ERROR ANALYSIS IN MASS MEDIA IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF RADIO NEWS BULLETINS FROM KENYA BROADCASTING CORPORATION KISWAHILI STATION AND RADIO CITIZEN:

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the common errors in mass media in Kenya. Its main focus was on broadcast media with a special bias on radio where two media houses were selected through purposeful sampling. The radio was selected due to its wide use and accessibility throughout the country. A sample of 37 news bulletins from 7 o'clock evening news was sampled for a period of one year from November 2013 to December 2014. Error analysis of these news bulletins was done where errors were identified, classified and the conclusions were made. Recommendations were later suggested. Five broad categories of errors were identified. These included grammar, spelling, lexical, semantic and pragmatic errors. The findings of this research are important in that they can help to improve the quality of broadcasting in Kenya. Language learners and researchers would also benefit by identifying the common causes of errors and providing treatment. Curriculum developers especially in journalism schools would also benefit by identifying areas requiring more attention in their programs.

Key words.

Errors, pragmatics, content analysis, error analysis

Introduction

Mass media is a means of communicating to a large group of people at the same time. It involves print media such as newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, broadcast media such as television, radio and films and the internet which includes social media agents like Facebook, what Sapp, instagram and Skype. Many Kenyans rely on media for entertainment, information and education. Their use of various types of media varies. However the radio is a major source of information for many Kenyan citizens. Bowen (2010) says that nearly all Kenyans are listeners of the radio. They use it as a basic tool for getting information and not just entertainment. Research by Ipsos Synovate (2010) shows that 90 % of Kenyans listen to the radio news with over 107 FM radio stations already registered in Kenya. Among the most trusted and favoured radio stations were Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Kiswahili radio station and Radio Citizen (Katharine and Iginio 2011).

The number of journalism schools has also continued to increase to a total of 23 institutions offering training at different levels. Most of these schools provide basic training in journalism and fail to provide proper foundation needed in this profession. This leaves most graduates of these institutions with limited knowledge and skills and as such are poorly equipped for their careers. This has contributed immensely to the falling standards of language and professional ethics among most practicing journalists in Kenya. Okoti and Ondego (2013), laments that it is no longer possible to listen to FM radio stations for the purpose of bettering one's own language or for language proficiency. They argue that most radio presenters are sloppy and take language issues casually impacting negatively on the audience who rely on these media houses for language learning.

Kiswahili use in the radio on the other hand is quite pronounced today. The status of this language is also quite important in Kenya as it serves as an official and national language. As an official language it is expected to be correct and standard to avoid ambiguity in communication and also in line with its status. As a national language, it is expected to be understood and readily accepted by the citizens because it is a unifying tool as well as a symbol of identity. In spite of these roles however, Kiswahili use in Kenya and especially in the radio broadcast has left a lot to

be desired. Many errors have been detected, thus impacting negatively on this language. This paper identifies, categorizes and examines the errors in Kiswahili news bulletins and discusses possible treatment and the way forward. Errors are significant especially for those learning the second language where Kiswahili falls for the majority of Kenyans. Corder (1967) pointed out that errors are a good feedback to the language learners in that they provide evidence of the systems of language they are using. They also provide evidence to the researcher of how language is learnt and acquired as well as strategies which are used by the learner in discovering his or her language.

This study is significant in that it identifies common errors within the radio broadcast. These errors provide important feedback to the media owners, consumers and other stakeholders on the areas that require more attention and research. It provides important strategies that can be employed in the treatment of these errors. This in turn will improve the communication and professionalism among radio broadcast that will translate into high incomes from their products. On the other hand the standards of language will be maintained for the benefits of scholars and society in general.

