

Pedagogical Strategies Limitations and Practices Leading to Improved Teacher-Learners' Classroom Interactions through English in Lower Primary Schools of Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

Strategies employed by teachers and learners in lower primary schools in Rwanda were judged insufficient and ineffective, as learners' learning performance, especially in rural schools, was still unsatisfactory in examinations set in English. The study aimed to investigate the limitations of the strategies used by teachers and learners in their English classroom interactions and to propose effective practices to enhance teacher-learner interactions in lower primary grades. The constructivism theory guided this study, employing a mixed method with a sequential exploratory research design. The research population consisted of 56,691 people, including 56,125 learners, 449 teachers, and 117 head teachers of primary schools in Musanze District. A sample of 115 respondents, including 109 teachers and six head teachers, were randomly selected. Semi-structured interviews with 18 teachers and 6 school head teachers yielded qualitative data, while 91 teachers completed a written questionnaire, which provided quantitative data. Thematic analysis helped to treat qualitative data, and descriptive statistical analysis by cross-tabulation was utilized in quantitative data cleaning and analysis. Findings revealed that strategies employed in teacher-learner classroom interactions present some limitations to effective teaching and learning through English. Furthermore, various practices, including special preparatory programs in preschool centers, improved methodology for pre- and in-service teachers' training on the English language, and an emphasis on practical tasks to equip learners with sufficient knowledge and skills to solve school and real-life problems, were suggested. The study recommended the collaboration and cooperation of multiple educational partners during the implementation of the proposed practices. The proposed practices are expected to have a great impact on the journey of re-examining and re-contextualizing teaching and learning in Rwandan schools.

Keywords: Classroom Interactions, Medium of Instruction, Pedagogical Strategies, Suitable Practices

I. INTRODUCTION

In this era of active learning, where students must blend experiential learning with real-world application (Yorulmaz et al., 2020), educators view the classroom as a system where pedagogical actions necessitate a supportive environment to improve learning outcomes (Li & Oliveira, 2015). According to Maja (2019), classrooms are both interactive spaces and socio-intellectual learning communities in which teachers and learners, or learners among themselves, interact based on predetermined daily actions and tasks. More clearly, Perlman et al. (2016) asserted that depending on classroom management and organization, activities or tasks in the classroom known as classroom practices involved various agents of education, including teachers and learners, through their interactions at the top. As a result, Shoham and Kupferberg (2020) viewed classrooms as complex territories that require deep exploration and analysis for those who want to know what goes on there.

Classroom practices include learners' actions and teachers' strategies during the teaching-learning process (Cerqua et al., 2014). Hence, teacher-learner interactions in classes hold a primordial place within classroom practices, as they initiate and maintain relationships among them (Adaba, 2017). For Rohmah (2017), efficient teacher-learners' interactions in the form of verbal and non-verbal communication are inevitably necessary to enhance effective teaching and learning outcomes. Then, Asbah (2015) asserted that teacher-learner interactions become more effective when applied in the classroom and should have a communicative approach. Meanwhile, achieving communication

competencies is a complex process that demands time and effort to master the language of communication, known as the medium of instruction (MoI) in the academic domain (Alhamami, 2023).

Within the continuum of ensuring access to quality basic education for all, Borjian (2014) highlighted a consensus among educators and researchers that the primary language of the learners should be the medium through which education is conducted. Moreover, compared to other learning areas, the potential negative effects of learning a foreign language in an endoglossic country often go unconsidered (Makarova, 2020). In these lines, Kosonen (2017) noted that many countries prioritize national or official language (which is often not the home language for learners) as the MoI for socio-economic and political purposes. Consequently, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2016) mentioned that studies showed that almost 40% of children did not have access to education in their native language, which hindered their ability to fully understand the content of the subjects they were learning, thereby negatively affecting their learning performance.

