CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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Abstract:

This study investigated the impact of assessment methods used in internal evaluation on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. This study was anchored on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. A pragmatic paradigm was adopted using exploratory sequential mixed methods. A quasi-experimental, pre-test, and post-test design was adopted. The target population comprised of all the form two students and teachers of English in Teso North Sub-County. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to select 10 schools. Simple random sampling was used to select 509 students. Purposive and simple random were used to select 10 teachers. Data was generated using an interview schedule, observation schedule, questionnaire, and English Grammar Achievement Tests. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed using the narrative analysis technique and presented through narration and direct quotes. Findings revealed that grammar was predominantly assessed through gap-filling as well as question and answer method. Assessing grammar through cloze test and composition writing had a more positive influence (M = 16.02; SD = 3.51) than where it was not used (M = 14.12; SD = 3.33). Pearson Correlation revealed that assessment had a statistically significant relationship of r = .643, n = 509, p = .006 with students' achievement in English grammar. The study concluded that cloze tests and composition writing are effective methods of assessing English grammar. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education should in-service teachers on the importance of assessing English grammar through these methods. This study recommends that teachers should assess English grammar using cloze tests and composition writing.

Keywords: assessment, achievement, grammar, methods, instruction, influence, practices

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1. Introduction

Assessment is an essential component of the instructional process. This is because it is used to evaluate whether lesson objectives were achieved, establish the suitability of the instructional resources, teaching methods, and check whether the learning experience stimulates learners (Muth'im, 2016).

Goodrum, Hackling, and Rennie (2001) assert that fruitful learning occurs when correspondence exists between teaching and assessment. Thus, given the central role of assessment in the instructional process, English as Second Language (ESL) teachers should embrace effective assessment methods that can enhance students' achievement in English grammar. Consequently, to enhance the quality of instruction, assessment methods used should help learners master English grammar. However, research has shown that ESL teachers have failed to employ appropriate assessment methods that can further language learning experiences (Tsagari and Vogt, 2017).

Assessment methods are most effective when ESL teachers and learners decide together which method will be used and when learners are responsible for choosing their work to be assessed (Vogt and Froehlich, 2017). This suggests that ESL teachers should engage learners when deciding on the kind of assessment methods that will be adopted to assess their learning.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasises the importance of teachers helping children reach their full potential. To achieve this, ESL teachers should use effective assessment methods. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the extent to which assessment methods used in internal evaluation influenced students' achievement in English grammar among secondary school students in Kenya.

1.1 Purpose of the Study
This study examined the impact of assessment methods used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

1.2 Research Objectives
1) Investigate the methods used to assess English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.
2) Ascertain the influence of assessment methods used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis
H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between assessment methods and students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study employed Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory which postulates that social interaction is critical to learning. Vygotsky observes that effective learning occurs when it is guided by the more knowledgeable other (MKO). The MKO could be a teacher, parent, or a more capable peer. Consequently, when learners work on tasks within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) with the guidance of the MKO, they will learn to do tasks on their own. This implies that assessment methods are more effective when they take into consideration learners' ZPD.

Scaffolding works closely with the ZPD and it entails the teacher providing learners with appropriate support that enables them to learn independently (Davis & Miyake, 2004). When learners become independent, the support is removed (Harland, 2003). In this study, scaffolding entails using effective assessment methods that will enable the learners to solve English grammar tasks independently. This theory is relevant to this study because it requires the ESL teacher and learner to cooperate to enhance achievement in English grammar.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews literature under the subheadings: definition of assessment, purpose of assessment, teaching English grammar, methods for assessing English grammar, and the influence of assessment methods on students' achievement in English grammar.

2.1 Definition of Assessment

Assessment is viewed as a process of monitoring, measuring, evaluating, documenting, reflecting on, and adjusting teaching and learning to ensure students reach high levels of achievement. It further states that assessment is either formative or summative and should be aligned with the instructional objectives (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). On the other hand, The Ministry of Education Singapore (2008) posits that assessment is a measurement of the developmental progress of learners. Furthermore, Gipps (1994) asserts that assessment entails evaluating learners' performance using formal written tests or oral classroom-based assessments carried out in the process of instruction. Having considered all these definitions, it seems that assessment is a form of evaluation carried out on learners' performance with a view to providing learners with the support they may require to improve their performance in academics.

