

**PREPARATION FOR CLOZE TESTS COMPLETION IN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN MURANG'A COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university/institution for consideration. This thesis has been complemented by referenced sources duly acknowledged. Where text, data (including spoken words), graphics, pictures or tables have been borrowed from other sources, including the internet, these are specifically accredited and references cited in accordance with anti-plagiarism regulations.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife Margaret Micere Mwenda for her patience, unwavering support and understanding while pursuing my studies.

To my children, Shirley, Shylah and Shawn; may this work inspire you to seek and achieve your academic ambitions in your lives.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BOM	- Board of Management
CLT	- Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	- English as a foreign language
ELL	- English subject Lessons
ELL's	- English subject Learners
ELTE	- English subject Teacher Education
ELT	- English subject Training
ELTs	- English subject Teachers
ESL	- English as a second language
KCPE	- Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	- Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KNEC	- Kenya National Examination Council
KIE	- Kenya Institute of Education (former)
KICD	- Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
MoE	- Ministry of Education
TSC	- Teachers' Service Commission
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT

The cloze test was first recommended as a tool for assessment in the Kenya secondary school syllabus in 2002 and subsequently in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination in 2006. Performance in the cloze tests in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations was reported as poor between 2006 and 2019. The purpose of this study was to study the preparation for cloze tests completion in secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. The specific objectives were to find out cloze tests completion strategies taught and learnt in secondary schools in Murang'a County, establish the availability and number of cloze tests in approved secondary school English learners' course books in Kenya, investigate the frequency of practise with cloze tests in secondary schools in Murang'a County and investigate what is read extensively by secondary school students in Murang'a County. The basis of the study was schema theory which works on how knowledge is represented mentally and utilized in context. The theory has a basic assumption that the written text itself carries no meaning but only offers the reader a sense of direction in order to retrieve or hypothesis meaning from knowledge acquired previously and knowledge structures called schemata. A descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The study target population comprised 7669 secondary school students and 56 English subject teachers; sample frame had 768 students and 20 teachers. Sampling was by simple random technique. Data was collected from students by use of a structured questionnaire and from teachers by an interview schedule. Course books were assessed using a learners' course book analysis checklist. The findings indicate that cloze tests completion strategies are not taught in English subject lessons in secondary schools, English subject learners' course books have few cloze tests for students to practise with and students are limited in their extensive reading which contributes to their deficiency in schemata that is necessary for successful completion of cloze tests. It is recommended that secondary school students should be taught cloze tests completion strategies in their English subject lessons. The approved secondary school English subject learners' course books should have at least one cloze test in each study unit. Encouragement to read extensively should be given to students in secondary school and provided with many and a variety of general reading materials. Further research on the teaching and learning of cloze tests completion strategies in primary schools should be carried out. A study should be done on what guidance English subject teachers are provided with and training they have had in handling cloze tests so as to determine their efficacy. A research should also be carried out to determine what reading materials would best aid acquisition of schemata so as to help when recommending reading materials to be availed to English subject learners.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the following areas of the study: background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose, specific objectives, research questions, justification, scope and limitations, assumptions, theoretical and conceptual framework and definition of operational terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

English has been the official language in Kenya since independence in 1963 and reaffirmed in Kenya's new constitution of 2010. Colemon (2010) says English plays crucial roles in global mobility, employment and for tapping opportunities in development. In Kenya, English is also used in various sectors such as the media, entertainment, diplomacy, tourism and commerce, immigration and education. The Ministry of Education (MoE) has over the years emphasised the development of English as noted in the recommendations by various education commissions: Ominde (1964), Gachathi (1976), Mackay (1982), Kamunge (1988) and Koech (1999). According to Ogalo (2011), the teaching and acquisition of skills in English subject is being strongly emphasised as is knowledge of English as a subject.

Academic achievement in school is usually assessed through administration of assessment tests in the learning process and examinations at the close of terms, semester, year or a course. Ganai and Muhammad (2013) define academic achievement as attainment of knowledge ability which is measured by standardized tests while the

level of achievement is expressed in a grade or unit based on learners' achievement. Academic achievement therefore expresses a degree of competence in a given school task. The Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) 2002 syllabus discerns that assessment is instrumental as it helps to inform the teacher on mastery (or lack) of specific skills by students in English subject teaching. In each of the four English subject skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading, the syllabus suggests a number of assessment methods that can be used. Among other methods, the cloze test is included in the list as a tool for testing grammar and especially to test connectors.

In language study, the cloze involves a systematic deletion of letters, words or phrases from a continuous text. A student is expected to supply the blank spaces with the missing parts to make the passage meaningful. It is based on the assumption that language can be shown to exhibit some regularity; for instance, there is a probability that a noun will follow an adjective or 'Merry Christmas' is more probable than 'Merry Birthday'. This idea has been subject to use in various fields in education (not necessarily language) and also research and improvement. Oller has researched extensively on cloze tests and in refers to the cloze is a measure of 'grammar of expectancy'. The reader is involved in a process of reconstructing what the original writer went through when arranging the original text. Thus the process involves thinking, understanding, speaking, reading and writing.

It is observed that studies on cloze tests generally concentrate on the use of cloze tests in assessing proficiency in language and comprehension, the various types of cloze tests and on various cloze test completion strategies. This study was focussed on

performance of cloze tests contained in KCSE English Paper 1. The cloze test was first included in KCSE English paper 1 in 2006 and has become a part of the paper since then. The Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) summarizes and reports about the performance of students in each subject and paper in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination. The report analyses every question on requirements of the question, weaknesses observed in the students' answers and recommends how students should be prepared by teachers. The KNEC KCSE examination reports have between 2006 and 2019 reported many students scoring zero in cloze tests and most of the rest of the students less than five out of ten.

Several reports are referred to here.

In 2008:

“This was the worst performed of the cloze texts so far. There were more candidates who scored zero than has been the case previously.....”

In 2011:

“The Chief Examiner reported that many candidates performed poorly in this question.”

In 2017:

“Candidates performed poorly in the cloze test. As usual many failed to make use of the provided contextual, syntactic and discourse clues.”

In 2018 and 2019:

“The cloze test was rated as accessible to the target candidates but as usual, performance on the test was dismal.....”

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The KIE 2002 syllabus states that assessment is instrumental as it helps to inform the teacher on mastery (or lack) of specific skills by students. It goes on to list the cloze test as an assessment tool among a number of other tools. As shown in the background to the study, the cloze test has consistently registered poor performance in the KCSE examinations. Various KNEC reports state this problem is a consequence teachers not emphasizing on this aspect of language learning and testing. It is hence important to find out what preparations students studying English at secondary school level undergo in preparation for cloze test completion as an assessment method.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study purpose was to survey the preparation for cloze tests completion in secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya.

1.4 Specific Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- a. Find out cloze tests completion strategies taught and learnt in secondary schools in Murang'a County.
- b. Establish the availability and number of cloze tests in approved secondary school English learners' course books in Kenya.
- c. Investigate the frequency of practise with cloze tests in secondary schools in Murang'a County.
- d. Investigate what is read extensively by secondary school students in Murang'a County.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions guiding the study were the following:

- a) Which cloze test completion strategies are taught and learnt in secondary schools in Murang'a County?
- b) How many cloze tests are available in the approved secondary school English learners' course books in Kenya?
- c) When do secondary school students practise with cloze tests in Murang'a County?
- d) What do secondary school students read extensively in Murang'a County?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study helps teachers realize the need to expose and train students on cloze tests completion strategies to assist them attain better cloze test scores. The study also helps to inform school administrators and teachers on course books providing cloze tests and therefore make them available in the ESL teaching and learning. Developers of curriculum are sensitised on course books containing cloze tests and so consider them when recommending course books for the subject. The need to encourage extensive reading and provide reading materials is also realized. The study also adds to cloze tests research reference materials. It is envisaged that more studies in the area of cloze tests and their usage in ESL will be spurred by this study.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study was restricted to studying which cloze tests completion strategies are taught and learnt in secondary schools.

The study also only focused on secondary schools and left out primary schools and tertiary education institutions. The level and course taken in tertiary education institution one enters is determined by the scores and subsequent mean grade achieved in the KCSE examination, and so subsequently, career in life.

Only a representative number of secondary schools in one sub-county were utilised in the study.

1.8 Assumptions

The researcher made the following assumptions:

- i) The English subject teachers are trained, qualified and experienced to teach the subject.
- ii) School administrators ensure that the approved syllabus is used.
- iii) School administrators ensure that the approved course books are available.
- iv) Publishers of course books ensure that cloze tests in the approved course books are standard and appropriate.

1.9. Theoretical Framework

The basis used in the study was schema theory by Rumelhart (1980). This theory has received further explanation and support by Carrell (1981) and Hudson (1982). The theory is about how knowledge is represented mentally and utilized in context. The theory has a basic assumption that the text that is written itself carries no meaning but only offers the reader a sense of direction in order to retrieve or hypothesis meaning from knowledge that was acquired previously and knowledge structures called schemata. This knowledge acquired previously is referred to as a reader's background

knowledge (prior knowledge) and structures of the knowledge acquired previously are known as schemata. One acquires schemata and prior knowledge as he or she relates over a period of time with others and appropriate content in suitable context. Schemata and prior knowledge are acquired naturally in suitable environment or can be planned for by intentionally carrying out a variety of task arranged in advance. For the ESL and EFL student to attain proficiency in the target language, there is need for exposure and interaction with that language in a number of different contexts so that knowledge and linguistic structures that are relevant are acquired.