In Rwanda, the three consecutive policy shifts in MoI from 2008 to 2021 [from Kinyarwanda to English (2009–2011), from English back to Kinyarwanda (2011–2020), and again from Kinyarwanda to English since 2021] could have affected teachers and learners in lower primary (Niyibizi, 2014). This is due to the limited use of English by many teachers and learners at primary schools, despite its adoption as the unique MoI at all levels of schooling (Habyarimana, 2015). For this purpose, Nsengimana et al. (2023) argued that almost no learners at primary schools could answer teachers' questions without referring to Kinyarwanda, the mother tongue. As far as this challenge is concerned, code-switching by language pairing, translation, and updating of available teaching and learning materials were among the practices suggested and utilized by teachers to enhance the teacher-learners or learner-learners' interactions through English (Tabaro & Twahirwa, 2018). On the other hand, during class time, many learners utilized strategies like rote learning and constant repetitions while learning.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Rwanda, an endoglossic country with a monolingual society, presents a unique case regarding the use of English as the Medium of Instruction (MoI). Rwandans hold mixed perspectives on the issue of English as a MoI (Maniraho, 2013). For some, even though English has been adopted as the sole MoI in all levels of schooling since 2009, its use by many teachers and learners at primary schools in Rwanda is still limited (Habyarimana, 2015). On the other hand, Sibomana (2014) noted that the desire and need to know and be able to use English in daily life, as well as MoI in the teaching and learning process, increased day after day for many Rwandans, specifically academicians. Then, many Rwandan teachers and learners can easily question the fairness and success of pedagogy conveyed through unfamiliar language (Kagwesage, 2013). Consequently, Ndabaga et al. (2023) notified the Multilingual Medium of Instruction (MMoI) for the social justice aspect of learners. In addition, besides this general preference for using English as MoI, many teachers and learners in lower primary, specifically in rural schools, manifested a more positive attitude toward the shift to Kinyarwanda as MoI (Niyibizi, 2014). This is because, even if some strategies like rote learning, code-switching, language pairing, and content signification or translation were adopted (Halai & Karuku, 2013), learners' learning performance is still low in the examinations, tests, and other competitive tasks set in the English language.

1.2 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The motive to carry out this study was the need to know more about the gaps in strategies employed in teaching and learning through English and propose some actions to adopt to refine teacher-learner classroom interactions through English (the current MoI in Rwanda). Therefore, the objectives of the study were: (1) To investigate the gaps and challenges in strategies employed by teachers and learners during teacher-learners' classroom interactions through English. (2) To propose suitable practices to undertake to ameliorate teacher-learner classroom interactions through English in lower primary grades in Rwanda. Then, the study tried to answer the following questions: (1) What are the limitations of strategies employed by teachers and learners during their interactions through English? (2) What are suitable teaching and learning practices to undertake to improve teacher-learner classroom interactions in lower primary grades in Rwanda?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Review

The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) concerns education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (Saini et al., 2023). In these lines, strategies to strengthen effective teaching and learning processes to improve educational outcomes and ameliorate standards of living were highlighted across the countries (Hofkens et al., 2023). In the Rwandan context, referring to the shift to English as MoI, Mahoro et al. (2024) argued that the correlation of teaching techniques with learners'

backgrounds could be very important to improve the teaching and learning process for the better learning performance of learners. In fact, since 2009, teaching and learning through English have become compulsory at all levels of schooling in Rwanda (Hategekimana et al., 2024). Meanwhile, it has been detected that the unfamiliarity of the English language hinders effective teacher-learner interactions (Ndimurugero, 2015). Consequently, teachers might transmit wrong or incorrect information. On the other hand, learners could not participate actively in lessons because of fear and being afraid of making mistakes due to their low English proficiency (Hategekimana et al., 2024). In addition to hindrances in terms of 'lack of qualified, competent, and professional' teachers, mentors, and learners' backgrounds, the lack of or low access to teaching and learning materials in English aggravated the issues and led to lower learning performance (Tabaro & Twahirwa, 2018). Then, it was imperative to propose practices or actions aiming at the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies that could help to improve the teaching and learning process and lead learners to satisfactorily succeed in the academic and non-academic given tasks through English (Smith et al., 2019).

