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## The Use of Visual Aids in Supporting English Language Teaching in English Medium Primary Schools: A Case Study in Meru District

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study was to investigate the use of visual aids in supporting English language teaching in English medium primary schools: a case study in Meru District. The study further employed mixed method where by both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collections were used. The quantitative data were collected by using questionnaire; while observation and interview were used to collect qualitative data. The study findings on the used visual aids in English language teaching in English medium primary schools shows that majority of respondents rated often between the mean score of 2.50 to 3.49 this mean that the majority often used the visual aids in teaching English class. Also the respondents rated rarely between the average mean score of 1.50 to 2.49 in five items (5) on application of Visuals in language teaching, this results show that visuals like movies, video, power points are rarely used in English language skill teaching meaning they rarely applied visuals in English language teaching. This is really a big problem that the most important visual are scarcely used consequently it causes lack of interest amongst learners and failure in language skill development. All the interviewed administrators admitted that; firstly they have managed to allocate a reasonable number of periods to the language teacher which is not above 23 periods per week. Secondly, two school managers have managed to set aside funds each year for buying and supplying visual for language teaching and have fulfilled the goal. While three school managers have failed to fulfill the need yearly. The findings from classroom observation shows that in English language classes where visuals were used properly, pupils showed positive and good, reaction in the sense that they responded enthusiastically to the lesson. Pupils paid more attention to the lesson, understood well the lesson, participated in the class by providing different responds. The researcher recommends that: The Government of Tanzania under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training should ensure that the directors and school owners allocate budgets in their schools for seminars and training modern media and visuals technology and usage in teaching English.*

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

Domin (2007) study which was done in Cambridge University about application of visual aids in teaching English, argues that since ancient time man has always made visual representation of reality and used visual stimuli to transmit information. The evidence can be drawings on the walls of pre-historic caves, Egyptian hieroglyphs, as well as contemporary pictograms. Visual aids have been an important aspect to the English language classes over the years. To be exactly the use of visual aids for teaching and training language has been around since 1920's-1930's, consisting mainly of filmstrips, pictures, slides and passes

around objects. Jewitt (2006) did a study on the visual use on the language learning which is exposed in his Turkish online Journal of Educational Technology. His finding showed that in USA images and visual objects, visual experiences and practices are common in classroom and have a central role in how language knowledge is presented and support dialogue and interaction between learners. Linz (1961) under UNESCO did a research on the development of audio-visual education in Kenya and his research findings commented that the visual are important in English language because their value is appraised according to their facility in assisting teachers to teach children and in assisting children to learn. Calder (2008) conducted a case study on the selection and evaluation of audio-visual media to supporting language learners in South Africa. The research findings indicated that, visual-media has important role in supporting English language teaching because they stimulate cognitive skills including solving critical thinking. According to the United Republic of Tanzania under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2010), a research was done on Pedagogy and leadership in Tanzanian primary school, the finding showed that, visuals when properly used in language teaching brings about learners communicative competence. But in Tanzania visual usage face a lot of obstacles due to the following reasons; Most of parents are not educated and do not value education, they are preoccupied with making ends meet, Many of pupils come to school while hungry, HIV/AIDS impacts on the school and community in terms of absenteeism of children who have to look on sick relatives, students do not study after going home. Also there are challenges such as the lack of teaching materials, not enough textbooks and visual aids also it is challenging to teach a wide range of pupil's abilities. Domin (2007) in her research done in UK in Cambridge University on Application of Visuals in English Teaching; asserts that; today we live in highly visual world, dominated by visual messages. In most public places all over the world we can find information in the form of words and pictures combined. As language independent we speak. Pictures are around us, they provide us with information, arouse our interest, and are enjoyable. They possess all important features of effective teaching aid. Up to the 20th century an interest in visuals was an interest in visual representation which was primarily associated with language teaching. (Jewitt, 2006) Joshi (1995), in his study written on an article entitled; the role of Visual Communication in Teaching English. The Process of Education, which was done in Pakistan; argues that, visual aids are used to increase the effectiveness of classroom teaching of English as a second language. The use of visual aids is supported with various theories on language teaching, but this study done is basing on communicative language Teaching (CLT). This is one of the popular language approaches in the present time, which aim at practical use of language in everyday communication. The approach emphasizes on the use of authentic materials in language teaching to simplify teaching and bring about effectiveness in teaching and learning process of English. This study examined the valuable aspects of the use of visual aids in the English language classroom. The research and analysis focused on the commonly used visuals materials that benefited by language classrooms in primary schools as have studied over the years.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was expected to have the following contributions:-

First, it was expected that the outcome of this study would to provide basic input and information to policy makers on areas to address the use of visual to best educational improvement in the country

Second, the outcome of the study would provide input and information's to use of visual in their curriculum designed to enhance language teaching

Third, to head of schools: the outcome of the study would encourage them to supply visual aids for teachers to use them in language teaching and learning process.

