

Self-Planning Learning as Predictor on Academic Performance of English Language among Students in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract The purpose of the study was to establish the effect of self-planning learning strategy on the academic performance of English language among students in public secondary schools. The study adopted Information Processing Model and metacognitive theory. The study employed a mixed concurrent method approach which combined Solomon Four group experimental design and open ended interviews. The study target population involved 1397 form three students from 23 public secondary schools, 27 teachers of guidance and counseling and 49 teachers of English language. Stratified random sampling technique was utilized to obtain four study groups that had a sample size of 283 students. The participants from the four groups were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. Purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve (12) teachers of English and (8) teacher counselors. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instruments of which a correlation coefficient of 0.80 was obtained. Face, content and construct validity was affirmed through experts' judgment by the University supervisors. Triangulation method was used to measure the validity of the research instruments. Data was collected using pretest/posttest scores, metacognitive learning questionnaires and open-ended interviews. Pretest/posttests were administered provide data on students' academic performance on English language. The self-planning learning strategy questionnaires were used students to gather data on the application of metacognitive learning strategy on English language. Quantitative data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and linear regression statistical techniques while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis framework. Pearson Correlation results revealed that there is a positive and statistically significant ($r = .149$, $n=270$, $p=.014$) effect of self-planning learning strategy on academic performance on English language. It can be concluded that self-planning enhances academic achievement among students. Its recommended that teachers of English should adopt self-planning learning strategy should be infused in the teaching and learning process of English language among students in secondary schools.

Keywords Self-planning learning strategy, Students, Academic performance English

1. Introduction

Globally, the academic performance of English language among students seems to remain below the expected standards despite of the language being widely used as a medium of communication and instruction in many tiers of learning institutions, in trade and scientific and technological advancement (Al-Nasser, 2015). Many students from nations which have adopted English language as a second language have encountered several challenges in the basic skills. This

problem has hindered effective learning because students cannot understand effectively the instructions and contents in the curriculum and other literary materials that provide important information for learners (Curtain, et al., 2004). Low academic performance in English language has attracted a worldwide attention. In Saudi Arabia, English language was introduced to all learning levels and made compulsory for all learners from class four and beyond after Arabic language. Since then it has expanded because of its great contribution in teaching, training and economic growth (Al-Nasser, 2015).

Despite of the positive attitude towards the subject, the proficiency level and academic performance of the subject remains inadequate and below expectation (Al-S eghayer, 2014). A study conducted on the performance of English language in Asian countries such as Malaysia, China, Philippines and Singapore among others revealed that

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English was taught as second language in most learning institutions and it was considered critical in addressing the growing global demands. However, the low academic performance of the subject was wanting (Al-Asmari and Khan (2014).

In Ghana, literature revealed that English language is vital in the education sector as core language in learning centers. However, performance in the subject is unsatisfactory in the national examinations according to S'aad (2014), Oppong-Sekyere and Oppong-Sekyere and Akpalu (2014) respectively which was attributed to poor instructional strategies. In Tanzania, English language has expanded as it used by learners in secondary schools. According to the Tanzanian syllabus on language policy, it is expected that students need to have acquired and mastered skills of the language in order to allow them to cope with the demands of English and progress for further training. However, the results from the national examinations in English language indicate that there is consistent poor performance for learners in rural and urban settings (Mosha, 2014).

In 2013 during the release of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (KCSE) the minister for education indicated that English language had the highest decline in all the thirteen subjects that dropped in the average mean. This poor performance was attributed to sheng' and frequent use of electronic and technology gadgets which denied learners opportunities to learn and practice proper language use (KNEC Report, 2013). In 2014, there was slight improvement in the mean to 3.86. In 2015, there was improved performance of English language to 4.029 (KNEC Report, 2015). However, in 2016, the national performance of English dropped so much and this was devastating to the learners. The low performance of English language remains to be a major national challenge to a country in regard to education, training and development where its mastery and competency is key because it frustrates students from their future prospects.

