

The Effectiveness of teacher's classroom assessment practices on predicting pupils learning of English concept in public primary schools

Abstract

This paper aimed at assessing the effectiveness of teachers' classroom assessment practices on predicting pupils' learning English concept. The main objectives were to assess teacher's classroom assessment practices in teaching English concept and predicting the pupils' English performance using the classroom assessment. The study used mixed design approach and data were collected through questionnaires and classroom observations. The study found that the common assessment methods used by English teachers are traditional methods of assessment which based on paper and pencil while modern assessment methods such as portfolio, peer and self-assessment, oral presentation were less used in public primary schools. However the study found that purpose of assessment was highly perceived by English teachers to be usefulness in classroom assessment practices, while source of test items perceived to be less usefulness. It was also revealed that there was strong positive relationship between excise, test and examination in predicting pupils' English performance.

Key words: English concept, classroom assessment, students' performance and tools of assessment.

1.1 Introduction

Assessment is an essential tool which enhances academic performance at all levels of education .Itis anintegral part of the learning process which closely relates with effective and carefulplanning.Striggns (2007) states that assessment carries information about all activities done in the classroom setting it provides feedback to both teachers and pupils. Classroom assessment encompasses a range of activates that include: instruction of assessment tasks, administration, marking and grading tasks and interpreting the results (Ndalichako,2004).The purpose of classroom assessment is divided into three parts namely;assessment for learning, assessment of learning and assessment as learning(WNCP,2006).Assessment for learning generally occurs throughout of the process of learning.Saefurrohman and Balins (2016) explain that classroom assessment enable teachers to diagnose strength and weakness in teaching and learning, to obtain information on students' progressto plan instruction and provide feedback to students as they progress through the course. The activities involved in this assessment process include observation, questions, tests, quizzes class exercises and homework (Ndalichako, 2004).

Through assessment for learning, teachers get feedback whether pupils are on track or not during the process of teaching and learning. Assessment as learning focuses on developing pupils' meta-cognitive skills. It helps pupils to use their prior knowledge such as ability, experience, interest, difficulties and level of achievement in applying new learning. This means that pupils use their sense of ownership and efficacy in improving their learning process (WCP, 2006).

There are several methods used to assess pupils' learning outcomes. Ndalichako (2004), Fred and Schmitt, (2010) have categorized assessment methods into two groups namely: traditional assessment methods and modern assessment methods. Thus, it is noteworthy for teachers to select appropriate assessment methods that provide useful information during teaching and learning new concepts. Traditional assessment methods based on paper-and-pencil tests, make up of multiple choice, matching item, true or false, short answer or fill in-the-blank essay questions; while modern assessment methods use portfolio, presentation, group discussion, individual assessment, observation, debate, performance chart, checklist and group assessment (Fred and Schmitt, 2010).

On the other hand the Tanzania educational assessment system after attainment of independence in 1961 was based on single examination mode inherited from colonial government (Laurent, 2011). The assessment relied on summative assessment accompanied with its weakness. Therefore, the government introduced teacher's education curricular courses to incorporate basic concepts and assessment skills. This helped teachers to conduct effective assessment which are reliable and valid in the classroom setting. However the MoVET (2011) has prepared school inspectors manual to which direct how to assess pupils learning and understanding of new concepts in the learning process of a particular subject. Also the Primary School English Guide TIE (2016) has elaborated required tools to be used in classroom assessment for measuring pupils' performance in primary school as follows; presentation, portfolio, debate, group discussion, concept mapping, individual assessment, group assessment, self and peer assessment rubric, performance chart, anecdotal records and checklist.

