



Teachers' Use of Feedback in Teaching Integrated English and Its Influence on Achievement of Linguistic Skills: A Case of Public Secondary Schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract: *There have been various strategies used by teachers of English while teaching integrated English approach. The achievement of linguistic skills amongst learners depends on teachers' strategies of teaching. The aim of this paper was to investigate the teachers' use of feedback in teaching integrated English and its influence on achievement of linguistic skills among students in public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study utilized descriptive survey research design using mixed methods approach. A sample size of 251 teachers, 371 students and 134 heads of languages department was used. Purposive, Proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain the respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and observation. The validity of the instrument was tested through expert judgment while reliability was achieved using Cronbach Alpha. Quantitative data from the questionnaires was analysed by use of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and classroom observations was analysed thematically and presented in narrations and quotations. The study found out that most teachers did not make use of feedback to learners leading to low achievement of linguistic skills among learners. Thus, challenges students encountered were not addressed. The research recommends that there is need for teachers to use feedback in the teaching integrated English. Use of feedback enables teachers to understand individual challenges facing students thus enhancing acquisition of linguistic skills. The findings of this study will be significant to teachers of English to re-evaluate their teaching strategies that enhances students' acquisition of linguistic skills.*

Keywords: *Teachers, Feedback, Integrated English, Achievement, Linguistic Skills*

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1. Introduction

Feedback is defined as information provided by a teacher, parent, self, peer, book, or experience that is sought after by teachers, students, peers, and others as a result of performance (Wisniewski *et al.*, 2020). According to Colbran *et al.*, (2016), feedback is the foundation of all learning. Feedback is not

usually considered as a standalone entity, but rather in the context of assessment (Goh and Walker, 2018). Assessment and feedback are inextricably linked (Huang 2015). The primary goal of feedback is to eliminate errors, close gaps in knowledge, and improve skill acquisition (Tan *et al.*, 2020). Feedback has been established as one of the most effective methods for significantly influencing learning outcomes (Al-Hattami 2019; Mahfoodh 2017; Van der Kleij *et al.*, 2019). Any type of feedback (written,

spoken, grades, or scores) has the potential to influence learning (Brown *et al.*, 2012). Feedback is an essential component of teaching and learning since it indicates whether or not learning has occurred. Bergil and Atlib (2012) The proper feedback given at the right frequency can boost educational attainment and learning (Panhoon & Wongwanich 2014). Feedback is a crucial and effective component in the design of instruction and a better strategy to increase performance (Wiggins, 2011).

There are various types of feedback, such as planned, unplanned, formal, informal, ad hoc, spoken, or written feedback (May, 2013). There are two sorts of feedback in general: formative feedback and summative feedback. Formative and summative assessment feedback are both valuable to learning and have a direct impact on student engagement (Colbran *et al.*, 2016). Formative assessment feedback largely focuses on input such as describing strengths and weaknesses, whereas summative assessment feedback is related with grades and marks (Colbran *et al.*, 2016). In contrast to summative assessment, which oversees students' educational outcomes and grades performance at a certain point in time, formative assessment feedback is frequently qualitative and non-graded (McCarthy, 2017).

Anchored in the educational process, feedback is an essential pedagogical practice in classroom-based instruction, which contributes to students' learning and facilitates their achievement (Wisniewski *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, with the help of feedback, students can have a deeper insight into their weaknesses and strengths in learning, and how to improve their learning outcome (Yu *et al.*, 2018). In the realm of second language (L2) writing, teacher written feedback, as a widely used intervention method, scaffolds L2 learners' writing process and enhances their writing performance (Zhang, 2018; Hyland & Hyland, 2019). In a study Akter, (2010) had proved that giving feedback to learners on their performance was an important aspect of effective teaching. Feedback can either be positive or negative and may serve not only to show learners how well they have performed but also to motivate them and build a supportive classroom climate. The current study investigated teachers' use of feedback in teaching integrated English and its influence on achievement of linguistic skills in public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

2. Literature Review

Students need feedback from their assessment as a part of their demand for quality education. Thus, feedback provided during formative assessment is an important aspect of 'Quality Accountability' of Institutions and enhances student satisfaction and learning in tutorials (Kahraman, & Koray, 2020). It helps students to know 'what they have accomplished' and 'how far they are from their learning goals'. Studies on formative assessment indicate feedback and learning to be inseparable as feedback motivates students by reinforcing and recognising their efforts and leads them to a deeper understanding of the topic (Najum, 2017). According to Paterson *et al.*, (2020), feedback is useful to students only if given timely. But in most instances,

students get feedback after completion of course and 'timely feedback' is still a cause of concern in higher education (Carless, & Winstone, 2020). However, Hattie & Timperley, in Wisniewski *et al.*, (2020) observe that although feedback places much demand on teachers' as well as students' time, it does promote learning. In addition to time, the quality aspect of feedback is equally important. Factors like lack of comprehensibility, inadequacy of information, poor handwriting and judgemental comments may compromise the quality of feedback for students (Mckenzie, Burgess, & Mellis, 2017).

