

**LEARNERS' VIEWS TOWARDS THE USE OF KSL AS A MEDIUM OF  
INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR LEARNERS WITH HEARING  
IMPAIRMENT, HOMA BAY COUNTY.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) is visual gestural language used by people with hearing impairment in Kenya it can also be learnt and used by people who have hearing ability. KSL plays a critical role in the academic world in the education of learners with hearing impairment as it is used for self expression and in communicating with others. Policy documents such Kenyan Constitution (2010) and Ministry of Education (2004), recognized KSL as a third national language, use of KSL as medium of instruction in schools for learners with hearing impairment and first language to HI learners, therefore factors influencing its growth and development in Homa Bay County should have a bearing on medium of instruction in the educational institutions for learners with HI. Scarcity of empirical evidence in respect to the topic of the study further necessitated conducting this study on Factors Influencing use of KSL as a medium of Instruction in primary schools for the hearing impaired in Homa bay County: A case of Nyangweso Special school for the Deaf. The objectives of the study were; Establish teachers' ability to use KSL as a medium of instruction, Determine how classroom facilities affect KSL as a medium of instruction and Identify learners' views towards the use of KSL as a medium of instruction. Qualitative research design was used, tools used for data collection were; interview schedules, questionnaires and classroom observation checklist. The main study was carried out at Nyangweso special school for the Deaf while piloting was carried out Lambwe Christian School for the Deaf and the findings were not included in the main study. Study targeted a population of 147 participants which comprised of 1 head teacher, 16 teachers and 130 learners. Stratified random sampling was used to get a sample size of 76 participants which comprised of 1 head teacher, 16 teachers and 59 learners. Reliability of the instruments was done through test-retest method and for valid information about the study,

researcher made teachers part of the participants and data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics, tables and graphs.

**Keywords:** Medium of Instruction, Kenyan Sign Language, Hearing Impairment, Influence

### **Introduction**

A study by Kenya Institute of Special Needs Education (2002), The National Survey on Children with Disabilities and Kenya Institute Special Needs Education (2018) identified a Spanish monk named Pedro Pounce de Leon who created manual alphabets while working with the deaf students. In Africa, Uganda was the first to recognize sign language through constitutional amendment of 1995, while in Kenya, Republic of Kenya report (1988) noted that lack of definite sign language for Kenyans was one of the problem experienced in teaching learners with Hearing Impairment (HI). This therefore led to the establishment of Machakos School for the deaf to pilot the suitable way of educating and a medium of instruction to learners with HI. Even though Kenyan Constitution (2010) recognized KSL as a third national language in Kenya, KSL Bill (2019) outlined that KSL can be a first language to the HI or a preferred language to those who have learnt it. This therefore showed that the suitable mode of communication for learners with HI was still a challenge, and therefore factors that influence its growth and development in Homa Bay County should have a bearing on medium of instruction in the educational institutions where teaching learners with HI using sign language started in 1988.

The related research works done by scholars such as; (Agori, Imbiti & Kwena 2014) who focused on the Strategies facilitating Kenyan Sign Language Progress in primary schools for hearing impaired learners. Another study by Pakata.B.F, (2015) on Factors Influencing use of Sign Language in Teaching and Learning in public primary schools and all failed to outline the stated

study adequately. Scarcity of empirical evidence in respect of the topic of the study further necessitated conducting of this study on Factors Influencing use of Kenyan Sign Language as a medium of instruction in primary schools for the hearing impaired in Homa Bay County: A case of Nyangweso special school for the deaf.

