

2500/2

A STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE USAGE IN STANDARD FIVE  
CLASSROOMS OF M/M WEST MERU CENTRAL DISTRICT.

PROJECT - THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

BY

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*A study of English  
language usage in*




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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.



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C.K. KITHINJI

This project - Thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University Supervisor.



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## DEDICATION

- 1) To my parents, Jacob and Elizabeth who provided me with the educational background that made it possible for me to pursue higher education.
- 2) To my Love and my husband, Ken, without whom I would not have come this far.
- 3) To my beloved children, Nkirote, Kongi and Konene; who bore and braved my harrowing absence with strained patience. May you grow to be brave, patient, hard-working and God fearing people.
- 4) All children as they pursue academic excellence.

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## ABSTRACT

The researcher in this study tried to establish the level of English language usage in standard five classrooms of Meru Central District. The study sought answers to the following questions:

- (i) Were the levels of English language usage attained by the standard five pupils in the selected schools at par with the syllabus expectations?
- (ii) How did the teachers facilitate English language usage by the pupils as per the level of the class?
- (iii) Was the 1<sup>st</sup> term's syllabus content covered?
- (iv) Where there problem areas for the teachers and pupils in English Language usage?

The study involved 254 pupils from six primary schools, and two teachers of English from two of these schools. Data Were collected through administration on various language abilities expected to have been, taught by the 1<sup>st</sup> term of standard five and lesson observation schedules in which two teachers were observed. Methods of analysis included calculation of percentages, means and median of the test scores. Description of what was observed was also done. The results obtained were presented in tables and analysed before conclusions were established.

The results of the study revealed that the pupils of standard five in rural schools were not at par with the 1<sup>st</sup> term's syllabus expectations. Their language usage was poor and that some of their teachers did not have the

expected knowledge of English language to enable them to teach the subject and deal with unexpected possibilities of language usage in the classroom.

The findings also revealed that the syllabus was too wide and congested, consequently the time allocated for teaching was not enough. Also that teachers teaching English in the rural areas kept code switching and that slowed down English language learning and subsequent usage.

It was recommended that the primary English syllabus be reversed to put into consideration amount of work to be covered and appropriate material to be taught at class levels that can handle them. That the authorities concerned with curriculum development should receive continued feedback from teachers of English on books, the syllabus and other materials; and that training of teachers in primary teacher colleges be more intensified to ensure that the teacher's knowledge of English language was good enough to teach at the primary school level.

It was suggested that further studies in this area should consider suitability of the course books in relation to the mastery of language usage; extent to which the primary teachers of English should be prepared to enable them to handle the subject competently and the level at which the language that is to be used as a medium of instruction should be introduced in the education institutions.

## CHAPTER I

### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

The teaching and use of English language has been an issue which has occupied a central place in primary education since the achievement of independence in Kenya. Failure by Asians and Africans in national examinations at both primary and secondary level in the mid-1950s was attributed to failure to learn English (Stabler 1969). In these pre-independence years, European, Asian and African children were taught in three separate and non-integrated school systems.

In European primary schools, English was the language of instruction and French and Latin were introduced in standard 5. Asian primary pupils were taught in one of their four vernaculars – Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu-English was taught as a subject in the first two to three years and then became the medium of instruction. In African schools the children were taught initially in mother tongue, English was taught first as a separate subject and became the language of instruction in the fifth year of schooling. In the examinations at the end of the primary school, Asian and African pupils revealed marked weaknesses in the use of English.

Apparently, something was wrong with the teaching of English, and in 1957, the Ministry of Education created a special centre as an offshoot of the inspectorate to investigate this state of affairs. An attempt to integrate learning of English language and the contents of other subjects was made

and this gave birth to the innovation known as the English medium. Pupils were to be taught all subjects from class one using English as the medium of instruction. The English medium later came to be associated with the New Primary Approach (NPA) whose significance was the attempt it made to have children learn by doing. In Eshiwani's terms, this was "the most significant curriculum innovation in Kenya." (Eshiwani 1984).

In spite of this success, NPA was having serious problems. Due to rapid expansion of numbers of pupils enrolling in school and subsequent employment of untrained teachers, it was increasingly difficult to maintain standards of training and supervision. English medium eventually declined since inservicing of teachers and the provision of the special facilities required could not keep pace with such demands (Eshiwani, op. cit.). This was the situation the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (1976) dealt with when they made the recommendations:

To use as a language of instruction the predominant language spoken in the schools catchment area for the first three years of primary education. (Recommendation 101, p. 54).

To introduce English as a subject from primary I and make it supersede the predominate language as the medium of instruction in primary 4. (Recommendation 102, p. 55).

To the researcher, these recommendations in a way reverted the situation to what there was in the mid-1950s. As the policy above

implied, in rural areas where communities were largely monoethnic, the language of the catchment areas (usually the mother tongue) should have been used as a medium of instruction. At class 4 level, there was transfer from one teaching medium to another. This, as discussed earlier, is what was seen to be the contributory factor of Asian and African children from performing well at various tiers of schooling. Could this same weakness be a contributory factor of learning 40 years later? Standard five level was the serious point at which most primary school examinable curriculum was introduced. If, as had been observed by a number of researchers (see details in the literature review p. 10) the hand-maid language may not have been mastered, then this could have been the root cause of class eight K.C.P.E. performance.

The fact that English language was used for educational instructions, the standard and mastery of this language that a student had could influence his performance in other subjects and intellectual growth. This close relationship between language and cognitive development was expressed very well by the National Association of Teachers of English (1976) when they observed:

Language should not be thought of only as communication. One of the major functions that concerns teachers is its use for learning; for trying to put new ideas into words, for testing one's thinking on other people, for fitting new ideas with old ones, and so on, which all need to be done to bring about new understanding. These functions

suggest active uses of language by the pupils as opposed to passive reception.

This close relationship between language and learning should be reflected in classroom activities that take the form of listening, speaking, reading and writing as indicators of language usage.

As the Kenyan language policy stood at the time of this research, standard 4 pupils should have begun learning all content subjects in the curriculum using English language. Class 4 therefore became a transition class. English was no longer taught not only as a separate subject, but was used as a medium of instruction for the first time. The process of changing from one medium of learning to another had usually resulted in the loss of considerable learning time. At standard 5 therefore, the assumption was that the pupils had mastered English as a language and could use it for learning other subjects. The researcher therefore sought to find out whether this was the case.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

While the Kenyan standard five child in rural schools was expected to learn using the English language, there were reservations about how prepared he was. As pointed out earlier, standard 4 was the transition class. At this level, English was taught not only as a subject but it became the vehicle of all educational thought and expression for the first time. The process of changing from one medium of learning to another – as highlighted in the Asian/African pupils case in the mid-1950s –

usually results in the loss of considerable learning time. At standard 5 level therefore, the assumption was that pupils had mastered English language usage and could comfortably use it for learning other subjects.

From personal observation and occasional comments given during English language teaching facilitation seminars and subject panel meetings at district levels, this was not the case. Complaints about weaknesses in composition writing, sentence structures, tenses and general grammatical aspects had been raised. Also the K.C.P.E. Newsletter of 1995 through to 1998 pointed a finger at weakness in fluency, competence and general mastery of the language usage. The point of interest was, since standard 5 was the serious point at which upper primary examinable material was introduced, could this be the root cause of the said poor performance at the end of standard 8?

The present study set to find out how prepared pupils at standard 5 level were in English language usage, bearing in mind that this was the level at which – it was assumed, pupils could now learn even other content subject areas using English as a medium of instruction. The aim was not to compare pupils' performance at standard 8 level and language usage at standard 5, but it was to study pupils' mastery of language abilities such as; tenses, prepositions, adjectives, punctuation, comprehension etc. This was because if these were not mastered at an early level, they were liable to affect subsequent learning and hence performance.

Questions arising from this research problem therefore were:

1. Were the levels of English language usage attained by the standard five pupils in the selected rural schools at par with the syllabus expectations?
2. How did the teacher facilitate English language usage by the pupils as per the level of the class?
3. Was the 1<sup>st</sup> term's syllabus content covered?

