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Abstract
The study investigated the extent to which oral questioning, as a teaching strategy, affects the performance of students in English language as a subject in Eldoret Municipality, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study employed the mixed methods research design and involved all form three students and hence a sample size of 180 students drawn from six secondary schools within the Municipality. Form three English teachers, heads of the selected schools and education officials in the district. To collect data, the study used questionnaires, interviews, documentary data and non-participant observation. Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses were employed. It emerged that oral questioning as a method of teaching is not being utilized as recommended in secondary schools. The study findings may be a step towards the improvement of the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools, as well as the improvement in general performance in other subjects that rely on English as the language of instruction. It will also assist English teachers utilize the most appropriate resources to ensure English language is effectively taught/learnt and the objectives of teaching these skills are obtained. Subsequently, the performance in English will improve and by extension the performance in other subjects.

Keywords: critical review, oral questioning technique, secondary school English language teaching, Eldoret municipality, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, the poor language proficiency in English by students in secondary schools in the 1990s and the preceding years turned on a spotlight on the teaching and learning of English language (Barasa, 2005). Oladejo (1991) observes that "the major threat comes from lack of professionalism in English as a Second Language (ESL)" (p. 195). Barasa (2005, p. 2) identifies various instances recorded including: the Minister of Education stating that performance in English had deteriorated when announcing the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education results for the year 1994 (Daily Nation, March 1, 1995); in its Annual Report for 1991 and 1992, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) states to teachers that "the performance of English remained unsatisfactory" (KNEC Examination Report, 1994, p. 249), and universities voicing concern about receiving first year students who can hardly write, read, and hold discussions in English. The question that one has to answer is: what happens in class at the secondary level that leads to this scenario? What challenges does this state of affairs present to an education system that relies heavily on the use of the English language?

Concerns have also been raised over the discrepancies that exist between theoretical curriculum norms, regulations and expectations, which are the ideals, and actual teaching skills employed by teachers (KNEC, 2004; Barasa, 2005). From the author’s practical observation, it seems the way English is being taught in secondary schools within Eldoret Municipality has a bearing on students’ overall performance in national examinations. That English teachers either do not adequately apply teaching skills in English as specified by the curriculum of the Ministry of Education (MOE) or do apply it inappropriately. Therefore, the need to link teaching skills, specifically oral questioning, and students’ performance in English is a real one.

The problem of this paper, therefore, is to generate information on oral questioning practice of English language teachers in selected secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality. The main purpose is to answer the question: what is the relationship between oral questioning and performance of English in selected secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality?

Centrality of Use of Questions in Teaching English

Questioning is probably one of the most versatile and most readily available techniques in the hands of the teacher (Orlich et al., 1985). For Perrot (1982), “in fact it may well be the most important activity in which the teacher engages [in]…Teachers certainly rely on question asking as a major part of their teaching repertoire” (p. 41). According to Ondiek (1974), questions constitute about one-third of classroom discourse and teachers ask 86 percent of the questions in the classroom. English being a language, there is need to emphasize oral questioning because this enhances mastery of the language by students based on the principal that practice makes perfect. Despite the fact that there is no doubt that...
questions are crucial in the performance of both teachers and learners, this will depend on their types and functions in addition to skill and care in their use. With the emphasis in educational goals shifting from mere acquisition of facts and information to development of reflective thinking and intelligent manipulation of materials (Nacino-Brown et al., 1982; Ole Takona, 1996), the technique of questioning has become even more vital for the teacher. When considered in the context of grammar, this concept should be manifested not through mere memorization, recall and items of structure, but through involvement of the students in active participation and the provision of opportunities for the student to listen, to manipulate syntactical elements and use language naturally to communicate real meanings in circumstances which approximate real life situations (Ipara, 2003). Ipara further argues that there are many opportunities in a typical lesson for guiding students towards reflective thinking, listening to, and production of grammatical elements as means to meaningful learning. Indeed, of all methods available to a teacher for moving students towards oral conversation, questioning is the quickest and the easiest (Stevick, 1982). Ole Takona (1996) argues that teachers who ask challenging questions encourage their students to think at a higher level than teachers who ask low-level questions.