### **Purpose of the study/ Objectives**

The study sought to find out factors influencing the use of KSL as a medium of instruction in primary schools for the HI. The major objectives were to:

- Establish teachers' ability to use KSL as a medium of instruction.
- Determine how classroom facilities affect KSL as a medium of instruction.
- Identify learners' views towards the use of KSL as a medium of instruction

### **Theoretical Framework.**

This study was guided by two theories; the Theory of first Language Acquisition by (Noam Chomsky 1977), which argued that every human being is born with the capacity to learn first language the theory further outlines that children think in their first language and should be exposed to rich environment of learning language and the Behaviorist Theory of Language Acquisition as proposed Skinner (1957), in the theory Skinner argued that language is a form of behavior acquired through interaction with the users of the language, the two theories stressed on the influence of environment in the nurturing of first language learning process in which the child is a positive learner who responds to the environmental stimulus. This explains why children with hearing impairment born to hearing parents do not acquire KSL until they join school where they interact in KSL for the first time. On the other hand, children with hearing impairment born to parents with hearing impairment acquire KSL before joining school the hearing impaired child

may be only one in a family of hearing siblings and parents who use speech and may not know KSL. In that case therefore, the hearing impaired lagged behind in first language (KSL) acquisition. In this theory, for learning of the first language to take place effectively there has to be reinforcing agents it therefore identified parents as important reinforcing agents in the first language learning. This is why at school, teachers should use teaching and learning resources to reinforce their teaching and learning of KSL as a medium of instruction and as a teaching subject.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative research design was used to provide an in depth understanding and detailed information about the study to identify learners' views towards the use of KSL as a medium of instruction. Tools used to obtain data were; questionnaires, interview schedules and classroom observation checklists, the main study was carried out in one of the public primary school for the in Homa Bay County, Kenya, this was Nyangweso Special School for the Deaf. The population of interest in this study comprised of one head teacher, 16 teachers and 130 learners which gave a total target population of 147 participants. To get the sample size the researcher employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation of various strata in the population. The population was divided into three categories i.e the head teacher, teachers and the learners of classes five, six and seven who were more advanced in the use of KSL as a medium of instruction, class eight did not participate in the study because at the time of data collection they were busy preparing for the national examination. To get the respondents, a sample of 45% was used to get 59 learners, since the school had only one head teacher and 16 teachers; a sample was not drawn because the number of a total sample size of 76 respondents which gave a good representation to carry out the study. Piloting was done at Lambwe Christian School for the Deaf as one of the public primary schools for learners with hearing impairments within the study area, but the

findings were not included in the main study. In order to get valid information, the researcher decided to make teachers part of the respondents because KSL is the main medium of instruction between teachers and learners.

The reliability of the instruments was determined by test-retest method on the pilot study sample. The research instruments were to the subjects selected for piloting who did not participate in the main study. The responses were scored, the same instruments were administered to the same group of the subjects after two weeks. The scores of the first test were compared to the scores of the second test, comparisons of the responses obtained from the both tests were done by calculating pearson product correlation coefficient formula of about 0.75 The result of the correlation was 0.7 which was slightly above the stated correlation the researcher had set in the proposal.

The researcher sought authority to go and carry out data collection from the university and other relevant bodies such as Ministry of Education State Department for Early Learning & Basic Education and National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher also sought permission from head teachers while in the study area the researcher briefed the respondents about the study, after which the researcher issued the respondents with the questionnaires to fill. The questionnaires were collected immediately after they were filled, after which researcher sought permission from the target school head teacher in order to carry out classroom observation and interviews for learners.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected was mainly qualitative in nature which is appropriately analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data from the field was sorted, coded and organized in tables and graphs to reveal percentage scores of different study attributes after which it was edited for accuracy and completeness. The researcher then code the pre-coded questions so that all answers obtained from different respondents could be classified into study objectives.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The researcher sought clearance from the university and obtained Research Authorization letter from the ministry of education and research Permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation to collect data from the targeted primary schools within Homa Bay County. The researcher used both written and oral consent to get permission to collect data in the study area while on the actual data collection time, the researcher briefed the participants on the purpose and expectation of the research, sought consent from the parents for their children to participate in the study and assured participants of their confidentiality.

## **RESULTS/FINDINGS**

### **Learners Views Towards KSL Use as a Medium of Instruction**

#### **Learners' Age**

The Study sought to find out the ages of the learners' who took part in the study, the Study findings are presented in Table 1.2

#### **Table 1.2 Learners' Age**

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Below 14	15	38
15-17	22	56
18-20	2	6
Above 20	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1.2 showed that below 14 years were 38%, those who were between 15-17 years were 56% while those who were 18-20 years were 6% and none was above 20 years. Learners who participated in the study were drawn from classes five, six and seven, who were able to express themselves clearly in KSL since they have been in school for many years this therefore revealed that the longer the learners with hearing impairment stayed in school the more competent they are in KSL as supported by Adoyo & Okutoyi (2015) and Aura (2016).