Concept learning is regarded as mental construct that is timeless, universal and abstract thus Burnner et al (1967) insist that students learn new concepts through use of examples and non-examples as well as comparison and contrast. Mwakasendo (2011) observes that pupils acquire English concepts through grammar translation, direct method, the audio lingual methods, the

cognitive-code learning methods and communicative method. Erickson (2012) adds that concepts are universal, timeless, abstract which move students toward higher levels of thinking thus why a concept is something that can be taught in any classroom, regardless of the content included to be learned. English in primary schools determines the assessment methods on pupils' learning concept. For example, the list of concepts which pupils should acquire during teaching and learning are vocabulary, verbs, adjectives, nouns, comprehension, pronouns, occupations, letter writing skills, reading literacy, composition, conjunctions and punctuation. The teacher can measure the validity and reliability of English concepts by using item tests such as true/false to measure knowledge content, matching items that measure application, synthesis, analysis and evaluation (MoVET, 2011). This requires teachers' observation of their students' ability of understanding different English concepts as used in the subject being taught or mastery of concept when tested in the test or annual examinations.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the fact that English is taught as a subject at the primary school level particularly in public primary schools, majority of pupils graduate without the capability of constructing a single sentence in English (Mosha, 2006; Uwezo, 2010). This difficulty makes them unable to cope with subjects taught in English during their studies in secondary schools and at higher levels of education. Therefore, it leads to poor performance. Summative assessment still plays a greater role for the purpose of placement and it is based on traditional paper-and-pencil tests which focus on grading and score. Despite the measures taken to assess teachers' practices on teaching how students can master English concepts, still pupils in primary schools are performing poorly in English subject. For that matter, this paper aims to assess the effectiveness of teachers' classroom assessment and predict their pupils' ability of learning and mastering English concepts.

1.3 Objectives

The paper deals with examining the effectiveness of teachers' classroom assessment practices in teaching English concepts and how the teacher's classroom assessment predicts pupils' English performance.

2.1 Cognitive theory

Chomsky (1996) put an idea of language acquisition device (LAD). The LAD is a hypothetical tool hardwired into the brain that helps children rapidly learn and understand language. It explains how children are able to acquire language abilities as well as accounting for the innate understanding of grammar and syntax all children possess. He proposed that every child was born with LAD that holds the fundamental rules for language. In other words, children are born with understanding of the rules of language; they simply need to acquire the vocabulary. He posed that language is fundamentally similar across all of humanity. For instance, every language has something that is like a noun and verb, and every language has something that is similar across all of humanity.

2.2 Social cognitive theory

Jeanne (2004), in social cognitive theory argues that children or pupils learn through observing others in the community. Anita (2001) propounds that psychologist Vygotsky believed that human activities take place in cultural setting and cannot be understood apart from this setting. The specific mental structure and process can be traced to interactions with others according to Palincsar (1988), argued that social interaction are more than simple influence on cognitive development and thinking process.

3.1 Methodology

The study was conducted in Iringa Municipal. The area was purposively selected due to number of primary schools which are 51 including public and private but which high number of pupils in each class. This has been used to assess how teachers assess and predict their pupils performance of English concept in their final examination.

3.2 Research approach and design

The mixed research design was employed in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data through the use of both quantitative and qualitative approach. The reason behind using both approach was to provide a clear detailed explanation on findings concerning the study problem and its objective concerning pupils understanding of English concept.

3.3 Population, sample size and sampling techniques

The study based on all English teachers and class five pupils in all sampled schools. A total of 360 pupils were involved in data collection from 6 public primary schools out of 43 public primary schools. Each school was represented with 60 pupils. Also all English teachers from 6 public schools were involved purposefully. Pupils were obtained through both purposively and random techniques.

3.4 Data collection instruments

The study used questionnaires and observation instrument. The liker scale questionnaires with five points categories was used to measure teachers' assessment practices, teacher's self-perceived skills and usefulness of classroom assessment practices in teaching English concepts.

Non participant observation was used to examine on going classroom assessment practices in the classroom. Observation list was used to record assessment method applied by English teachers and how pupils participated during teaching and learning such as group discussion, presentation and peer assessment.

3.5 Data analysis

The statistical approach was considered to be relevant in addressing study finding. Descriptive statistic, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze research questions on teachers' classroom assessment practices in the classroom while liner regression model was used to predict pupils' learning and understanding of English concepts.

