make mistakes. Lack of confidence makes learners feel insecure and anxious in language learning especially Kiswahili language in secondary school.

**Lack of Exposure to a Language:** Learners' environment is the most pillar in language learning which works as external motivation (Alrasheed, 2020). Once learners are using the target language in their environment by communication with its speakers, they will be able to master and to effectively communicate the target language. The problem that learners of second language face is lack of people whom they can share ideas by using that language. In fact, the conducive environment offers learners the opportunities to learn the second language at ease as it allows them to feel free at home. In contrast, in some communities' learners learn the second language whereby they are in class only without making practice out of the class especially when they reach home. This is referred to Rwandan society whereby some learners don't have opportunities of using Kiswahili in real life situation because its speakers are very few by comparing these of English speakers. According to Ikuramutse (2022) a friendly learning environment helps a learner to master the language as he/she motivated by the surroundings. Thus, learners don't get time and opportunities as some parents and friends cannot communicate by using Kiswahili language.

**Lack of motivation:** Lack of motivation is the major element, that prevent students from learning a language effectively (Songsiri, 2010). This statement means that, students fail to learn any language owing to lacking

motivation. That lack of motivation results into failing to acquire different language patterns. According to Hong & Ganapathy (2017) the cognitive theory of learning is divided into two components which are learning and motivation. Hence, in teaching and learning process learners can have intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Firstly, learner can motivate him/herself by looking at the important of learning the language in real life situation. Secondly, learners can be motivated by educators while they are learning in a friendly environment that facilitate them to learn with enough resources. Learners cannot have a brave while speaking when they are not receiving motivation and encouragement from teachers and their fellow students in a class (Humaera, 2015). Learners need motivation and encouragement from educators, parents and classmates. For that reason, if learners receive motivation from all stakeholders in education, they will participate in language learning because there is no obstacle that humps their learning. That is way motivation is the main pillar in promoting learning whereby learning can also provide motivation again. That view is in line with Kiswahili poor speaking skills because, students are incompetent in speaking Kiswahili because they are not motivated as well as being interested in that language.

### **Fear of Committing Grammatical Mistakes**

Students are afraid of making various grammatical mistakes ahead of their mates. This results into Kiswahili mispronunciation, where students commit many grammatical mistakes, while uttering Kiswahili (Sebazungu, 2015). This means that, students fear to commit mistakes pertaining to grammar on account of being laughed by their colleagues. Mistakes provide teachers with information on what students have learnt and what they still need to learn (Kampookaew, 2020). This reminds us that learner can't learn a language especially the second language without making mistakes. That is why a teacher is there to investigate mistakes that are produced by learners of second language (Gass et al., 2013; Kampookaew, 2020). This problem is the key major challenge for students, who learn Kiswahili language, where they fear to make many grammatical mistakes as they speak it.

## **2.2 Strategies to overcome factors that Affect Kiswahili Speaking Skills**

**Self-Correction:** A speaker's detection of "an error either during or immediately following production and stops and reformulates the speech" is considered a self-correction (Tonkyn & Wigglesworth, 2000; Varcellotti & McCormick, 2018). Students may keep track of their language use while speaking and compare it to interlanguage, which can lead to self-corrections and

dropped sentences. Students who frequently make mistakes have a more restricted understanding of the target language, making it harder for them to spot mistakes and fix them (Camps, 2013). Therefore, Students correct their speaking mistakes, one another to speed up their linguistic mastery. This argument is in line with correcting Kiswahili poor speaking skills. This is because, it can be helpful in terms of improving Kiswahili spoken language.

**Reading:** Mushimiyimana (2016) shows that, reading plays a great role in increasing language spoken vocabulary as well as its grammar. This argument means that, reading is the major element in increasing spoken vocabulary, specifically vocabulary used in spoken language. Language learners will acquire vocabulary through reading, which will improve their speaking abilities and help them use the target language's structure (Mart, 2012). Therefore, the development of speaking abilities requires all of these elements, which are learned through reading. Developing speaking skills through reading is very essential task which helps learners to master the language that they learn. When learners are reading different texts they understand the grammar, vocabulary and how sentences are constructed. Thus, grammar aids students in creating understandable sentences when speaking.

**Lexical Resolution:** Students try to solve their language difficulties to fill the gap pertaining to lexical items (Bange, 1992). This statement means that students do their best to solve the lexical problems related to language vocabulary. This correlates with Kiswahili poor speaking skills because, lack of vocabulary is the root cause of Kiswahili poor speaking skills.