The cloze test measures the extent of correspondence between the language used in a message and the language system the reader has internalized. A reader is expected to use his/her language facility by considering the information in a passage semantically and syntactically in order to complete the cloze task. By so doing, communication in the language or comprehension of the information will be assumed to have taken place. A reader who is restricted in vocabulary or is grammatically hampered ends up with more difficulty than a reader who is proficient. This theory hypothesizes that the reading process starts at comprehension level which is used cognitively to enable word recognition and decoding. This study sought to find out what students read extensively as an aid in acquisition of schemata which in turn determines how proficient the student becomes in the language.

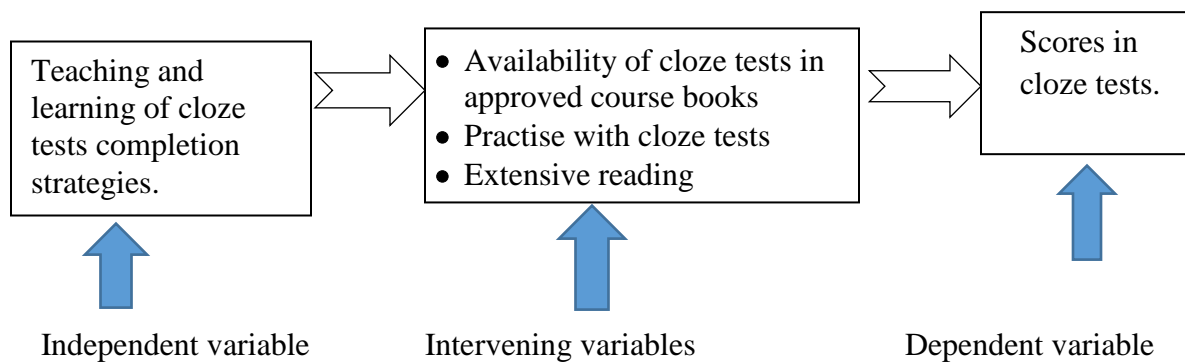
Course books used in the teaching and learning of ESL should provide cloze tests for practise and consequently improve cloze test completion. This study sought to establish the availability and number of cloze tests in the approved English subject learners'

course books since this determines the extent of practise and hence preparedness to tackle cloze tests.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The figure below identifies the variables under this study and outlines their relationships.

Figure 1.0 Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher

Variables are as the main ideas that researchers plan to collect information about in an attempt to address the purpose of their studies. The variables are categorised as independent, intervening and dependent. From the figure, scores in cloze tests as a dependent variable is a direct outcome of teaching and learning of cloze tests completion strategies which is an independent variable. This is however affected by intervening variables which include availability of cloze tests in approved course books, practise with cloze tests, and extensive reading. The variables are related in that an alteration in the independent variable influences the dependent variable.

1.11 Operational Definition of Key Terms

- Cloze test/passage** – a passage with some deleted words which a student is expected to fill meaningfully to make the passage complete.
- Curriculum** - lessons and academic content taught and learnt in school or education programme
- Extensive reading** – reading of texts beyond the prescribed syllabus and subject texts for enjoyment, pleasure and or general knowledge
- Proficiency** – show of high degree of skill/expertise/knowledge
- Schemata** – knowledge structures acquired over a period of time in the course of interaction with speakers and relevant content in appropriate context
- Teaching** – the process of facilitating acquisition of new knowledge
- Learning** – the process that leads to acquisition of new knowledge
- Learners' course book** – teaching and learning textbooks issued to students for use in day to day learning in subject lessons

1.12 Chapter Summary

The chapter has provided a background to the study where the role of English in the world and use in various fields is highlighted. This has made the MoE in Kenya emphasize the development of English in recommendations of various education commissions since independence. To test the degree of competence, assessment tests are administered and the cloze test is one such tool. It involves deletion of parts of a passage and one is to complete it. This involves thinking, understanding, speaking, reading and writing. The cloze was introduced in KCSE English Paper 1 in 2006. KNEC KCSE reports have between 2006 and 2019 reported many students scoring zero in this test and most of the rest less than five out of ten.

The chapter states the problem as the continued poor performance in cloze tests and quotes several KNEC KCSE reports which have apart from commenting on the scores, have interpreted the problem as a result of there being little emphasis on the aspect.

The purpose of the study is stated in the chapter as surveying the preparation for cloze tests completion among students in secondary schools in Murang'a County. This is guided by four specific objectives and their corresponding key questions. These are a) which cloze test completion strategies are taught and learnt in secondary schools in Murang'a County?, b) how many cloze tests are available in the approved secondary school English course books in Kenya?, c) when do secondary school students practise with cloze tests in Murang'a County? and d) what do secondary school students in Murang'a County read extensively?

The chapter shows the significance of the study to various stakeholders in education in teaching cloze completion strategies, course books publication, approval and use, emphasis on extensive reading and provision of reading materials.

The scope of this study was limited to a sample of secondary schools and it is assumed the teachers are qualified, the approved syllabus and course books are in use and cloze tests in the course books are standard.

The chapter explains the theoretical framework as being schema theory which involves previously acquired knowledge and knowledge structures referred to as schemata. These are built over time by a learner or language speaker naturally in the language environment or by intentionally carrying out prearranged tasks. Such tasks include learning completion strategies, extensive reading and practise.

Further, the conceptual framework is shown where the dependent variable is score in cloze tests while the independent variable is the teaching and learning of cloze tests completion strategies. These are affected by three intervening variables which are the availability and number of cloze tests in approved course books, practise by students with cloze tests and extensive reading.

The chapter then defines some operational terms used in the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature explaining what cloze tests are about, the role of the cloze test in English subject teaching, teaching the cloze test, the course book in teaching and learning, the contribution of reading to the cloze test, additional studies in cloze tests and finally a conclusion is made.

2.2 The Cloze Test

Cloze is a derivative form of the term 'closure' in Gestalt psychology theory. Cloze was used by Ebbinghouse as early as in 1897 to design a completion test to measure intelligence. Cloze (derived from 'closure') refers to a situation occurring when a part which is missing is completed based on hints from its environment. When a drawing or picture with a missing part is presented to a person, he or she inevitably fills in the missing part for the whole picture to be seen in the mind. The person uses his or her knowledge acquired over time together with the picture or drawing surroundings. Urquhart and Weir (1998) say there is a propensity by people to complete an arrangement after understanding its overall meaning. The cloze test as explained by Rye (1982) is an intellectual task that calls for reasoning and suggestion of constructions to fill any gaps. These suggestions have to be based on the surroundings in order to make sense. According to Brown (2002) humans have an inherent need to complete gaps and hence it is easy for people to attempt a cloze test completion exercise.

A conventional cloze exercise is a passage of 200 to 250 words in which every fifth word has been deleted but no word is deleted in the first and last sentences as described by Helfeldt, Henk and Fotos (1986). A learner is expected to fill the gaps with either an appropriate or the exact word. Steinman (2002) explains that when designing a cloze test, one can create two alternatives: a cloze that is either a random or a rational test. A random cloze test consistently deletes every n^{th} word leading to equal deletion of all types and classes of words. In a rational cloze test, a particular word type is deleted depending on a principle of linguistics such as prepositions, adverbs, nouns, etc. Alderson (2000) cited by Yamashita (2003) differentiates the two format types by making reference to the rational cloze test as ‘gap-filling tests’ while referring to the random cloze test as simply ‘cloze’. Ahluwalia (1993) opines that students’ performance in the cloze is hampered or improved according to the level of familiarity or difficulty of the cloze test.

This study sought to survey the preparation for cloze tests completion in secondary schools in Murang’a County, Kenya and the availability and number of cloze tests in course books used in secondary schools in Kenya irrespective of whether the cloze tests presented are random or rational.

2.3 The Use of Cloze Tests in Evaluating Language Proficiency

Cloze test completion involves use of skills such as reading ability, grammar, vocabulary and structure. The cloze then acts as a good evaluation tool for general English subject proficiency which is supported by several researchers. Ahluwalia (1993) says the grammar of expectation which underlies thinking, understanding, speaking,

reading and writing skills is measured by the cloze test. Cohen (1980) as cited in Ahluwalia (1993) is of the opinion that the cloze is able to evaluate global language competence which consists of textual, linguistic and language knowledge. This process uses prior background knowledge of the candidate together with knowledge of the diction, grammar and sentence construction abilities among others. Askes (1991) says the cloze tests integrates various components of language into one language occurrence that requires a student to enact an integrated performance in a context that is meaningful. Rashid (2001) considers the cloze tests dependable for assessing ESL students' proficiency in the language of study.

The cloze test has been acknowledged as a truly effective assistant in gauging integrative English language competence by various Chinese academicians such as Tao (2004), Li (2004), Zhu (2004) and Bai (2004) as cited in Guangling (2006).

2.4 Teaching and Learning Cloze Test Completion Strategies

Learning how to complete cloze tests is crucial for one who will be expected to fill one in examinations. The first step is interacting with the cloze test. Secondly, as Gunning (1998) directs, instructions are necessary before the start of a cloze exercise. Rye (1982) opines that the instruction to a cloze test becomes effective when sequenced carefully in length and difficulty. Adjustments to the cloze tests should be guided by readers' reading abilities.

