

**SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
NAIROBI CAMPUS**



CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION

*The Acquisition of English Language Sentence Structure in Nairobi Kindergarten
Schools: Case Study of Our Lady of Guadalupe Nursery School Nairobi.*

**A Research Project Submitted to Christ the Teacher Institute for Education in
Partial Fulfilment for the Requirement for the Bachelor of Science Degree in
Education of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.**

BY

SR. M. PETRONILLA IFEOMA KPANAH (DDL)

MAY, 2003

NAIROBI KENYA

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has never been presented to any other University or Institution of learning for any academic credit. I have acknowledged all information from other sources and people with whom I have consulted, duly.

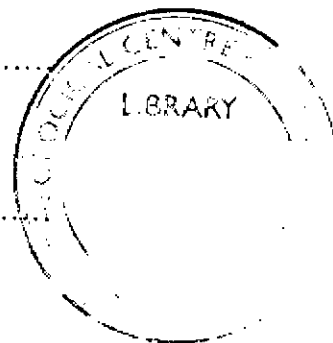
SR. M. PETRONILLA KPANAH (DDL)

Sk Pet

SIGNATURE

28/04/2003

DATE



This project has been submitted with my approval as the research supervisor

SIMON WACHIRA, MEd.
(SUPERVISOR)

Wachira

SIGNATURE

28/04/2003

DATE

It has been accepted by

BR. ROBERT SMITH, FSC, PhD
(DEAN OF SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, NAIROBI CAMPUS)

Bro Robert Smith

SIGNATURE

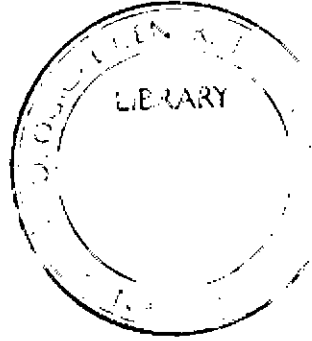
3/5/03

DATE

DEDICATION

With affectionate love, I want to dedicate this piece of work to my mother Victoria Egoyibo Kpanah. Who has taught me to persevere when hard work is ahead.

Thank you Mum.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Having been able to accomplish this project, I must admit that I am grateful to God for granting me the courage and peace to go ahead in the middle of so many activities. Thank you Lord.

I feel deeply indebted to Mr. Simon Wachira because, despite his many and demanding academic commitments, he supervised this project from the beginning to the end. He did the proof reading, helped me with some materials and the correction of grammar. Thank you Mr. Wachira.

A big thanks goes to the Head Teacher, Teachers and Pupils of Our lady of Guadalupe Nursery School, Nairobi.

I do recognise all who in one way or another supported me; Sr. Carissima Udorah, Fr. Mike Bazza, Brother John Damian Adizie and my community members at Thika.

Above all, I thank my congregation of Daughters of Divine Love for the opportunity given to me to study in Christ the Teacher Institute for education. Thank you to all. May God Bless you.

ABSTRACT

This research was designed to study the acquisition of English Language Sentence Structure in Nairobi Kindergarten Schools. Our Lady of Guadalupe Nursery School was chosen as a case study.

The objectives of the study included finding out the problem of acquisition of English Language Sentence Structure in Nairobi Kindergarten Schools and to highlight some possible solutions to the problems that pupils encounter in the acquisition process.

To be able to achieve these objectives, four research questions were formulated namely:

- 1) What are the differences in sentence structure between L1 and L2?
- 2) What part of English language sentence structure that affected by L1
- 3) What is the relationship between the first and the second language acquisition?
- 4) What are the interferences to the acquisition of English language sentence structure of a child at Kindergarten level?

The researcher conducted interviews and made observations to gather the data for the study. The out come of the research show some of the major findings as:

- ❖ L1 and L2 are almost the same in sentence structure, especially with the Bantu languages and English language structure.
- ❖ The teachers' constant corrections of the pupils and practice help in the language acquisition process.
- ❖ That there are problems of interference on the pupils' acquisition of L1, such as L1, family background, environment and slow learning.

The researcher gave some recommendations based on the findings that:

There is need for frequent and systematic monitoring of pupils' academic progress. The teachers should help their pupils to develop better acquisition skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading.

Finally, the researcher suggests some areas of further study on the teaching of English as L2, pronunciation in L2, learners' errors and inter-language and 'state of the art' in child language acquisition.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	5
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	5
1.5 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION.....	6
1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	8
1.8 ABBREVIATIONS.....	9

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
2.2 THEORIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.....	10
2.2.1 THE 'MONITOR' THEORY.....	10
2.2.2 "THEORY OF VARIABLE COMPETENCE".....	11
2.3 THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH.....	13
2.4 HOW DOES THE BRAIN DEVELOP?.....	14
2.4.1 A LEFT HEMISPHERE PHENOMENO.....	15
2.5 GENERATIVE AND UNIVERSAL SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.....	13
2.6 CONTROVERSIES.....	15
2.7 LANGUAGE TEACHING.....	20
2.8 BEHAVIOR, CONITIVISM, CONTRASTIVE ANALYSES AND ERROR ANALYSES.....	22
2.9 PURPOSE, EXPECTATION- AN ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONA COMPREHESION.....	26
2.10 READING FOR PLEASURE AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.....	28
2.11 CONCLUSION.....	29

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODOLOGY31

 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGNS.....31

 3.2 TARGET POPULATION.....31

 3.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES31

 3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.....31

 3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES32

 3.6 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES.....32

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION.....33

 4.1 INTRODUCTION.....33

 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS.....33

 4.3 DIFFERENCES IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE BETWEEN (L1) AND (L2).....33

 4.4 PARTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SENTENCE STRUCTURE THAT ARE AFFECTED BY L1.....34

 4.4.1 TENSES.....35

 4.4.2 VERBS.....35

 4.4.3 NOUN AND PLURALIZATION.....36

 4.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST AND THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITIONS36

 4.6 THE INTERFERENCE TO THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SENTENCE STRUCTURE OF A CHILD AT KINDERGARTEN LEVEL..... 38

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....41

 5.1 INTRODUCTION.....41

 5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY.....41

 5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY.....43

 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS.....44

 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....45

REFERENCES..... 46

APPENDIX I INTERVIEW GUIDE.....48

APPENDIX II OBSERVATION GUIDE.....49

CHAPTER I

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

One of the puzzles in human existence is how a child acquires a language, especially a second or even a third language. For some people, it is simply habitual. Every child, a linguist Norm Chomsky, (Yule 1985) argues, has the innate capacity to acquire new languages. For many other linguists like Terrace, language is acquired gradually and thus not hereditary.

A critical mind would want to know what makes the acquisition of new language possible. More so, when one considers the difficulties some children experience in trying to learn a new language (for instance, we have “slow-learners), one is tempted to wonder if there is no mystification involved in the process of language acquisition.

Looking at the way Nairobi children at kindergarten acquire language as my point of departure, in this project, I shall try to unfold some of the puzzles behind language acquisition.

It may interest my readers to know what exactly happens when a child tries to learn a new language, especially when trying to construct new sentences. I shall be looking at some of the possible interference to the acquisition of English sentence structure of a child at kindergarten level. Gold, as the saying goes, is not gotten on the surface. For one to get gold, he/she must dig deeply. As a way of solidifying my research, such issues as first language interference, design, slow learners, the influence of the environment and culture will be thoroughly examined and accordingly highlighted.

Second language acquisition is one of the fastest growing areas within linguistics, yet few works have been explored in depth on how a second language is acquired and what the second language learner must do mentally to achieve proficiency in another language. This paper will provide an incisive analysis of these questions. Different linguists approach second language acquisition from different viewpoints like sociological, psychological, or purely pedagogical perspective, representing a wide range of viewpoints and approaches.

According to Klein Wolfgang (1986), "the acquisition of a second language, be it by everyday communication or by instruction, follows certain processes which stem from various properties of human language processing, from the learner's specific motivation and finally from the way in which samples of, or information about the language to be learned are made accessible to the learner." The objective of second language acquisition studies is to uncover these processes.

There are two reasons why the study of second language acquisition is an important and sometimes rewarding enterprise. First, for foreign language teaching to be effectively maximized, it must be turned to the processes outlined above. Successful language teaching can only be a matter of practice experience of individual pedagogical gifts, or of luck.

