



Original Article

Perception of Teachers of English Towards Boys in English Lessons in Secondary Schools in Uganda: Implication on Students' Performance

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The study investigated why boys perform poorly in the English language in secondary schools, with a focus on schools in Uganda. The specific objective was: to establish the perception of teachers of English towards boys in English lessons in Uganda. An explanatory case study research design was adopted, and 20 study participants were included in this study. Purposive sampling techniques were used to reach the respondents and the primary data was collected using interview guides, observation checklist and document analysis. Findings revealed that teachers of the English language perceive boys as not cooperative in class; they are stubborn, disturbing, and much disorganised with low interest in the subject. Findings further revealed that some teachers are supportive and accommodative whereas some are cold-hearted towards them. The administrators also said that the performance of boys in the English language has been deteriorating for the last four years since 2018 when it comes to the UCE results. It was recommended that Teachers need to improve their pedagogical approaches in order to interest boys in English Language subjects. Boys need to be trained in better ways in which they can read the English language and be independent thinkers than always following their peers. In addition, Boys in secondary schools need to change their attitude and feeling towards the English language and take it as a serious subject like other subjects. Developing a positive perception and attitude towards the subject will enable them to improve their grades. Further still, boys should not perceive the English language as a subject for only girls because there are male teachers of the English language and doing it perfectly well with ease.

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INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. English language is spoken by a quarter of the world's population enabling a true single market in knowledge and ideas (Martirosyan et al., 2015). English plays an important role in several fields such as education, science, politics and technology (Mwiigi, 2014). In the education context, English has become one subject matter that has to be mastered by students at school in many countries. In Uganda, English is one of the core subjects that students must pass with at least a credit to get a first grade in national examinations. However, to master and pass well in English is not easy especially for those people for whom it is not a mother tongue. Therefore, students need good motivation to encourage them in learning and performing well in English language. Good motivation can be obtained from different sources, such as parents, friends, teachers, and environments (Mwiigi, 2014). Recently, the issue of poor academic performance in the English language in secondary schools in Uganda has been of great concern to teachers and all those who are interested in the education sector. However, there is an assumption that all students admitted into secondary schools regardless of their gender can cope with the academic demands and responsibilities, but on the contrary, some students tend to concentrate on particular subjects and give less attention to others and end up with either good grades or low grades.

This has been observed, especially in Ugandan secondary schools, that boys perform poorer in the English language during their continuous assessments and final national assessments (Muyaka et al., 2023). Therefore, the study investigated the perception of teachers of English towards boys during English lessons and its implication on performance.

CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

Globally, before the 20th century, men were expected to be breadwinners (Faisal et al., 2017). Due to these expectations, boys lived separate lives from girls in preparation for different future roles to play in society (Igbudu, 2015). In Europe, boys would help their fathers on the family farm picking apples and feeding animals. In summary, boys worked outside (Igbudu, 2015). Boys looked up to their fathers who were usually seen as breadwinners of the family. Due to this kind of gender-based work, Europeans saw boys' education as being more important since they were the expected breadwinners. Such discrimination led to high boys' enrolment in schools. This was the situation even in the 20th century. Between 1945 and 1980, males occupied a sizeable majority (over 60%) at high schools in Western Europe (Plummer, 2008). before the 1990s, boys used to perform better in both Europe and America. All the early research indicated boys dominated the upper positions in class. There was a significant difference in the performance of boys (Collins et al., 2000).

In pre-colonial Africa, the situation was not different because society had many expectations for the boy child (Mkandawire, 2005). Boys were taught by their fathers how to hunt, fight in wars, build houses, raise and look after animals like cattle, and make clothes from skins and bark trees. Just like in Europe, boys were taught and raised to be breadwinners. During the second half of the 19th century, western education was introduced in Africa by the missionaries who came to spread Christianity (Mosweunyane, 2013). The new kind of education system was received with a gender-based mind because Africans saw the education of boys as being more important than that of girls. In the African culture, men are praised and are naturally believed to be brilliant all around; academic spheres are included, and hence the assumption of better performance in all areas is presumed (Tabitha, 2008). Because of this presumption, African parents gave boys priority in education since they were expected to be breadwinners in future. This prioritisation of boys' education led to boys' good academic performance. In the British former colonies such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) for example, boys' scores on average were two times those of girls by 1985 (Heinzmann, 2009).

