

# The Influence of Sheng' Word Formation in the Learning of Kiswahili Grammar in Public Secondary Schools in Uasin Gishu County- Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

Sheng' is a linguistic code based primarily on the Kiswahili structure and grammar with the lexicon drawn from Kiswahili, English and the various ethnic languages of Kenya; that are mostly spoken in towns and other urban areas. The aim of this paper was to identify how word formation in Sheng' influences the learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu county- Kenya. This study applied Howard Giles Communication Accommodation Theory. The study employed mixed methods research and exploratory sequential research design. Out of the 185 public secondary schools in the study area. Krejcie & Morgan sampling table was used to sample the schools. Stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and purposive strategy were used to sample the public secondary schools to participate. Data was collected using observation schedules, focused group discussion guides and a writing tasks for students. Questionnaires and interview guides were used for teachers of Kiswahili. Qualitative data collected was analyzed thematically to generate information that was summarized in graphics and discussed in narrative form. Quantitative data was analyzed with the help of Statistical package for social Sciences. The study found out that there were no benefits of using Sheng' words in teaching and learning Kiswahili grammar. The study thus recommends that school administrators should ensure that language policy is adhered to so as to control learners' language environment.

**Key Words:** Influence, Sheng', word order, Kiswahili Grammar

## INTRODUCTION

**Origin of sheng':** Sheng' a hybrid linguistic code, is thought to have developed in Nairobi during the 1960s and 1970s. Various factors such as language contact, limited knowledge of standard languages (Swahili and English), identity, obfuscation of meaning, and cognitive efficiency have been linked to its evolution and usage (Angalia, 2017). (Obatu, 2022) states that Sheng' cannot be classified as a pidgin, creole, slang (despite the acronym), or jargon because it exhibits characteristics of each category without fully fitting into any one of them. It is widely accepted that Sheng' originated in the impoverished residential areas. Presently, it has become a distinctive linguistic feature of Nairobi and other multiethnic urban areas in Kenya, with varying levels of proficiency and involvement among different speakers in different regions (Githiora, 2018). As a language code, Sheng' can influence students' thinking and their expressions in both verbal and written communication.

## Purpose

This study aimed to investigate the influence of Sheng' word formation on Kiswahili grammar and explore methods to reduce this effect on verbal and written expressions. The Kiswahili language's origins can be traced to the colonial era, with oral culture being deeply ingrained in the Kenyan populace for an extended period (Ogechi, 2011). The advent of foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam facilitated the introduction of written forms of communication. Consequently, Kiswahili emerged as one of the first indigenous languages to

be transcribed (Gitara, 2016). Sheng' is largely criticized for its speaker's poor learning and mastery of other languages (Kabellow, 2019).

## Findings

These researchers all agree that Sheng' is based primarily on the Kiswahili structure and grammar with the lexicon drawn from Kiswahili, English and the various ethnic languages of Kenya that are largely spoken in towns and other urban areas. Initially, this mixed code was unstable, random and fluid, but it gradually developed more systematic patterns of usage at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels (Geia, 2021). Despite the crucial role played by Kiswahili in society, performance in Kiswahili grammar has not been impressive, as noted by KNEC (2021). Research indicates that the low performance in Kiswahili national examinations is primarily attributed to weaknesses in Kiswahili grammar and composition. It's worth noting that Kiswahili is an integral part of the subject cluster for all courses (Joint Admission Board, 2011). The language policy, coupled with career choices, has led to Kiswahili receiving increased attention from both teachers and learners, similar to other examinable subjects. Success in national-level Kiswahili examinations is heavily reliant on proficiency in the grammar section. This study aimed to assess the influence of Sheng' word formation on the learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Kenya, where performance in this area has been less than satisfactory

## Statement of the problem

Grammar serves as the foundation when learning any language and is crucial for performance in other assessed areas of Kiswahili, such as Insha (Kiswahili composition) and fasihi (Kiswahili literature). Therefore, achieving high proficiency in Kiswahili grammar is essential. There has been a great concern over the falling standards and underperformance of the Kiswahili language in national examinations. Despite this, students' performance in Kiswahili grammar remains notably low, with the factors contributing to this poor performance not being clearly documented. The widespread use of the Sheng' language code by students both inside and outside the classroom is a significant concern. This language code is increasingly becoming the primary mode of communication among learners, potentially impacting their overall performance in Kiswahili. Most of the linguistic difficulties experienced by learners have been investigated but the area of the Impact of Sheng' on the learning of Kiswahili grammar remains understudied. It is for this reason that the current study sought to investigate The Impact of Sheng' in the learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu county. The influence of Sheng' word order on the teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar is likely a contributing factor.

