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### Instructional Methods Used by Secondary School Teachers in Classroom to Develop Students' English Writing Skills in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania

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**Keywords:**

Instructional Methods,  
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Writing Skills.

This study examined instructional methods employed by secondary school English language teachers in classroom to develop students' English writing skills in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. Specifically, the study sought to assess English language teachers' understanding of the purpose of English language syllabus for secondary education; to investigate the teaching and learning techniques used by teachers in classroom to develop students' English writing skills; and to evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques used in developing English writing skills among students. The social-cultural theory and communicative competence theory were adopted to guide the study. The study employed an interpretivism paradigm, qualitative approach and a phenomenological research design. The study involved 33 participants (12 English teachers and 21 FIII students) who were selected purposively from 3 public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. The data were collected using documentary review, classroom observations, and interviews, and thematically analysed. The findings revealed that teachers had differing understanding of the purpose of the English syllabus. Also, the findings showed that teachers used techniques, such as explanation and demonstration, writing practice and exercise, reading-writing integration, sentence combining, genre-based instruction, and collaborative writing, in teaching English writing skills. Moreover, the study found that the techniques used were ineffective to develop students' English writing abilities as many students struggled to write in English. The study concludes that the opposing understanding of the purpose of the subject syllabus among teachers limits teachers from effectively using instructional methods to develop writing skills in English among students. Therefore, teachers should be trained on the purpose of the subject syllabus to enable them effectively use instructional methods in a manner that focuses to develop English writing skills among students per requirements of the subject syllabus.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Globally, improving English writing skills among students is crucial for their academic success and future opportunities. Academically, improved English writing skills contribute to clearer communication, better academic performance, enhanced critical thinking, and preparation for future educational and career opportunities (Rahman & Sarker, 2019). In this regard, developing strong writing abilities not only supports immediate academic goals but also lays the foundation for long-term personal and professional growth. The improved English writing skills open global opportunities, foster personal development, and contribute to entrepreneurial success (Rao, 2017). Therefore, students who excel in English writing skills are advantaged in education and opportunities after schooling than those with undesirable English writing skills (Rahman & Sarker, 2019).

Writing is the application of visual medium to represent a language's grammatical structure and graphology (Widdowson, 2001). Crystal (2006) defines writing as a communication method that involves creating a system of visible marks on surface. Generally, writing is the process of using symbols, typically letters and punctuation, to communicate thoughts, ideas, information and emotions in a readable form. On this matter, it is the teachers' role to develop English language writing skills among students. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) emphasize that it is important to support and foster writing as a communicative activity for language learners through their academic journey. Therefore, writing skills is the ability to express ideas, thoughts and information clearly, effectively and coherently in a written form (Rao, 2017).

Writing skills is one of the influential language skills and powerful mode of communication that helps to produce the language (Rahman & Sarker, 2019). However, English writing skills is regarded the most difficult skill by students because of the complexity of its structure and vocabulary (Rao, 2017). This is because the English language's spelling system differs from its pronunciation. In this, Maliva *et al.* (2022) argue that the majority of students find it challenging to write in English since there is no perfect match between pronunciation and spelling. This implies that students need to be trained English writing skills using appropriate instructional methods. Teachers should teach English writing skills using instructional methods that encourage students to write in English. Rao (2017) insists that teachers are responsible for inspiring their learners to write by demonstrating the characteristics of effective writing. Alongside, Richards and Schmidt (2002) state that teachers should guide learners in the complex process of planning, drafting, reviewing and revising for their learners to excel in writing.

The government of Tanzania has been implementing a competence-based curriculum since 2005 to enable its citizens align with the needs of the world. In 2005, a communicative competence-based English language subject syllabus for secondary education, Form I-IV was adopted. Among others, one of the objectives of the adopted syllabus is to enable secondary school students express themselves in written English (MoEVT, 2005). In this respect, English language teachers in Tanzanian secondary schools are required to teach using instructional methods that enable their students become effective communicators in various contexts using written English language. Emmanuel (2019) attests that the new syllabus requires teachers to use learner-

centered methods such as collaborative writing, pair works, dictations and individual writing activities.

