



The Significance of English Writing Skills on Learners' Performance: A Case of Two Secondary Schools in Kicukiro District, Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This case study aims to investigate the impact of English writing skills on learners' performance in secondary schools in Kicukiro District. Guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Richards' Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the study used a mixed-methods approach. The study targeted 147 participants, comprising learners, teachers, and heads of studies, from which a sample of 75 participants was selected using proportionate stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Primary data was collected through both interviews and questionnaires, assessing the impact of English writing skills on learners' performance, exploring effective teaching approaches, identifying factors contributing to low English writing skills among learners at secondary schools in Rwanda, and examining the influence of teaching strategies on learners' writing skills. Out of these findings, the paper discloses that essay writing, agenda writing, playwriting, poetry writing, and minute writing skills considerably influence learners' performance. The study suggests enhancing learners' writing skills through regular writing activities like letters and short stories. Teachers of English should also be role models for their learners when teaching to uplift their writing motivation. In a similar or different setting, future studies should investigate the relevance of other skills to primary learners.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English Language, Learners, Performance, Secondary Schools, Writing Skills

I. INTRODUCTION

English is a lingua franca that enables people to stay connected globally. The Government of Rwanda recommended English as the sole medium of instruction in secondary education to facilitate local, regional, and global integration (Sibomana, 2014). This language continues to play a significant role in various aspects of life, both within and outside the country. It is a way for people to successfully integrate, despite related challenges. Writing is taught at secondary to enhance learners' performance not only in language but also in other subjects. Research on English skills in education indicates that writing takes precedence over other language skills (Dornbrack & Dixon, 2018; Assaf et al., 2016), with a moderately lower priority when teaching English as a foreign language.

Typically, the language proficiency plays a perennial role in academic achievement (Al-Busaidi, 2021). Particularly for learners of English as a second language, the place that writing skill holds is not generally in doubt. According to Bhowmik (2021), writing is an important skill that second language (L2) learners need to develop in order to participate as effective communicators, be it in an academic or professional context. Al-Busaid (2021) supports the idea that language proficiency plays a perennial role in academic achievement. For instance, research reveals that writing proficiency plays a crucial role in achieving holistic success. Jagunos et al. (2019) claim that someone with good English writing skills equips students with the capacity to correct mistakes in written works such as exercises, group work, field work activities, take-home assignments, quizzes, continuous assessment tests, examinations, and other academic writings (Verger et al., 2016). Conversely, Ur (2017) claims that the use of English writing activities to communicate is less common among teaching and learning strategies compared to other English language skills.

As previously mentioned, teaching writing skills is a complex process. According to Jagunos et al. (2019), writing is the hardest skill to develop in a particular learner. It is a process that requires time and effort to master. Indeed, each English writing skill is considered a challenging task internally or externally. The learners' conditions, including their native language, linguistic competence, and motivation, pose challenges in this context. External challenges consist of teaching writing in a large class and the availability of aids and time as well.

In light of the above background, this study attempts to examine the impact of one of the four English skills on learners' performance at secondary schools in Rwanda, with particular interest in G.S. Rwabutenge and G.S. Busanza of Kicukiro district.

1.1 Problem statement

Research has shown that writing skills increase students' achievement in language and other subjects (Kétyi, 2013). While English writing skills play an important role for learners, it can be a hard and stressful activity for them too (Tsui, 2016; Özgen & Alkan, 2014). Because background knowledge and skills are generally required for learners to perform well in other subjects, a lack of writing skills affects their performance in science, English, and social sciences. In the Rwandan context, studies on English writing skills did not assess their significance for secondary school learners' performance. They did not bridge the gaps that remain unfilled in this area of contention. Against this situation, this study aims to explore how significant writing skills are on students' performance in two selected secondary schools from the District of Kicukiro.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study sought to examine the significance of English writing skills on learners' performance in two secondary schools of Kicukiro district in Rwanda. One is an urban school, G.S Busanza, while another is located in rural areas that is, G.S Rwabutenge. Specifically, the study purposed to:

- (i) Explore the teaching approaches that teachers perceive more effective for teaching writing skills;
- (ii) Identify the factors that fuel low English writing skills among learners at secondary schools in Rwanda;
- (iii) Examine the extent to which teaching strategies affect learners' English writing skills and academic performance in their different subjects.

1.3 Hypothesis

HO: There is no significance of English writing skills on learners' performance in G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza in Kicukiro district.

H1: There is significance of English writing skills on learners' performance in G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza in Kicukiro district

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Sociocultural Theory

The influence of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory on second language learning is still embraced by various critics in educational and linguistic studies (Tzuriel, 2021). Framed on the central tenet that the development of humans depends largely on how they interact with the environment around them, the sociocultural theory holds that language learners' communication is connected with social reasons. Some of Vygotsky's concepts imply more teacher-student collaboration, whereby the teacher or peer explains a subject to a certain extent. Elsewhere, the child learns by self-regulation as he or she creates meaning from their collaborative experience. This is the process where an individual constructs theories and develops awareness not only about the world but also themselves. Hence, this theory will guide this study in which the relationship teacher student is central.