Sheng' influence is now felt across Kenya's social strata, influencing the way other languages are acquired, learnt and used, even within the educational system such as schools and colleges (Mutiga, 2013). Sheng' is also evidently used in Tanzania and Uganda, where the urban youth in the major cities show off their proficiency as a sign of international exposure (Funk, 2020).

## Objectives of the study

1. To identify how Sheng' word formation influences the learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Kenya.
2. To explore the effect of Sheng' phonology in the learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Kenya.

## Significance of the study

The research findings would be useful to school managers, learners, teachers, parents and educational planners. The school managers can use the study findings in making decisions as to what teaching and learning materials to provide in schools so as to enhance Kiswahili performance. This should in turn be able to help in identifying ways to help learners achieve higher in Kiswahili grammar and find ways of helping improve academic performance. The researcher also hoped that the findings would influence strategies that would be employed to minimize the influence of Sheng' on Kiswahili grammar. It was also forecasted that the findings of this

research would provide vital information to the language team makers on how the influence of other languages on Kiswahili would be dealt with. The research further provided an open ground for sensitization of parents on the need to ensure control on their children's use of Sheng' language code at home. Similarly, it would benefit the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in formulation of a standard book for teaching and learning Kiswahili language. Moreover, the study findings would guide the KICD in understanding the essence of conducting in-service courses on teaching and assessment together for emerging issues like the Sheng' linguistic code. Uasin Gishu County. The respondents in the study included; teachers of Kiswahili and students in the sampled schools. The study was conducted in the months of September to December 2023 when schools were in session.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study applied Howard Giles Communication Accommodation theory which was in this context abbreviated as CAT. CAT is a communication theory that was developed by Howard Giles in the year 1975 and revised in 2023. According to Giles, during their speech, people tend to adjust their gestures and their vocal patterns in order accommodate others during their interaction, (Giles, 2023). CAT explores innumerable reasons as to why individuals emphasize or lessen the social differences between themselves and their interlocutors through verbal and non-verbal communication. CAT is concerned with links between language context and identity and focuses on both intergroup and interpersonal factors that lead to accommodation as well as the way power macro and micro context concerns affect accommodation compartments.

CAT was the most suitable theory in this context in the analysis of Sheng' because it is an in-group linguistic code whose communicative patterns are highly influenced by both personal and intergroup social compartments. CAT relies cripplingly on social identity theory which argues that a person self-concept comprises of personal identity and social identity and where this social identity is based on comparisons made by people between in-groups (groups they belong to) and out-groups (groups they don't belong to). According to CAT, people strive to maintain social identity by either joining groups they feel more contented or making a more positive experience of belonging to social groups they already belong to as a way of expressing social identity. Speech is a way in which one can express group membership. People in-group languages like Sheng' adopt convergence and divergence (the two major processes in CAT) to signal a salient group distinctiveness. In salient group distinctiveness stands out as a positive way to strengthen the individual social identity.

Giles CAT theory is based on four socio-psychological tenets which help explain why speakers seek to converge or diverge their language, accent, dialect and behavior to that of their interlocutor. These tenets can clearly be identified in Sheng'. Sheng' speakers make use of some of the maxims such as convergence and divergence. The tenets help to explain why individuals seek to converge or diverge from the language, dialect and behaviors of their interlocutors.