Despite the syllabus requiring teachers to use instructional methods that enable students to write, studies show that majority of secondary school students in Tanzania are unable to write in English. John (2018), for instance, found that 10/28 (35.7%) Form One students were not able to write their short history in English and those who tried, did not write comprehensively. Ndulila and Msuya (2017) revealed that many secondary school students were not able to write even a single comprehensible passage in English. Msimbe and Mwila (2023) reported that even if English language is the medium of instruction in secondary schools, it is not written well by many students particularly in community owned secondary schools. Bimboma and Kumburu (2023) informed that students encountered challenges in writing the English language.

The inability of secondary school students in Tanzania to write the English language is an indicator that the instructional methods used by teachers in classrooms are questionable. If they used suitable ones, they would enable their students to communicate in written English. This is because classroom is a suitable environment teachers can use to create a dynamic and engaging learning experience that significantly contributes to the development of students' communicative competence (Rahman, 2018; Rahman & Sarker, 2019). Certainly, it was not known about the instructional methods used by teachers in classroom to develop English writing skills among secondary school students in Tanzania. Thus, the aim of this study was to examine the instructional methods employed by secondary school teachers in classroom to develop students' English writing skills in Iringa Municipality. Specifically, the study aimed at addressing three research questions: (i) what do teachers know about the purpose of the English language syllabus for secondary education? (ii) How do teachers teach English writing skills to their students in a secondary school classroom? (iii) How effective are the techniques used in developing English writing skills among secondary school students?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Theoretical Review

This study was informed by the socio-cultural theory and communicative competence theory.

#### *The Socio-Cultural Theory*

Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) is a theoretical framework about learning developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). The theory significantly emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction and culturally rooted activities in classroom to develop individuals' cognition, learning and behaviour (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory provides important insights on teachers' practices in classroom. It has shaped pedagogical practices whereby teaching and learning is regarded a participatory phenomenon (Lantolf, 2000). In this basis, teachers in classroom should create opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful interactions that allow students to learn from more knowledgeable or experienced peer and teachers (Long, 1996). Besides, interactions in classroom enable teachers to provide scaffolding and guidance to help students reach the next level of language proficiency through modeling language use, breaking down tasks into smaller steps and gradually releasing responsibility to students (Ovando et al., 2003).

The SCT was adopted because it proposes various student-centred teaching and learning method such as role play, discussions, dialogues, simulation, projects, portfolio and authentic materials that can activate students' interests and participation to learn the target language (Emmanuel, 2019). Therefore, the SCT was used to investigate if English language teachers employed participatory methods to promote interaction in classroom.

#### *The Communicative Competence Theory*

Communicative Competence Theory (CCT) is a theoretical framework in the field of second language learning developed by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain in 1980. The theory has been influential in shaping language teaching methodologies that prioritise communicative language use and interaction in the classroom. The CCT holds that the teaching of language should

focus at developing four components (i.e., grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence) on the learners for them to become communicative competent. According to Canale (1983), grammatical competence is the knowledge of the rules and structures that govern language use. Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge to appropriately use a language in various social interactions. Discourse competence is the knowledge of combining small grammatical units to form larger grammatical structures to express oneself in either a written or spoken language. Strategic competence is the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication systems.

In regard to the CCT, the teaching of language should aim at developing proficiency of all four components for the learners to become communicative competent in a target language. This is because all components have almost equal importance towards knowing and using a language (Adejumo, 2020). Therefore, the teaching of language should ensure that all the components are integrated with similar emphasis for the learners to familiarise the particular target language in order to effectively use it in different communicative settings. This is because the theory emphasizes on the importance of using a language in meaningful and authentic contexts, engaging in real communication tasks, and developing the ability to communicate with others (Almohideb, 2019).

The CCT was used by this study because it focuses on real-life communication. It emphasizes the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts and for various purposes (Almohideb, 2019). Therefore, it was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques used by English language teachers in developing English writing skills among students.

## Empirical Review

### *Teachers' understanding of the purpose of the English language syllabus*

Understanding the purpose of the English language subject syllabus among English language teachers is of great significance as curriculum implementers. It significantly helps teachers to decide the content to teach, teaching activities and assessment tools in

accordance with the syllabus objectives (Emmanuel, 2019). Teachers who are aware of the purpose of the communicative competence-based syllabus that is implemented can design lessons and activities that focus on meaningful communication rather than just mastering grammatical rules (Zulu, 2019). In this regard, it is teachers' understanding of syllabus purposes that enables teachers to apply student-centered instructions that develop learners' communicative abilities in the target language (Triwibowo, 2023).