Second, the study of how the human mind builds up fragmentary linguistic systems from limited input, how it reorganizes them if new input becomes available, and how it uses them for communicative purposes for which they may still be inadequate; can tell us something about how human language processing functions in general.

The study of second language acquisition opens a window on the nature and function of human language to an even greater extent. The present introduction is not so much a comprehensive survey of all of the research done in the field over the years; rather, it attempts to give the reader an idea of what the relevant problems are, of how they were and are approached, and of what the result so far obtained can contribute to the practical and theoretical issues mentioned above.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of acquisition of English language sentence structure in Nairobi kindergarten schools is the focus of this research paper.

While it is true, that, many young children whose parents speak different languages can acquire a second language in circumstances similar to those of first language acquisition. For most children, the ability to use their first language is rarely matched, even after their early years of growth, by a comparable ability in the second language.

This is something of an enigma, since there is apparently no other system of knowledge, which one can learn, better at 2 or 3 years old than at 15 or 25.

Chomsky (1986) puts forward a number of reasons to account for this enigma, and a number of proposals have been made which might enable learners to become proficient in a second language (L2) Like English language as they are in their first language (L1).

Some obvious reasons for the problems experienced in L2 acquisition are related to the distinction between tutored and untutored (spontaneous) language learning.

Felix (1982) distinguishes between spontaneous and guided (usually by a tutor) language acquisition. He uses 'spontaneous' to mean the acquisition of a second language in everyday communication, in a natural way, free from systematic guidance. In addition 'guided' (as opposed to spontaneous) refers to the learning that is open to systematic and intentional influence.

Activities associated with acquisition are similar in some respect, by those who pick up another language from long periods spent in social interaction (daily use of the language) in another country. Those L2 experience is primarily a 'guided' one tend not to develop the proficiency of those who have had acquiring experience.

Klein (1986) thinks of this process in terms of the language faculty being strongly taken over by the features of the L1, with a resulting loss of flexibility or openness to receive the feature of another language.

Against this view, it has been demonstrated that students in their early teens are quicker and more effective L2 learners than for example, 7 year olds. It may be, of course, that the acquisition of an L2 requires a combination of factors. Even during the optimum age of acquisition, there may exist an acquisition barrier of quite a different sort. The literature on child L2 acquisition is full of instances where young children acquiring a second language have overcome such inhibitions.

Moreover, children's English language sentence structure would be affected by their first language interference, the influence of the environment, slow learners and even culture.

Research in this field has until recently been mainly pedagogically oriented, but since the 1970s linguists and psychologists have become increasingly interested in the

principles that underlie second language acquisition for the light these throw on how human language processing functions in general.

Moreover, it is only through an understanding of these principles that foreign language teaching can reach maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions will guide the study:

- a) What are the difference in sentence structure between L1 and L2?
- b) What part of the English Language Sentence Structure that are affected by L1.
- c) What is the relationship between the first and the second language acquisitions?
- d) What are the interferences to the acquisition of English sentence structure of a child at kindergarten level?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This project will be of interest to mainly parents and teachers. Since education is not limited to the four walls of the school, parents whose children are in the kindergarten may want to know how to assist their children in the acquisition of English language sentence structure, back at home.

Teachers, especially those in kindergarten would also want to deepen their knowledge and skills in coaching their pupils on how to acquire English language sentence structure.

This project is designed to help measure the progress of children at kindergarten level. It also aims to develop their skills in using and understanding the English language structure.

This paper should prove of equal value to the less able or less experienced child who can benefit greatly from practice and exposure to the use of English language sentence structure in varying contexts. These children should be given more time to deal with their problems and allowed to explore some of the problems at leisure. They should not be discouraged if they are slow to start with; speed will come with familiarity, and understanding with practice.

In many research studies the teacher has been shown to be most important factor involved in the child's learning process.

However, as early as the child is able to respond to language, members of the family can begin responding to the child. The child's oral language experiences are a vital factor in his reading success. Oral language provides a foundation on which the child is able to build much other language skills.

Applied linguists will find this extremely valuable resources, as well as general linguistics, graduate students in linguistic, teachers of foreign languages and researchers.

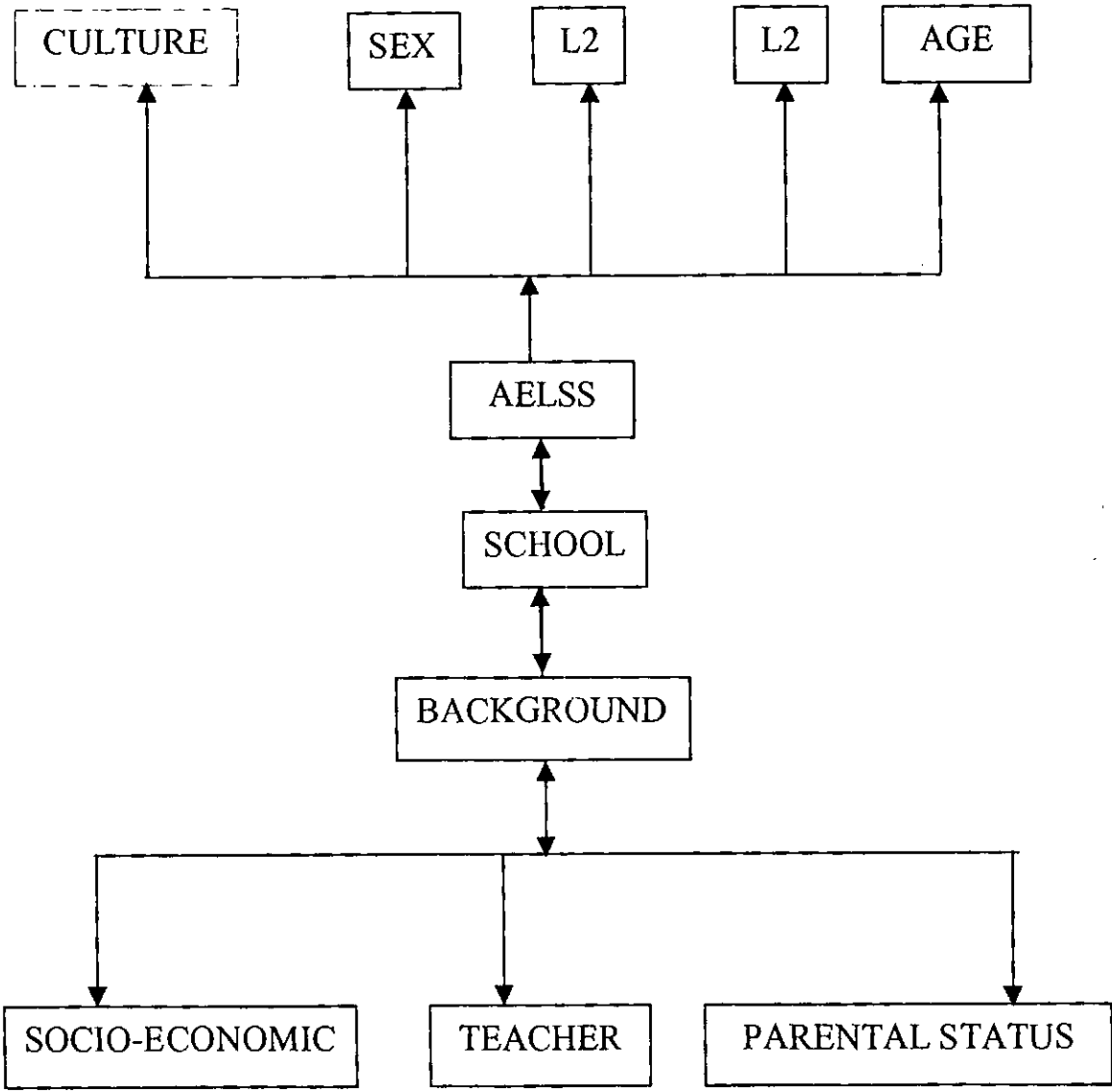
1.5 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The scope of this research will be on how children acquire English Language Sentence Structure at Kindergarten level. Their strength and weaknesses in the construction of their English language sentence structure. The part of grammar they omit in making their sentence structure.

