



REVIEW ARTICLE

SPEAKING SKILLS AND VALUES EDUCATION IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the nature of classroom activities used by learners to develop speaking skills and facilitate the acquisition of values in English language classrooms in secondary schools in Kenya. The research was guided by two central questions: What activities do learners engage in to enhance their speaking abilities? And how do these activities contribute to the development of values among learners? A qualitative case study design was employed to gain in-depth insights into classroom practices. The target population consisted of secondary school learners and English language teachers, with a purposive sample drawn from selected schools. Data were collected through *classroom observations, focus group discussions with learners, and document analysis of instructional materials and learners' written work* for presentation in class. Findings revealed that learners actively participated in a variety of speaking-based activities, including *role plays, group discussions, debates, storytelling, and oral presentations*. These tasks not only supported the development of oral communication skills but also fostered the internalization of values such as respect, honesty, cooperation, and empathy. The activities created interactive environments where learners practiced both language use and social behaviors in meaningful contexts. The study concludes that classroom activities that are well-structured, learner-centered, and value-oriented serve a *dual purpose* in language education. They support the mastery of speaking skills while also contributing to the moral development of learners. The study recommends that language instruction should integrate value-based content through active speaking tasks, and that teacher training programs should equip educators with strategies to foster both communicative and ethical competence among learners.

INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a powerful medium for shaping thought, culture, and personal identity. In the context of education, the English language plays a central role in Kenya's curriculum, particularly as a medium of instruction and as a subject that equips learners with essential communicative skills. Among the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, *speaking* holds a distinct position, as it enables learners to express themselves fluently, interact with others meaningfully, and participate confidently in both academic and social environments. However, effective teaching and learning of speaking skills in many Kenyan secondary schools remains a challenge. Traditional teacher-centered approaches and exam-oriented instruction often limit learners' opportunities to actively use the language in realistic and engaging situations. Yet, it is through *learner-centered classroom activities* such as: debates, group discussions, role plays, storytelling, and oral presentations, that students develop fluency, coherence, confidence, and interactional competence in spoken English. Beyond the linguistic benefits, these classroom activities also serve as platforms for *value transmission*. Through interaction and content that often reflects real-life moral and social

dilemmas, learners are exposed to and begin to internalize values such as respect, honesty, cooperation, responsibility, and empathy among others. In a multilingual and multicultural society like Kenya's, nurturing these values alongside communication skills is essential for producing well-rounded individuals capable of contributing positively to society. Although studies have examined methods of teaching English and the challenges faced, there is limited research focused on what *learners actually do* in the classroom to learn speaking skills and how the activities *enhance acquisition of values* among learners. This study therefore seeks to fill that gap by exploring the types of classroom activities learners engage in to build speaking proficiency and to acquire values in English language lessons in Kenyan secondary schools.

The study was guided by two Research Questions:

- Which activities are used by learners in the English language classroom to develop speaking skills?
- What classroom activities facilitated the acquisition of values among learners during English language lessons?

By centering the inquiry on learners' classroom experiences, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how

English language education can be both communicatively and morally enriching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skills: *Speaking skills* are a foundational aspect of language learning and communication. They involve the ability to express thoughts, ideas, emotions, and opinions clearly and effectively through spoken language. In the language classroom, the development of speaking skills is not just about pronunciation or grammar—it's about enabling learners to communicate meaningfully, confidently, and appropriately in various social and academic contexts (Meletiadiou, 2022). Speaking combines several competencies: *vocabulary knowledge, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, fluency, and pragmatic awareness* (knowing what to say, how, and when). For a learner to be an effective speaker, all of these elements need to come together in real-time communication. That's why speaking is often considered one of the most complex skills to master. Developing speaking skills involves both receptive and productive practice. Receptively, learners must listen carefully to understand language models, tones, and conversational rhythms. Productively, they need to practice constructing their own sentences, responding to others, and participating in dialogues or discussions. One of the most critical aspects of teaching speaking is creating a safe and supportive environment. Learners often feel vulnerable when speaking, especially in a second language. Encouraging risk-taking, modeling respectful listening, and giving constructive feedback help learners grow in both skill and confidence. Speaking tasks should be meaningful, not mechanical - instead of just repeating dialogues or memorizing sentences, learners should be involved in authentic speaking situations—negotiating meaning, sharing experiences, expressing opinions, or solving problems. This kind of speaking is more engaging and leads to better retention and application (Yan, et. al, 2024). Moreover, speaking skills are closely tied to social and emotional development, especially in younger learners. Through speaking, learners practice turn-taking, empathy, and active listening. They learn how to assert themselves respectfully, how to agree or disagree politely, and how to build relationships through words (Adams, & Oliver, 2023). These skills are central to language proficiency, developing the skills requires *purposeful practice, emotional support, and real-life communicative opportunities*—so that speaking becomes not just a skill to be taught, but a tool to be lived.