These arguments clearly highlight the fact that oral questioning is just one of the skills used in teaching, which can only be effective if used well and along other teaching techniques. According to Kogan (1976), “English is the heart of the National Curriculum. All other learning depends crucially upon the mastery of the fundamental skills of the English language, which are vital not only for educational purposes …but…also for our economic growth and competitiveness” (p. 80). English is hereby underlined not only as an international language but also an important language based on the role it plays in the country’s economy. The Ministry of Education (1995) announced that “English is the medium of instruction in Kenyan schools,” which shows the importance of the subject both in our curriculum and as a service subject. It is the latter statement which highlights the function of English in the system of education. The purposes of English are varied, and include the fact that “the school leavers will require good English in a large variety of professional, commercial and day to day transactions in the Kenyan and International environment” (Barasa, 2005, p. 10). Eshiwani (as cited in Barasa, 2005) reiterates that “English is there…to facilitate discussion among many African states” (p. 10).

English, like all other foreign languages that are official languages, is taught and learnt in Kenya to achieve several objectives that include: to develop the learner’s intellectual powers; to increase the learner’s personal culture by reading literature and philosophy; to increase the learner’s knowledge on how language works; to teach to the learner a language so that he/she can do research, and to bring to a better understanding of international issues (Ministry of Education, 1994). These objectives are found in other African states that have embraced English as a medium of instruction (Barasa, 2005). However, there are other scholars who are very critical of the African governments’ language policies with regard to the choice of foreign languages as media of instruction. Rubagumya (1994), for instance, believes that the present language policies and practices in Africa lead to the entrenchment of the status quo. That Africa’s language policies and practices have found themselves into this position because of the relationship between language and power. He, however, is aware that Africans do not need to reject English and French altogether.

But as Barasa (2005) notes, there are others who take this debate further and insist that English and French or any other foreign language should not have a place in the school curriculum because of their socio-political ideological influence. In the Kenyan context, one cannot underscore the role of English in cementing national unity. In multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies such as Kenya, English facilitates the needed mobility for students among the different provinces (Barasa, 2005). English, therefore, “promotes uniformity of teacher education and all national curricula” (p. 12).

**Purposes of Questioning**

In the classroom, questions are used for a number of purposes. By understanding the range of purposes teachers can expand their use of questioning in instruction. Among other purposes, Kissock and Iyortsuun (1984, p. 6) state that questions can be used to:

1. Develop processes of thinking and guide inquiry and decision-making
2. Acquire and clarify information, answer concerns, and develop skills
3. Determine knowledge students bring to class so lessons can be made to meet their needs
4. Provide motivation by encouraging active participation in learning
5. Lead students to consider new ideas and make use of ideas already learned
6. Help students clarify their ideas, structure their study, and learn about things that interest them
7. Encourage students to ask their own questions
8. Gain information from pupils on which to judge their performance and understanding
9. Provoke students and teachers to share ideas they have
10. Help teachers assess the effectiveness of their own teaching

**Types of Questions**
Questions can be categorised in many ways. According to Bloom (1956), we have low-level questions that emphasize memory and recall of information. High-level questions call for complex and abstract thinking. Low-level and high-level questions form the cognitive domain questions concerned with intellectual understanding, which forms the basis on which oral questions will be analysed in this paper. Divergent questions demand no specific answer. Convergent questions demand specific answers. There are also written and oral questions. Written are typically presented on homework assignments, worksheets, in textbooks and readings and on examinations of all kinds. Oral questions are statements which elicit obligatory verbal and non-verbal responses from a learner through teacher-led drills or one-to-one, small-group, and large group discussion.

The Major Categories in Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) are as discussed below.

1. **Knowledge** of terminology; specific facts; ways and means of dealing with specifics (conventions, trends and sequences, classifications and categories, criteria, methodology); universals and abstractions in a field (principles and generalizations, theories and structures). Knowledge is (here) defined as the remembering (recalling) of appropriate, previously learned information.
   - Defines; describes; enumerates; identifies; labels; lists; matches; names; reads.
2. **Comprehension**: Grasping (understanding) the meaning of informational materials.
   - Classifies; cites; converts; describes; discusses; estimates; explains; generalizes.
3. **Application**: The use of previously learned information in new and concrete situations to solve problems that have single or best answers.
   - Acts; administers; articulates; assesses; charts; collects; computes; constructs.
4. **Analysis**: The breaking down of informational materials into their component parts, examining (and trying to understand the organizational structure of) such information to develop divergent conclusions by identifying motives or causes, making inferences, and/or finding evidence to support generalizations.
   - Breaks down; correlates; diagrams; differentiates; discriminates; distinguishes.
5. **Synthesis**: Creatively or divergently applying prior knowledge and skills to produce a new or original whole.
   - Adapts; anticipates; categorizes; collaborates; combines; communicates.