Practice and its effect on the cloze has made Dupuis (1980) conclude that cloze completion is a technique that can be taught and learnt. Rye (1982) counsels that for students, getting accustomed to the cloze test is important. He advises that training on

cloze test completion should emphasize on reading the whole text as one before concentrating on the blank spaces. Errors made by students in the cloze test should be analyzed to help understand particular areas of problem in students' reading ability. He continues to recommend use of group discussions since it assists students to carefully read the test and together reason with one another meaningfully about the choices of words made. He continues that the teacher can help the learning process to continue after the discussion by giving due credit for correct or appropriate responses and also offering possible explanations for the word choice. Steinman (2002) advises that the words deleted should be those that make the readers look beyond the individual sentences with deletions. Fyfe and Mitchel (1983) recommend exercises in cloze that involve altering the format of the cloze test and using the same passage to set different kinds of cloze exercises. Maroko (2016) suggests a procedure involving text selection, cloze test preparation and cloze test presentation that could be used for direction when teaching/learning completion of the cloze test.

An advantage of the cloze test as put forward by Rye (1982) is that during the test completion process, the teacher may be absent and only check the progress of the students at one's own convenience. Students can be left to complete the cloze passage which can then be collected and checked later by the teacher.

However, the cloze test may not improve reading habits if used incorrectly which Rye (1982) explains as including exposing students to the cloze procedure for short trial periods; lack of training on how to use context clues; absence of discussion with students and lack of feedback from teachers. Rye (1982) adds that a student would end

up frustrated when left to work with short passages while unfamiliar with cloze test rules. Maroko (2016) says that there is a possibility that there is generally no accepted and reliable method of teaching cloze test completion at primary school among teachers of language in Kenya.

This study enquired about what activities English subject secondary school students are involved in when completing cloze tests and what other activities follow after completing the tests in English subject lessons.

2.5 The Use of Course Books in Teaching and Learning

Bgoya, et al (1997) assert that course books in education are developed by their publishers to reflect a country's goals and objectives so that the materials are relevant. Communication is highly emphasized by the Kenya Secondary English Syllabus which in turn is replicated in English subject training (ELT) objectives at secondary school level. One of the mandates of the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) is to recommend instructional resources that can be used in Kenyan education institutions offering the national education curriculum. This list generated gets approved by the Ministry of Education (MoE) which then publishes it in a book. This book is informally referred to in education circles as the 'Orange Book'. Course books are the primary instructional resources because a book comes after the teacher as a key resource in the teaching/learning process. A teacher when asked to teach will most certainly request for a course book for him/herself and his/her students. A British Council survey in 2008 polled teachers and found out that sixty five percent (65%) frequently used textbooks. Tomlinson (2012) reports that in a survey at conferences in Malaysia, the UK

and Vietnam, ninety two percent (92%) of respondents regularly use a course book. As Ayot (1984) found out, ESL teachers from Kenya confess that they cannot teach without a course book because the books form a base for their teaching approach. Teachers use course books to achieve their objectives or aims (Brown, 2002). Davies and Pearse (2000) say that books guide teachers on what to teach and in what order and standardize instruction. Tomlinson (2012) reports that the course book helps supervisors in achieving course integrity, timetabling of lessons and standardizing teaching. Course books also assist inexperienced teachers on how to present and sequence teaching content in language lessons. Richards (2001) adds that books save the teachers' time because they do not need to prepare new teaching materials. Much of lesson time is spent using this resource. Therefore, it is vital that the course books in use satisfy students' needs, capture their attention, stimulate their interests and lead to language acquisition. Tomlinson (2012) opines that a course book should cover the syllabus, use suitable language, allow for student involvement and accommodate emerging issues. Davies and Pearse (2000) say that the content of a course book may consist of vocabulary, grammatical structures, functions and other aspects such as reading passages.

It is noted that in his study of selected practice papers in primary schools in Kenya, Maroko (2016) found out that the recommended resources in the curriculum show that much of the information teaching and learning of cloze test completion is generally limited to provision of exercises for practice.

By focussing on secondary schools, this study intended to establish the availability and number of cloze tests in the approved English subject learners' course books meant to help prepare students to successfully complete cloze tests in examinations.

2.6 The Use of Cloze Tests in the Language Classroom

Brown (2002) reports that the cloze has been used to teach English since 1953 when it was used to try to establish how written materials were readable before presenting them to schooling children in the United States of America (USA). A number of researchers recommend using the cloze test as an instrument for teaching English. The cloze is regarded by Helfeldt, Henk and Fotos (1986) as a 'passage-completion' technique good for establishing students' instructional reading level. Teachers can adjust and give better guidance to students when they are informed on the definite reading capabilities of their students. Lombard (1990), who has applied cloze tests in her junior and senior ESL classes says the tests assist to resolve reading challenges in her students and their confidence is boosted as a result of speedy and acceptable responses provided. Legenza and Elijah (2001) view it as effective when the basis of teaching is error profiling. A teacher can correct specific error types through teacher-developed cloze exercises. For instance, a specific part of speech can be deleted at any given time and students then deal with those blank spaces to try to achieve semantically correct sentences in the cloze test. One then deals with another part of speech and another systematically. Steinman (2002) describes her use of it for students to practice together with context clues to uplift the ability to read and vocabulary improvement. Teacher-made cloze texts, rational deletion and accepted word scoring are methods used in the process. This goes together with negotiation of comprehension of the text and then the choice of words

used discussed after cloze text completion. It has been observed by Alderson (2000) and Yamashita (2003) that cloze tests can be used to establish reading comprehension.

Practice is advocated by Best (1971) who found that reading comprehension is improved in young children when they practice with cloze tests. Stafford (1976) added by establishing that students' capacity gets better developed in anticipation of vocabulary and demonstration of knowledge in structural relationships when they are involved in practice. Further, Farahani (2011) studied Iranians studying EFL and found that those who practised regularly with cloze tests developed better reading skills and so concluded that regular practice is necessary in EFL students. Shohamy (2001) recommended cloze tests practise for Hebrew teaching and learning in both Stanford and California University. This study tried to investigate the frequency of practice with cloze tests in secondary schools in Murang'a County.

2.7 The Relationship between Reading and the Cloze Test

Groebel (1981) says that any student's goal is to read academic texts with fluency and understanding. Gaining new knowledge among second language learners according to Dreyer (1998) is dependent on reading skills. Stern (1983) is of the opinion that by reading extensively, learners are able to develop a bank of words or vocabulary and assists revelation of new ideas and structures in language which are later used both verbally and in the written form to communicate. The student, by reading extensively, builds schemata over time and so will be able to choose from the built background knowledge and draw from his/her familiarity with the culture of the language of the test.

Cooper (1986) reports that when reading comprehension, reading skills which include verbal and grammar skills, reading speeds and syntax and discourse knowledge are involved. Reading requires readers to be active and apply the skills consciously and effectively. The ability to read fluently is referred to by Merritt (1969) as cited in Rye (1982) as 'Intermediate Skills'. Fluency in reading is assisted by one's ability to use clues in the context to anticipate letters and words in a sequence and hence not much time is spent on one word which would slow down reading. As one scans the context information, the proposed words are confirmed or modified to fit in. The processes one uses during reading are compared to the process of cloze test completion. The cloze calls on one to reflect on the context, put forward a word and try to evaluate to assess whether it makes sense within that context. It can be concluded as Rye (1982) does that reading skills are developed by cloze test among other means.

Background knowledge is considered as very important in ESL/EFL reading comprehension. Rumelhart (1980) and Carrell (1981) proposed this as schema theory which is a concept based on representation of knowledge mentally and how this representation is used in different contexts. This theory proposes that by itself, the written text has no meaning attached to it. The written text therefore only offers direction or clues for the person reading to construct or retrieve meaning from one's own knowledge acquired beforehand called reader's background knowledge (prior knowledge). The structures of this previously acquired knowledge are called schemata. Acquisition of this schemata and prior knowledge is done over time as one relates with the community and content in appropriate situations which are natural occurring or can be intentional where certain prearranged tasks are completed. Comprehension of a text

is a process that is interactive since it involves the reader's background knowledge and the text under scrutiny. Readers consider the current information from the text and activate their background knowledge to assign meaning to the current reading and to also make conceptual predictions on the meaning of the text which is then confirmed by searching for information in the comprehension. Meaning is not only about linguistic knowledge but also specific to the culture of the language community from which extraction of the passage has been done. Therefore, reading comprehension, understanding and efficiency would definitely fail for a reader who does not have or cannot gain access to relevant content schema. Competent readers according to Neville (1984) are those who are so confident that they are able to restore the deletions with exact words or equivalents.

This study inquired what secondary school students read extensively which leads to one acquiring wide knowledge that subsequently determines proficiency and ability to complete cloze test successfully.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained what cloze tests are by stating that standard cloze tests have some words deleted and a student scores by completing the passage by filling the gaps with the exact correct words or their equivalents. It goes on to explain the place of cloze tests in evaluating proficiency in language and shows that cloze tests completion uses a number of skills such as reading ability, grammar, vocabulary and structure. The cloze then acts as a good evaluation tool for general English subject proficiency which is supported by several researchers.

The chapter has looked at the teaching and learning of cloze tests completion strategies and recommended activities that should be carried out during and after cloze test completion. This study tried to find out how the teaching and learning of cloze test completion strategies is done in secondary school English lessons in Murang'a County in Kenya.

The chapter further looked at course books in teaching and learning. The course book is the principal instructional resource. The content of the course book is a vital element in the teaching and learning process. This study sought to establish the availability and number of cloze tests in the approved English subject learners' course books in Kenya which are meant to help prepare the students and provide practice for successful completion of cloze tests.

The place of the cloze test in the classroom is looked into. Various researchers and teachers are quoted on how they use the cloze in language classes. The place of practise with cloze tests is shown by various researchers. The study hence tries to investigate whether cloze tests are provided for practise in secondary schools in Murang'a County.