Conversational skills are speaking abilities that emphasize engaging in meaningful and effective dialogue with others. These skills encompass both speaking and listening, aiming to ensure smooth and engaging interactions across social, academic, and professional settings. When developed well, conversational skills contribute to stronger relationships, increased confidence, and more effective communication. To hold effective conversations, a person needs to master several core skills. Active listening is essential—it involves giving full attention to the speaker and responding in a thoughtful manner. Equally important is clarity and coherence, which refers to expressing oneself in a way that is both easy to understand and logically organized. Turn-taking plays a crucial role in conversations, requiring individuals to recognize when it is appropriate to speak and when to listen. Additionally, empathy and respect are vital; they involve understanding the viewpoints of others and responding with compassion and consideration.

Non-verbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact, further enriches verbal exchanges and reinforces the speaker's message. Lastly, the ability to ask relevant questions and demonstrate genuine interest in the conversation helps to maintain engagement and promote deeper dialogue (Gudu, 2015). Conversational skills hold significant importance in various areas of life. In social contexts, they are essential for forming friendships and nurturing relationships. Within the workplace, effective communication supports collaboration, teamwork, and professional networking. These skills also aid in problem-solving by fostering discussions that lead to shared understanding and viable solutions. Furthermore, in public relations and broader interpersonal interactions, strong conversational skills enhance one's ability to connect with diverse individuals confidently and respectfully.

Developing Sub-skills of Speaking for Effective Communication: Effective speaking is an essential component of communication, whether in academic, professional, or social settings. To become an effective speaker, one must develop several sub-skills. These include fluency, pronunciation, grammar and accuracy, vocabulary, coherence and cohesion, listening and responding, as well as confidence and body language. Each of these skills contributes to a speaker's ability to convey messages clearly, engage an audience, and respond appropriately in different contexts. This comprehensive exploration of speaking sub-skills, supported with examples and illustrations, presents an integrated understanding of how learners can enhance their oral communication capabilities.

Fluency in Speaking: Fluency is the cornerstone of effective speaking. It refers to the *ability to speak smoothly, naturally, and without frequent pauses or hesitation*. When a person speaks fluently, their ideas are expressed in a continuous and uninterrupted flow. This skill is particularly vital for second-language learners who often struggle with maintaining the natural rhythm and pace of speech in a non-native language. Imagine a conversation between two friends at a café. One friend, who is fluent in English, shares a story about their weekend: "Yesterday, I went hiking in the hills with some friends. The weather was perfect—clear skies and a cool breeze. We even spotted a deer along the trail." The speaker delivers their story smoothly, without awkward stops or long pauses to search for words. This natural flow encourages the listener to remain engaged and makes the communication more effective. Fluency is marked by several characteristics. First is the ability to produce *smooth and continuous speech*. A fluent speaker speaks without frequent interruptions or hesitation. Their sentences flow easily, and they transition from one idea to the next seamlessly. Another trait of fluency is maintaining a balanced speed and rhythm. A fluent speaker neither rushes through sentences nor speaks so slowly that the listener becomes disengaged. They strike a natural pace, appropriate to the context and audience (Gudu, 2015). Minimal use of *fillers* is also a sign of fluency. While occasional use of words like "um," "uh," or "you know" is common in casual conversation, overuse can hinder communication. Fluent speakers rely on these fillers sparingly, instead maintaining coherence through purposeful word choices. Furthermore, spontaneity is a key indicator of fluency. A fluent speaker can respond promptly and appropriately in conversation without significant effort or delay. They do not appear to be searching for the right words; instead, they express ideas effortlessly. To develop fluency, consistent practice is essential. Learners can benefit greatly from engaging in daily conversations, either with peers or even

through self-practice such as speaking in front of a mirror. Recording one's speech and listening to it critically helps identify areas of improvement. One effective technique is to practice thinking directly in the language being learned—such as English—rather than translating from the first language. This mental shift reduces hesitation and fosters more natural speech. Participating in interactive speaking activities, including role-plays, discussions, and storytelling sessions, enhances fluency. These exercises simulate real-life scenarios where spontaneous speaking is necessary. Listening to native speakers through podcasts, movies, and interviews also helps learners internalize speech patterns, pronunciation, and intonation. Repetition and imitation can greatly accelerate fluency development. *Building a rich vocabulary* is another essential component. When learners have a broad vocabulary, they are less likely to stumble or search for words. For instance, knowing synonyms for common terms allows speakers to avoid repetition and maintain engagement. Confidence also plays a vital role. Learners must embrace mistakes as part of the learning journey. Focusing on effective communication rather than grammatical perfection promotes fluency and encourages risk-taking, which is critical in language learning.

