

# Using Dramatization to Improve High School Students' Achievement in English Oral Skills

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## Abstract

Oral skills is taught and examined as part of Kenya's secondary school integrated English syllabus. However, difficulty in learning the skills has made it unpopular among students and teachers in secondary schools. Kenya certificate of secondary Education (KCSE) candidates continue to perform poorly in the Oral skills section of the English paper. This raises questions on their level of communicative competence in a language that is very important in their academic pursuits. It is evident from research that this is due to the traditional methods of teaching commonly used by teachers of English. But this should not be the case considering the central role played by oral skills in the language curriculum. One responsive approach that has been lauded to enhance the development of oral skills is dramatization. Research on the use of dramatization in teaching English in various countries supports its usefulness in improving students' achievement in language learning. This study was therefore set to determine whether the use of dramatization is more efficient in developing oral skills of secondary school students than the traditional approaches of teaching. The study was carried out in Koibatek Sub-County where a persistent low performance in English has been registered. The study focused on selected oral skills in the Form Two English syllabus namely effective listening, pronunciation, stress and intonation, use of non-verbal cues, public delivery and etiquette. The study adopted the Solomon Four Quasi-experimental research design. Four co-educational secondary schools were purposively selected from the 35 secondary schools in the subcounty to take part in the study. A total of 177 subjects took part in this study. Balloting was used to select subjects that were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Data was collected from a sample of Form Two students. The traditional method, using teacher-centered methods, was implemented in the control group, whereas dramatisation was utilized in the experimental group. At the end of the 8 week period, all the four groups participated in the post-test. The Oral skills achievement test (OSAT) was pre-tested and post tested on the students to assess the effectiveness of the program on the students' achievement in oral skills. An analysis of the results showed that dramatisation resulted in significant learning gains in oral skills. As such the use dramatisation in language instruction improves development of oral skills when contrasted with traditional, teacher-centered methods. This suggests that dramatisation can be used to improve those areas of language teaching that are difficult to teach and learn using regular methods. Dramatisation therefore should be integrated into the language education curriculum because it can be used as a complement to regular teaching methods.

**Keywords:** Dramatization, Oral skills, communication, High school, Kenya

## 1. Introduction

The main goal of teaching Oral skills in English is to enhance effective communication among learners. Effective communication is one of the basic skills that individuals should have because it enables one to convey thoughts, feelings and ideas successfully. Lack of effective communication skills is an impediment to one's personal development. Oral skills refer to the ability to correctly and confidently communicate using the spoken word (Njoroge, Muchai & Bukenya, 2014). Oral skills which comprise the teaching of listening and speaking skills form the backbone to the teaching of English. In Kenya, Oral skills are taught and examined in schools because they are a rich language resource available to the English language learner. This is also the reason why the integrated English syllabus stresses the teaching of oral skills at all levels in the secondary school English syllabus.

Because of the ineffective teaching strategies applied by language teachers, the performance of English in Kenyan secondary schools has been very dismal over the years (Mshenga, 2013). This has led to a public outcry from parents and other educational stakeholders. The scenario implies that the school system is failing to equip learners with the skills of communication that are critical for work and further training. The development of oral skills competence depends to a large extent on whether the students are given sufficient opportunity to become productively involved in practical language using situations. Many schools in Kenya fail to provide such opportunities.

It therefore follows that the problem lies with the teachers' approach to Oral skills at the secondary school level and not the students. Most of the teachers handling the skills are not confident that they have the language to explore it successfully, or the means to assess reading or writing it effectively (Chemwei, Kiboss & Cheruiyot, 2013). Consequently, they adopt traditional ways of exposing students to Oral skills such as lectures and teacher led-discussions. These methods are teacher-centered and hence dominated by teacher talk with little or no

students' involvement in the learning activities.

To counter this problem, Oral skills should be made appealing to students not only in content but also in the form of delivery (Bukenya, Kioko & Njeng'ere, 2004). Teachers have to move from the traditional way of teaching and adopt interesting, enjoyable and responsive approaches. A responsive approach is one that relates the literary work to the learner's own experiences. Njoroge et al (2014) observes one basic requirement for a serious user of English to improve his or her oral skills is the practice. Practice is important because we learn by doing. Practice make perfect. This is the surest way to acquire and master good oral skills is by regularly trying out when we learn.