The relationship between reading and the cloze test has also been reviewed in the chapter. Cloze tests require background knowledge which is acquired among other ways through extensive reading. The study was aimed at establishing what secondary school students read extensively since reading is a basis of acquisition of schemata required in successful completion of cloze tests.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

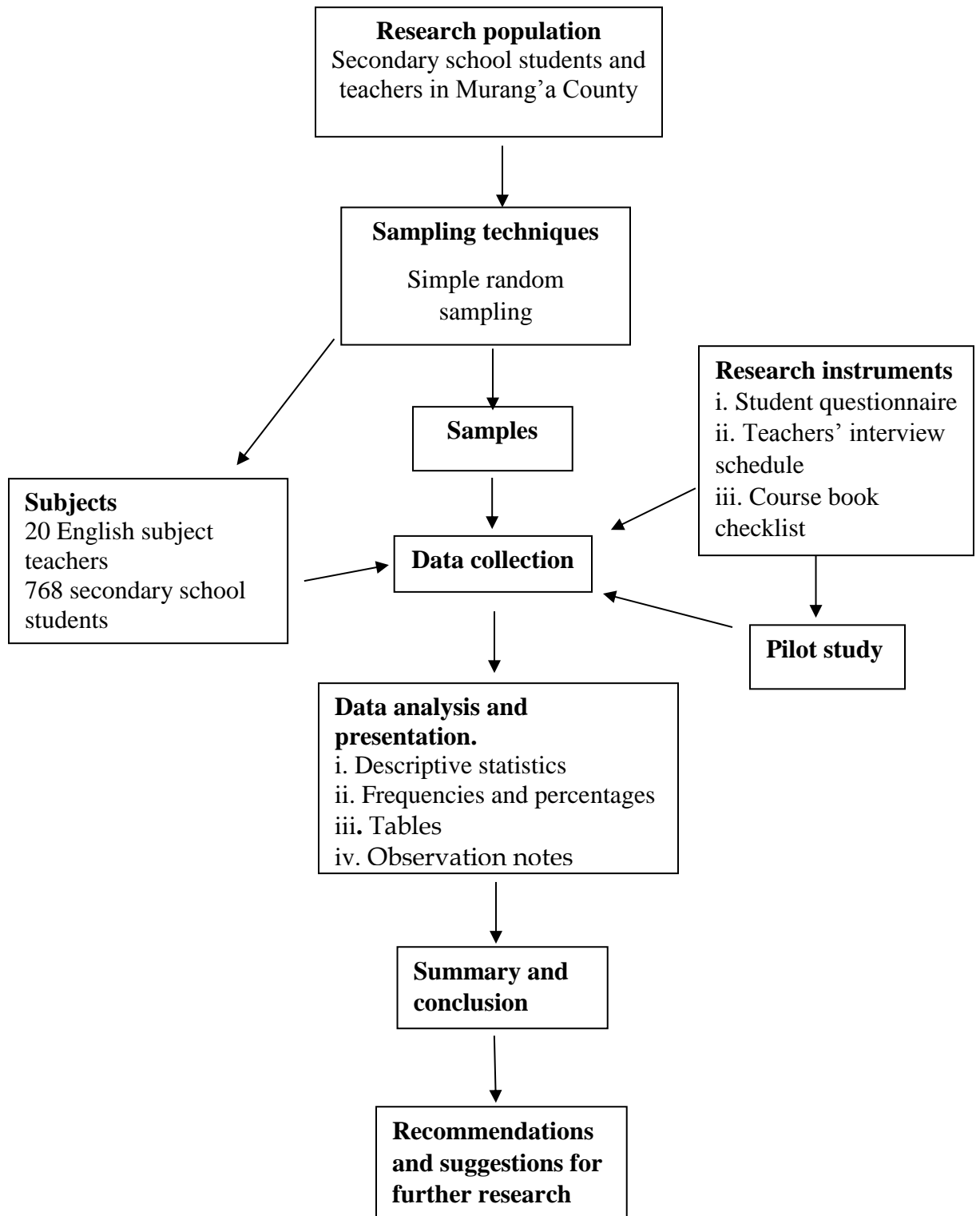
This chapter looks at the methods of research that the researcher employed in data collection and explanations on the selection of the methods. The following study areas are included: research design, location of study, target population, sampling procedures and sample size, instrumentation, piloting, data collection procedure and methods of data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study used a descriptive survey research design whose goal according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) is to gather data at a specific time and use the data in description of the conditions in existence at the time. In this study, the researcher met students and teachers, and considered course books as they existed in secondary schools. Surveys in many instances gather evidence from a small number of people chosen from the universe (Creswell, 2011). The study was a survey since instead of studying the whole population in the sub-county, data was collected from a sample. From the sample, conclusions inferred are said to be the same ones we could get from the whole universe. The survey was cross sectional in that respondents from the different categories of schools were involved at the same time.

The design is represented in figure 3.0 overleaf.

Figure 3.1 Research design.



Source: Adapted from Cohen, I., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2011).

3.3 Location of Study

This study was conducted in Murang'a County, Kenya where one sub-county (Murang'a East) was used as representative of the County. Murang'a East Sub-county is one among eight sub-counties in Murang'a County. Before the concept of counties, Murang'a East sub-county was referred to as Kiharu district and is part of Kiharu constituency. Within the sub-county is Murang'a town which is the county headquarters and approximately ninety (90) kilometres from Nairobi (the capital city of Kenya). The sub-county stretches from the warm and hot dry sandy terrain on the banks of River Sagana to cool higher grounds where coffee is grown.

3.6 Target Population

In 2018, Murang'a East sub-county had a total of thirty one (31) secondary schools: twenty nine (29) public and two (2) private. The MoE in Kenya categorizes secondary schools as either national, extra-county, county or sub-county. The public schools in the sub-county consisted of one (1) national school, one (1) extra county school, two (2) county schools and twenty five (25) sub-county schools. The two (2) private schools are not categorized like the public schools. The list of schools is attached as appendix V. The researcher considered this distribution as suitable since every category of school is represented and this variety provided an opportunity to sample from the different school categories.

The study targeted a students' population of seven thousand six hundred and sixty nine (7669) students in all four forms in the thirty one (31) secondary schools. All forms

were included in the study in order to determine if any differentiation is practised by the students, teachers, or in the course books at the different levels.

All fifty six (56) teachers of English subject working in the thirty one (31) secondary schools were also targeted in the study.

3.7 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

In sampling, Zikmund, et al (2010) says a part of a population in a study is used to arrive at conclusions about the whole population Information that is reliable and detailed is provided when working with a sample as put forward by Koul (1984). Ary, Jacob and Razieriah (1972) consider fractions of between ten to twenty percent of the targeted population to meet acceptable limits for the population values.

a) Schools Sample

The schools sample comprised a total of ten (10) schools where six (6) were obtained using simple stratified random sampling that considered the MoE school categorization: the only one (1) national and one (1) extra-county school, and the only two (2) county and two (2) private schools. The other four (4) schools (15% of this category) in the sample were got out of the twenty five (25) sub county schools by simple random sampling.

b) Teachers' Sample

A sample of ten (10) teachers representing 17.9% of fifty six (56) teachers of English subject were used. Simple random sampling was used to pick a teacher from each of the

ten (10) sample schools. Where a school had only one teacher, then the researcher picked him or her.

c) Students' Sample

The study students' sample had a total of seven hundred and sixty eight (768) students which represents 10% of the students' target population of seven thousand six hundred and sixty nine (7669). The researcher used simple random sampling to pick the first and every fifth (5th) student in the admission list from all the four forms in each school irrespective of gender or performance. The researcher achieved a fair representation of the students this way since no advance knowledge, interaction or information of the students were known beforehand.

3.8 Instrumentation

The study made use of three research instruments: students' questionnaire, a teachers' interview schedule and a course book checklist.

3.8.1 Students' Questionnaires

A questionnaire was administered to the sampled students. Kerlinger (1993) says questionnaires are cheap to produce and use little time to get filled.

Fowler (2013) opines that questionnaires are appropriate for students since questions are asked in a uniform manner and they ensure responses are compatible. The researcher chose questionnaires as they would quickly reach the large students' sample number and in a short time gather opinions and ideas from the respondents. Student respondents in the study were presumed to be able to answer questionnaires since they qualified to

join secondary school from primary school and subsequent classes they were enrolled in.

The questionnaire contained questions and corresponding alternative answers to be chosen from by the respondent. The questionnaire was aimed at collection of data on students' interaction and practise with cloze tests during and after English subject lessons. This data was largely quantitative. The questionnaire had 2 sections. Section 1 sought general information about the student. Section 2 sought information about students' interaction and practise with cloze tests in ESL learning. It also asked about students' reading practices.

Appendix A1 shows the students' questionnaire.

3.8.2 Teachers' Interview Schedule

The researcher interviewed English subject teachers. In an interview, one is expected to respond to some prepared oral questions. The researcher prepared an interview schedule which sought information on what activities and strategies were used by students during and after completion of cloze tests, sources of cloze tests, what is read extensively and reading materials made available to students.

The interview schedule had open-ended questions which allowed the interviewer to probe for more information from responses elicited. Open-ended questions make the interview method effective since as Koul (1984) says, flexibility is achieved when additional information is provided. Kerlinger (1993) adds that through interviews,

answers not originally expected are provided. The method also allows explanation of unclear issues since the method is good in establishing rapport with the respondents.

