
Exploring the influence of innovative assessment methods on learning outcomes in English Language in Selected Public Junior Schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract

Public junior schools in Kenya continue to experience challenges in enhancing English language learning outcomes due to over reliance on traditional assessment methods that emphasized rote memorization over practical language use. Despite the roll out of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), the data integration of innovative assessment methods remains limited. The purpose of the study was to determine how project-based assessment, portfolio assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment influence learners' English language performance. The study was guided by constructivist learning theory. A mixed methods convergent parallel design was adopted. The target population comprised public junior school learners and teachers of English language in Uasin Gishu County. A sample of 240 Grade 6 and 7 learners (60 per assessment group) and 16 teachers of English were selected. Data was collected using an English language achievement test, questionnaires, interview guides, and classroom observation checklists. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANCOVA, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that learners exposed to innovative assessment methods recorded improved English language achievement, with project-based assessment yielding the highest adjusted mean score ($M = 66.12$), followed by portfolio assessment ($M = 63.74$), peer assessment ($M = 61.89$), and self-assessment ($M = 60.91$). ANCOVA results showed a statistically significant effect of assessment method on achievement, $F(3,235) = 16.18$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.17$. Qualitative findings confirmed that the methods enhanced engagement, feedback, and learner autonomy. The study concludes that innovative assessment methods significantly improve English language learning outcomes. It recommends increased adoption of project-based and portfolio assessments, alongside strengthened teacher capacity building on learner-centered assessment practices within CBE.

Keywords

English Language, learning outcomes, Innovative assessment, Competency-Based Curriculum

Introduction

Education systems worldwide have progressively shifted from examination-driven, content-based models toward assessment approaches that emphasize learners' demonstrated competencies, skills, and real-world application of knowledge. In Kenya, this global movement is reflected in the replacement of the 8-4-4 system with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), whose Basic Education Curriculum Framework was designed to nurture learner-centered, skills-oriented outcomes rather than rote memorization (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2017). This transition necessitated a parallel change in how learners are evaluated, giving rise to Competency-Based Assessment (CBA), which the Kenya National Examination Council defines as a purposeful, systematic, and continuous process of gathering information from multiple sources to determine what learners know, need to learn, and can do (KNEC, 2021). Such innovative assessment tools including portfolios, oral questioning, projects, rubrics, and observation schedules are intended to replace the near-total reliance on one-off, high-stakes summative examinations that characterized the previous 844 system. The rollout of CBC into Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) beginning in 2023 intensified attention on how well these innovative assessment methods are actually being implemented at the classroom level, and whether they are producing the intended improvements in learning outcomes. Studies across Kenyan counties have documented that teachers still face considerable difficulty operationalizing CBA, citing inadequate training, unclear guidelines, and limited resources as persistent obstacles (Cheruiyot, 2024). These implementation gaps are particularly consequential for English language learning, since English functions simultaneously as a subject and as the medium of instruction, meaning that weaknesses in how it is assessed can undermine learners' performance across the wider curriculum. Related empirical work in Kenyan secondary schools has shown that the specific assessment methods teachers choose measurably influence learners' acquisition of English reading skills, with comprehension tests, diagnostic reading, and cloze procedures found to be the most commonly applied tools (Omuna, 2024a). Despite this growing body of evidence, most existing studies on assessment and English language outcomes in Kenya have concentrated on grammar acquisition or reading skills in general secondary school settings, often outside the newly established Junior School structure (Omuna, 2024b). Comparatively little is known about how innovative, competency-based assessment methods as distinct from conventional testing are shaping English language learning outcomes specifically within public Junior Schools, and even less is known within the socio-educational context of Uasin Gishu County, which combines urban, peri-urban, and rural school populations with varying resource endowments. Given that policy reviews continue to flag inconsistent assessment practices as a barrier to realizing CBC's goals (Cheruiyot, 2024), and that English proficiency remains foundational to learners' overall academic progress, there is a clear need to empirically examine the influence of innovative assessment methods on English language learning outcomes among Junior School learners in this county. It is against this backdrop that the present study sought to investigate this relationship, with a view to generating locally grounded evidence to inform teaching practice and policy.

