Full Length Research Paper

Determination of language materials selected, developed and used in the early childhood education programme

George O. Ogott[1], Francis Chisikwa Indoshi[2], Michael Okello Okwara[3]

[1]Dienya Secondary School, P.O Box 211, Ng'iya, Kenya.
[2]Maseno University, Private Bag Maseno.
[3]Bondo University College, P.O Box 210, Bondo, Kenya.

Teaching and learning of language in Early Childhood Development and Education ECDE Centers could benefit from effective selection, development and use of materials. However, in Gem District in the Republic of Kenya, concerns have been raised regarding insufficient and ineffective selection, development and use of materials in teaching and learning. The purpose of this study was to determine the range and factors influencing selection, development and use of language materials. The study involved 68 teachers drawn from 115 ECDE centers in Gem District, Kenya selected by simple random technique representing 33% of the population. It was based on descriptive survey design. Data was collected by questionnaire and observation checklist. The study found that there was acute shortage of language materials due to administrative, physical, human and target task factors which influenced the selection, development and use of language materials in ECDE centers. The study recommends that the Government and all the stakeholders be involved in capacity building to enhance sufficient and effective selection, development and use of language materials in the Early Childhood Development and Education Programme.

Key words: ECDE language materials, selection, development, use

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood development and education (ECDE) constitutes all the stakeholders efforts to provide integrated development for children from birth to the age of entry into primary school (Republic of Kenya, 1999). The emphasis on ECDE has been on provision of institutionalized education to children in the 3-6 years age group. This is because it is the stage where so many attributes and personalities are formed (Farrant, 1986).

The introduction of the language curriculum in the ECDE system cannot achieve desired results without serious efforts to ensure its implementation. There is need for sufficient and effective development, selection and utilization of language materials for quality language teaching and learning. In pursuit for more sufficient and effective language materials recommendations have been made for research in developing appropriate local teaching and learning materials for pre-primary school age children (Republic of Kenya, 1988). It is suggested further that, training institutions should provide a program for the replacement of equipment, tools and machinery to ensure continuity and relevance of training programmes. Recommendations have been made to the relevant ministry to organize the writing and publication of Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE) print materials in all local languages through subsidized publishers (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

Grasha (1990) talks about two types of resources for the implementation of the curriculum and these are; General resources which include teaching and learning materials and Subject specific resources such as the audio-visual resources, laboratory equipment and materials.

Brown and co-workers (2006) classified teaching and learning materials into four groups; Visual materials or three dimensional materials such as; objects, models and specimens; printed materials i.e. text-books, workbooks

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*Corresponding author E-mail: findoshi@yahoo.com

and instructional materials; chalkboards, graphics i.e. posters, diagrams; Audio-Aids such as radio, record player and tape-recorder; Audio-visual aids i.e. motion pictures, television and Community resources.

Gerlach and Elly (1971) classified the resources into five general categories;

Real materials and people i.e. teachers, librarian; Visual materials for projection i.e. projectors, overhead projectors; Audio materials i.e. radio, tape recorders; Printed materials i.e. work books and Display materials i.e. chalkboard, bulletin board. They further suggest that factors to consider for media selection include appropriateness, extent of sophistication, cost, availability, and technical quality. Dale (1969) classified them into three categories, that is; Audio i.e. radio, tape recorder; Visual media, Audio-visual and computer meditated materials. Ellington and Race (1993) classified the teaching and learning resources into seven groups; Printed and duplicated materials; Non-projected display materials; Still-projected display materials: Audio materials: Linked- audio and still-visual Material: Video materials and Computer- mediated materials.

Gathumbi and Ssebbunga (2005) classify them as; Audio-visual aids which can be used in teaching grammar; Flashcards in form of card or Manila paper which may be used to write bold letters on and may contain words or pictures drawn in sequence so as to bring out a story line: Pictures in form of magazines, newspapers, photographs which can be used to show letters and particular grammatical structures and Audio-tapes and films: Realia or three-dimensional objects which can be used to teach vocabulary and grammar such as prepositions of under, over: and Visual aids- which can be used to explain difficult words and also to increase the learners' concentration and retention.

The National Guidelines for Early Childhood Development in Kenya gives the materials to include; the syllabi, guidelines, trainers guide, teachers manual, public information pamphlets, films, videos e.t.c. It classifies them as; Graphic materials including; charts, work cards, coloring books :Textual materials including; manuals, guidelines, syllabi, manual for developing materials, local stories, poems, riddles in local language: Concrete materials or three dimensional materials including wooden letters, toys: and Audio-visual materials including films, video cassettes, photographs, cassette recorders, computers and computer software (Republic of Kenya,2006b).

