

**INFLUENCE OF PLAY ON DEVELOPMENT OF
LANGUAGE SKILLS AMONG PRESCHOOL
CHILDREN IN KISUMU CENTRAL
SUB-COUNTY, KENYA.**

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**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Award
of Master of Education Degree in Early Childhood Education in the Department of
Educational Communication and Technology, University of Nairobi.**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for the award a master degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

I sincerely dedicate this work to my husband Titus Obat, my mother Agneta Ojuondo and children Dr. Eddy Obat, Kevin Obat, Hazel Obat and Brian Obat whose inspiration and desire for me to succeed has been the single driving force that has enabled me to be where I am today.

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ABSTRACT

Play is essential, vital, critical and fundamental to a child's social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. Without adequate healthy play, children run the risk of entering school unprepared, growing into teens and adults without needed skills and failing to meet their potential. Play develops children's language because it incorporates many of the socially interactive and cognitive elements known to enhance language skills. Language development occurs when children have access to wide variety of play activities and are encouraged to talk about their ideas, feelings. Specifically the study sought to find out aspects of play that contributed towards the development of language skills in Kisumu Central Sub County. In this regard, the study under objectives one to four examined types of play, availability of play materials, role of the teacher during play and school policy on play as elements of play that influenced language skill development. The study reviewed relevant literature to establish research gaps and determine the current underlying play factors and performance levels of pre-school children concerning language skills. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires, interview guides and observation checklist. The study adopted purposive sampling procedure in selection of the study sample. A study sample of 143 respondents was used. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine means, frequencies and percentages then presented in form of tables for interpretation. The findings of the study revealed that learners who were exposed to different types of play like manipulative, creative, dramatic and physical plays with play materials achieved higher scores because the children acquired listening, speaking, reading and writing skills during interaction with teachers who played active roles to instruct and direct play than those who were not exposed to any form of plays.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xi
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	6
1.3 Purpose of the Study	7
1.4 Research Objectives.....	7
1.5 Research Questions.....	8
1.6 Significance of the Study	8
1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	8
1.8 Delimitations of the Study	9
1.9 Basic Assumptions of the Study	9
1.9 Definition of Key Terms	10
CHAPTER TWO	12
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	12

2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Play and Development of Language Skills.....	12
2.3 Types of Play and Language Skills Development.....	14
2.3.1 Manipulative Play and Language Skills.....	15
2.3.2 Creative Play and Development of Language Skills.....	16
2.3.3 Dramatic play or Role-play and Development of Language skills.....	17
2.3.4 Physical Play and Development of Language Skills.....	19
2.4 Availability of Play Materials and Development of Language Skills.....	20
2.5 Teachers’ Role in play and Development of Language Skills.....	24
2.6 Policy on Play and Development of Language Skills.....	27
2.7 Theoretical Framework.....	30
2.7 Conceptual Framework.....	32
CHAPTER THREE.....	36
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	36
3.1 Introduction.....	36
3.2 Research Design.....	36
3.3 Target Population.....	36
3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure.....	37
3.5 Research Instruments.....	37
3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments.....	38
3.6.2. Reliability of Instruments.....	39
3.7 Data Collection Procedures.....	39
3.8 Data Analysis.....	40

3.9 Ethical Considerations	40
CHAPTER FOUR.....	41
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	41
4.1. Introduction.....	41
4.2. Questionnaire Return Rate.....	41
4.3. Demographic Profile of teachers and Head teachers.	42
4.3.2. Head teachers and teachers’ professional qualifications.	43
4.3.3 Head teachers and Teachers Gender.....	44
4.4 Findings on Influence of types of play on development of pre-school children language skills.....	45
4.4.1. Manipulative play and Development of language skills.....	45
4.4.2 Creative play and Language skills development.	47
4.4.3. Dramatic play and language skills development.	48
4.5. Availability of play materials and the development of language skills.....	50
4.5.1 Appropriateness of play materials and development of Language Skills.....	52
4.5.2 Utilization of Play materials and the development of language skills in pre- schools.....	54
4.5.3. Play Activities and Development of Language Skills	55
4.6 Teachers role on play and the development of language skills	59
4.7. Policy on play and the development of language skills.....	62
CHAPTER FIVE	67
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	67
5.0. Introduction.....	67

5.1. Summary	67
5.6. Conclusion	70
5.7. Recommendations.....	71
5.8. Suggestion for Further Research.....	71
Contribution of the Study to the Body of Knowledge	72
REFERENCES.....	73
APPENDICES	79
Appendix I: Letter of Transmittal	79
Appendix II: Questionnaire for Pre-School Teachers.....	80
Appendix III: Questionnaire for Headteachers	85
Appendix IV: Interview Schedule for Pre-School Children	88
Appendix V: Observation Check List.....	90
Appendix VI: Sample test for Pre School Children.....	92
Appendix VII: Research Letter of Introduction from the University	94
Appendix VIII: Research Authorization from NACOSTI.....	95

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework	32
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Head teachers and teachers by professional experience.....	42
Table 4.2: Head teachers and teachers professional qualifications.....	43
Table 4.3 Distribution of head teachers and teachers by gender	44
Table 4.4: Manipulative play and language skills development.....	45
Table 4.5 Creative play and Development of language skills	47
Table 4.6: Dramatic play and development of language skills.....	48
Table 4.8. Availability of play materials and the development of language skills.....	51
Table 4.9 Appropriateness of play materials and development of Language skills	52
Table 4.10. Play equipments, Materials, and development of language skills	54
Table 4.11: Play Activities Learners engage in, in Pre-school.....	55
Table 4.12: Availability of play materials and Development of Language Skill	57
Table 4.13: Teachers role on play and the development of language skills	59
Table 4.14. Teachers role and development of Language Skills	60
Table 4.15. Policy on play and development of language skills.....	62
Table 4.16: School policy on play and development of language skills.....	64

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ECE	Early Childhood Education
IPA	International Play Association
KICD	Kenya Institute of curriculum development
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
PE	Physical Education
SMSK	Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Play enhances children's development and is fundamental for every child's acquisition of language skills (Ginsburg, 2006). It is a critical element of early childhood, curriculum and pedagogy development. In addition to being recognized as a vehicle for learning, play is described as a context in which children can demonstrate their own learning and help scaffold the learning of others (Woolkopf, 2004). According to the United Nation High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR 2006), play is so important to optimal child development.

Play benefits children's language development through socially interactive and cognitive elements known to enhance language skills (Shonkoff and Philip, 2000). Maria Montessori (1940), noted that play is children's work as it often mirror in aspects of lives through development of language skills. Children talk about having fun, mingling with friends and sequencing activities for sustained fulfillment through use of language. Language performance is the manner in which the learner comprehends, how a learner uses language, the extent of vocabulary use and how one is understood using language. Language learning involves both the receptive skills (listening and reading) and the productive skills (speaking and writing) (Woolkopf, 2004). Naturally, the receptive skills should be learnt first. In schools, learning to read becomes the most celebrated achievement in a child's schoolin Play encourages Language growth through a curriculum that introduces interesting play objects, activities, experiences and concepts as well as creating an indoor and outdoor environment that set up to invite groups of

learners to work together. As children play, they manipulate, explore, experiment and develop language and reasoning skills while they acquire concept of the world around them. In the contemporary society, play has been undervalued in school because the goals of learning in these settings have been defined narrowly in terms of mastering a set of basic academic skills. In this regard, most readers find it difficult to incorporate play in and outside classroom.

Broncher and Joyes (2003), note that currently in the UK, the government has been taking keen interest in developing the standard of the children studying in pre-schools by providing relevant facilities and play materials that enhance holistic development of the learners (Aliza and Rahety 2011). They believe that children are playful by nature. Their earliest experiences of exploring with their senses leads them to play by themselves at first and then eventually with others. Available research in Western world shows that play materials tend to be differentiated according to gender. Play materials for girls are attractive and nurturing while materials for boys are aggressive and competitive based, (Betozzi, 2008).

In California, there is well-established consensus among early childhood professionals that play is an essential element of developmentally appropriate high quality early education program. National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2003). Play provide benefits for cognitive, social, emotional, physical and moral development for children from all socio-economic cultural & linguistic background (Josef, 2006).To provide these benefits, play must be consciously facilitated by skilled teachers who are well trained in observing children and in understanding how play

contributes to the children's mastery of concepts and skills. The exploratory and creative activity that young children initiate themselves is the primary way they develop concepts and understanding about the world. In California, teachers use the power of developing ideas, interests and competencies to promote learning through play, circle time and small groups (Elkins, 2007). Children have many opportunities to apply and integrate all types of learning – physical, social, emotional, intellectual and language development. Children engage in activities they are interested in so that they have a natural motivation to learn (Shonkoff and Philips, 2000). These oral narratives, capacity and oral language skills form the foundation for reading comprehension, the ability to produce coherent writing.

In Malaysian context, the play-based approach has been emphasized in the pre-school curriculum and teachers are encouraged to adopt play-based activities in their teaching and learning process. Manstura (2008) reiterated that play focuses on children's natural characteristics and that learning through play is the most appropriate approach in early childhood curriculum. Nonetheless, managing play-based activities is one of the most challenging tasks that teachers in Malaysia have to face. Studies have shown that many teachers never prioritize the use of play approach in their teaching instruction (Saayah, 2004). They do not possess skills in planning and organizing activities by identifying appropriate age to use materials and resources effectively during play activities, structuring environment to suit learners' needs during play. In addition, constant pressure for academic achievement and lack of support from school administration has resulted in play-based approach being abandoned by many teachers.

In Ghana, ECE focuses on learning through play, which Jean Piaget posits that meets the physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social needs of children. Children learn more efficiently and gain knowledge through activities such as dramatic play and social games. It is important that teachers promote children development through play by various types of play on daily basis. In Ghana pre-schools, the key guidelines for creating a play-based learning environment include providing a safe space, correct supervision and culturally aware trained teachers who are knowledgeable about early years' foundation. Learning through play has been seen regularly as the most versatile way a child can learn. According to Rudolf Steiner (1925), believed that play allows children to talk, socially interact, use their imagination and intellectual skills.

(Frobel, 1852) stated that play was a vehicle of child's development, "the more the child plays the more the mind becomes" hence play helps children learn to solve problems in an environment that is supportive to this process. Play enhances children's skills to ask questions and figure out how things work. Through these activities, children strengthen their language development when given the time and basic play materials that provide the child with a variety of valuable learning opportunities. In reading, children learn to hold a book properly and turn pages, understand that words convey messages through pictures and enjoy reading picture storybooks. Children's play unlocks their creativity and imagination and develops reading; thinking and problem solving skills. When playing with children and adults, vocabulary and language skills are fostered.

Children will learn to use language to communicate meaning as well as picking up new words and hearing grammatical structure of the English language. Children's symbolic play is cognitively valuable occupation because such play allows them to practice the

skills required in later life. The ability to pretend at a young age is a sign of early competence in understanding mental status. Even though considerable research has explored play's development potential in early years, play has been reduced or eliminated from some early childhood classrooms in Ghana. The press for academic readiness through direct teaching is now affecting the amount of time assigned for play in pre-school in Ghana (Gmitrova and Gmitrov, 2004).

Psychologists generally agree that the period below six years is critical in the development of human beings. Theories of intellectual development take place in stages and it therefore follows that certain concepts, skills and attitudes must be developed and nurtured at particular periods in a child, failure then the concepts can be stunted or missed completely. There is a growing concern among Kenyan pre-school education practitioners on the current approach to ECE that emphasizes the academic component at the expense of other areas of child development. Over emphasis on cognitive development observed, goes against child development research findings that define quality and relevance of ECE to be, that which caters for total development of the child (Kombo and Khalayi 2011).