In the past three decades however, trends started changing. Boys' academic performance started declining. Since the 1990s, it has been "underachieving boys" who have been the focus of gender research in education (Haralambos & Heald, 1980). More recently, Ministers of Education from across the Commonwealth have raised the issue of boys' underachievement, a growing phenomenon in all regions. The worry is that although boys' performance is declining, there are no convincing factors as to why the performance keeps on declining (Jha & Kelleher, 2006). English language subject is one of the subjects cited by many interested scholars in the subject where such a sharp decline has been observed across the globe (Plummer, 2008). Globally, there is a persistent decline in boys' performance in English language

subjects (McFarland et al., 2017). In some countries like the U.K., Brazil, Mongolia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand, boys have been noted to underachieve in English subjects in national examinations. Studies carried out in Tanzania established that boys' English language achievement in national exams has been poor for a long period of time. Nearly half of the boys obtained between divisions four and zero in rural as well as urban secondary school students (Abdullah et al., 2017). In Uganda, all the past Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) reports on students' work from 2015 have indicated a good English performance on the girls' side and a poor one on the boys' side. Many boys fail to get better grades because of failing to get a credit in English. In Uganda's secondary schools, it is quite interesting to observe that much as boys are faring well in all compulsory subjects, the reverse is true with English language subjects. Over the last ten years, it is fascinating to note that boys' grades in the English Language subject have been declining steadily. This is evidenced by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) reports, whose findings show that males' performance is always declining and below that of the female candidates in the English language, and male candidates perform better than females in sciences and mathematics subjects (UNEB, 2020). Considering that the English language is one of the core subjects taught at all levels in Uganda secondary schools coupled with the students' performance in various subjects at both internal and external examinations. The inefficiency in boys' English competences and communicative skills which is a medium of instruction at secondary education level is likely to negatively affect their performance in other subject areas. Still, many stakeholders in the education sector have great concern on the deteriorating performance of boys in the English language. These include parents, teachers, head teachers, directors of schools and UNEB officials. While evidence in their poor performance is very clear, the reasons behind are not clear. Nobody seems to explain satisfactorily

what happened from 1990 onwards to assist girls on average to do better in English language than boys and improve year after year, nor why boys have begun to do so poorly (UNEB, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The English language is regarded as a very important subject in Uganda mostly because of its wide usage in all sectors and its value in the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) (Główka, 2014). At UCE, it is one of the compulsory subjects that a candidate has to pass with at least a credit six if he/she is to have a first grade and join any school of his choice for advanced level education or any course of his/her choice. Due to its importance, many stakeholders, like the government through the Ministry of Education and Sports, teachers have put a lot of effort into seeing students pass the English language. Despite all the efforts, boys' performance has remained poor and worrying to all stakeholders (Chege et al., 2013). The most interesting fact is that boys perform better in all other compulsory subjects at O' level according to UNEB reports, but when it comes to the English language, the reverse is true. This can be evidenced by the UNEB report for 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, where statistics showed that males performed poorer in the English language (at 1.3% compared to their counterparts, the female candidates at 1.4%) while male candidates showed better performance in mathematics and sciences (UNEB, 2020). Even in continuous assessments, boys' performance in English language subject has been lower compared to other compulsory subjects (Muyaka et al., 2023). Therefore, without doubt, boys' unabated poor academic performance in the English language is a major issue among students, teachers, parents, school administrators and the community at large, which has to be investigated (Wangu, 2014). If there is no serious action taken to help boys improve in English language subject, these boys will continue to miss out on diploma courses in nursing and teaching, among others. Besides, the question as to why boys' performance in the English language is

lower will still remain unanswered, and many boys will continue to miss a first grade in their ordinary level final exams, miss joining Advanced schools of their own choice, fail to pursue their dream combinations, courses and therefore miss out their career among secondary schools in Uganda. Thus, a study of the perception of teachers of English towards boys in English lessons in secondary schools in Uganda can shed more light on this contentious subject.