4.1 Presentation of findings

4.2 Teachers' classroom assessment practices in teaching English concept

The findings in appendix one revealed that the purpose for classroom assessment provided by most teachers were to 'prepare pupils for National examinations' with a Mean =4.53, SD, =696 followed by 'to rank pupils based on their performance' with Mean =4.17, S.D=878. The statement 'to determine the effectiveness of instruction' has the lowest rating with Mean=3.75, S.D=937. Further, results indicate the overall mean of the purpose of assessment

(purpose index) with Mean=4.05. These results indicate that, most and little attention was paid on the effectiveness of instruction to the pupils during teaching and learning English concepts whether is effective or not. The most frequently used assessment method to the most teachers was 'providing exercise to the pupils' with a Mean=4.50, S.D =0.878 followed by 'writing fill-in-the-blanks or short answers' with Mean=4.17, S.D=0.97. The with lowest mean was 'using portfolio to assess pupils' which is a Mean=2.47, S.D=1.276. The overall mean of methods of assessment (methods of assessment index) was a means of 3.69.

The traditional method of assessment such as quiz, test, and exams were predominantly used in primary schools. While modern assessment methods like observation, group discussion, portfolio and self and peer assessments were least frequently used.

In the aspect of procedures for assessment, results indicated that source of items questions used mostly frequently by teachers were developed from 'syllabus' with Mean=4.69, S.D=0.624, followed with 'text book' with Mean=4.31, S.D=0.710, and the 'internet' source was the less frequently used by English teachers with Mean=1.81, S.D=1.064. The overall mean (source of assessment items index) used by English teachers was 3.59. It is implying that teachers depended much from syllabus and text books. On providing feedback and reporting, result indicates that teachers mostly like using 'total test scores' with Mean=4.19, S.D=1.009, while 'latter grading' with Mean =4.03, S.D=0.774. The slightest used method for providing feedback and report was the 'verbal feedback' which has Mean=3.44, S.D=1.275. The overall mean (index in feedback and reporting) of methods of providing feedback and reporting was 3.88. This shows that most of teachers do not much consider verbal feedback, written comments and discussion with pupils as a proper methods for providing feedback to the pupils in classroom assessment.

The same result was revealed through the classroom observation where teachers preferred the use of traditional assessment then modern assessment. Teachers provided class exercise to the pupils during English lesson and less attention were paid to other assessment methods. For example most of the exercise and examinations items based on multiple choice, true/false, filling in the blank and matching questions were dominant in their mid-term and terminal examinations. On the other hand, little practice were practiced on pupils discussing the English concepts through oral presentation, giving feedback and homework. This

happen so because teachers found that modern assessment requires time to assess each pupils understand of English concepts tough in each lesson

Classroom assessment predict pupil's English performance

The linear Regression Model was used to predict pupils' English performance. The pupils' exercise and test were employed as independent variables and examination was dependent variable. The result shows that more frequent exercise and test enabled teachers to predict pupils' performance in the examination score.

Table 1 Model Summary Output for Multiple Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
1	.786 ^a	.618	.616	12.00014

a. Predictors:(constant), test mark, exercise mark

The model of the result summary provides the multiple correlation coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R²) for the regression model. A coefficient of 0.786 suggests that there is strong positive relationship between exercise, test and examination. The coefficient of determination (R²) =0.618 indicates that only 61.8% of the variance can predict the output. This means that test and exercise marks contribute 61.8% of the total performance in examinations while 38.2% remain un predicted. This implies that the outcome in examination depends much on exercise and test provided by teacher in the process of teaching and learning.

Table 2 ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sign
1 Regression	83154.375	2	41577.188	288.724	.000 ^b
Residual	51409.225	357	144.003		
Total	134563.600	359			

a. Dependent variable: mark

b. Predictor:(Constant),test mark, exercise mark

The regression analysis result in the table presented above describes that F=288.724 and p-value=0.00 (≤ 0.005), then there enough evidence that exercise and test are useful predictor on English examination performance.

