



Assessing what Matters: English Language Proficiency, Competency Development and Formative Assessment Practices among Junior Secondary School Learners in Ndhiwa Sub-County

Charity Otieno, Amimo Catherine & Jane Genga Ayiemba

University of Eastern Africa, Baraton

Email: charityawuor87@gmail.com/amimoc@ueab.ac.ke/jayiembra@ueab.ac.ke

Abstract: *This study assessed English language proficiency, competency development and formative assessment practices in Junior Secondary Schools in Ndhiwa Sub-County, Kenya. It was guided by concerns that assessment under Competency-Based Education (CBE) may not adequately capture what matters in language learning, particularly balanced development of reading, writing, listening, speaking and 21st-century English competencies. A descriptive research design was adopted. Data was collected from 14 schools, 13 teachers, 14 headteachers, 1 Sub-County Director of Education and 404 Grade 8 learners using questionnaires, interviews, observation checklists, and document analysis. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and thematic analysis were used for data analysis. Findings indicate that learners demonstrate moderate English language proficiency, with stronger performance in listening and basic reading comprehension, but weaker outcomes in speaking and writing. Competency development is uneven: collaboration is relatively strong, while communication remains the weakest competency. Creativity and imagination are moderately developed but largely dependent on teacher scaffolding and structured classroom tasks. Regarding assessment practices, formative assessment is moderately applied. Teachers frequently use grammar, vocabulary and writing focused assessments, while listening and speaking tasks are less consistently implemented. This imbalance contributes to uneven development of both language proficiency and competencies, particularly communication, creativity and imagination. The study concludes that although CBE-aligned formative assessment practices are present, their inconsistent application across language domains limits the achievement of balanced learner outcomes. It recommends strengthened oral language instruction, balanced formative assessment across all skills, increased use of open-ended tasks and enhanced teacher training on competency-based assessment strategies.*

Keywords: *English language proficiency; competency development; formative assessment practices; Competency-Based Education (CBE); Junior Secondary School Learners*

How to cite this work (APA):

Otieno, C., Amimo, C. & Ayiemba, J. G. (2026). Assessing what Matters: English Language Proficiency, Competency Development and Formative Assessment Practices among Junior Secondary School Learning in Ndhiwa Sub-County. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education* 10(2), 664 – 680. <https://doi.org/10.59765/rv36>

1. Introduction

Assessment is a fundamental component of the educational process, used to measure learners' understanding, skills and progress while informing instructional decisions at classroom and policy levels. Within English language education, assessments such as speaking tests, writing tasks, listening exercises and standardized examinations ensure that learners acquire the holistic skills necessary for advanced study and real-world communication (Malpartida, 2021; Islam et al., 2021; Bachman, 2022). Increasingly, educators and policymakers are questioning whether current systems truly assess what matters in language learning namely learners' ability to communicate effectively, think critically, collaborate with others and apply language meaningfully in authentic contexts. Traditional practices tend to emphasize reading and writing at the expense of listening and speaking, producing learners who may perform well in written tasks but struggle with oral communication an imbalance that hinders real-world proficiency (Aizawa et al., 2023, as cited in Saldo et al., 2025).

Across the United States, assessments for English language learners (ELL) often rely on standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT which predominantly emphasize reading and writing proficiency (Abedi 2004). Although these tests offer measurable outcomes, they have been criticized for insufficiently addressing listening and speaking skills which are essential for comprehensive language competence (Gottlieb 2016; Linquanti & Cook 2013). As debates intensify over assessing what matters in 21st century education, some schools have adopted formative assessments including class presentations, debates and project-based learning which offer a more holistic approach to measuring language proficiency (Gottlieb 2016; Andrade & Brookhart 2013).

Canada has adopted a more balanced approach by incorporating formative strategies such as peer and self-assessment alongside summative evaluations to provide continuous feedback on learners' competencies (Cummins, 2021). These global practices highlight the evolving role of assessment not only as a measurement tool but also as a mechanism for enhancing learners' communicative competence and overall academic development (DeLuca et al., 2021; Chan, 2021). Increasingly, educational systems are shifting attention from merely testing content recall toward assessing what matters: such as the practical application of language skills, creativity, collaboration and communicative competence needed in real-life situations.

Nigeria, where English serves as the official language of instruction, continues to rely heavily on assessments centered on reading and writing often evaluated through standardized tests such as the West African Senior School

Certificate Examination (WASSCE). However, stakeholders have raised concerns that these assessments fall short in adequately measuring listening and speaking skills which are essential for achieving full language proficiency (Akande 2023). Teachers have advocated for a shift toward more formative assessments such as oral presentations, group discussions and debates as these methods would foster a more comprehensive development of language skills. They believe that incorporating these interactive assessments would enhance learners' overall communication abilities by addressing gaps left by the current reliance on written evaluations (Okoro & Adeyemi 2022; Akande 2023). A similar pattern is evident in Uganda where English language assessments predominantly emphasize written examinations that primarily evaluate learners' reading and writing abilities. Although oral skills are critical for comprehensive language proficiency, they are rarely assessed in a formal manner (Mitana, Muwagga & Owino 2022).

Kenya's Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework has introduced a more balanced approach to English language assessment by incorporating continuous evaluations of writing, reading, speaking and listening skills. Through CBE, learners are assessed on their ability to apply language in real-world contexts using methods such as oral presentations, group work and written assignments (Versity 2023). Teachers have noted that this approach is more effective in developing comprehensive language competencies compared to traditional exam-based systems.

Regarding English language proficiency, what matters is not merely learners' ability to reproduce grammatical rules in written examinations, but their capacity to communicate meaningfully in authentic situations. Assessments that simulate real-world communication such as debates, listening exercises and interactive speaking tasks are therefore closely aligned with CBE's emphasis on practical lifelong learning skills (Carter 2022). These methods encourage active engagement, self-assessment and adaptability which are core objectives of CBE's competency-oriented framework (Miller & Thompson 2021). Consequently, the question confronting contemporary education is no longer whether learners can pass a national examination, but whether assessment practices truly capture what matters in real-life language use.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although assessment is a critical component in promoting English language proficiency, growing concerns persist regarding its effectiveness in capturing learners' abilities across all four essential skills reading, writing, listening and speaking. In practice, assessment approaches tend to emphasize reading and writing, often at the expense of

listening and speaking, which are equally vital for meaningful communication and real-life language use (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). This imbalance raises questions about whether current assessment practices genuinely support the development of holistic communicative competence among learners, as intended within competency-based education frameworks (Kubai, 2023). Consequently, learners may demonstrate satisfactory performance in written tasks while exhibiting limited proficiency in oral communication, indicating a disconnect between assessed outcomes and actual language use. This raises concerns about whether current assessment practices truly assess what matters in competency-based learning, particularly learners' communicative competence and ability to apply language meaningfully in authentic contexts.

