A Study on Interactive Teaching Methods in Developing Oral Communicative Competence in Learners of English Language in Trans Nzoia West, District of Kenya

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Abstract

The research was carried out between 2008 - 2011 in Trans Nzoia West District of Kenya, among form three students of English Language. The purpose was to investigate on interactive teaching methods in developing oral communicative competence in learners of English. The objectives sought to establish: the methods used by teachers of English to teach oral communication skills, and the effect interactive teaching methods of English have in developing oral communicative competence in learners. The study adopted a descriptive research design under the qualitative approach. The study was guided by Classroom Interaction theory and communicative Language theory. The target populations comprised teachers of English and form three students, drawn from thirty three schools (four girls, three boys and twenty six mixed). A representative sample of thirty percent per school category was used - stratified random sampling technique was preferred to arrive at a ratio 3:3:7 to give a total of thirteen schools. The schools were randomly selected from each stratum using the simple random sampling technique. In cases where schools had more than one form three streams, simple random sampling was used and the selected stream provided a teacher of English for the study. The study made use of Classroom observation, teacher interview, audio tape recording and document analysis as instruments for data collection. Data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. The data revealed that interactive teaching methods are crucial in the development of oral communication skills in learners. These methods provide opportunities for language use, accuracy, proficiency and immediate feedback. The study recommends that: curriculum planners in Kenya need to revise the English syllabus as a whole which has a direct influence on the methodology to be used by the teacher. Trainers of teachers of language at both colleges and university should strengthen the emphasis on teaching methodology by equipping the teachers with both interactive and non-interactive teaching methods of oral communication skills.

Keywords: Interactive methods, Communicative competence.

INTRODUCTION

The world is a global stage faced with numerous challenges but most exciting are the opportunities it provides for members of the world family to reach out and communicate with each other. English language plays a significant role in this global stage. It is in fact the means by which all other global variables are communicated and hence tagged global language or world language. It is no longer viewed as the property of the English speaking world but as an International commodity referred to as an English International Language (EIL), (Robins, 1999). Whereas communication today is reflected through diverse use of
technology; it must be recognized that, there is still need for more sober debate in examining oral communication competence. Canale and Swain (1980) noted that, communicative competence was understood as the underlying systems of knowledge and skills required for communication. Although much emphasis is laid on the instruction of oral communication skills, teaching methods to be used are less emphasized, this possess a dilemma, resulting in poor mastery of the skill by the second language learners of English language. Thus, Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) noted that, there are many teaching approaches that can be used in teaching English. The teacher is advised to choose the method depending on: objectives, content, resources, learners' abilities and interests and class size (KIE, 2006:3). It is observed that, learners even after completion of high school and attaining good grades in English as a subject, their oral skills are still questionable. As a result, when they get to the global job market they are unable to communicate competently. The purpose of the study was to investigate on interactive methods in developing oral communicative competence in learners of English language in Trans Nzoia West district of Kenya. The study was based on two language theories - Communicative Language Theory, (Straw, 1981) and Classroom Interaction Theory, (Sinclaire and Coulthard, 1975). Communicative Language theory emphasizes that speech is basic in the development of other communication modes and if learners are given opportunities to practice, they build experience that will help them in development of other language skills. Classroom Interaction theory also emphasizes the importance of interactive modes as ways of contributing to oral competence - a teacher initiates a task, the learner responds and feedback is given by the teacher. This actively involves the learner. These theories supported the study in that, they encourage the involvement of the learners in interaction activities (functional language use) to develop and enhance competence.

