



# Implications of English Language Teacher's Assessment Techniques on Students' Learning Outcomes in Public Secondary Schools in Iganga District Uganda

Namugaya W. A., Prof. Yiga, A. P., & Prof. Ssekamwa, J. C.  
Nkumba University, Uganda

Email - [waibiannet@gmail.com](mailto:waibiannet@gmail.com)

*Received July 5, 2020; Revised January 30, 2021; Accepted February 1, 2021*

**Abstract:** *The main purpose of this study was to establish from teachers of English language and students, the ways in which content expertise for English Language teachers defines learning outcomes. This was geared towards enabling readers understand the ways in which teachers of English Language handle tasks that create positive impact. The study was conducted on a sample of 208 respondents obtained from a population of using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The study used mixed methods research design. The findings revealed that teachers' creation of opportunities for students to demonstrate possession of skills is related to development of reading skills and if students are allowed to demonstrate the skills they possess, they are able to exhibit speaking skills in various ways. Furthermore, reading together is essential in the learning of new materials. The results indicate that it is easier for students who read tests in groups to discover more about poetry and novels, thus, obtaining new information, which translates into exposure to reflect what would be required in the English Language curriculum. The use of body language also influences learners' outcomes especially in terms of; learning new materials that are pick up poetry books, pupils difficulty recalling material from previous day's lessons and quality of pupils' reading skills. The study recommends the use of extra materials especially where the student enrollment rate is very high. This is intended to make sure that performance for each student is monitored at individual level without compromising efforts of slow learners. It also recommends that while preparing lessons for teaching, learners' expectations should be incorporated.*

**Keywords:** *Assessment techniques; English Language Teachers; Students' Learning Outcomes; Public Secondary Schools; Iganga District*

## How to cite this article (APA):

Namugaya, A. W, Yiga, A. P & Ssekamwa, J. C. (2021). Implications of English Language teachers' assessment techniques on students' learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Iganga District, Uganda. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 5(1), 42 - 54.

## 1. Introduction

History has identified that students learning outcomes were first connected to physical activity way back in the 1950s and 1960s when researchers in the United States of America wanted to establish the relationship between physical activity and students' learning outcomes (Alber, 2017). Initially, learning outcomes was based on grading scales, and tests that varied by teacher and were more subjective than standardized academic assessments typically used in the research today. Trost and Johnson (2019) indicate that in the modern world, students' learning outcomes are

characterized by refined and improved protocols allowing for more accurate comparisons of results across classrooms and schools.

Edward, Margaret, Wang, & Walberg (2016) emphasize the importance of students' learning outcomes with regard to different perspectives such as for individuals and societies, as well as psychological and educational research. In addition, an early synthesis of existing research on the educational effects still influences current research such as investigations of predictors of academic achievement, academic achievement assessment studies. Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA. Edward, et al, (2016) highlight the relevance of research

syntheses such as reviews and meta-analyses as an initial point for the improvement of educational processes

Globally, the problem of unsteady students learning outcomes is reported to be increasing in the United States, and some European countries. The latest PISA results from 2012 show that 22.1 % of European students had low achievement in mathematics, 17.8 % in reading, and 16.6 % in science (European Commission, 2013). The common attributes for global decline in learning outcomes are 77% out of school factors, i.e. peer group influence, learners' socio-economic background, educational level of parents and language barrier (Teodora & Vansteenkiste, 2016).

In Uganda, following the numerous challenges faced by teachers, the Ugandan National Teacher Policy (NTP) was approved and presented at the 101 Education Sector Consultative Committee Meeting in Kampala on the 28th September 2017. The aim of the NTP is to provide a framework to professionalize and standardize the teaching profession and enhance the development and management of teachers. It is based on four thematic objectives namely Standard and Qualification, training, Management and Cross-cutting issues (UNESCO, 2018). The researcher therefore believes that with the rise of these concerns about learning outcomes as attributed to pedagogical approaches, it is important to conduct a study to test the effect of Pedagogical approaches for English Language Teachers on learning outcomes in public secondary schools in Iganga District.

## 2. Literature Review

This subsection discusses information about; accuracy in writing English following diction and spelling, comprehension through reading and interpretation, allowing use of examples to express understanding, giving tasks after every lesson to test understanding, subjecting students to correction and later mark their books, posing questions to individual students to test understanding, grading students according to scores, observing changes in students' scores and give feedback, giving encouraging remarks to reinforce performance, giving continuous assessment tests about subject weekly or monthly, and composition skills through random storytelling.

### (a) Accuracy in writing English following diction and spelling

Literacy skills are demonstrated through reading and writing, especially to describe an individual as someone who can read and write well for purposes of comprehension and enable young people and adults to participate in life, learning and work (DeNisi and Pritchard 2016). In school, children's success is measured by literacy performance or how well they meet the goals of the set targets often referred to as academic performance. Teaching writing is not only the job of the English department alone (Akogu, 2018). Writing is an

essential tool for learning a discipline and helping students improve their writing skills is a responsibility for all faculties (Akogu, 2018). Faculty who tell students that good writing can be rewarded and poor writing can be penalized receive better essays than instructors who don't make such demands. In the syllabus, on the first day, and throughout the term, remind students that they must make their best effort in expressing themselves on paper. Back up your statements with comments on early assignments that show you really mean it, and your students will respond (Abagi & Odipo, 2018). Students need to talk about papers in progress so that they can formulate their thoughts, generate ideas, and focus their topics. Take five or ten minutes of class time for students to read their writing to each other in small groups or pairs. It's important for students to hear what their peers have written (Akogu, 2018).