Objectives of the Study

This paper was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify errors in radio news bulletin broadcasted in Kenya
2. To categorize the errors
3. To discuss these errors with a view of treating them

Statement of the Problem

Most Kenyans rely on radio for information, education and entertainment. Language is a key tool in the accomplishment of these functions. Previous research has shown that majority of Kenyans trust the information passed through the radio believing that it is correct and accurate. The Kenya broadcasting corporation which was the main media house owned by the government since independence in 1964 played its roles successfully. Following the liberalization of media waves in the early 1990s, many media houses have been established. Majority of them have no regard for professional or social ethics. This has lowered the standards of language in the country as well as affecting the communication function of the radio. This paper investigated errors in radio news bulletin by identifying and categorizing them as they occurred. Although research has been carried out on language use in media, no specific research has been carried out to identify, categorize and discuss errors in Kiswahili news bulletins transmitted through the radio in Kenya, a gap this research addresses.

Methodology

This research was carried out through the field research. Purposeful sampling method was used to select two radio stations: Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Kiswahili Station and Radio Citizen. Katharine and Iginio (2011) says that these media houses are the most popular with the highest number of listeners. Research was carried out for a period of one year for the

period between November 2013 and December 2014. 74 news items were selected from the two media houses through random sampling method, 37 news bulletins from each media house. These were from the 7 o'clock evening news. Sichangi (2008) says that these news are more detailed as they cover most of what had been covered during the day. Descriptive research design was used for this study. The news bulletins were analyzed, errors identified, categorized and discussed in line with research objectives

Data Analysis

Based on research objectives, this data was divided into 3 main categories: identification of errors, categorization and discussion. Analysis of data was enabled by use of error analysis theory according to Corder (1967), and further expounded by Gass and Selinker (1994).

Data Presentation

The results for this study were presented in a descriptive manner. The researcher analyzed the sampled news bulletins by identifying, categorizing and discussing the errors. The possible sources of these errors were discussed and treatment given. Use of tables and graphs was also employed in data presentation. It is important to note that the errors that were identified were the ones that appeared at least twice and that the quantity of errors did not include the frequency of individual items. There was some overlapping too where one type of error could be reflected in two different categories. Five categories of errors were discovered which included: grammar, lexical, spelling, semantic and pragmatic errors. These errors are further demonstrated through the following tables:

Table 1

Errors from written news bulletins

Types of error	Frequency	percentage
Grammar	845	65.45
lexical	94	7.28
spelling	238	18.44
Semantic	54	4.18
Pragmatic	60	4.65
Total	**1291**	**100**

Table 1 shows the total number of errors identified from written news bulletins from the studio. This was done to investigate any variation between broadcasted news and those written for presentation. From this table grammatical errors were the highest with 65.45% of the errors followed by spelling errors with 18.44%. Lexical errors followed with 7.28%, and then pragmatic errors at 4.65% and the lowest recorded errors were semantics with 4.18%

Table 2

Errors from broadcasted news

Type of error	Frequency	Percentage
Grammar	596	69.95
lexical	74	8.69
spelling	109	12.79
Semantic	36	4.23
Pragmatic	37	4.34
Total	**852**	**100**

Table 2 shows errors from broadcasted news bulletins from the selected media houses. It is important to mention that all the errors dropped significantly in terms of frequency meaning that

