

**SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
NAIROBI CAMPUS**

CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION

The Influence of Student's Social Background on the Acquisition of Fluency in Written English

BY

MARY OJONUGWA UNWUCHOLA

A Research Project Submitted to Christ the Teacher Institute for Education in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement for the Bachelor of Education, at St Mary's University of

Minnesota

May 2005

NAIROBI - KENYA



UNW
2005
CTI

DECLARATION

I hereby, declare that this research work came to be by my personal effort through reading and carrying out of scientific research. This work has never been submitted to any institution of learning. All sources cited have been acknowledged.

Mholan
Mary Ojonugwa Unwuchola

13/5/2005
Date

This project has been submitted with our approval as the research supervisors

AM
Angela Mwenda, MA

13th May 2005
Date

J. Carigg
John Carigg, CFC, EdD

13.5.05.
Date

S. Wachira
Simon Wachira, MEd

13/05/05
Date

I have approved this research project as the Director and Associate Dean of School for Education of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota USA.

Bro. Paulos
Bro. Paulos Welday Mesmer, FSC, EdD

18-05-05
Date

DEDICATION

To all who wish they could speak the English language better. Do not give up on your effort keep on searching for ways to improve. To all in Anejodo clan, drink from the wealth of studies and be enlightened!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God for guiding me through over the last years of my studies. My special thanks to my two older brothers who set me on my path to education and to my brother in-law Mr. Stephen Egwudah and his family for laying the foundation for me. I am extremely grateful to my religious family, The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Thanks for educating me at this third level.

Thanks to all who have helped me by reading my work again and again that I may present a good paper. Thanks to Dr. Ruth Ndungu who awakened me to the wealth of knowledge in our Tangaza library. Thanks to Ms. Angela Mwenda, Mr. Simon Wachira and Brother John Carrigg for tireless proof reading. God bless you all.

My deepest appreciation also to Sr. Helen Ojuh and Sr. Roseline Dee (Daughters of Charity) for helping me out when I desperately needed help. May God reward you abundantly. My sincere and special thanks to Mark Anthony Uche Okpala (SDB) for helping me. God bless you. Thanks to all those who asked at various times how this work was progressing, especially Stella Okpunor and all my classmates.

May God bless and fill all the students of Parklands Boys High School with Greater Knowledge and Wisdom. Thanks to the Administration and all the Teachers for their support.

ABSTRACT

This research addresses the topic of the *Influence of Student's Social Background on the Acquisition of Written English*. The research was carried out at Parklands Boys' High School.

The school's head teacher, the deputy head teacher, English teachers and selected students participated in the study. Questionnaires and interviews were the instruments used to gather raw data from the field.

The following objectives guided the research:

1. To examine teachers' knowledge of their students' social background.
2. To identify ways in which parents and teachers can help students improve their writing skill.
3. To enable students find ways of improving their written work.
4. To explore the various variables that inhibits students from writing competently.

The research findings revealed that teachers are aware of students' social background. The purpose of this knowledge is to establish how to help the students in their written English. The study, however, revealed that teachers have to do more work in order to help students improve their English.

The method of teaching ought to be examined and reviewed in order for students to participate fully and have interest in the subject. Teachers also ought to give students more assignments and model the use of English language to them. Teachers should to make conscious effort to achieve this for the effective learning to take place within the students. The knowledge of English language is extremely important in the life of students and every teacher taking the

subject seriously should make this known to them. Students are to be discouraged from using *sheng* and Kiswahili in the classroom as well as on the school compound. They should be disciplined so that they may realize the importance of English. Teachers should engage students in various practices that can improve their skills in writing but their reading, speaking and comprehension of given materials.

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION.....	I
DEDICATION.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	V
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	1
1.2 PARKLANDS BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL.....	3
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH ISSUE.....	5
1.4 OBJECTIVES.....	5
1.5 GUIDED RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	5
1.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	7
1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	8
1.10 CONCLUSION:.....	8
CHAPTER TWO.....	9
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.0 INTRODUCTION.....	9
2.1 THEORIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.....	9
2.1.1 <i>Krashen's Monitor Theory</i>	9
2.1.2 <i>Contrastive Hypothesis</i>	10
2.2 SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS.....	11
2.3 TEACHERS TRAINING.....	16
2.4 APPROACHES TO TEACHING WRITING IN ENGLISH.....	18
2.5 CONCLUSION.....	22
CHAPTER THREE.....	23
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	23
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	23
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	23
3.3 TARGET POPULATION.....	23
3.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES.....	23
3.4.1 <i>Random Sampling</i>	24
3.5 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.....	24
3.5.1 <i>Questionnaire</i>	24
3.6 QUESTIONNAIRES FOR STUDENTS.....	25
3.7 QUESTIONNAIRES FOR TEACHERS.....	25
3.8 INTERVIEWS.....	26
3.9 DATA COLLECTION.....	26
3.10 DATA ANALYSIS.....	27
3.11 CONCLUSION:.....	27

CHAPTER FOUR	28
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION	28
4.1 INTRODUCTION	28
4.1.1 <i>Demographic Character</i>	28
4.1.2 <i>Table 1 Distribution of Student Respondents by Age</i>	28
4.1.3 <i>Table 2 Type of School Attended</i>	29
4.2 THE NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	29
4.2.1 <i>Table 3 Students Participation According to Form</i>	29
4.3 STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES	30
4.3.1 <i>Table 4 Teachers' Awareness of Problems in Written English</i>	30
4.4 TABLE 5 SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS OF STUDENTS	31
4.5 STUDENTS RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	32
4.5.1 <i>Reasons Given by Students</i>	33
4.5.2 <i>Why Students Encounter Problems in Written English</i>	33
4.5.3 <i>How Teachers can Improve the Teaching/Learning of English</i>	36
4.5.4 <i>What Students Can Do to Improve their Learning of English</i>	37
4.5.5 <i>What Parents/relatives do to Improve the Learning of English</i>	38
4.5.6 <i>General remark on the Teaching and Learning of English</i>	39
4.6 TEACHERS RESPONSES	40
4.6.1 <i>Table 6 Background Information</i>	40
4.6.2 <i>Teachers Responses to the Questions on Social Background</i>	41
4.7 TEACHERS RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	41
4.7.1 <i>Influence of Social Background on Written English</i>	41
4.7.2 <i>Specific Tasks that enable Improve their Written English</i>	42
4.7.3 <i>Teachers' Suggestions on how to Help Students' Improve Writing Skill</i>	43
4.7.4 <i>Reasons Given By Teachers Why Students Encounter Problems In Written English</i>	43
4.8 INTERVIEWS WITH THE ADMINISTRATION	44
4.8.1 <i>On the Influence of Social Backgrounds</i>	45
4.8.2 <i>Specific suggestion to Students on how to Improve Written English</i>	46
4.8.3 <i>Other factors that could inhibit students from writing well</i>	47
4.9 CONCLUSION	47
CHAPTER FIVE	49
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	49
5.1 INTRODUCTION	49
5.2 SUMMARY	49
5.3 CONCLUSION	50
5.4 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS	52
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS	52
5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	53
REFERENCES	55
APPENDIX I QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS: ADMINISTRATION	57
APPENDIX II QUESTIONNAIRES FOR PARTICIPANTS: STUDENTS	58
APPENDIX III QUESTIONNAIRES FOR PARTICIPANTS: TEACHERS	61
APPENDIX IV	64

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English as a medium of instruction in schools is very important for the effective learning of the students. The knowledge of English gives students the ability to express themselves verbally as well as in their written work. The Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E., 2002) highlighted the importance of English and its benefit to students:

- The English language is the pre-eminent language of the international community.
- Those who master English reap many academic, social and professional benefits.
- In the school setting, proficiency in English makes the learning of other subjects much easier. The importance of English therefore cannot be overemphasized.

In Kenya, as in other African countries, student's exposure to English prior to their formal education varies. The competent use of English language varies too. This cannot be helped, as there are many and various factors involved. These range from the differences in students' backgrounds such as family's economic status and having literate parents, to a physical environment that enhances learning. For instance, one student may acquire English from home while another may only come to learn it in school. These differences in students' backgrounds are influential in their written work as some are better able to write well than others.

The English language is like an economic indicator that stratifies or classifies people into various categories. It defines one's background. No wonder David (1998) argued that:

No one can speak without broadcasting his origin, his role in life and ultimately his identity. For the language that every individual uses is a product of all the social forces that affect his behavior: the society in which he lives, his class, his occupation and his own unique experiences.

This too is applicable to the written work of students. When two students from different backgrounds are given a composition topic, the output of each will obviously illustrate the different capabilities. This can be manifested in diction, sentence structure, flow of ideas and so on.

Some gifted children, irrespective of their backgrounds can do better than those who already have everything. That may be why Loein (1988) stated that, economically advantaged children are not necessarily smarter; they have many more opportunities to handle books, talk about and listen to stories, and be a part of or observe literate activities at homes. The above observation makes a lot of sense because if the economically deprived students were brought up in a similar home they would perform equally well. The relationship between the economic disadvantage and literacy is very narrow. Such students' encounter with reading and writing begins only from the moment they enter school, and it takes them a longer time to settle into the system. Unlike the privileged ones who live in an environment where those around them read, write and use English in conversation, the less privileged are usually only familiar with their own local language. Lack of access to books from an early age makes them slow in orthographic knowledge.

Teachers complain about some students' work because they compare it to that of their classmates. They often do not take time to explore the backgrounds of their students so as to know how to help them. The teachers often mark only the written work and may not follow up the student's work as to whether the correction has been done or they have understood their mistakes. Activities like making the student rewrite the same given work under the guidance of the teacher may help the student greatly. Organizing group work where the students write on chosen topics under the supervision of the teacher can also be of help. Some students finish their secondary education still making the same mistakes in their written work as they did from

the beginning. There is no improvement, which may be the problem of fossilization. In regard to developing writing skill the Kenya Institute of Education (2002) suggests that teachers' should give writing tasks based on the student's interests and their experiences; group work should also be used so that they get to learn from one another how to write well. Research conducted in 1974 in Machakos District revealed that teachers and students have negative attitude towards the subject and the type of primary school attended by the latter also affect them. Whitney the researcher said:

The students acquisition of language depends largely on their early exposure to the language, for language is easier learnt at childhood where it is done unconsciously.

African society, being multilingual, poses a lot of challenges to students. Some will have to grapple with two or three languages concurrently while growing up. On the other hand, others are exposed only to English language because they have educated parents and their environment is favorable for learning English language. Those with multilingual backgrounds tend to mix up terms from other language(s) with English when given written work. On the other hand, those who are monolingual will have a different challenge.

