



From Policy to Classroom Practice: A Review of Communicative Strategies for Teaching Speaking and Writing Skills in Secondary Schools

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Abstract: The 2023 English Language Syllabus for Ordinary Secondary Education in Tanzania places communicative approach, learner participation, and the purposeful use of English at the centre of instruction. This integrative review examines two questions: whether communicative strategies are used effectively when teaching speaking and writing, and which constraints inhibit their use. It combines a close policy reading of the 2023 syllabus with a transparent synthesis of peer-reviewed Tanzanian research and the historical baseline supplied by Sila's (2003) dissertation. Searches covered ERIC, Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed publisher platforms, and reference chaining, with emphasis on studies published from 2020 to August 2026 and on evidence generated after the syllabus reform. Findings show partial rather than full enactment. Teachers employ question-and-answer exchanges, oral presentations, discussions, demonstrations, role play, dictation, modelling, and collaborative writing. These strategies are effective when they create purposeful interaction, distribute speaking turns, connect oral rehearsal with writing, and include feedback and revision. In many classrooms, however, communication remains teacher-controlled: responses are brief, participation is concentrated among confident learners, and writing often ends with transcription or a single corrected product. Persistent constraints include large classes, limited materials, weak learner foundations in English, restricted exposure beyond school, time and workload pressure, teachers' uneven pedagogical knowledge, code-switching dilemmas, examination washback, and insufficient classroom-embedded professional learning. It is argued that reform should be evaluated through learners' actual opportunities to produce extended spoken and written English, not merely through the presence of communicative terminology in plans. It recommends task-focused professional development, large-class participation routines, communicative writing cycles and aligned assessment.

Keywords: *Communicative language teaching, competence-based curriculum, speaking skills, writing skills.*

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1. Introduction

A curriculum reform becomes meaningful only when learners experience it in everyday lessons. That test is particularly important in language education, where a syllabus may advocate communication while classroom interaction continues to reward recall, copying, and short teacher-approved answers. Communicative language teaching (CLT) treats language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts rather than only as a system of forms. Its core concern is learners' developing ability to choose and use linguistic resources appropriately, intelligibly, and strategically (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Littlewood, 2014). Speaking and writing are therefore not terminal displays after explanation; they are both the means and the outcomes of learning.

Tanzania's English Language Syllabus for Ordinary Secondary Education, Forms I-IV, issued by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) in 2023, gives this direction renewed emphasis. The syllabus organizes learning around competences, communicative functions, learner-centred activities, and assessment tasks intended to show what learners can do with English (TIE, 2023). This direction is consequential because English is both a school subject and a major medium through which secondary students access curriculum knowledge. Learners who cannot participate orally, interpret classroom discourse, or construct coherent written texts face disadvantages across subjects, not only in English lessons (Brock-Utne, 2007; Mkimbili & Ødegaard, 2020).

The reform enters a school system with a distinctive linguistic transition. Most learners build their early schooling and everyday social life largely through Kiswahili, while English carries a much greater instructional burden in secondary education. The transition is not experienced uniformly. A well-resourced urban school in Dar es Salaam and a rural community secondary school may follow the same TIE syllabus, yet differ sharply in class size, access to print, teacher supply, learners' exposure to English, and opportunities to use the language beyond the lesson. Any account of implementation must therefore begin with this uneven terrain (Brock-Utne, 2007; Mkimbili & Ødegaard, 2020).

Yet a new syllabus does not automatically change who speaks, who writes, or whose ideas receive attention in class. Teachers interpret new expectations through their prior beliefs, language proficiency, available materials, class size, time, assessment demands, and professional support (Borg, 2015; Priestley et al., 2015). CLT is also not a single technique. A question-and-answer exchange, group discussion, dictation, presentation, or writing exercise may be communicative or non-communicative depending on its purpose, information flow, learner choice, distribution of turns, cognitive demand, and connection to a real or

plausible audience. Counting activity labels therefore provides a weak measure of effectiveness. The more defensible question is whether activities generate sustained, meaningful, supported language use and whether feedback helps learners improve subsequent performance.