In Kenya, the Ministry of Education syllabus intended for use in pre-schools places emphasis on the use of play and play materials by teachers during teaching and learning process (KICD, 2008). The schools should ensure that there is equal opportunity for girls, boys, and children with special needs in all aspects of play. However; there is a lot of rote learning with more emphasis on academic achievement depriving the learner time to play. Evidence is seen in schools that have perfected teaching over the weekends even to pre-schools yet what is done is within the confines of classrooms. The school policy

requires the adoption of pre-school curricula that emphasize play and child initiated activities yet both parents and teachers who believe in academic achievement hinder this.

1.2 Statement of the Problem.

Preschool language activities play an important role in the development of a child's vocabulary, and communication skills through activities like singing games, poems, rhymes and role-plays. A healthy brain development depends on vigorous physical activities children engage in during the early years of childhood. However, expectations from parents and teachers on academic achievement lead teachers to push for more and more developmentally inappropriate academic programs in early childhood education (Raver, 2003). Researchers indicate that language development is influenced by social interactions and the kinds of play materials children use. An environment rich in language and literacy interactions full of opportunities to listen and use language constantly should be provided for children to explore.

Language skills are improved by outdoor play activities that are effectively learned through play. Culture of educational accountability, elimination of school recess, learners going to school over the weekends, learners going to school early and leaving late has been evident in Kisumu Central Sub County (Kere, 1998). Moreover, at this very sensitive stage, there is a lot of rote learning with a central focus to the cognitive development of the child. The pressure to acquaint children with academic skills deprives them of playtime. During playtime when they should be out playing, they may be in class completing class work. Other reasons may range from lack of play materials, lack of good playgrounds, teachers' incompetence on knowledge on play, and inadequate time allocated to play.

The problem therefore, is that despite the Republic of Kenya providing preschool education learning through play, play has been dismally below expectation. Not only is play rarely used in public pre-school but the quality of play activities has often been hindered by many factors such as inadequate playground, limited play materials, pressure by parents on teachers to meet academic standards Play as a medium of learning language is not being used well in preschools hence the view upon which this study is based. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to establish the influence of play on language skills development of preschool children.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of play on development of preschool children language skills in Kisumu Central, Kenya.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- (i) To establish how types of play influence development of pre-school children language skills in Kisumu Central Sub County.
- (ii) To assess how the availability of play materials influence development of preschool children language skills in Kisumu Central Sub County.
- (iii) To examine how the role of teachers in play influence development of Preschool children language skills in Kisumu Central Sub County.
- (iv) To determine how School policy on play influences the development of preschool children language skills in Kisumu Central Sub County.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

- i. How do types of play influence development of preschool children language skills in Kisumu Central Sub County?
- ii. How does the availability of play materials influence development of preschool children language skills?
- iii. How does the role of the teacher on play influence development of preschool children language skills?
- iv. How does school policy on play influence development of preschool children language skills?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will be of immense value to school administrators and teachers in ensuring that specific, relevant and adequate play materials are provided to pre-school children to enhance language skills development. The findings will be important to school administrators and pre-school teachers in ensuring that they provide adequate time for play.

The researcher hopes that the study will form a basis for future involvement of play in preschools in general and will lead to the generation of new ideas for better and more efficient control of ECE educational institutions in Kenya.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

. The study had no control of other variables that may also have effect on language skill development like environment and social economic activities.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was limited to public ECE Centers in Kisumu Central. The respondents for the study include head teachers, preschool teachers and preschool children. The study focused on language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The study used questionnaires, interview schedule and observation checklist to collect data from the respondents. The findings of the study cannot be generalized to other parts of the country unless a similar study is done in areas with similar characteristics.

1.9 Basic Assumptions of the Study

The study was guided by the following assumptions:

The study assumed that all ECE centers exposed learners to various types of play and had play materials and that the children were given enough time to play. The researcher conducted the study under the assumption that play influences the development of language skills. The researcher assumed that all the respondents would give the correct information.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

Development	The action or process of developing or being developed
Influence	Ability to persuade an individual to change his or her opinion
Language	Any set of defined rules that can be used to convey thoughts, ideas and instructions.
Language skills	Language abilities the child acquire in order to communicate
Language performance;	This is the output or product of a language learning process usually given in series.
Language Acquisition Device;	Is an inborn mechanism that enables children to infer linguistic rules from the languages children hear.
Language Acquisition;	Process by which children acquire the capacity to perceive, produce and use words to understand and communicate.
Play	Performing or doing an activity for pleasure enjoyment, or for amusement
Speaking skills;	Ability to produce flexible, appropriate and indefinite number of utterances in particular language.
Skill	Ability or talent or potential to perform tasks.
Readiness:	Is the development level that a child is expected to achieve prior to being engaged in teaching and learning process.

Organization of the study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one includes background to the study statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, basic assumptions limitations of the study, delimitations of the study and definitions of key terms. Chapter two covers review of related literature, theoretical framework and conceptual framework. Chapter three covers research methodology, which includes research design, sample size and sampling procedure, research instruments, validity and reliability of research instruments, data collection procedure and analysis.

Chapter four covers findings and discussions. Chapter five covers summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores a review of literature related to the study. It includes sections on concept of play, types of play, availability of play materials, age appropriate play materials, attitude of teachers towards play, teachers' role in play, and school policy on play, theoretical and conceptual framework.

2.2 Play and Development of Language Skills

Play is the most relevant way through which children learn. Play based teaching and learning promotes positive social skills in children. Today many children are not given time to play and teachers do not integrate play as a school based policy as stipulated in the curriculum yet the entire teaching and learning of young children is entirely based on play. Play is part of children's behavior embedded in spontaneous day-to-day living. It forms an important part of pre-school and out of school early learning. Play is important to healthy brain development (Shonhoff and Philips, 2000). Article 31 of the UN Convention states that every child has the right to rest, leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts. The article further states that member governments shall respect and promote the rights of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity (KICD, 1994).

Early childhood learning knowledge centre in Canada looked at the relevance of play to child's development and reported that play is relevant to children because it enhances

every aspect of child's development. Previous works of Luther (1546), Montessori (1912), Piaget (1950), cited by Kontos (2004), proposed that children in school should construct their own knowledge and insisted on integration of relevant play activities in teaching and learning that is conducted in a relevant learning environment that is ideal for young children. The study noted that, when relevant play activities go along with relevant learning environment, higher learning results are yielded in children. In the article, *play as a curriculum*, (Kananu, 2000), claims that, in most East Africa countries, children play progresses through various stages and levels of complexity. In addition, a study by Mokena, (2008) enunciates clearly common characteristics of relevant play for small children in ECE classroom as active, adventurous, communicative, enjoyable, involving, symbolic, and interactive.

Lindy's (2012) study in Tanzania emphasized that preschool should be child's place of play. Her study differs from this study as her study was on relevance of play on preschoolers in Tanzania while this study is on influence of play on the development preschoolers' language skills in Kenya. In the ECE syllabus, five lessons per week are set aside for play activities and that is a clear indication of the recognition of the importance of play (KICD, 2008). When deprived of play, the child is a prisoner shut off from all that makes life real and meaningful. The impulse to create and achieve, working through play allows the child to grow in body and mind .Play helps to enhance a child's readiness for more formalized learning. Through play in early childhood, a child strengthens his or her language development. It presents a child with many opportunities for oral communication. This early language development will in turn help children as they later learn to read and write.

Coolahan, (2000) states that play is integral to the academic environment. It ensures that school setting attends to the social and emotional development of the children as well as their cognitive development. Play has been shown to help and motivate children adjust to the school setting and even to enhance children learning readiness, learning behaviors and problem-solving skills. Play and unscheduled time that allows for peer interaction are important components of socio-emotional learning. Play that involves language activities plays an important role in the development of child's vocabulary, listening skills and communication skills. Therefore, play materials are integral component of learning process hence their adequacy, sustainability is important (Boreham and Riddoch, 2001). The relationship between play and learning is complex, reciprocal and multidimensional. The process of play and learning stimulate one another in early childhood. There are dimensions of learning in play and dimensions of play in learning. Play and learning are inseparable dimensions in pre-school practice. Subsequently, this study intends to establish the effects of play on the development of preschoolers' language skills in Kisumu Central, Kisumu County.

2.3 Types of Play and Language Skills Development

The playtime activities children engage in vary based on their motivation levels. Play fosters children cognitive growth. According to Tassoni and Cate (2000), as children grow, they develop their social skills since they are capable of playing together in a social manner. The social play that children engage in can be classified into four stages. There is the solitary play stage that involves children between one to two years old. At this stage, children play alone but seek reassurance from adults. They tend to develop independency because they want to do things alone. Parallel play stage involves two

years olds where they meet other children for the first time. They play alongside others even without communicating. Cooperative or group play stage is between 3^{1/2} years. They play actively with others, they talk and decide about play, they share and make their own rules. Exploratory play, which is sometimes, called unoccupied play where a child randomly interacts with things and people around them. The adult may not be able to tell whether the child has a purpose to this play or not. Plays of different forms in children enhance language skills development.

2.3.1 Manipulative Play and Language Skills

Manipulative play involves the use of hands and legs and all body parts. This kind of play develops hand-eye coordination in children as they interact and manipulate play materials. The manipulative area should therefore, consist of relatively small materials like balls, ropes, clay, blocks, beads brushes, paints in addition to swings that can be used for both indoor and outdoor play activities respectively. . In writing readiness, the child learns how to paint, draw and color pictures, write letters, scribble, write patterns, draw and model. Reading readiness involves looking at and differentiating details in pictures and objects and moving eyes according to the accepted reading style from left to right.

Manipulation of play materials enhances the development of gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination that is important in the development of writing and speaking skills in language. As they hold play materials during play, get ready to hold writing tools with a fist or finger grasp and draws with a variety of items like crayons, pens, and pencils, make marks and scribbles. This is developed through their muscles during manipulative play. Work in this area; primarily enhance their fine motor skills and spatial awareness. The items to be manipulated should vary depending on the age, interests and needs of the

children in the pre-school centre. It is therefore important to maintain a wide range of play materials.

2.3.2 Creative Play and Development of Language Skills

Frankel and Hobart (2000), states that creative play promotes social, emotional and intellectual skills. Many early learning and childcare programs take learning through play approach and ensure that there are large blocks of time each day when children choose an activity from a number of activities selected by the educator. By allowing children to select their own learning activities, they become the leader of their own learning. According to Libera (2004), imagination is more important than knowledge. Through play, children learn that their personal gratification is often dependent on their cooperation and creativity with other children. Play teaches children about partnership, teamwork and fair play.

In creative play, learners use art materials such as paint, clay markers, pencil, and glue. Games that require interaction with other learners are a great way to develop interaction with other people. Expression of thought and articulation in conversation are some of the speaking skills that are developed. In developing reading skills, children require to read the instruction provided so that they could proceed through the next level. These games are not only essential in developing vocabulary but also empower children to develop reading comprehension. A study on language skills asserts that reading skills involve training children to observe and interpret details in pictures, objects and symbols. In addition, it entails classification of objects by colour, size, kind shape and texture (KICD, 2008).

2.3.3 Dramatic play or Role-play and Development of Language skills

This kind of play involves acting out roles and situations. Many young children spend a lot of time engaged in imaginative play by themselves throughout the early childhood years. They invent scripts and play many roles simultaneously. Toys, dolls, cars and action figures usually support this kind of play. As children grow old, they create entire world in solitary pretense, often with large collections of small objects or miniature figures. This kind of play fosters communication (listening and speaking) skills in language as children express their emotions, feelings, fears and aspirations through dramatic play. This play also fosters sharing, self-confidence, problem solving, cooperation and conflict resolution.

In dramatic or role-play situation children learn to use language to explain what they are doing. They learn to speak fluently by asking and answering questions and the words they use fit whatever role they play. Personal vocabularies grow as they begin to use new words appropriately and the importance of reading and writing skills in everyday life becomes apparent by their use of literacy materials. Lewis and Bruce (2001), study on British children aged 1-6 years, measured children's capacity for symbolic play. Children were asked to perform symbolic tasks as substituting a teddy bear for absent object. They found out that the kids who scored higher on a test of symbolic play had better language skills-both receptive language and expressive language.