6. **Evaluation**: Judging the value of material based on personal values/opinions, resulting in an end product, with a given purpose, without real right or wrong answers.
   - Appraises; compares & contrasts; concludes; criticizes; critiques; decides.

**Guidelines in Asking Questions**
Good questioning is both a methodology and an art; there are certain rules to follow that have been known to apply in most cases, but good judgment is also needed. Below are four main guidelines in asking questions.

**Wait-time**
This is the interval between asking a question and the student’s response. A study by Rowe (1974) indicates that the average amount of time teachers wait is 1 second. Increasing the wait-time to 3-4 seconds has several benefits, such as: Length of response increases, unsolicited but appropriate responses increase, failure to respond decreases, confidence increases, speculative responses increase, student-to-student responses increase, evidence-inference statements increase, student questions increase and responses from students rated by teacher as relatively slow increase (op cit: p. 81).

**Directing**
The recommended strategy in directing questions to students is to ask the question and then call a student’s name, because more students will think about the question (Ornstein, 1995). Research on classroom management also confirms that it is better to be unpredictable in calling on students to answer questions than to follow a predictable order (Evertson et al., as in Ornstein, 1995, p. 178). The research also indicates that calling on non-volunteers can be effective as long as students who are called on can answer the question most of the time.

**Redirecting and Probing**
If a student’s response to a question is incorrect or inadequate, an effective strategy for the teacher is not to provide the answer, but to redirect the question to another student or to probe for a better answer from the same student. Redirecting the question is better for high-achieving students, but probing is better for low-achieving students. In probing, the teacher stays with the same student, asking for clarification, rephrasing the question or asking related questions, and restating the student’s ideas. It is important not to overdo it lest it should become a cross-examination (Ruggiero, 1992).

**Commenting and Praising**
It is generally agreed that honest praise increases achievement and motivation. Positive reactions can simply mean a smile, nod of approval or brief comment (“Good”, “Correct”, “That’s true”) indicating approval or acceptance. Phoney praise or too much praise can have detrimental effects.
Criticisms and disapproval can also have a detrimental effect on student achievement (Dillon, 1981, p. 136). Criticism is justified when the answer is wrong or the behaviour is interfering with the rules or the procedures of the classroom – however, it is not only what you say that counts, but how you say it, and how you follow up.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
The study was limited to responses that were obtained from the questionnaires, the interviews and observations. Since the study sought information on oral questioning as a teaching strategy, it was possible that teachers could not be willing to divulge information on their weaknesses. To overcome this, the author, thus, used observations. In addition, some of the questionnaires were not returned making it difficult to draw the entire picture of the challenges of using the oral questioning technique. Nevertheless, the author used the information obtained from the three methods to corroborate the responses.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The study was conducted in Eldoret Municipality, Uasin Gishu County in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. The study mainly employed the mixed methods research design. This design involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process (Creswell, 2003). It focuses on collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a series of studies. Its premise is that the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than can either approach. The participants in the study were all Form 3 students, English teachers and head teachers of the selected schools in the municipality, the inspector of schools and the District Education Officer (DEO) in charge of Uasin Gishu County. The study relied on a sample size of 180 students drawn from six secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality. First, the researcher used stratified random sampling to select 3 public and 3 private secondary schools within the Municipality. This was followed by a systematic random sampling to select 30 students from each school. From a total of 686 Form 3 students in the six schools, 90 were selected from each category.

The author used a questionnaire for students; the Form 3 English teachers had their lessons observed and tape-recorded and were later given a questionnaire after the observation. Heads of the English departments, heads of the selected schools, and the DEO all responded to key informant interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were employed. Qualitative analysis involved the derivation of explanations and making of interpretations of the findings based on descriptions. The concern was on description of patterns, singularities or uniqueness in the data collected.

RESULTS
The Use of Oral Questioning
The respondents were asked to give their views on oral questioning. It was important to find out whether teachers use oral questions in a class session or not. Out of the total number of respondents 173(96.1%) indicated “Yes” and 7(3.9%) indicated “No”. Teachers indicated that 18(100%) used oral questions. These results are almost similar to those of the learners.

Types of Oral Questions
Oral questions can be divided into different types. For the purpose of the study, they were divided into “Academic fact” (recall questions), “Academic opinion” (thought-provoking questions) and “Non academic.” From the study, 123(68.3%) of the respondents said they were asked “Academic fact” questions, 52(28.9%) said they were asked “Academic opinion” questions and 5(2.8%) said they are asked “Non academic questions”. This shows that the questions posed to the learners are mostly “Academic Fact” type of questions which require learners to recall what they have been taught. For example:

“What do the initials VCT stand for?”
“Academic opinion” questions are thought-provoking and are not as common as the academic fact questions. For instance:

“Any example of irregular verb?”
“Non academic” questions were the least asked. Some example of such questions are:

“The people this side are very dead today. You did not take tea?”

