

Teaching Speaking Skills in English Language using Classroom Activities in Secondary School Level in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

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Abstract

There is a general public concern in Kenya that majority of Form Four school leavers lack communicative and linguistic competence and thus cannot sustain conversation in English language without occasionally code switching to *Sheng* or Kiswahili. This study sought to find out the classroom activities used by teachers to promote learners' active participation in speaking skills lessons in eight secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. The study was based on Krashen's (1985), Monitor Model specifically the input and the affective filter hypotheses which emphasize that learners acquire target language when they are motivated and involved actively in the learning process. The study adopted mixed methods design and simple random sampling to select schools, students and English language teachers from National, Provincial and District schools. In certain cases, purposive sampling technique was also used. Data on classroom activities used to teach speaking skills were collected using Questionnaires administered to teachers and students, direct observation during speaking skills lessons in Form three classrooms. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study found out that: there was variation in use of classroom activities for example discussion was the most used classroom activity while oral drill was the least used, during classroom discussions, students code switched to Kiswahili or *Sheng* due to low oral skills and teachers did not integrate various classroom activities in one lesson thus denied learners chances of using authentic language in context. The study recommends that: 1) students should be given chances to practice using authentic English language in context, 2) teachers should integrate various activities in a lesson to meet learners' needs and 3) Curriculum to acknowledge learners' cultural backgrounds in order to enhance their learning outcomes. This study is useful to language educators and teachers of English language.

Keywords: speaking skills, classroom activities, English, language, motivation, teacher, learner

1. Introduction

In Kenya English is taught as a second language, it has been given a high status than native languages by the Government due to its status as a national and international language (Chesang, 2005). It is used in all government communications, compulsory subject in educational system hence taught from standard one to university and a language for instruction from standard four to university (Ongondo, 2009; Sewe, 2009). This recognition has enhanced penetration of English language even to domains such as inter-ethnic and social communications where the indigenous languages were being used (King'ei, 2004; Chesang, 2005; Kembo and Ogechi, 2009). Although, it has been used for linguistic imperialism by the colonialists to perpetuate their own culture and interest (Nabea, 2009; Kembo and Ogechi, 2009), it still holds a prestigious position in the country because it is the language used across the curriculum in Kenyan Educational system, official language used in office, media houses, courts, diplomacy, used to conduct all government business and an international language (Chesang, 2005). As such, the importance of one attaining communicative competence in English language in Kenyan Education system cannot be overemphasized.

However, globally, there is debate that majority of high school graduates cannot speak English language properly (Alonzo, 2014; Sarwar, *et al.*, 2014; Alharbi, 2015). Even the bright students who get high scores in written examinations are unable to express themselves orally in English language (Sarwar *et al.*, 2014). In Kenya, students lack communicative and linguistic competence and often code switch to use *Sheng*, Kiswahili and English languages during conversation or in group discussions in class (Abenga, 2005; Gudu, 2010). A research done in Kenya by Mwamba (2005) found out that many students in secondary schools were shy and preferred remaining quiet in class because they were unable to express themselves properly in spoken English. This observation is consistent with that of Richards (old.fltrp.com/down//080403001.pdf) who found that learners who have no linguistic competence often speak slowly, take too long to compose utterances, do not participate actively in conversation, their spoken English language do not sound natural, have poor grammar and pronunciation.

Similar observation was made by Alharbi (2015) in Saudi Arabia where learners have low oral skills due to absence of authentic language learning situations outside and inside classroom. According to the author, there are several factors that influence learning of speaking skills for instance use of mother tongue outside and inside classroom environment, low status of English in a country, learners' negative attitude towards English

language, use of mother tongue by teachers to explain difficult concept, use of teacher-centered methodology and passiveness of learners in classroom (Ibid). These factors influence successful speaking skills lessons. The problem of low communicative and linguistic competence from secondary school is carried to the university where it has also been observed that some of the first year students in Kenyan universities are not able to sustain class discussions in English language without code switching or making grammatical mistakes (Barasa, 2005; Mwamba, 2005; Gudu, et al., 2014). This is a serious problem which could affect the students learning of other subjects and long term professional career development.