2.2 Purpose of Assessment

According to Vahid and Hussin (2018), assessment is used by teachers to check their students' learning uptake and if necessary to revise their instructional methods or resources where necessary. Assessment helps teachers to identify gaps in teaching and learning practices (Wagner et al., 2012). Other reasons for assessment are:

1) to determine whether the set objectives have been achieved through the learning process;

2) to find out whether the relevant principles and concepts have been mastered;
3) to determine the level of mastery of each topic, thereby determining the appropriate remedial teaching;
4) to ensure that learners revise the covered content and (iv) to facilitate selection into the next stage of learning (Bukenya et al., 2003).

In view of the foregoing, it is clear that assessment of English grammar is necessary since it enables the teachers to know where their students are and how well they have acquired competence in grammar. The purposes of assessment led this study to examine the impact of assessment methods used on students' achievement in English grammar.

2.3 Teaching English Grammar

Ur (1996) asserts that grammar is the rule by which words change form and are combined to form acceptable units of meaning within a language. For that matter, grammar enables learners to use a variety of sentence structures and vocabulary correctly. Similarly, Richards and Reppen (2014) define grammar as the 'glue' that joins words and sentences together to create written and spoken texts. A good mastery of grammar makes a speaker proficient in other language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), 2006; Toprak, (2019). This implies that learning grammar correctly makes one proficient in the English language skills. In supporting this point of view, Mart (2013) claims that good knowledge of grammar will enable learners to build better sentences in spoken and written performances.

Research shows that grammar instruction is essential in language learning and teaching because knowledge of grammar is the base of English language (Ellis, 2006). Scholars in support of grammar instruction claim that its instruction is beneficial because it makes learners conscious of the grammar rules and eventually acquire the intended language (Widdowson, 1988). Considering all these views, grammar plays a critical role in language learning. Hence, it should be taught appropriately. One way of establishing if appropriate teaching and learning are taking place is by conducting assessments at every level. This study sought to examine the impact of assessment methods used on students' achievement in English grammar.

2.4 Methods for Assessing English Grammar

There are several methods for assessing grammar. These include but are not limited to oral questions, written questions, written exercises, gap-filling exercises, composition writing, essay writing, objective questions, transformational exercises, joining sentences, cloze tests, jumbled exercises, rewriting exercises, question and answer exercises among other techniques (KICD, 2006). From the onset, it should be noted that teachers ought to take into consideration the learning objectives when selecting the assessment method to be used. Sewagegn (2016) affirms that learning objectives aid teachers in choosing the most appropriate assessment method.

Cloze test can be used to assess students' learning in different areas of language, including grammar. Cloze test is a text of appropriate length and difficulty with every

nth word deleted (Farhady, 1996). In this method, the meaning and surrounding grammar help to replace the missing parts. Studies show that the cloze test has a positive effect on grammar achievement among learners (Mashhadi & Bagheri, 2015).

Multiple choice has the advantage of being easy to grade and being able to cover many grammatical items. Multiple choices may take many forms. For example, learners may be given a sentence with a blank with several choices of a word that completes the sentence correctly. Another way is by giving learners an utterance and having them decide the most appropriate response (Kitao & Kitao, 1996).

Completion items entail asking the learners to fill in blanks in sentences. The words that fit the blanks should be function words such as articles and prepositions. Completion items are test production, not just recognition (Kitao & Kitao, 1996).

Transformational exercises make use of transformation. In this method, learners are given a sentence and the first few words of another sentence to change the original sentence without changing the meaning. Sometimes, the word that starts the transformed sentence is underlined or the learner is given one word to use in the new sentence (Kitao & Kitao, 1996).