A study by Gao (2015) to examine how English language teachers perceived and adapted to curriculum changes in relation to syllabus design in China found that teachers were not aware of the purpose of the syllabus. A study by Mthethwa-Sommer (2018) to investigate how South African teachers perceived the English curriculum reported that many teachers struggled with aligning their teaching practices and with the curriculum goals due to limited training. A study by Mokharti and Reddy (2020) to explore teachers' awareness of syllabus objectives in Botswana found that teachers were not conversant of the objectives of the syllabus which was due to lack of necessary professional development to fully grasp the syllabus' goals. A study by Kakinda (2021) to investigate the perceptions of primary English teachers regarding the national syllabus and its implementation identified gaps in training and resources that hindered effective syllabus implementation.

In Tanzania, a study by Mhando (2020) to investigate teachers' perception of the English syllabus in secondary schools found that many teachers had a limited understanding of the syllabus objectives, impacting their teaching effectiveness. A study by Kihwele and Mbise (2021) to examine the challenges faced by English language teachers in implementing the national syllabus highlighted the need for professional development programmes to enhance teachers' awareness and skills. A study by Ngowi (2022) on primary school teachers' understanding of the English language curriculum showed that teachers were not aware of the objectives of the syllabus, due to gaps in training. Overall, the reviewed empirical studies underscore the critical significance of teachers' understanding of the English language syllabus, pointing to the



need for ongoing professional development and support.

### ***Techniques used by teachers to teach English writing skills***

The development of English writing skills among students is determined by the techniques teachers use in classroom when teaching. Emmanuel (2019) argues that teachers decide on certain teaching techniques when answering questions: what kind of writing skills do they want their students to comprehend and why they want their students to be conversant with such writing skills. In this, Kress (1993) argues that if the goal is to create citizens with specific skills, knowledge and attributes, learning modalities are just as crucial as content types. Therefore, in order to attain the desired writing outputs, teachers must employ the teaching methods suitable for developing such writing skills. Hyland (2007) claims that developing students' English writing skills requires a combination of instructional methods that address different aspects of the writing process.

In Tanzania, the communicative competence-based English language subject syllabus for secondary education requires teachers to use learner-centered methods where students are expected to engage in different writing activities. The methods proposed include pair works, collaborative writing, dictations, genre-based approach and individual writing activities (MoEVT, 2005). This implies that teachers should make use of the suggested instructional methods in a manner that encourages students to learn English writing skills. Kayi (2016) argues that in the teaching of writing, teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real life communication, authentic activities, meaningful tasks that promote written language and collaborative groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task.

### ***Effectiveness of the techniques used in developing English writing skills***

The teaching methods are regarded effective when they result to required effect among learners. With respect to this, the instructional methods are considered effective when they help teachers to develop English writing skills among students.

Richards (2006) argues that teachers should strive to employ the teaching techniques that develop communicative competence among students. Richards and Rodgers (2001) attest that communicative language teaching techniques are generally considered effective in developing communicative competence. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2000) argues that the techniques such as collaborative writing, pair works, demonstration, and individual writing activities are highly effective in developing learners' writing skills because they expose learners to the appropriate use of language in different social and cultural contexts. While the effectiveness of these techniques in developing writing skills is widely recognised, it is important to note that the degree of effectiveness can vary depending on factors such as teacher expertise and learning context.

