Assessment of Kivunjo as Second Language Learners' Competence

Z. Elisifa
Department of Linguistics and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Open University of Tanzania
zelda.elisifa@out.ac.tz

Abstract: *The current study sought to assess the second language learners' competence at lexical, syntactic, morphological, comprehension and pragmatic levels. The language under study was Kivunjo dialect of Chagga, spoken in Kilimanjaro. The study involved 68 subjects who included 28 subjects who were dubbed 'the diaspora", 20 immigrants into Kivunjo speaking area by virtue of their marriage, and 20 who were residing in Kivunjo speaking area because they are working or doing business in the area. Two instruments were used to collect data. The first was a cloze test to measure the respondents' level of competence and the second was questionnaire which was aimed at capturing the respondents' biodata focusing on their age, sex, place of birth and growth, and their domicile. The findings showed that the respondents' level of competence was such that the majority from all three clusters performed between 'fair' and 'very good', which gives the impression that most of them were able to communicate accurately and appropriately. However, there was variability across the three groups which point to the fact that the Kivunjo as L2 speakers are no a homogenous group with regard to their varying levels of competence.*

Key Words: Kivunjo, second language, competence

INTRODUCTION

Possessing a language is the quintessentially human trait, all normal humans speak, no nonhuman animal does. Language is the main vehicle by which we know about other people's thoughts, and the two must be intimately related (Pinker, 1987). Learning a first language is something every child does successfully, in a matter of a few years and without the need for formal lessons. This first language is close to the core of what it means to be human; it is not surprising that children's acquisition of language has received so much attention.

However, second language acquisition, which Krashen (1981) defines as a process that requires meaningful interaction in the target language (i.e. natural communication) in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding, is not as ease and subconscious as is the case for first language acquisition. The latter has been a quest for researchers mainly focusing on how communicative competence, i.e. the ability to interpret the underlying meaning of a message, understand cultural references, use strategies to keep communication from breaking down, and apply the rules of grammar- develops in a second language (Savignon, 1997). Other researchers (e.g. Krashen, 1981) focus on such learner individual factors as aptitude and attitude.

Most acquisitionists argue for the prime role of natural, informal, input-rich environments for successful second language acquisition. Examples are Mason's (1971) study in which certain foreign students at the University of Hawaii were allowed to follow regular academic programmes without extra ESL, despite the fact that their English placement scores indicated that they should be enrolled in English for foreign student classes. Post-tests given at the end of the semester showed no significant difference in increase in English proficiency between

those excused from ESL and controls who took the required ESL classes. Another was a study by Carroll (1967) of the second language proficiency of American college seniors majoring in foreign languages (French, German, Russian, Spanish). A strong relationship was found between time spent abroad (in the country where the target language was spoken) and test performance, with those who reported a year's study abroad doing best, followed by those who reported a summer abroad or a tour. Both of these groups outperformed those who had never been in the country where the target language was spoken. Thirdly, Meisel, Clahsen, and Pienemann (1981) studied the untutored, non-instructed acquisition of German L2 by Gasterbeiter or guest workers, who had migrated to Germany from Eastern and Central Europe for short term employment. They were native speakers predominantly of Romance languages and Turkish.

Another related area of research has focused on how interaction contributes to second language acquisition. Interaction refers to communication between individuals, particularly when they are negotiating meaning in order to prevent a breakdown in communication (Ellis, 1999). Research on interaction is conducted within the framework of the Interactive Hypothesis, which states that conversational interaction "facilitates (language) acquisition because it connects input, i.e. what learners hear and read; internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and output, i.e. what learners produce, in productive ways" (Long, 1996:451-452). Interaction also provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input and feedback (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994) as well as to make changes in their own linguistic output (Swain, 1995). Empirical research with second language learners supports the contention that engaging in language interactions facilitates second language development. Findings from a study to determine how conversational interaction affects the acquisition of question formation indicate that interaction can increase the pace of acquisition (Mackey, 1999). Research on interaction includes studies of task-based language learning and teaching and focus on form.

In Africa, Mangugu (2010) investigated common English language errors made by Oshiwambo, Afrikaans and Silozi first language speakers. The study examined errors in a corpus of 360 essays written by 180 participants. Errors were identified and classified into various categories. The four most common errors committed by the participants were tenses, prepositions, articles and spelling. Another study is by Siambo (2013) who investigated the challenges which second grade learners face during the transition from the language of initial literacy (Nyanja) and second language of literacy (English). A sample of 80 participants drawn from five schools in Chongwe District took part in the study out of which 30 were teachers while 50 were pupils. The research findings showed that some grade two learners experienced challenges during the transition between language of initial literacy (Nyanja) and the second language of literacy (English). These were in terms of getting used to learning in a local language; pronouncing English words in Chinyanja; inability to read some of the English words in the SITE course because of failure by teachers to complete teaching the Chinyanja phonic sounds stipulated in the Teachers' Guide.

However, most of the studies in this untutored, naturalist and interactive situations have mainly focused on languages that are of international status such as English and if other languages are studied it is only as their role in either facilitating or inhibiting the acquisition of English as second or foreign language.

