Determinants of Students' Mastery of English Language as the Medium of Instruction in Rwandan Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the determinants of students' mastery of the English language as the medium of instruction in Rwandan universities. The study adopted a convergent parallel design (mixed approach). This allowed the researcher to get an in-depth insight into the factors that influence students' success with English as the language of instruction in universities in Rwanda. This research was anchored on Lee Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) theory and Brian Tomlinson's Language Material Development (LMD) theory. Five chosen universities from various districts of Rwanda, including Karongi, Rubavu, and Nyamasheke, participated in the study. The study involved 8121 participants, but a smaller group of 381, including 354 students and 27 lecturers, was chosen for in-depth analysis. The researcher used a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques to select this representative group, following Yamane's formula to determine the appropriate sample size. Data collection relied on a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale options, one-on-one interviews, and document analysis. Statistical methods were used in the data analysis for the quantitative research. The numerical data was presented and summarized using descriptive statistics, and conclusions and population-wide generalizations could be made using inferential statistics. The study also explored how different factors (variables) might influence each other. A computer program called IBM SPSS Statistics 2022 helped analyze the numerical data (percentage, averages, etc.) and identify potential connections between these factors. It was found that Rwandan university students who benefit from qualified teachers, high-quality learning materials, a supportive social and linguistic environment, their age when learning the language, and a strong foundation in English from pre-university education achieve significantly higher levels of English language mastery. All these factors were shown to have a positive and statistically significant impact (p-value 0.05), suggesting that they play a crucial role in successful language learning at the university level. The study calls for a two-pronged approach to improve English language skills among students. First, it recommends the Ministry of Education implement comprehensive language programs that nurture a language-rich environment. This environment should encourage students to develop all their language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Second, the study emphasizes the role of teachers in creating a similar English-rich environment in their classrooms. By incorporating authentic English-language materials, teachers can further boost students' English proficiency.

Keywords: English Language, Mastery, Rwanda, Students, University

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mastering English as the language of instruction goes beyond achieving fluency and strong grammatical skills. It demands a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural tapestry woven into the language (Jenkins, 2007). According to Hinton and Sarikay (2011), this cultural awareness entails navigating the nuances of customs, traditions, and values from diverse backgrounds. It requires recognizing and respecting cultural variations, understanding often-unspoken rules of social interactions, and possessing the ability to connect and communicate effectively with people from a variety of cultural experiences. Universities play a vital role in endowing students with this essential competency by integrating cultural studies into their curricula. Through the establishment of cultural awareness, university students are empowered to encourage inclusivity, minimize misunderstandings, and form strong networks in the vast social and professional settings they will encounter (Brown, 2007).

Various elements affect the mastery of English as a language of instruction among university students in Rwanda. As such, these elements impact their understanding capacity to communicate as well as their effective utilization of English in learning (Ngabonziza, 2018). These entail the policies of the university, methods of evaluation, opportunities for exposure, cultural concerns, and teacher training. Prior competence in English, influenced by secondary education and experience, plays a major role (Ibiam & Gudyang, 2020). The university setting, accompanied by immersion choices and resources, likewise determines language competence (Sibomana, 2017). Effective tactics regarding teaching, such as interactive and student-centered techniques, further boost mastery. In the same vein, the personal motivation and ambition of students to study English are vital factors. In the end, the

availability of supportive materials, well-articulated curricula, and institutional assistance are beneficial for acquiring language (Sibomana, 2017; Ngabonziza, 2018).

In the words of Garton and Graves (2014), the language competency of students' is evaluated, and crucial advice is provided as part of the assessment and feedback processes. Exposure to language and immersion possibilities in Rwanda enable students to interact with English beyond classroom settings. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), this promotes actual utilization and language attainment. Benson (2004) observed that cultural elements, for instance, the cultural importance linked with fluency in English coupled with its perceived value, determine the motivation and commitment of students. At the same time, career growth for teachers emphasizing boosting their methodologies, language competency, and ability to form an effective learning setting assists in promoting students' expertise and accomplishment in the English language (El-Koumy, 2013).

Nonetheless, Rwandan university students cope with a number of obstacles to realizing a high degree of mastery in the English language. To begin with, inadequate competency in English proficiency stemming from hindrances in secondary-level English education impedes the ability of students to fully comprehend English-medium instruction (Sibomana, 2022). Likewise, inadequate settings for learning languages, noted by inaccessibility to English language resources alongside reliable English-speaking contexts, present hindrances to the growth of students' languages (Gasana & Gashayija, 2018). Moreover, an inadequate number of authorized English instructors and their constrained training result in challenges encountered by students (Sibomana, 2022). Constrained opportunities to rehearse English outside of class, combined with inadequate language policies, interchangeable curriculum, and resources customized to universities in Rwanda, further impede the fluency of learners and their confidence in verbalizing the language (Gasana & Gashayija, 2018; Sibomana, 2022).