The creation of English clubs at schools, translation, and updating available teaching and learning materials were among the practices suggested to help and improve English use, specifically during teacher-learner or peer interactions (Tabaro & Twahirwa, 2018). However, they were found not sufficient, regarding the depth of the issue. Consequently, the Rwanda Education Board (REB) (2015), on its side, advised Rwandan teachers that, in addition to expertise in their particular special subjects, they must have a high level of expertise in English adopted as MoI. Therefore, this study tried to deeply analyze the limitations of some strategies adopted by teachers and learners to be able to interact through English. Hence, several practices in relation to the improved outcomes of the teaching and learning process would be proposed.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The constructivist learning view of Jean Piaget (1896–1980) has guided this study (Fosnot, 2013). This is because constructivism learning theory not only explains how teachers teach and learn how to teach (Shumba et al., 2012), but also explains how people might acquire knowledge (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Based on Shumba et al.'s (2012) assertion that learners have to construct new knowledge themselves, in the constructivist classroom, the classroom is no longer a place where learners are considered empty vessels passively waiting to be filled with teachers' disseminated knowledge (Umida et al., 2020). On the contrary, the learner-centeredness of a constructivism classroom encourages learners to attempt various practices to be able to extrapolate and transfer gained knowledge for a better understanding of learned content (Weimer, 2013). Therefore, to enhance effective teacher-learner classroom interaction, learners are obliged to actively be involved in their learning. Meanwhile, Osborne (2018) questioned the constructivist belief that all knowledge has to be personally constructed as teachers' efforts and roles have to come as additional intervention from the more experienced facilitators, mediators, or helpers in the learners' learning process (Darsih, 2018).

Referring to constructivist learning views, within this study, measures and practices that could improve learners' participation during teachers' and learners' classroom interactions for better learners' learning performance have been proposed. This underpins the Rwandan vision and embarks on implementing the competency-based curriculum (CBC) started and implemented in Rwanda in 2016. In fact, from an early age, learners need to be trained and prepared to solve their problems, starting with classroom problems, to equip them with sufficient capacity to apply skills and knowledge gained from school to solving problems in real-life situations (Dushimumuremyi & Sibomana, 2018). Meanwhile, the teacher's role in the learning process is unavoidable because teachers have to provide and equip learners with the necessary tools, advice, and skills that help and lead them to success in both inside and outside the classroom's tasks (Franklin & Harrington, 2019).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm that employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The sequential exploratory research design has been utilized in data collection and data analysis. Thus, qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed separately. Firstly, qualitative data were collected and analyzed and then, the acquired results led the researchers to conduct quantitative data collection.

3.1.1 Research Population and Sampling Procedures

The research population was 56,691 persons, comprising 56,125 learners, 449 teachers, and 117 head teachers of primary schools in Musanze District, one of the five districts of the northern province of Rwanda. The stratified sampling technique was utilized to choose the sample schools for gathering qualitative data. Among 117 primary schools, two categories of schools were determined based on their location: one rural and the other urban. In addition,

referring to school status, three categories of schools (public, government-aided, and private) were formed. To determine the representative sample schools, both categories of schools were combined, and six sample schools were randomly selected as follows: Gashangiro II (urban public school), Groupe Scolaire (GS) Muhoza (urban government-aided school), 'Ecole Regina Pacis' (urban private school), GS Murora (rural public school), GS Kamisave (rural government-aided school), and SPES NOVA Junior Academy (rural private school).

To decide the subject to focus on, the purposive sampling technique was used. The condition was that the subject was taught and learned through English. Therefore, among the four core subjects taught in English [Social and Religious Studies, Mathematics, Science and Elementary Technology (SET), and English], the SET subject has been picked out randomly to be focused on during this study. Therefore, 24 respondents (18 teachers and 6 school head teachers) were chosen as research participants during the collection of qualitative data.

To get the sample size of research participants to provide quantitative data, the 117 primary schools were also grouped into two categories referring to their location (rural and urban schools) and three categories (public, government-aided, and private schools) based on their status. To determine the size of the research participants, Yamane's formula (Chaokromthong & Sintao, 2021) has been used as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

. Then, N represented population size, n : sample size, e : level of precision of 5/100. Therefore, $n=117/1+ [117*(0.05)^2]$. Then, $n=90.52224371$.

Then, 91 schools were taken as school sample size (n). From these 91 sample schools, in each category, a number of sample schools was determined using the method of proportional allocation under which, size of samples in different categories remained proportional to the size of those categories (Kothari, 2004). Then, $n_i = n * P_i / N$. Where: n_i represented sample schools in a given category, n represented all sample schools, P_i represented the proportion of schools included in category i , while N represented all schools in Musanze District.

