From Assessment to Learning: The Teaching of English Beyond Examinations

Lilian I. Vikiru

From Assessment to Learning: The Teaching of English Beyond Examinations

Lilian I. Vikiru

Institute for Educational Development, Aga Khan University, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

The backwash of testing on teaching can be positive or negative. This article is based on the findings of a study carried out in Kenya on strengthening the development of literacy in English among primary school children, which established that the learners performed poorly on skills that were not directly tested in the conventional examinations. Interventions used in improving teaching, learning, and assessment to target communicative competence are discussed in the article.

Key words: *assessment, cross-cultural education/multicultural education, English as a second language education, evaluation, measurement, testing.*

The various traditions that have influenced the teaching of English all over the world also are evident in the history of teaching English in Kenya. Against the background of being a former British colony, Kenya adopted English as its second and official language. This placement, along with the position of English as an important international language, has served to further entrench the importance and use of the English language in Kenya. Emphasizing the extent of English desirability, a 2000 study on language policy and practice in Kenya found that most of the study participants, who were stakeholders in education, indicated they preferred their children to learn and be taught in English (Muthwii 2002). The research further revealed that the reason stakeholders favored English was because literacy in English was considered a gateway to better economic prospects (Muthwii 2002).

Despite the coveted status and attention to the English language, students' performance as assessed in national examinations has consistently been dismally poor (Bunyi 2008). Therefore, it is worth investigating why performance in English is unsatisfactory. According to the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education 2008 results,

Address correspondence to Lilian I. Vikiru, Institute for Educational Development, Aga Khan University, Salama House, P.O. Box 125, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
E-mail: lillian.vikiru@aku.edu

English registered the lowest mean of 42 percent for the objective paper and 40 percent for composition. These results suggest that understanding the link between teaching the language, learning the language, and assessing that learning may be significant to improvement in competency. Investigating these areas could provide useful insights because testing tends to influence what is taught.

Some studies have been carried out to investigate the feasibility of alternative modes of assessment as a deviation from norm-referenced testing. Such studies include the English Literacy Norms (ELN) project of 2003 through 2008 for primary schools, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation (Gathumbi, Bwire, Mogaka et al. 2009). From the findings of this study, it was apparent that a criterion-referenced mode, which was being proposed and trialed in the project, better impacted the teaching and learning of English at the primary school level.

Building from the background of student performance and the foundational statistics of the studies mentioned, this article discusses the following topics: the need to teach English beyond what is required for examinations, the case for achieving communicative competence, the use of benchmarking to target communicative competence, the application of norms-based strategies and task-based learning to achieve communicative competence, the development of autonomy in the language learner, the consideration of alternative modes of language assessment, and the implications of these proposed pedagogical and assessment strategies for policy and practice.

The Case for Communicative Competence

In all language-teaching programs, the aim is to develop a certain level of competence in the target language. Some programs may target what has been referred to as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS). According to Cummins (1996), BICS is the proficiency one needs to participate in face-to-face interaction. This kind of proficiency is greatly aided by context and is, therefore, less linguistically demanding because the language user is aided by cues, feedback, and paralinguistic features in the context of interaction.

Other programs may require higher proficiency in context-reduced communication. Successful communication depends on the user's knowledge of the language itself. Cummins (1996) referred to this type of proficiency as cognitive academic language proficiency, which requires language to be used not only as a tool of communication, but also as a tool of thinking. In both cases, using language for communicative purposes is necessary. Therefore, it is easy to appreciate the case for communicative language teaching; communication is the desired outcome for whichever program one may choose.

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to communicate competently, not the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker does. Communicative competence is made up of four competence areas: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic (Canale 1983; Bachman and Palmer 1996). *Linguistic competence* is knowing how to use the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of a language (Canale 1983; Bachman 1990). *Linguistic competence*, also referred to as grammatical competence, poses the following questions: What words do I use?, and How do I put them into phrases and

