

Criticism has been directed to the quality of Swahili used in newspapers. The views of scholars like Mensah (1995) is that Swahili journalistic texts diverge from the standard Swahili recommended for instruction purposes both lexically and grammatically. Mensah goes on to reveal the existence of colloquialism, slang, jargons, patois, non-standard vocabulary, grammatical irregularities and a heavy influence of English.

The justification for this paper is to challenge article contributors and editors to ensure purity of language, conformity to the standard and integrate all the outstanding issues in Kenya secondary school education.

1.3 Methodology

This research was based on the library research method with a bias of content analysis. *Taifa Leo* dailies for the month of July were purposely sampled as the source of data to be analyzed. Specific areas of grammar were also purposely picked. These included tense and aspect, noun-verb agreement, punctuation, affirmation and negation, parts of speech and verb derivation. Texts from the newspaper published within the specified time were analysed to identify tenses, verb agreements, punctuations and other aspects of grammar.

1.4 The concept of grammar

Nkwera (1978) defines grammar as a system of principles or rules guiding a language speaker to construct correct sentences that can be understood by others and at the same time understand the constructions of others using the same language. Mdee (1988:1) echoes him saying that grammar consists of a system of sounds, word structure and meaning.

The grammatical rules are language specific and are learned by a speaker during the process of language acquisition with competence increasing with frequency of exposure to the said rules. Acquiring the grammar of a language is paramount if effective communication is to be realized. The teaching of grammar requires careful execution to enable presentation of meaning in varied contexts. The use of *Taifa Leo* in teaching grammar lessons can be realized in the following areas:

1.4.1 Tense and aspects

Tenses in Swahili are marked as either *present*, *past* or *future*. Other aspects and are marked as *just completed* and *habitual*.

1.4.1.1 Present tense

This tense is marked by the inflection {na} prefixed on the verb. Texts from *Taifa Leo* can be used to teach this tense in class. A teacher can select sentences with words with the said inflection. The following such sentences were picked from sampled newspapers.

- i) *Hiyo inafikisha idadi ya wasichana wanaoacha shule kutokana na mimba au kuolewa mapema kuwa zaidi ya 400 kila mwaka.* (This raises / is raising the number of girls dropping out of school from pregnancies or early marriages to above 400 every year) *Taifa leo*, July 16, 2011 pg.1

- ii) *Stakabadhi katika ofisi ya wizara ya elimu ya Galole Kaskazini zinaonyesha kuwa...* (Documents in Galole Ministry of Education Office show/ are showing that ...) *Taifa Leo*, July 16, 2011 pg. 1
- iii) *Jinsi shughuli inavyofanywa kwa usiri mwingi, wapo baadhi ya Wakenya ambao wanashuku huenda kikosi hicho chenye jukumu la kudumisha sheria na usalama kinataka kuficha mambo fulani.* (The way the process is being implemented in secrecy, have got some Kenyans suspecting that the body charged with keeping the law and security is intending to obscure some issues) *Taifa Leo*, July 16, 2011 pg 1.

From the above sentences, a teacher would easily pick the inflection {na} marking the present tense to learners and give explanations on the functions in the said sentences.

1.4.1.2 Past tense

This tense is represented by the inflection {li} also prefixed on the verb. The tense refers to actions that have already taken place. Examples of sentences picked from *Taifa Leo* newspapers are:

- i) *Mapema mwezi huu, alishuhudia Bunge la Kimajimbo la Ujerumani...* (Early this month, he witnessed the federal national assembly of Germany...) *Taifa Leo*, July 8, 2011, Pg 3.
- ii) *Wachezaji 12 walitoweka baada ya kubanduliwa kwenye mechi...* (12 players disappeared after being removed from the match...) *Taifa Leo* July 13, 2011, pg 24.
- iii) *Alieleza kuwa aliachiliwa na Polisi kwa kuwa uchunguzi ulikuwa bado unaendelea.* (He explained that he was released by police because investigations were still ongoing) *Taifa Leo*, July 16, 2011 pg 3.

These examples show that the said newspaper had a treasure that cannot be ignored in teaching tenses. Such examples would be handy in directing learners in the classroom.

1.4.1.3 Future tense

This tense is represented by the inflection {ta} prefixed on the verb. The tense refers to events expected to happen in future. The following sentences picked from *Taifa Leo* show the use of the prefix {ta}.