Forth, to language teachers: the study findings would motivate them to consider the value of visual media and get inputs on how they can use visuals to make language teaching dynamic.

Fifth, the study findings would encourage learners and parents to provide positive challenges to teachers on use of visual media in language teaching, parents would be reinforced to buy visuals for their children. Learners would value, keep also use visuals being supplied by the school and parents.

Lastly, to business people, the study findings and input would help them to consider the government directive on purchasing -and selling the visuals aids materials at a manageable price.

### **The Scope of the Study**

The study was delimited to five English medium primary schools owned by private sectors which are at Meru District in Arusha. It was further restricted on use of Visual aid or visual media in English language teaching in those primary school from three wards of this district.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Lee and Van Pattern (2003), in their case study in Yemen public schools on An Exploration of English Language Teaching Pedagogy, they explained that, the use of visual aids in English language is well

supported by the “Communicative language Teaching theory approach” (CLT). This theory approach has its root in 1980s being found by Dell Hymes of Europe and other linguists of United States of America, it is referred to as the notional or functional approach. It emphasized the teacher on the knowledge systematic and integrity which is a teacher centered, knowledge centered from medieval “scholastic” teaching method. It advocates language acquisition through people interaction hence learning by doing. The approach is also learner –centered, experience centered and focuses on communicative proficiency.

According to Snow (2001) suggests the visual materials use content – based goes from gestures and anatomies to pictures, photographs and slides. These aids help to make the activities more motivating and meaningful for the students. Krashen and Terrell (2000), says, students needs comprehensible input for both language acquisition and language learning. Lee and Van Patten, (2003) describes the introduction of comprehensible input through the use of familiar themes, visual acts, gestures games, drawing, total physical response. The technological resource for comprehensible input have been growing from Mp3 to iPods, internet websites and mobile phones (Zhao, 2005)

Domin (2007) explains that, our pupils expect their English lesson to be visual. Language they experience outside the classroom is strictly, connected with images, colors, and sounds young children, who are not very proficient in writing or reading, learn much about the world relying on various stimuli. Their understanding comes through hands, eyes and ears, but sight is the students are; the more they need perceptual stimulation to understand and memorized new.

### **Empirical Literature**

#### **The Impact of Media on Children**

Saleem (2013), in his study done in New Delhi in India on the impact of Media on children found that, visual aids in communicative language teaching are vital and popular in Primary English lessons. The younger the pupil the more they need perceptual stimulation to help their understanding and retain their memory. Moreover English is the second language; more difficulties arise when conveying the knowledge to the young pupils. Hence primary English teachers need to relay more on visual aids in motivating pupil’s interest, encouraging them to speak practically, in stimulating their participation in the lesson.

Vergheze, (2005) did a study on Modern Methods of English Teaching in India, comments that, early primary pupils can be taught English through pictures, which are objects that pupils are familiar with visual aids help better teaching and a variety of teaching aids brought about stimulus variation that is important to sustain student’s attention.

#### **Video**

Cakir (2006), did a study in Kink kale University of Turkey, on The use of Video as Audio visual material in FLT classroom, explained that, visual aid in foreign language teaching classroom it has an emphasis on communicative techniques and is of great help for foreign language teachers in stimulating and facilitating the target language. Also the idea of using video in language class is ideal to facilitate speaking and presentation skills. He stated “Active viewing increases the student’s enjoyment and satisfaction and focuses their attention on the main idea of the video attention.

Cakir (2006) reported that the use of video in language teaching ensures authentic language input to the learners. Moreover, using context related videos helps to conceptualize the ideas and get in depth thought on that topic. Besides, learners can concentrate on the use of contextual language in the video along with non-verbal features of language that helps to have better understanding of the target language use.