Across the world, universities depend on the English language as the instruction language for a number of main reasons. To start with, Kachru (2005) argued that it allows communication and dissemination of knowledge among researchers from different backgrounds. Likewise, it enables learners to access a broad array of educational possibilities and careers globally. Proficiency in English also supports academic exchange programs, enhancing global cooperation and multi-cultural understanding (Tsui, 2017). In addition, it nurtures the circulation of research through publications and seminars, widening the scope of educational work (Dafouz & Smith, 2016). To conclude, fluency in English provides graduates with the language skills to attract multinational firms, boosting their employability in the global job market (Mauranen, 2012; Tsui, 2017). The methodology through which English is learned as a medium of instruction is different across continents. For instance, North America, Europe, and English-speaking states e.g. America, UK, Canada, Australia, and Ireland promotes solid proficiency in English because of historical and educational variables. This appeals to a considerable quantity of international students looking for English-taught programs, according to the British Council (2020).

Asian universities possess different degrees of English language ability. While nations such as Singapore and Hong Kong emphasize English-medium education and display high levels of proficiency, other countries such as India and the Philippines exhibit varying levels of English language mastery among students (British Council, 2020). South America, on the other hand, generally demonstrates lower levels of English language proficiency in universities compared to other continents (British Council, 2020).

In Africa, English language proficiency in universities varies across different countries and regions. South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya have universities with a significant focus on English-medium instruction, but proficiency levels may differ within and across institutions (British Council, 2020). The mastery of the English language by universities in Africa is seen as a key factor in promoting internalization, fostering academic exchange, and preparing students for global opportunities. The English language in Africa is seen as a means to enhance communication and collaboration with international partners, attract foreign students, and improve the employability of graduates in a global job market (Kaplan International, 2012).

According to the World Bank (2020) university ranking report, the lower level of mastery of the English language is attributed to the University of Rwanda and many other universities in Rwanda to several factors, such as limited exposure to the English language for students, cultural and linguistic differences, inadequate language instruction, limited practice opportunities, and insufficient support services such as language tutoring or language exchange programs, which may hinder students' progress in mastering the English language. Despite ongoing efforts to improve language acquisition in the country, students from some universities are not able to use the English language in some contexts, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills, which means a lower level of mastery in the language (Ministry of Education [MINEDUC, 2018]; Sibomana, 2010).

In the study by the World Bank (2020), indicators that suggest a potential limited mastery of the English language as the medium of instruction by university students in Rwanda include low performance in national or international English language proficiency examinations, limited fluency and accuracy in spoken English, inadequate comprehension of complex academic texts, weak academic writing skills, limited critical thinking abilities in English,

a restricted vocabulary range, reliance on translation, limited exposure to authentic English-language resources, inadequate participation in English-medium classes, and poor academic performance in English courses.

For instance, in research that Sibomana (2010) conducted at the Kigali Institute of Education on the sociolinguistic status of English, he found that the use of this language was confined to classroom settings and to academic senate meetings, while Kinyarwanda dominated all other settings, including board meetings. In another study on the experiences of postgraduate Rwandan students with the use of English, Sibomana (2010) found that these had very limited knowledge of English and did not use it in their daily communication, though they occupied various government official positions, while Laviolette (2012) noted the inability to communicate in English by many undergraduates' students from private and government universities in Rwanda. This situation suggests that people who are studying English in Rwanda are exposed to very limited input and, therefore, their output may also be very limited.

It is against this background that a researcher was interested in investigating the determinants of the students' mastery of English as a medium of instruction (teacher's qualification, instructional materials, socio-linguistic environment, learner's age, and pre-university education) in Rwandan universities.

1.1 Objectives of the Study
By examining three Rwandan districts (Karongi, Rubavu, and Nyamasheke), this research unravels the determinants of students' mastery of English as the medium of instruction in universities, delving into areas such as:

i. To examine the influence of teacher's qualification on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda.
ii. To assess the influence of Instructional materials on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda.
iii. To determine the influence of socio-linguistic environment on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda.
iv. To evaluate the influence of student's age on English language competence by university students in Rwanda.
v. To measure the influence of Pre-University Education on English language competence by university students in Rwanda.

1.2 Research Questions
i. What is the influence of teacher's qualification on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda?
ii. What is the influence of Instructional materials on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda?
iii. What is the influence of socio-linguistic environment on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda?
iv. What is the influence of student's age on English language competence by university students in Rwanda?
v. What is the influence of Pre-University Education on English Language competence by university students in Rwanda?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review
This research combines concepts from two core areas: how teachers or instructors avail information (Pedagogical Content Knowledge) and ways in which to formulate effective materials for learning (Language Material Development). The aim is to point out the most reliable teaching techniques and resources for students in Rwandan universities studying in English.

2.1.1 Pedagogical Content Knowledge Theory (PCK)
This present research looks at how the knowledge and skills of instructors and teachers affect university students' competence in English as the instruction language. Shulman (2015) posited that it is anchored on Lee Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) theory. In this regard, it states that effective teachers require an in-depth comprehension of the subject matter (content knowledge) as well as methodology to teach it effectively (pedagogical knowledge), according to Morris et al. (2017) and Friedrichsen et al. (2017). This concept also takes into account the knowledge of teachers regarding their students, the syllabus, and applicable educational research (emerging best practices). This is required in order to discover the factors that lead to successful English language mastery in Rwanda (Loughran & Ryder, 2018). Last but not least, the PCK theory also takes into account the scope of

teachers' knowledge (school setting, local community, and entire education patterns) as vital components for effective teaching (Melnick & Armbruster, 2017).

