Empowering Learners to Improve English Language Performance through Group Discussion Strategy in Selected Secondary Schools in Rwanda

Barungi Celestin[1]
Ndayisaba Viateur[2]
Ntibanyurwa Sosthene[3]
Irankunda Aime [4]
Nyirahabineza Pascasie[5]

[1]bacele86@gmail.com
[2]viandayisaba3@gmail.com
[3]ntibaso3@gmail.com
[4]nkundantege@gmail.com
[5]pascasieh018@gmail.com

[1,2,3,4,5]University of Rwanda

……….…

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the group discussion strategy on English language performance among secondary school students in Rwanda. Recognizing the critical role of English proficiency in academic achievement and future career opportunities, the research addresses the persistent challenges faced by students in mastering the language through traditional teaching methods. The study adopts a descriptive research design using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to assess the effectiveness of group discussions in enhancing students' comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This study was guided by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Data were collected through filled questionnaires from students, teachers' and administrative staff. Results indicate that the group discussion strategy significantly improves students' English language performance by fostering interactive and collaborative learning environments. Students showed increased engagement, motivation, and confidence in using English. The findings suggest that incorporating group discussions into the curriculum can effectively empower learners and enhance English language education in Rwandan secondary schools. The study established that group discussions significantly contribute to improving various language skills among students. The interactive nature of these discussions fosters engagement and participation, leading to heightened confidence and motivation among students. The study recommends integrating structured group discussions into Rwanda's English curriculum, supported by teacher training. It emphasizes creating supportive environments, leveraging technology, promoting peer support, and implementing continuous assessment and feedback. These measures aim to improve English proficiency, enhancing students' academic success and future prospects in a globalized world.

Keywords: *Empowerment, English Language, Group Discussion, Performance*
……….…

I. INTRODUCTION

English speaking is very important to be mastered since it is worldwide used, in other words it is the language which is internationally used. As part of the international community, it is necessary to master English peaking for it plays important roles in the coming era where everything is going to be globalized (Bohari, 2020). When someone is in Japan, for example (or in any other countries whose mother tongue is not English), and he does not speak Japanese, he can communicate with English to interact with people there. People will not excuse for he speaks English since it have been an agreement that English is the language which can connect people all over the world. That is why English is needed to be learnt (Boonkit, 2019).Group discussion is described as a group of individuals, typically who share a similar interest, who gather either formally or informally to discuss ideas, solve problem or make comments. Group discussion is defined as form of communication in which the participant share ideas and exchange information on a common topic

English is the second-most widely spoken language in the world, Africa adopted it through colonization and had started used it. English surpassed only by Chinese. Travelers from Western countries often assume widespread global English proficiency – but that's far from reality, especially in Africa. According to Business Insider, only 130 million of the approximately 1 billion people in Africa speak English. Proficiency levels range widely from country to country. However, analysis of world-wide English proficiency published by EF Education First reveals several

individual African countries have considerably higher levels of either official or widely practiced English skills. Others show solid improvement since the organization's first survey (Tibbitts, 2011). This means that English has been commonly used in Sub Sahara Africa through different ways, due to being Bantu, it is not easy for everyone to adapt English in their speaking. This requires learners to improve their learning through group discussion so they will be communicating with others, as we know that language is a tool of communication.

The term "English as a Second Language" (ESL) refers to the use or study of English by non-native speakers in an English-speaking environment. It encompasses a variety of programs and teaching methods designed to help learners become proficient in English, focusing on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills (Nordquist, 2019).Rwanda as country which had been colonized by the Western countries (Germany and Belgium), the languages had been developed and many Rwandans became educated. French was commonly used in different activities during colonization. As colonization started ending the Explorers visited Rwanda came from different areas in the world. In recently years English had become increasingly in the world, Rwanda also got it and adapted it as communication language. As far as developing English, Rwanda shifted curriculum and the medium of instruction from French to English. But nowadays some learners failed to communicate in English, because they are not familiar with it.

In Rwanda, the concerns raised by private schools' owners, parents, teachers and learners, and to address the observed low proficiency and mastery of English language in schools, the Ministry of Education has endorsed that all schools use English language as medium of instruction. The Ministry of Education reiterated the Government of Rwanda's vision to improve proficiency of all official languages (Kinyarwanda, French, Kiswahili and English) emphasizing learning of English Language as a medium of instruction (MINEDUC, 2019).