2.1.2 Communicative Language Learning (CLT)

In addition to Vygotsky's theory, Richards' Communicative Language Learning (CLT) assumes that both the teacher and learners must contribute to the learning environment. According to Richards (2006), CLT's central premise is that many learners need English in order to use it in specific occupational or educational settings. So, it would be more efficient to teach learners the specific kinds of language and communicative skills needed for particular roles rather than just concentrating on more general English. According to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), people typically learn language as a tool to facilitate communication and interaction within their speech community. A good way to do so is to engage learners to use language creatively, as echoed in Ahmad (2019),

that the language teacher should primarily understand and create optimal language learning environments. The author continues by emphasizing that the language teacher should design learning activities that provide learners with opportunities to participate in multiple contexts, as language learning primarily emphasizes accuracy and appropriateness in its application in various contexts. Henceforth, CLT is reliable in the present study involving the role of the teacher to engage learners in English language classroom.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Integrative Approaches to Teaching English Writing Skills

Teaching English writing skills has been a topic of interest with the appearance of a communicative approach to take the role of the situation into consideration. Larsen-Freeman (2011) proposes a framework that combines the features of grammar description, which include grammatical morphemes and syntactic patterns, to constitute the data and information related to when and why a particular English grammatical form is used in a given situation (Keck & Kim, 2014). Due to the complexity of the phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic systems of the English language, writing skills are among the most difficult. It is the most important of the English language skills that needs to be introduced through carefully designed activities (Rao, 2019). This is an implicit approach, which may prove problematic in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situation because learners need some explicit English writing skills at some point. In this vein, teaching English writing skills should focus on such dimensions in order to make students “use grammar appropriately in a variety of real-world contexts” (Keck & Kim, 2014). As Hinkel and Fotos (2001) indicated, teaching writing skills in English has evolved from grammar-focused to task-focused instructions. Enderwati et al. (2023) posit that writing skills are fundamental to academic and professional success, serving as a gateway to effective communication and critical thinking. Therefore, teaching writing skills integrate a number of tasks and activities that engages learners communicatively.

2.2.2 Factors Affecting English Writing Skills among Learners

Around the world, poor writing skills among learners of English as a second language in secondary schools have become a recurrent topic for discussion. Oladejo (1992) observes that there are many difficulties facing the teaching and learning of writing skills in developing English-speaking countries. Such difficulties include, but are not limited to, a lack of qualified teachers, large class sizes, teachers’ low motivation in teaching writing skills, and low confidence. However, the main hazard comes from insufficient or a lack of professionalism, mainly about how to handle the issue of English writing skills among students. According to Hlas and Hildebrandt (2010), inadequate resources, low teachers’ motivation, and a short time of teaching in the classroom are some of the elements that complicate the instruction of English writing skills, mainly in secondary schools.

2.2.3 Importance of Writing Skills for Students

Studies conducted on the importance of writing skills to students highlight that they play a significant role in many ways. In Rao (2019), writing activities are considered a booster for students’ learning, thinking, and reflecting on the English language in their academics. Conversely, a lack of writing proficiency impedes learners’ ability to engage creatively and to express their thoughts effectively (Klimova, 2012; Asror et al., 2024). Based on the relevance of writing skills, studies recommend teachers to pay particular attention to students’ difficulties and help them enhance formal writing skills by focusing on the genre of argumentative essay writing (Fajrina et al., 2013). Additionally, writing practice makes learners fluent in it. Graham et al. (2013) examined why writing is important, how it develops, and its effectiveness. The study confirmed that frequent writing exercises make students write more skillfully and become better writers. Writing is also a versatile tool to enhance learners’ performance. Tusino et al. (2024) claim that learners who excel in writing from an early stage tend to develop effective language communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and the capacity to express ideas clearly and persuasively.

2.2.4 The Role of the Teacher

The teachers’ role is crucial because they provide students with the basic English writing skills that are essential to mastering it. If learners do not master the basics of English writing skills, they will not be able to develop their knowledge properly. Evans and Morrison (2011) note that by merging integrative approaches like hard work, durable motivation, constructive learning strategies, and peer networks, learners conquer poor English writing skills and their academic performance, like being aware of technical vocabulary and comprehending English notes. More so, Harmer (2015) emphasized that creating story prompts can boost writing skills and help students to expand grammatical and organizational skills, thus bringing positive change to learners’ preferred writing skills and achievement.



III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study is a case study that adopted a mixed-method approach. The study assessed the significance of English writing skills on the learners’ performance in secondary school.

3.2 Target Population

The population of interest from two targeted schools comprised 147 participants of three categories namely 2 Deputy Head teacher in charge of studies, 16 school teachers and 129 students.