Only a few studies in the area of second language acquisition have been on African languages. In fact, Spinner (2013) refers to second language acquisition of Bantu languages as a mostly untapped research opportunity in his summary of research on the second

language acquisition of Bantu languages, including Swahili, Zulu, Xhosa and Lingala. The few examples include, first, Mali's (2007) investigation of the strategies that second language learners of isiZulu used to understand and make themselves understood when they communicate in computer chat rooms. The results of this study showed no difference in the number, category and type of strategies used when chatting with peers versus native speakers about personal or cultural topics. The second is the study by Ramnarain (2004) who investigated factors that affected the poor performance of students in Afrikaans as second language at grade twelve level in three schools in the Pietermaritzburg region. The critical questions addressed relate to the attitudes of learners and educators towards Afrikaans as a subject. The findings showed that the use of a mother tongue and its impact on the acquisition of an additional language plays a major role in performance. In addition to this, the negative attitudes of African learners towards Afrikaans also had a disastrous impact on the results in grade twelve. Thirdly, Joy (2013) studied the effect of environment on the Kiidakho first language speakers' acquisition and use of Kiswahili second language. From the learners' responses, it was deduced that the home environment exposes the learner to more Kiidakho than Kiswahili. Fourth, Ombui (2012) investigated institution based factors influencing Kiswahili as second language students' performance at KCSE examinations in public secondary schools in Sameta Division, Kisii County in Kenya. The study found that majority of the schools had inadequate teaching/learning resources to a level that learners lacked language course books. A good number of the schools lacked enough physical facilities like libraries and classrooms. Further, most day schools had inadequate trained teachers consequently engaging untrained form four school leavers who not only could not deliver content, but also lacked language pedagogy. The fifth and last study is by Ibiwotisi (2010) who soughtto determine the major areas of difficulty experienced by the Igbo speaking students of Youruba as L2 who have studied Yoruba as L2for more than one and half years. Based on the findings, the following grammatical errors were identified: (i) misuse of tense, (ii) misuse of verb (iii) pronoun errors, (iv) noun errors, (v) spelling errors, (vi) high case errors, (vii) style errors, (viii) adjectives/adverbs errors (ix) tone usage errors, (x) conjunction errors, (xi) fragment errors and (xii) word order errors, etc.

In Tanzania, studies on acquisition of Tanzanian languages as L2 are virtually non-existent except Msanjila's (2004) study of literacy levels of Kiswahili as L2 learners. Most other studies either focus on the role of those languages as L1 mainly in the acquisition of English as second or foreign language. The current study thus sought to pioneer in the quest of acquisition of a Tanzanian, ethnically based language as a second language.

The current study thus sought to assess the level of competence exhibited by speakers of Kivunjo as L2 at the syntactic, lexical, pragmatic and comprehension levels.

The Language under Study
Kivunjo is one of several dialects of Chagga language. It is spoken in the traditional chiefdoms of Kirua, Kilema, Marangu, Mamba and Mwika. Administratively, the area is known as Vunjo, located in Moshi rural district, in Kilimanjaro region. The people of Vunjo regard themselves as speaking Kichagga (or pronounced as 'Kichaka") referring other variants of Chagga by the name of the former chiefdoms, such as Kikibisho, Kimachame or Kirombo (Elisifa, 2008). Stahl (1964) observes that the word 'vunjo' is derived from the verb 'eyenja' i.e. 'to go about hawking', which was used as a nickname by the people of Rombo and Moshi.

According to Nurse (1977), Vunjo people were largely agricultural. Their staple foods are bananas, beans, millet, and cassava with some variations. They depend on coffee and finger

millet as their cash crops. They also practice indoor grazing of cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and chicken due to lack of land.

While major arguments are that the majority of ethnically-based languages are in the verge of disappearance because of negative attitude by the political elite (Rugemalira, 2004) or inaccessibility by researchers (Maho, 1999), or lack of documentation (Legere, 2002), Kivunjo's endangerment is somewhat minimized by its being acquired by some of non-first language speakers. The language is itself demographically strong since it has over 500,000 speakers some of whom speak it as L2 (Elisifa, 2008).

Methods and Instrumentations
Study participants
The Vunjo area is populated by people who have migrated into the area for various reasons, notably cross-ethnic marriages, employment and businesses. These people, while in the area, would mingle with the Vunjo as L1 speakers through their co-participation in various social, cultural, religious and economic activities, all of which may require the use of Kivunjo. There are also those whose parents work and live away from the Kivunjo speaking area but would require their children (or children themselves would wish) to acquire Kivunjo for integrative or instrumental reasons.

Specifically, the study involved 68 subjects who were grouped into three categories as follows: 28 subjects (who were dubbed 'the diaspora") were born of parents who speak Kivunjo as L1 but live outside Kivunjo speaking area, 20 were immigrants into Kivunjo speaking area by virtue of their marriage, and 20 were people who were resident in Kivunjo speaking area because they worked or carried out business in the area.

Data Collection Instruments
Two instruments were used to collect data. The first and primary tool was a cloze test to measure the respondents' level of competence in the four areas of syntax, morphology, lexis and comprehension. The second tool was questionnaire, which aimed at capturing the respondents' biodata focusing on their age, sex, place of birth and growth, and their domicile. It also sought to get data on linguistic background, the onset date and duration of Kivunjo learning.