there was conscious effort by newscasters to correct the errors within the written script. The errors that remained could have been as a result of limited knowledge or inadequate time for thorough evaluation. From this table, grammatical errors remained on the top position with 68.95%. In terms of quantity the errors had however reduced by 249, spelling errors followed at the second place with 12.79%. The quantity of these errors had also reduced by 129 which was also quite significant. Lexical errors followed at 8.69% with a reduction in quantity of 20. Pragmatic errors followed at 4.34% with a reduction in quantity of 23. Finally semantic errors took the lowest percentage at 4.23% with a reduction in quantity of errors of 17.
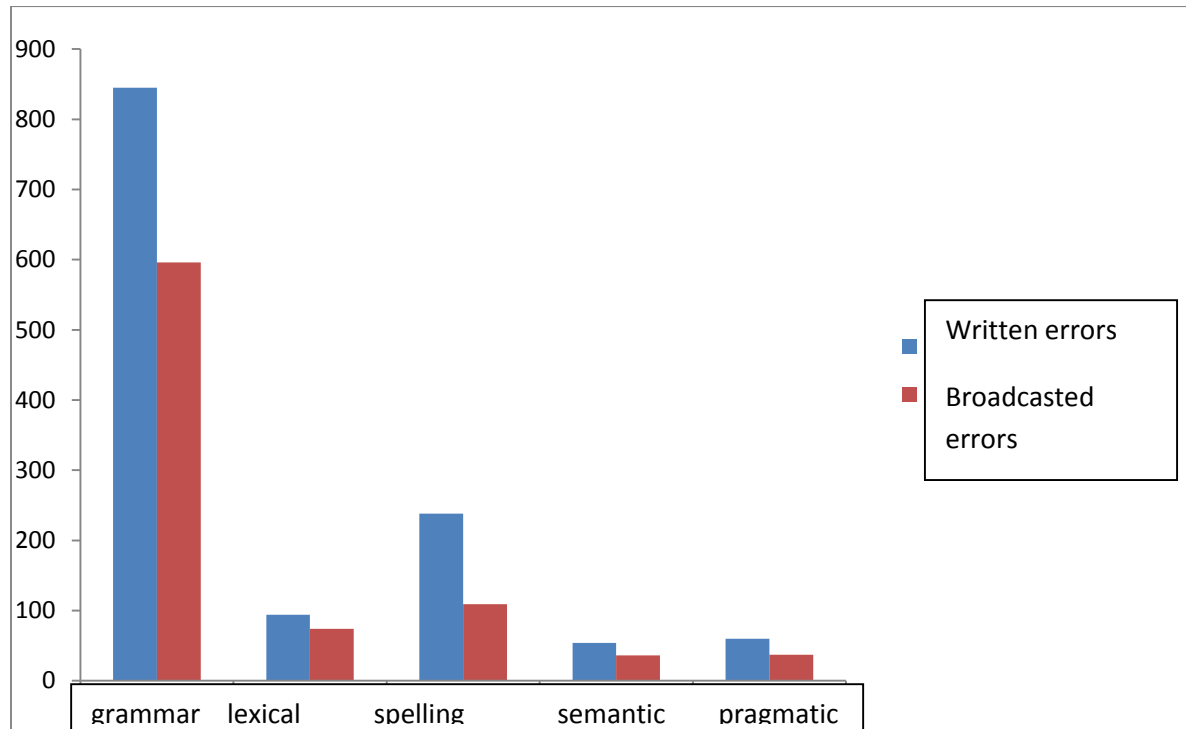

Figure 1

A graph comparing the number of errors from written and broadcasted news from the selected media houses.

This graph compared errors from written and broadcasted news. It is obvious as has already been discussed that all the errors reduced significantly during broadcasting of the news. The reduction in terms of percentage was as follows: spelling 37.18%, grammatical 17.27%, pragmatic 24.74%, semantic 20%, and lexical at 11.29%

Table 3

Total errors investigated

Type of error	frequency	percentage
grammar	1441	67.24
lexical	168	7.84
spelling	347	16.19
semantic	90	4.20
pragmatic	97	4.53
total	**2143**	**100**