Study Objective

To establish the perception of teachers of English towards boys in English lessons in secondary schools in Uganda.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was used to get detailed answers from the respondents. An explanatory case study research design was adopted for the study. The study participants included students, teachers, and head teachers from two secondary schools in Mukono district that is one boarding private secondary school and one-day government secondary school in Mukono district. The accessible population included forty respondents including subject teachers, head teachers, director of studies and students in two secondary schools, one mixed boarding private secondary school and one mixed day government secondary school. In the study, 20 study participants were selected from the total accessible population. These included 02 head teachers, 02 directors of studies, 06 subject teachers and 10 students. This sample size was considered appropriate for this study in line recommendation of (Creswell, 2009). The purposive sampling technique was applied to the head teachers, deputy head teachers, and subject teachers, whereas random sampling was applied to students. Interviews, document analysis and observation, were used to obtain the data that was analysed thematically.

STUDY FINDINGS

Teachers' Bias Towards Boys During English Lessons

Findings were obtained by interviewing head teachers, teachers, and students. When teachers were interviewed about their common beliefs about boys towards the English language, they revealed that boys keep on disturbing the class when they have no interest in the topic, and they tend to develop aggressive-disruptive behaviour. They make a lot of noise and laugh in a very weird way. One teacher remarked that;

Boys can annoy you during lessons. I think they intend to provoke me because I asked teachers of other subjects whether that is how they normally laugh, and they said no. They laugh in base and for a longer period hence failing me to finish all the work I would have organised.

Boys do not want to do work in class. Teacher has to stand there so that they do the work. One teacher reported agony;

Those boys will never do work unless you strictly supervise them, but in my stream, I have over one hundred and thirty students. If you stand in one area, others will miss your assistance. And when you again leave these boys who have wasted over ten minutes of yours because you are supervising them, they stop writing. For me, I now decided to help those students who have an interest in the subject and in most cases, those are girls.

Therefore, teachers enter the class with the belief that boys are hard to deal with, which makes them give boys little assistance; some teachers also noted that they feel demoralised by boys' attitude in the lesson. Some teachers said there are some streams where they go late to class because they lack the morale to go there. When a teacher enters a class, he knows many boys are going to move out or make noise. When a teacher is teaching, they keep throwing in words. Some boys have been given

some punishments but do not want to change. One teacher remarked;

“UNEB should stop making English compulsory because it's forcing many students who don't want to do it”.

Another teacher also said that; those students should concentrate on what they think is better for them than wasting time. This very teacher noted that if UNEB was to make English optional, many boys would opt to do away with the subject. They do not want to participate actively. It is normally hard to tell whether a certain aspect, especially grammar, has been understood or not as many do not speak out, they do not do class work, and many even do not have English subject official books. From the above, therefore, many teachers find it harder to teach lessons of English which involve boys.

However, some teachers, on the other side, feel good whenever they attend English lessons of mixed gender. One teacher said he feels elevated because he knows he is bringing up a generation of men who understand the importance of studying the English language and who will be like him in future. He remarked that he loves this subject and he is doing whatever it takes to make many boys love the subject though they are hesitant. Another teacher remarked that she also has a thought of instilling courage and eloquence in speaking the English language among these boys as they tend to feel shy and lack self-esteem when in class and addressing teachers on the compound. Other teachers noted that they have no problem with teaching English lessons to mixed genders. While in class, they encourage boys, and they end up liking the subject. They show their interest in grammar but tend to show disinterest in analysing comprehension passages and give a feeling that it is the girls to read these passages aloud when they are, in most cases, putting their heads down. From the above therefore, many teachers do not find it so challenging to teach lessons that involve both boys and girls. Although boys tend to have low interest in the English subject

lesson, these teachers keep on encouraging and involving them, which makes these boys improve.

Boys have Bias against English Language Subject: “It is a subject for girls.”

During the study, teachers also revealed that boys have a bias toward English language subjects which is a result of their continuous poor performance. The teacher emphasised that it is normal for students to get biased in subjects; they always get low marks since they tend to think that such subjects are hard and unpassable. They say that because of a lack of interest in the subject, most boys are not attentive in class during the teaching-learning process. More so the teacher also added on to say that boys feel like English as a subject is not beneficial to speak and concluded that English is for girls. Teachers still revealed that boys see the study of the English language as a waste of time. This is because boys believe that since they know how to speak it, they can easily pass it. The above findings concurred with that of head teachers who revealed that boys do not put in much effort in English subject because they think it is of less importance; after all, they know how to speak it. A teacher vividly said that when boys are called in front to read and analyse comprehension papers, they get shy, read in low voices or, at times, they black out because they have nothing to say. More so, when girls are called in front to read, they excellently read and interpret comprehension papers. With this mindset that reading the English language is a waste of time, boys have denied English subject the time it deserves, thus leading to poor performance. Teachers concurred that since many boys are never active in class that even when you ask a probing question, they cannot say anything; “We tend to just ignore them. We concentrate on these active learners who sit in front and, in most cases, are girls and very few boys”.

