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Teachers' English Language Proficiency and Students' Academic Performance: Evidence from a Mixed-methods Study in Public Senior Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya

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***Abstract*—** *English is a compulsory subject in the Kenyan school curriculum. Nevertheless, persistent low pass rates in national English examinations remain a major concern. Against this backdrop, this study was conducted to examine the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in public senior schools in Matungu Sub-County, Kakamega County, Kenya. The objective was to generate empirical evidence to enhance instruction quality, inform policy, and improve learning outcomes. The study was anchored on Communicative Language Teaching theory and Krashen's Input Hypothesis, and employed a mixed-methods approach and a pragmatist paradigm, utilizing a convergent parallel design. Quantitative data were collected using standardized questionnaires and analyzed using simple linear regression and Pearson's correlation. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews and classroom observations, and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that teachers' English proficiency did not have a statistically significant effect on students' performance in national English examinations ($F(1,78) = 0.575$, $p = .450$; $R^2 = 0.07$). Qualitative results corroborated the quantitative findings by highlighting the influence of broader contextual and systemic factors, such as large class sizes, heavy teacher workloads, and limited instructional resources, compounded by learner-related challenges, such as first language interference. Teacher-related issues, such as code-switching, pronunciation difficulties, and grammatical hitches, were also identified, although they did not independently determine students' performance. The study concluded that students' performance in English was shaped by an array of interacting factors, rather than teachers' English proficiency alone. This demystifies the notion that teachers' English proficiency directly translates to higher students' performance in national English examinations. It recommends enhanced in-service teacher training, improved access to instructional resources, manageable workloads, and the*

establishment of clear national benchmarks to embolden and enhance teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national examinations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, English teachers, especially in sub-county and county schools (now classified as C3 and C4), have been criticized for posting "unsatisfactory" results in national examinations. It is against this backdrop that this study unfolded to establish the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations in Matungu Sub-County, Kenya. The overarching purpose of this study was to unearth the underlying causes of this unsettling phenomenon and to propose solutions to mitigate it.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Persistent low pass rates in national English examinations across various countries have been widely acknowledged as worrisome, particularly in education contexts that use English as a medium of instruction (MOI), according to World Bank (2020). In Kenya, this trend remains prevalent, with Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results consistently showing below-average performance in English (KNEC, 2022, 2023, 2024). Matungu Sub-County in Kakamega County is a reflection of this trend. An analysis of KCSE results from 2022 to 2024 revealed persistently low achievement levels. In view of this, English teachers have often been castigated and tasked to account for the underperformance. Since there was little empirical evidence to support the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in KCSE examinations in the Kenyan context, there was a need for urgent and focused interventions. Consequently, this study was conducted to underscore and understand the nature of the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations. In essence, the study remained alive to the fact that limited English proficiency among teachers remains prevalent, especially in countries where English is taught as a second language (Baisa et al., 2024). With little empirical evidence of the nature of this relationship in the Kenyan context, this study filled the existing contextual gap.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To examine the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations in public senior schools in Matungu Sub-County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Question

The research question guiding the inquiry into the nature of the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance is:

Is there a statistically significant relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations in public senior schools in Matungu Sub-County, Kenya?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The study sought to test the following research hypothesis:

There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations in selected public senior schools in Matungu Sub-County, Kenya.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Krashen's Input Hypothesis was adopted as the complementary theory. The key elements of CLT pertinent to this study included; language learning occurs through meaningful interaction, rather than mere memorization of forms; communicative competence, not grammatical competence alone, is the goal of language teaching; teachers are expected to create, manage, and sustain communicative situations that encourage learner participation; and lastly, fluency and accuracy are complementary, with fluency often prioritized during communicative activities and accuracy addressed through feedback**.**

CLT provided an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it explains how teacher proficiency influences the quality of classroom interaction, the extent of learner participation, and ultimately students' performance in English examinations. Also, it emphasizes meaningful communication and learner interaction, which align with real-life language use in classroom situations. Research investigating CLT implementation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms showed that communicative activities significantly increased learner engagement, autonomy, and real-life language use, particularly in speaking tasks (Khaydarbek, 2025). Nonetheless, the successful implementation of CLT depends on teachers' preparedness and resource availability, underscoring the indispensable need for teachers' proficiency in delivering communicative instruction (Hakimi, 2025).