Table 1

Target Population

Categories of respondents	Population	Number
School staff	Deputy head teacher in charge of studies	2
Teaching staff	G.S Rwabutenge (Rural school)	6
	G.S Busanza (Urban school)	10
Learners (S ₅ & S ₆)	G.S Rwabutenge (Rural school)	43
	G.S Busanza (Urban school)	86
Total	All targeted respondents	147

3.3 Sampling and Sample Size

The research used the all-inclusive population of interest as a sample for small populations (Green, 1992). Thus, two deputy headteachers in charge of studies and 16 teachers were purposefully sampled, while 57 student respondents were selected from two schools in Kicukiro District. The Nassiuma (2001) formula was used to calculate the sample size, as shown below:

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N\hat{a} \cdot 1)e^2}$$

A sample size which is equal to 57 participants (Learners) is derived in the equation below:

$$n = \frac{129(0.5)^2}{(0.5)^2 + (129\hat{a} \cdot 1)(0.05)^2} = 56.57 \text{ or } 57 \text{ Respondents}$$

Table 2

Sample Size

	Targeted population			Strategy		Research tools
	Population	Sample size	Types of sample size	Sampling		
Director in charge of studies	G.S Busanza	1	2	Universally	Purposive	Interview
	G.S Rwabutenge	1				
Teachers	G.S Rwabutenge	6	6	Universally	Purposive	Questionnaire
	G.S Busanza	10				
Learners	G.S Rwabutenge	43	19	Systematically	Stratified	Questionnaire
	G.S Busanza	86				

According to Bryman (2012), under the proportion allocation, the sizes of the sample from strata are kept to the size of the strata using the following formula:

$$n_1 = \frac{n\hat{a} - P_1}{N}$$

n₁ represents the sample size for stratum one; n representing the total sample size; P₁ representing the proportion of population in stratum one; and N representing the total population. Therefore, for the stratum of learners sampled using the above formula, its sample size is the following:

$$n_1 = \frac{43\hat{a} - 57}{129} = 19 \text{ Learners at G.S Rwabutenge}$$

From a population of 147 participants, the study used a sample of 75 respondents selected using a stratified sampling technique. They include 57 students selected from two targeted schools that is, 38 learners from G.S Busanza and 19 from GS Rwabutenge; 6 teachers from the same school and 10 from GS Busanza. Lastly, 2 head of

studies, one from each school, were also selected to participate in this study because they best meet the purpose of the study. Their individual capacity was a knowledgeable source to improve learners’ writing skills and performance.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques and Analysis

The study used interviews and questionnaires to gather primary data. Secondary data were collected through documents, including journal articles, published books, and reports. Data collected using questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics with percentages and figures, while qualitative information, as generated from interviews, was handled using themes in light of the research objectives.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1.1 Response Rate

Data were collected from 75 respondents, including 2 key informants, 16 teachers, and 57 learners. In total, 16 teachers and 57 learners responded to questionnaire questions, while two Deputy head teachers were involved in the interview questions. All 57 questionnaires were well filled out and returned to the researchers for analysis. The response rate was thus 100%. A high response rate indicates that the study was relevant to the participants and that the data collection process was effective.

Table 3

Response Rate

Sampled	Responded	Response Rate
57 learners	57	100%
16 teachers	16	100%
2 heads of studies	2	100%

4.1.2 Demographic Information of Respondents

Presented below are teachers’ demographic information such as gender, age, level of education and experience in teaching English.

4.1.2.1 Gender Characteristics of Respondents

This study labels the gender details of respondents and results in respect of this demographic feature are presented in Figure 1 below:

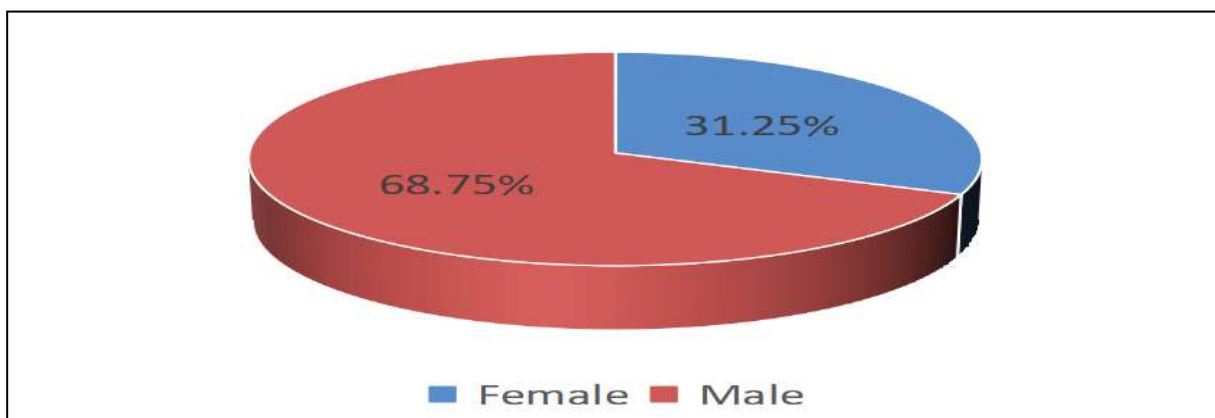


Figure 1

Female and Male English Teachers

As presented in Figure 1, the number of female teachers is twice the number of male teachers of English in G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza in Kicukiro district. This was necessary for the study to get a balanced picture of the respondents’ views. Indeed, involving both genders implies that the study is free of gender bias. Most importantly, the fact that majority of respondents are female (68.75%) reflects that women have currently shown their ability to serve as men in education career.