A study by Rahman and Sarker (2019) to investigate teachers' classroom practice to develop English writing skills among primary pupils in Bangladesh found that teachers used traditional teaching-learning methods emphasizing students' rote learning and used Bangla as a medium of instruction. A study by Mokhathi (2022) to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative writing exercises in South Africa highlighted the benefits of peer collaboration in enhancing writing quality and student engagement. A study by Kibona (2021) to explore the use of collaborative writing strategies among university students in Tanzania showed that peer collaboration significantly increased engagement and writing quality. A study by Msuya (2021) to investigate how the use of technology in writing instruction impacts the writing skills and engagement of secondary school students in Tanzania reported that digital tools enhanced student motivation and facilitated collaborative writing. These studies contribute to the understanding of effective instructional methods for developing writing skills among English language learners.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research was conducted at Iringa Municipality in the Iringa Region of Tanzania. The selection of Iringa Municipality as a study area was based on the presence of secondary school students who are not able to effectively communicate in written English

(John, 2018; Bimboma & Kumburu, 2023; Nyoni, 2023). Merton (1973) claims that researchers choose certain areas of study because there is a problem to be studied. The study adopted the interpretivism research paradigm and qualitative research approach in order to collect in-depth and detailed information from participants in natural environment (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). A phenomenological research design was used by this study in order to understand and describe the subjective experiences of participants. According to Creswell (1998), phenomenology is the best design in understanding common human experiences of certain group of people.

The population for this study included the secondary school English language teachers as implementers of instructional methods and students as beneficiaries or victims of the methods used in classroom. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 33 participants (12 teachers and 21 Form III students) from 3 public secondary schools for this study. Purposive sampling is a selection of participants basing on specific criteria relevant to research objectives (Patton, 2002). The desired criterion for selecting schools was the sustained good performance of the English Language Subject in the Certificate for Secondary Education Examinations (CSEE) for four consecutive years (2020-2023). The supposition was that English teachers in these schools held distinctive content and pedagogical knowledge that enabled their students to write desirably in their examinations and eventually perform well constantly. Banerjee *et al.*, (2014) attested that students perform better the subjects taught by competent teachers using effective methods. The criteria for selecting teachers were the teaching experience and level of education. This was because teachers with varied teaching experience and levels of education hold different levels of understanding the syllabus objectives and they differently use instructional methods in the course of teaching English language (Elibariki, 2017; John, 2020). Students were selected based on their class of study and performance in the English language continuous assessment. The assumption was that the students who perform better in English language have a good command of written English. In this context, Form III students were considered relevant

for this study because they belong to upper class of ordinary secondary education. Therefore, they were expected to demonstrate the developed writing skills in English.

Data for this study were collected using documentary review, classroom observation, and interviews. The English language syllabus for secondary schools, teachers' schemes of work, lesson plans, and students' exercise books were reviewed. Students were given a 40-minutes writing assignment on any topic of their interest. A classroom observation schedule that contained a comprehensive list of written language classroom activities was used to conduct a classroom observation. Lastly, an in-depth interview was conducted with English language teachers whose classrooms were observed. The collected data were subjected to thematic analysis in order to identify the main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the instructional methods employed by secondary school English language teachers in classroom to develop students' English writing skills in Iringa Municipality. Specifically, the study sought to assess English language teachers' understanding of the purpose of English language syllabus for secondary education; to investigate the teaching and learning techniques used by teachers in classroom to develop students' English writing skills; and to evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques used in developing English writing skills among students.

### Teachers' understanding of the purpose of the English language syllabus

Data from interviews with teachers showed that English teachers had conflicting understandings regarding the objectives of the English syllabus. The teachers demonstrated a mixed understanding of the syllabus. Some teachers admitted not understanding the objective of the English syllabus. In this, one teacher said:

*To be honest, personally, I am not very sure about the objective of the English syllabus. What I know is that the student is supposed to be taught all the topics and be able pass the exam (T1SB).*

The data linked the limited understanding of the objectives of the syllabus to inadequate teacher preparation in teacher training colleges. It appeared that teachers were not being prepared to understand the objectives of the syllabus, but rather how to interpret and implement it. Regarding this, one teacher said the following with more emphasis:

*I don't know the objectives of English syllabus. This is because in colleges, we are not taught the objectives of subject syllabi. We are trained on how to interpret and implement them using various methods that are appropriate for students and the environment (T3SA).*

Even more concerning, teachers expressed frustration over the absence of continuing workplace training to help them grasp the objectives of the English syllabus. One teacher posed this concern by saying that:

*We have not received adequate training at our workstations to help us understand the objectives of the English syllabus. Many of us rely on topics and teaching methods from the syllabus without reflecting the actual objectives of the syllabus (T2SC).*

