

An assessment of the Criteria used by Teachers in Selecting Learning Resources for Language Instruction in Secondary Schools in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

Agufana, Byrne P.¹, Too, Jackson K.², Mukwa, Chris W.³,

Murang'a University of Technology

Abstract

The main objective of this study was to establish the criteria used by teachers in the selection of learning resources for language instruction in Secondary Schools in Kenya. The study was carried out in Secondary Schools in Uasin-Gishu County in Kenya. This research adopted descriptive survey design. Stratified random sampling was used to select one hundred and sixty eight secondary school teachers to take part in the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data, which was presented in tables, describing the findings through frequencies and percentages, inferences were then made from the same. The findings showed that when selecting learning resources for use in language instruction, teachers were guided mostly by the lesson objectives; level of syllabus coverage; age of pupils, and topic of study.

Key Words: *Learning Resources, Instruction, Criteria, Selection*

Introduction

Variation theory takes the object of learning as the point of departure and highlights some necessary conditions for learning that are related to how the object of learning should be dealt (Mun, 2012). In the same light, Bawden and Marton (2004), espouse that an effective way of seeing a phenomenon by learners is that they must experience important variations of that phenomenon. Teachers of language should ensure variation in instruction through use of learning resources.

According to Oliver and Trigwell (2005), for learning to occur, variation must be experienced by the learner. If there is no variation, then there is no discernment because normally one does not attend to a thing that is always the same. The variation helps students to learn new ways of seeing from each other. The variation theory states that learning begins from the level where the learner is able to directly experience the phenomenon. The use of different media tools or strategies could be used to help students experience variation. It is therefore critical for language instructors to carefully design instruction by incorporating strategies to enable learners experience complex concepts in different ways to bring in the necessary variation to various phenomena. Dale (1975) posits that as a rule, educational experiences that involve the learner physically and that give concrete examples are retained longer than abstract experiences such as listening to a lecture. Instructional media help add elements of reality. Instructors instructional media for language instruction includes: real objects and models; printed text (books, handouts, worksheets); printed visuals (pictures, photos, drawings, charts, graphs); display boards (chalk, bulletin, multipurpose); interactive whiteboards; overhead transparencies; slides and filmstrips;

audio (tape, disc, voice); video and film (tape, disc); television (live); computer software; and the World Wide Web.

Dale (1975) goes further to state that media can be used to support one or more of the following instructional activities: Gain attention: A picture on the screen, a question on the board, or music playing as students enter the room all serve to get the student's attention; Recall prerequisites: Use media to help students recall what they learned in the last class, so that new material can be attached to and built upon it; Present objectives to the learners: Hand out or project the day's learning objectives; Present new content: Not only can media help make new content more memorable, it can also help to deliver new content (a text, movie, or video); Support learning through examples and visual elaboration: One of the biggest advantages of media is to bring the world into the classroom when it is not possible to take the student into the world; Elicit student response: Present information to students and pose questions to them, getting them involved in answering the questions; Provide feedback: Media can be used to provide feedback relating to a test or class exercise; Enhance retention and transfer: Pictures enhance retention. Instructional media help students visualize a lesson and transfer abstract concepts into concrete, easier to remember objects; and Assess performance: Media is an excellent way to pose assessment questions for the class to answer, or students can submit mediated presentations as classroom projects. Language teachers therefore have the responsibility of enabling learners get maximum benefit from language instruction they give through use of learning resources.

Black and William (2010) posit that raising the standards of learning that are achieved through schooling is an important national priority. Instructors have to manage complicated and demanding situations, channeling the personal, emotional, and social pressures of a group of 30

or more youngsters between the ages of 11-15 in order to help them learn. Instruction standards can be raised only if language teachers can tackle this task more effectively.

According to Sheldon (1994), in many countries both research data and more anecdotal observation indicate an erosion in the general quality of education provided to learners as defined in traditional terms of inputs (teachers, facilities, books and supplies), out-puts (literacy and completion rate, achievement scores) and processes (the nature of the teaching – learning act). A final and perhaps most important issue concerns the narrowness of the traditional vision of what good education is and what it is meant to achieve. It can be argued that good education given by the state to its school-going generation can only create impact if appropriate learning resources are used in teaching.