4.1.2.2 Description of Age of Respondents

In research, age is very important as it reflects participants' wisdom. In this study, details about the age of respondents were provided to ensure that they are able to reveal the significance of English writing skills among learners in secondary schools in Rwanda.

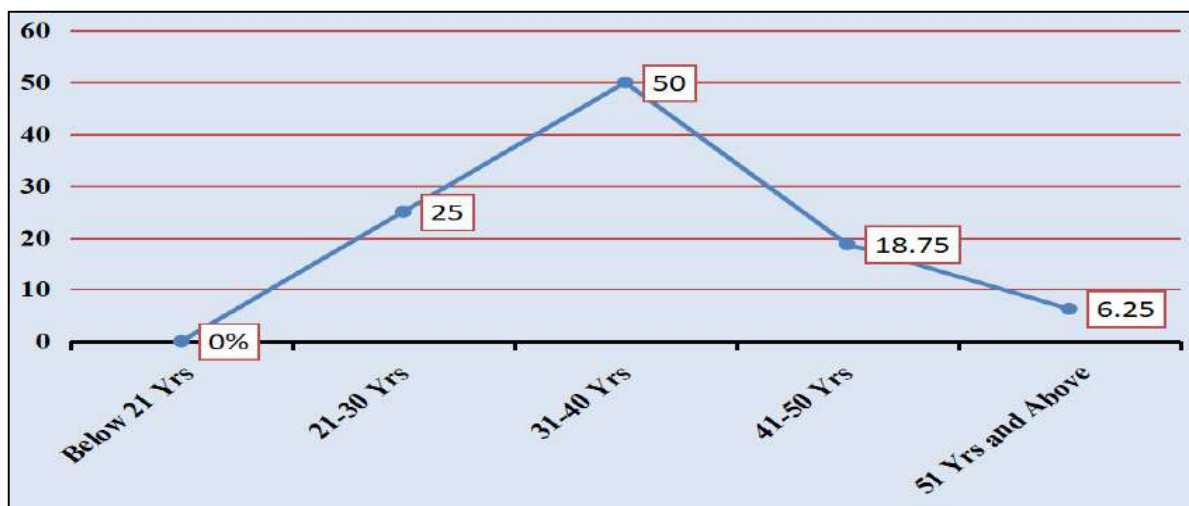


Figure 2
Teachers' Ages

As shown on the above figure, 50% are aged between 31 and 40 which is twice the second teacher's age group (18.75%) from age 21-30. Further, 6.25% fall in age category between 41 and 50. None of the teachers is therefore below the required age to teach at secondary.

4.1.2.3 Academic Qualification of Respondents

Figure 3 illustrates teachers' qualification. Generally, people having only advanced level certificate of secondary education are not qualified enough to teach at any level of secondary education. Besides, teachers having bachelor's degree are the only qualified to teach in upper secondary school. As it can be seen below, majority of teachers (62.5%) are qualified as they hold bachelor's degrees. This is an advantage for quality of education purpose as G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza employ teachers who have required level.

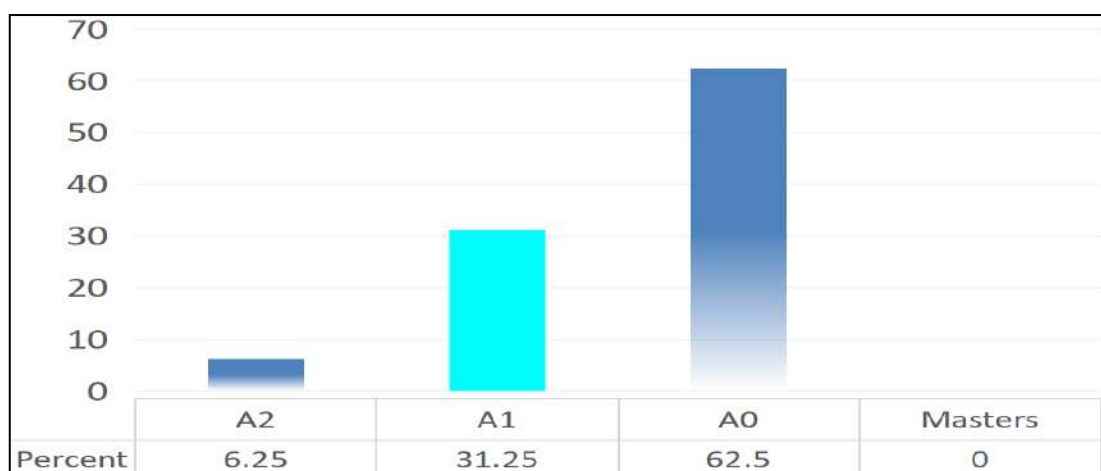


Figure 3
Teachers' Academic Qualification

4.1.2.4 Teachers' Teaching Experience

As shown in Figure 4, a good number of English teachers have more than five years of teaching experience. For example, 7 teachers have taught English for 5-7 years and 3 for 8 years and more. Hence, information for this research was collected from respondents who are well experienced in teaching English subject.