Dramatic play promotes the use of speaking and listening skills. When children take part in the play they practice words they have heard others say and realize that they must listen to what other players say in order to respond in an appropriate manner. It teaches children to choose their words wisely, so that others will understand exactly what it is

they are trying to communicate. As they play children learn to follow instructions and directions, and take turns. This play helps children feel proud of what they can do hence they develop a sense of who they are. According to Zins (2004), outside their own and immediate families, children see how older children and adults talk, play and work with each other hence they develop their social skills. Zins (2004) concludes that this is how children learn ways of how to relate with people outside their confines.

The opportunity for dramatic play is a way for children to explore the meaning of the activities they see in grown-up world. Here they learn to interact with others and they gain a sense of competence. The children are immersed in social talk that includes greetings, goodbyes, chatting and jokes. Daily activities like tidying up, story time, and telling teachers and parents about their personal experiences, are opportunities for children to use their language listening and speaking skills in a meaningful way. Moreover, it enhances the child's needs to organize a complex environment into meaningful scripts, encourages children to plan, communicate their plans and courses of action, stimulates children to listen, speak, think creatively and predicts later creativity. Dramatic play not only offers social and emotional development but also offers language development. A teacher can incorporate writing skills into dramatic play. For instance, if the teacher wants the child to learn writing, then they can take down an order in a restaurant with a pad and crayon or they can make a grocery list. When they finally internalize it through play, they will be ready to move on to formal writing.

- a) A study by Manqué and Eldemira, (2009) based on the relevance of symbolic play activity on improvement of mathematical thinking confirmed that symbolic

play activities are important and relevant to teaching of most mathematical problems but did not address influence of play on the development of preschool children's language skills. Therefore, this study seeks to establish the influence of play on preschoolers' language skills in Kisumu Central Kisumu County.

2.3.4 Physical Play and Development of Language Skills

Despite the known benefits of play, there is evidence to suggest less of children's time is being devoted to play in favor of structured education activities (Hofferth and Sandberg, 2000). Appropriate toys and materials encourage children to build muscle and strength. Children gain practice and confidence as they manipulate play materials. Toys, swings, balls and ladders for climbing that children can explore in many different ways build eye-hand coordination and encourage children to think about how things work. Some of these items like ladders swings and balls promote balance and body awareness. These play materials that promote active physical learning motivate children to pursue their own ideas and interest enthusiastically developing writing skills. During this kind of play, the children are able to develop listening and speaking skills as they coordinate, give instructions, listen and follow rules during play. Children gain practice and confidence as they manipulate materials. Hobart and Frankel (2009) confirms that play is away through which children expend on excess energy and maintains physical fitness.

Some items also promote balance and body awareness. In this type, children use the whole body in activities with bicycle, balls and ropes to build their muscles, and to enhance or develop their muscles in writing skills. They act out their feelings, and they listen and talk (listening and speaking skills) to playmates as they follow rules.

2.4 Availability of Play Materials and Development of Language Skills

Play facilities and materials in children's play add value. Children learn best when they are part of a secure and stimulating environment full of materials for manipulation. Teachers, parents and school administrators are expected to provide play materials to the children to help them engage in meaningful play that will influence the development of language skills. Play helps children learn language because it incorporates many of the socially interactive and cognitive elements known to enhance language skills (Woolkopf, 2004).

Play materials range from balls, ropes, dolls, swings, clay, blocks, beads and ladders. According to National ECE policy framework (2006), parents should provide security and protection, stimulation, socialization, play and learning materials. Interactive display and availability of play materials in schools, thematic collections of carefully selected materials entice pre-school children to explore a wide range of ideas. Children are active learners and if they are to develop the skills and competence, they must be able to work and access play materials. Increased time spent talking during play with peers is associated with better comprehension and production (Tabor, 2001). Play is important for language development because when they are in control of an interaction, they are engaged; they speak about and listen to what interest them. A study done by Eli, (2000), on effect of selected play materials on children's social skills development, revealed that children who had used variety of play materials had developed better than those who were not exposed to variety of play. However, his study did not address effect of play materials on the development of language skills; hence, this study wants to fill this gap.

The materials should be organized in such a way that opportunities for learning and discovery, that enhance the development of language skills, are maximized. Physical manipulation of these play materials promote coordination which is important in developing communication as well as hand-eye coordination (Frankel and Hobart, 2001).

The anticipation, preparation and instruction from teachers before and after play provide opportunities for listening and use of new vocabularies relevant for that time. Other listening skills that develop during play include giving clear, simple instruction for everyday tasks, being a good listener, praising and playing listening games. All these activities are aimed at helping the children acquire listening skills that are vital for learning and acquiring language skills. Language skills are primarily avenues for cognitive development because they allow children to talk about their experiences and discoveries. With the availability of play materials children learn words used to describe concepts and words that let them talk about activities and events in the field. Language is dependent upon the amount of practice children have in both speaking and listening skills during interactions with good adult models (Mutai, 2001).

The priority currently given to the early acquisition of academic skills is another threat to children's play. These emphases always constrain and limit the scope of learning that unfolds naturally in play. Children need time, space, materials and support of informed parents and thoughtful skilled early childhood educators in order to become master players. A study by Kananu (2005), found a strong relation between resource availability and effective use as related to academic achievement. She noted that physical facilities, teaching, learning, and play materials are important determinants of pre-school performance in the learning of all subject areas. The importance of play in a child is

grounded in Vygotsky theory that children learn at the time they play. Play, according to Vygotsky (1962), contains rules for behavior that the child should follow to be successful in play situation. Proper materials engage children in a wide range of play, alone and with others. The curriculum and play materials and activities should be based on the children's interest, age and skill level. The teachers should provide a variety of activities for different age groups that focus on language, social development, fine and cognitive development and gross motor skills.

The teacher is the facilitator of play by working with children to develop rules for appropriate indoor and outdoor play environment. The issue about the appropriate use of materials, age and developmental levels must be carefully considered in design and selection of materials. The quantity, quality and selection of play materials influence the interactions that take place between children, thus these materials provided to children should be age appropriate and flexible to the children. Flexibility allows the teacher to maximize on the space for integration of learning activities such as dancing, dramatization, skipping, jumping and hide-seek.

As for the structure of knowledge in language skills, the content should be presented in a way that the child understands so that the vocabulary, terminology, symbols and examples given are at the child's level. Through age-appropriate materials, the desire to learn is stimulated and children are free to discover language concepts (Khoima, 2006). According to Khoima (2006), language development begins with cooing games and evolves to sophisticated language levels such as telling stories and jokes where children develop their language. Safety of equipment encourages children to use their imagination

and learn to cooperate. A facility like the playground maximizes opportunities to engage in greater amount of play with peers. The interaction with their peers allows children to express ideas and feelings and develop oral skills.

According to Brooks and Atkins (2002), an aspect of school management that is generally overlooked is the physical facilities maintenance. Brooks and Atkins (2002) noted that school managers and teachers constantly use play facilities but ignored facilities maintenance. Repairs take place only when problems arise. According to Betsy (2004), the administrator should put in place guidelines and rules to be followed by both teachers and children on use of play materials. Teachers need to facilitate play by working with children to develop rules for safe indoor and outdoor play. No matter how careful the child, teacher and administrators are to follow rules, sometimes children are bound to get hurt. According to Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya(SSMK (2008), adult supervision can help prevent injuries by ensuring children safely use the play materials and engage in safe play. The playground should be designed in a way that from whichever position the children and adults are where they can clearly see each other while playing. This can help reduce injuries or accidents that are bound to happen during play. The playground should be free from stagnant water, sharp objects and stones to allow relaxed movement of children during play. For children to reach their potential, they should feel comfortable in a safe context of the world around them Maslow (1943). Safety measures will ensure effective use and manipulation of play materials that will enhance development of fine and gross motor skills hence the development of writing skills in language.

2.5 Teachers' Role in play and Development of Language Skills

To provide quality education, the teacher must have attained a given level of education relevant to the task and be properly trained. The success of any literacy program is largely dependent on the type of teacher's performance in that field. Each teacher should recognize the value of play in the programs for young children. Unfortunately, teachers often fail to take advantage of the opportunities play provides for children's development and learning. Through observation, teachers can learn about children's social interactions, cognitive and language abilities, motor skills and emotional development. Adult supervision can help prevent injuries by making sure children properly use playground equipment and do not engage in unsafe behavior around (SMSK, 2008).

The role of the teacher is to select activities and organize the learning environment in such a way that creates a language rich environment (Spodeck, 2006). This safe environment will encourage children to use freely the play materials and facilitate the development of oral, listening and speaking skills. Ziegler, (2006) noted that skilled teachers, who are well trained in observing children, must consciously facilitate play and understand how play contributes to the child's mastery of concepts. The teacher should organize activities and materials that promote language development for use throughout the indoor and outdoor daily schedules. The teacher should establish an environment where language exploration and usage is encouraged. Language here should be used to develop reasoning skills. This can be done through logical relationships and concepts, which should be presented in appropriate ways. Children learn through interactions with materials and people, both peers and adults in the context of play and daily routines. The teacher should have a daily schedule, which is essential to the basic structure of each day.

Consistency enables children to feel secure, giving them confidence and freedom to explore the environment. The daily schedule is to make the teacher be a keen observer of children's characteristic and behavior. The teacher should therefore keep brief and accurate records of children's interests, abilities and emotional aspects and use them for noting improvement. Some specialists in play activities argue that the ever-increasing amount of knowledge and skills needed by young children through play require teachers' guidance or direct instruction to specific learning goals and objectives (Lillemyr and Fredrick, 2000).

Teachers have a variety of roles in supporting integration of children's play in ECE curriculum (Goffins and Wilson, 2003). These roles include providing materials for play, encouraging high quality play, structuring environments for play, modeling play and introducing children to new play opportunities. During planning and preparation, the teachers can arrange for physical places suitable for different types of play, find and provide accessories for play (dress props) and decide how play periods can fit into the daily routines and schedules of the school and class. Teachers in ECE programs are facilitators who need to engage children in multiple experiences to foster their all round development. They need to observe children to identify their needs and capabilities and move with their pace of development. They need to create a nurturing and positive relationship with children and among children. Play appears to be the source and motivator for eagerness to learn and think creatively. The teacher should facilitate the transition process of moving from one activity to another, which is often difficult for young children. The teacher must prepare and point children for change of activities.

They need to use attention getters like signals, songs, finger play, rhymes, games and puppets to signal change. These activities promote listening and speaking skills in language. Teachers who use transition activities will have calm and organized classrooms and environments with happy cooperative children during play. The environment of play and the attitude of the supporting teacher towards play shape the quality of the play experience for children. One of the most important attitudes and roles of the teacher is facilitation of play.

The teacher should set this stage, creating and maintaining an environment conducive for rich, spontaneous play and interactions in ways that enhance children's language skills, without interrupting the flow and direction of play. Play is a valid learning experience in and of itself albeit one that has been difficult to justify and sustain in formal education settings. Creating environments where children can learn through play is not a simple thing to do consistently and well. It needs one with a positive attitude towards the tasks and one who joins and enjoys with the children in their play for the children to learn. The role of the teacher is critical for the children to become skilled at play; they need uninterrupted time and knowledgeable teachers who pay attention to support the right to play. Teachers' perception to use of play-based approach provides learning benefits to children. Their perception of play impacts children's learning experiences.