### Where You First Learnt KSL

The Study sought to find out where learners with HI first interacted in KSL, the Study findings are presented in Table 1.3

**Table 1.3 Where You First Learnt KSL**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>No. of learners</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Home	2	5
School	36	92
Others	1	3
Total	39	100

From Table 1.3 above 5% of the learners agreed that they first learnt KSL at home, 92% of the learners agreed that they first learnt KSL when they first joined school, while 3% of the learners first learnt KSL in other forums and through further probes the learner revealed that they learnt KSL from home had their elder siblings with hearing impairment. At home parents and sibling use oral speech which a child with hearing impairment cannot hear and understand compared with their hearing peers who join school after having acquired first language (MT). The Study therefore revealed that learners with hearing impairment lagged behind in first language acquisition because

they have to wait until they first join school is when they first interact in KSL. This was in support of scholars such as Chamberlain and Mayberry (2000) as cited in Aura (2016), Adoyo and Okutoyi (2015) who further recommended on the early interventions and maximization of exposure to KSL among learners with hearing impairment.

### Teachers' Preferred Communication Mode

The Study sought to find out from learners other communication modes preferred by teachers apart from KSL the Study findings are presented in Table 1.4

**Table 1.4 Teachers' Preferred Communication Mode**

Communication	No. of learners	Percentage (%)
Finger spelling	5	13
KSL	20	51
Total communication	7	18
Writing	7	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>

From the Study findings 13% of the learners were of the opinion that their teachers preferred finger spelling, 51% had the opinion that teachers preferred KSL and 18% had the opinion that their

teachers preferred writing and TC. Since majority of the respondents were of the opinion that their teachers preferred using KSL this clearly revealed that KSL was used as a medium of instruction in schools for learners with hearing impairment as recognized by the Kenyan Constitution (2010) as the third National language. Scholars such as Reed (2009) also supported the use of TC as it gave teachers freedom to choose suited mode of communication, it also gave learners with HI opportunity to access all avenues of communication in enhancing medium of instruction. Aura (2016) noted that use of TC exposes learners to rich language environment which facilitated early acquisition of KSL.

### Challenges encountered in using KSL as a Medium of Instruction

The Study sought to find out challenges encountered by learners in using KSL as a medium of instruction. The Study findings are revealed in Figure 1.1