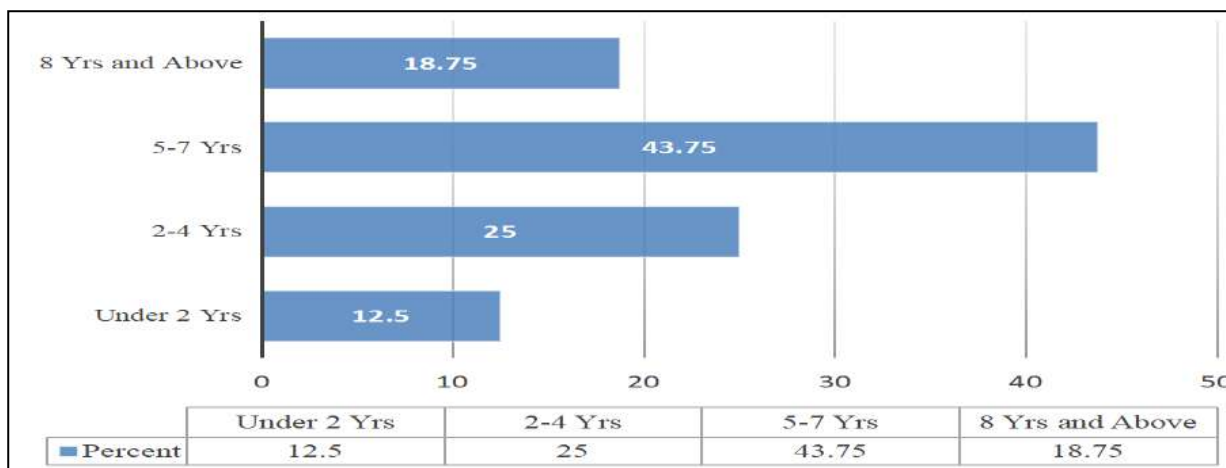


Figure 4
Statistics of Respondents' Teaching Experience

4.1.3 Integrative Approaches in Teaching English Writing Skills in Secondary Schools

This section helps to achieve the objective one related to the effective integrative approaches and methods in teaching English writing skills in secondary schools as reported in table 4 and 5.

Table 3
Approaches Used in Teaching Writing Skills

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Grammar translation approach	4	25.0
Competence based approach	2	12.5
Product approach	0	0.0
Process approach	1	6.25
Genre approach	1	6.25
Literature approach	6	37.5
Other approaches	2	12.5
Total	16	100.0

From table 4, 37.5% participants argued that they used literature writing while 25% use grammar translation method. 12.5% reveal that they use competence - based writing skills approach; (6.25%) use other strategies such as paragraph writing strategy, composition writing strategies much as the other 6.25% use process approach. Additionally, results demonstrated that some teachers use letters, minutes, reports, recipes, dialogues and memoranda.

Table 4
Learners' Views on the Kind of English Writing Skill Strategies Applied by their Teachers

Strategies	Frequency	Percent
Letter writing	10	21.8
Composition writing	17	36.9
Writing modal verbs	1	2.2
Minutes writing	3	6.4
Poem writing	4	8.7
Paragraph writing	11	23.9
Total	46	100.0

The results of the study showed that some respondents (36.9%) believed that teachers use a composition writing skill approach to uplift learners' performance in English. More so, 21.8% of learners argued that their English teachers apply letter writing skills to enhance learners' writing skills at G.S. Rwabutenge and G.S. Busanza in Kicukiro district.

According to data from interviews, teachers guide learners in essay writing, minutes, and reports while using short narratives to tell a similar story. Some other teachers used dictation to improve spelling, punctuation marks, capitalization, paraphrasing, and taking notes from spoken and written sources to improve learners' handwriting. Data show that most teachers use integrated approaches, product approaches, process approaches, and genre approaches as integrative approaches and methods.

4.1.4 Factors fueling low English Writing Skills among Learners at Secondary in Kicukiro District

This section presents the answers for objective two related to factors affecting English writing skills among learners of secondary schools in Kicukiro District. Details are presented using frequencies and percentages, as shown in the below table.

Table 5
Factors affecting poor English writing skills among learners

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Lack of understanding of what is expected to be written	8	50.0
Unwilling to use dictation	5	31.1
Insufficient writing works to uplift learners' writing skills	1	6.3
Time shortage to teach writing skills	0	0.00
Ineffective methods of teaching writing skills	1	6.3
English is not learners' mother tongue	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

From the above table, factors driving poor English writing skills among learners at secondary school include low learners' understanding of what they are expected to write, teachers' unwillingness to use English dictation, insufficient writing works to uplift learners' writing skills, English as a second language to learners, and ineffective methods of teaching writing skills. This emphasizes that secondary school students in Kicukiro district do not like works that require them to write formally. They are not encouraged to read other works to engage in English writing practices too.

