



**EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES USED  
ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR  
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA**

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**Abstract:**

Learning activities play a crucial role in the instructional process. The use of efficient teaching and learning activities enhances the teaching and learning of English language. However, performance of English language among secondary school students in Kenya has remained poor over the years (2013-2018) as depicted by poor Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination results. This can partly be attributed to failure of teachers to adopt appropriate learning activities. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. This study was guided by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and anchored on pragmatic philosophical paradigm. The study employed an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach utilizing quasi-experimental design of non-randomized control group, pre-test-post-test. The target population involved 3399 Form Two students and 84 teachers of English from Teso North Sub-County, Kenya. Stratified and simple random sampling were used to select 10 schools. Simple random sampling was used to select 509 students. Purposive and simple random were used to select 10 teachers. Data was generated using interview schedule, observation schedule, questionnaire and English Grammar Achievement Tests. Validity was determined by expert judgment and piloting. Reliability of the pre-test and post-test were established by test-retest which yielded a coefficient of 0.94 and 0.76 respectively. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire which yielded a coefficient of 0.85. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive

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data was presented through tables of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Inferential statistics involved t-test and Pearson correlation. Qualitative data was analyzed using narrative analysis technique and presented through narration and direct quotes. The findings revealed that teachers predominantly used individual activities when teaching grammar, language games and group work had a positive influence on students' achievement in grammar. Pearson Correlation results revealed that there existed statistically significant relationship between learning activities and achievement in grammar ( $r = .723$ ,  $n = 509$ ,  $p = .001$ ). The study concluded that learning activities used influenced students' achievement in grammar. Language games and group work are effective to be used in enhancing students' achievement in English grammar than individual activities. This study recommends that teachers of English language should adopt language games and group work activities when teaching English grammar.

**Keywords:** achievement, grammar, learning activities, instructional practices

## 1. Introduction

Research in the field of education has demonstrated that the quality of instruction is crucial to students' learning outcomes. This view is supported by Palardy and Rumberger (2008) who noted that instructional practices have a strong relationship with achievement gains in reading and maths. This implies that among other factors, teachers' instructional practices are crucial in enhancing students' achievement in the subjects they are teaching, English grammar included.

Shuls and Ritter (2012) contend that what teachers do in their classrooms greatly influence their students' academic achievement. Thus, if students are not performing well in academics, then their teachers should be responsible (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern & Keeling, 2009). This argument is further advanced by Ekuia and Kofi (2015:31) who aver that, "*students learn more and are more likely to participate in school tasks when their teachers employ quality instruction assessed by three indices of instructional practice namely: active teaching strategies, making connections and extensions, and student-to-student interactions.*" Therefore, this suggests that students' academic achievement largely depends on teachers' instructional practices.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) (1983) attributed poor standards of education in the United States of America (USA) to ineffective teachers' instructional practices such as inadequate utilisation of instructional materials and use of inappropriate teaching and assessment strategies. Unsatisfactory achievement in English was one of the causes of the dismal standards in education in the USA (NCEE, 1983). Hence, this justifies why the teaching and learning of English should be accorded top priority.

Best practices in teaching and learning, English grammar included, entail the use of effective learning activities. Effective learning activities enable students to become

active participants in the learning process. This is because students do not learn much just by sitting in their classes listening to their teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and providing answers. But they need to talk about what they are learning, relate it to past experiences and apply it (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Therefore, there is need for English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers to maximize the interaction between them, learners, and the learning tasks during English language by employing appropriate learning activities (Syomwene, Barasa & Kindiki, 2015).

Good performance in English language is crucial for learners. This is because English is the medium of instruction, language of examinations and language of regional and international communication (Okwara, Shiundu & Indoshi, 2009). Consequently, it is noteworthy that ESL teachers use effective learning activities that enhance learning of English grammar. This is because mastery of grammar is very crucial since it forms the basis for achieving proficiency in the four language skills namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), 2006; Richards and Reppen, 2014).

Similarly, Toprak (2019) asserts that knowledge of grammar is central to a substantial level of proficiency in language and learners who possess it can use the target language more effectively when compared to those who lack it.

Despite the critical role of English language, its performance in both primary and secondary schools in Kenya has persistently remained dismal over the years (Okwara, Shiundu & Indoshi, 2009; Syomwene, 2016). For instance, the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) annual reports indicate that the overall performance in English language in secondary schools in Kenya still falls short of the average mean of 50% (KNEC, 2013-2018).