Results and Discussion
As stated earlier, the current study sought to empirically base evidence of the respondents' language competence at the grammatical, comprehension and pragmatic levels. For this purpose, the respondents were assigned a number of oral tasks that required them to narrate the steps involved in a particular social event or to describe something. They were given various controlled tasks in order to make the tool more reliable.

Level of Grammatical Competence
Knowing a language includes having mastery of rules and grammatical units that govern it. According to Widdowson (1973), a language is a total phenomenon and the use of language in a particular context in a natural way involves different kinds of structures and hence the procedures of selection and grading should not be applied to the grammatical units. He further contends that, in assessing the learner's grammatical competence, the input needs to be more generally given slowly and neatly to the learner and the learner, in carrying out the specific tasks assigned to him/her develops and allows the researcher or an education practitioner to test their grammatical and communicative competence. So, structural grading is necessary for the development of grammatical competence, which is the foundation for further build up. It was in the light of Widdowson's (2002) observation that the researcher

was interested in testing the respondents' grammatical competence in Kivunjo as a second language.

To do this, two tasks were set up; task one required them to explain in Kivunjo the importance of education, and in task two they were asked to tell in Kivunjo their position regarding primary school pupils being taught AIDS[1] related issues. The aim was to use the discourse from their answers to assess the respondents' ability to produce well-formed utterances that adhere to morph-syntactic rules governing concord as guided by noun classes, tenses and aspects. The assessment was made and the verdict passed based on the established five-leg-scale ranging from 'No practice' (equivalent to zero) at the lowest to 'Very Good', as the highest, using the ACTFL[2] scale.

In this study 'Very good' was a label used to refer to the respondents who were able to use language with great accuracy and fluency for representation of point of view. They could consistently harmonize the noun classes with their concordial agreement with verbal structures. They could convey meaning effectively using appropriate vocabulary as well as complex structures and organized discourse well, speaking effortlessly and smoothly with a firm grasp of various levels of style with rare occurrences of errors and the errors that occurred did not interfere with communication.

This group scored 81 to 100 percent. 'Good' referred to respondents who obtained 61 to 80 percent and were able to use cohesive devices flexibly and communicate clearly and naturally using broad vocabulary. They could also harmonize the noun classes with their respective verbal structures amidst a few errors that sometimes occurred in the choice of vocabulary without distorting meaning.

Occasional errors showed imperfect control of some patterns but no weakness that caused misunderstanding. 'Fair' was a label given to respondents who scored 41 to 60 who had frequent errors which showed some major patterns, flaws, causing occasional misunderstanding. Choice of words was sometimes inaccurate because of limitations of vocabulary. 'Elementary' referred to subjects who could control very few major patterns, and could barely establish concord between the chosen noun class with its respective verbal structure. Frequent errors in vocabulary and grammar often distorted meaning and frequently prevented communication.

The lowest level was labeled 'no practice'. This referred to respondents who had no practical oral proficiency in Kivunjo. They had almost entirely inaccurate phrases, inadequate vocabulary and speech was so fragmented that communication was virtually impossible.

The respondents' performance is as summarized in Table 1 for task I and Table 2 for task II.

Table 1: Task 1, grammatical competence

[Explanation in Kivunjo the importance of education]

SCALES	RESPONSES				
	DIAS	MAR	EMPL	TOTAL	PERCET
No Practice	3	0	0	**3**	44

---

[1] *AIDS being a burning social issue for discussion in the society was found appropriate for respondents to discuss it in Kivunjo. However, it unexpectedly happened to be a loaded subject and some respondents were not free to discuss it because it is related to sexual processes.*

[2] *ACTEL is an acronym for American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages.*

Elementary	4	2	2	**8**	11.8
Fair	6	2	5	**13**	19.1
Good	9	8	7	**24**	35.3
V. Good	2	6	2	**10**	14.7
Non Resp	4	2	4	**10**	14.7
TOTAL	**28**	**20**	**20**	**68**	**100%**

Table 2: Task II, Grammatical competence

[Opinion about teaching pupils about Aids]

SCALES	RESPONSES				
	DIAS	**MAR**	**EMPL**	**TOTAL**	**PERCET**
No Practice	5	0	1	**6**	8.8
Elementary	3	4	3	**10**	14.7
Fair	4	5	4	**113**	19.1
Good	10	8	6	**224**	35.3
V. Good	1	2	2	**15**	7.4
Non Resp	5	1	4	**10**	14.7
TOTAL	**28**	**20**	**20**	**68**	**100%**

As revealed by the findings in Tables 1 and 2, most respondents from all three groups/clusters performed between 'Fair' and 'Very Good' in comparison to those who were at elementary level and no practice (equivalent to zero) levels, who scored an overall average of 14.7% and 8.8%, respectively. 14.7% of the respondents did not respond to the task. The diaspora did better than other groups, with almost half of them clustering between 'Good' and 'V. Good'. The employed, on the other hand, had comparatively the poorest performance, with only 8 out of 20 scoring between 'Good' and 'V. Good'. However, the general impression is that most respondents were able to handle communicative tasks that are of descriptive and argumentative level both accurately and appropriately.

