

Time Utilization and Its Influence on Actual Oral Skills Teaching in Public Primary Schools in Uasin Gishu County Kenya

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Abstract

The paper aimed at establishing whether a relationship existed between time spent and oral skills delivery. The study questions were: how much time do teachers spend on actual oral skills teaching in public primary schools in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya? To what extent did the teachers' experience influenced the utilization of time stipulated for oral skills teaching? How does teachers' training influence the use of time allocated for oral lessons, does the location of a school influence the use of time allocated for oral lessons? Pre-test post-test comparison group design guided the study. The target population was class one teachers of English and class one pupils. Stratified simple random sampling procedure was used to get the sample size. Observation schedule and document analysis guide were used to collect data. Data analysis was via frequencies, means, percentages and multiple regression.

Key Words: time spent, oral skills, teaching

Background

Oral skills are the listening and speaking skills which prepares a learner for reading readiness. These two skills are interdependent of each other (Gathumbii & Masembe, 2005). However, learners find difficulties with these two skills and therefore there is need for teachers to spend a lot of time teaching the skills. In Sweden Anna (2008) asserted that the teachers believed that the assessment of pupils' oral ability was hard because it was not as concrete as other skills that they assessed in the English foreign language classroom. According to the author, other reasons why the assessment was considered hard were lack of time and unmotivated pupils to participate in oral lessons. In Saudi Arabia Mona (2013) established that more time was devoted to listening skills than speaking skills. The author also revealed that using Arabic in class affected students' proficiency; curriculum of listening and speaking did not contain enough exercises for speaking skills. Further, instructors did not use strategies that developed speaking such as role-play, debates, and presentation assignment. Labs were not used for teaching listening and speaking skills.

Onchera (2013) postulated that since oral skills were not examined in Kenya. Teachers in schools, saved time to teach areas that were likely to be tested. The practice could not allow students to make enough room for the development of oral skills. In Kenya, objectives of teaching oral lessons and among pupils are stipulated in the syllabus (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002). The objectives of oral lessons are that: by the end of the primary cycle, the learner should be able to acquire listening skills to be able to listen, understand and respond to information and instructions appropriately in addition to using correct intonation, pronunciation and stress which are needful in expressing needs and feelings, conveying information and relating experiences.

Methodology

Pre-test post-test comparison group design was used to carry out the study. The study targeted population was class one pupils and teachers of English in all public primary schools in Uasin Gishu County. The sample size was composed of 22 teachers and 104 pupils. Stratified simple random sampling was used. The instruments used to collect data were an observation schedule and a

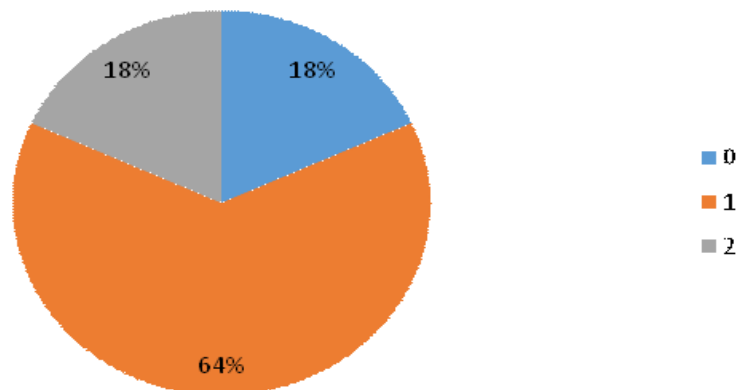
document analysis guide. To determine validity of the research instruments experts were consulted. Split half method was used to determine reliability of the observation schedule. Means, frequencies, multiple regression and percentages were used to analyze data.