#### **Television and Movies Programs**

Close (2004) in the study on Television and Early Language Development, which was done in American Academy Primary Schools, the study findings showed that: There is promising evidence that children are developing the capacity of explanatory talk, and knowledge of narrative and storytelling, which are skills associated with television viewing. The researcher argues that, there is another evidence that language learning from TV depend on: age of a child, the linguistic maturity of a child, the age appropriateness of the content, the quality of content viewed, the amount of TV viewed and the involvement of parents during viewing

#### **Projectors and Power Point**

Mutar (2009) in his study on the advantages of using power point slides in the classroom to give lecture, that it help the teacher to deliver their lectures in dynamic ways which becomes interesting to the learners. Mamun (2014) argues that the data shows that one of the very useful visual aids for the language teachers is power point presentation. Using power point slides, teachers can visualize their lecture which make the class live. Learners can take notes taking help from the slides if they miss any part of the lecture. Besides, it helps the teachers to draw the attention of the learners. For the teachers this is the effective tool for language teaching in diverse ways.

**Pictures**

Mamun (2014) did a research in Dhaka on; Effectiveness of Audio-visual in language teaching in Tertiary level explained that using different relevant pictures in language classrooms makes the class interesting and interactive. It helps the teacher to visualize the context of the classrooms, it makes learners more attentive and engaged in tasks, introduces any topic to the learners, makes the lesson more real and contextualized, and learners get an overview of the lesson and can generate ideas better. Also it improves learners’ comprehension ability.

Harmer, (2001) claims that;” teachers have always used pictures or graphics whether drawn, taken from books new papers and magazines, or photographs- to facilitate learners.” Harmer (2001) adds that pictures can illustrate the meaning more directly and quickly without a verbal explanation. Moreover, pictures can clarify some difficult complicated items, and stress very important points. What is more they act down unnecessary teacher talking time when they don’t use pictures as a source of information .Here students can use all kinds of maps plans, brochures, theatre guides and other real objects to write for example how to get to a certain place, to plan holidays or to invite somebody to the theatre.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

The study employed mixed method where by both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collections were used. Creswell (2012) argues that quantitative method is used to investigate factors that influence the outcome as well as in a situation where there is a need for understanding the best predictor of outcome. Therefore in this study, the quantitative data were collected by using questionnaire; while observation and interview were used to collect qualitative data. The nature of the study and kind of data to be obtained demands this approach to use instruments which are interview, observation and questionnaire. A researcher used a case study to carry out this research in order to achieve the objective of this study.

**Population Sampling**

The selection of population to be employed as respondents based on the sampling types which are random used on selection of administrators, teachers and observation of classroom teaching. The researcher selected 50 respondents in five private English medium primary schools to participate in this study.

**Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were used in this research with a belief that is effective in collecting massive information in short time; as how they were administered by a research the questioners were prepared from the existing literature to gather information from. They were distributed to thirty five English teachers of selected English medium primary schools.

**Interview**

Through interview, the researcher gathered data on the use of visual aids in supporting English language teaching in English medium primary schools. According to Maxwell (2005), interview is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone’s perspective.

**Observational**

The researcher observed English Teachers in some in English classes on how visuals are used in English language teaching and collected data which were useful in this study. Gall et al, (2007) says, observation provides rich data sources that offer in-depth explanation of the case.

**PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

**The Used Visual Aids in English Language Teaching in English Medium Primary Schools**

Nine items were used to determine the visual aids used in English language teaching in English medium primary schools under the following interpretations:

**Table 1: The Used Visual Aids in English Language Teaching**

	Means Score	Interpretation
	3.50-4.00	Always
	2.50-3.49	Often
	1.50-2.49	Rarely
	1.00-1.49	Never

  

SN	ITEM	MEAN	SD	INTERP.
1	I use videos related to the topic to enhance Pupils communicative skills.	3.0000	.87447	Often

2	The power point is used in my English language classroom to make the class alive.	3.0857	1.19734	Often
3	I use television to show movies programs for teaching composition such as sentence making.	2.8571	.91210	Often
4	The photographs are used in my English language class to teach various figures of speech such as nouns.	2.0294	1.08670	Rarely
5	I use power point in my class presentation to draw attention of the learners.	3.0909	1.12815	Often
6	I use computer Microsoft word programs to teach various English language figures of speech.	2.9697	.91804	Often
7	I use real objects for teaching various parts of English grammar.	1.2857	.51856	Never
8	I use pictures in my lessons to support my explanations.	1.3939	.55562	Never
9	In my English language class, I use internet search engines for searching more knowledge on some language terms.	2.8286	1.97761	Often