Consequently, in regards to the aforementioned reflection on PCK, it underscores that this theory is relevant to the present research on the determinants of the mastery of English as the instructional language by university students in Rwanda. This is because PCK theory alludes to the value of teachers' capacity to effectively teach certain content areas by combining their content skills, pedagogy, learners, syllabus, scope, and research to arrive at informed decisions and align their instruction to fulfill students' needs.

2.1.2 Language Material Development Theory

Another important idea for this study comes from Jack Richards, a New Zealand expert in applied linguistics, and Brian Tomlinson, a famous British expert on language learning. They developed a model for creating learning materials back in 1998 (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

This theory emphasizes the importance of exposing students to language in authentic use, helping students to pay attention to features of authentic input, providing the students with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes, providing opportunities for outcome feedback, achieving impact in the sense that they arouse and sustain the learners' curiosity and attention, and stimulating intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional involvement (Tomlinson, 2012), which may be relevant to understanding the determinants of the mastery of English as the language of instruction by university students in Rwanda.

Exposing students to language in authentic use means that instructional materials in any language should strive to be authentic, meaning that they should reflect real-life language use and situations. Authentic materials can include newspapers, magazines, videos, podcasts, and other resources that expose students to genuine language and cultural contexts (Littlewood, 2016). Authenticity helps students develop their language skills in a more meaningful and realistic way (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Suitable resources for language learning, according to Tomlinson's theory, should be interactive and considerate of various learning approaches (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017). This entails availing different formats such as written texts, audio recordings, debate exercises, and games, as noted by Brown (2017). By combining actions such as role-plays and debates, these resources attract students to frequent use of the language and obtain feedback on their progress, enabling the learning process to be more dynamic and entertaining (Byram, 2017).

Observing how to form effective learning materials (theory of language material development) can be insightful in grasping what is practical for Rwandan university students undertaking English in English-taught settings. This technique can aid in evaluating if the prevailing materials are reliable and identifying areas where learners struggle. By discovering these impediments, this theory can direct improvement to the materials, ultimately assisting students' learning more effectively.

2.2 Empirical Review
2.2.1 Teacher's Qualification and Students' Success in the Mastery of English Language

Studies worldwide show that skilled English teachers have a major impact on students' language learning, with research in North America and Europe highlighting the benefits for both academic achievement and overall proficiency (British Council, 2020). According to Hattle (2009), teachers with a strong grasp of the subject (English) can design better tests. These tests accurately measure students' progress in all areas of English, including speaking, writing, reading, and listening. This allows teachers to identify areas where students need additional support and tailor their instruction accordingly. A teacher with strong subject matter can serve as a role model for students. Their passion, enthusiasm, and expertise in the English language can inspire and motivate students to strive for excellence. Students are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards learning English and become lifelong learners of the language (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

A teacher with strong pedagogical skills can create well-structured lesson plans that cater to the specific needs of university students. This includes selecting appropriate teaching materials, designing engaging activities, and setting clear learning objectives (Johnson, 2019). A skilled teacher can adapt their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities within the classroom. By using various instructional strategies, such as visual aids, group work, and technology integration, they can ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and succeed (Tomlinson, 2012).

A pedagogically competent teacher can design effective assessments to evaluate students' language proficiency and provide timely feedback. This helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to focus on areas that require improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). A teacher with strong pedagogical skills can create a positive and inclusive learning environment. They establish clear expectations, manage student behavior effectively, and promote active student engagement, which fosters a conducive atmosphere for language learning

(Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Skilled teachers are committed to their own professional growth and stay updated with the latest research and best practices in language teaching. They actively seek opportunities for professional development, attend conferences, and engage in reflective practices to enhance their pedagogical skills (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

A teacher with strong subject-matter knowledge can effectively convey complex concepts and ideas to students. They are able to confidently and accurately respond to questions from pupils while also giving concise explanations and pertinent examples. This helps students develop a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding in English. Subject matter knowledge refers to a teacher's deep understanding and expertise in the specific content area they are teaching, in this case, the English language. When a teacher has strong subject matter knowledge, it can positively impact university students' mastery of the English language in several ways (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Strong subject-matter expertise allows a teacher to create and present difficult yet interesting lessons. A range of pedagogical approaches, materials, and exercises that complement the objectives and content requirements can be included. Students are encouraged to actively participate in class and learn as a result of this engaging learning environment (Grant & Starkweather, 2018). A teacher who is well-versed in the subject matter can provide students with accurate and helpful comments. They are able to pinpoint the areas in which pupils' English language proficiency is strong and weak and offer specific advice for development. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), students benefit from this individualized feedback as they advance and improve their language proficiency.

