TEACHER-RELATED FACTORS AND ERRORS PRESCHOOL CHILDREN MAKE IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN MURANG'A COUNTY SCHOOLS

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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This projects has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This   work is dedicated to my parents Mr.   And Mrs.   Muchau, without whose caring

and support it would not have been possible, and for passing on a love of reading and

respect for education.

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First, I would like to thank my parents and my two siblings for the love and support they have provided throughout my entire life. Second, I would like to thank Dr. H. Inyega, your assistance is greatly appreciated. Also my gratitude goes to the entire department of Educational communications and technology, for their hard work and dedication.

ABSTRACT

Teachers play a significant role in pupils' academic achievement in English subject. This implies that the effect of their teaching can be reflected in pupils' performance and behavior. The errors they make and the methods of teaching they employ can also be reflected through pupils. The present study sought to examine teacher-related factors and errors children make as they learn English language in preschools in Murang'a County. The study was guided by the following research objectives: To find out how the teacher's instructional methods influence the errors that pre-school children make as they learn English; to investigate the influence of the teacher's errors on errors pre- school children make as they learn English, to; examine how the teacher's attitude towards English influences errors pre- school children make as they learn English; and to determine whether the teacher's professional training influences errors pre -school children make as they learn English. The study employed a survey research design consisting of 100 pre-schools, teachers and pupils in Murang'a County. Data were collected through questionnaires for teachers and observation schedule for children. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22.0). Results were presented using both descriptive statistics and narrative techniques. The study found that teachers' professional training and errors they made influenced pupils' errors in English to a very great extent. It was also revealed that teachers' instructional methods as well as their attitude towards the subject were key to the errors made by children as they learnt English. The study recommended that in order for the subject to improved, there is need for learning institutions, especially the pre-school sector, to embrace teacher in-service training as well as organizing for English seminars and workshops. It was also recommended that there is need for teachers to encourage themselves and actively take part in organized seminars.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

English is an international language spoken nearly all over the world. It is considered one of the most important means of communication. By learning English, a wide door is opened for learners to know a lot about the world around them and it is a good chance for exchanging experiences in different aspects of life, social, educational, cultural and political (UNESCO, 2009) Acquiring English as a second language is a challenge for people in different continents of the world. Duly, educational curricula in different parts of the world have adopted many systems for schools in different stages to improve learners' abilities. Consequently, most teachers of English like to master English in their schools. They feel that a good teacher is an artist and therefore teacher characteristics are viewed as important in effective teaching of English.

Studies done in Kenya show that students leave school with little competence in English language (Maina, 1991; Nyamasyo, 1992) However, the characteristics of teachers of these learners who have acquired and learnt the language in a non-native speaking environment (Kenya) has not been studied.

The fact that the language teacher is a non-native speaker who has been taught and trained by non-native users of English makes the task of teaching English, especially speech skills, a very difficult one; indeed a night-mare. For example, in the Kenya Institute of Education's Handbook (1987) the English secondary school teacher is instructed and expected to provide the students with skills for distinguishing the

pronunciation of particular English vowels. A list of 20 Received Pronunciation (RP) vowels is provided and the teacher is informed that 'the confusion of vowels occurs with practically all ethnic groups. The methods suggested for teaching pronunciation assume that the teacher is (or can be) a speaker of the model variety of English and is therefore, capable of 'watching out'. Most teachers faced with this impossible task leave out the pronunciation drill exercises to the disadvantage of the student. This results to learners having a lot of errors in English.

An example of this linkage not working is the writing lesson (not uncommon in primary schools according to the literature) in which the teacher stresses to the children that the outcome should be "an exciting story, with plenty of action and good ideas" but then proceeds in her reactions to their writing to emphasize exclusively the need for accuracy in spelling and presentation without reference to the declared criteria of excitement, action and good ideas. Most children learn very quickly to put their efforts into what their teacher really wants from the writing, but it was hypothesized that this dissonance between a teacher's reported beliefs about what s/he was aiming for in teaching and the real criteria for the task was less than effective in terms of children's progress. Beliefs (or rhetoric) and reality which were consonant were more likely, to promote such progress (Njoroge, 1996)

There is evidence that effective teachers of other subjects tend to possess a well-developed knowledge base in those subjects. Such a knowledge base appears to consist of knowledge about content, knowledge about children and their learning and knowledge about how to teach the subject effectively. It had not yet, however, been established that effective teachers of literacy were in a similar position with regard to their 'subject'. We

hypothesized that there would be a link between effective teaching of literacy and subject knowledge.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Learners of English language have a tendency to be good listeners, readers, speakers and writers in English. These learners need careful attention towards these skills. However, the general command of learners' language is reported to be poor in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The intensity of teachers' creativity, attitude and commitment are considered as key factors in the success of the current educational reform agenda, as it heavily influences the teachers' willingness to engage in co-operative, reflective and critical practice to develop learners' proficiency or performance in English language.

Language learners are prone to making numerous errors. This is worrying because good performance in English in Kenya and the world enhances a learner's choice of prestigious careers especially those that strictly consider English as a special requirement.

Much of the available research into the spoken English language in Kenya has concentrated on code switching (Nthiga, 2003), analysis of errors in learners' language at different educational levels (Nyamasyo, 1994), and issues in English language teaching methodologies (Gathumbi, 1995). However, hardly any of these approaches consider the influence of teacher-related factors on the errors learners make in English language in Kenya.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the influence of teacher-characteristics in the errors children make as they learn English language.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study outlined several objectives that are somewhat related to each other;

1. To find out how the teacher's instructional methods influences the errors that pre -school children make as they learn English.

2. To investigate the influence of the teacher's errors on errors that pre- school children make as they learn English.

3. To examine how the teacher's attitude towards English influences errors pre-school children make as they learn English.

4. To determine whether the teacher's professional training influences errors pre -school children make as they learn English.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How does the teacher's instructional method influence the errors that pre-school children make as they learn English?

2. What influence do the errors of the teacher have on errors that pre-school children make as they learn English?

3. How does the teacher's attitude towards English affect errors that pre-school children make as they learn English?

4. What effect does the teacher's professional training have on errors that pre-school children make as they learn English?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will help improve the practice of teaching English language as the findings will help teachers plan their lessons properly to achieve the goals that lead to proper acquisition of the English language. The study will help reduce the number of errors committed by pre-school children as they learn the English language. Quality assurance and standards officers of English language will find some help to simplify their methods in inspecting English language. It is hoped that curriculum developers will benefit much of the pupils' errors and that would reflect on designing creative methods which will help reduce pupils' errors.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study is restricted to pre-schools and lower primary children and their teachers as learn and teach English respectively. This made the research limited in its representativeness thus it was difficult to get external validity for a more conclusive verdict. Lack of cooperation was one of the challenges that was faced during data collection. Teachers were busy and were not willing to help in filling the questionnaires. However, the researcher asked them politely to cooperate and the information provided was meant for academic purposes only.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was done exclusively in schools located in Murang'a County. Its main focus was on how teacher-related factors directly affected the errors pre-school children made in English. The scope of the study thus focused on pre-school learners' progress in English language. The study delimited itself to English language.

1.9 Basic Assumptions

The study assumed that children make errors while learning and that these errors are influenced by the teacher and errors are bound to have effect on the process of second language acquisition.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Attitude   Manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, especially of the mind.

Errors   Something that is not correct, a wrong action or statement or a mistake made by a person.

Language   The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

Learning   The acquisition of knowledge or skills through experience, study, or by being taught.