The respondents of this study will be children and teachers from Our Lady of Guadalupe. In addition, I shall focus on both English L2 and Kiswahili L1 sentence structure. And to some possible interference to the acquisition of English sentence structure in a child at kindergarten level. Example: first language interference, design, slow learner, environment and culture.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The variables that interact in this study are culture, sex, L1, L2, age, school, background, socio-economic, parental status and teachers.



1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

ACQUISITION:

The term acquisition when used of language refers to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations.

LEARNING:

This term applies to a conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a language (Mathematics for example is learned, not acquired).

FIRST LANGUAGE (L1):

This is the language, which a child is born into. It might not necessarily be the first language of her parents. It is not genetically inherited, but is acquired in a particular language - using environment. It might be the parents' mother tongue.

SECOND LANGUAGE (L2)

This is the language acquired different from your first language. It can be a foreign language: English, French e.t.c.

GENERATIVE GRAMMAR (GG)

This is a set of explicit rules, which yield to sentences and can be seen as a comparable set.

UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

Universal grammar involves claims regarding the use of second language data test or development of a theory of language.

1.8 ABBREVIATIONS

L - Language

LI - First Language

L2 - Second Language

FLA - First Language Acquisition

SLA - Second Language Acquisition

UG - Universal Grammar

LAD - Language Acquisition Device

RA- Re-acquisition

KG - Kindergarten

AELSS - Acquisition of English Language Sentence Structure

GSLA - Generative second language Acquisition

ND - Not Dated

CA – Contrastive Analysis

EA – Error Analysis

ERFLA – Extensive Reading For Language Acquisition

CHAPTER II

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of second language acquisition research is testing of a theory of second language acquisition. When linguists talk about acquisition in SLA research, it is in the sense that one acquires language aspects. Linguists talk about a change in the person resulting from its interaction with the environment. The change can be greater or lesser performance.

2.2 THEORIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

2.2.1 THE 'MONITOR' THEORY

Considerable interest has been aroused in recent years by Stephen Krashen's very ambitious attempt to construct a new theory of second language acquisition, often referred to, in rather simplified way as the *monitor* theory (Krashen, 1982). This theory consists of five main hypothesis the best known of which are the acquisition/learning hypothesis, which seeks to show that a person has two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language, acquisition (which is 'subconscious') and "learning" (which is 'conscious') and the 'monitor' hypothesis, which claims that this conscious 'learning' serves only the function of being the monitor or editor of production. A recent article by Gregory.M.U. in Krashen's monitor and Occam's Razor in Kashen's 1984. Comments after a lengthy examination of that hypothesis that;

"Krashen's second language acquisition theory is not a coherent theory; it is indeed incoherent to the point that it seems inappropriate to apply the word 'theory' to it.

It is not that I think Krashen's ideas are wrong, although I do of course strongly agree with some of his ideas. Indeed, although there is much that seems not to understand about language and language acquisition. I think he is often right on the important questions: I agree with him that most language learning is unconscious, that comprehensible input is vital for learning and that a teacher's most important job is to provide that input, that effective barriers can prevent successful acquisition of a second language and that a teacher has the duty to try to lower those barriers wherever possible. But then, does anybody disagree? ..." (Greqq 1984).

According to (Krashen. S. 1981)) the distinction between 'acquisition' and 'learning' is one that has been familiar in the field of mother-tongue learning for a long time. Wallwork (1969) says that at all events, what seems indispensable is that a teacher has to be able to organise, quite unconsciously, an environment which maximises learning opportunities for a variety of pupils, all of whom may have different learning strategies. Much learning of first language (L1), or even a foreign language is apparently intuitive, perhaps 'subconscious' in Krashen's terms. But it is only an exceptional gifted teacher who can afford to teach intuitively, or to rely on the 'comprehensible input' being ordered and organised by the learner who is subjected to an unselected, ungraded set of data.

2.2.2 "THEORY OF VARIABLE COMPETENCE"

The question here becomes one of choosing between ability and knowledge as the domain of SLA theory. In SLA research, the term 'competence' is frequently used, but unfortunately the distinction between ability and knowledge has always been a problem without clarity and coherence.

Reseachers (Tarone 1984; Ellis 1985)working within this variable competence model framework address themselves to the question of variability in the output of L2 learners, not so much the variability among learners but instead the variability within the output of any single learner, depending on the task or situation. Ellis (1989) correctly notes that from a generative perspective such variability would be treated as a performance question. He then goes on, however , to contrast that persepective with a sociolinguistic one "which emphasis the systematic way in which learner behaviour is influenced by context. In other words, variability is now seen to be an integral feature of competence".

Here we have two confusions: performance (learner behaviour) is argued to be a feature of competence (knowledge), and systematically is evidently seen as a sufficient condition for qualifying something as being part of competence. Having merged performance and competence, it is easy to go on to claim that the learners's competence is heterogenous. But this misuses the term 'competence', heterogenous competence" is simply a contradiction in terms.

A competence theory, differs from a performance theory in two principal respects: its goal is characterize mental representations rather than observed behaviour, and it is based primarily on a somewhat different class of evidence "Pylyshyn (1973)". The evidence Pylyshyn (1973) refers to is the intuitions of the competent subject; in our case, the language learner. "The term intuition is used here because it traditionally suggests a knowledge which is not mediated by rational processes. It is self-justifying, and is accompanied by strong conviction".

Pylyshyn (1973) also says, in the typical case of a competence theory (such as generative grammatical theory), the subject whose intuitions are being examined is at the same time the investigator. In the case of acquisition theory, however, as (Ellis 1989) correctly reminds us that it is by no means clear that the best method is for determining what an L2 learner's intuitions are.

Chomsky (1980) also suggests the existence of a separate 'pragmatic competence' that "underlines the ability to use (grammatical competence) along with the conceptual system to achieve certain ends".

2.3 THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Yule (1985) presents the most recent approach to L2 teaching which is widely used, and it is described as the communicative approach. It is partially a reaction against the artificiality of 'partten-practice' and also against the belief that consciously learning the grammar of a language will result in an ability to use the language. Although there are different versions of how to create communicative experiences in the L2 classroom, they are all based on a view that the functions of language (i.e what it is used for) should be emphasized rather than the forms of the language (i.e correct grammatical or phonological structure). This approach is characterized by lessons organised around concepts such as "asking for things" in different social contexts, rather than the forms of the past tense" in different sentences.

Chomsky in (Paikeday 1985) presented that "among the things in the world there are languages or dialects, and that individuals come to acquire them". It is necessary to separate the commonsense idea of language-which, like in everyday life. From the idea of language as an object of scientific inquiry. The commonsense idea not only involves a

degree of reification, it also contains as Chomsky says, a Normative-teleological element that is eliminated from scientific approaches. "consider the way we describe a child or a foreigner learning English... We do not, for example say that the person has a perfect knowledge of some language L, similar to English but still different from it. What we say is that the child or foreigner has a partial knowledge of English," or is "on his/her way" towards acquiring knowledge of English... whether or not a coherent account can be given of this aspect of the commonsense terminology, it does not seem to be one that has any role in an eventual science of language (Chomsky 1986)

The trouble with this concept of language is that it fails to distinguish between competence and performance. As Chomsky has pointed out, acquisition of a language involves more than the acquisition of rules for the production of utterances. It involves the acquisition of knowledge, including knowledge that will never find expression in output: knowledge of ambiguity possible versus impossible interpretations of sentences, and so forth.

At this point, it will be good to know how the brain develops and learning of language.

2.4 HOW DOES THE BRAIN DEVELOP?

Peterson (2000) describes what scientists are finding about brain development, learning and memory. According to him, the brain goes through different phases in development. Before birth, a process called neurogenesis takes place, during which cells are generated. The cells then migrate to the places in the brain where they belong. Then the brain starts to wire itself. By the time a child is about three years old, 80 percent of

the brain growth is finished. Although many important changes go on from ages 0 to 3 and 3 to 6, learning and brain changes take place.

Peterson (2000) says that "until a child's brain has reached certain stages of physical development, certain behavioural expectations may not be appropriate". He talks of critical periods for learning certain things, suggesting that if children are not taught certain things when they are open to learning them, the opportunity for most efficient learning will be lost. Critical periods are sensitive periods in the development of animals and people. For example, between the ages of 3 and 12, children are capable of developing an incredible vocabulary-50000 to 100000 words. They are learning 50 words a day.