Background to the study

The purpose of this research was to study the ways teachers select the learning resources they use for language instruction in secondary schools in Kenya. For language instruction, there are many innovative learning resources for formal classroom instruction and personal learning outside the school, touching virtually every school, teacher, student, and family. Learning resources are available from the internet through smart phones that are now available in almost all households and cybercafés that are spread all over the country, and centers of excellence secondary schools that are well stocked with computers and are found in every county in Kenya. Students cannot learn from one type of instructional material alone, they also believe that it's the educators, parents, and administrators who can best determine what content will be effective for learners. Supplemental resources help teachers differentiate instruction and engage students who, for whatever reason, need enrichment beyond the core classroom material. No matter which

materials are used, though, parents and educators should hold all instructional content providers accountable for the quality of their learning resources.

Bruner (1999) posits that such experiences take the learners through the levels of doing and observing to engaging with abstract ideas in order to establish and understand concepts. The implication here is that verbal messages are not as powerful as direct experiences. Sampath et al. (1990) identifies the senses that are stimulated by learning resources, and underscored the importance of selecting appropriate resources for learning. He posits that the amount of what is learnt depends on the senses used and stimulated.

Miller et al (2008) note that instructional resources add weight to the value of learning. He asserts that through using learning resources, teachers are provided with a common starting point that paves way to be followed by learners by making them to nearly think on similar lines for the same subject. Miller et al (2008) summarizes the factors to be considered in selecting any learning resource for use in instruction, when he outlines seven factors to be considered when selecting learning resources as follows: the learning resource should be appropriate, have technical quality, be considered in terms of cost, availability, simplicity, flexibility in the environment of use and level of sophistication. This is further confirmed by Mukwa (1988) when he states that the variables to consider in the selection of learning resources include: lesson objectives, individual learner characteristics such as age, intelligence, learning style and cultural background, cost in terms of money and time, and what is available.

Teachers should consider the same factors when selecting learning resources to be used in the instruction in secondary schools in Kenya.

The resources should also reflect on accurate and comprehensive representation of the diversity and contributions of peoples of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, promote development of a positive self-image, reflect a balanced view to respectfully and effectively address stories, controversial issues and topics, and current affairs, from multiple perspectives.

On the issue of impact on policy issues on learning resources, Kerr (1991) suggests that policy approaches which ignore personal and professional beliefs tend to construe educational technology as an innovation to be administered and then adopted by teachers. On the contrary, this should not be the case as teachers should view policy directives on improving instruction as support rather than as being imposed on them. Kerr (1991) further observes that teachers assume that ICTs are merely new educational tools waiting to be picked up and used. It should be noted that classroom change will not arise through simply providing more machines, software and functionality, and demonstrating that using ICT is effective, but through embracing it and using it to bring the much needed revolution in instruction to ensure maximum benefit for the learner and easier instruction by teachers. This view is echoed by Kochar (2000) who expounded that media is valuable in instruction because they present clearly to the senses sensible objects so that they can be appreciated easily. In the view of Ranasinghe and Leisher (2009), integrating technology into the classroom begins when a teacher prepares lessons that use technology in meaningful and relevant ways. Technological aids should support the curriculum rather than dominate it.

Otunga, Odeo, and Barasa (2011) posit that, learning is measured from what learners are able to do as a result of learning. They also state that students learn concepts, attitudes, and values. Studies indicate that for instructors, the words learning resources invoke images of large, print, classroom textbooks with small type, outdated information, and content that covers the breadth but not depth of a subject. But learning resources are more than that. They are any tool that helps teachers teach and students in learning. In modern times the android phone can be manipulated to be a rich source of aiding learning especially where the phones can access internet connectivity.

On stressing the importance of learning resources, Confucius a famous Chinese philosopher noted that ‘usually the wise man guides his students rather than pull them along, he urges them to go forward and does not suppress them, and he opens the way rather than take them to the place. If his students are encouraged to think we call the man a good teacher’ (The oxford dictionary of philosophy, 2016). Ministry of Education officials in Kenya, have partly accused teachers of not using appropriate methodology and not availing and using instructional resources for teaching of Kiswahili. This was based on the assumption that teachers in our schools had apparently abdicated their responsibilities as educators and had been reduced to instructors programmed to dispense knowledge only as required for examinations (Bennars, 1994). It is therefore essential that appropriate instructional material available in instruction and that appropriate materials should be made available more promptly and within minimum time. Language instructors should also know that wrong selection of learning resources can lead to misrepresentation of ideas, and this may alter the instruction process through modifying the message that the instructor intended to give to their students.

