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Influence of School Language Policy on Pupils' Achievement in English Language Composition in Public Primary Schools in Trans-Nzoia West Sub-County, Kenya

Moses Wafubwa Sakwa

Secondary School Teacher, Department of Curriculum and Education Management,
Laikipia University, Kenya

Dr. Stephen Thuku Ndichu

Lecturer, Department of Curriculum and Education Management, Laikipia University, Kenya

Dr. Peter Githae Kaboro

Lecturer, Department of Curriculum and Education Management, Laikipia University, Kenya

Abstract:

English language is an important subject in Kenya because it is used as a medium of instruction in schools and is one of the two official Languages in the country. Pupils' ability to read, speak and write accurately and fluently in English influence their performance in national examinations. However, despite its importance, pupils' academic achievement in composition writing in English in Trans-Nzoia West Sub-county has been low. This has contributed to the overall dismal academic performance among the pupils in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination in the Sub-county. Review of literature indicates that a favorable school culture influences pupils' academic achievement in schools. Language is an important component of institutional culture. Therefore the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of school language policy on pupils' achievement in English composition in public primary schools in Trans-Nzoia West sub-county. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The target population was 1,715 class 8 pupils, 120 teachers of English and 91 head teachers. Purposive sampling techniques were employed to select 73 head teachers and 92 teachers of English who were involved in the study. The 313 pupils who participated in the study were selected using proportionate stratified sampling procedures. Data were collected using the teachers' questionnaires, the headteachers' interview schedule and pupils' English composition achievement test. The content and face validity of the three instruments were examined by the researcher in consultation with experts from the department of Curriculum and Education Management of Laikipia University. The English teachers' questionnaire and the English composition achievement test were piloted in 5 schools in Kwanza Sub-county and their reliabilities estimated using the Cronbach coefficient alpha method and the Kuder-Richardson 21 formula respectively. The reliability coefficients of English teachers' questionnaire and the English composition achievement test were .898 and .916 respectively. Data were analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance using simple regression. The results of the study revealed that school language policy influences pupils' achievement in English composition. The results of the study should assist teachers to manage and improve the quality of instruction in English composition. The results of the study should also help the policymakers in the Ministry of Education Science and Technology to develop a suitable language policy for implementation in all schools in Kenya.

Keywords: English, language, policy, composition, performance

1. Introduction

Language is a distinctive feature of human beings which makes them different from other animals. It is a means of communicating ideas, emotions and desires using words, symbols and gestures (Vuzo, 2010). It is one of the most useful tools humans have without which it would be neither possible to express our thoughts nor engage in the activities that take place in society (Mosha, 2014). Language is very important in education as effective communication is critical to teaching and learning. Malekela (2003) asserts that if the learner is handicapped in the language of instruction, then learning may not take place at all as the instructor or the teacher and the learner will not be communicating.

English is the most widely spoken language out of the 4,000 to 5,000 living languages in the world (Mahu, 2012). English plays an important role in society as it is the language of globalization, international communication, academics, commerce, trade and media (Peters & Ravier, 2009). This shows how critical the spoken word is. According to Manivanna (2006), over 40% of top firms transact their businesses in English and over 52% of books and films are authored in English. Morris and Maxey (2014) observed that expertise in English is a requirement in most work places. Webb and Kembo (2000) established that more than 30 out of the 52 countries in Africa use English as the official language. A study

by Thuku (2015) established that holders of political power prefer speaking and writing in English because it is the most widely used language internationally.

The use of English language in Kenya can be traced back to the colonial times. During this period, English was the official language and the medium of instruction in schools. After independence in 1963, the position of English as the official language in Kenya remained while Kiswahili became the national language (Abonyo, 2005; Thuku, 2015). The constitution of Kenya of 2010 identifies English as the official language. Due to the aforementioned critical position of English in the country, it is a compulsory subject in the curricula of both primary and secondary schools in Kenya. The objectives of teaching English in primary schools are stipulated in the subject's syllabus. It is expected that at the end of the course, pupils should have acquired both spoken and written skills to enable them cope with English language demands at higher levels of education and the world at large (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Writing is considered as the most important component of English language because most examinations and assignments that pupils undertake are assessed through writing (Mukulu, 2006). Writing skills enable pupils to express ideas clearly and effectively (Nyasimi, 2014). The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD)(2006) observed that writing is a lifelong process and part of personal development whose usefulness stretches beyond the classroom. It is imperative for pupils to acquire such skills for them to survive in the ever changing and competitive technological world.

