

Use of Communicative Approach Implications for Teaching and Learning Vocabulary in Composition Writing in Public Secondary Schools, Kitui County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Various approaches have been employed to teach vocabulary to students in the context of English composition writing. Among these, the Communicative Approach has emerged as vital for enhancing both language learning and teaching efficiency. However, this approach has often been overlooked in composition writing instruction, adversely affecting students' performance, particularly in national exams like the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). This oversight is concerning as it hampers students' ability to excel in English composition and discourages the use of creative vocabulary. The Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) has consistently highlighted this issue in KCSE results. This study investigated the Communicative Approach and its implications on the teaching of vocabulary in English composition writing in public schools in Kitui County, Kenya. Specific objectives were to: establish the Communicative Approaches used by teachers of English in teaching of vocabulary in composition writing, investigate the extent to which Communicative Approaches are used in teaching vocabulary in composition in English, establish the extent to which the learners can utilize the vocabulary learnt in composition writing in English, establish the challenges the teachers of English face while teaching vocabulary in writing composition using Communicative Approaches. A descriptive research design was adopted. In this study that targeted 33 public secondary schools, 4,770 Form Three students, and 90 English teachers in Kitui West Sub-County. A combination of stratified, simple, and purposive sampling techniques was used to select the sample population, which included four public secondary schools and 477 Form Three students (representing 10% of the target population), as well as nine randomly selected English teachers. Data collection methods used in the study included surveys, observation schedules, and structured interviews. A pilot study was conducted in one of the schools within Kitui West Sub-County prior to the main study. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were employed. Qualitative data from questionnaires were analyzed thematically and categorized, while quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that teachers predominantly used genre-based strategies, traditional methods, and the Communicative Approach, with a focus on language acquisition, fostering creativity in paragraph development, and guiding students in writing different types of compositions. Teachers

occasionally utilized the Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in composition writing. They employed this approach in various ways to encourage vocabulary use among students. However, the study found that there were insufficient resources available in classrooms to support the Communicative Approach during composition writing lessons. Other challenges included limited time and large class sizes, which hindered effective student management. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficients was applied in the testing of reliability of the research instruments used in the study and yielded 0.71 and 0.75 for the teacher's questionnaire and students' questionnaires respectively. A Pearson's coefficient above 0.70 (70%) reveals a strong internal consistency of a series of questions integrated to form a single scale measured by the coefficient. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education provide secondary schools with adequate resources to support teaching and learning strategies, including the Communicative Approach. Additionally, teachers should plan materials in advance to optimize time use, and school management should allocate more time for instruction using the Communicative Approach. Organizing workshops to equip teachers with skills in the Communicative Approach is also advised.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching Approach, Situational Language Teaching method, Language Learning, Teaching Efficiency, Composition Writing, Descriptive Research Design, Genre-Based Strategies, Traditional Methods, Rod Ellis's theory, Task-Based Language Teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

One crucial element of language development and academic achievement across all educational levels is the ability to develop communicative competence in writing (Saravanan, 2021). Canale and Swain (1989) define communicative competence as the capacity to use language correctly and effectively to accomplish communication goals (Spolsky, 1989). Writing is a fundamental skill that significantly impacts both academic performance and personal development (Rao, 2019).

Historically, teaching grammar was considered the primary focus of second language education. The main goal was to master grammatical structures, with the grammatical translation method dominating the field. Traditional teaching methods emphasized rote learning and recitation, which hindered students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Vocabulary acquisition was often treated as secondary, usually involving the memorization of isolated word lists-

Since the 1960s, various innovative concepts and methods for second language vocabulary acquisition have emerged, largely influenced by English linguists. One significant development is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which evolved from the British Situational Language Teaching method. CLT gradually replaced the Grammar- Translation method and has become a widely accepted approach to language instruction. The Communicative Approach is based on the idea that meaningful communication is essential for effective second language learning. Genuine interactions activate learners' inherent language acquisition abilities.

In educational contexts, "approach" and "method" are distinct concepts (Mulwa, 2013). An approach represents a general perspective on teaching and learning, while a method pertains to the specific execution of teaching strategies. A method is a structured, systematic and carefully planned approach designed to support and improve the learning experience for students. Throughout this study, "approach" and "method" are used interchangeably to refer to the teaching method. The CLT approach, initially introduced for teaching French in secondary schools, is also applicable to English language instruction

(Mukayi, 2020). Despite its acknowledged benefits, the Communicative Approach requires a well-defined strategy and adequate funding to be effective.

In addition to the challenges students face in achieving fluency and accuracy in language use, Jeyasala (2014) argues that teachers must actively foster students' communicative abilities and provide ample speaking opportunities to enhance their proficiency (Radjabovna, 2022). Shahnaz and Mahmud (2014) highlight the Communicative Approach as an effective teaching strategy in Bangladeshi schools, although they also identify significant challenges that teachers face in selecting suitable skills for students (Basu, 2020). In Italy, Kasumi (2015) demonstrated that the Communicative Approach contributed to broader use of English among students (Hariyani, 2020). However, the study also pointed out potential limitations such as teacher preparation, attitudes, and students' perceptions of the Communicative Approach in the classroom (Valfridsson, 2020).

The application of the Communicative Approach in Africa has yielded mixed results. Muhammad and Hassan (2018) found that English teachers in Ethiopia play a crucial role in implementing Communicative Approaches, serving as facilitators in the communication process and helping students develop both oral and written skills (Nuby M. H., 2020). In South Africa, Nel and Muller (2015) identified the teacher-student relationship as a barrier to effectively applying the Communicative Approach in English and writing instruction (Walton, 2017). Chiyembekezo (2019) noted that the Communicative Approach is a well-researched and effective strategy for enhancing language comprehension in Malawian secondary schools (Tchesa, 2020).

In Kenya, English is taught as a second language and serves as the official Language of Instruction (LOI) in educational institutions. However, second language learners often struggle with mastering English writing. Baraka and Omulando (2014) explored the challenges of using the Communicative Approach for teaching and speaking in the Lugari District, revealing difficulties that suggest broader issues (Lameck, 2020). Given that writing is a key focus in paper 101/3, these issues may be contributing to poor performance.

Since 2002, Kenya's secondary education curriculum has emphasized four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Gudu, 2015). Among these, writing, particularly creative writing, is considered the most challenging to master. According to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development's (KICD, 2002) syllabus, students are expected to utilize a variety of syntax and vocabulary, write effectively, think critically and creatively, and communicate adeptly in both functional and creative writing by the end of their four-year course (Kerubo, 2017). Despite the continued use of Communicative Language Teaching in Kenya, there is a need to explore effective methods for using the Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in writing. This challenge is reflected in the performance of students in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations, particularly in paper 101/3, over the past five years. This is according to KNEC reports of 2016 – 2020. According to this report, it is evident that the mean performance of candidates in P3, which tests writing composition in Question One continues to be far below expectations with comparable low means of 30.86%, 32.37%, 31.42%, 33.33%, and 34.4% in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively. Therefore, to aid students in strengthening their writing skills, it is important to look into the factors contributing to their persistently low performance on writing tasks. The ability to pick and use just the right words to make one's ideas come across engagingly is a significant factor in how well students do in composition writing.

The performance for Kitui County and Kitui West Sub-County is no better. Kitui County CQASO's

office 2022 report shows that Performance for English was below average consistently for five years since 2016. More specifically, kitui west Sub-County portrays a below-average and very inconsistent performance for English since 2016.

This study was grounded on Rod Ellis’s (2021) theory on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The theory emphasizes that language is most effective when students engage in meaningful tasks that require communication. By focusing on interaction, collaboration and cultural relevance, teachers can create engaging learning environment that prepare students for effective communication. TBLT significantly enhances the Communicative Approach to language teaching and learning. In this study, the learners will be well placed to enhance practical communication ability to better composition writing skills. The teachers understanding of the CLT Approach determines their capacity to create an interactive environment. This research suggests improving the Communicative Approach to teaching and learning vocabulary in composition writing.