The interview schedule consisted of two sections. Part one inquired general information about the teacher and lesson workload. Part two sought to know when the teacher used the cloze test in ELT, the teacher's instructions and activities provided to students on its use, follow up activities, teacher's source of cloze tests, students' preparation for use of the test and reading materials provided to students. The interviewer did not necessarily strictly follow the schedule but rather had the responses elicited from the interviewee guide the session.

Appendix A2 contains the teacher interview schedule.

3.8.3 Learners' Course Book Analysis Checklist

A checklist was developed by the researcher to analyse learners' course books. The researcher developed and used a checklist to establish the availability and number of cloze tests provided in the approved English subject learners' course books in use in secondary schools.

The data generated from the checklist was quantitative since it was concerned with the number of cloze tests contained in the course books in the study.

Appendix A3 shows the checklist developed and used.

3.9 Piloting

The research instruments were subjected to piloting in order to test and improve the research instruments. The piloting was also used to evaluate the feasibility of the study. Kahuhia Girls' High School was chosen by the researcher since it is an extra-county school within Murang'a County like one of the sample schools in the study and is located near the sub-county of study.

Five (5) students from each form and two (2) teachers were involved. This gave the researcher responses from students and teachers which first assisted the researcher to review the objectives of the study from an initial five (5) to the current four (4) and were also restructured to reflect the actual concerns of the study.

Piloting aided the researcher to assess the validity and reliability of the instruments. This was aimed at helping to modify or adjust the instruments so that they fit the purpose of the study. The researcher also got a feel of the instruments and was able to improve skills in using them prior to the actual study. Piloting assisted the researcher to plan better for the fieldwork during the study and challenges were better anticipated.

3.10 Validity

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) say validity is concerned with how far an instrument is able to measure what it was meant to measure in such a way that the results of data analysis represent the subject under study. The researcher constructed research instruments as per the objectives of the study and collaborated with the supervisors and experts in the Department of Educational Communication and Technology of Kenyatta University.

According to Wiersma (1995), validation of a research tool is done by pre-testing in order to analyse its items, content and construct related evidence. Simple random technique was used to pick five (5) students in each form in the pilot school to whom the student questionnaire was administered. Two (2) teachers of the English subject in the pilot school were interviewed using the teacher interview schedule. Data collected was analysed by the researcher to determine which questions elicited relevant data to the study. The researcher reviewed questions that appeared unclear and or ambiguous at the point of piloting in the study.

3.11 Reliability

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) say that reliability refers to the ability of a research instrument to elicit consistent scores or data after repeated trials. Macmillan and Schumacher (2001) add that apart from the measurements being consistent, reliability is also about the degree to which there are no errors in the measurements. In this study, piloting assisted in testing for reliability. Test – retest method was used where the same instrument was administered twice to the sampled respondents in the pilot school with a two weeks’ lapse between the first and the second time in order to establish whether the results obtained would be the same.

The researcher administered the students’ questionnaire to (5) five students picked by simple random technique from each form and studied the responses. The questionnaire was administered on the same students after two weeks and responses studied. The researcher piloted the teacher interview schedule in the same pilot school. The researcher interviewed (2) two teachers picked by simple random method and the

responses were also recorded and studied. A retake of the interview was done with the same English subject teachers. The responses were studied again. The research instruments were considered reliable since the responses in the repeat administration for the students and the teachers were found to be consistent with the responses from the first administration.

3.12 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher started by obtaining a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). This permit was used to seek approval from the Murang'a County Director of Education under the MoE and also Murang'a County Commissioner under the Ministry of Interior and Co-ordination of National Government to proceed with the research in the area. The researcher then approached the principals of the ten sample schools to allow administration of the research instruments to the students and teachers of English subject in the schools.

The teachers assisted the researcher to sample the students for the study and also planned for administering the research instruments on convenient days. The researcher visited the schools again and explained the purpose of the study and what it entailed to help create rapport and a comfortable atmosphere during data collection. A sample of seven hundred and sixty eight (768) students drawn from each class level in ten (10) schools were used in the study. All class levels were considered in order to establish whether any differentiation is done at the different form levels by teachers, students and learners' course books in regard to cloze tests.

The students completed questionnaires which were distributed among the sampled students with the help of their English subject teachers. The teachers had the sampled students complete the questionnaires during the students' free time depending on their school daily programme. The questionnaires were left with the teachers who issued them to the sampled students during the students' free time and collected them immediately after they completed filling them. Out of seven hundred and sixty eight (768) questionnaires distributed, six hundred and ninety eight (698) were submitted by the teachers to the researcher and subsequently analysed. The subject teachers were unable to explain the seventy (70) unreturned questionnaires.

The teachers were interviewed in a sitting with the researcher at times they indicated as convenient to them and the researcher.

For the learners' course books, the researcher analysed the books and checked them against the checklist generated.

3.13 Data Analysis

The researcher analysed the data from the research instruments using tables and calculated percentages. The researcher has presented the data in tables and percentages in chapter four.

3.14 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

The rights of the participants were protected by the researcher while carrying out this study. This was done by engaging the students and teachers to get their informed consent. Those who were willing but had not been selected were explained to that not

all could fit in the study due to time and scope of the study and their personalities, intelligence or behaviour had nothing to do with their being left out. The participants' sensitivity was considered by the researcher wording questions in a general unisex way. The participants were also made aware on expectations of the researcher and expected outcomes. The researcher observed due diligence in obtaining all necessary authorization from the NACOSTI, MoE and County Commissioner.

3.15 Chapter Summary

This chapter explains the research design and methodology used. It explains that descriptive survey design was used where the researcher met students and teachers, and considered course books as they existed in secondary schools. Only a sample was used cutting across the different school categories in existence.

The study target population was 31 schools, 56 teachers and 7,669 students. The sample consisted of 10 schools where simple stratified sampling was used to pick the only national school, the only extra-county school, the only 2 county schools and the only 2 private schools. Simple random sampling was used to pick 4 (15%) of the remaining 25 sub-county schools. Simple random sampling was used to pick 1 teacher from each of the 10 sample schools; where only 1 existed, he or she was picked.

The chapter has explained the instruments used which were a students' questionnaire, a teacher interview schedule and a course book checklist. These were piloted at Kahuhia Girls' High School which is the next sub-county but in the same county. Piloting helped in checking the reliability of the instruments which were further improved in their

validity through input from members of the Educational Communication and Technology department of Kenyatta University.

The chapter also explains the acquisition of a permit from NACOSTI which was used to seek permission from Murang'a County Director of Education and Murang'a County Commissioner under the Ministry of Interior and National Coordination. Consent from the Principals of the sample schools was sought and collaboration with the teachers of English in administration of student questionnaires and interview of the teachers was done. Learners' course books were checked against a checklist.

The chapter also highlights the analysis of data using tables and percentages which are then presented in chapter four. It further explains how logistical and ethical considerations were taken care of among participants and relevant government agencies.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents research data and reports the findings of the study. The demographic data of the student participants is presented first. The findings of the study are then reported with the data in relation to the specific objectives of the study. These are to a) find out cloze tests completion strategies taught and learnt in secondary schools in Murang'a County, b) establish the availability and number of cloze tests in approved secondary school English learners' course books in Kenya, c) investigate the frequency of practise with cloze tests in secondary schools in Murang'a County and d) investigate what is read extensively by secondary school students in Murang'a County.

4.2 Cloze Tests Completion Strategies Taught and Learnt in Secondary Schools in Murang'a County

The first objective of the study was to find out cloze tests completion strategies taught and learnt in secondary schools in Murang'a County. This information was sought through questions 5 and 6 of the students' questionnaire (Appendix A1) and questions 4 and 5 in the teacher interview schedule (Appendix A2). The information regarded activities carried out by students during and after cloze test completion sessions.

Table 4.0 Students' activities during cloze test completion sessions

ACTIVITY	n	%
Read cloze before filling gaps	378	34.5
Fill gaps then read the passage	20	1.8
Fill gaps per statement as I read the passage	214	19.5
Discuss cloze with others	35	3.2
Complete the deletions individually and silently without any feedback	450	41.0

Slightly less than half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of students completed cloze tests individually and silently without consultations or feedback on their progress. About a fifth ($\frac{1}{5}$) read the cloze passage before filling the gaps while about a third filled the gaps per statement as they read through the passage. Very few discussed the cloze with others or filled gaps then read the passage.

All twenty (20) teachers reported that they present the cloze test in printed papers and supervise the students as they completed it individually. Three (3) said they sometimes allow students to discuss the tests in groups in class. The responses indicate that cloze tests are predominantly presented in examinations where one would expect the examination to be presented in printed papers and submitted for marking. Hence, the tests are completed individually and silently without discussion with others which does not provide them with opportunities to relate what they know and lacks immediate feedback necessary to guide the student in progressive learning.

Reading the cloze before filling it is a helpful technique but only about half ($\frac{1}{2}$) the students do this. A good number fail to look at the cloze test as a unit since they complete gaps per statement as they read the passage. The information indicates that the techniques in use during cloze test completion may not be helping the students improve their skills. As noted in the literature review, if the cloze test is used incorrectly, reading abilities are not improved. Rye (1982) explains this incorrect use as including exposure to the passages for brief experimental periods; lack of training on usage of context clues; absence of group discussion with students and teachers' failure to provide feedback.