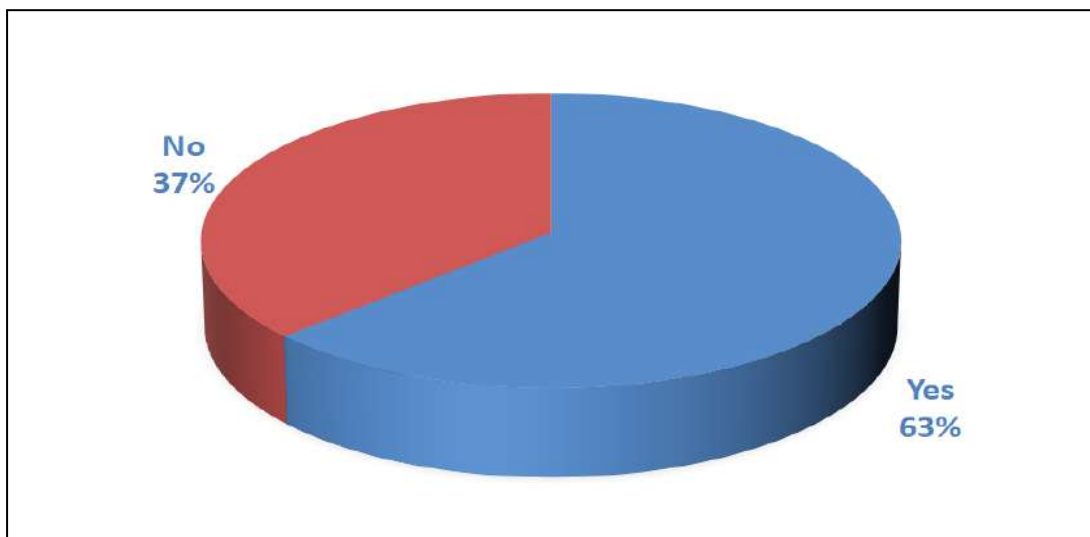


Figure 5
Learners' Reactions on How They Have Been Taught English Writing Skills

When asked if their teachers teach writing skills, 63.1% of respondents confirmed it, in contrast to 36.9% who disagreed. They say teachers at G.S. Rwabutenge and G.S. Busanza do not teach writing skills conveniently. This assertion by numerous students that they didn't receive instruction in English writing skills reveal that their understanding of the language was inadequate.

4.1.5 Effect of Teaching Strategies on the Learners' English Writing Skills

Findings depicted in this sub-section illustrate that strategies to improve learners' English writing skills and high academic performance in their subjects should be improved in secondary schools in Kicukiro District. Findings unveil that most teachers improve their students English writing skills through encouraging learners to read many

English books, a view that is different from their students'. Correspondingly, few of them say they improve learners' English writing skills through modelling English writing skills because there is no better way to learn something than to see someone else doing it. Teacher respondents advised their mates to let learners practise English writing tasks as daily as possible. Few teachers use regular teaching to write letter and short stories to develop learner's practical life skills because frequent writing letters and short stories on special topics would all go a long way to giving learners' English writing skills a boost.

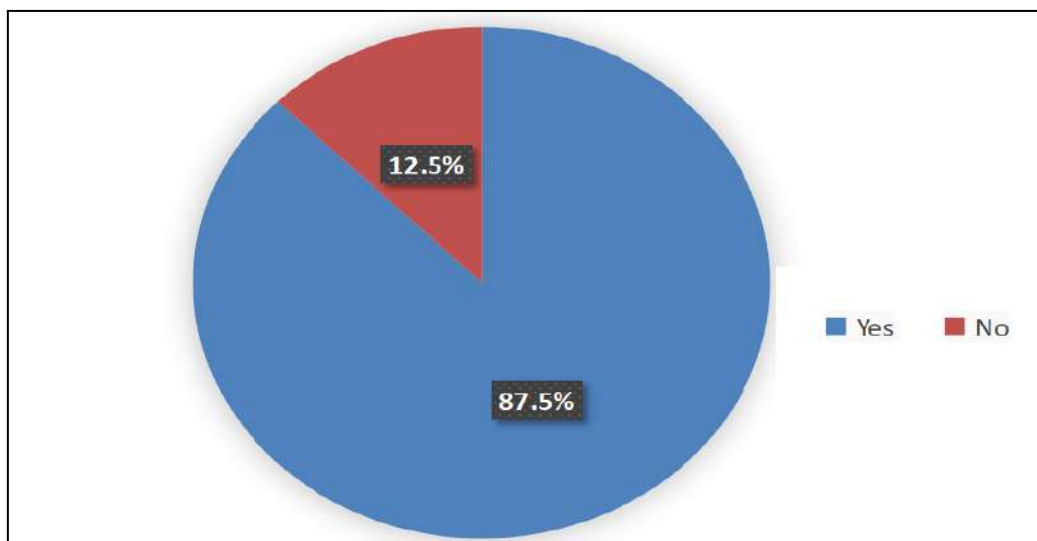


Figure 6
The significance of teaching English Writing Skills on Learners' Performance

According to the figure 6, 87.5% agreed that teaching English writing skills has significance on learners' performance in other subjects at G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza against 12.5% who assert that teaching English writing skills has no significance on learners' performance in other subjects in their schools. This implies that teaching English writing skills plays a great role for learners' performance in secondary schools.