It is appropriate for pre-school teachers to understand the appropriate teaching approach such as learning through play and its role in early childhood development. Children's listening and communicative skills are fostered as they talk with teachers and play with

other children. By using carefully chosen comments and open question, teachers can assist children in their thinking and help to build their confidence in the use of language. As children browse in the book corner, look at books in various areas of play and listen to stories read to them, they become aware that the printed word has meaning. Pre-writing skills develop as children play and have opportunities to experiment with variety of media such as pencils, crayons and paint brushes. This they use to scribble and make patterns hence develop writing skills. The teachers' attitude towards play should be geared towards acquiring language through social interactions. Play activities give children opportunities to learn language from their peers and practice what they have learnt in different situation.

Despite the fact that teachers may assign time for play in their lesson plans, their attitude towards playtime may not be routinely built into the program because teachers generally hold diverse viewpoints about teaching, one that is child-centered and one that is teacher-directed. Most often ECE teachers may set up appropriate stimulating environment for young children but decide to stand back and may not follow up with guidance, scaffolding or supportive and responsive interactions with children as they play. A study on effects of television watching on preschool learners' language skills was confirmed to be enhancing children's vocabulary, pronunciation of words and spelling. (Wanja, 2011) however, did not address effects of play on preschoolers' language skills development. Therefore, this study needs to address this gap.

2.6 Policy on Play and Development of Language Skills

Proper time management in pre-school leads to effective learning in class (Ouke, 2010). Time management techniques have great implication for learning in pre-school and if

implemented well, can go a long way to optimize time spent on instruction (Sassoon, 2007). The school should provide space and appropriate periods for children to experience a holistic learning through play to sustain interest and development of languages skills. In many early childhood programs across the country, time for play is dwindling away as pre-school teachers tend to spend time stressing on academic performance; however, this inhibits communication among learners that is enhanced through play. Almost every adult you have met can recall a pleasurable childhood play experience often in rich and vivid detail. Many remember endless delicious time spent in secret places enjoying various play activities, yet most teachers in Kenya do not integrate play in curriculum leading to poor performance by children while teaching and learning of children should be entirely based on adequate playtime.

A policy framework is the most important instrument for advocacy, for ensuring provision of quality services and for harnessing resources and other support for young children (Republic of Kenya 2006). When legalized, a policy framework becomes the legal instrument that all those providing services for young children must adhere. The framework guides the government in its commitment of resources to programs for young children. A policy framework is therefore extremely important for addressing the total well being of young children. Article 31 of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child states that play is part of children's lives and development. The article states that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in culture and arts. It further states that the member government shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and should encourage the provision of

appropriate and equal opportunities for recreational and leisure activity (Republic of Kenya 2006).

In order to provide services for children, pre-school teachers are expected to be guided by the use of ECD policy framework as a foundation for improved service delivery to pre-school children. Quality of ECE is determined by facilities that are child friendly for example, school infrastructure, play ground and play facilities (ROK, 2006). In order for pre-school teachers to provide these facilities, a framework that provides appropriate play facilities for all children should guide them. According to pre-school guideline, play activity is acknowledged as a vital activity and thus it is allocated much time in the timetable. The general objective of ECE states that allocation of time to play enables children to enjoy living and learning through play since it develops the children's self-awareness and self-esteem (KICD, 2009). The ECE syllabus allocates five lessons per week of 30 minutes and it incorporates play activities in every other activity area in ECE. The ECE guidelines states that the pre-school teachers should work with parents and community members towards provision of quality materials, feeding programs, health services and safety for children.

According to Bedrova and Leong (2010), the need to integrate play into the ECE curriculum has been supported by decades of child development research and is reflected in the most recent documents of professional organization such as National Association for the education of young children and the International play Association. NAEYC promotes play-based approaches in early childhood curriculum and states that teaching practices should be appropriate for children's need, age group and development. NAEYC

believes that developmentally, appropriate practices (DAP) contribute to children's healthy development in learning (NAEYC, 2009).

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study is modeled on two theories the Nativist theory by Noam Chomsky's on Language Acquisition and Lev Vygotsky's on Social Cognitive theory. Noam Chomsky Nativist theory on language acquisition holds that people are born with a predisposition to learn language. The theory holds that children are born with a hard-wired language acquisition device (LAD) in their brains and that the brains contain the major principles of language, which is ready made to quickly, acquire language at specific stages in the development process. According to Chomsky's theory when young children are exposed to a language, their LAD makes it possible for them to set the parameters and deduce the grammatical principles because the principles are innate. He states that language structures are heavily influenced by the environment hence the theory holds that language skills were developed through watching and learning our parents and other people in the environment. He states that the environment heavily influences language structures. The theory is relevant to the study because it posits that children acquire language in a social interactive environment with the help of adults who are parents, peers and teachers during play

Lev Vygotsky's Theory on Social Cognitive is based on the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD). The concept of ZPD was established as a framework to describe the process of self-development as it occurs with the guidance of adults and peers in the learning environment. Vygotsky focused on the role of social interaction in human

development and examined the complex relationship between language and thought as well as learning and play. He found out that children's social interactions with significant individuals in their lives profoundly shape their interpretation of the world. As applied to this study the theory holds the idea that child development is because of social interactions between children and their social environment. These interactions involve parents, teachers, playmates, sisters, brothers and other relatives. Vygotsky's research focused on the role of social interaction in human development. It means that the most significant psychological achievement of the early childhood age occurs while children engage in play. According to Vygotsky, play creates a broad zone of proximal development, both in cognitive and socio-emotional development. According to Vygotsky (1962), play contains all the developmental tendencies in a condensed form. Vygotsky theory is relevant as it emphasizes on self-development of the child through play in a social context. These theories are supported by Froebel's theory (1852), which emphasizes on the need for the child to engage in play with objects'. Froebel states that with objects the child will learn the underlying concepts represented by the objects. He not only emphasizes on children playing with objects but also playing outdoors with objects.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

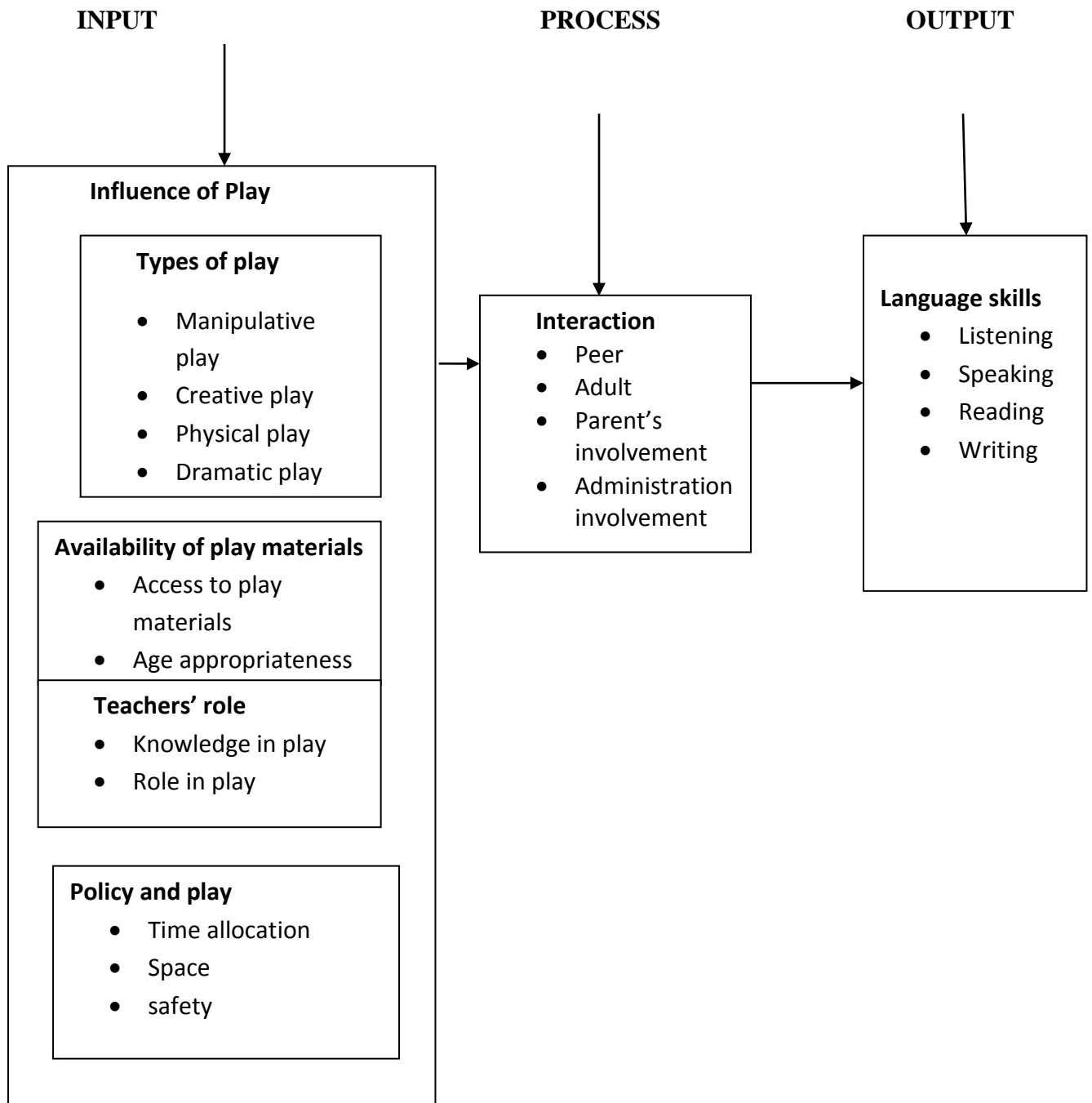


Figure 1 is the perceived framework for influence of play on development of language skills among pre-school children.

The independent variable of this research is influence of play, which includes types of play, availability of play materials, and teachers' role on play and policy on play. These factors function within the limits of interaction among learners peers, adults, parents and administration involvement. For the purpose of this study, language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. The successful management of play in early childhood schools should lead to effective acquisition of language skills.

2.8 Summary of Reviewed Literature

No.	Author	Yr	Study/Focus	Findings	GAP	Intervention
1	Eli	2000	Effect of selected play materials on children social skill development	Children who used play materials developed better than those who did not	Effects of play materials on language skills	Provide play materials to pre-school
2	Bedrova E & Leong	2010	Curriculum and play in early childhood development	Effective evaluation and monitoring of ECE curriculum	Determinants of effective curriculum implementations in ECE programs	Stakeholder involvement and effective supervision of ECE programs
3	Bettozi E	2008	You play like a girl. Play and gender disparity in ECE programs	Play contributes to the development of social skills	Effects of selected play materials on children social skills	Formulate play and play materials that do not stereotype negative socialization
4	Boreham C & Riddoch	2001	Physical activity, fitness and health of education	Leads to greater physical levels and greater intensity in boys and girls	Physical activity and health in academic performance	Children to spend more time in physical exercises
5	Colaham K	2000	Pre-school instrul and readiness to learn.	Parental and teacher characteristics as determinants in pre-school readiness.	Relationship between classroom, peer play and learning behaviors and conduct	Involvement of all stakeholders in pre-school readiness.

No.	Author	Yr	Study/Focus	Findings	GAP	Intervention
6	Kananus	2004	Factors contributing to pupils performance in ECE	Playing activities enhanced the development of mathematics in ECE	Challenges facing the use of play methods in teaching mathematics in pre- schools	Inclusion of math activities in pre-school programs
7	Kere, J	1998	Stakeholders perception in tuition and academic in pre-schools	Tuition inhibits holistic growth and development of the early childhood learner	Factors influencing tuition of pre-school children	Review of pre- school curriculum for holistic development .

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, research instruments, validity and reliability of instruments, data collection methods and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2002). The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The research design was chosen because it involves quantitative and qualitative analysis that allows the researcher to gather information through questionnaire and large amount of information from observation (Orodho, 2005). The design was chosen because the study tried to establish possible relationship between independent and dependent variables. as they are on the ground. The researcher aimed at gathering accurate information that was observable to establish the influence of play on the development of pre-school children's language skills in ECE centers.