When teachers were interviewed on why they do not change the students’ sitting arrangement, they said that they have done that several times but after about three weeks, boys take themselves back. This is the

reason for some teachers ignoring boys during their English language lessons which also makes boys ignore them, something that affects their performance. However, boys revealed to the researcher that they do not do class work simply because they are never given feedback, and sometimes their books get lost in the staffroom.

When teachers were still interviewed on how the above-mentioned beliefs discourage boys from performing well in the English language. All the six teachers interviewed in this study and the four administrators concurred with the statement since boys believe English is for girls, they pay less attention towards its learning. One teacher again said that boys fail to grab a book or dictionary to read as they see it as a waste of time, yet girls see it as relaxation. One teacher was quoted saying;

I feel I am doing a lot to help all my students, but those boys can disappoint. Personally, I was given some boys to put in an English language clinic. Here, a clinic is where you are given some students who are very bright whose first grades may be affected by a pass or F9 in the English language to help and push them up to at least a credit six. I have tried to pull those three boys, but they are not forthcoming. I give them tasks; they do not want to do them. I call them for discussions; they do not want to come. I have to hunt them myself. I feel they are breaking me down.

In addition to that, boys lack concentration in class when teachers are teaching. They think about other things altogether. They think failing English is normal because they are not girls. It’s, therefore, clear that some boys do not take the English language seriously. More so, boys think it is a waste of time to attend English lessons. They see no need to have very many English lessons. Since many boys do not have much expectations and are only looking for the lowest credit to pass, they tend to dodge the lessons while in the classroom. A teacher explained that dodging in the classroom means a student is in the class but chooses to do other things,

like reading other subjects while the teacher is busy teaching. Another teacher said that some boys go and hide in the library. She used to look for them, but because she believes the administration has not helped her through having many students in the classroom, she gave up on those that dodge and now concentrates on those who attend lessons.

When teachers were interviewed on what can be done to improve the performance of boys in the English language, they had this to say; Boys need to be told the importance of studying the English language. Poor perception is an individual effort that can be encouraged and motivated. Many boys think that the English language is for girls because most of the jobs related to it are best done by girls. One teacher quoted a certain bright boy she asked why he did not want to read English the way he read science subjects, and the boy had this to say;

But teacher, do you know that girls are the ones that need the English language most? Some of the jobs that come out of it are done by them. For example, teachers, do you know that most of the English teachers and librarians are women? So, I do not give English time because I do not see it in the line of my career.

Another teacher concurred with her by emphasising that these boys need counselling and guidance so that they improve their commitment to the English language. It's therefore, evident that teachers agree that boys' mindset towards the English language must be changed if their perception towards the English language is to change. More so, encouraging boys to revise and be active during the time for English lessons. In addition to that, they should be encouraged to do class work. It is out of that classwork that teachers get to know their problems and help them accordingly. This shows that boys' morale in the English language is low, and therefore, teachers need to just keep on encouraging these boys so that their perceptions towards the English language change.

In relation to the above, sessions should be organised to talk to boys and ask them challenges they face in learning the English language so that teachers find ways how they can solve such challenges. Unlike girls, boys are a little bit reserved. Girls will always open up to you and tell you, teacher, do you know; this topic has failed to enter my head, but boys just give up. Even when you call a boy to tell you what made him switch off, he just tells you obvious things. So as teachers, there should be special meetings organised in a friendly environment to have a teacher-boy talk and share. Maybe they will tell teachers where the problem lies and teachers work together to find a solution.

Based on the information provided, it is obvious that teachers rarely meet boys to ask them about their challenges because they think boys are not forthcoming. Still, boys can also be encouraged and advised to be more patient by giving the subject more time and attention. Boys need to know that English is a language that requires them to be patient, according to all teachers interviewed in this study. When they try and see that things are not working out, they just give up, yet girls persist because they have an interest in the language. It takes time to learn the structure of the language. That grammar, you see, calls for time and practice. Teachers concurred with the boys' problems in the narrative and descriptive topics emanate from their failure to practice and be more attentive. They think English is that easy and that such sections have to be learnt in just a day. When they find out that things are not like that, they switch off, and that is the poor performance we see at the end of the day.