1.11 Organization of Study

This study is organized in five chapters. Chapter one discusses background to the study, introduces the problem statement and purpose of the study. The chapter outlines research objectives and questions and significance of the study. The chapter ends with basic assumptions of the study, limitation and delimitations of the study and organization of the study. Chapter two presents a review of related literature associated with the problem addressed in this this study. It outlines also the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. Chapter three then presents the research methodology. Specifically the chapter discusses research design, target population, sampling and sampling techniques as well as instruments for data collection and procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter four contains analysis of data and presentation of the results. Chapter five offers a summary and discussion of research findings, implications of the study, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0   Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature related to this study. It provides information concerning errors in English language learning process. Previous studies done in the area of errors in English and the place of teacher characteristics and factors in learning of English in general are discussed as well.

2.1 Errors Children Make While Learning English Language

English is used as a second language for most people in the world. According to UNESCO (2009) English leads world languages as far as communication and publication is concerned. Freeman and Long (1991) observe that English has become the international language for business and commerce, science and technology and international relations and diplomacy. It is therefore important that English is learnt so that people can fit well in the international community.

In Kenya the importance of English as a medium of instruction in schools goes way back to the colonial period. According to Oluoch (1982), the Phelps Stoke Commission of 1924 suggested that Kiswahili and other local languages be used as languages of instruction in schools. According to Ellis (1994) study of a language, which learners give an output of in all their development stages, is the beginning point of L2 acquisition. The acquisition process identification occurs in several ways, which include the study of the learners' pragmatic features, errors portrayed, variability, and various types of development patterns.

The errors identified are classified as developmental errors (errors associated with L1 acquisition) and interference errors. In the course of learning language, children often go through phases in which they make predictable errors. When children learn to talk, they often make language mistakes. Some common mistakes include:

Logical missteps- Children often make logical missteps when they follow the English language rules they have learned, such as saying "mouses" instead of "mice" or "goed" instead of "went."

Mispronouncing words- Many children between the ages of 1 and 3 years mispronounce words. For example, they may say "aminal" for "animal" or "hostibal" for "hospital."

Using incorrect letter sounds- For example, children between the ages of 2 and 3 years often say the sound for the letter "r" as a "w" (they say "wabbit" instead of "rabbit"), and the letter "d" for "t" (they say "dat" instead of "that"). They also may use the sound for the letter "t" for any other sound they have trouble with.

Having difficulty saying certain letter sounds- When children begin to talk, they often have problems saying the sounds for certain letters. Children between the ages of 2 and 5 years may have problems saying the letters "m," "p," "b," "w," and "h." Even some 6- and 7-year-olds have problems saying the sounds for the letters "sh," "l," "th," and "r." For example, English speaking preschoolers often say "mouses" where their parents and older siblings would say "mice".

Corder (1970) introduced the distinction between errors and mistakes. This distinction directed the attention of researchers of second language acquisition to competence errors and provided for a more concentrated framework. Thus, in the 1970s researchers started examining learners' competence errors and tried to explain them. Studies such as

Richards' "A non-contrastive approach to error analysis" (1971), where he identifies sources of competence errors; L1 transfer results in interference errors; incorrect (incomplete or over-generalized) application of language rules results in intra- lingual errors; construction of faulty hypotheses in L2 results in developmental errors.

Not all researchers have agreed with the above distinction, such as Dulay and Burt (1974) who proposed the following three categories of errors: developmental, interference and unique. Stenson (1974) proposed another category, that of induced errors, which result from incorrect instruction of the language. As with most research methods, error analysis has weaknesses (such as in methodology), but these do not diminish its importance in SLA research; this is why linguists such as Taylor (1986) reminded researchers of its importance and suggested ways to overcome these weaknesses.

As mentioned previously, Corder (1970) noted to whom (or in which areas) the study of errors would be significant: to teachers, to researchers and to learners. In addition to studies concentrating on error categorization and analysis, various studies concentrated on these three different areas. In other words, research was conducted not only in order to understand errors per se, but also in order to use what is learned from error analysis and apply it to improve language competence.

Such studies include Kroll and Schafer's "Error-Analysis and the Teaching of Composition", where the authors demonstrate how error analysis can be used to improve writing skills. They analyze possible sources of error in non-native-English writers, and attempt to provide a process approach to writing where the error analysis can help achieve better writing skills.

Because these errors are systematic, and because they are usually not explicitly corrected, it has been argued that children could never learn to make the transition to adult language based on experience alone. Accordingly, it is often claimed that learning even simple aspects of grammar is logically impossible in the absence of innate constraints on what is taught (Baker, 1979).

2.1.1 Correction of Errors

Freiermuth (1997) claims that when a child creates language (for example, when he tries to express an idea by using a linguistic form he has not yet acquired), he will most likely make errors; correcting these errors will be ineffective because the learner is not aware of them. Thus, error correction would result in the acquisition of the correct form only if the learner has been previously exposed to that particular language form.

As regards the seriousness criterion, Freiermuth (1997) claims that the teacher must determine the gravity of an error before deciding whether he should correct it or not. Here Freiermuth sets a criterion which agrees with that of Hagège's: "the error, he states, must impede communication before it should be considered an error that necessitates correction." But what constitutes a serious error? Which errors are those which should not be corrected? As an example of non-serious errors, Freiermuth mentions those errors which occur due to learners' nervousness in the classroom, due to their stress or the pressure of having to produce accurately a linguistic form in the L2.

These errors can occur even with familiar structures; in that case, they are not of serious nature and are similar to what Corder (1970) called "mistakes". Here again we see Corder's influence in error analysis, and in particular in the distinction between errors and mistakes. Freiermuth (1997) goes on to suggest a hierarchy of errors (according to

seriousness) to help teachers decide which errors should be corrected: "Errors that significantly impair communication [are] at the top of the list, followed by errors that occur frequently, errors that reflect misunderstanding or incomplete acquisition of the current classroom focus, and errors that have a highly stigmatizing effect on the listeners." He also clarifies what can cause stigmatization: profound pronunciation errors, or errors of familiar forms.

A different approach to error correction was suggested by Porte (1993), who stressed the importance of self-correction. Porte refers to Corder's (1970) distinction of errors and mistakes and points out that many students do not know the difference. It is important, Porte notes, that students know how to identify an error in order to avoid it in the future. She agrees with Corder that it is more efficient for learners to correct themselves than be corrected by the teacher, and goes on to suggest a four-step approach for self-correction. This approach consists of questions that the teacher provides to students. After writing an essay, students should read it four times, each time trying to answer the questions included in each of the four steps. Thus, in each re-reading task (each step) they concentrate on a different aspect of their essay. In brief, the first task asks them to highlight the verbs and check the tenses; in the second task students concentrate on prepositions; the third task requires them to concentrate on nouns (spelling, agreement between subject and verb); finally in the fourth task students should try to correct potential personal mistakes. Porte also offers some clarification of what is meant by personal mistakes, in order to help the students identify them.

2.2 Teaching Method

Instructional methods can be teacher-centered, learner-centered or mixed approach. Quite often, teachers prefer methods that make their work easier based on their beliefs, personal preferences and norms of their disciplines (Watson, 2003). In this regard, some teachers believe that lessons should be teacher-centered, where the teacher is the expert and the authority in presenting information (Ahmad& Aziz, 2009). Nevertheless, teacher-centered methods are associated with inadequate stimulation of students' innovative capacities, intellectual thinking, and memorization, cramming of facts, poor knowledge retention and high dependency among learners (Adeyemi, 2008).

English teachers need to be creative in their teaching method because this component provides something extra from creative performance (Amabile, 1996). Creative thinking depends on the personal characteristics which relate to the independence, self-discipline, orientation towards risk-taking, tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance in the face of frustration and a relative lack of concern for social approval (Barron, 1988). On the other hand, creative skills can be raised by the learning and practice techniques to improve and develop the teachers' cognitive flexibility and intellectual independence. So, to make the lesson interesting; activities are one of the techniques for climate and schema for creative thinking in most classrooms.