Brown (2007) found that a lack of subject matter knowledge can also affect a teacher's ability to design appropriate learning materials and activities, choose engaging and relevant resources, and create meaningful assessments that accurately measure students' language proficiency, all of which can impede students' progress and limit their opportunities for practice and improvement. Brown (2020) asserted that a teacher may not be able to provide accurate, comprehensive explanations, examples, and guidance to students without a strong foundation in the subject matter. This can lead to students developing an incorrect or incomplete understanding of the English language, which can be difficult to correct later on.

A proficient teacher can use effective teaching strategies that are tailored to the individual needs of their students. They can create assignments, projects, and assessments that encourage active learning and engagement, which improves language proficiency (Byram, 2017). A teacher who understands the cultural nuances and context can assist students in developing intercultural communicative competence, which will allow them to use the language appropriately in various social and cultural contexts (Smith, 2018).

A teacher's ability to manage time efficiently in the classroom allows for optimal use of instruction time (Wong, 2009). This enables students to engage in various language learning activities, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, leading to improved mastery of the English language (Johnson, 2019). Effective classroom management ensures a disciplined and orderly learning environment, allowing students to focus on their English language learning. A well-managed classroom by a teacher reduces distraction and promotes a positive atmosphere for language acquisition (Tomlinson, 2017). Classroom management techniques by a teacher that support differentiated instruction cater to the diverse needs and abilities of university students. By adapting teaching strategies and materials to individual students, teachers can enhance their English language proficiency (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

A well-organized and stimulating classroom environment created by a teacher can positively impact students' motivation and engagement in English language learning. Teachers who create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere foster a sense of belonging, which can enhance students' mastery of the language (Wong, 2009). Clear and effective communication between the teacher and students is crucial for successful language learning. Teachers who establish open lines of communication, provide constructive feedback, and encourage active participation can facilitate students' language development (Brophy & Good, 1986).

Effective assessment and feedback should be aligned with clear learning objectives. When teachers provide specific and measurable goals for students, it helps them understand what is expected of them and guides their learning process (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Timely feedback from a teacher is crucial for students to understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Constructive feedback should be specific, actionable, and focused on the learning goals. If a teacher has the ability to demonstrate timely and constructive feedback, this helps students identify their mistakes, make necessary adjustments, and enhance their language skills (Garcia, 2020).

A proficient educator motivates learners to contemplate their own education, and offering chances for peer review can improve their proficiency in the language. Self-evaluation empowers learners to take charge of their education, while peer review fosters teamwork and offers a range of viewpoints (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Teachers with the necessary skills can incorporate technology into the classroom; they can use digital resources to improve language learning, offer interactive activities, and promote student participation and communication by knowing how to use educational technology tools successfully (Garcia, 2020).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research adopted a convergent parallel research design which incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, to get an in depth insight on the factors that influence students' success with English as the language of instruction in universities in Rwanda. This technique, according to Johnson and Onuegbuzie (2004), enables researchers to gather both numerical data and in-depth insights, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

3.2 Population and Sampling

As Kothari (2004) points out, a well-defined study population is crucial to the to the research design. This study focused on understanding the factors that affect students' mastery of the English language, the language of instruction at Rwandan universities. To achieve this, the study involved students and faculty members from five universities in Rwanda. These universities, including both public and private institutions (ULK Gisenyi, PIASS, KEPLA, UTB, and KIBOGORA), are located in the districts of Karongi, Rubavu, and Nyamasheke. The study participants (target population) included lecturers and students from the first to the fourth year.

To ensure a representative group, the study involved 381 participants (out of a total population of 8121), including 354 students and 27 lecturers. Students were chosen randomly, while lecturers were selected based on specific criteria (purposive sampling). An appropriate sample size was determined using Yamane's formula, a reliable method for sample size estimation. Per Yamane (1967), the sample size is the following:

$$n = \frac{N}{N+Ne^2}$$

Where N is the population, n stands for sample size, while e represents sampling error equal to 0.05.

3.3 Instruments

To gather in-depth information, this study used a combination of data collection methods. Participants responded to a questionnaire designed with Likert-scale questions. This format offered them multiple answer choices, ranging from '' strongly agree'' (1) to '' strongly disagree'' (5), to indicate their level of agreement with various statements. Additionally, researchers conducted interviews guided by a pre-designed interview guide. This allowed for more detailed discussions and exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. Finally, the study incorporated a comprehensive documentary review. Researchers examined existing resources like books, journal articles, and theses to gain a broader understanding of the topic and supplement the data collected through questionnaires and interviews.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Before collecting main data, a pilot test was conducted to ensure the survey and interview questions were clear and effective (validity and reliability). Experts reviewed the questions and suggested improvements. Then, 20 people took part in practice session, completing the questionnaire and providing feedback. This helped assess how well the questions worked together (reliability) using a common method called Cronbach's alpha. The specific results are shown in Table1.

Table1
Reliability Results

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Comments
Teacher's qualification	20	0.900	Accepted
Instructional materials	20	0.800	Accepted
Socio-linguistic environment	20	0.832	Accepted
Learner's age	20	0.799	Accepted
Pre-university education	20	0.773	Accepted
Overall		**0.8208**	**Accepted**

Higher levels of Cronbach's alpha, a statistical metric with a range of 0 to 1, indicate more internal consistency. In terms of internal consistency, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher is generally regarded as adequate. When the number is greater than 0.7, it indicates that the scale's elements are meaningfully related to one another and accurately reflect the intended construct. This suggests that the scale, which is corroborated by George and Mallery (2003), is dependable and consistent in evaluating the intended construct.