Therefore, all schools (private, public and government aided) are required to put in place strategies to strengthen the teaching and learning of all languages, specifically English as a medium of instruction from early grades to achieve appropriate language proficiency. This is an important requirement, and schools are required to strengthen students' language proficiency through debates, language competitions, appropriate measures to learn and use English language, and supporting and monitoring measures to ensure use of English language in class, in the school premises, and to ensure mastery of the language, so that it enables students to understand better and obtain higher scores in other subjects (MINEDUC, 2019).

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the emphasis on English as a medium of instruction and its importance in global communication, secondary school students in Rwanda continue to face significant challenges in mastering the English language. Traditional teaching methods, which often focus on rote learning and teacher-centered instruction, have proven insufficient in developing students' proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Consequently, many students graduate with inadequate English language skills, impacting their academic performance and future opportunities in a globalized world (Mbonimana, 2020).

The problem is further compounded by a lack of engaging and interactive learning strategies that can facilitate practical language use and foster a deeper understanding of the language. Group discussion, an underutilized pedagogical approach in Rwandan schools, holds potential for improving language acquisition by promoting active learning, peer interaction, and critical thinking. However, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of this strategy in the context of Rwandan secondary schools.

This research aims to address this gap by investigating how group discussion strategies can empower learners and enhance their English language performance. Specifically, it seeks to evaluate the impact of group discussions on students' language skills, confidence, and motivation, and to provide actionable recommendations for integrating this approach into the English language curriculum. By doing so, the study aims to contribute to the development of more effective and student-centered teaching methodologies that can better equip Rwandan students with the English language competencies needed for academic and professional success.

1.2 Specific Objectives
  i. To assess the impact of group discussion strategies on the overall English language proficiency of secondary schools students in Rwanda?
  ii. To explore the effect of group discussions in the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in English among secondary schools students?
  iii. To identify the perceptions of students regarding the effectiveness of group discussions in improving their English language skills?

iv. To assess the extent of group discussions in fostering peer learning and collaborative skills among secondary schools students in Rwanda?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review
2.1.1 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

This theory was advanced by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, in the early 20th century. This concept holds premise that social interaction plays a fundamental function in cognition development. In the words of Vygotsky (1978), learning is basically a social procedure whereas language is a primary instrument of cognitive growth.

This theory is applicable to this present research as it stresses the value of collaborative learning as well as dialogue in a class setting. The group discussion tactic is in agreement with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept. It describes the difference that exists with what learners can perform without assistance and what they can attain with help and mentor-ship from a skilled person (Miller, 2011). In a secondary school setting, group discussions promotes scaffolding, whereby more experienced instructors or teachers assists learners to attain higher degrees of English language skills comprehension and performance.

This theory makes the assumption that that development in cognition is a socially mediated procedure. In addition, the process of learning precedes development. This concept assumes that interacting with more knowledgeable colleagues and adults substantially boosts cognitive abilities of learners. Similarly, the theory alludes that language functions as a vital role in cognitive establishment because it is a cultural instrument as well as a communication mean that forms thought.

On the other hand, Miller (2011) argued that Sociocultural Theory is critiqued by different scholars. They posit that it overly focuses on social interaction while ignoring the function of personal cognitive procedures and biological elements in learning. At the same time, Shavers (2003) asserted that critics note that this theory is devoid of particulate information on the various dimensions which social interaction impacts directly cognitive development and falls short of accounting for differences in motivations of individual learner's as well as techniques of personal learning.

In the end, Sociocultural Theory offers a strong model for comprehending how tactics in group discussion promotes performance of English language in secondary schools. Through boosting collaborative learning settings, teachers can leverage social interactions to improve development of students' language abilities. This conforms to Vygotsky's perceptions on the social learning nature. Although this concept is criticized by some scholars, it stresses the relationship between social interactions, language, together with development of cognition. It thus remains relevant in educational procedures.