Table 4.1 Students' activities after cloze test completion sessions

ACTIVITY	n	%
Exchange test/exercise with classmate(s)	54	6.9
Discuss with others	23	2.9
Hand in for marking	671	84.8
Write corrections from teachers without explanations	05	0.6
Write answers and discuss explanations from teachers	20	2.5
Discuss explanations and instructions on completion strategies	18	2.3

Nearly all students reported that they handed in their cloze tests after completion and few reported they write answers and discuss explanations from their teachers. A very small number (from the one national and two extra county schools) reported to either exchange their tests with a classmate or discuss it with others. A nearly negligible number (from the one national and two extra county schools) reported to discuss

explanations and instructions on strategies on how to complete tests. Just as noted on activities by students during cloze test completion, the students may have responded based on the majority's interaction with cloze tests at examination times only.

All teachers reported that the students hand in their work for marking during examinations and the class discusses the cloze test upon receiving their papers back. Three (3) teachers (each from the one national school and two extra county schools) reported having the cloze test as part of class work and explained that the students exchange books/papers and have the class agree on answers with guidance from the teachers. It is noteworthy that examinations are periodical and the teachers may not necessarily include cloze tests in short continuous assessment tests. Hence, the students would be limited in the number of times they discuss cloze tests.

Steinman (2002) recommends use of cloze texts made by teachers, completion of cloze tests using accepted word scoring and eventually a discussion held about the choice of the words. The study found that the best activities which include discussion with others, exchanging tests with classmates and discussing explanations and instructions on strategies on cloze test completion are not carried out by the majority of students. Teachers marking cloze tests without a discussion with students leads to students not learning why and how the correct answers are arrived at. Therefore, there is poor preparation and subsequently, the students write examinations without the necessary skills. Low scores would be inevitable.

4.3 Availability and Number of Cloze Tests in Approved Secondary School English Learners' Course Books in Kenya

The second objective was to establish the availability and number of cloze tests in approved secondary school English learners' course books in Kenya. This objective was established by responses to question 7 of the students' questionnaire (Appendix A1), questions 7 and 8 of the teacher interview schedule (Appendix A2) and a learners' course book checklist (Appendix A3). The information relates to approved English subject learners' course books, source of cloze tests in English subject lessons and checking for cloze tests in the approved English subject learners' course books.

Responses by students on their source of cloze tests for learning are presented first in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Students' source of cloze tests

SOURCE	n	%
English learners' course books provided	168	15.7
Teacher's own resources	420	39.2
Past examinations	213	19.8
Revision materials/books	271	25.3

About forty percent (40%) of the students indicated they got cloze tests supplied from their teacher's own resources. The approved learners' course books and past examinations contributed less than twenty percent (20%) as sources of cloze tests while revision books accounted for about a quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) as sources of cloze tests.

All twenty (20) teachers said they relied on past examination papers and revision books available in the market. Only two (2) out of the twenty (20) teachers said they refer to the approved learners' course books provided to the students.

Only 3 revision books are in the list of KICD approved course books. These are bought by individual students and or schools and so not available to all across the classes. Past examinations are not subject to approval by the KICD. Reliance on past examination papers and revision books points to an inadequacy in the approved learners' course books as sources of cloze tests. The availability and accessibility of past examination papers and revision books by all students is subject to willingness and ability of individuals and institutions. The small number of students finding cloze tests in approved learners' course books indicates a gap in the number available for practice.

All twenty (20) teachers reported they referred to revision books to extract cloze tests since the learners' course books in use do not contain cloze tests and where they have, they have already been tried out by the students. This study found teachers relying on revision books which are not issued to each student or are not necessarily accessible in all schools.

Seven (7) learners' course book titles are approved by the KICD for use in secondary school ELLs. The researcher lists the approved English subject learners' course books here where the abbreviations in brackets have been assigned by the researcher for purposes of presentation in table 4.3.

1. Head Start Secondary English Book 1, 2, 3 and 4 (H.S.E)
2. New Integrated English Book 1 and 3 (N.I.E)

3. Advancing in English Book 1, 2, 3 and 4 (A.E.)
4. Excelling in English (Secondary English) Book 1, 2 and 3 (E.E.)
5. New Horizons in English Book 1, 2 and 4 (N.H.E.)
6. Explore English Book 1 and 3 (Ex.E.)
7. Macmillan (Moran) English Book 3 and 4 (M.E)

This study perused learners' course books to establish the number of cloze tests provided. The number of cloze tests available in each course book is significant as it is an indicator of the opportunities available for a learner to get to practise with the cloze test in and out of ELLs. The books were found to be arranged in units of study where each unit covers the four skills in language: listening, speaking, writing and reading. The learners' course book checklist considers the book, Form or class considered, number of units in the book and total number of cloze tests found. The number of cloze tests available in the approved learners' course books was reported next with the assistance of table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Availability of cloze tests in approved course books

COURSE BOOKS	Form 1		Form 2		Form 3		Form 4	
	N.U.	CT	N.U	CT	N.U.	CT	N.U.	CT
E.E.	20	0	26	5	24	0	N/A	N/A
N.H.E.	25	1	30	0	N/A	N/A	20	4
N.I.E.	32	0	N/A	N/A	30	1	N/A	N/A
A.E.	30	2	29	3	30	3	31	6
H.S.E.	30	3	30	3	27	3	24	3
Ex. E.	20	0	N/A	N/A	24	2	N/A	N/A
M.E	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	30	1	21	6

KEY: N.U. = Number of Units, CT = Cloze Tests

The books for each class had between nineteen (19) and thirty two (32) units. The figures indicate five (5) cloze tests as being the most in any of the course books out of twenty six (26) units. Five (5) out of twenty (20) course books had no single cloze test. The researcher is of the opinion that five (5) cloze tests in one (1) academic year are very few to provide sufficient completion practice. Being assessment tools, cloze tests in the English subject learners' course books in Kenya appear at points of revision or checkpoints for several topics.

4.4 Frequency of Practice with Cloze Tests in Secondary Schools in Murang'a County

The third objective was to investigate the frequency of practice with cloze tests in secondary schools in Murang'a County. This objective was measured by responses to questions about students' awareness of cloze tests, students' first contact with cloze tests, frequency of practice with cloze tests which relates to the time teachers present cloze tests to students and instructions presented alongside cloze tests by teachers in lessons and in examinations. These are related to questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 of section 2 of the students' questionnaire (Appendix A1) and questions 1, 2 and 3 of teacher interview schedule (Appendix A 2).

Tables 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 show students' data.

Table 4.4 Students' awareness of cloze tests

CLASS	YES		NO		NOT SURE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Form 1	127	18.2	24	3.4	09	1.3
Form 2	155	22.2	04	0.6	06	0.9
Form 3	173	24.8	00	00	03	0.4
Form 4	190	27.2	00	00	02	0.3
TOTAL	645	92.4	28	4.0	25	3.6

Nearly all students know what cloze tests are. A very small number in Form 1 and 2 do not know what cloze tests are while a small number across all forms claim to be unsure of their knowledge of what cloze tests are. The figures from these responses indicate that nearly all students know what cloze tests are and so can relate with what to do with a cloze test when presented with one.

Twelve (12) teachers reported they taught cloze test completion strategies in class while eight (8) confessed to only present cloze tests in examinations. This contradicts the data from students on the frequency of exposure to cloze tests while in school since the majority of students reported that they interact with cloze tests at examination time only. Of the twelve (12) teachers, some explained that they presented cloze tests as assignments to be completed during revision and extra work. Most were not definite on the actual teaching in class. This data concurs with Maroko's (2016) finding that cloze tests are predominantly found in terminal examinations at both primary and secondary school levels.

Table 4.5 Students' first contact with cloze tests.

RESPONSES	n	%
During ELLs in primary school	590	84.5
During KCPE	45	6.4
During ELLs in Form 1	23	3.3
During ELLs in Form 2	10	1.4
Have never seen a cloze test	30	4.3
TOTAL	698	100

The majority of the students reported that they interacted with cloze tests during ELLs at primary school level. Those with alternative answers (all from sub-county schools) were very few while a nearly negligible number claimed to have never seen a cloze test.

All teachers reported they thought the students had seen cloze tests earlier in primary school but with multiple answers to choose from. They thus introduced the term 'cloze'

in Form 1 but did not offer multiple choices. This observation coincided with the response from students where majority indicated they had interacted with cloze tests in primary school.

The report indicates that nearly all the students in secondary school know about cloze tests since they interacted with them in primary school ELLs. It would then be expected that students would score relatively well at KCSE level since they have interacted with it since primary school and a further four years in secondary school. However, the KNEC KCSE reports depict a different picture about the performance in cloze tests.

Table 4.6 Students' frequency of practise with cloze tests in ELLs

FREQUENCY	n	%
Only in exams	604	86.5
Once a month	63	9.0
Once in 2 weeks	20	2.9
Once a week	06	0.9
Never	05	0.7
TOTAL	698	100

The majority of the students reported to interact with cloze tests during examinations while a handful reported to never practise with them at any time. Just a few said they got to engage with cloze tests once a month and very few reported to do so once in a fortnight while a handful had them once a week. The few who reported to interact with cloze tests in lessons rather than only in examinations were all from the one national and two extra county schools.

All twenty (20) teachers reported they have a cloze test in the end of term examinations. Three (3) of the teachers from the one national and two extra county schools) said they have one (1) at least once in a month but could not confirm the regularity of the occurrence.

The report shows that only a small proportion of students interact with cloze tests beyond the exam situation. It also confirms a lack of provision of guided exposure to the cloze test by the teachers which would lead to low scores in examinations. Rye (1982) stresses that familiarity with the cloze test is important for language learners since students would get frustrated when working with short passages while unfamiliar with cloze test rules. Lack of practise with cloze tests is considered a deficiency which would influence performance during exams. The lack of clear answers to this question by the teachers pointed to a high possibility of lack of practise with the cloze in English subject lessons.