Learner-centred teaching should be encouraged in schools by letting students give their own opinions and let them take the readings and interpretations, but teachers want to do everything for themselves. Teachers should therefore put learners at the centre of learning so that their interest in the subject increase. Compulsory teaching of literature should also be introduced in schools from S.1-S.4 to support the learning of the English language.

Literature supports the learning of the English language in many ways. This helps students to learn listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills on top of improving grammar and new vocabulary. One teacher emphasised that many boys do not want to do literature. She remarked that;

Let me show you my literature class register for senior four. Do you see Ssebo (sir)? There are only six boys out of 45 students. Do you still wonder why they perform poorly in the English language? Omwana akola litulica tagwa lungereza kubanga litulica ayamba nnyo omwana okuyinga olungereza, obirabye ssebo? (A student who offers literature can never fail the English language because literature helps the student to understand the language better. Have you seen it, sir? (Interview with teachers, November 2022).

Worth still, teachers need to increase their supervision of boys. As boys grow, they tend to become rebellious. Teachers need to admit this and therefore guide all learners well. Most teachers tend to be strict with girls and relax with boys. When a girl misses class work, you may even call the parent, and a girl is given a suspension, but when a boy misses work, there is a way teachers take it normally. Even in the classroom, when boys sit and lousy from behind there, there is a way teachers do not give a damn, but when girls even dose, there is a way a teacher gets tougher on them. Still, when boys are called to do the work and do not come out, there are ways teachers easily back off, but when it is a girl, there is a way you see teachers sticking to her. Teachers should therefore, work as a team to see that these boys are not given room to relax during English lessons. Boys should be involved in lessons, most especially being chosen to lead discussions. Encourage them during class participation and lesson contribution. Boys should also be engaged in plenty of reading and activities organised by the teachers. One teacher remarked that;

When a girl has disorganised notes, n'ewa principal ntuuka (I even reach out to the principal), but when it is a boy, ah nuke, that is normal. Which boy can you find with organised English work? Even our own P whom we expect to get maximum aggregates this year, has no organised work; what about the rest?

From the above presentation, it appears as if teachers have a weakness when it comes to supervising a boy-child. They should therefore supervise all learners equally because all of them join schools to learn and they need guidance. Positive feedback should be encouraged. Teachers of the English language need to always provide learners with timely positive feedback so that they motivate learners to learn English. The worst thing is that teachers of English forget that they are teaching a language that needs the motivation to learn. They take it like other subjects. These students need praise even when he has presented nothing. He needs to be promised that he is getting better every day. But teachers provide demotivating feedback, which makes students believe that they can never master the subject. One member of the English department disclosed to the researcher how he initiated the dismissal of a teacher. He said;

This teacher joined us in 2018. He was so cheeky, which was not bad. The only problem is that he extended his cheeky behaviour to students' work. He always wrote funny comments on students' work. Such comments would even be written in Luganda language. The most loved comments were kulikayo, genda olime Emmwaanyi, toddangamu kumpandiikira kasasiro, n'ebirala (welcome back, go plant coffee, never write this trash for me, etcetera). Such comments discouraged students. We found out that in 2019, many students failed the English language in his streams; when we investigated, we found such evils in learners' books, and we had to let go of him.

From the above therefore, teachers should be professional, parents and counsellors while giving

students feedback because feedback either motivates or demotivate learners. When teachers were interviewed on whether boys are interested in and understand the importance of learning the English language, they had this to say; All teachers agreed that yes, boys do but only in the second and last term of their final year. This is evidenced in them paying attention sometimes when a teacher is teaching. Some of them participate in the lesson, and sometimes a few of them consult teachers. Teachers concurred with the statement during the interview with them; boys realise the importance of the subject to their final grade. Therefore, their attitude starts changing slowly. One teacher noted that;

That is how boys in this school have been behaving since I came here seven years ago to teach this language. They always get serious towards the end of the course. They tend to love the subject in senior one. When they reach senior two and three, they show little or no interest at all. Now in the senior four-second term, they start coming back on board again. That is why girls in this school perform better than them in the English language. Girls like the English language and literature in English right from form one. They keep learning, practising, and consulting teachers. By the time boys wake up, it is just late for them. They try to work harder, but the fact is they would have lost a lot of time already. All they can do is move from a pass to the least credits, especially credits six and five.