Table 1: the findings in item number one shows the average mean scores of 3.0000 which represent the often used visuals related to the topic to enhance Pupils communicative skills in English language teaching. Therefore the often used visuals in five selected schools were videos, PowerPoint, television, computer and internet. This indicates that by use of visual aids in a classroom, the teacher can teach language making the class live and interesting. Different visuals bring variation in the classroom teaching which draw attention of the learners towards the lessons. Moreover visuals are valuable because, they increase teachers and students interest to the subject matter. Majority of respondents rated often the average mean score between 2.50 to 3.49 for items number two up to item number nine except items number four, seven and eight, this mean that the majority of the respondents often used the visual aids in teaching English class. The responded rated rarely for item number four with an average mean score of 2.0294 this mean that the respondents are rarely used photographs in English language class to teach various figures of speech such as nouns. Then the results of respondents who rated never in items seven and eight with the average mean score of 1.2857 and 1.3939 consequently indicted that real objects and pictures were never used. Smith (1999) supports the use of realia in language teaching that they are authentic actual objects and items which are brought into a class as aids to be used in teaching where they create memorable experience for your learners in which they can connect with the words through the use of senses.

**Visual Aids Application in Supporting English Language Skill Teaching in English Medium Primary Schools**

Eleven items were used to determine application of visual aids in supporting English language skills teaching in English medium primary schools under the following interpretations:

**Table 2: The Application on Visuals in Language Skill Teaching**

		Means Score	Interpretation		
		3.50-4.00	Always		
		2.50-3.49	Often		
		1.50-2.49	Rarely		
		1.00-1.49	Never		
SN	ITEM	MEAN	SD	INTERP.	
1	Visuals are used in my English language classes to teach language skills such as speaking, reading, writing and listening.	1.6286	.84316	Rarely	
2	Television viewing is used to enhance language development also encourage reading skills.	2.0571	.90563	Often	
3	Video is helpful in teaching speaking skills.	1.6571	.87255	Rarely	
4	Video can also be used to teach listening skills.	1.7143	.89349	Rarely	
5	When visuals like power points are used, creates reading interest among learners.	1.6286	1.03144	Rarely	
6	When different relevant pictures are used in English language teaching, makes the class interactive.	1.1714	.56806	Never	

7	Movies viewing in English class enhance teaching of writing skills.	1.8286	.82197	Rarely
8	The use of visual aids in English language classroom is highly beneficial for most of the learners in skill learning.	1.3714	.77024	Never
9	Visuals when used in English language class help learners to focus their attention on the topic.	1.2000	.40584	Never
10	The use of visuals motivates learner's participation in class.	1.1429	.35504	Never
11	The use of visual aid helps to clarify the message in English language teaching.	1.2353	.60597	Never

Table 2; indicates the findings about the application of Visual aids in English language skill teaching. The results show that respondents rated often with the average mean scores of 2.0571 agreed that television as a visual aid is often used to enhance language development and reading skills. The respondents rated rarely with the average mean score between 1.50 to 2.49 in five (5) items on application of Visuals in language teaching, they agreed that that visuals like movies, video, power points are rarely used in English language skill teaching. This is really a big problem that the most important visual are scarcely used consequently it causes lack of interest amongst learners and failure in language skill development. Moreover the results of respondents who rated never with the average mean score between 1.00 to 1.49 to the other remaining five items that those visuals never support language skills teaching, this mean that they disagreed that visuals never support language skills teaching. These findings indicates that language teaching faces difficulties because the teacher fails to make the class interactive, help learners focus on the topic, motivating learners participation and clarifying the lesson's message. Teachers also believe that when teaching involves visuals create the content more interesting which draw the awareness of the learners, makes the class interactive. It gives the presenter self-confidence and can recover anxiety, makes the presentation vigorous by using different colorful visuals and examples.

**Finding From the Head Teacher Interview**

Five head teachers of the selected English medium primary schools were interviewed whether visuals are available and used in their schools by their language teachers. The interview had questions which based on the following aspects.

**The Role of the School Administration**

All the interviewed administrators admitted that; firstly they have managed to allocate a reasonable number of periods to the language teacher which is not above 23 periods per week. Secondly, two school managers have managed to set aside funds each year for buying and supplying visual for language teaching and have fulfilled the goal. While three school managers have failed to fulfill the need yearly. Finally, the administrators have made some of the school environment favorer the use of modern technology. However this is real because all five schools have computer labs with working computers, working Televisions. The problems in these schools is that not all classes are having sockets for electronic devises connections, two schools are lacking projectors for PowerPoint projection of language slides.