Pronunciation in Speaking: Pronunciation refers to the accurate production of sounds, words, and intonation in spoken language. Clear pronunciation ensures that listeners understand what is being said, which is particularly important in environments where multiple accents or dialects are present. It encompasses elements such as: *articulation, stress, rhythm, and intonation*. For example, consider the word “think.” Many English learners may pronounce it as “sink” or “tink” due to difficulty with the /θ/ sound. Similarly, the word “this,” pronounced with the /ð/ sound, is often mispronounced as “dis.” These errors can cause confusion. Practicing tongue placement by gently placing the tongue between the teeth when pronouncing “th” words helps improve articulation. Words like “thank,” “that,” and “mother” offer good practice for mastering these sounds. *Word stress* is another pronunciation challenge. English often changes meaning based on stress. For instance, “CONtract” (noun) and “conTRACT” (verb) have different meanings, as do “PREsent” and “preSENT.” Misplacing stress may lead to misunderstandings. Listening to native speakers and mimicking their pronunciation aids in mastering stress patterns. Using dictionaries that include phonetic symbols can also guide learners in understanding correct stress. *Silent letters* present another hurdle. Words such as “knight,” where the “k” is silent, “honest,” where the “h” is silent, and “debt,” where the “b” is silent, are common examples. Learners must memorize the correct pronunciation of such words and reinforce learning through audio resources and repetitive listening. Pronunciation improves significantly through regular practice. Learners should listen to native speakers, use phonetic tools, engage in pronunciation drills, and receive feedback. Over time, these efforts contribute to clearer and more confident speech.

Grammar and Accuracy in Speaking: While fluency involves the natural flow of language, *grammar and accuracy* ensure that the message is correct and professional. These refer to the appropriate use of *sentence structures, verb tenses, and word order*. Take the following sentence: “Yesterday, I go to the market.” While the meaning may be understood, it is grammatically incorrect. The correct sentence is “Yesterday, I went to the market.” Using the past tense appropriately ensures

clarity. Similarly, subject-verb agreement is essential. Saying “She go to school every day” is incorrect; it should be “She goes to school every day.” English follows a specific word order, generally subject-verb-object. Deviating from this structure can cause confusion. A sentence like “Plays football he every evening” is difficult to understand. Reordering it to “He plays football every evening” makes it grammatically sound and easier to follow. Improving grammar and accuracy involves *a multifaceted approach*. Regular conversations, especially those that focus on structure, allow learners to apply grammar rules in context. Observing how proficient speakers use grammar in natural settings provides models for imitation. Grammar exercises that focus on common mistakes, such as tense usage and sentence correction, reinforce learning. Recording and reviewing one's speech highlights patterns of errors, allowing for focused improvement (Hasan, 2023).

Vocabulary in Speaking Skills

Vocabulary refers to the *range of words a person knows and uses*. A broad and dynamic vocabulary enables speakers to express themselves with *precision, clarity, and creativity*.

For instance, instead of repeatedly saying “very big,” a speaker might say “enormous” or “gigantic.” Instead of saying “nice weather,” one might say “pleasant weather.” Such choices not only enhance clarity but also demonstrate linguistic richness. Word choice reflects a speaker's intent and the context in which they are speaking.

Understanding contextual usage is key. A formal situation may require one to say, “I would like to request your assistance,” while an informal context may call for, “Can you help me out?” Knowing when to use formal, informal, or technical vocabulary adds depth and appropriateness to speech. Additionally, learning *synonyms and antonyms* helps in expressing ideas in varied ways. For example, synonyms for “happy” include “joyful,” “elated,” and “content,” each with its own nuance. Collocations—words that naturally go together—are also important. Saying “make a decision,” “strong coffee,” or “heavy rain” sounds natural, whereas “do a decision” or “powerful coffee” does not. To enhance vocabulary, learners should immerse themselves in reading, listening to news, and engaging with various media. Keeping a vocabulary journal, where new words are recorded along with their meanings and usage, helps with retention. Daily practice using new words in speech and conversation accelerates mastery.

Coherence and Cohesion in Speaking

Coherence and cohesion are critical to effective speech. *Coherence* refers to the logical arrangement of ideas, while *cohesion* involves the smooth connection between sentences and thoughts. Consider the following incoherent passage:

“Yesterday I went to the market. The weather was cold. I bought fruits. My father called me. I cooked dinner.”

Though each sentence is correct, the narrative feels *disjointed*. Compare it with a coherent version:

“Yesterday, I went to the market to buy fruits. Since the weather was cold, I finished shopping quickly. After that, my father called me, and we planned to cook dinner together.”

The second version flows logically, guiding the listener through the sequence of events.