It is said that questioning and answering are the most general ways of creating opportunities for teacher-student interaction. "The classroom question and answer discourse serves the instructive and exploratory functions in addition to the communicative and interpersonal functions" (Fu, 2008). For English teachers, questioning is a critical skill because questions can elicit students' responses and then

pushes further interaction. In other words, teachers encourage students to participate in classroom activities by asking them questions, and get some feedback on whether the students know well about what they've learned from their answers.

Raising questions can draw the students' attention, arouse their enthusiasm of participation, offer opportunities of practice, and improve their learning. It is obvious that open questions and referential questions provide students with more opportunities to use the knowledge that they have already mastered so as to improve their communicative ability. Therefore, English teachers should pay attention to their ways of questioning so as to get better teaching effect.

English learning, students will be willing to become involved in classroom activities. However, English teachers' classroom English is not always helpful to encourage students' cooperation and participation. Some rigid and monotone English classrooms can neither attract students' interests nor get students involved in class activities, which will not be beneficial for their English learning. For example, some English teachers are accustomed to using the same praising words which they've used for numerous times. As a consequence, students will get bored with such classroom English soon and lose enthusiasm gradually.

2.3 Teachers' Errors in English

The assumption in Kenya is that at all the school levels, the teachers, who are the learners' main linguistic models, have an excellent command of this yardstick of correctness and appropriateness with regard to pronunciation, grammar and lexis and that such teachers can teach the said variety. This assumption presupposes that teachers in

Kenya will use similar linguistic forms to those that a prestigious British standard speaker uses in England despite their regional and socio-cultural differences (Muthwii & Kioko, 2004). But is this indeed the case?

Studies in second language learning note that a teacher's language use will in a great way influence the quality of the learner's language and will have a bearing on the learner's linguistic competence (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989; Ellis, 2000). This then justifies research that sets out to discover whether the teachers of English in Kenyan primary schools present to their learners' forms that are similar to RP's, the model upon which Kenya national English examinations and the English language syllabus are based. If their English varies from the norm, then itis important to discuss the implications the emerging patterns have for pedagogy in Kenya. Determination of the exact model that learners are presented with in the classroom is paramount if achievement of quality education by learners is to be realized.

2.4 Teachers' Attitude towards English

Attitude refers to the way that one thinks and feels about somebody or something. "The teacher needs to be aware that everyone has both positive and negative attitudes" (Brown, 2001). If English teachers present their classes in an attractive way, students will adjust themselves to positive attitudes; conversely they will hold negative attitudes towards English. "Second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation and in all likelihood, because of decreased input and interaction, to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency" (Brown, 2001).

Perry and Howard (1999) argue that the pedagogy used in the classroom is determined by the philosophies the teacher holds about English. That is to say, the teacher's belief about English has great impact on the teaching of English and learning of English in the classroom. Cobb (1996) argues that teacher beliefs about English and the learning of English impinge on students' beliefs and goals within the subject area. This shows that teacher beliefs and attitude about English largely shapes the pedagogy they use hence the response they obtain from their students.

There are many opinions and suggestions about the influence of teachers' creativity, attitude and commitment on students' proficiency of the English Language. Teachers' creativity can help students to increase their level of thinking and teachers' communication with students.

Teachers' attitude or commitment towards work is very important to encourage the students to learn. Teachers' commitment towards work becomes visible.

An Investigation of Teachers' and Students' Beliefs on Language Acquisition from structures, processes, and ideas which are in the mind at birth, rather than from the environment, and that these are responsible for the basic structure of language and how it is learned" (Richards, Platt, Platt, 1998). After reviewing Skinner's (1957) Verbal Behavior, Chomsky (1959) claimed that "children have an innate faculty which guides them in their learning of language. Given a body of speech, children are programmed to discover its rules, and are guided in doing that by an innate knowledge of what the rules should look like" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p.26). Therefore, "children are biologically programmed for language and that language develops in the child in just the same way

that other biological function develop" (Lightbown & Spada, 2004). In other words, children do not have to be taught in order to acquire the language.

"Being one of the most important mirrors through which children discover who they are, English teachers are in a very strong position to create conditions that can be conductive or detrimental to their self-esteem"(Arnold, 2000). English teachers' encouraging and inspiring words can convey positive energy to their students so as to enhance their self-esteem. On the contrary, negative responses will attack students' self-confidence and even damage their self-esteem. For instance, some English teachers who are not qualified would use humiliating and vulgar words to shame their students. They don't take students' feeling into consideration, which will cause serious detriment to the students. As a result, students' self-esteem is damaged and they dare not express themselves in future English learning.

2.5 Professional Training of the Teachers

Despite the importance of teacher training in most school districts, there is surprisingly little evidence on the effect of teacher training on student achievement. Indeed, as Angrist and Lavy (2001) pointed out, there seems to have been more research on the impact of teacher training in developing countries than in developed countries. Early research on teacher training presents a rather pessimistic view of the effectiveness of staff development for increasing student performance. In a meta-analysis of 93 studies of the effect of teacher development on student performance, Kennedy (1998) reports that only 12 studies show positive effects of staff development. Consistent with this finding, Corcoran (1995) and Little (1993) claim that typically staff development is a low intensity affair that lacks continuity and accountability.

There are some notable exceptions to these findings however. Bressoux (1996), using a quasi-experimental research design, and Dildy (1982), examining the results of a randomized trial, found that teacher training increases student performance. Wiley and Yoon (1995) and Cohen and Hill (2000) are others who find teacher development programs to have at least small impacts on student performance.

One recent paper that finds particularly strong effects of teacher training is Angrist and Lavy (2001). While this paper presents strong evidence regarding the potential effectiveness of teacher training programs, this analysis has several limitations. In addition to funding teacher training, the intervention consisted of several other components that might have increased student achievement, including the establishment of a learning center to assist failing students after school and a project to support immigrant students and their families.

Teacher knowledge of English is pivotal to their capacity to provide effective English instruction and to their ability to access students' learning (Ball, 2005). The National Council for the Teaching of English (NCTM, 2000) makes it clear that teachers need knowledge about the important ideas that are central to their grade level.

The measurement of teacher knowledge of English has been a problem occupying researchers for several decades but they sort to use characteristics of teachers and their educational background. Other studies sought to focus on pedagogical content knowledge of teachers (Begle, 1999).

Rowan and Ball (2005) refer to English knowledge for teaching as knowledge that is specific to the profession of teaching and is closely linked to student achievement. In a study carried by Ball, et al. (2005), on the effects of teachers' knowledge on students' achievements, the results showed that teachers who scored higher on English knowledge also produced better gains on student achievements. That is, their students achieved good grades than their counterparts who scored low on English knowledge.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

There are some basic theories advanced to describe how language is acquired, learnt and taught. The behaviorist theory believes that "infants learn oral language from other human role models through a process involving imitation, rewards, and practice. Human role models in an infant's environment provide the stimuli and rewards" (Cooter & Reutzel, 2004). When a child attempts oral language or imitates the sounds or speech patterns they are usually praised and given affection for their efforts. Thus, praise and affection becomes the rewards. However, the behaviorist theory is scrutinized for a variety of reasons. If rewards play such a vital component in language development, what about the parent who is inattentive or not present when the child attempts speech? If a baby's language learning is motivated strictly by rewards would the speech attempts stop merely for lack of rewards (Cooter & Reutzel, 2004)? Other cases against this theory include "learning the use and meaning of abstract words, evidence of novel forms of language not modeled by others, and uniformity of language acquisition in humans" (Cooter & Reutzel, 2004).

