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Influence of Teaching Methods Used on the Acquisition of English Reading Skills in Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract:

English reading skills are essential in academic and professional development. While appropriate teaching methods enhance learner acquisition of reading skills, inappropriate teaching methods hamper the acquisition of reading skills. This article examines the type of teaching methods used when teaching reading skills and seeks to establish the influence of teaching methods used on the acquisition of English reading skills. Data were obtained from 400 form three students and 40 teachers of English language from 20 public secondary schools in Teso North sub-county. Stratified, simple random and proportional sampling was used to obtain the study sample. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and classroom observation schedules. The sampled students filled out questionnaires and teachers were interviewed and observed in the classroom. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicate that teaching methods such as group work, pair work and discussion were the most significant factors influencing the acquisition of reading skills $p < 0.05$. The study concluded that pedagogy has a significant relationship with the acquisition of English reading skills. The study recommended that teachers should use a variety of teaching methods. This is because each method complements the other.

Keywords: Teaching methods, reading skills, acquisition, pedagogy

1. Introduction

Reading skills in language acquisition are very important since they are the basis for improving educational outcomes (Gove & Wetterberg, 2011). Therefore, effective teaching of reading skills requires that the teacher carefully chooses teaching methods that make learners active in the development of the skill. That is why Rogers (2001) advises that when teaching reading skills, the teacher must consider the teaching methods and learning activities during the preparation and learning process. Harmer (2003) argues that for learners to fully develop reading skills in English language, the teacher should be able to choose teaching methods carefully and purposefully.

According to N'Namdi (2005), language teachers should be responsive to the vast and varied needs of each learner. This will promote an educational climate that facilitates the desire to read. Hugo (2008) stressed that teachers play an essential role in children's acquisition of the Second Language in the way they present their lessons and how learners participate. Thus, to enable essential mastery of reading skills, learners need to be given plenty of guided opportunities by knowledgeable teachers as they put their reading skills into practice. Knowledgeable teachers are important because children do not learn to read just by being exposed to printed matter. Reading skills must be taught explicitly and systematically, one small step at a time (Karuoya, 2015).

A study by Høien and Lundberg (2000) revealed that reading was not a natural process in a child's development but rather a culturally determined phenomenon. According to them, reading is determined by teaching methods. In this regard, using inappropriate pedagogy may hinder the development of reading skills. According to Runo (2010), a number of learners may become reading-disabled due to a lack of appropriate teaching methods. Poor development of English reading skills among the learners may perhaps be one of the factors that are the root cause of poor examination performance not only in the English subject but also in other school subjects which are examined in the English language in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE). According to Wanjiku (2015), reading skills are required by students to interpret examination questions and even comprehend what the questions require for an answer. However, learners who are ill-equipped in reading skills may not understand the written texts or learn anything; as a result, they cannot be successful in examinations (Erkan, 2006).

From the foregoing, it is evident that the teaching of English reading skills calls for a review of teaching methods. Teachers of English need to revisit their teaching methods and embrace all the necessary aspects to meet the learners' needs. Teachers should adapt their teaching through the modification of the teaching methods by making them more motivating. Thus, for learners to achieve competence in English reading skills, all the barriers need to be identified, and concerted efforts need to be made to overcome them. Therefore, this study sought to identify and establish the influence of teaching methods on the acquisition of English reading skills among secondary school students in Kenya.

1.1. Study Objectives

The objectives of this paper were to:

- Examine the type of teaching methods used when teaching English reading skills
- Establish the influence of teaching methods used on the acquisition of English reading skills.

1.2. Hypothesis of the Study

- H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between the teaching methods used and the acquisition of English reading skills.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985). This theory explains that human beings acquire language by receiving "Comprehensible Input." Krashen argues that a learner moves from '*i*' (learners' current level of competence) to '*i* +1,' (learner's next level of competence) along a natural order by understanding input containing *i* +1. Also, the hypothesis explains that input that is comprehensible is at the right level, but that which is incomprehensible is not valuable to the learner. Teaching methods are input used to develop reading skills. Thus, the methods should be effective to allow the learner to acquire reading skills. The input hypothesis is relevant to this study because it embraces the instructional aspect of language acquisition.

2. Literature Review

This section presents a review of related literature. The literature was drawn from books, theses, internet and journals.