In the word-changing method, learners are given a sentence and a word that they need to fit into the sentence by changing the form of the word. This method is used to assess learners' knowledge of different word forms and how they are used in sentences (Kitao & Kitao, 1996). Sentence combining is an activity in which learners join short sentences in a number of ways following guidelines provided without altering the meaning (Chin, 2005). Sentence-combining exercises can be used to assess learners' written language needs (Scott & Nelson, 2009).

Jumbled words/sentences exercises are a strategy in which learners are asked to rearrange a set of mixed-up words/sentences into coherent and cohesive sentences (Nurhayati, 2017). Studies indicate that Jumbled sentence assessment improves learners' grammatical mastery (Utami et al., 2018).

The question-and-answer method involves oral questions where learners provide answers verbally (Partin, 2005). This method aims to gauge learners' level of comprehension and engage students in an active learning process (Astrid et al., 2019). According to Fries-Gather (2008), questioning enables teachers to identify what the learners know and what they do not know. Studies indicate that questioning strategies have positive effects in the English language classroom (Sujariati et al., 2016). Thus, to enhance students' achievement in English grammar, teachers should employ effective question-and-answer techniques.

In gap filling, learners are asked to fill in blanks with missing words to reinforce grammar points as well as help learners practice new grammar points (Knaeble, 2020). Gap fills can either be open or closed. In open gap-fills, learners write in the gaps, sometimes there may be a hint, such as the first letter of the word.

In this study, cloze tests and composition writing were the methods that were experimented with in assessing learners' understanding of grammar. The active and the passive voice were taught during the experiment.

2.5 Influence of Assessment Methods on Students' Achievement in English Grammar

Several studies have highlighted the significance of assessment in the instructional process. Research shows that the use of inappropriate assessment techniques contributes to students' poor performance in English (Anwar, 2017). Assessment can effectively be used to enhance learning by providing corrective feedback to learners regarding their academic performance and outcomes as well as to the teachers on the effectiveness of their instructional practices (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Goodrum et al. (2001) assert that effective learning occurs when correspondence exists between teaching and assessment. Thus, given the central role of assessment in the instructional process, teachers should use effective assessment practices that can enhance students' achievement. However, it has been noted that teachers have failed to employ relevant assessment methods that can improve language learning (Tsagari & Vogt, 2017).

Likewise, Ugodulunwa and Okolo (2015) stated that if the formative assessment is effectively used, student's achievement would improve significantly. Furthermore, Khan (2012) posits that effective assessment has a great impact on students' learning because assessment provides an opportunity for teachers to place students in a situation where they exhibit their true potential. On his part, Sumardi (2017) found that assessment motivated students to learn

3. Material and Methods

This section presents the research design, research methodology, study site, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, research instruments, and data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed methods approach. Hence, quasi-experimental and qualitative research designs were employed. The experimental design used was the pre-test and post-test control group design with no randomness on participants. Intact two classes were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control groups. Ten intact classes were randomly selected from 10 public mixed secondary schools that were available for the experiment. Of the 10 from two classes, 5 were assigned to the experimental group and 5 to the control group. A pre-test and post-test were administered to both groups. The quasi-experimental design is represented diagrammatically as follows:

Figure 1: Non-equivalent Control Group Design

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental Group (EG)	O_1	**X**	O_3
……………………………	……………..	……………..	……………..
Control Group (CG)	O_2	Ox	O_4

Key:

X = Experimental treatment assessed through composition writing and cloze test;

Ox = Control treatment gap filling;

O_1 = pre-test result for the EG;

O_2 = pre-test result for the CG;

Q_3 = post-test result for the EG;

O_4 = post-test result for the CG;

……= indicates that the experimental and control groups were not formed randomly.

3.2 Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methods approach specifically the exploratory sequential design (QUAL→ quan) because the qualitative phase was given more weight within the design. Qualitative data was collected and analyzed in the first phase to establish teachers' assessment practices. The second phase entailed collecting and analyzing quantitative data to ascertain the influence of assessment methods on students' achievement in English grammar. Qualitative data was collected using an interview schedule, observation schedule, and document analysis. Quantitative data was generated using a questionnaire and an English Grammar Achievement Tests (pre-test and post-test).