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Specifically the researcher sets out to:

1. Establish the mastery level of English language usage in standard 5, according to the syllabus, using tests on different language abilities.
2. Observe and establish teacher's language usage and reactions to pupils' responses and language usage in English language.
3. Identify problem areas of teachers and pupils in English language usage.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It was hoped that the findings of this research would be of interest to teachers, teacher trainers and curriculum developers in the following ways;

- (i) Allocation of reading materials of different levels of difficulty to children with different levels of language usage in class.

- (ii) Formation of school language policies. Using some of the issues raised in this research, teachers could discuss how best they could help their pupils master English language usage.
- (iii) Evaluation of English language syllabuses for teacher training colleges as well as those used in primary schools.

### **1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

The mode of the researcher's study limited her time. The research project was limited to three months. Therefore, the study concentrated on only one level of the primary school course (standard 5) because this was the serious point at which examinable curriculum materials were introduced. Language usage mastery level at this point may hence have had advance implications at the end of the primary school course when these pupils sat for the national examinations.

The study further concentrated on one zone out of the three in Meru Central district. This was because more time would have been needed to cover all three, especially since the distances to be covered were vast.

The factor being studied (language usage) entailed mastery of all language skills. Yet, language skills are so complex a phenomenon and closely related to the total context in which they are used as well as to many non-linguistic skills such as gestures and so on; that it may often seem impossible to separate them for the purpose of any kind of

assessment. A person always uses language in particular situations at particular times, and without this kind of context, language may lose much of its meaning.

Finally, this study used classroom observation as one of its research instruments. This mode of study has been criticized as it has been argued that the presence of the researcher in the classroom influences behaviour of the teacher and pupils. However, no better way had yet been found to enlighten the teachers on what actually happens in the classroom. Familiarizing oneself with the target group minimized this to acceptable extents.

## **1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

1. English Medium – English as the language through which instruction is done.
2. K.C.P.E. Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
3. Language Competence – In Chomskian sense – is the ability to produce and recognise correct language forms and use language for one's particular needs.
4. Medium of Instruction – Language used for teaching.
5. M/m West – Miriiga Mieru West; an educational division in Meru Central District.
6. Mother Tongue – the language naturally acquired in infancy or childhood, also referred to as 1<sup>st</sup> language.

7. N.P.A. – New Primary Approach.
8. Second Language – 'The Language that pupils acquire next after learning their 1<sup>st</sup> language.
9. A<sub>1</sub> - C<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub> - C<sub>2</sub> - Codes for the schools selected.
  - A<sub>1</sub> - best performing school in the Municipality
  - B - Average performing school in the municipality
  - C<sub>1</sub> - Poor performing school in the municipality
  - A<sub>2</sub> - Best performing school in the rural area
  - B<sub>2</sub> - Average performing school in the rural area
  - C<sub>2</sub> - Poor performing school in the rural area

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature reviewed in this section concerned the English language usage in the primary school. Research done overseas, in Africa and in Kenya was referred to. The review was done in two parts:

1. Literature related to content
2. Literature related to research methodology.

#### 2.2 LITERATURE RELATED TO CONTENT

Over the years, emphasis had been on the teaching of grammar and phonology with little attention being given to language usage. Teaching of language had mainly been seen as the formation of habits by drilling after drilling. These drills form the basis of the audio-lingual approaches to second language teaching which was based on behavioural psychology that erroneously saw all behaviour to be a result of conditioning. Fries (1945) claimed that conditioning could be achieved in three months!

It was noted that this was an oversimplification of language learning and even today, educators are still looking for effective methods of teaching language usage (Raimes 1983). Though no definite answer has been

possible, better understanding of what language learning really was had shed some light on useful ideas that could be used to facilitate the attainment of good language usage. The central idea is that good language usage was achieved through the mastery of language abilities for the different language skills. Examples of these included - mastery of tenses, punctuation, parts of speech like adjectives, verbs, prepositions, excetra; number, comprehension, sentence structures; and other grammatical aspects not mentioned here. Teachers should therefore structure classroom teaching in such a way that as much opportunity as possible is given for the practice of these in order to enhance mastery of language usage.

Schonbein (1980) reported an experiment with German nursery school children who acquired the basics of English within 8 months. A model adult, maximum exposure to the second language usage and a play-oriented situation where the pupils talked while playing were the crucial elements. A dialogue model partner for example, a puppet and a relaxed classroom atmosphere where positive instant reinforcement was given were further elements of the classroom. Inconspicuous revision of what had been learnt was also done regularly. This to the researcher looked like the basis of the NPA approach which was employed in the late 1960s and early '70s and which was quite successful save the rapid expansion of numbers of pupils and uncorrespondingly small number of trained teachers. From these two experiences, it was clear that children needed not to wait to be introduced to a target language, especially one that was

to be used as a medium of instruction. This was because there was a considerable linguistic problem involved in requiring a child to change from one language of instruction to another half way through the primary school, as was the case with the Kenyan language policy. Class 4 grade becomes the transition class and one-year later, the class five grade seemed to inherit the confusion. The main damage in the transfer from one teaching medium to another lay in the loss of meaning, hence considerable time was lost in-between as pupils struggled to adjust to the change.

Brumfit (1985) in support of Schonbeins structuring reminded us that the whole point should be to develop fluency, the confidence to use the target language and therefore he viewed formal accuracy-as brought out in the teaching of English in lower primary as a separate subject-subordinate to it. He further stated that confidence would be developed only where pupils were encouraged to use the target language, even when they would use obviously 'foreign English'. Constant correction of errors is therefore seen as counterproductive if it was done at the expense of fluency.

Selinger (1977) associated competence in any target language with its usage. Those who interact and therefore practised the target language were termed high-input generators in that they encouraged more input of language usage to come from either the teacher or even outside and

therefore learnt more. Those who said nothing were less cognitively involved and therefore achieved little. This was further verified by research done in Lebanon and Egypt that indicated that any second language mastery was more related to the language having been used as a medium of instruction as early as possible than to the number of years it had been taught as a subject (Segart 1974). In the Kenyan primary schools, pupils are expected to have mastered English language usage after three years of learning it as a subject. Selinger and Segart's findings seemed to imply that our pupils may not have been ready after such a short duration of learning the language as a subject. Rather if it were to be used as a medium of instruction straight from grade one, then we would have expected marked mastery at the grades 4 and 5 level. It was important that at grade 5, they would be fully competent with the language usage so as to be able to learn the syllabus materials being introduced here as this was the serious point at which examinable material was introduced.

In Kenyan schools, Maritim (1984) found a significant correlation between language usage and scores in English and other content subjects at .05 and .01 for standards 3 and 5 levels. He was interested in language usage (in form of interaction) between pupils and teachers. He found out that the more pupils were encouraged to practise language use, the more this helped them to modulate the input they received to increase its comprehensibility. This was further verified by Dr. Ryangas' findings that

the more a learner was able to understand and use English progressively, attaining its feel and fluency, the better one was placed in the performance of other curriculum subjects (Ryanga 1995). The implications here were that pupils who would be restricted in language usage only at specified time for instance, as in learning English as a separate subjects in standards 1 to 3 may not attain its feel and fluency and therefore comprehensibility would be at its minimum. The consequences would be low performance at the level in which this language was expected to be fully utilized for full time learning purposes.

A study by Hann (1982) in Machakos on the development of language and reading assessment material found that teachers encourage little language usage in the classroom. This was because they mainly used the lecture method; followed the course book closely, emphasized memorization and taught words in isolation. The teachers also encouraged chorus responses by the pupils rather than individual ones. In a few instances that pupils attempted to use the target language, they portrayed weaknesses in its abilities such as wrongly used tenses, mixed up pronouns, made wrongly constructed sentences and so on. According to him, the nature of the teaching methodology employed resulted in little learning and consequently minimal language usage. The fact that there was very little pupil-talk was an evidence to the researcher that teachers separated language from its usage.