There are studies with finding that are more or less similar to these. Douglas and Selinker (1994), for example, conducted a research, seeking to understand the ability of a non-native speaker to use English in talking and writing about a technical field. They analyzed the data and came up with a distinction between primary data (i.e. the inter language talk or writing we wish to study) and secondary data (i.e. commentary on the primary data). This type of testing is what Brown *et al.* (2002) refer to as performance based, and seeking to test what students are able to do with the second language. Language performance assessment provides a means for eliciting students' performances on tasks that require the use of the second language in some integral way, and such assessment may enable meaningful interpretations to be made about students' abilities to use the second language for actual communication (Norris *et al.,* 1998).

To find out more about the level of respondents' grammatical competence, the researcher assigned the subjects tasks with controlled target structures, namely morphology, lexical and comprehension. Each respondent's performance in specific linguistics tasks was recorded in the respective categories. For each group means were computed across the three selected linguistic levels (morphology, lexis and comprehension).

Level of Morphological Competence

To measure respondents' morphological competence, subjects were given ten Kivunjo sentences which were in singular form and asked to change them into plural form. The aim was to test their knowledge in subject-verb-object agreement i.e. grammatical concord in Kivunjo. Five elements were tested; these were pronouns, verbs, nouns, adjectives and affixes. The tasks were marked and assigned scores and averages were sought for each task. The results are summarized in Figure 1.
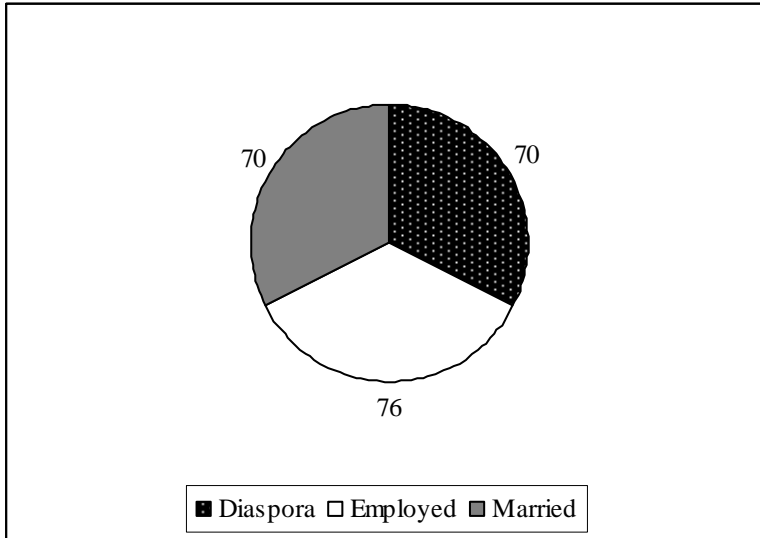

Figure 1: Respondents' Performance at the Morphological Level

Figure 1 shows that all the testes scored 70% and above out of 100. Figure 1 shows that all the testes scored 70% and above out of 100. Employed informants came top with 76% followed by married and diaspora both of whom scored 70%. Generally, the results lead one to state that the respondents had high competence in the Kivunjo morphology.

Level of Lexical Competence

It is not possible to talk of a language and or language competence without consideration of competence at lexical level because other language aspects like morphological and syntactic rules are applied on lexis. For this reason the researcher found it important to investigate Kivunjo lexical aspects in order to be in a position to make a conclusion on respondents' competence in Kivunjo lexis. In testing Kivunjo competence at lexical level the researcher focused on respondents' vocabulary base.

To test lexical competence subjects were given (a) pictures of objects which they were to identify in Kivunjo and (b) 40 words in Kiswahili which they had to change into Kivunjo. This manner of testing was suggested by Saville-Troike (1989) who asserts that testing for lexical competence may involve asking learners to identify a picture or object that is named and learners' understanding of action words and those that denote spatial or temporal relations can be checked by playing games (or simulations) that require following directions. The words involved in this case were those which denote actions, common nouns and states. Also the words were rich in texture i.e. they were comprised of both cultural words (words referring to things found in a specific culture or environment only, for example, cow and banana) and basic words (words which refer to things found almost all over the world, such words like head, eat, and stomach). The combination of both types was to make the test accessible to the schema of all the groups of the respondents. Their written responses were marked and graded in numerical scores, which are as summarized in Figure 2.
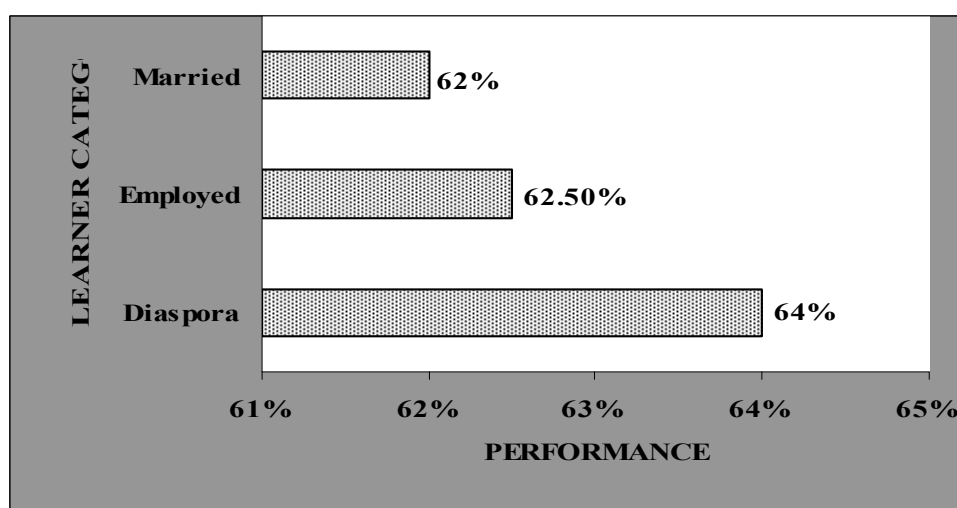