While considerable attention has been given to areas such as curriculum implementation, teacher preparedness for competency-based reforms and performance in national examinations, there remains a notable gap in empirical research focusing on learners' actual proficiency across the four language domains (Wasanga, 2020). More specifically, limited studies have examined how well junior secondary school learners are developing balanced skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. This gap is particularly evident in Ndhiwa Sub-County, where no documented study has systematically assessed learners' multidimensional English language proficiency. As such, the extent to which learners have attained comprehensive language skills remains unclear, raising concerns about the alignment between assessment practices and the goals of competency-based education (Mogaka & Oduor, 2021).

1.2 Objective of the Study

This paper was set to address this objective:

To assess English language proficiency, competencies development and assessment practices that matter in competency-based learning among junior secondary school learners in Ndhiwa Sub-County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Skills in English Language

2.1.1 Listening Skills

Listening skills are essential in the acquisition and mastery of the English language, particularly within the framework of Competency-Based Education (CBE). These skills involve the ability to receive, interpret and respond appropriately to spoken language, thereby enhancing communication, comprehension and academic performance. Effective listening promotes critical

thinking, language proficiency and understanding of linguistic nuances such as accents, pronunciation and speech patterns (Benen, 2021; Бабенко, 2020). In English language learning, listening encompasses phonetic awareness, vocabulary recognition and syntactic understanding, all of which contribute to listening comprehension and communicative competence. As learners strengthen these abilities, they become more capable of following conversations, understanding lectures and interpreting instructions effectively (Wah, 2019; Moussa-Inaty et al., 2012; Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021).

The integration of technology has further enhanced the teaching and learning of listening skills in English language education. Digital tools such as podcasts, audiobooks and interactive listening activities expose learners to authentic language use and diverse accents, thereby improving listening competence and supporting the goals of CBE (Ahmadi, 2018; Republic of Kenya, 2017). In addition, assessment plays a significant role in monitoring learners' progress in listening skills development. Teachers use methods such as listening quizzes, oral presentations and peer assessments to evaluate listening comprehension and provide continuous feedback for improvement (Ammade, 2018). This continuous assessment approach not only strengthens learners' listening abilities but also encourages self-directed learning, resilience and the development of lifelong learning skills.

2.1.2 Speaking Skills

Speaking skills are an essential component of English language education, enabling learners to communicate effectively in academic and social settings. These skills help learners express thoughts, ideas and emotions clearly and confidently, thereby enhancing classroom participation and meaningful interaction with others (Leong et al., 2017). The development of speaking proficiency equips learners with practical communication abilities necessary for future academic and professional engagements, which aligns with the goals of Competency-Based Education (CBE) that emphasize real-life communication skills (Sayin, 2015). Effective speaking involves several elements, including pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary and grammar. Pronunciation ensures intelligibility, while fluency and accuracy contribute to coherent and grammatically correct communication. Expanding vocabulary further enables learners to express complex ideas and actively participate in discussions and collaborative learning activities (Syakur et al., 2020; Qasim, 2021).

Assessment of speaking skills is important in monitoring learners' progress and enhancing their communicative competence. Teachers use strategies such as oral presentations, debates and peer evaluations to assess learners' fluency, coherence, accuracy and ability to use language for different purposes, including narration, explanation and persuasion (Ounis, 2017). Within the CBE framework, both formative and summative assessments provide continuous feedback that helps teachers adjust instructional approaches to meet learners' needs (Almalki, 2019). Regular feedback also enables learners to identify areas requiring improvement while strengthening their confidence and motivation in speaking English, thereby promoting self-awareness and effective language development.

2.1.3 Reading Skills

Reading skills are fundamental in English language education as they enable learners to decode written texts, comprehend information and critically analyze content. These skills are essential for academic success because they allow learners to access knowledge across various subjects within the curriculum (Dash, 2013). Strong reading proficiency also contributes to the development of vocabulary, grammar and writing skills, thereby enhancing overall language competence. Within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework in Kenya, literacy development is highly emphasized to ensure that learners can read, understand and apply information from diverse texts relevant to their daily lives and future careers (Republic of Kenya, 2017). The development of reading skills involves key components such as phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary development and comprehension. Phonemic awareness enables learners to recognize and manipulate sounds in words, while fluency supports accurate and smooth reading. Vocabulary development enhances understanding of texts, and comprehension enables learners to interpret, analyze and make inferences from written material (Rustamova, 2023; Lipka & Siegel, 2012).

Assessment of reading skills is important in monitoring learners' progress and identifying areas that require improvement. Teachers use formative assessment methods such as comprehension quizzes, reading journals and peer assessments to evaluate learners' reading abilities and provide immediate feedback (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Summative assessments, including standardized tests and reading examinations, help determine learners' overall reading proficiency and their ability to apply reading skills in practical situations. In the CBE framework, assessment goes beyond testing by incorporating continuous feedback and learner reflection, which encourages active participation in the learning process (Republic of Kenya,

2017). This learner-centered approach ensures that reading instruction addresses learners' needs effectively, thereby fostering competent, confident and independent readers.

2.1.4 Writing Skills

Writing skills are fundamental in English language education as they enable learners to communicate ideas, thoughts and arguments in a clear and organized manner. Writing supports academic success by helping learners demonstrate understanding, reflect on learning experiences and develop critical thinking skills (Taye, 2024). Within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework in Kenya, writing is recognized as a core competency that promotes creativity, communication and collaboration through various written activities (Mwangi, 2012). The development of writing skills involves important components such as grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure and coherence. Grammar ensures accuracy and meaningful sentence construction, while vocabulary enhances the effective expression of ideas. Sentence structure contributes to clarity and flow, whereas coherence ensures logical organization of ideas, making written texts easy to understand (Maryam, 2018). The CBE framework encourages learners to apply these writing components in practical contexts such as essay writing, report preparation and creative storytelling.

Assessment of writing skills is essential for monitoring learners' progress and guiding improvement in written communication. Teachers use formative assessment methods such as writing journals, drafts and peer reviews to provide continuous feedback that helps learners refine their writing abilities over time (William, 2021). Summative assessments, including essays and examinations, evaluate learners' ability to apply writing skills effectively in formal contexts. In the CBE framework, continuous assessment is emphasized to support competency development rather than focusing solely on examination performance. This approach allows teachers to address learners' individual needs while encouraging creativity, self-expression and confidence in writing, ultimately fostering competent and effective communicators.