(Akmajian et al 1990), explains where language is localized in the brain.

Language:

2.4.1 A LEFT HEMISPHERE PHENOMENO

He says that for over a century scholars have debated the question of speech and language localization within the brain. In the 1860s, scientist known as localizationist speculated that the functioning of specific regions in the brain was responsible for language. Antilocalizationists argued that speech and language were the consequences of the brain functioning as a whole. In 1861, Paul Broca, (Akmajian et al 1990) a French surgeon and anatomist, described to the *societ'e d' Anthropologie* in Paris a patient who in life had had extreme difficulty in producing speech. Later, at autopsy, the patient was found to have damage in the posterior inferior part of the frontal lobe in the left cerebral hemisphere, now known as Broca's area. With the publication of this report Broca became the first individual to sub-speech deficit. In 1865, Broca extended his claim about

speech localization by reporting that damage sites in the left cerebral hemisphere produced aphasia, whereas destruction of corresponding sites in the right hemisphere left linguistic capacities intact.

In 1874, Carl Wernicke (Yule 1985) a young Germany physician, published a monograph describing patients with speech comprehension deficits who had damage (lesions) outside Broca's area in the left posterior temporal lobe. Wernicke's work strengthened Broca's claim that left hemispheric structures are essential for speech and generated intense interest in the hypothesis that different areas within the left hemisphere fulfil different linguistic functions. Today scientists e.g (Krashen 1982, Yule 1985, Akmajia et al 1990) neuroanatomic structures, generally of the left hemisphere, are vital for speech and language, but debate continues as to which structures are committed to the various linguistic capacities. For most individuals the left cerebral hemisphere is dominant for language, regardless of handedness. Approximately 70 percent of all individuals with damage to the left hemisphere will experience some type of aphasia as compared with only 1 percent of those with right hemispheric lesions.

Some of our linguistic knowledge is not, strictly speaking acquired; it is innate perhaps the primary different for most people can be captured in terms of a distinction between acquisition and learning. The term 'acquisition', when used of language, refers to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations. The term 'learning' however, applies to a conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a language. Atkison (1982) points out that for any acquisition theory, we first need to identify a specific domain of inquiry; that is, we must identify what it is that we think is being acquired. Once a domain is established,

then there will be explanatory theory used in investigating that domain. Klein Wolfgang (1986) provides a critical assessment of the current state of art. He looks at the different ways by which the second language can be acquired. At any age, for different purposes and to varying degrees. He equally looks at the learner's point of view. He brings out some problems which anyone learning a second language either through everyday communication or in the classroom is faced with, and whose solution constitutes the acquisition process.

2.5 GENERATIVE AND UNIVERSAL SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Gregg and Bley-Vroman in (Gass and Schachter 1989) look at second language acquisition from two linguistic perspectives; namely:

Generative

Universal grammar

From which to view the relationship between theories of language and theories of second language acquisition.

Generative perspective involves claims regarding the impact of a theory of languages on the development of a theory of second language learning. Universal grammar involves claims regarding the use of second language data test or develop a theory of language. Gregg's generative perspective points out that we must have a clear idea of the domain of inquiry of second language acquisition before attempting to construct a theory of it. He argues from a Chomskyan perspective that in characterizing second language knowledge, it is necessary to differentiate between competence and performance.

Gregg claims that the domain of inquiry of second language acquisition research is to characterize the linguistic competence of second language learners. He argues that such concepts as variability in L2 performance are beyond the scope of a theory of linguistic competence. Thus to account for the acquisition of linguistic competence, one needs a theory of language, for we cannot understand the acquisition of something without an understanding of what that something is while Gregg views a formal theory of grammar as essential for understanding a theory of second language acquisition, he also points out that such a theory is not an end in itself but only a means of studying one aspect of language. Bley-Vroman (1989) argues against the notion that adult second language learners have access to universal grammar. While acknowledging that the logical problem for adults in learning a second language (in his terms foreign language) is the same as for children learning first language.

According to Bley-Vroman (1989) there are many possible sentences in a language which a learner never hears. How do learners determine whether these sentences are not heard due to chance or are not heard because they are in fact ungrammatical sentences of that language? The sentences or utterances to which one is exposed comprise the positive evidence on which learners base a grammar. Negative evidence on the other hand, is that information provided to a learner that an utterance or sentence is ungrammatical or is in some way deviant. Within a universal grammar frameworks negative evidence is considered to be of little theoretical value.

However a lack of negative evidence would make the task of learning impossible. It is then claimed that there is a language learning system (known as the language acquisition device (LAD)) that constrains the possible grammars. This system is

comprised of principles of Universal Grammar. Bley-Vroman argues against the position that adult and child language learning are fundamentally the same and rejects the notion that adults have access to principles of Universal Grammar. This is what he calls the fundamental difference hypothesis.

Schwartz and Sprouse (1994) carried out a research on "Generative second language Acquisition". They argue that the psycholinguistic study of nonnative language (L2) acquisition needs to go 'Back to Basics'. They make a call for a re-examination of what the purpose of Universal Grammar (UG) is, i.e. what UG is posited to explain, and why UG is taken to be that explanation. Whether mainstream generative L2 acquisition research is, and should be. They focus on the issue of development, both in L1 acquisition and in L2 acquisition. They also try to show that the principal concern of generative research on L2 acquisition should be to determine whether UG constrains L2 acquisition.

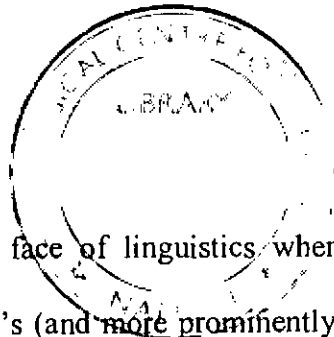
2.6 CONTROVERSIES

There are controversies among those linguists who study the learning of second languages, and the implications of these controversies are significant for educators. The neuropsychologists led by Penfield to the view that first language acquisition had something to do with the development of the brain in childhood (Penfield and Roberts, 1959). This idea was revived by Lenneberg (1967), who developed it into the widely discussed theory of the critical period for language acquisition. The group of Lenneberg claim that ability to acquire language is actually dependent on certain maturational stages, such as the range of two to three years old when a great deal of

phonological information is acquired. As one matures, the theory runs, one loses the ability to learn a language in 'natural' way.

Chomsky and other linguists, however hold that the language acquisition device has full potency throughout life. The implication of the former theory is that a second language must be learned via meta-linguistic awareness. The development of awareness of the rules of a second language can refer to rules from the first one, but second language acquisition can never be conscious and 'natural'. It must be very conscious with intense drill and evaluation of rules, conjunction of verbs and so on.

The later theory holds that unconscious acquisition of a second language is always possible and so an immersion or language experience approach is the more legitimate one. The contrast between these two approaches underscores how our assumptions about language determine our teaching styles and points to the effectiveness and on learning stages.



2.7 LANGUAGE TEACHING

In 1957 Noam Chomsky changed the face of linguistics when he published Syntactic structure, but it wasn't until the 1960's (and more prominently in the 1970's) when applied linguistic research started to change the prevailing views of classroom methodology; notably, the behaviourists, following B.F Skinner, came under attack. Behaviourists, supporters of audiolingualism, embraced skinner's verbal behaviour, which suggest that language was a form of conditioned behaviour. According to Skinnerian behaviourists language could be acquired like a habit by a program of stimulus, response, and reinforcement. Audiolingualism used consistent and unending drilling of the students followed by positive or negative reinforcement, Skinner 1957.

Chomsky cited the fact that children spontaneously utter sentences they have never heard, much less practiced before. No language isn't just a habit, there must be a cognitive factor, a language acquisition device in the brain, Chomsky 1957.

Later, linguists such as Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrel conducted classroom research on input focus: like a child learning its native language (L1), the listening input is the key, they said. Give students massive amounts of comprehensible input, and have them focus on meaning, not form, like a child listening to its parents, Krashen 1982.

