

Effects of Dramatization on Learning of the English Language in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study sought to find out the effects of dramatization on learning of the English Language, among high school students and its influence on learner achievement. The target population of the study was 4,400 students, 45 headteachers, 720 teachers and 16 Directorate Quality Assurance officers from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology. Data was qualitative and quantitative in nature and was collected using questionnaires, interviews and test scores. Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS which is an acronym for (statistical package for social sciences software) and descriptive statistics. The analyzed data was presented in tables of frequencies and percentages. The study established that when dramatic features were used in learning the English Language, learner achievement was improved. The study explored the significance of drama and the communicative approach, teachers and student attitude towards drama, drama and learning of the English Language and drama and the micro-skills in learning the English Language. Other factors were dramatized poetry used in learning the English Language, dramatization and secondary curriculum, dramatization and performance of the English Language and Bloom's taxonomy and dramatization in learning the English Language.

Key Words: effects, dramatization, learning and English Language.

INTRODUCTION

Dramatization as a teaching strategy has been used globally to practice and strengthen the role of the English Language as an international language. Therefore, dramatic features such as role play simulation and mimicry are utilized to stimulate acquisition of skills and to facilitate learning. Dramatization entails transforming a book or event into a play or film which becomes exciting and stimulates acquisition of skills to the learner. To facilitate learning dramatization manifests innovations empowers imaginative powers which assist learners to explore new horizons of knowledge (Fleming & Mike 2006; Kenedy and Grioia 2005; Holden, 1981; Hayes and Suzanne, 1984).

Dramatization presents the learner as an active participant in the process of learning the English Language. Dramatic features such as role-play, simulation, mime and language game promote self-learning, group interaction in authentic situations. Fernandez and Coil (1986) stated that drama encourages students to share ideas and develop imaginative powers. Drama fosters the social intellectual and the linguistic development of students (Amato, 1970). The study conducted by Holden (1981) states that drama centres around language development, personal awareness, group cooperation, sensory awareness and imaginative growth.

In Kenya's secondary schools, the learners lack linguistic competence, consequently; they switch to mother tongue during a discourse. Gakunga (1980) explains that in many cases, the learner does not distinguish between the forms, he has mastered as part of his linguistic competence; he lacks competence in the communication system, hence the need to develop skill and use strategies in language learning. A study done by Davies (1990) in Germany revealed that dramatic techniques are significant in learning English Language. Dramatic activities can be employed in language teaching and learning. The possibilities considered in this study include recitation, mime, simulation, role-play, scripted plays, improvisation and course book dialogue (Johnson, 1985; Carroll, 2006; Dass, 1984; Christopher & Smith, 1990).

Dramatic activities cover a wide scope of activities during English lessons. They can be used to predict a storyline, to work out a jumbled dialogue, a gapped dialogue and in role-play (Holden, 1983). Plays are significant in explaining the theme of humor and they provide comic relief in tensed up situation (Davison & Dawson, 1998). The issue of choice of instructional methods to use in teaching the English Language was addressed by the Binns Education Commission of 1952 and (Nunan, 1990) emphasized the significance of instructional methods in learning the English Language. The commission advocated on the student centred approach as opposed to the teacher dominated approach. Dramatization propels a scenario, where students participate actively and the activities are student centred (Maley and Duff, 1982).

The fluency in English Language is a byproduct of the school system. Students can use language for all they want to do and say in an atmosphere where inquiry and activity are encouraged through role-play or simulation (Holden, 1983). Poor performance in the English Language in National Examination is disturbing and does not

argue well with the future (KNEC, 2008). The KCSE English Language results revealed students lacked the ability to comprehend the input, their mastery of grammar and communicative skills were poor. Students were unable to respond to literal cues and failed to express themselves in writing. This made the subject to record a decline of 33.78% in 2008. The KCSE examination result from 2007-2011 depicts a decline in the performance of the English Language, performance in paper I declined by 28.12 in 2010. The results for paper 3 declined by 2.17 points from 20.81 in 2009 to 18.64 in 2010. The overall performance was impacted by the double decline in paper I and 3. It dropped by 1.06 from 78.42 in 2009 to 77.36 in 2010. The poor performance was depicted with drastic decline by 2.54 points from 31.07 in 2010 to 28.53 and in 2011 with poor grades of D and Es. The KNEC secretariat attributes this performance to poor instructional techniques, lack of teaching resources, lack of learning resources, lack of textbooks and shortage of trained teachers. The above exposition exposes a significant gap which this study endeavors to fill.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development has consistently challenged the methodology of the English Language learning in Kenyan secondary school. Gathumbi's (1985) was very critical on teachers using automated teaching strategies. She recommended research on methods that can be productive, captivating and learner centred. The Kenya National Examination Council's report on the performance of the English Language (KIE, 1987) advised teachers to use methods that are based on learner activities and participation.