Cohesion involves using *linking words* like “however,” “therefore,” or “in addition” to connect ideas. Pronouns such as “he,” “she,” or “they” prevent repetition, while conjunctions like “and,” “but,” and “because” help in joining ideas. Instead of saying, “I love reading books. Books are interesting. Books help me learn,” a cohesive sentence might be, “I love reading books because they are interesting. In addition, they help me learn new things.”

Improving coherence and cohesion involves planning speech beforehand, using *transition words* effectively, and practicing storytelling. Reviewing recorded speech can reveal areas lacking flow, and engaging in structured discussions allows learners to develop organized speaking habits.

Listening and Responding in Speaking: Effective speaking requires active listening. A speaker who listens attentively is better equipped to respond meaningfully and maintain conversational flow. Active listening means focusing fully on the speaker, interpreting both words and non-verbal cues. For example, when someone is sharing a problem, nodding, maintaining eye contact, and showing empathy indicate attentiveness. Asking clarifying questions like “Could you explain that further?” shows genuine interest. Paraphrasing, such as saying “So you’re saying that teamwork is essential?” confirms understanding and encourages further dialogue. Responses should be relevant and thoughtful. Whether it’s acknowledging the speaker with a statement like “I understand your point,” or sharing a perspective such as “I agree because teamwork improves efficiency,” meaningful interaction requires both listening and engagement. Voice tone, facial expressions, and gestures also affect how responses are received. To improve listening and responding, learners should avoid distractions, participate in conversations regularly, and expose themselves to different accents and speaking styles. Taking notes during discussions aids in processing information and crafting relevant responses. Asking open-ended questions deepens engagement and encourages fuller conversations.

Confidence and Body Language in Speaking: Confidence is a powerful enabler of effective speech. A confident speaker *captivates their audience and delivers messages with conviction*. This confidence is often reflected in body language. A confident speaker maintains a clear and steady voice, neither too soft nor too loud. They speak at a pace that allows listeners to absorb the message without feeling rushed or bored. Good posture—standing or sitting upright—communicates assurance. Eye contact strengthens the connection with the audience and reflects sincerity. One should stand tall, look at their audience rather than the floor, smile at appropriate moments, and use hand gestures to emphasize points. It conveys confidence and credibility. Body language includes facial expressions, gestures, posture, and voice modulation. A smile when greeting someone, a frown when expressing concern, or a nod to show agreement adds emotional depth to speech. Open gestures such as extended hands indicate inclusivity, while crossed arms may suggest defensiveness. Movement should be natural, avoiding fidgeting or stiffness. Varying tone and pitch—such as lowering the voice for serious points or raising it for excitement—keeps listeners engaged. Improving body language and confidence involves practice. Speaking in front of a mirror, joining debate or drama clubs, recording and

reviewing oneself, and observing skilled speakers are valuable strategies. Reducing nervous habits like pacing or avoiding eye contact helps build poise. Mastering the sub-skills of speaking requires deliberate practice and a willingness to grow. By focusing on fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, coherence, listening, and body language, learners can become confident, articulate communicators capable of thriving in diverse situations.

Speaking Skills and Values Education in the Classroom: Speaking skills and values education are closely connected in the classroom, as both contribute to the development of well-rounded students. *Speaking skills* enable learners to express themselves clearly, engage in meaningful discussions, and understand different perspectives. On the other hand, *values education* instils ethical principles, moral reasoning, and social responsibility. When combined, these aspects help create a respectful and inclusive learning environment. Speaking skills enhance values education through:

- **Encouraging Respectful Communication**
- **Promoting Critical Thinking and Moral Reasoning**
- **Enhancing Empathy and Understanding**
- **Strengthening Confidence and Integrity**

Speaking skills teach students how to communicate respectfully, listen actively, and express their views without offending others. In values education, respect is a fundamental principle, and effective speaking helps uphold it in discussions. Through speaking activities like debates, storytelling, and discussions, students learn to analyze ethical dilemmas and express their opinions. This helps in developing their ability to think critically and make ethical decisions. Good speaking skills allow students to articulate their feelings and experiences while listening to others with empathy. Values education emphasizes understanding different perspectives, which is supported by effective communication (Obuhatsa, 2000). Speaking confidently allows students to express their values and stand by what they believe is right. Integrity, a key aspect of values education, is reinforced when students learn to communicate their thoughts honestly and respectfully (Moschel, 2024).

Values Education Enhances Speaking Skills by:

- **Promoting Ethical Speech**
- **Encouraging Active Listening**
- **Creating a Safe Space for Expression**

Values education develops ethical speech through teaching: honesty, kindness, and responsibility, which are essential for ethical speaking. Students learn to avoid harmful speech, such as gossip or dishonesty, and practice constructive communication. In addition, it encourages active listening - respecting others' views is a core value - active listening is a fundamental part of speaking skills. When students learn to value others' perspectives, they improve their listening and response skills in conversations. Moreover, it creates a safe space for expression, a values-based classroom encourages open dialogue where students feel safe to express their ideas without fear of judgment, helping students to develop confidence in their speaking abilities. Speaking skills and values education enable students to become effective

communicators and responsible individuals. While speaking skills help them express their ideas, values education ensures that their communication is ethical, respectful, and meaningful. Teachers can integrate both aspects into classroom activities to foster a culture of open, respectful, and values-driven communication.