3.3 Target Population

Target population is a complete set of individual cases or objects with some common observable characteristics (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The study included head teachers, teachers and pre-school children. The number of public ECE Centers in Kisumu Central Sub County was 45 comprising of 45 head teachers, 380 ECE teachers and 780

learners (MEO, Kisumu County 2015). The head teachers were selected because they are the administrators in charge of running both primary and pre-schools . The teachers are selected because they are directly involved with the learners in and outside the classroom and subsequently the implementers of the program.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A sample is a small group selected from a big population of the study (Nyakwara 2009). It is a representative of the population. From the 45 public ECE schools in Kisumu Central Sub-county, 13 of them were randomly sampled. This comprised of 13 head teachers, 150 ECE teachers and 780 learners. From the sampled schools, 13 head teachers were purposively sampled because the researcher wanted to work in schools that were offering varied types of play. While 52 ECE teachers were sampled in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), who had pointed out that at least 30% of the population is adequate for the study. From each sampled preschool, 4 teachers were randomly sampled giving sample size of 52. While the 78 learners being 10% their population was sampled for the study as proposed by Kothari (1994) who had observed that sample of 10% from the accessible population of 780 respondents is appropriate for a descriptive survey design study thus six learners were systematically random sampled from each pre-school.

3.5 Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires, interview schedules and observation checklist and sample tests to collect data. Appendix II were questionnaires which were used by teachers to

collect data on types of play. Appendix III was questionnaires for head teachers to answer questions concerning school policy on play and teachers' role in play. Appendix IV were interview schedules that were used to answer questions on types of play, time for play and availability of play materials in schools. Appendix V was observation checklist to check the available play materials. Appendix VI was sample test for learners on language skills.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments.

3.6.1. Validity of Instruments

According to Combo and Tromp (2006), validity of a test is how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure. It is the degree to which the research instruments measures what it is intended to measure. Mutai (2001) states that validity is the degree to which the results obtained from the analysis of data actually represents the phenomenon. To ensure validity of the instruments, content validity was used where the items in the questionnaire were checked against research objectives. An expert opinion was sought from the supervisor to identify items in the questionnaire that needed to be restated or removed from the study.

The researcher conducted a pilot study in order to pre-test the instruments just before the actual data collection. The purpose of the pilot study was to detect any ambiguity in the instrument so that they could be addressed before the actual study. Pilot study to determine the suitability of the research instruments was carried out in three schools that were not part of the sample. It would provide a check on the questionnaire by establishing

which questions were doubled and which ones were ambiguous. All these were done before the final questionnaires were rolled out to the respondents

3.6.2. Reliability of Instruments.

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency that the instruments demonstrate (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2002). Reliability of the questionnaires was tested to confirm the consistency. To check the reliability the test-retest technique was used where the same respondents were exposed to the same questions after a period of one week. The information given by the respondents were the same and instruments were deemed reliable. A Pearson's product moment correlation formula was used. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) coefficient of 0.80 or more will simply show that there is high reliability of data. The reliability of the instruments in this study was 0.815, which deemed the instrument reliable.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Before collection of any data from the sampled population, the researcher sought for an introductory letter from University of Nairobi, and an authorization permit from the National Council of Science and Technology. Subsequently, clearance to carry out a research was obtained from the County Director of Education Office and County Commissioners Office in Kisumu County. The schools were visited to make appointments and the researcher sought permission from the head teachers to administer the questionnaires and to interview children. The questionnaires, interview schedule and

observation guides were administered to various respondents. The instruments and the were later collected for analysis

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of bringing meaning to the raw data collected (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Data for this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to determine frequencies and percentage of the responses to each question and presented in tabular and figures form. In the analysis, all items focusing on research questions were analyzed and conclusions made.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are very important in research. A researcher should consider upholding the ethics during a research study. The participants must make a decision to participate in the study. The participants were informed about the nature of the study. Safety of the participants was of paramount importance to the researcher. The researcher showed a written letter of authority and explained the details of the research and its objectives in order to gain consent. Right to privacy and confidentiality of the participant was considered. Collecting information or observation of the participant without permission was unethical and therefore the researcher sought permission from the head teachers and teachers to interview learners. Data collected from participants was treated with confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a description of analysis of data, presentation, interpretation and discussion. The study was on influence of play on the development of pre-school children's language skills in Kisumu Central Sub-County, Kenya. The chapter has been discussed under various sub sections guided by the research objectives. The first part presents questionnaire return rate, demographic information about head teachers and teachers. The second part presents information on influence of play on the development of pre-school children language skills. The presentation is based on the questionnaire administered to the head teachers, teachers and interview schedule and tests for preschool children, and observation checklist to confirm availability of play materials and play activities for children.

4.2. Questionnaire Return Rate

The returned questionnaires were from 13 head teachers who filled giving a response of 100% (N-13) whereas out of the 45 ECDE teachers, 42 filled and returned the questionnaires giving a response of 93-3%(N-42) while all the 15 ECE learners who were interviewed responded giving 100% (N-15). According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a response rate of 50% is allowed for analysis, response rate of 60% is good and response rate of 70% and over is very good.

4.3. Demographic Profile of teachers and Head teachers.

4.3.1 Demographic information of teachers and Head teachers by experience

The study sought to establish the demographic characteristics of head teachers and teachers according to professional experience. The responses are shown in Table 4.1

Table 4:1: Head teachers and teachers by professional experience

Professional Experience	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5 years	16	38.1	0	0
6-10	10	23.8	0	0
11-15	11	26.2	3	23.08
16-20	5	11.9	5	38.46
Over 20			5	38.46
Total	42	100	13	100

Table 4.1 shows that majority of teachers 16 (38.1%) had work experience of between 1-5 years. This implied that the school administration had confidence in their teaching, as this would help raise the performance level of language skills. Teachers with experience of between 6-10 years were 10 (23.8%) and teachers with work experience of between 11-15 years were 11 (26.2%). This illustrated that majority of teachers had experience and were qualified to manage preschool better for language development. The study revealed that a number of head teachers with professional experience of between 16-20 years were 5 (38.46%). This implied that the head teachers had managerial skills to run

both Primary and ECE Schools and their experience is important in teaching especially in the foundation classes (Ngige 2011). This confirmed that most head teachers were in a position to understand the needs of pre-school children and therefore allocated time and play materials.

4.3.2. Head teachers and teachers' professional qualifications.

The study sought to establish qualification of head teachers and teachers. The responses are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Head teachers and teachers professional qualifications

Professional Experience	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
P1	0	0	8	61.5
Certificate	35	83.3	0	0
Diploma	7	16.7	3	23.1
Degree	0	0	2	15.4
Total	42	100	13	100

Table 4.2 shows that majority of teachers 35 (83.3%) possess certificate in ECE while 7 (16.7%) have diploma in Early Childhood Education. This shows that the teachers handling pre-school children in Kisumu Central are trained and this could be due to the government policy on Early Childhood Education that requires teachers handling pre-school learners to hold either certificate or diploma so that they are able to, plan and organize ECE activities and programmes in pre-school effectively. The table further

indicate that majority of head teachers 8 (61.5%) are P1 holders while 3 (23.1%) have diploma and 2 (15.4%) have degree. This shows that most head teachers had qualifications to lead schools and understand the importance of play in the development of pre-school children language skills hence provide the necessary and relevant facilities to facilitate play in schools for the development of language skills. According to Ngige (2011), qualifications in teaching are considered important in participation and performance of the teachers.

4 3.3 Head teachers and Teachers Gender.

The study sought to find out the distribution of head teachers and teachers by gender. The responses are shown on Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Distribution of head teachers and teachers by gender

Response	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender				
Male	0	0	8	61.5
Female	42	100	5	38.5
Total	42	100	13	100

Table 4.3 clearly indicates that there is gender imbalance in pre-schools with majority of teachers being female. This confirms that more women than men venture in the teaching of young children considering their patience and nurturing skills as mothers. This also implies that ECE has the foundation of baby care role that the male teacher is unable to perform well hence the female teacher understands the needs of young children. Distribution of head teachers by gender confirms that more males than females head most

primary schools. This could be because women are less interested in leadership positions in school and therefore more men are promoted to head schools (Kere, 2000).

4.4 Findings on Influence of types of play on development of pre-school children language skills.

The study findings are discussed systematically in relation to the objectives being: influence of types of play on development of pre-school children language skills, availability of play materials and development of language skills, role of the teacher in play and policy on play and development of language skills.

4.4.1. Manipulative play and Development of language skills.

This play involves the use of hands, legs and all body parts. It develops hand-eye coordination in children. The study sought to establish from the teachers how manipulative influence language development skills play. The responses are as shown in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Manipulative play and language skills development.

Response	Teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	12	28.6
A	30	71.4
D	0	0
SD	0	0
Total	42	100

This is also confirmed in Table 4.4 which indicates that majority 30 (71.4%) of the teachers agreed that manipulative play enhances all language skills of listening,

speaking, reading and writing where the hand muscles are used and the eyes are coordinated to perform the manipulation of materials. This implied that teachers used varied language activities in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to expose children to acquire language skills. Data from observation confirm this was because such children had little face-to-face with teachers and peers. Teachers prepared children for writing readiness in pattern writing through the use of basic equipments like painting brush, use of clay and plasticines. This was in line with Piaget (1930), that children of between 1-7 years are in pre-operational stage when they show developmental aspect through play and therefore they need many concrete materials to manipulate. A teacher had this to say, "Children who are actively involved in manipulating objects are quick to grasp concepts and quick to speak".

4.4.2 Creative play and Language skills development.

Many early childhoods learning and childcare programmes take learning through play approach and provide blocks of time for children to choose a number of activities. It is for this reason that this study sought to find out from teachers how creative play influences development of language skills of pre-children. The responses are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Creative play and Development of language skills

Response	Teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	29	69.04
A	13	30.96
D	0	0
SD	0	0
Total	42	100

Table 4.5 indicates that 29 (69.04%) of the teachers strongly agreed that creative play influences the development of language skills while 13 (30.96%) of teachers agreed that creative play enhances the development of language skills. This is because creative play involves the use of materials like paint, brushes, paper, water and modeling clay hence children are exposed to various activities that are selected by the teachers. Through these, they are able to express, their thoughts hence develop their vocabulary in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This confirms Ndugu's (2013) study that activities provided should allow children to explore for themselves and use materials provided.

4.4.3. Dramatic play and language skills development.

This play involves acting roles and situations. The respondents are asked to rate the level in which dramatic play influences development of language skills. The responses are indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Dramatic play and development of language skills

Response	Teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	36	85.7
A	6	14.3
D	0	0
SD	0	0
Total	42	100

In Table 4.6, 36 (85.7%) of ECE teachers strongly agree while 6 (14.3%) agree that dramatic play promotes the development of all language skills of pre-school children. This is because the learners are able to listen to instructions, perform the roles as they speak, read the scripts and write essays related to the roles they perform. According to Similensky in (Wood and Artfield 2005) not only do children derive satisfaction through make believe play but also from the ability to imitate. They practice words they have heard from others and realize that they must listen and organize meaningful scripts through writing. This is in line with Khoima (2006) who confirmed that learning by doing raises the learner's level of retention. Kennan's (2005) said that learning and teaching aids increases chances of greater participation, understanding and retention rate.

4.4.4.Types of play and Performance in language skills.