Figure 2: Respondents' Performance at Lexical Level

The findings from Figure 2 show that all the respondents scored more than 61%. This suggests that all the respondents were competent in lexical aspect of Kivunjo as they got right more than half of the expected vocabulary output. Married and diaspora groups performed the average of 62% while the employed group scored the average of 64%. These findings are congruent with Prapphal (1990) who tested Thai universities students' "General English" and "English for Academic Purposes". She found that the students transferred vocabulary, structure, add reading skills from General English to those in English for Academic Purposes. However, the students appeared to lack the ability to transfer writing skills from General English to those in English for Academic Purposes.

Level of Comprehension Competence

Learners need enough linguistic data in their minds for them to devise and deduce both rules of grammar and usage. Learners can be tested on, or self-test, their ability to comprehend by having an interlocutor directing them to do something the appropriate behavior of which will determine their ability to understand their interlocutors (Krashen, 1971).

To test the Kivunjo respondents' comprehension competence, the respondents were subjected to five different directives in which they were reacted to accordingly. Directives were given in Kivunjo and respondents were to listen, understand and respond to them in Kivunjo too. The main purpose of the researcher was to investigate the extent to which respondents could comprehend Kivunjo. Their responses were as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Performance at Comprehension Level

Respondents Group	Average Performance	
	Raw Scores (n/5)	Percentage
Married	4	80
Employed	3.4	68
Diaspora	3.9	78

From Table 3 all the testes were able to achieve above average, all ranged from 68% to 80% and therefore one can conclude with reasonable confident that Kivunjo L2 respondents were able to comprehend Kivunjo. At this level, unlike the previous two levels, the diasporas achieved the highest; 4(80%) points out of 5, followed by married who scored 3.9(78%) and the last one were employed respondents with 3.4 (68%). The differences across groups were very minimal. The fact that at morphology and lexical levels employed respondents excelled while at comprehension level they came the last, means that lexical competence of some respondents could not necessarily be equated to comprehension competence; the two need to be tested differently. The argument is supported by Ricardi (1997) who studied the lexical competence of university students to read in EFL and found out that respondents' lexical competence was vague and imprecise in two dimensions: quantitative (number of known words or vocabulary size) and qualitative (depth or width of this knowledge). One can be equipped with a good number of vocabulary items with little knowledge of their usage.

Level of Syntactic Competence
Syntactic competence encompasses the ability to identity and use the rules of a language that dictate how the various part of sentences go together. Syntax deals with a number of things, all of which help to facilitate being understood and understanding language. Without rules of syntax, there would be no foundation from which to try to discern meaning from a bunch of words strung together, whereas with syntax, an infinite number of sentences are possible using a fairly small finite number of rules (McGuigan, 2007).

Testing respondents' syntactic competence was carried out by assigning them a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) in which they were asked to fill in the missing words (target structures) whose expected output was what is presented in Text Box 4.1, with the underlined data being the items expected from the respondents.

Text Box1: Expected Output of DCT in Testing Respondents' Syntactic Competence

Rema lya kijiji lik<u>eri</u> kulya riata. Orio mndu msoro nek<u>eenda</u> na ik<u>umbii</u>pho rem<u>enyi</u>. Koikyo wandu woosewekes<u>hika</u> wawore mak<u>umbi</u> wao. Wekew<u>ooka</u> irema s<u>aa</u> tsiwi ngam<u>eny</u>. Wandu waw<u>ore</u>

> *makumbi wangan wekerema, na walya wawore matutu wekeway nao mbeu. Saa nyanya wandu woose wekeuya na kanyi kowo wakandeonyonya*

The responses of the learners were summarized again in five-leg-scale ranging from 'No practice' (equivalent to zero) at the lowest to 'Very Good', as the highest. The overall performance, in percentages, is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Syntactic Performance in DCT

Respondent's Groups	Performance						
	V. Good	Good	Fair	Elementary	No Practice	No Response	TOTAL
Married	9	5	0	0	0	6	20
Employed	12	4	1	0	0	3	20
Diaspora	4	7	3	0	0	14	28
Total	25	16	4	0	0	21	68
Percentage	36.8	23.5	5.9	0	0	30.8	100%

As revealed by Table 4, the learners' syntactic competence was such that none was at the elementary or no practice stage and that only 4 testes (about 6 percent of those who did the task) were at "Fair"[3]Level. All others were at Good and Very Good levels (similar to Intermediate-Mid and Intermediate High in ACTL[4] descriptors of competence scale.) This leads one to safely conclude that the learner's syntactic competence, especially tested in a context-based task was far better when compared with earlier tasks. However, 21 respondents did not respond to this task, most of them were diaspora these were 14 in number. As explained before, this group is a disadvantaged one because its members were not residing in a Kivunjo speaking area and therefore the task of identifying complex structures in a stretch of discourse that is as long as a paragraph was probably too much for them.