### (b) Comprehension through reading and interpretation

The ability for students to comprehend what is being read is an essential skill that is necessary for success in academics and career readiness. It is crucial that each student knows how to read and derive meaning from a text (Abagi & Odipo, 2018). In a study that examined the question: how can close reading a text be used to improve students' comprehension? Audio recordings, discussions, and interviews proved differences between the students' comprehension of a text through a close read and a general reading strategy. The findings showed improvement in the students' understanding of a text and provides implications that the teachers should evolve instructional practices to meet the needs of the common core and allow for students to become confident in reading harder texts (Kaoffa, 2016). The rigorous reading has presented students who opportunities to gain a deeper understanding however it has been concluded that many students do not know how to analyze and evaluate an informational, complex text (DeNisi and Pritchard 2016). The close reading strategy allows the students to look at the different text elements and text structures to correctly identify the purpose for reading, what the meaning is, and what the main idea could be. Furthermore the strategy will provide students a reading that will have students build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities and broaden their perspectives. The reading instruction through the common core also addresses the issue of reading comprehension (Fisher & Frey, 2012).

Close reading goes beyond reading and asking questions about the details of the text. The text being a piece of writing whether it is a picture book, a few stanzas from an article, a poem, or a short story that is nonfiction and complex that the students can analyze and evaluate it piece by piece (Fisher & Frey, 2012). In many cases, when students get to middle school, they are required to read complex texts and think abstractly about what they are reading and without having knowledge in knowing how to carefully analyze the text they will not find the deeper

understanding (Seattle, 2015). By doing a close reading, students are able to delve deeper into a text and analyze, interpret, and infer using a variety of literacy skills. While students closely read, they understand the purpose for reading that text (Graziano & Navarrete, 2016). Developing what the purpose is for reading will happen by learning how to look for the different meanings the author conveys and how the ideas in a text are interconnected. The students are formulating questions and seeking answers to those questions (Ambili, 2016).

#### **(c) Allowing use of examples to express understanding**

This is commonly measured through examinations or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best evaluated or which aspects are most important (Salmah, Azizah, & Shaifol, 2016). On the other hand, academic improvement is the gradual or steady positive change in levels of achievement until one reaches excellence (Janelle, 2011). The known correlates of academic improvement are: reading speed, phonetics, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension, individually administered by an examiner and assessed through ranges, percentiles, age equivalents and grade equivalents (Hertler, 2016). The attributes of the examples should vary widely, particularly on irrelevant characteristics, so learners get the right idea. In a course on sexual harassment, if your examples only demonstrate a person harassing an individual of the opposite sex, a learner might erroneously generalize that sexual harassment cannot occur between people of the same gender. This, of course, is not true. By varying the less relevant attributes of your examples, learners get irrelevant attributes, learners may form generalizations that are too limited (Malamed, 2020). Generally, students learn through explanation, example, and experience (Maxwell, 1978). Unfortunately, teachers sometimes rely too much on explaining the knowledge, lingo, and methodologies of their discipline, all of which can sound like a foreign language to their students. Consequently, teachers may spend less time teaching with examples and encouraging experiential learning within their discipline, which is where the real learning often takes place. Examples and illustrations are powerful ways to broaden and deepen student learning. One of the challenges facing teachers is selecting the most effective examples and knowing when and how to best use them (Ken, 2020).

#### **(d) Giving tasks after every lesson to test understanding**

Understanding is important because it allows the teacher to make instructional decisions during the lesson. It informs the teacher when to speed up, slow down, or re-teach, helps pace the lesson. When teachers look at independent work, homework, quizzes, or state test results to see if pupils learned... it's too late to modify instruction. It is the back bone of effective instruction and Explicit Direct Instruction... because you measure and monitor student learning in real time, guarantees high student

success (80-100%)... because you revise teaching in direct response to student learning, and ensures that your pupils will not be practicing and reinforcing their mistakes (Janelle 2011). According to Risk, "one of the purposes of the assignment is to teach the pupils how to study." It is certain that the assignment should contribute materially to training pupils to this end. Usually, when it comes to teaching, assignments are very important in education. Mostly students imagine that educational assignments are insignificant but the fact is that assignments are given to assist the students in self-study and clear their concepts or ambiguities regarding any subject (Hertler 2016). Being a student most of the students think that it is not our task to learn ourselves as it is the responsibilities of the teachers to teach us. However, this fact cannot be denied that a teacher cannot deliver every single detail to every student related to any subject. Such types of spoon feeding can destroy the learning capabilities and academic career of a student (Akogu, 2018). Spoon feeding is just like the killing of students with kindness. College or university is those learning areas where teachers teach and clear all concepts of a subject and expect from students to learn or explore it more at their own (Ambili, 2016). These tasks or assignments are considered as massive unhappiness and irritation for the students as they feel studying in the university or college is sufficient (Akogu, 2018).

#### **(e) Subjecting students to correction and later mark their books**

Advanced students need lots of correction, beginners hardly any. When you start to learn a language you need to be able to communicate imperfectly in lots of situations, not perfectly in a few. The teacher's job is to support learners as they blunder through a range of communicative scenarios, not badger them because they've forgotten the third person -s. With advanced learners the opposite is usually the case (Alber, 2017). Research into Second Language Acquisition has suggested that it may be that some language forms can be acquired more quickly through being given special attention while others may be acquired in the learners' own time, regardless of teacher attention (Ajayi, 2015). Learners need to have the opportunity to repeat the communication scenario in which they made the error, if they are to have any chance of integrating the correct form into their English (Abagi & Odipo, 2018). Lots of learners and teachers place a high importance on correction. The problem with some learners is that they don't make enough mistakes. Accurate but minimal contributions in speaking activities are unlikely to benefit learning as much as inaccurate but extended participation. Learners can be hampered by their own inhibitions and attitudes to accuracy and errors, the teacher's attitude and behaviour (conscious of unconscious) to accuracy and errors, or the restricted nature of the activities proposed by the teacher (Ambili, 2016).