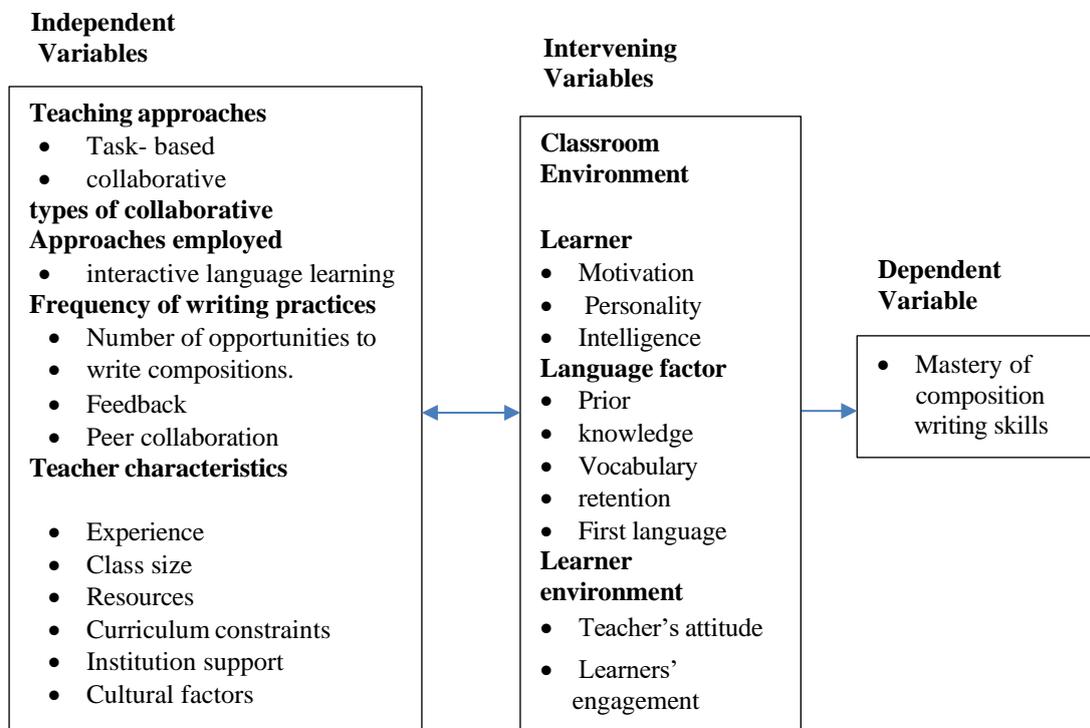


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of effective Communicative Approach

For competence, role-playing, task completion, information gathering, games, interview activities are a basis for vocabulary acquisition and learners’ involvement in learning. This study drew example from Ellis’s 2021 Task-Based Language theory to arrive at a conceptual framework illustrated in figure 1, to direct the study in establishing the implementation of the CLT and its implication for teaching and learning vocabulary in selected schools in Kitui West Sub- County, Kitui County Kenya.

The fundamental independent variables that came into play to ensure learners acquired communicative competence in writing included teaching approaches which were task- based, collaborative and interactive language learning. Frequent writing practices were key because learners had an opportunity to put into use the vocabulary learnt during teaching. The knowledge and teaching experience of the teacher was essential for the Communicative Approach to EFL to be

effective. Some factors to be put on check if Communicative Approaches were to impact positively on students' overall performance in writing composition were: class size, resources, curriculum constraints, institution support and cultural factors.

The intervening variables were; the classroom, learners' motivation, personality and intelligence, prior knowledge of the vocabulary retention and first language influence. The teachers' attitude & learners' engagement are additional factors. Under the classroom setting, factors to be included are; group dynamics, collaborative opportunities and available resources because their absence can affect the success of communicative strategies. The amount of prior knowledge or familiarity with the vocabulary before instruction could influence how easily the learners integrate with the new words into their writing. In addition the degree to which learners retain the vocabulary after instruction can mediate their ability to use it effectively. In conclusion, the independent and intervening variables must inter-relate to cause mastery of composition writing skills, which is dependent variable in this study.

The broad objective of this study was to investigate the use of a Communicative Approach: implications for teaching and learning vocabulary in composition writing in Public Secondary Schools, in Kitui County, Kenya. Based on the stated problem of poor performance in English (KCSE) at all levels; National, County, and Sub- County, the study looked at a different approach apart from the traditional approaches, possibly which could improve composition writing performance. The research study was guided by the following specific objectives;

- 1 Establish the Communicative Approaches used by the teachers of English in teaching and learning of vocabulary in composition writing.
- 2 Investigate how Communicative Approaches are used in teaching and learning of vocabulary in composition writing.
- 3 Establish the extent to which the learners utilize the vocabulary learnt in composition writing.
- 4 Establish the challenges, the teachers of English face while using a Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in composition writing.

2.0 MATERIALS, EQUIPMENTS AND METHOD

2.1 Materials and Equipment

Questionnaires for both teachers and students, Interview schedules and Observation schedules

2.2 Research design

A descriptive design was used in this study. This study design allows for the qualitative description of phenomena, making this design best suited for this study. According to Kombo and Trump (2006), Descriptive research's main objective is to describe the current situation. The design aided in describing the communicative strategies teachers use to teach vocabulary in writing composition, the extent of the usage, and whether learners used the vocabulary learned in writing. Teachers face challenges because the research involves comparative elements and relationships between variables. The data was gathered and analyzed using both quantitative methods, as suggested by (Levitt, 2018). Due to the design's suitability for this study which examines the use of a Communicative Approach and its implications for teaching vocabulary writing in public secondary schools: in Kitui County, the study is relevant.

2.3 Target Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010), define a target population as a collection of items or events, whether they be people, or things, that meet particular requirements and allow researchers to generalize their findings (Mak-Mensah, 2018). The cases regarded as target population were both public boarding and

day secondary schools. This study focused on 33 schools comprising of 4470 Form Three students, 33 heads of department, and 57 teachers totaling to 90 teachers of English. The respondents were mainly teachers of English and learners in Kitui West Sub-county. The distribution of the target population is exhibited in Table 2.1.

Table 2. 1: Target population (sample frame)

School	Category of schools	Number	Form Three enrollments	Teachers of English	
A	National	1	220	4	
B	Extra-County	3	A	360	8
			B	380	6
			C	220	5
C	County	5	A	300	4
			B	292	3
			C	261	3
			D	291	4
			E	286	4
D	Sub-county	24	2160	30	
TOTAL		33	4470	90	

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Kitui County (2024)

Form Three students were selected for this study because they have more writing experience compared to Form One and Two students. This greater experience makes them more suitable for evaluating the impact of the Communicative Approach on the mastery of composition writing skills, as they have likely developed a stronger foundation in writing through their earlier years of study. The reason for not including Form Four students in the study is that they were busy preparing for their National Examinations. Additionally, only public secondary schools were considered for the study, as they all receive government funding from the Ministry of Education for tuition, infrastructure, and other grants, which ensures homogeneity among the schools. The Teachers Service Commission provided the instructors and KICD provided the course materials. The target population was hoped to provide crucial information for this study's objectives.

2.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination

According to Mason (2006), sampling involves selecting groups within a population to obtain a representative sample (Haegele, 2015). This process ensures that the characteristics of the entire population are adequately reflected in the sample. In this study, a sample was obtained using stratified, purposive, and systematic random sampling methods. These approaches were employed to ensure that the sample was a representative of the different schools, teachers, and students involved in the study. Stratified Sampling method was used to ensure that different subgroups within the population were proportionally represented in the sample. After dividing the schools into appropriate strata, 4 out of 36 schools were randomly sampled from each.