Research findings indicate that use of learner-centered activities such as group discussions, drama, debates, poem recitation and songs could alleviate the problem of low oral skills among language learners (Gathumbi and Masembe, 2005). Furthermore, learning activities enable students to interact with each other thus enhancing performance in English language (Achmad and Yusuf, 2014). It was in this context that this study sought to establish the effectiveness of teaching/learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar among secondary school students in Kenya.

### **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of teaching/learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1) Establish the teaching/learning activities used to teach English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.
- 2) Examine the influence of the teaching/learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

### 1.3 Research Hypothesis

The main hypothesis of the study was:

**Ho:** There is no statistically significant difference in students' English grammar achievement mean scores when their teachers use different teaching/learning activities.

### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory which states that knowledge acquisition and learning is as a result of social interaction with the surrounding culture and social agents. During these interactions, children learn by the help of significant adults, teachers, or more capable peers, materials and events in a cooperative or collaborative environment. According to Vygotsky, much important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). Initially, the MKO interacting with the child assumes most of the responsibility for guiding the learner in problem solving but gradually the responsibility transfers to the learner. The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the difference between what a learner can do independently and what he/she can do with assistance of the MKO. Children who are in the ZPD for a specific task can almost perform the task independently, but not quite there yet. However, with an appropriate amount of assistance, these children can accomplish the task successfully. It is for this reason that teachers of English should use effective learning activities that would improve students' achievement in English grammar. Scaffolding works in conjunction with the ZPD. Scaffolding entails the temporary guidance given to a child by the MKO that enables the child to perform a task until such time that the child can already perform the task independently. The significance of scaffolding in this study is evident where the teachers of English support learners having difficulties in grammar by facilitating their learning using effective learning activities. The implication of Vygotsky's theory for this study is that students' achievement in grammar is dependent on the interaction between the teacher, the students and the teaching/learning activities.

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents a review of related literature on the learning activities used to teach English grammar. According to Coughlan and Duff (1994) an activity is a behaviour that actually takes place when an individual performs a task. Al-Jarrah, Waari, Talafhah and Al-Jarrah (2019) contend that learning activities help students remember new language and become more accurate. This implies that ESL teachers ought to give learners a chance to performer certain tasks that can facilitate the understanding of the grammar. According to Ur (2004) ESL teachers ought to provide a variety of learning activities to sustain student's interest. He further noted that a successful activity, if used for longer spells without variation, may end up boring the ESL learners.

Supporting this point of view, Klancar (2006) contends that providing students with a variety of learning activities offers them plenty of opportunities to play an active

role in communicative situations, ranging from simple imitation to conscious exchange and internalization of grammatical points and communicative skills. Baker and Westrup (2000) assert that each lesson in English should include a good variety of learning activities to help keep learners motivated. Therefore, ESL teachers should provide a variety of activities to capture learners' interest throughout the lesson and consequently enhance their achievement in grammar. Gathumbi and Masembe (2005) observe that use of learner-centred activities such as pair work, group work, drama, debates, songs and role play could alleviate the problem of low performance in English language. These activities improve student's active participation, motivate and expose students to authentic use of English language in context. Their view is supported by Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy and Perry (1992) who assert that learning is an active process. This is because it occurs more effectively when learners are actively involved, rather than passively receiving information. Therefore, it is paramount that ESL teachers provide learners with activities that will ensure they remain active during grammar lessons.

Research has established that using learning activities helps to improve learners' active participation, motivate and expose them to authentic use of English language in context. According to Syomwene, Barasa and Kindiki (2015), learning activities are vital in the teaching of language in that they provide an interaction between the learners, the teacher and the learning tasks as well. This point of view is supported by Achmad and Yusuf (2014:151) who claim that students are much more ready to interact with each other with more complex responses than with their teacher. This implies that use of learning activities when teaching grammar leads to better performance.

This assertion is further confirmed by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, who proposed that learners need support (scaffolding) in form of encouragement and motivation. Scaffolding requires that the teacher provides the students with the opportunity to extend their current skills and knowledge through a variety of learning activities. He points out that teachers ought to give learners, activities based on a learning-by-doing approach in the English grammar classroom. There are many learning activities that can be used to facilitate the instruction of grammar. They include but not limited to songs, language games, debates, pair work, group work, drama, role plays, dialogue and listening to clips (KICD, 2006).