3.3 The Study Area

This study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in Teso North Sub-County of Busia County, Kenya. Teso North Sub-county was found appropriate partly because of students' poor performance in English in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE). Teso North Sub-County had consistently fallen short of the average mean score of (6.0) 50% (KNEC Reports, 2018-2022). The main problem currently facing English language education in the sub-county is the need to improve learners' performance in English. There is a need to intensify assessment practices to alleviate the existing problem.

3.4 Target Population

The target population comprised 31 public secondary schools categorized as: 1 National girls' boarding school, 1 Extra-county boys' boarding school, 1 County girls' boarding school, 1 Sub-county girls' day/boarding school, and 27 sub-county mixed day secondary school with 3399 Form two students and 84 ESL teachers in Teso North Sub-County. Form 2 students were chosen because they were not preparing for any external examination. Hence, the schools were willing to allow these students to participate in this study.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Ten teachers of English language and 509 from two students from 10 public secondary schools were sampled for this study. Stratified sampling was used to categorize the research site into five zones. Simple random sampling was used to select 2 schools from

each zone. Simple random sampling was used to select one stream to be included in the study. Purposive and simple random sampling was used to select 10 teachers. Five schools were assigned to the experimental group while the other five were assigned to the control group using simple random sampling.

3.6 Research Instruments

This study adopted a mixed methods approach using an exploratory sequential design. Thus, a variety of data collection instruments were used thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. Data was generated using an interview schedule, observation schedule, document analysis, questionnaire, and an English Grammar Achievement Tests (pre-test and post-test).

3.7 Data Collection and Analysis

The data that was generated was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was analyzed through the narrative analysis technique and presented through narration. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics consisted of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation. Inferential statistics entailed Pearson Product Moment Correlation, which was employed to examine the relationship between assessment methods and students' achievement in English grammar.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the study which were presented as per the research objective as follows:

4.1 Methods Frequently Used to Assess English Grammar

The first objective investigated methods frequently used to assess English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. Data for this objective was generated using an interview schedule, observation schedule, document analysis, and a questionnaire.

4.1.1 Results from the Interview Schedule

The results revealed that gap-filling and question-and-answer were the most frequently used methods. The following are some of the teachers' verbatim responses:

> *"I prefer assessing grammar lessons by using the question-and-answer method. I use this method to gauge whether the learners have understood the concepts I am teaching. Then, at the end of the lesson, I give them written exercises. This is usually in the form of filling gaps or rewriting the sentences. But this highly depends on the topic I am teaching."* (Teacher 2)

"I use question and answer especially before beginning a new lesson. I can ask students questions about the previous lesson to assess if they had understood what they had learned. In most cases, I ask the learners to provide their responses orally." (Teacher 4)

"After teaching a grammatical structure or some new vocabulary, I give my learners a quick, short test about what has been covered. Most of the time the exercise will entail filling gaps, and rewriting exercises according to the instructions provided. These methods are easy to use because I can get time to mark many exercises." (Teacher 5)

"I occasionally call students to come in front of the class in pairs, and then give them a grammatical structure, for example, I can ask them to change a structure from direct speech into reported speech. This is just two minutes for each pair, and they can help each other. Over a period of time, I try to test all the students." (Teacher 9)

The views of the teachers above reveal that teachers of English language predominantly used question-and-answer and gap-filling methods when assessing English grammar.