The Kenya certificate of secondary examination (2007 to 2011) depicts a decline in the performance of the English Language. The performance Paper 1 declined by 2.63 from 30.5 in 2009 to 28.12 in 2010. The results for paper 3 declined by 2.17 points from 20.81 in 2009 to 18.64 in 2010. The double decline caused the overall performance to go down. This prompted the researcher to find out if instructional methods used in learning the English Language could raise or lower students' achievements in the English Language examinations. This study is therefore being undertaken, to find out if dramatization as an instructional strategy when used can promote learner achievement in Meru County.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study conducted by Orodho (2004) defined research design as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. The research design used experimental scheme in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Kombo, Tromp and Delno (2006) noted that experimental design entails the manipulation of one, or more independent variables to determine their effects on the experiment. The research design is appropriate for the study, because experimental design can test-cause-effect relationship to determine the status of that population with respect to one or more variables.

Target population

Target population is the group of sample to whom the researchers want to apply the conclusion from the findings (Ary, Razaimah and Sorensen, 2006; Gay Mill and Aira 2006). Target population consisted 398 public secondary schools offering English Language curriculum in Meru county (Source: Director of Education Meru County 2010). Those involved in the study were 38 head-teachers, 300 teachers, 1350 students and 8 officers from Directorate Quality Assurance and Standard Office.

Sample Techniques and Sample Size

The study used simple random sampling to select the sample size involved in the study.

Research Instruments

The research instruments used in the study were questionnaires and interviews in testing the validity of the instruments that were used, a pilot study was conducted at Akithi Girls, Kangeta Girls and the DEO's office Meru-North. Pre-testing was significant in determining clarity of questions – pre-testing was also done to boost reliability of the research instruments (Best and Khan, 2003). There were three questionnaires used head teachers questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered to students, teachers and head teachers. The questionnaires were collected immediately they were filled in by the respondents. The questionnaires return rate for head teachers' was 95%, the return rate for teachers' was 93% of the selected population. The DQASO officials who returned the filled up interview schedules were 88%.

These were the objectives of the study:

1. To establish if drama is used as a method of teaching the English Language in Meru-County schools

2. To determine how dramatization can be integrated in the process of learning the English Language
3. To establish the role of drama in communicative approach of learning the English Language
4. To examine the attitude of students and teachers towards drama as an activity of enhancing the learning of the English Language
5. To establish if performance of the English Language can improve when dramatization is used in teaching and learning of the English Language

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. Do teachers of the English Language use dramatization in teaching and learning of the English Language in Meru County Secondary Schools
2. How can dramatization method be integrated in the process of learning the English Language in secondary schools.
3. What is the role of drama in the communicative approach of teaching and learning the English Language.
4. What is the attitude of the students and teachers towards drama as an activity of enhancing the learning of the English Language?
5. What is the performance of the English Language after dramatization has been used in teaching and learning of the English Language?

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data used was quantitative and qualitative in nature. The data collected was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and descriptive statistics. The results were presented using tables of frequencies and percentages. Graphical presentation of the data was done using bar graphs, line graphs and pie charts.

Research Question 1: Do teachers of the English Language use dramatization in teaching and learning of the English Language in Meru County Secondary Schools

The researcher wanted to find out if the teachers of the English use dramatization in teaching and learning of the English Language. The responses from teachers are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Teachers responses on dramatic activities commonly used in teaching and learning the English LANGUAGE

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Role play	40	13.3
Simulation	51	17.0
Gestures	32	10.7
Games	47	15.7
Tonal variation	48	16.0
Facial expression	31	10.3
Mimicry	51	17.0
Total	300	100.0

The majority of the teachers indicated that they did not use dramatic activities effectively in teaching the English Language. This shows the teachers used teacher centred method of teaching and learners were not actively involved in the learning process. The results concurred with findings that teachers used narration, answers/question method and lecture methods to deliver the contents. When teachers use loud reading strategy for comprehension work and fail to incorporate dramatic strategies, this will lower learner achievement (Byrne and Dorn, 1986).