In effect dramatization of Oral language skills is one approach that is globally acclaimed for its capability to improve students' understanding and learning of language. This is because children love acting and spend a lot of their time playing or role playing, attempting to reproduce situations which they meet in their daily lives. According to Mwangi, Nyaga, Kibui, and Odundo (2015) dramatization is a teaching strategy that has been used generally to practice and reinforce the role of the English Language as an international language. This is also because dramatic features such as role play simulation and mimicry can be employed to stimulate acquisition of skills and to facilitate learning. Dramatisation involves transforming a text, book or event into a play which becomes exciting and stimulates acquisition of skills to the learner. In order to facilitate learning dramatization empowers imaginative powers which assist learners to explore new horizons of knowledge. It presents the learner as an active participant in the process of learning the English Language.

Moreover, dramatization tends to make learning easier and enjoyable and as such, it can help demystify language learning which some students view as abstract and beyond their comprehension. Since classroom drama generally helps students develop their oral skills (Gecaga, Indangasi, Mwangi, Kinyanjui & Mukunga, 2008; Wachira, 2010), then the use of dramatisation can be an interesting method through which language learners can learn oral skills in practical ways. It is a valuable and motivating resource available to the language teacher because it encourages the student to infer meaning by both engaging with the language and interacting with the writer's world through action (Elting & Firkings, 2006). Empirical evidence exists in other parts of the world to support the effectiveness of dramatization in studying listening and speaking (Iamsaard & Kerdpol, 2015). This is where students are taken through the experience of learning Oral skills through acting and writing it, leading to a pleasurable acquisition of knowledge. However, the extent to which dramatisation is beneficial in teaching oral skills in Kenya is largely unknown. Therefore, English teachers may not realize its benefits as an instructional strategy. It is for this reason that this study attempted to determine the effects of Dramatisation on students' achievement in English Oral skills in Koibatek sub-county, Kenya.

### *1.1 Statement of the problem*

The Secondary school English language curriculum in Kenya emphasizes the importance of providing learners with opportunities to lay a firm foundation for the development of competence in communication. It is expected that children should be able to master English language to perform well in all the subjects in the curriculum since English is also a service subject. However the general performance in English among secondary school students has been poor for many years. Poor performance in the English Language in National Examination is disturbing and does not augur well with the future (KNEC, 2016) This has been attributed to many factors one of which is the use of ineffective instructional approaches. The recent 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. 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. The section on Oral skills has consistently been difficult for pupils and yet it occupies a central place in the English syllabus. There is however inadequate documented information in research conducted in Kenya to investigate the effects of the use of dramatization on students acquisition of oral skills. Therefore, this study was set to investigate the effects of dramatisation on students' acquisition of Oral skills in English in secondary schools in Koibatek Sub-county.

### *1.2 Purpose of the study*

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of dramatization on students' achievement in Oral skills in English.

### *1.3 Research hypothesis*

In pursuance of this purpose the following null hypothesis was tested:

H<sub>0</sub>: The use of dramatization technique will have no significant effect on students' achievement in Oral skills in English.

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Research design**

The Solomon- Four group quasi – experimental design was employed in this research. 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 was 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. The design involves a random assignment of subjects to four groups with two groups being the treatment group and the others being the control group. One treatment and one control were administered the pretest. The experimental groups were exposed to the program – the experimental treatment while the control group was denied treatment. The four groups were all post tested after the exposure to the content of Oral skills. This design was deemed appropriate because in Kenyan secondary schools, classes usually exist as intact groups and as such it was not possible to have them reconstituted for research purposes (Borg. R.W. (2003). The design enabled the researcher to assess the effect of the experimental treatment relative to the control treatment. It also provided adequate control on moderator variables that would affect the internal and external validity of the study. More so the design controlled the relative effects of experimentation (Koul 1993). To control for interaction between selection and maturation, the schools were randomly assigned to either the control or the experimental group while interaction between selection and treatment was controlled by ensuring that the administration of instruments across the schools was kept as similar as possible (Zechmeister & Shaughnessy 1994; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). Moreover, the regular qualified teachers of English run the experiment therefore the students were less aware of the fact that they were being subjected to experimental treatment (Koul 1993). To control for teachers' gender, training and experience as sources of internal invalidity, female teachers of equivalent training and experience. Form Two students of approximately the same age were used to avoid the threat of maturity to internal validity. Moreover, a pretest analysis showed no significant difference between the subjects' performance in Oral skills to suggest that they were equivalent before the commencement of teaching.