Children engagement in various types of play influences their developmental stages positively. Preschools where teachers and the children involved in variety of play activities were recorded as well varied while pre schools where learners and teachers averagely involved in play activities were recorded as moderately varied while those that learners and teachers did not involve at all in play activities were recorded as not varied. The researcher sought to establish the performance in language skills in various schools. The responses are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Types of play and language skills development

Pre Schools	Types of play	Mean scores
A	Well Varied	80
B	Well Varied	78
C	Well Varied	74
D	Well Varied	70
E	Moderately varied	60
F	Moderately varied	58
G	Moderately varied	54
H	Moderately varied	48
I	Not varied	46
J	Not varied	44
K	Not varied	42
L	Not Varied	40
M	Not varied	40

From the observation, schedule the researcher recorded types of plays used during both indoor and outdoor. The Table indicates that pre-schools A,B,C D that used varied types of play posted higher mean scores of 80,78,74 and 70 respectively in language skills compared to schools E,F,G,H which posted average mean scores of 60,58,54 and 48 which had limited play activities in their schools while schools I J.K ,L and M that did not have varied play activities at all registered the lowest mean scores of 46,44,42,and 40

respectively in language skills due to limitations in various forms of play activities. Booth (1994) also confirmed that a preschool environment should be one that involves children in active learning experiences and encourages them to talk. However, one teacher had this to say on children's play:

“Through play a child's interest and potentials can be identified at an early stage and any disability can be detected and the right intervention sought and therefore children should be left to play and maximize their potentials.

Tables from the questionnaires shows that majority of teachers and head teachers agreed that types of play influenced development of language skills of children through object and materials that they manipulate during play activities. Data from the observation schedule revealed that learners who were engaged in various play activities and had face-to-face conversation with teachers learnt various vocabularies related to language skills of listening and speaking. From interviews with the children, data indicated that various types of play children engaged in enhanced self-confidence in them thus prepared them for speaking and reading skills. This confirms that, for children to develop language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing there is need to expose them to different play activities that enhances acquisition of these skills. One of the head teachers had this remark:

“Because of play with other children, my son learnt to talk and produced words that he acquired from his friends in the neighborhood hence he had to be taken to preschool at the age of three years simply because of his eloquence in speech”

4.5. Availability of play materials and the development of language skills

Pre-school learning environments as well as the resources to be used are essential in the development of pre-school children. Children learn best when they are part of a secure

and stimulating environment full of play materials for stimulation. It is through this that the study sought to investigate the impact of play materials on the development of pre-school children language skills. The responses from the head teachers and teachers are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Availability of play materials and the development of language skills

Response	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
QA	0	0	0	0
Adequate	10	23.8	8	61.5
Not Adequate	32	76.2	5	38.5
Total	42	100	13	100

Table 4.8, 8(61.5%) of head teachers confirmed that play materials were adequate. From the observation and interview schedules, it was observed that during utilization of play materials, teachers engaged learners in direct instructions and led activities, which enabled them to acquire new vocabulary and the language skills that accompanied the activities. Through observation and interview schedule, it was evident that learners who interacted with the teachers, peers and utilized play materials were eloquent in communication and free to respond to questions confidently compared to their counterparts from schools who did not utilize play materials.

Table 4.8, 32 (76.2) of teachers confirms that play materials are not adequate. This is depicted from the observation and interviews with the children that emphasis is laid on mean scores for entry to class one. This further suggests that such schools that did not avail play materials to children were disadvantaging children as far as their language skill development is concerned. Head teachers therefore equated this inadequacy to lack of

funds by parents who fail to pay school levies. From the observation made by the researcher, it was evident that those schools with inadequate play materials do not provide maximally for children’s play. However, one of the head teachers made this remark

“It becomes very difficult to adequately equip preschool section with play equipments as parents attitude towards children’s play is negative, they will always want to see children in class competing for academics than play as they consider play a waste of time and hindrance to academic performance.”

This was in line with Ndugu’s (2013) study on utilization of play materials and equipments which confirmed that finances was a major hindrance to the acquisition of play materials and resources. According to Montessori (1952), children learn and develop best in a prepared environment like safe playground where opportunity to play is provided.

4.5.1 Appropriateness of play materials and development of Language Skills

Children are active learners and if they are to develop the skills and competence, they must be able to work and access play materials that are appropriate to their developmental age. The researcher sought to find from head teachers and teachers the appropriateness of play materials in ECE centers. The results are indicated in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Appropriateness of play materials and development of Language skills

Response	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Appropriate	8	19.05	9	69.2
Appropriate	30	71.43	4	30.8
Not Appropriate	4	9.52	0	0
Total	42	100	13	100

Table 4.9, indicates that 8 (19.05%) of ECE teachers and 9 (69.2%) of head teachers confirmed that play materials and activities learners engage in were very appropriate to learners age. Majority 30 (71.43%) of teachers agreed that play items were appropriate to the learners age. This implies that play occupies a major part of pre-school children lives; therefore materials that are appropriate to their age makes them acquire vocabularies that are within their level hence any of their curriculum should include play activities for children Frobel (1952). This means teachers were the ones on the ground and were involved in identification and selection of all play equipments and materials while the head teachers are the one who purchase the materials. However, 4 (9.52%) of ECE teachers confirmed that the play materials were not appropriate. This is because of lack of interest and inability to plan and organize for the materials. These teachers felt incompetent and were not enthusiastic about play as they worked on class achievement to determine learners' movement to the next level.

4.5.2 Utilization of Play materials and the development of language skills in pre-schools.

Play materials and equipments in pre-school learning environment can create a conducive atmosphere for learning. This is brought about by the way the materials are availed and organized by the teacher for children to use. It is through this that the researcher sought to examine the play materials used by preschool children from observation checklist as shown in Table 4.10

Table 4.10. Play equipments, Materials, and development of language skills

Response	Seesaws		Tyres		Sandpits		Balls		Climbers	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Adequately Used	5	11.9	42	100	4	9.5	42	100	3	7.14
Not adequately	37	88.1	0	100	38	90.5	0	100	39	92.86
Total	42	100	42	100	42	100	42	100	42	100

Table 4.10 clearly indicates that majority of pre-school 37(88.1%) do not adequately utilize sea saws. This is because the equipment is costly and most preschools cannot afford to have it while only 5(11.9%) are adequately utilized due to parents cooperation to support the schools. The Table also shows that children are adequately using 42 (100%) tyres, as tyres are locally available and easy to get for most schools. Majority of pre-schools 38(90%) do not utilize sand pits equipment due to cost in construction and maintenance However, a study by Mahindu (2011), noted that inadequacy of materials encourages aggressiveness, fighting and scrambling for few that are there hence that was

not safe as it exposes them to psychological distress hindering children’s acquisition of language skills during play.

4.5.3. Play Activities and Development of Language Skills

Healthy brain development depends on the vigorous activities the child engages in during the early years of childhood. Play activities children engage in vary based on their motivation levels and this contributes to cognitive growth. Therefore, the researcher sought to determine from learners the play activities they engage in and the responses are shown in Table 4.11

Table 4.11: Play Activities Learners engage in, in Pre-school.

Response	Skipping		Sliding		Riding		Ball play		Rope		Bean	
	ropes				tyres				Pulling		Bags	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Majority	42	100	0	0	42	100	42	100	42	100	42	100
Not	0	0	42	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Majority												
Total	42	100	42	100	42	100	42	100	42	100	42	100

From Table 4.11 it was established that most pre-school children 42(100%) participated in rope skipping and pulling, riding tyres, ball games, and beanbag throwing. This is attributed to the facts that play materials for these activities are easily available and affordable. However, 42 (100%) of pre-schools do not participate in sliding and climbing ladders due to the cost involved in purchasing the materials therefore this hinders the

learners from interacting with teachers and peers during play hence hampering their development in language skills.

4.5.4. Availability of play materials and Performance in language skills.

The availability of play materials in preschool impact positively on children language skills. The researcher-recorded preschools where play materials were available for learners as very adequate and in schools where play materials were moderately available were recorded as adequate while schools that had none were recorded as not adequate. Data on the availability of play materials on children's language mean score are presented on Table 4.12

Table 4.12 Availability of play materials and development of language skills

Preschools	Availability of play materials	Mean scores
A	Very adequate	80
B	Very adequate	78
C	Very adequate	74
D	Very adequate	70
E	Adequate	60
F	Adequate	58
G	Adequate	54
H	Adequate	48
I	Not adequate	46
J	Not adequate	44
K	Not adequate	42
L	Not adequate	40
M	Not adequate	40

Data from the questionnaire on availability of play materials reveal that 61.5% of head teachers confirmed that play materials were adequate. Preschools A, B, C and D where play materials were very adequate posted higher mean score of 80, 78, 74 and 70 respectively. While preschools E, F, G and H where play materials were just adequate posted average mean scores of 60, 58, 54 and 48 respectively. However, preschools I, J, K and M where play materials were not adequate achieved low mean scores of

46,44,42,and 40 in language skills Data from questionnaires from teachers and interviews with the children indicated that some preschools lacked fixed play materials like see saws, swings and balancing equipments while majority of simple materials like balls, beanbags, ropes and tyres were plenty in preschools. This confirmed the observation made that emphasis was laid on achieving mean score for entry to class one rather than helping the child to grow holistically through play methods.

The implication therefore was that preschools that had play materials for children had higher mean scores in language skills compared to preschools that did not have play materials. Those preschools that achieved low mean scores in language skills were confirmed to lack play materials and therefore the children did not have face-to face interaction with the teachers and peers to enhance language skill acquisition. This is in line with Kombo and Khalayi (2011) who confirmed that quality and relevance of ECE is affected by inadequate state of learning materials, equipment and supervision. They further said that availability of play materials and equipment is especially affected by lack of proper funding and lack of parent participation in their children's education. . This reveals that play materials are essential components in preschool learning environment and development of language skills because they attract and raises children's curiosity to learn as children tend retain concepts of what they see and manipulate during play with objects .Mitei (2012) further confirmed that use of real objects helped to enhance concentration. However, teachers confirmed that where learners did not use real objects their concentration span and motivation was low.

A teacher had this to say on availability of play materials:

“Children who used variety of play things had developed better social skills and tend to be more creative and innovative in their daily thinking and activities”. than those who were not exposed to a variety of play materials”.

4.6 Teachers role on play and the development of language skills

The success of any literacy programme largely depends on the teachers’ involvement and participation. The researcher sought to find out from head teachers and teachers the role of the teacher during play of ECE children in the development of language skills. Table 4.13 shows the results.

Table 4.13: Teachers role on play and the development of language skills

Response	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SA	26	69.9	10	76.9
A	16	38.1	13	23.1
D	0	0	0	0
SD	0	0	0	
Total	42	100	13	100

From Table 4.13 clearly shows that the teacher has major role to play in the organization and planning of children’s play in pre-schools. The teacher is expected to identify appropriate play materials. ensure safety of materials to the learners. The teachers role in play is also confirmed from Table 4.13 where majority of ECE teachers 26 (69.9%) and 10 (76.9%) of the head teachers confirms that teachers have a role to play in planning, organizing and participation in children’s play. SMSK (2008), states that the role of the teacher is to select activities and organize learning environment in a way that creates a language rich environment. The head teacher noted that teacher’s organization of play and play materials in a meaningful and familiar way assisted children in cognitive development. However, a study by Ngecha (2011), confirmed that lack of teachers

participation in children’s play lead to children’s low motivation in school Spodeck (2006), confirms that safe environment encourages children to use freely play materials and to facilitate the development of oral, listening and speaking skills. During an interview with the children a teacher had this to remark:

“Children believe so much in teachers that they would always engage in what a teacher does regardless of the circumstances and the outcome therefore they will always be excited at the teachers involvement in their activities”.