Table 3 shows the total number of errors from both the written and broadcast news bulletins. Grammatical errors had the highest frequency at 67.24% followed by spelling errors at 16.19%. Lexical errors took the third position at 7.84% and pragmatic errors took the fourth position at 4.53%. The errors that had the lowest frequency were semantic at 4.20%. This result shows that although some sentences and phrases were obviously deviated from the standard forms of Kiswahili writing, they still conveyed the meaning and served the communication function.
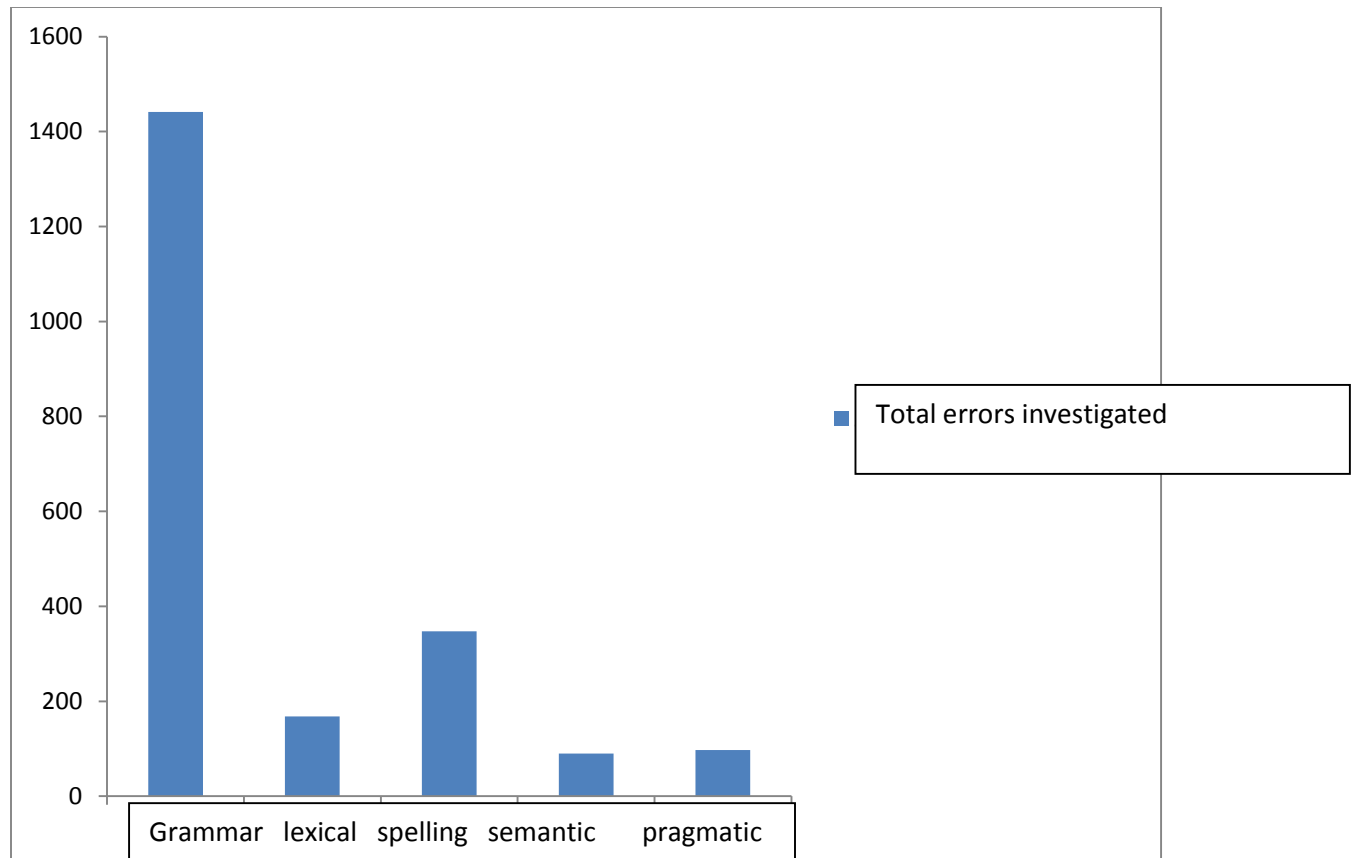
Figure 2

A graph showing the total number of errors from the study

Results from figure 2 shows that grammatical errors were the most prominent in this research followed by spelling errors, vocabulary, pragmatic and then semantic errors respectively. These errors included those from written and broadcasted bulletins.

Discussion of the Results

From this study it is clear that grammatical errors took the highest percentage of 67. 24% followed by lexical errors at 16.19%, then lexical errors took the third position at 7.84%, fourth position was taken by pragmatic errors at 4.53% and the fifth position was taken by semantic errors at 4.20%. It is also important to note that these errors were not exclusive in

that one error could overlap to another category and that their effect would affect other categories as well. These errors are further discussed below:

Grammatical Errors.