Cronbach's alpha for the scale was calculated, and it was found to be 0.8208, exceeding the 0.7 criterion, based on the values shown in Table 1. This demonstrates a substantial level of internal consistency within the scale. The high Cronbach's alpha value indicates that the items consistently measure the same construct, specifically pertaining to the investigation of the determinants of students' mastery of English as the medium of instruction in Rwandan universities. Therefore, the scale exhibits the ability to accurately measure the intended construct, thereby minimizing potential measurement errors.

3.5 Statistical Treatment of Data

In this study, a mixed-methods approach was utilized, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research data analysis. The qualitative data analysis phase involved the systematic coding and categorizing of the data to identify recurring themes and patterns. A deeper understanding of the gathered qualitative data was attained through the use of techniques like content analysis and thematic analysis. Conversely, statistical methods were used in the data analysis for the quantitative research. The numerical data was presented and summarized using descriptive statistics, and conclusions and population-wide generalizations could be made using inferential statistics. The study also explored how different factors (variables) might influence each other. A computer program called IBM SPSS Statistics 2022 helped analyze the numerical data (percentage, averages, etc.) and identify potential connections between these factors. This software made it easier to perform a statistical technique called regression analysis, which helps uncover these relationships.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Concerning the age of respondents, in Table 2, 22 (5.8%) were less than 20 years, 173 (45.40%) were 20 to 25 years old, 104 (27.29%) were above 25 years old, 48 (2.59%) were 30 to 35 years old, while 34 (8.92%) were above 35 years old.

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Cumulative
15-20	22	5.8
20-25	173	45.40
25-30	104	27.29
30-35	48	2.59
35-above	34	8.92
Total	**381**	**100.0**

This study involved 381 participants (354 students, 27 lecturers). In terms of gender, this study involved 156 (40.95%) males, and 225 (59.05%) female ones, as indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Cumulative
Male	156	40.95
Female	225	59.05
Total	**381**	**100%**

Concerning education level, in Table 4 below, 150 (39.37%) were students of level one, 112 (29.39%) were students of level two, 60 (15.74%) were students of level three, 32 (8.39%) were students of level four, 7 (1.83%) were lecturers with master's level, while 20 (5.28%) were lecturers with PhD level.

Table 4
Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Educational	Frequency	Percentage
Level 1	150	39.37
Level 2	112	29.39
Level 3	60	15.74
Level 4	32	8.39
Masters	7	1.83
PhD	20	5.28
Total	**381**	**100.0**

With regard to professional experience in Table 5, 4 (14.81%) represent lecturers having three years of professional experience, 20 (74.08%), were lecturers with five years of professional experience, while 3 (11.11%) were lecturers having more than five years of professional experience.

Table 5
Distribution of Respondents by Professional Experience

Level of professional experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than one year	0	0
Three years	4	14.81
Five years	20	74.08
More than five years	3	11.11
Total	**27**	**100.0**

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Inferential Statistics for Teacher's Qualification and Students' Success in the Mastery of English Language as the Medium of Instruction

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The results in table 6 show the opinions of respondents about different statement defining teacher qualification.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics for Teacher's Qualification

Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	STD
Our English language lecturer has Doctor of Philosophy in English language and literature	381	1.00	5.00	4.034	.7431
Our English language lecturer has Masters of Arts in English and Cultural studies	381	1.00	5.00	2.734	1.9092
Our English language lecturer has Masters Arts in English language teaching	381	1.00	5.00	4.555	1.0273
Our English language lecturer has Masters of Arts in English literature	381	1.00	5.00	4.967	.1932
Our English language lecturer has Masters of Arts in English language	381	1.00	5.00	3.781	.7113
Our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English and creative writing	381	1.00	5.00	4.222	.7812
Our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English Education	381	1.00	5.00	4.007	1.2051
Our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English language and linguistics	381	1.00	5.00	4.511	. 7190
Our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English literature	381	1.00	5.00	3.909	.7485
Our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English	381	1.00	5.00	4.018	.8112
Overall	**381**			**4.0738**	**0.8849**

Note: Strongly Disagree= [1-2[= **Very low Mean**; Disagree= [2-3[=**Low mean**; Neutral= [3-4[=**Moderated mean**; Agree= [4-5[= **High mean**; Strongly Agree= [5[=**Very High mean**; **N** the number of the respondents.

Considering the mean from responses, it appears that statements are in the following category: High mean, moderate mean, and low mean. The results in all these categories show that the respondents agreed, and disagreed with the statements related to teacher qualification on success in the mastery of English language.

The statement with high mean are: Our English language lecturer has Doctor of Philosophy in English language and literature (Mean= 4.034),our English language lecturer has Masters Arts in English language teaching(M=4.555),our English language lecturer has Masters of Arts in English literature(Mean= 4.967),our English

language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English and creative writing(Mean= 4.222),our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English Education(M= 4.007), our English language lecturer Bachelor of Arts in English language and linguistics(M= 4.511),our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English(M= 4.018).