sentences? *Sociolinguistic competence* is knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately given the setting, topic, and relationships among the people communicating (Halliday 1973). Sociolinguistic competence requires consideration of the following questions: Which words and phrases fit this setting and this topic?, How can I express a specific attitude (courtesy, authority, friendliness, or respect) when I need to?, and How do I know what attitude another person is expressing? *Discourse competence* is knowing how to interpret the larger context, as well as how to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole (Halliday and Hassan 1976; Bachman 1990; Ranney 1992). This competence asks, How are words, phrases, and sentences put together to create conversations, speeches, e-mail messages, and newspaper articles? *Strategic competence* is knowing how to recognize and repair communication breakdowns, how to work around gaps in one's knowledge of the language, and how to learn more about the language and in context (Bachman 1990). Strategic competence involves awareness and knowledge on whether or not the speaker or listener is understood and how to respond when there is misunderstanding. It addresses the ability of the communicator to express ideas when unsure of the name of something or the right verb form to use.

When communicative competence is the goal of a language-teaching program, the aim of the program goes beyond passing examinations. The target of teaching language becomes one of equipping the learner with the ability to competently use language in different contexts. It requires that the program include the use of grammar to facilitate linguistic competence, various sociolinguistic aspects that acknowledge language is a social or cultural phenomenon, discourse strategies to enable the language user to effectively engage in communication with other language users, and strategic competence that assists language users in navigating their way in different situations, considering that language is a tool for communication, thinking, and manipulation.

At the end of the primary school course in Kenya, it is expected that the learners can fairly competently express themselves in English. For a majority of the learners, however, their competence in the four skills is far below the desirable level (Maundu 2008). This state of affairs is what prompted the second phase of the ELN. During this project, the researchers, in collaboration with various stakeholders, sought to use a norms-based approach, task-oriented strategies, and criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) for teaching English in selected Kenyan primary schools.

Targeting Communicative Competence Through Benchmarking

Benchmarking, as the process of setting standards for performance according to specified criteria, has been used in education in many countries for a variety of purposes, including improving the quality of education, setting clear criteria for interpreting performance, and streamlining instruction. In the case of Kenya, the basis for setting benchmarks or norms was to provide more informative ways of interpreting learners' levels of competence in English. The norms were developed through a process of analyzing various documents including the curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks. In addition, various stakeholders were consulted on their expectations of learners' actual performance using English to accomplish various tasks (Gathumbi 2008b).

Benchmarking was deemed useful for targeting communicative competence because it directly linked learning targets to community expectations, considering that learners were expected to use the language in the community and beyond. The stakeholders did not express their expectations in terms of grades. For example, they expected the primary school learner to do the following in English:

a)   *take instructions regarding tasks the learners do at home and at school;*
b)   *understand assignments given;*
c)   *take and correctly interpret instructions when sent on errands or asked for something;*
d)   *take instructions to operate simple equipment;*
e)   *prepare a meal from instructions given;*
f)   *identify customers' problems by listening to the explanations given by customers;*
g)   *follow debates conducted in English; and*
h)   *follow television and radio advertisements. (Gathumbi et al. 2003).*

Since grades were not given, only the levels of ability to function in the language were important. This context required a combination of pedagogical strategies, specially designed resource materials, and in-service training of teachers in the norms-based approach and criterion-referenced testing based on the norms developed. The pedagogical strategies used in the study included the use of dialogue in group work, role-play, and individual tasks that closely related to normal, everyday language-use situations. This holistic intervention resulted in better classroom interaction that had greater pupil–pupil and teacher–pupil interaction. Further, learners enjoyed acquiring English vocabulary because of the diversity of activities. This approach also led to better coverage and integration of skills. Another definite advantage of the norms-based approach was increasing the learners' confidence in using English because the lessons and enrichment activities provided considerable opportunities to practice both inside and outside the classroom (Gathumbi, Bwire, Mogaka et al. 2009). In this research, benchmarking successfully helped target and develop communicative competence.