Grammar deals with rules and principles that guide the use of a language. It is the study of the classes of words, their inflections, and functions in relation to the sentence. It is the study of what is to be preferred or avoided in inflection and syntax. Correct use of grammar is necessary to facilitate good communication. Many grammatical errors were identified in this study which included: wrong inflection of words, singular and plural forms, code mixing, misplaced words, using English acronyms in Kiswahili texts, omission of important words, wrong use of adjectives, and wrong use of prepositions. The following are examples:

1 *Ameamrisha kufungwa kwa kilabu **moja**…Radio Citizen 9/12/13 (kimoja)

2.* Wateja waliokuwa **wakuburudika**…Radio Taifa 2/1/14 (wakiburudika)

3. *kwa kufanya kazi **masaa** mengi…Radio Citizen 17/12/13 (saa)

4.* wakati wa shambulizi la kigaidi **za** Westgate…Radio Citizen 12/12/13 (la)

5. *iliondolewa katika chuo cha **mfunzo** ya sheria…Radio Taifa 19/2/14 (mafunzo)

6. *majaji wa **ICC** wameipa serikali…Radio Citizen 10/12/13. (Mahakama ya kimataifa ya jinai)

Example 1 shows wrong inflection in line with Kiswahili grammar. Words are supposed to be in agreement according to their word group which was not the case in this example. Error from example 2 shows wrong use of tense which distorts the intended meaning. The sentence talks of the patrons who were having their fun but the word *wakuburudika* shows future tense which was not the case. The word *masaa* in example 3 was wrongly put because some words in Kiswahili do not take the plural prefixes. The use of *za* denotes a plural form in example 4 and the incidence being referred to was singular. Omission of letter *a* from example 5 distorted the meaning of the sentence as the word meant that the one being taught and not

the school as had been referred. Use of acronyms *ICC* in example 6 was wrong as the news were being read in Kiswahili unless these acronyms were interpreted.

Lexical Errors

Lexical errors referred to wrong use of words either due to the first language interference or as a result of limited knowledge of the target language. Among the errors under this category were pluralization of non-plural forms, tautology, acronyms, wrong translation, and confusion of homophones. The following examples give further elaboration:

7. *Senegal imenasa mashuameli ya Russia…Radio Citizen 6/11/13 (mashua)

8. *idara ya CID…Radio Citizen 27/11/13 (idara ya upelelezi)

9. *Mututho anafaa amalizane…Radio Citizen 8/10/14 (amalize)

10. *swara hilo la uchaguzi…Radio Citizen 20/4/14 (suala)

Error from number 7. was tautological in that both *mashua* and *meli* refer to a small sea vessel or ship. The two words were not necessary under the same context. The use of acronym *CID* in example 8. was wrong as the news were being read in Kiswahili. The meaning of the sentence in example 9 was distorted due to the wrong use of the verb. The word *swara* conveys a different meaning as it referred to an animal in example 10. *Suala* which meant issue would have been more appropriate.

Spelling Errors

Spelling errors occurred in many forms such as omission of some sounds, dividing a compound word, joining a word wrongly and wrong ordering of sounds or syllables within the word. Spelling errors occur due to speedy writing and not passing through the work after writing as well as poor writing skill. The following are examples under this category.

11. *majera…Radio Citizen 18/12/13 (majeraha)

12. *hati miliki…Radio Citizen 8/12/13 (hatimiliki)

13. *wafanyibiashara…Radio Citizen 3/4/14 (wafanyi biashara)

14. *majo generali…Radio Taifa 14/2/14 (meja jenerali)

There was the omission of syllable *ha* in example 1 and the word *majera* meant jails however with the inclusion of the missing syllable it meant casualty. Example 12 shows the word *hati miliki* which is supposed to be one word in Kiswahili meaning title deed. This error could have occurred as the writer was using direct translation from English. The error in number 13 was joining two words that are independent while example 14 shows wrong translation of the English word *major general*. The sounds were supposed to change to reflect the Kiswahili format.