The statements with moderated mean are: Our English language lecturer has Bachelor of Arts in English literature (M= 3.781), our English language lecturer has Masters of Arts in English language (M= 3.909). The statements with low mean is: Our English language lecturer has Masters of Arts in English and Cultural studies (M= 2.734). The results from table 6 show that the overall mean of agreement is high (**M= 4.0738, high mean**) and the overall standard deviation is (**STD= 0.88491**). This high mean indicates a positive effect between teacher's qualification and success in the mastery of English language by University students in Rwanda.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics for Mastery of English Language as the Medium of Instruction in Rwandan Universities

Descriptive statistics					
Statements	**N**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**STD**
The most challenging English skill to me is reading	381	1.00	5.00	4.721	.999
The most challenging English skill to me is writing	381	1.00	5.00	4.002	1.189
The most challenging English skill to me is speaking	381	1.00	5.00	4.883	.545
The most challenging English skill to me is listening	381	1.00	5.00	4.009	.749
I am able to use proper grammar, punctuation and strong vocabulary in writing skills	381	1.00	5.00	2.333	1.181
I am able to convey ideas clearly and concisely in writing English	381	1.00	5.00	2.505	1.134
I am able to comprehend and analyze complex text, their vocabulary in reading English language	381	1.00	5.00	2.141	.933
I have the fluency and speed in reading English language	381	1.00	5.00	2.101	.877
I have the ability to accurately comprehend spoken language, identify key information and main ideas in English language	381	1.00	5.00	2.322	1.076
I have ability to speak smoothly and without hesitation, use correct grammar and vocabulary	381	1.00	5.00	2.000	1.080
Overall	**381**			**3.1017**	**.9763**

Note: Strongly Disagree= [1-2[**Very low Mean**; Disagree= [2-3[=**Low mean**; Neutral= [3-4[=**Moderated mean**; Agree= [4-5[= **High mean**; Strongly Agree= [5[=**Very High mean**; **N** the number of the respondents.

The results in table 7 show the opinions of respondents about different statements defining students' mastery of English language. Considering the mean from responses, it appears that statements are in the following category: high mean, and low mean. The results in all these categories show that the respondents agreed, and disagreed with the statements related to the students' mastery of English language.

The statements with high mean are: The most challenging English skill to me is reading (M= 4.721) the most challenging English skill to me is writing (M= 4.002), the most challenging English skill to me is speaking (M= 4.883), the most challenging English skill to me is listening (M= 4.009). The statement with low mean are: I am able to use proper grammar, punctuation and strong vocabulary in writing skills (M= 2.333), I am able to convey ideas clearly and concisely in writing English (M= 2.505), I am able to comprehend and analyze complex text, their vocabulary in reading English language (M= 2.141), I have the fluency and speed in reading English language (M= 2.101), I have the ability to accurately comprehend spoken language, identify key information and main ideas in English language (M= 2.322), I have ability to speak smoothly and without hesitation, use correct grammar and vocabulary (M= 2.000).

Since we have overall moderate mean (**M= 3.1017, and STD= .9763)**, this suggests that the respondents tend to disagree and agree with the statements related to students' mastery of English language. The survey results show that students in Rwandan universities have an average level of English proficiency. Scores leaned slightly towards disagreement with statements about their English skills, with an average rating of 3.1 on a scale where 1 is strong disagreement and 5 is strong agreement. There was also some variation in scores, with a standard deviation of 0.97, suggesting some students are more proficient than others.

4.2.2 Inferential Statistics for Teacher's Qualification and Students' Success in the Mastery of English as the Medium of instruction

Table 8 shows R-Square of .956, and this indicates that 95.6% of the change in dependent variable (Teacher's qualification) can be explained by independent variable (success in the mastery of English language), while the remaining percentage are for other variables which are excluded in the model.

Table 8
Model Summary for Teacher Qualification

Model summary				
Model	**R**	**R-Square**	**Adjusted R-Square**	**Std. Error of the estimates**
1	.978[a]	.956	.956	.10184

Predictors: (Constant), Teacher's qualification.
Dependent variable: Success in the mastery of English language.

Table 9
ANOVA for Teacher Qualification

ANOVA[a]					
Model	**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Regression	68.985	1	68.985	1761.811	.000[b]
Residual	3.268	380	.040		
Total	**72.253**	**381**			

a. Dependent variable: Success in the mastery of English language.
b. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher's qualification.

The results from table 9 shows that teacher's qualification has positive significance influence (p value = .000 < 0.05) on success in the mastery of English language by university students in Rwanda. Thus the null hypothesis number one ($H_{0.1}$) which says that there is no there is no significant influence of teacher's qualification on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda, can be rejected and alternative one is accepted.

Table 10
Coefficients of variance

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
Constant	.634	.111		3.323	.000
Teacher qualification	1.171	.027	.973	38.101	.000

Dependent variable: Success in the mastery of English language.

