Approaches Teachers use in Teaching Imaginative Writing: A Case of Secondary School Teachers in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract
Kenyan secondary school students learn imaginative writing through English, a second language which is performed dismally in the Kenya Certificate Secondary Education making educators and the general Kenyan public worried. This article is a product of a study which sought to investigate approaches teachers use in teaching imaginative writing in secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-county, Kenya. Guided by The Input Hypothesis of Krashen's Monitor Theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the study used a descriptive survey design and sampled seven (7) out of twenty three (23) public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-county through stratified, purposive and simple random sampling. Seven (7) secondary school teachers of English participated in the study. A questionnaire, interview schedule, and classroom observation schedule were used to collect data from the sampled teachers on teaching imaginative writing. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in frequency tables and percentages, bar graphs and pie charts. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed based on themes and content and was presented descriptively in words. Among other findings, the study revealed that there were insufficient instructional materials and lack of computer competence that limited approaches used by majority of teachers of imaginative writing during teaching.

Among other recommendations that the study made was organizing for more workshops, give updates on the teaching approaches and how to integrate technology into the imaginative writing lesson.

Keywords: Teaching, Imaginative Writing, Secondary School Students

Introduction

Imaginative writing is the use of written language to conceptualize, explore and record experiences in such a way as to create a unique symbolization of it (Khan, 2011). It, therefore, means that imaginative writing is meant for self-expression and pleasure through employment of creativity in writing. Imaginative writing is taught in English to equip learners with the basic language skills and give them opportunities to express their feelings and experiences freely. Since English is a compulsory and examinable subject that is used as the medium of instruction, it ought to be performed exceptionally well. Entry into higher institutions of learning in Kenya depends on the overall performance in all subjects during the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations. This means that good imaginative writing reflects good mastery of concepts and content of the English language that lead to better academic performance in other subjects examined in English.

Despite the importance of imaginative writing, most secondary school students perform below   average (below 50%). This is because they face great difficulty in expressing themselves in simple English during imaginative writing (Gicobi, 2013). This is a major issue in language development among secondary school students which result into poor performance in English as a subject and consequently other subjects. This is the reason why the Kakamega County Director of Education in the year 2014 recommended the need for enhanced delivery of the subject content by teachers to increase learner achievement in imaginative writing in English. Blames have been laid on the structure of the integrated curriculum of English and teachers of English for the dismal performance in imaginative writing. However, very few researches have been conducted to find out approaches teachers use in teaching of imaginative writing. It was from this perspective that this study aimed at establishing approaches teachers use in teaching imaginative writing among Form Three secondary school students in Kakamega Central Sub-county, Kenya.

Teaching Imaginative Writing

Teachers are very important tools of input towards effective learning of imaginative writing. It is believed that all teachers of English are capable of teaching imaginative writing and by virtue of their training, knowledge and skills attained, they are believed to provide a larger percentage of input in learning of imaginative writing. Instructional approaches are important variables in effective teaching to enhance learning of imaginative writing.

From the reviewed literature, teaching of imaginative writing is influenced by curriculum and assessment expectations, teachers' perception about creativity and the function of imaginative writing. Mwangi (2016) established that dramatization is an effective strategy in teaching the English language and promotes learner achievement. She carried out a study in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya to establish the effect of role play, simulation, mime and language games in curriculum implementation at secondary school level. The study established that teaching strategies such as role play, simulation, language games and mime had a significant influence on learner achievement and dramatization was superior to lecture strategy in teaching of the English Language.She recommended that the Government of Kenya should plan to address the issue of including dramatization in teaching the integrated syllabus by requesting Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to

incorporate dramatic genres in the language curriculum. Mwangi (2016)'s study relates to the current one as it provides avenues to enhancing creativity, thus promoting imaginative writing. It also agrees with Tolga (2013)'s study which found out that the creative drama method contributed to the improvement of the learners' writing skills regarding writing format, content and language and expression.