A number of studies had been conducted prior to this one aiming to test second language learner's grammatical competence in different linguistic areas. Such examples are studies by Green and Hecht (1992), Macrory and Stone (2000), and Hu (2002).

Green and Hecht (1992) presented a set of sentences containing grammatical errors to 300 German students who were learning English in a secondary school or a university setting. The learners were asked to correct each sentence and to state the rule that had been violated. They found that although the learners were able to correct 78% of the sentences, they could only state the correct rule in 46% of the cases (although the university learners in the sample were able to do so in 86% of cases). In other words, the learners' ability to correct the errors exceeded their ability to explain the rules.

Macrory and Stone (2000) investigated students from British secondary schools and examined their perceptions of what they knew about the formation of the French perfect tense (measured by means of self-report), their actual knowledge of the tense (measured by means of gap-filling exercises), and their ability to use the tense in an informal interview and in free written production. They found that the students had a fairly good explicit understanding of the perfect tense (e.g., they understood its function, knew that some verbs required different auxiliaries, were familiar with the forms required by different pronouns, and were aware of the need for a final accent on the past participle). In general, this study

---

[3] *Fair is used to rate someone who is an Intermediate Low using ACTFL descriptors*
[4] *ACTFL is an acronym for American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages*

found only weak relationships among students' perceptions, their performance in the gap-filling exercise, and their use of the tense in free oral and written production. For example, whereas they typically supplied an auxiliary (not always the correct one) in the gap-filling exercise, they typically omitted it in free production except in formulaic expressions involving j'ai "I have". Macrory and Stone concluded that what they term language-as-knowledge and language-for-use might have derived from different sources-instruction about the rule system and routines practiced in class-thus explaining the observed disparity.

Hu (2002) conducted a study of 64 Chinese learners of English. His main purpose was to investigate to what extent explicit knowledge was available for use in spontaneous writing. He asked the learners to complete two spontaneous writing tasks and then to carry out an untimed error correction task and a rule-verbalization task before again completing two similar spontaneous writing tasks and a timed error correction task. The assumption was that the untimed correction and rule-verbalization tasks would serve a consciousness-raising function, thereby making the learners aware of the structures that were the focus of the study. Hu focused on six structures, selecting a prototypical and peripheral rule for each (e.g., for articles, specific reference constituted the prototypical rule and generic reference constituted the peripheral rule). Overall, when correct metalinguistic knowledge was available, the participants were more accurate in their prototypical use of the six structures. Also, accuracy in the use of the six structures increased in the second spontaneous writing task, suggesting that when made aware of the need to attend to specific forms, the learners made fuller use of their metalinguistic knowledge.

What distinguishes these studies and the present study is that the testing has been classroom-based and clients have been acquiring the target language within formal institutional setting. The present study, however, focused on second language learners in naturalistic setting and the testing was conducted in an informal setting.

Level of Pragmatic Competence
An important area in the field of second/foreign language teaching and learning is pragmatics – the appropriate use of language in communicating intention through speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, complimenting, refusing, and thanking. It was thus the second concern for this study to investigate learners' competence at pragmatic level. One way of measuring learners' communicative competence is by looking at the way they are able to produce coherent and cohesive pieces of discourse. This was achieved by administering a series of tasks, in which learners were asked to opt for only one that they thought was appropriate to them.

One task required the respondents to imagine pleading with their father/mother, who are resisting to grant their request, to increase their pocket money; the second one required the respondents to make their employers change their minds regarding their refusal to give them a pay rise; the third was about a plea to a spouse refusing to increase the partner's (respondent's) share of shopping funds, and the last one required the respondent to politely decline an invitation to a party by a friend because he/she has to stay at home and take care of personal issues. Their responses were read and assigned to the five-leg-scale ranging from 'No practice' (equivalent to zero) at the lowest to 'Very Good', as the highest. The findings are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Pragmatic Level of Competence in a Rating Scale

Scale	Responses	Total

	Diaspora	Married	Employed	N = 68	Percent
No practice	2	0	2	**04**	5.9
Elementary	3	2	2	**07**	10.3
Fair	9	1	4	**14**	20.6
Good	5	7	8	**20**	29.4
V. Good	6	8	0	**14**	20.6
Non Resp.	3	2	4	**09**	13.2
Total	**28**	**20**	**20**	**68**	**100**

Results in Table 5 reveal that only 4 and 7 respondents were at the lowest 'zero' and elementary levels respectively, equivalent to 16%. Fourteen (14) respondents were at fair level, 20 good while 144 were at V. good level. Again if the three positive levels are combined, 48 (71%) were able to produce the tested speech acts. This shows that most of the respondents were able to use language appropriately, which concurs with Hyme's (1972) assertion that there are rules of use without which rules of grammar would be useless. Knowing use of language is characteristic of those that need the language to carry out communicative needs in here-and-now naturalistic settings, as was the case for the Kivunjo respondents. These learners may not have competence to account for the explicit rules that are operational in Kivunjo but are nonetheless able to carry out communicative tasks appropriately even though at locationary level the utterances may not be grammatically eloquent. What is interesting in this finding is that even the performance of those respondents living in the diaspora was more or less similar to those living in Kivunjo area (the married and the employed).