Developing Communicative Competence Through Norms-Based Pedagogical Strategies and Task-Based Learning

The researchers in the ELN project used the norms-based approach to interpret and implement the syllabus. Resource materials were developed based on the benchmarks. In these resource materials, each norm (benchmark) was explained—the linguistic content, functional application, and relationship to other norms were outlined. Further, the norm was then divided up into the sub-skills (referred to as competences) that were listed within the norm, along with examples of how those sub-skills could be realized. As an example, the speaking skill included norms such as talking about oneself. This norm was explained and broken down into sub-skills, such as introducing oneself, which included real-time language models of the task—as in how people introduce themselves. Each norm then listed performance indicators that the teacher used to assess the learner's competence. These indicators were helpful to the teacher in developing test items for formative evaluation because they directly related to the requisite competences. Since the teacher

was expected to use the resource materials for teaching, various engagement activities were explained and expected to be used. These activities contextualized the norm and exemplified its realization in other subjects as well. The inclusion of these activities was to ensure that language was taught for meaningful communication, in a pupil-centered approach. In addition to the engagement activities, the teacher was expected to provide pupils with enrichment activities that involved further practice outside the classroom. The enrichment activities involved learners seeking information from peers, siblings, parents, or others, as well as non-classroom sources. Through these enrichment activities, pupils applied the norms outside the classroom in real-time, language-use situations. They also promoted parental involvement and support of the learning process. The resource instructional materials included suggestions for resources that could be used in the teaching of a particular norm. These resource materials supplemented the core textbooks and were designed to aid the teacher during preparation, teaching, and assessment (Bwire 2008; Gathumbi 2008a; Mujidi 2008; Vikiru 2008).

The whole orientation of basing the teaching on the norms was aimed at helping pupils develop relevant skills in language through exposure, controlled practice, and free practice. The learners were not left on their own to figure out how certain grammar concepts and structures were applicable in real-time language use. These concepts and structures were contextualized, and the learners practiced their usage in meaningful contexts. It was expected that whatever pupils learned would be better mastered because of the hands-on, minds-on approach.

Task-based learning is premised on the principle that as learners engage in performing the task using language, they are not only exposed to language structure but also to opportunities to practice the language. Task-based learning as proposed in the ELN study was developed from the norms established by the researchers prior to the intervention. It was expected that the activities (or tasks) targeted specific sub-skills or a combination of competences and could be evaluated on the norm. In addition, through enrichment activities, learners were expected to appropriately deploy the same skills to other relevant contexts outside the school and classroom. This would take care of the lack of congruency between what learners are taught in class and their ability to display the same competence in normal real-time, language-use situations.

In addition to realizing the norms-based approach, task-based learning has other benefits. One is motivating learners. Motivation is an essential requirement in the language classroom. Regardless of the type of motivation (extrinsic or intrinsic), language learners need sufficient motivation to learn a target language. Part of the motivation is derived from the satisfaction learners feel upon successfully completing a given task. Second, learners look forward to the completion of the task as a goal, making language learning meaningful. In the ELN study, the benchmarks provided a goal for the learners.

Developing Autonomy in the Learner

Successful language learners should take responsibility for their learning. Developing learner autonomy is inevitable if the aim of a given program is communicative competence. Kenyan pupils are used to teacher-centered methodology, which does not encourage the learner to take charge of their learning. A study carried out among students using the

task-based methodology reported that students found it strange to be involved in the planning and assessment of their own learning (Ingonga 2001). The proposed norms-based methodology and task-based learning requires greater learner participation than is currently the case. According to Little (1995), learners benefit from task-oriented instruction if they are autonomous. Learners are considered autonomous when they are able to perform given tasks (1) without assistance, (2) beyond the immediate context in which they acquired the knowledge and skills that constitute the aim of learning (i.e., outside the school or English classroom context), and (3) flexibly, taking into account particular circumstances (i.e., deploying the knowledge and skills acquired to solve other tasks in various environments at different times; Little 1999).

In formal language-learning situations, autonomy is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action … presupposing, but also entailing that the learners' stage of development is of a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of their learning" (Little 1991, 4). Learner autonomy is crucial for the development of communicative competence. The learner must be able to appropriately apply language skills acquired within the classroom in other relevant contexts. This is the basis for the development and use of enrichment activities proposed in the resource materials in the ELN project. They provide the learner with opportunities to relate classroom-acquired skills to out-of-class contexts with meaningful results.

Alternative Assessment—Importance of Criterion-Referenced Formative Assessment

It has been established that assessment has a backwash effect on instruction (Spolsky 1994; Gates 1995; Cheng, Watanabe, and Curtis 2004). Backwash effect has been defined as "the influence of testing on teaching and learning" (Gates 1995, 101). In many contexts, teaching is carried out for the sole purpose of obtaining good examination results (Jansen 2007). Similarly, a test can be perceived to have an effect at two levels: (1) the microlevel, affecting the individual teacher and learner; and (2) the macrolevel, affecting the society and the education system. Therefore, it is evident that assessment, in whatever form it takes, does effect instruction.