Writing is a skill that draws from other language skills of listening, speaking and reading. It influences the way people think and learn. Writing also encourages pupils to be organized, logical and creative in their thinking. It is because of this reason that the primary school syllabus singles out the ability to write as essential to pupils' success, personal development and building of relations with other people (Nyasimi, 2014). The syllabus also encourages pupils to be competent in writing using language structures. Writing is the chief means of recording knowledge and ideas accurately and carrying out inquiry in order to discover and invent (Stephen, 2015). The primary school English syllabus also requires pupils to write a composition paper at the end of the eight year primary school cycle to ascertain their level of competence in English (KNEC, 2013).

Most primary school pupils lack basic writing skills despite the significant role it plays in the school curriculum (Bunyi, 2005). KNEC (2011) noted that pupils are weak in both mechanical and stylistic writing skills. They are also weak in punctuation, word choice and construction errors. According to KNEC (2008), most pupils in the year 2007 wrote compositions that were irrelevant, sketchy and gave dull accounts thus rendering them unintelligible. KNEC (2010) observed that many KCPE candidates of the year 2009 showed low levels of content mastery since they wrote irrelevant compositions, demonstrated poor word choice, wrong grammar, spelling, lacked logical argument and coherence. The KCPE national mean scores in English language composition for the years 2006 to 2015 in Table 1 supports the observations of KNEC.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mean (%)	42.70	42.89	40.48	32.40	42.70	42.45	42.43	41.90	41.45

Table 1: National Mean Scores in KCPE English Language Composition for the Years 2006 To 2014

Source: Kenya National Examination Council, Newsletter (2015)

The data in Table 1 shows that the mean scores of composition for the years 2006 to 2015 ranged from 32.40% to 42.89%. The mean scores were considered to be below average given that they were below the 50% mark.

Pupils in public primary schools in Trans Nzoia West Sub County have also been attaining low scores in English composition over the past years. Their achievement in KCPE English composition paper for the years 2006 to 2014 are depicted in Table2.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mean (%)	16.92	17.44	16.25	16.50	16.25	14.21	15.54	15.44	15.61

Table 2: KCPE English Language Composition Percentage Mean Scores for Trans-Nzoia West Sub-County for the Years 2006 To 2014

Source: Kenya National Examination Council, Newsletter (2015)

Data displayed in Table 2 reveals that the KCPE English language composition mean scores range between 14.21 and 17.44%. The achievement in English composition writing was considered very low given that it is marked out of 100%. The very low performance is an indication that writing in English is a major challenge to primary school pupils in Trans-Nzoia West Sub-county.

Research has shown that several factors affect pupils' achievement in English. These factors are either student-related, teacher-related or school-related (Dosssett & Munoz, 2003). Among the school related factors, Lawrence and Vimala, (2012) noted that school environment plays a critical role in influencing pupils' achievement as school is where children spend most of their time. Zais (2011) defined school environment as the extent to which school settings promote pupils' safety, health and learning. Abubakar and Usaini (2015) assert that a supportive and favorable school environment enriched with enough learning facilities and a favorable learning climate makes pupils more comfortable and enables them concentrate on their academic activities that result in high academic performance. One of the most important aspects of school environment is the school culture. Creemers (1994) defined school culture as the shared ideologies and

collaborative missions in a school community setting. School language policy is a critical component of school culture (Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore, 1995).

According to Omboto (2004) the term policy refers to decisions made and taken by bodies that have administrative and juridical responsibilities of such nature that their decisions affect procedures and practices in a given domain. Wango (2009) observes that a national policy on language is a set of nationally agreed principles which enable decision-makers to make choices about issues of language in a rational, comprehensive and balanced way. For example, the education policy in Nigeria stresses the use of the local language of the community in instruction at the lower level of primary education and use of a combination of English and local language of the community at the upper primary level. Language policy in Kenyan education system has been influenced by a number of government policy documents. Among these are: The Kenya Education Commission Report also referred to as Ominde Report of 1964, the Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies or the Gachathi Report of 1976, Presidential Working Party on the Second University in Kenya also known as Mackay Report of 1981, Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond or the Kamunge Report of 1988 and the Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the System of Kenya popularly known as the Koech Report of 1999.

The Ominde commission recommended use of English as the medium of instruction from the first class in primary school to university arguing that it would expedite learning in all subjects by ensuring smooth transition from 'vernaculars', and owing to its intrinsic resources. Gachathi Report (1976) recommended the use of English for instruction from class four in primary level to University. The commission also declared Kiswahili an important subject in primary and secondary classes.