Sheng' is an in-group linguistic code (commonly spoken by the Kenyan youth although not limited to the youth of Kenya). The linguistic code has features that make it unique as a language of identity among the Kenyan youth. This theory explores the various reasons why individuals emphasize or minimize the social differences between themselves and their interlocutors through verbal and non-verbal communication. The theory has a major concern with links between "language a context and identity (Githinji, 2014). In Sheng' individuals can induce others to adopt Sheng' words that they consider more favorable by trying to get rid of dissimilarities in the language structure. For instance, most of the borrowed words in Sheng' are re-tailored before they are incorporated into the second language.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

Word formation refers to various patterns and their meanings, both within and across languages. This forms a level of linguistic analysis that seeks to study the internal structure of a word. In other words, it is a branch of linguistics which studies word structure and how words change their forms when they change grammatical function. (Wisnieski, 2011). Similarly, it deals with the study of how these words are arranged into phrases and sentences. With reference to the give definition, language may be described as vague if morphological and

syntactic principles are neglected. In fact, what is said to constitute language will just be a leftover of unnamed piece of unstructured vocal utterances. (Kariuki, 2021). One way in which word formation in Sheng' influences the learning of Kiswahili grammar is through the incorporation of various linguistic elements from different languages. Sheng' is a slang linguistic code that has evolved as a result of the fusion of Kiswahili, English, and various local languages in Kenya. This mixing of languages in Sheng' has resulted in unique word formation processes that may not align with traditional Kiswahili grammar rules (Wanyama, 2014).

The study of word formation, morphology, and syntax is crucial in understanding how languages evolve and how words are created. These fields of linguistics help us to unravel the intricate processes that shape the structure and meaning of words in different languages Morphology examines how words are formed and how they are related to other words in a language.

It delves into the internal structure of words, looking at prefixes, suffixes, roots, and other morphemes that come together to create meaning. By studying morphology, linguists can uncover the patterns and rules that govern word formation in a language, helping us to better understand how words are created and how they convey meaning (Ibrahim2023). In this study the following are some of the word-formation processes in Sheng':

### **Reversing syllables**

In attempt to remain a relevant and distinctive code for peers only, Sheng' speakers employ the reversal or swapping of syllables in a word ( Erling, 2021). Once a word has been received from another language, in the speech community where Sheng' is being used; the word that has been formed is manipulated in order for the resulting word looks completely new and unique from the source language for example the Sheng' word dika is a back formation of Kiswahili kadi. For example the noun word "dika" – card has such a form. The word is sourced from the English card that is Bantusized in pronunciation as "kadi."The word's two syllables swap places so that kadi yields" dika". Its meaning in English however is maintained in sheng', i.e. it still means card in sheng' (Wienski, 2011).

### **Truncation**

In this method, one borrows a word from one of the local languages in Sheng' speaking community, and then this word is eventually Bantusized. Thirdly, the Bantusized word is truncated either in its initial or final syllable (s) depending on the Bantu syllable structure. Fourth, the truncated form may be suffixed either a coined syllable or sound to complete its marking for Sheng'. The meaning of the resulting word cannot be interpreted by the non-initiated Sheng' speakers, until they learn it from the Sheng' speakers themselves (Kimani, 2019).

### **Illustration**

Finje ("fifty"), buufewe (bus fare), saaya (science), tizi (practice), preso (president), hasii (husband) and goe (ghost). Finje (fifty) is sourced from English fifty then Bantuized to fifti. The last sound -fti and the initial syllable fi- is retained. However the dropped syllable is compensated for by nje to yield finje. Notice that finje has a special meaning in Sheng'. Its meaning is not defined from to the numeral fifty (original borrowed word) rather becomes a preserve of fifty shillings in Sheng'.

More case examples of truncated forms selected from Sheng' adverts (Kariuki et al. 2013). Verbs in Sheng'. Unlike nouns in Sheng' which appear to be unstable (constantly changing), verbs in Sheng' appear to have high level of stability (Kakai, 2022). The situation is indicates a lack of similar vocabulary equivalents in comparison to noun synonyms. What happens is that verbs appear where no known Sheng' verbs existed before.

### **Polysemous verbs**

They are verbs constituting of more than one sense.

## Examples

- Wahi – is used to mean to outsmart or upstage for example niliwahi yule manzi“ (outsmarted that girl)
- Wahi in Kiswahili is used to mean to reveal a place earlier than expected.
- Manga – to dish, eat nilimanga chapo’

## Synonyms

Although not common, some verbs have synonyms.