Table 3

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sign
	B	Std. Error			
1(constant)	-7.368	2449		-3.009	.003
Exercise	.602	.055	.517	11.021	.000
mark	.375	.053	.329	7.013	.000
test mark					

The result is the table demonstrates the coefficient of the linear regression model which can be used to predict pupils' performance in final examination using exercise and test marks. It has been revealed that the constant (-7.368), the exercise and test mark are all significant at both 0.05 level of significant. This indicates that the exercise and test contribute significantly to the exam marks. The coefficient of the linear regression model applied to predict the final result has been calculated using; $\text{Exams} = 0.602 \times \text{exercise mark} + 0.375 \times \text{test mark} - 7.368$.

The coefficient in the exercise marks indicated that every unit has increases of mark in exercise which in turn influences increase of 0.602 marks in examinations. On the other side the coefficient in test marks indicates every unit increases 0.375 marks in the final examination. Thus why the is constant term -7.368 show evidence that for pupils who score 0 marks in both test and exercise can score -7.368 in examination.

So far, the study managed to predict the pupils' final result in English through regression whereby marks were computed using this model. For example, two samples were taken from the pupil who scored 70% in exercise and 60% in test. The predicated was $\text{Exam} = 0.602 \times 70 + 0.375 \times 60 - 7.368 = 57\%$. With regards to this computation the English teacher is in position to predict this pupil that has possibility to score 57% in the final examination.

5.0 .Discussion of the findings

The first objective based on assessing teacher's classroom assessment practices in teaching English concepts with regard to the purpose, methods and procedures of classroom assessment. The teachers' responses indicate that, most teachers devoted their time for the purpose of preparing pupils for final examinations while little attention was paid to the effectiveness of instruction to the pupils during teaching English concepts. This was influenced with both internal and external influences. For example, most educational stakeholders like politicians, parents'

educators and ministerial hierarchy and Teachers themselves stress on the best result from annual and national examination without considering how those pupils have mastered English concepts which will help them in different circumstances of communication. The stress on requiring pupils to pass national examination prompted that most English teachers usually base on the methods of preparing pupils for final examination as key reason for classroom assessment.(Ketabi and Ketabi,2014;OECD,2015).

Although hers seems to employ all assessment methods the reality show that they do not use all methods to the same extent. Some methods were used very often, while others used seldom regardless of whether these methods are traditional or alternative assessment. For instance teachers reported that using a great deal of providing pupils exercise,multiple-choice and writing fill-in-blanks or short answers questions. Authentically, the methods were practiced just because enabled them easier administering of test and exercise but they demonstrated lack of competence in evaluating pupils' English language performance and mastery of English concepts. Kipkorir (2009) is of the same opinion that teachers simply used multiple choice, true and false question not merely for evaluation student competence in particular subject but rather to simplification of their work of administering the test.

In additional the teacher occasionally used portfolio, oral presentation, classroom observation, homework, peer and self-assessment and group discussion to assess pupils' understanding of English concept during learning process.The teachers based on paper and pencil as the best way of assessing pupils. Similar results were found by Ndalichako (2004); Linn and Miller (2005); Kuberwa and Nyaruta (2013).Paper and pencil cannot help to diagnose pupils' strength and needs because most pupils were led on doing test or examination which do not facilitate easier comprehension of insight gap to be achieved or be improved during the year of study (Mc Tighe and Ferrara, 1994).

Teachers who were teaching English in primary schools do not pay attention pupils' oral presentation and group discussion which would have influenced pupils' to create critical thinking and judgment of new concepts which they come across during discussion and try to find out its meaning through insight thinking knowledge or searching the meaning from other sources such as dictionary.Limiting pupils to paper and pencil methods has caused primary pupils to lack

speaking skills. The language acquisition theory insists the skills of listening and speaking practice in acquiring second language following by reading and writing skills (Scott and Ytreberg, 1998).

The study found that primary teachers had little knowledge on the use of portfolio as assessment tools during the process of teaching and learning English concepts since the method was less used by some of the teachers compared to the use of traditional assessment methods. Furthermore, portfolio is not the easiest type of assessment to implement because it needs knowledge, time and resource to fulfill it.

