

An Investigation of Utilization of Teaching Techniques That Enhance Integration of The Four Basic English Language Skills in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

English language in Kenya is taught as a second language and it is also the country's official language, as well as the language of instruction (LOI) in secondary schools. It is through English that all the other subject contents are taught and examined (except for other languages). This scenario implies that proficiency in the LOI is essential if learners are expected to advance to institutions of higher learning for tertiary education. The four basic language skills that were of interest in this study are listening, speaking, reading and writing; grammar and vocabulary are embedded in these four. These skills are expected to be integrated during the actual classroom teaching. Performance in English language in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations (terminal secondary school examinations) has been going down, year after year. There was a need, therefore, to find out if teachers used the integrative approach when teaching English. Use of teaching techniques that promote integration of language skills is expected to improve language learning. The study was conducted in ten secondary schools in Gatundu district of Kenya. The sample comprised 20 English language teachers who teach Form three students and 10 Heads of English department. Instruments for collection of raw data were a questionnaire, a classroom observation schedule and an interview schedule. The SPSS program was used to analyze the generated qualitative data, which were presented descriptively using basic statistics. Research findings showed that most teachers found integration of language skills during teaching, a challenge. Classrooms were teacher-centered rather than learner-centered. A negative backwash effect was evident as 80% of the teachers said they ignored listening and speaking skills as they are not tested in KCSE examinations. Conclusions have been drawn and recommendations made.

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