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ICT TOOLS USAGE AND THEIR IMPACT ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IMPROVEMENT IN THREE SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NYAMASHEKE DISTRICT

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Abstract

The education sector in Rwanda is improving day by day as the government has embarked on making Rwanda a knowledge based economy. This research set out to investigate the ICT tools usage and their impact in English language teaching and learning improvement in secondary schools in Nyamasheke District. First, it sought to investigate the ICT resources availability for English teaching and learning in secondary schools, to find out the extent to which ICT is used in teaching and learning of English language among teachers and students in secondary schools, and to assess the impact of ICT tools on teaching and learning English in Secondary Schools. The findings revealed that teachers and students do not use ICT tools extensively in English teaching and learning. Talking about the availability of ICT resources teachers and students revealed that the ICT tools they have at their schools are not sufficient to help in English language teaching improvement. Teachers revealed that they have not been trained in using modern technology in teaching English with 61% of teachers who are not trained. In the same argument, some students revealed that they have never seen ICT tools in their classrooms. On the impact of ICT tools in improving English teaching and learning, teachers and learners were of the opinion that if they had enough materials they English skills would improve. They stated that ICT tools help them search for information, doing homework and assess their English skills. It was recommended that the government of Rwanda should provide sufficient ICT tools and train teachers in using them. Head teachers should allow access to computers from the Smart Classrooms. Teachers should learn to use ICT tools through community of practice or in-service teacher training facilitated by their fellow teachers.

Keywords: ICT tools, English language teaching, English language learning, Secondary Schools

1. Introduction

Rwanda Vision 2020 aimed at moving Rwanda from "an agriculture based economy to a knowledge-based society "and middle-income country by 2020. Education is a key sector to this social and economic transformation, tapping into the limitless potential of an empowered population. At the same time, the Vision 2020 places ICTs at the heart of the transformation across all sectors (MINEDUC, 2016). The use of ICT in education is seen as a strategic lever for

achieving this transformation. This policy complements the overall "SMART RWANDA" Strategy which implements the SMART Education Policy.

In Rwandan Education, the vision for ICT in Education is "to harness the innovative and cost-effective potential of world-class educational technology tools and resources, for knowledge creation and deepening, to push out the boundaries of education: improve quality, increase access, enhance diversity of learning methods and materials, include new categories of learners, foster both communication and collaboration skills, and build capacity of all those involved in providing education"(MINEDUC, 2016). Thus, ICT in education will contribute to achieving the Ministry of Education mission "to transform the Rwandan citizen into skilled human capital for the socio-economic development of country by ensuring equitable access to quality education focusing on combating illiteracy, promotion of science and technology, critical thinking, and positive values" (ESSP, 2013).

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP, 2013) calls for 3 strategic goals to be addressed for education to fulfill its potential in the development of Rwanda. To expand access to education at all levels, to improve the quality of education and training; and to strengthen the relevance of education and training to the labor market including the insertion of 21st century skills. Since 2008, MINEDUC has implemented the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) program at primary schools and computer labs for secondary schools. 250,000 OLPC devices were deployed in 764 schools thus reaching only 10% of primary students (MINEDUC, 2016). The program faced challenges in capacity building of teachers due to a high learning curve, the cost of deployment was also high while it only reached a few students and lastly, the lack of integration of the program in the normal learning and teaching activities was the main challenge.