In the case of teaching English in Kenya, if the test assesses sentence structures, teachers will teach structures, regardless of what the syllabus specifies as the general objective of teaching English. It is expected that the learners will, in some way, convert these structures into actual language use in various contexts. This partially explains why a learner may have good grades in English but performance (real-time language use) does not equal the grade, or vice versa, where a learner has a poor grade in English but impressive performance (language use), indicating that language structures were not mastered. From the 2003 ELN study, it was established that the stakeholders' interest in the learners' performance in the language was stated in terms of the kind of functions the learners could carry out in the language and not just the grades the learner earned.

The CRTs Used in the Study

In both the first and second phases of the ELN study, norms from criterion-referenced tests were isolated, competencies required for realization of the norm were analyzed, and specified performance indicators were used to set authentic tasks related to real-time,

language-use on the test papers. The test papers, thus, integrated various skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Information obtained from this kind of assessment was vital for instruction and not just grading. The tests were given in three papers as follows:

> Paper 1: listening and writing (grammar and vocabulary integrated)—administered to the whole class;
> Paper 2: listening, speaking, and reading (grammar and vocabulary integrated)—administered on a one-to-one basis; and
> Paper 3: reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary—administered to the whole class.

Of the three papers, Paper 3 was closest in design to the conventional examinations currently used.

Developing the Tests for the ELN Study

The tests were specifically designed for research purposes, measuring the learner's general knowledge of the English language against hypothesized norms. Hypothesized norms were based on the stakeholders' views, document analyses, and analyses of lessons (Gathumbi et al. 2003). Therefore, tests deviated from the usual teacher-made tests with which pupils were familiar. In addition, they integrated the four language skills with grammar and vocabulary—a mode also unfamiliar to the learners. The integration of skills, together with grammar and vocabulary, was deemed appropriate because it facilitated the testing of various skills through single-test items. The integrated approach also was considered suitable because it better reflected language use in real-time situations where skills and structures are not used or presented as discrete items. For every test item, specific norms were considered.

For example, Standard 3–Paper 3, Question 1 tested reading, writing, and vocabulary. It was based on norms for reading that required the pupils to demonstrate comprehension after reading silently, reading short stories and recognizing the sequence of events in a story, and being able to demonstrate their feelings about what they have read. It was based also on norms for grammar and vocabulary that required pupils to demonstrate the ability to infer the meanings of words from the context.

The pilot tests were scrutinized and reviewed by the research and development team, which was comprised of researchers from Kenyatta University, Kenya Institute of Education, Ministry of Education Science and Technology (Kenya), and Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). The performance indicators and competence levels for each test paper were set. For the competence levels, three levels were stipulated: desired competence level (at least 75 percent of the total mark), minimum competence level (at least 50 percent of the total mark), and below minimum level (less than 50 percent of the total mark).

Two sets of the test papers were developed for piloting. For the two sets, one third of the test items for Test Papers A and B were the same, and the rest were similar in focus (the norms) and level of difficulty. The tests were piloted in four districts to a sample of 68 schools (at least one third of the 200 schools sampled for the main study). The tests were piloted with one half of the sampled pupils taking papers from Set A and the other half

taking papers from Set B. The piloting was meant to test the suitability of the test items and also to establish the practical logistics of administering the tests (time, physical requirements, and clarity of instructions). The tests were revised and final papers compiled.

To ensure content validity, the various test items were based on the hypothesized norms, as well as tables of specification, to ascertain the coverage of various skills and different levels and types of questions. Validity was further gained by rephrasing vague questions. Scorer validity was achieved through team marking under the guidance of the research and development team. Reliability was ascertained by administering equivalent parallel tests (referred to as Test a and Test b) during the pilot stage. The final tests were found to be reliable as indicated in the reliability indexes of the different papers.