The integrated curriculum body is rooted in the progressive education program of 1930s. It is extolled as a move-away from the memorization and presentation of isolated facts to a more constructivist understands of learning which values in-depth knowledge of topics. This is seen as a curriculum organization geared towards teaching for transmission and considerate learning (Mbithe, 2014). The introduction of the integrated English curriculum in Kenya was done alongside the 8-4-4 education system introduction in 1985. The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE, 2002) sees integration as amalgamation of two independent but related entities allowing for enrichment of each other. KIE further notes that through acquaintance to literature, students have an opportunity of improving their linguistic skills. Furthermore, an enhanced knowledge of the language improves the student's obligation of literally materials (KIE, 2002).

Integration, as stated by Hungyo and Kijai (2009), is language instruction where all the four skills in English take place at the same time and with student, teacher and setting as playing their roles in the learning and teaching. This shows that language skills should not be taught or focused in a separate manner by focusing on a single skill at a time, but rather they should be combined and incorporated so more skills can be focused at a time. It is to be recognized that incorporation of skills does not, in any way, put weight on the shoulders of learners. Rather, it is the most proficient way to guarantee the best of results by the learners. Language integration is more like a package deal where one skill cannot be separated from the other. It is a whole language approach to language teaching. Even if a course deals with one language skill for instance, reading, writing or speaking; all the other skills need to be incorporated and dealt with (Gjendemsjo, 2013).

According to Manyasi (2014), the Ministry of Education in Kenya demands that English language need to be taught by adopting the integrated methodology. This comprises a situation where the instruction of English language and Literature in English is done as one subject in the secondary school syllabus. The Kenya Secondary School Syllabus clarifies the matter of integration as amalgamation of two independent but inter-related subjects so as to augment and enrich both entities. Moreover, acquaintance to literature enables the students to enhance their linguistic skills. The students will not only augment their terminology but also learn to adopt the use of language through various ways. Moreover, an enhanced language skill will improve on the students' obligation of literary materials.

Linguistic skills are considered as another section of productive skills which include; speaking and writing and receptive skills such as listening and reading. Further, Willis and Willis (2007) characterized speaking as an interactive skill and writing as the transactional skill. The first language is acquired practically without any struggle. In cases where there is learning of a second language additional to one's mother tongue, the state of affairs then to be different in comparison to any specific mother tongue. Learning approaches can be said to be an individual's preferred way to acquire and use one's natural capabilities to emphasis on specific ways to learn in a distinctive way.

It has been shown that Second language (L2) students may have difficulties in the achievement of reading skills, particularly learners who are from poor socio-economic backgrounds and who are taught using teacher-centered methodologies. Whereas these struggling students may attain poor scores in academic performance due to their low self-esteem, their disentanglement in form of determination, for instance, may influence their reading command and, thus may not gain skills of comprehension efficiently (Klauda & Guthrie, 2015). A four-phase model of reading development has been offered by Ehri (2014), whereby decoding written words along with mastering of the alphabetic philosophies are considered a key stepping stone towards the acquisition of reading.

Kathirvel and Hashim (2020), notes that while listening and reading two receptive skills of linguistic learning and adoption, speaking and writing are considered as other two important skills required to be integrated for effective development of communication skills. Speaking is seen to be the most significant skill that is required for effective communication among the four linguistic skills. Effective communication through of speaking typically creates a number of advantages for both speakers and business institutions. As noted by Chastain as quoted in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) the aim of listening skills is to understand the linguistics at ordinary speed in an unconscious situation. Moreover, Hamouda (2013) pointed that listening as a skill is very significant in the acquisition of understandable input. In addition, Pourhosein and Ahmadi (2011) articulated that listening play a significant part in the communication procedure. These researchers noted that listening is considered as the most vital skills among the four important parts of communication skills.

Development of written communication is among the competence aims of the Upper Secondary School English subject curriculum in Norway and in common with other countries feedback and assessment for learning (AfL) have been encouraged in Norwegian schools (Bueie, 2015; Gamlem & Smith, 2013). Feedback has been employed in formative assessment to promote the development of students' writing skills and AfL has been defined as a classroom practice that involves dialogue and feedback loops between teachers and peers during subject specific problem solving (Gamlem & Munthe, 2014). New digital technologies open up opportunities by providing automated feedback and specifically for enhancing

the development of students' writing skills in English (Winerip, 2012).