The process approach has been considered appropriate because it treats all writing as a creative act which requires time and positive feedback to be done well (Graham and Gilbert, 2015). Moreover, in the process approach to imaginative writing, the teacher is involved in the writing process itself and gives feedback during the writing process, thus encouraging an improvement in imaginative writing among learners unlike when learners just copy and develop the already written piece. Therefore, every stage of the writing process should be studied and demonstrated by teachers and students in order to develop the writing abilities (Tufail, 2013).

Since the concepts of teaching and learning are very closely related, teaching is, therefore, a process that facilitates learning (Omulando and Barasa 2013). This implies that the way the teacher teaches the learner is very important in enhancing learning of imaginative writing. Despite the teacher's input using appropriate approaches to enhance learning of imaginative writing, curriculum and assessment expectations may still affect teaching and learning of imaginative writing.

In a study by Mbithe (2014), curriculum affected learners' performances. Mbithe's Study investigated the influence of the integrated English curriculum on students' performance in English at the KCSE in Masinga Division, Kenya. Using a descriptive survey design, she targeted forty-one (41) teachers of English and six hundred and ninety (690) students from twenty-three (23) public secondary schools in Masinga Division. Questionnaires for the teachers of English and students were used. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics, findings being that both the students and teachers had a positive attitude towards the integrated English curriculum. In addition, although the teachers employed the right teaching techniques and had the necessary professional documents and adequate teaching learning resources, the students still performed poorly. Moreover, the Regression analysis found that teaching techniques employed in teaching content of Integrated English syllabus, the internal assessment and evaluation influenced performance of English at KCSE level.

This is also reflected in Craft et al (2007)'s report on a significant 'slice' which focused on teacher stance in creative learning. The Study was conducted over a twelve (12) months period from February 2005 in three primary schools and one secondary school investigating progression in musical and written composition and involved children aged 4-15 years. A co-participative research design was selected to include researching teachers, combined with a collaborative approach to data analysis using an inductive-deductive analytic approach. Findings were that a part from the growing competence and capability of composition, there was a comparison with adult standards in the progression in musical and written composition.

It was also discovered that as children's self- determination grew, its agency diminished over time since choices were increasingly determined by curriculum and assessment expectations. On the other hand, reflection and persistence was noted with increased age. This implied that adults showed a lot of willingness to learn musical and written composition than children and

that the way the teacher looked at creativity in the teaching context was likely to affect the teaching process and, consequently, influence the learning of imaginative writing.

The way the teacher perceives creativity affects the way it will be presented to learners when teaching. In learning more about the process of writing, teachers should move away from using formal curriculum, objectives, assessment criteria and time considerations and recognize the complexity of writing and how much work it involves to compose in written form (Ings, 2005). This means that teachers should deeply understand what is involved in the writing process and practice it in class as they help learners in the imaginative writing process. As a result, there will be a change in the way they teach imaginative writing and, therefore, positively influence learning of imaginative writing.

Khan (2012) presented a Paper on English Teachers' Perception about Creativity and Teaching Creative Writing. He aimed to explore the close affinity between creativity and creative writing in Pakistan. Using questionnaires and focus group interviews, he collected data from Master of Arts in English students. Findings explicitly revealed that the teachers choose topics from the text books and explain them for writing in the classroom. Moreover, there was confusion about strategies needed to rouse learners' interests in creative writing.

Vasudevan (2013) investigated the influence of teachers' creativity, attitude and commitment on students' proficiency of the English language. He examined the effect of creative thinking, creative teaching, creative learning, teachers' attitude and teachers' commitment on students' proficiency in English language. Three hundred and ten (310) teachers at private schools were surveyed for this purpose. The results of this Study revealed that creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching, teachers' attitude and teachers' commitment positively and significantly influence the students' proficiency in English language. In other words, the results were interpreted to suggest that higher students' proficiency of the English language is related with higher creative thinking, creative learning, creative teaching, teachers' attitude and teachers' commitment.