Results and Discussions

The following were the results of the study; As shown in Figure 1.1, 4(18%) of the respondents were found not to attend to oral lessons at all. The finding meant that the teachers ignored the outlined sequence of teaching English in the syllabus; that is, oral skills must precede reading and writing skills, or the teachers had a negative attitude towards oral skills teaching. The finding is in line with Anna (2008) who established that in Sweden the teachers believed that the assessment of pupils' oral ability was hard because it was not viewed as concrete when compared to the other skills they assessed in the English foreign language classroom. The other meaning of the finding could be that the teachers ignored the guidelines provided in the Class One English syllabus, yet they function as guides to systematic teaching. The other reason that might be attributed to the finding could be that the teachers utilized the time assigned to the oral skills to teach reading and writing skill as they were testable at the national exams. This

assertion is consistent with that of Onchera (2013) who postulated that since oral skills were not examined, teachers in Kisii County saved time to teach only those areas that had a likelihood of being tested. The other meaning to the finding could be that The Kenyan System of Education is examination oriented and, therefore, teachers were discouraged from giving listening and speaking adequate attention. The other meaning which might be deduced from the finding could be that time spent on teaching oral skills is organized differently by individual teachers and not as prescribed in the English syllabus.

As shown in Figure 1.1, 14(64%) of the participants were reported to have attended to oral lessons once a week while 4(18%) of the respondents attended to the two oral lessons weekly. This finding meant that the teachers consulted the syllabus while preparing the schemes of work. Another reason might be that 4(18%) of the teachers prepared the lesson plan for the listening and speaking skills and also made reference to it as they taught. Further, the finding implied that those teachers who taught all the two oral lessons were aware that oral language skills were the enabling and significant predictors of later reading development, as awareness of oral language sounds is a necessary precursor skill to the acquisition of the alphabetic principle which leads to acquisition of reading (Paris, 2005 & Woolley & Geva 2000).



The researcher did an observation in class to find out whether the teachers intensified the oral lessons time as required. The results are shown in Table 1.

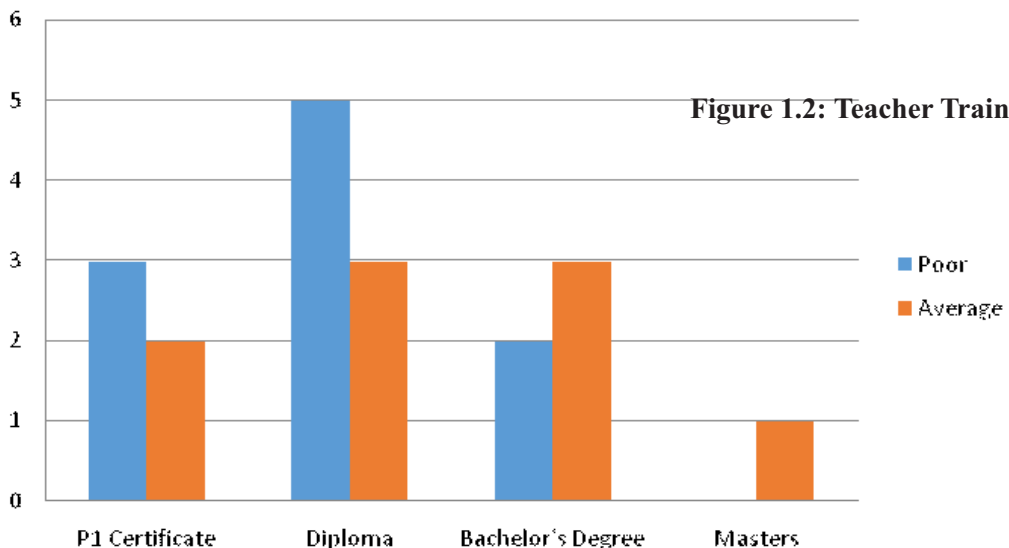
Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Time Spent on Oral Skills Instruction by School Location

			Location of School		Total
			Rural	Urban	
Teacher utilised scheduled time appropriately	Poor	Count	8	2	10
		% within Location of School	47.1%	40.0%	45.5%
	Average	Count	9	3	12
		% within Location of School	52.9%	60.0%	54.5%