1.2 Parklands Boys' High School

Parklands Boys High School was opened in 1928; it was first started on a hired site and thereafter a new site was acquired and a new building erected in 1931. The school originally was built purposefully for the Goan community in Parklands. The idea for the school was conceived by a Dr. A.C.I de Souza. The school was initially called The Dr.Robeiro School after its principal benefactor. It merited the present name (Parklands Boys High School) in 1966. The school currently has a population of 450 students; it has three streams of each class (Forms 1-4) with the teachers posted by the Teachers Service Commission from the Ministry of Education.

The following courses are taught in Parklands Boys High School: Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Christian Religious Education, History, Geography, Social Ethics, Accounts, Home Science, Drawing/Design, Agriculture, English language, Kiswahili, and French.

The school's motto reads "*Educatio Omnia Vincit*" which means "Education Overcomes all Obstacles."

The school's goals are in line with what has been stated by the Kenya Institute of Education which are the following:

- Foster nationalism, patriotism and promote national unity
- Promote the social economic, technological and individual needs for national development
- Promote individual development and self-fulfillment
- Promote social moral and religious values
- Promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures
- Promote an international consciousness and foster positive attitudes towards other nations
- Promote positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection (KIE 2002).

In order to ensure the holistic development of students they are greatly involved in co-curricular activities within the school and outside the school where the school participates and competes with other schools. These activities include the Annual Drama Festival, and such as these as: sports, Cricket, Basket ball and Football among others.

1.3 Statement of the Research Issue

Teachers encounter students with their respective strength and weaknesses in writing. These are expressed in misspellings, lack of coherence and clarity in their compositions. In other words, some students cannot communicate effectively in writing. Writing encourages students to be organized, logical and creative in our thinking (KIE, 2002). To create a society where we have people who can think creatively, writing has to be learnt and used effectively.

This study therefore, set out to find whether in general, the social backgrounds of students affect their competence in written English. The study also found other variables that hindered students from writing competently.

1.4 Objectives

The Research had the following objectives

1. To examine teachers' knowledge of their students' social background.
2. To identify ways which parents and teachers can help students improve their writing.
3. To enable the students find ways of improving their written work.
4. To explore the various variables that inhibits students from writing competently.

1.5 Guided Research Questions

the following research questions guided the research:

1. How can teachers help their students to improve their learning of English?
2. Do parents help their children in their written assignment?
3. Are students aware of their strength and weaknesses in writing?
4. Do English language teachers consider their respective students' background?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions about the influence of social backgrounds on acquisition of written English were made:

1. Students who are exposed to English language from home can perform better in English than those who are not.
2. Students' social background impacts greatly on their acquisition of written English.
3. Teachers' awareness of students' weakness in written English enables him/her to help the students.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study was carried out to explore the reasons why students do not write as competently as is expected of them. This can be discouraging for both the teacher and the students. Teachers need to do more than merely mark students' notes. They should find possible ways to help students to develop writing skills. This will not only be beneficial to students in English language classes but in other areas of the subjects that they study in school. Constant evaluation of writing and a reasonable follow up on what they write, and how they develop the ideas and techniques of writing, will help students become competent writers. Therefore, the findings and suggestions that will be generated from this research may prove useful to both teachers and students. Teachers should involve parents, irrespective of their educational background. They should discuss the problem with them and let both parents and teachers come up with ways of helping. Organizing extra tuition for the students can help them to improve.

If teachers are able to know their students' individual needs they will be better able to help them. That was why KIE (2002) emphasized that teachers should be able to diagnose each student's problems in written work. Thereafter remedial exercises given according to their

needs will meet each student's need. Competent knowledge of English language and the students' ability to express themselves is not only helpful in the English language subject but also in subjects like biology, agriculture, home science, chemistry, physics and so on. Teachers of other subjects would have far less problem marking the students' written work. Today's world is very competitive, and a good foundation of speaking and writing English right from primary through university will place a good career before the student. Some students' failure in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) can be attributed to lack of the ability to express their answers clearly and not that the students do not know the subject. This problem should therefore be attended to as early as possible to enable students enhance their writing skills. They would then become great writers who will communicate their ideas and thoughts effectively and clearly without their reader finding it difficult to understand what was written.

Writing must convey the basic meaning and the sense of ideas without the aid of the human voice, eye contact, body language and so forth (Bear, 1998: 42)

Students' inability to communicate effectively in writing should be the concern of the school's administration, parents and the Ministry of Education as well. This study shall draw their attention to the importance of English and will motivate them to find ways to help the students work hard to improve their written work.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The study was carried out at Parklands Boys High School among the administration, teachers and the students. Questions and interviews were the instruments used to generate responses for the study. The study investigated social background and how it influences students' acquisition of written English. Forms two, three and four students were the main participants of the study. The administration (head teacher and the deputy) and the English teachers also participated in the study. Their respective views on the influence of social background on the acquisition of written English were sought.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Social backgrounds as used in this study refer to economic status, physical environment, family educational background, and social status.

Acquisition: the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situation.

Fossilization: this means to become fixed in a language; it occurs when the learner ceases or stops to elaborate on the second language grammar in some respect.

Orthographic knowledge: the writing system of a language, specifically the correct sequence of letters, characters, or symbols.

KIE: Kenya Institute of Education

Sheng: The mixture of Kiswahili and English word to communicate especially among the youth.

Her, she: either of these pronouns shall be used throughout the study to refer to either teacher or students to avoid excessive use of him/ her e.t.c

1.10 Conclusion:

The above chapter highlighted the background to this study and the importance of English language to students. The problems they are likely to encounter and the factors responsible for these problems were discussed. Parklands Boys' High School is the school where the study is to be carried out. It is a day school within Nairobi. The study aimed at exploring variables that inhibit students from writing competently. Hopefully it will be of benefit to teachers as well as students as their attention shall be drawn to certain issues concerning written work.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses theories of language acquisition as based on the research carried out by some linguists. In regard to the present study, students' social backgrounds as researched by some linguists and its impacts on students learning have been discussed, as well as teacher training and approaches to teaching writing.

2.1 Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Some Linguists investigated on the acquisition of a second language, among them was Krashen's whose theory is presented below.

2.1.1 Krashen's Monitor Theory

Krashen's Monitor Theory posits a relationship between spontaneous and guided learning of a second language. According to Krashen a second language learner gains proficiency in the second language by acquiring it subconsciously as well as learning it consciously. By acquisition, Krashen meant the situation whereby the learner is left to communicate with the speakers of the target language. The learner uses the language freely without being conscious of the forms and linguistic rules guiding the target language. The learner employs various means at her disposal to communicate. This is why it is unconscious. On the other hand Krashen refers to learning of the language consciously when the learner uses the language, attending to its linguistic rules as the instructor guides her to do. Here the learner is monitored by her instructor so that she uses the correct form of the language. The learner also monitors herself to make sure she uses the correct form of the language according to its linguistic rules and structure.

This practice can only be effective if there is enough time for the learner to practice the use of the language. Correct usage of rules and speech production by the learner are emphasized. However, the theory does not give specific rules governing the process or the factors responsible for the outcome of the learning.

The above theory when applied to the classroom situation can be of great help to the learners of English as a second language. However, it is important to note that in African setting, the schools have no native speakers of the English language. Both teachers and students learn the language at various times. Therefore, the aspect of allowing students to use the language freely (unconsciously) does not hold since it is only the teachers that know and teach them. Some students may go back home where they do not use English. Nevertheless, those whose parents are educated and use English at home can be left to use it freely but yet have to be corrected when they make mistakes. On the other hand, the aspect of their being guided by the teacher and also monitoring themselves in order to use the correct form of the language and its linguistic structure is very important and can help students master the language very well.

2.1.2 Contrastive Hypothesis

This theory claims that *the acquisition of a second language is largely determined by the structure of an earlier acquired language*. The rules and structures of the first language correspond to the target language are learnt easily as a result of “positive transfer”. This same theory poses a lot of difficulty, as there may be “negative transfer” or “interference” between the two contrasting languages as well. Contrastive theory can never work for the teachers of English because the rules and structures of the English language greatly differ from those of African languages. Besides the teachers and the students may not have the same language so, how are they to know whether they are transferring the correct rule to apply to the target

language? It will only make the learning of the language easier if the rules as in the second language apply to the first language.

2.2 Social Backgrounds

According to Dyson (1993), the standard classroom contains a mix of social backgrounds. He sees students' social world as the most influential aspect of their learning to be literate. Neisser (1990) also identified with this view about students' social world. He stated that the social world is like a basket for development of the physical and psychological world. In the social world through the company of others, students define themselves. Through their exploration in the social world, they develop ideas, and beliefs about themselves and the world around them. Students' exposure to the social world varies as some are in the urban areas while others are in the rural areas. The world of experience in both cases differs, thus offering different views, ideas, and development. In term of literacy development, those in the urban areas more or less have a wider opportunity. Those growing up in the rural areas on the other hand lack literacy experience. Their trend of thoughts, ideas and development are based on the environment in which they grow. Their approach to literacy will be on a slower pace.

Smith *et al* (1984) claimed that most, if not all children growing up in a modern society, where they watch television, go to restaurants and accompany adult to shopping, have experience with written language. They see writing used in signs, labels, names, grocery lists and notes written to family members. All these are practical uses of writing and are dependent for meaning on the environment in which the learners live. The writing is highly contextualized, especially when it is part of an action, and enables children to make inferences about both the function of writing and the relationships that exist between visual symbol and speech sound. Such a world offers to them the opportunity to learn reading by asking how what they see is pronounced, as well as learning spellings. Their immediate environment presents to them conventional symbols and

their meaning. As often as they see new things and associate them with what they learnt previously, they are able to appropriate them and incorporate into the learning process. For example if a student is asked to make sentences with the word ice cream it would make meaning to the student if she knows what ice cream is, what it looks like, how it tastes and its form. However, if the student does not know what an ice cream is, she might not construct a reasonable sentence with that given word.

Bissex (1981) expressed the view that students' reading and writing reveals the content of their world, level of intellectual activity, and how they bring their knowledge and intelligence to reflect on the task of learning a written language. Since this is the case, the teacher should give them freedom to write on the topic of their choice. The teacher should then facilitate their use of mechanics in the field they choose to write on. If a student from a pastoral community decides to write on his life as a cattle boy, words such as grazing, pasturing, and herdsman that are related to an aspect of keeping cows should be introduced to him if he did not use them in his writing. Another student might choose to write about snow, she must have seen snow and would like to write about it. The teacher should allow the student to do so even if the teacher himself or herself does not have the experience of it. The teacher's role is to facilitate the use of language by the student since the student is able to learn using her own experience. The student's background matters in her effort to learn. Bear (1998) made this point clearer when he stated that:

The most important part of assessment, particularly for students who do not speak English as first language is to understand a student's academic and personal background...when you understand a student's home and language background, it is time to explore his or her facility in English... (Developing Literacy :272-273).