The computation of sample schools in each category of schools has been made as the following:

Schools' location

$$-n_i \text{ rural schools} = n * P_i / N.$$

$$\text{Then, } n_i \text{ rural schools} = 91 * 80 / 117 = 62.22$$

$$n_i \text{ rural schools} = 62 \text{ schools}$$

$$-n_i \text{ urban schools} = n * P_i / N.$$

$$\text{Then, } n_i \text{ urban schools} = 91 * 37 / 117 = 28.77$$

$$n_i \text{ urban schools} = 29 \text{ schools}$$

School Status

$$-n_i \text{ public schools} = n * P_i / N.$$

$$\text{Then, } n_i \text{ rural schools} = 91 * 28 / 117 = 21.77$$

$$n_i \text{ public schools} = 22 \text{ schools}$$

$$-n_i \text{ government aided schools} = n * P_i / N.$$

$$\text{Then, } n_i \text{ rural schools} = 91 * 60 / 117 = 46.66$$

$$n_i \text{ government aided schools} = 47 \text{ schools}$$

$$-n_i \text{ private schools} = n * P_i / N$$

$$\text{Then, } n_i \text{ rural schools} = 91 * 29 / 117 = 22.55$$

$$n_i \text{ private schools} = 22 \text{ schools.}$$

The combination of sample schools was summarized in Table 1.

Table 1*Table of Sample Schools*

Name of Sector	Number of sampled schools	Location		Status		
		Rural	Urban	Government Aided	Public	Private
Busogo	6	4	2	2	2	2
Cyuve	12	6	6	3	3	6
Gacaca	6	5	1	4	1	1
Gashaki	4	4	0	3	1	0
Gataraga	6	6	0	2	4	0
Kimonyi	3	2	1	1	1	1
Kinigi	6	5	1	2	2	2
Muhoza	16	1	15	6	2	8
Muko	4	4	0	3	1	0
Musanze	8	5	3	5	1	2
Nkotsi	5	5	0	4	1	0
Nyange	4	4	0	4	0	0
Remera	3	3	0	2	1	0
Rwaza	5	5	0	4	1	0
Shingiro	3	3	0	2	1	0
Total sample schools	91	62	29	47	22	22

From Table 1, the sample size of this study was made up of 91 schools. Based on school location, 62 schools were located in rural areas and 29 in urban areas. Referring to school status, 47 sample schools were government-aided, 22 were public, and 22 were private. Then, to respond to the questionnaire, each school was represented by one SET teacher. This is because, for some schools, SET subjects are taught by one teacher from primary one (P1) up to primary three (P3). The demographic features of participants in quantitative data collection are presented in Table 2.

Table 2*Demographic Features for 84 Participants in Quantitative Data Collection*

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentages
School Location	Rural	55	65.48
	Urban	29	34.52
School Status	Public	21	25
	Government- Aided	43	51.20
	Private	20	23.80
Class level	P1	29	34.52
	P2	28	33.33
	P3	27	32.15
Class size	10 to 20	0	0
	21 -30	3	3.58
	31-40	19	22.63
	41-50	24	28.58
	51-60	20	23.82
	61-70	12	14.24
	71 and above	6	7.15
Teacher Qualification	A ₂	68	80.96
	A ₁	8	9.52
	A ₀	8	9.52

Table 2 shows majority of respondents were teachers in rural schools(65.48%), from government aided school(51.20%). 80.96% of them finished secondary school level and their class size comprising between 31 up to 60 learners.

3.1.2 Research instruments and procedures for data collection

Qualitative data were collected by semi-structured interviews with eighteen (18) SET teachers and six (6) school head teachers. Using an interview guide, the semi-structured interview sessions have been conducted in Kinyarwanda; the language most of the respondents feel at ease with. Participants were required to provide their views on the limitations/ gaps and challenges of teaching and learning strategies employed by teachers and learners during their classroom interactions through English. They have also been required to suggest suitable practices to undertake to mitigate or overcome the mentioned challenges.