- i) *...wengine wataweza kujisomea jumbe wanazopewa na iwapo waajiri watakuwa wakificha ukweli...* (some will be able to read for themselves messages given to them and if the employers will be hiding the truth...) *Taifa Leo*, July 9, 2011, pg 14.
- ii) *Kenya inahitaji chombo ambacho kitatikwa jukumu la kusawazisha istilahi* (Kenya needs a tool responsible for harmonizing terminologies)
- iii) *FIDA ilisema itakata rufaa.* (FIDA said it will appeal) *Taifa Leo*, July 16,2011 pg 7.

These sentences reveal that the inflection {ta} is extensively used in Swahili sentences. These and many more examples appear in *Taifa Leo* and are a great help to learners in comprehending this tense.

1.4.1.4 The just completed aspect

In Swahili, the term used for this aspect is *hali timilifu* and is represented by the inflection {me}. This aspect can be considered a variant of the past tense only differing in the

duration after the action has been executed. This aspect specifies that the action has just happened or has just been completed before the statement is made. It refers to actions in the immediate past. Examples from *Taifa Leo* are:

- i) ... *akiwa amebewa na Maria del Mar Arjona mwenye Mkoba*. (...had just been carried by Maria Del Mar Arjona in her handbag) *Taifa Leo*, July 8, 2011, pg 3.
- ii) ...*alirejea dukani baada ya kusahau simu na kupata bidhaa hizo zimeibiwa*. (...he returned to the shop after forgetting the phone and found that the goods had just been stolen) *Taifa Leo*, July 16, Pg 5.
- iii) *Inaonekana waziri amesahau kuwa wenye nguvu ya kuamua atakayekuwa rais mwaka wa 2012 ni mpiga kura na wala si wanasiya*. (It seems the minister has just forgotten that one who has the power to elect the president in 2012 is the voter and not the politicians) *Taifa Leo* July 13, 2011 pg 10.

1.4.1.5 Habitual aspect

This aspect refers to actions which occur habitually. It is represented by the inflection {hu}. The inflection is realized in the following examples.

- i) ... *mapambano dhidi ya wanakandarasi hafifu ambao huruka kutoka wizara moja hadi nyingine...* (... the war against the incompetent contractors who jump from one ministry to another...) *Taifa Leo*, July 9, 2011, Pg 4.
- ii) *Hulia pamoja na wakazi wakati wa mikasa ya moto* (They cry with residents during fire catastrophies) *Taifa Leo*, July 13, 2011, pg 3.
- iii) *Susan hufanya kazi katika makao ya watoto mtaa wa Babadogo jijini Nairobi*. (Susan Works in a children's Home in Nairobi's Babadogo Estate) *Taifa Leo*, July 16, 2011, Pg 5.

1.4.2 Noun-verb agreement

The Swahili parallel for noun-verb agreement is *upatanisho wa kisarufi*. Noun-verb agreement refers to the harmony between the nouns or pronouns with verbs. (Wesana-Chomi, 1998). Noun-verb agreement is marked by a noun class prefix on the verb. Massamba et al (1999) points out that this prefix acquires a Sandhi quality and depending on the class of the noun, it exhibits itself in the initial verb environments throughout the sentence. Incorrect use of noun-verb agreement results in erratic sentence structures. The basic rules guiding the agreement are the recognition of the noun or pronoun class, the number of nouns involved and the size of the said nouns. Noun-verb agreement in some languages like maasai will also be guided by the gender of the nouns involved (See Meitamei, 2008)

The following examples picked from *Taifa Leo* newspaper can be used to teach this agreement in a classroom situation.

- i) *Serikali imewataka wakenya wajitokeze na kutoa maoni kuhusu mswada wa ndoa. Mswada huo ukiidhinishwa utaathiri pakubwa jinsi ndoa hufanyika nchini*. (The government has requested Kenyans to come out in large number to air their views on the marriage bill. Once the bill is passed, it will greatly affect marriages in the country) *Taifa Leo*, July 9, 2011, pg 1.
- ii) *Kashfa inayofanana na ile ya wizi wa pesa za mpango wa elimu ya msingi bila malipo imetokea katika mpango wa kustawisha maeneo kame*. (a scandal similar to the one involving theft of free primary education funds has

developed in the body responsible for development of arid and semi-arid areas) *Taifa Leo*, July 8, 2011, pg 1.