Importance of Values Education: Values education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals and societies by instilling moral and ethical principles that guide behaviour, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships. It helps in the holistic development of individuals, ensuring they contribute positively to their communities and the world at large.

Values education is essential because it develops:

- | | |
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| ● Moral development | ● Supports emotional and psychological well-being |
| ● Character building | ● Strengthens family and community bonds |
| ● Promotes social cohesion | ● Encourages ethical leadership |
| ● Enhances decision-making skills | ● Promotes a culture of peace and non-violence |
| ● Prepares responsible citizens | |

Values education fosters ethical awareness and moral reasoning, helping individuals distinguish between right and wrong. It cultivates virtues such as honesty, integrity, and fairness, which are essential for building a just society. Similarly, through values education, individuals develop qualities like responsibility, respect, and self-discipline, which shape their personalities and influence their actions in various aspects of life, including school, work, and social interactions. A society thrives when its members share common values such as respect, tolerance, and cooperation. Values education nurtures social harmony by reducing conflicts and encouraging peaceful coexistence among diverse groups (Strom, M. (2005)). In addition, individuals equipped with strong values can make informed and ethical decisions in challenging situations, which is a significant in leadership, business, and personal life, where integrity and accountability are crucial. Moreover, Values education instills a sense of civic responsibility, encouraging individuals to contribute positively to their communities and the nation. It promotes active *citizenship*, *environmental consciousness*, and *respect for laws and human rights*. It also supports emotional and psychological well-being. Living by positive values fosters self-respect, confidence, and inner peace. It enables individuals to build meaningful relationships and cope with life's challenges with resilience and a positive mindset (Moschel, 2024).

Families and communities are built on trust, love, and mutual respect. Values education reinforces these principles, ensuring strong family ties and cohesive societies where people support and care for each other. Leaders who possess strong values such as justice, transparency, and humility inspire trust and confidence. Values education ensures that future leaders act in the best interests of their people, fostering good governance and sustainable development. Teaching values such as *empathy*, *compassion*, and *forgiveness* helps prevent violence and conflict. It encourages dialogue and understanding, leading to a more peaceful world. In a rapidly evolving world with technological advancements and globalization, values education provides a moral compass to navigate complex ethical dilemmas, ensuring *progress does not come at the cost of human dignity and ethical considerations* (Waweru, &

Njuguna, 2018). Values education is a fundamental aspect of personal and societal development, it shapes individuals into responsible, ethical, and compassionate human beings, who contribute positively to their communities. Integrating values education into schools, families, and society, creates a foundation for a more just, peaceful, and progressive world (Fisher, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design, a methodological approach used to systematically describe a phenomenon, situation, or population without manipulating the environment or variables (Gupta, & Zieske, 2024). Its main goal is to provide an accurate representation of the characteristics, behaviors, or conditions of a subject being studied. It is usually employed when a researcher wants to gather detailed information about the existing status of a phenomenon (Hurst, 2023). Descriptive qualitative design, was ideal for exploring and understanding the nature of learners' classroom activities. This approach allowed the researcher to observe and describe, in detail, how students engaged in tasks aimed at developing their speaking abilities and how these activities also facilitated the acquisition of values. By examining real classroom situations, the study captured experiences of learners and how they interacted with peers, teachers, and learning materials through structured or informal speaking tasks that carry moral or social significance. The target population comprised of 100 Form 2 and 3 students enrolled in English language classes in Kenyan schools.

The primary focus was on learners' activities—what students actually do during language lessons to build their speaking competencies and internalize values. A purposive sample was drawn from 3 secondary schools. In each school: One English language class - Form 2 or Form 3 - was selected. Each class had 50 students, giving a total sample of 150 learners. Three teachers of English were interviewed to provide context for the learners' activities. The sample size was appropriate for a qualitative study aiming to gain deep, contextual insights into students' classroom experiences. To explore learners' activities for developing speaking skills and acquiring values, the following qualitative research instruments were used: *observation guide*, *Focus group discussion* and *Document analysis*.