These results seem to tally with those of observation and tape-recording where the total number of questions asked in the classroom session was divided into the aforementioned types and their percentages determined. The results showed that 524 (77%) of the questions were “Academic fact” (convergent), 114 (17%) were “Academic opinion” (divergent), 26 (4%) were “Non-academic” and 16(2%) were “evaluative.”

Nature of Oral Questions
Views on oral questions also sought to find out how the respondents rated the nature of oral questions asked. Out of the total number of respondents, 31(17%) said the questions were “Easy”, 34(19%) “Difficult” 6(3.5%) said they “Did not know” how to rate the questions asked and 6(3.5%) said the questions were “Very difficult”. This means that a majority of the questions the learners were asked were “Easy” and “Very easy” as represented by 134(74%). Those who said they were “Difficult”
were 34(19%), a smaller percentage compared to that of “Easy”.

Pausing for Answers
It was important to find out whether the learners were given time to think about their responses after being asked a question. This is sometimes called wait-time (pause) or think-time. From the study, out of the total number of respondents, 90(50%) reported that teachers paused for “0-2 seconds” before calling a student’s name after asking a question, 54(30%) said the teacher paused for “2-3 seconds”, 22(12%) for “3-4 seconds” and 14(8%) for “more than 4 seconds”. The results show that half of the respondents were in agreement that the “Pause” lasted “0-2 seconds”. Another 54(30%) said the pause lasted “2-3 seconds.” This could mean that the pause given to the learners is not enough to enable them to think of the response. During the study, it was observed in the classroom that instead of pausing to give time to the student to think of the response, most teachers either repeated the question or allowed for instantaneous chorus answers.

The results on this issue are summarised in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pause</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>0-2 seconds</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3 seconds</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-4 seconds</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 4 seconds</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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Frequency of Asking Oral Questions
The author went further to find out how “Frequently oral questions were asked.” The responses showed the statistics of the findings that 68(37.8%) of the respondents said they were asked an oral question “After every 2 minutes”, 18(10%) “After every 1 minute”, 29(16.1%) “After more than 4 minutes”, 33(18.3%) “After every 3 minutes”, and 32(17.8%) “After every 4 minutes”. These statistics show that most questions in a class session, 86(47.8%), are asked “After every 1 and 2 minutes.” “After every 3 and 4 minutes” were 33(18.3%) and 32(17.8%) respectively. These results infer that during a class session, learners are asked a question at a frequency between every 1 and 2 minutes.

The results from the teachers questionnaire seem to tally with these results as 10(58%) of them reported that they asked a question “After every minute”. Furthermore, classroom observation and tape-recording of 12 lessons revealed that a total of 680 questions were asked in 370 minutes, an average of 1.8 questions per minute.

Factors Affecting the Use of Oral Questions
It was important to find out whether or not “Limited time to cover the syllabus” as a factor hindered oral questioning. As shown by the results, 69(38.3%) strongly agreed that limited time to cover syllabus was a constraint, 54(30%) agreed, 26(14.5%) disagreed and 18(10.0%) strongly disagreed. From the table, it can be deduced that a majority of the respondents, 123(68.3%), agreed that “Limited time to cover the syllabus” was a factor that hindered oral questioning. Those who disagreed were 44(24.5%). According to the new syllabus, the time allocated for the teaching of English language in Forms 1 and 2 is 6 lessons and 8 lessons in Forms 3 and 4 (KIE, 2005). Since the respondents were in agreement that “Syllabus coverage” is a factor, one can say that the time allocated for English language teaching in secondary school is not enough, in this case the learners may not be asked oral questions because of lack of time.

Teachers Comments about Students’ Answers to Oral Questions
The study sought to find out the comments, which teachers give after a student’s response. The results show that 97(53.9%) of the respondents reported that the teacher never gives “A brief positive comment” after a student response, 47(26.1%) said the teachers rarely did so, 23(12.8%) said the teachers did so but occasionally, while 10(5.6%) said they frequently did so.