It had also been observed that teachers often restrict language usage in the classroom by Long and Sato (1983) cited by Gales (1983). They found out that one way teachers did this was by asking display questions. These are questions which asked for information the teachers already had : for example, "What is your name?" such questions required only one word answer and would not encourage any further language usage. Preferable would be, questions which they term referential in that more information would be called upon. Such would also encouraged diversified language usage and subsequent corrections where errors would be made. For example, "What did you do over the weekend?" Such a question would solicit for proper use of tenses, well constructed sentences, careful selection of pronouns to use, number aspects and so on; as elicited by a probable answer such as the following.

- I helped my mother to digged over the weekend. He had many works to do, so I help her.

Further still, such referential questions may lead to further questions and therefore more practice on language use and the teachers could have more opportunity to provide more input to the children.

### **2.3 LITERATURE RELATED TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The review of literature on the previous section focussed on the content of the problem statement. The review of literature in this section will be on selected methods of gathering data to establish the mastery levels of language usage at the level being studied.

Second language teaching aims at producing pupils who are proficient in the usage of the language being taught. Being proficient in language use spells out being an expert in its usage due to training and practice. Yet, a look at what had been written by different scholars portrayed how difficult it has been to state exactly what language proficiency is. Different definitions of language proficiency portray different types of proficiencies according to the mode of usage. These modes reveal differences at the production levels such as in usage of grammatical devices like tenses, parts of speech (adverbs, adjectives, propositions), comprehension and sentence structures. As most definitions indicate, the idea of language usage will persistently run through the general notion of language proficiency.

While discussing the nature of psychological processes that underline language usage, Oller (1979) described language proficiency as consisting of an expectancy grammar system which was constructed and modified in the course of language acquisition. Expectancy grammar was used by Oller and other scholars to describe a learner's knowledge of a language that enabled him to figure out what was about to be said as he listened, or what was to be written if he was reading. This to the researcher is an evidence as to why cloze tests are viewed by many as a valid and reliable measure of general second language proficiency (Bialystok and Howard 1979, Oller 1976).

Vollmer and Sang (1969) shared a similar concept with Oller when they defined language proficiency as the degree of a learner's language usage. This definition presupposed the possibility of distinguishing the degree of using a language particularly in a foreign language learning situation, according to the level of the learner's competence. Their definition suggested that an individual's measured proficiency would correspond to the level of his language usage. If this was so, then the lack of language proficiency in a learner could indicate a very low ability level of language usage in him.

Morrison and Lee (1985) in their test validation study defined language proficiency as the subject's apparent mastery of the English language system and its usage, with special attention to grammar, pronunciation, comprehension and general fluency. Harrison (1983) realised the complexity of defining language proficiency and simplified the whole concept in asking the question that, having learnt this much of language, what could the pupil do with it?

Heaton J.B. (1988) posited that a language test which sought to find out what candidates could do with a language provided a focus for purposeful everyday language usage. It had a useful effect on the learning of particular language usage, and has positive effect on learning habits. The classroom test is concerned with evaluation for the purpose of enabling teachers to increase their own effectiveness by making

adjustment in their teaching to enable certain groups of students or individuals in the class to benefit more.

A good classroom test would help to locate the precise area of difficulty encountered by the class or the individual students in that class. At the standard five class level being studied in this research, it was found imperative to construct varying tests for the various language abilities included in the syllabus. These included usage of prepositions, tenses, number concept, comprehension, sentence structures (to be found in composition writing) etc. This is because unless the teacher is able to identify and analyse pupil's weak areas in handling the target language, she would be in no position, to render any assistance at all through appropriate anticipation, remedial work and additional practice. Rogers (1975).

Such tests would also enable the teacher to ascertain which parts of the language programme had been found difficult by the class. In this way, the teacher could evaluate the effectiveness of the syllabus as well as the methods and materials she uses. The test could indicate, for example, certain areas of the syllabus which had not taken sufficient account of the learner's language usage needs, or which for some reason may have been glossed over. In such areas, the teacher would be conversant with those problem areas encountered by groups of students. For instance, if

two or three pupils in a class of 40 confused the present perfect tense with the present simple tense as in –

I already see the film-

the teacher could correct the error before moving on to a different area.

However, if seven or ten pupils made this mistake the teacher would take this problem area into account when planning remedial or further teaching.

According to Ryanga C. W. (1995), teacher made tests are constructed according to some specific subject matter that is taught to a class over a period of time. The level of the test items usually consists of specific characteristics of a certain grade or age group on their mastery level of the material covered during teaching sessions, as an evidence of the performance level for that class or age group only. Since this study targeted language usage in the standard five class, tests modeled after teacher-made tests were found an appropriate tool for data collection.

Other than the use of tests, Allwright and Bailey (1991) advanced two other ways of getting a record of what goes on in a particular classroom. The first involves direct observation where on the one hand, the observer sits in the classroom making free-hand observation notes on what she observed. On the other hand, she could wish to focus on some particular phenomena in the classroom which means she may have a schedule with categories to be observed. To have a complete record, the researcher

could also wish to audio-tape or video-record a class in progress. Data from audio and video recordings would need to be transcribed so as to have a written down and more comprehensive record of what transpired in the classroom. In this study, direct observation was done, using freehand and a specifically designed observation instrument to fit the researcher's interest (See Appendix B).

Through teacher-made tests and classroom observation, teachers have been able to evaluate their behaviours and know whether they have reached and attained the goals which they set for their teaching (Moscowitz 1970). They have been able to use such knowledge in a situation characterized by personal meaning. Amidon and Hough (1967) also said that through classroom observation, teachers and teacher trainers have been able to get quick feedback on their behaviour and that of their trainees. They have also been able to discover for themselves the most effective patterns of teacher and pupil's behaviour. The researcher in this study therefore undertook to investigate English language usage in selected standard five classrooms mainly through administration of tests and classroom observation.

The next chapter gives an exposition of the procedures followed in the designing of the instruments used in collecting data for the present study.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology procedures adopted for this study were derived from the literature review in chapter two. Data collection was mainly through administration of a test-battery and classroom observation.

This chapter deals with procedures used to collect data. It describes the sample, the research instrument and how they were developed and administered.

#### 3.2 THE SAMPLE

Six schools out of 27 from m/m west division of Meru-Central District were chosen for this study. Two variables were used namely:

- (i) The locality of the school; that is whether they were in the municipality or the rural area.
- (ii) The 1<sup>st</sup> term's performance on standards maintaining tests for the division.

The schools were therefore selected on the criteria of being good, average and poor. Three schools from the municipality area and 3 from the rural area were finally selected. These were given codes as follows:

A - Good

B - Average

C - Poor

The ones ( $A_1$ ,  $B_1$ ,  $C_1$ ) were from the municipality, while the twos ( $A_2$ ,  $B_2$ ,  $C_2$ ) were from the rural area.

Forty (40) pupils from the standard five classes from each school were to be selected. This would have given a target population sample of 240 pupils. However, different numbers from each school sat for the tests as shown in table III.I.

**Table III.I: Subjects of the Study**

School	No. Enrolled	No. that sat for the tests.
$A_1$	46	46
$B_1$	37	37
$C_1$	57	56
$A_2$	38	37
$B_2$	45	44
$C_2$	42	34
<b>TOTAL</b>		254

In some schools, the standard 5 streams comprised very few pupils. For example, school  $B_2$  had two standard five streams comprising 22 pupils in one stream and 23 pupils in the other stream. In school  $C_1$  two standard 5 streams- one with 29 pupils and the other with 28 pupils were put together in one class to sit the tests. The enrollment of pupils in school  $B_1$  and  $A_2$  was less than 40 pupils, while in school  $C_2$ , only 34 pupils sat for the tests.

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

#### 3.3.1 The Test Battery

To establish the mastery level of language usage in the standard five class, tests that were modeled after teacher-made tests were administered. These were made following the discrete - point technique and were based on a sample of language abilities included in the 1<sup>st</sup> term's syllabus for standard 5. The test were 8 in number and they tested abilities as shown below:

- 1) Number concept
- 2) Use of adjectives
- 3) Use of prepositions
- 4) Use of conjunctions
- 5) Use of punctuation
- 6) Use of tenses
- 7) Comprehension
- 8) Composition

Factors that prompted the researcher to construct tests that were modeled after teacher - made tests were:

- (i) Teacher - made tests are constructed according to some specific subject - matter that is taught to a class over a period of time.
- (ii) The level of the test items usually consists of specific characteristics of a certain grade or age group.
- (iii) The mastery level of the material covered during the teaching session is an evidence of the performance level of that class.