2.2 Empirical Review
2.2.1 The Impact of Group Discussion Strategies on the Overall English Language Proficiency of Secondary Schools Students

A research was performed by Dozois et al. (2019) in the United States on the effect of group discussion tactics on the proficiency of English language among high school learners. By adopting a quasi-experimental technique, encompassing pre-test and post-test control groups, the research engaged 120 learners from five different learning institutions. The students were categorized into an experimental formation as well as a control group. Every group comprised 60 students. Outcomes revealed that students who engaged in group discussion strategies displayed substantial improvements in their aggregate English language proficiency when compared to learners in the control group. In particular, the group under experiment illustrated increased scores in reading comprehension, skills in writing in addition to verbal communication in the post-test. The scholars summarized that strategies of group discussions considerably boost the proficiency of high school students' English language by fostering participation, exposure to different perspectives, and chances for practice in a collaborative context. The researchers suggested combining structured group discussion engagements into the English curriculum in addition to offering continuous career development for teachers and educators to promote these discussions effectively.

Skattum (2018) did a survey in Ghana to explore the influence of group discussion strategies on the comprehension of English language in selected secondary schools. The study utilized a descriptive survey approach, gathering qualitative and quantitative data from 200 learners in four urban secondary schools. This was along with interviews from 20 English instructors. Outcomes revealed that learners who participated in group discussion demonstrated considerable improvements in their proficiency of English language. This was notable in the use of vocabulary, grammar expertise, and oral fluency. Educators and teachers in addition illustrated that students were

more confident and engaged in English lessons. Skattum (2018) summarized that group discussions favorably influence proficiency of secondary school students' spoken English by promoting interactive learning settings.

2.2.2 The Effect of Group Discussions in the Development of Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing Skills in English among Secondary Schools Students

Hariani (2018) carried out a study in Pakistan on the impact of formal discussions on English speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills development in secondary school students. He used a cross-sectional technique involving 150 students from four secondary schools, combining both pre- and post-tests together with focus group discussions. Results of the research hinted considerable improvements in all four skills involving language, with positive gains in verbal and listening abilities. Hariani (2018) summarized that group discussions establish both interactive and supportive setting that promote proficiency in language. He suggested integrating group discussions into day-to-day classroom timetables to boost holistic language development.

Malik et al. (2021) explored the effect of group discussions on skills pertaining to English language in high school learners by utilizing a quasi-experimental technique. The research entailed 120 learners from six high schools, categorized into experimental and control groups. Research outcomes depicted that students in the experimental formation illustrated marked improvements in oral, listening, reading, and skills in writing Vis a vis to the control group. They concluded that discussions in a group setting are effective pedagogical tactic for advancing comprehensive skills in language. The researchers recommended that teachers and English instructors to consistently adopt group discussions to boost active learning and proficiency in language.

2.2.3 Perceptions of Students Regarding the Effectiveness of Group Discussions in Improving Their English Language Skills

In a research carried out in Netherlands by Maulina and Pahamzah (2019), explored secondary school students' perceptions concerning group discussions effectiveness in enhancing their English language skills. Embracing a qualitative research technique, the research entailed structured interviews with 60 learners from 3 different institutions. Results of the study demonstrated that vast majority of students noted group discussions to be highly effective in boosting their oral and listening skills, offering them with better options to practice and receive feedback. In the same vein, learners reported better confidence and support to engage in English lessons. The scholars arrived at the conclusion that student notions are overwhelmingly positive and indicated the benefit of encompassing group debates into the curriculum. This will lead to enhanced and active learning and development of language.

In Britain, Perry-Smith &and Mannucci (2017) did a survey on the perceptions of intermediate school learners on the group discussions efficacy in boosting their expertise in English language. This was attained through an explanatory research technique. The survey encompassed 200 students and performed focus group discussions with 70 responders from four different institutions. Survey outcomes showed that students basically perceived group discussions to be valuable for their language learning. This was specifically in relation to bettering their vocabulary, dictation, and understanding skills. Nonetheless, a number of learners relayed concerns about distorted engagement and the prevalence of more confident orators. The survey results concluded that although group discussions are positively acknowledged, there is a need to handle constraints connected to participation dynamics to ascertain all students equally benefit.

2.2.4 Extent Do Group Discussions Foster Peer Learning and Collaborative Skills among Secondary Schools Students in Rwanda

Antoni (2020) undertook a research in Jordan on the extent to which group discussions promote peer learning and collaborative knowledge in high school learners. Utilizing a case study analysis, research engaged fifty students from three schools, encompassing surveys and class observations. Survey outcomes depicted that group discussions substantially boosted peer learning and collaborative skills. In this regard, learners demonstrated better teamwork, communication, and problem-handling skills. Antoni (2020) summarized that group discussions are efficient in boosting basic collaborative skills and suggested their integration into day to day classroom timetable.