Examples:

Hanya–katia (seduce a girl)

Susu–nyooro (urinate)

Wahi–samba (beat up)

Note that the largest share of verbs unlike nouns, has no synonyms. Kiswahili based verbs constitute the bulk of Sheng’ verbs about 44% (Kakai, 2022). Adjectives in Bantu languages are few, Kiswahili similarly has few adjectives and Kiswahili being the base language in Sheng’. The fact that the adjectives are few makes the available few Bantu adjectives to be used with many senses.

## Examples

“poa” (adj)

Poa –the surface form of poa is reminiscent of Kiswahili poa for cool.(Ogechi 2005)

However in Sheng’ “poa” evokes many senses largely due to semantic borrowing from English.

- Mtu “poa” (a gentleman)
- Pesa “poa (a reasonable pay) especially after some work
- “Nomaa” is a coined adjective which is variably used to mean very nice.
- Mtu “nomaa” (a person of good character)
- Mtu “nomaa” (a troublesome person)

The effects of Sheng’ in Kiswahili grammar, cannot be fully discussed without falling back to linguistics. Kiswahili language is among many natural languages in the world that uses morphology and to coordinate coherence and clarity in both speech and writing. That is, in the event that there are morphological and syntactic misrepresentations in speech, grammar or writing. In addition, it has been observed that when a reader struggles to make out meaning from a poor assemblage of word strings in a passage, then he will begin to appreciate the contributions of syntax in language (Kariuki, 2021).

The imaginary beauty that underlies a word that has undergone word formation process following a given procedure of a set of rules is overtly seen as the immense work of word formation. Scholars in linguistics can never be grateful enough to early scholars who had made this wonderful contribution. It is therefore worthy to say that morphology and syntax play a leading role in the development, study and use of language (Barasa, 2022).

## Research gap

Despite the increasing influence of Sheng' on daily communication in Kenya, there is limited research on its effect on the teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools. While some studies have examined the use of Sheng' in informal settings, little is known about how its word formation, phonology, spelling, and vocabulary usage impact the teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar in formal settings. Therefore, there exists a research gap regarding the implications of Sheng' on the teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar in secondary schools, which this study aimed to address.

## Knowledge gap

It is the element missing in the existing research literature that has not been answered by the existing studies. The area not explored is effect of Sheng' on the learning Kiswahili Grammar.

## Methodological Gap

Previous studies used a method that either yielded qualitative or quantitative data. Mixed method Research (MMR) was used in this study with exploratory sequential design

## METHOD

Research designs are plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2023). The study was carried out between the months September and November 2022 when the schools were in session. The independent variables were sheng word formation, phonology spelling and vocabulary. The dependent variable was Kiswahili grammar. This study adopted exploratory sequential design. Exploratory sequential design begins with exploring a topic through qualitative methods and then using the findings to develop a quantitative instrument and a phase of the research study. The approach is commonly used when the topic or population of interest is under researched. Exploratory sequential design is based on sequencing or time ordering of the qualitative and quantitative methods. (Herye, 2021). The study was carried out in two phases. Qualitative study used exploratory design by exploring the views of participants. The data was analyzed and information used to build into the second quantitative phase. The qualitative phase was used to build an instrument that best fits the sample under study, to identify appropriate instruments to use in the follow-up quantitative phase or specify variables that needed follow-up in quantitative study (Obuya, 2020). Using 30% recommended by Poth (2016), a sample size of 55 public secondary schools were randomly sampled. Specific schools were selected using proportionate method as follows: seven (7) girls boarding schools out of 22, 9 boys boarding out of twenty-nine, and 39 public day schools giving a total of 55 schools. In each of the sampled school, one teacher of Kiswahili was purposively sampled to participate in the study. In schools that had more than one teachers of Kiswahili, simple random sampling method was used to sample one teacher giving a total of 55 teachers of Kiswahili. In simple random sampling, a population is well defined, followed by picking of the required number through an established procedure. The following process was used to draw the random sample; a) the list of extra county schools served as a sample frame. b) The names of the schools as per number assigned for each school was randomly picked through the use of computer. Questionnaire was administered to students and teachers. Focus group discussion was also conducted by the teachers. To assess the test's reliability, the researcher employed the Test-Retest approach. Two public secondary schools that weren't included in the study's sample took part in the Test-Retest procedure. The first test was given by the researcher, who then manually scored the results. The same test was given to the same group again after a two-week interval, and the results were manually assessed. Using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient formula, the first score and the second score were compared. The dependability of teacher surveys and the principal interview schedule were both examined by the researcher using the same methodology and approach. To test validity and reliability, of research instruments are first pre-tested on a small, representative sample that is the same as the first group but does not include, the study's group. A pilot research is crucial because it identifies problems with the way questions are written, allowing for their reformulation for improved comprehension by all respondents. Pilot study was carried out in two public secondary schools in neighboring county of Transzoia. The study was piloted in this