The majority of students reported they knew what to do when presented with cloze tests while all the teachers reported using one of the following instructions:

- a) Read the passage below and fill each blank space with the most appropriate word.
- b) Fill the blanks in the passage below with the most appropriate word.
- c) Fill the blank spaces in the passage with ONE word for the passage to be complete.

The findings in the study on instructions are in line with standard practice provided in examinations and so would be considered appropriate for the students. The students would be considered to be clear on what they are required to do when presented with cloze tests. The findings concur with Rye's (1982) assertion that instructions that are well sequenced in length and difficulty contribute to the effectiveness of cloze. It also follows Gunning's (1998) insistence on clear instructions being issued before the start of a cloze exercise. This is a positive observation that should translate to high scores in examinations. Unfortunately, the high scores are not realised in the examinations as reported in KNEC KCSE reports.

4.5 Extensive Reading by Secondary School Students in Murang'a County.

Neville (1984) observes that competent readers are able to restore the exact words or synonyms in a cloze text. In line with this, the fourth objective was to investigate what is read extensively by secondary school students in Murang'a County since schemata is built among other ways through extensive reading so that a student can make predictions in a cloze test since he/she has some background knowledge and familiarity with the language of the test.. The required data was elicited by responses to questions on materials students reported to have read in the previous two weeks before the questionnaires were presented. Question 8 in the students' questionnaire (Appendix A1) and questions 10 and 11 of the teacher interview schedule (Appendix A2) dealt with this objective.

The data is presented next with the aid of table 4.7

Table 4.7 Materials students read extensively

Reading materials	Newspapers	Magazines	Novels	No reading done
N	150	62	80	386
%	22.1	9.1	11.8	57.0

The researcher noted that about a half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the students had not extensively read any material. About a quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) reported to have read newspapers and less than an eighth ($\frac{1}{8}$) had read magazines and or novels. This implies that the students do not read beyond the classroom materials provided or expected of the curriculum.

Eight (8) out of twenty (20) teachers said a small portion of students read beyond the curriculum-specified materials. This was reported in the National, Extra-county and County schools. The other twelve (12) teachers reported that students read what is provided and when insisted upon by their teachers. All twenty (20) teachers reported that students will read what they perceive to be directly related to the examinations they write. The researcher concluded that the majority of teachers are of the opinion that students do not read unless it is of interest due to examination purposes. Schemata from reading is hence not adequately acquired yet it contributes greatly in cloze test completion.

Fourteen (14) out of twenty (20) teachers reported that newspapers and story books are made available by their schools in libraries. This applies for only seven (7) schools in

the sub-county which have functional libraries. Eleven (11) teachers reported that newspapers are provided for students by them being pinned on their school notice boards. Newspapers seem to be common since they are cheaper than books and are available on a daily basis. News is also of interest to the administration, teachers, non-teaching staff and students. One (1) newspaper can be read by many persons in a short time.

Teachers report that reading of these provided materials is mostly voluntary and or well done only when the students are instructed to read. The accessibility of the materials is however dependant on availability and accessibility of libraries and notice boards; and the possibility of having enough numbers for the students per institution. The figures from the study on students' extensive reading are extremely low indicating that acquisition of diction and schemata is not adequate. The performance of cloze tests is bound to be affected negatively.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter explains that a sample of seven hundred and sixty eight (768) students drawn from each class level in ten (10) schools were used in the study. The researcher used student questionnaires, teachers' interview schedule and learners' course book checklist were used to collect information. Of the 768 student questionnaires distributed, only 698 were submitted by the students.

The first objective was to find out about teaching and learning of cloze test completion strategies. The data presented shows that much of the activity around cloze test

completion is related to examinations. This is because cloze tests are primarily found in examinations rather than English subject lessons.

The second objective was about the number of cloze tests available in English learners' course books. There are 7 English learners' course approved by the KICD. The English learners' course book checklist revealed that the course books are organized in units of learning with the course books having at most 32 units and the least being 19. The book with the highest number of cloze tests is 5 out of 26 units while up to 5 learners' course books have no cloze test.

The third objective sought to find out the frequency of practise with cloze tests in English language lessons. Data reveals that students encountered cloze tests in primary school and know what to do when presented with one. The instructions that teachers give to accompany cloze tests are also quite clear. However, cloze tests are largely presented in examinations and little or no practise is done in English lessons in school.

The fourth objective was concerned with extensive reading among secondary school students. The study found out that students generally read what is exam oriented and or insisted upon by teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to survey the preparation for cloze tests completion in secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya. This chapter presents a summary of significant findings, conclusions, recommendations of the study and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of Significant Findings of the Study

The following is a summary of significant findings as they relate to the objectives.

a) The Teaching and Learning of Cloze Tests Completion Strategies

The researcher noted that the activities the students and the teachers reported to be involved in during cloze tests completion were primarily during examinations rather than in English subject lessons as anticipated at the start of the study.

The researcher found out that secondary school students know what to do with cloze tests and the instructions given by the teachers are clear. The findings indicate that more than half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the students complete deletions individually and silently without feedback and about half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of them read the whole cloze before filling the gaps. About a third ($\frac{1}{3}$) fill the gaps per statement as they read the passage. All students hand in their work to their teachers for marking in examinations. The students discuss the cloze tests upon receiving their work back from the teachers.

These findings reflect a shortcoming since the best activities as recommended by Rye (1982), Fyfe and Mitchel (1983), Steinman (2002) and Maroko (2016) among others are not practised by a majority of students and teachers. Such activities include involving discussion with others, exchanging tests with colleagues and receiving detailed explanations with instructions on strategies on how to complete cloze tests.

b) Availability of Cloze Tests in Approved English Subject Learners' Course Books

The researcher found that only a small fraction of students find cloze tests in learners' course books and teachers do not use the learners' course books as a source of cloze tests for their students. The researcher observed that the approved learners' course books have very few and some have no cloze tests for students to practise with.

c) Practise with Cloze Tests in English Subject Lessons

The researcher found out that secondary school students know what cloze tests are and have interacted with them earlier in primary school. However, most students only work with cloze tests in examinations in school. Most teachers confess to only present cloze tests in examinations.

d) Extensive Reading by Secondary School Students

The researcher found out that about a half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the students had not read any material for pleasure. About a quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) reported to read newspapers and less than an eighth ($\frac{1}{8}$) had read each magazines and novels. About three quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of teachers reported

that students only read what is provided and insisted upon by the institution or teachers and what the students consider as having direct correlation with examinations.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings led to four conclusions:

- a) Cloze tests completion strategies are not taught in English subject lessons in secondary schools. Cloze tests are primarily presented in examinations. Thus, recommended cloze test completion strategies the students should be involved in during and after the cloze test completion sessions are not practised.
- b) The approved English subject learners' course books have few (and some none) cloze tests for students to practise with.
- c) Students are aware of what cloze tests are and are exposed to them at the level of examinations. There is however a shortcoming in practise with cloze tests in English subject lessons which could affect performance in the examinations negatively.
- d) Students are limited in their extensive reading which could be one factor contributing to poor performance in cloze tests. Extensive reading is an important agent in building of schemata that is necessary for successful completion of cloze tests.

5.4 Recommendations

The following are recommendations of this study:

- a) Cloze test completion strategies should be taught to secondary school English subject students. This is by having students engaged in the recommended activities during and after cloze test completion sessions. These include teaching students how to complete the cloze by emphasizing reading the whole text as one before concentrating on the blank spaces. Errors made by students in the cloze test should be analyzed to help understand particular areas of problem in students' reading ability. There should also be use of group discussions since it assists students to carefully read the test and together reason with one another meaningfully about the choices of words made. The learning process should be helped to continue for the student after the group discussion by the teacher giving credit for correct or appropriate responses and also offering possible explanations for the word choice.
- b) The approved secondary school English subject learners' course books should have at least one cloze test in each study unit for practise. Much of lesson time is spent using this resource. Therefore, it is vital that the course books in use satisfy students' needs, capture their attention, stimulate their interests and lead to language acquisition. Having cloze tests in each unit would provide much needed resource for practise.
- c) Secondary school English subject students should practise with a variety of cloze tests in their English subject lessons. The teacher can use the cloze test as an integration tool for all the language skills. Practise makes perfect.

d) Secondary school students should be encouraged to read extensively and provided with many and a variety of general reading materials. Reading for second language learners is an important skill that helps them gain new knowledge. By reading extensively, learners are able to develop a bank of words or vocabulary and assists revelation of new ideas and structures in language which are later used both verbally and in the written form to communicate. The student, by reading extensively, builds schemata over time and so will be able to choose from the built background knowledge and draw from his/her familiarity with the culture of the language of the test. Reading enhances proficiency which is tested by the cloze.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research on a number of issues concerning the cloze test needs to be carried out. First, it would be informative to find out whether cloze tests completion strategies are taught and learnt in English subject in primary schools. Further, a study on what training ELT's undergo in teaching cloze tests completion strategies would help to determine their efficacy in teaching the same in English subject lessons. It would also be important to carry out a study to determine what reading material would best aid in acquisition of schemata to ensure successful completion of cloze tests so as to help when recommending materials for reading to be availed for ELL's.

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APPENDIX I A: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a questionnaire meant to collect information about cloze tests in English subject.

Confidentiality will be maintained on any information contained here.

This questionnaire should not be treated as a test and there will be no scores awarded to any response or respondents.