Group work activity entails dividing a large class into groups small enough to enable every learner to participate on tasks more actively (Baker & Westrup, 2000). According to Argawati (2014), group work provides learners an opportunity to practice language skills. Group work activity has many advantages. For instance, enhances creativity, students learn from one another, provides greater variety and quality of learner talk, increases learner responsibility and autonomy through roles, increases language practice opportunities, all learners actively participate in the lesson, shy learners feel more secure, enhanced students' communication skills and motivates learners to learn (Baker & Westrup, 2000; Harmer, 2001; Nasmilah & Rahman, 2017).

Those who criticize the use of group work argue that it is difficult to control the class (Baker & Westrup, 2000). To overcome such drawback, the ESL teacher should give

learners vivid instructions on how the group work activity should be conducted (Doff, 1988). Research findings have shown that applying group work in the ESL classroom improves students' grammar achievement significantly (Nasmilah & Rahman, 2017). Owing to the numerous benefits associated with group work, teachers should employ it in the teaching of grammar.

Pair work is a kind of classroom interaction which involves one learner working with another to carry out communicative tasks (Harmer, 2001). Working in pairs is better than groups because all the learners in the pair become active and motivated to learn a language. Learners get more opportunity to practice the target language. Furthermore, pair work gives learners some degree of privacy and teachers can easily monitor learners (Harmer, 2001; McDonough, 2004). According to Zaswita and Ihsan (2019) application of pair work activities make students more active and engaged with learning because they work both as a couple. Therefore, working in pairs promotes interaction between learners consequently enhancing language learning in terms of grammar.

Language games are considered excellent learning activities that can be used to teach several grammar items. Vernon (2008) gives the following reasons why ESL teachers ought to teach grammar using language games. Firstly, language games are regarded as communicative activities since they enable ESL learners to gain knowledge as well as apply and use what they learn. Secondly, language games contain repetition, which make the language easier and understandable. Thirdly, language games motivate learners and increase cooperation, competition and create a positive atmosphere. Fourthly, learning a new language requires a great and tiring effort. Therefore, language games play a very important role in the learning of English grammar.

According to Saricoban and Metin (2000:1) songs "*can also be used to teach a variety of language items such as sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythm, adjectives, and adverbs.*" This implies that songs are a rich source by which ESL learners can easily be motivated to learn a language. Thus, songs are an effective activity as they are enjoyable and full of real life language that learners need to use when learning grammar.

Drama is another activity that can be used to teach grammar. One of the merits of working with drama is the simulated reality that facilitates the use of authentic language in the interaction of the characters (Baldwin, 2012). Most importantly, drama gives a chance for students to repeat realistic dialogues that have a lot of grammatical rules (Boudreault, 2010). This implies that drama has a positive influence on learners' performance in English grammar due to its motivational effect.

Madeja (2003) postulates that using dialogues in the teaching of grammar has several benefits. Firstly, dialogues provide a context for students to understand a given structure. Secondly, they present students to a direct use of a language. Thirdly, using them in teaching grammar is favourable because they provide a strong connection between a language and a situation. Thus, dialogues in the ESL classroom present context to students to understand a grammatical structure.

Role-play is an effective learning and teaching experience for both the students and the teachers. According to Huang (2008), role play lightens up the atmospheres and

brings liveliness in the classes. This is because role play enables the students to use language in a more practical way. Thus, they can become more aware of the usefulness and practicality of English. It presents the students with a problem, but instead of reaching a group consensus in solving it, the students act out their solution. Gordon (2007) adds that through acting the structure orally, learners become more deeply internalized. Role play also helps learners in speaking, listening, and understanding grammatical structures. More so it lightens the ESL classroom atmosphere and enlivens it.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory that guided this study asserts that children's interactions, engagements and participation in social and cultural activities with others are crucial factors that engender their development. In the teaching of English grammar, ESL teachers can employ learning activities like dramatizing, individual work, role playing, language games, dialogue, clips, singing, group work, pair work and debates among others. For the purpose of this study, language games and group work were experimented in the teaching of the English grammar topic active and the passive voice. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of learning activities on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

### **3. Material and Methods**

This section discusses the philosophical paradigm, research design, the research site, the study population, sample size, sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection procedures, validity and reliability of the research instruments.