Purposive sampling was utilized in the study to select the teachers and students who comprised the sample. In purposive sampling, the investigator relies on their knowledge or judgment to choose units that are typical or representative of the population (Orodho, 2009). Teachers of English were specifically

chosen because they instruct Form Three students, who have more writing experience compared to those in earlier forms. However, in schools where multiple teachers were responsible for teaching three or more classes, the teachers were then selected randomly to ensure a fair representation among the instructors. In total, 9 out of 90 teachers of English from Kitui West Sub-County were selected. This corresponded to 10% of the population sampled. In relation to the students, students in Form Three were purposively chosen because of their considerable practice in composition writing.

Systematic Random Sampling technique was employed to select participants at regular intervals from a list, ensuring that every n^{th} individual was included in the sample. This approach helped to reduce potential biases and ensured a more random selection process. From the national cluster, 22 students were selected out of (220) using systematic random sampling of every 10th element. Consequently, 143 county schools were selected out of (1430) and 216 Sub-County were selected out of (2160).

The researcher selected a sample size equivalent to 10% of the target population, which exceeds the 10% minimum threshold recommended by Mugenda & Mugenda (2013). This sampling approach ensures that the sample is sufficiently representative, allowing for reliable and valid conclusions to be drawn from the study.

2.5 Research Instruments

In this study the instruments used to collect data were: Questionnaires for teachers and students, Interview schedules and Observation schedules.

2.5.1 Questionnaire for both teachers and students

Two questionnaires were used: one for the teachers and another one for the students. Teachers' assessment and opinions were sought through this instrument. The questionnaire administered to teachers to: identify the communicative strategies English language teachers employ when instructing vocabulary for composition writing, determine how much vocabulary is taught in composition writing using Communicative Approach and lastly to identify English teachers' difficulties when implementing Communicative Approach to vocabulary instruction. This tool sought to establish students' opinion and knowledge of: the Communicative Approaches used by teachers as they taught vocabulary and establish the challenges students faced as they learn vocabulary in composition writing. The questionnaire to a large extent contributed to the findings of use of Communicative Approach in teaching and learning vocabulary.

2.5.2 Interview Schedule

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to assist the researcher in gathering comprehensive data regarding evaluation of the written compositions of students and their responses. Four students from each school's original sample were randomly chosen to receive the questions the researcher created and administered. It focused on how well the students can use the vocabulary they have picked up while writing compositions.

2.5.3 Observation Schedule

After compiling information from questionnaires, the researcher conducted five in-depth observations to document how teachers use the Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in composition writing during English lessons. As part of objective 2, the researcher observed the various methods teachers use to teach vocabulary in composition. Each observation lasted for 30 minutes and contributed to collecting information on teachers' methodologies of teaching vocabulary in composition classes. The researcher acted as a bystander throughout the observations. The distraction or influence on

the teachers' instructional choices and routines was kept to a minimum using this technique. According to Flick (2009), non-participant observation lessens the researcher's interest's impact on participants' behaviors (Alsaghiar, 2018). Observations were scheduled following the preferences of the teachers.

2.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study is crucial because it aids in determining if the research instruments are valid and reliable (Reaven, 2009). In Kitui West Sub-County, schools were chosen through simple random sampling. The schools that were sampled were not included in the study's primary sample. Lesson observation plans and questionnaires were developed and tested in advance. As a result, the researcher pinpointed weaknesses in the research tools' and made the necessary connections before and actual study. The research instruments were also checked by reviewing indicators aligned to each objective to ensure they were related to the variables of the study.

2.7 Data collection procedure

The data collection process for this study was meticulously organized to ensure a thorough and effective gathering of information. Initially, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from Kenyatta University, which facilitated the process of securing official approval from the Ministry of Education, the National Council for Science and Technology, and the Kitui West Sub-County Director of Education. After obtaining the necessary permissions, the researcher visited the selected schools to foster relationships and create a cooperative atmosphere for data collection. This groundwork was essential for ensuring smooth interactions and building trust with participants.

During data collection, various methods were employed to gather a comprehensive range of information. Questionnaires were administered to both teachers of English and Form Three students to collect quantitative data on their experiences and perceptions. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted to gain deeper qualitative insights into the participants' views and experiences. Observation checklists were used to systematically document and analyze classroom interactions and teaching practices, providing a detailed understanding of the educational environment.

2.7.1 Questionnaires for teachers of English and form three students

Teachers of English were given questionnaires and were guided on how to fill them and their purpose. The questionnaires distributed were 9 and only 2 were returned. The questionnaires comprised three sections. They filled in information on demographic usage and knowledge of communicative skills to teach vocabulary writing. Lastly, they responded to the challenges they faced. A 78% response rate was attained. The researcher received the questionnaires through the HODs and thanked them for their cooperation. To collect data from the students the researcher administered questionnaires to students. In total, 447 questionnaires were distributed and 247 were received. The questions were on whether they use vocabulary taught using the Communicative Approach in composition writing. The response rate is 52% and it was adequate.

2.7.2 Face-to-face interviews

The researcher sought to determine if the students used the vocabulary they learned during their teaching vocabulary using the Communicative Approach. To obtain accurate information the researcher established a friendly relationship with the teacher. Nine teachers were supposed to attend the interview that lasted 15 to 20 minutes, but only 7 showed up. This response rate was 78%.

2.7.3 Observation Schedule

Observation schedule was employed to offers a direct and real-time view of classroom interactions and instructional methods. The researcher utilized the observational method to analyze how teachers of English implemented the Communicative Approach in teaching vocabulary for composition writing. Five in-depth observations were conducted, involving seven out of the nine initially selected teachers. The observations focused on four key aspects:

- **Teaching Activities:** The researcher noted the different activities that teachers used to facilitate vocabulary learning among students.
- **Learner Participation:** Attention was given to how actively students engaged with the teaching methods and activities.
- **Use of Communicative Activities:** The study examined how teachers incorporated communicative activities into their teaching practice.
- **Challenges Faced:** The researcher documented any difficulties that teachers experienced while applying the Communicative Approach. Each observation session lasted 30 minutes, allowing the researcher to gain a thorough insight into the application of the Communicative Approach in the classroom and the difficulties teachers encountered during its implementation.

2.8 Data Analysis

The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative approaches for analyzing the data. For the quantitative analysis, data gathered were assigned numerical codes to simplify the coding process. This coded data was then entered into SPSS version 21.0 to carry out descriptive analyses. The analysis generated percentiles, frequency tables, and pie charts, providing a clear representation of the data. Qualitative data, gathered through the same instruments, were described in textual form. This information was also coded using SPSS version 21.0, and then categorized and interpreted to identify recurring themes and patterns. A descriptive analysis was performed to provide an overview of the views of both teachers and learners regarding the Communicative Approach.

Additionally, Inferential statistics were utilized to investigate the relationships among different variables and to evaluate hypotheses. Regression analysis was employed to determine how various factors influence the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach in language instruction. Qualitative analysis extended beyond basic thematic categorization. Content analysis techniques were employed to uncover nuanced interpretations and contextual meanings within the data. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the study aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of how the Communicative Approach was implemented and perceived by educators and students. Further analysis was conducted according to the objectives outlined in Table 2.1, ensuring that the research addressed all relevant aspects of the study.

Table 2.1: Summary of data analysis

Objective	Types of Data Collection	Research Instruments	Data Analysis Tools	Data presentation
a) To establish the Communicative Approaches used by the teachers of English in	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaires Interview Observation Checklist	Descriptive Statistics e.g. T-test	Frequency table Percentile Bar charts

teaching vocabulary in composition writing.

b) To investigate how Communicative Approaches were used in teaching vocabulary in writing composition	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaires Interview Observation Checklist	Descriptive Statistics e.g. T-test	Frequency table Pie charts Bar charts
c) To establish the extent to which the learners can utilize the vocabulary learned in composition writing.	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaires Interviews Observation Checklist	Descriptive measures of central tendency e.g. ANOVA	Pie charts Frequency table and percentiles
d) To establish the challenges the teachers of English face while using a Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in composition writing.	Qualitative Quantitative	Questionnaires Interviews Observation Checklist	Descriptive Statistics e.g. Regression	Percentiles, pie charts, and frequency tables.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Response Rate

The researcher administered 9 questionnaires to the teachers, 477 questionnaires to students, 9 interview guides, and 9 observation checklists. Both the teachers who received the questionnaires and the students were purposely and randomly selected. The facts collected from the respondents were examined to confirm teachers’ usage of the Communicative Approach and its implication when teaching vocabulary in composition writing.

