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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNER CENTERED METHODS IN INTEGRATED ENGLISH APPROACH ON LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT OF LINGUISTIC SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA.

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Abstract

In spite of the efforts to enhance the performance of English in Kenyan secondary schools, there have been persistent challenges in using the integrated English approach on learning achievement of linguistic skills. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of learner centered teaching methods in integrated English approach on learning achievement of linguistic skills in public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The study utilized descriptive survey research design using mixed methods approach. A sample size of 251 teachers, 371 students and 134 heads of languages department was used. Purposive, Proportionate and simple random sampling techniques was used to obtain the respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules, observation and document analysis. The validity of the instrument was tested through expert judgment while reliability was achieved through the use of Croncbach Alpha. Quantitative data was analysed by use of frequencies, percentages means and standard deviation. Qualitative data was analysed thematically and presented in narrations and quotations. The study found that learner centered methods enabled learners to develop conceptualization, speaking and reading skills. The study recommended that teachers of English need to embrace the use of journal writing, demonstrate use of English grammar thus enabling students' acquisition of linguistic skills. The findings of this study will be significant to teachers of English to reevaluate their styles of teaching and improve on them.

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Introduction:-

Collins and O'Brien (2003) noted that student-centered instruction (SCI) is a teaching strategy in which learners affects the content, materials, activities and pace of learning. This learning model places the learner in the center of the learning process. Learner-centered as used in conjunction with processing, learning, or teaching describes a learning process where much of the power during the experience rests with learners (Estes, 2004). By utilizing learner-centered facilitation procedures, teachers ensure that learning experienced and competency-based learning excels (Davis, 2003). In addition, De la Sablonniere et al., (2009) stated that although an educational shift from a teacher-centered strategy to a learner-centered strategy may be related with positive consequences, it nonetheless necessitates teachers and learners to respectively modify their thinking and action towards education.

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In addition, Vavrus, et al., (2011) studied the adoption of student-centered strategies in various Sub-Saharan nations and concluded that instructors' useful concerns on student-centered method, professional support and favourable conditions of instructions were never considered useful. The study revealed that teachers had inadequate linguistic skills during instruction hindering their expression of multifaceted ideas and to asking of critical questions in the classrooms. In addition, it emerged that the assessment system was associated less with active learning and student-centred teaching approaches. However, it was associated more with direct teacher instruction thus making the it to be more of teacher-centred approach. This reveals that instructor-centred teaching approaches are practiced more in Sub Saharan nations. In addition, Hyvonena et al., (2014) showed that those collaborative and learner-centred approaches in authentic classroom setting can result in deeper understanding about student's efficacious agency in learning contexts.

Further, Mmela, (2010) argued that scholars learn more words fast through repeated exposure during writing and reading than through direct teaching approach. Artistic writing normally extends the ideas underlying the new words that eventually become a permanent part of writing and reading process. In addition, Mmela (2010) conveyed a synthesis of studies on studying and writing connections, locating that analyzing has influence on writing and vice versa; for this reason, they concluded that the two are cyclical and similarly facilitative devices that help each other. Newcomers learn how to read and write via conducting reading and writing. By use of studying experiences, most learners turn out to be proper readers in the identical manner they grasp verbal language (Mmela, 2010). Reading and writing need to come as naturally as language learning. Students write more and think at deeper levels when they are involved in low-stakes writing assignments, because the aim is on exploration of concepts rather than clarity of presentation. It allows students to connect what they know to what they are learning, and move beyond low-level recall level of information. Low-stakes writing also permits students to interact individually with information and concepts without the demand of creating well-polished finished work.

Further, Davidson et al., (2015) claimed that approaches that enhance the achievement of linguistic skills appear prominently during pre-school learning. On their part, Davidson et al., (2015) examined the effect of indirect language stimulation (ILS) approaches on receptive and expressive oral language of 4-year-old pupils using methods that could be easily imparted to instructors and implemented in the classroom. The outcome showed that students in classrooms where teachers had higher professional skills achieved significantly higher growth in expressive linguistic scores than students in other classes.

In their research, Ahmad and Aziz (2009) pointed out that in some instances instructors were of the view that classes need to be instructor-centred. In his part Ndirangu (2004) noted that unsuitable classroom skills including the adoption of teacher-centred approaches could sabotage the achievements and aims of the course. Eken (2000) as cited in Towett, Indoshi and Okwach (2013) pointed that in learner centred classes, learners were seen as being able to undertake a more active and participatory role as compared to traditional strategies. This instruction method enhanced active involvement of learners in classroom activities. However, in a classroom environment a teacher should be well equipped with various approaches of instruction in Integrated English.