#### **3.1 Research Methodology**

A pragmatic philosophical paradigm was adopted; hence, employed the exploratory sequential approach. The rationale for using a mixed method approach was that qualitative data would generate explanations on the learning activities used by ESL teachers to teach grammar whereas quantitative results would generate explanations for the relationship between the learning activities used and students' achievement in grammar. Qualitative data was collected in the first phase while quantitative data was collected in the second phase. The findings were linked in the interpretation and discussion section.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design following a pre-test, post-test control group design with no randomization of the participants since they were already in intact classes (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2010). A pre-test and post-test were administered to both groups. The notational paradigm of the design is presented in Figure 1.

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental Group (EG)	O <sub>1</sub>	X	O <sub>3</sub>
.....	.....	.....	.....
Control Group (CG)	O <sub>2</sub>	O <sub>x</sub>	O <sub>4</sub>

**Figure 1:** Non-equivalent Control Group Design

Where:

X = Experimental treatment using language games and group work activities

O<sub>x</sub> = Control treatment using individual work activities

O<sub>1</sub> = pre-test result for the EG

O<sub>2</sub> = pre-test result for the CG

O<sub>3</sub> = post-test result for the EG

O<sub>4</sub> = post-test result for the CG

.....= Shows that both experimental and control group were not randomly composed.

### 3.3 Research Site

This study was conducted in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub-County of Busia County, Kenya located between Longitude 34° 01' East and Latitude 0° 29' and 0° 32' North covering a total area of approximately 257.10 square kilometres. This research site was selected because its performance in English subject at KCSE examinations had consistently fallen short of the average mean score of (6.0) 50%. This trend has raised concern among education stakeholders, therefore, creating the need to establish causes leading to poor performance in English language. The study targeted 3399 form two students and 84 teachers of English from 31 public secondary schools. Form 2 was selected because the active and passive voice grammar topic used in the pre-test and post-test is offered in the Form 2 Secondary Education English syllabus (KICD, 2002) and also it was not an examination class.

### 3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample consisted of 10 teachers of English and 509 students comprising 264 students for EG and 248 for CG from 10 public mixed sub-county secondary schools. Stratified sampling was used to categorize the research site in five zones. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 2 schools from each Zone. Hence, 10 schools were picked. In schools with more than one stream, only one stream was selected randomly. Purposive and simple random sampling was used to select 10 teachers of English language teaching the form two class. Simple random sampling was used to assign five classes to the EG and another five to the CG respectively.

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data was generated using the interview schedule for teachers, observation schedule, questionnaire for students and English Grammar Achievement Tests (EGAT) in the form of pre-test and post-test. The interview schedule was administered to the teachers. The interview schedule was used to gather information on the learning activities teachers used to teach grammar. Observation schedule was administered to corroborate data



collected through the interview schedule. The students' questionnaire was administered to confirm the data generated through the interview and observation schedule. A 5 point Likert scale was used to measure the variables. The achievement tests were designed to investigate the research hypothesis. The items were adapted from KCSE English past papers and modified to suit participants' level. The pre-test and post-test consisted of 30 open-ended items on the topic active and passive voice. The post-test bore items that resembled those of the pre-test but different in wording. Common marking schemes were used. Validity was assessed through experts' judgment and piloting. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Reliability of the pre-test and post-test were estimated using test-retest method and the values were 0.94 and 0.76 respectively.

### **3.6 The Experimental Procedure**

Selected teachers of English underwent a one week training. The EG was trained on how to use language games and group work activities while the CG was taken through individual work activities. Also, the objectives and activities of the students were discussed. The pre-test was administered before treatment began. The EG learnt grammar using language games and group work activities with the aid of prepared passages and lesson plans while the CG learnt grammar using individual work activities with the aid of prepared passages and lesson plans. The experiment lasted for four weeks after which the post-test was administered to both groups. Both tests were marked by the teachers and the researcher analysed the scores.

### **3.7 Controlling Extraneous Variables**

According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012), the success of quasi-experimental designs relies on stringent control of extraneous variables. Hence, the researcher put mechanisms in place to control extraneous variables. Firstly, the effect of participants' interaction was mitigated by ensuring that participants in the EG and CG belonged to different schools not so close to each other. Additionally, the participants were not informed about other participating schools. Secondly, the Hawthorne effect was controlled by using regular teachers to teach their own students. This made the students believe that they were undertaking their normal lessons. Thirdly, the effect of teacher differences was controlled by providing the teachers prepared lesson plans and specific instructions that enabled them maintain uniformity. Fourthly, the effect of the pre-test on post-test was mitigated by administering the two tests after the interval of 4 weeks which was long enough not to permit the pre-test to affect the post-test. This prevented students from becoming familiar with the test items. Finally, the effect of students' variation in achievement in grammar was controlled by using only students from public mixed sub-county schools who were of comparable academic ability.