Following the recommendations by the Gachathi Commission (Republic of Kenya, 1976), the Ministry of Education gave clear policy guidelines that allowed the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction in lower primary school while English and Kiswahili were taught as subjects (Barasa, 2005). English was to be adopted as the medium of instruction from standard four and beyond (Nabea, 2009). Kiswahili and English have been the national and official languages respectively since independence (Mbaabu, 1996). However, the current constitution has uplifted Kiswahili to an official language position together with English (Government of Kenya, 2010).

Schools have language policies that aim at helping pupils to be proficient both in spoken and written English (Ministry of Education, 2012). These policies are implemented with the belief that if pupils speak in English, their written English will also improve. Teachers and parents believe that early exposure of pupils to English enhances the learning process since English is the medium of instruction in Kenyan schools (Barasa, 2008). In his book on language policy in schools, Carson (1999) found that school language policies are viewed by many in education as an integral and necessary part of the administration and the curriculum practice of schools. He defines language policy as a document compiled by the staff of a school, often assisted by other members of the school community, to which the staff members give their assent and commitment. Kimani (2003) underscores the importance of language policy in defining the rules and procedures to follow in the teaching and learning languages.

Bwire (2008) emphasizes that the language policy has implications for teaching and learning. He adds that the language a learner listens to most of the time is the language in which he/she will be most interested to learn. Bwire recommends that there is need to sensitize teachers on the importance of communicating in English when in the school compound so that they act as role models and provide pupils with enabling environment for listening to the target language. According to Grima cited in Chomba (2008), it is the responsibility of every school to have a school language policy because it assists in ensuring that schools remain focused in providing language education. It provides a framework for coping with change and helps schools in taking stock of their needs, success and failures in achievement of language. Muthwii cited in Chomba, (2008) found that teachers develop school language policies without consulting national language policy, parents and ministry of education officials. As a result, language policies in the school are not well coordinated. Barasa (2005) recommends that schools should come up with inclusive policies that will help to change the attitudes of all, staff and pupils, towards English and other languages.

All schools in Kenya are regulated by the Ministry of Education and are required to adhere to the education policy including those that follow foreign curriculums. However, the location, type of school and management influence the extent to which a given policy is adopted. Studies by Mundia (1982) and Muthwii (2002) found that rural and urban, private and public schools have made varied choices on language of instruction. The private schools appear not to be fully controlled by Ministry of Education regulations. The private and urban schools use English language as the medium of instruction right from pre-primary school level.

A study conducted by Adhiambo (2010) found that teachers of English use a mixture of English, mother tongue and Kiswahili in teaching the English lessons. Adhiambo adds that use of the mixture, yields poor results and further notes that pupils in some schools are punished for not using the official language of communication. Ogechi (2003) investigated and found that in many primary schools, English language is forced on pupils through rewards and punishment for using or not using it. A study by Njeri (2010), also found out that teachers preferred to use English because school policy dictates its use. Njeri established that the school language policy was not favorable to pupils since they preferred to be taught in Kiswahili or mother tongue and communicate and write in the same instead of English. The conflict between policy and pupils preferences affected learners' achievement in English.

Studies have shown that the choice of language of instruction influences academic performance as pupils who are taught in their mother tongue language perform better than those taught using the official language of instruction (Kinyaduka & Kiwara, 2013). Gathumbi (2008) recommends that language policy be strictly adhered to during teaching

and learning. Adhiambo (2010) found that pupils in private schools prefer reading and storytelling in Kiswahili and perform better in it even though they are taught in English. Wanjiku-Omolo's (2014) study conducted in former Kapseret division, Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya indicated that policies that promote frequent use of English and Kiswahili enhance achievement in those subjects. The foregoing studies confirm that there is an association between language policy and achievement. However, there are hardly any studies that link language policy and achievement in English composition in Trans-Nzoia West Sub-county.

1.1. Research Objective

The objective of the study was to assess the influence of schools' language policy on pupils' academic achievement in English language composition in public primary schools in Trans-Nzoia West Sub County, Kenya

1.2. Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance:

- Ho1: School language policy has no statistically significant influence on pupils' academic achievement in English language composition in public primary schools in Trans-Nzoia West Sub County, Kenya.

2. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. It is primarily concerned with finding out the state of affairs as it exists (Borg & Gall, 2007). It was deemed appropriate for the study because it enabled investigation of the influence of school language policy on pupils' achievement in English Language composition in public primary schools in Trans Nzoia West Sub County, Kenya.