Primary pupils were not imposed to peer and self-assessment methods. This had caused the pupils to lack skills, confidence and experiences of evaluating themselves and then identify their individual problems on understanding English concept. The teacher also does not use this method which arose pupils' participation and self-confident expression of ideals and problems which face them in English classroom. These traditional practices have also hindered teacher to have accurate assessment and evaluation of the students' mastering of English concept. The use of paper and pencil method might be good but some time pupils may end up with claiming concept rather than understanding the concepts and its proper applications.

The lack of support from parents and other education stakeholders become an obstacle on pupils' use of portfolio because pupils need to collect materials that depict a pupils' activities such as English subject notes, different information from newspapers, real life English written episodes/stories, book pages that have been reproduced, written speeches, drawn pictures and maps, English written assignments, assessment of performance works, test, quizzes, and pupils' day to day individual and group work. This form of assessment has been also suggested by TIE (2016).

The procedures for assessment (source of items/questions) were found that teachers depend much from syllabus and text books which indicate very often used. The reason for concentrating on the syllabus is due to that syllabus shows what pupils should learn and achieve in particular academic year. In addition either annual or final examinations always test and assess pupils' knowledge and competence basing on the subject content included only in the entire syllabus. Failure to accomplish the syllabus on time if leads the pupils to poor performance in national examination. Actually, teachers spend much of their time in the classroom teaching and

evaluation of pupil's performance of subject but not evaluation the level of pupils understanding concepts used in English.

Furthermore, the results show that textbook were frequently employed in developing questions items to the most teacher since were among of the curriculum support material and available questions used to assess the level of competence to pupils. On the other side, shortage of Englishbooks, invalidity of the content make difficulties to teachers and pupils to accomplish syllabus on time which directly affect the efficient of classroom assessment.

The issue of feedback and reporting were carried out through test scores using grading letter A, B, C,etc. The enables teachers to understand and justify their pupils level of understanding and performance and intended by the curriculum. Yigzwa(2013) argues that even though pupils have moved on to the next level yet the result can serve as source of information for revising curriculum and instructions for the next class. Saefurrohman and Balinas(2016) supports that grading serves as primary base of dataassessment for providing final report. The grading letter motivates pupils in achieving intended academic goals. When the teachers conduct classroom assessment practices are aligned they can support daily instructional practices of teachers as well as planning for instruction.

On other hand, time spent for assessment and evaluation indicated to the most English teachers less time in classroom assessment. The implication of the finding is that teachers' face a limited time in classroom assessment because it is difficult to identify pupils with learning difficulties in a single period. Furthermore, classroom observation shows that there are huge number of pupils in a class so that 40 minutes is not enough to the teacher to asses more than 50 pupils in a single period.

The paper findings found that there is strong relationship between classroom assessment and pupils' performance in English concept. The correlation coefficient indicates that the outcome on exercise and test can predict pupils' scores in final examination. However, it was revealed that examination distinguishes different level of performance among pupils and it provides an indication pupils' progress as well as teachers' effectiveness. Therefore more frequent exercise, test and examination may improve pupils' grades and provides effective learning (Mc Cormick,

1994). Examination also helps in making curricular changes that bases on performance outcome (Braxton, 1993).

The paper established that, poor performance in final exams was due to lack of frequent exercise and test in the classroom. Reboredo (2017) and Quansah (2005) is of the same opinion that classroom assessment system involves test, class exercise and homework which are most important learning medium that allows pupils to take active part in their own learning.

Furthermore, test, quiz, final exams, individual works and group assignments were found as the key influences of creation and improvement of pupils' activeness use of cognitive domain which helps them in critical thinking during learning process of English concept. Sharma (2002) wrote that pupils should be imposed to self-assessment in order to assess their own ability of mastering English concept.

Therefore, the results show that the exercise and test contribute significantly to the pupil's examination performance in English. It is substantial to English teacher to conduct effective classroom assessment so as predict pupils learning English concepts effectively contrary to lack of or inadequate exercise and test in classroom it may lead to the pupils' poor performance in final examination.