Some of the complex challenges that prevent teachers from integrating new technologies into education include: School with limited technical support. Without both good technical supports in the classroom and school resources, teachers cannot be expected to overcome the obstacles preventing them from using ICT (Lewis, 2003). In Sicilia's study (2005), technical problems were found to be a major barrier for teachers. These technical barriers included waiting for websites to open, failing to connect to the Internet, malfunctioning computers, and teachers

having to work on old computers. Technical barriers impeded the smooth delivery of the lesson or the natural flow of the classroom activity (Sicilia, 2005).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The nature of every subject informs the teaching methods, instructional resources, as well as the assessment instruments and procedures that teachers must employ in handling it. The situation demands that the ICT tool is brought to life to facilitate understanding and to foster the interest of students in the English subject. To achieve this, there is the need to use appropriate teaching methods as well as appropriate instructional resources to aid delivery. English teachers would have to be innovative by introducing new methods and resources into teaching English. As Field (2003) admits, English, like every national curriculum subject, has clear requirements to use technology but it seems that English teachers feel it a burden to make use of ICT. This implies that for a long time, English teachers in Rwanda have resorted to the old and dogmatic ways of teaching the subject without new technological innovations. In this regard, ICT is a tool that can help in effective teaching and learning of English language. Kefala (2006) argue that although teachers appear to acknowledge the value of ICT in schools, they continue encountering obstacles during the processes of adopting these technologies into their teaching and learning.

2. Related Literature

2. 1. ICT Tools Used in EEnglish Teaching and Learning

According McAlan (1985) there different tools that can be used in English language teaching. According to him some of the important ICT tools and applications used in the field of English Language Teaching. Computer is the most important tool of information and communication technology and backbone of modern human life. All the modern communication process are impossible without the use of computers. It is helpful in storing, preparing, collecting and preparing of data for communication. It is helpful in the development of listening and speaking skills. It is helpful in English language speaking and listening skills (McAlan, 1985). Overhead projector which is used along with a computer is an important tool of displaying information and processes to a large number of people simultaneously. It can be used in teaching and training of

personnel. Prepared forms of information are easy to display with the help of overhead projector (Dang, 2011).

Lingua phones This tool is very important in English language training of the students. A number of students can practice speaking and hearing drills with the help of lingua phone. It is especially useful in the training of English language listening and speaking skills (Dang, 2011). In developing learners' hearing and listening skills, Radio also works a very useful tool in education and training of the students of rural areas. Many distance and open education programs are being conducted with the help of radio. It is also useful in audio conferencing. Programs relayed on radio are helpful in the development of language skills, especially dialogues and dramas (McAlan, 1985).

Television It is useful in education as well as entertainment of the people. It is helpful in developing English listening skills, useful in learning situational language as well as motivating English learners. It is very helpful in understanding the language of mass media. A large number of students may be benefitted with the programs of television simultaneously. According to Fanney (2014), many distance and open universities and secondary schools are running their educational programs on television; it is an important tool of audio video conferencing in English. Live telecast of training and discussions are done through this television.

Internet is the most important facility of communication. All the modern communication takes place through this. It has made the communication facility very fast, convenient, economic, and attractive. Fanney (2014) lists some facilities available for communication on internet. Some of them are social media and online films. With internet, social media has become an important tool of communication among teachers and students. It provides a platform for sharing thoughts and ideas. Blogs are made on it. Students can add themselves with the English language learning groups and take advantage of sharing information. Lots of social sites are available on it like, Face book, Twitter, Instagram etc. It is very helpful in learning situational language. According to Tinio (2011), these are online facilities for English language learning: A lot of online facilities are available on internet for the development language skills. Some of them are e-guidance, e-tutoring, e-teaching, e-journals, e-magazines, e-books, e-library, online training, virtual classes. With internet, students can also benefit from online films. Films can be used in the teaching of

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English language. Films may be documentaries, educational and entertainment based. These can arouse high level of motivation. It results in a most satisfying learning experience (Dang, 2011).

2.1. Categories of ICT Tools Used in Teaching and Learning

2.3.1. E-Creation tools

These tools enable English language learners to be creative. Hartoyo (2008) asserts that involve playing with and using language to create, explore, and discover while producing content and learning performances that can be measured. Examples of these tools include, web publishing, presentations software, exercises creating tools, podcasting, camera, moviemakers, and audio makers.