4.1.2 Results from the Observation Schedule

Lesson observation was undertaken in 10 schools before the intervention process began. The findings revealed that the majority of the ESL teachers mainly used question-and-answer and gap-filling methods to assess English grammar. It was observed that the teachers used question-and-answer techniques during the lesson while gap-filling exercises were given at the end of the lesson. For instance, in lesson 8, the teacher engaged the learners in question-and-answer assessments during the lesson. The lesson objective was to identify the order of adjectives and use them correctly in sentences. It was observed that the teacher asked the whole class questions and learners responded orally as the lesson progressed. At the end of the lesson, the learners were given a gap filling exercise. Similar trends were observed in Lesson 1, Lesson 3, Lesson 4, Lesson 6, Lesson 9, and Lesson 10. It was observed that the ESL teachers used question and answer to assess grammar and gave gap filling exercises at the end of the lesson. This practice implies that ESL teachers predominantly used gap filling as well as question and answer to assess grammar.

4.1.3 Results from the Document Analysis

Students' English grammar exercise books were analysed to establish the number of grammar exercises that had been assessed by the teachers. This was achieved by analysing a minimum of five exercise books per school. The number of grammar exercises done was ascertained and the exercise was marked. The findings revealed that the marking of grammar exercise books was very minimal. The highest frequency of marked grammar exercises was observed in schools B, E, D, and F where a total of 11 grammar exercises had been given out the previous term. On the other hand, teachers in schools C

and G had marked grammar exercises only 8 times during the whole of the previous term.

The pre-test mean scores were used to establish whether there was a significant relationship between the frequency of assessment and students' achievement in grammar.

The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Marked Students' English Grammar Exercises

Group	School	Number of Students	Sampled Grammar Exercise Books (10%)	Marked Grammar Exercises	Pre-test Mean Scores
Experimental group	School B	59	6	11	13.14
	School H	53	5	9	12.32
	School E	49	5	11	12.47
	School C	55	6	8	11.78
	School J	48	5	10	12.17
Total		**264**	**27**	**49**	**12.39**
Control group	School F	51	5	11	12.51
	School D	42	4	11	12.62
	School A	54	5	9	11.98
	School G	52	5	8	11.90
	School I	46	5	10	12.26
Total		**245**	**24**	**49**	**12.24**

Source: Field data.

Table 1 shows that schools B, D, E, and F with an overall mean score of 12.69 had conducted assessments in English grammar 11 times each. Schools I and J with an overall mean score of 12.22 had conducted 10 assessments each. Schools A and H with an overall mean score of 12.15 had carried out 9 assessments each. School C and School G whose overall mean score was 11.84 had done 8 assessments each. These results show that schools that had conducted more assessments in grammar had higher mean scores than those schools that had conducted fewer grammar assessments. This implies that the frequency of assessment influenced students' achievement in English grammar. The results of the document analysis revealed that gap-filling was the most frequently used assessment method. On the contrary, other assessment methods such as composition writing, transformational exercises, cloze tests, sorting mixed-up sentences, joining sentences, completion exercises, and objective questions were rarely used.

4.1.4 Results from the Questionnaire

Students responded to the questionnaire using a five-point Likert Scale.

The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency of Using Assessment Methods during English Grammar Lessons

Assessment Method	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)	N
Gap filling	27 (5.3%)	57 (11.2%)	64 (12.6%)	96 (18.9%)	265 (52.1%)	509 (100%)
Writing compositions	87 (17.1%)	254 (49.9%)	117 (23.0%)	37 (7.3%)	14 (2.8%)	509 (100%)
Joining sentences	22 (4.3%)	56 (11.0%)	93 (18.3%)	130 (25.5%)	208 (40.9%)	509 (100%)
Cloze tests	22 (4.3%)	72 (14.1%)	109 (21.4%)	108 (21.2%)	198 (38.9%)	509 (100%)
Rewriting exercises	24 (4.7%)	42 (8.3%)	87 (17.1%)	101 (19.8%)	255 (50.1%)	509 (100%)
Question and answer	44 (8.6%)	57 (11.2%)	58 (11.4%)	86 (16.9%)	264 (51.9%)	509 (100%)
Completion exercises	43 (8.4%)	79 (15.5%)	117 (23.0%)	95 (18.7%)	175 (34.4%)	509 (100%)
Objective questions	76 (14.9%)	106 (20.8%)	120 (23.6%)	82 (16.1%)	125 (24.6%)	509 (100%)
Sorting mixed-up sentences	97 (19.1%)	119 (23.4%)	111 (21.8%)	76 (14.9%)	106 (20.8%)	509 (100%)
Transformational exercises	135 (26.5%)	104 (20.4%)	103 (20.2%)	71 (13.9%)	96 (18.9%)	509 (100%)

Source: Field data.