- (iv) The tests constructed challenge only one language ability at a time, a factor which the researcher found relevant in testing this level of pupil for the purpose set by this study.
- (v) The method was deemed economical time-wise.

### 3.3.2 THE TESTS

These were derived from a sample of language abilities expected to have been taught and covered by pupils of standard five. The 1<sup>st</sup> term's syllabus materials were used to give the upper limit of the expected language concept and usage. This period (1<sup>st</sup> term) was chosen because the research was carried out in the first month of 2<sup>nd</sup> term.

A total of 8 tests based on 8 randomly selected abilities were set, following the standard five's 1<sup>st</sup> term syllabus as seen in 3.3.1. Test comprised of <sup>ten</sup> items. The composition was also marked out of ten.

#### 3.3.2.1 Test One: Number Concept

This was set to test if the pupils had mastered the concept of singular and plural. Unlike in class three and four where they had dealt with changing separate words into singular and plural forms at class five level, they were expected to deal with the same concept at sentence level. This involved changing a number of words in the sentence into their appropriate forms in order to have number and person agreement. For example,

The lady is carrying a baby

The ladies are carrying babies.

### 3.3.2.2 Test Two: Use Of Adjectives

At standard five level, pupils are introduced to adjectives as noun qualifiers. The pupils are taught that adjectives help learners to know more about the nouns, and that adjectives normally come before the nouns. The test was made up of sentences that pupils were expected to pick adjectives that told more about the nouns by underlining them.

### 3.3.2.3 Test Three: Use Of Prepositions

Prepositions are used to enforce clarity in language usage. At this level, the syllabus posits that pupils should be taught prepositions as used when they come before nouns or pronouns. A list of words and their correct prepositions is given and taught during the 1<sup>st</sup> term of class five; for example:

Afraid - of

Aim - at

Angry - with

Ashamed - of

The test consisted of sentences in which blanks were left at strategic places as in the following example;

We come to school \_\_\_\_\_ bus.

The highway passes \_\_\_\_\_ the town.

A list of probable answers was given at the end of the test for pupils to choose from.

#### **3.3.2.4 Test Four: Use Of Conjunctions**

The ability to join words in form of two separate sentences is within the realm of developing good sentence structures. Competence in good sentence structures is a base for good language usage. Pupils at standard five grades are taught the basics of joining sentences through simple conjunctions like: - and, but, which, etc.

This test comprised pairs of sentences that were supposed to have been joined using conjunctions given for instance.

- a) He was working hard
- b) He failed in the examination.

Answer: He was working hard but he failed in the examination.

#### **3.3.2.5 Test Five: Use Of Punctuation Marks**

The role of punctuation is to ensure that people's expressions either in speech or in written form are clear. At standard 5 grade, pupils are taught that punctuation is very useful and that without it most pieces of written work are difficult to understand. The uses of the most basic punctuation marks like; the comma, full stop, question mark, apostrophe,

quotation marks, exclamation mark and use of the capital letter are taught at this level.

In this test, pupils were required to punctuate the given sentences using any of the given marks which best fitted the sentences. This way, they would demonstrate their knowledge of the uses of these marks.

### 3.3.2.6 Test Six: Use Of Tenses

The formation of English verbs from one tense to another has been observed to cause difficulties for many children. This is because many children's first language - especially in the Kenyan situation - does not follow similar patterns as the English language. For instance, the addition of a consonant, or the change of a final consonant to form the various tenses. Again, the way in which some children speak is hampered by incorrect applications of tenses. The importance of knowledge and mastery of such tense usage is hence unquestionable if pupils have to gain command of language usage.

The sub-test items were set in completion type of sentences. The blanks were to be filled in with the correct form of the verb given at the end of each sentence. Pupils were to put each verb into its correct tense as demanded by the sentence context.

Examples:

- (i) Yesterday night \_\_\_\_\_ with each other. Argue

(ii) Tomorrow he \_\_\_\_\_ to my place at this time. Come

### **3.3.2.7 Test Seven: Comprehension**

This test was set to establish mastery of the literal and critical comprehension skills. If the pupils have to be competent students in any one-subject area, they must be able to read, internalize specific terms and concepts, interpret, translate and recall information that they read. All these are reading comprehension skills. Melnik and Merritt (1972) agree that comprehension ability does indicate mastery of language usage. It triggers intellectual growth and development. The items within this test were based on the basic comprehension skills such as recall, inference, deductions and applications.

### **3.3.2.8 Test Eight: Composition**

An extended - response type of composition was chosen for this test where pupils were expected to write a lengthy answer to a general topic. This type of composition was chosen because such an essay measures a complex of interwoven skills such as organization of ideas, sentence construction, expressing oneself in one's own words, using acceptable functional language expressions and a host of other cohesive language devices. These skills are without doubt fundamental to the mastery of language usage.

Pupils were asked to write a paragraph or two on any topic that interested them. To ascertain objectivity in scoring the composition, a five- part scale was used [see appendix C page 76].

### 3.3.3 LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE:

Two English lessons were directly observed by the researcher. The two average schools were used for this purpose. An observation schedule sheet designed to fit the researcher's area of specification was used. This schedule sheet is attached as Appendix B.

The researchers interest in observing an English lesson in progress was to find out:

- (a) If the pupils were adequately involved in the learning process
- (b) Types of response pupils give. Were they in single words or in sentence form?
- (c) Whether the weaknesses portrayed in the test battery also surfaced in their verbal language usage.
- (d) If such weaknesses were addressed by the teacher when they occurred.
- (e) Whether the teacher had any language usage weaknesses.

The observation schedule was expected to supplement the test battery and to verify the findings of the tests administered. It was hoped that the two research tools would help to collect enough data that would lead to answers to questions raised in the study.

### **3.4 ADMINISTRATION OF THE RESEARCH TOOLS**

The tests were administered by the researcher herself at each of these schools. Instructions given at the beginning of each test were read and explained by the researcher while the pupils listened. Pupils were allowed to ask questions at this stage. The examples given were also explained to make instructions clearer. After going through instructions, pupils were then asked to start answering questions from test one through to test eight. The test battery was timed to last for one-hour after which pupils were asked to hand in the papers.

After the administration of the tests in schools, B<sub>1</sub> and B<sub>2</sub> (the average schools), two other dates were set for lesson observation. The researcher assured the teachers who were to be observed that the interest was not on inspection basis, but on how children generally learn and use English language in a classroom situation.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE**

Methods of analysis included calculation of percentages, means and median for all the tests. Description of what was observed during lesson observation was also done.

Chapter IV focuses on presentation, analysis and discussion of data.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the research methodology used in this study. Aspects such as the design of the study, sampling, research tools used, and how they were developed was outlined.

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses data collected.

#### 4.2 THE TESTS ANALYSIS

##### 4.2.1 Test One: Number Concept.

Information presented in Table IV.1 is on the performance of the 254 pupils who sat for the test battery.

**Table IV.1: Use of Number Concept Test Scores**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of students	90	45	25	19	13	23	16	10	6	6	1
%	35	18	10	8	5	9	6	4	2	2	0
Average	53%		10%	36%							

**N = 254**

**Mean = 2.35**

**Median = 1**

Table IV.1 shows that majority of the pupils are poor in the mastery of number concept usage. The mean is 2.25 which is far below the expected average performance which should have ranged between 4 to 6 marks when the test is marked out of ten. It is further observed that 53% of the pupils were below average. A mere 10% were on the 2.35 average while 36% were above this low average mark. This is below where the syllabus expects them to be.

### **Discussion**

Although the teaching of number concept has been indicated severally in the content of language abilities being taught; (primary education syllabus volume I pages 52, 55, 73; and volume II pages 79, 80, 88), the results as shown in Table IV.1 are disturbing. It was disheartening to realise that 35% of the pupils in the sample studied got a zero mark, meaning they had no idea of changing words from their singular into plural form.