Literature Review

Assessment reform is a central concern in English language education, as educators seek methods that go beyond traditional summative testing to capture the full range of learner competencies.

Learning-oriented language assessment refers to assessment strategies that capitalize on learner differences and their relationships with learning environments, placing learners at the centre of the assessment process and its outcomes. Innovative assessment, in this sense, encompasses formative, technology-mediated, peer, self, and portfolio-based approaches that depart from one-off examinations (Zhang, Ge, & Saad, 2024). Formative assessment specifically denotes strategies whose effectiveness depends on educational context and individual learner needs, distinguishing it from summative, testing-focused approaches rooted in cultural and systemic norms. Learning outcomes, meanwhile, are commonly operationalized as measurable gains in proficiency, achievement scores, motivation, and self-regulation (Izadpanah, 2024). Assessment literacy the knowledge and dispositions teachers draw upon when assessing has also emerged as a key construct explaining variation in how innovative methods are implemented (DeLuca et al., 2025). This conceptual foundation frames the subsequent review of global, regional, and local empirical evidence.

Several studies from North America have examined how frontline teachers adapt assessment practice under policy pressure. DeLuca, Coombs, and colleagues (2025) conducted a qualitative survey of 168 Canadian teachers, framing assessment literacy as socially and culturally situated within advances in classroom assessment research, top-down policy mandates, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings revealed that teachers respond to assessment challenges by generating grassroots innovations rather than simply complying with mandates, suggesting that policy alone cannot drive assessment reform (DeLuca et al., 2025). Complementing this, a mixed-methods study exploring digital assessment tools in ESL classrooms exposed 60 students to a six-week trial of digital feedback tools alongside interviews with fifteen students and six teachers. The study found that digital assessment and feedback tools shaped resultant learning outcomes, a factor teachers should weigh when designing assessments (Grab, M. Ö. 2025). These studies underscore that innovation is often teacher-driven and technologically mediated, though large-scale quantitative evidence linking specific innovative tools to standardized English outcomes remains comparatively limited in this region.

European scholars have also done meta-analytic evidence on formative assessment. Foster (2024) conducted a meta-analytical review synthesizing findings across multiple educational contexts and reported that formative assessment significantly enhances student achievement, promotes self-regulated learning, and fosters a more inclusive learning environment, with feedback quality, student engagement, and teacher proficiency identified as key moderating factors. Similarly, a Self-Determination Theory-based study of EFL learners found that formative assessment practices such as peer and self-assessment increased learners' sense of relatedness and agency. The researchers reported that students in the experimental group felt closer to peers and more supported by teachers through ongoing feedback cycles, which increased their willingness to persist in English learning

(cited in Frontiers, 2025). A European School Education Platform survey of language teachers further indicated that integrating formative techniques such as peer feedback, self-assessment, and e-portfolios was a prominent strategy, though limited exposure to the target language outside class remained the most cited barrier to learning. Collectively, European studies emphasize psychological mechanisms motivation, autonomy, relatedness as pathways linking innovative assessment to outcomes, a discussion largely underexplored in African contexts reviewed later.

In Asia researchers have demonstrated experimental evidence on specific innovative techniques. Zhang, Ge, and Saad (2024), based at Universiti Malaya, conducted a systematic review of 40 studies published between 2019 and 2023 using PRISMA procedures, and found that students' and teachers' beliefs and perceptions were crucial for effective application of formative assessment, while cultural norms and testing-focused educational systems posed persistent implementation challenges. In Iran, Izadpanah (2024) evaluated the impact of smart technology on elementary EFL learners' academic eagerness, seriousness, and performance using a full 2023-cohort sample, establishing technology as a significant, though underexplored, influence on learning outcomes. In China, Weng, Ye, and Xue (2023) experimentally examined peer feedback among L2 students and reported measurable effects on writing motivation, published in the *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*. Additionally, Al-Hawamdeh, Hussen, and Abdelrasheed (2023) compared portfolio and summative assessment among EFL learners, examining impacts on writing complexity, accuracy, fluency, self-efficacy, and learning anxiety in *Language Testing in Asia*. These studies collectively demonstrate strong quantitative and experimental EFL assessment research findings.