Table 2 shows that 265 (52.1%) students reported that gap-filling was the most frequently used method. Question and answer 264 (51.9%), rewriting exercises 255 (50.1%), joining sentences 208 (40.9%), cloze tests 198 (38.9%), completion exercises 175 (34.4%), objective questions 125 (24.6%), sorting mixed up sentences 106 (20.8%), transformational sentences 96 (18.9%), composition writing 14 (2.8%). This implies that gap-filling and question-and-answer methods were frequently used to assess English grammar.

4.2 Influence of Assessment Methods on Students' Achievement in English Grammar

The second objective examined the influence of assessment methods used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. Data was generated using the English Grammar Achievement Test.

4.2.1 Result from the English Grammar Achievement Test

A pre-test was administered to the control and experimental group before intervention.
      The results are presented in Table 3. Table 3 indicates that schools D (M = 12.62) and F (M = 12.51) whose teachers had been assessing grammar through composition writing and cloze tests had an average mean score of 12.57. School A (M = 11.98), B (M = 13.14), C (M = 11.78), E (M = 12.47), G (M = 11.90), H (M = 12.32), I (M = 12.26) and J (M = 12.17) whose teachers had not been using composition writing and cloze test had an average pre-test of 12.25.

Table 3: Pre-test Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Group

Group	School	Number of Students	Mean Score	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Experimental group	School B	59	13.14	.45451	3.49
	School H	53	12.32	.53862	3.92
	School E	49	12.47	.56175	3.93
	School C	55	11.78	.57072	4.23
	School J	48	12.17	.53787	3.73
Overall Mean		**264**	**12.39**		
Control group	School F	51	12.51	.68334	4.88
	School D	42	12.62	.60385	3.91
	School A	54	11.98	.58903	4.33
	School G	52	11.90	.43007	3.10
	School I	46	12.26	.66262	4.49
Overall Mean		**245**	**12.24**		

Source: Field data.

During the treatment period, the experimental group was assessed through cloze test and composition writing while the control group was assessed through gap filling and question and answer.

The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Overall Mean Scores Gain for Experimental and Control Group

Group	School	Number of Students	Pre-test	Std. Deviation	Number of Students	Post-test	Std Deviation	Mean score Gain
Experimental group	School B	59	13.14	3.49	59	16.34	3.90	**3.20**
	School H	53	12.32	3.92	53	16.77	2.55	**4.45**
	School E	49	12.47	3.93	49	15.24	3.84	**2.77**
	School C	55	11.78	4.23	55	15.65	3.74	**3.87**
	School J	48	12.17	3.73	48	16.10	3.12	**3.93**
Overall Mean Gain			**12.39**			**16.02**		**3.64**
Control group	School F	51	12.51	4.88	51	14.43	2.53	**1.92**
	School D	42	12.62	3.91	42	14.31	3.01	**1.69**
	School A	54	11.98	4.33	54	13.68	4.14	**1.70**
	School G	52	11.90	3.10	52	13.98	3.40	**2.08**
	School I	46	12.26	4.49	46	14.20	3.47	**1.94**
Overall Mean Gain			**12.24**			**14.12**		**1.87**

Source: Field data.

Table 4 shows that the experimental group which used cloze test and composition writing had a mean of (M = 16.02; SD = 3.51). The control group which used gap filling and question and answer had a mean of (14.12; SD = 3.33). This implied that assessing English grammar using cloze test and composition writing enhanced students' achievement in English grammar.