Krashen's Input Hypothesis was adopted as the supporting theory because CLT fell short in explaining the concept of linguistic input. The Hypothesis states that language acquisition occurs primarily through

understanding slightly more advanced language input than the current level. It is often represented as "i+1", where "1" stands for the learners' current level of language ability, whereas the "+1" represents the next level of complexity the learner can comprehend with the teacher's input. This involves clarity, accuracy, and a slight linguistic challenge. Input should align with learners' developmental readiness (Ellis, 2020). Additionally, the concept of the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that emotional factors, including anxiety, motivation, and confidence, influence language acquisition, spoke to the heart of this study. Nevertheless, just like CLT, Krashen's Input Hypothesis assumes optimal classroom environments, which is not always the case, especially in Kenyan classrooms.

Integrated Theoretical Framework (CLT and Input Hypothesis)

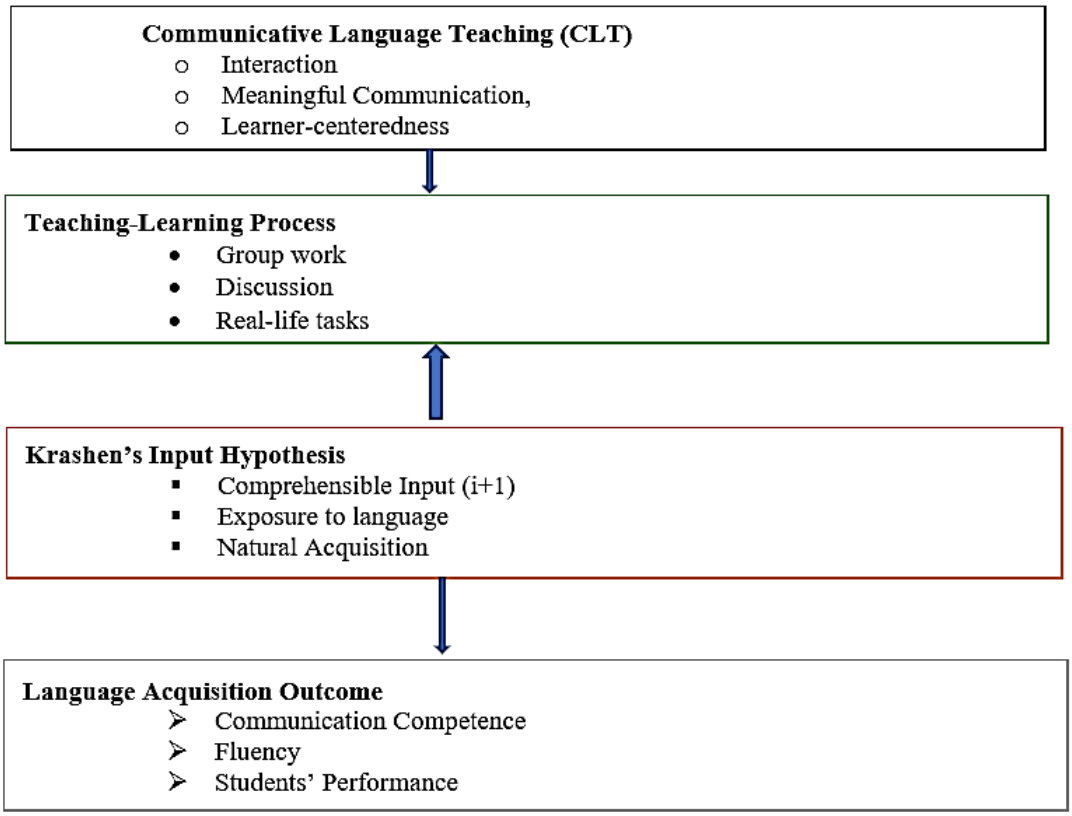

Fig. 1 Integration of CLT and Krashen's Input Hypothesis

CLT facilitates interaction with the English language through meaningful communication and learner-centered teaching approaches. Krashen's Input Hypothesis provides the requisite input (i+1) through exposure to the English language. The two theories should converge to yield desirable learning outcomes, as seen in students' performance in English examinations.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

The study underscored the relationship between teachers' English proficiency (independent variable) and students' performance (dependent variable) in national English examinations. They are diagrammatically represented as follows:

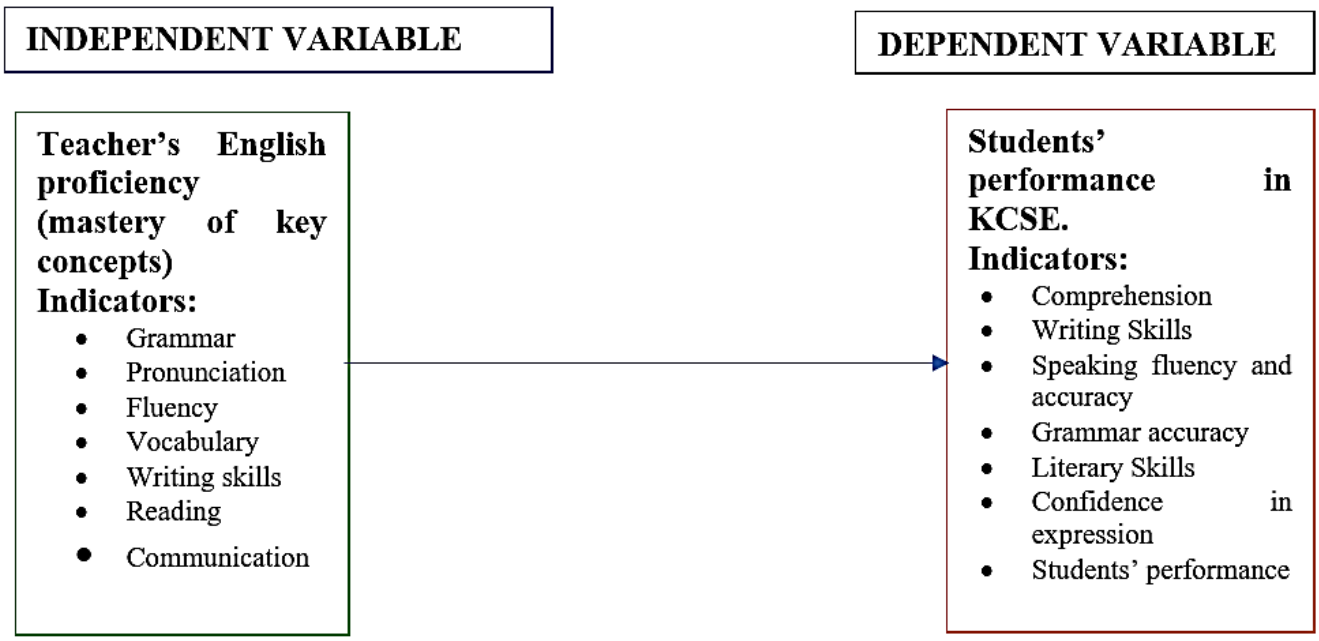

Fig. 2 Conceptual Framework

The independent variables comprised key aspects of the teacher's mastery of English: grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, writing, and reading. These competencies influence students' language performance, as reflected in the dependent variables: quality grades in KCSE.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of teachers' English proficiency in shaping students' academic performance in English cannot be overstated. This explains why it has attracted sustained scholarly attention, particularly in contexts where English is used as a medium of instruction (EMI). Recent studies suggest that while teachers' proficiency is important, it should operate within a broader ecosystem of pedagogical, learner-related, and contextual factors to yield desired outcomes. As a globally spoken language, English plays a central role in students' academic and future development. Teachers, who serve as both guides and transmitters of knowledge, play a pivotal role in shaping students' English language learning and achievement (Gao et al., 2023). As Gao et al. (2023) noted, a teacher's proficiency in English translates to their ability to comprehend and deliver educational content and implement effective teaching strategies.

Empirical studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in examinations. For instance, Lin et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' English performance in higher education institutions in China. The study employed a quantitative research design, using multiple linear regression, quantile regression, and panel regression models. The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' English achievement. The regression analysis results showed that teachers' English proficiency explained 27.5% of the variance in students' English achievement ($\beta = 0.522$). Further revelations showed that teachers with higher levels of English proficiency demonstrated stronger teaching abilities, which contributed to students' knowledge gains, skill development, and overall academic performance. Nevertheless, this study was conducted in a higher institution of learning, rather than secondary schools. Still, the study measured students' performance broadly, rather than using standardized national examination results. As a result, there was a need to conduct a similar study in the Kenyan context, using national examination results to ascertain how the relationship manifests itself, considering the nuances presented by contextual differences.

In a related study, Cassian (2021) investigated the impact of English language teachers' proficiency on students' performance in Rwanda's Nyagatare District. The findings revealed a statistically significant correlation between teachers' English proficiency and students' academic success, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.564 and a significance level of $p = .000$. Accordingly, teachers' proficiency accounted for 36.5% of the variance in students' performance. This indicates that while teacher

proficiency plays a substantial role, other factors also contribute to student outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of qualified and proficient English language teachers in promoting academic achievement. However, the study focused on the general performance of students, overshadowing the specific aspect of performance in national English examination. This created a gap that the present study filled by focusing specifically on teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations.