6.0 Conclusions

English classroom assessment on how pupils understand the English concept encompasses range of activities that include instruction of assessment tasks, administration marking and grading tasks to interpret results. Also for effective teaching and pupils' learning of English concepts, teachers are required to focus on the purpose, methods and procedures of teaching English especial English concept in primary schools instead of spending much time preparing pupils for passing the English final examinations. For effective classroom assessment on pupils' mastery of English concept English teachers in primary need to gain knowledge and self-perceived skills in using varieties of assessment like self and peer assessment, portfolio which has been rarely observed practiced from this study.

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APPENDIX 01

Teachers' responses on Classroom Assessment practices

No	Descriptions	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	S.D
A	Purpose of Assessment							
	i)Plan for instruction (objectives, strength,& weakness, going on	1	2	6	21	6	3.81	.889
	ii) Monitoring pupil's progress and provide feedback to pupils as they progress	0	3	5	17	11	4.00	.894
	iii) Prepare pupils for National exams	0	1	1	12	22	4.53	.696
	iv) Determine the effectiveness of instruction	1	3	6	20	6	3.75	.937
	v) Determine final grades for my pupils	0	1	7	17	11	4.06	.791
	vi) To rank pupils based on their class performance	0	2	5	14	15	4.17	.878
	Index in Purpose of Assessment						4.05	
B	Methods of Assessment							
	i)Assessing pupils through classroom observation	0	4	7	17	8	3.81	.920
	ii)Assessing pupils through group discussion	0	5	8	17	6	3.67	.926
	iii)Using portfolio to assess pupils' progress	11	8	8	7	2	2.47	1.276
	iv)Assessing individual class participation	1	4	4	17	10	3.86	1.046
	v) Providing exercise to the pupils	-	1	3	8	24	4.50	.878
	vi)Providing homework to the pupil's	1	6	9	14	6	3.50	1.056
	vii)Administering quizzes to the pupils	2	4	8	12	10	3.67	1.171
	viii)Evaluate oral questions from pupils	1	2	6	19	8	3.83	1.028
	ix)Writing multiple-choice questions	0	1	5	18	1	4.11	.854

						2		
	x)Writing true/false questions	0	2	8	16	10	3.89	1.008
	xi)Writing matching questions	0	2	4	23	7	3.97	.736
	xii)Assessing pupils through peer assessment	3	8	6	14	4	3.14	1.291
	xiii)Writing fill-in-the blanks or short answer	0		6	18	12	4.17	.697
	xiii)Assessing through self-assessment	3	5	7	15	4	3.17	1.363
	Index in Method of Assessment						3.69	
C	Procedures for assessment							
	i)Source of assessment items/questions							
	ii)Teacher's own materials	3	6	5	15	7	3.47	1.230
	iii)Text book	0	0	5	15	16	4.31	.710
	iv)Past paper	2	2	8	17	7	3.69	1.037
	v) Interest	0	2	7	5	4	1.81	1.064
	Vi)Syllabus	0	0	1	8	27	4.69	.624
	Index in source of assessment items/questions						3.59	
	2.Feedback and reporting							
	i)Verbal feedback	2	8	8	8	10	3.44	1.230
	ii)Written comments		2	8	16	10	3.94	.860
	iii)Total test scores (marks)	1	2	3	13	17	4.19	1.009
	iv)Letter grading (A,B,C, etc)	0	2	4	21	9	4.03	.774
	v)Discuss with pupils	2	4	5	13	12	3.81	1.291
	Index in feedback and reporting						3.88	
	3.Time that were spent on assessment and evaluation							
	i)1-10 mins				Frequency		Percent age	Cumm%
	ii)11-20 mins				2		5.6	5.6
	iii)21-30 mins				3		3.8	13.9
	iv)31-40 mins				2		5.6	19.1
	v) Above 40				27		75.0	94.4
	Total				2		5.6	100
					36		100	

Note: Not at all used,2=seldom used, 3=Used occasionally,4=Used often ,5 Used very often