The results in Table 10, indicate that (B= .973, and is positive). Therefore, there is a positive and significant influence of teacher's qualification on success in the mastery of English language. Meaning that as the independent variable increases (teacher's qualification) by one unit, the dependent variable (success in the mastery of English language) tends to increase by 1.171 units.

4.2 Ordinary Least Squares regression of the Determinants of Students' Mastery of English as the Medium of Instruction in Rwandan Universities

This part shows the Ordinary Least Square Regression Analysis that indicates the impact of the four independent variables (teacher's qualification, instructional materials, socio-linguistic environment, learner's age, and pre-university education) jointly on students' success in the mastery of English as a medium of instruction. The findings are presented in the following tables.

Table 11
Model Summary Using R-Square for the IVs Altogether

Model summary[b]			
Model	**R**	**R-Square**	**Adjusted R-Square**	**Std. Error of the estimates**
1	.888[a]	.870	.901	.22108

Predictors: (Constant), qualification, instructional, linguistic, age, pre-university.
Dependent variable: Students' mastery of English language.

The analysis of the results show that all the predictors variables were able to explain the reality of the dependent variable as in table 6. The R square is 87.0%. Using Ordinary Least Squares Regression model, the research tested the hypothesis that the predictor variables altogether have a positive influence on the dependent variable.

Table 12
Analysis of Variance for the IVs altogether

ANOVA[a]					
Model	**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Regression	77.067	1	77.067	1866.001	.002[b]
Residual	1.184	380	0.010		
Total	**78.251**	**381**			

a. Dependent variable: Students' mastery of English language
b. Predictors: (Constant), qualification, instructional, linguistic, age, pre-university.

The results from Table 12, shows that the determinants of students' mastery of English as the medium of instruction (teacher's qualification, instructional materials, socio-linguistic environment, learner's age, and pre-university education) have positive significance influence (p value= .002< 0.05) on dependent variable (students' mastery of English language). Thus the study rejects the all five null hypotheses as the independent variables (determinant of mastery of English language) have significant positive influence on the dependent variable (students' mastery of English language) based on the results presented above in Table 12.

Table 13
Regression Coefficient for the IVs Altogether

Co-efficient[a]					
Unstandardized coefficients			**Standardized coefficients**		
Model	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
Constant	1,722	1.108		10.346	
Qualification	1.171	.29	.973	31.502	.001
Instructional	1.301	.035	.977	49.863	.000
Linguistic	1.202	.210	.993	48.873	.000
Age	1.843	.029	.981	52.526	.000
Pre-university	1.378	.782	.851	56.000	.001

The results in Table 13 indicate that (B =.973 and is positive) for the independent variable (teacher's qualification). Therefore, there is a positive and significant influence of teachers' qualifications on students' mastery of the English language among university students in Rwanda. This means that a unit of change in a teacher's qualification increases students' mastery of the English language by 1.171 units, while holding constant other factors of instructional materials, socio-linguistic environment, learner's age, and pre-university education.

Additionally, there is a positive and significant influence of instructional materials on students' mastery of the English language (B =.977). This suggests that a unit of change in instructional materials, increases students' mastery of English language by 1.301 units, while holding constant other variables of teacher's qualification, socio-linguistic environment, learner's age, and pre-university education. Moreover, there is positive and significant influence of socio-linguistic environment on students' mastery of English language (B= .993). This implies that a unit of change in the socio-linguistic environment increases students' mastery of English by 1.202 units while holding constant other variables of the teacher's qualification, instructional materials, learner's age, and pre-university education.

Furthermore, there is a positive and significant influence of the learner's age on students' mastery of the English language (B =.981). This means that a unit of change in the learner's age increases students' mastery of the

English language by 1.843 units while holding constant other variables of the teacher's qualification, instructional materials, socio-linguistic environment, and pre-university education.

Lastly, there is a positive and significant influence of pre-university education on students' mastery of the English language (B =.851). This means that a unit of change in pre-university education increases students' mastery of the English language by 1.378 units while holding other constants of the teacher's qualification, instructional materials, socio-linguistic environment, and learner's age.

The outcomes originated from the subsequent model: $Y=1.722+1.171X_1+ 1.301X_2+ 1.202X_3+1.843X_4+1.378X_5$

Where Y refers to changes in students 'success in the mastery of English language as (dependent variable),

X_1 refers to qualification (teacher's qualification).

X_2 refers to instructional (instructional materials).

X_3 refers to linguistics (socio-linguistic environment).

X_4 refers to age (learner's age).

X_5 refers to pre-university education.

4.4 Discussions

As mentioned earlier, this study aimed at investigating the determinants of students' mastery of English as the medium of instruction in Rwandan universities.

First objective: The findings on the objective one, which was to examine the influence of teacher's qualification on English language mastery by university students in Rwanda, revealed that there is a positive and significant influence of teacher's qualification on students' mastery of English language (B =.973, p value =.001 < 0.05).

Similar to other research (Smith, 2018; Brown, 2020), this study confirms that qualified teachers have a strong grasp of English and can effectively teach grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other skills. This deep knowledge allows them to provide clear and comprehensive instruction, which is crucial for students' language development. Additionally, qualified teachers are skilled at giving students helpful feedback (Brown, 2020). They can pinpoint areas for improvement and offer specific suggestions, helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses and focus on areas that need work. Finally, competent teachers benefit from training in effective teaching (Johnson, 2019). They can design engaging and interactive classes that cater to different learning styles and levels. This can entail embracing tactics, e.g., role-playing, mutual projects, and multimedia resources, to foster the learning of students.