- iii) *Maswali mengi yameulizwa kuhusu msururu wa visa vya ukiukaji wa sheria na vurumai zinazohusishwa ...* (Questions are being raised about cases of law breaking and the violence associated...) *Taifa Leo*, July 13, 2011, pg 1.

In example (i) above, the use of the inflection {i} in the word *imewataka* shows that the subject which is the government is one, therefore it is a singular form. In addition the inflection {wa} in *Wakenya* and also in *wajitokeze* shows that the subjects who are Kenyans are in the plural form. Similarly the {wa} preceding the word *mswada* (bill) is a possessive pronoun and whose structure also exhibits noun-verb agreement. Noun-verb agreement is represented in the verb *ukiidhinishwa* and *utaathiri* by the prefixed inflection {u} as the noun *mswada* referred to belongs to the U-I class.

In example (ii), the inflection {i} in the verb *inayofanana* and the adjective *ile* shows that the noun *kashfa* being referred to is in singular and is from the class I – ZI. The noun *pesa* is always referred to as a plural and never in singular form. The adjectives and verbs referring to the noun will always use the prefix inflection *zi*. The *wa* following the word *mpango* is a possessive adjective as the noun belongs to the U-I class. The prefix {i} in *imetokea* is conditioned by the singular noun *kashfa* which is in the class I-ZI. The *me* of the adjective *mengi* and *ya* of the verb *yameulizwa* in example (iii) are conditioned by the plural noun *maswali* from the class LI-YA whose morphological variant is JI-MA. The adjective *mengi* arises from the following process:

Maswali *ma+ingi* yameulizwa

a + i = e

Mengi

The word *msururu* conditions the adjective *wa* as the noun also belongs to the class U-I. The plural noun *vurumai* conditions the prefix *zi* as an initial inflection in the verb *zinazohusishwa* as the noun belongs to the class I-ZI.

1.5 Punctuation

This is a process of using standard marks to clarify meaning, convey emphases, provide breathing pauses natural to speech, to indicate sentence structure and to enhance readability (Student Encarta, 2009)

Punctuation marks used in *Taifa Leo* texts can be used as a resource for classroom teaching. The following text has plenty of punctuation marks.

Ameabiri ndege za United Airlines mara 5,962 na amefanya safari inayotoshana na kuzunguka dunia mara 19 kutimiza kilomita milioni 8 za kwanza na miaka 10 kusafiri nusu hiyo nyingine. 'Tunatarajia tutakuwa hapa tena kukuzawadia baada ya miaka mitano ijayo utakapogonga maili milioni 15 (Kilomita million 24) alisema Naibu Mkuu wa Masuala ya Wateja, Bw. Martin Hand'

(He has boarded United Airlines planes 5,962 times and made travels equivalent to 400 times the earth's circumference. It took 19 years to cover the first 8 million

kilometers, and 10 years to cover the rest. 'We expect to meet you here again after 5 years when you'll have covered 15 million miles (24 million Kilometres)' exclaimed the Deputy Officer in charge of clientele affairs, Mr. Martin Hand) *Taifa Leo*, July 16, 2011, pg 3.

In the above extract, first letters in all sentences have been capitalized. This has been done in words like *Ameabiri*, *Ilimchukua* and *Tunataraji*. In addition, first letters of proper nouns like *United Airlines*, *Martin* and *Hand* are also capitalized. The coma has been used in the number 5,962 and also to separate words in order to allow for breathing pauses during speech. The coma has also been used to separate a person's name from his title towards the end of sentence 3. The full stop has been used at the end of sentences and in shortened words forms such as Mr. Speech Marks have been used to show direct speech such as the exclamations of Martin Hand. Brackets have been used to show the source of the text.

1.6 Affirmation and negation

Affirmation is an aspect of an action happening, happened or likely to happen in future. Negation on the other hand is the opposite of affirmation. It is a denial state that an action did not happen, will not happen or is not happening. From the *Taifa Leo* newspaper, the following examples were sampled which could be used to teach in the classroom.

- i) *Hata hivyo, aliwahakikishia wamiliki wa magari kwamba maafisa wake watalikomesha kundi hilo lakini akahimiza kuripotiwa kwa visa vya wizi...* (Even so, he assured the vehicle owners that his officers will handle he gang but emphasized that theft cases be reported....) *Taifa Leo* July 9, 2011, Pg 3.
- ii) *Inaonekana labda hakuisoma katiba, au hutaki kubadilika na anaendelea kuishi katika enzi ya katiba ya zamani...* It seems maybe that, he has not yet read the constitution, or does not want to change and continues to live in the age of the old constitution) *Taifa Leo* July 9, 2011, pg 1.