The fluctuating standard of the English language among the Kenyan secondary school students is a national outcry and it poses a serious challenge. Teachers, parents, employers and education stakeholders are complaining of poor results at school levels and national examinations. Previous studies on possible causes of low performance have shown that attitude, school facilities, and instructional approaches among others have contributed to poor results, however the outcome is still of great concern indicating there a gap to fill towards providing an amicable solution. According to KNEC annual reports from 2007 to 2016, there is a prolonged and persistent problem of low academic performance of English among most learners in public secondary schools especially in Marani Sub County Kenya according (KNEC Report, 2017). The performance of English in Marani Sub County is dismal although it is compulsory and a medium of instruction. Efforts have been made but the problem of dissatisfying results among students still exists, hence necessitating the present study on learning strategy as predictors on academic performance of English

language among secondary schools in Marani Sub County because there is no single known study which has been carried out in the area from the self-planning learning strategy perspective.

The null hypothesis was stated as follows;

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant effect of self-planning learning strategy on academic performance of English language among students in public secondary schools in Marani Sub County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Empirical studies reviewed have highlighted that metacognitive strategy is critical in meaningful learning. A study conducted by Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, and Shore (2010) on the effect of goal setting among online students indicated that intensive goal setting had a positive influence on student academic achievement. The outcome revealed that students who successfully completed the goal setting intervention showed significant improvement on academic performance implying that there was evidence of increased improvement by 30% in average compared to the control group. The reviewed study utilized online goal setting students in college implying that participants did not have a chance to express their emotions, experiences and perceptions thus limiting findings of the study. Hence, the present study captured the participant's experiences and impressions which were obtained through indepth focused group interviews, hence broadening the findings of the study in regard to metacognitive learning strategies. Moeller, Theiler and Wu (2012) also reported a positive relationship between thinking process and language achievement. Further, a study done among students in an elementary school by Valle, Regueiro, Rodriguez, Pineiro, Nunez and Rosario (2016) on academic goals and academic achievement, pointed out that students who had clear goals completed their academic homework on time and this was positively linked to the academic performance. The level and type of motivation for academic learning was assessed using the academic goals Instrument while the approach towards homework was measured using an adapted students' approaches to learning Inventory. Academic achievement was assessed through students' report card grades. The reviewed study was conducted on elementary school learners who were relatively younger in age unlike the present study which involved learners in secondary schools who were relatively older with divergent experiences due to developmental stage differences. In Nigeria, Idowu, Chibuzoh and Madueke (2014) conducted a study which indicated that students who received the treatment on goal setting scored better than the control group. This was a study that explored on the effects of goal setting skills among senior 11 students's academic performance in English language. Eighty (80) students were chosen through stratified sampling technique. The study design was quasi-experimental and quantitative data was collected

through questionnaires. The study reviewed used a smaller sample size of 80 participants posing a challenge of generalizing the study findings to a larger population while the present study used a larger sample size of 283 participants.

From the reviewed literature, it was clear that some studies have been conducted in elementary learners who are at preadolescent stage, hence the developmental tasks differ with the adolescents in the present study. In some reviewed study, data was collected using questionnaires which were rigid, hence the participants views, impressions and experiences were lacking in the findings. However, in the present study, a mixed method approach was employed in order to tap the participants rich data especially through open ended interviews. In some reviewed studies, a small sample size was utilized thus increasing the margin error and variability making the results not generalizable. However, the present used a larger sample size to ensure a fair representation in the findings.

3. Research Methodology

The present study employed a mixed concurrent method approach which combined Solomon Four Group design and open ended interviews. Mixed method approach is used where quantitative data is collected and then supported or amplified by qualitative data within a single study (Creswell, 2014). The study targeted 1395 form three students, teachers of English (49) and guidance and counseling teachers (27). Purposeful sampling technique was to select a sample size of twelve (12) teachers of English and eight (8) guidance and counseling. Stratified random sampling was used to obtain a sample size of 283 students. The experimental group was treated for 12 weeks while the control group used conventional learning. Quantitative data was collected through pretests/posttests which measured on the academic performance of English language, metacognitive learning strategy questionnaires which were rated on Likert Scale (Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1) were used to measure the application of metacognitive strategy. Qualitative data was collected using focus group interviews from students and indepth interviews from teachers of English language and guidance and counseling teachers. To ensure content, construct and face validity were achieved, the study utilized University experts who were my PhD supervisors from Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOUST) and they checked through the tools and provided constructive feedback on the suitability of the instrument. Trustworthiness of qualitative data was also guided by procedures outlined by Guba and Lincoln (2000). Data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics such as; means, standard deviation and inferential statistics like; Pearson Product moment correlation, paired sample 't' test and multiple regression. For qualitative data, thematic analysis procedures were used.