Further analysis of the test papers revealed weaknesses in various types of words and roles that go with changing them from singular to plural, for example, nouns whose plural forms are irregular like woman were given the regular plural forms and written as womans or womens. Pronoun changes too give them a lot of trouble. For example, He was written as we, Hes, Its, She etcetra . The concept of the verb to be is changing into are was not understood either. Hence, most of the mistakes made were major.

The kind of confusion that ensued in the usage of this language concept; according to the researcher could be attributed to the approach of teaching the number concept as laid down in the syllabus. The singular and plural idea is restricted to single words and very little is said about using these words in sentence form. It is in the class five 1st term syllabus that the concept is taught in a sentence pattern form for the first time. Therefore, the pupils have not mastered it.

#### **4.2.2 Test Two: Adjectives**

The standard four language content has a lot to do with adjective usage both in sentence patterns teaching and new items. Precisely, five sentence patterns have the adjective as one of the elements and 23 adjectives are listed as new learning items (Opt. cit. pages 79-81 and 84). At standard five level (first term) one sentence pattern containing the adjective as an element; as in

Too adjective/ adverb

It's too high,

is taught, plus 5 new items as adjectives.

The results of the test on adjective usage are shown in Table IV.2

**Table IV.2: Use of Adjectives Test Scores**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of students	11	0	6	4	10	18	21	32	89	48	15
%	4	0	2	2	4	7	8	13	35	19	6
Average	27%							13%	60%		

**N=254**

**Mean = 7.08**

**Median = 8**

Table IV.2 shows that 60% of the pupils who had the test administered to were above average, 13% were average and 27% were below average.

### **Discussion**

From the results, it is clear that usage of adjectives is a concept that has been thoroughly covered and learnt by pupils who sat for this test battery. In fact, it was noted that this was the best scored test. It had a mean of 7.07 and a median of the 8 mark. As pointed out earlier, this concept appears in the class four syllabus many times and is repeated in class five first term. It is used in the context of sentence patterns, new vocabulary, as well as in the reading texts that come in the units where these items are taught. This could be a good reason why the concept is well mastered and therefore, its usage is quite easy to these pupils.

### **4.2.3 Test Three: Prepositions**

Usage of prepositions as a language ability is included in literally every level of learning in the primary school. At standard five level, pupils

should have encountered this concept many times. Many exercises on preposition usage are found in primary English books 3, 4 and five. Scores for the test on prepositional usage are presented in Table IV.3.

**Table IV.3: Usage of Preposition Test Scores**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of students	25	36	38	22	30	17	20	25	20	1	2
%	10	14	15	9	12	7	8	10	8	7	1
Average	48%				12%	41%					

**N = 254**

**Mean = 4.05**

**Median = 4**

Table IV.3 reflects inadequate mastery of preposition usage by most pupils as per the study. 48% of the pupils studied were below average. 41% were above average, while only 12% had average marks.

### **Discussion**

Much as the usage of prepositions is a concept that occurs quite frequently in the primary education syllabus, the mastery of this ability lacks. Evidence from the pupils' papers low did not show lack of complete knowledge of what preposition are but rather confusion of which prepositions go with particular nouns or pronouns. For example, pupils had such sentences as:

- Mwenda is afraid with his father
- It is very kind for you.
- The thief jumped through the wall.

It was observed that the prepositions were used interchangeably, for instance, when prepositions are used to indicate place, they are done in relation to the dimension properties as shown in the examples below.

My car is at the cottage

There is a new root on the cottage

There are two beds in the cottage.

Those pupils who are poor in prepositional usage ability cannot attain a high command of language usage since prepositions are used to enforce its clarity.

#### 4.2.4 Test Four: Conjunctions

TABLE IV.4: Usage of Conjunctions Test Scores

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of Students	91	51	35	20	16	14	10	9	3	3	2
%	36	20	14	8	6	6	4	4	1	1	1
Average	56%		14%	31%							

**N = 254**

**Mean = 2.0**

**Median = 1**

Table IV.4 shows that this test proved quite difficult for the pupils. 36% of the total population tested got no marks at all. The high percentage that got very low marks made the median to lie at the 1 mark. The mean itself is 2.0 and this is very low from the total mark of 10. Further analysis

shows that 56% were below the average mark, and 31% were above average. Only 14% were at the average mark. The mastery level of this language ability is poor.

### **Discussion**

During the administration of the Test battery, pupils asked questions before doing the tests for clarity purposes. Many questions in almost all the schools were asked which pointed at this language ability as one that was difficult for children of this level. Questions asked included:

- Do we write answers only?

Where writing answers only meant just adding the right choice of the conjunctions given without changing the rest of the sentence, for example:

- a) Mary is a nice girl
- b) Mary is an honest girl

pupils would have been comfortable writing:

Mary is a nice girl and Mary is an honest girl.

Others wanted to (as per their question) and some actually did write, the conjunction needed at the end of sentence (a), and assumed that that would join it with sentence (b) for example:

- a) Mary is a nice girl, and
- b) Mary is an honest girl.

It was observed that making one sentence from the two that had been given was a confusing idea to them. From the lesson observation, it was

evident that pupils were used to single word responses as opposed to complete statements (see observation report on page 48 ). This would have been the reason why pupils found it difficult to form sentences in this test.

The primary education syllabus volumes I (Page 78) indicate that simple conjunctions were introduced in standard 3. Volume II (pages 84 & 92) of the same syllabus show that more conjunctions were taught in classes four and five. The poor results presented in Table IV.4 point at the possibility of gross omission in the teaching of conjunctions in the context of sentence formation. This was evidenced by the fact that most pupils used conjunction and for all the sentences while others had been given, even in sentences where meaning was completely distorted. For example:

- (a) He was working hard
- (b) He failed in the examination

Pupils answer; He was working hard and he failed in the examination.

It was further observed that pupils did not understand the use of some conjunctions included in this test such as but, who, and which.

Examples:

- This is the book but brother made it.
- This is the book who was missing
- That is the man which wanted to see you.

The examples above also show that who and which confused the pupils such that these two were used interchangeably . As pointed out in the literature reviewed in chapter two, competence in good sentence structures is a base for good language usage. Pupils who may have lagged behind in the mastery of this language ability may find themselves hampered in being precise in whatever language communication they may be engaged in.

#### 4.2.4 Test Five: Punctuation

The most basic punctuation marks like the comma, full stop, and question mark are taught in standard 3 and 4 (Opt. cit syllabus pg 59 and 80). At standard 5, the use of the apostrophe, quotation mark and capital letter is taught. (Primary English Pupils book 5 page 48, 56).

**Table IV.5: Usage of Punctuation Marks Test Scores.**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of students	9	15	11	27	21	30	58	60	19	3	1
%	4	6	4	11	8	12	23	24	7	1	0
Average	33%						12%	67%			

**N = 254**

**Mean = 5.15**

**Median = 7**

Table iv.5 portrays substantial mastery of usage of punctuation. 67% of the pupils attained marks that were above average. 33% were below the average. Only 12% were on the average mark. Pupils who got the zero mark in this test had left their papers blank.

## Discussion

The use of the period to end sentences and the use of the comma to separate two different items or sub-ideas were concepts that have been mastered. However, punctuation marks that serve the specification of language functions proved difficult to use. An example is the use of the apostrophe to indicate that an inflection is genitive proved a difficult task for these pupils. Thus, the sentence was written in many versions as follows;

This is Johns' book

This is John's book

This is Johns book

The specification sign of the questions mark also did not seem known to some pupils. The exclamation mark too was unknown to a considerable number of the pupils studied. It was noted that the exclamation mark is sparingly used in English, as it does not occur with epistolary formulae or with vocatives or imperatives. Very little of the same is mentioned in the primary education syllabus.

Usage of the capital letter was highly mastered. Majority of the pupils knew that most nouns are written using capital letters irrespective of their position in the sentence. This concept appears severally in the primary education syllabus.

## 4.26 Test Six Tenses

**TABLE IV.6 Usage of tenses test scores**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No of Students	64	18	24	13	20	22	34	17	17	19	6
%	25	7	10	5	8	9	13	7	7	8	2
Average	42%			5%	54%						

**N = 254**

**Mean = 3.87**

**Median = 4**

Table IV.6 presents the results of the test on tense usage. The average mark is quite low- 3.8 only. Only 5% of the pupils were at the average mark. 42% were below average and 54% were above average. It was also observed that 25% of the pupils got no marks at all.