Table 3 1: Response Rate

Instrument	Distributed	Obtained Responses	Percentage
Questionnaire for teachers	9	7	78%
Questionnaire for students	477	247	52%
Interview guide for teachers	9	8	89%
Observation Checklist	9	6	67%
Total	504	268	53.1%

Table 3.1 points out that the researcher managed to collect 7 (78%) questionnaires from English teachers, 247 (52%) questionnaires from students, 8 (89%) interview guides, and 6 (67%) observation checklists. In three schools, some students had been sent away because of nonpayment of fees. The teachers were absent because there was a competency-based curriculum (CBC) workshop for heads of departments in the sub-county. This curriculum is new for secondary teachers so it was important for them to attend. The response rates for questionnaires and interview guides for teachers were the same because they were administered on the same day. In reference to Saunders et al. (2009), a response rate greater than 50% is adequate for statistical analysis. Given that the response rate for all the instruments

was greater than 50%, the data was treated as sufficient for further analysis.

3.2 Demographic Information

3.2.1 Demographic information of students and teachers

The teachers were drawn from the four strata of schools in Kitui West. Students were also from different backgrounds and therefore diverse abilities. The gender of the students who were part of the research is shown below in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Students' gender

Gender classification	Frequency	Percentage
Male	129	52%
Female	118	48%
Total	247	100%

Source: Student's questionnaire

From table 3.2, majority of learners were male with 129 (52%); girls 118 (48%). The higher percentage of male attendance can be attributed to the prevalence of mixed day schools in Kitui West Sub-County, which provides equal opportunities for both genders to attend school. Additionally, the government policy of 100% transition from primary to secondary education after completing the KCPE has significantly increased secondary school enrollment. Kitui West Sub-County has only four girls' schools out of 33 public schools. The variance in male and female representation is not so high and so there was good representation of data opinions for the research purpose.

Table 3.3: Demographic information of teachers

Gender Classification	Frequency	Percent
Male	4	76.9
Female	3	23.1
Total	7	100

Source: Teachers' questionnaire

The results in table 3.3 revealed that 4 teachers (76.9%) were male, while 3 teachers (23.1%) were female. This shows a notable gender imbalance, but neither gender appears to be disadvantaged. According to Dee (2007), teacher gender can negatively affect the performance of students of the opposite sex (Holmlund, 2008). However, this does not seem to be the case in this study. Given that English is a compulsory subject assessed at the Form Four level, students need to engage with the subject regardless of their teachers' gender.

3.2.2 Education Level for Teachers of English

All the teachers were asked to provide their academic qualifications, as shown in the table 3.4.

Table 3.4: English Teachers' Education level.

Teachers' level	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	1	14.2
Degree	5	71.4
Masters	1	14.2

Ph. D	0	0
Total	7	100.0

Source: Teachers’ questionnaire

Table 3.4 indicated that all teachers were professionally trained. Diploma 1 (14.2%), Degree in education were 5 (71.4%) and Masters 1 (14.2%). None of the teachers were Ph.D. holders. These data suggest that all the teachers are fully equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes to teach learners and hence not expected to have any challenges in the implementation of this approach.

3.2.3 Years spent teaching by teachers of English.

The investigator aimed to determine the teaching experience of teachers of English. This is shown in the table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Teaching experience of teachers of English

Years spent teaching English	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 3 years	3	42.9
4 to 8 years	1	14.3
9 to 13 years	2	28.6
14 to 20 years	1	14.3
Total	7	100.0

Table 3.5 shows that 3 (42.9%) of the teachers reported having taught English in their current school for less than 3 years, 2 (28.6%) for 9 to 13 years, while 1 (14.3%) indicated 4 to 8 years, and 14 to 20 years respectively. The table implied that there was a balance of teaching staff. Those with less than 3(42.9%) years were young and very energetic. They had not completed their probation period and the commitment they signed with the Teachers Service Commission to work for not less than 5 years. This can be interpreted as they were willing to work. Teachers of English with an experience between 9 and 20 years were the most experienced. They had acquired and practiced new teaching pedagogies. With a lot of experience, the researcher of the study concluded that they know how to handle teaching challenges, and learners of different abilities and this should make them produce good results.

3.3 Communicative Approaches used by the teachers of English in teaching vocabulary in composition writing.

The first objective of the study was to establish the Communicative Approaches used by teachers of English in teaching vocabulary. The British Council (2015) defines an approach as a perspective on teaching and learning that informs methods—specific techniques and activities used in the classroom to facilitate learning (Toro, 2019). There is a connection between teaching approaches and methods: an approach provides a broad framework from which specific methods are developed. This is why the researcher investigated the teaching pedagogies used by teachers in selected schools in Kitui West Sub-County. The results from the teachers’ questionnaires, classroom observation schedules, and interview schedules are detailed below.

Table 3.6: Teaching Pedagogies

Pedagogy	Percentage
Role-play	11.1%
Interview	16.7%

Problem-solving	22.2%
Opinion sharing	5.6%
Reasoning gap activities	5.6%
Games	11.1%
Other approaches include lecture, question and answer, debate, and translation.	27.6%
Total	100.00

It can further be seen from table 3.6 that several approaches were listed and rated as; role-play 11.1%, interview 16.7%, problem-solving 22.2%, opinion sharing 5.6%, reasoning gap activities 5.6%, games 11.1% and other approaches including; lecture, question and answer, WhatsApp, drilling and translation 27.6%. Feedback from the teachers’ questionnaires, interview schedules, and classroom observations as supported by the above responses, revealed that teachers of English were aware of Communicative Approaches. It was key to know the approaches because vocabulary instruction is stocked with a variety of teaching Pedagogies. Other methods that are not communicative like the use of dictionaries, lectures, and translation were used by teachers. The uncovering of this data meant that teachers know many different approaches which they could use to teach vocabulary. This finding concurs with researchers; Tibategeza & Zimbac (2020), Toro et al (2019), and Kamiri (2022) who looked into the communicative tactics used by teachers to teach English through observations, interviews, and questionnaires and came up with the listed-on table 3.6 teaching Pedagogies. They also added others like; modeling, repetition, pair work, group work, grammar translation, audio-lingual, zoom meeting, Google Meet, and Whatsapp. Based on these findings, the researcher noted that there is a diversity of teaching approaches to vocabulary teaching using the Communicative Approach. This then, calls for teachers of English to find what approach is best applicable to learners or the classroom teaching environment and available teaching resources.

3.4 How Communicative Approaches are used in teaching vocabulary in composition writing

This section focused on the manner Communicative Approaches were used in teaching vocabulary. The interviewees were first asked whether they had received any training or attended any in-service workshop on how to apply Communicative Approaches when teaching vocabulary in writing. This data enabled researcher to build the overall backcloth of the responders. The results are presented in figure 3.1 According to the findings in Figure 3.1, most of the teachers, 5 (71.40%) asserted that they had not been involved in any training sessions/ workshops on the Communicative Approach when teaching vocabulary in writing as a strategy to advance mastery in composition writing. The interviewees confirmed that they were using knowledge from their former colleges/universities. Only 2(28.5%) had attended in- service trainings. Further investigation was conducted on whether workshops/in-service courses were beneficial to the respondents and the findings were as follows: Had an in-depth review of the latest KCSE performance trends; Ventured into new frontiers in teaching the new set-books in line with exam expectations, and Addressed challenging areas for candidates.

The researchers’ findings pointed out those in-service courses were helpful to teachers with new pedagogues in the teaching profession. Killen (2000) attests that it is primordial for experienced workers, and teachers to advance their training in their walk of life; through seminars, refresher courses, and on-the-job training to acquire up-to-minute ideas and acquire more understanding. It was also noted

that for non-attendance of workshops, the reasons were purely administrative.