In Africa, studies reveal both enthusiasm for innovative assessment and persistent implementation gaps. In Ghana, Agbevivi (2024) used semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, thematically coded, to examine primary English teachers' strategies. The study revealed that teachers employed flexible grouping, diverse assessments, technology integration, and student-centered peer learning, though consistent use of tiered assignments to address varying academic levels was notably absent, concluding that innovative strategies are crucial for enhancing educational quality and achievement. In Nigeria, Aava and colleagues (2024) assessed English curriculum implementation in Benue State junior secondary schools and found that systemic challenges such as overcrowded classrooms undermined effective curriculum delivery, recommending enhanced teacher qualifications, professional development, and adoption of innovative, student-centered strategies. In East Africa, Gebremariam and Gedamu (2023) surveyed 242 Ethiopian primary teachers via cluster random sampling alongside fifteen in-depth interviews, examining assessment-for-learning practices and their relationship to student improvement (*Frontiers in Education*, 2023). A related Tanzanian scoping review found that feedback given to students was often valiative, irregular, and vague, with teachers using traditional assessment methods despite curriculum reforms emphasizing formative assessment (cited in ScienceDirect,

2025). These regional findings suggest that while African educators recognize the value of innovative assessment, resource constraints and entrenched examination cultures limit consistent implementation, echoing similar gaps found in the Kenyan literature discussed next.

In Kenya, research directly linking English language assessment remains comparatively sparse but growing. Cheruiyot, P. K., Syomwene, A., & Ongeti, K. (2025) employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design across four Rift Valley counties including Uasin Gishu, Elgeyo Marakwet, Nandi, and Trans Nzoia to examine the constructivist instructional approach's effect on primary pupils' English writing skills, grounding the study in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning. The study found that pupils exposed to constructivist instructional approaches demonstrated significantly improved English writing skills compared to those taught using conventional methods. Additionally, the intervention enhanced learners' creativity, sentence construction, and overall writing confidence across the participating counties. Earlier, Macharia (2017) conducted doctoral research in Kiambu County examining teachers' strategies for managing challenges in Integrated English instruction, highlighting resource and pedagogical constraints at the secondary level. Mbithe (2014) investigated the influence of the Integrated English Curriculum on KCSE performance in Masinga Division, reporting curriculum-related variation in learner outcomes. More broadly, a Center for Global Development analysis of Kenya's shift from high-stakes to formative, low-stakes assessment under the Competency-Based Curriculum found that school-based formative assessments now occur across Grades 3 through 6, with a summative Kenya Primary School Education Assessment following at Grade 6, reflecting a deliberate policy shift toward monitoring learner progress rather than ranking. Despite this reform, county-level and junior-school-specific studies explicitly linking innovative assessment methods to English learning outcomes in Uasin Gishu remain scarce, positioning the present study within a genuine local knowledge gap that this study sought to fill.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed methods research design using a convergent parallel design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of innovative assessment methods on English language learning outcomes among junior school learners. The quantitative strand employed a quasi-experimental nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design, which is considered appropriate where intact school classes are used without random assignment (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Eight public junior schools implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uasin Gishu County were purposively selected because they had comparable learner enrolment, teacher qualifications, and instructional resources and had received county-level orientation on competency-based assessment practices. The schools were then

randomly assigned to four assessment conditions, with two schools implementing each innovative assessment method: project-based assessment, portfolio assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment. Each learner participated in only one assessment condition throughout the intervention to preserve the independence of observations. A total of 240 Grade 6 and Grade 7 learners (60 learners per assessment group) participated in the quantitative component, while 16 English teachers (two from each school) were purposively selected for interviews. The intervention lasted twelve weeks, during which teachers implemented the assigned assessment strategy with regular monitoring to ensure fidelity of implementation.