Maundu (1988) as quoted by Ogula *et al* (1996) noted that the level of education and type of occupation of parents are becoming increasingly important in determining their children's achievements of both primary and secondary school levels. He emphasized the role of parents

as educators. Those who receive formal education and are working as teachers, doctors, accountants, and engineers and in many other fields know the value of formal education; thus they place their children in prestigious schools where they pay high school fees; they encourage and support them in all aspects of their education. On the other hand there are the peasant farmers, casual workers and many others who cannot even afford three square meals, leave alone pay school fees. However, some try to send their children to school. The children are sometimes sent home for school fees where they stay away from school for two to three weeks or even more. They miss a lot when they are away because their learning is always interfered with.

Economic position is another contributing factor. This is quite obvious as it is evident every year when pupils are moving from primary school to secondary school. The selection is done according to how well they performed. Parents want their children to go to school like Strathmore School, Alliance, Hillcrest Secondary School, Loreto Convent Msongari School, St. Mary's High School, Kianda High School, and Starehe Boys' School. Those who are able to afford it are the ones who take their children there. The principals tend to enroll those who have done very well and would want these to come to their school. The poor ones are left to join less prestigious schools in their neighborhood. They have obtained poor results because their parents are semi- skilled workers. They are raised in congested rooms, probably in the slum, and their parents do not have interest in their education. No one can answer their questions on how to spell a word, use a phrase correctly or order words in sentences. Their educational foundation is too weak to sustain their learning so as to achieve good result like those in better schools. Since the education policy allows them to move to the next class, whether they pass or not, they are always promoted to the next class carrying along their failures not only in English language as a subject but also in other subjects. If our schools can be common where students are mixed irrespective of their economic, social, family educational background and intellectual

competence, they can learn and work together and help each other improve. The system of segregating them according to intellectual competence may be impoverishing those who can improve when they are all put to study together.

Indongole (1987) claimed that the socio-economic background tend to influence students' performance. Well-educated parents, he said, provide their children with educational materials that will stimulate and motivate them to study. They do this by providing relevant study materials such as text books and related reading materials. On the other hand low-income parents tend to be illiterate or semi-literate especially in the third worlds. Students with good intellectual and material environments presumably do well in public examinations than their contemporaries who are not. This may be true of one economically advantaged student who, for example, lives in an environment with infrastructure from childhood watches television their parents read and write. Before age five, they are sent to nursery school. Parents may even put pencils and crayons in the child's school bag. The child also makes an effort to do what she sees her other siblings or parents doing. Hearing words such as "That's good" after scribbling down something, whether it makes sense or not, motivates the child.

The child sees that what she is doing is positive and that reinforces her. That arouses her interest in study and gradually she develops reading, listening, comprehension and writing skills. Her parents help her in assignments and in other school activities. She is even given more work to do at home such as writing letters, stories, and journals. On the other hand, a student whose early life is not exposed as such would find it difficult to cope in the same class with the other. It will take a longer time for her to be on a par with the student who already is exposed to different aspects of literacy. This is because no one in her homestead may have gone to school. Research carried out in the Western showed that children from the middle-class' home educational achievement is superior to that of children from manual working class homes (Burt, 1937 in Indongole, 1887; Douglas, 1964; Harvitghurst et al, 1962)

In a study that was carried out in Nairobi by Kapila in 1976, Ndiritu (1998) notes that there was a positive association between parent's participation in the children's school and academic performance. However, Osire's work cited in (Ndiritu 1998) denied that there is no relationship between academic performance and parental involvement. Osire's study rather proved that too much parental involvement can cause students to panic and anxiety which may lead to entire failure in examination. In spite of that report, another research was carried out by Kitvo in 1989 which was reported in Ndiritu (1998). In the study the relationship between secondary school students' need to achieve and the educational level of their parents was investigated; the result from the finding showed that there was a positive correlation between the father's level of education and that of the pupil's need to achieve. A further positive report between the mother's level of education and the student's achievement motive was established. In such a homestead it is obvious to the children to see the relevant of education and thus work hard to achieve probably high than their parents who model it for them.

The study by Jamison and Lockheed as cited in Indongole (1987) supported this finding : the formal education of the head of the house-hold was an important factor that influences the children's learning achievement at school level. In Kenya socio-economic status of parents impact greatly on students performance in the public examinations and particularly English examinations taken in KCSE.

Onjoro (1990) claimed that:

Children of Diplomats, Senior civil servants, professionals and the general elites who live in up-market parts of the urban centers have an advantage over others. They speak English as their first language, read books in English, watch television broadcasts in English and generally interact in English most of the time. Such students have greater advantage over their other counterparts who in the rural areas start learning in their mother tongue and are only introduced to using English to study in other subjects much later. (As reported in An Analysis of Performance in English at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examination by Zipporah Mutea : 25)

Mwanzi (1982) also points out that:

Children in rural areas have difficulties in learning English language because only a minority of the folk in rural Kenya speak it, and therefore children don't hear it often enough. Children in rural areas therefore rely solely on their teacher for the expansion of their vocabulary and sentence construction.

In answering the question as to how children might be encouraged to write in ways that would help them learn more about the features of written language Sulzby (1985) found out that children from homes where literacy was supported knew how to form some, if not all the letters of the alphabet. They knew how writing should appear on the paper and that writing conveyed meaning. For those whose parents are not literate, writing becomes a problem to them because they would have to learn to write and understand that what they are writing must convey a meaning. The teacher has to be patient and work with them until they understand the meaning of what they are into. Otherwise students will not have the motivation to continue.

2.3 Teachers Training

A well qualified teacher is needed in order for the students to learn the skill for writing effectively. A senior lecturer at Kenyatta University, English Department Dr. Ogutu commented on the educational foundation of teachers of English. He gave an example of the training the primary school teachers whose training as teachers is not pivoted towards any specialization. That is, none of them is trained to teach mathematics or English language specifically. They are instead trained to go and teach all subjects. The college minimum entry qualification of such a trainee is usually a D+ at K.C.S.E and majority of them are admitted with an average of D in English. This implies that the teacher trainees are not fluent or proficient in English. English is not acquired like mother tongue or Kiswahili. It has to be taught carefully. For the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to be inculcated well, they have to be taught by qualified and specialized teachers he said. It was also observed that

most teachers do not give written assignments and upon giving them, they only browse through looking for outstanding grammatical errors and leaving out sentence structures, the flow of ideas and creativity. (cited from *An Investigation of Factors Affecting Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Performance. By Leonard, : 42*)

Teachers are challenged to speak English more often and to model the use of the language to students so that they could use it. In rural areas where the use of the native language is inevitable teachers often falls to the temptation of using the local language to explain contents to students. This is aggravated by the fact that most teachers come from the same area. It might be that the teacher is not competent enough due to lack of training which has adverse result on the teacher, for example low self esteem. Such teachers would have the following characteristics:

- they dominate in the class
- They do not allow active participation of students in the learning. Process. Probably because she/he fears that student might ask for explanations or ask tough questions if they have the courage to do so.
- Poor teacher/pupil relationships develop in the classroom as students do not feel accepted by their teacher or vice versa. Consequently the situation impacts greatly on the students learning... Learners feel intimidated and lack the urge to be active in class. Many students become withdrawn in class (*Daily Nation,13,May 2002, Blackboard : 1*)

If such a teacher is found in English language class the students will definitely not be able to ask questions on what they do not understanding. So there is a need to have a n integrated teacher who would be gentle and show concern towards the needs of the students in written English.

Osman's (1988 :56) study on poor performance in K.C.P.E in Northern Eastern Province indicated that there was a high percentage of untrained teachers and inequitable distribution of teachers in the Province. The untrained teachers received only a few in- service courses and most schools are understaffed; they had only a few qualified teaches. This condition impacted on the students' performance, especially as they had not enough desks and chairs and also shortage of exercise and textbooks for learning.

The Daily Nation of 18th March 2002:18, reported that:

Shortage of teachers continues to bite and threatens to hamper the provision of quality education in schools. Since the government froze teacher recruitment in 1998 schools have controlled to lose through deaths, retirements and resignation without any replacement.

According to Maundu as reported in Wamai (1991) on a study carried out in Kenya it was discovered that academic qualifications of teachers and the availability of teaching/ learning resources were crucial factors that affected learners' achievements. The study indicated that schools which were set up as a result of Harambee (community schools) relied heavily on untrained teaches and thus had a failure rate of 37% in national examinations compared to 2% for the government schools where they have trained teachers. This is to emphasize that for students to be great achievers they have to be given the best and this is by giving them competent teachers and not just any teacher.

2.4 Approaches to Teaching Writing in English

Writing is a skill that is taught by teachers and learnt by students. This skill is a process and must be learnt well as it helps in the development of students. The KIE (2002, :viii) also lay emphasis on writing skills as it stated the following qualities on writing:

- Writing encourages us to be organized, logical and creative in thinking
- Writing influences our chances of success, personal development and our relations with other people

'When we as educators allow our pedagogy to be radically changed by our recognition of the multicultural world, we can give students the education they desire and deserve. We can teach in ways that transform consciousness, creating a climate of free expression that is the essence of a truly liberal arts education.' (Bell, 1994:59). This author acknowledges the differences in classroom situation where students have their respective strengths and weaknesses in learning. Indeed students will benefit greatly when the teacher is able to recognize each one's need and teaches the particular area for more clarification and understanding of the content. These differences however, are inevitable. The teacher can effect a change in the students' life by doing more work.

Calhoun (1999:103) in her book stated:

This is something (education) we public school educators- have some direct control over. We cannot change neighborhoods, home environments, and socioeconomic circumstances, but we can change the range of instructional opportunities and the learning environments available for students and for ourselves.

Cazden pointed out that Language is the knowledge we have in our heads, and this knowledge can only be through speech and writing. This is to say that if this knowledge of the language is not well expressed in writing we can then conclude that the person does not possess the language as claimed. It is important that students express the knowledge they have competently in writing as well as use them effectively in oral communication. Nathan *et al* (1989) suggested that teachers should pay close attention to what students write rather than how they write. A teacher can give students some practice in punctuation by having them insert the punctuation in a given paragraph that was not punctuated. This will give them the experience of examining sentence structure well in the written texts. Teachers should develop a repertoire of open-ended questions to encourage students to talk in conferences. Several questions that encouraged reflection when students ask for the teachers' assistance should help in guiding students' writing. Questions such as asking the student to tell the teacher about what she is writing on,

why she chose the particular topic, in what way did she think she has improved since the last time she wrote the first draft, what problem in relation to her writing is she encountering? What question has she to ask the teacher and whether she has more than one plot in the story she is writing? These questions would help to guide the student when writing.