2.2 Current Levels of English Language Skills

English language proficiency is a cornerstone of academic success and effective communication; however, learners in Kenya—particularly in rural areas such as Ndhiwa Sub-County—continue to face significant challenges in mastering the four core language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Although the Competency-Based

Curriculum (CBC) emphasizes the development of these skills through formative and summative assessment practices, implementation gaps persist due to systemic and contextual constraints. International studies reveal similar challenges. For instance, OECD (2019) reports that a significant proportion of learners across OECD countries perform below baseline reading proficiency, while Brown (2017) found that UK secondary learners struggle with inferential comprehension despite adequate vocabulary knowledge. In China, Zhang, Li, and Liu (2020) observed that learners demonstrate competence in literal comprehension but experience difficulties with critical interpretation and deeper textual analysis. These findings suggest that reading challenges are not unique to developing contexts but are widespread across different education systems.

Similarly, writing proficiency remains a global concern. UNESCO (2018) reports low writing achievement in many developing countries due to limited instructional time and inadequate formative feedback. Studies in Mexico and South Korea further show that learners struggle with coherence, organization and expressive writing despite strengths in grammar and accuracy (Martínez, Rivera & Gómez, 2019; Lee, 2021). Listening and speaking skills also present difficulties across contexts. Alqahtani (2015) found that Saudi EFL learners lack effective listening strategies, while Ortega, García and Sánchez (2022) reported pronunciation and intonation challenges among Spanish learners. In Hungary, low self-efficacy negatively affects learners' willingness to communicate (Kormos & Dörnyei, 2014). In the African and East African context, similar patterns are evident. Agele (2019) found that learners in Homa Bay County have weak oral communication skills due to limited interactive teaching, while Ochieng, Achieng and Asena (2020) identified large class sizes, inadequate resources and teacher-related factors as barriers to effective reading and writing instruction. In Tanzania, Mligo and Mwashilindi (2017) also noted exam-oriented curricula as a constraint to developing communicative competence. In Kenya, despite CBC reforms aimed at promoting formative assessment practices such as group discussions and peer reviews, implementation remains inconsistent due to limited teacher preparedness and resource constraints (Versity, 2023; Mohr & Barasa, 2024). Consequently, learners in Ndhiwa continue to demonstrate weak reading comprehension and writing coherence, highlighting the need for strengthened instructional support and targeted interventions.

2.3 English Language Competencies

2.3.1 Communication

Communication is a core competency in English language learning under Kenya's Competency-Based Education

(CBE) framework, involving the ability to express ideas clearly, interact effectively and use language appropriately across contexts (Republic of Kenya, 2017; KICD, 2019). In English classrooms, learners develop this competency through discussions, presentations and collaborative tasks that enhance both oral and written skills.

Effective communication is reinforced through formative interaction between teachers and learners, where feedback and dialogue support continuous improvement (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). Classroom interaction and peer engagement further enhance fluency and confidence in language use (Carless, 2015). Communication also supports collaboration and critical thinking as learners articulate ideas, respond to others and construct arguments logically (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2019; Brookhart, 2017).

2.3.2 Collaboration

Collaboration is a key CBE competency that emphasizes teamwork, shared problem-solving, and peer learning. In English language learning, it is developed through group discussions, peer assessment and joint writing tasks that enhance both language use and interpersonal skills (Republic of Kenya, 2017; KICD, 2019).

Collaborative activities strengthen communication as learners negotiate meaning, exchange ideas and evaluate peer contributions (William & Thompson, 2019). Such interaction mirrors real-world contexts where teamwork and cooperation are essential for success (Sung et al., 2020). Collaboration also promotes deeper learning by exposing learners to diverse perspectives and encouraging critical engagement with ideas (Hattie & Clarke, 2019).

2.3.3 Imagination

Imagination is an essential competency that supports creativity and expressive language use in English learning. It is promoted in CBE through storytelling, creative writing, and role-play activities that encourage learners to generate and explore new ideas (Republic of Kenya, 2017; KICD, 2019).

Imaginative tasks enhance both creative and analytical thinking, as learners construct coherent narratives while applying language structures (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2019). Such activities increase learner engagement and motivation by making learning more interactive and meaningful (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). Imagination also supports empathy and perspective-taking through creative expression (Carless, 2015).

2.3.4 Creativity

Creativity is a core competency in English language education that involves originality, flexible thinking and expressive language use. It is developed through activities

such as creative writing, poetry, drama and storytelling (Republic of Kenya, 2017; KICD, 2019).

Creative tasks enhance critical thinking as learners generate and organize original ideas coherently (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2019). They also promote engagement and ownership of learning, increasing motivation and participation (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). Additionally, creativity supports problem-solving and innovation by encouraging learners to explore multiple perspectives and solutions (Sung et al., 2020).

2.4 Competency Acquisition in Schools

Research indicates that CBE competencies communication, collaboration, imagination and creativity are best developed through interactive, learner-centred and formative approaches. Collaborative learning and peer interaction enhance communication and teamwork skills (Johnson et al., 2014; OECD, 2017), while open-ended and performance-based tasks strengthen imagination and creativity (Robinson, 2011; Runco & Acar, 2012).

Formative assessment practices such as peer feedback, self-assessment, and presentations further support competency development (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam & Thompson, 2019). However, studies show that in many Kenyan contexts, implementation remains uneven due to large class sizes, limited resources and exam-oriented instruction, which constrain full development of these competencies (Cheptabok & Okari, 2024; Mokaya & Njoroge, 2022).

2.5 Assessment Methods in English Language: Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a continuous process that supports teaching and learning by providing timely feedback on learners' progress, particularly in English language education. Through quizzes, oral tasks, peer assessment and class discussions, it engages learners in reflecting on strengths and areas for improvement while enabling teachers to adjust instruction to meet diverse learning needs (Islam et al., 2021). Black and Wiliam (2018) emphasize that formative assessment is primarily aimed at supporting learning rather than ranking learners, while Wiliam and Thompson (2019) highlight its role in identifying learning gaps and promoting continuous improvement.

In English language classrooms, formative assessment takes varied forms, including written assignments, oral presentations and group tasks that allow learners to demonstrate language skills in authentic contexts. These approaches promote learner self-regulation by encouraging goal setting and reflection based on feedback (Nicol et al., 2020). Peer assessment further strengthens collaboration and communication skills, making learners active

participants in the learning process (Hattie, 2017). Such practices also enable differentiated instruction, ensuring that learners' individual needs are addressed (Sadler, 2017).