The literature reviewed indicated that oral communication is very important throughout one's lifetime. In school, learners are expected to give well argued and presented oral answers when attempting to answer teacher's questions as part of the teaching/learning process and also participate in group discussions, (Okwako, 2002). Additionally, Burton (1990:4) said, when participating in group discussions, the success of group work is largely determined by a shared sense of purpose, willingness to give and take good group management skills and efficient interpersonal management skills. Burton (1990:5) noted that, oral communication skills and competence is learned and not inherited; communication work develops a range of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal qualities that are necessary for life roles in both social and work contexts. This stresses that, oral communication in English is important both in and out of school and the teacher plays a major role in the life of the learners. Castellanos, (2006) pointed out that, one must know the learner's individual differences, particular form of learners in communication with other students and assess their learning needs if they are to develop their abilities to communicate orally in a foreign language.

Teaching of oral communication is faced with problems unique to individual countries; most of the constraints encountered in teaching particular subjects in the curriculum are similar. To this end, continuous evaluation of the subject should be done, to determine the implementation weaknesses and address them. But many countries however, do not undertake the process of continuous evaluation of their education curriculum (Oluoch 1992; Ondiek, 1996).

Brown and Yule (1983), posited that strategies for interaction in spoken language are both interactional and transactional. According to Faerch and Kasper (1983), one needs both competence and performance to interact well, where competence refers to knowing the rules and structures of a language while performance refers to putting the rules and structures of a language in practice. If you use a language for a long time, and then switch to another language, you will realize that when speaking the second language you are not quite competent. You are likely to lack a vocabulary, thus substitute it with a simpler one so that it appears that your fluency is not impaired and you don’t make errors - Formal reduction strategy. Oxford (1990:50) classified the strategies for communication as follows: code switching, getting help by asking the person you are talking with to provide you with the alternative word or phrase that you can’t remember or don’t know, using mime, gesture or non verbal noise; avoiding communication partially or totally when you are not sure of relevant vocabulary, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words where there is missing vocabulary; using circumlocution or synonym to provide a close equivalent, syntax avoidance by using different grammatical construction to avoid words we are unsure of, finally, functional reduction and using tone of voice to convey meaning.

Teaching speaking in early 70's meant repeating after the teacher, reciting a memorized dialogue/ responding to mechanical drill (Shrum and Glisam, 2000:26). This reflects the sentence based view of proficiency prevailing in the methodologies of Audio lingualism and situational learning/ teaching. The theory of communicative competence prompted attempts at developing communicative syllabuses in the 1980's, initially resulting in proposes for notional syllabuses as well as the threshold level and more recently proposals for task based approaches to teaching. Thus, fluency
Methdology adopted by teachers in class to meet the needs of society.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive research design to obtain information on the current status of teaching oral communication skills. Kerlinger, (1978) noted that descriptive surveys are useful for educational fact finding and provide a great deal of information that is accurate. This design was chosen because it is used to collect data about attitudes, opinions and a variety of educational issues (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

The target population comprised of teachers of English and forms three students, drawn from thirty three schools (four girls, three boys and twenty six mixed). A representative sample of thirty percent per school category was used. Stratified random sampling technique was preferred to arrive at a ratio 3:3:7 to give a total of thirteen schools. The schools were randomly selected from each stratum using the simple random sampling technique. In cases where schools had more than one form three streams, simple random sampling was used and the selected stream provided a teacher of English for the study. The study made use of four instruments: Classroom observation schedule and audio tape recording; teacher interview schedule and document analysis. Classroom observation schedule was used to record events simultaneously with audio tape recording so as to supplement and provide more firsthand information on the classroom context. Teacher interview schedule had semi structured questions that was used to solicit views from the teachers in the study. Schemes of work, record of work and lesson notes were analyzed under document analysis.

To ensure validity of the instruments, the researcher carried out a pilot study in four secondary schools in a neighboring district -Trans-Nzoia (East). The schools were randomly selected to form a sample, which was observed and the lessons tape recorded. The outcomes of the pilot study were considered for verification and validation of the instruments. To test reliability, the test-retest method was used whereby tools for research were administered, results obtained and after two weeks, the same tools were re-administered. Analysis was done using Pearson’s product moment.