The dissertation that prompted this review offers a valuable historical point of comparison. In four Tanzanian primary schools, Sila (2003) found that teachers named and sometimes used communicative strategies, yet classroom implementation was narrowed by teacher explanation, unequal participation, overcrowding, limited textbooks, weak preparation, and inadequate professional support. Because that study predates the 2023 secondary syllabus and concerns primary education, its findings cannot be treated as direct evidence of current secondary-school implementation. They are used here as sensitising propositions against which recent secondary evidence is compared. This distinction prevents a common error in policy reviews: relabelling old data as an evaluation of a new reform.

More recent Tanzanian studies make it possible to revisit that picture. Abdala (2024) documents the structure of teacher questions and learner responses in secondary English classrooms; Msuya and Abdala (2025) examine competence-based paragraph-writing instruction; Msamba et al. (2023) analyse in-service preparation for competence-based English teaching; and Ndunguru et al. (2026a, 2026b) report prevalent practices and intervention effects in rural secondary schools. Together with work on multilingual classroom practice (Abdala, 2025) and language-of-instruction conditions (Mkimbili & Ødegaard, 2020), these studies allow a cautious account of what is occurring during the early implementation period.

Two questions, adapted from the dissertation for the present secondary-school context, guide the review: (RQ1 – To what extent are communicative teaching strategies used effectively in teaching speaking and writing skills after the introduction of the 2023 syllabus? and RQ2 – What constraints are inherent in using communicative strategies to teach and learn speaking and writing?). The purpose is not to claim a nationally representative impact evaluation. Rather, it is to synthesize the best available evidence, identify continuities and changes, and establish practical criteria for evaluating the movement from policy to classroom practice.

2. Policy and Conceptual Context

2.1 The communicative promise of the 2023 syllabus

The 2023 syllabus is situated within competence-based education. Competence in this framework involves mobilizing knowledge, skills, and attitudes to perform meaningful tasks, not simply reproducing declarative knowledge. For English, this translates into using language to exchange information, express viewpoints, negotiate

meaning, interpret texts, and produce oral and written discourse for identifiable purposes (TIE, 2023). The syllabus consequently creates a stronger policy basis for discussions, conversations, role plays, oral reports, projects, presentations, functional writing, and process-oriented composition.

Three implications matter for classroom practice. First, classroom talk must be redistributed. Teacher explanation can scaffold learning, but it cannot constitute the main evidence that learners are becoming communicatively competent. Second, speaking and writing should be connected. Oral brainstorming, pair rehearsal, and collaborative planning can support the generation and organization of ideas before individual writing, while written notes can support presentations and debate. Third, assessment must sample performance. If high-stakes and classroom assessments privilege discrete grammar and memorized products, teachers receive contradictory signals even when the syllabus promotes communication.

The syllabus describes the curriculum Tanzania intends schools to provide. The implemented curriculum consists of the tasks, interaction patterns, resources, language choices,

and feedback learners actually encounter. The attained curriculum is reflected in learners' ability to communicate beyond rehearsed items. Alignment among these three levels is the central policy-to-practice problem examined in this article.

In Tanzanian schools, that gap is visible in ordinary routines: a Form II class may be timetabled for communicative work, yet one teacher may face a crowded room, a limited number of textbooks, and learners whose confidence in English varies widely. Under such conditions, group work can either broaden participation or simply relocate the same few confident voices into smaller groups. The relevant question is not whether a teacher reports using discussion or role play, but what learners are actually required and supported to say, write, revise, and present.

2.2 What counts as effective communicative teaching?

Five practical criteria are used to judge whether an activity is genuinely communicative. These criteria synthesize CLT, task-based language teaching, and research on speaking and writing pedagogy (Ellis et al., 2020; Goh & Burns, 2012; Hyland, 2019; Littlewood, 2014).