Basically, "the behaviorist theory of stimulus-response learning, particularly as developed in the operant conditioning model of Skinner, considers all learning to be the establishment of habits as a result of reinforcement and reward" (Wilga Rivers, 1968, 73). This is very reminiscent of Pavlov's experiment which indicates that stimulus and response work together. According to this category, the babies obtain native language habits via varied babblings which resemble the appropriate words repeated by a person or object near him. Since for his babblings and mutterings he is rewarded, this very reward reinforces further articulations of the same sort into grouping of syllables and words in a similar situation. In this way, he goes on emitting sounds, groups of sounds, and as he grows up he combines the sentences via generalizations and analogy (as in*goed for went, *doed, for did,so on), which in some complicated cases, condition him to commit errors by articulating in permissible structures in speech. By the age of five or six, or babblings and mutterings grow into socialized speech but little by little they are internalized as implicit speech, and thus many of their utterances become indistinguishable from the adults. This, then, obviously means that behaviorist theory is a theory of stimulus-response psychology.

Skinner (1957), a behaviorist proponent, regarded language learning as the formation of habits; he viewed learning as any kind of behavior that is based on the notions of stimulus and response, which was popular in the 1940s and 1950s. People who adopted this view believed that language learning is the result of imitation, practice, feedback on success, and habit formation (Lightbown & Spada, 2004).

Children move through a number of stages when learning English as a new language. Some go through these stages more quickly than others, and children will sometimes have the characteristics of more than one stage at the same time as they transition between stages. Understanding a child's stage of learning is important for planning appropriate activities. Early childhood professionals play a role in helping children progress to higher stages; however, each child's English development will follow its own timetable. Planning and programming should be based around each child's abilities and developmental level.

Beginning Stage

Home language use: Some children initially use their home language in educational settings because it is the only language they know. Most young children give up using their home language quickly, realizing that it is not an effective means of communication in that context. If a few children in a setting share the same home language, they may continue to use it amongst themselves.

Nonverbal Period

In a new setting, young children may not use any language at all, or very little, for a few weeks or even months. They are listening and accumulating knowledge of English, but are sometimes hesitant to speak much. Children often use gestures to communicate with adults and other children. Sometimes they may rehearse phrases in English quietly to themselves.

According to current views of children's literacy, spelling is very much influenced by pronunciation at the early stages of development (Read 1986, Treiman 1997). Children begin to spell words by attempting to represent the sounds that they hear. Accordingly,

children with different accents might be expected to make different spelling mistakes. This has been shown in a comparison of US English and British English speakers (Treiman, 2000) but no previous work to date has examined the effect of accent variation within Britain. In addition, children's spelling is often examined from the point of view of deficit rather than resource. A different approach, drawing on recent research in the field of literacy and children's education (see for example Pahl and Rowsell 2005) would regard these mistakes not simply as 'incorrect' but as examples of how children actively engage with literacy, draw on their own resources such as spoken language) and in the process develop their ability to write. The study found the application of this theory more relevant on teacher characteristics and errors made by children when learning English in classroom. This is because the theory provides relevant information on how Children begin to spell words by attempting to represent the sounds that they hear as well as the errors they make.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is an analytical tool with several variations and contexts. It is used to make conceptual distinctions and organize ideas. Strong conceptual frameworks capture something real and do this in a way that is easy to remember and apply. The conceptual framework of this study shows the relationship between the independent variable; (teachers' method of teaching, teachers' attitude towards English, teachers' own errors in English and teachers' experience) and the dependent variable; influence of teacher characteristics on errors children make. Figure 1.1 shows the influence of teacher characteristics on errors children make.
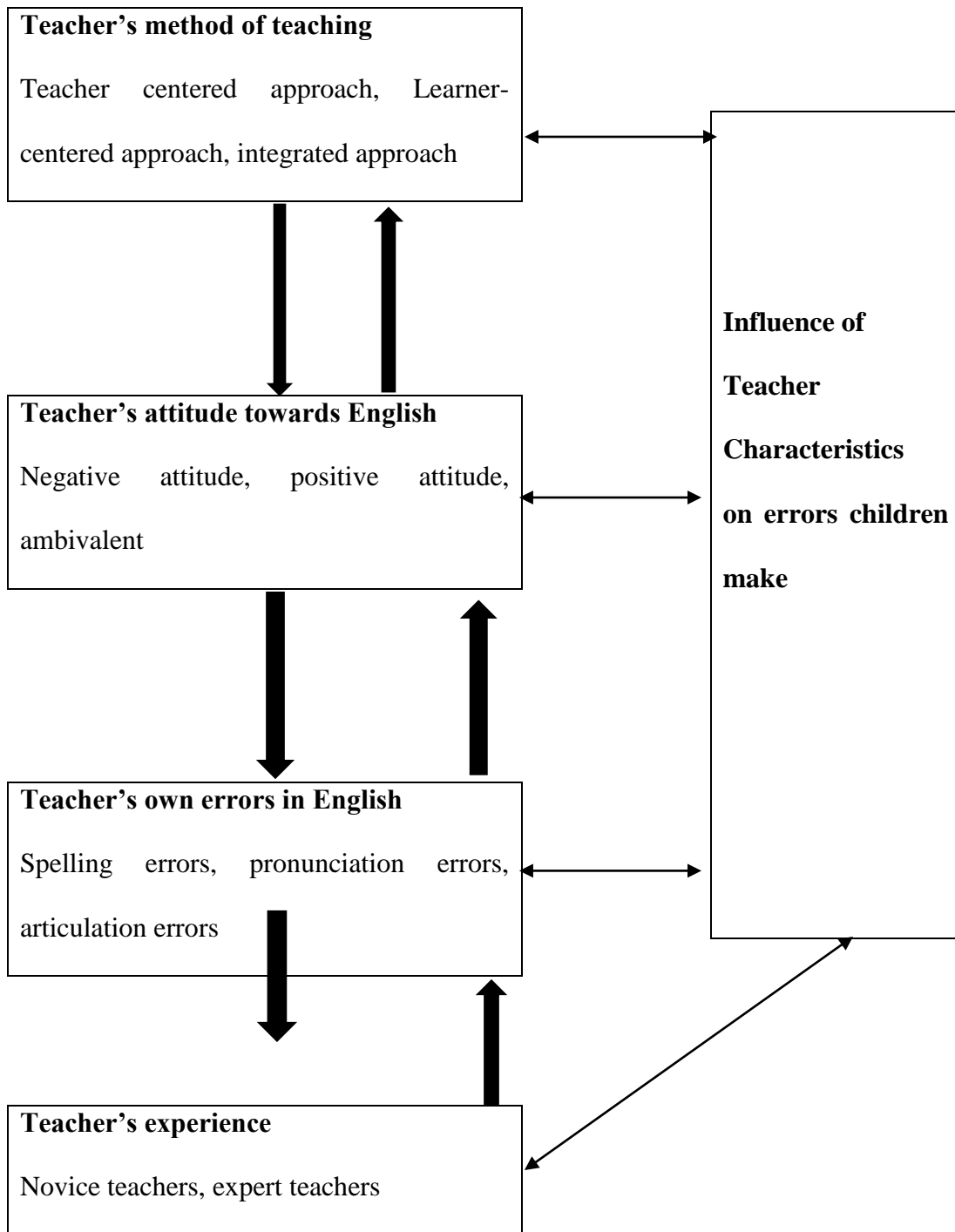
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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Teacher's method of teaching        │
│                                     │
│ Teacher  centered  approach, Learner-│
│ centered approach, integrated approach│
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                                              ┌──────────────────────┐
                                              │                      │
                                              │ Influence of         │
                                              │                      │
                                              │ Teacher              │
                                              │                      │
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐       │ Characteristics      │
│ Teacher's attitude towards English  │       │                      │
│                                     │       │ on  errors  children │
│ Negative   attitude,   positive  attitude,│  │                      │
│ ambivalent                          │       │ make                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘       │                      │
                                              │                      │
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐       │                      │
│ Teacher's own errors in English     │       │                      │
│                                     │       │                      │
│ Spelling   errors,  pronunciation   errors,│ │                      │
│ articulation errors                 │       │                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘       └──────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Teacher's experience                │
│                                     │
│ Novice teachers, expert teachers    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 1.1: Influence of Teacher Characteristics on Errors Children Make