This reveals that boys always start picking interest in the English language towards the end of their ordinary-level secondary education cycle. However, it is dangerous because they would have abandoned the subject for close to two years. Teachers need to address the factors that make boys lose interest in the subject between senior two and four. Worse than losing two years of inertia, boys do not attach importance to the English language beyond passing exams. All teachers revealed that

boys get interested in the English language because they have realised its importance in passing exams. Boys do not know that there are many opportunities to learn and pass the language well. They only know that when a student gets a pass in the subject at UNEB, he/she gets a second grade, and when it is an F9, the student gets a third grade. So, they start getting serious in the senior four-second term just to get any pass that can push them to a second grade or a credit that can push them to first grade. One teacher remarked that;

Boys think that all opportunities that come from studying the English language are for girls. They do not see themselves making a living out of the English language. That is why most of them do not take the language seriously. They are always reading science subjects claiming that their future is based on science subjects. But when it comes to senior four second and third term, you see them fidgeting because they want that pass or credit.

Boys therefore pick interest in the subject in the remaining four months towards their final exams. During this period, they try to participate in class by asking questions, giving answers in class, ask for books they can read because they have little disorganised or no notes at all. Some start consulting and others are seen joining English discussion groups. This therefore means that boys' interest in English subjects is very small. It is focused on only passing the subject with either a pass or a credit. Teachers should therefore get to know the importance of studying the English language and emphasise such importance to students whenever in class to motivate the learners. When teachers were asked about their feelings during the English lesson when boys are in class, one teacher was quoted saying;

I at times feel demoralised by their attitude at times as they tend not to air out their views or even ask questions. It is normally hard to know whether a certain aspect, especially

grammatical, has been understood or not as many do not speak out.

Another teacher added to the fact that he feels elevated as he thinks he is trying a new generation of men who know the importance of studying English and who will be like him in future. Still, when teachers were interviewed about their thoughts, they had for teaching the English language to boys. The majority of the teachers said that they have positive thoughts about instilling courage and eloquence in speaking the English language among the boys, as they tend to feel shy and lack self-esteem when addressing their teachers specifically. Other teachers thought that boys look at the subject as a little boring as they hardly show any interest in learning it and that they look at it as of less value to them. This means that also teachers find it hard to teach boys because of such negative attitudes they have towards the subject.

Teachers were very positive about the importance of studying the English language to boys and any other individual. This is because they believe that just as girls need the language, boys also need to learn it as it helps them to express themselves in both written and normal oral discourse in and out of the school environment. This can enable them to compete favourably with girls in the job market.

When boys were interviewed about their perception of teachers of the English language, they had this to say; boys remarked that during the lesson, some teachers were supportive and accommodating, whereas some were cold-hearted. Some English language teachers are too selfish and hard to understand. They do not care whether we are learning or not. They mind more on coverage without emphasising what they are teaching. Some of these teachers enter class with many thoughts that they even forget to greet the class. They start by asking who did not hand in work the previous week and punish them accordingly, and this kills the mood of boys and their own 'vibe'. When they are marking books in class, such teachers will never give credit for anything good boys contribute in

class. One student said there was a teacher who enters and sits on a chair in front. She will never labour to move around the class to interact with students. Even when she goes behind, she is looking for a desk to sit down. Another boy talked about the same teacher in the following words;

We heard that Madam X lost two of her close relatives, but she did not inform us as her class. We got the rumour from other teachers who were consoling with her. Even when she came back, she pretended as if nothing happened. Is that the right thing to be done for sure? She is our teacher and as her students, we need to know what goes on in her life.

From the above presentation, it is obvious that teachers of the English language create a rigid classroom environment which does not allow interactions between the teacher and the boys. This affects teaching and learning. However, there are some teachers who create rapport with their boys in the classroom. Boys noted that there are some teachers who make English lessons interesting. When one of the teachers, Mr A, enters the class, he starts by greeting the boys first and giving them some news updates, especially concerning the war between Russia and Ukraine and the progress of the premier league. He allows boys to freely interact with him during this session and all boys are attentive to get updated. Boys noted that this period takes between 3-5 minutes thereafter, he starts teaching.