The teacher can learn a lot about how students write by moving around the room stopping and observing what they write. The teacher can stop and help one who is stuck. In a classroom however, some teachers would give such written work and then sit down to do other things without being interested in the students' work. They only collect the books at the end of the lesson mark and return them. KIE (2002) stressed the need to give meaningful and helpful feedback on written assignment. This obviously will help the students to improve.

Among the six strategies given by Cohen (1980) for teaching English to students, two are related to writing. First, in vocabulary development technique students should make association, attend to the meaning of parts of the word, notice the structure of the word, place the word in topical groups with similar words, visualizing or conceptualizing it, link it to the situation in which it appears, create a mental image of it, and associate some physical sensation to it. By so doing they will learn more vocabulary. Secondly writing drafts again and again comparing and making improvement every time would enhance cohesion.

Hayes (1991) proposed that teachers should have students write daily and watch for letter formation, capital letters, punctuation and sentence structure. The teacher can then develop a lesson plan around what is needed. Some teachers can be so rigid that they would not want to alter the lesson plan. They drag along the lesson even when they note that some students have difficulties in certain areas of reading and writing. On the other hand the number of students in the class might pose a great challenge to the teacher such that she would not be able to read, mark and attend to all the students' needs. In an average class in most of the schools there are

about forty students. To assess their writing on a daily basis would weigh heavily on the teacher. As a result of this, ways have to be sought to help the teacher employ a method to enable students improve on their writing.

Small class size is highly preferable by language teachers as this will give them opportunity to really examine the development of their student.

A research findings by Lancaster within Leeds on Learning Project as presented in Wamai (1991), showed that language teachers prefer to teach smaller classes for some of the following reasons in regard to teaching English to large classes :

- Teachers find it difficult and at times impossible to establish rapport with individual students;
- Oral work is difficult to conduct
- It is difficult to evaluate the work of students in English
- Complicated but exciting activities are avoided; and
- There is usually too much distracting noise (Allwright, 1998 in Wamai 1991).

Research findings showed that the most effective way to teach writing is to teach it as a process of brainstorming, composing, revising, and editing. The teacher can guide the students to jot down ideas as they come, make draft of the topic they want to write about and to proof read several times and make correction until they are ready to write the final copy and submit. The students will get into the habit of such practice until they master the skill for writing competently. It requires a teacher who is so committed and hardworking before the student can get to this stage.

How teachers organize material and teach is very crucial to how students learn. Awareness of what students really need to know rather than following the lesson plan strictly is also very

vital. The teachers therefore should make effort to familiarize themselves with their students social, economic, and physical world so as to know how best to present the content to be learnt. By doing so, they will be creating effective writers and readers.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of theories of language specifically that of Krashen Monitor theory and Contrastive theory. Various aspects of students' social backgrounds and literacy in English were also discussed. The qualities of the teachers' educational background and strategies which will help teachers teach better were also looked into. The next chapter discusses the research design and procedures: target population, description of sample and sampling procedures, and the research design.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter defines the method employed for effective result of the study: research design, target population, sample procedure, research instrument, data collection and data analyses.

3.2 Research Design

Survey design, which was described as “conducted to establish the nature of existing condition”, was used in this study (Wise, 1967). This design helped to investigate the relationship between the two variables- social backgrounds and how it impacts on students written English.

3.3 Target Population

The students, teachers of English, head teacher and his deputy of Parklands Boys’ High School were the target population for the study. The school has three streams of each form of which a class has about forty students. The school has five teachers of English and they all participated in the study.

3.4 Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedures

The main objective in purposive sampling type is to select cases that are typical of the population being studied (Kathuri, 1993). The students of Parklands Boys High School were chosen to participate in the study because they represent the population of the topic under study. Ten students were chosen from each class to participate in the study. Since the teachers

of English are a small number they were all chosen to participate in the study. Data was also collected from the head teacher and the deputy.

3.4.1 Random Sampling

Random sampling is a process that allows the selection from the population that provides every sample of a given size an equal probability of being selected. This eliminates bias or discrimination. The first five best students and the last poorly performed students in each class were randomly sampled for the study. The students were from each class of Forms 1-4. However, because of the smaller number of the teachers of English in the school, they were all given questionnaires as designed for the study

3.5 Description of Research Instruments

In order to carry out this research the following tools were used to gather information: Questionnaires and an interview guide. See Appendix I (Interview guide for the Administration), II (Students' questionnaires) and III (Teachers' questionnaires) respectively for the research instrument.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

Factual questions were designed to elicit objective information from both students and teachers regarding their backgrounds, environments, habits and the like (Frankfort, 1996). Questions were formulated based on the hypothesis and the objectives of the study. The questions comprises of restricted and unrestricted responses. The questionnaires comprises of two sets. A set was designed specifically for the teachers of English language and another specifically for the students.

3.6 Questionnaires for Students

The questionnaires for the students had three sections and they sought the following:

Section A

Background information: students' age, class, type of school attended were the information sought.

Section B

This section was made up of restricted questions that were rated agree; strongly agree; undecided; disagree; and strongly disagree. They covered: Teacher's awareness of student's problem in English.

a.) whether teacher corrects students work and guides them to see their mistakes.

b.) the social background of students (economic statue, social statue, parents' educational background).

Section C

This had unrestricted response of students on:

- Problems they encounter in written English.
- Their performance in English language
- Why students encounter problem in English language
- How teachers, students, and parents can help improve the teaching and learning of English language.

3.7 Questionnaires for Teachers

Questionnaires for the English teachers also had three sections:

Section A

The information sought was number of teaching years experience and the class taught.

Section B

This had restricted questions on the following:

- Awareness of students problem in written English
- Awareness of students' social background (socio-economic status, parents' educational background, physical environment)

Section C

This had open-ended questions on the following:

- Their views on the influence of social backgrounds on written English
- The specific tasks they give students to improve their written English
- Their suggestions to parents regarding how to help students improve their written English
- Their views on why students encounter problems in written English

3.8 Interviews

Questions were formulated to guide the interviewing of the head teacher and the deputy. The interviews were done orally in form of question and answer and the responses written down. The same questions were used for both the head teacher and the deputy. The interviews were about students' performance in English language at national exam, the influence of social background on the performance where asked. See Appendix I for the instrument.

3.9 Data Collection

Questionnaires for the students were sent to the office of the Dean of Studies awaiting the day arranged for the researcher to go and administer them to the students. Thereafter, there were subsequent visit to the schools to check out but the appointment was always postponed. However, on two other visits to the school, interviews were conducted with the head teacher and the deputy respectively. On another visit to the school, questionnaires were administered to the teachers of English. They were later sent to the English' head of department from whose

office the responses were collected from. Students were given the questionnaires by the dean of studies in their classes and the responses were later collected.

3.10 Data Analysis

“Raw data taken from questionnaires, interview schedules, checklists, etc. need to be recorded, analyzed and interpreted.” (Bell, 2004). The data was collated, categorized and interpreted using tables, to describe the percentage of the response. The data were analyzed by categorizing each response based on the particular question as answered by the respondent.

3.11 Conclusion:

Survey design helped to establish the existing condition in Parklands Boys' High school which is the school where this study was conducted. The study was carried out among the school's administration, teachers' of English and some selected students. Questionnaires and interview were the sole instruments used to gather data. The results from the study are presented and analyzed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

Analysis of data, its presentation and interpretation as collected from Parklands Boys High School is discussed in this chapter. Questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect the data. Students' questions were different from those given to the teachers. The principal and his deputy however, had the same interview guide.

The data was collected and analyzed according to various themes: students' awareness of their weakness in written English; teachers' awareness of students' weakness in written English; Students home background of English language; and parents' education statues.

4.1.1 Demographic Character

The information sought here was age, type of primary school attended, and the number of students that responded.

4.1.2 Table 1 Distribution of Student Respondents by Age

<i>Age</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
15-19	94	95.9
20-25	4	4
total	98	100

Table I shows that 95.9% of the students that participated in this research fell between ages 15-19 while 4% falls between ages 20-25. These students are preparing for various careers in life and the English language is undoubtedly very crucial to each one of them.

They must master it in order to express themselves well during examinations as well as when the occasion demands it. The foundation is to be laid right from time and built upon at this secondary level. They have to be well taught and they have the responsibility to study the language for easy communication in all aspects as demanded of them.

4.1.3 Table 2 Type of School Attended

Type of school	n
Government school	74
Private school	15
No response	4

Table 2 shows that 74 students out of the 98 students that responded attended government Primary schools, which means public schools. Generally, public schools are less expensive and the quality of teaching there may not be that credible but some parents have no choice but to send their children since they cannot pay high school fees as demanded by private schools.

4.2 The Number of Respondents

One hundred and twenty students were given questionnaires but only 98 students responded to them. 81% response on the influence of social backgrounds on the acquisition of written English was collected from Parklands Boys High School.

4.2.1 Table 3 Students Participation According to Form

Form	n
2	20
3	36
4	42
Total	98

As shown in Table 3 above, more students responded in Form Four than in Forms two and three. 120 questionnaires were distributed, 30 to each form of which 10 students from each class were to participate in the study. During the time the questionnaires were distributed Form One students were new so the administrator decided that they do not participate in the study. The Dean of Studies gives the 120 questionnaires to some of the school's prefects to distribute among the classes. At the end of the exercise 98 responses were collected.

4.3 Students' Responses to the Questionnaires

Teachers awareness of students weakness in English language were presented with likert items which graded: 5- strongly agreed; 4=agreed 3= undecided, 2=disagreed, 1=strongly disagreed and NR=No Response. See Appendix II for the questionnaires. If teachers know the problems of students in his or her class, the teacher will be able to answer their questions and worries in those areas but if not, the problem will remain unsolved.

4.3.1 Table 4 Teachers' Awareness of Problems in Written English

Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	NR
My English teacher knows my problem in written English	12	27	15	25	14	5
Teacher listens to each students problem	18	31	10	20	13	6
Teacher guides each one to see his mistakes	32	37	11	7	6	5

As shown in the above Table 12 of students strongly agreed that their English teachers are aware of their difficulties in English while 27 agreed. 15 students were undecided of this question. 25 disagreed while 14 strongly disagreed that their English teacher is not aware of the difficulties they encounter in written English. The result reveals that the students were equally divided concerning this issue.

That is, half of the students agreed that the teachers are aware of their problems while the other half do not agree. It is very important for teachers of English to know the problems their students have in written English so that they know how to help them. If teachers do not take interest in the subject and encourage students by calling their attention to the mistakes they make, or being there for them when they want to consult, it will make the students not to take the subject seriously. Nevertheless, the result revealed that the great majority strongly agreed that their teachers guide each one to see his mistakes. This is very encouraging since pointing out individual student's mistakes helps the students work harder to correct them.