### **Discussion**

Many mistakes of the usage of the verbs made in this test showed direct mother tongue influence. Usually students who use the correct forms of the verbs will have met so many examples that they almost instinctively use the correct forms. The ability to use verbs correctly will therefore come from wide and careful reading. The syllabus gives many sentence patterns that are supposed to be taught that have the tense element. (The primary syllabus volume II pages 79-81 and 88). The primary English course books also have many written exercises that practise the various usage of tense.

Types of mistakes that were made in the test papers were mainly on verbs that are used to imply time as in yesterday, today and tomorrow, for instance, pupils wrote;

- I am going by this time tomorrow
- What were you doing now?
- We are playing at this time tomorrow

Instead of

I will be going by this time tomorrow

What are you doing now?

We were praying at this time yesterday

Verbs that were to be changed to the continuous form were not problematic at all. The pupil's examples shown above verify this. However, the spelling that goes with the same verbs when they change to the continuous tense had not been mastered. For instance;

coming was written as comeing

taking was written as takeing

The test analysis indicated a possibility of lack of adequate practice in the usage of tenses. A bit of practice was done only when there were written exercises to be done. Verbal usage was at its minimum since the pupil's

first language was used more commonly for social transactions in most of the schools.

#### 4.2.7 Test Seven: Comprehension

This test was set to establish mastery of the literal and critical comprehension skills.

**Table IV.7: Comprehension Test Scores.**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of students	12	15	19	32	40	30	27	25	21	21	12
%	5	6	7	13	16	12	11	10	8	8	5
Average	47%					12%	42%				

**N=254**

**Mean = 5.01**

**Median = 5**

Table IV.7 shows that 12% of the pupils were at the average mark. 42% were above average while 47% were below average. It was only 5% of the pupils who got no marks at all. The mean and the median lay at the mark of 5 and this verified that the performance of this group of pupils was generally average as far as their comprehension ability is concerned.

#### **Discussion**

Results of the test on comprehension portrayed very interesting findings. In spite of all the marked weaknesses that surfaced in the grammar-based tests, pupils seemed to be able to comprehend what they read. Most items that were based on the recall skill were scored very highly. The

inferential and deduction type were also scored well except those that had no multiple choice. These were missed because the sentences pupils wrote were either wrongly constructed or had spelling mistakes.

The weak point in the comprehension test was on questions that were based on the application skill. Item no. 5 and 8 which asked;-

Q. 5. Why was Nyambura afraid to get off the bus?

Q.8. Why do you think Mr. Njoroge's children asked Nyambura a lot of questions about her parents, brothers and sisters?;

Proved quite difficult for the pupils. Many of them gave answers that were not related to the information on the reading passage. This could imply that this was a skill that was of a higher order than the level of these pupils. More time and exposure in exploring reading tests would help bring these pupils to a level where they could apply issues of what they may read with whatever else could be happening in the same reading text.

#### **4.2.8 Test Eight: Composition**

In this test, pupils wrote a one paragraph composition on a topic of their own choice. Most pupils wrote on simple topics such as: myself, my best friend, my school, my pet, and so on.

**Table IV.8: Composition Writing Test Scores.**

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Students	3	15	106	55	21	20	17	14	2	1	0
%	1	6	42	22	8	8	7	6	1	0	0
Average	49%			22%	30%						

**N = 254**

**Mean = 3.15**

**Median = 3**

As shown in table IV.8, the average mark is 3.15 which is quite low. 30% of the pupils got marks above this low average mark. 22% were at the average while 49% were below the average mark. The implication here could be that language usage level is quite low among pupils studied. Majority of them scored 1, 2 and 3 marks out of ten.

### **Discussion**

An extended response type of essay was chosen for this test. It was meant to measure a complex of interwoven skills such as; organization of ideas, sentence construction, use of acceptable functional language expressions, expressing oneself in one's own words, and so on. These skills are without doubt fundamental to the mastery of language usage; and pupils' ability or inability to master them contributes a lot to their academic performance.

The results presented in Table IV.7 show marked weaknesses in the mastery of various components of language usage. Their handwriting for example, was illegible. 10% of them had work that could not be marked. In some cases, words were joined throughout the line, hence legibility was hampered. Some pupils left their paper blank. They simply did not write anything. On asking a few later (when I was on a visit for observation purposes), pupils confessed that they had not been taught how to write a composition, therefore they preferred not to attempt at all.

Other prevalent problems included:

i. Wrong spelling

Mistakes similar to those noted in test six on spelling of such words as come being changed to comeing and take as takieng recorded in their compositions.

ii. Misuse of preposition:

Prepositions were used interchangeably. Examples were in sentences such as;

- When we are at the classroom ---
- My friend visits me in our home every Sunday.

iii. Confusion of pronouns:

Gender pronouns were interchanged so readily as though it was normal to call a he a she or him to be her anytime. Verbs that followed these pronouns depending on number were also wrongly use for instance, sentences such as;-

- She were coming to visit me.
- They is my friend.

Were quite common in the pupils compositions.

#### iv. Wrongly used tenses.

As was observed in test five, tenses were mixed up. Most children could not differentiate the past, present and the future tenses.

#### v. Punctuation Usage.:

Quite a number of pupils did not use any punctuation marks in their essays. Use of the capital letter was also poor. The main weakness with the use of the capital letter was that it was used all over the essay - at the beginning, middle and even end of sentences. The most commonly and correctly used punctuation mark was the full stop. The vocabulary used was very basic, only a few pupils tried the use of language expressions and most of these were used wrongly. Reading fluency of most of these compositions was hampered by wrong spelling, lack of punctuation and wrongly constructed sentences.

### **4.3 LESSON OBSERVATION**

Two English lessons in progress were observed to get first hand information on the procedures used by the teachers of English and to confirm the information gathered through administration of the tests. Two teachers of English were observed out of the six primary schools selected. Arrangements to see them teach were made after the administration of the tests. They were teaching the same pupils who had sat for the test battery.

#### **4.3.1 Preparation of the Lesson**

None of the two teachers observed had a personal scheme of work. They both seemed to be using the course books as their schemes of work and handled topics as they were arranged in the teacher's guide.

The two teachers did not also have any lesson plans. Therefore, the researcher could not tell whether they had any objectives of teaching. From the topics written on the chalkboard and what was taught during the lesson, it was observed that what was being taught was suitable and relevant as per the syllabus. The quality of what was being taught was low as both teachers scored one point from the five-point scale used. What was taught within these single lessons was a lot; almost too much as the score on this was 4 out of five. Due to lack of planning, most activities conducted were haphazard.

### **4.3.2 Actual Teaching**

Of the two teachers observed, Teacher 1 had the kind of introduction that could provoke and sustain curiosity of the pupils. This same teacher was able to link the introduction with subsequent learning. Teacher 2 had a poor introduction. Pupils were not induced to learn. On lesson development, the two teachers were weak in extending knowledge logically and systematically. Teacher 1 scored 2 and Teacher 2 scored 3 points.

### **4.3.3 Teachers Language Usage.**

#### **4.3.3.1. Teachers' Performance**

The two teachers were fairly good in introducing new items. They used questioning as a method of teaching new items but failed to use pupils' answers to explore and extend pupils' knowledge and use of language. The researcher noted that the teachers had a tendency of misusing the questioning method of teaching. They seemed to ask questions for the shake of asking them. They were phrased poorly while others were irrelevant.

Teacher 1 had the ability to handle different types of learners effectively. She was quite keen in correcting errors that were made. She was able to get the attention of different learners and she handled unexpected possibilities fairly well. Teacher 2 was weak in distributing questions to her class in a balanced manner. She also failed to provide appropriate

work to children of different abilities. Her language usage was fairly good but she ignored mistakes that the pupils made.

#### 4.3.3.2 Problems of the Teachers in English Language Usage.

Various behaviours of English teachers as they interacted with the pupils were observed carefully in order to see the problems of teachers in English language usage.