Formative assessment also enhances learner motivation and confidence by shifting focus from grading to learning progress. This reduces anxiety and encourages participation, particularly in language learning contexts where learners may fear making mistakes (Wiliam, 2018; Hattie, 2019). Continuous feedback supports the development of language fluency and improves instructional alignment with learner needs (Brookhart, 2017).

Additionally, formative assessment promotes higher-order thinking by requiring learners to analyze, apply and communicate knowledge rather than simply recall information. Tasks such as essays and presentations foster critical thinking and deeper language engagement (Carless, 2015; Heritage, 2018). Reflection is also a key component, as learners evaluate their own progress and take responsibility for improvement in reading, writing and speaking skills (Gibbs et al., 2018; Wiliam et al., 2019).

Formative assessment contributes to teacher professional growth by providing feedback on instructional effectiveness. It enables educators to refine teaching strategies such as communicative and task-based approaches based on learner responses, thereby improving classroom practice and learning outcomes (Black, 2018; Sadler, 2017).

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design to assess English language proficiency, competencies developed and assessment practices that matter among junior secondary school learners in Ndhiwa Sub-County in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to describe existing conditions as they naturally occur in schools without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study was conducted in Ndhiwa Sub-County, which has 135 public junior secondary schools with approximately 6,693 Grade 8 learners. A sample of 14 schools was selected using stratified sampling, where the sub-county was divided into seven educational zones (wards) and two schools were randomly selected from each stratum. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants, including 1 Sub-County Director of Education, 14 headteachers and 14 English language teachers due to their direct involvement in assessment and instructional processes. In addition, all Grade 8 learners in the selected schools were included through a census approach, resulting

in 408 learners, giving a total sample size of 437 respondents.

Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules, documentary analysis and observation checklists to obtain a comprehensive description of learners' English language proficiency. Questionnaires were administered to the 404 Grade 8 learners and 13 English language teachers to gather data on reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills using a four-point Likert scale. Interview schedules were conducted with the 14 headteachers, 13 teachers of English and the Sub-County Director of Education to provide contextual insights into assessment practices. Documentary analysis involved reviewing learners' exercise books, assessment records, and examination reports, while observation checklists were used to capture real-time classroom assessment practices. Validity of the instruments was ensured through expert review and alignment with research objectives, while reliability was confirmed through a pilot study conducted in Kisumu County, which yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.750, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Data was analyzed using

descriptive statistics such as means, and standard deviations to determine the levels of proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking among learners, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically to support and enrich quantitative findings. Ethical considerations were strictly observed through informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and secure data handling throughout the study.

4. Results and Discussion

Level of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking Skills Among JSS Learners in the English language

Interpretation Scale

The researcher adopted a five -point scale for interpreting the data as follows:

1.00-1.49 = Very Low

1.50-2.49 =Low

2.50-3.49 =Medium

3.50-4.49 = High

4.50-5.00 = Very high

Level of Listening and Speaking Skills

Table 1: Level of Listening and Speaking Skills

Descriptive Statistics			
Level of Listening and Speaking Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learners' ability to understand spoken English in various contexts (e.g.,classroom instructions, conversations)	14	3.29	.726
Learners' ability to express themselves clearly in spoken English (e.g., during discussions, presentations)	14	2.64	.929
Learners' ability to engage in conversations with peers and teachers	14	3.00	.679
Learners' ability to listen for specific information in spoken texts (e.g.lectures, audio recordings)	14	3.21	.975
Average	14	3.035	0.827

The quantitative findings in Table 1 show that JSS learners in Ndhwa Sub-County demonstrate a moderate level of listening and speaking proficiency (M = 3.035, SD = 0.827). In this context, "medium" reflects a developing but inconsistent level of oral competence, where learners perform better in receptive than productive oral skills. Item-level analysis reveals that learners performed highest in understanding spoken English in familiar classroom

contexts (M = 3.29, SD = 0.726), indicating that they can generally follow instructions and comprehend routine classroom discourse. This was closely followed by listening for specific information (M = 3.21, SD = 0.975), although the high variability suggests uneven performance across classrooms, likely influenced by differences in instructional approaches, exposure levels, and learning environments.

These quantitative results are strongly supported by qualitative data. Teachers consistently observed that learners understand spoken English better than they can produce it. For example, T3 noted that learners “can understand passages and instructions but struggle to explain their understanding orally,” while T6 emphasized that listening comprehension is relatively stronger because learners are frequently exposed to English in classroom settings. However, T2 highlighted a persistent challenge in oral production, observing that learners “prefer responding in Kiswahili rather than English,” indicating limited confidence in spoken English.

In terms of speaking ability, learners recorded a mean of 3.00 (SD = 0.679) for basic conversational participation, indicating limited but functional engagement in dialogue with peers and teachers. However, performance declined significantly in expressing ideas clearly during discussions and presentations (M = 2.64, SD = 0.929), revealing difficulty in structured oral communication and extended speech production. This was echoed by teachers, particularly T1, who remarked that “*only a few learners can speak English fluently; the majority speak at a very basic level.*” Similarly, T5 observed that learners often avoid speaking activities due to lack of confidence, further reinforcing the low performance in expressive oral tasks.

Headteachers provided additional triangulation of these findings. H1 stated that learners are “approaching expectations in writing and listening, though they need more practice,” while H7 emphasized that speaking remains the weakest skill across schools, noting that learners struggle with sustained oral communication. The Sub-County Director further confirmed this imbalance, observing that learners generally “follow instructions well” in English (SCD) but face significant challenges in maintaining conversations, with speaking identified as the most underdeveloped skill (SCD). This confirms the quantitative pattern of stronger listening than speaking competence.

The disparity between listening and speaking abilities suggests that learners are developing receptive competence faster than productive competence. The relatively higher mean for listening tasks (M = 3.29) compared to speaking tasks (M = 2.64) reflects this imbalance. This was also noted by T7, who observed that learners can comprehend

spoken input but struggle when required to respond verbally, indicating a gap between understanding and expression.

These findings are consistent with existing literature. Agele (2019) and Mwashilindi (2017) argue that many East African classrooms emphasize teacher-centered instruction and written assessments, which limit opportunities for meaningful oral interaction. This instructional imbalance explains the underdevelopment of speaking skills observed in this study. Similarly, Assessment for Learning Theory emphasizes that continuous feedback, supportive classroom interactions and learner-centered assessment practices are essential in improving learners’ confidence and oral language development. This aligns with the observed low performance in expressive speaking (M = 2.64), suggesting that limited opportunities for formative oral assessment and feedback may hinder learners’ fluency and confidence in communication.

Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020) further note that learners in multilingual contexts often experience insecurity when using English, especially in environments where local languages dominate outside the classroom. This is supported by H2, who observed that learners frequently mix languages during communication, and SCD, who emphasized that the dominance of vernacular languages negatively affects English fluency and oral expression.