4.4 Table 5 Social Backgrounds of Students

Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD	NR
I am brought to school in our car everyday.	2	6	3	20	65	3
We have study room at home	18	24	5	26	22	3
I could not go to a better school because my parents are poor	5	10	8	26	45	4
My parents always provide whatever I asked for	11	24	12	31	16	4
My parents are able to provide all I need for my education	28	32	8	16	9	5
We have television fridge, radio/CD player	22	36	3	14	20	3
My parents understand only Kiswahili and our mother tongue	5	6	2	20	58	7
I go for extra tuition (lesson) to improve my written English	6	13	10	35	32	2

The research assumed that students' social backgrounds impact greatly on their acquisition of English language skills. This is because if parents are wealthy they may send their children to prestigious schools where probably the children receive higher quality education than in public schools. Parents also if well educated would like to give children the best education which requires huge expenses ranging from buying text books, sending them for extra tuition and giving them maximum support in everyway possible.

On the issue of establishing student's economic background, Table 4 above shows that only 2 students strongly agreed that they are brought to school by car while 6 simply

agreed. 26 disagreed and 65 being the majority strongly disagreed that they are brought to school by car. However, 45 strongly disagreed that they were unable to go to a better school because their parents were poor. A better school here implies a private school where parents pay heavily for their children's education. Students' response here may be taken as their appreciation of accepting what their parents are able to give them despite the reality that they may not have gone to a better school because they are unable to afford the money. 58% strongly disagreed that their parents speak only Kiswahili and their mother tongue while only 4% strongly agreed that their parents speak only Kiswahili and their mother tongue. This means that the students are from homes where their parents speak English. However, this does not determine that they are well educated since all primary 8 school leaver or secondary school leaver know some amount of English.

4.5 Students Responses to Open-ended Questions

The majority of students admitted having mistakes in spelling of words and use of tenses when writing, use of punctuation and problem with writing a free composition.

A student wrote:

The problem I have in writing is punctuation; tenses and I have bad handwriting, which let me down.

Students were asked to grade their performance level of written English of which 67-ticked good, 8 ticked excellent, 2 ticked below average while only 1-ticked poor. This shows that students are aware of their capabilities in the subject and this is a good sign, as it will help each one to try and work harder to improve in English language. Students were able to give answer as to why they ticked good, excellent and below average respectively.

4.5.1 Reasons Given by Students

One of those who ticked “below average” wrote that lack of practice and not having books for him to use for studies at home has made him not do well in English.

A student who does well wrote this:

I usually do a lot of homework with my brother who is much better than I because in English exams he scores 70% and above. My sister also helps me especially in practicing tenses.

Another of the student wrote on what has helped him improved on his written English

I do a lot of practices on my own; whenever I have difficulty I go to the teacher to help me that is why I have improve gratly (greatly).

And another wrote:

I read a lot of novels and do any work given by our teacher. It helps me impruv (improve). That is why I marked good for myself

Yet another student gave this reason for grading his performance as good

We speak English at home and I have friends who speak English too. I always work hard to finish my English assignment. I read a lot of novels and English books. This helps me to write well.

4.5.2 Why Students Encounter Problems in Written English

Majority of the students gave reasons as to why students generally do not do well in written English. This problem ranges from the use of *sheng* in schools, student/teacher relationships, and lack of enough written exercise to students attitude towards English as a subject.

A student wrote:

Our teacher is not serious and 90% of the students do not like her. So, most of the students are not attentive when she is teaching.

Another wrote:

I think in our public schools, majority of students do not usually express themselves in English and thus making it difficult to write in English.

Another student agreed to this by expressing the same concern:

Some of us prefer Kiswahili; we speak and write well in it than English.

A student differs with this view he wrote:

Though we blame the use of Sheng at times different teachers preach the importance of their subject and at home my parents speak to me in vernacular. This confused my mind.

A student expressed another reason as:

The influence of mother tongue makes students transfer meaning into English language.

Many students laid emphasis on students' attitude towards English as a subject. Some assumed that English is very simple and does not need studying as do other like other subjects. This attitude has made some students not to take their written work serious. A student wrote that English helps one to improve spelling mistakes and that is the only reason for him to study his English language once in a while.

The following are some of the comments made by students:

Some students ignore teacher's assignments thus they cannot improve because they cannot notify (identify) their problems, so no improvement.

Another student wrote: some students assume that English is very easy and can excel anytime. They do not practice.

A student wrote something similar:

Students assume English and think no need to revise they can pass anytime they do the exam. Science subjects create job opportunities than languages so some don't see the need to study English.

Students raised issue connection to the teaching method employed by their English teachers. If the teaching of English is boring students may not follow what the teacher is teaching. This will in turn make them loose interest.

A student expressed that teachers should make English lesson interesting and use simple language. Another who wrote supported his view:

English should be fun or make it interesting so that student will be interested in learning. Learning English is fun and requires interest he emphasized.

However a student poses a challenge to others, writing that:

English is an interesting subject, if you are interested i.e. practice speaking in English, reading story books, novels, filling crossword, but if you don't practice it you will find it so hard to understand.

Another student wrote:

English is an international language teachers should try and make students see the need to speak and write it well. Students on their own side should make effort to learn it well. Students should read widely that is read novels, news papers, and other written materials that can help you improve on your writing.

The time of teaching English language has been cited as a problem for the students. The brain can be fresh and alert at certain time during the day and at this time students tend to pay more attention than when they are tired. The morning hour is obviously suitable for language teaching, as more attention would be given at that time.

A student made the following observation writing:

English being a compulsory subject I think it should be better if most of the classes could be morning instead of in the afternoon.

Other students compared their school to others in terms of what they have in the library and attributed their poor performance to lack of enough materials.

A student wrote:

I think national schools have better access than any other school.

Another concurred to this:

English is the success of every student, students in places like Alliance High or Starehe Boys have good library and are used to English and that is why they do perform well in al subjects.

4.5.3 How Teachers can Improve the Teaching/Learning of English

Students went further to answer questions on what teachers need to do to improve the standard of teaching and learning of English as a subject. This is very crucial to both teachers and students but especially to teachers because they should always seek ways or methods that will help students to learn and understand materials better. They should not be rigid by using only one style of teaching all the time or teaching and not giving students opportunity to participate by answering and asking question relevant to their understanding of the content.

One student wrote:

Teachers should not focus only on what the syllabus say to teach us. teachers should use other sources to teach us English e.g. use films, radio program, debate and quizzes.

This view coincides with another who wrote:

Teachers should adopt a better way to teaching English. Have various sources of teaching materials no (not) only those accepted by the government. (Syllabus)

A student also expressed:

Take students for seminars and debate in English in different areas in Kenya. Interaction is a sure winner

Another student supported the above view when he wrote:

Let there be debate and quizzes between classes and then we have with other schools too. It will help every student to take English as a serious subject and create positive attitude towards this subject.

A student gave this advice:

Teachers should help students to form groups to help one another. Form English language club this will help us improve I think. Everybody should be motivated in answering English in answering English and not discouraged when someone makes a mistake when reading or writing English answering question

A student expressed the same concern he wrote:

*Let every student participate in answering questions during lessons and not a few, we are all learning.
Teachers should give frequent exercise and be ready to mark, respond and correct them another student wrote*

A student wrote:

They should motivate us and correct us where necessary.

Yet another student wrote:

Teachers, all teachers should mark our books regularly to see what we write. Not only the English teachers. When they correct our work we will continue to do well. And again, English is not all about speaking as they always say; teachers should also emphasis on writing but if I do not understand the vocabulary of the teacher I cannot write what the teacher wants me to.

A student gave an example of how some vocabularies are not clear he wrote this:

Some use of words are not clear that is why we fail because we cannot get the meaning let teachers explain meaning for example transitive verb, intransitive verb, parenthesis what are they? He asked.

Another student wrote:

They should use correct form of English when teaching some are bad example to us!

4.5.4 What Students Can Do to Improve their Learning of English

The issue of learning English is very important to both the teachers and students. This concern should be more on students as it is important for them to master it and use it to write and express themselves in every activity and occasion that requires them to do so. It is very important that even when they are not from homes where the language is used that each student should take the assignment given in class seriously. Students should take the

initiative to find ways to improve their learning of English language. Students were sincere in their responses to this question on what they can do to improve their learning of English language. The challenges they posed should be taken up so that they can work and improve both individually and collectively.

A student wrote:

Take English seriously and consult your teacher when you are not sure of the correct thing.

Another gave this advice:

Read novels and books written with good English/ do your exercises given by your teacher, submit for marking. Do your own example it is good to fill in crossword puzzle in newspaper, it helps to build your vocabulary and you can use it to write next time.

And another student wrote this:

English requires a lot of practice.(:) students should practice writing compositions, stories, essays and others. They should ask for correction so that they know their mistakes.

A student made this contribution that:

Students should be encouraged to watch news and educative programs on the television, (:) I think teachers should use radio programs to teach too.

Another challenged the students' attitude towards English:

Avoid the use of sheng and be interested in English.

4.5.5 What Parents/relatives do to Improve the Learning of English

Students answered question on what parents/relatives can do to help improve students English. The workload should not be left solely to teachers; it is important that parents also get involved in the teaching and learning of English. Student expressed ways in which parents can help them to improve their English. Many of the students however, wrote that parents should provide textbooks for their children. They do not consider that it is not all parents that can provide textbooks. And also expressing that parents check their children's

books to see what they write and so on. These are good ideas but so limited to only those who have educated parents.

A student wrote:

Parents should check their children's book when they come back from school.

Yet another wrote:

Let parents ensure that their children do the assignments given to them by their teachers. Parents should also pay school fees so that students can come to class for every lesson and so that they can follow every lesson the teacher is teaching. Let them encourage students to read and write English for example ask them to spell words and let them write stories and they correct them. If their children are not doing well in English let them send them for tuition.

4.5.6 General remark on the Teaching and Learning of English

Finally students commented on general teaching and learning of English.

A student commented:

English is used almost world wide, teachers should teach well and students should be determine to learn.

Another wrote:

English is an international language teachers should make students see the need to speak and write well in it. Students on their own side should make effort to learn it well too.

Its prominence was still emphasis as a student wrote:

English applies in all subject taught in schools except Kiswahili, it is needed everywhere in life, teachers should be serious with it and students too.

Yet another wrote:

Qualified teachers should teach English so that student will learn the language well. For example teachers with mother tongue influence should not teach English.

The responses revealed that students are very much aware of the importance of English.

The need to have qualified teachers for English language was emphasized. The school administration should ensure that students get the best by having a qualified teacher.