The researcher observed a tendency of rushing over the lesson steps as they were in the teacher's book. A wide area was covered within the single lessons observed. On further inquiry after the lesson, the teachers confessed that the syllabus was too wide to cover in a year at a slow pace.

The two teachers observed did not seem to have good command of the subject matter they handled. Teacher 1 scored 3 points while Teacher 2 scored 2 points in the five-point scaler. The teachers depended entirely on what was in the course book and did not seem to have read widely on the subject matter they were teaching. As a result, mistakes such as the following were made:

- (i) On introducing helping verbs to the pupils, Teacher 1 used the following sentences.

Jane is sitting on the chair

I am going to school

We are eating.

The teacher gave practice to the class to reinforce the idea of helping verbs, then she asked pupils to make their own sentences.

Some pupils gave the following:

I will play.

He is tall.

The teacher accepted the two verbs underlined above as helping verbs whereas they had been used as linking verbs.

Teacher 2 introduced the new items deaf, blind, lame and dumb using probing questions. She accepted the meaning of a deaf person as one who cannot hear or speak. Later, when the pupils were to tell the meaning of the word dumb, they could not even try because they had been confused by the answer given earlier. Later in the lesson, this teacher failed to help the pupils to retrieve the meaning of an item that had been taught earlier. She asked them who a Game Ranger is.

A pupil answered;

It is the one who stays with the animals.

The teacher followed their answer with the following question: and comment:

Is it someone who looks after the animals? I want you to go and do your homework properly.

This item was left unexplained and the teacher continued to teach. Further still, this very teacher kept code - switching to Kiswahili and mother tongue while teaching items that she thought were difficult, for the pupils to comprehend - Teacher I did the same but with less frequency.

These findings again confirmed to the researcher that English language was being taught in schools by teachers who are not competent enough in their English language usage.

#### **4.3.4 Pupils' Language Usage.**

##### **4.3.4.1 Pupils' Participation**

The researcher noted that in the two schools and the classes observed, the pupils were fairly attentive and their participation in the lessons was good. They were as involved as the teachers made them to be and were ready to respond to them all the time. However, most of pupils' language usage was in single word responses. The responses made in sentence form were the teachers model which pupils were made to repeat.

##### **4.3.4.2 Problems of Pupils in English Language Usage.**

The lesson observation schedule gave the researcher an opportunity to observe pupils' English language usage in a classroom situation. Those that persisted were;

- (a) Pronunciation
- (b) Stress and intonation

- (c) Accuracy in reading
- (d) Poor phrasing while reading
- (e) Punctuation
- (f) Use of tenses
- (g) Misuse of pronouns
- (h) Prepositions
- (i) Vocabulary usage.

These findings confirmed what the researcher found out from the tests administered.

## **Discussion**

As indicated in the lesson observation report, the findings of the research revealed that teachers do not make schemes of work and lesson plans. This could be one reason why some concepts seem to be better learnt than others. All the topics and concepts indicated in the syllabus are supposed to be taught, yet some were left out. Teachers who do not make schemes of work may have very little (if any) reference to the syllabus.

In summary, weaknesses that were noted in connection to language usage included;

- (j) Inability to explore a lesson to extend pupils' knowledge and opportunity for language usage.
- (ii) Poor questioning techniques.
- (iii) Inability to handle unexpected possibilities which occur in the course of teaching some new items.
- (iv) Inability for pupils to express themselves freely and accurately in English.
- (v) Teacher's lack of sufficient command of English language.

The findings in the lesson observation schedule clearly indicate that low mastery level of English language usage in the standard five level has a lot to do with teachers' insufficient command of English, lack of preparation, time allocated for learning this language and poor teaching techniques.

#### **4.4. CONCLUSION**

The researcher hopes that the discussion above has revealed that English language usage in the standard five classroom in the selected rural schools is not at the level the syllabus indicates they should be. There are weaknesses in various language abilities and this has contributed to the low mastery level in language usage.

The summary, conclusions and recommendations are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study involved collection and analysis of data in an attempt to find out the mastery level of English language usage in standard five classrooms of rural schools. The methods used in gathering information entailed the following:

- i. Administration of tests on various language abilities expected to have been taught by the 1<sup>st</sup> term of standard five.
- ii. Lesson observation schedules to supplement and verify the findings of the test.
- iii. Presentation and analysis of data.

The findings revealed that there were marked weaknesses in pupils' language usage at this level and that the syllabus expectations had not been met.

#### 5.2 Conclusions made from the Findings

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:-

- I. The pupils of standard five grade in rural schools were not at par with the 1<sup>st</sup> term syllabus expectations in their language usage.
- II. Teachers were not using expected knowledge and techniques to facilitate English language usage for pupils of this level.

- III. The K.I.E. course books lacked depth of material in dealing with some language abilities, therefore teachers had to look for other books to supplement English language mastery and subsequent usage by pupils.
- IV. Some teachers did not have the expected knowledge of English to enable them to teach the subject comfortably and to deal with unexpected possibilities in language usage in the classroom.
- V. The syllabus is too wide and congested, consequently the time allocated for teaching it is not enough. In their endeavour to cover the syllabus, the teachers were forced to go over the topics in a hurry, hence little learning was finally achieved.
- VI. Majority of pupil's responses to the teachers were in single word answers. Sentences were rarely used hence language usage opportunities were minimal.
- VII. Teachers teaching English at rural areas kept code switching. This slows down English language usage mastery, as pupils do not make a lot of effort to learn it.
- VIII. The language policy for schools in Kenya contributed to the failure of achieving the lower primary English language teaching objectives. The fact that English was taught as a subject while mother tongue as a medium of instruction, slowed down English language usage as very little exposure was given to the pupils.

IX. The main weakness in pupils language usage was their tenses. There was a lot of mother tongue influence in the sentences that pupils made.

### 5.3 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following suggestions were made for the improvement of English language usage at standard five level.

- (a) The current language policy for schools in Kenya should be reviewed in order to enhance achievement of English language teaching objectives. English language should be used as a medium of instruction from standard one and not at standard four as the current policy stipulates. If English was to be used as a medium of instruction in most levels of learning, pupils ought to have been exposed to its usage more thoroughly than in just learning the language as a subject from standard one to three.
- (b) The English syllabus for primary schools should be revised to reduce the load of work for the teachers. At the same time, topics should be reviewed and re-arranged so that appropriate material will be taught at class levels that can handle them.
- (c) The authorities concerned with curriculum development should receive continued feedback from the teachers of English on books, the syllabus, and other materials in order to make adjustments accordingly for the benefit of the pupils.

- (d) Schools that have not yet developed their own policies should do so in order to accord opportunities to pupils for thorough and continued language usage practice.
- (e) The training of teachers in primary teacher colleges should include both English language content and methodology so as to make English teachers more competent in teaching the subject. Frequent inservice courses should also follow to ensure that the teachers' knowledge is updated in content and methodology.

#### 5.4 **Suggestions for Further Research.**

The researcher would like to recommend that further studies explore the following:-

- (a) Investigation on the suitability of the course books in relation to the mastery of language usage.
- (b) A study be carried out to determine when a language that should be used as a medium of instruction should be enforced. Should it be at the beginning of the education system or sometimes after?
- (c) A study be carried out to establish to what extent the primary teachers of English are prepared to handle the subject.

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# APPENDIX A

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST FOR STANDARD FIVE

TIME: 1 HOUR

NAME : .....

AGE : .....

SCHOOL : .....

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR PUPILS:

Do not open the test booklet until you are told.

Do not start writing until you are told.

Try to complete each test in the given time.

**TEST ONE**

10 MINUTES

**NUMBER**

Change the following sentences into the plural by making all the necessary changes.

Example:

SingularPlural

This is a glass

These are glasses

It was my book

They were our books

1. He is my brother. \_\_\_\_\_
2. This woman is sick. \_\_\_\_\_
3. My foot is paining. \_\_\_\_\_
4. That is an ox. \_\_\_\_\_
5. This house is big. \_\_\_\_\_
6. His car was stolen yesterday. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The child is playing outside. \_\_\_\_\_
8. My house is very far. \_\_\_\_\_
9. The cat killed a mouse. \_\_\_\_\_
10. It is her toy. \_\_\_\_\_

**TEST TWO**

5 MINUTES

**ADJECTIVES**

Find the adjectives from these sentences. Underline the adjective.