Students have been shown to have poor conceptualization of linguistic skills and part of the challenge lies with the traditional teaching approaches adopted by their instructors in classroom (Ahmad & Aziz, 2009). A study carried out by Ng'ong'a (2002) showed that in Kenya school leavers have continued to perform poorly in English and this was associated to instruction approaches adopted by their teachers in secondary schools. This study assessed the effectiveness of the learner centered teaching approach adopted by teachers in enhancing the acquisition of linguistic skills among learners in secondary schools in Bungoma County.

Methodology:-

The research used descriptive survey design using mixed approach methods. Mixed methodology is the blending of two or more approaches in a research study resulting in both quantitative and qualitative data (Greene, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The study was mixed methods in a single research which permits for pragmatism.

The study targeted all the 724 teachers of English teaching Form three students in 206 secondary schools in Bungoma County. In addition, the study targeted all heads of languages department in all the 206 secondary schools. Form three teachers of English were specifically targeted for the purpose of this research because, it is at this level that set books are fully introduced according to the syllabus and thus the teacher is tasked with the responsibility of

teaching the skills appropriately using integrated approach. The sample size formula for this study is Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as quoted by Kasomo (2001) where a sample size of 251 teachers and 134 heads of languages department was obtained.

The researcher stratified the respondents into the six administrative units; Bungoma Central sub-county, Bungoma East Sub-county, Bungoma West sub-county, Bungoma North sub-county, Bungoma south Sub-county and Mount Elgon Sub-county making Bungoma County. The researcher further employed stratified sampling technique to select the respondents from each of the administrative unit. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to choose Form Three teachers of English involved in the study from each of the six administrative units. In addition, HODs in every selected school were selected purposively to take part in the study.

Questionnaires, interview schedules, observation and document analysis were the main data collection instruments used in this study. A pilot study was carried out in a neighbouring Kakamega County to establish the reliability of the research instrument. The content and structural validity of the instrument was tested by consulting supervisors of Kisii University and thereafter incorporating their positive inputs in the refining the final data collection instruments (Foxcroft, wood, Kew, Herrington & Segal, 2004).

The quantitative data from the questionnaire was first subjected to preliminary processing through validation, coding and tabulation in readiness for analysis with the help of the statistical package for social science (SPSS) computer package. Frequencies, percentages, means and Standard deviation was used to analyze quantitative data. Data analysed was presented by use of tables and figures. Qualitative data from interview schedules, observation and document analysis was thematically classified and arranged before they were reported in narrations and quotations as per the research objectives.

Results and Discussions:-

Students were requested to rate the use of learner centered methods in a four-point scale questions adopted from likert scale as; Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree. The outcome of the analyzed information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1:- Effectiveness of Learner Centered Methods on Achievement of Linguistic Skills

Statement	SD		D		A		SA		Overall Percentage	Mean	Std Dev
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	rercentage		Dev
In Integrated English lessons, students are provided with ample opportunities for interaction and participation in the classroom enabling the acquisition of speaking, writing,	27	11.4	7	3.0	83	35.0	120	50.6	85.6	3.12	.934
reading and listening skills											
Students can use listening skills to deduce and understand meaning correctly from spoken discourse	0	0.0	27	11.4	53	22.4	157	66.2	68.6	3.34	.804
Students can speak accurately, fluently, confidently and appropriately in a variety of contexts	43	18.1	30	12.7	164	69.2	0	0.0	69.2	2.91	1.092
Learners actively engage in learning language and literacy skills when they are provided with the necessary resources	61	25.7	23	9.7	73	30.8	80	33.8	64.6	2.88	1.246
Learners use a variety of language and learning strategies to expand learning beyond the											

classroom and to become	137	57.8	73	30.8	0	0.0	27	11.4	88.6	1.34	.982
independent, lifelong learners											
Learners practice their											
summarizing capabilities and											
they become more skillful in											
descriptive linguistic skills by											
writing news headlines for	23	9.7	61	25.7	80	33.8	73	30.8	64.6	2.25	1.278
lessons and topics discussed in											
class											