Lessons Learned From the Baseline Test Information

First, it was notable that the pupils performed poorly on test items that focused on skills not regularly tested in the conventional school examinations and national examinations, and vice versa; hence, Papers 1 and 2, which tested listening and speaking skills, recorded poor performance compared to Paper 3, which tested reading and writing. Testing by integrating the skills showed both the teachers and learners the importance and the relationships among the different language skills.

Second, learners also performed poorly on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation questions, but performed relatively better on knowledge and comprehension questions. This also reflected the mode of instruction that is common in Kenyan schools—that of rote learning and recall of facts and information.

For Paper 3 in which some language structures were directly tested, such as plurals, tenses, punctuation and use of articles, the pupils performed fairly well. However, the same structures were wrongly used in the composition questions that required students to construct their own sentences. The conventional school examinations and national examinations tend to test language structures as discrete items. This showed that the learners, though exposed to these structures during instruction, did not internalize their correct usage.

Fourth, pupils performed poorly on other literacy skills like reading and interpreting visuals, such as pictures and maps. During interviews later, most of them said that they did not expect a map in an English language test. This also reflected the generally narrow view of literacy adopted during the instruction of language as opposed to the expectations of shareholders (Gathumbi et al. 2003).

Fifth, learners performed extremely poorly in composition writing (mean marks 2.87 out of 15). Most learners exhibited common errors associated with composition writing such as incorrect spelling, wrong word order, mixing of pronouns, poor punctuation, wrong tenses, and poor plot development. Some errors in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling were observed to be regional, signaling a possible influence from the learners' first language. The poor performance in composition writing also reflected the lack of emphasis on this area during instruction, hence lack of guidance and practice (ascertained from the data gleaned during interviews with teachers and pupils, as well as observations of lessons being taught).

Finally, both the learners and teachers expressed surprise at the kind of tests that required them to relax and talk about their duties, express their opinions, and carry out simple instructions. These were considered unconventional because examinations and tests in Kenya are treated seriously and are a source of stress to both the teachers and learners.

The Interventions: Using Lessons Learned to Inform Instruction

From the baseline data, the research and development team developed various interventions: norms-based instruction (using the comprehensive literacy norms resource books for teachers), provision and use of literacy materials (books, charts, and audiotapes), criterion-referenced assessment for formative assessment, and the use of "Learn Language Skills" (LLS) events, another intervention that was meant to give learners an opportunity to practice using language in fun contexts. These events or activities included story-telling, poetry recitals, singing, reading, writing, and drama.

To monitor the impact of the suggested interventions, the schools were divided into two groups: experimental schools in which interventions were undertaken, and control schools with no interventions. Both groups participated in the tests. As part of the interventions, the teachers from the experimental schools were trained through a series of workshops on how to set authentic tasks for assessment based on the performance indicators for various norms and how to integrate assessment into instruction (formative assessment). The teachers also were trained on how to integrate the various skills in instruction, as well as assessment. This integration is reflective of language as it is used in normal real-time, language-use contexts.

Teachers also assessed learners during the LLS events. In some schools, these events were adapted for the whole school, not just the classes participating in the study. In such schools, reports indicated that the learners were more confident in using English, enjoyed participating in the activities, and were less stressed by the testing than the usual assessment and compulsory use of English—testing styles the learners consider punitive. The LLS events made the learning of English fun and accessible outside the designated English language lesson. Formative assessment had the advantage of directly feeding back into instruction, shaping teachers' plans for either the next lesson or remedial lessons.

Teachers were provided with draft copies of Comprehensive Literacy Norms (Gathumbi, Bwire, and Vikiru 2009) resource books, which explained the use of the norms for instruction and assessment. Not only were the norms stated in terms of expected skill or competence, then explained in terms of sub-skills, but for each norm, performance indicators (ways for the learner to demonstrate achievement) were derived. Each norm also provided an explanation of various activities for engaging learners during lessons. In addition, a description of enrichment activities and real-time, language-use experiences for practice outside the classroom were also supplied, along with suggestions of resources the teachers could use to teach a given norm.

Through a series of workshops, teachers were trained on how to execute the interventions too. The research and development team also gave sensitization workshops for key stakeholders—representatives from parents' associations, school management

committees, Ministry of Education officials, and national examinations officials. The Ministry of Education officials, together with the head teachers and their deputies, were further trained to provide support for monitoring and evaluation. The research and development team also visited schools to consult with and assist the teachers.