Research Methodology

A Descriptive Survey design was used. A survey is a representative selection from the population of a particular type (Biggam, 2011). A Descriptive Survey is a research design that allows the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data from the sample of teachers and students (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2004). The choice of the design was based on the fact that a survey was ideal in a social research concerned with description. It was also fairly elaborate and gave voice and power to respondents who in this case were Form Three Secondary School students and teachers of English.

The Study was conducted in Kakamega Central Sub-County which is found in Kakamega County. Kakamega Central Sub-County had twenty-three (23) public secondary schools. It comprises of two Divisions: Lurambi and Municipality. The Study was carried out in Kakamega Central Sub-County because it had all categories of secondary schools: national, county, sub-county, same gender and mixed secondary schools just like a county or region. The study involved twenty-three (23) public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub-County. The target population were four thousand (4000) Form Three Secondary School students and thirty-nine (39) English language teachers. Through stratified, purposive and simple random sampling, seven (7) out of twenty-three (23) public secondary schools were selected.

Stratification was done on the basis of the type of school, that is, national, county, sub-county, boys only, girls only and mixed secondary school.

In mixed secondary schools selected, students were classified as either males or females. Respondents in each group were selected using proportionate simple random sampling technique for each member of the population to have an equal chance of being chosen (Kothari, 2011). Purposive sampling was also used to select Form Three secondary school teachers of English.

Out of the twenty-three (23) public secondary schools, seven (7) were selected. From the seven (7) secondary schools selected, seven teachers of English were sampled through purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The number of sampled secondary schools represented thirty percent (30%) of the total number of secondary schools (Kombo and Tromp, 2009) while the number of sampled public secondary school students was based on the conventional ninety-five percent (95%) level of probability used in social sciences that the sample would accurately represent the population (Guthrie, 2010). The instruments for data collection in this study were questionnaires for teachers, interview schedules for secondary school teachers of English and classroom observation checklist for imaginative writing lessons in Form Three.

The study used one questionnaires for teachers of English. Using questionnaires, as Kothari (2011) points out, first-hand information as well as the deep description of variables was provided. The teachers' questionnaire was divided into three parts; Part 1 for gathering general information, Part 2 for gathering information on teaching and learning imaginative writing and Part 3 to gather general views of teacher respondents on improving learning of imaginative writing.

The sampled secondary school teacher of English was also interviewed to provide data on educational challenges (if any) that are faced in the teaching of imaginative writing. The interview was conducted at a convenient time that was suggested by the authority in the seven sampled secondary schools and agreed by the researcher.

An observation schedule was further used because it is a tool that provides information about actual behavior. Observation is useful because some behavior involves habitual routines of which people are hardly aware of (Kombo and Tromp, 2009). With the help of an observation schedule, the researcher observed imaginative writing lessons to collect data on teaching imaginative writing. The guide had a question seeking to find out methods that secondary school teachers of English used when teaching imaginative writing. This was important as it informed the researcher on how the teaching of imaginative writing took place in classrooms.

Prior to commencement of the actual research work, the researcher conducted a pilot study in a school not selected for the actual study to determine the Validity and Reliability of the research instruments. Piloting enabled the researcher to assess the suitability of the instruments in gathering the required data on educational factors influencing learning of imaginative writing among Form Three Secondary School students in Kakamega Central Sub-County.

Quantitative data from questionnaire items was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in frequency tables and percentages, bar graphs and pie charts. Qualitative data from interviews and observation was analyzed descriptively. The researcher then wrote a detailed report using statistical data that had been analyzed in tables, interpreted and described, based on each objective.

Findings

The objective of this study was to investigate the approaches secondary school teachers of English use in teaching imaginative writing among Form Three Secondary School students in Kakamega Central Sub-County. Questionnaire for teachers of English, interview schedules and classroom observation provided data. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 1: Approaches to Teaching Imaginative Writing

Questionnaire item	Agree	Disagree
1. Teaching aids are used when teaching imaginative writing.	100%	0%
2. Students are given sample imaginative texts to read.	86%	14%
3. Students with common needs are assisted in groups.	58%	42%
4. The source of assignments for imaginative writing is the text book.	50%	50%
5. Assignments given to learners reflect daily life experiences.	72%	28%
6. Lesson plans are used during teaching of imaginative writing.	58%	42%
7. Teachers discuss topics in class before giving learners imaginative writing assignments.	86%	14%

