In any organized society, there is a deliberate attempt to provide for education that is relevant and one that will generally improve the welfare of every individual and the whole society at large. The Kenyan government, being no exception, has time and again set up educational commissions with an aim of getting an education system that is appropriate for the nation. The core of every system of education is an effective medium of instruction. The medium of instruction in Kenyan Secondary Schools is the English language. This gives the English language a central position in our education system.

This study set out to investigate the teaching and learning of English language, in the public secondary schools in Kenya. The study focused on the teacher's instructional behaviours and learners' participation in secondary School English language classrooms in Nairobi, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to determine the classroom interaction patterns in English language classrooms, and to identify which teaching techniques encourage learner participation. Literature on classroom interaction, teaching and learning of English, and other related studies, was reviewed with the purpose of establishing a basis for this study.

The research population was drawn from selected public secondary schools in Nairobi province. For the purpose of the study, nine public secondary schools were selected. A sample of three boys' secondary schools, three girls' secondary schools and three mixed secondary schools was used. From these schools the form two English language teachers and their learners were selected for the study. Data were mainly collected using observation schedules, SLIAS (Second Language Interaction Analysis Schedule adapted from Gathumbi 1995) and interview schedules. The classroom interaction was audio recorded, and data thus collected transcribed and later coded using SLIAS. Data collected from the observations and the interview schedules were analysed using descriptive statistics and results presented.

The results indicated that most teachers dominated the classroom interaction. It was also evident that the teaching techniques used were mainly teacher-centred such as lecturing, and question and answer. Out of the nine teachers observed, only one integrated more than seven different language teaching techniques and tried to facilitate learner participation. Time factor due to the elaborate syllabus was the main reason given by teachers for employing teacher-centred teaching techniques. The study observed a tendency by the teachers to strive towards covering the syllabus. This meant using the textbook leaving no room for their own innovativeness and/or creativity in the classrooms.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations and suggestions for further research were made. The syllabus should be re-structured so as to allow teachers to structure their teaching in line with their learners. Teachers should also go for in-service training so as to keep abreast with current developments in English language teaching and learning. Teacher training should also equip English language teachers with teaching techniques inclined towards learner-centered teaching. More research needs to be done, in the area of English language teaching; necessary suggestions in this line were made.