Other teachers showed that they knew the objectives of the English syllabus. Some teachers, during the interviews, clearly stated that the syllabus was designed to enable students to become proficient in communicating in English fluently. One teacher, for example, said that:

*As stated in the Education Policy (2014), the English syllabus aims to enable students to communicate in English across various fields of communication (T4SC)*

Another teacher remarked that:

*The goal of the English syllabus is to equip students with the ability to communicate in a wide range of communication contexts (T3SB).*

Another teacher added that:

*The objective of the English syllabus is to prepare students to effectively communicate in English across diverse communication settings (T2SA).*

The aforementioned data indicated that English teachers in the schools covered by this study have differing understanding of the purpose of the English syllabus. Some teachers were not conversant with the purpose of syllabus while others were aware. Furthermore, the data revealed that teachers were not adequately trained in the colleges and workplaces about the objectives of the syllabus. The data corresponds with those by Gao (2015) which showed that English language teachers in China were not aware of the purpose of the syllabus. The findings are also parallel with those by Mokharti and Reddy (2020) which revealed that in Botswana, English teachers were not conversant with the objectives of the syllabus which was due to lack of necessary professional development to fully grasp the syllabus' goals. Also, these data are similar to those by Ngowi (2022) which showed that English teachers in Tanzanian primary schools did not know the objectives of the syllabus, due to gaps in training.

### **Techniques used by teachers to teach English writing skills**

Data from documentary review, interviews with teachers and classroom observations have indicated that teachers used various techniques to teach their students English writing skills. Such techniques included explanation and demonstration, writing practice and exercise, reading integration, sentence combining, genre-based instruction, and collaborative writing as presented in more details below:

#### ***Explanation and demonstration***

The findings from classroom observations showed that teachers often started by explaining the fundamental principles of writing such as grammar, syntax, and structure. They modelled effective writing techniques by demonstrating how to construct different types of texts, from letters to essays. Teachers used examples of well-written text to highlight features such as coherence, organisation, and style, to help students understand what constitutes good writing. Explanation and demonstration techniques were regarded effective to make abstract concepts more tangible and understandable for students. Concerning this, one teacher said:

*Explanation provides students with a clear understanding of writing techniques, rules, and structure, while demonstration offers a practical model, showing how these skills are applied in real writing. Together, they help bridge the gap between theory and practice, allowing students to grasp complex writing processes and develop their own writing skills more effectively (T4SB).*

The findings showed that explanation and demonstration method was the preferred method of teaching writing skills by many teachers. All 12 teachers whose lesson plans were reviewed indicated explanation and demonstration as a teaching technique for writing skills.

### **Writing practice and exercise**

The findings from classroom observations showed that teachers provided structured writing prompts and exercise that guided students through the writing process. Teachers guided their students to practice to fill in gaps, rewrite sentences and compose short paragraphs. To create creativity, teachers assigned tasks that encouraged students to write stories, poems, or descriptive essays, to allow them to practice imaginative and expressive aspects of writing. Similarly, the students' English language exercise books that were reviewed showed various writing exercises, including sentence construction, essays, poems and imaginative stories. Writing practice and exercise were regarded significant in teaching writing skills because they provided students with opportunities to apply what they had learned through explanation and demonstration. In this regard, one teacher said:

*Regular writing practice helps students to reinforce concepts, improve grammar, punctuation and structure, and develop a more natural flow in writing. It enables students to experiment with different styles and formats, while exercises target specific areas like sentence construction or coherence (T2SA).*

Moreover, the findings from documentary review showed that, teachers preferred using writing practice and exercise as the technique for teaching writing skills. Eleven out of twelve teachers whose schemes of works were reviewed indicated writing practice and exercise as the teaching technique. Of

the twelve conducted interviews, only three teachers did not mention writing practice and exercise as a teaching technique. One teacher acknowledged writing practice in building confidence, enhancing creativity and developing active learning among students in the following extract:

*Writing practice helps students build confidence, enhance creativity, and develop their voice. Through feedback and revision, students can identify areas of improvement, making the learning process more interactive and personalized. Overall, writing practice and exercises foster active learning and long-term skill retention (T3SC).*