Quantitative data collection came after qualitative data collection and analysis. Before embarking on the real quantitative data collection, the questionnaire was piloted in six (6) schools chosen randomly based on their location and status. The purpose was to validate eight mostly suggested practices by interviewing head teachers and teachers. Teachers were required to react (by agreement or disagreement) on a five-point Likert-type scale survey. Then after, the updated questionnaire was administered to 91 SET teachers in sampled schools. The information utilized within this study was gathered from 84 questionnaires returned.

3.2 Data analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed separately: Qualitative data were grouped into themes and sub-themes regarding the information they hold and then analyzed thematically. Quantitative data were treated using inferential statistics analysis with cross-tabulation, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To ensure the credibility of the findings, information from questionnaires was triangulated with information gained from semi-structured interviews, to come up with general findings of the study. Findings were presented in the forms of text and tables.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Response Rate

Findings from the study showed that each strategy adopted and employed by teachers and learners during their classroom interactions through English presented some limitations/gaps or challenges that can impede effective learners' learning performance. Scrupulously, based on detected limitations, suitable practices were proposed. Most of the proposed practices were related to the improvement of English as MoI and other actions helping learners to learn by doing.

4.1.1 Strategy Limitations/Gaps/Challenges to Tackle to Enhance Effective Teacher-Learners 'Classroom Interactions Through English

Limitations of strategies employed in teacher-learners classroom interactions differ depending on school status. The most highlighted limitations were related to the most employed strategies like code-switching by language pairing and translation mostly employed by teachers in public and government-aided schools. Additionally, gaps or challenges related to learners-strategies, specifically content memorization by constant repetitions, group discussions or debates, and trying out various exercises, were also revealed.

For translation of content subject from Kinyarwanda to English and vice-versa, one teacher in an urban-government-aided school said:

Really, the translation from English to Kinyarwanda and vice-versa helps learners to understand the subject content, but it does not provide the guarantee of success in examinations, as learners have to answer through English only. Then, measures and actions that could help teachers and learners to improve their knowledge and skills in English languages are required. I suggest continuous teachers' trainings in English and well-organized coaching sessions in English for learners during holidays.

Regarding the language pairing strategies, mostly used in rural and urban public and government-aided schools; teachers in rural public schools mentioned that learners have a tendency to pronounce English words in Kinyarwanda sounds qualified as "Kinyaglais". They revealed that this habit could impair the acquisition of true pronunciation of English words even at advanced levels. For both of these mentioned challenges, one head teacher of a rural public school argued that suitable practices could be the deep and detailed training of teachers on the English language and related methodological guidelines to follow while teaching through English. She argued:

Normally "translating is betraying". Then, how can a teacher who is still struggling with performing in English can make an effective translation from English to Kinyarwanda and vice-versa? Better for teachers to master English language firstly, to be able to teach through it!

Concerning rote-learning memorization mostly employed by learners, specifically during preparation of tests and examinations; one head teacher in an urban public school noted that apart from possible long-term memory



depletion and related health problems, most of the time learners struggle with deciding where to reproduce crammed passages during tests or examinations because of language barriers. Therefore, these strategies adopted by most learners, even if they can help in the development of immediate memory, do not promise sustainable success for further examinations. This was confirmed by a teacher in an urban private school, who discouraged the employability of rote memorization and advised the focus on understanding of the content's meaning. She roughly said “*Cramming does not prevent ignorant learners from crying*”.

The group's discussions/debates, works and other practical exercises to review learned material are mostly used by learners in private schools. These strategies were highly appreciated by teachers as they enhanced better understanding of learned content. Moreover, one of the interviewed teachers in rural private schools mentioned that these strategies require enough time and careful preparation, follow-up as well as regular provision of feedback by teachers. Hence, he added that most of the time, because of a large number of learners in one classroom, teachers lack sufficient time to check and correct all given tasks and exercises or provide feedback accordingly. He therefore concluded that some learners are demotivated and lose interest in doing such tasks and exercises. He suggested the reduction of the number of learners within a classroom or hiring assistant teachers to help in individual coaching to enhance effective learners' learning.

Other key information from interview' sessions with teachers and head teachers on limitations, gaps, and challenges of strategies employed in teaching and learning through English were summarized in Table 3.