county because of close proximity to Uasin Gishu County hence high probability of having similar features.

In every sampled school, forty-five (45) students comprising of one class participated giving a total of 360 students. Total sample size was 415 respondents, that is, 360 students and 55 teachers of Kiswahili. The tools that were used in the study are questionnaires, interview guides for teachers of Kiswahili and the observation schedule with focus group discussion guides and a written test.

**Table 6.1:** Showing sampling frame used in the study.

Type of Population	Target Population	Sample Population
Form Three Students	18,661	360
Teachers Kiswahili	350	55
Total	19,011	415

**Source:** generated by the researcher

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Background Information and Characteristics of the Sample

The study sample consisted of 55 teachers of Kiswahili and 360 form two students as indicated in Table 7.1.

### "Sheng" Word Formation and its Influence on the Learning of Kiswahili Grammar

The study sought to find out the influence of Sheng' word formation on learning Kiswahili grammar. Respondents were given a series of statements with five (5) possible options ranging from Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were asked to indicate the answer that most closely approximated their opinion concerning Sheng' word formation in teaching of Kiswahili grammar by ticking ( √ ) in the spaces that were provided. The responses were as indicated in table 4.3

**Table 7.1:** Sheng' word formation on the learning Kiswahili grammar (n=55)

TATEMENT	SA (Strongly Agree)	A (Agree)	U (Undecided)	D (Disagree)	SD (Strongly Disagree)
1. I am familiar with sheng' vocabulary?	18 (33%)	26 (47%)	4 (7%)	7 (13%)	0
2. I often use sheng' words in my conversations?	0	33 (60%)	7 (13%)	7 (20%)	4 (7%)
3. I think the use of sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar hinders understanding?	40 (73%)	7 (13%)	0	7 (13%)	0
4. There are drawbacks of using sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar?	22 (40%)	18 (33%)	0	11 (20%)	4 (7%)
5. There are benefits of using sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar?	0	11 (20%)	0	26 (47%)	18 (33%)
6. I think sheng' word formation should be incorporated into the Kiswahili curriculum?	0	7 (13%)	7 (13%)	22 (40%)	18 (

Table 7.1 indicated respondent's reactions on Sheng' word formation and learning Kiswahili grammar. On whether they were familiar with Sheng' vocabulary, (33%) out of 55 strongly agreed, (47%) agreed, (7%) was undecided while (13%) disagreed. When they were asked whether they used Sheng' words in their conversation, (60%) agreed, (13%) were undecided, (20%) disagreed while (7%) strongly disagreed. On whether use of Sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar hindered learners understanding, (74%) strongly agreed, (13%) agreed while (13%) disagreed. The researcher further wanted to find out whether there were drawbacks of using Sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar. The respondent's reactions were (40%) strongly agreed, (33%) agreed, (20%) disagreed while (7%) strongly disagreed. On whether there were benefits of using Sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili, (20%) agreed, (47%) disagreed while (33%) strongly disagreed. On whether respondents thought that Sheng' word formation could be incorporated into Kiswahili grammar, (13%) agreed, (13%) were undecided, (40%) disagreed while (33%) strongly disagreed. This underscores the findings of Momanyi (2010) who suggests that the emergence of Sheng' may have to do with lack of clarity in Kenya's language policy.