Other studies, however, increasingly show that teacher proficiency alone does not sufficiently explain variations in student performance. For instance, Yüksel et al. (2023) EMI student success study demonstrated that learner factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-regulation were stronger predictors of academic success than teachers' English proficiency alone. Similarly, Soruç et al. (2026) EMI learner disposition study revealed that students' attitudes and learning strategies significantly mediated the relationship between instructional language and achievement outcomes. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of teachers' English proficiency is contingent upon how it interacts with learner characteristics.

Another study by Curle et al. (2020) investigated predictors of academic success among 159 students in Turkey using a mixed-methods design. The study found that teachers' general English proficiency was not a statistically significant predictor of students' performance. The findings showed that English proficiency accounted for only 0.3% of the variance in course scores. Instead, prior academic success in first-language-medium courses emerged as the strongest predictor, explaining 67.9% of the variance in performance. The findings suggest that factors beyond general English proficiency may play a more substantial and consequential role in determining students' success in some EMI contexts.

Classroom practices further shape this relationship. Research by An and Childs (2023) classroom interaction study highlights that teachers' questioning strategies, wait time, and interaction patterns significantly influence students' participation and language output. This implies that even highly proficient teachers may fail to improve students' outcomes if their instructional approaches do not actively engage learners. This, in essence, implies that while a teacher may be very proficient in English, their pedagogical approaches may either improve or diminish students' performance in examinations. Likewise, Guo et al. (2022) EMI evaluation study emphasizes that institutional factors such as class size, teaching resources, and curriculum design play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of English-medium instruction. As noted by Nguyen (2023) EMI learner background study, classrooms that emphasize interaction and real-life language use tend to produce better learning outcomes, regardless of minor variations in teacher proficiency. This underscores the argument that pedagogical practice mediates the impact of linguistic competence.

Adaro and Ibojo (2026) examined teachers' instructional competence and students' performance in examinations. The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design involving 166 Grade 9 students from six public secondary and integrated schools in the Philippines. Data were collected using questionnaires measuring teachers' instructional competence and classroom learning environment, while students' English achievement was measured using first-quarter English test scores. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to examine relationships among variables. The findings revealed that teachers generally demonstrated moderate to high instructional competence, and classrooms were perceived as reasonably conducive to learning. Yet, neither teachers' instructional competence nor classroom learning environment significantly predicted students' English language learning success. Regression results revealed that teacher competence explained only 1.9% of the variance in students' examination performance, while classroom environment explained 4.3%. The study's findings suggest that factors such as learner motivation, language exposure, self-efficacy, home language use, and socioeconomic conditions may exert stronger influences on English achievement than teachers' instructional competence alone. However, the study did not directly assess teachers' English language proficiency; instead, it focused on instructional competence. Additionally, the study relied on a cross-sectional design and self-reported measures, limiting causal interpretations. This created a need to conduct the current study to address this knowledge gap**.**

Wang (2021) underscored the relationship between English as a medium of instruction (EMI) teachers' classroom English proficiency and their self-efficacy. He revealed that highly proficient teachers of English demonstrated high teaching efficacy, which can positively influence students' performance. Further, he asserted that a teacher's ability to use English effectively in instruction and interactions with students has a significant impact on student achievement. Similarly, Abdallah & Mramba (2024) reported that in rural Tanzanian schools, limited command of English among teachers directly translated into students' weak performance in English language skills. As a result, they noted, teachers frequently resorted to code-switching to Kiswahili to explain some concepts to help students understand. While this practice offered short-term clarity

and comprehension of lesson content, it ultimately hindered the sustained development of English competence among the students by preventing them from engaging fully in English as both a subject and a medium of instruction. The study highlights a clear connection between teacher proficiency and student performance, revealing that students taught by less proficient teachers displayed weaker mastery of English language skills (Abdallah & Mramba, 2024).

Despite studies showing a positive correlation between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance, others show that this relationship may be weak and insignificant. For instance, a study examining predictors of English language outcomes among university students revealed that learner self-efficacy and motivation were stronger predictors of achievement than a teacher's linguistic proficiency alone (Huang, 2024). Furthermore, studies have shown that teachers' self-reported proficiency does not necessarily predict students' academic performance. Research examining the validity of English language examinations reported that English proficiency had a weak and statistically nonsignificant effect on university students' academic achievement (Gebremichael & Tesfaye, 2025).