In example (i), the use of the prefix {a} in the word *aliwahakikishia* and *akahimiza*, and the prefix {wa} in *watalikomesha* show that the sentence is in the affirmative. The use of the prefix {ha} in the words *hakuisoma* and *hataki* signifies negation.

1.7 Word classes (parts of speech)

There are 8 parts of speech - the nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions and exclamations. Identifying these parts of speech is an important aspect of language competence. Quotations from *Taifa Leo* stories and reports can be used to teach the parts of speech in Swahili language. For example:

Bw. Mohammed alionya kuwa serikali haitawavumilia wale wanaotumia hela hizo kwa miradi mingine. (Mr. Mohammed warned that the government will not condone those using that money to fund other projects) *Taifa Leo* July 8, 2011, Pg 4.

From this sentence, various parts of speech can be identified;
Nouns: Mr Mohammed, Government, Money and projects.
Verbs: Warned, Condone and Using
Pronouns: That, Those
Adjectives: Other

Apart from identifying different word classes or parts of speech, the correct arrangement of the words and their functions can also be learned from *Taifa Leo* texts.

1.8 Word derivation process

This is a process of adding affixes to words to either change meaning or sometimes to change word classes (parts of speech). The following examples exhibit derivative forms.

- i) *Mwanafunzi aliyejiunga na Al shabaab anaswa.* (The student who joined Al shabaab is arrested) *Taifa Leo* July 8, 2011, Pg 1.
- ii) *Nauli ya gari moshi yaongezeka.* (Train fair hiked) *Taifa Leo*, July 8, 2011, Pg 1.
- iii) *Mwalimu anyanyuliwa juujuu na mwenye shule na kutupwa nje.* (A teacher is lifted into the air and thrown out by the school proprietor) *Taifa Leo*, July 8, 2011. Pg 1.
- iv) *Ole wao wanaokutana naye na genge lake.* (Woe unto them that meet with him and his gang) *Taifa Leo*, July 13, 2011, Pg 3.
- v) *Alisema maafisa waliolifunga gari hilo...* (He said the officers who had locked that car...) *Taifa Leo*, July 13, 2011, Pg 3.

These five sentences have words that exhibit the derivation process. For example,
The simple form : *waliolifunga*
The passive derivation: *anyanyuliwa, anaswa, kutupwa.*
The associative/ reciprocal: *waliokutana*

2. Challenges

Challenges have been encountered in the attempts of using *Taifa Leo* newspaper as a Swahili teaching resource. The following are the challenges that have been identified.

2.1 Attitudes

Many scholars have negative attitudes towards Swahili language usage in Kenya (Onyango, 1990). This scholar also notes that a majority among the elites shun Swahili newspapers on grounds that, the language lacks artistry. This attitude is also prevalent in secondary schools where some Swahili language teachers have negative attitudes towards *Taifa Leo* newspapers. Most teachers would rather read English newspapers. These teachers prefer to read English newspapers and ignore *Taifa Leo*. Only English newspapers are bought and even this only end up in offices and staffrooms. This has denied students the opportunity to exploit this handy resource in their Swahili studies.

2.2 Improper language use

As pointed out earlier, Swahili journalistic texts have tended to diverge from the standard. Ontieri (2005) also noted that *Taifa Leo* newspaper is not an exception and that it is occasionally written in a language with a plethora of

grammatical and lexical mistakes. The reasons for this could be the pressure on the journalists to conform to the popular slang which is more attractive to readers or simply lack of competence in Swahili language. Mensah (1995) in his work *Swahili Journalistic Language* has dealt in detail with the irregularities inherent in Swahili journalistic texts. The authors of this work noted the following grammatical and lexical unconformities.