In Kenya, education is a fundamental human right which every child is entitled to in the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Education is also considered as critical to our development as individuals and as a society. It helps pave the way for a successful and productive future Children's Act (2004). According to Andambi, and Kariuki (2013), learning resources for any curriculum implementation becomes one of the most important variables in learning. In support of this, Bruner (1999) further observes that a creative use of instructional learning resources would enhance the teachers' feeling that their students have learnt more and will retain better what is learnt, resulting in an improved performance in the skills they are expected to develop. This is a pointer that the value learning resources should be accorded, as they are very important to student learning experiences, hence need to verify the criteria used in selecting them to see if it adds value to the process.

Andambi and Kariuki (2003) further state that by implication, by using learning resources, a teacher can achieve his/her objectives by careful selection and use of learning resources for instruction. This means that an appropriate use of learning resources such as media could go a long way to influence students' behaviour in the classroom, therefore, learning resources are to be considered as indispensable components to any learning process. Ayot (2006) observes that teaching resources are used to increase learning, to generate more interest and to create a situation where the learners would fully engage in classroom activities. This necessitates the need for them to be selected methodically to enable them make the impact they are intended to have in instruction.

Problem statement

Excellent learning depends upon the manner and form in which the subject is taught. In the light of the above, the present study several questions can be raised. From the literature presented in this paper, it is evident that many studies have been carried out to find out the learning resources teachers use in enhancing learning (Kochar, 2000; Sheldon, 1994; Andambi, et al, 2003). However, very little research has focused on how teachers select learning resources that they use in instruction.

Given the vast range and quantity of learning resources available, the challenge is to select those which are most likely to enhance learning. The resources which are selected should contribute towards achieving the objectives of the course. It is often tempting to include a vast amount of resources but in learning resource selection, the main aim should be to provide only key resources.

The literature review singles out the attributes that influence instructional use of learning resources for teaching. A majority of the literature reviewed also reveals that there is need to integrate learning resources in instruction. Although these studies are contextual to Kenya, most of them have only examined the use of learning resources in teaching, however none addresses the criteria teachers use in the selection of learning resources by teachers in secondary schools. This gap is what the present study tries to fill.

Materials and Methods

The study took place in Uasin-Gishu County, one among the forty seven Counties that make up the Republic of Kenya. In total, one hundred and sixty eight teachers were selected to take part in the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design.

Kombo and Tromp (2006) define research design as the structure of research. It is the 'glue' that holds all the elements in a research project together. Orodho (2004) states that survey design is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. It is the most frequently used method of collecting information about people's attitude, opinion, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues. The descriptive survey method was used because it is efficient in collecting large amounts of information within a short time, this research design does not permit manipulation of the variables. Kerlinger (1986) argues for the use of surveys in social economic fact finding because they provide a great deal of information which is accurate. Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) state that the intention of descriptive survey research is to gather data at a particular point in time and use the findings to generalize over a larger population being studied. Cohen et al. (2017) also state that survey studies collect data with the intention of determining the relationships existing between specific events or variables.

Survey design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the criteria used by teachers in the selection of learning resources for instruction in Uasin Gishu County and helped draw conclusions on the facts discovered. Stratified random sampling method was used to select the percentage of schools that were included in the study because the sub-county has single and mixed, county and sub-county schools which are either day or boarding. Two strata sampling was applied for the study including: First, gender status of the school and second; size of the school as per the number of students enrolled. A total of 168 teachers were identified to take part in the study as respondents (n=168) representing (32%) of the total number of teachers from the sampled schools.

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Platt, Richards, and Weber (1992) note that a Likert like scale, is a common scale used to measure a person's reaction to something. The Likert scale contained ten items (statements) seeking teachers' views on the criteria they use in selection of learning resources for instruction. Respondents were required to respond to every statement using a structured format: Agree (A), Tend to Agree (TA), Tend to Disagree (TD), and Disagree (D)

After all the questionnaires were collected, data was appropriately coded and entered into the computer for analysis. Qualitative data obtained was analyzed thematically. Data was organized into themes, categories and patterns relevant to the study then the findings were presented through tabulation. Quantitative data obtained were coded then analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the results from the analysis presented in tables using percentages and frequencies. Inferences were then made from the trends observed from the analyzed data and were used to reach conclusions and make generalizations about the characteristics of populations based on data collected from the respondents.

Results and Discussion

The present study sought to find out the criteria used by teachers when selecting learning resources for language instruction. The questionnaire listed ten items using a four point Likert scale i.e., Agree (A); Tend to Agree (TA); Tend to Disagree (TD); or Disagree (D). From the findings of the study the following were the results which are also discussed in this section.

