

*Full Length Research Paper*

# An investigation of the use of integrated approach in the teaching of English in secondary schools in Kenya

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The integrated approach to teaching and learning has been lauded in educational literature as an approach which avoids fragmentation of knowledge and leads to holistic understanding of concepts. It is also considered to be a superior organization for cognitive learning since the human brain rejects learning what is fragmented. The integrated approach is also said to lead to better learning of students. This approach was implemented in the teaching of English in secondary schools in Kenya in 1995. People have however hitherto, expressed doubt about the implementation of this in secondary schools in Kenya. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of the integrated approach in the teaching of English in secondary schools. Data was collected from classroom practice using the adopted Maseno University Teaching Practice Assessment Criteria and from students using a questionnaire. Analysis of data revealed that there were minimal levels of integration in English lessons and that more than half of teachers of other subjects did not bother to correct language errors that occurred during their lessons. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a discrepancy in Kenya between the official English Language Curriculum and the implemented English Language Curriculum in schools. Secondly, there is lack of concerted efforts in improving English Language standards among teachers of other school subjects. It is recommended in this study that research be carried out on impediments to implementation of the integrated approach to the teaching of English in secondary schools in Busia district in particular and in Kenya in general. Secondly teacher education, in-service courses and teacher workshops should emphasize the language across the curriculum concept so that every secondary school teacher becomes an English teacher concerned about English errors.

**Key Words:** Integrated Approach, Teaching and Learning, Teaching English, Teaching other Subjects.

## INTRODUCTION

English language was introduced in the curriculum in Kenya along the East African coast as early as 1877 by the European colonial powers. Down the years various policies were adopted about the use of English in the language situation in Kenya. Currently, English language is the official language in Kenya. It is also one of the leading media used in regional and international forums. In education it is the medium of instruction and the language of examinations in all school subjects except for

other language subjects. Prior to 1985, at secondary school level, English and Literature were taught as two separate subjects.

The integrated approach to teaching of English was introduced in secondary schools in 1985. According to this approach, English and literature are to be taught as one subject. There are various levels of integration. First, Curriculum level which involves use of knowledge, ideas, and concepts, primarily from literature which is closely related to language, and from other school subjects to teach English. Second, Skills level which entails, a combination of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills during English language teaching and learning.

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Third is the resources level which is a combination of different learning resources such as graphics and three-dimensional materials. Fourth is the methodology level which is a combination of different language teaching methods such as Grammar Translation, Direct method, Structural approach, Situational approach, Audio-Lingual method, Functional approach and Simulation. Fifth is the techniques level which is a combination of different teaching techniques such as Verbal exposition, Use of examples, Questioning, Reinforcement, Set induction and Stimulus Variation. Finally, we have efforts level which is the support from teachers of subjects other than English in maintaining correct English language usage among students (KIE,2002).

The concept of integration at efforts level is the idea of Language across the Curriculum. Language is the main means of teaching and assessing in schools. In every classroom! Each subject poses language demands particular to its content and process. Language is the key to learning. The language across the curriculum movement follows the example set by the writing across the curriculum movement of the 1980s, which sought to use writing as an essential learning tool in classes outside the English department (Fichera & Straight, 1997). Rather than relegating writing instruction to classes in Literature or composition, writing across the curriculum provides advice and assistance to students for the in evaluation of the skills needed for writing in each curriculum specialty. Because language is key in learning, the teaching and learning in all subject areas needs to have a language focus. Teachers need to understand how language is used in content areas and share their understanding with the learners by correcting language errors whenever they occur. It suffices to say that language development is the responsibility of all areas of the curriculum. This is especially applicable to the language of instruction. It was with these ideas in mind that this study investigated use of the integrated approach at efforts level.