Table 1: Analytical criteria used to evaluate communicative effectiveness

Criterion	Observable classroom evidence	Why it matters
Purposeful meaning	Learners exchange information, solve a problem, express a position, or address a plausible audience.	Moves activity beyond mechanical display.
Distributed production	Most learners speak or write; turns are not confined to volunteers or choral responses.	Communication competence requires production time.
Choice and negotiation	Tasks permit some choice of content or language and require clarification or response.	Creates genuine information processing.
Scaffolding and progression	Models, planning, vocabulary support, rehearsal, and gradual release lead to independent performance.	Makes communication accessible without replacing it.
Feedback and transfer	Feedback addresses meaning and form and is used in revision, repetition, or a later task.	Converts performance into learning.

2.3 Speaking and writing as productive, interconnected competences

Effective speaking instruction requires more than correct pronunciation or repetition. Learners need preparation, repeated opportunities to formulate meaning, interactional support, and feedback on comprehensibility, appropriateness, fluency, and accuracy (Goh & Burns, 2012; Nation & Newton, 2009). Pair and group structures can multiply speaking time, but only if tasks assign an outcome and accountability. A group in which one confident learner completes the work while others watch is organizationally collaborative but not communicatively effective.

Writing is similarly social and recursive. A communicative writing task has a purpose, genre, and audience; it normally

involves idea generation, organization, drafting, response, revision, and editing (Hyland, 2019; Lee, 2017). Dictation, copying, sentence transformation, and controlled exercises may provide useful attention to form, but they are preparatory rather than sufficient endpoints. Peer feedback can distribute response and develop audience awareness when learners receive criteria, models, and training (Yu & Lee, 2016).

In practice, speaking and writing are most productive when they support one another. Learners may discuss a problem, take notes, draft a position, exchange feedback, revise, and present a final argument. Such sequences respect the 2023 syllabus's competence orientation while remaining feasible in resource-constrained classrooms because they depend

more on task design and participation routines than on expensive technology.

3. Review of Literature

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is no longer usefully understood as fluency at the expense of grammar. Contemporary practice is more context-sensitive. Contemporary accounts do not prohibit explicit form-focused instruction. They position it inside a broader cycle in which learners attend to form because it helps them accomplish communicative purposes (Littlewood, 2014; Spada, 2022). This is particularly relevant where learners have limited exposure to English outside school. Clear explanation and controlled rehearsal can reduce cognitive load, but they should open rather than close opportunities for independent use.

Research on task-based teaching suggests that planning, repetition, interaction, and feedback can improve aspects of oral performance (Bygate, 2018; Ellis et al., 2020). Yet importing idealized small-class tasks without adapting roles, timing, materials, and accountability is unlikely to work. Context-sensitive CLT uses pairs, groups, peer monitors, shared texts, locally generated prompts, and staged reporting to distribute production in large classes. Effectiveness depends on interaction design, not simply the label attached to the method.

Teachers do not make pedagogical choices in isolation: teachers act through an interaction of professional histories, current resources, institutional expectations, and future aspirations (Priestley et al., 2015). When examinations reward short correct answers, timetables are crowded, or teachers lack models of communicative assessment, even teachers who endorse CLT may retreat to explanation and written exercises. Implementation must therefore be analyzed systemically rather than attributed to teacher resistance alone.

Likewise, Tanzanian studies have described a familiar tension: policy promotes learner-centred teaching, while much classroom interaction remains teacher-led. Sila's (2003) baseline found frequent oral question-answer routines, reading aloud, drills, dictation, spelling, and written comprehension. Communicative roles such as guiding and organizing group work existed, but teachers often addressed only a few pupils, while explanations and talk-and-chalk restricted participation. The study's enduring value lies less in its exact frequencies than in its identification of an implementation pattern: knowledge of communicative techniques did not guarantee high-quality enactment.

The language-of-instruction context helps explain why this tension persists. Students enter secondary education with varied English resources, while English becomes central to accessing subject knowledge. Brock-Utne (2007) showed

how learning through an unfamiliar language can constrain classroom understanding, and Mkimbili and Ødegaard (2020) demonstrated the continuing relationship between language choice and inquiry participation. In English lessons, this produces a pedagogical dilemma: insisting on English-only interaction can silence learners, while unplanned reliance on Kiswahili can reduce English production. Abdala (2025) suggests that actual classroom practice is multilingual and that language alternation should be examined by function rather than judged categorically.