### **3.8 Data Collection procedure**

First, the interview schedule was administered to ten teachers to generate data regarding learning activities used during English grammar lessons. Ten grammar lessons were observed to verify the information obtained through the interview schedule. The questionnaire was used to corroborate data from the interview and observation schedule. The pre-test and post-test generated quantitative data which was used to test hypothesis. The teachers administered and marked the tests while the researcher analyzed the scores. The researcher administered the interview schedule, observation schedule and questionnaire. The intervention period lasted four weeks. The EG was taught using language games and group work with the aid of prepared passages and lesson plans. The CG was taught using individual work activities with the aid of prepared passages and prepared lesson plans.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data was analyzed through narrative analysis technique and presented through narration and direct quotations. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation while inferential statistics entailed independent samples t-test and Person Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. The findings are presented according to the objectives.

### **4.1 Learning Activities used when teaching English Grammar**

Data used to answer this objective was generated using the interview schedule for teachers, observation schedule and students' questionnaire. The findings are presented as follows:

#### **4.1.1 Data Obtained from the Interview Schedule**

Teachers were asked to describe the teaching/learning activities they had been using when teaching English grammar. The findings revealed that teachers predominantly used pair work activity when teaching grammar. Some of the teachers' responses were as follows:

Teacher 3 stated that:

*"I normally prefer using pair work activities when teaching grammar. I put my students into pairs then ask each pair to choose their secretary to make notes of their ideas. I would then ask each pair to discuss the grammar questions on the board and decide together on one answer. Students would then present their opinion to the whole class. Usually, each*

*pair is given a few minutes to do the activity. The secretaries are then asked to present their findings to the whole class."*

Similarly, Teacher 8 described his main teaching activities as follows:

*"First, I prefer using learning activities that are more interactive such as pair work and role playing during most of my English grammar lessons. Secondly, I like using pair work activities because students feel very comfortable when working through grammar concepts."*

On the same point, Teacher 10 added:

*"Sometimes I pair a more able student with a less confident one, to work on grammar activities together. According to me, using group work activities is good because students tend to benefit from their partners. For example, stronger students can guide the weaker ones."*

These findings revealed that ESL teachers predominantly used pair work when teaching English grammar. The study further sought to establish whether the teachers involved their learners during the selection of learning activities for grammar lessons. The findings revealed that ESL teachers did not involve their learners in the selection of learning activities. The participants reported that they did not involve their learners because they were not privy to the grammar topics as well as lesson objectives.

For instance, Teacher 2, Teacher 5, Teacher 7 intimated that in most cases learners did not know the demands of the grammar lessons. They observed that selected learning activities should be aligned to the lesson objectives. In particular, Teacher 2 observed:

*"I do not involve my learners in the selection of learning activities for grammar lessons. This is because they do not have prior information on the lesson objectives. Hence, they may not be able to suggest appropriate activities for what I intend to teach. That's why, I personally select teaching activities that will see me achieve the objectives set."*

Teacher 3 observed that since learners do not have the lesson topic and objectives in advance, they would not be able to select ideal learning activities. He observed that: *"I select learning activities for grammar lessons based on the lesson objectives and learners' ability."*

Teacher 4 reported that students should not be allowed to select learning activities since they do not have the capacity to do so. For that reason, the teachers should directly decide on the appropriate learning activities. She observed that, *"Learners may select learning activities that may not facilitate the achievement of lesson objectives."* These findings revealed that ESL teachers did not involve their learners in the selection of learning activities for grammar lessons.

#### 4.1.2 Data Obtained from the Observation Schedule

Ten grammar instruction lessons were observed to verify the findings of the interview schedule. The findings revealed that ESL teachers predominantly used individual work activity when teaching grammar. This was observed in lesson 2, lesson 3, lesson 4, lesson 5, lesson 7, lesson 8, lesson 9 and lesson 10. For instance, in lesson 5 where the teacher was teaching the grammar topic, "Use and identification of Interjections in a sentence," it was observed that the teacher gave the learners individual activities to accomplish.