Mistakes are usually corrected immediately when the aim of the stage of the lesson is to promote accuracy,

particularly during the drilling of the target language and during guided practice. Attention to mistakes in these stages improves the chances of correct use of language later, while mistakes made during less-guided practice often indicate that the teacher has not dealt effectively with mistakes at the accuracy stage. When the aim is fluency, however, less intrusive, 'gentle' or delayed correction techniques are required in order not to damage either the flow of the activity or the confidence of the learners (AllAfrica 2014). Interlanguage; in the process of acquiring the language, a learner may acquire forms of language that are in between their first language and their target language. This is their 'interlanguage' and is a product of incorrect application of rules, incomplete knowledge and comparison between two (or more) languages. Interlanguage may seem completely logical and correct in the mind of the learner and may also be a part of a natural learning process where rules get more refined as more input is received. This leads to the theory that mistakes are a healthy part of language learning and should not be dealt with too severely. However, if learners are not corrected, mistakes in their interlanguage may 'fossilise' and become permanent (Alejandro, 2018).

#### **(f) Posing questions to individual students to test understanding**

Research on the importance of questioning as a teaching and learning strategy is well documented. It is suggested that teachers spend up to 50% of class time on questioning and that they ask between 300 and 400 questions a day, while each student asks, on average, 1 question per week. Surprisingly, teachers seem to be not aware of this discrepancy (Abagi & Odipo, 2018). Research has shown that teachers ask a high frequency of questions. (Abagi & Odipo, 2018) Suggested that teachers spend half of the class time asking questions also concluded that a teacher asks, in average 69 questions per hour, what corresponds to 30000 questions per year! In 2002, Kerry reinforced these numbers, noting that if teachers ask an average of 43.6 questions per hour, in an average career they are likely to ask about 2 million questions. More recently, Almeida and Neri de Souza (2010) conducted a study with secondary science teachers and concluded that the questioning patterns found some decades ago are still prevalent, with teachers clearly dominating the classroom discourse. Questioning is the most frequently used instructional tool. However, even if teachers ask a huge number of questions per class, the questions posed are consistently of the same kind. It is well-known that teachers typically ask low-level questions, whose answers require mainly memory. The findings on teachers' characteristic use of low cognitive-level questions have been verified at all school levels, from elementary teaching to university (Goh & Burns, 2016).

For teachers, students' questions raised in class have the potential to: (a) help the teacher diagnose students' understanding and tap into their thinking, thereby acting as aids in formative assessment to inform future teaching;

evaluate higher-order thinking; (c) stimulate further inquiry into the topic under study via open investigations, problem-based learning and project work; and (d) provoke critical reflection on classroom practice (Bloomsbery, 2018). Students' questions provide insights into their knowledge, understanding, and puzzlement, and act as a window into their minds. Thus, for the teacher, such questions can diagnose students' understanding by revealing the quality of students' thinking and conceptual understanding, conceptual difficulties, alternative frameworks, and confusion about concepts, their reasoning, and what students want to know (Abagi & Odipo, 2018). The type of question and the content embedded therein can also indicate the questioner's depth of thinking. All these instances point to the potential use of students' questions in formative assessment where the teacher can gain some insight into the students' minds and provide the appropriate feedback. In this regard, students' questions allow two-way 'double feedback' in that they not only provide feedback to the teacher about students' thinking, but also allow the teacher to act on this information and subsequently provide responsive feedback to the students (Zacharia, 2019).

#### **(g) Grading students according to scores**

Although student assessment has been a part of teaching and learning for centuries, grading is a relatively recent phenomenon. The ancient Greeks used assessments as formative, not evaluative, tools. Students demonstrated, usually orally, what they had learned, giving teachers a clear indication of which topics required more work or instruction (UNESCO, 2018).

In the United States, grading and reporting were virtually unknown before 1850. Back then, most schools grouped students of all ages and backgrounds together with one teacher. Few students went beyond the elementary education offered in these one-room schoolhouses. As the country grew—and as legislators passed compulsory attendance laws—the number and diversity of students increased. Schools began to group students in grades according to their age, and to try new ideas about curriculum and teaching methods.

#### **(h) Observing changes in students' scores and give feedback**

Classroom observations, in which observers rate multiple dimensions of teaching according to established protocols (either live in the classroom or from video recordings of lessons), increasingly are being used for both research and teacher evaluations. However, changes in rater severity over time, and changes in teaching quality over the course of the school year, can lead to time trends in the ratings. Such trends may create challenges for designing measurement systems that avoid bias and excess variance in inferences from ratings of classroom instruction. Given the growing use of these ratings for research and policy purposes, understanding the nature and magnitude of time

trends in ratings is critical both for designing measurement systems with desirable properties and for learning about the nature of teaching (Katrin, 2019)..

Rater reliability appears to be a persistent problem with ratings of instruction from classroom observations. In cross multiple studies, variance among raters observing the same lesson accounted for 25% to as much as 70% of the variance in scores, depending on the study and the protocol (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation [BMGF], 2012; Casabianca et al., 2013; Hill, Charalambous, & Kraft, 2012). There are multiple sources for discrepancies among raters. These include variation in severity, or the extent to which a rater is strict or lenient in his or her scoring halo effects, which refer to the tendency to apply common scores to multiple measures of performance or behavior based on positive or negative notions about the individual being assessed (Thorndike, 1920); central tendencies, or a rater's tendency to assign scores in the middle of the score range versus using the full scale when appropriate (Saal, Downey, & Lahey, 1980); and assimilation, a rater's tendency to assign scores that are influenced by scores assigned to units scored previously (Attali, 2011).

**(i) Giving encouraging remarks to reinforce performance**

Reinforcement refers to “a stimulus which follows and is contingent upon a behavior and increases the probability of a behavior being repeated” (Smith, 2017). The simplest way of conceptualizing positive reinforcement is that something pleasant is ‘added’ when a specific action is performed (Cherry, 2018). Positive reinforcement is an aspect of the construct of Operant Conditioning that was developed by B. F. Skinner (Cherry, 2018). Skinner studied rats, and he found that if the rats consistently pressed a bar which then administered food to the rat, the rat would press the bar more and more in order to get the food reward. Like those rats, if people find a particular behavior rewarding, it is more likely that they will repeat this behavior.