The target population for the study was all the Head teachers, teachers of English and pupils of all public primary schools in Trans-Nzoia West Sub County. The Sub-County has 92 head teachers, 120 teachers of English and 88,109 pupils in public primary schools (County Education Office, 2015). The accessible population was all the 92 head teachers, 120 teachers of English and 1715 class 8 pupils. The head teachers were chosen because they are in charge of every aspect of running the school (Bakhda, 2006) while the English teachers were selected because they are responsible for the actual instruction of teaching composition in class Eight (Wango, 2009). The class 8 pupils were chosen because they have been in school for the longest period of time and are relatively mature. The table for determining the sample size of a finite population developed by Kathuri and Pals (1993) was used to determine the sample sizes of the head teachers, teachers of English and the class 8 pupils. The sample size of the head teachers, English teachers and the class 8 pupils were 73, 92 and 313 respectively given that their accessible population were 92, 120 and 1715 respectively. Proportionate stratified sampling techniques were used to select the sample.

Three instruments, namely, head teachers' interview schedule (HTI), English teachers questionnaire (ETQ) and English composition achievement test (CAT) were used to gather data. The interview schedule was chosen because it is ideal when conducting a study that covers sensitive topics or in situations that require responses that may be difficult to measure by closed-ended items (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Questionnaires were selected because they were efficient, practical and allow the use of a large sample (Salkind, 2009). Sekaran and Bougie (2010) contend that they are easy to administer, score and make an analysis.

The head teachers' interview schedule was constructed using semi-structured items. It guided the discussions that generated qualitative data on school language policy and achievement in English composition. The information provided during the interviews supplemented and were used to countercheck those provided by the teachers of English. The English Teachers' Questionnaire (ETQ) comprised two sections namely bio-data and items on English language policy and pupils performance in English composition. ETQ was constructed using both open and close-ended items. The English Composition Achievement Test (CAT) was used to measure the pupils' achievement in English composition. Pupils were given an opening sentence of an essay and then asked to complete the composition. The CAT assessed pupils' competence in sentence construction, ability to generate ideas, organize, expressed them clearly and logically in writing. The pupils were awarded a maximum of 5 points for sentence construction, 5 points for ability to generate ideas, 5 for organization and 25 for expressing themselves clearly and logically in writing. The total marks for the test was 40.

The content and face validity of HTI, ETQ and CAT were determined by the researcher in consultation with experts from the department of Curriculum and Education Management, Laikipia University. Orodho (2005) refers to content validity as the extent to which a measure relates to other measures in a way that is consistent with the theoretically derived hypothesis. Orodho asserts that face validity ensures that a test tool measures the relevant concepts. Six weaknesses in the data collection tools were identified during the validation; one poorly constructed item in HTI, two poorly constructed and three double edged items in ETQ. The items were rephrased before the instruments were used in the field.

The three data collection tools were piloted for reliability using samples from five schools drawn from the neighboring Kwanza Sub-county. Reliability tests enabled the researcher to check the items in the data collection tools and clear any ambiguities in them before they were used in the study. The reliabilities of HTI and ETQ were estimated using the Cronbach Alpha method while that of the CAT were done using the Kuder-Richardson 21 formula. The reliability coefficient of ETQ and CAT were .895 and .916 respectively. The instruments were deemed reliable as their reliability coefficients were above the .7 threshold. Panayides (2013) recommends the .7 level as the threshold for social sciences research.

The head teachers were interviewed in their respective offices. Prior to the interview, the heads were given a copy of the interview schedule and taken through the modalities of the interview. The interview was a question/answer session with occasional discussions. Data generated during the interviews were recorded using pen and paper. The interview took an average of 30 minutes per interviewee. The teachers of English were taken through the modalities of filling the questionnaires before they were administered. The teachers were then allowed 20 minutes to fill them. The filled questionnaires were collected and organized by division, awaiting analysis. Prior to administration of the composition test, the modalities of writing it were explained to the pupils. The test was then administered with the assistance of the teachers of English. Pupils were given 30 minutes to sit the test. After the 30 minutes the compositions were collected and organized by school awaiting marking.

Data were recorded and then coded before being keyed into the computer and analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Qualitative data generated by the open ended items in the questionnaires and through interviews were organized into themes pertinent to the study and described and summarized using frequencies and percentages. The influence of language policy on achievement in English composition was determined using simple linear regression. This technique was preferred because it is ideal in establishing causal relationships between variables and also explaining the power of the independent variable in accounting for variations in the dependent variable (Field, 2017). The association between the constructs was examined using the formula:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Y is Achievement in English composition

b_0 is the Y-intercept

X_1 is the extent of integration of language policy in schools

ε is the error term

3. Results

3.1. Instrument Return Rates

The study had proposed that data be collected from 73 head teachers, 92 English teachers and 302 class eight pupils. Consequently, 73 head teachers were invited for interview while the questionnaires and composition test were administered to 92 English teachers and 302 pupils respectively. Table 5 shows the return rates of each of the instruments.