### **2.2 Subjects**

A total of 177 secondary school students from four coeducational secondary schools in Koibatek sub-county in Kenya served as the subjects of the study. These students were randomly selected from intact classrooms because school authorities do not normally allow classes to be split for research purposes once they are constituted. The subjects were randomly selected from four intact classrooms in four schools. All the groups were comparative enough in terms of number and resources. Moreover, the pretest analysis showed no significant difference on all the dependent measures. The experimental groups (E1 and E2) dramatised oral poetry in order to practice oral skills while the true control group C1 and C2 were taught Oral skills through the regular teacher directed methods.

### **2.3 Materials**

The dramatization module was implemented in a natural instructional setting that involved comparisons between the treatment groups and control group. The researcher designed the Dramatization Module based on oral skills content as per the Kenya institute of Education Syllabus, the integrated English teacher's guide, Spot on Oral skills textbook and other relevant English oral skills text books.

### **2.4 Instrumentation**

The variable of interest was improving students' achievement in Oral skills. Achievement was operationalized to mean the level exhibited by the subjects' performance on the pretests and posttests on the oral skills achievement tests. The oral skills achievement test consisted of ten structured questions that tested the subjects understanding and use of Oral skills in English. The piloting of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79 using the Kuder Richardson (K-R21) formula. This indicates that the dependent measure was valid and reliable because the reliability coefficient obtained was higher than the recommended level of 0.70 (Koul, 1992).

### **2.5 Data Collection Procedure**

Before starting the study, the researcher visited the schools and requested teachers' participation in the study and then commenced on training the teachers on how to conduct the program. The students in both the control and experimental groups were then pre-tested on the Oral skills achievement test. The experimental groups were then exposed drama activities while the control groups were taught oral skills using the traditional method. This continued for a period of ten weeks. At the end, a post test was given to students in both groups. All instruction content and tasks were conducted in a normal classroom setting.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

The findings of the effect of the dramatization program on the students' acquisition of Oral skills are presented and discussed in the sections that follow.

#### 3.1 Effects of dramatization on students' achievement in Oral skills

Prior to the treatment, data was collected from all the subjects using the Oral skills Achievement Test to ascertain whether they had similar characteristics. Only two groups E<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>2</sub> were pretested using the OSAT. To confirm whether the groups used were homogenous, the mean scores of OSAT were compared using the One Way Analysis of Variance and Independent samples T-test.

A close scrutiny of the subjects comparative results of their performance on the Oral skills achievement Test (OSAT) shown in Table 1 indicates that prior to the commencement of the oral skills lessons, the subjects were equal because the mean scores (M=3.9 and M=4.4) and the standard deviations (SD=1.89 and SD=1.36 for the E1 and C1 groups that received the pre-test were similar. This indicates that the students had comparable characteristics and that they were drawn from the same population (Bryman & Cramer, 1997).

Table 1: A comparison of the pre-test and post-test mean scores and standard deviations (SD) obtained by the subjects on Oral skills achievement test.

SCALE	GROUP				
	Overall (n-177)	E1(n=44)	E2 (n=53)	C1 (n=38)	C2 (n=42)
PRE-TEST		3.87	-	4.42	-
SD		1.89	-	1.36	-
POSTTEST		10.06	10.49	8.3	7.5
SD		2.71	2.72	2.18	1.51

It can be noted from the results after the start of the lessons, the performance of the subjects on the experimental group was higher than the performance of those in the regular programme. Evidence shows that the mean scores of (M=10.06 and M=10.49) obtained respectively by the two groups (E1 and E2) were markedly higher than the (M=8.3 and M=7.5) obtained by the (C1 and C2) respectively which did not receive the treatment. The study has revealed there is a relationship between learner achievement and the type of the instructional strategy used in the learning of the English Language. The students had performed fairly in the pretests tests; however their performance was improved significantly in the post test.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to determine whether the subjects mean scores were significantly different at the 0.05 level confirms this finding.

Table 2: Results of One-way ANOVA of the posttest mean scores obtained by the subjects on the OSAT.

SOURCE	df	SS	MS	F-ratio	P-value
Between groups	3	267.34	89.11	15.80*	0.00
Within groups	173	975.62	5.63		
Total	176	1242.96			

\*Significant  $p < 0.05$

The findings in Table 2 shows that the ANOVA results yielded an F-Ratio of F (3, 173=15.80,  $p < 0.05$ ) which obviously indicates that the performance of subjects in the dramatization group is higher because the mean scores are statistically significant at 0.05 level. This is in line with Ula's (2008) findings that students taught using creative drama activities performed better than those taught using the traditional method. Because this test was not enough to determine which of the experimental group was significant, it was therefore necessary to carry out a post hoc test to determine where the significance lies. Usually there are four post hoc tests namely; Dunnett's, Fisher's, Scheffe's, and Tukey's. Since the number of subjects was not similar in the groups Scheffe's post hoc test was deemed the most appropriate. Results of the post hoc test performed on students' post-test achievement scores using Scheffe's multiple comparisons are shown on Table 3.