Teachers' method of teaching such teacher centered approach, learner- centered approach and integrated approach play a significant role in errors made by children while learning English, this is because they play a key in children's attention and cooperation in class. Teachers' attitude towards English, teachers' own errors in English and teachers' experience are also key factors on children's understanding of English subject during the lessons. For instance, a teacher who makes errors can influence the same to children since they learn from adults.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter describes the research design, target population, sampling and sampling procedures, data collection instruments and procedures for data collection, methods for data analysis and presentation of findings.

3.2 Research Design

According to Gall and Borg (1989), descriptive designs are used by researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret it for the purpose of clarifications and produces satisfied information about aspects of education that interests policy makers and educators. The research design used in this study was the survey method research design which involved several respondents such as pupils and teachers. The design was appropriate to unearth both qualitative and quantitative data for in-depth and intensive understanding of teacher characteristics and how they influence pre-schoolchildren's errors in English language.

3.3 Target Population

The target population   included teachers and all 100 pre-schools, pre-children and teachers in Murang'a County. The study assessed and analyzed how school teachers influence the learning of the English language and the errors children in Murang'a County make as a result of the teachers' characteristics.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

According to Ferguson and George (1981), a sample is any group sub-aggregate drawn by appropriate method from the population. Random sampling, and especially stratified random sampling was used to select 30% of the targeted pre-schools in Murang'a County after being categorized as either public or private. From these schools, pre- school and lower primary teachers were chosen. Pupils, five per class, were Teacher centered approach, Learner- centered approach, integrated approach purposively selected.

3.5 Research Instruments

The research instruments used in the study included questionnaires, interview schedule and documentary analysis checklist/form.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Open ended questionnaires were used as they let respondents describe things from their own perspectives. They were administered to teachers. The questions sought information on the methods of teaching and level of professional qualification.

3.5.2 Interview Schedule for Teachers

An interview is an oral administration of a questionnaire or an interview guide. The interviews in this study were conducted face to face. Open ended interviews were used as they made it possible to penetrate the thoughts and feelings of respondents in a conversational manner. The questions sought to understand teachers' attitudes and experiences on errors children make.

3.5.3 Documentary Analysis Checklist/Form

It is a tool used to analyze available documents (Miles and Huberman, 1993). The documents analyzed included children's exercise books.

3.5.4 Observation Schedule

Observation schedules are used in research for employing observational methods to study behavior and interaction in a structured and systematic fashion. They consist of predefined systems for classifying and recording behavior and interactions as they occur, together with sets of rules and criteria for conducting observation and for allocating events to categories. An observation schedule includes a time dimension for locating observations in time and contains variables relating to different aspects of behavior and interaction, each consisting of a set of categories describing particular behaviors and interactions. The observation schedule in the present study was used to record errors teachers make in English lessons and if they correct them or not.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher paid visits to each school to discuss with the administration on the purpose of the study. Arrangements were then made on the most suitable day, time and procedure to be followed in conducting the study in the school.

Data collection was done using the three instruments. Questionnaires were given to teachers by the researcher to fill in. The interviews were done by the researcher and documentary analysis conducted during the visits to the schools.

3.7 Validity of Research Instruments

The reliability and validity content of the research instruments will be ensured by giving them to the supervisor to ascertain content validity. The questionnaires will also be tested and retested. There will be a grace period between interviews and administering of questionnaires with the same type of questions for comparison of the responses. A small sample population will be used to test the external validity of the instruments. Prolonged period of interview will be used to ensure instrument validity.

3.8 Reliability of Research Instruments

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), reliability is the ability of a research instrument to consistently measure characteristics of interest over time It is the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials (Nachmias, 1996). To establish the reliability of the research instruments, the researcher carried out a pilot test of the instruments using another similar group with the same characteristics as the one targeted in the study. The reliability of the teachers and administrators' questionnaires was computed using split half method with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). If the value found falls within the accepted levels (0.05), the questionnaires would be held reliable (George & Mallery, 2003). Interview guides, being mainly open ended, were not be tested for reliability.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected through questionnaires, interview schedules and observation guide were coded. Descriptive statistics was used to answer research questions. The data were presented in chapter four using frequency and percentage tables.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

In their book 'How to research,' Blaxter et al. (2001) cover the subject of research ethics within their chapter on data collection. There was informed consent from participants before they took part in the study. This means that they knew exactly what they were being asked to do, and what the risks were, before they agreed to take part.

An information sheet was used to provide participants with information about the study. The identity of the participants will be kept confidential.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers analysis and presentation of the findings on teacher related factors and errors pre-school children make as they learn English language in Murang'a County. Data were analyzed by help of a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).The findings were presented in frequencies and percentages by use of descriptive analysis. Tables and figures were used to summarize the findings. The chapter is organized as follows: demographic information teaching method, teacher's errors, and teacher's attitude towards English and teacher's professional training.

4.2. Demographic Information

The key demographic information of the respondents that was looked into in this study included gender, age range and years of experience of teachers who took part in the study. The study sought to establish the distribution of the respondents by gender. Figure 1 shows distribution of the respondents by gender.
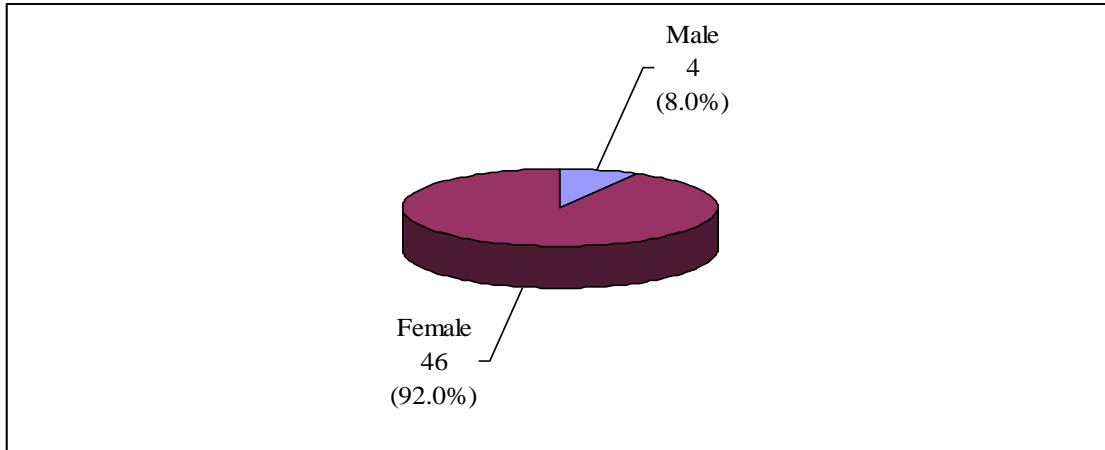
Figure 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