This reality makes rigid English-only prescriptions pedagogically unhelpful. A teacher may use Kiswahili briefly to clarify a demanding concept, organise a task, or help learners generate ideas, then return deliberately to English for rehearsal and performance. The key issue is purposeful progression: familiar-language support should open a route into English participation rather than become the endpoint of the lesson.

Studies conducted around the reform show movement, but also considerable continuity. Msamba et al. (2023) found that in-service training for competence-based English teaching requires stronger planning and follow-through. Abdala (2024) found that teacher questioning often elicits restricted learner responses, illuminating why an apparently interactive lesson may still offer little sustained production. Msuya and Abdala (2025), working with 32 participants and 16 observations in Tanzanian secondary schools, identified dictation, demonstration, question-answer, discussion, and oral presentation in paragraph-writing instruction. They also found inadequate materials, weak English foundations, insufficient writing time, teacher unpreparedness, and limited commitment. These findings are especially pertinent because they were published after the syllabus and describe classrooms operating in the reform period.

Evidence from rural schools adds another layer to the picture. Ndunguru et al. (2026a) report that competency-based practices for English communication coexist with persistent implementation limitations. Their quasi-experimental follow-up indicates that targeted professional development can improve teachers' participatory practices and students' communication skills (Ndunguru et al., 2026b). Although these studies do not establish nationwide effects, they weaken deterministic claims that large classes or rural conditions make communicative teaching impossible. Conditions matter, but pedagogical support can alter what teachers and learners do within those conditions.

Conclusively, most available studies focus on one skill, one district, or one part of competence-based implementation. Few explicitly connect the 2023 curriculum to evidence about both speaking and writing, and fewer still evaluate effectiveness using criteria beyond the reported presence of activities. This review addresses that gap by combining policy analysis, a historical dissertation baseline, and recent

classroom evidence. It also separates post-reform observations from causal claims: a study conducted after 2023 can describe implementation during the reform period, but without a counterfactual it cannot prove that the syllabus caused the observed practice.

4. Methodology

An integrative review was appropriate because the questions require the synthesis of policy documents, qualitative classroom studies, mixed-methods research, intervention evidence, and a historical dissertation (Torraco, 2016). The review is structured and reproducible but is not presented as a statistical meta-analysis: measures, populations, skills, and outcomes were too heterogeneous for a meaningful pooled effect size. The unit of synthesis was an evidence statement about communicative opportunity, instructional effectiveness, or implementation constraint.

The starting point was Sila's (2003) dissertation, supplied by the author/user as the originating evidence source. Searches were then conducted for Tanzanian secondary-school evidence using combinations of Tanzania, secondary school, English, communicative language teaching, competence-based language teaching, speaking, writing, classroom interaction, teacher questioning, multilingual practice, and professional development. Sources searched included ERIC, Google Scholar, Crossref/DOI records, publisher databases, and reference lists. The final update was completed in August 2026. The official 2023 English syllabus was retrieved from TIE and treated as a policy source rather than peer-reviewed evidence.

The two review questions provided an initial coding frame, while additional subthemes were allowed to emerge from the evidence. For effectiveness, coding captured task purpose, distribution of participation, learner choice, scaffolding, feedback, revision, and evidence of transfer. For constraints, coding captured learner, teacher, classroom, school, assessment, language-policy, and system-level conditions. A temporal comparison then examined which constraints identified in the dissertation reappeared in recent secondary studies. Contradictory evidence was retained rather than forced into a single judgment.

5. Findings

5.1 The use of communicative strategies

Taken together, the evidence points to partial rather than full enactment. Teachers use strategies that can support communication, but the quality and distribution of language production vary considerably. The gap is therefore one of depth rather than simple presence or absence: communicative activity is not absent, but it is often compressed into teacher-regulated formats that generate limited learner language.