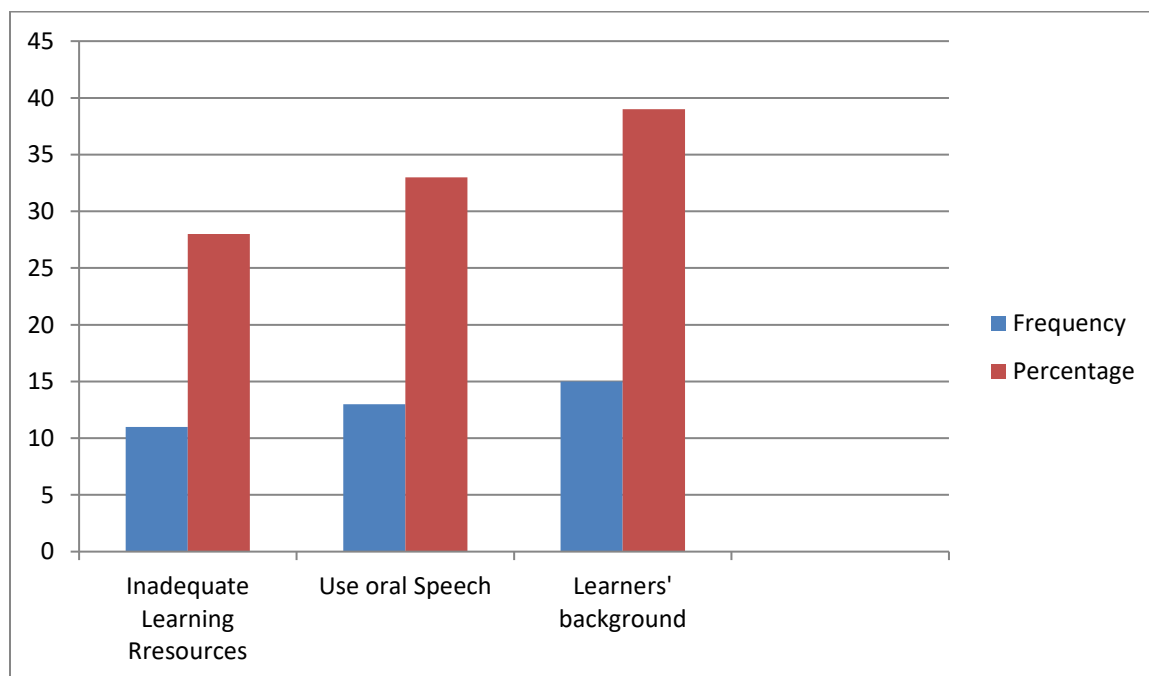


Figure 1.1 Challenges encountered in using KSL as a Medium of Instruction

Figure 1.1 showed that 28% of the respondents were of the opinion that inadequate learning resources were some of the hindrance in the use of KSL, while 33% of the respondents agreed that use of oral speech by the hearing people was a great challenge and 39 % of the respondents agreed that learners' background was also a challenge since newly admitted learners join school without basic KSL communication skills. The Study findings revealed the challenges they faced as learners in using KSL as a medium of instruction were as due to the fact that; inadequate KSL text books and other KSL learning resources, new learners join school without knowledge in KSL, at school they use KSL as a medium of instruction.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Learners' Views towards KSL Use as a Medium of Instruction**

Learners who participated in the study were drawn from classes five, six and seven, whose ages varied from below 14 years were 38%, between 15-17 years were 56%, between 18-20 years were 6% and none was above 20 years, these learners had longer period of stay in the school and had some advanced level of communication in KSL. The learners' level of communication was very much useful during data collection especially through interview schedules which required the use oral expressive skills, as this would help the researcher to get more information on the study and were able to express themselves clearly in KSL this therefore revealed that the longer the learners with hearing impairment stays in school the more competent they are in KSL as supported by Adoyo & Okutoyi (2015) and Aura (2016).

From the study findings 92% of the learners first interacted in KSL when they first joined school, 5% first interacted in KSL at home through sibling who had hearing impairment, while 3% first interacted in KSL in other places. Since majority of the learners with hearing impairment first

interacted in KSL when first join, this therefore according to researcher's own opinion, learners with hearing impairment lagged behind in first language acquisition because they have to wait until they first join school, compared with their hearing peers who join school after having acquired first language (MT). This therefore to help bridge the gap scholars such as Chamberlain and Mayberry (2000) as cited in Aura (2016), further recommended on early intervention and maximization of exposure to KSL among HI learners. Noam Chomsky (1977) and Skinner (1957) further supported by recommending on exposing children to rich environment for first language learning early in life.

Other communication modes preferred by teachers were as follows; 51% had the opinion that teachers preferred KSL, 13% of the learners had the opinion that their teachers preferred finger spelling and 18% supported that the teachers used Total Communication and writing since majority of the learners supported that their teachers preferred using KSL revealed that teachers were competent in KSL use as a medium of instruction, this therefore revealed that teachers within the study area have embraced the use of KSL as a medium of instruction and also a national language as recognized by the Kenyan Constitution (2010) as the third national language in Kenya.

Challenges encountered by learners in using KSL as a medium of instruction were as follows; 39% of the respondents had the opinion that learners' background, since newly admitted learners who join school for the first time had no knowledge in basic KSL communication skills. This therefore clearly revealed that majority of learners with HI within the study area interacted in KSL when they first joined school. communication was a challenge while they are at home this was because their siblings and parents do not understand KSL and use oral speech which learners with hearing impairment could not hear and understand, in researcher's own opinion this revealed inconsistency in use of KSL as a medium of instruction. Through probes learners urged the

government to put more emphasis that everybody should learn KSL to help bridge the gap between the hearing and the hearing impaired people. 33% had the opinion on the use of oral speech this was mostly realized while communicating with the hearing people who used oral speech which learners with HI did not understand and 28% had the opinion on inadequate learning resources especially the KSL text books and other learning resources were inadequate at school.

