

Dialogic Instruction and Learning: the Case of one Kiswahili Classroom in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper reports on an ethnographic case study which was carried out in a Kenyan first-grade classroom. The classroom had 89 students with their 2 teachers who taught at different times. The classroom was very crowded and had a high paucity of literacy materials. The study was guided by sociocultural and dialogic frameworks which maintain that social and dialogic interactions have important roles to play in a child's literacy and language development. Thus, the social life of the observed classroom was central to the children's literacy and language learning. Although there were a shortage of literacy materials and space limitations in this classroom, the Kiswahili teacher's mediating role and children's agency in this classroom were paramount. Through the teacher's dialogic instruction and mediation, the children's voices were recognized and acknowledged. There were dynamic classroom interactions and dialogues which involved different practices such as storytelling, peer-guided reading, play, and classroom talk. The study concluded that meaningful instruction and dialogue are important for meaningful language learning to occur. Also, oral and written languages develop simultaneously in a classroom setting. Finally, classroom contexts play a major role in language learning.

Keywords: teaching methods; communicative language learning; bilingualism; mediation; voice; interactions

Full text:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07908318.2014.912285?needAccess=true>