Likewise, Malmström (2025) found no significant association between teachers' English proficiency scores and the instructional approaches they employed in EMI contexts. The study concluded that higher proficiency did not necessarily translate into more effective or learner-centered teaching practices. The findings reinforce the argument that proficiency scores alone may not be strong determinants of student achievement, particularly in examination-oriented systems.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and then integrated during interpretation. This ensured representativeness in the quantitative phase and depth and information richness in the qualitative phase, in accordance with Creswell & Plano (2018).

3.1 Research Paradigm and Approach

This study was anchored within the pragmatist paradigm. The relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' examination performance was measured statistically using raw data obtained from a standardized questionnaire. Qualitative data were generated from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. This paradigm emphasizes practical solutions to the problem, the very reason the study was conducted. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, which provided a strong understanding of the research problem by drawing on both qualitative and quantitative insights, hence minimizing the limitations of both approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Sampling Procedures

This study targeted 37 public senior schools in Matungu Sub-County, spread across the five wards, namely Khalaba, Kholera, Koyonzo, Namamali, and Mayoni. A sample of 22 schools was used, which represented 60% of the whole population. Schools were first stratified into higher, average, and lower-performing categories. This was based on their three-year (2022, 2023, and 2024) KCSE mean scores. Proportionate stratified sampling was then used to determine the number of schools to be selected from each category. Simple random sampling was then employed to select the actual schools from each stratum. This ensured fair representation of all performance categories while minimizing sampling bias, thereby strengthening the generalizability of findings and enhancing research rigor.

3.2.1 Proportionate Stratified Sampling for Schools

First, schools were ranked by their three-year KCSE mean scores, followed by classification based on percentile cut-offs. This yielded the following classification: 12 higher-performing schools, 13 average-performing schools, and 12 lower-performing schools. Next, simple random sampling from each category (from 12 higher, 13 average, 12 lower) was conducted.

Table 1 Proportionate Stratified Sampling Table (n = 22)

Performance Category	Score Range (3-year mean)	Population (N_h)	Sampled Schools ($n_h = N_h/37 \times 22$)
Higher-Performing	C− and above (MG ≥ 4.50)	12	7
Average-Performing	D+ (MG 3.50 – 4.49)	13	8
Lower-Performing	D and below (MG ≤ 3.49)	12	7
Total		**37**	**22**

3.2.2 Quantitative Sampling (Questionnaires)

The sample size for teachers was arrived at using the Krejci and Morgan formula for finite populations, given as:

$$S = \frac{x^2 Np(1-p)}{d^2(N-1)+x^2 P(1-p)}$$

By substitution, the sample size for teachers was computed as:

$$S = \frac{3{\cdot}841 \times 100 \times 0{\cdot}25}{0.0025(100)+0.96025}$$

N = 79.3431. This sample size is consistent with Kothari's sample size determination table, which recommends a sample of approximately 80 for a population of 100 at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. It was considered adequate for the study to provide reliable and generalizable results while minimizing sampling error, considering the stratified nature of school selection and the study's focus on contextual analysis rather than national performance benchmarks.

Teachers were selected proportionately from each school, with each school constituting a stratum. This ensured proportional representation across the 37 schools. Where schools had fewer teachers of English, all eligible ones were included. Larger schools contributed proportionately more participants (up to six), who were selected using simple random sampling. This reduced sampling bias and ensured that variations across school contexts were adequately captured, as advised by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018).

3.2.4 Teacher Sample for Interviews and Observation

Twenty-two (22) Heads of Department (HODs) were interviewed. They were deemed fit to speak to the challenges that teachers in their departments face in their classrooms, given their vantage point as leaders and their teaching experience. The chosen range aligns with methodological recommendations that qualitative saturation in educational research is often achieved within a range of 9-17 interviews. For instance, Hennink and Kaiser (2022) conducted a systematic review of empirical studies and found that near saturation in qualitative interview research often occurs within a narrow range of around 9-17 interviews when the study population and objectives are relatively homogeneous. For observation, teachers were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study. Nevertheless, participation was limited to two teachers per school, making it a total of forty-three (43) observations (one school had only one teacher).