8-4-4 system of education has interfered with teaching of English language because of loaded curriculum. The curriculum does not provide enough time for learners to practice using language in context due to large number of students in class, students' low proficiency and cultural related factors (Al-Hosni 2014; Alharbi, 2015). Consequently it encourages the use of traditional teaching approaches by teachers because enable teachers to cover the syllabus in good time (Lumala, 2007; Ngagi *et al*, 2014). Krashen (2005) recommend that learners should be motivated so that they do not feel threatened. Al-Hosni (2014) observe that anxiety and unwillingness to learn by learners in speaking skills lesson are the two main obstacles for learning English. These are caused when learners fear being negatively evaluated in error correction in front of their friends. In addition, those learners with low proficiency and rate self as 'poor' become more anxious and are not willing to communicate (Ibid).

The problem of poor spoken English language among Form four graduates has led to a general feeling that there is a need to re-examine the teaching of English language in Secondary Schools in Kenya (Mwamba, 2005). According to many researchers, the reasons for poor speaking skills could emanate from lack of emphasis on speaking skills in the curriculum since it is not examined in national examinations, teachers' own limited English proficiency, class conditions that do not favor oral activities and limited opportunities outside class for practicing using English language (Mwamba, 2005; K. I. E, 2002; Kioko and Muthwii, 2001; Alharbi, 2015; Bashir *et al.*, 2011; Soureshjani and Riahipour, 2012; Alharbi, 2015).

Critics also blame the poor grasp of speaking skills of secondary school leavers to the introduction of 8:4:4 curricula by the Kenya Government in 1986 which according to them distorted the teaching of English speaking skills in secondary schools (Lumala, 2007; Njagi *et al.*, 2014). In this system of education, a student must undertake 8 years of learning in primary school, 4 years in secondary school and 4 years at university. At the end of primary and secondary levels, there is a summative national evaluation done by Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). Introduction this system has interfered with teaching of English language and encouraged traditional teaching methods due to overloaded English language curriculum consequently learners are not given chance to practice English language in context (Ong'ondo, 2009; Otunga, *et al.*, 2011; Barasa, 2005; Mwamba, 2005). The summative evaluations done by KNEC are used by the subject panelists at the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to evaluate the teaching, curricular implementation and review processes at primary, secondary and tertiary colleges.

The problems identified above could be as a result of various reasons advanced by scholars. First, due to lack of assessment of speaking skills, learners do not pay attention to it thus graduates have low oral skills (Sarwar, *et al.*, 2014). Researchers observe that speaking is the most difficult skill for most learners who learn it as a second or foreign language due to their low proficiency (Alonzo 2014; Alharbi 2015; Al-Hosni, 2014; Zhang 2009). Al-Hosni (2014) identifies factors causing speaking difficulties as:

Students are worried about making mistakes fearful of criticism, or simply shy. Students have no motivation to express themselves... only one participant can talk at a time because of large classes and the tendency of some learners to dominate while others speak very little or not at all... learners who share the same mother tongue tend to use it because it is easier and because they feel less exposed if they speak their mother tongue (Hosni, 2014: 123).

Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), formerly KIE (2002: 3), charged with the development of English syllabus and all syllabi taught in primary and secondary schools in Kenya, the current teaching of English Speaking Skills in secondary schools in Kenya is based on the Revised Syllabus released by KIE in 2002. The main aim of the Revised Syllabus was to improve communicative competence of secondary school learners in Kenya. The specific objectives were to enhance learners: (i) attentive listening for comprehension, correct inference, interpretation and appropriate response from spoken discourse, (ii) fluency and confidence in speaking in a variety of contexts, (iii) effective use of non-verbal cues while speaking, (iv) capacity to read, analyze and appreciate literary works, (v) capacity to use a variety of sentence structures and vocabularies correctly (vi) think creatively and critically and (vii) communicate appropriately in functional and creative writing. With these clear objectives and correct implementation of the syllabus KICD and most English language scholars believe that graduates of secondary school education should have no problem expressing themselves in English.