The study thus revealed that majority of respondents (80%) were familiar with Sheng' word formation with a few (20%) not aware. Among the participants, 60% used Sheng' words in their conversation while (86%) thought that use of Sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar hindered understanding. On whether there were drawbacks of using Sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar, the study revealed that (73%) were in agreement that using Sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar led to drawbacks in learning. This contravened the findings of Filipi (2022) whose findings showed that those who were found to switch in between languages were found to be more effective in maintaining focus on their cognitive function. The study also revealed that there were no benefits of using Sheng' words in learning Kiswahili grammar as indicated by (80%) of respondents with only (20%) agreeing. The study also revealed that Sheng' word formation should not be incorporated into Kiswahili curriculum as indicated by (73%) of respondents who disagreed with only (13%) of respondents agreeing. These findings contradict those of Githiora (2012). According to him, the problems found in the classroom and blamed upon Sheng' may in fact represent non-linguistic conflict. He thinks that this may be as a result of a larger social processes where teachers and students are part and parcel of including poor educational policy. From the above table it is clear that teachers were negative about the use of Sheng' in their lesson. They agreed that they are familiar with Sheng' vocabulary. Many would say that quality and effectiveness of learning are enhanced when both the teacher and students are in agreement. On the contrary, these teachers were against the use of Sheng' so they wanted Sheng' to be discouraged in totality. They felt that by doing this, the performance of Kiswahili would be at par with English. If Sheng' was included in the curriculum design, teaching and learning would be confusing. The findings are in contrast with those of Githiora (2013) which reveal that Sheng' is accepted by some scholars to be part of linguistic national identity and to neutralize ethnicity. Sheng' is loved by many people and they feel prestigious speaking it. At the same time they disagreed that Sheng' should not be allowed in written Kiswahili. Through the use of Sheng', students break their morpho-syntactic or Kiswahili grammatical rules because they write some words in exams as they pronounce them (Carless, 2008; Macho, 2012).

However, some teachers were neutral and skeptical on use of Sheng' they were not sure whether Sheng' be accepted in the teaching and learning Kiswahili grammar or not. This may be attributed to the age of the teachers, those with 45 and above years do not know what do with Sheng', they do not support its use but on the other hand it is a popular language that has emerged. The study further showed that, when teaching Kiswahili, both students and teachers felt that re-teaching grammar concepts reduced the chances of Sheng' influence in the way they responded to questions. The settings were also less formal; given that this is one area that is not tested by the Kenya National Examinations Council. This may be because the writer had enough time while the speaker may purport to be under considerable pressure to keep on talking during the time allotted to him/her. Deviations from the target norms were found to be more in specific syntactic categories. A big number of the sampled population had some problems with concordial markers, verbal and nominal extensions and generalization of plural markers. (Chomba 2013).

Questionnaire and interview responses were administered and received from all participants who were the teachers of Kiswahili. Observation of focus group discussion and tests were also conducted by students. Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyze relationships between the variables.



The study sought to find out the influence of Sheng’ word formation on learning Kiswahili grammar. Respondents were given a series of statements with five (5) possible options ranging from Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were asked to indicate the answer that most closely approximated their opinion concerning Sheng’ word formation in teaching of Kiswahili grammar by ticking ( √ ) in the spaces that were provided. The responses were as indicated in table 7.1

**Table 7.2:** Influence of Sheng’ Word Formation on the Learning Kiswahili

Variable	Mean	Std
Sheng’ interferes with Kiswahili language	4	0.626
Phonology of Sheng’ words affects comprehension of Kiswahili grammar	4.18	0.49
Sheng’ spelling confuses learners in Kiswahili lessons	4	0.584
Total Mean	4.17	0.567

As shown in table 7.2, teachers rated the variable Sheng’ interference highly by most of the teachers (Mean=4.18, SD=.626). The notion that Sheng’ word affects comprehension of Kiswahili grammar was also rated highly (Mean= 4.18, SD=.490). Further, the table reveals that Sheng’ spelling confuses learners in Kiswahili lesson (Mean=4.15, SD= .584). The high rating of these variables show that Sheng’ words affect teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar. Learners tend to use this language because they are not competent in Kiswahili grammar. Sheng’ is used by all the people ranging from the young to the old, illiterate to the learned but majorly in the urban setup. The language is acquired informally and new words emerge everyday hence have negative effect on learning Kiswahili grammar. The findings concurs with (Kerfoot, 2013) who supports that Sheng’ interferes with standard Kiswahili. Learners make grammatical errors that hinder their proficiency in Kiswahili grammar. People have different opinions on use of various languages, for example there are people who prefer using English while others prefer mother tongue. Many like languages that they are most comfortable with. That is why in a gathering with various communities one is allowed to speak even in mother tongue so long as there is somebody to translate