**RESULT**

**Interactive Teaching Methods of Oral Skills**

This study revealed that all the teachers involved in the study used varied interactive methods of teaching as the best way of teaching oral skills, so as to reach out to all the learners of different abilities. Thus, the learners would be able to communicate effectively globally.

As referred to, there are several interactive methods used to teach oral skills. It is evident that a number of interactive methods may be employed in teaching a single oral communication skill in one lesson. These methods can be used at different stages of the lesson or may be used simultaneously. The methods used largely depended on the nature of the oral communication skills being taught. In the thirteen schools under investigation, it was noted that each teacher had schemed differently the oral skills to be taught thus the teaching methods also varied. The teaching method (interactive) used by the teachers, frequency, percentages and oral aspects taught are illustrated in Table 1 below.

From the table 1 below, the most frequently used interactive method in teaching oral communication skills amongst the thirteen form three classes investigated was discussion, which had (84.62%), indicating that most learners participated in oral communication skills when discussion as a method was used by the teachers. Another significant number (61.54%) used dialogue, reading aloud, question and answer in the oral skills lesson. Oral presentation as an interactive method which involved debates and symposia had a minimal usage of (23.08%) in the form three classes. While role play, songs and recitation was among the least used interactive methods. The teachers in the study explained that, it was because these methods are time consuming in terms of presentation and yet the syllabus being implemented does not cater for that. Furthermore they said that, these methods require rehearsal before...
presentation so as to have effective delivery but many times this is rarely done. The least used interactive method was interview with a percentage of (7.69%). It was pointed out that the method is said to be time consuming. From the above analysis, it does suggest that teachers tend to employ a number of interactive methods but tend to underuse others because of the reasons outlined above. The researcher observed that, Interactive teaching methods were learner involving and participatory; non-interactive teaching methods were mainly teacher centered and less lively. Non-interactive methods did not achieve as much interaction as the interactive methods did, in teaching oral communication skills. The interactive methods had a positive effect on the learners by; building self confidence in them, allowing them to exploit their potential, nurtures learners who are talented as good orators. This meets the second objective of the study which was to investigate the effect of interactive teaching methods of oral skills in English on language learning.

Teaching methods are crucial in the development of oral communication skills in the learners especially if it is a second language that is being learnt. Research revealed that for oral communication skills to be instilled in learners, the teaching methodologies should fulfill certain functions like: providing opportunities for learners to be practical in language use encourage accuracy for development of proficiency, immediate feedback and many others.

An element of preference in teaching methodology used by the teachers was also noted, for instance, discussion, dialogue and oral presentations had high frequencies while other teaching methods were rarely or not used at all. Reason given was that, they preferred to use the simplest, so as to save time for syllabus completion.

Non interactive teaching methods were also used. It was observed that these methods were teacher-centered so they denied the learner opportunities of oral expression thus failed to meet the learner's needs. From observation it is advisable for a teacher to use a variety of teaching methods that encourage functional language use.

### Out-of-Class Language Activities

The study is an investigation on interactive teaching methods, out of class activities are amongst those that actively engage the learners orally. These activities are important in developing oral communicative competence in learners of English language in that it gives them the practical usage of language and as a result it builds their esteem and confidence.

This was observed and noted by the teachers of English in the study. The activities in the study included: symposia, debates, language policy, public speaking, music and drama as illustrated in Table 2. The researcher picked on these activities because they form part of out-of-class interactive activities that learners in secondary school engage in.