**Discovery Method:** In a learning environment known as "discovery learning," the student must independently find the main subject matter of what is to be learnt (Hanafi, 2016). With the help of specific activities, the students can use this strategy to get information and build their knowledge. Learners are also stimulated to ask questions or share ideas in teaching and learning. According to Mushimiyimana (2016) discovery method mobilizes personal experience of students, where the group of students appreciate as well as solving the problem, that they encounter as they are speaking a language. This method is related to constructivism theory whereby learners learn by construct their own knowledge rather than receiving the final learning material from teachers. Henceforth, teacher of language will give his learners freedom of discovering the solution of learning material by solving different linguistic problems, that they confront as they are interacting with one another linguistically. This means that learners are problem solvers in gathering, comparing, contrasting and drawing conclusions.

**Group Works:** Group works are the best ways, that students use as they are sharing ideas and knowledge pertaining to different linguistic items to step up the spoken language (Mushimiyimana, 2016). This statement means that, group works are key element in promoting students' speaking skills. Thus, this happens because, group works are all about sharing ideas, that results into getting vocabulary to be in spoken language. Therefore, this method is all about solving the problem of language poor speaking skills. Togetherness rises when every learner is free from speaking in group work according to how he/she understands the work given by teachers. The findings from group discussions must be shared to the whole class in group presentation whereby every member from the group has the idea to their final work. Thus, shyness, anxiety and lack of motivation are no longer obstacles to the languages as every member from the group is presenting what they have already discussed in group.

### 3. Methodology

Our study was qualitative research and findings were analysed by using words instead of using numbers. Analyzing data qualitatively requires the researcher to use his critical thinking skills by matching the finding and previous studies. As a result, we used classroom observation, interview and document analysis to collect data about factors that lead to poor speaking of Kiswahili. The study was conducted in Kicukiro district. Three Kiswahili teachers and twelve students from three selected schools were chosen to participate. Those participants were chosen purposively because they knew Kiswahili language. In addition, they were aware of different Kiswahili speaking problems. Moreover, the education background and in teaching experience of these teachers allow them to be selected by the researcher as he knew they information will be relevant to the current study.

As a result, this study is guided by constructivism theory. Thus, constructivism theory is defined as the idea that students construct knowledge independently, without any intervention of their teacher (George, 1991). According to the philosophy of constructivism, students create their own knowledge rather than simply absorbing it. This statement means that learners participate significantly in their learning, where every student learn constructs the content of learning material oneself. Learners constructs new knowledge from the existing skills which means that learners are not tabula laser that is why teachers must guide and facilitate them in their learning (VonGlaserfeld 1989; Fernando & Markan, 2017). Thus, the Learners learn to learn by learning which means that in learning we construct meaning and system of meaning. Constructive theory aids students in better comprehending the context of life. The

most important pillars of constructive theory are learners' collaboration, motivation, active learning, innovation, and use of the mind in production new content. Constructivists believe that learning is a social activity which has the connection with other people in real life such educators,

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Views from Kiswahili Teachers about Factors that Cause Students Kiswahili Poor Speaking Skills**

Data collection was all about interviewing Kiswahili teachers as well as students to be aware of factors, that are the root cause of Kiswahili poor speaking skills. As a result, the first teacher from school A, expressed deeply about these linguistic problems, saying:

As Kiswahili teacher, our students face a big problem in speaking Kiswahili language. The problem is based on shyness. Many of our students are shy. When they are asked some questions, they keep quiet. In addition, they keep quiet as they are presenting Kiswahili works, specifically Kiswahili literary works.

This extract means that students face a big problem related to Kiswahili speaking skills, where they keep quiet as they are asked questions. Moreover, they are silent when they are presenting different Kiswahili works. This argument is proved by Nsengiyumva (2019). Therefore, this scholar showed that some students, who learn a language are shy, while presenting their linguistic works. This is a big challenge for teaching and learning Kiswahili four skills, especially speaking skills. Another Kiswahili teacher from school B participated significantly in this study. As a result, he said:

Kiswahili poor speaking skills is a big linguistic challenge for me. It prevents me from teaching Kiswahili effectively. Thus, our students are not confident in speaking Kiswahili. This results into speaking it badly. In addition to this, they are not motivated in learning Kiswahili. They are used to saying that Kiswahili has no value in their daily life. In addition to that, it is not mainly spoken as well as used in different domains.

These teacher's arguments mean that, students, who learn Kiswahili language are not confident in speaking Kiswahili language. Moreover, students are demotivated in learning Kiswahili language because, that language is not mostly spoken and used in every area of their real life. These arguments are in line with Nsengiyumva (2019).

friends and family (Hein, 1991). Therefore, in language learning learners must learn the language so as to communicate and interact with their society by using the target language for overcoming society's hindrances.

Thus, this scholar showed that, students are not confident as well as motivated, as they are learning a language. Then, the last teacher from school C also showed her point of view, saying:

Our students fear to speak Kiswahili in classroom as I am teaching that language. They do not respond to any question owing to committing grammatical mistakes. Furthermore, they lack spoken vocabulary as they are presenting as well as asking problem pertaining to Kiswahili lessons.