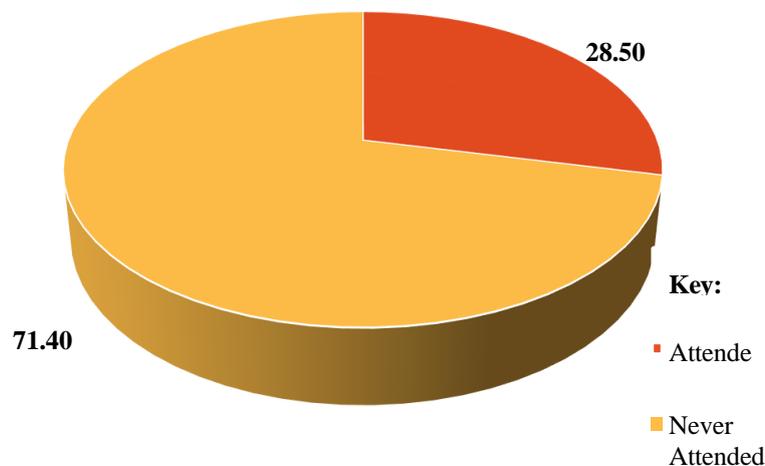


Figure 3.1: Attendance of in-service courses/seminars on the use of Communicative Approaches.

School principals and heads of departments should reconsider sponsoring more teachers to workshops/seminars in their budget drawing for better performance. Further research was conducted by asking respondents to rate the teaching approaches they employed when teaching vocabulary for composition writing. Table 3.7 shows the outcome.

Table 3.7: Teaching Techniques

Teaching techniques	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Role-play	0	0.0	7	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Interview	4	57.2	2	28.6	1	14.3	0	0.0
Problem-solving	1	14.3	6	85.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Opinion sharing	2	28.6	3	42.9	2	28.6	0	0.0
Reasoning gap activities	3	42.9	1	14.3	3	42.9	0	0.0
Games	0	0.0	1	14.3	4	57.2	2	28.6
Lecture	2	28.6	3	42.9	0	0.0	2	28.6
Question and answer	5	71.4	2	28.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Debate	1	14.3	6	85.5	0	0.0	0	0.0

n = 7

The results show that the respondents who sometimes employed role-play when teaching vocabulary for composition writing were 7(100%). Interviews were employed by 4(57.2%) frequently, sometimes 2 (28.6%) and rarely 1(14.3%). Problem-solving was frequently used by 1(14.3%), sometimes 6(85.7%). Opinion sharing was used frequently by 2(28.6%), sometimes 3(42.9%) and rarely by 2(28.6%). Respondents who frequently used reasoning gap activities were 3(42.9%), sometimes 1(14.3%) and rarely 3(42.9%). Games were sometimes used by 1(14.3%), rarely 4 (57.2%) and never by 2(28.6%). Others like lecture was frequently used by 2(28.6%), sometimes 3(42.9%), and never by 2(28.6%). Additional question and answer was frequently used by 5(71.4%), sometimes 2(28.6%) and lastly debate was frequently used by 1(14.3%) and sometimes 6(85.5%). The results imply that the

approaches that rank higher in terms of application include; question and answer, lecture, interview, role-play, problem-solving, opinion sharing, and debate.

This finding are supported by Yulia Wats & Aprilli (2017) that games as one communicative activity, make learners understand the meaning of words being used in games, then this would lead to improved vocabulary. Groenewegen (2008) and Daff (1995) pointed out that giving students practice opportunities was the ideal method to assist with the betterment of their writing skills. The great percentage of teachers’ usage of question and answer by 7(71.4%) points frequently to a negative attitude towards task-based activities and a reason for the KCSE Kitui West Sub-County performance overall results for English. The researcher further investigated how Communicative Approaches are used in teaching vocabulary in composition writing by conducting classroom observations with seven teachers of English in Kitui West Sub-County.

3.4.1 Classroom observation on approaches used by teachers

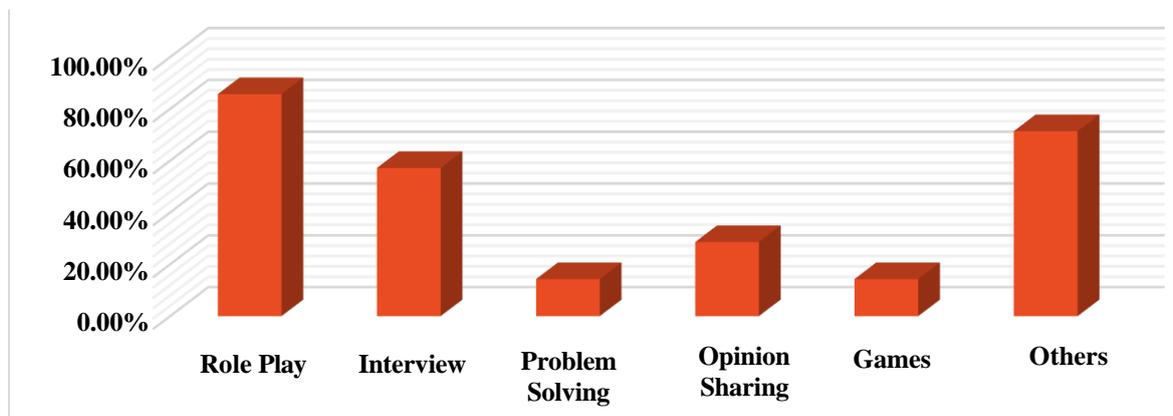


Figure 3.2: classroom observation on approaches used by teachers

The findings in figure 3.2 indicate that the most commonly used Communicative Approach is role play (85.7%) followed by interviews (57.2%), opinion sharing (28.6%), problem-solving (14.3%) and games (14.3%). Under the cluster of others: lectures, questions and answers and debate indicated 71.4%. The finding suggests that the commonly used approaches are highly practiced. It should also be noted that despite teachers having knowledge of what Communicative Approaches are, they still fall back on using traditional strategies like lecture and question and answer.

Although some Communicative Approaches like games were not popular with the teachers in particular games, they provide opportunity for language development and reaches students at their level. Interview, problem solving, opinion sharing and games encourage learners to learn vocabulary because of more interesting class activities. From the literature review, Yuliawari & Aprilla (2018) support this. From the same, Kimana’s (2021) study of communicative ways of teaching vocabulary, teachers must choose approaches to make teaching vocabulary attractive at all levels. In conclusion, if teachers implement full use of communicative ways, learning vocabulary will improve.

3.5 Extent to which the learners can utilize the vocabulary learned in composition writing.

Students were asked to indicate how they use the vocabulary taught by the teacher in class when writing compositions. The results are illustrated in Figure 3.3. The results suggest that majority of the

respondents, 213 (86%) use the vocabulary that the teacher had taught them in class when writing compositions, while 34(14%) indicated that they do not use the vocabulary. Both the teachers' questionnaire and the students' responses indicate that Communicative Approaches are utilized for teaching vocabulary resulting in effective learning outcomes.

The observations from these findings align with Mollel's (2021) research on how the communicative language teaching style stimulates student learning. Mollel's (2021) indicated that the Communicative Approach encourages learners to express themselves in the target language, helps them develop communicative skills, fosters interaction between learners and speakers, and facilitates simple evaluation of the learners' practices and growth. A small proportion, 34 individuals (14%), reported that they do not utilize the vocabulary taught through the Communicative Approach.

If all teachers consistently implement Communicative Approaches, actively engaging learners in communicative activities, the learning process would become inherently more captivating. Consequently, students would feel encouraged to actively incorporate the newly acquired vocabulary into their language repertoire. This enhanced linguistic fluency, in turn, would naturally translate into the production of high-quality written compositions. In conclusion, students would have no challenges as per the findings if well guided.