Instructions:

- i) Do **NOT** write your name or admission number.
- ii) Put a tick on the appropriate response {√} or write your response in the provided spaces.

Section 1.

1. School name:

2. Class: Form { 1 } { 2 } { 3 } { 4 }

Section 2

1. Do you know what a cloze test is? Yes { } No { } Not sure { }

2. When did you work with cloze tests for the first time?

Normal lessons in primary school { } K.C.P.E. { }

Normal lessons in Form 1 { }, 2 { }, 3 { }, 4 { }

I have never seen a cloze test { }

3. While in school, how regularly do you complete a cloze test in a week?

- Only in exams { } - Once in a month { }

- Once in 2 weeks { } - Once a week { } - Never { }

4. Do you know what to do when given a cloze test?

Yes { } No { } Not sure { }

5. Which one do you do when filling cloze tests? (You can tick more than 1)
- Read cloze before filling gaps { } Fill gaps then read the passage { }
- Fill gaps per statement as I read the passage { } Discuss the cloze with others { }
- Complete the deletions individually and silently without any feedback. { }
6. Which of the following do you do after filling the cloze test?
- (You can tick more than 1)
- Exchange test with colleague { } Discuss the cloze test with others { }
- Hand in test for marking { }
- The appropriate responses are provided without explanations. { }
- The correct answers and accompanying explanations provided by teachers. { }
- Receive comprehensive explanations on how to complete cloze tests { }
7. Where do you find cloze tests when studying English? (You can tick more than 1)
- From English course books provided { } Teacher provides tests { }
- From past examinations { } From revision materials/books { }
8. In the last two weeks, which of the following that are not for testing in English have you read for pleasure? (You can tick more than 1)
- Newspaper { } Magazine { } Novel { } Short story { } Play { }
- Others {specify}.....

**APPENDIX I B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ENGLISH SUBJECT
TEACHERS.**

School:

Qualification:

Teaching experience:

1. When do you introduce the cloze to the students?
2. How regularly in a week/term do you present the cloze test in English lessons?
3. When presenting the cloze test to students, what instructions do you provide?
4. What activities are the students engaged in during cloze test completion sessions?
5. What activities are the students guided to engage in after completion of the cloze test filling exercise?
6. Which approved textbook(s) is used by the students in your institution?
7. What is your source of the cloze test?
8. Which textbook do you use when teaching cloze tests?
9. In your opinion, do the students read beyond what the curriculum provides?
10. Apart from the curriculum approved course books, what other reading materials are provided to the students?

APPENDIX I C: COURSE BOOK CHECKLIST

(This is to be filled while observing the teaching and learning resources)

This checklist is meant to find out the number of cloze tests in the approved English subject learners' course books for each form or class.

Indicate the number units and number of cloze tests appearing in each approved English subject learners' course book.

COURSE BOOK	Form 1		Form 2		Form 3		Form 4	
	N.U	CT	N.U	CT	N.U	CT	N.U	CT

KEY: N.U = Number of Units, CT = Cloze Tests

APPENDIX II: WORK PLAN

The following is a work plan by the researcher.

	Apr'13 Aug'15	Aug'15 Aug'17	Oct'18	Jan'19	Feb'19 May'19	June'19 July'19	April'21	Aug'21
Literature Review	■	■						
Proposal Preparation		■						
Departmental Defence			■					
Piloting				■				
Collection of data					■			
Data analysis						■		
Submission of thesis & External Readers							■	
Graduate School defence								■

APPENDIX III: RESEARCH BUDGET

Budget proposal by the researcher in the study.

ITEM/DESCRIPTION	COST (Kshs)	TOTAL (Kshs)
Proposal preparations		
Printing	80 Pages @ 3 * 15 copies	3,600
Binding	15 copies @ 50	750
Internet cost	Safaricom 5GB @ 1,000	5,000
Travelling	20 times @ 200	4,000
Piloting		
Printing	100pages @3	300
Travelling	5times @ 200	1,000
Data collection		
Travelling	10times @ 200	2,000
Printing instruments	1,500 copies @ 6	9,000
Assistants	5 persons @ 1,000 * 3 days	15,000
Telephone costs	Airtime @ 2,000	2,000
Data analysis	SPSS @ 35,000	35,000
Thesis preparation		
Printing	250 pages @ 3 *6 copies	4,500
Binding	6 copies @ 100	600
Total expenditure		82,750
10% contingency		8,275
Grand total (rounded off)		100,000

APPENDIX IV A: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION 1




Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Murang'a County.

The County Director of Education
Murang'a County.

APPENDIX IV B: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION 2

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Telephone: 060-2030467
Email: cc.muranga@interior.go.ke

COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MURANG'A COUNTY
P. O. BOX 7-10200
MURANG'A

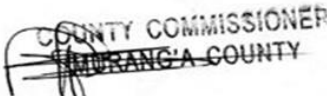
When replying please quote

REF. NO. PUB. 24/11/VOL. II/43 **31ST OCTOBER, 2018**

ISAAC MBUGUA NGIRACHU
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
P.O BOX 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION.

In reference to a letter **NACOSTI/P/18/62873/25011** dated **11TH OCTOBER, 2018** from National Commission For Science, Technology and Innovation regarding the above subject, You are hereby authorized to carry out research in this County on ***“Preparedness Of Secondary School Learners And Their Ability To Correctly Complete English Language Cloze Tests In Murang`a County, Kenya”*** for a period ending on **11^h OCTOBER, 2019**


COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MURANG'A COUNTY

PETER MAJIWA
For: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MURANG'A COUNTY.

APPENDIX IV C: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION 3



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION

Email: cdemuranga@gmail.com
Telephone: 060 2030227
When replying please quote

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
P.O BOX 118 - 10200
MURANG'A

REF: MGA/CTY/GEN./64/VOL.III/153

31st October, 2018

Isaac Mbugua Ngirachu
Kenyatta University
P.O.Box 43844 -00100
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

The County Education office is in receipt of your request and authority letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, reference No. NACOSTI/P/18/62873/25011 dated 11th October, 2018 to carry research on **"Preparedness of secondary school learners and their ability to correctly complete English language cloze tests in Murang'a County, Kenya"**

Permission is hereby granted to carry out research in **Murang'a County** for a period ending **11th October, 2019**.

You are kindly advised to deposit a copy of the final research report to the County Director of Education office.

FOR: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MURANG'A
Dorcas Gachanja
For: County Director of Education
MURANG'A

APPENDIX IV D: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Kenyatta University,

Department of Educational Communication and Technology,

P.O. Box 43844-00100, Nairobi.

THE PRINCIPAL,

_____ **SEC. SCHOOL,**

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: COLLECTION OF DATA: *Preparedness of Secondary School Learners and Their Ability to Correctly Complete English Language Cloze Tests in Murang'a County, Kenya.*

Ngirachu I. Mbugua wishes to involve your school in a study for his Master's thesis at Kenyatta University. The study will involve a sample of students from each form in answering a questionnaire. One teacher of English will be interviewed by the researcher.

Their honest views, participation and opinions are very important. The data collected will be treated with a high level of confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose beside the stated study.

The student researcher will very soon be visiting you in order to plan on the logistics involved. It is hoped you will assist him to make the study a success..

Yours,

Isaac Mbugua Ngirachu,

Student Researcher,

APPENDIX IV E: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION OF RESPONDENTS

Kenyatta University,

Department of Educational Communication and Technology,

P.O. Box 43844-00100, Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Master's student at Kenyatta University conducting a research on the topic:
Preparedness of Secondary School Learners and Their Ability to Correctly Complete English Language Cloze Tests in Murang'a County, Kenya.

I kindly request you permit a number of students to participate in answering a questionnaire for the study. This number will be sampled from each form and class.

I also wish to interview one teacher of English subject.

The opinions and participation are important for the study and I assure you that all data and information will be stored with utmost confidentiality. This shall be only considered for this study. Names and other personal details will not be recorded nor collected.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Isaac Mbugua Ngirachu.

APPENDIX V: LIST OF SCHOOLS

The following is a list of schools in Murang'a East sub-county and their categories.

1. Murang'a Boys' High - National	17. Maragi Secondary - Sub county
2. Mumbi Girls' High - Extra county	18. Mirira Secondary - Sub county
3. Kiambu Boys' High - County	19. Muchungu Secondary - Sub county
4. Gaturi Girls' High - County	20. Mugeka Secondary - Sub county
5. Gaitheri Secondary - Sub county	21. Mukurwe Secondary - Sub county
6. Gakurwe Secondary - Sub county	22. Mweru Secondary - Sub county
7. Giathiya Secondary - Sub county	23. Nyakihai Secondary - Sub county
8. Gikandu Secondary - Sub county	24. Rurii Secondary - Sub county
9. Gikindu Secondary - Sub county	25. St. Joseph Secondary - Sub county
10. Githanga Secondary - Sub county	26. St. M. Gathukiini Secondary- Sub county
11. Kiamuri Secondary - Sub county	27. Vidhu Ramji Secondary - Sub county
12. Kiangochi Secondary - Sub county	28. Ititu Secondary - Sub county
13. Kiawambeu Secondary - Sub county	29. Karemaini Secondary - Sub county
14. Kigetuni Secondary - Sub county	30. Bishop Mahiaini Secondary - Private
15. Kigongo Secondary - Sub county	31. Philadelphia Secondary - Private
16. Kimathi Secondary - Sub county	

NB: Sample schools are in bold letters

Source: Murang'a County MoE office

APPENDIX VI: MURANG'A COUNTY MAP