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The study used a teacher questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale (1–5) to collect self-reported quantitative data. A detailed observation schedule was used to collect qualitative data. This ensured consistency in capturing real-time instructional dynamics across lessons, thereby enhancing reliability (Kothari, 2019). In addition to qualitative data, interviews with 22 English HODs provided in-depth insights into challenges affecting teachers' English proficiency in instruction. Interviews are effective for exploring perceptions, experiences, and professional challenges in depth (Creswell, 2018).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Data collection commenced in earnest after permission was granted by the Matungu Sub-County Director of Education and school principals. Participants were informed about the study, provided informed consent, and participated voluntarily with the freedom to withdraw at any time. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through coded identities. All data collected were used strictly for academic purposes (Xu et al., 2020; Mirza et al., 2023).

3.5 Data Collection

The collection of quantitative and qualitative data was conducted concurrently. Questionnaires were hand-delivered to teachers during non-instructional hours. They were allowed enough time to fill them, after which the researcher collected them. Interviews were conducted with HODs, and in cases where the HOD was unavailable, the Head of Subject (HOS) conducted the interview. Classroom observations were carried out using a structured observation guide that focused on the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

3.6 Data Analysis

Responses from questionnaires were coded numerically for clarity and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data cleaning was conducted before statistical analysis to enhance the quality of the findings. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, involving Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and simple linear regression, were used to analyze these data. Before the study's hypothesis was tested, assumptions of the regression model of normality and linearity were tested. The null hypothesis was tested at $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim using AI tools, specifically *turboscribe.ai.* Themes were generated following a rigorous process of qualitative data analysis, comprising data familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, and developing major themes. Synthesis and integration of the findings was done using a side-by-side

narrative method to identify areas of convergence or divergence in the three (3) data sources. This helped to get a detailed and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

The questionnaire was tested for face and content validity to ensure it measured the constructs it was meant to measure. Piloting of the research instruments was done in two schools outside the study area to test the clarity and overall reliability of the questionnaire. The internal consistency of the original instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a value of $\alpha = 0.883$. In relation to the advisable value of $\alpha = 0.7$, this value was good enough for further statistical tests.

The researcher ensured trustworthiness of qualitative data through triangulation of data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews and observations. Transferability was achieved through thick descriptions of the research setting, participants, and procedures, including the characteristics of the schools, the teachers involved, and the data collection processes. A detailed account of the stages of the research process, including the research design, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, and data analysis methods, was maintained throughout the process. This documentation provided a transparent record of how the study was conducted. The researcher maintained a deep sense of reflexivity throughout the research process, cognizant of the potential influence his qualification as a teacher of English could have on the study. This was achieved by keeping reflective notes during data collection and analysis.

IV. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS

The respondents' demographic characteristics were collected in categorical form, and the details are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' demographic characteristics

Variable		Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	32	40
	Female	48	60
	Total	80	100
Academic Qualification	Diploma	5	6.25
	B.Ed.	73	91.25
	Masters	2	2.5
	Total	80	100
Teaching Experience	5 years and below	28	35
	6-10 years	32	40
	11-15 years	9	11.25
	Above 15 years	11	13.75
	Total	80	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 2 shows that most respondents were female 48 (60%), compared to 32 males (40%). This indicates a female-dominated teaching workforce. The majority held a Bachelor of Education degree at 73 (91.25%), with few possessing a Diploma 5 (6.25%) or a master's degree 2 (2.5%). This suggests that respondents met the professional qualifications required to provide reliable views on the issue under investigation. Regarding teaching experience, most teachers had 6 –10 years of experience; 32 (40%), followed by those with 5 years or fewer; 28 (35%), while 11 (13.75%) had over 15 years and 9 (11.25%) had 11–15 years. This indicates a workforce largely composed of early to mid-career professionals with moderate experience.

4.1 Results and Discussion

Data analysis was conducted as follows.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' English Proficiency and Students' Performance.

Descriptive statistics were computed to determine the overall level of teachers' self-reported English proficiency. Teachers' English mean proficiency was calculated in SPSS by the average of the questionnaire items. These

scores were then assigned against the students' English performance to represent the number of respondents from each school. Students' English performance was the average of KCSE English mean scores of three consecutive years;

2022, 2023, and 2024. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' English Proficiency and Students' Performance.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers' English Proficiency	80	4.0375	0.97687
Students' English Performance	80	4.4456	1.07594

Teachers' English proficiency score was 4.0375 (SD = 0.97687), while students' English performance was 4.4456 (SD = 1.07594). Both the teachers' English proficiency and students' English performance mean scores are relatively high across the sampled schools in the Sub-County. The standard deviations indicate moderate variability in both cases, meaning teachers' proficiency and students' performance are somewhat spread out, though not highly dispersed.