2.1. Methods of Teaching Reading Skills

There are various methods of teaching reading skills. This includes dialogue, role play, group work, hot seating, dramatization, oral presentation, debates, writing summaries and note-making. Teachers select the method to use by considering the individual needs of the learner, objectives of the lesson, content, resources available, and class size (KIE, 2006). Teaching methods provide a framework for the orderly organization and presentation of learning activities (Killen, 2004). Hence, a better understanding of teaching methods is a prerequisite for good teaching.

Høien and Lundberg (2000) observe that reading is not a natural process but rather a culturally determined phenomenon. It is determined by teaching methods and the child's experiences with printed matter. Teaching methods can be teacher-centred, learner-centred or mixed approach. Quite often, teachers prefer methods that make their work easier based on their beliefs and personal preferences (Watson, 2003). Although teachers have the discretion to choose methods for delivering lessons to their students, Chika (2012) observes that learner-centered pedagogy is a powerful strategy for improving learning achievement.

English is a practical subject. Therefore, exposure to various skills needs to be employed as opposed to the lecture method (Adeyemi, 2008). Tella *et al.* (2010) noted that teacher-centred methods often result in students not enjoying lessons and missing the benefits of intellectual discovery. For this reason, philosophers of education advocate learning by doing to produce the best results. Therefore, practical teaching methods like group work, inquiry, discovery and discussions are greatly emphasized. According to Hugo (2008), teachers should use various methods of teaching reading skills so that learners in the reading class will not become bored.

Phonics as a method of teaching refers to helping children understand the mappings between letters and sounds (Beck & Juel, 2002). It involves teaching the phonemes which comprise a word. Through this method, learners are taught techniques that will enable them to identify words that they do not recognize in print. At the initial stage, the forms and sounds of the letters are taught, and as a rule, the vowels are taught first (Gray, 1969). The consonants are introduced in some prescribed order and their sounds combined with each of the vowels. Another method used to teach reading skills is the look and say. In this method, learners are expected to say a word as soon as they look at it. The advocates of this method expect that learners will be able to identify words on sight without first having to go through conscious letter-by-letter analysis. According to Lerner (2006), for students to read fluently, they must recognize words instantly without further analysis. The critics of look and say point out that this method fails to equip learners with skills of 'attacking' new words and therefore retards reading.

2.2. English Reading Skills

KIE (2006) considers silent reading, aloud reading, speed reading, using a dictionary, using the library, scanning and skimming, summary and note-making and report writing as some of the activities that learners can engage in during reading lessons.

According to Anderson (2003), silent reading helps the students understand the text more than aloud reading because they can focus on the text independently and identify the unknown words without any interruption. Whereas, reading aloud hampers their comprehension process as they have to pay attention to someone else who is reading the text loudly.

Hedge (2011) observes that readers use skimming skills to get an overall idea of the text. He notes that skimming is a largely top-down process used to get the general dimensions of a text. He further adds that skimming is mainly concerned with findings, key topics, main ideas, overall theme and basic structure of the text. Scrivener (1994) notes that in skimming, learners attempt to find the answers quickly by going through only some of the portions of the passage. On the

contrary, readers use scanning skills to get specific information. Scanning skills "involve details of the text; the way that a reader finds those details involves processing the whole text" (Scrivener, 1994:184).

Nwabudike *et al.* (2013) note that extensive reading is a kind of fluent, faster reading of longer texts for pleasure, entertainment and general understanding, but without careful attention to the details. Extensive reading of developmentally appropriate material of many kinds, both in and out of school, results in substantial growth in vocabulary and comprehension abilities and in the information base of students (Squires, 2004).

Reading comprehension is a thinking activity in which readers use their mental abilities to deal with the printed text. According to Peterson (2008), comprehension skills are activities that students complete to learn about features of text, like the main idea or cause and effect. In order to achieve comprehension, reading must employ and integrate certain sub-skills since each sub-skill does not stand alone.

3. Study Design and Methodology

This study was carried out in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub County, Busia County of Kenya. For a long time, Teso North has posited poor results in English at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. The target population consisted of 26 public secondary schools, 59 teachers of English language and all the 1625 form three students. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 20 schools, 40 teachers and 400 form three students. The research instruments included a questionnaire for students, interview schedules for teachers and an observation checklist.