2.3.2. E-communication tools

Software that promotes communication among students and teachers may be divided into two kinds of tools. First, there are those types of software that allow for real time interaction (synchronous) such as telephone conversations, a board meeting, voice conferencing, and instant messaging. The second type of software includes those that occur with a time day asynchronous) such as such as email, text messages transmitted over cell phones and discussion boards. (Tinio, 2009).

2.3.3. Reading/ Writing-facilitative e-tools

According to Finney (2011) some ICT tools can facilitate and boost teaching and learning of writing and reading skills. An example of these tools includes online boards, online journals, blogs, wikis, and e-books. Blogs, wikis, and e-books can be used to create digital materials or portfolios online are spaces where learners work in collaborative projects. They can also be used for professional development or to summarize learners' work. Similarly, e-books have much functionality. Learners can use them to develop their reading skills. For instance, e-books have added audio, interactive tasks and built-in dictionaries. Another advantage of this tool is that learners can access this tool on several devices such as tablets, mobile phones, and laptops.

2.3.4. Listening / Speaking Facilitative e-tools

According to Tinio (1999) listening skills can be developed through ICT tools such as

- Video and audio files

- Podcast (syndicated audio files and vodcast (syndicated video files)

- Audio video sharing libraries like YouTube

2.3.5. E-assessment tools

Tony (2009) listed three basic performance types of assessment, namely, performances, portfolios, and projects. The main difference between these types of assessment and standardized traditional tests lies in the fact that with the alternative assessment tools, the learners "produce evidence of accomplishment of curricula objectives. This evidence is put in the form of a performance, project, or portfolio and can be achieved and used at later date with other pieces of learning as a compilation of proof to demonstrate achievement.

2.3.6. Virtual Learning Environment

Finney (2011) observed that Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) consists of web-based platforms that allow teachers and learners to manage and organize their work electronically. Some of the benefits of these online spaces are that both parents and learners can access these spaces to assess progress. All participants may have their say on the discussion forums and conferencing sections. VLE reduce the social distance between all participants.

2.2. Challenges, Strength and opportunities of ICT usage in Rwanda Secondary Schools

In the study by MINEDUC (2016) found out challenges that ICT usage in education is facing. These challenges include among others inadequate infrastructure; high power cost; equipment and connectivity cost. The absence of culture around the use of ICT also prevented the widespread adoption of such tools in education, as did the availability of digital content, expertise and project coordination. MINEDUC recognized that high level support of ICT in education initiatives showed promise of rapidly transforming the sector. Among the information gaps revealed by MINEDUC (ibid) included insufficient monitoring and evaluation of ICT in education projects at school level, lack of analysis of the outcomes of partnerships; and unclear standards in the sector.

A study by Mukama (2014) showed many challenges to be overcome in order to disseminate the use of ICT throughout the nation generally and in education specifically. With poor infrastructure, 16% of electricity coverage in households by 2012, 47% in public schools, low connectivity rates, lack of equipment and high costs-access to ICT the education system is very limited (computer ratio in secondary schools 40:1; 16% of primary schools use XO laptops. MINEDUC (2016). In addition, due to lack of ICT culture and of understanding of possible applications and benefit in education, communities and educational institutions are often reluctant to adopt ICT and adapt their teaching methods. However, one of the main strengths of ICT in education is that it is already strongly supported by the Government and well taken into account in national policy documents, and various projects are already implemented or underway. The table below summarizes strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and challenges.

For Computer labs, only 5% of secondary schools benefited from the program and the labs were used only for ICT lessons. This policy has now been revised to a "One Digital Identity per Child" and 'Smart Classrooms" in all primary and secondary schools. While a device for every child remains the end goal, MINEDUC is shifting from One Laptop per Child (OLPC) to the concept of a "Smart Classroom" following changing technology, to reduce costs and increase access and equity. More importantly, the policy will ensure that technology is integrated in all education processes i.e. preparation, delivery of lessons, assessments and research.