**(j) Giving Continuous Assessment Tests about Subject Weekly or Monthly**

Testing students on the basis of knowledge that they acquire from classes, books, and videos are not sufficient. Many times, students are excellent when it comes to studying the course out of a well-written book. However, the challenge lies in testing the student on something more. This is often in relation to the curriculum and the course (Abdulmumeen, 2016). If a student is able to score excellent grades in a written test or a viva, this is great! However, it does not show how the student is able to differentiate themselves with others. In order to be able to test the student on various skills, continuous assessment is crucial. Also, over the past few years, students have proven that they can burn the midnight oil and get their grades. But this does not showcase the knowledge that

they have acquired over a period of time from the course. Therefore, continuously and regularly assessing and testing their performance on the various parameter is critical.

According to Omoifo (2006), what is termed “assessment in many schools today is summative, final, administrative, rigorous and content-driven rather than formative, diagnostic, private, suggestive and goal oriented, as such can be regarded as grading.” Summative assessment entails the focus on final examinations by teachers, parents and students. Surprisingly, formative assessment is geared towards the consolidation of students’ performance in the final examinations rather than inculcating students with problem solving, critical thinking, and life skills. American Association for the Advancement of Science (1998) has categorized the purpose of assessment into internal and external purposes. The internal purposes for assessment include conveying to students expectations about what is important to learn, providing information to students and parents about students’ progress, helping students to judge their own learning, guiding and improving instruction, classifying and selecting students. The external purpose was to inform the education donors including parents, education departments and ministry about what happened in schools.

**(k) Testing Composition Skills through Random Story Telling**

The other reading habit is known as guided reading common in secondary schools. Mukumbila and Rowland(2016) notice that guided reading sessions involve a teacher and a small group, ideally of 2-4 children although groups of five or six with a set of objectives to be taught during a session lasting approximately 20 minutes. While guided reading takes place with one group of children, the remaining children are engaged in quality independent or group literacy tasks, with the aim of allowing the teacher to focus the small group without interruption and each Guided Reading group meets with the teacher several times throughout a given week (Makumbila & Rowland, 2016). Engaging in storytelling activities is a way to motivate even the most reluctant reader or writer. Storytelling is defined as, “relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture. This is because storytelling relies on both the listener and the teller; this strategy utilizes the social element of language (Ann, 2019). Researchers have found that literacy instruction is most effective when developed through social interaction and collaboration with others. This pedagogical strategy capitalizes on students’ desire to talk and interact with others. In fact, some researchers have found that the weakest readers and writers are often the most adept at storytelling. Building on the synergistic relationship between language in an interactive way, teachers and students can use storytelling to improve literacy learning (Katrin, 2019).

### 3. Methodology

#### (a) Research Design

Across-sectional survey design was adopted as a multi method approach that can be blended with qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and descriptive approaches. This kind of design was also adopted because

it is relatively quick and easy to conduct and data on all variables were collected once.

#### (c) Study population and sampling

The study population was 432 respondents. It included teachers, head teachers, teachers and students.

Population of the Study

**Table 1: Population and Sampling**

Respondent Category	Number per school	Total
Head teachers	1	8
Teachers	8	64
Students	45	360
Total		432

#### Sample Size determination

$s \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$  where n ample using Yamane (1967) The formula is as follows;

n = = sample size, N the total population targeted and e = percentage of error made in selecting sample (5% or 0.05), and 1 is representative of any likely avoided element that would have been included.

$$\begin{aligned} \therefore n &= \frac{432}{1+432(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{432}{1+432 \times 0.0025} \\ &= \frac{432}{1+1.08} \\ &= \frac{432}{2.08} = 207.6 \text{ (208)} \end{aligned}$$

#### (b) Sampling techniques

**Stratified sampling:** For categorizing study population by gender, and by professional characteristics. This sampling technique is key to the study because it is the best for selecting a sample that best represents the entire population. Its strengths are in two points; - it minimizes sample selection bias and ensures that certain segments of the population are not overrepresented or underrepresented

**Purposive sampling:** This study adopted the concept that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Purposive sampling was

therefore used to include head teachers and teachers of lower secondary classes, because they possessed the attributes which were being looked for in the study in terms of curriculum management, pedagogical approaches, support supervision, monitoring and that of quality control. Therefore, the highlighted respondents are expected to possess appropriated information for the study.

**Simple Random sampling:** The researchers in this study also adopted the idea that, a simple random sample is a subset of individuals (a sample) chosen from a larger set (a population). Each individual is chosen randomly and entirely by chance, so that each individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process and each subset of individuals has the same probability of being chosen for the sample as any other subset of individuals (Daniel, Moore & Starnes, 2008). This study therefore, employed simple random sampling (SRS) for selecting individual respondents from each stratum. As the most commonly used sampling technique, it was chosen for being free from errors in classification, it was suitable for the use of inferential statistics given the fact that this study had a quantitative component and SRS as a technique was envisaged to be free from bias and prejudice. In this study therefore, SRS was employed to select teachers of English language curriculum as respondents for the study. For selecting individual respondents from each stratum, as the most commonly used sampling technique, it is chosen for being free from errors in classification, it is suitable for the use of inferential statistics given the fact that this study has a quantitative part, and it is free from bias and prejudice.

#### **(d) Data collection instruments**

The study employed a triangulation of data collection instruments firstly because it possessed the qualitative and quantitative components. Secondly, the researcher had intentions to cross-validate data as the topic of study seemed to be quite sensitive in the context of secondary schools particularly with headteachers and teachers. As a result, a set of self-administered questionnaires was used to collect data which was quantitative in nature whereas, informant interview guides, document analysis guides and participant observation guides were used to collect qualitative data. In this study therefore, the researcher's initiative to triangulate data collection tools and sources was done for purposes of determining data credibility.