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis entailed calculating percentages, frequencies and means. Inferential statistics were used to make deductions and generalizations about the whole population. The results were presented in the form of tables. Thematic reporting of data from teacher interviews was also included. Chi-square, pair-wise correlation analysis and logistic regression analysis were used to determine whether there was a significant association between the independent and dependent variables. Regression analysis was pursued for variables that were significantly correlated with the dependent variable at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

4. Findings

This section presents analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings. This study investigated the influence of teaching methods used on the acquisition of English reading skills in secondary schools in Kenya.

4.1. Teaching Methods Used While Teaching English Reading Skills

The first objective of this study sought to examine the type of teaching methods used when teaching English reading skills. The data was generated using the students' questionnaires. Table 1 shows the frequency of using the teaching methods.

Teaching Method	Frequently		Occasionally		Rarely		Never		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Group work	93	23.3	200	50	65	16.3	42	10.5	400	100
Pair work	115	28.8	168	42	56	14	61	15.3	400	100
Lecture	60	15	73	18.3	140	35	127	31.8	400	100
Discussion	135	33.8	145	36.3	51	12.8	69	17.3	400	100
Dramatization	111	27.8	68	17.8	134	33.5	87	21.8	400	100
Demonstration	80	20	149	37.3	109	27.3	62	15.5	400	100
Individual work	174	43.5	124	31	30	7.5	72	18	400	100
Question and Answer	33	8.3	71	17.8	60	15	236	59	400	100

Table 1: Frequency of Using the Teaching Method (N = 400)

Table 1 gives a summary of the frequency and percentage distribution of teaching methods used by English language teachers to teach reading skills. The results show that majority 174 (43.5%) frequently used individual work, 135 (33.8%) used discussion, 115 (28.8%) used pair work, 111 (27.8%) used dramatization, 93(23.3%) used group work, 80(20%) used demonstration, 60(15%) used lecture and 33(8.3%) used question and answer method.

Data obtained from the teachers using the interview schedule revealed that group work was the most frequently used method. Respondent 17 captured this in the following words, "I always use the group work method because it gives my students a chance to interact among themselves." Meanwhile, Respondent 33 asserted that "when students work in groups, they generate new knowledge."

Meng (2010), in his study regarding cooperative learning, noted that students work well in groups if teachers set a platform at the beginning of the term, informally check in with groups to see how things are going, offer assistance as needed, and provide time for groups to assess their own effectiveness.

Discussion was also another popular teaching method. For instance, Respondent 34 commented, "I use discussion because it gives the students an opportunity to interact in the classroom." The lecture method was least used, as Respondent 23 explained, "I use lecture method only when I want to introduce a new topic or explain a new concept to the learners."

Observation results on teaching methods indicated that in most of the schools visited, English language teachers used some teaching methods more than others. Discussion and lecture were the most commonly used teaching methods in

schools 1, 2,3,5,9 and 10. This finding is consistent with Mutai (2012), who found out that lecture and group discussions are the common methods employed by teachers of the English language in their teaching. The observation method revealed that some of the schools selected for this study used lectures, group work, discussion, and demonstration. This was evident in schools 4, 6, 7 and 8. However, it was observed that the lecture method was commonly used in all the ten schools visited. None of the teachers observed in all the schools used "individual work or pair work in their lessons. This finding contradicts the earlier one by students' questionnaire, where students indicated that teachers commonly used individual work methods. As cited before, this is a serious limitation that would influence the overall outcome of this research.

This paper then sought to establish if there was a correlation between teaching methods used and the acquisition of English reading skills. The null hypothesis being tested was: H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between teaching methods used and acquisition of English reading skills. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

4.2. Dichotomous Dummy Variable for Running Logistic Regression

The researcher resorted to transforming the variables in table 1 into dummies for the purpose of running a pair-wise correlation analysis and binomial logistic regression analysis. The results of the dichotomous dummy variable are presented in table 2.

Teaching Method	Frequently		Infrequently		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Group work	93	23.3	307	76.8	400	100
Pair work	115	28.8	285	71.3	400	100
Lecture	60	15	340	85	400	100
Discussion	135	33.8	265	66.3	400	100
Dramatization	111	27.8	289	72.3	400	100
Demonstration	80	20	320	80	400	100
Individual work	174	43.5	226	56.5	400	100
Question & Answer	33	8.3	367	91.8	400	100

Table 2: Results from the Transformed Dichotomous Dummies Variable (n=400)

The results presented in table 2 indicate that 174(43.5%) frequently used individual work while 226(56.5%) used it infrequently. 135 (33.8%) frequently used discussion, while 265(66.3%) infrequently used it. Pair work was frequently used by 115 (28.8%) while 285(71.3%) used it infrequently. Dramatization was frequently used by 111(27.8%) while 289(72.3%) used it infrequently. 93 (23.3%) frequently used group work, while 307(76.8%) used it infrequently. 80 (20%) used demonstration while 320(80%) used it infrequently. 60 (15%) used the lecture method while 340(85%) infrequently used it. 33 (8.3%) used the question-and-answer method, while 367(91.8%) used it infrequently. This result conforms to findings by Mutai (2012), who reported that group discussions are the common methods employed by teachers in their teaching of the English language.