Studies done in the past have indicated positive effects of integrated curriculum. Lake (1994) states that integrated curriculum is a movement by schools away from teaching isolated facts towards a more constructivist view of learning, which values in-depth knowledge of subjects. Proponents of the progressive education movement of 1930s advocated an integrated curriculum, sometimes identified as the "core curriculum" (Vars, 1987). The movement towards integrated curriculum is a move away from memorization and recitation of isolated facts and figures to more meaningful concepts and connections between concepts. The twenty first century requirements for a flexible use of knowledge goes beyond a superficial understanding of multiple isolated events to insights developed by learning that is connected or integrated. Shoemaker (1989) after conducting a study on the human brain and education concluded that the human brain actively seeks patterns and searches for meaning

through these patterns. This research is supported by Caine and Caine (1991) when they connect neuro-psychology and educational methodologies and state that the search for meanings and patterns is a basic process in the human brain. In fact, the brain may resist learning fragmented facts that are presented in isolation. The two further state that learning is believed to occur faster and more thoroughly when it is presented in meaningful contexts with an experiential component. Every student has a unique brain. The search for patterns and contexts will be universal but every learner will have his own learning style. To meet these diverse needs means providing choices for students.

Put to use in the classroom, the brain research points towards interdisciplinary learning, thematic teaching, experiential education and teaching that is responsive to student learning styles (Shoemaker, 1989). This work has been supported by other educators involved with implementation of curriculum integration (Jacobs, 1989, Shoemaker, 1989). These differentiations may move from two teachers teaching the same topic but in their own separate classes; For example, both English and History teachers teaching about the same period of history, to team design of thematic units, to interdisciplinary courses, or to a fully integrated curriculum, which is also referred to as synergistic teaching. In a study reported by Drake & Burns (2004) it was found out that more than 80 percent of the schools which integrated service learning into the classroom recorded an improvement in the grade point averages of participating students. For example, when teachers integrated service learning into the curriculum in Springfield, Massachusetts high school, the dropout rate reduced from 12 percent to 1 percent; the number of students going to college increased by 22 percent, and those achieving a grade point of 3.0 or higher increased from 12 percent to 40 percent. According to this study, such programmes foster a life-long commitment to civic participation, sharpen "people skills" and prepare students for the workforce.

It was perhaps with these ideas in mind that the integrated approach to the teaching of English was introduced in Secondary schools in Kenya. People have however expressed doubt about the implementation of the integrated approach in the teaching of English in Secondary schools in Kenya.(Muya,1996; Kayna,1996 KIE,2002). The doubt has however not been based on any documented study. The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate use of the integrated approach in English lessons in secondary schools in order to provide data that may be useful to policy makers and curriculum developers. The specific objectives of the study were to; investigate the use of the integrated approach in English language lessons and to find out if teachers of other subjects correct language errors that occur during their lessons.

**Table 1:** Observation of Availability of the lesson plan

Response	Score	Frequency	Percent
Available	10	12	13.3
Not available	0	78	86.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2:** Scores attained by Teachers in Using Integrated Approach in lesson Objectives

Score Attained	Number of Teachers	Percent
10	05	5.6
5	06	6.7
0	79	87.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 3:** Scores attained by teachers in using Integrated Approach at the lesson introduction stage.

Score attained	Number of teachers	Percent
10	03	3.3
5	09	10
0	78	86.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## METHODOLOGY

The study used survey research design and was conducted in Busia District, Kenya. The study intended to cover an area experiencing difficulties in implementing integrated approach. Data was collected from English lessons using the adapted Maseno University Faculty of Education Teaching Practice Assessment Criteria and from other subjects using an Observation Schedule while from students using Questionnaire. Stratified Sampling was used to classify together all the districts in Kenya in which English Language was performed poorly. After stratification, one district was randomly picked from folded pieces of paper on which the names of these districts were written. This gave Busia as the venue of the study. Saturated sampling was used to select fifty schools in the district. Purposive sampling was again used to select from form 3 and form 4 classes in every school. Form 3 and 4 were the upper levels of the secondary school cycle. To yield results, evaluation was done at the highest levels of the education cycle, because these subjects have been in the system longer than the others. There were 5,362 form 3 and 4 students. Out of these a total of 1609 students (30 per cent) were selected (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). The selection of students was done using the systematic sampling technique. Thirty percent of the form three and 30 percent of the form four students were selected in each school.

