

Teaching English as a ‘Second Language’ In Kenya and the United States: Convergences and Divergences

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English is spoken in five countries as the native language and in numerous other countries as an official language and the language of instruction. In countries where English is the native language, it is taught to speakers of other languages as an additional language to enable them to participate in all domains of life of that country. In many countries where it is an official language and language of instruction, which includes former British colonies in Africa and Asia, students tend to use English in specific domains, particularly school, as most communication outside of school is in the local languages. These are two contrasting contexts for enhancing English language skills. In both settings there are concerns about students’ difficulties in developing adequate English proficiency to successfully learn content through that language. Focusing on the United States and Kenya, this article considers the similarities and differences in the content of English language instruction for secondary schools, in both environments and the types of challenges students encounter in the learning of English. This article broadens the understanding of what it means to teach English language for academic purposes and provides a framework for creating and evaluating teaching and learning materials for speakers of other languages who are learning through the medium of English.

Keywords

Language of instruction, academic language, English language teaching, Kenyan English, English language learners