Wringe (1995) broadly puts them or classifies the materials into three; Traditional teaching aids such as books, posters, flashcards, diagrams and of course, the blackboard and chalk or its modern equivalent: Established language technology such as the over-head projector, audio and video-recorders, projectors, copiers and language lab: and Information technology notably the micro-computers.

The development, selection and use of language materials in these centers may be influenced by several factors including: teacher competence, learner predisposition, lesson content and objectives, availability and cost and Physical constraints such as availability of time and physical facilities.

Kyriacou (2001) says that the most important aspect of an educational objective is that it is a description of an aspect of pupil learning thus contributing to pupils' intellectual and social development. And therefore in one way or another it will influence the selection, development and use of learning materials.

In reviewing their literature, Gardner and Miller (1986) in their study entitled 'Language Materials for the Language Teachers' give a number of reasons why adequate and authentic materials should be availed for language learning. They motivate learners, promote language acquisition, Contribute to language immersion and provide learners with discipline-specific or other particularities.

Physical constraints may also have impact on the selection, development and use of language materials. These constraints include availability of adequate time and the necessary physical facilities. Quist (2005) says that teachers have a great variety of tasks which include classroom organization, planning activities, selecting and preparation of teaching aids among others. This means that they need to manage personal time and the management of lesson times.

The World Bank (1980) observed that provision of textbooks, other teaching materials and library supplies had a low priority with budget planners in less developed countries.

Kenya recognizes the importance of ECDE as the most important lever for accelerating the attainment of Education for all (EFA) and the millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Republic of Kenya, 2006a). Despite all the efforts and commitment made by the government of Kenya to achieve Basic Education for All (BEFA) through ECDE there is still poor performance in the sub sector.

It has been noted that the development, selection and use of teaching and learning resources and materials in general is in a worrying state. In Gem District, given the poor state of provision of materials in general, concerns have been raised over the poor state of the ECDE programmes and especially on language materials (Republic of Kenya, 2009). However, there is lack of information on the range and factors influencing the selection, development and use of language materials. Without this information it would be difficult to implement appropriate strategies to address the problem. Therefore this study intended to determine the range of language materials selected, developed and used.

The study also aimed to determine the influence of human, target task, administrative and physical factors on the selection, development and use of ECDE language materials.

Objectives of the Study

To determine:
(i)   Language materials selected
(ii) Language materials developed
(iii) Language materials used

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey design. Orodho (2003) describe a descriptive survey as collecting data in order to get a detailed description of cuerrent practices, status of the subject or situation required. Descriptive survey design was chosen because it is appropriate for educational fact finding and yields a great deal of information, which is accurate. The research aimed at gathering accurate information on the range and factors influencing the selection, development and use of language materials.

Sample and Venue

Simple random sampling technique was used to select 68 teachers drawn from 115 ECDE centers in Gem District, Kenya, representing 33.3% of the study population. Simple random technique was used because it reduces the chance variation between a sample and the population it represents (Grinnel, 1996) and (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

Data Collection Instruments

Teachers Questionnaire and observation checklist were used to collect data from teachers regarding the range and factors influencing selection, development and use of language materials. Both of them had open-ended and closed-ended items. Open-ended questions gathered in-depth information and were used so as to enable the researcher gather data from a large number of respondents at a particular time (Ngumbo, 2006) while closed ended questions gave out structured responses, which facilitated the ease of tabulation and analysis. The observation checklist was used to gather data from the centers to assist in verifying information obtained through the teachers' questionnaire. And also gave additional information which could not be captured in the questionnaire.

Pilot Study

To establish reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was carried out in 6 ECDE centers involving 12 teachers (6% of the study population) this was done to guard against the response set, distortion of data and subjectivity of responses. Teachers who participated in the pilot study were not involved in the final study. For validity of the instruments to be ensured, three experts on the topic from Maseno University, examined the content of the instruments and advised the researchers on the content validity. Their feedback was used to revise the instruments.

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers sought for a research permit and research authorization letter from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology before the process of data collection in the field. The instruments were administered through personal visits on appointment with teachers. The questionnaires were filled by the teachers and collected by the researchers after a fortnight. The researchers observed the general status of the centers and held discussions with the respective teachers during the collection of the questionnaires.

Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative data was analysed by use of descriptive statistics, namely frequency and percentages. Qualitative data was categorized and reported in emergent themes. Watson (1994), defines qualitative data analysis as a systematic procedure followed in order to identify essential features, themes and categories. Data was then presented in frequencies, percentages and tables.

RESULTS

Range and factors influencing language material selection

Based on the responses of 68 teachers, range and factors influencing language material selection were studied. The study findings are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. According to the teachers, majority selected flashcards, posters, ECDE guidelines and syllabus, diagrams and activity books 1, 2 and 3 in teaching and learning of language. Language pamphlets, Language story books, Poems, Wooden Letters, Toys, Resource Persons, Radio, Films, Photographs and Video Cassettes were rarely selected while Computers and computer Software, Overhead Projectors and Audio Video recorders were never selected. On factors influencing selection majority indicated that target task (content selected and lesson objectives) had greater influence followed by human factors (teacher and learner factors), physical factors (facilities and time availability) and lastly administrative factors (material cost and availability).

Range and factors influencing language material development

The study found the majority of teachers in ECDE centers developed flashcards, diagrams and poems. Posters, toys and wooden letters were rarely developed. The rest of the materials were never developed during the process of teaching and learning. On factors influencing the development of language materials, majority indicated administrative factors (material cost and availability) had greater influence followed by physical factors (facilities and time availability), human factors (teacher and learner factors) and lastly target task (lesson objectives and selected content). The findings are summarized in Tables 3 and 4

Table 1. Range of language materials selected

Language Materials	Selected		None	
	F	%	F	%
ECDE Guidelines	53	77.9	15	22.1
Act. Books1,2 & 3	50	73.5	18	26.5
Language pamphlets	11	16.2	57	83.8
ECDE language syllabus	43	63.2	25	36.8
Language story books	1	1.5	67	98.5
Poems	18	26.5	50	73.5
Posters	60	88.2	8	11.8
Flashcards	60	88.2	8	11.8
Diagrams	47	69.1	21	30.9
Wooden Letters	7	10.3	61	89.7
Toys	6	8.8	62	91.2
Resource Persons	9	13.2	59	86.8
Radio	3	4.4	65	95.6
Films	1	1.5	67	98.5
Photographs	3	4.4	65	95.6
Video Cassettes	3	4.4	65	95.6
Computers & Software	-	-	68	100
Overhead Projectors	-	-	68	100
Audio Video recorders	-	-	68	100

Table 2. Factors influencing language material selection

Factors	Perceived Extent of Influence of factors on selection									
	1		2		3		4		5	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teacher factors	26	38.2	27	39.7	8	11.8	6	8.8	1	1.5
Learner factors	20	29.4	30	44.1	9	13.2	7	10.3	2	2.9
Objectives	33	48.5	23	33.8	6	8.8	4	5.9	2	2.9
Content	27	39.7	31	45.6	4	5.9	4	5.9	2	2.9
Material cost	23	33.8	14	20.6	24	35.3	3	4.4	4	5.9
Availability	33	48.5	23	33.8	10	14.7	2	2.9	0	0
Facilities	28	41.2	14	20.6	17	25.0	6	8.8	3	4.4
Time available	29	42.6	24	35.3	10	14.7	4	5.9	1	1.5

Key: 1. Very Great Extent 2. Great Extent 3.Fair Extent 4. Minimum Extent 5. No Extent at All

Table 3. Range of language materials developed

Language Materials	Developed		None	
	F	%	F	%
ECDE Guidelines	-	-	-	-
Act. Books1,2 & 3	-	-	-	-
Language pamphlets	-	-	-	-
ECDE language syllabus	-	-	-	-
Language story books	-	-	-	-
Poems	37	54.4	31	45.6
Posters	31	45.6	37	54.4
Flashcards	59	86.8	9	13.2
Diagrams	47	69.1	21	30.9
Wooden Letters	5	7.4	63	92.6
Toys	6	8.8	62	91.2
Resource Persons	-	-	68	100
Radio	-	-	68	100
Films	-	-	68	100
Photographs	-	-	68	100
Video Cassettes	-	-	68	100
Computers & Software	-	-	68	100
Overhead Projectors	-	-	68	100
Audio Video recorders	-	-	68	100