Sample Group	Instrument	Respondents Involved	Provided Data	Return Rate (%)
Head teacher	Interview guide	73	72	98.6
English teacher	ETQ	92	91	98.9
Pupil	CAT	302	302	100.0

Table 3: The Study Questionnaire Return Rates
Source: Field data (2017)

Table 3 reveals that the instruments return rates were very high as they ranged from 96.5% for head teachers to 100.0% for the pupils. The overall return rate for the three instruments was 99.2%. The return rates were deemed adequate for analysis.

3.2. Profile of the Respondents

The study examined the personal profiles of the head teachers and English teachers before assessing the influence of the school language policy on pupils' achievement in English composition. Okwara (2012) and Pühr (2007) consider such a description important as it lays down the foundation for a detailed discussion of the study objectives. Adeyemi (2008) asserts that personal profiles give a better understanding of the context in which a study is conducted. Kekare, (2015) submits that bio-data enables a researcher to conduct additional analysis around variables of the study. The profile of the head teachers examined was duration (in years) as school heads and those of the English teachers' were duration in the school as a teachers and classes taught.

Data on duration as the school head teachers was captured using the interview guide. Adeyemi (2008) asserts that the duration one has been in a station is important as it helps in ensuring that those who participate in a study have been in the places of work for a reasonable period of time and are conversant with their operations.

Duration in Years	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 4 years	26	37.1
5 to 8	26	37.1
9 to 12	11	15.7
13 years and above	7	10

Table 4: Duration in Station as School Head (N = 70)

The results in table 4 reveal that nearly two thirds (62.8%) of the head teachers had headed the schools which participated in the study for 5 years and above. An examination of the data revealed that the head teachers had been in the schools for periods ranging between 1 to 15 years. On average, they had been heads of those institutions for 6.36 (SD =

3.71) years. This is an indication that the head teachers had been in those schools for a reasonable period of time and were conversant with their operations. They were thus in a position to provide quality data on issues that the study investigated.

Data on the profiles of the teachers of English were gathered using ETQ. The teachers were asked to indicate the duration that they had been in the study schools. Their responses are summarized in table 5:

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
5 years and below	25	28.1
6 to 10	46	51.7
11 to 15	7	7.9
16 to 20	1	1.1
21 to 25	10	11.2

Table 5: Duration as an English Teacher in the Study Schools (N = 89)

Table 5 indicates that nearly three quarters (71.9%) of the teachers had been in the study schools for 6 years and above. Further analysis showed that the teachers of English had been in their respective schools for periods ranging between 0.3 to 25 years. The mean duration in the schools was 9.48 (SD = 7.60) years. These results indicate that data on the variables investigated by the study were derived from a sample that was conversant with their environment of work.

The teachers of English were also asked to indicate which classes they taught at the time of the study. Their responses are summarized in Figure 1.

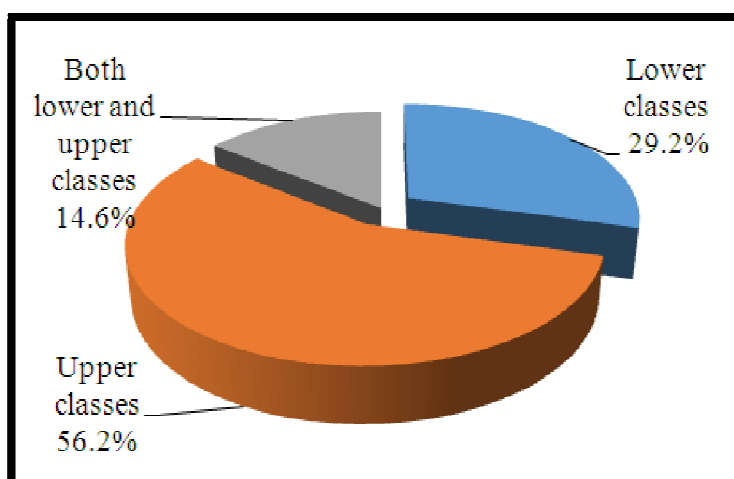


Figure 1: Classes Taught by the Teachers of English

Figure 1 shows that more than a half (56.2%) of the teachers taught upper classes only, more than a quarter (29.2%) taught lower classes only while the rest (14.6%) taught both lower and upper classes.

4.3. Influence of Schools' Language Policy on Pupils' Academic Achievement in English Language Composition

The objective of the study examined the influence of schools' language policy on pupils' achievement in English composition. This influence was determined using simple linear regression. The test was preferred because it is ideal for establishing the causal relationship between constructs measured at interval scale (Field, 2017).