### **Reading-writing integration**

The findings from classroom observations showed that teachers combined reading activities with writing exercise to enhance students' overall literacy. During the classroom session, T2SC, for example, was observed emphasizing the relationship between reading and writing by encouraging students to read a variety of texts. He guided the students to read two texts and analyse writing styles, structures and techniques used by authors. T4SA as well was observed using the reading-writing integration techniques in her lesson. She encouraged students who had read a text to engage in related writing task by summarizing, analyzing or creating new texts inspired by what they had read. The reading-writing integration technique was praised by teachers for being effective in helping students to develop a deeper understanding of how to organise ideas, use vocabulary effectively, and create coherent writing. One of the interviewed teachers said:

*When students are introduced to a range of texts, they can examine the writing styles, structures, and techniques employed by different authors. This enables them to gain a better understanding of how to structure ideas, utilize vocabulary efficiently, and produce well-organised writing (T1SB).*

Moreover, reading-writing integration techniques significantly fosters critical thinking, improves comprehension, and allows students to apply the



writing strategies they observe in their reading. In this concern, one teacher had the following opinions:

*This method encourages critical thinking, enhances comprehension, and enables students to implement writing techniques they have learned from reading. The technique also helps students to make connections between reading and writing as complementary processes, ultimately improving their writing skills through consistent practice and reflection on authentic language use (T3SC).*

### **Sentence combining**

The findings from classroom observations indicated that teachers used sentence combining technique to enhance students' writing skills by helping them create more complex and varied sentence structures. During the English class, T3SA was teaching FII students to combine two or more sentences using coordinating conjunctions. The teacher, for example, guided students to join the sentences "The cat is black" and "It is sitting on the mat"; "The sun set" and "The sky turned orange". Also, it was witnessed that T1SC was teaching FII students to compose conditional sentences type 2 using "If..." and "Unless..." The teacher explained how "If..." and "Unless..." are used in conditional sentences. Then, he guided students to compose conditional sentences type 2 by joining sentences such as "I won the lottery" and "I travelled around the world"; "She knew the answer" and "She helped us"; "They lived closer" and "We saw them more often"; and "We had more time" and "We visited the museum".

Also, the findings from documentary review also indicated that sentence combining was the most used method by teachers in teaching. Through prepared schemes of works and lesson plans that were reviewed, teachers showed sentence combining as a teaching strategy for writing skills. Moreover, the reviewed English language students' exercise books showed different exercises on sentence combining, ranging from coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunction and subordinating conjunctions as well as conditional sentences. Sentence combining is a valuable technique for developing students writing abilities by focusing on clarity, variety, and grammatical precision. During interview, one teacher attested that:

*One of the technique I use in teaching writing skills is sentence combining. This is because it offers several advantages in teaching writing skills, including enhancing sentence variety, improving coherence, developing grammar skills, encouraging critical thinking, increasing writing proficiency and fostering creativity, among students (T4SB).*

### **Genre-based instruction**

The finding from classroom observation revealed that teachers taught their students conventions and structures of different writing genres, such as narrative, argumentative, expository and descriptive. It was evident that T4SB, during the lesson on "Writing using appropriate language, content and style", was guiding FIII students to identify key features of narrative genre from a variety of narrative essays that were used as teaching aids, which students then applied in their writing. Alongside, on the same topic, writing using appropriate language content and style, T2SA was guiding the FIII students to differentiate the narrative genre from descriptive genre by mentioning their contrasting features.

Not only the findings from classroom observations, but also those from documentary review indicated that genre-based instruction was the common method used by teachers to teach writing skills in the studied schools. Through the reviewed teachers' educational documents such as schemes of works and lesson plan, teachers indicated the teaching of writing skills using genre-based instruction. Also, the students' exercise books for English language subject contained multiple exercises and assignments on genre-based writing, covering narrative, argumentative, descriptive, expository, and creative compositions, as well as speeches and letters of different kinds.