Ur (2019) explored functions of group discussions in bettering peer learning and collaborative skills in selected Zambian secondary schools. Research adopted a descriptive survey, performing focus group interviews with 50 learners from three schools. Study findings deduced that group discussions encouraged peer learning by enabling students to share knowledge and help one another in learning. At the same time, learners alluded to forming better collaborative skills e.g. active listening and negotiation skills. Ur (2019) concluded that group discussions are

beneficial in promoting a collaborative learning setting and hinted at combining them into the syllabus to improve peer interaction and cooperation.

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study that used a mixed method to collect data. The target population was the set of cases from which a sample is drawn and to which a researcher wants to generalize (Ellis, 2020). Regarding the sample population, sample size and sampling techniques, Bhattacherjee (2022) describes a population as a group of people sharing a number of similar features. The target population for this research involved 273 students enrolled in this school year 2021/2022 academic year and 16 teachers as well as 6 staff administrative members from ES Cyimbiri. A sample of 50% of the students was selected using simple random sampling technique to ensure the highest representation and reliability in responses (Taherdoost, 2016). Therefore, the 50% of the population which is equivalent to a sample of 273 students was selected to give equal chance to the whole population, and an interview with all these teachers and administrative staff was conducted.

Table 1
Target Population

Nº	Category	Number		
		Male	Female	Total
1	Students	129	144	273
2	Teachers	11	5	16
3	Administrative staff	3	3	6

Questionnaires, elaborated in English language, were respectively used for students, teachers and administrative staff members as data collection tools. The questionnaires were distributed to 137 (50% of students) 16 teachers and 6 administrative staff of ES Cyimbiri. Data analysis was done through statistical package (SPSS Version 26) for quantitative data.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

The research sampled 137 students (50% of the student population), 16 teachers and 6 administrative staff from ES Cyimbiri who all responded to the questions focusing on empowering group discussion to enhance learner's speaking skills in English language. The responses to the research questions offer insightful perspectives on various aspects of integrating technology into English language proficiency.

Table 2
Response Rate

Category	Sampled	Responded	Response Rate (%)
Students	137	137	100 %
Teachers	16	16	100 %
Administrative staff	6	6	100 %

Concerning the improvement of English language performance through group discussion, the Table 3 presents the information from respondents shown as SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; N: Neutral; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree; F: Frequency; and P: Percentages.

Table 3

The Impact of Group Discussion Strategies on the Overall English Language Proficiency of Secondary School Students

Questions	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total	
Frequency/Percentages	F	P	F	P%	F	P%	F	P%	F	P%	F	P%
I am able to understand lesson when my teacher uses group discussion strategies in English lessons	0	0%	0	0%	5	7%	28	38%	40	55%	73	100%
I like English as medium of instruction in group discussions	0	0%	0	0%			30	41%	43	59%	73	100%
Other languages should be used for better understanding lesson	0	0%	0	0%	10	14%	25	34%	38	52%	73	100%
I use English group discussion strategies when communicating with my classmates at school	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	34	47%	39	53%	73	100%
English is a language that students use more than other languages	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	27	37%	46	63%	73	100%
In learning activity, I prefer individual work	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	29	40%	44	60%	73	100%
In learning activity, I prefer communicating with others	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	34	47%	39	53%	73	100%

Table 3 shows the views of respondents according to the student's impact on attitudes towards the implementation of a group discussion: neutral was 7%; agree was 38%; and strongly agree was 55%. I like English as medium of instruction in lesson delivering: agree was 41%; strongly agree was 59%. I use English when communicating with my classmates at school: agree was 47% and strongly agree was 53%. English is a language that students use more than other languages: agree was 37%; and strongly agree was 67%. In learning activity, I prefer individual work: agree was 43% and strongly agree was 57%. Most of the respondents chose strongly agree with the learning by doing in learners' skills, research and problem solving; homework and better provision of school learning materials and critical thinking was used in the student's attitudes towards the implementation group discussion.