Effective feedback has been shown in studies to be a learning facilitator (Aoun et al. 2016). Both teachers and students must understand what constitutes successful feedback, its impact on teaching and learning, its functions, and their respective responsibilities in feedback processes (Bader *et al.*, 2019). According to Colbran *et al.*, (2016), appropriate feedback clarifies what is referred to as good performance, stimulates autonomous studies, and can motivate and encourage students to grasp the gap between knowledge and understanding. According to the same authors, feedback is successful when it is immediate, positive, reasonable, and constructive. High-quality feedback is provided on a regular, timely, and locus basis (Pagano & Paucar-Caceres 2013).

According to Aoun *et al.*, (2016), effective feedback leads to the formation of reflective knowledge buildings. McCarthy (2019) identifies six key drivers of effective feedback for students to achieve better results: feedback should be sufficient in frequency and detail, targeted at students' performance and learning, "timely" such that it is relevant in time for application, suited for the purpose of assessment and its criteria, appropriate to students' conceptions of learning and knowledge, and attended to and acted upon. According to Bader *et al.*, (2019), feedback must be used in order to be regarded effective. According to the authors, one of the most important components of good feedback is student participation in feedback activities. For feedback to be successful, a student must be responsive to it, grasp the comment offered in such a manner that it corresponds with his/her frame of reference (Harrison *et al.*, 2015), and ultimately, the learner must create reasonable and attainable objectives and put forth effort to achieve them.

3. Methodology

The research used descriptive survey design using mixed approach methods. Mixed methodology is the blending of two or more approaches in a research study resulting in both quantitative and qualitative data (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The study was mixed methods in a single research which permits for pragmatism.

The study targeted all the 724 teachers of English teaching Form three students in 206 secondary schools in Bungoma County. In addition, the study targeted all heads of languages department in all the 206 secondary schools. Form three teachers of English were specifically targeted for the purpose of this research because it is at this level that set books are fully introduced according to the syllabus and thus the teacher is tasked with the responsibility of teaching the skills appropriately using integrated approach.

The current research used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula as quoted by Kasomo (2001) while determining the sample size. The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{X^2 * N * P(1 - P)}{(ME^2 * (N - 1)) + (X^2 * P * (1 - P))}$$

Where;

n=Sample size

X²=Chi Square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom= (3.841) from tables

N=Population size

P=Population proportion (.50 in the table)

ME=Desired margin of error (expressed as a proportion=0.05).

A sample size of 251 teachers and 134 heads of languages department was obtained from the formula.

The researcher stratified the respondents into the six administrative units; Bungoma Central sub-county, Bungoma East Sub-county, Bungoma West sub-county, Bungoma North sub-county, Bungoma south Sub-county and Mount Elgon Sub-county making Bungoma County. The researcher further employed stratified sampling technique to select the respondents from each of the administrative unit. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to choose Form Three teachers of English involved in the study from each of the six administrative units. In addition, HODs in every selected school were selected purposively to take part in the study.

Questionnaires and interview schedules were the main data collection instruments used in this study. A pilot study was carried out in a neighbouring Kakamega County to establish the reliability of the research instrument. The content and structural validity of the instrument was tested through expert judgement

while reliability was tested using test-retest method. A correlation coefficient of equal or more than 0.70 was considered adequate to allow the researcher proceed with the study as per the recommendations of Creswell (2013).

The quantitative data from the questionnaire was first subjected to preliminary processing through validation, coding and tabulation in readiness for analysis with the help of the statistical package for social science (SPSS) computer package. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data was thematically classified and arranged before they were reported in narrations and quotations as per the research objectives. Data analysed was presented by use of tables and figures.

4. Results and Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the teachers' use of feedback in teaching integrated English and its influence on achievement of linguistic skills among students in public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. To achieve this objective, the study participants were requested to rate the degree of agreement on teachers' use of feedback in integrated English approach on achievement of linguistic skills. This enabled the researcher to understand the effectiveness of evaluation techniques used in the integrated English approach on achievement of linguistic skills in public secondary schools. Teachers' responses were tabulated and the results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on use of feedback on Achievement of Linguistic Skills

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | | Overall Percentages |
|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|---------------------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | |
| Teachers' role in integrated English is to offer skills and promote the procedure by making recommendations that may be followed. | 26 | 11.0 | 67 | 28.3 | 21 | 8.9 | 123 | 51.9 | 60.8 |
| Use of authentic teaching materials has enable effective acquisition of the four skills of English. | 27 | 11.4 | 55 | 23.2 | 88 | 37.1 | 67 | 28.3 | 65.4 |
| Planning lessons teachers by is extremely vital for good teaching of literature and grammar. | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 84 | 35.4 | 153 | 64.6 | 100.0 |
| As skilled professionals, teachers of English need both support and feedback from colleagues and students on the acquisition of linguistic skills by learners. | 6 | 2.5 | 23 | 9.7 | 130 | 54.9 | 78 | 32.9 | 87.8 |

Table 1 shows that 123(51.9%) teachers of English were strongly in agreement with the statement that teachers' role in integrated English is to offer skills and assist the procedure by making suggestions that may be followed, 67(28.3%) teachers disagreed with the statement, and 26(11.0%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 21(8.9%) teachers agreed with the statement. The study showed that majority (60.8%) of the teachers of English in secondary schools in Bungoma County believed that teachers provided experiences and assisted the process by making suggestions that that could be followed. This was found to be consistent with the arguments of Adeyemi (2010) who noted that an integrated English method to instruction attempts to follow students' normal means of instruction where the world is viewed as a whole therefore the instructor's responsibility is to give skills and to assist the procedure by recommending further instructions that may be followed by the students.