The total of students who would be selected in each school was calculated by multiplying the total number of students in form three by 30 percent and the total number of form four students by 30 percent. Once this figure was known for each class, the total number of students in each class was divided by it to find out the interval at which students would be selected in that class from class registers and lists. There were variations in this interval from school to school depending on the number of form three and four students.

Purposive sampling was used to select 90 teachers of English in the sample schools. This was because their total number was manageable and could all be included in the study. Forty-five teachers of other subjects were selected to be involved in the study. Ninety English lessons were observed in all the schools because this was the number of lessons which were manageable within the time available. Forty-five lessons of other subjects were observed. The selection of these other lessons for observation was based on the English lessons observed. For every two English lessons observed, one lesson of other subjects also observed. Efforts were made to clear the balance in observing these other lessons between the sciences and the humanities. In total 23 humanities and 22 sciences were observed.

## RESULTS

### The Use of the Integrated Approach in English Language Lessons.

In order to get a holistic view of integration in English lessons, observations focused on preparation lesson development and conclusion.

Table 1 shows availability of the lesson plan as an indication of readiness to use integrated approaches at the preparation stage.

Lesson plan availability scored ten marks while unavailability of the same was rated at zero marks. The table shows that almost all the teachers (86.7%) did not have formal lesson plans for the classes they took. Only 13.3 percent had lesson plans. This was considered a very serious finding since the lesson plan is an indication of seriousness in preparation on the part of the teachers.

Lesson objectives are very important in any lesson plan. These are the specific targets that the teacher aims to achieve at the end of the lesson. They are the competencies that learners are expected to demonstrate as a consequence of a lesson. These were analysed for evidence of being based on the integrated approach. Where no lesson plan existed, this profile was scored zero. Where there was integration at two levels, a mark of 5 was awarded. Where there was integration at between 3 and 5 levels, a maximum of 10 marks were awarded. Table 2 indicates evidence of integrated approach in lesson objectives.

It is clear from this table that only 5.6 percent of the teachers had lesson plan objectives that were fully based on the principles of integration. The lesson plan objectives that were partially based on integration were 6.7 percent while 87 percent of the lesson plan objectives were zero rated in terms of integration.

Suggested learning activities in the lesson plan were also assessed at the preparation stages to see elements of integration. It is through these learning activities that the lesson objectives are expected to be achieved. The table that follows indicates existence of the integrated approach in the learning activities suggested in the lesson plan.

Table 3 shows that only 3.3 percent of the lesson plans had suggested learning activities that were rated as being

**Table 4:** Scores attained by teachers in using Integrated approach at the lesson introduction stage.

Score attained	Number of teachers	Percent
10	46	51.1
5	30	33.3
0	14	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 5:** Scores attained by teachers in integration during lesson development.

Scores attained	Number of teachers	Percent
1 – 5 marks	0	0
6 – 10 marks	15	16.7
11 – 15 marks	56	62.2
16 – 20 marks	14	15.6
21 – 25 marks	2	2.2
26 – 30 marks	1	1.1
31 – 35 marks	2	2.2
36 – 40 marks	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100.0</b>

of an integrated nature. Ten percent of the lesson plans scored half the total marks on this item while the bulk (86.7) were rated zero on this item because they had no lesson plans.

Clear objectives may be stated by a teacher but without appropriate learning activities, the objectives may not be achieved. It also follows that if the objectives are based on integration, for them to be achieved, the learning activities have also to be based on the same.

From the preparation stage, lesson observation focused on the development of the lesson. Two sub-areas were looked at, namely, the introduction of the lesson and lesson development. At introduction, integration at two levels scored 5 marks while at 3 or more levels scored 10 marks; which was the maximum score for this item. Table 4 shows the results of lesson observation on the item of integration at the lesson introduction stage.