1. Lesson objectives and selection of Learning Resources

This study item sought to establish whether teachers considered lesson objectives as a factor when selecting learning resources. The study data revealed that 90% of teachers agreed to this fact, that lesson objectives affected the way they selected learning resources for instruction. This is shown in Table 1. From this research data, we can infer that lesson objectives greatly determined which learning resources would be selected for use in instruction.

This finding agrees with Mukwa (1988), who posits that when selecting media to be used for instruction, a teacher could put into consideration the objectives, presentation of information and responses to be evoked. In general, use of learning resources greatly improves instruction.

Lesson objectives guide me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	151	90.0
Tend to agree	8	5.0
Tend to disagree	4	2.0
Disagree	5	3.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

2. Study topic and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether the study topic was considered by teachers when selecting learning resources. Research data showed that 58% of lecturers agreed that the study topic determined which learning resources they selected for use in instruction, while another 35% tended to agree. Table 2 shows the results on this questionnaire item.

We can infer the following from this research data that the study topic is a major factor considered by teachers when selecting learning resources. This agrees with Miller et al (2008) who argue that learning resources add weight to the value of learning, and that by using learning resources, teachers are provided with a common starting point that paves way to be followed by learners by making them to nearly think on similar lines for the same subject through their interaction with learning resources.

Topic of study guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	97	58.0
Tend to agree	59	35.0
Tend to disagree	12	7.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

3. Syllabus coverage and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether the level of syllabus coverage affected selection of learning resources by teachers. Research data revealed that 80% of teachers agreed to the fact that syllabus coverage affected the resources they selected for use in instruction, while another 18% tended to agree to this fact. The research data findings on this question are as presented in Table 3.

The result from the data leads us to infer that syllabus coverage is a factor that influences teachers in choosing learning resources to use in instruction. This agrees with Sampath et al (1990), who underscored the importance of selecting appropriate resources for learning. They posit that the amount of what is learnt depends on the senses used and stimulated.

Syllabus coverage guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	134	80.0
Tend to agree	30	18.0
Tend to disagree	4	2.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

4. Age of pupils and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether teachers considered the age of pupils when selecting learning resources. The study results revealed that 52.4% of teachers agreed to the fact that the age of pupils was one of the criteria they used in determining the learning resources they used in instruction, while a further 35.1% tended to agree to this fact. This study results on this questionnaire item are as presented in Table 4.

From the above research findings, we can infer that, age of pupils is a factor considered by teachers when selecting learning resources. In the same light, Bawden and Marton (2004) echo this by espousing that an effective way of seeing a phenomenon by learners is that they must experience important variations of that phenomenon. Therefore, there is need to recognize that substantial learning can take place with instruction and learning, and hence the need to take into consideration the age of learners to enable them interact with appropriate learning resources.

Age of pupils guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	88	52.4
Tend to agree	59	35.1

Tend to disagree	4	2.4
Disagree	17	10.1

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

5. Time available and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether time available affected teachers' selection of learning resources for use during instruction. The study results revealed that 40% of teachers tend to disagree that time available determined the learning resources they selected to use while instructing, while another 35% disagreed. This study results on this questionnaire item are as presented in Table 5.

From this research data, we can infer that time available does not determine selection of learning resources. This does not agree with the observation made by Mukwa (1988) that among the variables considered by teachers when selecting learning resources includes time, and what is available to be selected for use. Proper time management leads to effective learning in class, and time management techniques and strategies have an implication on the use of instructional media.

Time available guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	25	15.0
Tend to agree	17	10.0
Tend to disagree	67	40.0
Disagree	59	35.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

6. Cost of materials and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether teachers considered the cost of materials when selecting learning resources. The study results revealed that 42% of teachers agree that the cost of materials affects the selection of learning resources for use in instruction, while another 27% tended to agree to this fact. This study results on this questionnaire item are as presented in Table 6.

From this research data, we can make several inferences. Firstly, despite having the cost element, learning resources enhance instruction. Secondly, cost of materials for instruction determine the kind of learning resources teachers select for use in instruction. This agrees with Mukwa (1988) who gives the variables to consider in the selection of learning resources which include the cost in terms of money, time and what is available.

Cost of materials for developing learning resources guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	70	42.0
Tend to agree	46	27.0
Tend to disagree	33	20.0
Disagree	19	11.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

7. Class size and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether teachers considered the class size when selecting learning resources. The study results revealed that 42% of lecturers agree that using ICT enhances their effectiveness, while another 31% disagreed to this fact. This study results on this questionnaire item are as presented in Table 7.