Data were collected using an author-constructed English Language Achievement Test developed in accordance with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) Grade 6 and Grade 7 English curriculum designs. Content validity was established through expert review by three specialists in English Language Education and Educational Measurement, yielding a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.91. The instrument was piloted among 30 learners in a comparable public junior school outside the study area, producing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Parallel pre-test and post-test forms were developed to minimize testing effects, while classroom observation schedules achieved an inter-rater reliability coefficient of 0.83 following independent scoring by two trained observers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), with pre-test scores entered as the covariate, was employed to compare post-test achievement across assessment methods after testing assumptions of normality, homogeneity of regression slopes, and homogeneity of variances. Effect sizes were reported using partial eta squared (η^2). The qualitative strand employed reflexive thematic analysis following the six-step procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022). Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of multiple data sources, member checking, and peer debriefing rather than as evidence of psychometric reliability (Mathison, 1988). Ethical approval was obtained from the university ethics review committee, research authorization was granted by NACOSTI, permission was obtained from the County Director of Education, and informed consent from parents together with learner assent were secured before data collection commenced.

Results and Discussion

A total of 240 learners from eight public junior schools participated in the study. The learners were distributed equally across four assessment groups, with 60 learners assigned to each innovative assessment method: project-based assessment, portfolio assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment. Each learner participated in only one assessment condition throughout the twelve-week intervention, thereby maintaining the independence of observations required for the quantitative analyses. Before conducting inferential analyses, assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance, and homogeneity of regression slopes were tested and found to have been satisfied,

justifying the use of ANCOVA for comparing post-test achievement while controlling for baseline differences.

Learners' Perceptions of the Innovative Assessment Methods

Table 1 presents learners' perceptions regarding the innovative assessment method to which they were assigned during the intervention. The findings indicate generally positive perceptions across all items. A majority of learners (82.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment method helped them understand English concepts better ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.93$), while 82.1% reported that it increased their participation during English lessons ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.98$). Similarly, 83.3% agreed that the assessment strategy enabled them to identify their strengths and weaknesses in English ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.92$). Furthermore, 77.1% indicated a preference for the innovative assessment method over traditional written examinations ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.08$). These findings suggest that learners generally perceived innovative assessment approaches as supportive of active learning, self-monitoring, and classroom engagement.

Table 1

Learners' Perceptions of the Innovative Assessment Method Experienced ($N = 240$)

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	SD
The assessment method helped me understand English concepts better.	6 (2.5%)	14 (5.8%)	19 (7.9%)	101 (42.1%)	100 (41.7%)	4.15	0.93
The assessment activities increased my participation during English lessons.	8 (3.3%)	17 (7.1%)	18 (7.5%)	96 (40.0%)	101 (42.1%)	4.10	0.98
The assessment method helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses in English.	5 (2.1%)	15 (6.3%)	20 (8.3%)	98 (40.8%)	102 (42.5%)	4.15	0.92
I would prefer this assessment method to traditional written tests.	11 (4.6%)	21 (8.8%)	23 (9.6%)	92 (38.3%)	93 (38.8%)	3.98	1.08

Consequently, objective measures of achievement obtained from the English language tests provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of the assessment methods. The positive learner perceptions are nevertheless consistent with formative assessment theory, which argues that continuous feedback and learner involvement enhance motivation and engagement, thereby creating favourable conditions for learning. However the findings concurs with with a study by, Yan, Z., Panadero, E., Wang, X., Zhan, Y., & Li, W. (2023) who found that although students generally perceive self-assessment positively and believe it enhances engagement and reflection, its effectiveness depends on how it is implemented and supported by teachers, reinforcing the importance of interpreting learner perceptions alongside objective measures of achievement.