4.6.1 Teachers Role in Play Performance in Language skills

The teacher has an important role to play in the organization and planning of children’s indoor and outdoor play activities. Preschools where teachers fully participated in children’s play were rated as very active. Those preschools that teachers were partially involved were rated as active while preschools where they were not completely involved in play were recorded as passive. Data on teachers’ involvement in play and mean scores are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Teachers role and development of language skills

Preschools	Teachers role	Mean scores
A	Very active	80
B	Very active	78
C	Very active	74
D	Very active	70
E	Active	60
F	Active	58
G	Active	54
H	Active	48
I	Passively involved	46
J	Passively involved	44
K	Passively involved	42
L	Passively involved	40
M	Passively involved	

Schools A,B,C and D registered higher mean scores of 80, 78,74,and 70 in language skills compared to preschools E,F,G,and H which registered average scores of 60, 58, 54,48 in language skills while schools I,J,K,L and M posted low scores of 46,44,42 and 40 respectively in language skills

Data from the questionnaires revealed that 69.9% and 76.9% of teachers and head teachers respectively agreed that teachers had a major role to play during children's outdoor activity. Teachers' organization of children's activities was confirmed to influence their development in language skills. Preschools where teachers were quite active in play posted higher mean score due to their involvement, giving of instructions to children and directing them on various activities to undertake. Data observation indicated that those preschools with higher mean scores in language skills had teachers involving children in language situations through whole class, small groups and individual activities that enhanced acquisition of language skills. In these groups, teachers encouraged and guided children's use of language through direct instruction, which focused on concepts of vocabulary within a particular language skill. Interviews with children confirmed that teachers participated during play by availing to the children play materials and identifying the activities to perform. Preschools where teachers were moderately involved in children's play posted average mean scores as observed, that some teachers were not fully involved and left children to play on their own. From interviews schedule with the children, most of them confirmed that when left alone to play, some children become so aggressive and domineering that they hamper the free flow of play. Preschool teachers who were passively involved posted low mean scores in language skills because children lacked teachers' involvement, instructions and direction on play

Study by Ngecha (2011), confirmed that lack of teachers participation in children’s play leads to low motivation and self-esteem that hinders language acquisition in children. However, Spodeck (2006), confirms that safe environment supervised by adults for children’s play facilitate the development of oral listening and speaking skills. Smolensk’s work in Israel (1968) concluded that children who play on their own reach an initiative stage but do not progress further. Booth (1994) further confirmed that children’s language is developed well only when a teacher takes part in talking to them and stimulating them to ask questions.

The teacher’s role in play was confirmed to be important as a teacher had this to say:

*“The presence of a teacher during outdoor play activities prevents Children from injuries and aggressiveness
 “the absence of a teacher creates room for unhealthy competition for resources and space”*

4.7. Policy on play and the development of language skills

A policy framework is the most important instrument for advocacy in ensuring provision for quality services and for harnessing resource and other support for young children ROK (2006). The researcher sought to establish from head teachers and teachers the school policy on play in ECE centre with regard to time as shown in Table 4.15

Table 4.15. Policy on play and development of language skills.

Response	Teachers		Head teachers	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	15	35.7%	11	84.6
No	27	64.3	2	15.4
Total	42	100	13	100

Data from observation and interviews from children confirms that teachers adhered to the policy and observed time for play as indicated in the timetables. Table 4.15 indicates that 15 (35.7%) of ECE teachers and 11 (84.6%) of head teachers confirmed that ECE

learners were given enough time to play and this is in line with the M.O.E policy on curriculum. According to KICD (2009), physical education in school is allocated 35 minutes five times a week to enable children enjoy living and learning through play since learners get enough time to interact with the teachers and peers during play. Article 31 of the UN convention on the rights of children confirms that a child has a right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age. However, 27 (64.3%) of the ECE teachers as well as 2 (15.4%) of the head teachers did not agree that there is adequate time for play because most teachers deliberately ignored the policy and concentrates on the push for academic programs that denies the children opportunity to socialize freely during play. Ngecha (2011) confirmed that teachers were aware of government policy on children's play but hardly understood how to implement the policy on play.

The school policy through the M.O.E states that children should have 5 lessons per week for physical education however. a discrepancy was observed between theory and practice in pre-school education where the teacher is supposed to cater for total development of the child, the teacher was put under pressure to provide the child with academic head start needed for primary. This contradicts a study by (Elis 2000) who said that children who had enough time to play had developed better social skills. On policy matters, one of the head teachers had this remark to make:

“Due to lack of effective supervision from quality assurance office there is laxity in implementing policy matters and therefore teachers are bound to ignore the policies and keep children in class instead of giving them time to play”

Therefore, it was clear from the findings that integrating play and play materials to learners exposed them to various activities aimed at improving their listening speaking,,

reading and writing skills. This helped in enhancing language development than those who were not exposed to various play activities but were confined in class for academic work, which created monotony and boredom leading to low achievement in language. Subsequently, this is also in line with Vygosty (1967) theory, which holds that the process of self-development occurs with the guidance of adults and peers in the learning environment hence child development is because of social interaction between children and their social environment. In addition, Vygotsky states that play contain all the development tendencies in a condensed form.

4.7.1 School Policy on play and Performance in Language skills

In reference to preschool policy on play, the researcher recorded preschool that strictly followed school policy as strongly adhered while those that partially followed the school policy on play as adhered and preschools that did not follow school policy on play completely as never adhered. The mean score for preschool language skills are shown in

Table 4.16

Table 4.16: School policy on play and development of language skills

Pre Schools	Types of play	Mean scores
A	Strictly adhered	80
B	Strictly adhered	65
C	Strictly adhered	74
D	Strictly adhered	70
E	Adhered	60
F	Adhered	58
G	Adhered	54
H	Adhered	48
I	Never adhered	46
J	Never adhered	44
K	Never adhered	42
L	Never adhered	40
M	Never adhered	40

Policy framework is a very important instrument in ensuring provision of quality services for young children ROK (2006). From the Table it is revealed that preschools A,B,C, and D strictly adhered to school policy with higher mean scores of 80,78,74 and 70 in language skills. Preschools E,F,G, and H that partially followed school policy posted average mean score of 60,58,54 and 40 respectively language skills while preschools I,J,K, and L posted low mean scores of 46,44,42, and 40 in language skills.

Data from questionnaires in table 4.16 confirmed that 35.7% and 86.6% of teachers and head teachers respectively followed the school policy on play by allocating children time for outdoor activities and the time allocated encouraged children to interact freely with teachers and their peers during play and through these interaction children were able to perform in language skills as shown in Table 4.17. Pre schools A.B. C and D that strictly adhered mean scores of 80, 78, 74 and 70 respectively. Data from interview with children indicated that majority of preschool teachers took learners out to play and this is attributed to teachers' awareness on government policy on play and this allocation of time enabled children learn through play activities.. This confirms that language skills could only improve when children are involved in outdoor play activities. Preschools E, F,G and H recorded scores of 60,58,54 and 48. This confirms data from observation that revealed that some teachers found it difficult to engage learners in play during P.E time because of academic performance Preschools I, J, K, L and M, that recorded lower performance of 46, 44, 42, and 40 did not adhere to the school policy at all. According to KICD (2006), physical education is allocated 35 minutes every day five times a week. This allocation of time enabled children learn through play activities. Schools that did not adhere registered low mean score in language skills; this confirmed a study by Ngecha

(2011) who revealed a discrepancy between theory and practice in preschool education where teachers concentrated on academic performance at the expense of holistic development of the child through play. Ngecha in his study noted that effective supervision should be done to ensure that ECE curriculum is implemented to enable quality service delivery in preschool children.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This Chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.1. Summary

The purpose of this study was to establish influence of play on the development of language skills among pre-school children in Kisumu Central Sub-County. The study was based on four objectives: to establish how types of play influence the development language skills among preschool children, to assess how the availability of play materials influence development of language skills among preschool children, to examine how the role of teachers influence the development of language skills among preschool children and to determine how school policy on play influence the development of language skills among preschool children. The study used descriptive survey design where both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Questionnaires, interview schedules, observation checklist and children's test were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics was used to determine frequencies. Percentages and means.

Summary of the Findings

In reference to the first objective, the study examined aspects of types play that contributed towards the development of language skills. These included language activities that prepare the children to be functional members of society and therefore the school environment in which the child operates must be that which will promote the

development of requisite language skills. The various types of play like manipulative, creative, dramatic and physical play were essential components of language skills development since they clearly indicated the children's blending both play and language activities in school environment.

The second objective of the study on availability of play materials established that various types of play materials that the children were exposed to contributed immensely to performance in language skill as indicated in their mean scores. This was because they were able to acquire new vocabulary as they use the materials. However, the study established that those schools that did not expose learners to various forms of play did not perform well in language skills because of inaccessibility to materials that limited their interaction in play. It therefore means that use of resources in the teaching and learning of children enhances better retention in children. Play is an important component in teaching and learning in pre-schools. The study established that availability of play materials and their utilization was an important component in the teaching and learning of young children.

The study found out that children in schools that utilized play materials effectively, posted high mean scores in language skill acquisition because children had face-to-face interaction with teachers, and their peers, listened to instruction given by teachers and acquired new vocabularies. The use of these play materials improved their gross motor skill, improved their eye-hand coordination which prepared them for reading and writing. The study established that school that posted lower mean scores had minimal interaction with teachers and peers during play and these hampered their language skill development. It was observed that some play materials like balls, bean bags, ropes were easy to acquire

and assemble for children to access during play. However, some fixed equipment like sea-saws, swings and balancing not accessible to the school and children due to cost hence limited in use in pre-schools and this hampered development of language skills as it gave learners little opportunity to interact.

On objective three on the role of the teacher in play, teacher's relationship with the children was seen to improve the learner's affective and cognitive development, increased motivation and minimized anticipated negative behaviors. The study established that children in schools that posted better mean scores in language skills were where teachers provided simulative play environment by availing play materials,, directing them on how to utilize play materials and instructing children on activities to involve in accordingly. The role of the teacher in play is an essential component of language performance since they clearly indicated the teachers blending the use of play materials and the content of language skills in an outdoor environment. The teacher is expected to make tasks and play activities realistic, meaningful manageable and achievable. The teacher considers learners need to enable them comply and participate effectively in language activities. The study further found out that head teachers had a major role in supervising teachers and children's activities in preschool to ensure children are provided with holistic development in early childhood programs.

The fourth objective on school policy on play established that there is government policy through KICD syllabus which indicates that physical education activities should be allocated 35 minutes 5 times in a week. It established that preschools that posted higher mean scores adhered to the school policy on play unlike preschools that did not adhere

hence posting low scores. Head teachers were confirmed to be managers in the field of management of resources and personnel. They therefore are expected to ensure that school policies put in place are followed to the latter

5.6. Conclusion

Based on the findings it was concluded that provision of different types of play and play materials gave the children opportunity to learn through manipulating and experimenting for themselves. Through these, they are able to acquire all the language skills of listening, speaking, listening, reading and writing. This was exhibited in their performance in language skills. The study revealed that pre-school children who engaged in play activities were confident and eloquent in their speech and positively and freely interacted with everybody around them. That most preschools did not have equipment like sandpit, sea saws, balancing, swings and ladders due to cost implication hence most head teachers did not consider this play materials and equipment as priority to preschools. The role of the teacher is deemed very crucial component in developing language skills and the overall performance of children. The teacher is supposed to make tasks and activities realistic, manageable and achievable to learners. On policy on play, it is important that learners be given time to rest and leisure through play

It was concluded that the development of language skills is dependent upon the amount of practice children engage in and their interaction with good adult models and peers is essential if learners are to build a body of language and develop awareness of a particular thinking and interpreting their own personal experiences.

5.7. Recommendations

For policy Makers:

1. The government through the MOE needs to come up with clear policy guidelines regarding play in pre-school centers and clearly define the play activities according to the developmental stages of children. The government should enhance provision of early childhood play materials to enable preschool children develop holistically.
2. The supervision of ECE centers' need to be enhanced to ensure teachers allocate adequate time and play materials to enable children develop language skills for holistic development of children

Practitioners:

3. Teachers should be encouraged to take a major role in planning and organizing play activities. This will ensure that various play materials are provided to children according to appropriate age and interest play in preschools

5.8. Suggestion for Further Research

Despite the findings of the study, there are areas that still need further research.

A study should be carried out on the government policy on play and academic achievement.

A similar study need to be carried out on the influence of physical education and academic performance in primary school. Further study to be done on parents' perception on play in pre-schools.