**Focus Group discussion and Sheng’ word formation**

The study sought to explore students’ use of Sheng’ words in Kiswahili grammar discussion groups. The researcher listened and noted common words that were used and the results are indicated in table 7.2

**Table 7.3:** Focus group Discussion on Sheng’ Word Formation

SHENG’	STANDARD SWAHILI	DIRECT TRANSLATION	STANDARD ENGLISH
Finje	Shilingi hamsini	Fifty	Fifty shillings
Chini ya maji	Kufanya kisiri	Under the water	Do something discreetly
Kuiigia Nyasi	Kutoroka	Get in the grass	Disappear
Cheza chini	Achana na mambo mengi	Play down	Go slow on something
Inabamba	Inafurahisha	It is decorated	It is interesting
Kimeumana	Mambo yameharibika	It has bitten itself	Things have gone wrong
Stori za jaba	Uongo	Stories of the weed	Lies
Mzae	Baba	Old man	Father

Haina kelele	Haina shida	Has no noise	There is no problem
Kushika ball	Kupata ujauzito	Hold ball	Get pregnant

**Source:** Data from focus group discussion

As indicated in Table 7.3, the study revealed that common words that had Sheng’ formation included; finje meaning fifty shillings, Chini ya maji to mean do something discreetly. Cheza chini to mean go slow on something and Kuingia Nyasi meaning disappear. Other words included inabamba (It is interesting), kimeumana (Things have gone wrong), stori za java (lies) mzae (father) and haina kelele (There is no problem). From these results, the study concluded that most Sheng’ word were formed or coined from Kiswahili words. These results are contrary to the results of ( Chomba, 2013) in a study carried out in selected schools on effect of Sheng’ on Kiswahili composition. The study revealed that most Sheng’ words were formed from Kikuyu language. The study thus concluded that Sheng’ word formation is influenced by language environment of the speaker. This small group was easy to manage and with further probing using open ended questions the researcher was able to gather in-depth information. These are some of the sentences constructed by learner in the focus group discussion.

Itabidi ufanye uchunguzi huu chini ya maji ( You have to do your investigation secretly).

Usimwamini, hizo ni stori za java ( Do not take him seriously, he is lying)

Lakini hii topic inabamba kweli. ( But this topic is very interesting)

A focus group was conducted with the participants whereby questions were directed to them. Since the group consisted of the young they were able to discuss Sheng’ practices very well. They answered the questions and provided the general feeling of the group for example when asked if Sheng’ could be included in the curriculum design, one of the groups stated that Sheng’ should be included just like the way Kiswahili was included and now a national language. Further they clarified that Sheng’ is a unifying factor among the communities in Kenya. Sheng’ speakers are varied ranging from children to adults to gender, although those who use it are the youth which forms the majority (60%) of the population structure of the Country. However, (Okoth, 2013) disapproves these findings, he asserts that Sheng’ cannot attain full status of language due to deficiencies; it has no recognized dictionary which embody standard spelling. His opinion is in line with one of the focus groups which reported that Sheng’ should not be allowed in any official communication for example in the TV shows and company advertisement. They mostly use Sheng’ merely to make fun or entertain the audience. Moreover, the main intention of using Sheng’ is to keep others away from communication, the speakers do not want other people present to follow their conversation. This was also suggested by ( Lagat, 2010), who implies that Sheng’ is a secret code to communicate. Sheng’ speakers secretly pass messages amongst themselves while keeping teachers in the dark.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major goal of this paper was to look at the impact of Sheng’ word formation on the learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu- Kenya. The study identified how word formation in Sheng’ influences the learning of Kiswahili grammar. The first objective aimed to investigate the influence of Sheng’ word formation on the learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Kenya. The study findings indicated that majority of respondents were acquainted with Sheng’ vocabulary, although a few were not. There were those among the participants who used Sheng’ words in their conversations. However, a notable portion of respondents expressed the belief that the use of Sheng’ words in the learning of Kiswahili grammar impeded comprehension. Furthermore, the study revealed that a majority of the participants agreed that incorporating Sheng’ words in teaching Kiswahili grammar resulted in learning disadvantages. Conversely, there was a consensus among respondents that there were minimal benefits associated with the use of Sheng’ words in the learning of Kiswahili grammar. Additionally, the study findings indicated that the