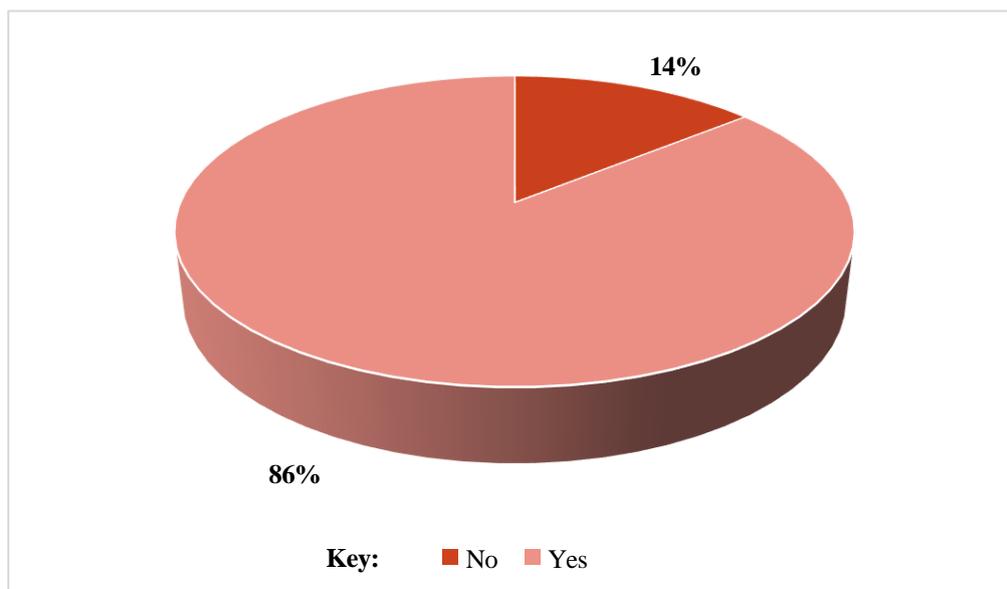


Figure 3.3: Usage of vocabulary

The respondents were also asked to indicate how often they write compositions. The findings are presented in Figure 3.4. The findings disclose that 46.2% of the respondents reported that they write compositions weekly, 30.4% termly, 12.6% monthly, 5.7% fortnightly, and 5.3% daily. The implication is that a higher number of students write compositions weekly, and this is likely to improve their mastery of composition writing skills. It also means teachers have embraced the teaching approach. English is a compulsory subject featuring the highest count of lessons per week in secondary school. To test, every week is no mean task for teachers. They know practicing writing, is like prior planning, so learners will find it easy and effective to write good vocabulary. Dale's (1959) investigation brought to light that there is higher retentiveness of what is learned when learners learn by doing (Johnson, 2002). Efforts should be undertaken to raise awareness and promote the practice of Communicative Approaches.

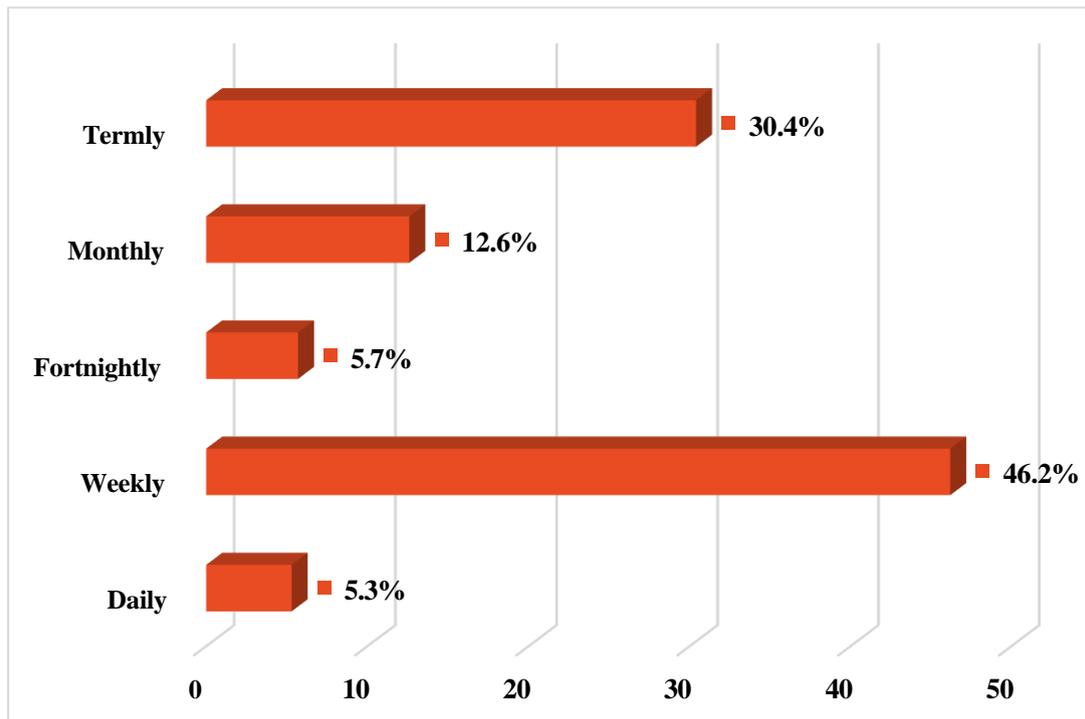


Figure 3.4: Frequency of composition writing

3.5.1 Teachers' Rating of Learners' performance

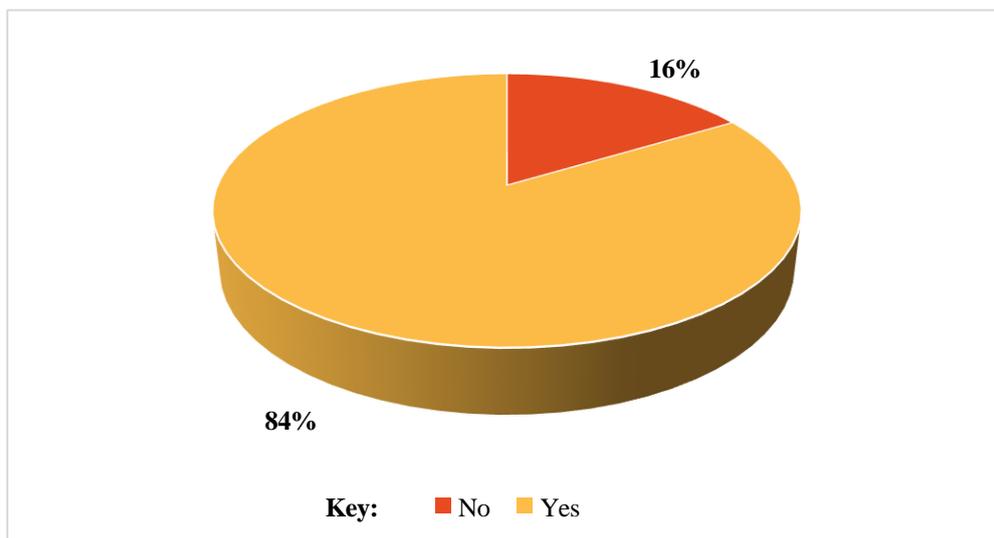


Figure 3.5: Improved Scores

Survey on the improvement in scores as a result of using the Communicative Approach to learn composition writing indicated that 206(84%) of the individuals surveyed improved in scores as a result of using the Communicative Approach to learn composition writing. However, 40(16%) of the students indicated that their scores had not improved even after using the Communicative Approach to learn composition writing. This could be caused by other factors like grammar and sentence construction. The results suggest that using the Communicative Approach for teaching composition writing effectively

improved students' performance. Based on improved scores in Figure 3.5, the responders noted that if students practiced vocabulary in imagined real situations such as role-play, and opinion sharing then they are expected to improve in composition writing skills. This outcome could influence to giving of valuable information to teachers concerning the use of the Communicative Approach. The results are consistent with Yuliawati & Aprillia (2019), who found that students responded positively to learning vocabulary through the Communicative Approach. Muelle's (2021) research also supports the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), noting its benefits in developing communicative skills. Furthermore, Uzoma and Ibrahim's (2018) study demonstrated significant improvements in students' performance with the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. Therefore, teachers of English in Kitui West Sub- County are encouraged to adopt this approach.