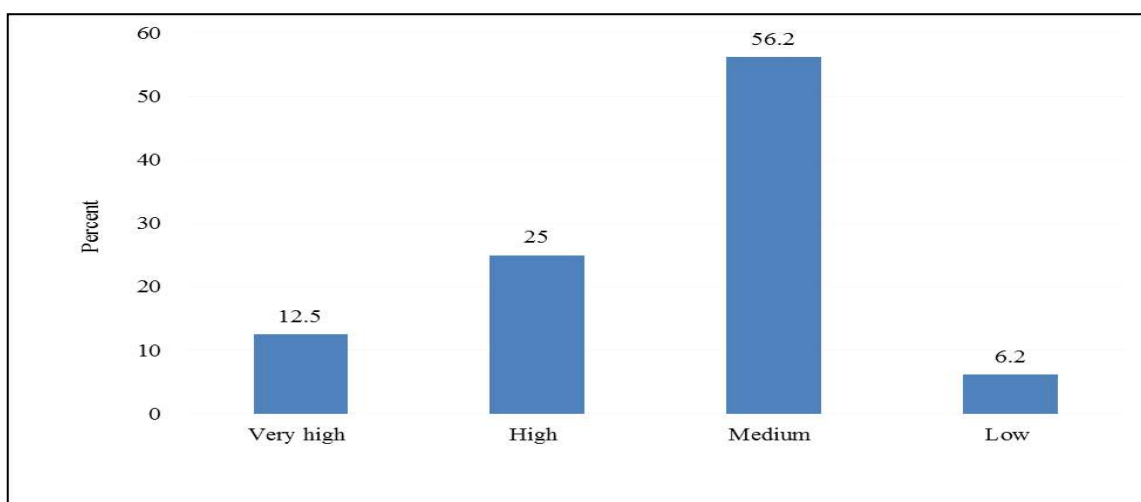


Figure 7
Level of learner's Performance Brought about by Teaching English Writing Skills

As identified on the above figure, 56.2 % said that the significance of teaching English writing skills on learners' performance in the other subjects was medium, 25% responded that it was high, while 6.2% asserted a low significance of teaching English writing skills on learners' performance in the other subjects. at G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza .



4.1.6 Testifying Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was: there is no significant importance of English writing skills on the learners' performance in G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza in Kicukiro district. The findings in figure 7 are used to test the hypothesis. Decision Rule: Reject Ho: if $z > z_{\alpha}$ or if $z < -z_{\alpha}$ (-r)

Accept HO: if $z < z_{\alpha}$ (r) or if $z > -z_{\alpha}$ (-r), Where; z = test statistic (value)

z_{α} (r) = critical (table) value. Level of significance used is 5%

The critical value is $z = 0.05 = 1.96$

The statistical test $z = \frac{Q - Q_0}{SQ}$

Table 6: Computation z_{α} value to test Hypothesis

X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
14	2	196	4	64
$\sum X = 14$	$\sum Y = 2$	$\sum X^2 = 196$	$\sum Y^2 = 4$	$\sum XY = 64$

Let X represents **Yes** and Let Y represents **No**, Substituting these values in the formula

$$r = \frac{N(\sum XY) - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{N\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2} \cdot \sqrt{N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2}}$$

$$z_{\alpha} = \frac{16(64) - (14)(2)}{\sqrt{16(196) - (14)^2} \cdot \sqrt{16(4) - (2)^2}}$$

$$\frac{1,024 - 28}{\sqrt{3,136 - 196} \cdot \sqrt{460}}$$

$$\frac{996}{1,352,400} = z_{\alpha} = \frac{996}{1,352,400} = 0.000736$$

Let's compare the critical value with the test statistics = $0.000736 < 1.96$. Since the positive value of the z statistic is greater than the critical or table value and falls inside the rejection region, the alternative hypothesis H1 is accepted. The null hypothesis H0 is then rejected as it stated that there is no significant importance of English writing skills on the learners' performance in G.S Rwabutenge and G.S Busanza in Kicukiro district.