4.3 Test for Normality

Before conducting the Pearson correlation analysis, the assumptions of normality for both teachers' English proficiency and students' English performance were assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test because it is suitable for small sample sizes (N < 50). The results are shown in Table 4 above:

Table 4 Normality test for teachers' English proficiency and students' performance

Variable	Tests	Statistic	df	p-value
Teachers' English Proficiency	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.152	80	0.000
	Shapiro-Wilk	0.931	80	0.000
Students' English Performance	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.210	80	0.000
	Shapiro-Wilk	0.817	80	0.000

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that both teachers' English mean proficiency and students' English performance deviated from normality (p = < 0.05). Nonetheless, further visual inspection of the Q-Q Plots and Histograms revealed only minor deviations from normality, allowing for parametric tests.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to examine the relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations. Table 5 below shows the results:

Table 5 Correlation analysis for teachers' English proficiency and students' performance

Variables	School Mean	Total Proficiency
School Mean	1.000	0.086
Total Proficiency	0.086	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	-	0.225
N	80	80

The correlation coefficient (r = 0.086) indicated a weak positive relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' performance in national English examinations. This suggests that an increase in teachers' English proficiency is associated with only a very slight increase in students' performance in English examinations. However, the relationship is not statistically significant as shown by the p-value = 0.225, greater than 0.05. Therefore, no meaningful linear association can be established between the two variables. This lucidly implies that while teachers' English proficiency is paramount, it does not predict students' performance in national English examinations.

4.5 Simple Linear Regression Analysis

To corroborate the findings of correlation analysis, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether teachers' English proficiency significantly predicted students' performance in English examinations. The results are summarized in Table 6 below:

Table 6 Simple linear regression analysis for teachers' proficiency and students' performance

Model Summary

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of Estimate
0.086	0.007	-0.005	1.07884

The results show that teachers' English proficiency explains only 0.7% of the variance in students' English performance, which indicates a very low predictive power. This was confirmed by the ANOVA model as given in Table 7 below:

Table 7 ANOVA results

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	0.670	1	0.670	0.575	0.450
Residual	90.784	78	1.164		
Total	91.454	79			

The overall model is not statistically significant ($F(1,78) = 0.575$, $p = .450$), meaning that it does not significantly predict students' English mean scores.

The Regression Coefficients are given in Table 8:

Table 8 Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	T	Sig.
Constant	4.065	0.516	-	7.878	0.000
Total Proficiency	0.094	0.124	0.086	0.759	0.450

The model summary showed that teachers' English proficiency explained only 0.7% of the variance in school mean scores ($R^2 = .007$; Adjusted $R^2 = -0.005$), suggesting a negligible explanatory power.

Regression analysis revealed that teachers' English proficiency had a small positive but statistically insignificant effect on students' English performance ($\beta = .086$, $B = 0.094$, $t = 0.759$, $p = .450$). This led to the upholding of the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' English proficiency and students' English performance in selected public senior schools in Matungu Sub-County. Although this finding diverges from studies such as Aizawa et al. (2020) and Lin and Lei (2021), which reported that higher teacher English proficiency improved content delivery and academic outcomes in EMI contexts, it aligns with more recent studies showing that teacher proficiency is conditional rather than deterministic. For example, Yüksel et al. (2023) and Soruç et al. (2026) found that learner motivation, anxiety, self-regulation, dispositions, and learning strategies were stronger predictors of academic success than teachers' proficiency alone. This also reflects the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasize meaningful interaction and learner participation, supported by An and Childs (2023), who demonstrated that teacher questioning and interactional practices significantly influence student engagement and output.

Qualitative findings further reinforced the quantitative results. Through interviews, it was revealed that teachers frequently simplified content, code-switched, and adjusted language to learners' levels, making lessons more accessible to learners. However, this approach limited learners' exposure to complex English structures. This observation is consistent with Sánchez-Pérez (2023), who argued that exposure to language input must be complemented by practice, feedback, and interaction for meaningful learning gains.

In addition, classroom observations and interviews identified contextual barriers such as large class sizes, limited teaching resources, heavy workloads, students'

first-language backgrounds, and limited prior exposure to English as major influences on performance. These findings are supported by Guo et al. (2022), who emphasized the role of institutional conditions in EMI effectiveness, and Nguyen (2023), who established that learners' backgrounds and prior experiences strongly shape academic outcomes in English.