## **Conclusions**

On the basis of the findings generated by this Study it is concluded that the use of KSL as a medium of instruction in primary schools for learners with hearing impairment had countable number of challenges which had negative influence on KSL thus making it difficult for learners with hearing impairment to realize full access to quality education,

Incompetence in first language (KSL) among the learners with hearing impairment who first join school, Learners with hearing impairment lagged behind in first language (KSL) acquisition thus affects language competence. The study revealed that learners with hearing impairment lagged behind in first language (MT) acquisition because they have to wait until they join school is when they first interact in KSL language. Some KSL influencing factors identified by the learners included; communication barrier with learners who join school for the first time because they have no knowledge in KSL, Inadequate KSL instructional materials such as KSL books and other KSL learning resources, inconsistency in use of KSL language because at school they use KSL while at home they have communication barrier because their siblings and parents use oral speech, and some other modes of communication which do not yield effective communication with the HI child.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

On the basis of study findings, it therefore recommends for early exposure to use of KSL as a medium of instruction among children with hearing impairment, this can be realized through induction courses on basic KSL to parents of children with hearing impairments as they are the first reinforcing agents for first language acquisition.

### **Recommendation for further research**

A study be done on KSL language competence among learners with hearing impairment in Homa Bay County.

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**APPENDIX 1: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**

The observation checklist will be used in three different classes 5-7. The researcher will describe the observation made on the observation checklist.

**Classroom Observation Checklist****A Classroom Environment**

<b>FEATURES</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
1 Size of the classroom	
2 Seating plan	
3 Roofing	
4 Lighting	
5 Availability of hearing aids	
6 Displayed KSL charts	

**B Furniture in the class**

<b>FEATURES</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
1 Teacher's desk	
2 Learner's desk	
3 Learners' chairs	
4 Notice boards	
5 Cupboards	

**C Other teaching aids**

<b>FEATURES</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
1 Computers	
2 Real objects	
3 Resource persons	
4 Maps	
5 KSL pictures	
6 KSL charts	
7 Others	

**APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS**

You are kindly requested to answer questions and give your honest response by ticking the most appropriate response in the box. All information will be treated confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Put a tick (√) in the appropriate space provided

**SECTION A: BIO DATA**

Girl ( )                      Boy ( )

Age ( )

Class ( )

**SECTION B**

1 Which language did you learn first before joining school?

Oral ( )    KSL ( )

Writing ( )    Total Communication ( )

Finger spelling ( )

Gestures ( )                      Others ( )

2 Where did you first learn KSL?

At home ( ) at school ( ) in the church ( )

3 Which mode of communication does your teachers commonly use?

Oral ( ) KSL ( )

Writing ( ) Total Communication ( )

Finger spelling ( )

Gestures ( ) Others ( )

4 Which medium of communication would you prefer your teacher to use during teaching?

Oral ( ) KSL ( )

Writing ( ) Total Communication ( )

Finger spelling ( )

Gestures ( ) Others ( )

5 a) which medium of communication are you not comfortable with?

Oral ( ) KSL ( )

Writing ( ) Total Communication ( )

Finger spelling ( )

Gestures ( ) Others ( )

b) Give reasons.....

.....

6 Which mode of communication does your parent commonly use when communicating with you?

Oral ( )

KSL ( )

Writing ( )

Total Communication ( )

Finger spelling ( )

Gestures ( )

Others ( )

7. What are some of the teaching and learning resources used in your class?

Charts ( )

Wall maps ( )

Hearing aids ( )

Real objects ( )

Any Other Specify.....

8 Do teachers use KSL to interact with the learners?

Strongly Agree ( )

Agree ( )

Neutral ( )

Disagree ( )

Strongly Disagree ( )

9 Do you have any other information that you would like me to know on what influences your learning of KSL.