Table 3
Limitations/Challenges /Gap of Strategies Employed in Teaching and Learning Through English

Strategies	Limitations/Gaps/Challenges
<i>Teaching strategies</i>	
Code-switching	-Possibility of wrong interpretation
	-Negative effects related to the unwillingness and utilization of recommended MoI for both teachers and learners
Semi abstraction	-Low quality of drawings made that may result-to insufficient knowledge acquisition
Morning/Evening/ weekend coachings	-Physical fatigue for learners and teachers
	-Lack of some pedagogical teaching and learning aids (books, chalks, chalkboards, etc.)
Teaching through songs	-Possibility of focusing on melody only without tackling necessary and helpful knowledge
Teach through games	- Poor mindset regarding the usefulness of teaching through games (challenges of implementing games effectively)
	-Possibility of not tackling the targeted knowledge
Provision of home activities	-Barriers in MoI that prevent many parents from helping their children
	-Possibility of utilization of different methods that may challenging the learners
<i>Learning strategies</i>	
Rote learning	- Possible reduction of creative and innovative willingness
	-Possibility of drop-down the long-term retention capacity of learners
	-Possibility of being overloaded by information and related health problems
Group work discussions	-Failure in moderating debates effectively and distraction of some learners
Try out various exercises	-Fatigue of learners
Copy handouts	-Copy wrong information because of language limitation

Referring to limitations for each considered strategy, suitable practices to take up have been proposed by teachers and head teachers.

4.1.2 Practices to Improve Teacher-Learners Classroom Interactions through English

The interviewed teachers and head teachers proposed various practices. The most highlighted practices related to the inclusion of special preparatory periods in preschool programs, teachers' training and teachers peer-learning as well as improvement of school practices helping learners to learn by doing. They suggested that the preparatory program in pre-schools would emphasize English communication skills, to help learners to start primary school with sufficient knowledge and skills in English that enable them to learn through it. They also proposed the refining of the methodology employed in Teacher Training Centers (TTC), or for in-service teachers. Finally, they request the dissemination of tools holding information related to basic English communication skills to boost learning by doing practices at schools and outside the schools. Details on teachers' reactions vis à vis the mostly proposed practices were visualized in table 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Table 4*English Special Preparatory Period in Pre-School Centres*

Practice	School status	Teachers' agreement				Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	
Special English preparatory period in pre-schools	Public	13	5	1	2	21
	%	62	23.8	4.7	9.5	100%
	Government aided	31	7	4	1	43
	%	72.1	16.3	9.3	2.3	100%
	Private	16	3	1	0	20
	%	80	15	5	0	100%

Table 4 shows that 80% of teachers in private schools strongly agree with a special preparation of learners in preschool centers on the English language.

Table 5*Training on English Language and Related Special Teaching Methodology*

Practice	School status	Teachers' Agreement			Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	
Teacher trainings on English language and ad hoc methodology	Public	14	6	1	21
	%	66.7	28.6	4.8	100%
	Government- aided	34	9	0	43
	%	79.1	20.9	0	100%
	Private	11	6	3	20
	%	55	30	15	100%

Table 5, it is shows that 79.1 % of teachers in Government aided schools strongly support teachers' training in English language as well as the methodology to teach through English.

Table 6*Dissemination of sufficient teaching and learning tools set in English*

Practice	School status	Teachers' agreement		Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	
Dissemination teaching and learning tools set in English	Public	14	7	21
	%	66.7	33.3	100%
	Government- aided	34	9	43
	%	79.1	20.9	100%
	Private	15	5	20
	%	75	25	100%

Table 6 shows that 79.1% of teachers in government-aided schools and 75% of teachers in private schools strongly agree with the dissemination of sufficient teaching and learning tools designed in English.

Table 7*Improvement of Practices Enhancing Learning by Doing*

Practice	School status	Teachers' agreement			Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	
Improve practices enhancing learning by doing	Public	16	4	1	21
	%	76.2	19	4.8	100%
	Government- aided	36	6	1	43
	%	83.7	14	2.3	100%
	Private	16	3	1	20
	%	81	15.5	3.5	100%

From Table 7, it is discovered that more than 76% of teachers in all categories of schools strongly agreed on the improvement of practices aiming at learning by doing at school and outside the schools.