- i) *Mazoea haya yalizidi kuendelea kwa muda mrefu licha ya jitihada za msichana huyo kuzikomesha.* (This habit persisted for a long time despite the girls effort to end it). In this example the prefix {ma} of *mazoea* of the class YA-YA does not agree grammatically with {zi} of *kuzikomesha* which should have been *kuyakomesha*.
- ii) *Hakuna pingamizi wowote ...* (There is no problem ...) The adjective *wowote* does not agree with *pingamizi* and should have been *yoyote*.
- iii) *...ardhi kutwaliwa na majengo zilivyonyakuliwa* (...taking over land and grabbing buildings) The {zi} of *zilivyonyakuliwa* conflicts with the noun *majengo* and should be {ya}
- iv) *Alijizatitisha kwa kilimo.* (She worked hard in agriculture) *Alijizatitisha* is a corruption of the simple verb *alijizatiti*. The slang cannot in any way be extended as *alijizatitisha*. It is erroneous.
- v) *Nani atakayemridhi atakapong' atuka.* (Who will finally inherit him/ her when he/she finally leaves the seat) *Atakayemridhi* should be *atacakayemrithi*. It is confusion between the voiced fricative /ð/ and the unvoiced /θ/.
- vi) *...kusahau msemu, 'raha mbele, mauti nyuma'* ... forgetting the adage 'pleasure comes, death follows' This is a corruption of the proverb *Tamaa mbele, mauti nyuma* which means Desire / covetousness precedes death.
- vii) *Wengine wamekuwa na mguu wa nje.* Some have one of their feet out. This is another corruption of the symbolism *Ana jicho la nje* which means 'he/ she is adulterous'
- viii) *Huduma aliyokuwa akiwatolea wateja ilikuwa ya haraka na ya ari mithili ya mchwa ...* (The service he offered to customers was fast and passionate like that of termites ...) the correct form should be *Aliwahudumia wateja kwa bidii za mchwa ...* He served customers with the zeal of termites. The sentence contravenes the syntax of Swahili language. It exhibits redundancy, verbocity, a misuse of similes and symbols.
- ix) *Sababu zilizofanya nitoroke ni nyingi kama mchanga wa bahari au nyota za mbinguni.* (The reasons for my flight were as many as the grains of sand of the sea or the stars of heaven)

This is another misuse of the similes 'as many as the grains sand on the sea shore' and 'as many as the stars of heaven'. Could simply have been stated *Nilikuwa na sababu nyingi za kutoroka* (I had many reasons to flee). Alternatively use of one simile could have been adequate for emphasis.

Such errors and many more have served to discourage many readers. They find no reason to read this Swahili daily newspaper with its myriad grammatical and lexical mistakes. This attitude has continued to hinder the widespread use of Swahili language in society especially by the educated elite. Readers with a poor grasp of the Swahili language tend to believe that Swahili journalistic language is the epitome of the language fluency and tend to be misled into accepting even the most erroneous forms (Rweyememu, 1995:76-77). Due care should be taken to sieve out the incorrect uses by editors before distribution.

3. Recommendations

Taifa Leo is the only Swahili newspaper printed and distributed all over Kenya. Despite the errors highlighted above, school head teachers should ensure that copies are bought daily and kept in libraries to be used by teachers and learners in teaching and learning Kiswahili. Kiswahili teachers should develop a positive attitude towards the *Taifa Leo* newspaper. They should transfer their affinity From the English newspapers to *Taifa leo* and set an example for their learners to emulate. Through reading this Swahili daily, they will discover a wealth of texts useful for Swahili language teaching. It is in reading this daily that, they will pick out plenty of literary texts, devices and linguistic content which will go a long way in improving their learners Swahili language skills.

Article contributors need to edit their work thoroughly before submission for publication. Those not competent in writing Swahili articles should leave the responsibility of writing articles to those who are competent in Swahili. Teachers and students do not need slang, jargons, patois and non-standard adulterations in the teaching and learning of this language. The ultimate responsibility lies with the *Taifa Leo* editors who need to be extra keen in their editing and production of future publications.

3.1 Conclusions

In this paper we have highlighted the role of *Taifa Leo* newspaper in teaching Swahili language. It has clearly been proven that the daily can be used to teach tense and aspect, noun-verb agreement, punctuation, affirmation and negation, parts of speech and verb derivation. Relevant examples have been quoted from different *Taifa Leo* publications which can be used to teach the above aspects in secondary schools in Kenya. We have also discussed the challenges encountered when using *Taifa Leo* newspaper in language teaching. Practical recommendations to address these few challenges have also been raised.

3.2 Future Scope

As mentioned above, Kiswahili language is evolving to be an East African lingua Franca. Kiswahili studies are

currently compulsory in Kenya and Tanzania. It has been illustrated in this paper how *Taifa Leo* newspaper can help to spread the usage of Swahili. Future works will explore how the same paper can be used to popularize Kiswahili as a lingua franca of trade, religion, entertainment, economics and globalization as East African pushes towards a political union.

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