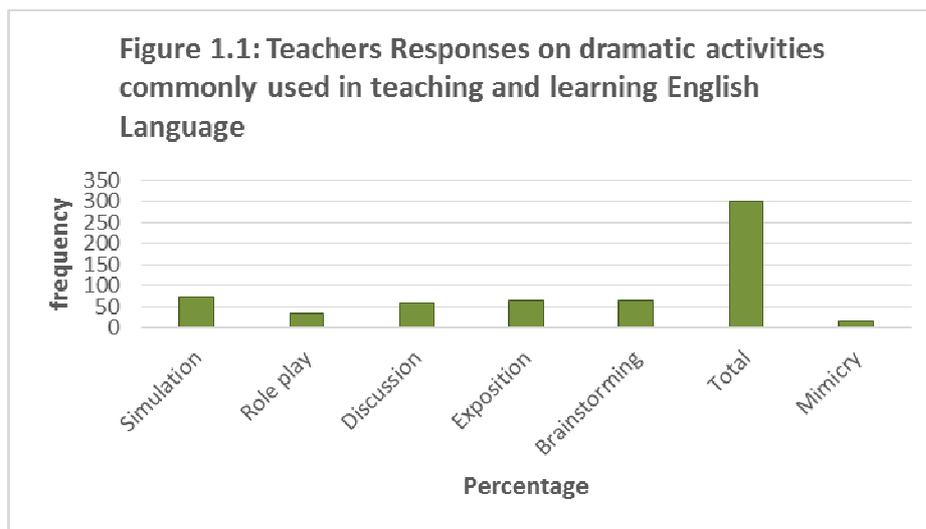


Figure 1.1 shows majority of the teachers used teacher centred strategies in teaching and learning of the English Language. However, these teachers neglected the use of role play, simulation and mimicry which could have assisted in boosting learner achievement in the English Language.

Research Question 2: How can dramatization method be integrated in the process of learning the English Language in Secondary Schools

Integration of dramatic features in the learning process will make the learner appreciate learning and retention of content becomes high. In real life, there are four driving forces usefulness, purpose wanting and emotion (Oxford, 1990). Learners enjoy learning English lessons when these expressive powers are mixed with role play; which promotes acquisition of language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

However, when asked to respond to the statement that dramatization should be integrated in the learning process of English Language many of the teachers 67% supported the idea, but 55% of the students agreed with the idea. Both the teachers and students felt dramatic activities enhanced the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The responses of teachers are shown in table 1.2

Table 1.2: Responses of Teachers on integrating dramatic activities in learning and teaching the English Language.

Instructional method	Frequency	Percent
Simulation	75	25
Role play	34	11.4
Discussion	60	20
Exposition	65	21.6
Brainstorming	66	22
Total	300	100

The table shows majority of the teachers agreed when role play and simulation are used in learning the English Language, they enhance content retention and students enjoy learning the language.