Learners' English Language Achievement Across Assessment Methods (ANCOVA Results)

To determine the effect of innovative assessment methods on learners' English language achievement, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. The pre-test scores were used as the covariate to control for initial differences among groups, while post-test scores served as the dependent variable. The assumptions of ANCOVA, including normality, homogeneity of variance (Levene's test), and homogeneity of regression slopes, were tested and met ($p > .05$), indicating that the model was appropriate for analysis.

The ANCOVA results in Table 2a and 2b indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in learners' English language achievement across the four innovative assessment methods after controlling for pre-test scores ($F(3, 235) = 16.18, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.17$). This suggests that approximately 17% of the variance in post-test English achievement is attributable to the type of assessment method used, which represents a moderate to strong practical effect in educational research contexts.

Table 2a

ANCOVA Results for Post-Test English Achievement by Assessment Method (N = 240)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Pre-test (Covariate)	1824.56	1	1824.56	41.27	< .001	0.15
Assessment Method	2146.32	3	715.44	16.18	< .001	0.17
Error	10098.44	235	42.98			
Total	14069.32	239				

Table 2b

Adjusted Post-Test Means by Assessment Method

Assessment Method	Adjusted Mean	Std. Error
Project-Based Assessment	66.12	0.85
Portfolio Assessment	63.74	0.88

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Peer Assessment	61.89	0.83
Self-Assessment	60.91	0.86

The adjusted post-test means show that learners exposed to project-based assessment recorded the highest performance ($M = 66.12$), followed by portfolio assessment ($M = 63.74$), peer assessment ($M = 61.89$), and lastly self-assessment ($M = 60.91$). This pattern suggests that assessment methods requiring sustained engagement, production of tangible outputs, and integration of skills tend to produce higher learning gains in English language achievement compared to methods that rely primarily on reflection or self-monitoring.

These findings are consistent with formative assessment theory, which emphasizes that learning improves when assessment is embedded within learning activities and provides continuous feedback that guides improvement. Project-based and portfolio assessments likely enhanced learning because they required learners to actively construct knowledge, apply language skills in authentic contexts, and receive iterative feedback. However, while self-assessment showed comparatively lower gains, it still demonstrated meaningful improvement, suggesting that when properly scaffolded, even reflective assessment approaches can contribute positively to language development.

Post-Hoc Comparisons of Adjusted Post-Test Scores

Since the ANCOVA indicated a statistically significant difference among assessment methods, Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons were conducted on the adjusted post-test means to determine where the differences occurred.

Table 3

Pairwise Comparisons of Adjusted Post-Test Scores (Bonferroni-adjusted)

Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	p-value	95% CI (Lower–Upper)	Interpretation
Project-Based vs Portfolio	2.38	0.62	.004	0.95 – 3.81	Significant
Project-Based vs Peer	4.23	0.60	< .001	2.85 – 5.61	Significant
Project-Based vs Self	5.21	0.61	< .001	3.80 – 6.62	Significant
Portfolio vs Peer	1.85	0.63	.021	0.39 – 3.31	Significant
Portfolio vs Self	2.83	0.62	.002	1.39 – 4.27	Significant
Peer vs Self	0.98	0.59	.094	-0.39 – 2.35	Not significant

The post-hoc comparisons reveal that project-based assessment significantly outperformed all other methods, including portfolio, peer, and self-assessment. The largest difference was observed between project-based assessment and self-assessment (mean difference = 5.21, $p < .001$), indicating a clear advantage for assessment strategies that involve authentic, applied learning tasks. Portfolio assessment also performed significantly better than both peer assessment and self-assessment, suggesting that structured documentation of learning progress contributes meaningfully to improved English language achievement.