Another teacher was even nicknamed a "strandloper" because she moved in all parts of the class during her lessons. She does not sit down in class like many teachers. She keeps on moving around the class and when she finds that one is not okay, she tries to help. The teacher was observed giving boys a chance to express themselves during the lesson and gave them time to tell their stories. One boy said;

I cannot forget the day Madam Y was moving around the class and found me sleeping. She

woke me up and asked what the problem was. I had a severe headache and told her the truth. She gave me two boys to escort me to the sick bay. After the lesson, she came and checked on me. That was wow. Even in the evening, before going home, she checked on me the second time. Sir, I felt I had got another mom at school. But if it was Madam X, that would have been a slap.

The students' data corroborates with data from the observation checklist. The researcher observed this teacher moving around the class and trying to interact freely with learners.

Further still, many teachers of English language do not easily avail themselves to students outside the classroom. This makes bonding between the two parties hard, which creates a master-servant relationship between teachers and students, thus making studying and learning harder on the learners' side. When the teachers of the English language were asked about their relationship with boys, they had this to say; the relationship with boys is a double-fold. Some boys are closer and more positive towards some teachers. Some of these boys are teachers' friends. When they are free, especially on weekends and the teacher is around, those boys go to their teachers and ask them different things about life which are far from English subjects. Sometimes in the evening hours, they go for football with some of their teachers. In class, they are active, just like girls. One teacher remarked that;

There is a group of boys who are forthcoming. They come to class to remind you of the lesson, they help carry books back to class, they help clean the blackboard and draw margins on it, they volunteer to read stories without being tasked, they do all the work and hand in their books for marking, and they sometimes help me carry books when I am going to the staffroom.

Still, boys revealed that some teachers call them charming and bright boys. They are respected and always look to us for assistance. When they see our marks, they get impressed and continue

encouraging us. The teachers' remarks about this group of boys corroborate with the observed data. The researcher observed various classes; he attended a group of a few boys who usually sat in the middle of the class, being very active in class and freely interacting with the teachers.

When the head teachers were interviewed on the perception of teachers of English towards boys, they had this to say; teachers always commend that some boys give them a vibe while in class while others give them a hard time. Some teachers, especially Mr A and B, were reported to have a very good relationship with those boys because they have similar interests when it comes to games and sports. Mr A, for example, likes football so much. In the evening, he is seen joining those boys on the pitch to play football. There is a way he has bonded well with them. Actually, boys even like his lessons because he starts them by telling them about football results. The second teacher likes things about ICT in that he goes to class with projectors, and that is what boys like most. There is another female teacher that those boys like most. They say she has many moving stories and cares for them. She is like a mother to them. When head teachers talk about those two teachers, they praise them a lot for trying to change English grades in their school.

Teachers who have positive feelings towards boys always change their grades. This is true because when the researcher looked at the previous performance of candidates, the streams taught by these two teachers had good performance from all students. The researcher also attended some of their lessons, and they were fun. Students seemed interested in what they were learning. Incidentally, some boys even change seats and come in front in order to be near the blackboard where they can enjoy the lesson from. Some boys brought a certain teacher with gadgets and helped to connect them. There was a boy who had a small notebook and sat near the researcher in the lesson. When he was asked why having an exercise book and a notebook, he said once the teacher comes in, he knows it is

time to learn new vocabulary and therefore he compiles all these new words in his notebook.

However, the head teachers also emphasised that many teachers of the English language have a cold relationship with students. They also noted that it's true boys can disturb; however, they can be talked to and changed. Teachers do not want to accept this fact. One head teacher revealed a day he found one teacher punishing students for making noise in class; he said;

I will not forget the day I found Madam Z punishing students. She told girls to sweep the upper compound and told boys to sweep the lower compound, all senior four classrooms and mop the D.H. When I asked why she is over punishing the boys, yet they committed the same crime, she said boys always disturb her during lessons. I am the one who pleaded with her to reduce boys' punishment. How can such boys like you when you are discriminative in executing punishments?

Another head teacher stressed how teachers also fight one another. Because of the desire to show their superiority in the subject, these teachers mudsling each other before learners. There are two teachers who were sacked in January 2022 because of always telling learners that other teachers gave them the wrong work. This made students lose confidence in their teachers and start attending English language lessons from other streams. The administrators reported that some teachers also witch-hunt certain students. A teacher may follow up with a student until such a student is expelled from the school. One head teacher revealed a teacher who told the learner that she would not settle not until the boy was expelled from the school and that if the boy was not expelled, she would be the one to leave the school. From this presentation, although some teachers are accommodative and keep encouraging learners, many English teachers do not want to do parenting work. They have a biased view towards the boy-child, and those views guide them in their relationship with boys. This

explains why they relate with very few boys and try to distance themselves from many other boys. This has a big impact on students' learning.