Teachers who implement the recommended English language syllabus should ensure that learners are equipped with comprehensive language usage and can express themselves in all situations. However, based on

persistent lack of communicative competence by secondary school leavers, English language scholars observe that there is still a problem with teaching of speaking skills in secondary schools in Kenya (Mwamba, 2005). In addition, researchers believe that speaking is an undervalued skill (Alonso, 2014; Al-Hosni, 2014; Alharbri 2015; Mwamba, 2005). Yet little research has been conducted into the teaching of speaking skill and possible remedy for generally low English language proficient learners in Kenyan context (Abenga 2005; Barasa 2005; Gudu, 2010).

Talley and Hui-ling (2014) observe that curriculum for teaching speaking skill should endeavour to expose learners to authentic, practical settings for speaking English and encourage active learner involvement in the lesson. Talley and Hui-Ling (2014) argue that English speaking curriculum should take cognizance of international and local cultures which should coexist mutually. In addition, Ngagi *et al* (2014) recommend that a curriculum should be designed in a manner that it recognizes the classroom activities of learners in order to enhance learning outcomes. Tuan and Mai (2015) pinpoint the factors that affect students' speaking performance such as motivation, confidence, anxiety, time, planning, amount of support, standard performance, listening ability and feedback during speaking activities. For students to have a successful conversation, they must have good listening skills in order to understand what is said to them. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches require that learners actively participate by sharing ideas, speaking freely, thus every speaker plays the role of listener and speaker (Tuan and Mai, 2015).

According to English language scholars, use of learner-centered classroom activities including group discussions, speeches, storytelling, drama, debates, poem recitation, songs, and tongue-twisters could alleviate the problem of low oral skills (Johnson, 2006, Villegas and Lukas, 2002, Gathumbi and Masembe, 2005; Okech, 2005). These classroom activities improve student's active participation, motivate and expose students to authentic use of English language in context. Many researchers have also proven that students are much more ready to interact with each other with more complex responses than with their teacher (Achmad and Yusuf 2014: 151) 'students feel comfortable working, interacting and making mistakes with their partners rather than with their teachers and corrective feedback from peers are found to be less daunting than the correction by teachers. This study therefore sought to establish classroom activities employed and how they are used by teachers in form three English lessons to enhance learners' active participation in secondary schools.

2 Method

The study was carried out in Eldoret Municipality which has three districts, namely Eldoret East, Wareng, and Uasin Gishu West, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The municipality was selected for this study because it experiences problem of low communicative competence of Form four graduates like other parts of Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design (Orodho and Kombo, 2002).

Simple random sampling procedure was followed as described by Mugenda (2008). A table of random numbers was employed to sample the Provincial and District secondary schools except national school category where there was only one in the entire Municipality thus purposively sampled. A total of eight out of twenty three secondary schools, constituting about 30 % of sampled population of secondary schools in the Municipality were selected. The same technique was again used to select 30% of form three students per school. Purposive sampling was used to select two form three teachers of English from each school. In this study two data collection instruments were used namely: questionnaire and observation schedule. Tape recording was used alongside observation to capture verbatim communication (Mutai, 2000). The data was analyzed using SPSS computer package.

3. Results

Based on questionnaires from teachers and students and classroom observations, the activities used by teachers of English language in their lessons included dramatization, discussion, debating, impromptu speeches, storytelling, role play, dialogue, oral narratives, , poems recitation, songs and tongue twisters. What differed was the mode of delivery and preferences as shown by frequency of use of the class activities.

3.1 Teachers' Responses

Fourteen teachers (100%) indicated that they use different classroom activities depending on the situation. The most preferred classroom activity among the teachers was discussion used by 92.9% of teachers, dramatization (85.7%), songs (78.6%), impromptu speeches and tongue twisters each (71.4%). Moderately preferred activities included short stories and role play (64.3%), debating and poem recitation each (57.1%). The less preferred activity was oral drills (42.9%).

The study also established that teachers used many recommended integrated classroom activities including dramatization, discussion, debating, dialogues, role play, impromptu speeches, tongue twisters, oral drills and poem recitation, but to various degrees (Table 1). This study found out that teachers preferred some combinations compared to others. The most preferred combination by teachers consisted of dramatization,

discussion, debating and dialogues which 50% of teachers used in classroom activities, followed by dramatization, discussion and role-play (14.3%). The rest of the activity combinations were less preferred but nonetheless used by at least one teacher. However, short stories, oral narratives, language games and songs combination were not used at all by any teacher.