Prior to establishing the influence of schools' language policy on pupils' achievement in English composition, information on status of school language policy was gathered from the head teachers and teachers of English. The head teachers were asked during the interviews whether their schools had a language policy. Nearly all (88.7.6%) schools had a language policy while very few (11.3%) did not. The heads were also asked to indicate the languages taught in the schools. Nearly all of them indicated that English (98.85%) and Kiswahili 97.2%) were taught while only a few indicated that mother tongue (12.7%) was taught. The teachers were also asked to state the medium of communication during staff meeting. Their responses are summarized in table 6.

Medium	Frequency	Percentage
English	64	72.7
English and Kiswahili	22	25
Kiswahili	1	1.1
Kiswahili and mother tongue	1	1.1

Table 6: Medium Of Communication during Staff Meetings (N = 88)

The results indicate that close to three quarters of the school use English as the medium of communication while a quarter used Kiswahili. The results indicate that English is the preferred medium of communication during staff meetings. The teachers were further asked to indicate the mediums of instruction in their schools for both upper and lower classes. The mediums of instruction are summarized in table 7.

Medium	Lower classes		Upper classes	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
English	35	39.8	78	88.6
Kiswahili	25	28.4	1	1.1
English and Kiswahili	27	30.7	9	10.2
English, Kiswahili, Mother tongue	1	1.1	0	0

Table 7: Medium of Instruction (n = 88)

Table 7 indicates that English (39.8%) and a combination of English and Kiswahili (30.7%) were the most commonly used medium of instruction in lower classes. The table also indicates that English is the medium of instruction in upper classes in majority (88.6%) of the schools. The results are not in harmony with language policy recommended by MOEST (2012). According to the Policy Session Paper 14 of 2012, the language of the catchment area (mother tongue) should be used for instruction in child care centers, pre-primary and lower primary.

Lastly the teachers were asked to indicate the medium of communication by teachers and pupils when in school. The results are displayed in table 8.

Medium	Staff n = 88		Pupils n = 86	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
English	55	62.5	49	57.0
English and Kiswahili	23	26.1	21	24.4
Kiswahili	6	6.8	15	17.4
English, Kiswahili, Mother tongue	3	3.4	0	0.0
Kiswahili and mother tongue	1	1.1	1	1.2

Table 8: Medium of Communication in Schools

The results in Table 8 reveal that English (62.5%) and a combination of English and Kiswahili (26.1%) are the most frequently used modes of communication by staff when in school. The results also reveal that a majority of pupils use English (57.9%) and a combination of English and Kiswahili (24.4%) to communicate when in school. The results indicate that mother tongue is rarely used in schools. This may perhaps be due to the cosmopolitan nature of Trans- Nzoia West Sub County. According to the County Government of Trans- Nzoia (Kenya Information Guide, 2015), the Sub-county is inhabited by several ethnic communities that speak different languages.

School language policy was measured by a set of 12 closed ended Likert items based on the extent to which the English teachers agreed (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with them. The responses to the items were assigned scores, averaged and then transformed into language policy index as shown in table 9.

Item	N	Mean	SD
My school has a language policy	88	4.39	0.69
The policy document was developed by the school administration in consultation with English teachers, parents and pupils	90	3.96	0.87
Teachers are aware of the language policy	90	4.50	0.52
The language policy is clear and easy to understand	91	4.21	0.84
The rules and procedures to follow in teaching and learning languages are clearly defined in the policy document	91	4.07	0.94
The policy document adequately covers the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking	87	4.09	0.77
The policy stipulates that English is the language of instruction in lower (standard 1 – 3) and upper (Standard 4 – 8) classes	91	4.10	0.79
It is policy that English is the language of communication within the school	91	4.21	0.59
The language policy is relevant	91	4.31	0.77
All teachers use English as the medium of instruction as per the policy	91	3.86	1.03
Implementation of the language policy has led to an improvement in pupils mastery of English	91	4.35	0.72
The language policy contributes to pupils achievement in English in national examinations	90	4.44	0.69
School language policy index	91	4.17	0.59

Table 9: School Language Policy Index (Maximum Mean = 5)

Table 9 shows that the means of the items on school language policy ranged between 3.86 (SD = 1.03) and 4.50 (SD = 0.52). The item means were relatively high given that they were out of 5. For instance, the means of 'Teachers are aware of the language policy' was very high, an indication that most of the teachers were aware of school language policy. This means that the teachers agreed with the statements, an indication that the policy contributes towards the teaching and learning of languages. The school language policy as measured by the index (M = 4.17, SD = 0.59) was also high. On the basis of the index, the language policy was rated as good for guiding the teaching and learning of languages in schools.