Pragmatic Errors

Pragmatics is a field of linguistics that studies the way in which contexts contribute to meanings. It deals with language use according to the context. Among the pragmatic errors were wrong use of words, coherence and cohesion and use of long sentences. Among the examples are the following:

15. *hatibu wa kijeshi wa Sudan Kusini…Radio Taifa 19/2/14 (katibu)

16. *amemuua mwanamke mpenzi wake kwa kumshambulia na kisa…Radio Citizen 2/12/13 (amemuua mpenzi wake wa kike kwa kumshambulia na kisu)

17. *watalii wanaozuru Kenya kuwa watakuwa salama wakiwa Kenya…Radio Citizen 1/4/14 (watalii wanaozuru Kenya watakuwa salama wakiwa nchini)

The error in example 15 was due to the omission of letter *k* and replacing it with letter *h*. this distorted the meaning as the word *hatibu* meant a religious leader instead of the secretary. This conveyed wrong meaning as the two words could apply within the given context. Word order in example 16 brought about the error because using the word *kisa* instead of *kisu* could apply within the text. *Kisa* meant a narrative which could have a metaphorical meaning in this context while kisu meant a knife. This sentence meant that the character in reference had killed his girlfriend using a knife. The repetition of the word *Kenya* was not necessary in example 17.

Semantic Errors

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that is concerned with meaning. It studies the ralationships between various signs and symbols and what they represent. Basically it deals with meanings within the language. Among the errors discovered under this category were ambiguity, repetitiveness and lexical errors. The following are examples:

18. *mpango wa serikali wa kuwazawadia malipo ya uzeeni… Radio Citizen 26/11/13 (mpango wa serikali wa kuwalipa malipo ya uzeeni)

19. *washambuiaji hao walisemekana kuifyatua risasi kadhaa nyumba ya mshukuwa…Radio Taifa….11/12/13 (washambuliaji hao walisemekana kufyatua risasi kadhaa kwenye nyumba ya mshukiwa)

20. *marehemu Njogu Baita alivamia na kupigawa hadi akafa…Radio Taifa 8/12/13 (marehemu Njogu Baita alikuwa amevamiwa na kupigwa hadi akafa)

21. *ambaye alidai kubakwa na kenge…Radio Citizen 19/12/13 (ambaye alidai kubakwa na genge)

The use of the word *kuwazawadia* in example 18 was wrong because this word meant a token or a present yet the pay for the retirees was their own right. The error in number 19 is the use of singular form in a plural context. *Kuifyatua risasi kadhaa* meant that the referred person shot one bullet many times which was not possible. Example in number 20 shows that *Njogu Baita* the victim was the attacker. The last example in number 21 refers to a person who had been defiled by a gang. The term *kenge* denotes a different meaning as it is a small reptile that resembles a lizard. The right term should have been *genge* meaning a gang.

Conclusion

This paper has identified five categories of errors from the Kiswahili news bulletin broadcasted through the radio. Among the errors that were discovered were grammatical which had the highest frequency followed by spelling, lexical, pragmatic and semantic errors in that order. This is an indication that all is not well as far as language use in the media is concerned. There is an argent need to address the issue of language in mass media in Kenya as it affects many people. Proper use of language is important because it promoted good communication, social cohesion as well as national integration.

Recommendations

1. This paper was confined to errors in radio news bulletins. Further research can be done to identify linguistic errors in other radio programs in Kenya.
2. There is need to evaluate the curriculum in journalism schools to address the above challenges. It was evident that there was a problem in the masterly of Kiswahili grammar. This is an area that requires more emphasis in the curriculum
3. Guidelines ought to be given on the maintenance of proper standards of language in mass media by the government; this will ensure that the falling standards of language are avoided.
4. There is need to investigate the effect of these errors in communication among the audience.
5. Media houses ought to use different criteria in employing their staff and not just having a good voice. This will ensure that competent writers and news anchors are recruited to maintain the standards.

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