Improvement of English language performance through group discussion is a dynamic and effective approach that fosters active participation, collaboration, and real-world language application. This is supported by Malik et al. (2021) who posited that engaging in group discussions, students can practice speaking English in a supportive environment, allowing them to build confidence, expand vocabulary, and refine communication skills. Discussions encourage fluency as students express their ideas, respond to peers, and negotiate meaning in real-time. Additionally, group settings provide opportunities for peer feedback and reflection, promoting continuous improvement in language proficiency. Through varied topics and structured interactions, group discussions not only enhance linguistic competence but also cultivate critical thinking, cultural awareness, and interpersonal skills essential for effective communication in diverse settings.

Table 4

Effect of Group Discussions on the Performance of Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing Skills in English among Secondary Schools Students

Response	Students	Percentage
Very well	75	47.4
Very poor	33	21
Good/fair	51	31.6
Total	159	100%

Table 4 above describes the effect of group discussions on students' performance in speaking English at E.S Cyimbiri. The following are the findings: very well with 47.4% of the respondents; very poor with 21% of the respondents; good/fair with 31.6% of the respondents. Students' performance in speaking English after engaging in group discussions can vary across different levels depending on their proficiency and exposure to the language. At lower levels of group discussions, students may demonstrate basic communication skills, such as simple greetings, describing familiar topics, and expressing opinions with limited vocabulary and grammar accuracy. As students progress to intermediate levels, their ability to engage in more complex conversations, participate in discussions on a wider range of topics, and convey ideas with improved fluency and accuracy generally improves. Advanced learners typically exhibit high proficiency in speaking English, demonstrating nuanced language use, effective communication

strategies, and the ability to express themselves confidently in various contexts. Factors influencing performance include exposure to authentic language use, opportunities for practice, quality of instruction, and individual motivation and effort in developing speaking skills. Ongoing support, targeted feedback, and opportunities for authentic communication are crucial in fostering continuous improvement across all proficiency levels

The fact that most of the students use English language in both group settings that is, inside and outside the classroom but they still tend to write rather than to speak revealed a huge gap. Thornbury (2020) and Ur (2019) believe that much language teachers' time is taken up teaching particular features of phonology, lexis or structure, presenting them, getting students to practice them, testing them and soon. But when students have learnt them, teachers have the problem of getting them to use their knowledge for actual purposeful verbal communication. That problem is now the major consideration to be solved.

Table 5
Levels of perception of Group Discussion and Speaking Skills in English

Levels of perception on group discussion and improving speaking skills in English	Frequency	Percentage
High level	50	36.6
Intermediate level	84	52.6
Low level	25	15.8
Total	159	100%

Table 5 above describes the levels of perception of group discussion and speaking skills in English at E.S Cyimbiri. The following are the findings: high level with 36.6% of the respondents; intermediate level with 52.6% of the respondents; good/fair with 15.8% of the respondents.

Improving speaking skills in English through group discussions is highly effective as it provides participants with frequent opportunities to practice and refine their communication abilities in a supportive and interactive setting. This is in line with Uwambayinema & Mangubhai (2023) who alluded that engaging in discussions encourages active participation, allowing individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions on various topics. It promotes fluency as participants listen to others, formulate responses, and engage in meaningful dialogue, thereby enhancing their vocabulary and language structures. Additionally, group discussions foster confidence in speaking English by creating a safe space for learning from mistakes and receiving constructive feedback. This collaborative approach not only improves speaking proficiency but also cultivates critical thinking, cultural awareness, and interpersonal skills essential for effective communication in diverse contexts (Samuelson & Freedman, 2021).

Table 6
Extent to Which Group Discussions Foster Peer Learning and Collaborative Skills

Do you think peer learning and collaborative skills in English can be fostered through group discussion?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	109	68.4
No	50	31.6
Total	159	100%

Table 6 answers the following question: "Do you think peer learning and collaborative skills in English at ES Cyimbiri can be fostered to through group discussion? Most of the respondents responded with 'yes' (68.4%); while 'no' was 31.6% of the respondents.

In the regard to communicative approach, Hedge (2000) argued that EFL learners can be communicative competent through group discussions. So, teachers need to know the components and system of the language and how the language system works in a convenient way. Learners should take into their consideration how to improve high proficiency of accuracy in the use of vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation. The students discussed the importance of group discussions and concluded by confirming that Group discussion enhances communication Skills as it can encourage students to become more confident in speaking up and asking questions. This will help them improve their communication in the long run because it should make them more confident to ask if they're stuck and need help. It also improves Interest in Lessons: It improves learning, as group discussion invites the students to be the speakers. This helps students as it can maintain their focus and concentration to hear another voice instead of listening to the same teacher, which holds their attention.