The researcher observed learners actively participating in speaking-focused tasks and attention was drawn on how the activities promoted values, for instance: respecting others, 'opinions during discussions, taking turns to speak, demonstrating teamwork during group tasks, reflecting on moral themes in stories or compositions. A *detailed observation guide* captured how learners engaged, how they interacted with peers, and whether the activities lead to meaningful communication and moral reflection. Focus group discussions with learners was conducted with small groups of students to explore: their perspectives on classroom speaking activities; how the tasks helped them build confidence, express opinions, and learn social values; and whether they find the activities engaging or transformative in terms of character development. *Document analysis* was used to review learners' written work - scripts from presentations, debates, role plays and reflection journals - to identify expressions of values and use of spoken English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activities for Teaching speaking skills: Teaching speaking skills requires engaging and interactive activities that encourage *communication, fluency, and confidence*. The activities used for teaching speaking skills were:

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| • Debates | • Listening and Responding Activities |
| • Role-Playing | • Pronunciation Drills |
| • Storytelling | • Drama and Skits and |
| • Picture Description and narrating | • Interview Simulations |
| • Pair and Group Discussions | • Reporting |
| • Oral Presentations | |

Debates were designed to spark critical thinking, provoke diverse viewpoints, and remain relevant to the social, political, and educational landscape in Kenya. Some of the topics of debate were:

- *Should mobile phones be allowed in senior schools?*
- *Is the Kenyan government doing enough to combat corruption?*
- *Is it time to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 in Kenya?*
- *Is poverty the cause of homicide in Kenya?*

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into education, the question of whether or not students should be permitted to use phones in school remains a contentious issue, raising concerns about discipline, distraction, and digital literacy. In addition, corruption is a deeply rooted issue in Kenya, and questioning the government's efforts sparks passionate arguments, not just about governance, but also ethics, leadership, and national values. Similarly, whether it is *time to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 years in Kenya*, is a question that brings young people into the heart of political engagement, exploring whether they are mature and informed enough to participate in elections. It ties into themes of civic education, responsibility, and youth empowerment. During *Role-Playing*, students were assigned roles in real-life scenarios (e.g., job interviews, doctor-patient conversations, customer service). It helps them practice using appropriate language and expressions. *Storytelling activities* enable students to narrate personal experiences or create imaginative stories, therefore, it enhances vocabulary, coherence, and pronunciation. Students were shown pictures and asked to describe what they saw. *Picture Description* encourage vocabulary development and fluency. *Picture Narrating* is based on several sequential pictures. Students are asked to tell the story taking place in the sequential pictures by paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher as a rubric. Rubrics can include the vocabulary or structures they need to use while narrating. Moreover, *pair and group Discussions* were utilized by assigning learners topics for small groups to discuss and then present findings. It enhanced teamwork, listening skills, and verbal expression. *Oral Presentations* were used by learners preparing and delivering speeches on assigned topics. It effectively improves public speaking and clarity skills. Listening and responding activities through playing audio clips, news reports and recorded conversations were used. Learners were asked to summarize and answer questions based on what they heard. In addition, pronunciation drills, where learners practiced sounds, stress, and intonation through tongue twisters and phonetic exercises were utilized. Similarly, students took turns being interviewers and interviewees, it enhanced questioning and spontaneous speaking skills. The activities not only improve speaking skills

but also boost learners' confidence in using English effectively. *Reporting* as an activity commences before going to class, students are asked to read a newspaper or magazine and, in class, they report to their friends what they find as the most interesting news. Students can also talk about whether they have experienced anything worth telling their friends in their daily lives.

Activities for Acquiring Values in a Language Classroom:

Learners were engaged in various activities that not only enhanced their language skills but also helped them acquire critical values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and teamwork. The activities created a holistic learning experience that nurtures both *communication skills* and *character development as summarized in table 1*. Incorporating values-based activities in the language classroom allows students to develop both *linguistic competence* and *strong moral character*. Activities such as discussions, role-playing, debates, storytelling, and community service help learners internalize ethical principles while improving their speaking, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Learning Experiences on Values: The importance of engaging in experiential learning when teaching values in the language classroom, is both profound and transformative. It shifts education from a theoretical, abstract activity to a lived, embodied one. Immersive value based learning experiences, highlights depth and emotional engagement - involving students in meaningful, active participation - where they practice, internalize, and reflect on values, rather than just hearing or reading about them.

When values such as respect, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and cooperation are introduced in language lessons through storytelling, dialogues, role-plays, group work, or community-focused projects, students are not merely being told what is right—they are involved in discovering and experiencing those values firsthand. A role-play where students act out a scenario involving forgiveness after a conflict doesn't just build speaking skills—it helps them feel what it means to forgive and be forgiven. The language used in the process becomes not only a tool for communication but also a medium for personal and moral growth.