To corroborate the quantitative findings, HODs' interview verbatims are presented as follows:

It was established that TOE in Matungu Sub-County had huge teaching workloads, owing to understaffing challenges. This pushed them to resort to teacher-centered teaching methods, a strategy that limits opportunities for interactive learning as postulated by CLT. HOD003 explained:

> *"I have 28 lessons each week. Add books to mark, tests to administer, mark and give feedback, lesson plans to write, gosh, it is too much, isn't it? And I also have administrative duties. By the time I'm attending the last lesson, I'm actually exhausted, and I may not give my best. Not because I'm not proficient, but because I'm just overwhelmed by work. See?"*

These sentiments were echoed by HOD007, who averred:

> "*You see, I have to teach 27 lessons every week, give assignments, mark, return feedback, revise… that's a lot of work and so draining."*

Heavy teaching workloads adversely affect teachers' motivation, well-being, and effectiveness. When teachers are overloaded, the decline in the quality of lesson planning, assessment design, and student support is inevitable. This compels them to opt for teacher-centered approaches to teaching, which negatively affect effective teaching and learning, regardless of their English proficiency. Luhombo et al. (2023) revealed considerable levels of burnout among educational personnel in public secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. The findings imply that occupational pressures, arising from multiple responsibilities and demanding schedules, undermine teachers' effectiveness. Such burnout limits teachers' ability to fully utilize their English language proficiency, with the ramifications being seen in unsatisfactory performance in national English examinations.

In addition, HODs cited limited resources as a challenge, stating that they relied heavily on government-suppled text books, which, they argued, offered little to no variety in terms of content. HOD003 emphasized the importance of digital and audio materials, stating:

> *"We need enough resources, especially digital ones. Audiotapes could help in teaching pronunciation."*

Learner-related factors were also brought into focus, with teachers reporting that their language level, entry behavior, and influence of their first language played a central role in the overall performance in English. They explained that due to the policy of 100% transition to secondary school, they get students who have difficulties expressing themselves and understanding concepts in English, forcing them to use Kiswahili to support instruction. HOD 001 asserted:

> "*We are forced to code-switch. Sometimes, you are explaining a concept but when you look at your students, you realize that they have missed it. So, you bring in Kiswahili, and they are like, aha, we now get it. You see? Sometimes it's not my fault as a teacher of English."*

HOD004 declared:

> *"So, what we can say about the efficiency of teachers' English in terms of understanding learners' needs in class. Sometimes we find it challenging because a good number of our students have mother-tongue influence. They have a very poor background in primary school, and most of them cannot really express themselves in English."*

On her part, HOD11 stated that on one occasion, students wrote in a suggestion box, addressing their sentiments to the principal to respectfully talk to a certain teacher in the department not to use 'a lot of English' during instruction, saying that they had difficulties understanding her. Hear her say:

> *"I remember there was a class that joined. One day, they wrote a note in a suggestion box, asking the principal to call the HOD of English and talk to her so that when she goes to class, she should not just use English throughout the lesson, because they're not good enough."*

Teachers in Matungu Sub-County reported that, despite their efforts and proficiency, unfavourable teaching conditions and the challenges of teaching English as a foreign language limit the impact of their proficiency on students' performance. Findings from interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires consistently

revealed that students' English examination outcomes are shaped by multiple interacting factors beyond teacher proficiency alone, including teaching methods, assessment alignment, learner engagement, learner-related factors, and school conditions. The study therefore rejects the assumption that teachers' English proficiency alone determines students' examination performance.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that teachers' English proficiency does not predict students' performance in English examinations in Matungu Sub-County, despite teachers demonstrating high English proficiency. Granted, the expectation is that higher teachers' English proficiency translates to higher students' performance in national English examinations. Nevertheless, caution should be taken not to mistake correlation for causation. Students' performance in English is a result of multiple interacting factors, including teaching methods, curriculum alignment, learner engagement, class size, school resources, school type, and learners' first language. Of these factors, teachers' English proficiency is integral, but not the only underlying driving force. The findings suggest that improving English performance requires a holistic approach that combines teachers' English language proficiency with effective pedagogy and adequate educational support resources.

5.1 Recommendations

In practice, the MOE, through the TSC, should hire enough teachers to address understaffing in Kenyan senior schools and reduce teacher burnout caused by overwhelming workloads. In addition, the ministry should ensure that schools are well-equipped with a range of resources, including digital tools such as audio tapes to promote the teaching and learning of English, especially pronunciation skills and drills.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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