1. There is a lovely bird on that tree.
2. Yesterday I saw beautiful flowers at the show.

These are healthy children.

The mother said: 'Get me some water.'

The main door was closed.

He was a terrible man.

It will be a successful plan.

Robert is a smart boy.

What is the latest news?

10. Take away the dirty clothes.

### TEST THREE

5 MINUTES

#### PREPOSITIONS

Look at the following sentences:

Edward is good at English.

The ball went through the window.

The teacher is angry with me.

In the above sentences, the words at, through, and with are called prepositions.

Fill in the blanks with the correct prepositions. Choose from the following:

over, on, of, with, of, behind, by, under, of, for

Mwenda is afraid \_\_\_\_\_ his father.

He does not agree \_\_\_\_\_ his sister.

It is very kind \_\_\_\_\_ you.

The boy jumped \_\_\_\_\_ the river.

She is fond \_\_\_\_\_ singing.

Kimathi hides \_\_\_\_\_ the door.

The cows were sleeping \_\_\_\_\_ the tree.

8. I met her \_\_\_\_\_ the way.
9. We come to school \_\_\_\_\_ bus.
10. He came \_\_\_\_\_ us.

**TEST FOUR**

10 MINUTES

CONJUNCTIONS

Use and, but, who, or which to join the following pairs of sentences.

Example:

- (a) David has two brothers.
- (b) David has four sisters.

Answer:

David has two brothers and four sisters.

1. (a) Mary is a nice girl.
- (b) Mary is an honest girl.

---

2. (a) He was working hard.
- (b) He failed in the examination.

---

3. (a) That is the man.
- (b) The man wanted to see you.

---

4. (a) This is the book.
- (b) The book was missing.

---

5. (a) He tried his best.  
(b) He did not get any prize.
- 

6. (a) This is the book.  
(b) My brother made it.
- 

7. (a) My head is paining.  
(b) My stomach is paining.
- 

8. (a) This is the dog.  
(b) The dog killed a cat.
- 

9. (a) Jane is a clever girl.  
(b) Jane is a lazy girl.
- 

10. (a) This is the box.  
(b) My brother made it.
- 

## **TEST FIVE**

10 MINUTES

### **PUNCTUATION**

Punctuations are very important. They help us express our views properly.

The main punctuation marks are as follows:

- Comma
- Full Stop

- Question Mark

- Quotation Mark

- Exclamation Mark

Use these punctuation marks on the following sentences:

This is John's books

---

The teacher said I am going out

---

What are you doing here asked the policeman

---

Oh cried the girl

---

The tourist was tall slim and smart

---

Write the following sentences using Capital Letters whenever necessary:

Example:

My father's name is mr. Kamau.

My father's name is Mr. Kamau.

I live at Kinoru in Meru town.

---

My father's name is mr. kamau.

---

Nairobi is the capital of Kenya.

---

9. mt. Kenya is near nyeri.

---

10. his brother's name is jackson and his sister's name is susan.

---

**TEST SIX**

10 MINUTES

EXERCISES:

Complete these sentences by writing the correct form of the continuous tenses of the given verbs in bold.

Examples:

The man is digging in the farm now. **dig**

My father was watching T.V. yesterday afternoon. **watch**

His uncle will be coming here at any time. **come**

Answers:

The man is digging in the farm now.

My father was watching T.V. yesterday afternoon.

His uncle will be coming here any time.

I will be going by this time tomorrow. **go**

What are you doing now? **do**

We were praying at this time yesterday. **pray**

They were taking their dinner when I went. **take**

Will you come with me tomorrow? **come**

Day before yesterday he was waiting for you. **wait**

My mother is cooking now. **cook**

8. \_\_\_\_\_ she \_\_\_\_\_ now? swim
9. Whom \_\_\_\_\_ he \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday? ring
10. \_\_\_\_\_ they \_\_\_\_\_ at their time? sleep

**TEST SEVEN**

10 MINUTES

COMPREHENSION

Read the following passage carefully, then answer the questions below. Put a tick in the box with the correct answer.

The bus reached Nairobi at three o'clock. The bus station was full of people and vehicles, and Nyambura was afraid to get off. She did not know where she should go. She was very happy when she saw her uncle's face smiling at her through the bus window. She quickly took her bag, got off the bus and went towards him. Her uncle led her to a car and they drove to his house.

Uncle Njoroge's family was happy to see Nyambura again. They all asked a lot of questions about her parents and her brothers and sisters. In the evening the children asked their father to drive then round the city, "going round the city would take a long time" said Mr. Njoroge. "We'd also use a lot of petrol, but we can see the whole of the city from the Kenyatta International Conference Centre."

Questions:

1. What time did the bus get to Nairobi?
- three o'clock in the morning       at five o'clock
- at four o'clock
- at three o'clock

Where was Nyambura taken by her uncle?

- Nyambura's home
- her uncle's home
- at school
- at Kenyatta National Conference Centre

Nyambura had carried a bag and a sack from home.

- Yes
- No

What can Mr. Njoroge's children call Nyambura?

- aunt
- cousin
- sister
- daughter

Mr. Njoroge thought driving round the city would take a long time and he would also use a lot of Petrol.

- Yes
- No

Why was Nyambura afraid to get off the bus?

---

Uncle Njoroge's family was happy to see Nyambura again. This means,

- Nyambura had been there before
- Nyambura was visiting for the first time
- Nyambura lives there

Kenyatta International Conference Centre is found in

- Nakuru
- Nairobi
- Mombasa

Write down the sentence which tells us that Nairobi is a busy city.

---

---

10. Nyambura and Uncle Njoroge used \_\_\_\_\_ to get to his house.

a bus

a car

a train

## **TEST EIGHT**

### **COMPOSITION:**

Choose a topic of your own and write a composition about it. Be as brief as possible.

Use only half a page of the paper provided. Make sure your composition has a heading (title).





## APPENDIX C

### MARKING SCHEME

#### TEST ONE: NUMBER

They are our brothers.

These women are sick.

Our feet are paining.

Those are oxen.

These houses are big.

Their cars were stolen yesterday.

The children are playing outside.

Our houses are very far.

The cats killed the mice.

They are their toys.

#### TEST TWO: ADJECTIVES

Lovely                      4. Some                      7. Successful                      10. dirty

Beautiful                      5. Main                      8. Smart

Healthy                      6. Terrible                      9. Latest

#### TEST THREE: PREPOSITIONS

of                      4. into                      7. under                      10. for

with                      5. of                      8. on

of                      6. behind                      9. over

#### **ST FOUR: CONJUNCTIONS**

Mary is a nice and honest girl.

He was working hard but he failed in the examination.

That is the man who wanted to see you.

This is the book which was missing.

He tried his best but did not get any prize.

This is the book which my brother made.

My head and stomach are paining.

This is the dog which killed the cat.

Jane is a clever but lazy girl.

This is the box which my brother made.

#### **ST FIVE : PUNCTUATION**

This is John's book.

The teacher said, "I am going out".

"What are you doing here?" asked the policeman.

"Oh!" cried the girl.

The tourist was tall, slim and smart.

I live at Kinoru in Meru town.

My father's name is Mr. Kaburu.

Nairobi is the capital of Kenya.

Mt. Kenya is near Nyeri.

His brother's name is Jackson and his sister's name is Susan.

## TEST SIX: TENSES

will be going

5. will, be coming

9. was, ringing

are, doing

6. was waiting

10. are, sleeping

will be playing

7. is cooking

were taking

8. is, swimming

## TEST SEVEN: COMPREHENSION

at three o'clock

her uncle's home

no

cousin

yes

Because she did not know where she should go.

Nyambura had been there before.

Nairobi

The bus station was full of people and vehicles.

. A car.

## TEST EIGHT: COMPOSITION

ve point scale for scoring composition:

<u>SKILLS</u>	<u>OUT OF</u>	<u>SCORE</u>
Grammar	3	
Vocabulary	1	
Mechanics	2	
Fluency	2	
Relevance	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	