2.3. The role of ICT in improving EEnglish Language Teaching and Learning

A new age demands a new paradigm. With the help of technology, teachers will be leaders in the transformation of education around the world"- Craig R .Barrett ICT means Information and Communication Technology. According to Kent, "ICT in education point of view refers to Information and Communication Technology such as computers, communications facilities and features that variously support teaching learning and a range of activities in education (QCA schemes of work for ICT in Kent country council, 2004).

2.5.1. ICT as an aid to comprehension

Azlin (2012) asserts that teachers use ICT as a presentation tool to address learner difficulties in comprehending literary texts. She observed a classroom where the teacher used a CD-ROM to

explain and check learners' understanding of the short story. The traditional mode of reading from a book was transformed as learners viewed a multimedia presentation which contained animation, narration and lines from the original texts. King (2000) in his study, observed that that the CD-ROM helped not only in describing the events in the story but also with the setting of the story. The teacher's use of the CD-ROM is related to her belief about how the use of multimedia could aid the learners' comprehension of the text. The learners' low levels of proficiency would have been an obstacle for them to appreciate the story through reading alone and the use of multimedia enabled them to access the text through a different medium.

2.5.2. ICT to promote learner response to literary texts

Teacher's ability to teach English includes knowledge of how to use ICT in a student-centered way and encouragement (Puran, 2006). In his study, there was evidence of ICT being used to encourage learners' response to the poem. The aim of the lesson was not to learn about the mechanics of the poem but rather to see how the learners responded to the poem. Although they did not compose their own poems, the learners were able to demonstrate an understanding of it by relating it to songs. Two of the learners who were proficient in the language were chosen to present their own responses to the poem.

The teacher believed that this activity was a way to promote peer teaching. Although the activity was not related to the exam, the teacher believed that it would help the students to "internalize the poem and that it will help them understand the poem better" (Puran, 2006). Although there was no collaborative work and not all learners had the opportunity to use ICT, the learners were engaged in oral interaction with the whole class. In Puran's view, the use of ICT as a presentation tool in this lesson was effective in creating a learning environment where learners were free to share their personal views both orally and in writing.

2.5.3. ICT to promote language awareness

Azlin (2012) reveals that the teaching of English and literature is also integrated with language practice with the help of a computer and films. In the first lesson observed, the teacher selected students to match description of characters with the right character trait as part of revision for the story in a English novel. For example, the character traits of the main character, Thomas Wilson,

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included the following: 'simple', 'lonely', 'indecisive', 'complacent' and 'naive'. The task required them to understand the meaning of words. An example of a description that they should match the word to is "He kept largely to himself". The activity provided by the program enabled a contextualized way of learning new vocabulary as they were not required to match the words with the definition but with the textual evidence regarding the character (Azlin, 2012).

2.5.4. ICT to increase learner motivation

According to Sharma and Salehi (2012), there are several reasons of using technology in language teaching. In addition to the fact that technology can be motivating, it offers the possibility to work autonomously or interact and collaborate with others. Technology also provides instant feedback on language performance in various tasks and exercises.

Handan's (2017) study found that the use of a CD-ROM added to a "variety of teaching methods". One example is when the teacher used a song "to catch students' interest" during the revision lesson. At the beginning of the lesson, the learners were given the lyrics to the song related to the story prior to the revision lesson. The song was accompanied by animation of the story. The teacher acknowledged that there was no focus on the language; the aim of the activity was just to sing an English song "because students like music, they like to sing but they don't really sing English songs." She believed that the learners could be inclined towards different ways of learning and the use of multimedia presentations that included music and visuals could help learners to remember better.