A further analysis was conducted to assess whether teachers used a variety of learning activities when teaching grammar. The results revealed that most teachers did not use a variety of learning activities. For instance, in lesson 3 and lesson 7, the teachers gave out some written exercises which were done during the lesson. It was observed that the teachers went round the class checking individual learners' work. The results further revealed that there was minimal learners' participation during the grammar lessons. For instance, in lesson 3, the teacher depended on only a few learners to respond to the questions asked. Most of the learners remained passive. In lesson 9, the teacher did most of the talking and there was little room for learner participation. At the end of this lesson, it was observed that only 14 out of 46 learners had participated by answering questions. Similarly, in lesson 4, lesson 8 and lesson 10, it was observed that learners remained passive during the lessons. Teachers took center stage as they explained grammar rules while the learners copied down the lesson notes.

#### 4.1.3 Data Obtained from the Questionnaire for Students

The students' questionnaire was used to verify data generated through the interview schedule. Students were asked to rate the frequency with which their teachers had been using the listed learning activities when teaching English grammar. The responses were rated on a five-point Likert Scale where 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = frequently and 5 = always. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Teaching/Learning Activities used the teaching of English Grammar

Activity	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	N
Dramatizing	100 (19.6%)	145 (28.56%)	76 (14.96%)	59 (11.66%)	129 (25.36%)	509 (100%)
Individual work	16 (3.1%)	38 (7.5%)	66 (13%)	87 (17.1%)	302 (59.3%)	509 (100%)
Role playing	131 (25.7%)	112 (22.0%)	92 (18.1%)	71 (13.9%)	103 (20.2%)	509 (100%)
Language games	152 (29.9%)	109 (21.4%)	85 (16.7%)	57 (11.2%)	106 (20.8%)	509 (100%)
Dialogues	73 (14.3%)	101 (19.8%)	104 (20.4%)	70 (13.8%)	161 (31.6%)	509 (100%)
Listening to clips	272 (53.4%)	134 (26.3%)	55 (10.8%)	19 (3.7%)	29 (5.7%)	509 (100%)
Singing	144 (28.3%)	149 (29.3%)	87 (17.1%)	54 (10.6%)	75 (14.7%)	509 (100%)

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Group Work	96 (18.9%)	120 (23.6%)	122 (24.0%)	68 (13.4%)	103 (20.2%)	509 (100%)
Pair Work	46 (9.0%)	101 (19.8%)	102 (20.0%)	91 (17.9%)	169 (33.2%)	509 (100%)
Debating	42 (8.3%)	83 (16.3%)	251 (49.3%)	107 (21.0%)	26 (5.1%)	509 (100%)

Source: Field Data (2019).

Table 1 shows that teaching/learning activities always used included individual work which was reported by 302(59.3%) students, pair work 169(33.2%), dialogue 161(31.6%), dramatization 129(25.36%), language games 106(20.8 %), role playing 103(20.2%), group work 103(20.2%), singing 75(14.7%), listening to clips 29(5.7%) and debates 26(5.1%).

Furthermore, the study sought for students' opinion on their involvement in the selection of teaching activities for grammar lessons. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Students' Involvement in the Selection of Learning Activities

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Never	208	40.9
Rarely	120	23.6
Occasionally	124	24.4
Frequently	34	6.7
Always	23	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data (2019).

Table 2 shows that 208(40.9%) students reported that they were never involved in the selection of learning activities, rarely 120(23.6%), occasionally 124 (24.4%), frequently 34 (6.7%) and always 23 (4.5%). The data suggests that 328 (64.5%) students were not involved selection of activities.

## 4.2 Influence of Learning Activities used on Students' Achievement in Grammar

The data used to answer this objective was generated using the English Grammar Achievement Tests in the form of the pre-test and post-test. The findings are presented as follows:

### 4.2.1 Data obtained from the English Grammar Achievement Test (Pre-test)

The pre-test was administered before the treatment began to establish students' baseline ability. The findings are as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Pre-test Performance by Experimental and Control group**

Group	School	Students	Mean Score	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Experimental	School B	59	13.14	.45451	3.49
	School H	53	12.32	.53862	3.92
	School E	49	12.47	.56175	3.93
	School C	55	11.78	.57072	4.23
	School J	48	12.17	.53787	3.73
<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>264</b>	<b>12.39</b>		
Control	School F	51	12.51	.68334	4.88
	School D	42	12.62	.60385	3.91
	School A	54	11.98	.58903	4.33
	School G	52	11.90	.43007	3.10
	School I	46	12.26	.66262	4.49
<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>245</b>	<b>12.24</b>		

Source: Field data (2019).