Table 3: Scheffe's Multiple Comparisons of Students' Post-test Mean Scores on Achievement

(I) Programme	(J) Programme	Mean (I – J)	Significance Difference
E1	E2	-.42	.484
	C1	1.67*	.525
	C2	2.56*	.512
E2	E1	.422	.484
	C1	2.09*	.504
	C2	2.99*	.490
C1	E1	-1.67*	.525
	E2	-2.09*	.504
	C2	.894	.531
C2	E1	-2.56*	.512
	E2	-2.99*	.490
	C1	-.894	.531

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

An analysis of the results shown in Table 3 indicates that the experimental groups performed better than the control groups. This higher performance by the experimental groups could be as a result of the treatment given to the two experimental groups. Thus the findings are supported by the Scheffe's multiple comparisons for multiple range tests data shown in Table 3. This therefore, is an indication that the use of dramatization improves performance as seen in Mwangi et al (2015) study which found out that students taught using interactive methods got significantly higher scores than those taught in the conventional way.

### 3.1 Discussion

Following the analysis and interpretation of data, it was found that there was significant difference between the dramatization group and the regular group in Oral skills in English. The findings support the general hypothesis that dramatisation in language education positively affects the development of students Oral skills in English. In the two treatment groups the subjects performed higher on the Oral skills Achievement test (OSAT) than their counterparts in the regular program. These finding also reaffirm previous studies that demonstrated that utilization of dramatization activities in oral communication education classes improved the performance of students significantly when compared to other methods employed (Mwangi et. al, 2015; Ula, 2008). They are also congruent with the hypothesis that reported incompatibility of regular methods to simultaneously maximize students' perception of their learning experiences and hence academic performance, which may well be a function of teacher-dominated expository methods that characterize the regular methods of teaching. Dramatization enhances 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 (Mwangi (2015). In effect, the results from this study confirm Ula's (2008) assertion that the use of dramatization will involve students more actively in the learning process often results in higher academic achievement than those that put the in in a more passive role. Dramatization is highly interactive. In response, the results of this study have rpvnen to that dramatization to be quite useful and might be one solution to the constraints that teachers often experience with regular methods commonly used in language education (Chemwei, Kiboss & Cheruiyot, 2013; Mwangi, et. al, 2015).)

### 4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The main justification for the dramatisation students to show better performance in Oral skills is because they participated in drama activities while the others did not. This is an indication that the use of dramatisation can enhance students' performance in English Oral skills more than the regular conventional methods of teaching. One plausible explanation is that the drama students were exposed to speech activities than the non-drama students. The strategy of dramatization also changes the teaching approach from that dominated by the teacher-talk to that of learner-learner as well as teacher-learner interactions. Thus the strong relationship between the dramatization and student performance is an indication that dramatization can be useful in teaching concepts that teachers consider difficult to teach, especially English Oral skills (Kiboss, Musonye & Kiboss, 2002). A logical conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that the effectiveness of the dramatization has been empirically proven to exert influence on the students' performance in English Oral skills. As such the use of dramatization can be an effective approach to language education. This is consistent with observations from previous studies (Chemwei, et al., 2013; Mwangi, Nyaga, Kibui, & Odundo, 2015; Khaemba 2014). Indeed, dramatization makes the learning process more enjoyable by overcoming the academicism of the regular lesson

structure and bringing the outside real life right into the classroom. Moreover, dramatization could have a similar impact on a learner's competence in any other language or other subjects

In the light of this, the following recommendations are proposed:

A close scrutiny of the findings of this study advances the following implications:

- i) Teachers of English should get in-service training on the use of drama in English language teaching and learning. School principals and other stakeholders could also benefit from such courses.
- ii) There is need for a wider usage of dramatization. Teacher trainers should include the use of dramatization in both pre-service and in-service teacher education curriculum in Kenya. This will enable teachers of English adopt group activities that involve the use of dramatization.
- ii) Publishers of English language books should make dramatized learning activities part and parcel of the instructional materials for teachers such as teachers' guides as well as hand books for teachers of English which accompany instructional materials for students.
- iii) Teachers of English should be encouraged to use drama activities in their instruction in addition to other teaching methods.
- iv) The ministry of education should enhance the integration of the dramatization in the process of learning the English Language. 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.

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