Table 4. Factors influencing language material development

Factors	Perceived Extent of Influence of factors on development									
	1		2		3		4		5	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teacher factors	39	57.4	10	14.7	10	14.7	3	4.4	6	8.8
Learner factors	22	32.4	25	36.8	16	23.5	5	7.4	0	0
Objectives	34	50.0	13	19.1	13	19.1	7	10.3	1	1.5
Content	22	32.4	26	38.2	10	14.7	9	13.2	1	1.5
Material cost	30	44.1	27	39.7	6	8.8	4	5.9	1	1.5
Time availability	48	70.2	11	16.2	5	7.4	4	5.9	0	0
Facilities	41	60.3	16	23.5	3	4.4	5	7.4	3	4.4
Time available	35	51.5	20	29.4	6	8.8	6	8.8	1	1.5

Key: 1. Very Great Extent 2. Great Extent 3.Fair Extent 4. Minimum Extent 5. No Extent at All

Table 5. Range of language material used

Language Materials	Utilized		None	
	F	%	F	%
ECDE Guidelines	53	77.9	15	22.1
Act. Books1,2 & 3	50	73.5	18	26.5
Language pamphlets	11	16.2	57	83.8
ECDE language syllabus	43	63.2	25	36.8
Language story books	1	1.5	67	98.5
Poems	37	54.4	31	45.6
Posters	31	45.6	37	54.4
Flashcards	59	86.8	9	13.2
Diagrams	47	69.1	15	22.1
Wooden Letters	7	10.3	56	82.4
Toys	6	8.8	56	82.4
Resource Persons	9	13.2	59	86.8
Radio	3	4.4	65	95.6
Films	1	1.5	67	98.5
Photographs	3	4.4	65	95.6
Video Cassettes	3	4.4	65	95.6
Computers & Software	-	-	68	100
Overhead Projectors	-	-	68	100
Audio Video recorders	-	-	68	100

Range and factors influencing language material use

Findings regarding the range of materials indicate that majority of teachers use flashcards, ECDE guidelines, activity books 1, 2 and 3, diagrams, ECDE language syllabus and diagrams in teaching and learning of ECDE language. Posters, language pamphlets, resource persons, wooden letters, toys, photographs, video cassttes, radio, films and language story books were rarely put into use. On factors influencing the use of language materials in teaching and learning, majority of teachers indicated that target task (lesson objectives and content selected) had greater influence followed by human factors (teacher and learner factors), physical factors (facilities and time availability) and lastly administrative factors (material availability and cost). The findings are summarized in Tables 5 and 6

DISCUSSION

This study found insufficiency of language materials in analyzed centers, which is likely to impact negatively on language learning at the early stage of growth. It also reveals the many factors which in one way or another

Table 6. Factors influencing language material use

Factors	Perceived Extent of Influence of factors on utilization									
	1		2		3		4		5	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Objectives	33	48.5	25	36.8	3	4.4	5	7.4	2	2.9
Content	22	32.4	31	45.6	11	16.2	3	4.4	1	1.5
Teacher factors	33	48.5	22	32.4	9	13.2	2	2.9	2	2.9
Learner factors	38	55.9	13	19.1	9	13.2	6	8.8	2	2.9
Facilities	33	48.5	18	26.5	12	17.6	4	5.9	1	1.5
Time available	40	58.8	14	20.6	9	13.2	4	5.9	1	1.5
Material cost	28	41.2	19	27.9	13	19.1	4	5.9	4	5.9
Availability	45	66.2	9	13.2	10	14.7	3	4.4	1	1.5

Key: 1. Very Great Extent 2. Great Extent 3.Fair Extent 4. Minimum Extent 5. No Extent at All

might hinder the effective selection, development and use of language material in teaching and learning.

The International Association for the Education of young children (1991) states that the quality of the physical environment and material provided affects the level of involvement of the ECDE children and the quality of interaction between the teacher and the children.Nunan (1991) states that while syllabus defines the goals and objectives, the linguistic and experiential content, language materials put flesh on the bones of these specifications. Quist (2005) states that teachers have a variety of tasks to perform which include understanding their strengths and weaknesses, students' preparation, classroom organization, managing their own time among others. These could help in sufficient and effective selection, development and use of language materials in teaching and learning. Tomlinson (1999) notes that language materials selected, developed and used should supply information and experience of the language in manner that is designed to promote learning.

Data analysis in Table 1 shows that out of the 68 teachers who participated in the study, majority (88.2%) indicated that they had selected flash cards and posters in teaching and learning. About (80%) indicated to have selected ECDE guidelines and activity books 1, 2 and 3 series, about (70%) indicated to have selected diagrams and ECDE syllabus. This is an indication that, most ECDE centers select flashcards, posters, ECDE guidelines, activity book 1, 2, 3 series, diagrams and ECDE syllabus which encourage the teaching and learning of language. The materials enable the teachers to implement the language curriculum since they put into practice the educational ideas as spelt out (Goffin and Wilson, 2001).