Respondents were asked to say whether or not the teacher “Criticized” them when they gave a wrong response. The results of the study show that 72(40.0%) of the respondents said the teacher never “criticizes,” 42(23.3%) rarely did so, 30(16.7%) do so occasionally and 18(10.0%) frequently did so. These results show that though a few respondents, 48(26.7%), were “criticized,” a majority, 104(63.3%) were not “criticized or disapproved”. One can infer from these results that “criticism” is not a common practice by the English language teachers. In addition, 20(5.5%) received a negative comments from the teacher. One can therefore, infer from these results that teachers could be aware of the detrimental effects of using “Negative comments or criticism.” Further analysis of responses given by the teachers during observation showed that 476(70.0%) of the questions asked received no comments, 117(17%) were a repetition of student responses by the teacher and comments like “Okay”, “Yes” or “Yeah” took 79(17%).

The study further looked at the correcting procedures employed by the teacher. The statistics indicate that 95(52.8%) of the respondents said the “Teacher corrects all mistakes” frequently, 42(23.3%) said they did so occasionally, 25(13.9%) rarely and 15 (8.3%) never did so. This means a majority of teachers “correct all the mistakes” made by the learners as represented by 137(76.1%).

327
Another area in oral questioning which the study sought to find out is how oral questions are directed to the learners. From the study, 61(33.9%) of the respondents affirmed that the teacher never “calls a name of the learner” before asking a question, 46(25.5%) said the teacher rarely did so, 45(25.0%) said it was done frequently and 27(15.0%) said it was done occasionally. The results show that although 107(59.4%) of the respondents said the teacher avoided “Calling a student’s name before asking a question”, another 72(40.0%) said they did. These results were almost similar to those from the teacher questionnaire where 11(64.7%) of the teachers said that they “call a name before asking a question” while 5(29.4%) said they did not. Directing oral questions by “calling on volunteer” after asking a question was another area the study sought to find out about. The results show that 93(51.7%) of the respondents reported that the teacher frequently did so, 40(22.2%) said occasionally, 31(17.2%) said the teacher rarely did such a thing, and 13(7.2%) said never. These results show that a majority of the respondents, 133(73.9%), reported that the teacher occasionally and frequently “calls a volunteer after asking a question”. This is in agreement with teacher results where a majority 12(70.6%) reported that they frequently “Call on a volunteer after asking a question”. Furthermore, observation results showed that volunteers responded to a majority of the questions asked.

“Calling on non-volunteers after asking a question” was seen as something rare by 52(28.9%) of the respondents, 38(21.0%) said it was done occasionally, 59(32.8%) said the teachers never did so as 21(11.7%) said it was done frequently. This shows that few teachers “call on non-volunteers” to respond to their questions as represented by 39(32.7%) of the respondents as those who do not were represented by 111(61.7%). In addition, observations revealed that of the questions asked, very few were directed to non-volunteers.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the study reveal that oral questioning is a strategy that is utilized by most teachers. Teachers responding to “whether they use oral questions in a class session” or not indicated they all asked oral questions. That oral questioning is utilized by most teachers was also confirmed by Orlich et al. (1985) and Kissock and Iyotsuun (1984). Ondiek (1974) also reiterates that questions constitute about one-third of classroom discourse and teachers ask 86% of the questions in the classroom. It was further confirmed from the results of the study that teachers ask “recall questions more often than “thought-provoking” ones. Higher levels of thinking are required if pupils and adults are to solve problems that demand reflective decision-making. The idea is to reach a balance between the two types of questions as proposed by Ornstein (1995, p. 165) so as to avoid such comments by Ndirangu (2005) in an article entitled *Lets review our language policy* in the *Daily Nation* that “graduates of Kenyan Universities have been accused of having appalling English language skills and inability to ask or answer oral questions appropriately” (p. 9).

The results of the study revealed that teachers of English language do not utilize the expected guidelines of oral questions. Firstly, teachers do not pause to give time to the learners to think about the response. Waiting for 3–4 seconds has several beneficial effects on students’ responses. Instead of pausing, it was observed that most teachers either repeat the questions or allow for instantaneous chorus answers; a practice that inhibits the teacher from getting feedback from individual students, in this way, the slow learners are disadvantaged.

Secondly, the practice of calling the name of the learner before asking a question prevents other learners from thinking about the response. The question should be posed, the learners given time to think, and then call a student’s name. Directing questions to volunteers only limits the teacher to call on high achieving students more often than low-achieving ones. Non-volunteers should be encouraged to participate in a classroom session. The recommended strategy is to be unpredictable in calling on students to respond to questions than to follow a predictable order since more students will think about the question.