Similar studies have been conducted elsewhere. Cohen and Olshtain (1993), for example, carried out a study describing ways in which non-native speakers assessed, planned, and then delivered speech acts. The subjects, fifteen advanced English foreign language learners, were given six speech act situations (two apologies, two complaints, and two requests) in which they were to role-play along with a native speaker. The interactions were videotaped and after each set of two situations of the same type, the videotape was played back and then the respondents were asked both fixed and probing questions regarding the factors contributing to the production of their responses in those situations. The retrospective verbal report protocols were analyzed with regard to processing strategies in speech act formulation. The study found that in delivering the speech acts, half of the time respondents conducted only a general assessment of the utterances called for in the situation without planning specific vocabulary and grammatical structures, often thought in two languages and sometimes in three languages (if trilingual), utilized a series of different strategies in searching for language forms, and did not attend much to grammar nor to pronunciation.

However, 7(10%) of informants were at elementary level while 4 (6%) were at zero i.e. they could not produce any communicative utterance/speech act in Kivunjo. Nine (13%) of the informants reported nothing in this task. The researcher tried to urge them to either write down their responses or narrate them but in vain. This could possibly be because informants were afraid of making mistakes (or fail to produce such common speech acts, as a result, considered to be impolite.) This situation has also been noted by Matsuura (1998) who studied perception of politeness in requests with 77 Japanes English majors and 48 American students in two U.S. universities. Perceptions were similar except that Japanese saw interrogatives with a present tense modal ("May I borrow a pen?") as less polite than those with a past tense modal ("Could I borrow a pen?").

This study's findings were not exceptional because there is often a reciprocal relationship between social competence and language skills. For example, peers play an important role in the development of language by providing opportunities for establishing and practicing language skills, role modeling, providing natural consequences, and offering feedback. The ability to initiate conversation appropriately, contributes to ongoing conversations, communicate intentions clearly, present more positive than negative comments, address all participants when joining a group, and make judgments in communication to suit the listeners' needs, have all been related to rating of school-age children peer acceptance and sociometric status rating (Gallagner, 1993, 1999).

Interestingly, it was observed by the researcher that respondents were freer and capable of using the target language (Kivunjo in this case) more proficiently when there was informal interaction with the researcher or with other Kivunjo speakers than after the researcher has introduced her intention to them. As soon as the questionnaire was given to the informants they became tense. Others were even reluctant to be recorded during interview sessions. This kind of phenomenon was once noted by Spolsky (1969). In his study he suggested 'indirect methods of measuring integrative motivation rather than the direct one". He noted that the indirect method has been successful because when the technique was used with the ESL students, it showed clear correlations with English proficiency. He reported that direct questionnaire, such as those used in the Canadian studies, did not show such relationships when used with ESL students.

CONCLUSION
The respondents' level of competence is such that the majority from all three clusters performed between 'fair' and 'very good', which gives the impression that most of them were able to communicate accurately and appropriately. However, there is variability across the three groups which point to the fact that the Kivunjo as L2 speakers are no a homogenous group with regard to their varying levels of competence. The implications of these findings is that languages do not die because of lack of documentation but because of not having speakers born into it. In this regard, Kivunjo is thriving by not only having L1 speakers but also a fair group that speaks it as L2.

References

Brown, J.D. and Rodgers, T. (2002). *Doing Second Language Research*. London: OUP.

Carroll, J. (1967) "The Prediction of Success in Intensive Foreign Language Training." In R. Glazer (Ed.), *Training Research and Education*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Cohen, A.D. and Olshtain, E. (1993). The Production of Speech Acts by EFL Learners. *Teaching of English to Speakers of other Languages*. Vol.27, No. 1:33-56.

Doughty, C., and Pica, T. (1986). "Information Gap Tasks": Do They Facilitate Second Language Acquisition? *TESOL Quarterly, 20, 305-325*.

Douglas, D. and Selinker, L. (1994). "Native and Non-native Teaching Assistants: A Case Study of Discourse Domains and Genres"; In Madden, C. and C. Myers (eds.), *Discourse and Performance of International Teaching Assistants*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Publications, pp. 221-230.

Elisifa, Z. S. (2008). Motivation for Second Language Learning: A Case Study of Kivunjo in Tanzania. Unpublished Masters (Linguistics) Dissertation, University of Dar esSalaam.

Ellis, R. (1999). *Learning a Second Language through Interaction*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Gallagner, T.M. (1993). "Language Skill and the Development of Social Competence in School-age Children", *Topics in Language Disorders*, Vol. 19, and No.2: 1-15.

Gallagner, T.M. (1999). Interrelationships among Children's Language, Behaviour and Emitional Children's Problems. *Topics in Language Disorders*, Vol 19, No.2; 1-15.

Gass, S. M. (1997). *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Green, P.S. and Hecht, K. (1992). Implicit and Explicit Grammar: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol.13, No.2:168-184.

Hu, G. (2002). Pyschological Constraints on the Utility of Metalinguistic Knowledge in Language Production. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, Vol.24:347-386.