A significant number of teachers from the thirteen schools (92%) who participated in this study observed that, out-of-class language activities can be used to encourage the development of oral communication skills amongst learners. They argued that, symposium, whether internal or external is a great mileage in the practical usage of language. Thus, it should not only be limited to English subject but also be extended to all other subjects which use English as a medium of instruction. The teachers of English in the study noted further that, debates on the other hand, help in modeling the personality of an individual in that, learners of English language, learn the virtue of confidence and self oral edification as they participate in debates from time to time. The findings of the study also revealed that, out of the thirteen schools in the study, (80%) of them, hold school debates at least once a week. In such schools, the teachers expressed that, debates are treated as a compulsory school activity for all the classes since interclass debates are a healthy in nurturing oral ability in learners more so in multiple stream schools where

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Oral Aspect Taught</th>
<th>Frequency-13</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Intonation, sound features, stress, sounds patterns in poetry.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Intonation, stress</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play/ dramatization</td>
<td>Sound features</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Barriers of communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>Sound features, intonation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning / answering</td>
<td>Sound, features, stress</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M. Phil. Thesis (Moi University, Kenya, 2011)
Table 2. Percentage of the various out-of-class language teaching activities observed in the oral skills lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency-13</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symposium</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language policy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>58.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public speaking</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M. Phil. Thesis (Moi University, Kenya, 2011)

Table 3. Percentage of communication strategies used in the oral skills lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Frequency-13</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code switching</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code mixing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures/non verbal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting help</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding partial communication</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discouraging total communication</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M. Phil. Thesis (Moi University, Kenya, 2011)

Inter-stream debates can encourage competition in oral communication skills. Thus, the teachers advised that, patrons and student officials of debate clubs should organize for interschool debates to help improve oral skills performance in the schools.

At least (58.33%) of the 13 schools investigated in the study had a language policy which stipulates the English speaking days. The teachers in the study pointed out that, the use of English outside the class time, improves oral communication but they still observed that some learners shy away from using English as the only mode of communication and resort to remain quiet. Contrary, (41.67%) of the schools in the study, did not have language policies.

Public speaking, drama and music were also strongly emphasized as important in developing oral communication skills. Public speaking calls for the student to be conversant with the topic or subject she/he is speaking about, thus, boosts oral skills and builds confidence in speaking. Majority of the teachers of English in the study (92.31%) supported this statement.

Strategies of Communication

Communication is a paramount factor in communication and therefore a teacher has to use possible means available to ensure proper communication between him and the learners. The study investigated the following communication strategies: code mixing, code switching, getting help, miming, and gestures word coinage amongst others. The researcher picked on these activities because they formed part of out of class interactive activities that learners in secondary school engaged in.

A summary of the communication strategies used are illustrated in Table 3 above.

Code switching involves shifting from the use of one language to another in the event of communicating with one another for one reason or another. This strategy was used by a few of the classes of form three students (23.78%) in the study. On the other hand, (15.38%) teachers used code switching more so when emphasizing, clarifying or correcting issues that were not easily understood. The researcher observed that, code switching was used when some learners switched to Kiswahili language so as to comfortably express their ideas. The respondents argued that, this was mainly as a result of language limitation (vocabulary) on the part of the learner.

Another strategy used was code mixing; the use of two languages at the same time to effectively communicate an idea in cases where the two speakers share the same codes. This strategy was used most by learners of form three classes, (69.92%). The researcher observed the usage in learners mainly during discussions and presentations to the class when they were unable to explain a point clearly so they opted to
mix these two languages- English and Kiswahili so as to be understood better. The researcher also noted that code mixing had a positive effect, of increasing the learner's oral participation in the lesson.

Gestures or nonverbal communication was used as a substitute of a word, when a learner wanted to express himself but could not remember the word. (46.15%) of the form three learners opted to use this strategy during interaction. The teachers in the study suggested that it resulted from the learner's inability to use synonyms or inadequacy of vocabulary.

Getting help from fellow learners to provide equivalent word(s) was another strategy that was investigated. The researcher observed this strategy amongst (61.15%) learners of form three classes during the oral skills lesson. The strategy was used when a learner(s) mispronounced or forgot a word or was unable to fully express himself during the lesson. It was also observed that, some learners were so keen when their fellow learners are making contribution towards a given topic and are timely to make instant correction in case of mispronunciation. This strategy was noted as important in developing accuracy which leads to proficiency in a language, hence, the importance of interactive methods.