According to the data presented in Table 1, 8(47.1%) of teachers in rural schools and 2(40.0%) of teachers in the urban set up were awarded a poor grade in regards to utilization of the oral lesson time. The researcher observed that teachers in some schools began the lesson five minutes late and in others schools they left the class earlier before the stipulated time for the lesson to end. The reason that might be attributed to the finding was that teachers did not regard oral lessons as important skills as reading and writing. The other reason could be that the teachers lacked adequate preparation for the lesson. The finding might mean that the class one teachers of English believed that oral lessons were hard to deliver. The finding is in agreement with that of Anna (2008) who had established that teachers in Sweden believed that the assessment of pupils' oral ability was hard. However, 9(52.9%) of

those teaching in rural schools were awarded an average mark on utilization of oral lesson time while only 3(60.0%) of teachers in urban area were of average performance on the same aspect. The reason that was attributed to the observation was that in these schools, supervision by the head teacher, deputy head teacher or senior teacher was noticeable. Therefore, the teachers really had no option but to attend to the lessons as scheduled in the time table. In class, the teachers awarded an average performance failed to intensify the thirty minutes allocated to the oral lessons, maybe because of under planning or they lacked information on the significance of oral skills interactive approaches.

The researcher did an observation on how teachers of various teaching experience and teacher training spent time on oral skills teaching. The findings were presented in Figures 1.2 and 1.3.



Data presented in Figure 1.2 show that three of the teachers with a diploma and three of teachers with a bachelor's degree were awarded an average grade for they were found to have been utilizing the time allocated to oral skills lessons as prescribed. The finding might mean that teacher development refreshed the skills which the teachers had acquired while they were at the primary teacher training colleges. The other meaning of the finding might be that teaching is a profession of ever changing demands and that the need to develop new skills and approaches to use with pupils is considered essential. The other implication of the finding could be that teacher development was vital to implementation of a school curriculum. The finding is consistent with that of (Lamie, 2004) who had established that teacher training courses had a significant role in the creation of situations that facilitate reflection and contemplation for the teachers who are important agents of change.

Data presented in Figure 1.2 show that only two of the participants with a P1 certificate utilized the time that had been set aside for

oral skills instruction. The finding might imply that the teachers had forgotten how an oral lesson was delivered or their perception towards the teaching of oral lessons was low. The other implication of the finding was that the teachers had not refreshed in terms of attending workshops or training courses to keep abreast on how the English curriculum is delivered. The finding is in agreement with that of Siddiqui (2010) who asserted that those skills that teachers had acquired at the pre- service training had already been considered out-dated. Hence, teachers needed refreshment.

The other meaning of the finding could be that since the teachers did not specialize in oral skills they were deficient in the competences needed to handle the lessons. The finding matched up with Jennifer and Brian (2012) who established that without specific required coursework relating to the unique learning needs of English language, teachers would not be capable of teaching oral skills adequately.

The researcher categorized the time spent according to the experience of teachers. The findings were presented in Figure 1.3.