The relatively high standard deviation in listening for specific information (SD = 0.975) suggests unequal exposure to effective listening instruction across schools, which may be influenced by differences in teacher competence, availability of learning resources, or classroom practices. This aligns with T4’s observation that oral activities are not consistently implemented across classrooms, resulting in uneven learner outcomes.

Level of Reading Skills
Table 2: Level of Reading Skills

Descriptive Statistics			
Level of Reading Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learners' ability to comprehend written texts (e.g., stories, articles, instructions)	14	3.21	.802
Learners' ability to analyze and interpret the main ideas and themes in texts	14	2.57	.756
Learners' ability to use reading strategies (e.g., skimming, scanning) effectively	14	2.64	.745
Learners' ability to read and understand a variety of genres (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, poetry)	14	2.86	1.027
Learners' ability to write coherent and structured essays	14	2.50	.855
Average	14	2.82	0.833

The quantitative findings in Table 2 indicate that JSS learners in Ndhiwa Sub-County demonstrate a moderate level of reading proficiency ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.833$). This suggests that while learners possess foundational reading abilities, their competence remains uneven, particularly in higher-order reading skills. The strongest performance was recorded in basic text comprehension ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.802$), indicating that most learners can identify and understand literal information from texts. However, performance declined in more complex skills such as analysis of main ideas ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.756$) and use of reading strategies like skimming and scanning ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.745$), reflecting difficulties in deeper comprehension and efficient reading processes. Additionally, understanding different genres recorded a mean of 2.86 with the highest variability ($SD = 1.027$), suggesting unequal exposure to varied text types across schools. The lowest-rated aspect was coherent essay writing based on reading comprehension ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.855$), indicating challenges in transferring reading understanding into structured written expression.

These quantitative findings are strongly supported by qualitative data from teachers. T1 noted that learners “can

understand passages, but struggle to explain their understanding clearly,” while T2 observed that “reading is better than speaking, but deeper understanding is limited.” Similarly, T5 emphasized that learners perform well in decoding texts but struggle when required to infer meaning or interpret implicit ideas, reinforcing the moderate scores for analysis and genre understanding.

Headteachers provided further confirmation of these patterns. H3 stated that “*Reading is fairly strong; most learners can read and answer questions correctly,*” while H6 added that learners are generally able to decode and respond to comprehension questions but struggle with higher-order interpretation. The Sub-County Director also strongly supported this trend, noting that “*Reading is good; they can decode words and understand texts*” (SCD), but emphasizing that comprehension depth and application remain limited.

The relatively high mean for basic comprehension ($M = 3.21$) combined with lower scores in analytical skills reflects a clear distinction between surface-level reading and critical reading abilities. This is consistent with the observation by T7, who noted that learners can read texts

but struggle to engage critically with them. The high standard deviation in genre understanding ($SD = 1.027$) further indicates unequal exposure to reading materials, a concern echoed by both teachers and administrators.

These findings align with established literature. Dash (2013) emphasizes that reading is foundational to vocabulary development, grammar acquisition and overall academic achievement, yet learners in resource-constrained environments often lack exposure to diverse texts. This is reflected in the current findings, particularly in genre comprehension challenges. Ochieng, Achieng, and Asena (2020) similarly found that inadequate access to reading materials and limited teacher support significantly hinder comprehension development in Kenyan contexts, particularly in rural settings.

The relatively low performance in reading strategies ($M = 2.64$) such as skimming and scanning reflects limited

mastery of essential academic literacy skills. Ahmadi (2018) argues that such strategies are central to efficient reading and digital literacy, yet their underdevelopment suggests instructional gaps in strategy-based reading instruction. This is supported by T4, who noted that learners rely heavily on literal reading and rarely apply strategic approaches when engaging with texts.

Further, Lipka and Siegel (2012) and Rustamova (2023) emphasize the interdependence of reading fluency, vocabulary growth and comprehension development. The current findings reflect this interconnection, as weaknesses in analytical reading correspond with limited expressive writing ability, particularly in coherent essay writing ($M = 2.50$). Mohr and Barasa (2024) similarly observed that many Kenyan learners struggle with reading coherence due to limited practice and insufficient formative feedback, a situation that appears consistent with the Ndhiwa context.

Writing Skills
Table 3: Writing Skills

Descriptive Statistics			
Level of Writing Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learners' ability to use appropriate grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary in their writing	14	2.79	.893
Learners' ability to express their ideas and opinions clearly in written form	14	2.71	.825
Learners' ability to revise and edit their written work effectively	14	2.43	.646
My learners express their thoughts clearly in spoken English	14	2.64	.497
Average	14	2.643	0.715

The quantitative findings in Table 3 reveal that Junior Secondary School (JSS) learners in Ndhiwa Sub-County demonstrate a moderate level of writing proficiency ($M = 2.643$, $SD = 0.715$), indicating that learners are developing foundational writing skills but have not yet achieved high-level competence. Specifically, learners performed relatively better in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary use, and idea expression ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.893$; $M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.825$ respectively), while their performance in revision and editing written work was lower ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.646$), suggesting a clear weakness in higher-order writing processes.

This statistical pattern is strongly corroborated by qualitative evidence from teachers. For instance, T4 observed that "*Writing is fair, but the biggest challenge is grammar and organization of ideas,*" while T7 noted that although learners perform relatively better in reading, "*writing is weaker in terms of organization and fluency of ideas.*" Similarly, T1 emphasized that learners struggle to move beyond basic sentence construction into coherent paragraph development, indicating limitations in writing depth and structure.

Headteachers reinforced these findings, confirming that learners are only approaching expected standards in

writing. H1 stated that “Learners are approaching expectations in writing and listening, though they need more practice,” while H4 added that “In writing, they meet expectations, but not excellently. There are still errors in grammar.” These views align closely with the moderate mean score reported in the quantitative data, confirming that writing competence is developing but still constrained.

The Sub-County Director further validated these findings, noting that “Writing is fair, but accuracy and fluency are still lacking” (SCD). This reinforces the quantitative evidence that learners struggle particularly with writing accuracy and refinement, especially in revision and editing stages.

The identified weakness in revision and editing skills (M = 2.43, SD = 0.646) is particularly significant, as it reflects limited engagement with process-oriented writing instruction. Teachers indirectly attributed this to insufficient emphasis on drafting and redrafting practices. As T4 highlighted, learners often produce written work that lacks proper organization and grammatical refinement, indicating minimal iterative improvement of texts.