3. Methodology

This study is quantitative and qualitative type. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative data collection method was used. Simple random sampling was also used. According to Korondo (2014) the main advantage of simple random sampling technique is that it gives equal chances for the participants to be included in the study. Purposive sampling technique was deemed appropriate for the study as it allowed only those who were perceived to have specific information required for the study to be included. Purposive sample technique was used to sample head teachers while simple random sampling technique was used to sample English teachers as recruited sample elements because they possess characteristics that will help the

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researcher to obtain reliable data necessary for his research. In this research, 94 students, 15 teachers and 3 head teachers from three selected secondary schools of Nyamasheke District have filled questionnaires.

4. Results

4.4. Availability of ICT resources for enhancing the teaching / learning of English.

Figure 1: Representation of teachers' perception about the availability of ICT resources
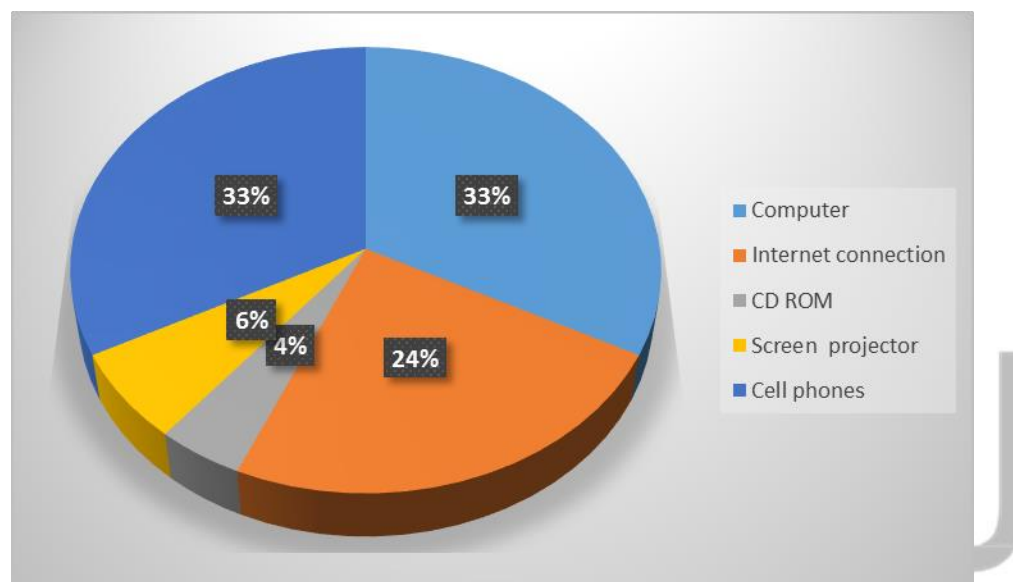

Teachers showed that ICT material in their respective schools were insufficient or even not available. Their responses showed that 15 (33%) had computers supplied by the Rwanda Education Board for facilitating teaching and learning. Most of those computers were managed or stored in the Smart Classroom. In addition, 11(24%) agreed that they have internet connection however when asked if all of them have access to the internet, they responded that they don't have access to internet and that they use modem or their mobile phones, 2(4%) agreed that they have CD-ROM on which courses are stored. Asked if the school purchased them, they revealed that they were from the Rwanda Education Board and that they are used in science subjects. It was also revealed that 15(33%) had cell phones. Furthermore, 3(6%) agreed that schools have Screen Projectors. Finally, it was also revealed that their schools did not have playback devices, photo cameras and DVD players. It can be concluded that the schools investigated did not have enough ICT tools that can help in English teaching and learning.

4.5. Teachers' Training Received in Teaching English Language using ICT

Professional development of teachers is necessary for effective teaching and learning of any subject. In this section, the researcher wanted to know if teachers have been trained in teaching and learning of the English language. The table below summaries the responses from them.