Most recently, Steven Pinker's controversial. The language instinct, has contended that language is an instinct, as automatic to humans as flying is to geese. Although researchers have not found a language, they well might not in the near future. There is still no definitive answer, which can explain the process of either first or second language acquisition.

There is still controversy still abounds and while a majority of applied linguistics might agree that habit formation is a theoretically unacceptable explanation for language acquisition, many still think that a traditional audio lingual classroom may help some students acquire a second language. Indeed, with all the research and counter claims, we might one day discover that language acquisition is a combination of multiple forces, psychological. Physiological and environmental, which interact in different ways with different students, how else can we explain why language students show a wide range of outcomes across the spectrum of classroom methodologies?

If the research has progressed linearly, each new wave adding a little to the corpus of classroom pedagogy seems to have moved in a rather small circle, especially in the developing world students tend to practice grammar rules, memorize vocabulary lists and

translate sentences level discourse in order to traverse the long journey to second language fluency. In many of these classrooms, the compiled research of the last forty years remains untapped, (Harmer, 1983). Many of the classes I have seen use the same techniques today that were used in 1961.

Although the behaviourists are considered passé, much of the research undertaken from their era up to the present has potentially favourable implications for language teachers and learners. Yet, many language curricula are designed oblivious to this fact. In other words, there is a lot of research available, which can improve the language acquisition environments of students, but much of it is not utilized.

2.8 BEHAVIOURISM, COGNITIVISM, CONTRASTIVE ANALYSES AND ERROR ANALYSES

Contrastive analysis (CA), a comparative analysis of two languages, their similarities and their differences, was thought by many in the 1940s, 50s and 60s to be a useful predictor of where second language students would likely encounter problems in learning a second language it stood to reason that if certain elements of a second language differed greatly from the student's native language, that student would likely encounter difficulties. Lado (1957) stated that his book *Linguistics Across Culture* "...rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe patterns that will cause difficulty." Oller (1971) echoed, speaking of Contrastive Analysis as, "... a device for predicting points of difficulty and some of the errors that learners will make." It seemed a plausible assumption, but as research piled up it showed that contrastive analysis predicted students errors sometimes and did it at others. Although Politzer (1968) found some predictive elements in CA, Wardhaugh (1970), Selinker (1972), Richards (1974), Taylor (1974),

and Tran (1975) all identified errors which were of a non-constructive origin, thereby lowering expectations of contrastive analysis as a predictor of language error. This encouraged the critics of behaviourism, the cognitivists, since the theory of transfer was often associated with the behaviourists. A counter theory, although not strictly associated with the cognitivists, certainly more compatible to them, was error analysis, which treated second language errors as similar to errors encountered in first language acquisition, or what the linguists referred to as “developmental errors”. These errors are divided into three sub-categories; overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, and the hypothesizing of false concepts. According to Richards (1971), the error reflects a learner’s competence at a certain stage and thereby different from learner to learner.

The debate raged on, notably through the 1970s, and contrastive analysis took quite a pummelling. Error analysis did not escape unscathed, suffering notably from Schacter’s (1974) study, which showed error analysis misdiagnosing student-learning problems due to their “avoidance” of certain difficult L2 elements.

The result today is that both contrastive analyses are rarely used in identifying L2 learner problem areas and “customizing” curricula for homogenous L2 groups, one exception being Pierson (1982) who used error analysis as a basis for developing curricula items for Cantonese speakers. I contend that the research done in both CA and EA can be utilized in curriculum development to the benefit of the L2 learner.

At Tunghsi University in Taiwan, informal error analyses were conducted on student writing continuously through the mid 1980s. The taxonomy did not encompass the traditional error analysis categories such as verb tense error and possessive marker error. According to error analysis theory the errors identified should represent

“developmental errors,” errors similar to those made in L1, but differing from student to student due to the students’ differing developmental levels. Remarkably, the corpus collected showed high rates of overlap ...in one class 50% to 60% of the identified errors were common to the whole class. Although flying in the face of EA, which would expect differing errors, depending on developmental stage, this 50% to 60% overlap itself could have served as a valuable pedagogical tool. That was a large body of language that none of the students had acquired. If they did not know it, at some point it should have been taught. If we can positively identify large chunks of common non-acquired language in homogenous L2 learners, we can “customize” their curriculum to ensure they are dealing with un-mastered language items.

Furthermore, even though, according to Richards (1971), research shows that contrastive analysis may be most predictive at the level of phonology and least productive at the syntactic level, many of the common mistakes by the Taiwanese students were syntactic errors found in written work:

- ❖ *Yinwei wo chrde dwo, swoyi wo hen pang.* Because I enjoy eating; therefore I am fat
- ❖ *Sweiran wo jijing syi gwo, keshr wode jifu haishr bu gangjing.* Although I washed the clothes, but I still didn’t get them clean.
- ❖ *Wo syihwan change.*
I like to sing songs.

The example here are pattern sentences structurally sound in Mandarin, but awkward when directly translated into English; therefore, but, and songs are all obligatory in Chinese, but render the English sentences awkward if not ungrammatical. The superimposition of the Mandarin structure into English strong hints of L1

interference here. In addition, the persistent by contrastive analysis... The Chinese and English verb system differs greatly.

The debate over contrastive analysis and error analysis has virtually disappeared in the last ten years. Most researchers agree that contrastive analysis alone cannot predict or account for the myriad errors encountered in learner English. But Candlin in his preface to Richards (1974) states "... far from being a fundamental opposition between constructive analysis and error analysis, the later serves as an important source of corroboration to contrastive linguistic analysis in their claims for predictability of error". And Norrish (1983) adds, "Although this 'strong predictive' claim for contrastive analysis can hardly be sustained any longer, it is certainly true to say that analysis has a useful explanatory role. That is, it can still be said to explain certain errors and mistakes".

Most young language teachers today are un-ware of the CA –EA controversy and the research it produced. Many of the original 'overblown' claims of the two research methodologies have been debunked, but even a superficial grasp of these two theoretical constructs of language learning can be applied in the classroom to identify and explain some of the problems that students are experiencing.

2.9 PURPOSE, EXPECTATION –AN ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL COMPREHENSION

The cognitivist Noam Chomsky implied more than once that his theories of language acquisition had nothing to do with adult language learning, and language teaching has never adopted a set methodology based on Chomsky's work. But as cognitivism gained credibility relative to behaviourism, it was natural that research should

turn their attentions to the role of thought processes in language acquisition, this can cover broad areas including psychology, physiology, areas most often associated with psycholinguistics. However, I would like to address the thought processes of the L2 learner, what is going on when the student is accessing the target language, Harmer (1983).

L2 comprehension skills are most often classified as type I or type II. According to Harmer (1983), type I skills are "...those operations that students perform on a text when they tackle it for the first time". This basically includes the two traditional tasks of reading to extract specific information and reading for general understanding. Type 2 skills are, quoting Harmer (1983) again "...those that are subsequently used when studying, reaching or listening material and they involve detailed comprehension of the text (after the students have performed type I skills). These type 2 tasks include inferring opinion and attitude, discussing learning from context and recognizing function and discourse patterns and markers.

Traditionally, learners have encountered the two type 1 skills involved with extracting specific information and getting the "general picture". This is especially true for young learners and those at the lower levels. These skills have been so emphasized that reading strategies have been developed, skimming for general understanding and scanning for specific information, to deal with them. The more practitioners have examined learners' motivations and thought processes, the more these two traditional skills have been questioned.

In many classrooms around the world students are given either written or listening material and asked to bring out the main ideas of the material. The student may or may

not be interested in the topic and, if interested, may wish to pick up some general understanding or some specific information. In real life, people often do not approach reading or listening this way. In real life people read or listen to language because they want to and because they have a purpose to read. Therefore, readers and listeners have a purpose that is more fundamental than the typical language learners.

Researcher, like Coe (1978) had also addressed the issues of interest, expectation and purpose, and proposed an addition to the type 1 questions, namely, predictive skills. Example; when the reader heard the bad news about his boss, he started subconsciously to predict, perhaps how seriously his boss was hurt. These predictions are initially the result of the expectations the initial exposure has raised in him. However, as he reads further his predictions will change as he receives more information. This is what Harmer (1978) refers to as interaction with context, and what naturally happens when one reads or listens in one's native language. Thus, this type of exercise becomes more realistic and natural than simply assigning random reading and asking students to answer general and specific questions. Type 1 skills which stimulate prediction and which are designed to confirm or deny a student's expectations are both interesting and realistic, interesting in that they present content the students want to access and realistic in that they map the subconscious cognitive processes involved in reading and listening to native language. Sadly many schools and language, programs fail to tap into this valuable resource.