**The Support of Education Curriculum on Visual Aids Usage in Language Teaching**

Each school has the Syllabi and the curriculum which promote the use of visuals in language teaching. However it has some short comings:

Firstly, the English language syllabus has so many concepts to be covered per year for each class. Secondly, the curriculum is examination oriented due to the fact that there are national examinations in standard four and standard seven; as a result teachers are busy engaged in completing the syllabus than to create visuals to be used in their classes. Most of the time is consumed on preparing notes and writing them on the chalk boards. Therefore teachers mostly prepared pupils to pass in the exams than to understand the lesson.

Finally the education curriculum sets its number of periods for each level of primary learners, yet a teacher has to find his/her other time out for the time allocated to prepare visuals for the next class.

**Finding From the Class Observation**

**Case study – School A**

It was an English language period for class three pupils. The visual aids that were used in a class were related to the objectives of the lesson.

The topic of the lesson was “Adjectives of comparing” the objectives were; the learners should be able to compare two different objects, and to be able to change various adjectives from comparatives to superlatives. In the class the teacher used pupils with different height, body size, skin color, and also

different objects like fruits i.e. Banana, orange, avocado etc. were compared. The level of language was the same as the proficient level of pupils.

The pupils reacted well to the lesson because they were happy, enjoyed the lesson, were active, participated well by composing sentences by use of adjective.

#### **Case study – School B**

One of the classes, the teacher used numbers in teaching how to count numbers. Therefore the teacher wrote number one to ten on the chalk board.

The teacher asked one student after another to read, then pupils were asked to count from one to ten, finally numbers on the chalk board were rubbed and pupils were asked to write in the exercise books the taught numbers from one to ten. Thus there was the combination of both four language skills. The class was effective and interesting and helped the teacher to involve pupils in the lesson.

#### **Case study – School C**

In the other class the teacher used the games to teach class two the topic of Arts development and sports. The class had 22 pupils. The games which were used involved, “who sits first,” Pebble game” and the “ready game” which involve throwers and the runner, The pupils participated in the games, then answered questions asked by the teacher verbally and wrote them as they sat in groups to discuss the steps of various games.

Thus they practiced listening, speaking, reading and writing. So the class was successful enough to draw the attention of the pupils. Therefore visuals were used to teach different language skills by the language teachers.

#### **Pupils Reaction on the Visual Usage in English Language Class**

In English language classes where visuals were used properly, pupils showed positive and good, reaction in the sense that they responded enthusiastically to the lesson. Pupils paid more attention to the lesson, understood well the lesson, participated in the class by providing different responds. For instance in the adjective class, pupils eagerly wanted to participate the lesson by each rising up the hand for answering questions, were ready to be compared. (Researcher observation)

### **SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **Summary of the Findings**

The study findings on **the used visual aids in English language teaching in English medium primary schools shows that** majority of respondents rated often with the average mean score between 2.50 to 3.49 this mean that the majority often used the visual aids in teaching English class. The respondents rated rarely with the average mean score between 1.50 to 2.49 in five items (5) on application of Visuals in language teaching, this results show that visuals like movies, video, power points are rarely used in English language skill teaching. This is really a big problem that the most important visual are scarcely used consequently it causes lack of interest amongst learners and failure in language skill development.

All the interviewed administrators admitted that; firstly they have managed to allocate a reasonable number of periods to the language teacher which is not above 23 periods per week. Secondly, two school managers have managed to set aside funds each year for buying and supplying visual for language teaching and have fulfilled the goal. While three school managers have failed to fulfill the need yearly.

The findings from classroom observation shows that in English language classes where visuals were used properly, pupils showed positive and good, reaction in the sense that they responded enthusiastically to the lesson. Pupils paid more attention to the lesson, understood well the lesson, participated in the class by providing different responds.

#### **CONCLUSION**

We are living today in a rich and sophisticated visual environment. As teachers we must face to the fact that this radically changes our pupil's expectations.

It is becoming more and more difficult to motivate a class with just chalk or a textbook only. Pupils know that language lives in sound and color, because they experience it every day outside the classroom. We as the English language teacher we need to take up this challenge and recognize the importance of teaching aids in stimulating our pupils in the classroom.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Government of Tanzania under the Ministry of Education should ensure that the directors and school owners allocate budgets in their schools for seminars and training on modern media and visuals technology and usage in teaching English.
2. Teachers especially in primary schools should be encouraged to make themselves and use as many teaching learning media aids to motivate and make the teaching event conducive to learning.

3. The Head of schools and School academic masters should make sure all English teachers incorporate media aids in their daily lesson plans.

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