5.1.1 Speaking: interaction frequently remains recitation-like

Question-and-answer routines remain the most common bridge between teacher explanation and learner talk. Abdala (2024) shows that questions elicit learner responses, but responses are often single words or short phrases and some learners remain silent. Such exchanges verify recall efficiently, yet they provide limited practice in turn development, clarification, reasoning, or negotiation of meaning. Under the effectiveness criteria in Table 1, they demonstrate interaction without consistently demonstrating extended communication.

Discussion, oral presentations, role play, demonstrations, and group work can create richer opportunities to use English for meaning. Recent Tanzanian studies report these activities, and the 2023 syllabus legitimizes them as routes to competence (Msuya & Abdala, 2025; Ndunguru et al., 2026a; TIE, 2023). Their effectiveness depends on preparation and accountability. When learners receive a problem, roles, language support, rehearsal time, and an obligation to report, a large class can produce many simultaneous turns. When instructions are vague, groups become seating arrangements rather than interactional structures, and confident learners dominate.

Teachers also appear to manage the balance between fluency and accuracy unevenly. Oral drills, repetition, and reading aloud can build pronunciation, automaticity, and confidence, especially for learners with weak foundations. Yet they contain little communicative choice when everyone repeats predetermined language. Effective sequencing uses controlled rehearsal as a scaffold, followed by a task that requires learners to select and adapt language for a purpose. Evidence that this second step occurs consistently remains limited.

Overall, current strategies are moderately successful for eliciting participation but less effective for distributing extended turns across the class. The most important missing evidence is learner-level speaking time and performance growth. Few studies quantify who speaks, for how long, and with what improvement.

5.1.2 Writing: activity is common, but process and audience are weakly developed

Learners spend considerable time writing, partly because it supports note-taking, exercises, homework, and examination preparation. Msuya and Abdala (2025) report dictation, demonstrations, question-answer activities, discussions, and oral presentations in paragraph-writing lessons. Dictation can strengthen listening-form mapping, spelling, punctuation, and handwriting. Demonstration and modelling can make genre expectations visible. However, neither strategy is inherently communicative. Dictating notes for transcription positions learners as copyists; modelling

becomes communicative only when learners use the model to make content and language choices in a new text.

Far fewer studies describe complete writing cycles involving planning, drafting, peer or teacher response, revision, editing, and publication for an audience. Time pressure and marking workload encourage one-draft products. This limits the use of feedback: corrections may identify errors in a finished text without changing the learner's next performance. Research on L2 writing shows that feedback becomes more educationally powerful when learners must interpret and use it in revision (Hyland, 2019; Lee, 2017; Yu & Lee, 2016).

Moving from talk to writing offers a practical route for implementing the 2023 syllabus. Discussion and presentation can generate ideas and language before paragraph construction, while peer reading can create a real audience after drafting. Msuya and Abdala's (2025) observation that oral strategies are used during writing instruction suggests that integration is possible. The limitation is that published accounts do not yet show

consistent progression from oral rehearsal to independent, revised texts.

Writing practices are therefore partly effective at supporting form, task completion, and some learner engagement, but less consistently effective at developing purposeful composition, authorial choice, and revision. The gap is not simply insufficient writing; it is insufficiently communicative writing.

5.1.3 Evidence of improvement is promising but not yet system-wide

The clearest evidence of improvement comes from the quasi-experimental intervention reported by Ndunguru et al. (2026b). Focused support was associated with changes in competency-based pedagogical practice and students' English communication skills. This result complements international evidence that task design, repetition, and feedback can support language development (Bygate, 2018; Ellis et al., 2020). However, one intervention cannot establish national implementation quality. Sustainability, transfer across Forms I-IV, and performance under ordinary staffing and assessment conditions remain open questions.

