Relationship between pupils' mastery of the language of instruction and achievement in science

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between pupils' mastery of the English language and their achievement in Science. The study sample included 196 standard eight pupils from eight rural primary schools in Kenya. Data was collected using an English Language Test (ELT), a Science Skill Test (SST) and a Science Achievement Test (SAT). The scores from the ELT were correlated with those of the SST and SAT using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PMCC). A positive and significant correlation was obtained at 0.01 level. This paper argues that for effective learning of primary science, pupils need to have a good command of the language of instruction, which in this case is English. Therefore, the teaching of English language at the primary school level should be strengthened. The paper concludes by recommending that code switching be encouraged as a way of solving some of the language difficulties encountered in primary science lessons.