Comparison Between Pretest (2007) and Posttest (2008)

After one year of carrying out interventions in the experimental schools, the learners were again tested using the CRTs designed earlier. Researchers found the comparison of the learners' performance before and after the interventions to be informative (see Table 1).

According to the results in Table 1, there was a general improvement in all schools, with the exception of Ifaa in Papers 1 and 2, Githi in Paper 2, Tetu in Paper 2, and Baba in the composition. Githi and Ifaa were control schools.

Overall, there was a significant improvement in learner achievement in all the papers, with the most improvement observed in Paper 3 (probably an indication that the proposed interventions would have a positive impact on performance in English).

A similar observation was made in the comparison of provinces, indicating that there was marked improvement, especially in Paper 3. However, North Eastern province had an overall negative change of –0.77 in Paper 2 and posted the least improvement. Nairobi posted the highest improvement across the three papers.

For the standard four tests, similar comparisons were registered where there was an improvement in the performance in the posttest across the schools (see Table 2).

The performance in Grade 4 in 2008 across the papers was significantly better than in 2007, with the highest improvement being registered in Paper 3. However, some schools posted lower results than previously recorded; these included Ifaa, Ithi, Kaka, Kara, Kari, Kinu, Noma, and Muyu across the papers. Of these schools, Ifaa, Ithi, and Noma were control schools. The others were adversely affected during the post-election violence, which occasioned movement of teachers and pupils to and from these schools. This led to a change in the sample that had participated in the interventions.

Implications for Policy and Practice

It may be concluded that, based on the results of the study, it is possible to teach and examine English in a way that is closer to the way the language is used in real-time contexts. It was evident that this kind of teaching would still have a positive impact on overall performance in English judging from the results posted for Paper 3, which was closest to the usual way of testing.

It is also important to encourage the use of English beyond the designated English lessons. The learners need more opportunities to use the English language. These opportunities can be created through such activities as those described herein for LLS events. It makes learning and assessment enjoyable, which, in turn, motivates the learners to learn more.

Formative assessment that directly feeds back into instruction should be encouraged, and teachers should be trained to do this. Having established the influence of assessment on teaching, it is important that teachers carry out formative assessment. They also could

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Test Results Per School

School Pseudonym	Paper 1 2007	Paper 1 2008	Paper 2 2007	Paper 2 2008	Paper 3 2007	Paper 3 2008	Composition 2007	Composition 2008
BABA	9.577	14.7179	13.000	20.4000	19.538	26.5897	3.6410	3.1538
CHESI	5.060	13.8511	3.600	17.8500	15.071	25.5745	2.2683	6.8830
ERE	10.970	17.8710	13.818	19.7000	15.029	27.3906	3.5441	6.5781
GAN	6.250	8.3913	7.792	13.8000	5.012	14.4444	0.0750	2.3587
GIKU	9.329	16.2121	16.227	18.6000	19.500	27.8182	2.6316	6.8636
GITHI	9.025	13.3333	16.850	13.9500	20.137	26.5250	3.3500	5.8125
GITWE	8.441	12.6190	15.700	19.4000	19.221	25.1681	1.6029	5.3095
IFAA	10.077	8.3750	20.950	12.0500	18.700	21.3875	1.9750	2.1375
ITHI	11.750	15.1875	10.818	19.0714	20.310	25.8571	2.6429	6.1707
KAKA	13.685	17.0128	11.833	19.7273	17.435	29.1750	4.2391	5.8000
KAKU	8.671	14.9767	8.929	16.5000	15.143	26.2907	1.7738	3.5349
KARA	15.850	17.4238	24.330	24.5500	26.950	30.0811	6.6250	9.2162
KARI	10.986	14.1282	12.222	15.1667	18.319	22.8750	2.3194	5.4625
KANGI	10.525	15.4891	17.364	16.9000	19.713	26.4894	4.4000	6.3370
KATATU	8.908	15.4400	13.650	18.7778	19.103	28.1923	2.6711	6.2308
KIANYI	11.304	13.8636	13.700	18.3500	17.571	22.4697	2.8036	6.0606
KINU	9.013	13.7625	19.900	18.5000	20.512	27.7000	5.3375	6.7750
KIRO	10.575	14.7258	14.125	20.2500	21.862	27.7710	3.1000	6.1129
KIOKA	9.297	12.6591	15.682	15.0500	18.135	20.7385	1.8514	5.1154
LANGA	4.944	14.8182	8.950	20.6000	10.150	24.5833	1.2405	5.0833
MIGO	9.871	12.9583	17.929	20.2000	14.429	24.0000	1.0714	6.9625
NAMO	7.913	12.5000	14.100	13.5000	16.375	24.1923	3.5513	5.9231
MTO	8.803	13.4020	13.550	19.5700	17.537	25.9216	2.4512	6.1176
MUYU	15.475	16.9186	17.500	20.7000	24.500	29.8256	6.9875	9.3256
MWAKI	11.564	13.6333	16.292	16.2000	17.949	26.9783	0.9231	5.8804
MWARO	6.325	8.8837	6.969	18.9500	15.425	21.0560	0.7250	5.3452
MBUNE	9.687	13.7571	20.750	22.8000	16.975	21.9429	4.1500	5.6429
NYASA	14.475	18.8293	19.591	21.3000	22.460	26.0625	4.0925	8.4125
BETH	7.803	14.6136	18.389	20.3500	17.269	24.5227	2.7625	5.9091
TUET	8.988	10.5000	20.500	17.0000	13.088	22.3229	1.3000	3.5313
Total	9.676	13.9340	14.488	18.3488	17.609	25.1220	2.8798	5.7463