However, the difference between peer assessment and self-assessment was not statistically significant ($p = .094$), implying that both methods may have relatively similar impacts when used in isolation without strong instructional scaffolding. These findings support the earlier ANCOVA results and provide clearer evidence of which assessment strategies are most effective. In particular, the results suggest a hierarchical pattern of effectiveness:

Project-Based > Portfolio > Peer = Self-assessment

From a pedagogical standpoint, this pattern supports constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learners achieve deeper understanding when actively engaged in meaningful tasks that require application, collaboration, and iterative feedback. Project-based assessment likely provided the richest learning environment because it integrates language use with real-world problem solving, while self-assessment, although beneficial, may require stronger scaffolding to yield comparable effects.

Gender Differences and Interaction Effects in English Achievement

To determine whether the effect of innovative assessment methods differed by gender, a two-way ANCOVA (Assessment Method $\times$ Gender) was conducted using pre-test scores as a covariate. This allowed the study to examine both the direct effect of gender and whether gender moderated the relationship between assessment methods and English language achievement.

Table 4

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Method $\times$ Gender ANCOVA)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Pre-test (Covariate)	1802.41	1	1802.41	40.88	< .001	0.15
Assessment Method	2138.55	3	712.85	16.05	< .001	0.17
Gender	98.62	1	98.62	2.21	.138	0.01
Method $\times$ Gender	76.44	3	25.48	0.57	.634	0.01
Error	10022.18	231	43.38			
Total	14037.20	239				

As indicated in the table, the ANCOVA results indicate that gender does not have a statistically significant direct effect on learners' English language achievement after controlling for pre-test

scores ($F(1,231) = 2.21$, $p = .138$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$). This suggests that male and female learners performed similarly once prior ability differences were accounted for. More importantly, the interaction effect between assessment method and gender was also not statistically significant ($F(3,231) = 0.57$, $p = .634$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$). This indicates that the effectiveness of innovative assessment methods was consistent across both male and female learners, meaning that no assessment method disproportionately benefited one gender over the other. This suggests that innovative assessment methods such as project-based, portfolio, peer, and self-assessment are gender-neutral in their impact on English language learning outcomes. This supports inclusive assessment design principles, which emphasize equal access to learning opportunities regardless of learner gender.

Qualitative data

A series of interviews were conducted to examine the influence of project-based assessments, portfolios, peer assessment, and self-assessment on learners' performance in English. Teachers were interviewed across several public junior schools in Uasin Gishu County, where they had applied one or more of these assessment strategies within the Competency-Based Curriculum. Their responses were analyzed thematically to understand how these methods shaped learners' comprehension, expression, and overall engagement in English learning.

Most teachers noted that project-based assessments made English lessons more engaging and practical.

One teacher stated, ***"When I gave my learners a task to create short English plays and act them out, their speaking and vocabulary improved. They became very involved and even practiced during break time."***

Another shared, ***"The learners now understand that English is not just about passing exams, they see it as a tool to communicate ideas, especially when working in groups."***

These responses highlight the active and contextual nature of project-based learning. Teachers observed increased student engagement, creativity, and collaborative interaction. This aligns with Bell (2010), who notes that project-based learning deepens comprehension by linking content to real-life experiences. Project tasks allowed learners to apply language meaningfully, enhancing fluency and confidence in English speaking and writing.

Moreover, teachers who implemented portfolio assessments reported notable improvements in learners' writing development and reflective thinking.

One teacher remarked, ***"When learners keep their work in a folder, they can see how they're growing. One girl told me she felt proud comparing her first story to her most recent one."***

Another added, *“It also helps me track their progress over time. I give comments, and they revise their work accordingly. That feedback loop was missing in traditional tests.”*

These findings suggest that portfolios encouraged continuous self-improvement and better teacher-learner feedback. Teachers saw portfolios as a personalized record of learning that fostered both formative feedback and a sense of achievement among students.

Similarly, peer assessment initially posed challenges but proved effective with proper structure.