The moderate standard deviation values (0.497–0.893) further suggest general agreement among respondents that writing challenges are widespread rather than isolated. The relatively low variability in revision and editing (SD = 0.646) indicates a particularly strong consensus that this is a persistent systemic weakness across schools.

These findings are consistent with existing scholarly literature. Taye (2024) and Mwangi (2012) argue that writing in Competency-Based Education (CBE) should extend beyond mechanical accuracy to include creativity, coherence, and critical expression. However, the current

findings suggest that learners are still largely operating at a basic structural level of writing. Similarly, Martinez, Rivera, and Gómez (2019) found that learners often struggle with coherence and organization, a challenge clearly reflected in the Ndhiwa context.

Lee (2021) further observes that writing development is often constrained by insufficient sustained practice and limited individualized feedback, which aligns with teachers’ reports of restricted opportunities for revision and editing. Mohr and Barasa (2024) also highlight that many classrooms continue to prioritize grammar drills and exam-based writing at the expense of process writing approaches such as drafting and revision, which directly mirrors the weaknesses identified in this study.

Furthermore, William (2021) emphasizes that formative strategies such as peer review, multiple drafting, and continuous feedback are essential for developing writing competence. However, as noted by Mokaya and Njoroge (2022), large class sizes and time limitations often hinder the effective implementation of such strategies in Kenyan classrooms, which may explain the limited development of revision and editing skills observed in this study.

Level of Competency Development in English Language Among JSS Learners

Interpretation Scale

The researcher adopted a four-point scale for interpreting the data as follows:

- 1.00-1.49 = Strongly disagree (Not at all Competent)
- 1.50-2.49 =Disagree (Slightly Competent)
- 2.50-3.49 =Agree (Moderately Competent)
- 3.50-4.00 = Strongly agree (Extremely Competent)

Competency in Communication
Table 4: Competency in Communication

Descriptive Statistics			
Competency in Communication	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My learners express their thoughts clearly in spoken English	14	2.64	.497
Learners use correct grammar and vocabulary in written communication.	14	2.43	.756
Learners ask and answer questions confidently during English lessons	14	2.79	.699
Learners use English appropriately in different situations (formal/informal).	14	2.43	.756
Average	14	2.573	0.677

The findings in Table 4 indicate that JSS learners demonstrate moderate competency in communication in English, with an overall mean of 2.573 (SD = 0.677). The highest-rated aspect was learners’ ability to ask and answer

questions confidently during English lessons (M = 2.79), followed by expressing ideas clearly in spoken English (M = 2.64). This suggests that learners perform better in oral

communication within structured classroom interactions where language use is guided and supported.

However, lower ratings were recorded in written communication (M = 2.43) and appropriate use of English in different social contexts (M = 2.43), indicating challenges in applying grammar, vocabulary, and sociolinguistic appropriateness beyond classroom tasks. This reflects a gap between controlled classroom performance and functional language use in real-life contexts, a concern also noted in competency-oriented language learning frameworks (Carless, 2015; Hattie & Clarke, 2019).

Qualitative findings reinforce this pattern. Teachers reported that “most learners prefer Kiswahili during oral

exchanges,” while describing English communication as “poor to average, though a few are approaching expectations.” Similarly, the Sub-County Director observed that learners “try, but exposure is still limited,” highlighting insufficient opportunities for meaningful English use outside class interaction.

The findings suggest that while learners exhibit emerging communicative competence, their proficiency remains largely classroom-bound and uneven across skills. This aligns with the Competency-Based Education (CBE) emphasis on functional communication, which requires sustained exposure to authentic language use and meaningful interaction (Republic of Kenya, 2017).

Competency in Collaboration
Table 5: Competency in Collaboration

Descriptive Statistics			
Competency on Collaboration	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learners work well with others during English group tasks.	14	3.50	.519
Learners share ideas and respect others’ opinions during discussions.	14	3.29	.469
Learners help each other solve problems during group activities.	14	3.36	.497
Learners are able to complete joint tasks effectively in English.	14	3.00	.555
Average	14	3.288	0.51

The findings in Table 5 indicate that JSS learners demonstrate relatively high competency in collaboration in English language learning, with an overall mean of 3.288 (SD = 0.510). The highest-rated aspect was learners’ ability to work well with others during group tasks (M = 3.50), followed by helping peers solve problems (M = 3.36) and respecting others’ opinions during discussions (M = 3.29). This suggests that learners are actively engaged in cooperative learning activities and are able to participate effectively in group-based classroom tasks. However, the comparatively lower score for completing joint tasks effectively in English (M = 3.00) suggests that while collaboration is strong, language limitations may still affect the depth of interaction and task completion in English-mediated group work.

Qualitative findings strongly support these results. Teachers noted that “collaboration is one of their strongest

competencies,” with learners “easily sharing ideas and helping one another in group work.” Headteachers similarly observed that group discussions “usually run smoothly,” while the Sub-County Director emphasized that learners “work well together and engage in task-based projects effectively.”

These findings align with Vygotsky’s Social Constructivism Theory, which emphasizes learning through interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development. They also reflect evidence that structured group work enhances language development and problem-solving when properly scaffolded (Hattie & Clarke, 2019; Brookhart, 2017). However, challenges such as large class sizes and limited instructional support may still constrain deeper collaborative performance in English (Cheptabok & Okari, 2024).

Competency in Imagination
Table 6: Competency in Imagination

Descriptive Statistics			
Competency on Imagination	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learners use creative ideas when writing compositions or stories.	14	2.57	.646
Learners show imagination during role plays or storytelling	14	2.50	.519
Learners invent characters or plots during English creative tasks.	14	2.64	.633
Learners add unique details or expressions when speaking or writing.	14	2.50	.519
Average	14	2.523	0.579

The findings in Table 6 indicate that JSS learners demonstrate moderate competency in imagination in English language learning, with an overall mean of 2.523 (SD = 0.579). Learners performed slightly better in inventing characters or plots during creative tasks (M = 2.64) and using creative ideas in writing (M = 2.57). However, lower ratings were recorded in role play or storytelling (M = 2.50) and adding unique expressive details in speaking or writing (M = 2.50). This suggests that imagination is more evident in structured written tasks than in spontaneous oral creative expression.

Qualitative findings support this pattern. Teachers reported that learners “can come up with good stories and dramatize when guided, but without support, they hesitate,” while headteachers observed that imagination “comes out clearly in drama and storytelling.” The Sub-County Director

further noted that learners may even “exceed expectations in drama and performances when well supported,” indicating that imagination is highly dependent on instructional scaffolding.