#### **(e) Data Analysis techniques**

A side-by-side comparison data analysis technique was employed in this study in order to cater for a whole-through integration of logical and coherent ideas so as to produce a deeper understanding (*in-depth & breadth*) of the research problem through results that were mutually complementary. This was done starting with the quantitative followed by the qualitative results using a blended (triangulation) technique. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically and reported by the help of figures and tables quantitatively. Mean scores and mode were used to test and ascertain how teachers manipulate content expertise. Qualitative data from interviews, observation guide and document analysis guide were summarized, grouped / sub-grouped, analyzed thematically. Finally, alongside the statistical data, the analyzed qualitative data were also reported qualitatively (*in verbatim form*), backed-up with quotations and statements of the participants.

#### **(f) Ethical considerations**

At the back of the mind of the researcher, it was very clear that ethical considerations were always important whenever the collection of data involved human beings. The main ethical issues considered in this study were physical and psychological harm, deception, informed consent and privacy. On that note therefore, confidentiality was taken into account so as to protect the respondents or participants' privacy. For that matter, respondents / participants were first and foremost assured that the study was only for academic purposes and the self-administered questionnaires for that matter were deliberately anonymous. Consequently, participants/respondents had a provision for informed consent.

In addition, respect and dignity were put into consideration when setting the questionnaires. All respondents and participants were given equal treatment

to enable each of them participating willingly without bias and unrealistic expectations. In addition, all researchers and scholars whose work was referred to in this study were quoted/acknowledged and cited accordingly. The researcher made sure that what was found out would be reported exactly and it was done to avoid fabrication of information through presentation of fraudulent results. At this level, the researcher also recognized respect for knowledge in pursuit for truth. A lot of efforts were made to ensure participants/respondents' rights to privacy by withholding individual identities to guard against traceability and flexibility as also provided for to the extent that if a participant or respondent wished to withdraw from the exercise at any level, it would be very possible without condition.

Right from the beginning of the data collection process, the researcher continuously sought the consent of the participants and respondents by establishing rapport with them and declaring the intentions of the research project. It was also important to seek permission of the respondents and participants to make recordings, photography or video coverage. The researcher first detached himself from being a teacher but become purely a researcher and then, sought permission from the Head teacher upon entering every secondary school additionally, administrative permission was sought from the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) and Education Officers (DEOs) for the districts under study. At the same time, an informed consent was sought from various respondents by assuring them that, their identities would be kept confidential and all information provided by them would be used purely for only academic purposes. Above all, the researcher sought an ethical clearance from Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC) and registered the study with Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST).

## **4. Results and Discussion**

Eleven items were used to test assessment of students in secondary schools for learning outcomes. These were; accuracy in writing English by diction and spelling, testing comprehension through reading and interpretation, allowing use of examples to express understanding, giving tasks after every lesson to test understanding, subjecting students to correction and marking their books thereafter, posing questions to individual students to test understanding, grading students according to scores, posing questions to individual students to test understanding, grading students according to scores, observing changes in students' scores and giving feedback, giving encouraging remarks to reinforce performance, giving continuous assessment tests about subject weekly or monthly, testing composition skills through random storytelling, among others as indicated in the table below.

**Table 2: Assessment of Students in various skills**

No	Assessment Technique	Rate	No	Sometimes	Always
1.	Testing accuracy in writing English following diction and spelling	F	100	5	95
		%	50	2	48
2.	Testing comprehension through reading and interpretation	F	129	7	64
		%	65	3	32
3.	Allowing use of examples to express understanding	F	112	19	69
		%	56	10	34
4.	Giving tasks after every lesson to test understanding	F	106	38	56
		%	53	19	28
5.	Subjecting students to correction and later mark their books	F	164	5	31
		%	82	3	15
6.	Posing questions to individual students to test understanding	F	93	22	85
		%	47	11	42
7.	Grading students according to scores	F	80	17	103
		%	40	9	51
8.	Observing changes in students' scores and give feedback	F	131	28	41
		%	66	14	20
9.	Giving encouraging remarks to reinforce performance	F	67	12	121
		%	34	6	60
10.	Giving continuous assessment tests about subject weekly or monthly	F	115	12	73
		%	58	6	36
11.	Testing composition skills through random story telling	F	101	19	80
		%	50	10	40

*Testing accuracy in writing English following diction and spelling:* There was numerous items describing assessment in secondary schools. The first item indicates scores for testing accuracy in writing English following diction and spelling. Results indicate that this approach to assessment of students is done but not too regularly, that is to say, respondents who said this was always done were 48% while those that reported lack of testing for accuracy in their respective schools were 50%. The percentage of responses indicating no assessments for accuracy in writing is considerably high and could justify why there are cases of poor handwriting and problems in word choice when writing compositions in examinations. Until this is responded to, chances of having sustained increase in positive outcome in English language are minimal. According to interview responses, testing accuracy in writing following diction and spelling is done but not regularly. (48% and 50% for lack of testing for accuracy in writing).

*Testing Comprehension through Reading and Interpretation:* This was the second aspect of students' assessment. It enables teachers of English determine the level at which students can understand and interpret texts, so as to give proper answers to questions and to have the best question approach. According to results, 65% of the respondents reported that students' comprehension skills are not assessed. Only 32% of the respondents reported regularly assessment of comprehension skills. There is also a small percentage of 3% indicating that assessment

is done but not regularly. Generally, comprehension is a significant part of English language, and it is only through mastery of comprehension that students can pass questions on composition and grammar. By these results, there is a clear reason to explain why many students misinterpret questions and make wrong question approach. To promote reading skills, results from head teachers indicated that ELT should support learners in carrying out extensive and remedial reading besides critical thinking and problem solving.

*Allowing use of Examples to Express Understanding:* This is one of the basic approaches to test individual student's understanding of concepts. It helps teachers to determine the number of students who can use examples from day-to-day lives to explain classroom work as a way of demonstrating understanding. However, much as this is important, there is limited regard attached to it because according to results, only 34% of the responses indicate regular use of examples to express understanding, while the 56% reported to attempts by teachers to allow students use examples to express understanding. This continues to explain why we still have students who cannot freely express themselves in English Language before an audience. It is at this point that case of students who cannot write letters are identified. However still, this alone is not enough point to explain inadequacy in learner outcomes for English language in relation to how teachers use assessment techniques.