Table 3 shows that all schools obtained pre-test mean scores below 50%. In order to establish whether this difference in mean was significant, an independent sample t-test was computed to test the hypothesis:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the pre-test mean scores.

The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Group Statistics for the Pre-test**

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pre-test</b>	Experimental	264	<b>12.39</b>	3.86	.23776
	Control	245	<b>12.24</b>	4.16	.26601

Table 4 shows that the EG had a slightly higher score ( $M=12.39$ ;  $SD=3.86$ ) than the CG ( $M=12.24$ ;  $SD=4.16$ ). To examine the significance relationship between the results of the two groups, an independent samples t-test was carried out. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that there was no significant difference in grammar between the EG and the CG in the pre-test mean scores  $t(507) = 0.431$ ,  $p > 0.67$ . The p-value is greater than  $0.05\alpha$ , ( $0.67 > 0.05$ ) which means that we accept the null hypothesis. This implied that the two groups were similar in achievement before treatment.

**Table 5:** t-Test for Pre-test Mean Scores for both Groups

Pre-test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. 2-tailed	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	.264	.608	.431	507	.666	.15342	.35578	-.54557	.85241
	Equal variances not assumed			.430	495.927	.667	.15342	.35678	-.54757	.85440

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

#### 4.2.2 Data obtained from the English Grammar Achievement Test (Post- test)

Both groups were taught the grammar topic 'active and passive voice' in the simple present, simple past, present perfect past participle and future tense. The EG was taught using language games and group work while the CG was taught using individual work activities. Both groups were given a post-test after the intervention which lasted 4 weeks. The results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Post-test Mean Scores for the Experimental and Control Group

Group	Schools	Students	Mean score	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Experimental	School B	59	16.34	.51213	3.90
	School H	53	16.77	.35087	2.55
	School E	49	15.24	.54328	3.84
	School C	55	15.65	.50400	3.74
	School J	48	16.10	.44982	3.12
<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>264</b>	<b>16.06</b>		
Control	School F	51	14.43	.34427	2.53
	School D	42	14.30	.42976	3.01
	School A	54	13.68	.56813	4.14
	School G	52	13.98	.49059	3.40
	School I	46	14.20	.52282	3.47
<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>245</b>	<b>14.12</b>		

Source: Field data (2019).

Table 6 shows the highest post-test mean score was from school H (M=16.77; SD=2.55) from the EG while the lowest post-test mean score was from school A (M=13.68; SD=4.14) from the CG. To establish whether this difference in mean scores was significant, an independent samples t-test was computed to test the hypothesis:

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the post-test mean scores.

The results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Group Statistics for the Post-test Means for both Groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	Experimental	264	16.02	3.51	.21596
	Control	248	14.12	3.33	.21156

Table 7 shows that the EG had a higher mean score of (M=16.02; SD= 3.51) than the CG (M=14.12; SD=3.33). These results were subjected to the independent samples t-test analysis to determine their level of significance. The findings are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8:** Independent Samples t-test in the Post-Test

Post-test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	.006	.940	6.406	510	.000	1.93988	.30281	1.34498	2.53478
	Equal variances not assumed			6.417	509.941	.000	1.93988	.30231	1.34595	2.53382

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

Table 8 shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the EG and CG in the post-test mean scores  $t(510) = 6.406$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The p-value is less than  $0.05\alpha$ , ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ) which means that we reject the null hypothesis. This implied that language games and group work activities had a positive influence on students' achievement in English grammar compared to individual work activities.

Person Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was computed to test the hypothesis:

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no statistically significant relationship between learning activities used and students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

The results are presented in Table 9.



**Table 9:** Correlation between learning Activities and Achievement in Grammar

		Teaching/Learning Activities	Students' Achievement in English Grammar
Teaching/ Learning Activities	Pearson Correlation	1	.723**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	509	509
Students' Achievement in English Grammar	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	509	509

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

Table 9 shows that there existed a statistically significant relationship between learning activities used and students' achievement in grammar ( $r = .723$ ,  $n = 509$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected given that  $p < 0.05$ . This means that learning activities used by teachers influenced students' achievement in grammar. When teachers use language games and group work activities, students' achievement in grammar improves.

