

**THE ROLE OF INPUT QUALITY IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH PAST
TENSE MORPHEME: A CASE STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS OF KAUWI SCHOOL IN KITUI WEST SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The acquisition of second language has been under investigation by many researchers for a long time but no in-depth studies have been carried out in the area of past tense morphology in the studies carried out in Kenya. Many junior secondary school students in many parts of rural Kenya exhibit errors in past tense marking but not many studies targeting this area have been carried out. It is on this basis that this study set out to investigate the role of input quality in the acquisition of English past tense morpheme by Kauwi junior secondary school students as a case study. The learners' written work in this school is characterized by poor mastery of the morpheme. The results of this study indicate that the reasons for this outcome can be traced to insufficient input in the acquisition of the morpheme. The objectives of this study were: to examine the nature of the past tense morpheme input exposed to the participants of the study, to establish the effect of experimental quality past tense input on the same participants and to assess the areas of difficulty that the subjects experience with a view to providing intervention measures. The study was guided by the following theories: Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Chomsky's Innatist Theory and Natural Order Hypothesis. A pre-test-post-test control-group design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique guided the sample selection. Two Form one classes (Form 1 East – 35 students and Form 1 West - 35) in Kauwi secondary school were chosen. Form One East was the control group while Form One West was the experimental group. Tense Proficiency Test (TPT) instrument containing items on past tense were used to collect data. The test was designed to cover those topics on past tense which the pretest and post – test groups were subjected to. The two groups were pretested after which the experimental group was taught by the researcher for two weeks unlike the control group. The researcher then observed all the groups again for post-test. The results for pre-test and post- test were subjected to statistical analysis. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of this study strongly indicate that quality input had a significant role in English past tense acquisition. It is hoped that the findings of the study will benefit several key stakeholders in the pedagogy sector like teachers of ESL, curriculum planners, book writers, policy makers and officials in the Ministry of Education, parents of learners and the high school learners themselves.