2.10 READING FOR PLEASURE AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Perhaps the most ironic body of research to be encouraged at the classroom door is the research on reading for pleasure or, what some refer to as extensive reading or free

voluntary reading. Ironic in that few need to corroborate that reading is good for you. Krashen (1982) has also been very involved in this area, compiling a research review. The power of reading, which was over 200 studies from the 1890s to the present. The conclusions drawn from that highly readable research review are noteworthy. To wit, reading habits and literacy are positively correlated. Reading for pleasure is more effective in improving comprehension than traditional skill-based reading instruction. Reading for pleasure, even comic books, is the most effective way to increase vocabulary. Extensive reading is nearly always superior to direct instruction on texts of reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing and grammar, and reading as a leisure activity is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary and reading speed.

Schackner (1994) and Sims (1996) looked at several Extensive Reading for Language Acquisition (EFLA) classrooms in Taiwan and Macau, and came to the same conclusion that there is strong evidence that reading for pleasure can promote substantial language acquisition both on short and long term basis. A technique that is effective obviously has many applications. Here is an activity that is not only student centered, but an activity a student can pursue independently and be relatively sure of positive results that would make it not only effective but cheap and convenient as well. Also, it is an activity that supplies teacher with an effective weapon, a trump card to use when confronted with stagnant, ineffective curricular.

Extensive reading is uniformly accepted among language teachers. There is virtual consensus, backed by quantitative evidence among professionals and lay people that extensive reading has a salubrious effect on language development. And although the number of extensive reading components in schools has been increasing worldwide, it is

still, considering its effectiveness, under utilized. Why? Three possible reasons come to mind:

First, expensive fairly healthy library is needed to implement this program, and the cost can be daunting for many schools especially those in the developing world. Second, extensive reading is a student-centred activity, which takes control of the teacher's hands and puts it into the student's hands. While this frees teachers for other activities, it is also a radical and sometimes threatening change for traditional school systems. Third, it simply appears too simple and too unstructured students lounging around reading comic books, magazines and novels does not fit many pre-conceived notions of what language program should be about. Many traditional educators balk at this approach even though it is meant to be a relatively small part of an overall language program.

2.11 CONCLUSION

On the test-bulletin board, on "the nct," a netter recently posted a message promoting the 'mishmash' school of language teaching try several different methods and see what works. An unfortunate choice of words because mishmash implies a random disorganized approach. Years ago, Teflers referred to it as the "golden nugget" approach. Students learn in many different ways; if you give them a wide range of options, they will selectively choose those which are most suitable to them picking up the 'nuggets' that appeal to them as they walk through the gold mine. As research in applied linguistic accumulates, this approach becomes more feasible because more options are continuously coming on stream. However, the number of schools and programs, which offers the student a choice, is still quite limited.

In almost all fields, change occurs quite slowly. It takes new drug years to get from research to market. The language-teaching field is similar. Many classrooms still reflect a behaviouristic approach to language teaching, even though historical result of audio lingual methodology have been relatively disappointing. Relevant research, that is, research with real pedagogical application, is out there. It just remains for many teachers and teacher trainers to bring it into the classroom.

CHAPTER III

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the procedures that will be followed in conducting the study. The steps involved in conducting the study will be described in details.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGNS

In this research, I am going to choose a case study design. This is because I am going to enter into deep reality. I want to get into the depth of studying the acquisition of English language sentence structure in Nairobi kindergarten schools.

3.2 TARGET POPULATION

My target population shall be the teachers and pupils of Our Lady of Guadalupe Nursery School Nairobi.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

My sample size shall be the pupils in Kindergarten I and Kindergarten III. The sampling technique is going to be purposive sampling technique. This is because of wanting to go into the department of the study. And take quality time for close observation and active participation from respondents who have 1st hand experience.

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

My research instrument will be interview guide. The interview guide will have interview questions to guide me. I shall be using interview guide because of the literacy competence of the pupils and the few number of teachers to be interviewed. I shall be listening to their conversations.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

My data collection procedure shall be through the use of my research instrument interview guide. I will be able to collect all the information I need from the teachers and the pupils. I shall also carry out thorough content analyses, which will mean going through the pupils' exercise books and listening to their conversations.

3.6 DATA ANALYSES PROCEDURES

As a case study, it does not require quantifiable data. I shall be interested in analysing information in order to come to some useful conclusions and recommendations. And seek to make general statements on how categories or themes of data are related.

I shall obtain detailed information about the phenomenon being studied and then try to establish patterns, trends and relationships from the information gathered.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 DATA ANALYSES AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of data analyses and presentation of data gathered from the field through the use of interview and observation analyses.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The number of pupils in Guadalupe Nursery School was 85. I observed 61 out of 85 pupils; ages ranged from 3-5 years. The male pupils were 33, while the female pupils were 28. The pupils were using mixed languages. They used mainly their first languages, which is Kiswahili and then the second language, which is English.

The teachers were 11 in number. All were female teachers. They had experiences that ranged from 9 years to 21 years; including 1 female teacher on a 2 years attachment experience.

4.3 DIFFERENCES IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE BETWEEN KISWAHILI (L1) AND ENGLISH L2

Teacher Consolata Owino is one of the female teachers in Guadalupe Nursery School. Her course of study was Early Child Educator (ECE). She had 10 years experience. Consolata had this to say:

Most children that come from Bantu Origin have the same sentence structure with L2, English S.V.O

She has this example:

L1 Kiswahili Nanyua /SV Maji/O

L2 English 1/S Drunk/V Water/O

Consolata continued:

Most children come when they have known only Kiswahili or their L1. They only think on their L1 and translate their understanding of L2 with L1. They feel comfortable and fluent in answering back questions in the first language than in L2.

Consolata equally added that:

The difference comes from Nilote or Cushite sentence structure. The children from these places find it very difficult to adapt to the L2 sentence structure.

On the same question, teacher Mary concerned with on the view that:

Some of my pupils speak English from the direct translation with their L1. And most of the time, they mean different things. But through practice and constant correction, they start to master each word and its different meanings in L2.

However, teachers Leonora, Lucy and Elizabeth told me the same thing in order to confirm what the other teachers had previously told me. To add to what the other had said, Elizabeth said that:

Sometimes, the pupil does not know the right word to use. Then, he mixes L1 and L2 in order to communicate with his mates.

More so, from my observation, interaction with the pupils and the teachers' feedback; I was able to deduct few things, that L1 and L2 are almost the same in sentence structure. Especially with the Bantu languages and English structure. And also, that children are fluent and comfortable with their L1, until they are exposed to L2. Then, with constant practice and corrections, they are also capable of acquiring the L2 very fast.

4.4 PARTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SENTENCE STRUCTURE THAT ARE AFFECTED BY L1

I approached teacher Leonora Musunba who studied Early Child Education (ECE). And had 21 years experience; to shed some light on the above-mentioned question. And she had this to say:

The parts of English language sentence structure that are affected by L1 are in word order. Verbs and tenses, nouns and pluralization

She went on explaining them as followed:

4.4.1 TENSES

Most children find it very easy to express themselves in Kiswahili but when they want to say the same thing in English, they mix up the tenses.

Leonora gave an example by asking a little child of 3 years, Makuria in Kg 1, to tell her what he took in the morning.

Teacher – Makuria, what did you take in the morning?

Makuria – I drink milk.

Teacher – Do you mean, you drank milk?

Makuria – Yes, I drink milk.

4.4.2 VERBS

Leonora started to share her experiences for the past 21 years in kindergarten schools and said that:

For all my 21 years experience and observation in Kindergarten Schools, pupils especially Kg 1 are comfortable in speaking their L1 with the verb. But always silence the verb or omit it in L2.