The head teachers were requested during the interviews to suggest ways of strengthening schools language policies. The suggestions given by school head teachers are illustrated in table 10.

Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
Include in school language policy provisions (debates, writing contest, motivation) that promote writing and speaking in English	22	31.0
Effectively implement the policies	17	23.9
Involve all stake holders (school administration, teachers, pupils and parents) in the implementation of policy	15	21.1
Provide for more teaching learning materials	9	12.7
Include in policy library services (equipping, management, utilization)	5	7.0

Table 10: Suggestions by Head Teachers on Ways of Improving Schools Language Policies

Table 10 indicates that the head teachers suggested that language policies be reviewed to include provisions that promote practicing English through speaking and writing (31.0%). The heads also suggested effective implementation of policy (23.9%), involvement of all stakeholders (21.1%), provisions for adequate instructional materials (12.7%) and library services (7.0%) in the policies documents

After examining school language policies, the pupils' achievement in English composition was determined using the English composition achievement test (CAT). The test assessed pupils' competence in four English composition domains namely, sentence construction, ability to generate ideas and organize and express ideas clearly and logically in writing. The pupils were awarded a maximum of 5 points for sentence construction, 5 points for ability to generate ideas, 5 points for organization of the ideas and 25 for expressing themselves clearly and logically in writing. The pupils mean scores are summarized in table 11.

Domain	Mean	SD
Sentences construction (maximum score = 5)	2.18	0.99
Ability to generate ideas (maximum score = 5)	2.12	0.95
Essay organization (maximum score = 5)	2.47	0.94
Clarity and logical writing (maximum score = 25)	8.38	3.10
CAT scores (maximum = 40)	15.14	4.95

Table 11: Pupils Mean Scores in English Composition Achievement Test (N = 302)

The results in Table 11 show that the pupils mean scores of the first three English composition domains were very low as they ranged between 2.12 (SD = 0.95) and 2.47 (SD = 0.94) out of a maximum of 5. Clarity and logical writing (M = 8.38, SD = 3.10) and the overall CAT (M 15.14, SD = 4.95) means were also low given that they were out of 25 and 40 respectively. The results indicate that pupils have challenges writing in English. The results support those of Uwezo (2016) that showed that learning outcomes among children in Kenya are low. The study further noted that English literacy levels among children aged 7 - 13 years have remained almost unchanged over the five years between 2011 and 2014. Ogada, Oracha, Matu and Kochung (2012) also noted that policies which lead to allocation of time and teacher participation in demonstration, storytelling and dramatization boosted pupils English composition abilities.

Data on Head teachers and teachers' views on pupils' achievement in English composition and the subject were also sought during the study. The head teachers' rating of the pupils in English writing is summarized in table 12.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Good (Above average)	16	22.2
Average	21	29.2
Low (Writing is a challenge)	33	45.8

Table 12: Head Teachers Rating of Pupils' Achievement in English Composition

Table 12 shows that majority (45.8%) of the head teachers rated the pupils achievement in English composition low while close to a third (29.2%) were of the view that the pupils' performance was average. These results mean that the school heads were of the view that pupils performance in composition was not good as the nearly two thirds (65.0%) of them rated pupils performance as average and low.

The head teachers and teachers of English were also asked to rate the pupils' achievement in English composition. Table 13 gives a summary of their responses.

Rating	Head teachers (n = 72)		Teachers of English (n = 91)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
High	21	29.2	31	34.1
Average	25	34.7	26	28.6
Low	28	38.9	19	20.9

Table 13: Teachers of English Rating of Pupils' Achievement in English Composition

Table 13 reveals that a majority (38.9%) of the head teachers were of the view that the pupils' achievement in English composition was low. The teachers however held contrary opinion as majority (34.1%) of them were of the view that the pupils' achievement in English composition was high. An examination of information in the table reveals that only a few of head teachers (29.2%) and teachers of English (34.1%) rated the pupils' achievement as high. It can therefore be concluded that the pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory.

The head teachers and teachers of English were also requested to give suggestions for improving achievement in English composition. The head teachers suggested that language policy be effectively implemented (47.9%), teachers should adopt appropriate instructional methods (29.6%), teachers should create a favorable learning climate in class (learners comfort, discipline, organized classes and motivation of pupils)(23.4%) and provision of instructional materials for effective curriculum implementation (21.1%). The English teachers recommended that learners be given more opportunities to practice speaking, writing and reading (79.1%) and strict implementation of school language policy (34.1%). They also suggested that positive attitudes towards English composition and the language in general be inculcated in learners (20.9%) and introduction of library sessions (9.9%) to enhance learner reading skills.