Probably the problem may not be that they do not have qualified teachers but the personality of the teacher and how she relates with the students. Students need a gentle push most of the times. This encourages them. This should be done with discretion and regularity. Both teachers and students have to work harder to realize the appropriate use of English words in reading and in writing. Mother tongue interference is an issue language but improvement can always be made by constant practice and deliberate effort. A teacher might be competent in the subject but when she has a mother tongue influence, she can distract some students by putting them off in her pronunciation and so on. Nevertheless, the teacher's approach to handling this can change the whole atmosphere of learning. For example acknowledging before the students that she has this problem and encouragement to them that they should feel free to ask questions on what is not clear will continue to arouse students' interest in the language.

4.6 Teachers Responses

Five questionnaires were distributed to the five teachers of English in the School only three responded fully to the questions. The fourth teacher answered only the restricted part of the questions and did not give other details such as number of years she has taught etc. For effective analysis the three shall be used.

4.6.1 Table 6 Background Information

Teachers	No of Years Taught	Class
1	3	1, 2, and 3
2	14	1, 2, and 3
3	18	1, 3, and 4

Table 6 above shows that the school has five English teachers however, only three returned their questionnaires. One teacher admitted to have taught for three years and currently teaches forms one, two and three. Another teacher had taught for 14 years and teaches in

forms one, two and three. The third teacher has been teaching for 18 years and currently teaches in forms one, 3 and four respectively.

All the teachers simply agreed to knowing the problems their students have in English. The importance of this cannot be over emphasized as it helps the teacher to teach more effectively knowing more areas to lay emphasis on and what particular students need attention. If on the other hand the teacher does not know students problems, it will make the teaching and learning difficult for the teacher will just be teaching and the students may be lagging behind in at least basic knowledge of the given topic. This lack of interest on the part of the teacher can also make students lose interest in the subject.

4.6.2. Teachers Responses to the Questions on Social Background.

Teachers' responses on the various issues raised showed that they are aware to a certain extent of their students' social background. They indicated that parents seemed enthusiastic about students education but do not really provide support. They all agreed that socio-economic factors have influence on students' written work. They also agreed that students need extra tuition to improve their writing skills and other skills in English.

4.7 Teachers Responses to Open-ended Questions

The questions sought teachers' view on the influence of social background on English, tasks they give students, suggestions on how students can be helped to improve their writing skill, and reasons why students encounter problems in written English.

4.7.1 Influence of Social Background on Written English

Questions were asked to find out what teachers think about the influence of social background on written English.

A teacher wrote:

Students with a good background have the advantage of exposure to things like computer and reading materials. Parents who are well educated also are able to purchase items such as books to be read by their children.

Another teacher also wrote:

Most times students from educated background are taught how to read and write at early age. So, they are naturally good at written English.

Another gave this opinion:

Students who have had much exposure to the use of English language outside school do perform better in the understanding and use of the skill learnt.

Teachers unanimously agreed that students who are exposed to English language and have educated parents who know their needs to have good reading material are at great advantage. They really do have advantage because they are able to interact with English language reading and writing materials.

4.7.2 Specific Tasks that enable Improve their Written English

Teachers gave examples of written tasks they give students to enable them write better.

This aspect is very important since frequent and constant writing helps students to articulate words in writing and eventually become competent writers.

One teacher wrote:

I engage them in creative writing e.g. reading and asking them to write summary from them, composing and writing poems, compositions, letters, reminders, filling of forms and writing reports.

Another teacher wrote:

*They do written exercises like composition and dictation.
Another wrote: more composition and other written exercises.*

It is quite obvious from what the teachers wrote that they expose students to various forms of writing. This will widen their knowledge on the rich variety that there are in written English and give them a focus on how to go about them respectively. The knowledge in this area should be holistic.

4.7.3 Teachers' Suggestions on how to Help Students' Improve Writing Skill

Teachers' suggestions on how to help students improve their writing skill were directed to parents. They were encouraged to buy reading materials for their children and engage them in written work where possible. The idea of asking students to write to newspapers or avail of any writing competition is very good. This will help students to want to learn and improve on their writing more and more.

A teacher wrote:

Buy them more reading materials and encourage them to write to newspapers and other competitions.

A teacher also wrote:

They should engage their children in constructive writing in place of oral explanations e.g. learn to give instruction through writing. Also give them work that demands writing.

Another teacher wrote:

Expose them to written work at an early stage. Both parents and teachers should encourage them to write at all times. They should make use of all opportunities.

4.7.4 Reasons Given By Teachers Why Students Encounter Problems In Written English

Teachers finally answered the question on why students encounter problems in written English. Teachers identified various reasons as given below:

A teacher wrote:

Lack of exposure to reading materials; also influence of press and peers and limited vocabulary due to poor reading habits.

Another teacher wrote:

Failure to have adequate and effective practice in the use of the language. Assumption that they already know it and their laxity in doing written work. Also poor background of the basic skills as learnt in acquisition and development of written English hence failure to practice the learnt skills through writing.

Yet another teacher wrote:

Lack of writing at an early stage. They also lack exposure to enough written work at school and there is no encouragement from teachers.

In order for students to be proficient in English both in writing and speaking they need practice. This will save the teachers plenty of time, again students need to be reminded both in the school and at home. The teachers and parents should keep on emphasizing to them the need to work hard and the only way is through practice. Teachers have to be firm on this, give students work regularly, mark and give back in due time. Let them cultivate a reading habit that will expose them more on how the English words are used in context and so on.

4.8 Interviews with the Administration

An interview was carried out with the school's head teacher and the deputy on the influence of social background on the acquisition of written English. The head teacher was new to the school; however, he tried to respond to questions. A question was asked concerning how the admission of students to the school is conducted. The school does have national and provincial selection of students, they conduct interviews with each student and they admit students who score 250 marks and above. This is to help keep the attained reputation of the school. Nevertheless the administration agreed to poor performance of the school in the past years. See the KCSE result in Appendix 5 particular reference to English language performance in the past years.

The Principal had this to say:

In the olden days, middle class parents used English a lot both at home and at working places but nowadays it has changed. Kiswahili has become the language. Middle-income earners are entrenched in Kiswahili and majority of students here are from that background so it has really affected them. The media also has influence on the students. This is because they prefer watching television to reading materials like magazine or newspaper where they are suppose to learn how language is used.

The Deputy Principal also said:

In this school students' English is not good enough. I think girls do well in English than boys. Boys are bent towards science subjects and do not care about how they use English language. The way students are exposed to sheng in Nairobi has really influenced them. The students have no culture of reading. Also previously we did not have good library but this year we are really buying books so we look forward to better results from this year. We now have a study room and we are campaigning that students use the right language when speaking on this compound.

The lack of reading habit by students keeps on being a hindrance to their learning of English language. There is also the problem of feeling more comfortable using *Kiswahili* or *Sheng* than English. Students prefer watching program to reading materials that can help them to learn. This attitude is emphasizing the role both parents and teachers have to play to help students see the need for studying. The school has already taken a step by buying books and building a study room for students' use.

4.8.1 On the Influence of Social Backgrounds

The Principal and the Deputy Principal expressed their views on the influence of social background on students written English.

The Principal said:

Yes, social background really influenced students, some students have no television at home where they can listen to may be news and know how English is used. For some also the language of communication at home is Kiswahili. Costs of books is high parents are not able to buy books for students example set books. Modern technologies also influence them for example the mobile phone. When one is sending a text message the person uses abbreviation. Do you know students now use those abbreviations in writing classroom work? This reduces competence in

performance of English language. Students who are from home where parents are educated have someone who models educational values to them. This also affects how they use language.

The Deputy Principal said:

Social backgrounds affect student use of English but the affluence thinks that sheng is prestigious both at home and in school. Their parents also with the notion that their children are in good school do not think it is necessary for them to check what they did in school for example what they write and how they write. They presume their children know everything. On the issue of Physical environment, students in the slum have no space to study and also no time they are so crowded in the room. They do little practice of writing. Parents should encourage their children to read and write, let them communicate sometimes in writing, continuous writing help direct problems and thus correct the problems. Reading also influence writing this leads to putting information in correct writing.

They both agreed that social background do have influence on written English. That is, some students are disadvantage by not having access to what could enable them learn and use English well. However, the use of *sheng* and technologies has been identified as having negative influence on students written English. This is true as students when given written work use abbreviations and sometimes uses Kiswahili words together with English words to express an idea. Parents' attitude of not checking what their children write and how they use language also contribute to their poor performance in written English. The task of education should not be left solely to teachers; parents should work hand in hand with the teachers. This will enable students to take every aspect of their education seriously and then excel.

4.8.2 Specific suggestion to Students on how to Improve Written English

Suggestions were given on how students can improve their written English.

Head teacher:

Students should use the library always; let them read magazines, novels. Let them also learn to use English to communicate with teachers and fellow students. Teachers of language should also demand more composition and have essay competition.

Deputy Head teacher:

Let them write always. When you write always you perfect your writing.

4.8.3. Other factors that could inhibit students from writing well

Teachers gave other probable factors that prevent students from performing well in written English.

The deputy responded:

Personality can affect them. Some students do not have confidence neither in writing nor speaking. Let them gain confidence in this area and try to write as well as speak English language. Be relaxed, unstable emotion is expressed in writing

Self-confidence comes with affirmation. This reveals that teacher may not have been affirming the students but scold or shout at them when they make mistakes.

4.9 Conclusion

The above chapter has dealt with information about students' age, and the type of primary school the respondents attended. Students rated their respective performance according to their abilities. 98 students participated in the study. Students answered various questions on social backgrounds. They identified the problems they have in written English such as spelling mistakes, wrong use of tenses, diction and so on. The use of *sheng*, students' negative attitude towards English, teachers' of English approach to teaching English and other issues were cited as a hindrance to the learning of English. The high cost of textbooks and modern technology also influence the way students use English to communicate. Parents were called upon to buy textbooks and relevant English materials to help students improve their learning of English language and hence improve written English. The school administration on have tried by equipping their library and going on the campaign that students use English when on the school compound. That is a step

forward. The next chapter shall present the summary of the research and give recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study investigated the influence of social backgrounds on the acquisition of written English. The study was carried out at Parklands Boys High School. Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings.

5.2 Summary

The research was based on these objectives:

1. To examine English teachers' knowledge of their students' social background
2. To identify ways which parents and teachers can help students improve their written English
3. To enable the students find ways of improving their written work
4. To explore various variables that inhibit students from writing competently

The study was conducted at Parklands Boys High School Nairobi. Survey design was used to conduct the study. The major participants were the students of form four and then a few from forms two and three respectively. Questionnaires and interviews were the instruments used to elicit responses from the participants. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed but only 98 were returned. 5 questionnaires were administered to the teachers of English but only four was returned but three teachers responded to all the questions. Interviews were conducted with the head teacher and the deputy head teacher respectively. The original design was that first five best students and last poorly performed were to be sampled to participate in the study but this did not take place. The reason was that the dean of studies sent out the questionnaires to some

of the school prefects and asked them to administer the questionnaires 10 to each class across forms one to four. This happened before the researcher could go and distribute the questionnaires as arranged. The research could not be redone in order to follow the original design as the responses were considered valid and are still in line with the study. However, the study showed that more forms four participated in the research than other classes. It was taken to be positive as they were committed, answered the questions and returned the questionnaires. Their responses were mature which showed they understood what the research was about. Each response cut across the representation of students whose social background influences his writing either positively or negatively.