Figure 2: Information of teachers' training received in teaching English using ICT
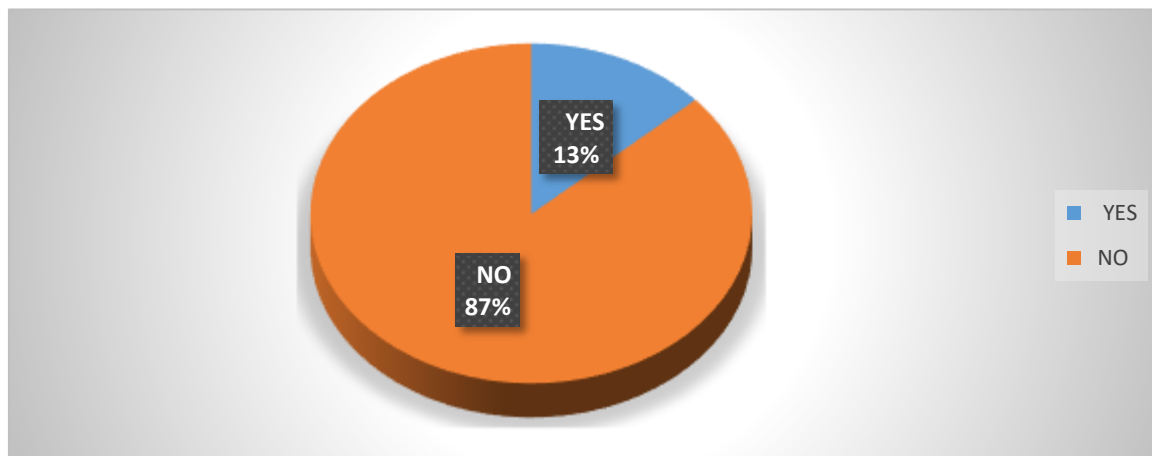

The results obtained from teachers on the question if they have been trained in teaching English using ICT showed that 2(13%) have been trained in teaching English using ICT while 13 (87%) did not receive any training in teaching English using ICT. The results above show that teachers do not use ICT in teaching English because the majority (87%) have not been trained in teaching English using ICT tools.

4.7. Students Opinion about the Availability of ICT resources for teaching / learning of English.

Teaching languages requires teaching tools that facilitate teachers and student to teach and learn with ease. In this section, the researcher wants to investigate the students' opinion on the availability of ICT tools that help in teaching and learning of the English language. The table below summaries the responses from students.

Figure 3: Representation of Students' Opinion on ICT Resources Availability
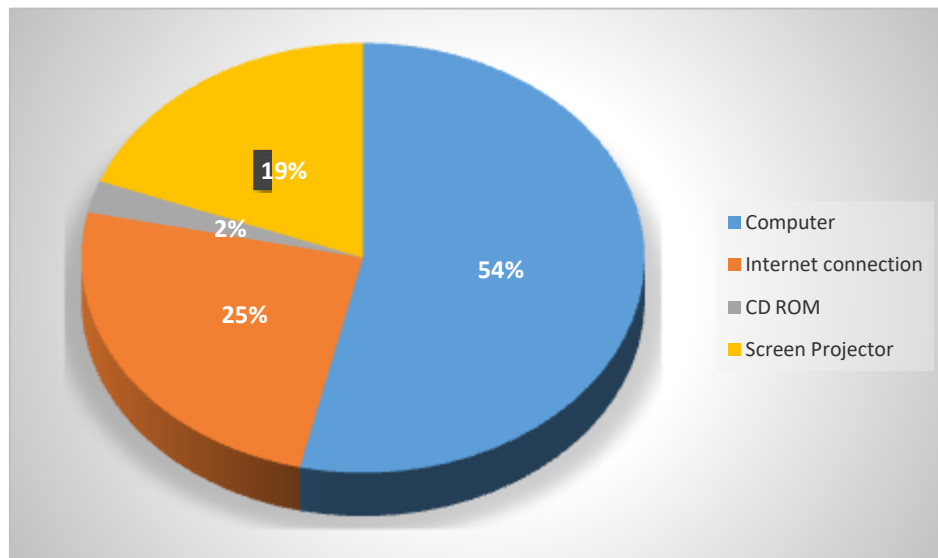
Students perceived materials available at school and which help them in English teaching and learning show that some material are available while others are not. Therefore, 67(54%) had computers, 31(25%) internet, CD-ROM 3(2%) and Screen projector 24 (19%). Other ICT materials that can enhance English teaching and learning such as playback device, audio recorder, DVD –CD player, television and cell phones are not available in Ruharambuga Sector's schools. During interview, when they were asked which ICT materials are available at their schools, they responded in chorus "*Computer*". Another student responded that *"Computer is a machine which is used in ICT and the internet"*. From these views of students, we can conclude that the only ICT material available is a computer which means that they do not know that other materials such as projector, cell phones, playback devices, DVD-CD player are ICT materials.