3.6 The challenges teachers of English face while using a Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in writing.

Table 3.8: Teachers' response on challenges

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Insufficient allocation of time	7	100.0
Big classes	7	100.0
Inadequate resources	5	71.4
Type of learners	3	42.8
Teachers' Perception of Communicative Approach	4	57.1
Syllabus	3	42.8

Table 3.8 indicated that 100% of teachers felt that the 40 minutes allocated by KCID per session was not sufficient for teachers to plan and organize learners to participate in activities. Forms Three and Four are allocated eight lessons per week of 40 Minutes each. Teachers are not allowed to teach a double lesson in English but can teach a class twice a day. From the literature review, Almu Sleni (2022) in his study pointed out the lack of time allocated same as Tibategeza and Zimba (2020), and Nam (2023). It could be interpreted that these two limitations of time; allocation of 40 minutes and distribution of the lessons per week are the reasons teachers revert to less participatory approaches like lectures, question & answer, use of dictionaries, and exposing learners to well-written sampled compositions.

Closely related to time, is the syllabus. A syllabus serves as a road map for a course and outlines the requirements for a given period. In Form Three, there is an introduction of self- books. This is an addition to the teaching load. Instead of increasing time, it is decreased. There is pressure on learners to take KCSE, after a year. The teachers felt that the syllabus was loaded with many teaching areas to cover in a very short time. 55.5% felt they had to rush over the teaching areas/ topics to cover in the syllabus. They disregarded the use of Communicative Approaches which were time-consuming. The responses from the questionnaires and interview schedules completed by the teachers confirm this. Mulwa (2014) suggests an alternative like extra tuition outside working hours within the school.

In Kenya, there is a law known as "100% policy". It is supposed to make sure that every child enrolls in primary school and completes secondary school. 57.1% of respondents felt that they were handling huge classes in terms of enrollment. The table below 3.9 shows the classes' enrollment.

Table 3.9: Standard class occupancy

Class Enrollment	Frequency	Percentage
Small (mini) (1-35)	1	14.2
Medium-sized (36-45)	2	28.5
Big (46-50)	4	57.1
Total		100

Table 3.9 shows that many classes were between 46-50 (44.4), and medium-sized classes 3645 (28.5). The class enrollment influences the choice of teaching approach, planning, and the activities to accompany it Mwaniki (2021). Schools were not ready to implement 100% transition. For it to be fully implemented, the government should make sure that infrastructure, teaching, and learning resources are enough Likoko (2023). From the previous Figure 3s.5, with such big classes, organizing communicative teaching activities effectively can be chaotic. This study concurs with Manyasi’s (2013) findings that a high student-to- teacher ratio presents difficulties. Also, studies by; Amulsleni (2022), Tibategeza and Zimba (2020), Zewda and Malla (2020), and Armlai and Alakrash (2021) report the same. The Ministry of Education funds tuition in secondary schools in Kenya through Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE). All registered schools receive funds and textbooks yet from the interview schedules and class observations with the teachers, the resources are to some sufficient and others insufficient as demonstrated in figure 3.6.

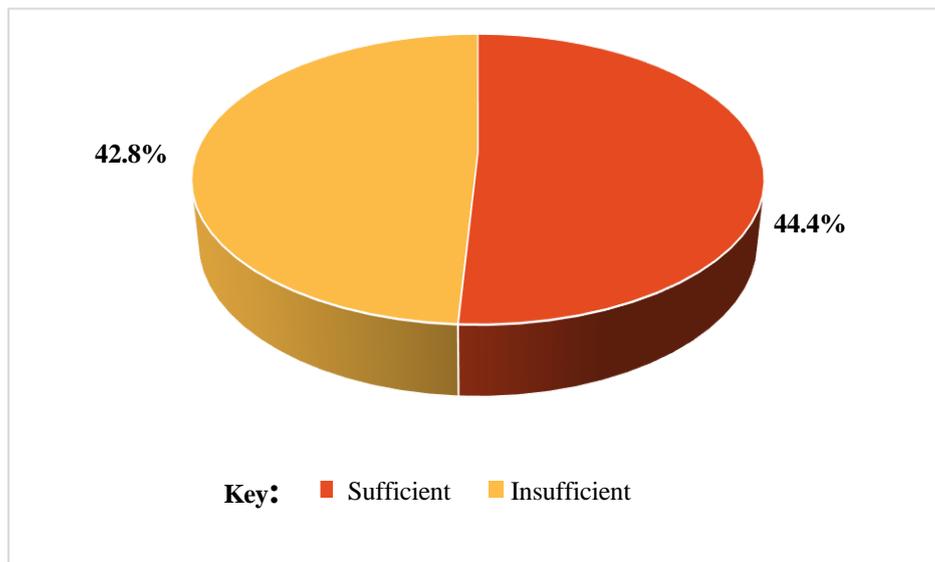


Figure 3.6: Resources status in schools

From the findings, 4 (44.4%) responders felt that the resources were enough because they had received textbooks at a ratio of almost 1:1, and 3 (42.8%) responded that the resources were insufficient. Out of the sampled schools, only 2 out of 9 observed teachers had used a resource like a newspaper. On further investigation, the textbooks were just loaded with activities but no supporting resources to carry out the activities. This could then be why most teachers use other methods where there is less improvisation like; debates, the use of dictionaries, and exposing learners to well-written compositions to copy. This study concurs with Almu Sleni’s (2022), Tibategeza and Zimba’s (2020), and Zewda and

Malla’s (2020) findings on challenges teachers face when implementing the Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in composition writing

An additional problem suggested by the teachers was the nature of the learners. Figure 3.7 shows the nature of learners as encountered by teachers. Figure 3.7 indicated that 20 (8.1%) were lazy, 30 (12.1%) refused to learn, 30(12.1%) lacked ambition and 167 (67.6%) were active participants. These challenges of the nature of learners are in support of findings by Zewda and Maua (2020), and Alharbi (2022) in their study of difficulties encountered by teachers while teaching vocabulary using the Communicative Approach. It can be interpreted that learners are a hindrance to their learning. Teachers should then accompany their teaching with motivating activities, and do inclusive lesson planning for all types of learners if they must be effective in teaching vocabulary.