These findings suggest that learners possess emerging imaginative capacity, but its expression is largely teacher-dependent and constrained by limited opportunities for open-ended learning. This aligns with research emphasizing that creativity and imagination develop more effectively through structured formative and exploratory tasks rather than rote instruction (Carless, 2015; Brookhart, 2017). Similarly, Hattie and Clarke (2019) note that imagination is a key 21st-century competency that requires consistent practice through interactive and learner-centered approaches.

Competency in Creativity
Table 7: Competency in Creativity

Descriptive Statistics			
Competency in Creativity	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Learners show originality when doing English assignments	13	2.54	.519
Learners present different solutions or ideas in English tasks.	13	2.77	.725
Learners use English to create poems, songs, or artwork.	14	2.57	.646
Learners show initiative when exploring English topics beyond the syllabus	14	2.43	.756
Average	14	2.578	0.662

The findings in Table 7 indicate that JSS learners exhibit moderate competency in creativity in English language learning, with an overall mean of 2.578 (SD = 0.662).

Learners performed best in presenting different solutions or ideas in English tasks (M = 2.77), followed by using English in poems, songs, or artwork (M = 2.57) and

demonstrating originality in assignments (M = 2.54). However, the lowest-rated aspect was learners' initiative to explore English topics beyond the syllabus (M = 2.43), indicating limited self-directed learning and low engagement in independent creative exploration.

Qualitative findings reinforce these results. Teachers observed that "creativity shows during poetry recitation and role play where some learners shine," although this depends heavily on teacher support. Headteachers noted that creativity is "more visible in co-curricular activities aligned with CBE goals," while the Sub-County Director highlighted that learners demonstrate originality in debates, storytelling and performances when well supported. This suggests that creativity is present but unevenly developed and strongly influenced by instructional conditions.

These findings reflect the view that creativity is best developed through open-ended tasks, learner autonomy, and supportive classroom environments rather than exam-oriented instruction (Brookhart, 2017; Anderson &

Krathwohl, 2019). Carless (2015) further emphasizes that without adequate scaffolding and formative opportunities, learners are less likely to engage in creative risk-taking or extend learning beyond the syllabus. The results indicate that while learners demonstrate emerging creativity in English language tasks, its development remains constrained by limited exploratory learning opportunities and dependence on teacher-guided activities, consistent with the implementation challenges of competency-based education in resource-constrained contexts.

Commonly Used Assessment Practices in English Language among JSS Learners

Interpretation Scale

The researcher adopted a four-point scale for interpreting the data as follows:

1.00-1.49 = Strongly disagree

1.50-2.49 = Disagree

2.50-3.49 = Agree

3.50-4.00 = Strongly agree

Formative Assessment Practices (Teachers and Learners)

Table 8: Formative Assessment Practices (Teachers and Learners)

Assessment Practice Item	Teachers Mean (SD)	Learners Mean (SD)
Quizzes/activities assessing reading comprehension	3.29 (.914)	3.22 (.886)
In-class writing exercises / grammar & writing tests	3.36 (.633)	3.44 (.785)
Listening activities included in quizzes/classwork	3.43 (.646)	3.10 (.922)
Quizzes assessing grammar and vocabulary knowledge	3.29 (.825)	3.38 (.816)
Short oral tasks / spoken activities to assess speaking	3.50 (.650)	3.16 (.847)
Average Mean	3.374 (.734)	3.260 (.851)

The combined table indicates that formative assessment practices are moderately and relatively consistently implemented in English language classrooms, as reflected in both teacher (M = 3.374, SD = 0.734) and learner (M = 3.260, SD = 0.851) responses. Teachers reported slightly higher engagement with formative assessment than learners, suggesting a small but notable perception gap between instructional intention and actual learner experience. This observation is consistent with Brookhart (2017), who notes that differences between teacher-reported assessment practices and learner perceptions often emerge when formative strategies are inconsistently enacted or when feedback is not fully experienced by learners in meaningful ways. Similarly, Hattie and Clarke (2019) emphasize that the effectiveness of formative

assessment depends on the consistency of feedback cycles and learners' active engagement across all skill domains, not merely the presence of assessment activities. Among specific practices, oral tasks for speaking received the highest teacher rating (M = 3.50), while learners reported lower exposure (M = 3.16), indicating a possible gap in the implementation of communicative assessment. Listening activities also showed a similar discrepancy, with teachers rating them higher (M = 3.43) than learners (M = 3.10), suggesting uneven frequency and exposure to these skills in classroom practice.

In terms of skill focus, both teachers and learners reported relatively stronger emphasis on grammar, vocabulary,

reading comprehension, and writing tasks, with mean scores generally above 3.20, indicating that accuracy-based language skills dominate formative assessment practices. This pattern aligns with UNESCO (2018), which reports that many educational systems tend to prioritize structured and easily testable language components such as grammar and vocabulary due to examination-oriented pressures and limited instructional resources. However, speaking and listening skills exhibit greater variability between teacher and learner responses, pointing to inconsistent classroom implementation and limited opportunities for sustained oral interaction. This finding is supported by Alqahtani (2015) and Kormos and Dörnyei (2014), who argue that insufficient exposure to authentic communicative tasks often leads to weaker learner confidence and underdeveloped oral proficiency. Consequently, while formative assessment is actively present in English language classrooms, its emphasis on accuracy over communicative performance suggests that learners may develop stronger receptive and written skills compared to productive oral skills. This imbalance, as also noted by Lee (2021) and Martínez, Rivera and Gómez (2019), highlights that form-focused instruction enhances grammatical competence but may restrict the development of expressive and communicative abilities, thereby indicating that formative assessment practices are not yet fully optimized for balanced English language proficiency development.

Formative Assessment Methods that Matter in Developing English Language Skills

The descriptive findings suggest that formative assessment methods that are continuous, skill-focused, and interactive are important in developing both English language skills and Competency-Based Education (CBE) competencies among Junior Secondary School learners. Teachers frequently used short oral tasks to assess speaking skills ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .650$), listening activities in quizzes ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .646$), in-class writing exercises ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .633$), and quizzes targeting reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .914$; $M = 3.29$, $SD = .825$). Learners similarly reported regular exposure to grammar and writing exercises ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .785$), vocabulary quizzes ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .816$), reading comprehension assessments ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .886$), spoken activities ($M = 3.16$, $SD = .847$), and listening tasks ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .922$). These assessment practices appear to support stronger development of receptive language skills, particularly listening ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .834$) and reading ($M = 2.99$, $SD = .857$), while speaking ($M = 2.41$, $SD = .877$) and writing ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .910$) remained comparatively weaker.