Second objective: This goal focuses on how instructional resources affect Rwandan university students' mastery of the English language. The assessment revealed a strong favorable relationship (B =.977, p-value =.000< 0.05), hinting that high-quality materials may possibly play a substantial function in aiding students to learn the English language effectively.

Similar to other research (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Tomlinson, 2012; Harmer, 2015), this study found that effective learning materials offer several benefits to students. These materials often include a variety of resources, like workbooks, videos, and online tools (Richards & Rodgers, 2000). This allows students to learn in different ways and caters to different learning styles. Additionally, the content is often practical and reflects real-world situations (Tomlinson, 2012), preparing students for everyday communication and developing their language skills meaningfully. Finally, good learning materials provide a structured learning path (Harmer, 2015), guiding students through various levels of proficiency with a strong foundation and progress in their English language skills.

Third objective: This study also investigated the influence of the social and cultural environment surrounding students (the socio-linguistic environment) on their English language mastery. The analysis revealed a strong positive relationship (B =.993, p-value =.000< 0.05), suggesting that a supportive environment plays a significant role in helping Rwandan university students learn English effectively.

Similar to Dornyei and Ushioda (2011), this study found that being surrounded by English in daily life (in a socio-linguistic environment) significantly benefits students' learning. By experiencing the culture and traditions of the English language, students gain a deeper understanding of how it is used in real-world situations. This, in turn, improves their ability to communicate effectively. Additionally, such an environment provides ample opportunities to practice English through interacting with others, participating in discussion, and engaging in language-related activities. This practice helps students develop all their language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Fourth objective: Research also sought to determine how the age of students' affects their English language mastery at Rwandan universities. Outcomes hinted at a positive correlation (B =.981, p-value =.000<0.05), indicating that younger university learners in Rwanda may possess an added advantage in English mastery.

Identical to past studies (Genesee, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 2013), present research suggests that younger university learners may possess an upper hand in studying English. Younger minds are more cognitive (Genesee, 2008), which tends to make them more adaptable to processing new languages. Similarly, cognitive abilities such as memory and problem-solving get better with increasing age (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). This enables younger learners to process and comprehend language at a more advanced stage, possibly benefiting their English competency through formal learning or casual exposure (Genesee, 2008).

Fifth objective: Research finally sought to determine the impact of students' pre-university education on their English mastery, focusing on Rwandan universities. The outcomes of the study indicated a positive relationship (B =.851, p-value =.001< 0.05), suggesting that students with a strong foundation in English from pre-university education likely have an advantage in mastering English at the university level.

The findings on objective five are similar to those found in the study by Cummins (2000), who found that a strong foundation in English language skills during pre-university education can greatly benefit students in their future academic and professional endeavors. He said that pre-university education provides students with the necessary language skills, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension abilities that are essential for effective communication in English.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the study concludes that the determinants of the mastery of English as the language of instruction (teacher's qualification, instructional materials, socio-linguistic environment, learner's age, and pre-university education) have a positive significant influence on students' mastery of English language (mastery of reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills), and ultimately enhance success in the mastery of English language by university students in Rwanda.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions were formulated for different parties, such as the ministry of education, English language lecturers, parents, and students.

The ministry of education in Rwanda should prioritize the enhancement of qualifications for English language teachers. By offering professional development programs and opportunities for teachers to improve their language proficiency and instructional techniques, this can have a significant impact on students' mastery of English. Expert teachers with fluency in English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (syntax, lexicon, and phonetics) are better placed to direct learners in reading, writing, oral skills, and listening. The education ministry can assist teachers by providing seminars, training courses, and professional advancement programs to improve their skills in English and qualifications.

For English language instructors to improve mastery of the language among university learners in Rwanda, they ought to engage in continuous professional advancement opportunities. Attending workshops, conferences, and seminars regularly can expose them to emerging trends in research and teaching methodologies in language education. To advance their English competency, students can get value from integrating two core routines into their daily schedule: reading and oral training. Consistent reading of interactive materials, for instance, books, articles, or online content, and slowly undertaking more advanced texts can considerably strengthen new words, grammar, and understanding. In the same vein, engaging actively in class debates, registering for language exchange programs, or simply debating with team members in English can boost fluency and communication abilities. Through adopting a growth mentality and appreciating errors as learning opportunities, learners can handle fear of communicating and gain confidence in improving their overall competency in English.

Parents and guardians ought to combine consistent conversation and exposure to English media with their young ones, for instance, age-appropriate songs, documentaries, movies, and home libraries, to strengthen vocabulary, listening, and oral skills. In the same vein, facilitating accessibility to academic resources, e.g., workbooks, storybooks, and educational podcasts, alongside fostering engagement in English language clubs or debating groups, can additionally boost their reading, writing, grammar, and overall English competency in an enjoyable and interactive manner.

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