*Giving Tasks after Every Lesson to Test Understanding:* Every teacher would love to have students understand whatever they have taught in lessons. However, often times, this is not possible until an assessment assignment is given after every lesson. In fact teachers are expected to give students an assignment after every exercise and also mark their work later to grade their level of understanding. Unfortunately, 53% of the responses in Table 4.6 signify a school environment where students do not get assignments after lessons. Even where this is done, 19% of the responses show that it is not regular except in 28% secondary schools. By implication, assessment of students in secondary schools is missed right from the time of lessons. Low grades are therefore transmitted from classroom to even after school whereby a student is not in position to make a speech in English language.

*Addressing students' misconceptions or lack of understanding:* Normally, a professional teacher is supposed to put right his or her students when things seem like not going on well. If a student has spelt the word wrongly, then the teacher is expected to instruct the class to share about the right alternative. This is why the researcher made investigations to this effect. However, 82% of the responses indicate "No" an implication that misconceptions are not given attention by teachers of English language. Though 15% of the responses reveal that teachers attend to students' misconceptions, this percentage is too small and it cannot even reduce the mistakes made by students. To the researcher, these results imply that at certain points, teachers can correct students' mistakes and make them effective. The results also show that it is easy to sustain positive learning outcomes in secondary schools if teachers make a close follow-up of students' levels of understanding and appreciating students' mistakes while still correcting misconceptions. However, since this is not the case in secondary schools in Iganga District, learning outcomes do not appease readers.

*Posing Questions to individual students to test understanding:* One of the ways to ascertain students' understanding is through asking. This happens even in everyday life especially to find out something, thus, asking questions is unavoidable until it comes to be a point of emphasis to test understanding. The results show 42% of the responses for regular use of questions by teachers to test students' understanding. However, this percentage would have been promising if 47% of the responses does not reflect failure to use questions to test students' understanding. This means that if teachers adopt this approach of using questions to test understanding, there is a possibility of improving and sustaining positive learning outcomes specifically in articulation of issues, reading competencies and writing neatness.

*Grading Students According to Scores:* Apart from asking oral questions as above, students are graded according to scores in a given assignment. This calls for establishing

the average mark which is normally 50% above which a student has good scores and below which a student has failed. According to results, 60% of the responses reflect that students are graded, though 9% of the responses show lack of regular practice. The 40% responses are still high to state that grading of students is effective in assessing students. This means that the ongoing reduction in students' positive outcomes can be partly due to failure of teachers to regularly attach importance on grading students.

*Observing change in students' scores and giving feedback:* Grading of students is followed by observing changes in performance for individual students. The results indicate that 66% of the responses reflects no attempts by teachers to notice changes in students' scores and thus give them feedback. By implication, in most of the secondary schools, students do not get feedback form evaluation of performance according to their teachers. Therefore, there are students who lack ladders towards improvement in performance.

*Giving Encouraging Remarks to Reinforce Performance:* Unlike with observation of changes in performance by grading system, the study established that the highest percentage (60%) of responses report that teachers in selected secondary schools always encourage students who perform well. Though 34% responses indicate lack of attempts to give encouraging remarks, so as to reinforce performance, which is not just for teachers of English Language. In the head teachers' views, this is done through such words as *excellent, very good, pull up, fair good, etc.* All these are intended to make students feel felt by teachers, thus a reason to sustain good performance.

*Giving continuous assessment tests about subject weekly or monthly:* Continuous tests (as it sounds) refer to unceasing efforts to know about academic progress of students. It is helpful because it enables a teacher make close follow-ups as they make assessment of improvements in performance. However, only 36% responses revealed that teachers always give continuous tests to students in secondary schools. Majority of the responses, (58%), report no attempts by teachers to give continuous tests as an approach of assessment. This situation could be an attribute to the persistent unfavorable learning outcomes in secondary schools. It can also indicate the lack of strong attachment or weaknesses in assessing of students' results, which in turn may affect students' outcomes.

*Testing Composition Skills through Random Story Telling:* Composition writing is one of the areas in English language that students are expected to master. This is the part which someone attempts in order to learn how to compose music stories, make good speeches and be fluent in English as well as be in position to sustain a conversation in English. However, going by the results in

Table 5.7, 50% responses show that teachers do not test composition skills at all. Among the 50% that test composition skills, 10% do not do it regularly.

## Discussion

Therefore low assessment in composition skills might also be a point to consider when discussing antecedents of sustained low grades in English language in secondary schools. On the side of head teachers, storytelling ends in primary school at a point where pupils are asked to narrate a story randomly. **Results indicate that this approach to assessment of students is done but not too regularly. The percentage responses indicating no assessments for accuracy in writing is considerably high and could justify why there are cases of poor handwriting and problems in word choice when writing compositions in examinations.**

First, results about assessment techniques were in relation to reading comprehension whereby comprehension is a significant part of English language, and it is only through mastery of comprehension that students can pass questions on composition and grammar. By these results, there is a clear reason to explain why many students misinterpret questions and make wrong question approach. Literature available talks about the importance of reading comprehension and as a result of lacking stressing that ability for students to comprehend what is being read is an essential skill that is necessary for success in academics and career readiness. On this note, Abagi & Odipo (2018) maintains that it is crucial that each student knows how to read and derive meaning from a text. In Kaofa (2016) study that examined the questions, findings showed improvement in the students' understanding of a text and provides implications that the teachers should evolve instructional practices to meet the needs of the common core and allow for students to become confident in reading harder texts. Close reading goes beyond reading and asking questions about the details of the text. Fisher & Frey (2012) also states that the text being a piece of writing whether it is a picture book, a few stanzas from an article, a poem, or a short story that is nonfiction and complex that the students can analyze and evaluate it piece by piece. Seattle, on the same found out that in many cases, when students get to middle school, they are required to read complex texts and think abstractly about what they are reading and without having knowledge in knowing how to carefully analyze the text they will not find the deeper understanding.