Table 1: Integrated Activities in Speaking Skills Lesson

Combinations Groups	Combinations of Activities used by teachers	Frequency of teachers using the activities	Percentage
1.	Dramatization, discussion, debating and dialogues	7	50
2.	Dramatization, discussion and role play	2	14.3
3.	Dramatization, discussion and impromptu speeches	1	7.1
4.	Dramatization, discussion and tongue twisters	1	7.1
5.	Discussion, debating and tongue twisters	1	7.1
6.	Discussion, impromptu speeches and oral drills	1	7.1
7.	Dramatization, discussion, poems recitation	1	7.1
8.	Short stories, oral narrative, language games and songs	0	0.0
	TOTAL	14	100

(3)

3.2 Students' Responses

According to the student responses, the most widely used classroom activities included discussion which was confirmed by 88.9% of the students, story-telling (82.7%) and poem recitation (82.9%). Other activities that are moderately used include dramatization confirmed by 69.4% of students, debating (67.1%), songs (56.7%), tongue twisters (58.3%) and role play (53.6%). According to the respondents, impromptu speeches (37.3%) and oral drills (35.3%) are rarely used.

3.3 Observed Lessons

One major observation was that classroom activities were carried by teachers in varying degrees. Discussion was more popular than oral drills in all school categories. In general, teachers in the National school were able to integrate several classroom activities within a lesson for instance dialogues, discussions, impromptu speeches and role play as opposed to provincial and district schools. Provincial school teachers used question and answer sessions, whole class discussion and group discussions. In the District school category, whole class discussion and story-telling were the mostly used classroom activities and students were noisy in their discussion groups. Although, observed lessons revealed that most teachers across the school categories used discussion comprising of whole class discussion, group discussion and pair discussion, in some cases learners code switched to use Kiswahili and *Sheng* in their group discussions.

In general, teachers tried to integrate at least two classroom activities within a single lesson to achieve integration of the four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). It was also observed that teachers chose an activity within a combination without using all the integrated activities. The emphasis though was however on listening and the students only spoke when answering the questions asked by their teachers. It was also observed that reading was only done by the teacher as students listened. Students were not properly given chances to practice their speaking and reading skills.

Where story-telling was used as classroom activity, only one to two students got the opportunity to tell a story before the end of a lesson and only one activity was undertaken throughout the lesson. In some observed lessons, oral narratives were also used to teach students but teachers tended to employ whole class discussion with less opportunity for students to tell their own oral narratives to enhance their speaking skills and sub-skills such as non-verbal cues, stress, intonation and fluency.

In all the lessons observed, there was no language game and songs used, even though in the questionnaire students and teachers indicated that these were used to some extent. The songs only came out in oral narratives. In some schools teachers provided enough time for practice for example in situations where teachers taught intonation as an initiated activity of pair practice using model sentences. During such lessons it was noted that some students could not even pronounce the sounds in words written on the board let alone reading them. Teachers in all school categories were able to integrate the four main language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) in a single lesson which enabled the skills to complement each other.

4. Discussion

In the light of the above given research findings, the discussion is based on; variation on use of classroom activities, motivation, teacher's role and learner's role. I will start by discussing the variation on use of classroom activities.

4.1 Variation on use of Classroom Activities

The observation between students and teachers on variation of use of the classroom activities was not similar. However, it showed a general agreement that some activities such as discussion were used more than oral drills. Although in the questionnaires teachers indicated that they use the learner-centered classroom activities, observed lessons by the researcher revealed that a majority of them adopted lecture method, explanation, question and answer which are mainly teacher-centered teaching methods. It was also observed during class observations that students' participation was low as most learners were passive.

A study done in Oman by Al-Hosin (2014) also indicated that learners were passive in class and when given chance to discuss they used Arabic in their study groups due to inadequate vocabulary, weak sentence building skills, grammar structures, fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates thus kept quiet. Kenya just like Saudi Arabia the curriculum is wide. This has led to teachers using teacher centered methodology like repetition drills, memorization and lecture method (Mwamba, 2005).

Boring and stressful classroom environments do not encourage students to be creative or analytical, and tasks that only require students to listen and imitate demotivate them. Students have no responsibilities in the classroom and are negative learners. Even if they have the opportunity to participate, they will not take it, because they are afraid to make mistakes. (Alharbi 2015: 108).