Immersive value-based learning experiences also creates a deeper emotional and cognitive connection with the content. When students participate in a group activity that requires collaboration and mutual respect, they don't just learn the word *cooperation*—they live it. Language becomes tied to real feelings and social interactions, which reinforces both vocabulary and the embedded value. This experiential approach bridges the gap between knowledge and action. Moreover, such experiential learning fosters critical thinking and self-awareness. In reflective activities that follow *practical experience*—such as discussing how it felt to include someone in a game or how a story character showed courage—students begin to examine their own values and choices. The language classroom then evolves into a space for shaping identity and character, not just mastering grammar and vocabulary. Other practical experiences that can be used in learning values in the classroom are:

- Kindness Jars
- Peer Mentorship and
- Gratitude activities

Table 1. Activities and Values Acquired

Activity for Acquiring Values	Description	Values Acquired
Group Discussions on Moral and Ethical Topics	Learners discuss thought-provoking topics related to moral values, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of honesty in daily life The impact of kindness and empathy in society The role of respect in maintaining relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect (by listening to different viewpoints) Empathy (by understanding others' perspectives) Critical thinking (by analyzing ethical dilemmas)
Role-Playing and Dramatization	Students act out real-life scenarios involving ethical decision-making, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student finding a lost wallet and deciding whether to return it A friend being pressured to cheat in an exam A disagreement between two friends and how to resolve it peacefully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honesty (by exploring the consequences of truthfulness) Responsibility (by making ethical choices in role-play) Teamwork (by working together to perform a skit) Encourages empathy and helps learners practice ethical decision-making.
Activity for Acquiring Values	Description	Values Acquired
Storytelling and Personal Narratives	Learners share personal stories or create narratives based on moral lessons, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A time they helped someone in need A lesson they learned about the value of hard work A story that highlights the importance of forgiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrity (by sharing authentic experiences) Compassion (by reflecting on acts of kindness) Self-awareness (by evaluating personal experiences) Helps learners understand and apply moral lessons in real life.
Debates on Ethical Issues	Learners engage in structured debates on moral topics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Should students always obey school rules, even if they seem unfair?" "Is it ever acceptable to lie?" "Should wealthy individuals be obligated to help the poor?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairness (by understanding different perspectives) Justice (by evaluating right and wrong) Confidence (by articulating arguments respectfully)
Letter Writing and Reflective Essays	Learners write letters or essays reflecting on values-based themes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter to a friend apologizing for a mistake A thank-you letter to someone who has positively influenced them An essay on the importance of tolerance in a diverse society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gratitude (by acknowledging others' kindness) Forgiveness (by learning how to express apologies) Self-discipline (by structuring thoughts effectively)
Reading and Analyzing Literary Works with Moral Lessons	Learners read short stories, poems, or novels that explore moral dilemmas, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Betrayal in the City " by Francis Imbuga (exploring leadership and corruption) "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee (exploring justice and empathy) Moral stories from African folklore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justice (by analyzing social themes) Compassion (by relating to characters' struggles) Wisdom (by learning from historical and cultural contexts)
Peer Teaching and Mentorship	Older students mentor younger students by teaching them language concepts while incorporating values. They can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach vocabulary using proverbs and moral sayings Guide younger students in writing stories with moral lessons Encourage good study habits and positive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership (by guiding and inspiring others) Responsibility (by being role models) Patience (by supporting others in learning)
Community Service Projects and Reflection	Learners participate in community service projects, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting a children's home and writing about their experience Organizing a school clean-up and discussing environmental responsibility Volunteering to teach literacy skills to younger children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compassion (by helping others) Environmental awareness (by taking care of surroundings) Teamwork (by working with peers to make a difference)

Using a *Kindness Jar* in values education within a language classroom is a creative and powerful strategy for cultivating *empathy, gratitude, and positive social interaction*—all while developing essential language skills. The Kindness Jar becomes more than a decorative item; it turns into a daily ritual and an anchor for meaningful language use tied to moral development. In practice, a Kindness Jar is a container where students write down or draw acts of kindness they have witnessed, received, or performed, and then place them in the jar. This can be done using slips of paper, sticky notes, or even small cards. These notes become prompts for *reflection, discussion, and storytelling*, thereby serving both value education and language learning goals. To integrate it

effectively into a language classroom, the teacher can dedicate a short time each day or week—perhaps at the end of a lesson—for students to contribute to the jar. They can write simple sentences such as, “I helped my friend with homework,” or “Someone shared their pencil with me.” Learners are encouraged to write full narratives or reflections, enhancing their written expression. The jar entries can then be used in various interactive language activities. For instance, teachers might read a few notes aloud and use them to spark classroom discussions, encouraging students to expand the situations, ask questions, or role-play similar scenarios. This not only reinforces kindness as a lived value but also deepens listening, speaking, and comprehension skills. In written tasks,

students could choose an act of kindness from the jar and write a story around it or compose a thank-you letter to the person involved. Notably, the Kindness Jar also nurtures a positive classroom culture. As students become more aware of kind behavior, both in others and themselves, they begin to internalize the value of kindness. Language becomes the tool through which they notice, name, and reflect on good deeds—making vocabulary about emotions, behavior, and interpersonal relationships more relevant and rooted in real-life experiences. The Kindness Jar supports values education by making kindness visible, habitual, and celebrated. In doing so, it gives students regular opportunities to use language meaningfully and emotionally—deepening both *their linguistic and moral development*