use various alternative modes, such as peer assessment and portfolios to record learners' progress.

Integrated assessment and teaching of skills demonstrated in the study were achievable and helpful for learners to develop balanced proficiency in all skills and also to learn

Table 2. Comparison of Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Performance

School Pseudonym	Paper 1		Paper 2		Paper 3	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
BABA	9.86	14.32	19.60	29.45	19.53	31.43
CHESI	7.58	12.02	14.39	25.10	14.22	24.65
ERE	6.57	13.93	17.60	25.80	12.15	28.33
GAN	10.18	10.21	11.88	24.78	7.46	14.41
GIKU	11.06	13.09	13.50	25.80	20.48	24.47
GITHI	10.67	11.19	20.55	22.45	24.28	25.86
GITWE	10.18	12.30	19.39	27.85	23.69	26.58
IFAA	7.63	8.65	23.00	15.95	17.53	16.87
ITHI	11.26	11.20	20.25	24.20	24.29	27.45
KAKA	13.41	14.57	31.15	27.80	26.09	26.97
KAKU	5.18	9.49	18.75	18.95	12.49	15.34
KARA	16.15	14.56	30.80	30.00	26.06	28.58
KARI	10.67	9.73	22.75	22.20	21.66	14.99
KANGI	13.01	13.66	19.11	28.25	24.60	27.86
KATATU	9.51	10.18	14.95	22.60	20.99	25.83
KIANYI	10.01	10.97	19.05	24.95	19.00	24.44
KINUI	8.70	9.49	22.50	19.75	23.55	23.30
KIRO	8.01	16.15	19.75	27.15	23.31	28.69
KIOKA	9.90	15.27	19.00	25.80	5.33	27.23
LANGA	6.32	10.49	15.75	23.00	16.81	19.64
MIGO	4.93	9.56	5.85	21.80	3.98	13.35
NAMO	8.04	9.59	19.50	16.65	18.94	18.91
MTO	6.98	13.97	19.64	26.90	14.39	23.38
MUYU	15.93	16.46	30.30	26.70	33.19	32.10
MWAKI	9.88	13.43	19.17	26.89	17.41	24.64
MWARO	9.69	9.93	23.75	24.20	19.68	21.96
MBUNE	9.75	13.91	19.30	26.60	17.86	24.83
NYASA	12.21	13.86	22.36	25.05	20.86	28.13
BETH	7.74	11.63	16.75	25.60	15.80	22.08
TUET	7.56	11.47	18.61	24.35	18.15	24.53
Total	9.56	12.22	19.56	24.54	18.70	23.93

language as it is used in real-time contexts. The suggested modes of teaching and assessment are more learner centered than current approaches to teaching. These modes would help develop learner autonomy, which is important for good language learners. Since the KNEC was part of the team that was involved in this study, it would be worthwhile for them to use some of these findings to influence policy in their institution.