Although classroom activities for instance discussion, role play, speeches, dramatization encourage learners to practice using language in context, learners cultural factors make them passive thus there is need for more effort by both teachers and students to engage in learner centered strategies (Achmad and Yusuf 2014). In addition, the learner centered classroom activities also encourage shy learners to speak by communicating face to face, work independently, minimal involvement of the teacher hence improve their speaking skills through practice (Alharbi, 2015: Achmad and Yusuf, 2014).

Pair work, group work, role playing and interviews ... encourage shy students to participate and discuss their opinions with their classmates instead of only with teachers. Employing various techniques in the classroom also challenges students and caters for diversity in students' learning styles (Alharbi 2015: 109).

In addition, cultural factors have been found to hamper effective implementation of communicative language teaching methodologies (CLT). The classroom activities which were of interest in this study are based on CLT principles. A study done in Thailand by Methitham (2014) found that teachers were unable to implement CLT methodologies due to cultural factors that make learners passive. Talley and Hui-Ling (2014) observe that CLT despite its benefits has met cultural barriers which have frustrated its implementation for instance in China CLT did not work due to learners' cultural background which make them "reticent and Quiet" (Talley and Hui-ling 2014). This could have been one of the factors that made teachers not to integrate several activities within a lesson. Teachers should therefore take cognizance of learners' cultural backgrounds in order to be able to identify the most effective EFL speaking strategies when learners are reluctant to speak and implement them according to learners' needs (Talley and Hui-ling, 2014).

Furthermore, problem on frequency of use of classroom activities was that most teachers tended to use less of some of the classroom activities especially oral drills and language games. Language scholars observe that oral drills help students improve by practicing and consequently perfect their skills in speech (Broughtton et al, 1980; Kochhar, 1992; Ayot, 1984; Oketch, 2005). In this study, this was done at low level. The designers of the curriculum assumed that all these interactive classroom activities would be used in equal proportion to promote learner participation and thus enhance acquisition of oral and communicative competence.

Alonso (2014) observe that fluency controlled activities for instance storytelling, discussions, debates, simulations and role play provide learners with room to practice using language for instance the use of vocabulary and formulaic expressions are communicative and interactive. These activities focus more on fluency and the teacher is a facilitator. Students also benefit from these classroom activities because in real life performance is dynamic and improves with practice in context. (Gathumbi and Masembe 2005; Alonso 2014). A study done by Alonso (2014) in Spain found that Institutions and State Language School teachers used role play, problem solving, discussions and debates and simulations more than Secondary Education (SE) teachers. These activities were found to give learners enough time to practice using language in context thus improvement of communicative competence.

Similarly a recent study done by Achmad and Yusuf (2014) in Indonesia found that pair work was effectively being used by teachers in teaching English. The students were actively speaking and the class was noisy. Later they reported what they had discussed in whole class discussion. These helped in improving their

proficiency. However, the use of pair work also had limitations because stronger students intimidated the weaker students thus they did not acquire language. The impact of preferential use of these classroom activities remain unclear and could be the subject of another study.

Another problem was that although discussion was a major group activity across schools, in some groups in some school categories, students code switched to Kiswahili and/or *Sheng* in their discussion groups. However teachers did not discourage this bad practice. Research has found that learners use mother-tongue in class when the topic of the lesson is difficult, for cultural identity and lack of encouragement to use target language by their teachers during English lessons (Tuan and man 2015). Similarly research done in Vietnam by Tuang and Mai (2015) revealed that learners speak in mother-tongue in English lessons. This finding is similar to a study done in Saudi by Alharbi (2015) where teachers use mother tongue (Arabic) in the classroom to clarify difficult concepts, grammatical points and explaining new vocabulary which decrease student motivation, encourage students to think in mother-tongue. Besides, a study done by Alhosni (2014) also revealed that some teachers use Mother-tongue for classroom management.