An overwhelming majority, (92.0%) of the teachers who took part in the study were female. Only 8.0% of them were male. This shows that the pre-school sector in the county is dominated by female teachers. The respondents were further asked to indicate their age range. Figure 2 shows the distribution of teachers' age range.
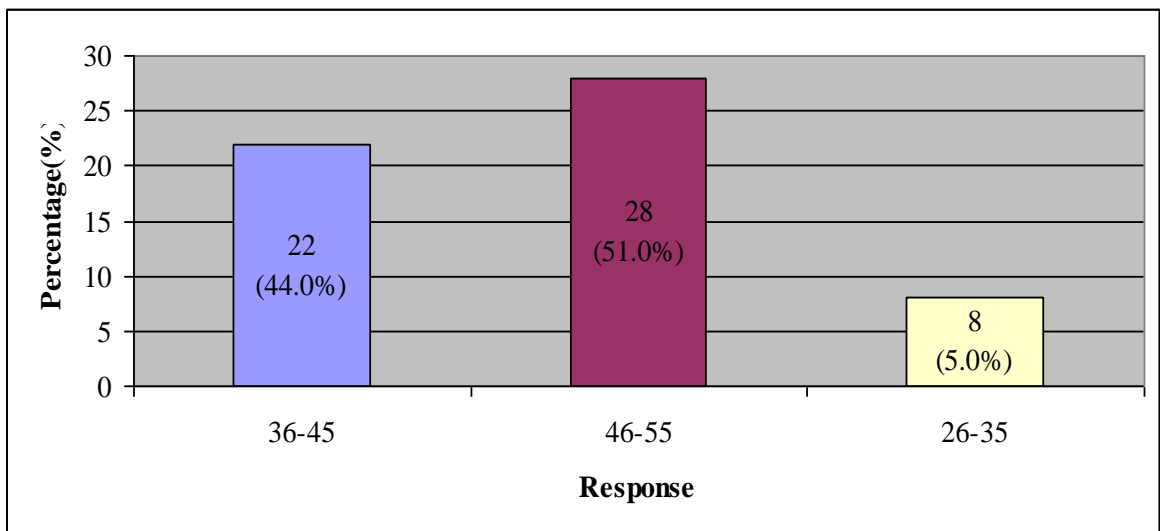

Figure 2: Distribution of Teachers' Age Range

From Figure 2, slightly over half of the teachers (51.0%) had between 46-55 years. This was followed by those who were between 36-45 years. Only 5.0% of them had a range

of between 26-35. This shows that the pre-school unit is dominated by teachers who are of average in terms of age.

The study further sought to examine the years of experience the teachers had. Figure 3 shows the distribution of teachers' length of service.
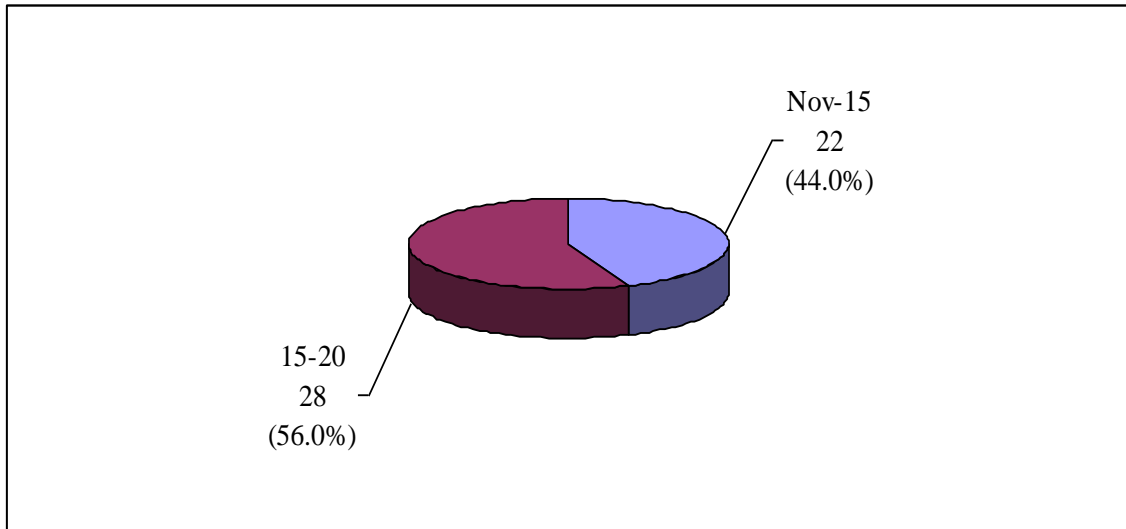

Figure 3: Distribution of Teachers' Length of Service

Majority of the respondents who took part in the study (56.0%) had a length of service of between 15-20 years. The remaining percentage (44.0%) had worked as teachers for between 11-15 years. This shows that teachers had good working experience and issues related to turnover were not common in their respective schools.

When asked to indicate if there were there any languages besides English spoken in their homes growing up, all teachers agreed to the statement. They were further asked to specify the languages they spoke at home. They were further asked to indicate whether they speak any language besides. English All of them agreed to the statement. Figure 5 shows other languages spoken by teachers besides English.
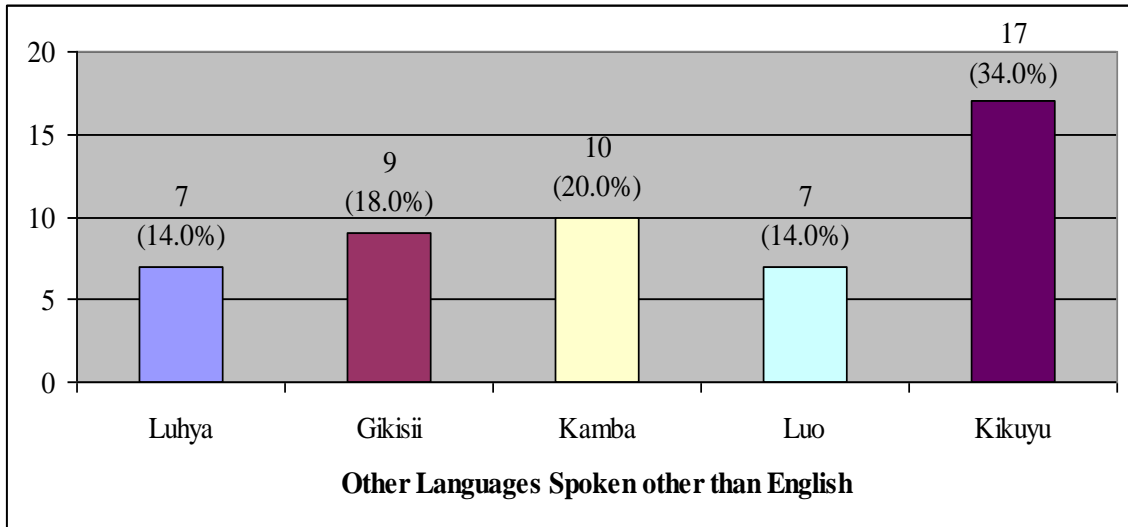
Figure 4: Other Languages Spoken by Teachers besides English

Majority of the respondents, (34.0%) indicated they speak Kikuyu language. This was followed by slightly less than a quarter of them, (20.0%) who speak Kamba. Other languages indicated by teachers were Gikisii, (18.0%), Luhya, (14.0%) and Luo, (14.0%) respectively. This shows that majority of the teaching professionals in the county are from Kikuyu tribe. This might be attributed their working experience and academic qualifications.

The study sought to examine the type of knowledge teachers had received in teaching English. Table 1 shows the distribution of responses on the type of knowledge teachers had received.