Ibiwotisi, R.A. (2010). An Error Analysis of Written Yoruba Composition Of Igbo Students In Secondary Schools. A Masters Thesis, Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

Joy, M.S. (2013).The Effect of Level of Exposure of First Language on Kiidakho Speakers' Acquisition and Use of Kiswahili Second Language in Western Kenya. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 3 No. 20*:161-169.

Legere, K. (2002). The Language of Tanzania Project, Resources and Perspectives. *Journal of Africa and Asia*, Vol. 2:163-186.

Long, M. H. (1996). The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Language Acquisition: Vol. 2. Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 413-468). New York: Academic Press.

Long, M. H. (2000). "Focus on Form in Task-based Language Teaching". In R. D. Lambert & E. Shohamy (Eds.), Language Policy and Pedagogy: Essays in Honor of A. Ronald Walton (pp. 179-192). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Mackey, A. (1999). Input, Interaction, and Second Language Development: An Empirical Study of Question Formation in ESL. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* Vol.21: 557-587.

Macrory, G. and Stone, V. (2000). Pupil Progress in the Acquisition of the Perfect Tense in French. *Language Teaching Research*, Vol.4, No. 4: 55-82.

Maho, J.F. (1999). *A Comparative Study of Bantu Noun Classes*. ACTA: Universitatis Gothonburgensis.

Mali, Z. O. (2007). Exploring Communication Strategy Use by Learners of isiZulu in Synchronous Computer-mediated Communication (S-CMC), Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Iowa.

Mason, C. (1971) The Relevance of Intensive Training in English as a Foreign Language for University Students. *Language Learning* 21: 197-204.

Matsuura, H. (1998). Japanese EFL Learners' Perception of Politeness in Low Imposition Request. *Japan Association of Language Teaching Journal*, Vol. 20, No.1:33-48.

McGuigan, B. (2007). What is Syntax?. www.wisegeek.com, downloaded on July 20th 2014.

Meisel, J., Clahsen, H. and Pienemann. M. (1981). On Determining Developmental Stages in Natural Second Language Acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition 3,109-35*.

Msanjila, Y. P. (2005). Problems of writing in Kiswahili: A case study of Kigurunyembe and Morogoro Secondary Schools in Tanzania. *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* Vol. 14, No.1:15-25

Mungungu, S.S. (2010).Error Analysis: Investigating the Writing of ESL Namibian Learners. M.A. (TESOL), university of South Africa.

Norris, J. M. and Ortega, L. (2001). Does Type of Instruction Make a Difference? Substantive Findings from a Meta-analytic Review. *Language Learning, 51 (Suppl. 1), 157-213.*

Norris, J.M., Brown, J.D., Hudson, T. and Yoshioka, J. (1998). *Designing Second Language Performance Assessment.* Honolulu: University of Hawii Press.

Nurse, D. (1977). Language and History on Kilimanjaro, the Pare Mountains and the Taita Hills. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam on October, 25, 2014.

Ombui, O. J. (2012). Institution Based Factors Influencing Students' Performance in Kiswahili at KCSE in Public Schools in Sameta Division Kisii County Kenya. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nairobi.

Pica, T. (1994). Research on Negotiation: What does it Reveal about Second-language Learning Conditions, Processes, and Outcomes? *Language Learning, 44*, 493-527.

Pinker, S. (1987). *Mechanism of Language Acquisition*.Cambridge,MA : MIT Press.

Prapphal, K. (1990). An Investigation of the General and Academic English X-tests in Measuring Grammatical Competence of Thai Science Students. *http//:pioneer.chula.ac* downloaded on July 20th 2014.

Ramnarain, P. K. (2004). Factors Affecting the Poor Performance in Afrikaans (second language) in Grade 12: A survey of Three Schools in the Pietermaritzburg Region. Upublished Masters Dissertation, University of Kwazulu Natal

Ricardi, S.M.V. (1997). The Lexical Competence of University Students to Read in English as a Foreign Language, *DELTA*, Vol. 13, No.2:215-246.

Rugemalira, J. M. (2004). Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania. Paper Presented at the Symposium on the State of Languages of Tanzania, University of Dar es Salaam, June, pp.18-19.

Savignon, S. (1997). C*ommunicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Saville-Troike, M. (1989). *The Ethnography of Communication. 2nd Edition*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Siambo, M. (2013). Challenges Faced by Second Graders during the Transition from the Language of Initial Literacy(Nyanja) to English- A case of Selected Schools of Chongwe District, Zambia. Unpublished Masters of Education Dissertation, University of Zambia.

Spinner, P. (2013).*Second Language Acquisition of Bantu languages*: A (mostly) Untapped Research Opportunity. Downloadedfrom http://slr.sagepub.com/content

Spolsky, B. (1969). Attitudinal Aspects of Second Language Learning. Journal of Language Learning, Vol. 19: 217-283.

Stahl, K. M. (1964). History of the Chagga People of Kilimanjaro. Mouton: The Haugue.

Swain, M. (1995). Three Functions of Output in Second Language Learning. In. G. Cook and G. Seidhofer (Eds.) *Principles and Practices in Applied Linguistics: Studies in Honor of H. G. Widdowson* (p. 125-144). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, H.G. (1973). An Applied Linguistics Approach to Discourse Analysis. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Edinburgh.

Widdowson, H.G. (2002). Verbal Art and Social Practice. *Language and Literature*, Vol.11, No.2:161-167.