Table 2: Synthesis of communicative effectiveness after the 2023 syllabus

Area	Observed pattern	Judgment against 2023 intent
Teacher questioning	Frequent, but many responses are short and teacher-selected.	Partially aligned: participation without sufficient extended production.
Pair/group talk	Reported and sometimes observed; quality varies with roles and accountability.	Potentially aligned; effectiveness is implementation-dependent.
Role play/presentation	Present but less routine than questioning and explanation.	Strong alignment when tasks have purpose, audience, and feedback.
Dictation/copying	Common supports for spelling, notes, and accuracy.	Preparatory, not sufficient evidence of communicative writing.
Discussion-to-writing	Promising integration of oral rehearsal and composition.	Aligned where it leads to independent drafting and revision.
Feedback/revision	Limited evidence of systematic multi-draft cycles.	Weak alignment with sustained writing development.
Learner outcomes	Positive intervention evidence; few longitudinal or national measures.	Promising but insufficient for a system-wide impact claim.

5.2 Constraints on effective communicative teaching

5.2.1 Large classes and unequal participation

In many Tanzanian secondary classrooms, large enrolments restrict movement, monitoring, individualized feedback, and the number of public speaking turns available. This constraint appears in Sila's (2003) baseline and remains prominent in recent Tanzanian research (Kinyero et al., 2024; Msuya & Abdala, 2025; Ndunguru et al., 2026a). The mechanism is important: class size does not automatically

eliminate communication, but it raises the organizational cost of distributing participation. Teachers often respond with whole-class explanation, choral responses, and written exercises because these are easier to control and inspect. Without routines such as stable pairs, assigned roles, timed turns, peer checking, and sampled reporting, group work can reproduce inequality within smaller units.

5.2.2 Weak learner foundations, confidence, and exposure

Many learners enter secondary school with limited confidence and uneven foundations in English vocabulary,

grammar, and pronunciation, which restricts both speaking and writing. Msuya and Abdala (2025) identify poor English foundations as a central challenge, while Abdala (2024) documents brief responses and silence. Learners may avoid risk because errors are publicly visible, especially in oral work. Limited use of English outside school reduces opportunities for consolidation. These conditions create a circular problem: low proficiency leads teachers to reduce communicative demand, but reduced demand deprives learners of the practice needed to improve. Scaffolding must therefore lower the entry threshold without removing the communicative outcome.

5.2.3 Multilingual classroom realities

Kiswahili—and, in some communities, other familiar languages—is part of the everyday linguistic reality of Tanzanian classrooms. Abdala (2025) shows that Swahili is used to explain, clarify, manage interaction, and support comprehension. The constraint is not bilingualism itself but unplanned language use. English-only rules may silence learners and conceal misunderstanding; unrestricted translation may allow learners to complete tasks without producing English. A principled sequence can use familiar-language discussion for complex idea generation, bilingual vocabulary preparation, and clarification, followed by accountable English rehearsal and performance. The 2023 policy's communicative objective is served when language choice expands rather than replaces English production.

5.2.4 Materials, space, and technology

Shortages of textbooks and print materials, together with crowded or inflexible classroom space, recur across the baseline and recent evidence (Sila, 2003; Msuya & Abdala, 2025). Shortages restrict access to models, prompts, genres, and independent reading material. Yet communicative teaching should not be equated with language laboratories or digital devices. Local notices, timetables, maps, forms, school events, community problems, and learner-generated texts can support authentic tasks. The policy challenge is twofold: provide minimum equitable resources and train teachers to transform available materials into information-gap and audience-oriented tasks.

5.2.5 Time, workload, preparation, and feedback

A communicative task asks more of a teacher than simply assigning group work: it must be designed, explained, monitored, and discussed afterwards. Process writing adds the workload of responding to drafts and supporting revision. Msuya and Abdala (2025) identify insufficient time and teacher unpreparedness, echoing Sila's (2003) earlier observation that some lessons lacked adequate planning. When teachers teach many periods or mark large sets of books, one-draft tasks and teacher-fronted routines become rational adaptations. Sustainable reform must reduce planning costs through shared task banks, common

rubrics, peer-feedback protocols, and collaborative preparation rather than relying on individual effort.

