

This study aimed at finding out whether teachers' questions in English language classrooms promoted oral language learning by giving pupils enough opportunity to express themselves in the language. This was prompted by the fact that speaking skills are prioritized in the secondary school English syllabus, yet examination towards which most of classroom work is geared do not test for oracy. It was therefore felt that adequate attention is probably not given to English language speaking in the classroom.

A survey was carried out in five district secondary schools in Molo division, Nakuru district. This rural area was selected because it was considered a non-supportive environment for acquiring speaking skills in English language. The majority of pupils in these schools had at least one common language, apart from English, which satisfied most of their day-to-day oral communication needs. It was assumed that the question/ answer method was the most readily available and frequently used way of involving pupils in classroom discourse.

Five form four classes were observed for one week each thus a total of forty lessons, teachers' questions were recorded using an audio tape-recorder and transcription was then done. These were then analyzed and grouped in predefined categories. It was found that:

- (1) English language teachers asked more content-based questions.
- (2) They asked almost more closed than open questions.
- (3) They asked almost as many original as extension questions.
- (4) By the end of each English language lesson observed, most of the pupils had not uttered more than four words of English.
- (5) As long as the teacher's questions allowed them, most pupils were ready to give lengthy responses.

It was recommended that teachers of English skillfully use questions in the classroom to provide pupils with the much-needed oral English practice opportunities.