4.8. Students Perception about adequacy of ICT resources available in teaching English.

**Figure 4: Representation of Students Perception about the Adequacy of ICT materials available.**
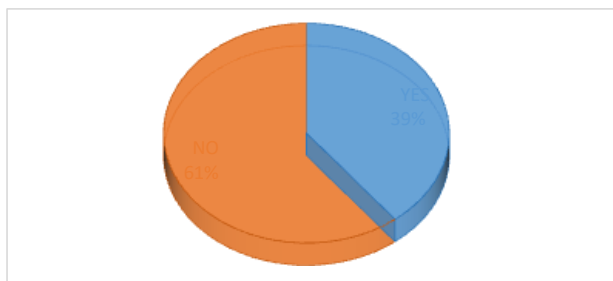
Students' responses of the question if available materials are adequate in teaching and learning English language, 39(39%) agreed that they are adequate in teaching and learning of English, 57(62%) said that they are not adequate. From the results above, it can be concluded that ICT materials that are available at schools in Ruharambuga Sector are not sufficient in enhancing and improving English teaching and learning using Information Communication Technology. When students were asked in which area of language ICT is used, one student responded in this manner: *"We use ICT material when we are learning ICT course or searching for information on internet but our teachers do not use it when we're learning English. One time the teacher used his cell phone when we were learning listening skills"*. From this response, it can be observed that teaching and learning using ICT materials is a culture in Nyamasheke District.

4.9. Students' Opinion on the Role of ICT in improving language skills

In this section the researcher wanted to know students' opinion on the role of ICT in improving their learning of English language. The following table shows a summary of different opinions about what they thought are the roles of ICT in English teaching and learning:

Figure 5: Representation of students 'opinion on the role of ICT in improving language skills
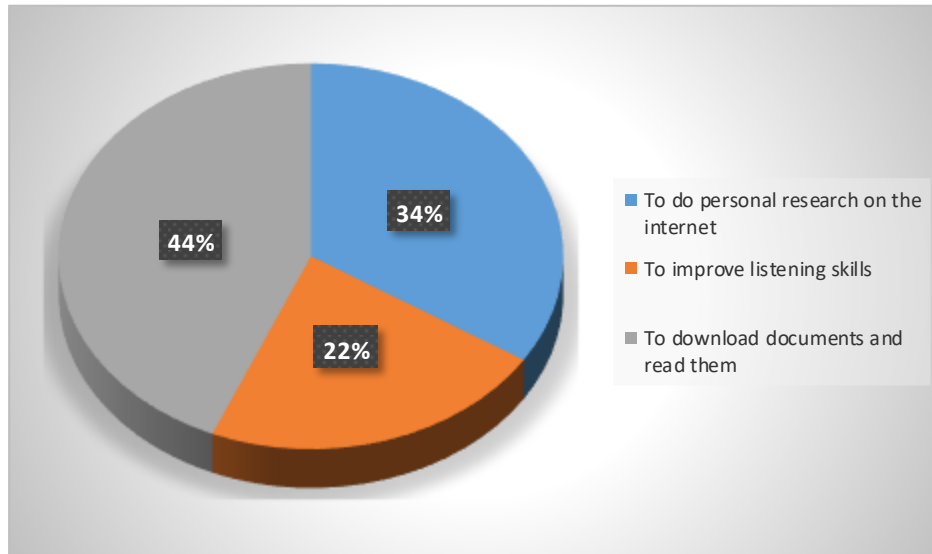
Source: Primary data (2022)