Students identified the problems they encounter in English and gave suggestions on how they can be helped by both teachers and parents. Teachers of English language as participants of this study identified that students need to be exposed to more reading materials. Failure to do their homework and not using the language within the compound has slowed their writing skill. The administration mentioned poor reading habit, excessive use of Kiswahili and *Sheng* among others as the reasons that inhibit students from writing competently. Generally, specific measure has to be taken to ensure that the subject is taught well and students learn it well.

5.3 Conclusion

Students were able to identify their personal problems in written English as well as point out what the problem is generally in their learning of English language. They were able to synthesis the problems teachers have in teaching them and give suggestion on how they can improve. The English teachers were challenged to model the use of English to students

by using the appropriate form of it when teaching both in class and outside the classroom when interacting with the students.

Teachers were also challenged to give more assignments to students and let them practice with those quite often. Students want to be encouraged to use the language within the school premises and taken out on academic visit to other schools where they can use language competitively. The role of parents in the learning of English is extremely important as this was strongly highlighted by both teachers and students that they should buy text books.

A major finding was in the area of teaching methodologies and the source materials for teaching. Students complained of boredom during English lessons. This was attributed to teaching by consulting only from a familiar text books every now and then. Calling upon only a few whom the teacher thought knew English more than the others discouraged other students from participating during English lessons.

Students on their own part admit they have done very little to improve their learning of English. The dominant use of *sheng* as well as high preference for Kiswahili has not been helpful to them. Their attitude towards English as a simple subject and that they do not need revision for exams has slowed their skills in English language. They posed a challenge to themselves to practice the use of English quite often. This is to be achieved by doing assignments as given by teachers as well as setting out to carry out their own work like reading novels, filling cross words and watching or listening to educative programs on the radio or television.

5.4 Summary of the Research Findings

- It was revealed that poor performance in written English is not necessarily as a result of poor social background.
- Teachers have to work harder to identify each student's problem in written English
- Students have negative attitude towards English as a subject, they undermine its importance in their career.
- Students' preference of Kiswahili usage over English affects their learning of English
- Parents do very little to improve the study of English because they do not buy relevant reading and learning materials for their children and some do not check on what their children write in school or how they use English language.
- students are lazy to carry out the assignments given to them by their teachers
- Poor teaching methods employed by teachers have made the learning of English difficult.
- Teachers give very little work to students and less practice means poorer performance.

5.5 Recommendations for Students and Teachers

Based on the research findings there was a need for students to be more exposed to reading materials and the use of English generally. Teachers' role as facilitators of the learning of English cannot be over emphasized. Thus the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers should emphasize the importance of English to students by making students speak English within the school premises.

- Students should be made to see English as necessary as other subjects that they study.
- Parents should try and provide necessary reading materials for students. Teachers should help students form clubs within the school where they are exposed to various activities like debate, quizzes and writing competition in order for them to appreciate English.
- There should be interclass and interschool competition as often as possible.
- Parents should be encouraged to find out the possibility of organizing extra mural classes for students in their neighborhood during holidays.
- Students should avail of newspapers, magazines and other available sources to practice written English as well as other skills.
- English language is better taught in the morning hours when student's mind is fresh and alert.
- Teachers should create variety of ways of teaching English to make the lesson interesting.
- Teachers of English should encourage all students to participate in class discussion during lessons.
- All teachers within the school should help students to realize the importance of English language in all courses except in other courses.

5.6 Recommendations for Further Research

The study focused solely on the influence of social background on written English. The following areas could be further researched on:

1. The formation of English language clubs in secondary schools to enhance the teaching and learning of English as a subject.

2. The English teachers' method of teaching and their effectiveness on students' learning of English language.
3. The time for teaching English and its impact on learning.

REFERENCES

- Bear, R.D., Diane Barone, (1998) *Developing Literacy: An Approach to Assessment and Instruction*, Houghton Mifflin Company. New York.
- Bell, J., (1994), *Doing Your Research*: New Delhi, Viva Books Private Limited.
- Bisex, G., (1981), *Work: A Child Learns To Read and Write*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard
- Calhoun, F., E.,(1999), *Teaching Reading and Writing*. Association for Supervision and
- Cazden, C., B., (1965), *Environmental Assistance to the Child's Acquisition of Grammar*
Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University.
- Cohen, A. D., (1980), *First Grades takes a Test*. New York: Dell Young Yearling.
Curriculum Development, Virginia, USA.
- Daily Nation*, (Nairobi) 13, May 2002.
- Daily Nation*, (Nairobi) 18, March 2002.
- Douglas, J., (1964), *The Home and the School*. London: McGibbon.
- Dyson, A. (1989), *Social World of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School*, New York: Teachers' College.
- Eshwani, G. S., (1980) *Evaluation of Kenya science Teaches' College*.
Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Education.
- Frankfort-Nachmias, C. Nachmias, D., (1996) *Research Methods in Social Sciences*,
London: St. Martins Press, Inc.
- Harvighurst, R.J., Bowman, P.H., Liddle, G., Mathews, C.& Pierce,(1962). *Growing Up in River City*. New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Hayes, B., L.,(1991), *Effective Strategies for Teaching Reading*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Indongole, M., J. P., (1987), *Factors Affecting Performance of Candidates in Public Examination: A Review of Research*. University of Lancaster: Cartmel College,
Department of Educational Research.
- Kenya National Examination Council *News-Letter 1986*, Nairobi Kenya,
National Examination Council Research Unit.
- Klein, W., (1995), *Second Language Acquisition*, New York: Cambridge University.
- Krashen, S., (1982), *Principles and Practice in Second Language*. New York: Pergamon.
- Ministry of Education Act* (2002). By KIE.

- Mutea, Z., K., (2000), *An Analysis of Performance in English at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examination. Master of Educational Administration and Planning at the University of Nairobi.*
- Mutua, L., W., (2002). *An Investigation of Factors Affecting Kenya Certificate of Primary :A case Study of Mtito Andel Division Makueni District.*
- Mwanzi, H., (1982), *Language policy in Kenya.* Unpublished Research Paper No. 1103
- Nathan, R., Temple, F., Juntunen, K., & Temple, C. (1989), *Classroom Strategies that Work: An Elementary Teacher's Guide Process Writing.* Portsmouth NH: Heinemann
- Ndiritu, W.A., (1999), *A Study of Factors which Influence Performance in KCSE in Selected Public Schools in Nairobi and Central Provinces Kenya.* Unpublished M. Ed. Research Proposal, University of Nairobi, Nairobi Kenya.
- Neisser, U., (1990), *Cognitive and Reality: Principles and Implication of Cognitive* New York: Teachers College.
- Ogula, P. et al (1996), *Analysis of Factors that Influences Achievement of Objectives of Education in Siaya District.* KIE Research report series No. 51, KIE Nairobi Educational Books Limited
- Onjoro, J. N., (1990). *The Communicative Language Classroom: Its Implication for the Teacher of Language in Kenya.* Unpublished M. A.(Education) Dissertation, University, University of Southampton, UK.
- Osman., A. O., (1989) *Poor Performance in North Eastern Province (A Case Study on Based on Some Schools in Wajir and Garissa Districts) "Unpublished" Post Graduate of Diploma Thesis.* Kenyatta University Press
- Richard. C. J., Rodgers. S. T., (1994), *Approaches & Methods in Teaching and Analysis.* Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge New York.
- Smith-Burke, T., M., Jaggat, A.M., (1994), *Implementing Reading research Recovery in NewYork.* In E.H Herbert & B.M Taylor (Eds.), *Getting readings right from the start: Effective early intervention.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Sulzby,E., (1985), *Children's Emergent Reading of Favourite Storybook: A Developmental University Press.*
- Wallwork, J., (1985), *Language and Linguistic* London Heinemann
- Wamai, M., (1991), *Scratching the Surface: Result of the First Secondary Examination under the New Curriculum.* Unpublished M.Ed. Long Essay, School of Education, University of Leeds.
- Wise, J., John, E., (1967), *Methods of Research in Education* D.C Heath Boston.

Appendix I Questionnaire for Participants: Administration

**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA/USA (NAIROBI CAMPUS)
CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION
TANGAZA COLLEGE
Unwuchola Mary Ojonugwa
P.O.Box 15055
00509-Langata
Nairobi**

Email: marycholas@yahoo.com

Interview Guide for Teachers

Title of the study

The Influence of Students' Social Backgrounds on their written English.

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is for a study on the influence of student's social backgrounds on their written English.

Your honest response to each of the item would be highly appreciated. Your response will definitely be confidential, it shall be very important for the research. This study is done to enable me obtain my degree in the above named school.

Thanks for your co-operation.

1. How is the admission of students to this school conducted?
2. Where do most of your students reside?
3. What is the performance of students in English language national examination?
4. What factors contribute to how they perform?
5. What are your views on the influence of students' social backgrounds (socio-economic status, family educational background, and physical environment) on their written English?
6. What specific suggestion can you give to students on how to improve their written English?

Appendix II Questionnaires for Participants: Students

**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA/USA (NAIROBI CAMPUS)
CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION
TANGAZA COLLEGE**

Unwuchola Mary Ojonugwa
P.O.Box 15055
00509-Langata
Nairobi

Email: marycholasa@yahoo.com

Questionnaire for Students

Title of the study

The Influence of Students' Social Backgrounds on their written English.

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is for a study on the influence of student's social backgrounds on their written English.

Your honest response to each of the item would be highly appreciated. Your response will definitely be confidential, it shall be very important for the research. This study is done to enable me obtain my degree in the above named school.

Thanks for your co-operation.

Section A

Please indicate your age _____

Please indicate your class _____

Instruction: Please put a tick for what applies to you.

Which primary school did you attend? Private Government

A= AGREE

D= Disagree

SA=STRONGLY AGREE

UD= UNDECIDED

SD=STRONGLY DISAGREE

	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	SD
1	MY English teacher knows the problem I have in English					
2	My teacher listens to each student's problem in class.					
3	The teacher corrects our work and guides us to see our mistakes					
4	My brothers, sisters and parents help me with my written work at home.					
5	I am brought to school in our car everyday					
6	We have study room at home					
7	I could not go to a better school because my parents are poor.					
8	My parents always provide whatever I ask for.					
9	WE speak English at home					
10	All my friends speak English very well					
11	I go for an extra tuition (lesson) to improve my written					
12	We have television, fridge and video machine in our home					
13	Almost all our neighbors have televising, radio/CD player					
14	My parents understand only Kiswahili and English					
15	My parents are able to provide all I need for my studies					
16	My parents have good jobs					

Section C

1. What problems do you have in writing?

2. Rate your performance level of written English

- Poor
- Below average
- Good
- Excellent

Please give reason for your answer

3. What reasons can you give as to why students are likely to encounter problems in written English?

4. What do teachers need to do in order to improve the standard of teaching and learning of English?

5. What can students do to improve their learning of English language?

6. What can parents/relatives do to improve the teaching and learning of English?

7. Please give general remarks on the teaching and learning of English.

Thank you very much for your responses and time!