In addition, research done in Saudi Arabia found that English language is not important in the nation, even in educational arena because students use mother-tongue (Arabic) to get what they want including lucrative white collar jobs (Alharbi, 2015). Although in Kenya English enjoys high status in the society as I had said in the introduction, students just like those in Saudi Arabia have low proficiency which could be alluded to several factors for instance the language policy that lower primary be taught using language of catchment area (mother tongue) does not encourage learners to achieve proficiency due to lack of authentic situations inside and outside English language classroom (Ayot 1984; Alharbi 2015). For this problem to be solved, teachers and students should be exposed to courses that increase language awareness for instance grammar, phonetics and phonology and they be provided with authentic situations to practice language in context (Borg, 2006; Alharbi 2015). For group discussion to achieve its objective, it must be carried out in the target language. Achmad and Yusuf (2014:153) observe that learners must be told the benefit of speaking in target language in the classroom because it helps 'mimic the real life' situations.

Al-Hosni (2014) argue that the use of mother tongue in English language lessons by teachers and students devalue the use of English for communication, sacrifice valuable opportunities for English language use and learners see it as language used for oral drills and dialogues which are not important. The teaching methodologies being used by teachers are inadequate as they do not put emphasis on speaking skill thus meager development in English language (Ibid). This is also emphasized by Alonso (2014) contend that:

Although the practice of speaking in the classroom is a key element in the development of the second language, oral skills have not always been central in second language teaching methodologies (146).

Teachers are not integrating various class activities in one lesson. Very few teachers managed to integrate several activities in a lesson. According to Kochhar (1992) a good lesson is evaluated basing on the varied activities the teacher used to actively involve the learners and how productive the activities were. Al-Abn (2008) in Al – Hosni (2014) observe that learners have difficulty in learning speaking skills due to lack of oral activities in the text book and recommended oral activities for instance songs, stories, rhymes and more conversational language to encourage students to practice using language , have fun and to enjoy learning in speaking skills lesson. Talley and Hui-ling (2014) recommend that topics should be creative to allow the teacher to mix varied classroom activities for instance videos, songs, role play and storytelling which help in promoting learner regular inclusion and participation.

4.2 Motivation

Motivation is an important factor which determines the rate at which learners undertake the activities. According to Littlewood, (1984: 53) 'Motivation is the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he/she devotes to it, and how long he/she perseveres.' This is an indication that the communicative skills are developed when the learner is motivated and is provided with opportunity to practice using language in context. Al-Hosni (2014) observes that some learners lack motivation to speak English because they do not see the need to learn or speak English. This means that teachers should endeavor to explain to their learners the importance of learning English language in order to develop internal motivation.

4.3 Teacher's Role

Teachers should facilitate the learning process by providing learners with knowledge (Alharbi, 2015). This requires that teachers use teacher centered methodology but be tactful to be aware of the culture of the community in order to take care of the learner cultures (Methitham, 2014). Identification of these cultural aspects provides warm, friendlier, and good relationship between teachers and students by reducing the cultural distance. In addition, teachers should also be fair in error correction so that they do not overcorrect a student (Borg 2006). This makes students' error correction to be a natural part of learning process (Alharbi 2015). Teachers should provide learners with authentic language in context (Alharbi, 2015; Hosni, 2014). Achmad and

Yusuf (2014: 153):

In speaking class, teachers are required to create communicative and interactive activities by giving students a great deal of opportunities to practice the target language. Essentially, the class manifests student-centred backdrop rather than teacher centered... teachers are to prepare classroom activities that are devoted and best facilitate speaking exercises.

Teachers also carry the burden of knowing how learners from specific communities learn so that the teaching styles are uniform with the learners' learning styles in order to enhance learning (Talley and Hui-Ling, 2014). Tsui (1996) identified six speaking strategies to be employed by teachers when teaching speaking skills lesson for instance i) lengthen wait time between question and answer, ii) to improve questioning techniques, iii) focus on content iv) Establish a warm rapport with the students, v) to accept variety of answers and vi) To allow for student rehearsals. Learners also expect their teachers to give them feedback on their performance. A teacher should only correct when there is a problem but should not correct every time a student makes a mistake because this will affect the flow of conversation, destroy the purpose for the speaking activity, demotivating students and learners may become afraid to speak. Thus a teacher should endeavour to correct mistakes positively and with a lot of encouragement (Tuan and Mai, 2015).