The finding is inconsistent with Miheso (2002), who pointed out that most classrooms were didactic, where teachers were very controlling and restrictive and used little learner-centred teaching approaches.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics for Teaching Methods

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the independent variables.

Variables	Mean	Se (mean)	Std. Dev.	Range	Min	Max
Group work	2.14	.0446484	.8929689	3	1	4
Pair work	2.1575	.0503794	1.007587	3	1	4
Lecture	2.835	.0518523	1.037046	3	1	4
Discussion	2.135	.0533766	1.067532	3	1	4
Dramatization	2.4925	.0557461	1.114922	3	1	4
Demonstration	2.3825	.0486972	.9739431	3	1	4
Individual work	2.0000	.0555221	1.110443	3	1	4
Question & Answer	3.2475	.0509618	1.019235	3	1	4

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Teaching Methods (n = 400)

Table 3 presents the findings of the descriptive statistics on the methods used to teach reading skills, which were analyzed through mean and standard deviation. The findings are as follows: Question and answer (mean=3.2475, Std. Dev.1.019235), lecture (mean=2.835, Std. Dev. 1.037046), dramatization (mean=2.4925, Std. Dev. 1.114922), demonstration (mean=2.3825, std. Dev.0.9739431), pair work (mean=2.1575, Std. Dev. 1.007587), group work, (mean=2.14, Std. Dev. 0.8929689), discussion (mean=2.135, Std. Dev. 1.067532), individual work (mean=2.0000, Std. Dev. 1.110443). According to Muindi *et al.* (2004), there is no single best method of teaching. A good teacher uses several methods of teaching a single lesson depending on the teaching/ learning situation of a given lesson.

4.4. Testing the Significance of the Dependent Variables

The second objective was also analyzed based on inferential statistics. Using pair-wise correlation, independent variables (group work, pair work, lecture, discussion, dramatization, individual work, question and answer) were cross-tabulated with each dependent variable (English reading skills). The researcher first ran a pair-wise correlation analysis between each dependent variable and all the independent variables to determine the variables to be pursued in the logistic regression analysis. Then, only independent variables that were significantly correlated with the dependent variables at $p < 0.05$ level of significance were included in the logistic regression analysis.

The null hypothesis to be tested was:

- H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between the utilization of teaching methods and the acquisition of English reading skills.

To test this hypothesis, pair-wise correlation analyses were computed for each of the dependent variables, and their significance was tested at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

4.5. Correlation Analysis between Teaching Methods and Acquisition of English Reading Skills

To test the null hypothesis, a pair-wise correlation analysis was used to determine whether the utilization of specific teaching methods had a significant relationship with the acquisition of English reading skills. Table 4 summarizes the results.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Reading Skills	1.0000								
Group work	0.2035* 0.0000	1.0000							
Pair work	0.2153* 0.0000	0.2911 0.0000	1.0000						
Lecture	0.1095* 0.0285	0.0671 0.1803	0.1044* 0.00368	1.0000					
Discussion	0.4085* 0.0000	0.2204* 0.0000	0.0606 0.2266	0.3220* 0.0000	1.0000				
Dramatization	-0.0203 0.6853	0.0686 0.1707	-0.1223 0.0144	0.1618* 0.0012	0.1480* 0.0030	1.0000			
Demonstration	0.1618* 0.0012	0.1391* 0.0053	0.0000 1.0000	0.2275* 0.0000	0.3040* 0.0000	0.3601* 0.0000	1.0000		
Individual	0.3005* 0.0000	0.1378 0.0058	0.3451* 0.0000	0.2810* 0.0000	0.3442* 0.0000	0.0981* 0.0498	0.2168* 0.0000	1.0000	
Question & Answer	0.0919 0.0664	-0.0145 0.7730	-0.0700 0.1622	0.1285* 0.0101	0.2856* 0.0000	0.0577 0.2497	0.2135* 0.0000	0.1768* 0.0004	1.0000