Table 1: Other Languages Spoken By Teacher besides English

	A		SA		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
I have no formal training in instructing English language	-	-	28	56.0	22	44.0	-	-
I have participated in one or more in-service workshops	14	28.0	36	72.0	-	-	-	-
I have taken some college coursework	36	72.0	14	28.0	-	-	-	-
I hold a college degree relating to teaching English	42	84.0	8	16.0	-	-	-	-

Majority of the teachers, (56.0%) strongly agreed that they had no formal training in instructing English language. However, the remaining percentage (44.0%) indicated otherwise.

Regarding whether they had participated in one or more in-service workshops, majority of them disagreed with the statement. Only 28.0% of them were in agreement that they had participated in one or more in-service workshops.

Majority of the respondents, (72.0%) who took part in the study agreed that they had taken some college coursework. However, slightly more than a third of them (28.0%) indicated otherwise.

Majority of the respondents, (84.0%) who took part in the study agreed that they hold a college degree relating to teaching English. This was supported by the remaining percentage of them, (16.0) who strongly agree with the statement. Training plays aa key role on teacher effectiveness. This shows that teachers who were trained taught effectively and there were no errors made by children.

The study sought to examine the respondents' highest level of professional training. Figure 6 shows the distribution of teachers' highest level of professional training.
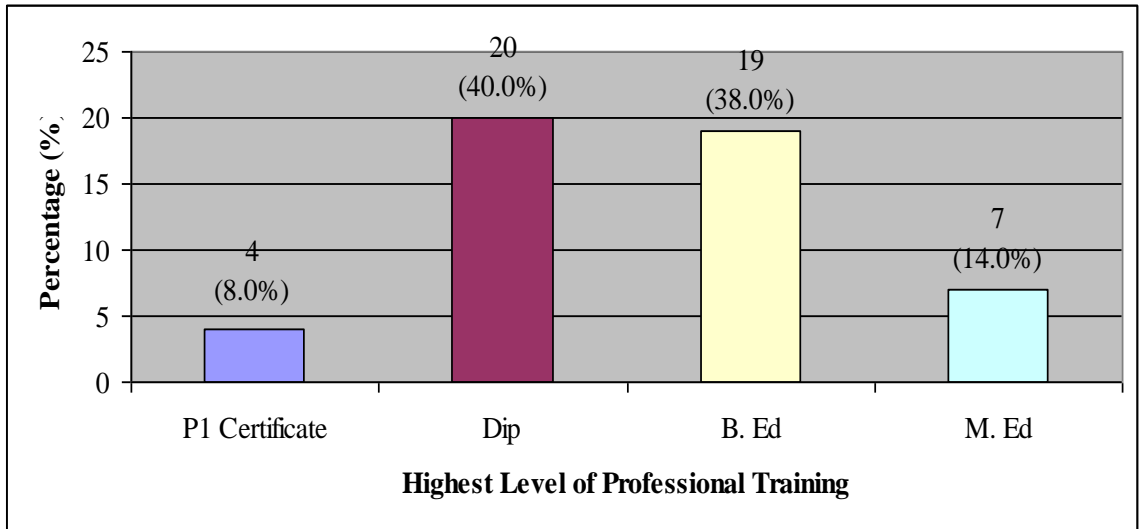
Figure 5: Distribution of Teachers' Highest Level of Professional Training

When asked to indicate their highest level of professional training, majority of the teachers, (40.0%) who took part in the study had Diploma level of education. This was followed by (38.0%) of them who had attained B.Ed. The remaining percentage of them had M.Ed. (14.0%) and P1 certificate (8.0%) respectively.

The study further sought to examine the resources used by teachers to teach English. Figure 7 shows the distribution of responses on resources used by teachers when teaching English.
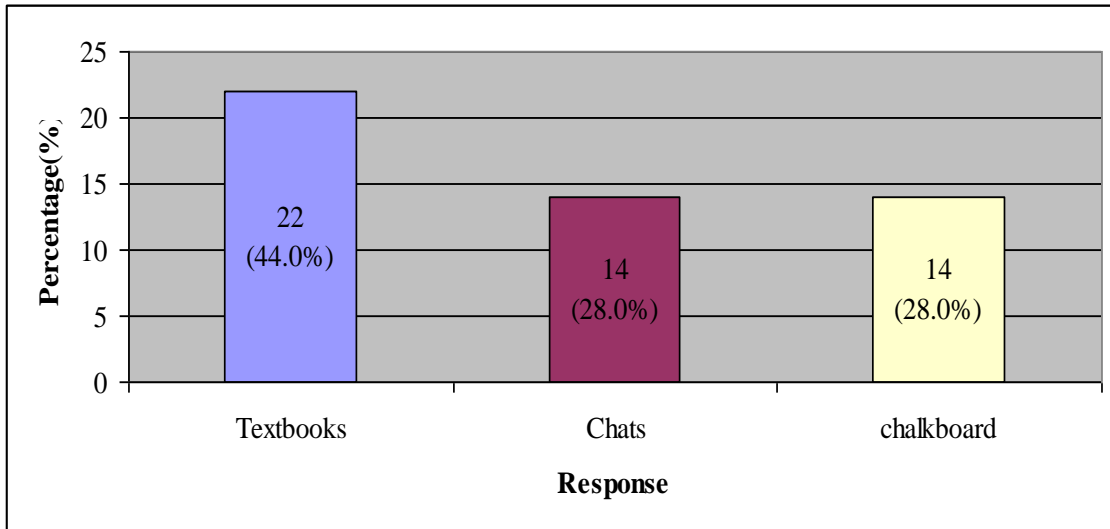
Figure 6: Distribution of Responses on Resources used by Teachers when Teaching English

Majority of the respondents cited textbooks as the main resources for teaching English. The remaining percentage of them indicated that they use chats (28.0%) and chalkboards (28.0%) respectively.

The study further sought to examine the most common errors children make as they learn English. Table 2 shows the distribution of responses on the most common errors children make as they learn English.

Table 2: Distribution of Responses on the Most Common Errors Children Make as they Learn English

Errors	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Pronunciation	9	18.0
Spelling	25	40.0
Difficulties in differentiating certain words i.e. **l** & **r**	9	18.0
Poor logical flow of words	12	24.0
Total	50	100.0

Majority of the teachers who took part in the study (40.0%) indicated that spelling errors were among the most common errors children make as they learn English. Slightly less than a quarter of them (24.0%) indicated that difficulties in differentiating certain words i.e. **l**& **r** was among the errors children make as they learn English. Other errors listed by a good percentage of teachers included pronunciation, (18.0%) and poor logical flow of words.