4. Findings and Discussion

To establish whether there is statistically significant effect on self-planning learning strategy on academic performance of English language among students in public secondary schools, the null hypothesis was tested. The null hypothesis was stated;

H₀₁: *There is no statistically significant effect of self-planning learning strategy on academic performance of English language among students in public secondary schools in Marani Sub County.*

To achieve this goal, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was performed and the results were shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Correlation between Self-Planning Learning Strategy and Academic Performance of English Language

		Self-Planning Learning Strategy
Post-Test Score	Pearson Correlation	.149*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014
	N	270

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

From Table 1, It was evident that the effect of self-planning learning strategy was positive and significant ($r = .149, n=270, p=.014$), with improved use of Self-Planning Learning Strategy resulting to improvement in performance of English language. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis taken. This means that Self-Planning Learning Strategy has a positive significance effect on the performance in English language. That is, the more self-planning learning strategy is applied, the higher the performance of English. To explain the extent of significant amount of the variance in performance of English, linear regression was generated to find the actual influence of each of the variables, as shown in Table 2;

Table 2. Coefficients of Linear Regression: Self-Planning Learning Strategy, Treatment and Pretest on Performance in English Language as a Subject

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	36.461	5.176		7.045	.000
	Self-Planning Learning Strategy	4.199	1.697	.149	2.475	.014
2	(Constant)	34.532	5.356		6.447	.000
	Self-Planning Learning Strategy	4.372	1.699	.156	2.573	.011
	Treatment status	.120	1.511	.005	.079	.937
	Pretest status	2.407	1.523	.096	1.581	.115

a. Dependent Variable: Post test Score

From the coefficient table 2, in Model 2, it was clear that if the application of self-planning learning strategy is increased by one unit by the students then their level of performance would improve by 4.372 units. This is a sizable effect from one independent variable. It is the only variable that made a statistically significant contribution, $p=0.011$ (less than .05). Although the other two variables made some contribution, they did not make significant contribution. If a student received treatment, the performance of English would improve by only .120 units and pretesting would make performance in the posttest exams improve by only 2.407 units. Qualitative data findings supported that self-planning learning strategy was key among students during the learning process. This was evident from the student's testimony from the experimental group;

To our side, most of us plan in advance on the sequence which our studying will take place from the start to the end. We think of a place, time available and books to use and anything we think will be required. Similarly, some of brain storm on what we expect and a strategy that may be useful though this depends on textbooks. When we arrange our work, our studying will flow smoothly (EXGP1, student 3).

On my part, I think it prepares us learners to pay attention, solicit instructional materials, which may help us obtain the required information. It makes the learning process to be lively as some of us ready and actively equipped to do independent studies. In essence self-planning learning strategy calls for seriousness from the students' perspective as they pursue their studies which eventually leads to better results in English language (EXGP1, Student, 11).

It was clear from the student's extract in the treated group that self-planning learning strategy enabled them to practice individualized organization, deliberate thinking and logical use of information materials in the learning process compared to the control group who hardly practiced the strategy in a meaningful manner because they were not aware of it. The present study findings were supported by Hematian, Rezaei and Mohammadyfar (2016) who found in a study that self-planning among students resulted to higher scores in comparison to the control and Valle, Regueiro, Rodriguez, Pineiro, Nunez and Rosario (2016) which revealed that self-planning goal-setting learning strategy had a positive significant effect on learning and achievement. Qualitative data findings also confirmed that self-planning learning strategy plays a critical part in ensuring purposeful learning takes place among students. The present study results demonstrated that self-planning learning strategy is important in promoting learning of English language among students as it was evident between treated and control group.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The present study revealed that self-planning learning strategy contributed to improved performance of English language as it was evident from experimental and control groups, hence the higher the application of metacognitive learning strategy the higher the academic performance of English language. Therefore, the study recommended that teachers of English should adopt self-planning learning strategy should be infused in the teaching and learning process of English language among students in secondary schools in order to improve overall performance of the subject.

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