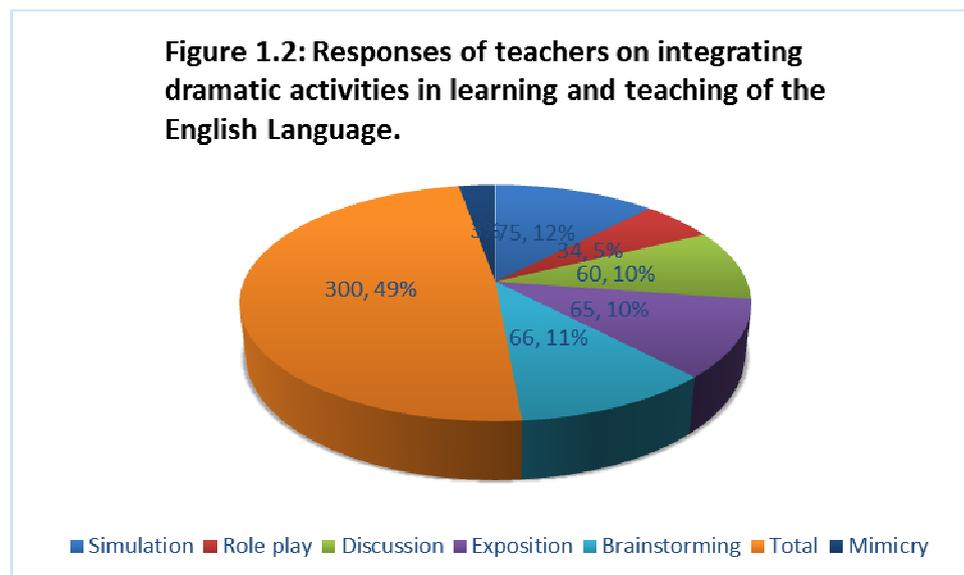


Figure 1.2 shows that majority of the teachers (36%) agreed that dramatic activities enhanced learner achievement when they were integrated in the learning process of the English Language.

Research Questions 3: What is the role of drama in the communication approach of teaching and learning the English Language?

The results of the analysis generally indicated that majority of the head teachers, teachers and students appreciated the role of drama in the communicative approach of teaching and learning the English Language. For example 78% of the teachers agreed with the statement that communication becomes exciting, the linguistic competence of the learner is improved, when dramatic features such as role-play, language games and simulation are used in teaching speaking skills. It was only 22% of the teachers who disagreed with the statement, they argued dramatic features are time consuming. However, 80% of the students agreed that when they participate in role-play; they can speak English Language fluently. The study conducted by Rivers and Temperly (1978), exposes new skills are acquired in Language Learning when students participate in role play and mime activities. The responses of the respondents are shown in table 1.3

Table 1.3: Responses of students on the role of drama in the communication approach of teaching and learning the English Language.

Role of drama in communicative approach	Number of responses frequencies	Percentage (%)
Very effective	180	60
Fairly effective	58	28
Not very effective	38	12
Not effective at all	19	6
Total	395	100

Table 1.3 represents student’s opinion on role of drama in the communication approach of teaching and learning the English Language.

Research question 4: What is the attitude of students and teachers towards drama as an activity of enhancing the learning of the English Language?

It is evident from the study that teachers regarded dramatic activities such as role play, mime, language games, and simulation has entertaining, captivating and enjoyable. Responses to items related in this theme indicates majority of the teachers and students are enthusiastic about dramatic features.

For example majority of the teachers 87% agreed with the statement, but 23% disagreed with the idea of using dramatic features in learning of the English Language. Many of the students 80% expressed their admiration of

dramatic activities. These results indicate both teachers and students are very enthusiastic about dramatic features.

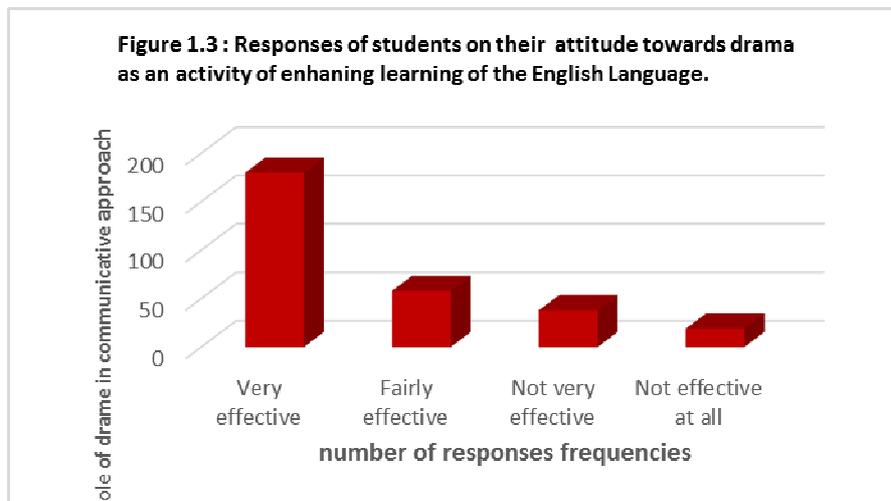


Figure 1.3 shows majority of the students (60%) felt dramatic activities were significant in improving oral communication, listening, reading and writing skills.