These findings align with Brookhart (2017) and Hattie & Clarke (2019), who argue that effective formative

assessment must be consistent and balanced across skill areas to support holistic learning outcomes. Similarly, Carless (2015) notes that in many resource-constrained contexts, formative assessment tends to favor easily testable skills, leading to uneven competency development. The results also reflect the Kenyan Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework, which emphasizes balanced and continuous assessment of all language skills, though implementation challenges remain (Republic of Kenya, 2017).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Junior Secondary School learners in Ndhiwa Sub-County demonstrate uneven development across English language skills, with relatively better performance in receptive and structured language tasks, but weaker outcomes in expressive and higher-order skills. In particular, communication emerges as the least developed competency, while collaboration is comparatively stronger. Creativity and imagination are present at moderate levels but remain constrained by limited opportunities for open-ended language use and exploratory learning.

The findings further indicate that formative assessment practices are unevenly applied across language skills, with greater emphasis on grammar and vocabulary compared to listening, speaking and other interactive tasks. This imbalance appears to influence both English language proficiency and the development of key competencies under the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBE), particularly communication, creativity and imagination.

5.2 Recommendations

From the findings, the following recommendations order:

1. Teachers should adopt more balanced formative assessment strategies that equally emphasize listening, speaking, reading and writing through interactive activities such as debates, role plays, and presentations.
2. Instructional practices should incorporate more open-ended and learner-centred tasks to strengthen communication, creativity and imagination.
3. Curriculum support materials should be diversified to promote higher-order thinking and authentic language use beyond grammar-focused exercises.
4. Teacher professional development should prioritize assessment literacy under CBE, with emphasis on designing tasks that foster both

language proficiency and competency development in authentic classroom contexts.

References

- Abedi, J. (2004). The No Child Left Behind Act and English language learners: Assessment and accountability issues. *Educational Researcher*, 33(1), 4–14.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Walker, D. A. (2006). *Introduction to research in education* (7th ed.). Thomson Wadsworth.
- Aizawa, K., Rose, H., Thompson, G., & Saito, H. (2023). (As cited in Saldo et al., 2025).
- Akande, A. T. (2023). English language assessment practices in Nigerian secondary schools. *Journal of Language and Education Studies*, 15(2), 45–59.
- Bachman, L. F. (2022). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (3rd ed.). Pearson.
- Brown, J. D. (2018). Formative assessment in language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 52(3), 612–620.
- Chan, S. (2021). Enhancing language proficiency through assessment feedback. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(2), 101–115.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Cummins, J. (2021). *Bilingual education and language assessment*. Multilingual Matters.
- De Klerk, V. (2020). Oral communication development in second language learning. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(3), 1–10.
- DeLuca, C., LaPointe-McEwan, D., & Luhanga, U. (2021). Teacher assessment literacy: A review. *Educational Assessment Journal*, 26(4), 245–260.
- East, M. (2022). Assessment alignment in competency-based education. *Assessment in Education*, 29(1), 15–32.
- Elliott, V., & Philp, J. (2021). Speaking skills and assessment reform in UK schools. *Language Testing in Education*, 38(2), 89–104.
- Gottlieb, M. (2016). *Assessing English language learners: Bridges from language proficiency to academic achievement*. Corwin Press.
- Gultom, E., & Oktaviani, L. (2022). The role of assessment in learning improvement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 14(1), 55–66.
- Islam, M. R., Karim, A., & Rahman, M. (2021). Language assessment in ESL contexts. *International Journal of Language Education*, 5(2), 78–90.
- Karim, A., & Hamid, M. O. (2022). Competency-based assessment in education reform. *Curriculum Journal*, 33(3), 412–428.
- Kelly, M. (2019). Standardized testing and language proficiency in the UK. *Assessment Matters*, 12(2), 34–50.
- Kennedy, M., & Stewart, R. (2012). Survey research methods in education. *Educational Research Review*, 7(2), 120–134.
- Khatoony, S., & Nezhadmehr, M. (2020). Challenges in language assessment in multilingual classrooms. *TESL-EJ*, 24(1), 1–15.
- Kisakye, M., & Ssenkusu, P. (2021). Oral assessment practices in Ugandan schools. *African Journal of Education*, 9(2), 77–89.
- KNEC. (2022). *National examination performance report*. Kenya National Examinations Council.
- Kubai, P. (2023). Learners' perceptions of English assessment in Kenyan schools. *East African Journal of Education*, 11(1), 23–38.
- Looney, A., & Klenowski, V. (2020). Formative assessment practices in language learning. *Assessment in Education*, 27(3), 245–260.
- Malpartida, R. (2021). Integrated language skills assessment. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(4), 501–518.
- Mhlongo, T., & Zulu, N. (2022). English language teaching challenges in South Africa. *Journal of African Education*, 18(2), 66–80.

- Miller, J., & Thompson, S. (2021). Competency-based learning frameworks. *Educational Development Review*, 10(1), 12–29.
- Mligo, M., & Mwashilindi, P. (2017). English language instruction in Tanzania. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(14), 112–120.
- Mokaya, J., & Njoroge, R. (2022). Implementation challenges of competency-based curriculum in Kenya. *Kenya Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 6(2), 90–104.
- Morrison, G. R., Ross, S. M., Kalman, H. K., & Kemp, J. E. (2011). *Designing effective instruction* (6th ed.). Wiley.
- Mugenda, O. M., & Mugenda, A. G. (2013). *Research methods: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. ACTS Press.
- Ndou, N. (2021). Language assessment reforms in South Africa. *Southern African Linguistics Journal*, 15(3), 44–58.
- Ngowi, A. (2018). Oral language development in Tanzanian classrooms. *Tanzania Educational Review*, 5(1), 33–47.
- Njoroge, P. (2019). Literacy acquisition in Kenyan primary schools. *International Journal of Education Development*, 28(2), 150–162.
- Open Textbooks for BC. (2021). *Research methods in education*. BCcampus.
- Raufelder, D., Lazarides, R., & Klingebiel, K. (2023). Competency-based learning approaches. *Learning and Instruction*, 82, 101–115.
- Saldo, R., Aizawa, K., & Thompson, G. (2025). Language assessment challenges in ESL contexts. *Journal of Applied Linguistics Review*, 12(1), 1–18.
- Smith, J., & Brown, L. (2021). Competencies in education systems. *Educational Theory Journal*, 35(2), 88–102.
- Versity, K. (2023). Competency-based education implementation in Kenya. *Education Policy Review*, 7(1), 45–60.
- Wasanga, P. (2020). Curriculum reforms in Kenyan education. *Kenya Journal of Education Policy*, 4(2), 21–35.
- Williams, R., & Ahmed, S. (2020). Performance-based assessment in education. *International Journal of Educational Assessment*, 9(3), 66–80.