Allowing use of examples to express understanding is one of the basic approaches to test individual student's understanding of concepts. However, much as this is important, there is limited regard attached to it, which continues to explain why we still have students who cannot freely express themselves in English Language before an audience. It is at this point that case of students who cannot write letters are identified. However still, this alone is not enough point to explain inadequacy in learner outcomes for English language in relation to how teachers use assessment techniques. In line with the findings, Malamed (2020) states that the attributes of the examples should vary widely, particularly on irrelevant characteristics, so learners get the right idea. In a course on sexual harassment, if your examples only demonstrate a person harassing an individual of the opposite sex, a learner might erroneously generalize that sexual harassment cannot occur between people of the same gender.

Further, teachers are expected to give students an assignment after every exercise and also mark their work later to grade their level of understanding. Unfortunately, assessment of students in secondary schools is missed right from the time of lessons. Low grades are therefore transmitted from classroom to even after school whereby a student is not in position to make a speech in English language. Whenever assignments are rarely given, Findings by Hertler (2016) which show that mostly students imagine that educational assignments are insignificant but the fact is that assignments are given to assist the students in self-study and clear their concepts or ambiguities regarding any subject are observed. This is a common feature characterizing schools in Iganga District.

Addressing students' misconceptions or lack of understanding; findings showed that misconceptions are not given attention by teachers of English language. To the researcher, these results imply that at certain points, teachers can correct students' mistakes and make them effective. The results also show that it is easy to sustain positive learning outcomes in secondary schools if teachers make a close follow-up of students' levels of understanding and appreciating students' mistakes while still correcting misconceptions. However, since this is not the case in secondary schools in Iganga District, learning outcomes do not appease readers. These contradict findings which show that students need lots of correction, beginners hardly any and that a teacher's job is to support learners as they blunder through a range of communicative scenarios, not badger them because they've forgotten the third person –as Alber (2017) states. The teacher can stop a discussion activity, conduct a correction slot and then allow students to continue the discussion. This is where Akogu (2018) established that an important advantage of this activity is that the lesson isn't ended on a 'downer' (accuracy work) but on communication, focusing on what students said and found out in the activity.

Results of show that teachers adopt this approach of using questions to test understanding, there is a possibility of improving and sustaining positive learning outcomes specifically in articulation of issues, reading competencies and writing neatness. In line with these findings, Abagi and Odipo (2018) research on the importance of questioning as a teaching and learning strategy is well documented. It is suggested that teachers spend up to 50% of class time on questioning and that they ask between 300 and 400 questions a day, while each student asks, on average, 1 question per week. Surprisingly, teachers seem to be not aware of this discrepancy. Students' questions provide insights into their knowledge, understanding, and puzzlement, and act as a window into their minds. Thus, for the teacher, such questions can diagnose students' understanding by revealing the quality of students' thinking and conceptual understanding, conceptual difficulties, alternative frameworks, and confusion about concepts, their reasoning, and what students want to know (Abagi & Odipo, 2018). The type of question and the content embedded therein can also indicate the questioner's depth of thinking. All these instances point to the potential use of students' questions in formative assessment where the teacher can gain some insight into the students' minds and provide the appropriate feedback. In this regard, students' questions allow two-way 'double feedback' in that they not only provide feedback to the teacher about students' thinking, but also allow the teacher to act on this information and subsequently provide responsive feedback to the students.

Other results were in line with grading students according to scores; and results reflect that students are graded, though 9% of the responses show lack of regular practice. This means that the ongoing reduction in students' positive outcomes can be partly due to failure of teachers to regularly attach importance on grading students. UNESCO (2018) report shows that the ancient Greeks used assessments as formative, not evaluative, tools. Students demonstrated, usually orally, what they had learned, giving teachers a clear indication of which topics required more work or instruction.

Observing change in students' scores and giving feedback was another issue of concern and it is followed by observing changes in performance for individual students. According to findings most of the secondary schools, students do not get feedback from evaluation of performance according to their teachers. Therefore, there are students who lack ladders towards improvement in performance. Findings can be related to those of Alejandro (2018) that shows that observations and student perceptions are recognised as important tools for examining teaching behaviour, but little is known about whether both perspectives share similar construct representations and how both perspectives link with student academic outcomes.

Giving Encouraging Remarks to Reinforce Performance; unlike with observation of changes in performance by grading system, the study established that the highest percentage (60%) of responses report that teachers in selected secondary schools always encourage students who perform well. Though 34% responses indicate lack of attempts to give encouraging remarks, so as to reinforce performance, which is not just for teachers of English Language. The simplest way of conceptualizing positive reinforcement is that something pleasant is 'added' when a specific action is performed (Cherry, 2018).

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

When learners work in groups, they develop life skills, discover new knowledge in novels and develop interest in reading new books as well as making self-discovery. Teachers' creation of opportunities for students to demonstrate possession of skills is related to development of reading skills and if students are allowed to demonstrate the skills they possess, they are able to exhibit speaking skills in various ways. Further, reading together is an engine to learning of new materials. Results indicate that it is easier for students who read tests in group to discover more about poetry and novels, thus, obtaining new information which translates into exposure to reflect what is required in the English Language curriculum. Use of body language also influences learners' outcomes, especially in terms of; Learning new material that is pick up poetry books, Pupils difficulty recalling material from previous day's lessons and Quality of Pupils' reading skills. The use of body language does not provide for recalling difficulty from previous day lessons. Students who take long to understand are not catered for, during use of body language, thus it's only appropriate for speedy/quick learners. Another aspect of assessment is correcting students' mistakes immediately, whose results indicate that it influences learners' outcomes through enhancing quality of reading skills and promoting direct interactions between teachers and pupils which in turn reduces the senior-subordinate gap and promote free interaction.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended that educational policy makers in Uganda implement a policy that aims at improving methodology, pedagogy and curriculum as well as to ensure functional benefits from their education system. The government of Uganda should follow up its legal framework that protects the right to education. Enact a policy on Every Student Succeeds Opportunity (ESSO) to avail students opportunity to learn and succeed. Teachers should have a growth mindset, responsible for their student's outcomes; readiness for educational