Peer mentorship in a language classroom is a highly effective and human-centered approach to learning values. It draws on the power of relationships—specifically between more experienced or mature learners and their peers—to foster a supportive environment, where both language and moral development can flourish. It is a practical vehicle for teaching and living out values such as responsibility, empathy, respect, cooperation, patience, and integrity. Selected learners (often older or more advanced in their language skills or emotional maturity) are paired with peers who may need academic support, social encouragement, or help adjusting to the learning environment. From a values education perspective, peer mentorship provides authentic opportunities to practice values in real-time. For example, a mentor must learn to listen actively, offer help respectfully, and model positive behavior—thus internalizing the values of compassion, patience, and leadership.

Meanwhile, mentees learn to trust, communicate, and collaborate, cultivating values like humility, gratitude, and openness to guidance. Language learning is naturally embedded in this exchange. Mentors may help their peers with reading comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, or writing tasks, but they do so in a way that emphasizes interpersonal connection. In these interactions, the use of polite language, affirming feedback, and expressions of encouragement become everyday linguistic tools, not just abstract grammar points. Teachers can enhance the value-learning experience by incorporating reflection activities. After mentorship sessions, students can journal or discuss questions like, “How did it feel to help someone today?” or “What did I learn from my partner?” These reflections reinforce both the language used and the moral lessons drawn from the experience. Essentially, peer mentorship shifts the classroom culture toward one of shared responsibility and mutual care. It de-centers the teacher as the sole moral guide and empowers students to lead and learn from one another. In doing so, values education becomes lived and relational, not merely taught. Peer mentorship in a language classroom is a living curriculum of values. It weaves moral learning into the very fabric of student interaction, while simultaneously enhancing communication skills. Through this model, students not only learn what values are, but how to live them—and how to express them through language (Adams, & Oliver, 2023).

Likewise, practical learning experiences that focus on *gratitude activities* such as: *Classroom gratitude wall or tree*, *Gratitude Circle*” Oral Sharing and writing “Notes” or letters appreciating are crucial in values acquisition. *Classroom gratitude wall or tree* is a dedicated space where learners can

post sticky notes or paper leaves with messages of thanks—either to people, places, or even experiences. This visual display of appreciation becomes a shared project that fosters community, collective reflection, and mutual respect. The act of contributing reinforces the idea that gratitude is a continual, communal value. “Gratitude Circle” Oral Sharing are used in a supportive classroom atmosphere. Learners can sit in a circle and take turns verbally expressing something or someone they are grateful for. This encourages active listening, spoken fluency, and emotional expression. As students listen to peers, they learn *respect, the art of taking turns, and how shared experiences* deepen communal bonds.

Learners express gratitude to their classmates and teachers by writing “Thank You Notes” or letters appreciating what they handled them based on certain experiences in the classroom. Such acts promote kindness and help create a positive classroom environment. The same can be extended to other learners, teachers, friends and family members outside the classroom. The goal is for the learners to learn to say; ‘Thank you!’ Teachers should also be role models in showing gratitude to learners too. In essence, the importance of learning experiences in teaching values lies in its power to make learning authentic, memorable, and transformative. It enables students to not only *understand values but to practice and embody* them, using language as the thread that weaves thought, feeling, and action into meaningful growth.

CONCLUSION

The study set out to explore the types of activities learners engage in during English language lessons to develop speaking skills and acquire values. The research revealed that learner-centered activities play a significant role in enhancing students’ spoken English. They provide authentic contexts for learners to express themselves, negotiate meaning, and build confidence in oral communication. Moreover, the study found that many of these activities are not only linguistic in nature but are also rich in value-laden content. Activities that involve collaborative work, themed discussions around social issues, and storytelling based on moral dilemmas or cultural values serve as natural platforms for character formation, through their *interaction patterns and the reflective content of their discussions or performances*.

Teachers play a crucial facilitative role in selecting and guiding these activities, embedding moral lessons within language instruction either implicitly or explicitly. The integration of speaking and values education appears to be most effective when it is intentional and learner-centered, allowing students to internalize both language and life skills through active participation. Therefore, learners’ classroom activities in language lessons are vital tools not only for enhancing *communicative competence* but also for *nurturing values* that contribute to holistic education. The findings underscore the need for pedagogical approaches that prioritize active learner involvement, value-based content, and real-life communication scenarios in the language classroom. It recommends that future training and curriculum design efforts should support teachers in balancing *linguistic goals* with *moral development* to produce articulate, thoughtful, and responsible learners.

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