Furthermore, data from interview showed that teachers made use of genre-based instruction because it helps students develop genre awareness and apply appropriate writing conventions. It is particularly effective in helping students understand the purpose and audience of their writing. In this regard, one teachers stated that:

*Genre-based instruction is one among the useful method in teaching writing skills. It provides a structured, purposeful, and engaging approach to teaching writing, helping students become more versatile and confident writers (T1SC).*

### **Collaborative writing**

The finding from classroom observations showed that students worked together in pairs or small groups to produce a piece of writing. In his class, T1SA allowed FIV students to discuss, share ideas and write an application letter for a driving vacancy per question demands as he guided them to solve a past paper. Besides, the FIV students at School C were found working together in groups to write projects as one of the academic requirements for their continuous assessment. Moreover, the findings showed that teachers preferred using collaborative writing because it fosters peer learning, critical thinking, and the development of negotiation skills. Concerning this matter, one teacher said:

*Collaborative writing is the useful and preferred method used in teaching writing skills. This is because it promotes peer learning, enhances critical thinking and cultivates negotiation skills as students learn by working together (T1SB).*

The above-mentioned findings show that English teachers in the studied schools used various techniques in teaching English writing skills. Such techniques included explanation and demonstration, writing practice and exercise, reading-writing integration, sentence combining, genre-based instruction, and collaborative writing. These finding are supported by Hyland (2007) who claims that developing students' English writing skills requires a combination of instructional methods that address different aspects of the writing process. The findings are in agreement with Kayi (2016) who argues that in the teaching of writing, teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real life communication, authentic activities, meaningful tasks that promote written language and collaborative groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task.

### **Effectiveness of the techniques used in developing English writing skills**

Data from interviews and observations indicated that despite teachers' use of various techniques, including explanation and demonstration, writing practice and exercise, reading-writing integration, sentence combining, genre-based instruction, and collaborative writing, in teaching writing skills, their effectiveness in developing writing skills in English among students was questionable. It was observed that most students were unable to write in English. Of the twenty one FIII students who were given a 40-minutes writing assignment on any topic of their interest, only four wrote passages with minor errors in punctuation and spelling, while six wrote incomprehensible passages and eleven could not even write a paragraph.

Not only data from observation, but also those from interview revealed that the majority of students struggled to write in English. During interview, one teacher admitted that:

*Based on my experience, most students cannot write in English. Despite using different teaching methods, the problem of poor proficiency in writing in English remains a pervasive issue. I think you will see this for yourself in the exercise you gave them to write short stories about topics they are interested in (T4SB).*

Worst enough, it was revealed that majority of students could not even copy the notes from the blackboards while others struggled even to write simple letters. In this concern, one teacher said:

*Honestly, the majority of students struggle with writing in English. Despite efforts to motivate them to use and write in the language, many still find it difficult. Some students even have trouble copying notes from the blackboard, while other face challenges with writing simple letters (T3SC).*

The abovementioned findings show that, although teachers in the studied schools employ a range of techniques to teach writing skills, their effectiveness in improving students' English writing abilities is uncertain, as many students still struggle to write in English. These finding are in agreement with those

by John (2018) which revealed that that 10/28 (35.7%) Form One students were not able to write their short history in English and those who tried, did not write comprehensively. The findings as well are supported by Ndulila and Msuya (2017) who reported that many secondary school students were not able to write even a single comprehensible passage in English. Moreover, the findings match with those by Msimbe and Mwila (2023) which informed that even if English language is the medium of instruction in secondary schools, it is not written well by many students particularly in community owned secondary schools. Besides, these finding correspond with those by Bimboma and Kumburu (2023) which revealed that students encountered challenges in writing the English language.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Basing on the findings of this study, it is concluded that English subject teachers have contradictory understanding of the goals of the English syllabus. The opposing understanding of the objective of the subject syllabus among teachers limits English language teachers from effectively using instructional methods to develop writing skills in English among students. This has resulted to persistent poor English writing skills among secondary school students. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) should train teachers on the purpose of the subject syllabus. This will enable teachers to effectively use the instructional methods in a manner that focuses to develop English writing skills among students per requirements of the subject syllabus.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was confined to examine the instructional methods employed by secondary school English language teachers in classroom to develop students' English writing skills in Iringa Municipality. Only a few of secondary schools in Iringa Municipality were involved in the study. The study involved English language teachers and FIII students as participants who provided information on the instructional methods used and their effects on developing English writing skills among students using a phenomenological research design. These

factors were most likely to delimit the representativeness and generalizability of the study to the entire situation in all secondary schools in Tanzania.

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