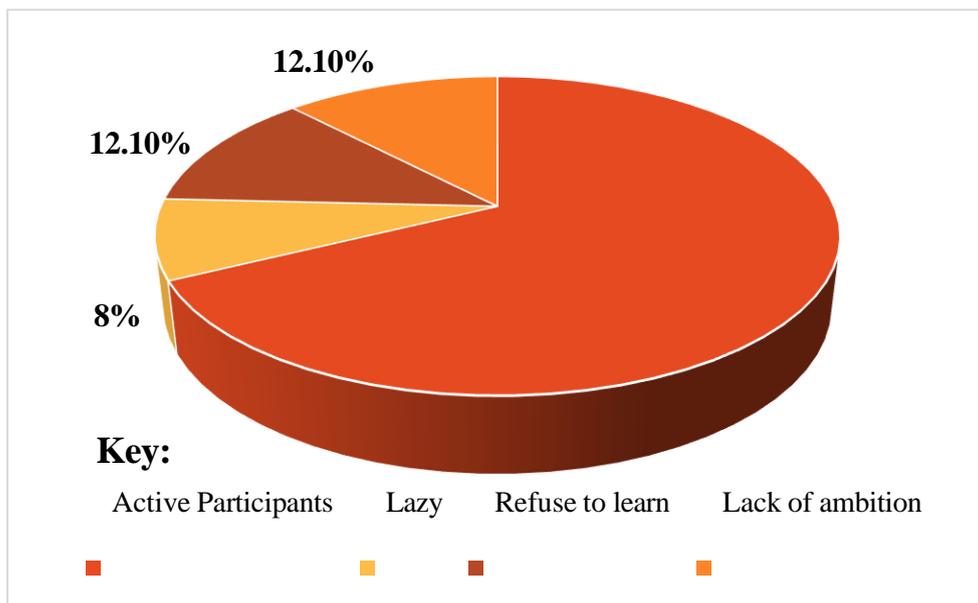


Figure 3.7: Nature of learners

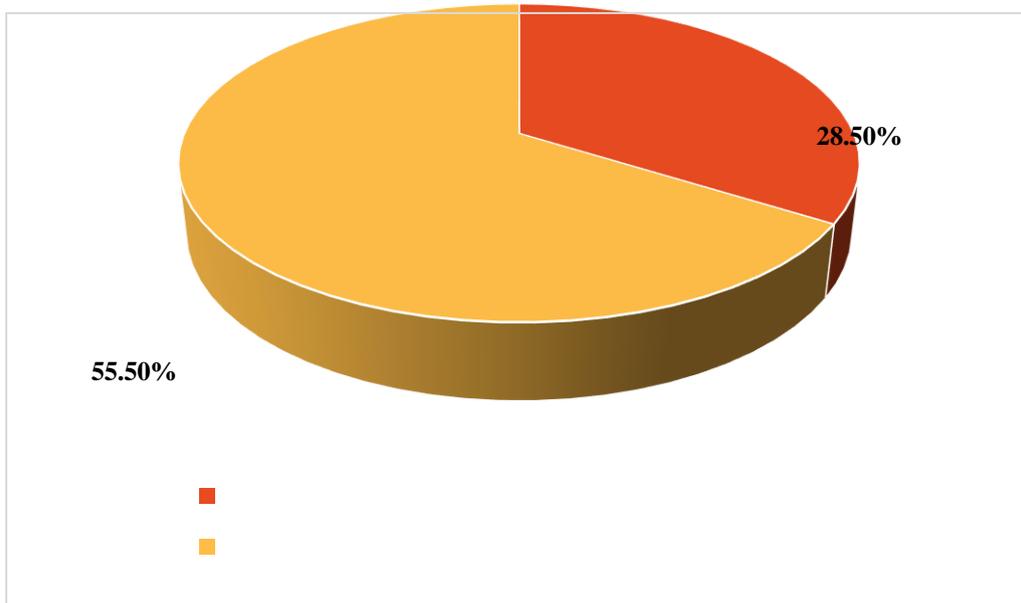


Figure 3.8: Teachers' Perception of Communicative Approach.

On the perception of how Communicative Approaches could be used to teach vocabulary; 2(28.5%) of teachers said they did not understand what it entailed and 5(55.5%) confirmed that they knew as illustrate in the figure 3.8. This data implies that the majority knows and should use Communicative Approaches in their teaching.

A small number 2(28.5%) do not know or are reluctant to adopt new teaching pedagogies. They lacked confidence in this approach and preferred traditional teaching styles. School administrators are encouraged to take this small number to refresher courses and supervise them for implementation. Same challenges were observed by Albarbi (2021) in his study on challenges teachers face in teaching vocabulary.

Teachers were also requested to give suggestions to solve the challenges faced in the application of Communicative Approach in the teaching and their responses are presented in the table 3.10

Table 3.10: Teachers’ suggestions on how to cope with the challenges

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
Allocate more time	7	100.0
Employment of more teachers	6	85.7
Source funds from other sectors apart from the Ministry of Education	2	28.5
Planning before lessons possibly the term’s teaching activities	7	100.0
Attend refresher courses	6	85.7

Table 3.10 indicates that majority felt they could request more time and 7(100%) suggests teachers to plan for lessons before the actual time possibly for a whole term. A good number, 6 (85.7%) felt that it would be beneficial for the government to engage more teachers or even the board of management. 6 (85.7%) were not well-skilled. It is suggested that they should attend refresher courses. On funding, 2 (28.5%) believed that since the ministry is already funding them and the resources are insufficient should source for alternatives. The suggestions made by teachers are essential if teaching vocabulary in composition writing when using the Communicative Approach has to be effective.

3.10 Reliability of the Research Instruments

This study employed the test-retest method to assess the consistent of the results produced by the research instruments across different groups. The researcher revisited two schools in Kitui West that had previously participated in pilot studies. The questionnaires were carefully reviewed to correct any errors before being administered again to the same teachers of English and Form Three students. After a two-week interval, the same respondents were retested under identical conditions. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficients for the results from both testing periods were analyzed and yielded 0.71 and 0.75 for the teacher’s questionnaire and students' questionnaires respectively. This level of correlation is above the recommended correlation by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the use of a Communicative Approach and its implications for teaching vocabulary in composition writing in Public Secondary Schools in Kitui County, Kenya. To achieve this objective, the study was guided by different specific objectives: establishing the Communicative Approaches used by the teachers of English in teaching vocabulary in composition writing; investigating how Communicative Approaches are used in teaching vocabulary in composition writing; establishing the extent to which the learners can utilize the vocabulary learned in composition writing; and establish the challenges the teachers of English face while using a Communicative Approach to teach vocabulary in composition writing. The research yielded the following conclusions:

(i) English teachers know what Communicative Approaches are. They were able to give examples such as; interviews, role-play, opinion sharing, problem-solving, and games among others. They also listed other methods used by teachers like; the model approach, the use of dictionaries, context-related, dialogue, and question and answer. These findings imply that teachers could have other reasons for not implementing the Communicative Approach fully because they know them.

(ii) In Kitui West Sub-County English teachers are trained and therefore skilled in using Communicative Approaches. They have an experience that falls within 3 to 20 years. The study also concluded that they used Communicative Approaches. Even though they knew them, their usage was not as frequent. There were many using traditional methods like question and answer, model approaches and others. This indicates that there is poor implementation of Communicative Approaches. Most teachers do not use Communicative Approaches. However, when these approaches were used by a few teachers, the results were impressive. The teachers enjoyed using Communicative Approaches when teaching vocabulary and learners' participation was good.

(iii) The study concluded that most students used the vocabulary taught by teachers using Communicative Approaches when writing compositions. Students testified that their results were impressive, and the teachers' mark books supported this. If teachers embraced teaching vocabulary using Communicative Approaches, performance in writing would improve.

(iv) Based on the findings of the study's objectives, it was concluded that teachers faced challenges while using the Communicative Approach during composition lessons, in particular there are no adequate resources in the schools/classrooms. Another challenge was the limited time available as the materials used for communicative classes needed to be developed. Large classes made it difficult to manage. Also, the nature of learners' and teachers' perception of communicative classes was an hindrance to the full implementation of the Communicative Approach. When learners are not active participants, then learning is slowed. If teachers' perception of the Communicative Approach is negative, they will not implement this approach. This could be a contributing factor to poor results of English in Kitui West Sub-County.

4.2 Recommendations

The study recommended the following based on its findings:

1. There is a need for English teachers to put the application of Communicative Approaches into practice. The findings of the study established that the Communicative Approach is effective and will improve students' performance in composition writing. Teachers are encouraged to use it.
2. Teachers should attend workshops. Killen (2002) attests that it is primordial for experienced workers

and teachers to advance their training in their walk of life; through seminars, refresher courses, and on-the-job training to acquire up-to-minute ideas and more understanding. It is also recommended that the Communicative Approach should be emphasized in workshops for teachers.

3. Teachers should give learners the activities to be carried out to plan and internalize before the lesson. It is recommended that students undergo training in the use of interactive classroom learning strategies like role-playing, games, interviews, and others in which they can relate to the environment. This will enable learners to learn more words and lead to effective writing skills in composition writing.
4. There is a need for teachers to make prior planning of materials for use in communicative classes to save time. As a way of solving some challenges like lack of resources, other stakeholders like the school and board of management should set aside some money for supplementary resources in schools.

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