5.2.6 Pedagogical knowledge and professional learning

Being able to name a strategy is not the same as being able to use it well. Teachers need to design a genuine purpose, anticipate language demands, group learners, monitor interaction, give feedback, and assess performance. Msamba et al. (2023) show that the planning of in-service support for competence-based English teaching needs strengthening. Generic workshops can transmit policy vocabulary without changing classroom routines. The intervention evidence from Ndunguru et al. (2026b) indicates greater promise when professional learning is focused on practice and linked to student communication outcomes.

5.2.7 Assessment washback and curriculum coverage

Classroom practice is inevitably influenced by what school and national examinations appear to reward. Discrete grammar, comprehension answers, and single-draft compositions are easier to administer and mark than interactive speaking or iterative writing. When oral competence is weakly represented in consequential assessment, speaking becomes vulnerable to time pressure. Assessment misalignment therefore converts a curriculum reform into an additional demand rather than a coherent change. Classroom rubrics, school-based oral tasks, portfolios, and moderation procedures are needed so that competence can be evidenced without making assessment unmanageable.

For Tanzanian teachers and learners, this pressure is felt through continuous school assessment and preparation for the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination. Even when the syllabus values interaction, teachers may understandably devote scarce lesson time to written forms that are easier to mark and visibly connected to examination performance. Reform will remain fragile unless classroom guidance, school assessment, quality assurance, and high-stakes expectations send compatible messages.

5.2.8 Leadership, quality assurance, and implementation coherence

Heads of school and academic leadership teams influence timetabling, collaborative planning time, material use, observation, and the messages teachers receive about risk and innovation. Kinyero et al. (2024) emphasize collaboration among teachers, internal quality assurance teams, and management, although the methodological and evidential quality of the underlying literature varies. The robust implication is that subject-specific feedback matters. Observation that merely checks lesson-plan completion may reinforce compliance; observation focused on participation distribution, learner output, feedback, and alignment can support instructional improvement.

Table 4: Constraints and implementation responses

Constraint	How it suppresses communication	Feasible response
Large classes	Reduces public turns and individualized monitoring.	Stable pairs; assigned roles; timed turns; peer monitors; sampled reporting.
Weak English foundations	Raises task difficulty and learner anxiety.	Models, word banks, rehearsal, sentence frames, gradual removal of support.
Unplanned code-switching	Either silences learners or displaces English production.	Purpose-specific multilingual scaffolding followed by accountable English output.
Limited materials	Restricts prompts, models, and audience-oriented tasks.	Shared text sets; locally generated materials; reusable task cards.
Time and marking load	Encourages explanation and one-draft writing.	Focused feedback, peer response, staggered portfolios, shared rubrics.
Uneven teacher expertise	Turns communicative labels into weakly designed activities.	Lesson rehearsal, coaching, observation, and subject-specific learning communities.
Assessment washback	Privileges easily marked accuracy and coverage.	Oral performance tasks, analytic rubrics, revision evidence, moderation.
Weak implementation support	Makes reform depend on isolated teacher effort.	Leadership-protected planning time and communication-focused quality assurance.

6. Discussion

First, it is revealed that the Tanzanian teachers do not use communicative strategies, they do: questioning, discussion, presentation, group work, role play, modelling, and collaborative activities appear across the evidence. The second is that the presence of these strategies proves successful implementation. It does not. The decisive issue is instructional depth: how much purposeful language learners produce, how widely opportunities are distributed, and whether feedback changes subsequent performance.

This helps explain the continuity between Sila's (2003) baseline and post-2023 secondary research without falsely equating the contexts. In both periods, policy-consistent terminology and activities coexist with teacher control, uneven participation, and resource constraints. The persistence of the pattern suggests that reform cannot be secured through syllabus prescription alone. However, current evidence also shows development: competence-based writing research documents a broader repertoire, and intervention research demonstrates that focused support can change practice (Msuya & Abdala, 2025; Ndunguru et al., 2026b). The picture is therefore one of constrained agency, not static failure.

One useful way to judge implementation is to ask how much language learners actually produce: the proportion of lesson time in which learners produce language that is neither choral repetition nor copied text. This need not become a crude universal target. Rather, it directs observation toward what curriculum reform is meant to change. Complementary

indicators include the proportion of learners contributing, average turn length, evidence of clarification, number of substantive writing revisions, and transfer to a new task.