4.2 Discussions

Regarding the first objective, the study results indicate that teachers utilize various writing skills such as essay writing, approaches, agenda writing, play, poetry, and minutes. Additionally, 25% of teachers use a grammar, translation, and writing skills approach. The interview findings align with quantitative data, indicating that English teachers instruct students in writing skills by promoting the integration of basic language skills through narrative, argument, discussion, and exposition essays. Additionally, interview results demonstrate that English teachers teach writing skills by encouraging functional writing compounds such as letters in English, minutes, reports, recipes, dialogues, and memoranda.

This study's second goal aimed to demonstrate that learners' inadequate comprehension of writing expectations, inadequate use of English dictation, and insufficient writing tasks to enhance their writing abilities were the primary causes of their poor performance. When asked about the challenges they encounter while studying English writing skills, several learner respondents confirmed this observation. One learner expressed, "I struggle with English writing because I haven't studied English writing skills, and most of my school's teachers haven't provided me with various writing tips." In a similar vein, another learner confirmed, "Teachers dislike teaching English writing skills by giving us dictations, and we lack a library with enough English books to enable us to study writing skills thoroughly."

Findings from interview disclose that poor English writing skills among learners is mostly influenced by different factors such as poor background writing skills, low educational level and lack of will among some learners who do not pay attention to the English writing skills because English is not their mother tongue. Relatedly, out of school they do not find people to interact with or write to in English. The results indicated that low English writing

skills among learners is also influenced by learning environment in terms of inadequate or lack of resources, and teachers not well trained on how English writing skills should be taught in class.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings rhyme well with empirical data that poor English writing skills among learners is most influenced by inadequacy of materials and teachers' inability to teach English writing skills well. Teaching English writing skills was also affected by the inadequate resources and lack of teachers' motivation. Correspondingly, short time of teaching in classroom is another factor that affects the teaching of writing skills in secondary schools and this is consistent with Hlas & Hildebrandt (2010).

The study's third objective revealed that encouraging students to read numerous English books can enhance their English writing skills. Few teachers improve learners' English writing skills through modeling because there is no better way to learn something than to see someone else doing it. Learners supported this by explaining how they can learn English writing skills more effectively and comprehensively to excel in homework activities, exercises, quizzes, continuous assessment tests, and exams.

Actually, the first objective of the study was to identify approaches and methods that teachers perceive as effective in teaching English writing skills. According to the study's findings, no teacher used the product approach, but most of them used literature writing skills and grammar translation approaches. Other approaches include a competence-based approach and a process approach, such as paragraph writing skills, composition writing skills, and handwriting skills. Teachers used those approaches to teach writing skills by encouraging the integration of basic language skills through narrative, argument, discussion, and exposition essay writing. Similarly, the teachers adopted those approaches to encourage writing letters in English, minutes, reports, recipes, dialogues, and memoranda. In a similar situation, Larsen-Freeman et al. (2011) propose a framework for effective English teaching by encouraging functional writing compounds and regular English dictations that combine the features of grammar description.

The findings unveil that the main factors affecting low English writing skills among learners in secondary schools in Kicukiro District include low learners' understanding of what is expected to be written, unwillingness to use English dictation, insufficient writing works to uplift learners' writing skills, the mother tongue factor when English is taught as a second language (ESL), and ineffective methods of teaching writing skills. Furthermore, inadequate teaching and learning materials primarily impact learners' low English writing skills besides their apprehension about receiving criticism for their mistakes. These findings align with previous studies (Adam et al., 2021; Enderwati et al., 2023) which found out that teaching English writing skills is challenging and can potentially cause anxiety in students (Bobojonova, 2020).

Regarding the third objective, the results indicated that teachers improved their students' English writing proficiency through modeling English writing skills because there is no better way to learn something than watching someone else do it. Learners supported this by explaining how they can enhance their English writing skills more effectively and comprehensively through homework activities, exercises, quizzes, continuous assessment tests, and exams. The findings align with Keck & Kim's (2014) assertion that morphology and syntax enable students to "use grammar accurately and appropriately in a variety of real-world contexts, thereby improving both learners' English proficiency and writing skills. Although Hidayati (2018) emphasizes that challenges in teaching writing are complex, Harmer (2015) encourages writing and modelling it to develop both learners' grammatical and organizational skills, helping learners with examples of the type of genre teachers want them to read or learn to write.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the effects of English writing skills on the learners' performance in secondary schools in Rwanda. Effective approaches and methods for teaching English writing skills were examined. Factors fueling poor English writing skills among learners in secondary schools in Rwanda were discussed too. Findings highlighted that writing skills play a significant role in learners' performance not only in English but also in other subjects. The study identified factors that obstruct effective teaching such as learners' low English writing skills, lack of understanding of what is expected to be written, insufficient writing works to uplift learners' writing skills, mother tongue influence, ineffective methods of teaching writing skills besides teaching and learning materials, and a fear of being judged once learners make written mistakes in English.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that teachers receive sufficient training in English writing skills to enhance their confidence and proficiency in teaching the subject. Teachers should motivate learners and be their role models. English clubs and writing competitions in English must be reinforced or initiated if they are not there. Further studies

are suggested on similar grounds, especially for other English skill dimensions such as speaking, reading, and listening.

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