4.4 Learner's Role

Learners also lay an important role in speaking skills lesson. First, students should be ready to interact with the curriculum being provided. This requires learners who have internal motivation. This increases self esteem, confidence and willingness to communicate (Alharbi 2015). The learners then develop long-term self motivation and determination which will enable them to put more effort by participating actively in classroom activities and speaking in English outside the classroom. Archmad and Yusuf (2014) recommend that when a teacher is using the uncontrolled classroom activities, it is important to take cognizance of culture of the learners as it impacts on their learning outcomes. Talley and Hui-ling (2014) observe that learners are expected to agree to initiate, respond, manage and negotiate their part in speaking skills lesson. In addition, they should select, sequence, arrange words and sentences and utterances in order to have unified spoken English. Consequently, learners demonstrate their comprehension and express self through meaningful and grammatical sentences verbally (Ibid).

Talley and Hui-ling (2014: 40) propose four strategies in classroom communication interaction. A learner should: Think of what they are going to say, think about the structures they are using but do not let them interfere with what they want to say, do not be afraid to make mistakes (mistakes are normal as you are learning a language) and when you are not understood, use repetition, gestures, synonyms, definitions, acting out, whatever comes naturally as you begin to feel more proficient in the language.

5. Conclusion

The study then made conclusion as follows: First, all the classroom activities including discussion, dialogues, drama, oral narratives, songs, tongue twisters, debate, poem recitation, story-telling and role play were used during lessons but with different frequencies. For example, discussion was used more across schools than oral drills. This could bring imbalance in the contribution of these classroom activities to the learner.

Two, code switching to use Kiswahili or *Sheng* by students was a problem in certain class group discussions which could hamper learning of the target language. It was found that learners speak in mother tongue in their discussion groups (Kiswahili and Sheng). This was a sign of low proficiency in the target language. Teachers should endeavour to teach using the target language (vocabulary, grammar, difficult concept which will encourage their learners to speak using the target language. The students should also be made to know the importance of attaining communicative competence in English language for instance job interviews, attainment of decent jobs and positive attitudes towards English language. These will increase motivation for learners. There are several causes that make students to have low proficiency in English language for instance teachers' lack language awareness thus learners lack models to emulate; learners are passive; teacher centered methodology; lack of motivation by learners and students think in mother tongue and then translate to English language (Alharbi, 2015).

Teachers should invite native speakers. A study done in Spain by Alonso (2014) found that teachers do not invite native speakers of English to interact with learners. Although, this strategy usually motivate and enable learner to acquire the sounds as pronounced by native speakers (role modeling). Teachers underrate the contribution of interaction with native speakers which is a key pillar in motivation of students. A study done by Wu (2006) in Talley and Hui-ling (2014) indicated that EFL learners often lack exposure to native speaker models for their linguistic input because they have been exposed to non native models and are also non-native in host culture. This calls for teachers who take cognizance of learners' home culture and target culture in order to support their learners' learning. Talley and Hui-ling (2014:44) recommend that:

Provide students with numerous opportunities of intercultural exploration. When students encounter

new cultural aspects or reflect on their own culture through the perception of foreign eyes, it is possible to gain their interest.

Three, teachers prefer teaching classroom activities singly not integratively. English language teachers tended to integrate the various classroom activities differently with those in national schools doing it better than those in provincial and district schools. Together these observations could be responsible for low communicative competence of secondary school graduates.

5.1 Recommendations

The study then made four recommendations: First, teachers to discuss the importance of learning English language in national/international arena to motivate their learners to put a concerted effort in achieving communicative competence. Two, the curriculum design and teaching approaches should acknowledge cultural diversity and learning styles of learners in order to respond to the students' needs. Three, teachers should speak using target language in the classroom frequently in order to expose students more to English language and to encourage them to use English in the classroom discourse (Tuan and Mai, 2015). In addition, for learners to improve their speaking skills, they should speak using target language when undertaking classroom tasks and outside classroom, speak English at home with classmates, should be made to understand why it is important to acquire speaking skills, join speaking club for instance drama, debate and speak in front of a mirror (Tuan and Mai, 2015).

Suggested further research include: i) The reasons for the low communicative competence of secondary school graduates. ii) It is not apparent in this study why teachers find it difficult to integrate several classroom activities to achieve the set objectives in speaking skills lessons.

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