As indicated in this table, it was established through teachers' questionnaire that more than 80% of secondary school teachers of imaginative writing who participated in the study used teaching aids and gave learners sample imaginative writing materials to read. However, during classroom observation only one (1) out of the observed seven (7) teachers used teaching aids. This shows that the teachers' responses in the Questionnaire were based on what ought to be done though it was not practiced by a majority of the teachers of imaginative writing. In addition, the teachers discussed topics in class before allowing learners to write assignments. Further, 72% of teacher respondents gave learners imaginative writing assignments that reflected daily life experiences. Moreover, Questionnaire responses show that 50% of the teacher respondents gave imaginative assignments from text books.

On the same note, during lesson observation, it was found out that five (5) out of seven (7) secondary school students' imaginative writing notes were read from text books. In addition, six (6) out of seven (7) imaginative writing assignments were taken from text books and written on the chalk board. On the other hand, class room lesson observation found out that one (1) out of seven (7) teachers of imaginative writing employed modern technology like PowerPoint in teaching. Nevertheless, one (1) out of seven (7) of the observed teachers had no idea on approaches to use to teach imaginative writing. Finally, apart from the question and answer method employed by more than 50% of teachers, discussion groups were employed by one (1) out of seven (7) teachers in an attempt to meet students' individual needs in imaginative writing.

In teaching imaginative writing, it was found out that teachers explained text book notes and gave assignments from text books before giving learners sample imaginative writing materials to read. In addition, they discussed topics in class before allowing learners to write assignments and made follow-ups for students' progress. Further, 72% of teacher respondents gave learners imaginative writing assignments that reflected daily life experiences. On the other hand, few teachers used teaching aids and made lesson plans for imaginative writing lessons. A majority (58%) of teachers did not have sufficient information on the best approaches to use during teaching of imaginative writing though they had confidence in class while teaching imaginative writing. Moreover, 44% of teachers had a checklist for marking imaginative writing assignments. Further, it was agreed by 86% that insufficient instructional materials negatively affected teaching and, consequently, learning of imaginative writing.

In addition, lesson observation found out that 71% of notes were read from text books. Moreover, 85% of assignments were taken from text books. It was only 14% of imaginative writing teachers who used modern technology in teaching; using PowerPoint and students' individual needs were attended to by 14% of the sampled teachers.

Conclusions

Based on the objectives and findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

i. Teachers of imaginative writing find it a challenge to meet every learner's imaginative writing needs due to the large number of student enrolments.

ii. Most teachers of imaginative writing are not able to integrate technology into the imaginative writing lesson.

Recommendations

The findings from this study provide useful information to the teacher in enhancing learning of imaginative writing. Considering the large number of student enrolments that may not enable the teacher of imaginative writing to reach and meet every learner's needs, it is recommended that monitored discussion groups be used, so that the teacher deals with a group at a time unlike when addressing individuals within the limited time. To make contact hours be fruitful, there is a need for employment of more teachers of English so that the teacher has enough time with the learner, for easy identification of the learner's strengths and weaknesses so that appropriate action is taken.

Secondly, Krashen's input hypothesis of Second Language learning emphasizes on comprehensible input for learning to take place. With the transition from analogue to the digital era, it is suggested that more workshops be organized so that teachers of English get updates on the teaching approaches, and how to integrate technology into the imaginative writing lesson. This will enhance the teaching of imaginative writing. Most learners in the current generation are interested in things to do with technology, especially mobile phones and computers. If computers and projectors could be used to show learners still and moving pictures so that they are later asked to describe what they have seen, they are likely to provide a positive impact towards learning of imaginative writing. The approach used by the teacher is very vital towards enhancing creativity in the learner while promoting learning of English as a subject, and consequently all subjects tested in the English language. For further

research, it is suggested that a study be carried out on the role of Information Technology (IT) in influencing learning of imaginative writing in secondary schools.

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