It was observed that, use of mimes is a strategy that can be appropriately used to enhance the teaching of oral communication skills. Miming draws the learners' attention and it is upon the teacher to sustain the same attention and concentration throughout the lesson. It was unfortunate, only (7.7%) learners of form three used mime as a strategy. The teachers argued that, mimes are type specific and they do not have a general application. This was contrary to the fact that the use of mimes depends on the teacher's creative initiative in a lesson. In this study, mime was used in the development stage of the lesson to achieve the learners' assurance on where to place intonation in a sentence.

Another important strategy was avoiding partial communication. It was noted that, learners were discouraged from giving partial communication during the lesson. This was because a learner ought to express himself/herself on a given issue. The teachers argued that, this was due to limited English vocabulary which made some learners fail to communicate fully. The strategy was used during the development stage of the lesson and in some instances the teacher probed further to ensure that the learners communicated fully. This was observed in (23.08%) of the learners.

The strategy of discouraging learners totally from communicating in the absence of the relevant vocabulary was at times used. The teachers argued that, when the appropriate vocabulary is lacking, learners should refrain from communication. This saves them the misuse of words they do not understand. In this study, no teacher used this strategy.

Another strategy which lacked use in the study was word coinage. Word coining is a process of coming up with a word to refer to something whose word is not known. This normally happens in a situation where the object is a new invention or new in the environment. It also arises from a situation where the speaker's vocabulary of the language he is using is limited.

The above presentation reveals that communication strategies are used in the teaching/learning of oral communication skills. But there is need for exposure of learners to different registers so as to improve their language vocabulary and self expression in oral communication skills.

The researcher recorded all observed lessons on tapes. The tapes were used to decode information for later analysis. The study carried out further analysis of the oral aspects taught during the lesson and discovered that, teacher centered approach could not give a clear picture of oral communication skills. The non-interactive methods used to teach oral skills did not yield much data through tapes. Methods such as lecture and dictation were mainly teacher centered thus teachers' voice reduced the supposedly oral communication lesson to a broadcast material. Tapes were however, useful in the analysis of pronunciation of sounds, stress placement and intonation. The recorded interactive lessons were analyzed alongside the observation schedule data. In the analysis, it was discovered that learners had also learnt wrong pronunciation of English sounds. The teachers attributed this to: mother-tongue influence, code mixing, and code switching and wrong learning of English by learners from their elementary and current teachers of English. The study established that some teachers learned English in a wrong manner; this was evident in their pronunciation. The erroneous sounds and word articulation was transferred from the teachers to the student. For instance, during the lessons, some teachers interchanged voiced and voiceless stops.

The researcher concluded that, learners should be subjected to real and extensive oral communication in English language. There is also need to sanction the media family to use the correct pronunciation of the sounds of the language they broadcast in, so as to save the young people from adopting wrong articulation especially in English.

The information from the tapes also indicated that the learners under study had generally, low level of grammar. This was evident in their sentence construction where they lacked variation in sentence structure. The learners could not fully express themselves in English, this led to cases of code mixing, code switching, substitution of a forgotten word with an illustration word, as well as getting assistance from other learners therefore, teachers should use more interactive methods.
Teaching/learning activities provided by the teacher during the oral skills lesson

The success of any lesson depends on the teacher initiating and sustaining the teaching/learning activities throughout the entire lesson. During planning for the lesson, the teacher must design or select the appropriate activities and use them accordingly. The following teaching/learning activities were observed during the oral lessons: note taking, question and answering, reading aloud, discussion, singing and dramatization/role play.