The respondents were further asked to indicate how they **correct** the errors children make when learning English language. Figure 8 shows the responses on how teachers correct the errors children make when learning English language.
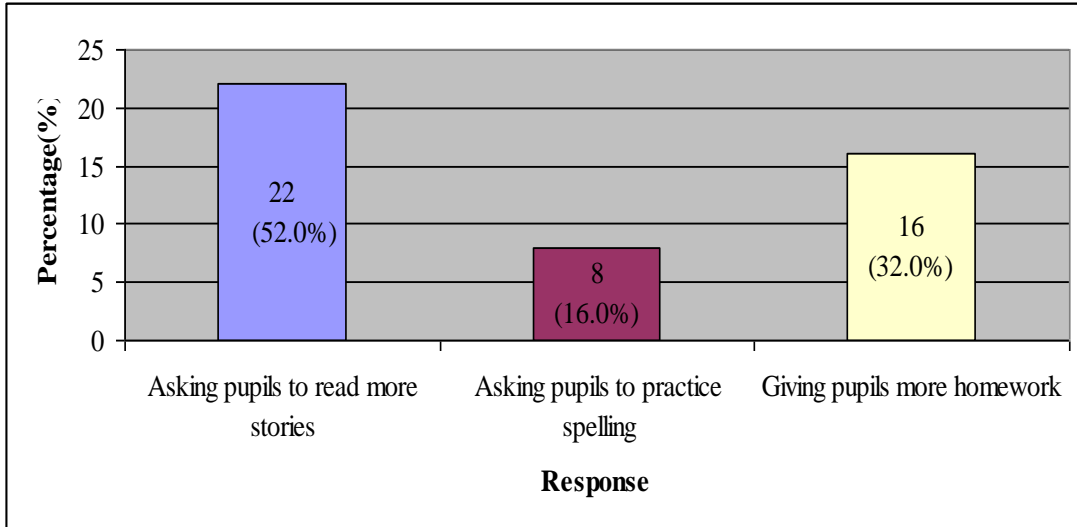
Figure 7: Responses on how teachers can correct the errors children make when learning English language

Majority of the teachers (84.0%) indicated that asking pupils to read more stories could help in correcting the errors made by children. This was supported by the remaining percentage of them, (16.0%) who were of the view that the errors made by children while learning English could be corrected by asking pupils to practice spelling.

The study also sought to examine the methods of teaching used by teachers in teaching English. Table 3 shows distribution of response on method(s) used by teachers to teach English.

Table 3: Distribution of Response on Method(s) used by Teachers to Teach English

Method	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Teacher-centred	4	8.0
Learner-centred	9	18.0
Question and Answers	13	26.0
Writing on Board	6	12.0
Mixed approach	18	36.0
Total	50	100.0

More than a third of the teachers who took part in the study (36.0%) indicated that they use mixed approach as a method of teaching English. This was followed by slightly more than a quarter of them, (26.0%) who indicated that they use question and answers method. The remaining percentage of the teachers indicated that they use either teacher or child centred methods of teaching.

The respondents were further asked to indicate how teaching of English could be improved. Table 4 shows a distribution of responses on how teaching of English can be improved.

Table 4: Distribution of Responses on How Teaching of English Can be Improved

	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Teachers to attend in-service training	15	30.0
Learning institutions to allow teachers to participate in seminars/workshops	32	64.0
Teachers to actively participate in organized seminars/workshops	3	6.0
Total	50	100.0

Majority of the teachers (64.0%) indicated that for teaching of English to be improved, learning institutions need to allow teachers to participate in seminars/workshops. Slightly less than a third of them (30.0%) indicated that there is need for teachers to attend in-service training. However, only 6.0% of the teachers who took part in the study were of the view that teachers should actively participate in organized seminars/workshops for English subject.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings of the study, conclusions of the study, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary

Teachers play a significant role in pupils' academic achievement in English subject. This also shows that their way of teaching can be reflected through pupils' performance and behavior. The errors they make and the method of teaching they employ can also be reflected through pupils. The present study sought to examine teacher-related factors and errors children make as they learn English language among schools in Murang'a County. The study was guided by the following research objectives: To find out how teachers' instructional methods influence the errors that pre -school children make as they learn English; to investigate the influence of the teacher's errors on errors that pre- school children make as they learn English; to examine how the teacher's attitude towards English influences errors pre- school children make as they learn English; and to determine whether the teacher's professional training influences errors pre -school children make as they learn English. The study employed a survey research design consisting of 100 pre-schools, teachers and pupils in Murang'a County. Data were collected through questionnaires for teachers and observation schedules for children. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22.0) and reported using both descriptive statistics and narrative techniques. . From the

analysis, the study found that teachers' professional training and errors they made influenced pupils' errors in English to a very great extent. It was also revealed that teacher teaching method as well as their attitude towards the subject were key to the errors made by children as they learnt English. The study recommended that in order for the subject to improved, there is need for learning institutions, especially the pre-school sector, to embrace teacher in-service training as well as organizing for English seminars and workshops.

5.3 Conclusions

From the study, it can be concluded that teachers play a significant role on pre-school pupils' academic achievement in English subject. This also shows that their way of teaching can be reflected through pupils' performance and behavior. The errors they make and the method of teaching they employ can also be reflected through pupils. The study sought to examine teacher related factors and errors children make as they learn English language among schools. It is quite clear that teachers' professional training, teaching method, attitude and the errors they make influences pre-school pupils' achievement in English in the County. This shows that the County through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology and the policy makers need to come to embrace the need for teacher in-service training so as to improve the learning of the subject.

5.4 Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. In order to improve the learning of English, there is need for not only teachers but also all the concerned stakeholders to work towards promoting positive attitude towards the subject in the County.

2. There is need for the government through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) to come up with functional centers for the provision of locally developed teaching aids and its function should include the evaluation and recommendations on specific and relevant instructional materials for pre-schools in the County.

3. Teachers should employ the best teaching method that can promote children's memorization and understanding of English language. In addition, they should also ensure that learners take homework, keeping track of their children's academic performance as well as motivating children to work hard among others.

4. There is need for the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), policy makers and the school administration boards to hold seminars and workshops for all the preschool teachers so as to be informed on the importance and role played by the teachers in the County.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

It is recommended that other studies may be carried out on school factors influencing performance of pre-school children in the county or any other part of the Country.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire for Teachers

Dear Respondent,

I am a student at the University of Nairobi and I am carrying out a research on the influence of teacher related factors on the errors learners make in English language in Murang'a County. You have been randomly selected to participate in this study by filling this questionnaire. All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially. While results will be made available, you are guaranteed that neither you, this school nor any of its personnel will be identified in any report of the results of the study. [Participation in this survey is voluntary and any individual may withdraw at any time.]

1. What is your gender?

    a) Female [   ]

    b) Male   [   ]

2. What age range do you fall into?

    a) 18-25 [   ]   b) 26-35 [   ]   c)   36-45 [   ]

    d) 46-55 [   ]   e) 56-65 [   ]   f)   66 years and above   [   ]

3.   How many years have you been a teacher, administrator, or educational professio nal?

a)   1-4 years [   ] b) 5-10 [   ]   b)   11-15 [   ]   c) 15-20 [   ]

c) 21 years and above [   ]

4. Were there any languages besides English spoken in your home growing up? If so , specify which one(s).

    a) No [   ]

    b) Yes: [   ]

_____
_____
_____
_____

5.   Do you speak any languages besides English? If so, specify which one(s).

    a) No [   ]

    b) Yes: [   ]

6. Indicate whether you agree (A), Strongly Agree (Strongly Agree), Undecide (UD), Disaree (D) or Strongly Disagree (SD) on the type you received in instructing English learners?

Statement	A	SA	UD	D	SD
I have no formal training in instructing English language					
I have participated in one or more in-service workshops					
I have taken some college coursework					
I hold a college degree relating to teaching English					

7. Which is your highest level of professional training?

a) P1 Certificate   [ ]

b) Dip   [ ]

c) B. Ed   [ ]

d) M. Ed   [ ]

e) Any other (Specify)_____

8. Which resources do you use to teach English?

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. List down the most common errors children make as they learn English?

_____
_____
_____
_____

10. How do you correct these errors?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Which method(s) do you use to teach English?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. How do you think teaching of English can be improved

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank You

Appendix II: Observation Schedule

Teacher's Gender	MALE [ ]	FEMALE [ ]
Class		
Number of Learners		
Errors made by the Teacher	1._____ 2._____ 3._____ 4._____ 5. _____ 6._____	1._____ 2._____ 3._____ 4._____ 5. _____ 6._____
Errors made by the Learners		
Corrections Made		

Appendix III: Documentary Analysis

Name of the document	
Description	
Significance	
Errors analyzed	