From this research data, we can infer that class size is a factor considered by teachers when selecting learning resources to integrate in instruction. This agrees with Otunga, Odeo, and Barasa (2011) who posit that, learning is measured from what learners are able to do as a result of learning.

Class size guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	71	42.0
Tend to agree	52	31.0
Tend to disagree	29	17.0
Disagree	16	10.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

8. Teacher guide recommendations and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether teacher guide recommendations were considered by teachers when selecting learning resources. The study results revealed that 53% of teachers disagreed that, teacher guide recommendations influence their choice of learning resources for instruction, while another 27% tended to disagree to this fact. This study results on this questionnaire item are as presented in table 8.

From this research data, we can make several inferences. Firstly, teachers select the learning resources they use in instruction. Secondly, majority of teachers did not solely rely on suggested learning resources for instruction available in teacher guides. This agrees with Oliver and Trigwell (2005), who argue that for learning to occur, variation must be experienced by the learner and this should be key when developing teacher guide recommendations for use by instructors

Teacher guide recommendations determine which learning resources to select to use in instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	17	10.0
Tend to agree	16	10.0
Tend to disagree	46	27.0
Disagree	89	53.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

9. Class level and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether teachers considered the class level when selecting learning resources. The study results revealed that 42% of teachers agree that class level affected the selection of learning resources for instruction, while another 27% tended to disagree to this fact. This study results on this questionnaire item are as presented in Table 9.

From this research data, we can make several inferences. Firstly, learning resources enhances learning. Secondly, learning resources are selected to suit class level. Thirdly, learning resources use improved school curricula presentation. This agrees with Andambi, and Kariuki (2013), who posit that learning resources for any curriculum implementation becomes one of the most

important variables in learning. Therefore language instructors should be careful when selecting learning resources to infuse in instruction.

Class level guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	71	42.0
Tend to agree	46	27.0
Tend to disagree	33	20.0
Disagree	18	11.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

10. Level of preparedness and selection of learning resources

This questionnaire item sought to establish whether teachers considered level of preparedness when selecting learning resources. The study results revealed that 42% of teachers disagree that their level of preparedness affects selection of learning resources for use in instruction, while interestingly another 27% tended to agree to this fact. This study results on this questionnaire item are as presented in Table 10.

From this research data, we can make several inferences. Firstly, the selection of learning resources is not dictated by the level of preparedness of teachers. Secondly, learning resources improves traditional instruction processes. Thirdly, use of learning resources improves school curricula presentation. This agrees with Black and William (2010) who posit that raising the standards of learning that are achieved through schooling is an important national priority. Therefore, language instructors are encouraged to select appropriate learning resources for instruction to achieve the desired results during instruction.

Level of preparation guides me in the selection of learning resources for instruction

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	17	10.0
Tend to agree	46	27.0
Tend to disagree	34	20.0
Disagree	71	42.0

Source: Primary Research Data (2017)

Conclusion

It is worth noting that language instructors are making useful and informed decisions about the learning resources that they use in their classrooms using some kind of criteria. However, the idea that language instructors are not capable of using learning resources that will enrich instruction through keeping learners engaged in the process of learning is a myth. Instructors understand the need to connect between the physical space that is the four-walled classroom and the real world. This is particularly important for language learning because it is often difficult for learners to understand why a particular activity is occurring. A teacher's innovation and competence in identifying and choosing appropriate learning resources is certainly one of the key conditions for meaningful, successful change of instruction practices.

It is too simplistic a view to see instructors as not using any criteria when selecting learning resources for use in language instruction. With the evolving new media, instructors should manipulate it to suit their lessons and enable learners to value this new media as a valuable source of knowledge from a tender age. It is inevitable that variation of learning can be attained through use of learning resources that make language learning interesting.

These blended classrooms will also inevitably have an impact on pedagogical processes and over time people's practices will change and potentially have a developmental impact on the ways that learners learn languages. Language instructors are expected to be methodical in giving instruction. This can be attained through carefully selecting instructional resources for use when teaching. The use of set criteria by the instructors of language will enable them choose the right instructional media relevant to the content being taught to use in instruction to give maximum benefit to the learner. Therefore, every language instructor needs to ensure they provide quality instruction through use of set criteria that guides the selection of such instructional media.

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