She had this example to give:

Kiswahili L1- Mummy anakuja

English L2- Mummy is coming (is silence)

- Mummy – coming (is- Omitted)

Teacher Cosolata also had something to add to this and she said:

I also discovered that they have a problem of regular and irregular verbs. Many of them say,

Go - goed

Put - puted

Cut - cuted

Sing - singed

Write - writed

4.4.3 NOUN AND PLURALIZATION

On the same question, teacher Elizabeth shared her own observation on the part of English language sentence structure that is affected by L1. She called it Noun and Pluralization and said:

I have observed that they equally have problem with Noun and their Pluralization., especially nouns with irregular plurals.

She gave some examples as followed:

Woman - Womans - Women - Womens

Man - Mans - Men - Mens

Sheep - Sheeps

Child - Childs - Children - Childrens

They do not understand why the plurals should not be only.

Teachers Leonora, Consolata, Mary and Lucy agreed to this. They said that they have been giving the pupils constant correction and practice.

I was able to make my own observation by speaking with some of the pupils in Kg I and Kg III. They told me short stories and through these stories I was able to find out the truth in what the teachers told me.

4.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST AND THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITIONS

Teacher Mary Ajigoh was a teacher in Guadalupe Nursery School. She studied Early Child Educator (ECE) and had 9 years teaching experience.

Mary tried to explain the relationship between the first and the second language acquisition. She had this to say:

Pupils whose parents speak different languages can acquire a second language in circumstances similar to those of first language acquisition. At these pupils' tender ages, they still have the flexibility of the language acquisition faculty. A child's exposures to his environment and with an already known language available for most of his daily communicative requirements enable the child to become as proficient in a second language (L2) as he is in his first language (L1).

Mary cited on exceptional cases of children with speech impairment in her class.

Mary pointed at one of her pupils and said:

That child has speech impairment. He came here when he could not communicate in any language, only to make some sounds and the other children used to laugh at him. But now, he can manage to say what he wants in his L1 and surprisingly in L2.

I was also opportuned to get the Head teacher Elizabeth Miraa. Her course of study was also Early Child Education (ECE). She had 13 years experience. Elizabeth shared with me and said that:

Since my 13 years experience as a child educator; I have observed that the pupils are so fluent with their L1 and are very eager to acquire and learn the L2 through the help of their educators. They have a very fast retentive memory unlike an adult who is learning the same language. The L1 helps the pupils to know the L2 because of the sameness in sentence structure. They are faster and more effective L2 learners.

More over, I saw sense in what the teachers told me. Going by their individual experiences in the field of child's education and also noticing that the pupils were more at home with their L1 especially during their recreation time. And that the same time, I heard the same pupil shouting what he said in English to his friend. My conclusion was that the pupils tried to get the two languages at the same time.

4.6 THE INTERFERENCE TO THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SENTENCE STRUCTURE OF A CHILD AT KINDERGARTEN LEVEL

I spoke to teacher Leonora, the longest served teacher in that school with 21 years experience on the possible interferences to the L2 language acquisition on children.

Teacher Leonora told me this:

In spite of the pupils' high proficiency in a second language L2, there are still interferences to the acquisition process. I attribute the interferences to so many things, namely:

The environment in which the child finds himself, if a child is in the midst of those that speak his L1 and other languages, that child will definitely pick up all those languages as fast as possible. But if the child is limited only to his L1, he will only be conversant with L2 alone.

Leonora continued:

Some pupils come to the kindergarten when they have known L2 (English). Well that they hardly make an error. This environment includes the background of the pupils. Their parents and those who stay around them influence them and contribute to their level of understanding L2. If the L2 is available for most of their daily communicative requirements, the child becomes fluent, but if the opposite is the case, the child will effectively use his L1.

On the same question, teacher Mary gave some responses and said that:

In some cases, no matter the environment and background the child comes from, it takes them time to articulate new words even in their L1. These are slow learners. But, with the help of the teacher, they gradually acquire and learn at their own pace. These group of pupils look like any other pupil in their class. There are also exceptional cases of children with speech impairment. They sometimes make only sounds but find it difficult to speak. These disparities in competence are problem and challenge to the teachers who are taking care of the pupils

The question became so interesting to the teachers that all of them wanted to share their ideas and observations. Teacher Lucy Wahu that was currently studying child development program (CDP) on 2 years attachment in Guadalupe Nursery School shared her experience and observation since she came to Guadalupe. She said:

Some of these children with speech impairment in my class improve day by day and are able to say few words. This is possible because of the help these pupils get at home and the families they come from. If the child comes from a family that cares about his improvement, the child normally has a rapid change and progress. But, if he comes from a family that do not care about his improvement, then the child suffers. And the school helps the child through his teachers. But he needs a follow-up at home.

Lucy pointed at one pupil in her class and said:

Look at that pupil seated at the 3rd row. He has a speech impairment. He makes funny sounds when the other pupils are singing in an effort to join them like: ho-ho-ho-ho-oo. when he came newly, the other pupils used to laugh at him. But with time, they have accepted him the way he is. He even feels comfortable with his fellow pupils in school than at home. Generally, the teachers understand and are friendly to them. And for the whole pupils, the teacher's constant help a lot in speeding up their acquisition and learning process of L2.

Again, the Head Teacher Elizabeth Miraa, started as a summary to what the teachers have said. And said that:

Children of their age, I mean from 3-5 years are very open to new things. Instead of learning the second language, they end up acquiring it very fast unlike an adult. That is the advantage children have over adults in learning, from the tender ages of 3-11, unless in exceptional problem child.

The Head teacher continued:

And with the teacher's understanding, correction and practice, this pupil with speech impairment will make out something out of his problem. That is why we are here. To create a community atmosphere where the young pupils will discover, nourish and develop their potentialities very fast. It is also the work of the parents to join us in this task by helping the pupils in anyway possible, when they are with them at home.

The Head teacher concluded by saying:

The parents should regularly come and see how their children are performing. Some of them register their children and disappear. They do not show up here to see the progress their children are making, and worse still they do not care much at home. I think both teachers and parents are responsible in making the acquisition of English language sentence structure easier for the pupils.

I actually observed one of the pupils in her class that has speech impairment from all the ideas, experiences and observations I got from the teachers, coupled with my own observations and interactions with the pupils; I noted that problem of interference on the pupils' acquisition of L2 was there.

And from my class observation, I drew a conclusion that those teachers were doing their best possible to helping the pupils to acquire English language sentences structure in a conducive atmosphere.

I had a close interaction with the pupils, and I found out that the pupils have memory skills that enable them to absorb stories, experiences and the ability to narrate them. There is an element of mystery in this process of acquisition. This points out that we are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which enables us to learn languages. Bley- Vroman (1989), says that this system is comprised of principles of Universal Grammar. He said that the sentences or utterances to which one is exposed comprise the positive evidence on which learners base a grammar.

I also took a close look at their writing books and discovered the omission of verbs in making sentences. The pupils were over generalizing regular and irregular nouns, to have regular plurals.

I equally noticed that the pupils mix up tenses, present tense and past tense when making their sentences. Interestingly, the pupils were so eager to be corrected and learn new words.

CHAPTER V

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a summary of the study's findings, conclusions; researcher's recommendations on the development of skills in helping pupils in using and understanding the English language sentences structure; and recommends areas for further research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The research was carried out to investigate the acquisition of English Sentence Structure in Nairobi Kindergarten schools. It was a case study of Our Lady of Guadalupe Nursery School, Nairobi.

The research had two objectives namely:

- a) To identify the problem of acquisition of English Language Sentence Structure in Nairobi Kindergarten schools.
- b) To highlight some possible solutions to the problem

The significance of this study is to create an awareness of the problem. The researcher also aimed at finding out the role and contribution of teachers in helping the pupils acquire the second language. This research was guided by the following questions:

- a) What are the differences in structure between L1 and L2?
- b) What parts of the English language sentence structure are affected by L1?

- c) What are the interferences to the acquisition of English Language Sentence Structure of a child at Kindergarten level?
- d) What is the relationship between the first and the second language acquisition?

In order to get a abroad perspective of the problems, the researcher consulted various sources, for example written material and observation.

To get the information needed for the study, the researcher used a case study design. This enabled the researcher to get into the study for credible and exploratory information.

The target population was the teachers and pupils of Our Lady Guadalupe Nursery School Nairobi. The sample size were the pupils in kindergarten I and kindergarten III. The researcher also used purposive sampling technique, where the Head teacher and teachers were interviewed. The interview guide and interview questions to guide.