### 4.3 Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya.

#### 4.3.1 Learning Activities used to teach English Grammar

This objective was aimed at assessing the learning activities used to teach English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. The findings revealed that teachers predominantly used individual work activities when teaching grammar. The observation schedule results revealed that 8 out of the 10 teachers used individual work. This was verified by the questionnaire results presented in Table 2 where 302(59.3%) students reported that teachers always used individual work. To the contrary, the interview schedule had indicated that teachers used pair work activities. These findings concur with those of Mutsotso and Nabukonde (2019) who confirmed that ESL teachers commonly used the lecture method in teaching English. These findings are also supported by the findings of Syomwene et al. (2015) established that that teachers used limited practice activities during English lessons. In addition, some of the practice activities adopted by the ESL teachers were not effectively used. These findings were not in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which asserts that human cognition and learning are the end products of social and cultural phenomena rather than the result of individual phenomena.

Further analysis, revealed that teachers did not involve learners in the selection of learning activities. The interview schedule revealed that none of the teachers involved learners in the selection of learning activities. This was validated by the observation schedule which revealed that in most of the lessons observed, teachers decided the learning activities. This was corroborated by the questionnaire where 328(64.5%)

students indicated that their teachers never involved them in the selection of learning activities as presented in Table 2. This was affirmed by the interview schedule which revealed that teachers did not involve learners in the selection of learning activities for grammar because they believed that they were never aware of the lesson objectives. Again, the findings revealed that there was minimal learner participation during grammar lessons. Teachers dominate the instructional process which negatively affected students' achievement in grammar.

This finding concurs with that of Adhikari (2017) who established that teachers were inclined to the traditional and teacher centred approach lacking in learner centred activities. Similarly, Rafael (2017) in a study conducted in Indonesia established that ESL teachers were still dominating the teaching and learning process. He observed that almost all the ESL learning activities were designed by teachers without any consideration about the learners' background, skill and learning ability. Consequently, learners did not have opportunity to decide what and how they should learn a topic. This practice was not in line with Vygotsky (1978) views on social interaction as an effective way of developing skills. Teachers of English should ensure inclusion of all students in the English grammar classroom. Such point of view makes Vygotsky's theoretical assumptions on the role of the teacher as a mediator of the learning process relevant to the present study.

#### **4.3.2 The Influence learning activities used on Students' Achievement in English Grammar**

This objective explored the influence of the learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. Firstly, the pre-test results revealed that both groups performed poorly in grammar before the administration of the treatment. The EG obtained (M=12.39; SD=3.86) while the CG obtained (M=12.24; SD=4.16). This was attributed to the influence of learning activities used by the teachers before the treatment was administered. This finding is in line with the finding by Sert (2013) who established that individual activities do not contribute positively to the learning of English language.

Secondly, the findings revealed that students taught grammar through language games and group work activities performed significantly better than students taught through individual work activity. This implies that language games and group work have a positive effect on students' achievement in grammar. The EG using language games and group work was found to achieve significantly better mean score (M=16.02; SD = 3.51) than the CG (M=14.12; SD=3.33) in the post-test results presented in Table 7. This finding corroborates the finding of Al-Jarrah, Waari, Talafhah and Al-Jarrah (2019) who emphasised the fact that educational games could help students learn English grammar more effectively. Similarly, Shende (2014) affirmed that language games are effective in developing learners' interest in learning English grammar. He established that games increased competitiveness among students thus enabling them to participate in the learning process. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Khan (2016)

and Nasmilah, and Rahman (2017) who established that there existed a statistically significant effect of students' achievement in English grammar after being taught through group work. Similarly, this finding confirms the finding of Funnell (2017) who found out that group discussion and games activities enhance learner participation and interaction with the instructional process.

Finally, Pearson Product-Moment correlation test on Table 9 revealed that there existed a statistically significant relationship between learning activities and students' achievement in grammar ( $r = .723$ ,  $n = 509$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This finding is in agreement with the finding of Akan and Basar (2013) who posit that students learn better through learning activities. This finding is in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which highlights the importance of classroom interaction, which enhances learners' growth and development in knowledge acquisition. The interaction may be in the form of teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction and other class activities. Therefore, the ESL teachers should employ learner centered activities during grammar lessons.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of learning activities used on students' achievement in English grammar in secondary schools in Kenya. Based on the findings, the study concluded that learning activities used influenced students' achievement in English grammar. The findings revealed that language games and group work activities had a positive influence on students' achievement in English grammar.

## 6. Recommendation

Based on the findings, this study recommends that ESL teachers should teach grammar using language games and group work activities as a variation for teaching grammar. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should mount in-service training for ESL teachers to sensitize them on learner-centred activities for grammar lessons.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES USED ON STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT  
IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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