Second, it is noted that drills, dictation, teacher explanation, and correction remain common. These practices should not be dismissed wholesale. In a context of limited English exposure, learners require form-focused support. The pedagogical problem arises when controlled practice becomes the endpoint. A productive sequence moves from noticing and modelling, through supported rehearsal, to purposeful performance and reflection. For example, a dictation can lead to comparison of versions, discussion of meaning, reconstruction in pairs, and adaptation for a new audience. A grammar explanation can lead to an information-gap task that requires the target form. This reframing preserves accuracy while aligning it with communicative competence (Littlewood, 2014; Spada, 2022).

Third, the review shows that the 2023 syllabus offers Tanzanian teachers an opportunity to bring speaking and writing together rather than teach them as separate compartments. Oral rehearsal lowers the idea-generation burden in writing, and writing stabilizes language for more extended speaking. A feasible cycle is: encounter a model; discuss purpose and audience; generate ideas in pairs; rehearse key language; draft individually; exchange focused feedback; revise; and present or publish. Not every task requires every stage, but repeated exposure to the cycle builds learner independence. This approach also makes large classes more manageable by distributing planning and

feedback among peers while preserving individual accountability.

Four, it is exposed that constraints interact as an implementation system. These constraints rarely operate alone. Large classes increase workload; workload reduces feedback; limited feedback slows proficiency growth; low proficiency encourages translation and teacher explanation; examination pressure rewards rapid coverage; and weak professional support leaves teachers with few alternatives. Isolated solutions are therefore fragile. Supplying textbooks without helping teachers design interactive tasks may increase reading but not communication. A workshop without follow-up coaching may increase knowledge but not routine practice. Assessment reform without manageable rubrics may add workload. Policy coherence requires coordinated change across curriculum materials, teacher learning, school leadership, and assessment.

Five, what can reasonably be claimed about the post-2023 period? At this stage, the most defensible conclusion is that implementation is early and uneven; the evidence cannot sustain a national verdict of success or failure. The syllabus has clarified communicative expectations and recent studies show policy-consistent practices. At the same time, recurring constraints and restricted learner output indicate that enactment remains partial. Because few studies establish pre-reform baselines, follow the same schools over time, or sample nationally, causal statements should remain cautious. The phrase 'after the introduction' identifies the policy period; it does not by itself prove syllabus effects.

7. Conclusion

The 2023 Tanzanian English syllabus articulates a strong communicative and competence-based direction for secondary education. Teachers are not starting from zero: questioning, discussion, presentation, group work, role play, demonstration, dictation, and modelling are part of the classroom repertoire. Yet these strategies are only partially effective when judged by purposeful meaning, distributed production, learner choice, scaffolding, feedback, and transfer.

Speaking instruction remains vulnerable to recitation-like interaction in which a teacher asks and a small number of learners provide brief answers. Writing instruction provides substantial activity but too often emphasizes transcription, controlled exercises, or a single corrected product rather than audience-oriented drafting and revision. Recent intervention evidence is encouraging because it shows that participatory practice and communication outcomes can improve with focused support. The reform's challenge is therefore not whether communicative teaching is possible, but whether systems make high-quality enactment routine.

The constraints identified in the original dissertation—large classes, insufficient materials, unequal participation, limited preparation, and weak professional support—remain

recognisable in contemporary secondary-school evidence, alongside assessment washback, multilingual dilemmas, learner anxiety, workload, and uneven pedagogical knowledge. Their persistence does not invalidate the 2023 syllabus; it shows that syllabus change must be accompanied by coherent materials, assessment, teacher learning, leadership, and research.

Ultimately, implementation should be judged by what learners can increasingly do with English. A communicative classroom is not defined by noise, group seating, or the frequency of a strategy label. It is defined by learners' sustained opportunities to formulate meanings, listen and respond to others, construct texts for purposes and audiences, use feedback, and perform with growing independence. Moving from policy to classroom practice therefore requires attention to the quality and distribution of communication in every lesson.

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