Research Question 5: What is the performance of the English Language after dramatization has been used in teaching and learning of the English Language?

The performance of the English Language is influenced by the strategy used by the teacher in teaching and learning of the English Language. The researcher has discussed the performance of the English Language in the Post Test A2 and Post Test A3.(table 1.4).

Table 1.4: Results of the English Language in post Test A2 and A3.

Number of students	Mean	Standard deviation
A2 N = 30	17.35	2.30
A3 N = 30	15.13	1.93

The T-test of comparison was used to compare the mean scores for A2 and A3 (Brown and Theodore 2012). There is a significant difference when dramatization (A2) and lecture (A3) methods are used in the teaching and learning of the English Language. These results show that dramatization (A2) mean 17.35 is significantly higher than the lecture (A3) mean score 15.13 for post Test (Table 1.4)

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed there is a relationship between learner achievement and the type of the structural strategy used in the learning of the English Language. The students had performed fairly in the pretests tests; however their performance was improved in the post test, Table 1.5.

Dramatic activities such as role play, language games, mime, gestures and simulation promote communication approach in language teaching. Dramatization enhance the learning of speech work and promotes linguistic competence in the learner. Communication approach promotes self-learning, group interaction and peer teaching, which are significant in the learning process.

The teachers' and students' attitude towards drama affected their performance of the English Language. The students expressed their opinion on dramatic activities as being creative, entertaining, enthusiastic and motivating. The students appreciated the role of role-play and simulation in encouraging fluent communication and acquisition of oral skills.

The teachers explained that dramatization elicits excitement, was captivating and enhances content retention, teachers expressed admiration in the simplicity of style and language used in plays. The respondents explored the significance of plays in promoting reading, listening, speaking and writing skills.

Drama can be used as an educational promoter in aspects such as creating stimulating environment for learning, it fosters social, intellectual and the linguistic development in the student. The development of conferencing system provides a Web CT and opportunity to use technology to aid teaching and learning using dramatization. This web houses the virtual space for role play and enabled communication and collaboration among students and between the students and their lecturers. The web enables access to “just in time” resources by making available to students resources such as up to date news from electronic newspapers and web sites, from all over the world when they need them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is important to use dramatic features in teaching and learning of the English Language. In view of the poor performance of the English Language in both spoken and written English, the key stakeholders namely, parents, sponsor, teachers and the Ministry of Education should actively encourage the students to speak English and donate story books to schools to enhance speaking, reading, and writing skills.
- The study revealed that teachers were not using effectively dramatic features such as role-play, mime, language games, gestures and tonal variation in their teaching and learning sessions. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology should therefore explore new ways of improving the academic performance of the students in the English Languages, especially in rural areas where vernacular/mother tongue interference hinders the linguistic ability of the learner.
- Address the integration of the dramatization in the process of learning the English Language; by the relevant authorities. The Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology, The Institute of Curriculum Development and the Kenya National Examination Council should assist in integrating dramatization in the learning process.
- Provision of instructional materials by the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology will promote learner achievement. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should publish magazines, textbooks and journals on dramatic features such as simulation, role-play, language games, mime and tonal variation, which will boost performance of the English Language.
- The Ministry of Education Science and Technology should strengthen the role of drama in the communicative approach of teaching and learning the English Language. The study unearthed dramatic activities were significant in improving listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. According to Richard and Rodgers (2001) drama and the communicative approach make the learner an active participant in the learning process. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology should encourage school community, sponsor, headteachers, teachers and education officers to design activities for example, role play, simulation language games, which influence learners on oral communication.
- Negative attitude of students and teachers towards drama as activity of enhancing the teaching and learning of the English Language should be eradicated. The study revealed the poor performance of the English Language was due to society negative attitude towards English as a foreign Language. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development in collaboration with the school community should launch a concerted campaign to educate people on the significance of speaking English fluently. The Ministry of Education should put emphasis on the use of role-play, simulation, language games and mimes in promoting fluency in speaking the English language.

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