Time to cover the syllabus was seen as one of the constraints in asking oral questions. In an ideal situation, the English language teacher is supposed to handle only two classes: in the extreme, three. When a teacher handles more than three classes, as was discovered during the study, the teacher lacks the time to put oral questioning guidelines into practice. Language teachers need participatory experiences to focus attention on the fundamental concepts in language teaching while sharpening observation skills and ability to analyse and evaluate classroom events. This will ensure that a language teacher has a combination of knowledge and skills required for teaching and the low performance in English language (KNEC, 2005) will be improved.

The study showed that teachers correct most of their students’ wrong responses. Giving the answers by the teacher to students’ incorrect responses will not help the student achieve much in learning. An effective strategy for the teacher is to redirect the question to another student or to probe for a better response from the same student. This is positively co-related with increased students’ achievement. Brief comments like “Good”, “Correct” or “That’s true” indicating approval or acceptance should be used as these
increase student achievements and motivations. Repeating student responses is a practice that not only wastes time but also causes the class to ignore their peers as sources of information and subtly conditions the class to wait until the word comes from the fount of all wisdom. The teacher should avoid any other comment without a positive connotation, for example, “Ok”, “Yes” and “Yeah”. Though giving negative comments was a rare practice among the teachers it should be discouraged for those who still use them. Students’ achievement can be affected by criticism and it can also curtail their asking questions or responding to questions. Chorus answers that characterized student response should be avoided, as the teacher cannot attend to student’s individual needs when they all shout the answer.

CONCLUSION

Firstly, it is clear that teachers’ awareness of the oral questions they ask in the classroom is limited. The study revealed that this awareness is limited to only the lower level of classifying questions. Secondly, secondary school teachers of English do not formulate or use oral questions for any specific purpose, that is, they do not put the awareness into practice. It seems that teachers ask oral questions spontaneously without reflecting on their source, purpose, structure, style of enactment or expected learner response. Perhaps that is the reason some teachers said students have an attitude towards English lessons.

Thirdly, teachers ask numerous oral questions during the teaching of English language. The findings illustrate that this amounted approximately to 2 oral questions per minute. A similar trend seems to link these questions. The number of oral questions at an average of 57 questions per lesson is probably not surprising for content lessons. However, this is low for language classrooms that are the only reliable opportunity for exposure to target language input and output in situations where this is scarce outside the classroom. The revelation that lower order oral questions pre-dominate English language lessons is of great concern because of the pedagogical and practical implication this has. Apart from failing to spur learners to ask and respond to higher order oral questions, which is a way of facilitating language acquisition, the propensity of low order oral questions and responses implants in the learners the false impression that such is appropriate verbal behaviour to emulate.

Another conclusion from the study is that teachers are not following the guidelines of asking oral questions. Teachers do not pause to give learners time to respond to the questions. Most teachers call on volunteers to respond to their questions and some of them call a name of a learner before asking a question. Teachers also correct most of the learners wrong responses and instead of commenting positively to a correct response by a student, they either repeat students response or give such comments as “ok”,” yes” or “yeah” which do not have positive connotation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, it seems desirable for teachers to strive to harness their perception in order to improve their questioning behaviour. This has the potential of enriching the oral questions they ask. Similarly, this will enhance the oral responses learners provide as a way of not only boosting the language input and output which facilitates the learning of English language but also as a means of performing better in the subject. Improvement can be achieved through the teacher’s own initiative by way of self-academic and professional development resulting from current publications on oral questioning and responding. It was further noted, teachers rely on class textbooks as a major source of English language content. It was also disclosed that teachers depend on the same textbooks not only as a direct source of classroom oral questions but also as a fountain from which to draw and formulate oral questions. It is recommended that textbook writers and publishers include in their texts a good repertoire of questions which when used by teachers may provide a comprehensive input as well as elicit appropriate oral responses. The potential of such questions to provide rich language production exercises in addition to facilitating communicative language use in the classroom is immense.

In addition, there is need to organise frequent seminars, workshops and in-service courses for teachers. The purpose of such activities should, among others, specifically focus on enlightening, refreshing and sharpening teachers’ knowledge and skills of questioning in relation to current developments in theory and practice.

Lastly, the information gathered during the study underscores the importance of classroom research. This could be done in three dimensions: by teachers investigating their own classrooms or lessons taught by their colleagues or by analysing learners’ observations of their own teaching behaviour. Through such studies, it is possible for teachers to gain insights into their own classroom behaviour particularly those pertaining to oral questioning and responding and conceptualising what they see. Teachers may then isolate fruitful practices from harmful ones.

REFERENCES