Data were elicited mainly through the use of interview guides, which were designed for Kindergarten teachers. The researcher supplemented interview data with observation of pupils' works.

After the data collection, the data were analysed qualitatively. The researcher's main findings of the study are:

- ❖ Teachers said that L1 and L2 are almost the same in sentence structure; especially with the Bantu languages and English structure.
- ❖ Those pupils are fluent and comfortable with their L1 until they are exposed to L2.

- ❖ The teachers' constant corrections of the pupils and practice help in the language acquisition process.
- ❖ Pupils omit mix up regular and irregular verbs, nouns and their pluralizations.
- ❖ That the pupils are faster and more effective L2 learners.
- ❖ That there were problem of interference on the pupils acquisition of L2, such as L1, family background, environment and slow learning.
- ❖ Those pupils whose parents speak different languages can acquire a second language in circumstances similar to those of the first language acquisition.
- ❖ Normal children are sometimes mixed up with abnormal children or children with speech impairment in a class.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings and evaluation of the collected data from Guadalupe Nursery School Nairobi, the researcher made the following conclusions

The researcher found out that L1 and L2 are almost the same in sentence structure especially with the Bantu languages and English structure.

Also, I have observed that normal children are sometimes mix up with abnormal children or children with speech impairment in a class.

The researcher has revealed that the problem is wide and needs a combined efforts of parents and teachers. The re researcher hopes that the findings of this research will be useful in the field of education.

The researcher's findings and her 'Review of Literature' are related. To maintain few areas as Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Contrastive Analysis and Euro Analysis.

For example, contrastive analysis compares two languages, their similarities and their differences, was thought by many in the 19th century to be a useful predictor of where second language students would likely encounter problems in learning a second language. It stood to reason that if certain elements of a second language differed greatly from the students nature language, that student would likely encounter difficulties.

Also, error analysis treated second language errors as similar to errors encountered in first language acquisition, or what the linguists referred to as “developmental errors”.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the researcher findings the following recommendations were made:

- i. Having meetings regularly between teachers and parents.
- ii. There is need for frequent and systematic monitoring of pupils’ academic progress. This will help parents, teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses their pupils have.
- iii. Encourage parents to visit the school so as to be in close touch with what is going on in the school.
- iv. The teachers should help their pupils to develop better acquisition skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading.
- v. Memorization can help pupils to absorb and retain the factual information.
- vi. Frequent giving of corrections and practices including reinforcement are highly recommended for the pupils.

- vii. Teachers should provide variety in their methods of teaching and engage pupils in extra curricular activities as well. This will help pupils to develop more interest in learning.
- viii. There should be follow-up at home by the parents when their children are with them.
- ix. Pupils with speech impairment should be taken to special schools for special education and attention.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since the research is not exhausted, the researcher therefore, proposes further areas of recommendations for this study.

1. A study should be conducted on the general treatment of the issues in L2 acquisition.
2. A study should be conducted on the teaching of English as L2.
3. A study should equally be conducted on pronunciation in L2
4. A study should be conducted on learners' errors and inter-language.
5. A study should be carried on the 'state of the art' in child language acquisition.
6. A study should be carried on how to improve the rapport between parents and teachers.

REFERENCE

- AKMAJIAN, et al., *An Introduction to Language and Communication*. Massachusetts, Cambridge MIT Press 1990.
- ANDERSON, et al P.S., *Language Skills Elementary Education*, 3rd Edition, New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers London 1979.
- ATKISON, M., *Explanation in the Study of Child Language Development*. Cambridge Studies in Linguistics, Vol.35 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982.
- BLEY-VROMAN, R., *The Comparative Fallacy in Inter-language Studies: The Case of Systematicity*. *Language Learning* 33: 1-17, 1983.
- CHOMSKY., *Knowledge of Language-Its Nature Origin and Use*. New York; Praeger 1986.
- CHOMSKY (1980), *Rules and Representations*, New York Columbia University Press.
- CHOMSKY, N., *Reflections on Language*. New York: Pantheon 1975.
- CHOMSKY, N (1957), *Syntactic Structures*, The Hague; Mouton.
- ELLIS, R., *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1985.
- HARMER (1983), *The Practice of English Language Teaching* Essex: Longman.
- GASS - SCHACHTER, *Linguistic Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*. United States of America, Cambridge University Press 1989.
- GREGG, K.R., (1984) *Krashen's Monitor and Occam's Razor*. *Applied Linguistics* Vol. No.5: 79-100
- HOEKSTRA AND SCHWARTZ, eds., *Language Acquisition Studies in Generative Grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.pp.313-68.
- KRASHEN, S.D., *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press 1982.

- KRASHEN, S. O., *Second Language Acquisition and Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1981.
- LENNEBERG, E., *Biological Foundation of Language*. New York, Wiley 1967
- PAIKEDAY, T. M., *The Nature Speaker is dead*. Toronto: Paikeday Publishing 1985.
- PENFIELD AND ROBERTS (1959), *Speech and Brain Mechanisms*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- PETERSEN, S., *How does the Brain Develop*. Washington: Educational Leadership 2000.
- PINKER, S., *Language Learnability and Language Development*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1984.
- PYLYSHYN, Z.W., (1973) *The Role of Competence Theories in Cognitive Psychology*. Journal of Psycholinguistic Research 2:21-50.
- SCHWARTS AND SPROUSE (1994), *World Order and Nominative Case in nonnative Language Acquisition: A Longitudinal Study of (L1 Turkish) German interlanguage*.
- SKINNER, B.F., *Verbal Behaviour*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts 1957.
- TARONE, E., (1979) *Inter-Language as Chameleon*. Language learning 29:181-191.
- WEXLER, et al, *Formal Principles of Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, Mass MIT Press 1980.
- WOLFGANG, K., *Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge, University Press 1986.
- YULE, *The Study of Language* .Cambridge: University Press 1985.

APPENDIX: I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. What problems do pupils have in acquiring the English Language Sentence Structure?
2. What part of speech do children in Kindergarten I and III omit in making their sentences?
3. What are the possible interferences to their acquisition of English Language Sentence?
4. How do you help children to overcome the problems?

APPENDIX: II

OBSERVATION GUIDE

- a) The researcher is to observe the differences in sentence structure between Kiswahili L1 and English L2
- b) To observe the use of tenses in the pupils' sentence structure.
- c) To observe the ways the pupils structure their sentence with verbs.
- d) Also to observe how pupils make use of nouns and their pluralisation.
- e) The researcher also is to observe the pupils' speaking and writing skills, through their telling of stories and going through their writing books.

Saint Mary's University of Minnesota/USA Nairobi Campus

Christ the Teacher Institute for Education
Tangaza College
P.O. Box 15055
P.C. 00509 Langata
Nairobi, Kenya

011-254-2-89-0339 (office)
011-254-2-89-1407 (messages)
011-254-2-89-0018 (fax)
xteach@kenyaweb.com

15 January 2003

To Whom It May Concern:

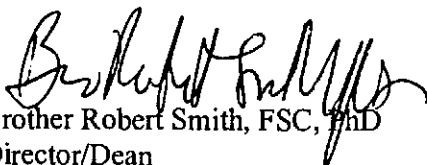
Sister Mary Petronila Kpanah, DDL (#0140) is a fourth-year full time student in good standing at Christ the Teacher Institute for Education. In May, she will be graduating with a B.Sc.Ed. As part of her final semester, she is enrolled in a research seminar in education, during which she is to conduct research and gather informational data regarding various issues, leading to the writing of a major paper. Her lecturer for this course, and the person responsible for directing her research, is Mr. Simon Wachira, our Registrar and one of our lecturers in Education.

Christ the Teacher Institute for Education is an institute in the School of Education of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota/USA. It is also an institute within Tangaza College, one of the constituent colleges of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

In order to accomplish her work, I respectfully request that you allow Sister Mary the courtesy of having access to your institution or program for the purpose of gathering data, all of which will be shown to and discussed with you.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request. Please contact me if I can provide additional information, clarification, or amplification of anything above.

Sincerely,



Brother Robert Smith, FSC, PhD
Director/Dean

Associate Dean, School of Education, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
Dean, Nairobi Campus, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