Integration at two levels scored 5 marks while at three and more levels at the introduction stage scored 10 marks. Ten marks was the maximum score on this item. The results in this table indicate that about half of the teachers did not integrate while introducing their lessons. A score of half the total mark was got by 33.3 percent of the teachers on integration while only 15.6 percent of the teachers scored 10 marks (100 percent). These results, therefore, indicate that a significant percentage (51.1) of teachers did not use the integrated approach at lesson introduction.

After lesson introduction observation focused on lesson development. The total mark for integrating during lesson development was 20. Five main areas were registered,

namely; curriculum area, Teaching techniques, Language teaching approaches, skills and resources. At the curriculum area, where the teacher primarily integrated content from English and Literature, 10 marks were awarded. If the teacher went ahead to use knowledge, ideas and facts from other school subjects to teach English and Literature, an additional 6 marks were awarded. The total weighting for integration at curriculum level during lesson development was 16 marks.

Integration of teaching techniques (skills), namely, the use of the lecture, use of examples, illustration, and questioning, set induction and stimulus variation scored a total of 6 marks. Integration of any two of these skills scored 3 marks while integration of three or more skills scored 6 marks. Table 5 shows the results of integration during lesson development.

The total score for integration of language teaching approaches was 6 marks. The language teaching approaches that were examined were grammar translation, Reading method, Direct method, Structural Approach, Situational Approach, Audio-lingual, functional and simulation. Integration of any two of these approaches scored 3 marks while integration of three or more of these approaches earned 6 marks.

Integration of the four basic language skills of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking was awarded a maximum of 6 marks. Integration of any two of these skills scored 3 marks while integration of three or four of these skills was awarded 6 marks.

Like in any other subject offered in the curriculum, visual aids play an important role in aiding teaching in the language classroom. Among other pedagogical functions, visual aids motivate the learners by sometimes creating a vital link between the theoretical aspects of the lesson and the real world. The visual aids also create stimulus variation by, for example, creating a change in the mode of reception from listening to seeing. In a well planned language lesson, therefore use of these visual aids is considered imperative. The types of language teaching visuals that were considered during classroom observation in this study were realia, graphics, and three-dimensional materials. Integration of any two of these visuals scored 3 marks while integration of all the three scored 6 marks.

It can be inferred from this table that the level of integration during lesson development was low. More than half of the teachers (62.2 percent) scored 11 – 15 marks, a score range that was way below 50 percent of the total mark. Only 2.2 percent of the teachers scored 31–35 marks that indicated that their level of the use of integration approach was high.

The final stage of lesson observation was at the conclusion stage. The conclusion stage is important because this is the stage at which the teacher needs to consolidate what has been learnt in the lesson. The interconnectedness of concepts and ideas should clearly show. This stage was weighted at a total of 20 marks.

Where there was integration at two levels, 8 marks were

**Table 6:** Scores attained by teachers in using integration at the conclusion stage.

Score attained	Number of teachers	Percent
0	0	0
8	58	64.4
12	18	20.0
16	14	15.6
20	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 7:** Learners' frequency of learning English and Literature as integrated.

Frequency	No. of learner	Percent
Always	0	0
Frequently	62	3.85
Rarely	1547	96.15
Never	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1609</b>	<b>100</b>

awarded; 3 levels, 12; 4 levels, 16 marks and 5 levels 20 marks. Table 6 shows the results of integration at the conclusion stage. It can be inferred from this table that a large proportion of teachers (64.4 percent) integrated only at 2 levels during lesson conclusion; 20 percent at 3 levels and 15.6 percent at 4 levels. The table also shows that none of the teachers integrated at all the 5 levels at lesson conclusion.

Triangulation of data on classroom practice with regard to the use of the integrated approach was done through the use of the learner questionnaire. Learners were asked to indicate how often they were taught English and Literature as an integrated subject. Table 7 shows the frequency with which this was done.

It is clear from the table that most learners (96.15 percent) were rarely taught English using the integrated approach. Only 3.85 percent of the learners indicated that they were frequently taught English using the integrated approach. These data confirms the finding from the classroom observation of English lessons that they were low levels of integration during the English lessons.