4.2 Discussions

Findings revealed that even if each strategy employed during teachers-learners' classroom interactions through English presents valuable contributions that allow teachers and learners in the lower primary to communicate through English, many limitations, gaps, or challenges during their employability were detected.

Based on Svendsen's (2014)' note, the foremost focus of the usage of code-switching would be to help learners understand and comprehend the learned content. The results from the study revealed that teachers did not respect regulations in translation, so that most of the time many English words are pronounced with Kinyarwanda sounds. In addition, even if the mix of Kinyarwanda and English has been taken as a tool to help teachers and learners understand one another during their interactions in the classroom at the beginning of schooling, it was also noticed that this strategy does not help learners during examinations, especially in extra-school examinations and competitions prepared in English. Consequently, almost all learners in public and government-aided schools are classified as unsuccessful in tests set in English. This could be justified by the fact that the Rwandan National Examination and School Inspection Authority (NESA) showed that at primary level 3 (P3), learners' performance in English literacy was low, at the level of which only 10.08% of learners met curriculum expectations (NESA, 2022).

Vanichvasin (2021) argued that comprehension and retention magnify memory and enable learners to recall, retain, and restate learned content. This has been supported by respondents in this study, who underlined that content memorization is a weapon to be utilized by almost all learners in public, government, and private schools. Moreover, findings showed that the end result or product of this strategy differs regarding school status, depending on the level of proficiency in English. In reality, it was demonstrated that learners in private schools memorize and understand subject contents and reproduce them easily during examinations. On the other hand, learners in public and government-aided schools cram not-understood learned elements and fail to reproduce crammed content during tests because of language limitations. Therefore, the recommended practices may vary depending on the status of the school. For public and government-aided schools, a change of mindset and behavior by encouraging the practice of the English language to improve their English proficiency from preschool studies might be necessary. For private schools that claim to have insufficient teaching and learning aids set in English so that learners have sufficient learning aids, the improvised ones could be advised. Moreover, based on the possible challenges in the production of effective materials by improvisation, as perfection is not for this world, the easy access to materials prepared by REB could also ameliorate the existing skills and enhance the outcomes of teacher-learner classroom interactions. In addition, depending on the type of lesson and available teaching and learning materials in the classroom, the learning-by-doing principle was highlighted by most of the respondents as a suitable practice that could help learners understand sustainably learned content. Furthermore, referring to Ndiwokubwayo's (2016) recommendation of collaborative work and improvising teaching and learning materials to upgrade instructional practices, schools' collaboration and exchange of teaching and learning materials and efficient working experiences could be advised.

Finally, as requested by school head teachers, REB might include teachers in private schools in teachers' training sessions for coaching, peer learning, a common understanding of the content to provide and suitable disseminating methods, as well as the exchange of success stories with those in public and government-aided schools. This request relates to the World Bank report recommendations on the improvement and professional support provided by teaching and learning one another during the training of pre-service and in-service teachers (Iwasaki et al., 2019).

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study emphasized limitations on employed teaching and learning strategies as well as practices leading to improved teacher-learners classroom interactions through English in lower primary. Therefore, based on noticed limitations/gaps and challenges in strategies adopted by teachers and learners in the lower primary to be able to interact, but also enlightened by enumerated suitable practices to be undertaken, the study proposed a practical framework to improve teacher-learners classroom interactions through English.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended teachers and learners strive to improve their English language proficiency to be able to interact through English. Specifically, teachers were required to adopt practices that help learners learn by doing, especially to prepare various practical tasks and organize debate sessions. Parents, school managers, and local authorities on their side, are suggested to enroll all children in preschool centers, create and improve an English-rich environment, and facilitate regular peer learning meetings. Rwandan decision-making institutions, including the Ministry of Education, REB, and NESA, as well as local and international partners in education, were advocated to update and follow up on the implementation of educational policies, curricula, and educational reforms and to improve

and increase teaching and learning tools. Finally, the study recommended active participation and partnership within the implementation of proposed practices to reinforce and enhance the effective teaching and learning process through English medium at primary schools.

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