reform. Teachers should also develop a local curriculum from the mother curriculum that is relevant and meaningful. English language should be interwoven in the fabric of every day school life and involve all teachers. Appoint members of staff to be reading advocates or coordinators and working closely with the school librarian and teachers in all subjects leading on and evaluating whole school English initiative. NCDC should design educational curriculum which is more logical and functional in that teachers are well equipped with skills to handle classroom work. NCDC should streamline the curriculum that makes learning outcomes a necessity and make a productive pedagogical curriculum framework which is relevant, motivating and engaging. Devote curriculum time for wider reading, writing and speaking

for pleasure the use of whole texts and extracts across the curriculum. NCDC should develop student's language reading, writing, and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English in its right and a medium for teaching all subjects. The MoES should use Integrative pedagogical Educational Model to address pedagogical approaches to students learning outcome to ensure effective acquisition of skills and strategies for English in secondary schools. Teachers should use holistic education methods to cultivate a developing learner's physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and moral. Future research should be done to consistently to address research gaps related to this study.

## References

- Abagi, O., & Odipo, G. (2018). *Efficiency of secondary education in Kenya. Situational analysis for education reforms*. Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Policy.
- Abdulumeen, I. (2016). *Academic Performance – The Impact Of Motivation On Teachers' And Students'*. Lagos.
- Afolabi, A. O. (2016). *issues surrounding studying and outcome-oriented Initiatives in the Developing World*. In Ilorin Journal of Education.
- Ajayi, B. I. (2015). *Unit Cost of Secondary Education and Students' Academic Achievement in Ondo State, Nigeria (1991-1995)*. Ph.D. Thesis. Ibadan: University of Ibadan.
- Akogu, A. D. (2018). *Teachers Perception of Factors influencing the Teaching of Academics*. Abuja: Niger State College of Education.
- Alber, R. (2017). 3 Ways Student Data Can Inform Your Teaching. *George Lucas Educational Foundation*, 5-8.
- Alejandro, C. (2018). *Transform a child's life through Language Development*. Rome: World Food Programme.
- AllAfrica. (2014). *Uganda, Rethinking Our Education Curriculum*. Kampala: AllAfrica uganda.
- Ambili, R. (2016). *Teaching as an efficient technique for learning effective English Language Teaching*. New York: Journal of Research in Medical Sciences.
- Ann, L. (2019). *Reading Comprehension Problems; Causes, Symptoms, and Support*. London: hgtr.
- BITVET. (2017). *Use of symbols to demonstrate language Skills, Improve equitable access to Education and Sports*. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports.
- Bloomsbery, N. (2018). *How to Improve your Listening Skills Through Podcasts*. London: Bloomsbury International.
- Bundy, D., Burbano, C., Grosh, M., Gelli, A., & Jukes, M. (2020). *Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development*. Wasington, DC: The World Bank.
- Carmichael, J. A., & Hale, J. B. (2016). *Debunking the Myths: If You Can Talk, You Can Write; Interventions for Students with Writing Disabilities*. New York: Interventions for Students with Writing Disabilities.
- DeNisi, A., & Pritchard, R. (2016). *Performance appraisal, performance management, and improving individual performance: A motivational framework*. London: Management and Organization Review.
- Emelyn, R. (2016). *An Abbreviated History of School Lunch in America*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
- Gemm, L. (2018). *Reading Difficulties Explained By Age; Reading Problem: Does not always recognize start or end sounds*. Chicago: <https://www.gemmllearning.com>.

- Goh, C. M., & Burns, A. (2016). *Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Graziano, J. K., & Navarrete, L. A. (2016). *Co-teaching in a teacher education classroom: Collaboration, compromise and creativity*. Nevada: Nevada State College.
- Hertler, S. C. (2016). *Psychological Assessment, Academic underachievement and academic achievement; measuring academic abilities*. Ridgewood: psychodiagnostics.
- Ipulangi, T. K. (2018). *Why Study Physical Education? the use of symbols in writing, a descriptive nature of writing*. Newsland: <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz>.
- Janelle, R. (2011). *Why is Academic Success Important? Applied Science and Technology Scholarship*. Saskatchewan: School Boards.
- Kaemerle, J. (2019). *Definitions for numeracy, How to pronounce numeracy?* London: DREK.
- Kaoffa, L. (2016). *Hygienic environment in school, a gear to the best performance*. New York.
- Katrin, G. (2019). *English threatens Nigeria's native languages*. Unicaf: Unicaf University.
- Ken, A. (2020). Unleashing the Power of Examples. *Effective Teaching Journal*, 7.
- Malamed, C. (2020). Six Ways to Use Examples And Nonexamples To Teach Concepts. *thelearningcoach.com*, 3.
- Medad, S. (2019). *Africa: Why Uganda's English language policy is failing rural children*. Kampala: Downtoearth.
- Otaiba, S., & Zilkowski, R. A. (2019). *Disorders of Reading and Writing*. Washington: The Journal of Special Education.
- Salmah, A., Azizah, Z. A., & Shaiful, Y. (2016). *The mediating role of academic self-efficacy in the relation between parent-adolescent relationship and academic performance*. Perpustakaan: Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- Seattle, W. A. (2015). *Strategies for enhancing English language fluency: Vocabulary: Center for training and learning*. Washington DC: University of Washington.
- Ślęzak, S. A. (2018). *Components of strategic competence in advanced foreign language users*. London: Dissertation thesis.
- Teodora, P., & Vansteenkiste, W. (2016). *Structural Indicators on Achievement in Basic Skills in Europe*. London.
- UNESCO. (2018). *National Teacher Policy to Increase Teacher Quality in Uganda*. Kampala: UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa.
- Wexler, N. (2019). *Why Homework Doesn't Seem To Boost Learning--And How It Could*. London: Unicaf.
- Zacharia, C. Z. (2019). Making the invisible visible: Enhancing students' conceptual understanding by introducing representations of abstract objects in a simulation. *htriersieo*, 5.