Contribution of the Study to the Body of Knowledge

The study findings have contributed to the body of knowledge as indicated below

1. **Objective:** Types of play and development of language skills among preschool children

Contribution: Limited play activities in preschools inhibiting development of language skills

2. **Objective:** Availability of play materials and development of language skills.

Contribution; Availability of play materials enhances gross motor skill, eye-hand coordination in children.

3. **Objective:** Role of the teacher in play and development of language skills in preschool children.

Contribution: Teachers to take major role in the planning and organizing play activities for children.

4. **Objective:** Policy in play and development of language skills.

Contribution: Policy framework on effective supervision on play activities for preschool children

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Millicent Akinyi Ojuondo

University of Nairobi, Kisumu Campus

Department of Education, Communication and Technology

Box 30497, Nairobi.

Email: millicentobat@yahoo.com

Celphone+0707904901|0733404211

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: INFLUENCE OF PLAY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN LANGUAGE SKILLS IN KISUMU CENTRAL SUB COUNTY, KENYA

I am a master of education (ECE) student at University of Nairobi carrying out research on the above topic. It is my humble request that you assist me by filling in the questionnaires and respond to the interview questions as correctly and honestly as possible. Your identity and responses will be treated with CONFIDENTIALITY. You are requested not to write your name or institution on any tool. I take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your cooperation and willingness to participate in this important exercise.

Yours faithfully

Millicent Akinyi Ojuondo

REG E57/73853/14

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS

	Questions	Responses	Instruction								
1.0	Background										
1.1	School		Indicate in full								
1.2	Zone										
1.3	How long have you served as a teacher		Write in figures								
1.4	Indicate your highest academic qualifications	KCSE_____1 KCPE_____2 O-level_____3 A-level _____4	Tick correctly in the space provided.								
1.5 6	Indicate your professional qualification	PI_____1 Diploma_____2 Degree _____3	Tick the appropriate								
1.6	Gender	Female _____ 1 Male _____ 2									
2.0	TYPES OF PLAY										
2.1	Do you agree that your school offer different types of play?	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">SA</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">A</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">D</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">SD</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">2</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">4</td> </tr> </table>	SA	A	D	SD	1	2	3	4	Tick in the correct box.
SA	A	D	SD								
1	2	3	4								

2.1.1	If you disagree or strongly disagree state the reasons	_____				
2.2	Do you agree that manipulative play enhances language skill development?	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	Tick in the right box
2.2.2	State any two language skills enhanced by manipulative play	_____				
2.3	Do you agree that creative play enhances speaking, reading and writing skills?	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	Tick in the right box
2.3.1	Give any two skills enhanced through creative play	_____				
2.4	Does physical play enhance listening and speaking skills only?	Yes _____ 1				Tick in the appropriate space provided.
		No _____ 2				
2.4.1	State reasons for your answer	_____				
2.5	Do you agree that dramatic play develops all the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills?	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	Tick the correct answer in the box.
2.5.1	If disagree or strongly disagree give reasons for your answer					

3.0	AVAILABILITY OF PLAY MATERIALS		
3.1	Are there enough play materials for children to access during play?	Quite Adequate _____ 1 Adequate _____ 2 Not Adequate _____ 3	Tick the correct answer in the space provided.
3.1.1	If not adequate give reasons for your answer	_____ _____ _____ _____	
3.2	What types of play materials do learners mostly use during play?	_____ _____	Write your answers in the space provided
3.3	Are play materials that are provided appropriate to the learners' age?	Very Appropriate _____ 1 Appropriate _____ 2 Not Appropriate _____ 3	Tick in the correct space provided.
3.3.1	If not appropriate give reasons for your answer	_____ _____ _____	
3.4	Does the school administration support play by providing adequate play materials?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	Tick Appropriately.
3.4.1	If no give reasons for your answer	_____ _____ _____	

4.0	TEACHERS ROLE DURING PLAY					
4.1	Do you agree that teachers have knowledge in planning and organizing play based activities for learners?	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	
4.1.1	If disagree or strongly disagree state reasons for your answer	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
4.2	Which outdoor play activities are organized for children?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
4.3	What role do your teachers perform during play?	<hr/> <hr/>				Write your answers in the spaces provided
4.4	What is your role in ensuring safe play?	<hr/> <hr/>				Write your answers in the space provided
4.5	Is the playground safe enough for children's play?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2				Tick the appropriate space

	Questions	Responses	Instructions
5.0	POLICY ON PLAY		
5.1	Are learners provided with adequate time to play	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	Tick in the correct space provided.
5.1.1	If no state the reasons	_____ _____ _____	
5.2	Is there enough space for children's play?	SA A D SD	Tick appropriately in the box
5.2.1	State the reasons for disagree or strongly disagree	_____ _____ _____	
5.3	How do you ensure children's safety during play?	_____ _____	Write the answer in the space provided

APPENDIX III

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADTEACHERS

1.0	Questions	Responses	Instructions				
1.1	Background		Indicate in full				
1.2	School						
1.3	Zone		Write in figures				
1.4	How long have you served as a teacher						
1.5	Indicate your highest academic qualifications	KCSE _____ 1 KCPE _____ 2 O- level _____ 3 A-level _____ 4					
1.6	Indicate your professional qualification	PI _____ 1 Diploma _____ 2 Degree _____ 3					
1.6	Gender	Female _____ 1 Male _____ 2					
2.0	TYPES OF PLAY						
2.1	Does your pre-school center expose learners to different types of play that enhance language skills	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">SA 1</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">A 2</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">D 3</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">SD 4</td> </tr> </table>	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	
SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4				

2.1.1	If you disagree or strongly disagree, state reasons	_____ _____ _____ _____									
2.2	AVAILABILITY OF PLAY MATERIALS										
2.3	Do the children access adequate play materials?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	Tick appropriate								
2.3.1	If no give reasons for your answer	_____ _____ _____									
2.4	Are the play materials appropriate to the children's age?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2									
2.4.1	If no give reasons for your answer	_____ _____ _____									
3.0	TEACHERS ROLE IN PLAY										
3.1	Do you agree that ECE teachers have a major role to play in organizing and planning children's play?	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>SA 1</th> <th>A 2</th> <th>D 3</th> <th>SD 4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4					
SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4								
3.1.1	If you disagree or strongly disagree, state reasons	_____ _____ _____									

4.0	POLICY ON PLAY					
4.1	Do you agree that ECE learners are allocated enough time to play?	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	Tick correctly in the appropriate box.
4.1.1	If you disagree or strongly disagree, state reasons	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
4.2	Do you agree that there are enough playgrounds for children's play?	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	Tick correctly in the appropriate box.
4.3	Do you agree that play materials and playground are safe for children?	SA 1	A 2	D 3	SD 4	Tick correctly in the appropriate box.
4.3.1	If you disagree or strongly disagree, state reasons	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				

APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

	Questions	Responses	Instructions
1.0	Background		Indicate in full
1.1	School		
1.2	Zone		
1.3	Gender	Male _____ 1 Female _____ 2	
1.4	Do you like playing?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	Tick correctly on the appropriate line
1.4.1	If no state reasons	_____ _____ _____	
1.5	Which games do you play most?	_____ _____ _____	Write the correct answers on the lines.
1.6	Are you provided with enough play materials?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	Tick correctly on the appropriate lines provided.
1.6.1	If no state reasons	_____ _____ _____	
1.7	Is the playground safe for play?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	

1.7.1	If no state reasons	_____ _____ _____	
1.8	How often do you go out to play in a week?	Always _____ Not Always _____	
1.8.1	If not always state reasons	_____ _____ _____	
1.9	Do you play for a long time?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	
1.9.1	If no state reasons	_____ _____ _____	
1.10	Do you sometimes stay in class when you are supposed to go out for PE?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	
1.10.1	If yes state reasons	_____ _____	
1.11	Are you injured during play?	Yes _____ 1 No _____ 2	

APPENDIX V

OBSERVATION CHECK LIST

Background	Responses		Instructions
School			Write in full your response
Age			
Gender			

Facilities	Adequately utilized	Not adequately utilized	Tick appropriately in the box
Seasons			
Tyres			
Sand pits			
Swings			
Balls			
Climbers			
Ropes			
Balance equipment			

Activity	Majority	Not majority	Instructions
Skipping rope			Tick appropriately in the box
Sliding			
Riding			
Riding tyres			
Jumping			
Rope pulling			
Ball playing			
Bean bag playing			
Climbing ladders			
Balancing on seesaw			

APPENDIX VI: SAMPLE TEST FOR PRE SCHOOL CHILDREN

1. Dictation
 - a) BOY
 - b) CAT
 - c) GIRL
 - d) COW
 - e) TREE

2. Read the following words
 - a) CHAIR
 - b) TABLE
 - c) PEN
 - d) TEACHER
 - e) PENCIL

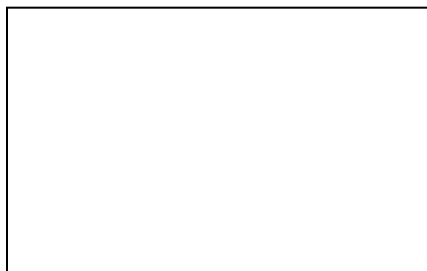
3. Draw the pictures
 - a) ORANGE



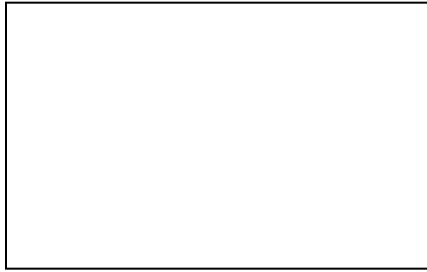
- b) SUN



- c) TREE



d) GIRL



**APPENDIX VII: RESEARCH LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM THE
UNIVERSITY**



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & EXTERNAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION &
TECHNOLOGY**

Telephone: 020-2500759, 020-2500760

P.O. BOX 30197, 00100 NAIROBI

020-2500762, 020-2460056

P.O. BOX 92, 00902 KIKUYU

10th August 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: MILLICENT AKINYI OJUONDO – E57/73853/2014

This is to certify that **Millicent Akinyi Ojuondo** Reg. Number **E57/73853/2014** is a student of the University of Nairobi, Department of Educational Communication and Technology pursuing M.Ed degree in Early Childhood Education. She has completed the course work and now working on the project. Her project is titled **“Influence of Play on the Development of Pre-schoolers Language Skills in Kisumu Central Sub-County, Kenya.”**

Any assistance accorded to her will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

A circular official stamp of the Department of Educational Communication and Technology, University of Nairobi, with a signature across it.

DR. PAUL A. ODUNDO

CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

APPENDIX VIII: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FROM NACOSTI



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349, 310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: secretary@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

9th Floor, Utalii House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref: No.

Date:

14th August, 2015

NACOSTI/P/15/8962/7532

Millicent Akinyi Ojuondo
University of Nairobi
P.O. Box 30197-00100
NAIROBI.

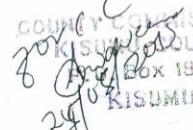
RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *“Influence of play on the development of pre-schoolers language skills in Kisumu Central Sub-County, Kenya,”* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kisumu County** for a period ending **31st December, 2015.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kisumu County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.


DR. S. K. LANGAT, OGW
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO


COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KISUMU COUNTY
P.O. BOX 1912
KISUMU

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Kisumu County.

The County Director of Education
Kisumu County.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MS. MILLICENT AKINYI OJUONDO
of UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, 1120-40100
Kisumu, has been permitted to conduct
research in *Kisumu County*

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/15/8962/7532
Date Of Issue : 14th August, 2015
Fee Received :Ksh. 1000

on the topic: **INFLUENCE OF PLAY ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOLERS
LANGUAGE SKILLS IN KISUMU CENTRAL
SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

for the period ending:
31st December, 2015



.....
Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

.....
Applicant's
Signature