Table 1 shows that 120(50.6%) teachers agreed with the statement that in integrated English lessons, learners are given ample chances for interaction and involvement in the classroom enabling the acquisition of speaking, writing, reading and listening skills, 83(35.0%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement and 27(11.4%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 7(3.0%) teachers disagreed with the statement. A mean of 3.12 with a moderate standard deviation of .934 was obtained on the statement showing that majority (85.6%) of the teachers of English in secondary schools in Bungoma County reported that students in integrated English lessons get opportunities for collaboration and involvement in the classroom enabling the acquisition of speaking, writing, reading and listening skills. This implies that integrated English provides learners with an advantage of acquisition of the four skills in English. This was found to be in concurrence with the study findings of Akram and Malik (2010) who found out that successful integrative strategies helps language teachers in making English lessons active, engaging the students in various events and interactions. Moreover, Magoma (2016) argued that the instruction of English is aimed at permitting the students to speak and write with facility in ways considered to be appropriate to a diversity of settings therefore Integration enhances communicative competence in the learners through the acquisition of linguistic skills; writing, speaking, listening and reading. In addition, Mekheimer (2013) pointed out that integrated language approach had improved on the acquisition of language skills. This study finding showed that teaching of integrated English had enabled secondary school learners to acquire the four linguistic skills in English.

In addition, 157(66.2%) strongly agreed with the statement that students can use listening skills to deduce and understand meaning correctly from spoken discourse, 53(22.4%) teachers agreed with the statement while 27(11.4%) teachers were in disagreement with the statement. A mean of 3.34 and a low standard deviation of .804 was obtained on the statement showing and from the responses majority (88.6%) of the teachers of English in secondary schools in Bungoma County were of the view that through the integrated English learning approach, students can deduce and understand meaning correctly from spoken discourse. This implies that integrated English learning approach can enable learners to develop conceptualization skills and therefore are in a position to correctly interpret the meaning of spoken words. Furthermore, the students are in a position to write clearly what they have listened to and therefore acquire adequate communication competencies. This supports KIE (2002) report which pointed that integrated English tends to produce learners with competent communication skills. In addition, the finding was found to be consistent with those of Ohno, (2011) who pointed out that the notion of communicative capability is an amalgamation of a fundamental system of knowledge and capabilities required for communication. In addition, Chen (2007) noted that language skills should be integrated by the teacher in speaking writing, reading and listening processes. All these language skills need to be considered as interdependent, inseparable and integrated components of a language.

Similarly, 164(69.2%) teachers of English were in agreement with the statement that the adoption of learner centered methods enables students to speak accurately, fluently, confidently and appropriately in a variety of contexts, 43(18.1%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 30(12.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement. From the responses, a mean of 2.91 and a high standard deviation 1.092 was obtained on the statement showing it can be inferred that majority (69.2%) of the teachers of English believed that use of student centered learning approach in teaching integrated English enhances students acquisition of speaking skills and therefore are able to speak fluently and confidently in different occasions in and outside school. This further support the KIE (2000) report which noted that use learner catered teaching approach in integrated English tends to produce learners with competent communication skills which include the acquisition of speaking skills. Moreover, Farris, (2001) reported through student leaner centered strategies, students learn more words swiftly and incidentally through recurrent acquaintance through writing and reading as opposed to via direct teaching. In his part Mmela, (2010) pointed out that through student centered teaching approaches artistic writing logically encompasses the notions fundamental to the new words that ultimately become a permanent part of reading and writing. Moreover, Janudom

and Wasanasomsithi (2009) argued that English speaking skills are increasingly significant for students of integrated English; however, many students have very low English speaking competencies. This therefore shows that speaking skills could easily by acquired through use of student centered teaching approaches.

Further, 80(33.8%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement that learners actively engage in learning language and literacy skills when they are provided with the necessary resources, 73(30.8%) teachers agreed with the statement, and 61(25.7%) learners strongly disagreed with the statement while 23(9.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement. A mean of 2.88 and a high standard deviation of 1.246 was obtained on the statement showing that majority (64.6%) of the teachers of English were of the view that provision of necessary resources for integrated English influences positively the acquisition of literacy skills. This implies that adequate and relevant resources such as textbooks for integrated English motivate learners to learn language and literacy skills. This is consistent with the finding of Adeogun, and Osifila, (2008) who found a positive significant association between instructional resources and students' achievement. In addition, Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo (2013) pointed out that educational achievements in secondary schools are closely associated to use and adequacy of instructional and learning materials indifferent ways. Furthermore, Barasa (2005) pointed out that an improvement in the provision of language resources in secondary schools is considered as the backbone of any educational system since they facilitate understanding of difficult concepts. This therefore shows that provision of adequate resources such as textbooks, drama play materials could positively influence the acquisition of the linguistic skills in English.