Similarly, 88(37.1%) teachers agreed with the statement that use of authentic teaching materials had enabled effective acquisition of the four skills of English, 67(28.3%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement and 55(23.2%) teachers disagreed while 27(11.4%) teachers strongly disagreed. The responses implied that a majority (65.4%) of teachers of English in secondary schools in Bungoma County were of the view that use of authentic teaching materials enabled students to effectively acquire the four skills of English. Razak *et al.*, (2020) pointed out that integrated language approach emphasized meaningful and authentic language use and linked oral and written language development which was found to be in line with this study finding.

In addition, 153(64.6%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement that planning lessons teachers by was extremely vital for good teaching of literature and grammar while 84 (35.4%) teachers agreed with the statement. From the responses, it seems like all the teachers of English in public secondary schools believed that planning of lessons was an important tool for effective teaching in integrated English as this enabled learner to effectively acquire the four skills in English. Experienced and skillful teachers of English understand the importance of a well-designed lesson and that they acknowledge that lesson preparation is not an ordinary initiative. Lesson planning is a multifaceted and considerate procedure that allows instructors to cautiously arrange the learning activities, respondent structures and connections that will aids during the instruction process. Acceptable lesson preparation is essential to guarantee that all learners meet the goals of a specific lesson. This therefore shows that proper lesson planning in integrated English enables effective acquisition of the four skills by learners.

Furthermore, 130(54.9%) teachers agreed with the statement that as skilled professionals, teachers of English need both support and feedback from colleagues and students on the acquisition of linguistic skills by learners, 78(32.9%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement while 29(13.2%) teachers were in disagreement with the statement. From the responses, it can be shown that majority (86.8%) of the teachers of English noted that

they needed both support and feedback from colleagues and students on the acquisition of linguistic skills by learners. Feedback is vital to formative assessment and is attached to clear norms concerning prospects for learner achievement, making the instruction procedure clearer and modeling for learners (Paterson *et al.*, 2020; Wisniewski, et al., 2020). Instructors are also deemed to benefit from the feedback procedure as they pay closer consideration to what learners do and do not comprehend well, and are well in a position to correct instruction methodologies to achieve set learner goals. Interviewing HODs, regarding use of feedback on achievement of linguistic skills, majority of them noted that feedback from colleagues and students on the acquisition of linguistic skills by learners was necessary. The feedback acted as a pointer of the areas of difficulty.

During classroom observation, it was noted that few teachers listened to the feedback from the learners. This was attributed to the lack of adequate time to listen to individualized student feedback and this affected the achievement of linguistic skills since feedback was not used in correcting the identified areas of difficulty among the learners. This was found to be consistent with other researchers' findings such as Anyanzwa and Otunga, (2007) and Barasa, (2005) who pointed out that the merging of English and Literature caused serious problems that led to confusion, reduction in time allocation and resistance. Time allocated for the teaching of integrated English needs therefore to be increased to allow teachers to give individualized feedback to students.

From the document analysis, majority of the teachers had lesson planned before going to class, but during lesson delivery, a few of them did not give adequate attention to the section of getting feedback from learners. Instead, they just gave an assignment. From the study, it can be shown that teachers were not keen on the use of feedback and this contributed to low achievement of linguistic skills by the students. Paterson *et al.*, (2020) pointed that learner feedback provide rich information on learner attitudes, behaviours and expectations for learning in class. In addition, Goss and Sonnemann (2017) pointed out that peers can positively influence each other's' learning, through tutoring, helping, providing friendship, giving feedback and making class a place where learners want to come to each day. This therefore shows that teachers need to be encouraged to use feedback as a way of enhancing learners' achievement of linguistic skills.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

While assessment feedback is recognized as a significant factor in teaching and learning practice, most teachers in public secondary schools in the study area did not make use of feedback. This resulted to low achievement of linguistic skills among learners. Effective feedback was found to be clear, simple, timely, suitable, detailed, and must be acted upon so as to address the challenges facing students in integrated English. Therefore, there is need for teachers to use feedback in the teaching integrated English. Use of feedback enables teachers to

understand individual challenges facing students thus enhancing acquisition of linguistic skills.

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