A summary of the teaching/learning activities is illustrated in Table 4 above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency-13</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note taking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question/Answering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>86.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatization/Role play</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M. Phil. Thesis (Moi University, Kenya, 2011)

i) Note –Taking

The researcher observed that this activity was used during the conclusion stage of the lesson and acted as a review of the oral work. The teachers argued that, this was mainly because note-taking was an important activity. Note-taking as a teaching activity had a minimal use of only (7.7%), out of the thirteen classes in the thirteen secondary schools. The researcher observed that, this method made learners more attentive; so as to get the teacher’s content. One of the teachers mentioned that, teachers play a supervisory role during this activity because some learners don’t have the ability to note down important points.

ii) Question and Answering (Oral/Written)

Question and answering as a teaching/learning activity can be either oral or written. The researcher observed that the activity was ideal at all stages of the lesson - introduction, development and conclusion stages of the lesson. A majority of the form three classes (61.54%) made use of question and answering activities. In teaching sound features and stress, question and answering gave the learners an opportunity to express themselves in both ways (oral and written) thus; the lesson became participatory and active.

iii) Reading Aloud

The researcher noted that, this activity was quite handy in teaching intonation and stress, reading aloud words and sentences. Correction was on the spot so as to help learners attain correct pronunciation and place intonation and stress correctly. This activity was used by (61.54%) form three classes. It was suggested that, it is also possible for the learners to direct and correct each others’ pronunciation through the use of minimal pairs.

iv) Discussion

Discussions observed in this study were mainly at class level. They were: between the teacher and learners, whole class and small groups. This teaching/learning activity was used by the majority (86.61%) form three classes. The discussion dominated the development stage of the lesson. This resulted to the following positive effects: the learners developed confidence in themselves, learners corrected mistakes of each other and most learners had a chance to speak. Other teaching/learning activities were: singing, used by (7.7%) in the lessons observed. This was at the development stage of the lesson. Dramatization was least used (15.38%). This was at the development stage of the lesson. The teacher demonstrated/role played in a poetry lesson. This activity brought out a complex concept close to learners by involving them in role playing thus making the lesson interesting. Generally, it was observed that, teaching/learning activities were interactive between the learner and the teacher or amongst the learners themselves. The teachers suggested that proper planning and time management is a key factor in ensuring the success of the lesson. Every activity should be allocated specifically
basing on the content to be taught.

During the study, it was observed that teachers used a variety of instructional resources during lessons. Amongst them were: charts, text books, audio tapes and others. This positively implies that, at least some teachers take time to select, prepare and use instructional resources. It is important that teachers be innovative in designing and using the instructional resources so as to meet the learner's needs. These instructional resources are important because they leave a lasting mental mark on the learner's mind.

This study also focused on professional documents. The documents provided data that assisted in establishing how often oral communication skills were taught and the interactive teaching methods used in this targeted schools. The documents analyzed were: schemes of work, lesson plans, record of work covered, student progress records. They indicated that most teachers indicated in the methods they used however none of these were interactive methods.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to investigate on interactive methods in developing oral communicative competence in learners of English language in Trans Nzoia West district of Kenya. Thirteen schools investigated in this study revealed that interactive teaching methods, although at varying degrees and frequencies were used to teach oral communication skill. Therefore, variety of interactive methods of teaching should be used in teaching oral communication skills. This will enable the teacher to meet each learner's needs and thus develop the learners' knowledge and understanding which will enhance communication competence in learners both locally and globally. It is the teacher's role to initiate, direct, explain, initiate where necessary but they should not dominate the lesson. They should be independent participants in the learning process so as to give the learners enough opportunities to learn the language. It is worth noting that language is a two way process and if achieved the learning will be collaborative, interactive and lively.

The teaching of oral communication skills in secondary schools has not been given the due emphasis and attention. This has been attributed to the laxity of both curriculum developers and implementers. Also, there is a big gap between curriculum developers, Kenya Institute of Education, and subject implementers (teachers of English) thus coordination between K.I.E. teachers and Kenya National Examination Council is not systematic.

Language policy is equally important in boosting the learner's competence in English oral communication skills by providing guiding principles on the use of language. Lastly, English as a service language should be used in teaching all subjects that are evaluated in this language. As a result, English will be of value as a service language not only in school but also in the global society.

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