4.2.2 Person Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Person Product Correlation Moments Coefficient was used to test the null hypothesis:

H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between assessment methods and students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Correlation between Assessment Methods and Achievement in English Grammar

		Assessment methods	Students' achievement in grammar
Assessment methods	Pearson Correlation	1	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	509	509
Students' achievement in grammar	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	509	509

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 indicates that assessment had a statistically significant relationship of r = .643, n = 509, p = .006 with students' achievement in English grammar. This implies that the kind of assessment method employed influences students' achievement in grammar. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected given that p < 0.05.

5. Discussion of Findings

Discussion of the findings is presented as per the research objectives.

5.1 Assessment Methods Used to Assess English Grammar

The first objective investigated methods used to assess English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. The findings revealed that assessment of grammar was mostly done through the filling method and question and answer methods. The results of the document analysis revealed that gap-filling was used in all 10 schools.

Results from the observation schedule revealed that 7 schools used gap-filling and question and answer. This was corroborated by the results of the questionnaire where 265 (52.1%) students reported the use of the filling method while 264 (51.9%) reported the use of the question-and-answer method. Only 14 (2.8%) reported the use of the writing composition method. These findings are in line with those of Dutta and Bala (2012) who assert that assessment of English grammar in Indian schools mostly entailed filling in the blanks and questions and answers. The study concluded that this approach deprives learners of an opportunity to practice communication.

These findings are further supported by Larsen-Freeman (2009) and Šipošová (2019) established that the traditional approach of assessing grammar using fill-in-the-blanks did not enhance students' achievement in grammar. Such methods test grammar

knowledge, but they do not assess whether learners can use grammar correctly in spoken or written.

5.2 Influence of Assessment Methods on Students' Achievement in English Grammar

The second objective sought to examine the influence of assessment methods used on students' achievement in English grammar. The findings revealed that the assessment method used influenced students' achievement in English grammar. The results of the post-test revealed that the experimental group which used cloze test and composition writing obtained a higher mean score (M = 16.02; SD = 3.51). The control group which was assessed using gap filling and question and answer obtained a mean score of (14.12; SD = 3.33). This in essence implies that cloze test and composition writing were more effective methods of assessing English grammar.

These findings concur with those of Mashhadi and Bagheri (2015) who contend that cloze test has a positive effect on the grammatical accuracy of Iranian English as a Foreign Language learners. Thus, they highly recommended that grammar rules should be presented in meaningful cloze tests. Similarly, Sahebkheir and Assadi (2014) advocate the use of essays and cloze test as a way of improving performance in grammar.

Person Product Correlation Moments Coefficient analysis shows that there existed a statistically significant relationship between assessment methods and student' achievement in grammar (r = .643, n = 509, p = .006). Hence the hypothesis was rejected. These findings are consistent with those of Tsagari and Cheng (2016) who posit that assessment has a strong impact on academic performance. Likewise, Ugodulunwa and Okolo (2015) stated that if the formative assessment is effectively used, student's achievement would improve significantly. Furthermore, the result of the current research is consistent with the finding of Khan (2012) who highlighted that effective and well-planned assessment strategies had a great impact on students' learning because assessment provides an opportunity for teachers to place students in a situation where they exhibit their true potential. Similarly, Alvarez et al., (2014) postulate assessment has the potential to enhance the instructional process, especially for learners who face particular challenges. On his part, Sumardi (2017) reckons that assessment motivates students to learn and become more successful in their learning. Furthermore, Bayat et al., (2017) attest that assessment helps learners to retain more information and understand concepts more rapidly. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory that guided this study affirms that assessment promotes learner development by offering learners mediation.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of assessment methods used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. Based on the findings, the study concludes that teachers do not use a variety of assessment methods when assessing English grammar. Furthermore, the study concludes that assessment methods influence students' achievement in English grammar. The findings revealed that

assessing through cloze test and composition writing enhanced students' achievement in English grammar.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that teachers of English language should assess English grammar through composition writing and cloze tests. Hence, in-service courses should be facilitated through the Ministry of Education and KICD to sensitize English language teachers on the importance of assessing grammar through these methods.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author
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