Appendix III Questionnaires for Participants: Teachers

**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA/USA (NAIROBI CAMPUS)
CHRIST THE TEACHER INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION
TANGAZA COLLEGE**

Unwuchola Mary Ojonugwa
P.O.Box 15055
00509-Langata
Nairobi
Email: marycholas@yahoo.com

Questionnaires for Teachers

Title of the Study

The Influence of Student's Social Background on Acquisition of written English

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is for a study on the Influence of Student's Social backgrounds on Acquisition of written English.

Your honest response to each of the questions would be highly appreciated. Your response will definitely be confidential, it shall not be published any where. This study is done to enable me obtain my degree in the above named Institution.

Instructions

Please, put a tick to indicate your view on the question.

Give brief information on the question asked

Section A

Which classes do you teach? _____

How long have you been teaching English? _____

SECTION B

Please put a tick () in the appropriate box that applies to your view on each question.

SA=Strongly agree

A=Agree

UD=Undecided

D=Disagree

SD=Strongly disagree

No	Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD
1	I know the problem each student has in English.					

2	Most students are from home where English is often spoken.					
3	Students have good foundation of English from primary school.					
4	Parents are very enthusiastic about students' education					
5	Parents provide all necessary needs for students' education.					
6	Parents give maximum support to students in this school.					
7	<u>Socio-economic</u> has influence on student's written work					
8	Physical environment has influence on student's written work.					
9	Given another opportunity students will prefer to be in a more prestigious school.					
10	Students come from home where they can study comfortably and be assisted by their parents					
11	The parents are very committed to the school's program like PTA					
12	Parents always made sure they attend all school functions.					
13	My students are exposed to English right from childhood					
14	Students in this school speak fluent English					
15	Students need extra tuition to improve on their reading and writing skills					

SECTION C

1. What are your views on the influence of students' social background (socio-economic status, parents' educational background, physical environment) on written English?

2. What specific tasks do you give students to enable them improve their written English?

3. What suggestions would you give parents in regard to how they can help their children improve their writing skill?

4. What are your reasons for why students are likely to encounter problems in written English?

Thank you very much for your responses and time!

Appendix IV

TABLE 6 TEACHERS RESPONSE TO SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Item	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Most students are from home where English is often spoken		1		2	1
Students have good foundation of English from primary school	1	1	1	1	
Parents are very enthusiastic about student's education	2	1	1		
Parents provide all necessary needs for student's education		1		2	1
Parents give maximum support to students in school		1		3	
Socio-economic has influence on written work	1	2		1	
Physical environment has influence on written work	1	2		1	
Given another opportunity students will prefer to be in a more prestigious school.	2	1	1		
Students come from home where English is often spoken		1	1	2	
The parents are very committed to school's program like PTA		2		2	
Parents always made sure they attend all school functions	1			3	
My students are exposed to English right from childhood	1		2	1	
Students in this school speaks fluent English		1	1	1	1
Students need extra tuition to improve on their reading and writing skills	1	3			

PARKLANDS BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

2004 K.C.S.E. SUBJECT ANALYSIS

SUBJECT	ENTRY	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E	X	M.G. 2000	M.G. 2001	M.G. 2002	M.G. 2003	M.G. 2004	M.G. DEV.	POS. M.G.	POS. IMP.	TEACHERS
C R E	10	1	4	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	6.79	6.44	8.50	6.00	16.10	-4.106	1	1	MRS MAGIRA
S S E	93	4	2	11	7	10	8	12	16	9	12	1	1	4	4.99	5.89	6.14	6.214	5.52	-0.396	2	6	MRS KAARIA/ONDIMU
H SCIENCE	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	-3	-	3.33	5.75	7.25	6.400	6.50	-0.100	3	7	MRS GICHENGO
D DESIGN	12	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	4	1	2	0	0	-	4.29	5.60	4.89	5.444	5.92	-0.476	4	3	MR MUTHUMBI
HISTORY	42	1	1			4	1	7	6	5	8	3		2	4.33	5.55	4.72	5.00	5.45	-0.45	5	4	MR OYUGA
ACCOUNTING	34		2	2	4	0	0		0	2	4	3		1	-	-	-	4.257	4.857	-0.600	6	2	MRS KIPLAGAI
ENGLISH	108				3	0	11	14	16	12	1	7		4	4.86	5.43	5.03	4.444	4.788	-0.344	7	5	KAIYA KAWEMA MACHARIA
BIOLOGY	57	2	2	2	4	7	2	6	7	4	14	14		-	5.84	5.00	4.59	4.542	4.77	-0.227	8	8	MRS WAMBI KARIUKI
AGRICULTURE	7				1		2	3		3	19	7		-	4.71	5.50	4.00	5.71	4.36	-1.35	9	14	MRS MWOLOLO
COMMERCE	41			1	0	3		3	5	4	16	7		-	4.79	4.29	5.04	4.247	3.976	-0.268	10	9	MR OYUGA
GEOGRAPHY	37	0	0	2		1	0		2		19	10		-	5.03	5.82	4.40	5.034	5.50	-0.466	11	15	MRS MWOLOLO
CHEMISTRY	108	0	0	3	1	5	2	5	3	9	12	32	5	4	3.33	3.43	3.52	3.34	3.44	-0.10	12	11	NJUNA NJAGI EKIRAPA
KISWAHILI	108	0	0	1		2	4	5	6	7	44	25	11	4	3.54	5.06	5.02	5.146	5.712	-0.566	13	16	MAINA MONGARI MACHARIA
PHYSICS	67	0	1	0	1	1	2	4	2	7	20	22	6	2	2.88	3.91	4.20	3.429	3.69	-0.261	14	10	OMONDI GITHUMI
FRENCH	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	-	-	6.00	9.00	3.560	2.50	-4.060	15	13	INDA
MATHS	108	1	1	1	2	2	0	4	1	4	8	20	16	4	2.30	3.07	2.60	2.765	3.27	-0.505	16	12	NJOROGE/LUDEKI MUGO

MEAN GRADE SUMMARY

YEAR	ENTRY	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E	X	Y	MEAN SCORE	GRADE
2004	108	0	0	2	2	6	2	12	25	26	17	1	4	0	0	4.212	D+
2003	82	0	0	1	2	2	9	7	8	17	17	8	0	0	0	4.6172	C-
2002	94	1	1	2	1	3	1	10	15	23	18	7	1	0	0	4.6072	C-
2001	83	0	1	3		5	5	9	13	24	14	9	0	0	0	4.6867	C-
2000	97				2	7	4	5	17	26	27	16	1	0	0	4.2243	D-

PARKLANDS BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

2004 K.C.S.E. SUBJECT ANALYSIS

SUBJECT	ENTRY	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E	X	M.G. 2000	M.G. 2001	M.G. 2002	M.G. 2003	M.G. 2004	M.G. DEV.	POS. M.G.	POS. IMP.	TEACHERS
C R E	10	1	4	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.79	6.44	8.50	6.00	10.10	-4.100	1	1	MRS. MAGIRA
S E E	93	4	2	11	7	10	8	12	16	9	12	1	1	4	4.99	5.89	6.14	6.214	6.52	+0.306	2	6	MRS. KAARIA/ONDIMU'
H.SCIENCE	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3.33	5.75	7.25	6.400	6.50	-0.100	3	7	MRS GICHENGO
D'DESIGN	12	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	4	1	2	0	0	0	4.29	5.60	4.89	5.444	5.92	-0.476	4	3	MR MUTHUMBI
HISTORY	42	1	1	0	3	5	2	7	6	5	8	2	1	2	4.13	5.55	4.72	5.00	5.45	-0.450	5	4	MR OYUGA
ACCOUNTING	14	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	3	0	1	-	-	-	4.250	4.857	-0.607	6	2	MRS KIPLAGAT
ENGLISH	108	-	-	-	3	0	11	14	16	12	1	7	-	4	5.80	5.43	5.03	4.444	4.788	-0.344	7	5	KAIYA KAWEW & MACHARIA
BIOLOGY	67	2	2	7	5	0	7	5	5	4	14	14	-	-	3.84	5.00	4.59	4.582	4.672	-0.090	8	8	MRS WANIBU KARIUKI
AGRICULTURE	31	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	3	10	7	0	0	3.89	3.50	4.00	5.700	4.50	-1.200	9	14	MRS MWOLOLO
COMMERCE	41	0	1	0	0	3	1	3	5	4	16	7	1	-	4.79	4.29	5.04	4.741	4.976	-0.265	10	9	MR OYUGA
GEOGRAPHY	37	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	19	10	1	-	3.61	3.82	4.40	5.054	3.50	-1.554	11	15	MRS MWOLOLO
CHEMISTRY	108	0	0	3	0	3	2	5	3	9	42	32	3	4	3.53	5.43	3.52	3.84	3.44	-0.406	12	11	NJUNA/NJAG/EKIRAPA
KISWAHILI	108	0	0	0	1	2	4	5	0	7	44	24	16	4	4.54	5.06	5.02	5.346	3.701	-2.144	13	16	MAINA/MONGARE MACHOKA
PHYSICS	67	0	1	0	0	0	2	4	2	7	30	22	6	2	2.88	3.91	4.20	3.429	3.169	-0.260	14	10	OMONDI GITHIOMI
FRENCH	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	-	-	6.00	9.00	3.560	2.50	-1.060	15	13	INDA
MATHS	108	1	1	-	2	2	0	4	1	4	8	20	00	4	2.30	3.07	2.60	2.765	2.27	-0.495	16	12	NJOROGE/LUDEKI/MUGO

MEAN GRADE SUMMARY

YEAR	ENTRY	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E	X	Y	MEAN SCORE	GRADE
2004	108	0	0	0	0	6	2	10	25	26	17	1	4	0		4.212	D-
2003	82	0	0	1	2	2	9	18	17	17	8	0	1	0		4.6172	C
2002	90	0	0	2	0	3	10	10	15	23	18	0	0	0		1.6072	C-
2001	83	0	0	3	0	5	5	9	13	24	14	9	0	0		4.6867	C-
2000	107	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	17	26	27	16	0	0		4.2243	D-