On the statement that learners used an assortment of linguistic and learning approaches to enlarge learning beyond the classroom and to become independent, lifelong learners, 137(57.8%) teachers strongly disagreed, 73(30.8%) teachers disagreed while 27(11.4%) teachers were in agreement. A mean of 1.34and a moderate standard deviation of .982 was obtained on the statement and this showed that a majority (88.6%) of teachers of English were of the view that even with the use of learner centered teaching approaches, students do not learn beyond the classroom. This implies that learning beyond the classroom could influence learners' acquisition of language skills and therefore students need to be encouraged to use various language and learning strategies outside the classroom. This is in line with the findings of de la Sablonniere, et al. (2009) who argued that for effectiveness of student centered learning approaches, instructors and learners are required to adjust their thinking and action to education. However, Kalmar (2008) pointed out that literacy practices in classroom environment create literacy-related experiences. This implies that students need to ensure that there is learning beyond the classroom for effective achievement of set goals. Pearson (2004) concludes that learners need to be trained on strategies necessary for language learning which is autonomous of formal teaching setting. First, they should equip learners with metacognitive knowledge that will enable them to make the most of integrated English potentials (Kuppens, 2010; Lai & Gu, 2011; Sundqvist, 2009). The main aim of integrated English is the acquisition of the four skills in English; writing, reading, speaking and listening which enhances achievement in English.

In addition, 80(33.8%) teachers agreed with the statement that learners practice their summarizing capabilities and they become more skillful in descriptive linguistic skills by writing news headlines for lessons and topics discussed in class, 73(30.8%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement and 61(25.7%) teachers disagreed with the statement while 23(9.7%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. From the responses, a mean of 2.25and a high standard deviation of 1.278 was obtained on the statement showing that majority (64.6%) of the teachers of English in Bungoma County believed that students who practiced summarizing skills were more proficient in descriptive language skills. This shows that the introduction of integrated English had enabled learners to acquire summarizing skills enabling them to perform better academically. On the contrary KIE (2004) report pointed out that during the syllabus review of 2002, a number of areas including poetry, plays, novels, summary writing, grammar and oral literature were found to be too difficult for learners. Summarizing teaches learners how to distinguish the most significant concepts in a text, how to ignore unconnected information, and how to assimilate the important ideas in a meaningful way. Teaching learners to summarizing skills enhances their memory for what is read. This implies that integrated English has enabled students to acquire various skills in English.

On interviewing the heads of English Department, it was found out that since the adoption of integrated English approach, little improvement has been seen where teachers have been seen giving emphasis on writing as a skill. The classes were overpopulated and thus teachers lacked adequate time for individualised student coaching in terms of improving the writing skill and as a result, students writing skill was wanting and pathetic. In the same vein Behroozi and Amoozegar (2014) research exhibits the need to review the strategies used to teach English language in Iran. The collected information revealed that Iranian learners after nearly seven years of education were neither

enabled to speak fluently in English language nor interact with other people due to emphasis on grammatical structure during learning.

On observation, it was found out that in listening and speaking skills little improvement was noticed as most of the learners could not speak effectively and listen keenly while being given instructions. This is consistent with the work of other researchers such as Alonzo, (2014), Alharbi, (2015) and Sarwar, et al., (2014) who noted that globally majority of secondary school graduates were not able to speak English language properly. Sarwar et al., (2014) further noted that even though some bright learners are able obtain high marks in written tests, they are incapable of expressing themselves orally in English language.

In addition, majority of them had problems in attempting exercises related to listening as skill. It was further observed that most of the teachers of integrated English did not use learner centered teaching methods. This shows that there were inefficiencies in the achievement of writing, speaking, listening and reading skills among learners of Integrated English.

On checking documents with the teachers of English, it emerged that lesson plans and schemes of work on integrated English were available. However, most of the teachers did not have updated schemes of work as per term when the study was undertaken. This implies that learners were disadvantaged in terms of achievement of linguistic skills.

Conclusions and Recommendations:-

Learner centered methods enabled learners to develop conceptualization, speaking and reading skills. This showed that learner-centered methods were effective in learners' acquisition of linguistic skills. Students' acquisition of speaking skills enabled them to speak fluently and confidently in different occasions in and outside school.

The study recommended that teachers of English in secondary schools need to embrace student-centered teaching approaches during instruction since student-centered approaches were associated with efficiency in the acquisition of linguistic skills.

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