This extract shows that, students fear to commit different grammatical mistakes, while they are speaking Kiswahili language. In addition, they lack vocabulary as they are speaking that language, either asking or responding to teacher's questions. All these linguistic problems prevent students from speaking Kiswahili accordingly. This argument correlates with Sebazungu (2015). Therefore, this scholar showed that students, lack spoken vocabulary as they are asking as well as responding to teachers' questions.

### **4.2 Students' Ideas about Kiswahili Poor Speaking Skills**

During the interview, students gave reasons for their poor Kiswahili speaking skills:

We are not motivated as we learn Kiswahili. That is the reason why we choose to be shy, while presenting as well as responding to questions. In addition, we don't master its grammatical rules. As a result, we fear to make mistakes while presenting our Kiswahili works ahead of our mates. Another challenge is lack of spoken vocabulary while speaking Kiswahili language.

Students' views show that they face different problems that are the root cause of poor speaking of Kiswahili as stated by Sebazungu (2015) in his study titled *Improving Kiswahili Speaking Skills among Students of Senior One Students A at Kagarama Secondary School in Kicukiro District*. He observes that students lack motivation as they learn Kiswahili language, specifically Kiswahili speaking skills. In addition, they miss the right vocabulary to use as they speak Kiswahili language. Moreover, they fear to speaking Kiswahili language, while presenting various Kiswahili works, specifically Kiswahili literary works.

## 4.3 Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Problems of Kiswahili Speaking Skills

Kiswahili teachers gave various views about strategies they use to overcome Kiswahili poor speaking skills. They said they solve Kiswahili poor speaking skills by means of different linguistic teaching methods. They indicated that they give students oral exercises to speed up their Kiswahili speaking skills. Secondly, motivate students by showing them the importance of learning as well as being aware of Kiswahili language. Thirdly, they organize Kiswahili discussions as well as debates to make them speak publicly without problems. Moreover, they give students work for presentation, then teach them different written materials to increase their vocabulary, especially Kiswahili spoken vocabulary.

In addition, we give students Kiswahili poems and plays to act before their classmates. This assists the students to gain courage of speaking that in public. We focus on teaching grammatical rules so as to compose correct Kiswahili sentences. Apart from this, data from observation showed that, students were not good at speaking Kiswahili language. Thus, students from School C, showed Kiswahili poor speaking skills as they were presenting Kiswahili works. Some of them lacked vocabulary as they were presenting their works.

On other hand, others committed various grammatical mistakes, while presenting those Kiswahili works. Moreover, they failed to respond to teacher's questions as they were asked about the work done about importance of learning Kiswahili language. Such strategies as presented above are supported by Mbaraga (2014); Sebazungu (2015) & Nsengiyumva (2019). These studies indicate that effective strategies of improving students speaking skills, require various linguistic teaching methods, namely: discussions, presentations, dialogues to play as well as organizing linguistic debates to speed up their language speaking skills.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

The study sought to investigate factors leading to Kiswahili poor speaking skills in Kicukiro secondary schools. Data analysis showed different factors that lead to Kiswahili poor speaking skills. Those factors were namely: shyness, students' anxiety, lack of confidence, lack of motivation as

well as fearing to make different grammatical mistakes, as they speak Kiswahili.

### 5.2 Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education should buy electric linguistic teaching aids as well as, distributing them in various secondary schools across the country. This will help Kiswahili teachers teach speaking skills effectively. In addition to this, students will improve their speaking Kiswahili language. Rwanda Basic Education Board must train Kiswahili teachers about teaching Kiswahili, specifically speaking skills.

2. Moreover, Rwanda Basic Education Board should compose as well as distributing, Kiswahili books in different secondary schools around the country. National Examination and School Inspection Authority should supervise school monthly to determine how teaching and learning Kiswahili are being carried out in different schools.

3. In addition, the National Examination and School Inspection Authority must assess Kiswahili language in National examinations at all levels, namely: primary schools as well as secondary schools. This will strengthen the learning of Kiswahili as well as its speaking. School heads should regularly supervise teaching and learning of Kiswahili in their respective schools leading to strengthening the teaching and learning Kiswahili, where teachers will prepare pedagogical documents as well as assessing their students accordingly.

4. Kiswahili teachers should prepare different speaking works, namely: classroom presentations, discussions as well as debates. All these linguistic strategies will improve, students Kiswahili speaking skills significantly. Students should use as well as speaking Kiswahili language wherever they are. This will help them to improve their Kiswahili proficiency.

5. Parents should contribute to their children's education, by buying them relevant leaning materials to help them learn Kiswahili in conducive environment.

6. Dictionary authors should compose Kiswahili dictionaries, which possess phonetics to show learners how to pronounce, different Kiswahili words. This will be significant to students who learn Kiswahili because, they speed up their level of Kiswahili pronunciation as well as its speaking skills.

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