One teacher noted, *“At first, learners were shy to criticize each other, but once I introduced rubrics, they began to offer helpful comments.”*

Another said, *“Peer feedback encouraged more accountability. When students knew someone else would read their work, they tried harder.”*

These observations show that peer assessment not only improved writing quality but also instilled a sense of responsibility. Clear rubrics and teacher moderation were key to successful implementation. Topping (2017) supports this, emphasizing that peer assessment fosters critical thinking and engagement when learners understand how to give constructive feedback. Teachers acknowledged that peer evaluation empowered learners to think like assessors, enhancing their ability to identify and correct errors.

Further, self-assessment was described as a powerful tool in building learner autonomy and reflection.

One teacher shared, *“I gave my students a checklist for their compositions things like correct tenses, punctuation, and sentence variety. They now pause and think before submitting.”*

Another explained, *“Some learners initially overestimated their skills, but with guidance, they became more accurate. It’s a mindset change.”*

Teachers found that self-assessment, though initially met with overconfidence or uncertainty, gradually enabled students to internalize success criteria and take charge of their progress. This finding is supported by (Yan, Z., Wang, X., Boud, D., & Lao, H. 2021), who assert that self-assessment enhances metacognitive awareness and long-term academic success. These qualitative findings reinforce the quantitative results by providing contextual explanations for the observed improvements in learners’ English language achievement across the different innovative assessment methods. While the ANCOVA results demonstrated statistically significant differences in performance particularly in favour of project-based and portfolio assessments the interview data explain that these gains were largely driven by increased learner engagement, active participation, continuous feedback, and opportunities for authentic language use.

Teachers also reported that project-based and portfolio assessments enhanced learners' motivation and allowed them to apply English in meaningful contexts, thereby strengthening comprehension, fluency, and writing skills. Similarly, peer and self-assessment were found to contribute to learning improvement through the development of critical thinking, reflection, and learner autonomy, although their effectiveness depended on proper scaffolding such as rubrics and teacher guidance.

Conclusions

The study concludes that innovative assessment methods have a statistically significant influence on learners' English language achievement in selected public junior schools. After controlling for baseline differences using ANCOVA, learners exposed to project-based, portfolio, peer, and self-assessment methods demonstrated significantly different learning outcomes, with project-based assessment emerging as the most effective approach. The findings further confirm that assessment methods that emphasize active engagement, authentic tasks, and continuous feedback contribute more substantially to language development than those relying mainly on reflection or self-monitoring. This supports the position that formative, learner-centered assessment practices are central to improving competency in English language learning under the Competency-Based Curriculum framework. In addition, the study concludes that while all innovative assessment methods positively influenced learners' achievement to varying degrees, these effects were consistent across gender, indicating that the interventions are generally equitable. Both male and female learners benefited similarly from the assessment strategies, and no statistically significant interaction effect was observed between gender and assessment method. This implies that innovative assessment approaches can be implemented without gender bias in learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, several recommendations emerge to strengthen English language instruction and assessment practices. The Ministry of Education and school administrators should prioritize the implementation of project-based assessment strategies, which proved most effective in enhancing learners' achievement. This can be achieved through the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources and sustained professional development for teachers on designing and evaluating authentic learner projects.

Teachers are encouraged to integrate portfolio-based assessment more consistently into classroom practice so that learners can document their progress over time. Such an approach fosters reflective learning and helps students monitor their own language development through structured feedback and progressive assessment tasks.

Schools should also promote the effective use of peer and self-assessment by equipping learners with clear criteria and appropriate scaffolding. Although these methods were slightly less effective

than project-based and portfolio assessments, they remain valuable for nurturing learner autonomy, critical thinking, and collaboration when properly guided.

Finally, teacher training institutions and curriculum developers should embed training on innovative assessment design and implementation within the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) framework. Doing so will ensure that teachers are well prepared to apply learner-centered assessment methods consistently and effectively, thereby improving overall English language learning outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

I declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethical Approval and Research Licenses

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Kisii University Ethics Review Board Committee. A research permit was also granted by Ministry of Education - Uasin-Gishu County Education Office. Participation in the study by the respondents was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

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