DISCUSSION

All the teachers and administrators interviewed in this study concurred that since boys believe English is for girls, they pay less attention towards its learning. This concurred with observation data because some of the boys' books checked had little work, were dirty and lacked neatness. Some boys write English on the back of other subjects' books, especially history and C.R.E. This revelation concurred with the findings of Ramesh et al. (2019) that girls in Pakistan enjoy English tasks and boys look at them as burdens. Some teachers also were not involved in innovative activity-based teaching and learning in the classroom, yet it is one of the commonest pedagogies used by teachers of English to teach learners and understand well. This is supported by Abd & Al Odwan (2012); Barahona (2015; Kuyate (2020), who all claim that students learn the English language easier when creative and activity-based learning is used. The findings show that some boys fail English Exams because they have no confidence in their teachers of English. This claim is supported by Ofori et al. (2020), who determined that students' failures in the English subject were due to the incompetence and irrelevancy of teachers in Malaysian schools. He was of the view that for successful language teaching, the teacher concerned should develop interesting and creative based teaching. Such teaching should cater for improving language skills and grammar.

Findings revealed that boys have a bias toward English language subjects which is a result of their continuous poor performance. This is in line with Bećirović (2017), whose studies revealed that boys' poor performance in English language subject is related to their negative attitude towards English subject. In addition to the above, teachers revealed that some boys go and hide in the library, toilets and other places to dodge English subject lessons.

Teachers used to look for them, but because they believe the administration has not helped them and there are many other students in the classroom to attend to, they gave up on those that dodge and now concentrate on those who attend lessons. This finding is in line with Njuguna's (2012) findings in Bomet Kenya that teachers don't look for students dodging lessons because they have big classes where even if about ten dodges, the teacher feels he has more than enough to teach the lesson. Findings revealed that boys emphasised that the value of studying English is to learn how to speak it. Now that they know how to speak it, they don't need extra lessons. When they have no interest in the topic, they tend to develop aggressive-disruptive behaviour. This is supported by various scholars such as Bolkan et al. (2011); Mills et al. (2004), who all argue that boys are hard to deal with if they have little or no interest in the activity going on in class.

In addition to that, teachers generally revealed that boys don't like English language teachers. This is in line with the reporting of Sprouse et al. (2018); Teló et al. (2022), who all reported that some boys tend to have a dislike for English language teachers. The administrators also reported that some teachers also witch-hunt certain students. This is in line with Edelman et al. (2020), who reported about six teachers that were sacked from their school in New York over the witch-hunt of students.

CONCLUSION

From the discussions, the following conclusion was made;

Teachers believe that boys are biased on English language subject and they do not like the teachers of the English language. This has negatively affected the rapport between teachers of English and boys during English Language lessons. Teachers attribute discipline problems of boys to a lack of interest in the subject, which has negatively affected the teacher's interest in helping the students in the subject leading to poor performance.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion made by the researcher, the following recommendations are made; Teachers need to improve their pedagogical approaches to interest boys in English Language subject. Boys need to be trained in better ways in which they can read the English language and be independent thinkers than always following their peers. In addition, Boys in secondary schools need to change their attitude and feeling towards the English language and take it as a serious subject like other subjects. Developing a positive feeling and attitude towards the subject will enable them to improve their grades. Further still, boys should not perceive the English language as a subject for only girls because there are male teachers of the English language and doing it perfectly well with ease.

To add on that, teachers should always encourage boys to work harder in all subjects, English language inclusive, because it determines their grades. This can be made possible through motivation, where teachers should keep on encouraging students so as help to win students on the side of the subject in the end. Still, teachers of the English language need to always provide learners with timely positive feedback so that they motivate learners to learn English.

There is a need to make close connections with teachers of the English language in order to get all the basic skills on how to perform well in the English language. The teachers of the English language should create a positive and cordial relationship with the learners so that a conducive environment is created to enhance performance and encourage learners to always consult teachers with a lot of ease.

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