The influence of school language policy on pupils' achievement on English composition was determined using linear regression. Prior to conducting regression analysis, tests were conducted to ensure that the regression assumptions were not violated. The test included; normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The one sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to assess the normality distribution of the variables, while the scatter plots and standardized residual scatter were used to check for linearity and homoscedasticity respectively. The test results showed that no assumptions were violated. The school language policy indices were then regressed on the pupils CAT mean scores. The results of the regression test are given in table 14.

Model	Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	8.054	2.046		3.936	.000
School language policy	1.698	.486	.198	3.494	.001
R = .198, R ² = .039, F(1, 300) = 12.205, p < 0.05					

Table 14: Regression Analysis Results on Influence of School Language Policy on Pupils' Achievement in English Composition

The results of the regression analysis in Table 14 show that the relationship ($r = .198$) between school language policy and pupils' achievement in English composition was positive but weak. The table also shows that school language policy accounted for 3.9% ($R^2 = .039$) of the total variance in pupils' achievement in English composition. The variation of the outcome explained by the predictor variable was however significant, $F(1, 300) = 12.205$, $p < .05$. This implies that school language policy influences pupils' achievement in English composition. These results do not support the first hypothesis which states that school language policy does not significantly influence pupils' achievement in English composition. The hypothesis was rejected on the basis of these results.

The study established that school language policy influenced pupils' achievement in English composition. The results are in line with the views of Usen (2016) that it is one thing to develop policy and plan and another to effectively implement strategies to serve the purpose for which they are developed for realization of the expected learning outcomes. Bello (2012) also noted that policy and planning for instruction facilities cannot bring about improvement in pupils' academic performance if they are not well implemented. The results support those of Uko and Ayuk (2015) study which noted that management activities such as policy, planning and coordination alone do not lead to better performance. The study noted that use of appropriate teaching facilities and teaching method is critical to the successful teaching and learning.

The results in Table 14 indicated that school language policy does not significantly influence pupils' achievement in English composition. These results do not concur with those of a study conducted in Tanzania by Kinyaduka and Kiwara (2013). Kinyaduka and Kiwara observed a decline in academic achievement among pupils when the mode of instruction was changed from Kiswahili to English language due to policy change. They noted that pupils had problems understanding concepts when taught in English and this led to a decline in their achievement. Wanjiku-Omolo (2014) also noted that

policy that allows more than one language leads to teachers using Kiswahili only in the process of teaching while the rest mix it with other languages. Such a policy affects the learners as they imitate the languages of the teacher and end up not being fluent in Kiswahili. Additionally, the writing of Kiswahili is affected since the learners end up using other languages like "sheng" together with Kiswahili in the process of writing.

The results in Table 14 contradict those of Njogu (2015) who established that policies which allow use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in lower primary school contributes positively towards acquisitions of English language. The study established that teaching and learning is best done in pre-schools using mother tongue since skills gained using mother tongue can be transferred to English. Njogu concluded that both languages; mother tongue and English, nurture each other and boost children's self-esteem and confidence. The study noted that combining mother tongue and English produced best performance in the English language among pre-school children.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the hypothesis test showed that school language policy had a statistically significant relationship with pupils' achievement in English composition. On the basis of this finding, the conclusion was made that school language policy influences pupils' achievement in English composition. The finding has both practical and theoretical implications on school management and English composition achievement. In Kenya, according to the Session Paper Number 14 of 2012 (MOEST, 2012), the language of the catchment area (mother tongue) should be used as the medium of instruction in child carecentres, pre-primary and lower primary schools. English and Kiswahili should be taught as subjects at primary school level (Barasa, 2005). The government policy thus exposes learners to mother tongue, English and Kiswahili. Njogu (2015) noted that use of mother tongue contributes positively towards acquisitions of English language. Njogu argues that teaching and learning is best done in pre-schools using mother tongue as skills gained can be transferred to English. Teachers of English could benefit from the observations of Njogu. However, bilingual national or school language policy affects language acquisition if a child's foundation in the local language is not well laid for transfer to the second language (English). Owu-Ewie (2006) observed that the Ghanaian child was not doing well in English despite bilingual language policy because, the child's foundation in the local language is not well laid for transfer to the second language besides other achievement factors.

On the basis of the finding, this study recommends that schools that do not have a language policy should develop one. The schools should implement their language policies given that it enhances achievement in English composition and the subject in general. However, in development of the policies, the schools should take caution to ensure that the policies developed are in tandem with the national language policy and that there is pedagogical and philosophical justification of the policies in terms of structure and their implementation strategies. The general aim should be to help the learner to acquire the skills of reading, speaking and writing in fluent and correct English as well as think critically and logically.

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