### Integration at efforts level

In Kenya, because English language is the medium of instruction, English occupies the special position of being a service subject to other subjects other than language subjects. This means that ideally, every teacher of other subjects should also be a teacher of English, concerned about correct English usage. This is because student competence in the language enhances performance in

these other subjects. The "Other subject" Observation schedule was used to capture the spirit of concerted efforts among teachers of other subjects. Table 8 indicates support or lack of it from teachers of other subjects. A total of forty-five lessons were observed for subjects other than English. These other subjects were; Geography, Business Studies, History, C.R.E., Maths, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Home science, Music and Agriculture.

It is clear from this table that at every stage of lesson progression more than half of the teachers did not bother about student English language mistakes. Only a small percentage of teachers of other subjects corrected English language mistakes at different lesson stages (11.1 percent at introduction, 15.6 percent at lesson development and 6.7 percent at conclusion).

### DISCUSSION

The finding of the study that 86.7 percent of the teachers did not have formal lesson plans shows the magnitude of lack of seriousness to integrate on the part of the teachers. The integrated approach calls for deliberate efforts to integrate that should be reflected in a lesson plan. Perhaps teachers who just taught following the textbooks assumed that the textbooks were written following some sort of syllabus. The majority of the teachers without lesson plans had teaching notes which would also make them feel that perhaps there was no need for a formal lesson plan. . It suffices to say that teaching notes should not replace the lesson plan ( Ng'ong'ah, 2002)

In its entirety, lesson observation at all the stages ranging from preparation, presentation and conclusion showed low levels of integration. This means that these lessons did not enjoy the full advantages of integrated curriculum such as a holistic view of learning (Lake, 1994), teaching for transfer and thoughtful learning (Perkins, 1991), making content relevant for students (Musslewhite, 2004) and being in line with the brain research that indicates the need for connectedness in learning materials and approaches for better learning outcomes (Cromwell, 1989).

On the second objective, data revealed that more than half of the teachers of other subjects did not bother about student English language mistakes. This situation could be explained in two ways. First some teachers feel that their concern is to impart factual knowledge to the learners, not language skills. Teachers who belong to this category sometimes switch to *Kiswahili* language at some point in their lessons when they feel that this will communicate their points better to the learners.

Secondly, failure by teachers to correct language mistakes could also arise due to the fact that some language mistakes are subtle even for the teachers and go unnoticed. In fact, in some lessons, the teachers themselves made language mistakes.

**Table 8:** Extent of use of in other subjects apart from English at different stages of the lesson (n = 45)

Lesson stage	No. of teachers who corrected mistakes	No. of teachers who Did not correct mistakes	Total number of teachers
Introduction	5 (11.1%)	32 (71.1%)	8 (17.8%)
Lesson Development	7 (15.6%)	33 (73.3%)	5 (11.1%)
Conclusion	3 (6.7%)	28 (62.2%)	14(31.1%)

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two major conclusions based on the findings of this study. First, there is a discrepancy in Kenya between the official English Language Curriculum and the implemented English Language Curriculum in schools. Whereas the official curriculum expects an integrated approach to be used in schools, in the classroom only minimal amounts of integration actually occur. This could be attributed to factors that would require investigation such as lack of preparation of teachers by way of teacher training, lack of teacher capacity building in integration, or inappropriate resources.

Secondly, there is lack of concerted efforts in improving English Language standards among teachers of other school subjects. This implies that these teachers have not embraced the concept of language across the curriculum

The following are the key recommendations that emanates from the study. There is need to carry out research to investigate the impediments to implementation of the integrated approach to the teaching of English in secondary schools in Busia district in particular and in Kenya in general teacher education, in-service courses and teacher workshops should emphasize the language across the curriculum concept so that every secondary school teacher becomes an English teacher concerned about English errors. It should be the responsibility of the secondary school administration to ensure that they facilitate the implementation of the integrated approach by co coordinating the activities of the teachers and by selling the language across the curriculum idea.

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