majority of respondents were against the inclusion of Sheng' word formation in the Kiswahili curriculum. It is therefore important to take into account the language environment that surrounds the students if any progress in the correction of Sheng'-related errors is to be achieved in Kiswahili grammar. The educators should therefore encourage the learners to desist from a language use that is likely to influence their language competence. As a lingua franca in Kenya and beyond, Standard Kiswahili should be guarded against proliferation and interfering of any nature. The influence of Sheng on the teaching and learning of Kiswahili grammar in public secondary schools in Kenya is a complex issue that requires further research and attention. By understanding the impact of Sheng on language usage and grammar, educators can better support their students in mastering formal Kiswahili while also recognizing the importance of the evolving language landscape in Kenya. School administrators should ensure that school-based language policies are adhered to. This may involve a tradition where certain days of the week are dedicated to communicating in Kiswahili and the students made to conform to it. The Ministry of Education should encourage as well as strengthen the culture of drama, debate, music and speech competition in Standard Kiswahili in order to give the students opportunities for language practice.

### Areas for Further Study

Further study can be carried out in the following areas:

1. Influence of sheng' on students' Kiswahili grammar achievement.
2. The role of sheng' in growth of Kiswahili as a language.
3. The future of sheng in the teaching of Kiswahili
4. Sheng is it a creole, a pidgin or a language?

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire to Teachers of Kiswahili

#### Section 1: General Information

1. What is your age?  
20-24 [ ]    25-29 [ ]    30-34 [ ]    35-39 [ ]    40 and above [ ]
2. What is your gender?  
Male [ ]    Female [ ]
3. What is your level of education?  
Diploma [ ]    Higher Diploma [ ]    Bachelors [ ]    Master [ ]
4. How do you rate yourself in terms of proficiency in Kiswahili?  
Fair [ ]    Good [ ]    Excellent [ ]

#### Section 2: "Sheng" Word Formation

Below are a series of statement with five (5) possible options ranging from Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Indicate the answer that most closely approximates your opinion concerning sheng' word formation teaching of Kiswahili grammar by ticking ( √ ) in the spaces provided.

STATEMENT	SA (Strongly Agree)	A (Agree)	U (Undecided)	D (Disagree)	SD (Strongly Disagree)
1. I am familiar with sheng' vocabulary?					
2. I often use sheng' words in your conversations?					
3. I think the use of sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar hinders understanding?					
4. There are drawbacks of using sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar?					
5. There are benefits of using sheng' words in teaching Kiswahili grammar?					
6. I think sheng' word formation should be incorporated into the Kiswahili curriculum?					

**Appendix B: Interview Schedule for Teachers of Kiswahili**

	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	I am familiar with the use of sheng' in Kiswahili language					
2	I often use sheng' words in everyday conversations					
3	I think the use of sheng' words affects the learning of Kiswahili grammar					
4	I have ever encountered sheng' words in my Kiswahili grammar lessons					
5	sheng' words should be included in Kiswahili grammar lessons					
6	I think the phonology of sheng' words affects their usage and comprehension of Kiswahili grammar					
7	I encounter sheng' spelling in Kiswahili grammar lessons					
8	sheng' spelling affects my understanding of Kiswahili grammar					
9	I often use sheng' words when speaking Kiswahili assignments					
10	In my opinion, sheng' words should be allowed in written Kiswahili					
11	Sheng' vocabulary should be allowed in Kiswahili grammar exams?					
12	sheng' words in teaching and learning Kiswahili grammar can be improved					

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

**Appendix C: Observation Schedule for form 3 Students**

Impact of Sheng	Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)
Word Order			
Phonology			

Spelling			
Vocabulary Usage			

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