Peer learning skills in English can indeed be associated with the lack of group discussion. Group discussions provide a structured environment where learners can practice and refine their speaking abilities through interaction,

feedback, and real-time communication. Nordquist (2019) argued that without regular opportunities to engage in discussions, students may struggle to develop fluency, confidence, and the ability to express themselves effectively in English. Group discussions encourage active participation, collaboration, and the application of language skills in authentic contexts, which are essential for overcoming language barriers and improving speaking proficiency. Therefore, the absence of group discussion sessions can limit opportunities for language practice and hinder the overall development of speaking skills in English.

Table 7
Challenges Related to the Improvement of Students' Speaking Skills in English through Group Discussion

Do you think the following are the challenges faced when you improve students' speaking skills in English through group discussion?	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of enough books to read	91	57.9
Lack of trained teachers	68	42.1
Total	159	100%

Table 7 number six describes the challenges faced when efforts are made to improve learners' speaking skills in English through group discussion at E.S Cyimbiri. The following are the findings: Lack of enough books to read with 57.9% of the respondents; lack of trained teachers with 42.1% of the respondents.

With the reference to Table 7, a total of 11 (57.9%) students admitted that the lack of enough books to read can pose several challenges when attempting to improve students' speaking skills in English through group discussions. Firstly, without sufficient reading material, students may lack exposure to diverse vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and different styles of communication that are essential for effective speaking. Limited resources can also restrict the range of topics available for discussion, potentially limiting the depth and breadth of conversations. Moreover, inadequate access to books may hinder students' ability to prepare adequately for discussions, reducing their confidence and fluency during speaking activities. Addressing this challenge involves seeking alternative resources, leveraging digital platforms, and encouraging creativity in selecting discussion topics to ensure students have opportunities to develop their speaking skills comprehensively.

However, 8 (42.1%) students confirmed that the lack of a trained teachers can indeed present significant challenges when aiming to improve students' speaking skills in English through group discussions. A trained teacher plays a crucial role in facilitating effective communication sessions by providing guidance on language structure, pronunciation, and conversation strategies. Without proper training, teachers may struggle to create a supportive learning environment, effectively manage group dynamics, or provide constructive feedback to students. Additionally, Skattum (2018) asserted that trained teachers are better equipped to select appropriate discussion topics, design engaging activities, and tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners. According to Nordquist (2019) addressing this challenge involves investing in professional development for teachers, mentoring programs, and leveraging peer support networks to enhance their skills in facilitating productive and impactful group discussions for language learning.

Table 8
Strategies Used to Improve Learners' Speaking Skills in English through Group Discussion

Do you think the following strategies can be used to improve students' speaking skills in English through group discussion?	Frequency	Percentage
Reinforcement of group discussion	25	15.8
Encouraging learner's unity	33	21
Encouraging teachers to use group discussion methods	75	47.4
Increase school enrolment and attendance	17	10.5
Reinforcement of group presentations	9	5.3
Total	159	100%

Table 8 number seven describes the strategies that can be used to improve learners' speaking skills in English through group discussion at E.S Cyimbiri. The following are the findings: Reinforcement of group discussion with 15.8% of the respondents; encouraging learner's unity with 21% of respondents; encouraging teachers to use group discussion methods with 47.4% of the respondents; increase school enrolment and attendance with 10.5% of the respondents; reinforcement of group presentations 5.3% of the respondents.

This supports the idea by Maulina & Pahamzah (2019) that students can greatly improve their speaking skills in English language through group discussion. Establishing ground rules for participation, encouraging balanced speaking opportunities, providing constructive feedback, promoting active listening, and facilitating reflection sessions can certainly enhance students' speaking skills in English through group discussions. At the same time, Perry-Smith & Mannucci (2017) concurred that these strategies create a structured yet dynamic environment where students can practice articulating their thoughts, engaging in meaningful conversations, and refining their language proficiency in a supportive peer context. By focusing on both fluency and accuracy, addressing individual needs through feedback, and fostering a collaborative learning atmosphere, these methods effectively encourage students to develop confidence, expand vocabulary, and improve overall communication competence in English.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The research on empowering students to enhance their English language proficiency through group discussion strategies in Rwandan secondary schools concludes with promising outcomes. Through rigorous analysis, it was established that group discussions significantly contribute to improving various language skills among students. The interactive nature of these discussions fosters engagement and participation, leading to heightened confidence and motivation among students.