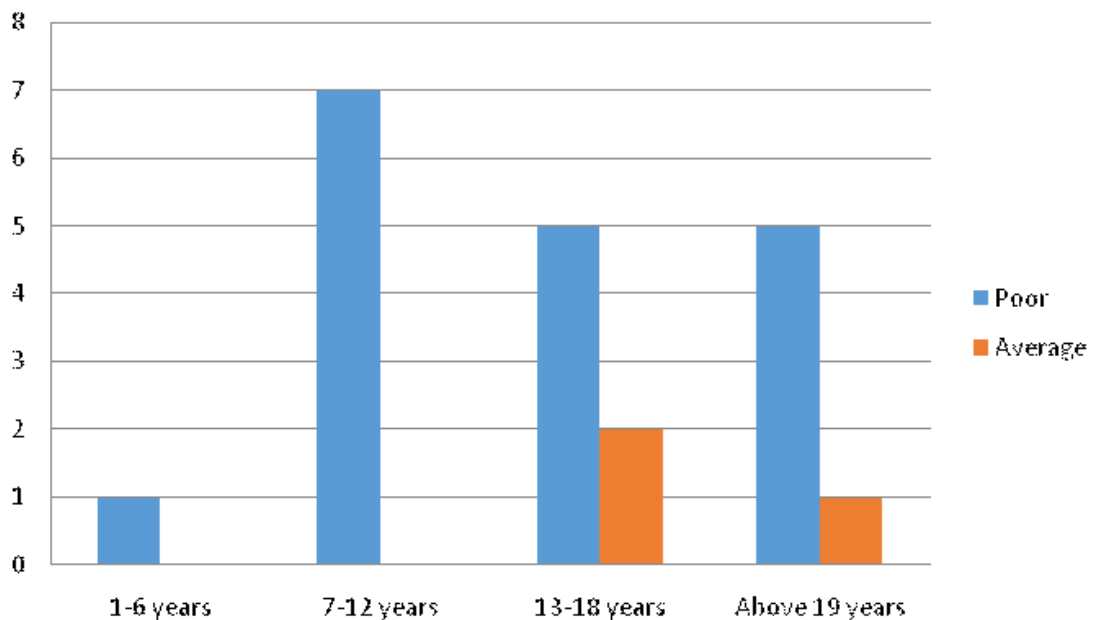


Figure 1.3 Teacher Experience

According to Figure 1.3, only one of teachers with a teaching experience of between 1- 12 years did not utilize the time that had been set aside for oral lessons teaching because they were awarded a poor grade. The finding might mean that these teachers were not aware that oral skills are vital to reading development (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004). The other meaning which could be inferred from the finding might be that it is the teacher who sets the tone for oral skills learning activities (Quist, 2000). The finding may also mean that this teacher is committed to the comprehensive implementation of the content that has been outlined in the Class One English Syllabus.

As shown in Figure 1.3, only four of teachers with an experience of 13- 19 years or more used the oral lessons instruction time as outlined in the syllabus. The finding might imply that teachers with increased experiences either had a low negative attitude towards oral lessons teaching or they assumed that the learners would be taught English in another class (Adeyemi, 2014). The other meaning of the finding might be that the teachers assumed that the focus of English language was merely cognitive development without serious attention to the oral skills part (Adeyemi, 2004).

Table 2: The multiple Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.642 ^a	.413	.383	6.70318

Since the R coefficient obtained (correlation coefficient) was .642, it indicated that there exists a greater degree of correlation as per Cohen's approach. Therefore, there is a relationship between the time spent on oral instruction, oral interactive approaches and the class reading ability score. The value obtained was 0.413. It showed that the total variation of a class reading test score could be explained to a large extent by the score of a teacher's time spent on oral skills instruction; in this case it could be explained by up to 41.3%. Since the value obtained is at a great or stronger level based on Cohen, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the finding implies that the amount of time spent on oral skills instruction has a significant relationship on a class reading ability. The finding may mean teachers need to utilize the time allocated for oral skills lessons so as to enhance the reading ability of class one learners. The other meaning of the finding would be that teachers have an obligation to spend a lot of time in engaging learners in various language activities so as

to enable them develop reading competencies. The finding is in line with Paris (2005) and Connor, Morrison, Fredrick and Slominski (2006) who established that the more time a child and teacher spend on oral skills and on activities related to language the early the child develops reading skills.

Conclusions

The study concluded that time allocated to oral lesson was underutilized.

The study concluded that there was a strong relationship between the time spent on oral instruction and reading ability.

Teachers with an experience of 13- 19 years or more used the oral lessons instruction time as outlined in the syllabus.

Teachers whose experience ranged from 1- 12 years did not use the time prescribed to oral lessons teaching.

It was concluded that teachers who had a diploma and those teachers who had a bachelor's degree used time allocated to oral lessons teaching as compared to the teachers who had a p1 certificate.

Recommendations

There is need for maximum supervision from the head teachers as this will compel the teachers to attend to oral lessons teaching.

The Kenya National Examination Council ought to think of examining learners on oral skills as they do to writing and reading as this will motivate teachers to accord

speaking and listening skills the seriousness it deserves.

The County and National Governments should design refresher courses for teachers who teach English on a regular basis so as to enable teachers to keep abreast with the dynamic changes which are evolving in the English language.

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