Most (80%) indicated to have not selected language pamphlets, toys, wooden letters, films, photographs, video cassettes and language story books.

All the teachers (100%) who participated in the study reported that they have never selected computer and computer software, overhead projectors and audio-video cassettes. This has a negative effect on the teaching and learning of ECDE language.

Table 2 shows that out of the 68 teachers who participated in the study, majority (84.8%) indicated that learning objectives and content selected had greater influence in the selection of language materials. This indicates that what is to be learned has to be considered when selecting materials for teaching. This means that as far as ECDE language materials are concerned the ideas have to be definite, convert them into plan and come with the right kind of teaching and learning materials to complete the target tasks (Berk, 2002).

Table 3 shows that out of the 68 teachers who participated in the study majority (86.8%) indicated to have developed flashcards, 69.1% diagrams and 54.4% poems.

Most of the teachers (92.6%) indicated that they had never developed wooden letters, (91.2%) toys or (54.4%) posters. All the teachers (100%) indicated that apart from the above stated materials they had not developed any other. This is an indication that most ECDE centers do not develop wooden letters, toys and other related learning materials hence an impediment to the learning of language as young children acquire knowledge in ways that are significantly different from the way older children learn, they learn by manipulating, exploring and experimenting with objects. They learn most exclusively by doing and through movements (National Association of Elementary Principals, 1990).

Table 4 on the other hand shows that majority of teachers (85.1%) indicated that material availability and cost had greater influence in the development of language materials for ECDE teaching and learning.

On the use of language materials Table 5 shows that majority of teachers, over 50% indicated that they had used flashcards, ECDE guidelines and syllabus, activity books 1,2 and 3 series and poems. This is an indication that, most ECDE centers use flashcards, posters, ECDE guidelines, activity book 1, 2, 3 series, diagrams and

ECDE syllabus which encourage the teaching and learning of language.

On the other hand, less than half of the respondents indicated that they had used language pamphlets, language story books, wooden letters, toys, radio, films and resource persons. This is an indication that most centers do not use language pamphlets and story books, wooden letters, toys, radio, films and resource persons.

All the teachers (100%) reported that they had never used computer and computer software, overhead projectors and audio-video recorders in language teaching and learning in the ECDE centers. This means that all the centers do not use computer and computer software, overhead projectors and audio-video recorders. This is an impediment to language teaching and learning in ECDE centers.

On factors influencing the use of language materials in teaching and learning majority (81.6%) of teachers indicated that the target task that is content selected and lesson objectives had greater influence. This means that what is to be taught and learnt is of importance in determining what kind of material is to be used in the teaching and learning process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following are the conclusions of the study:
(i) All the teachers (100%) who participated in the study do not select, develop nor use computer and computer software, overhead projectors nor audio-video recorders in teaching and learning language in the ECDE centers.
(ii) Majority of teachers, over 70% select, develop and use flashcards, ECDE guidelines and syllabus, activity books 1, 2 and 3 series and less than half for the other materials. An indicator that the centers do not have adequate language learning resources and materials.
(iii) Majority of teachers (84.8%) who participated in the study indicated that target task (learning objectives and content selected) had greater influence in the selection of language materials for teaching and learning.
(iv) Majority of teachers (85.1%) perceived that the availability and cost of materials had a greater influence on the development of language materials for teaching and learning.
(v) On the use of language materials, majority 81.6%) indicated that the target task (learning objectives and content selected) had greater influence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

 Based on the above conclusions, the study recommends that:
(i) The government through its relevant agencies should oversee the harmonization, acquisition and distribution of

the computer and computer software, overhead projectors and audio-video recorders for effective language teaching and learning in ECDE centers.
(ii) Teachers should be encouraged to select, develop and use other materials apart from the flashcards, ECDE guidelines and syllabus and activity books 1, 2, 3 series. This will ensure a variety of learning conditions for pupils and so improve on the efficiency of language teaching and learning.
(iii) There is need to harmonize the language materials and the lesson objectives and content to be taught and also avail sufficient materials. This could enhance the use of these materials for efficient language teaching and learning.
(iv) The ECDE administrators, teachers and other stakeholders should be sensitized and encouraged to purchase, develop, improvise and provide the relevant ECDE language materials.

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