Table 4: Correlation between Teaching Methods and Reading Skills

* Correlation Is Significant at ($P < 0.05$) Level

The results in table 4 show that six out of eight variables were statistically significant at .05. These were group work ($p=0.0000$), pair work ($p=0.0000$), lecture ($p=0.0285$), discussion ($p=0.0000$), individual work ($p=0.0000$) and demonstration ($p=0.0012$). In light of the results, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 significance level. This means that when teachers used these methods, students stood a better chance of acquiring reading skills. However, only dramatization ($p=0.6853$) and question and answer ($p=0.0664$) were not correlated with note-making at $p < 0.05$ level of significance; hence the hypothesis was accepted.

4.6. Regression Analysis for Teaching Methods and English Reading Skills

Logistic Regression analysis was then used to analyze independent variables that were significantly correlated with the dependent variable at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. The logistic regression analysis results are presented in table 5.

Reading Skills	Odds Ratio	Std .Err.	Z	P> z	[95%conf.	Interval]
Group work	1.42141	.4184495	1.19	0.232	.7982403	2.531074
Pair work	2.159053	.611918	2.72	0.007	1.238842	3.762795
Lecture	.6064976	.2123795	1.43	0.0153	.3053238	1.204751
Discussion	5.41212	1.492931	6.12	0.000	3.151837	9.293323
Demonstration	1.276334	.3795005	0.82	0.412	.7126414	2.285901
Question & Answer	2.088864	.5625965	2.73	0.006	1.232126	3.541322

Table 5: Logistic Regression for Teaching Methods and Reading Skills

$N=400$, $LR \chi^2(6) = 92.91$, $prob > \chi^2 = 0.0000$ pseudo $R^2 = 0.1870$ log likelihood = -201.97911

The findings presented in table 5 indicate that the odds of acquiring reading skills increased by 5.41 times (or $5.41 - 1 \times 100 = 441\%$) $p=0.0000$ at 95% confidence level when the teachers used discussion, increased by 2.16 times (or $2.16 - 1 \times 100 = 116\%$) $p=0.007$ when the teachers used pair work method.

It increased by 2.08 times (or $2.08 - 1 \times 100 = 108\%$) $p=0.006$ when the question-and-answer method was used, increased by 1.42 (or $1.42 - 1 \times 100 = 42\%$) $p=0.232$ for group work and by 0.61 times (or $0.61 - 1 \times 100 = 6.1\%$) $p=0.153$ when

lecture was used. The findings indicate that discussion had the highest likelihood of assisting students in acquiring note-making skills, while the lecture method had the least likelihood of acquiring note-making skills. This finding concurs with Wulandari (2012), who found out that after using the pair work method, the score increased from 63.75 to 76.24 in cycle 2.

5. Discussion of Findings

This study established that individual work 174 (43.5%) was the most frequently used method. In addition, 135 (33.8%) reported discussion and 115 (28.8%) said pair work was used. The results show that group work 93 (23.3%), which is strongly believed to enhance students' performance, was not frequently used. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000), group work and pair reading are methods recommended for teaching reading because they enable learners to learn from one another.

According to Cummins (2007), learner-centred methods such as group work, pair work and discussion are advantageous because they promote class participation and critical thinking. The positive impact of such methods has also been documented by Chika (2012), who notes that interactive methods are more powerful in enhancing learning achievement than teacher-centred methods. Therefore, teachers need to incorporate learner-centred methods when teaching English reading skills.

Furthermore, the results show that there was a positive correlation between the teaching methods and the acquisition of English reading skills. Consequently, we can conclude that English language teachers who employ appropriate teaching methods will enable students to acquire desirable reading skills. Junias (2012) observes that the main factor hampering the learning of English reading skills was the use of ineffective teaching methods. Therefore, the findings of this study could lead to the assertion that teachers' failure to use learner-centred methods has a negative effect on students' acquisition of English reading skills.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers of the English language in Kenya did not use effective teaching methods. Individual work was the frequently used method. This method was mainly used when reading comprehension passages and approved secondary school education literature in English set books. Discussion, group work, pair work, dramatization and demonstration methods were not used frequently. The lessons observed revealed a shallow use of these methods. The study establishes that integrating these methods is effective in acquiring English reading skills. This is because each method complements the other in acquiring English reading skills.

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