Conclusion

The outcome of the ELN project demonstrated that understanding the objectives of language teaching and matching them with norms helps to link language instruction and language use. The project demonstrated how language instruction can be linked to language use in and beyond the classroom (through LLS events and enrichment activities). The CRTs provided information on the skills for which the learners needed help. The LLS events and the use of the resource books enabled the teachers to carry out formative assessment, which informed their instructional planning and led to improved results on the tests.

As teaching and learning are affected directly or indirectly by assessment, each should enhance the other. In Kenya, a starting point would be to match the objectives of language teaching with what is taught and consequently examined. Targeting communicative competence would be evident in the real-time language used by the learners. Then, both the instruction and examinations would reflect this.

References

Bachman, L. 1990. *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Bachman, L., and A. Palmer. 1996. *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Bunyi, G. 2008. Introduction to English language teaching in Kenya. In *Benchmarks for English language education*, ed. T. Groenewegen, 25–44. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Bwire, A. 2008. The listening skill. In *Benchmarks for English language education*, ed T. Groenewegen, 89–159. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Canale, M. 1983. From communicative competence to communicative language pedagog. In *Language and communication*, eds. J. Richards and D. Schmidt, 63–88. London: Longman.

Cheng, L., Y. Watanabe, and A. Curtis. 2004. *Washback in language testing: Research, contexts and methods*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Cummins, J. 1996. *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*. Ontario, Canada: California Association for Bilingual Education.

Gates, S. 1995. Exploiting washback from standardized tests. In *Language testing in Japan*, eds. J. Brown and S. Yamashita, 101–06. Tokyo, Japan: Japanese Association of Language Teaching.

Gathumbi, A. 2008a. Development of the reading English literacy norms. In *Benchmarks for English language education*, ed. T. Groenewegen 206–25. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Gathumbi, A. 2008b. The process of developing English literacy norms. In *Benchmarks for English language education*, ed. T. Groenewegen 45–86. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Gathumbi, A., A. Bwire, D. Mogaka, W. Wachira, J. Maundu, P. Khaemba, F. Gichuru, and L. Vikiru. 2009. *English literacy norms report*.

Gathumbi, A., A. Bwire, and L. Vikiru. 2009. *Comprehensive literacy norms Vol 1 and 2*. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Gathumbi, A., J. Mujidi, S. Muthwii, J. Onjoro, E. Ndua, and G. Bunyi. 2003. *English literacy norms for primary schools: Terminal project reports numbers 1–10*. Nairobi, Kenya: Kenyatta University.

Halliday, M. 1973. *Explorations in the function of language*. London: Edward Arnold.

Halliday, M., and R. Hassan. 1976. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.

Ingonga, L. 2001. *A task-based language awareness approach to teaching English grammar in Kenyan secondary schools*. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, England.

Jansen, J. 2007, January. Dumb and dumber. *Reader's Digest South Africa edition*, 34–66.

Little, D. 1991. *Learner autonomy 1—Definitions, issues and problems*. Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D. 1995. Learning as a dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System* 23(2): 175–81.

Little, D. 1999. Developing learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: A social interactive view of learning and three fundamental pedagogical principles. *Revista Canana de Estudios Inglesias* 38: 77–88.

Maundu, J. 2008. The relationship between pupil achievement in English language and predictor variables. In *Benchmarks for English language education*, ed. T. Groenewegen, 302–16. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Mujidi, J. 2008. Writing. In *Benchmarks for English language education*, ed. T. Groenewegen 231–63. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Muthwii, M. 2002. *Language policy and practices in education in Kenya and Uganda*. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.

Ranney, S. 1992. Learning a new script: An exploration of sociolinguistic competence. *Applied Linguistics* 13(1): 25–50.

Spolsky, B. 1994. The examination-classroom backwash cycle: Some historical cases. In *Bringing about change in language education*: *Proceedings of the International Language in Education conference 1994*, ed. D. Nunan, R. Berry, and V. Berry, 55–66. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.

Vikiru, L. 2008. The speaking skill. In *Benchmarks for English language education*, ed. T. Groenewegen, 161–204. Nairobi, Kenya: Phoenix.