5.2 Recommendations

This study recommended that Rwandan secondary schools integrate structured group discussion activities into the English language curriculum. This integration should be supported by comprehensive teacher training programs to ensure effective implementation. Moreover, creating supportive learning environments, leveraging technology, and promoting peer support networks are essential to sustain the impact of group discussions on language learning outcomes. Additionally, continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms should be put in place to monitor progress and tailor instructional approaches accordingly. By implementing these recommendations, Rwandan secondary schools can effectively empower learners to excel in English language proficiency, thereby enhancing their academic success and future prospects in an increasingly globalized world.

REFERENCES

Antoni, R. (2020). Teaching speaking skill through small group discussion technique at the accounting study program. *Journal Education and Islamic Studies, 5*(1), 55-64.

Bhattacherjee, A. (2022). *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods and Practices*. USQ Pressbooks.

Bohari, L. (2020). Improving speaking skills through small group discussion at eleventh grade students of SMA Plus Munirul Arifin NW Praya. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching, 7*(1), 68-81.

Boonkit, K. (2019). Enhancing the development of speaking skills for non-native speakers of English. *Procedia-social and behavioral sciences, 2*(2), 1305-1309.

Dozois, D. J., Dobson, K. S., & Rnic, K. (2019). Historical and philosophical bases of the cognitive-behavioral therapies. *Handbook of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies, 4*(3), 3-31.

Hariani, H. (2018). *Improving students' speaking skill through the power of two strategy at SMP Negeri 4 Balusu*. English Program of Tarbiyah Department, State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Parepare (Undergraduate thesis, IAIN Parepare).

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: OUP.

Malik, S., Qin, H., Oteir, I., & Soomro, M. A. (2021). Detecting Perceived Barriers in FLSA: The Socio-Psycholinguistic Study of EFL University Learners. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies, 12*(1), 34-45.

Maulina, U., & Pahamzah, J. (2019). Attractive learning media to cope with students' speaking skills in the industry 4.0 using Sparkol Videoscribe. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT), 2*(5), 132-140.

Mbonimana, J. (2020). Language policies in post-colonial Rwanda: Continuity and change. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics, 41*(1), 73-92. https://doi.org/10.1515/jall-2020-0004.

Miller, P. H. (2011). *Theories of developmental psychology.* Worth Publishers.

MINEDUC. (2019). *Announcement regarding the language to be used as medium of instruction at lower primary level in Rwanda*. Ministry of Education.

Nordquist, R. (2019). *Definition of English as a second language (ESL)*. ThoughtCo. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/english-as-a-second-language-esl-1690599.

Perry-Smith, J. E., & Mannucci, P. V. (2017). From creativity to innovation: The social network drivers of the four phases of the idea journey. *Academy of Management Review, 42*(1), 53-79.

Samuelson, B. L., & Freedman, S. W. (2021). Language policy and education in Rwanda: A critical examination. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 22*(2), 181-198. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2020.1825165.

Shayer, M. (2003). *Not just Piaget, not just Vygotsky, and certainly not Vygotsky as alternative to Piaget. In Learning intelligence, cognitive acceleration across the curriculum from 5 to 15 years* (pp. 127-146). Open University Press.

Skattum, I. (2018). Language of instruction in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa: An overview. *Education for Life in Africa*, 2(4), 67-81.

Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; How to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, 5, 18-27. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3205035.

Thornbury, S. (2020). *The New A-Z of ELT: A Dictionary of Terms and Concepts*. Macmillan Education.

Tibbitts, F., & Fernekes, W. R. (2011). Human rights education. In S. Totten & J. E. Pedersen (Eds.), *Teaching and studying social issues: Major programs and approaches* (pp. 87–117). IAP Information Age Publishing.

Ur, P. (2019). *A Course in English Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Uwambayinema, E., & Mangubhai, F. (2023). English language proficiency and academic achievement in Rwandan schools: Challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 26*(4), 562-577. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2022.2075678.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.