

Integrative and instrumental motivation in the learning of African languages

Although motivation is widely acknowledged as an important factor in language learning, there is less agreement on whether it is integrative or instrumental motivation that leads to more involvement and higher success in learning language. Drawing from the integrative and instrumental language learning orientation debate, this paper seeks to establish whether it is integrative or instrumental motivation that drives students more in the learning of African languages by investigating students' motivation in the learning of Kiswahili in Kenya and the United States of America. The study focuses on the learning of Kiswahili in two different settings: high school education in Kenya and college education in America. In the former, data was collected from responses of 278 students on motivation related items in a broader language attitude research questionnaire. The American students' perspective, on its part, derives from a survey, specifically carried out to determine the students' motivation of learning an African language (Kiswahili) in America. It involved 28 students in a small liberal arts university in Canton, New York. Results of the study indicate that both integrative and instrumental integration account for the learning of Kiswahili, with the context under which language learning takes place being one of the determinants. While Kenyan students of Kiswahili are driven more by instrumental motivation, their American counterparts exhibited a measure of both orientations. For the former, the most important consideration was the use of the language in higher education, and in the job market (its economic utility). The latter wanted to use it to fulfill an education requirement, and while on a study abroad program. It is suggested that teachers and administrators of African languages programs need to take students' motivations into consideration in the design of their curriculums. By so doing, the programs will be equipped to better meet students' expectations.