Responses from students when they were asked how has the use of ICT helped them in the teaching/learning process, 32(34%) responded that ICT help them to do personal research on the internet, 21(22%) said that ICT tools help improve their language skills in listening to music from the computer at school, 41(44%) responded that ICT tools help them to download documents from the internet and read them, so you are improving English reading skills by doing that. From the responses above, it can be concluded that ICT tools is important in improving learning of English language.

4.10. Students' Opinion on areas in which ICT is used in learning of English

In this subsection, the researcher wanted to know areas of teaching and learning in which ICT tools are used in teaching English. The table (10) below shows that some ICT tools available in the schools of Ruharambuga are used in the following areas:

Figure 6: Students Perception about areas in which ICT is used in teaching and learning of English.
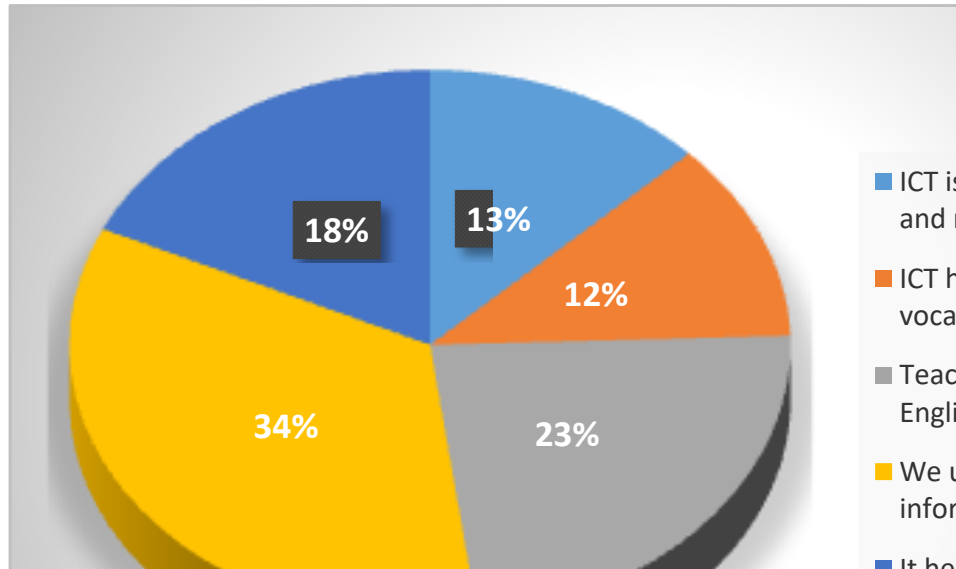
Students' perceived areas in which ICT is used in teaching and learning show that 17(18%) said that ICT help them to do their homework, 12(13%) responded that ICT is used in teaching listening and reading skills, 11(12%) agreed that ICT help teachers teach vocabulary, 22(23%) said that ICT help teachers assess their English language skills, while 32(34%) noted that ICT help them to do research for information. From the responses above, it can be concluded that ICT is used in different areas of English teaching and learning. Students benefit from ICT tools and learn different language skills and learn English even though these ICT tools are insufficient. Learners also benefit because ICT tools help them do homework and do research.

However, during interview, when students were asked if ICT tools help them learn English efficiently, the said that it does not because most of the students do not have sufficient ICT skills and that they learn to use computers once a week which does facilitate them master ICT tools. However, when told that cell phones are computer tools, they were moved by knowing this *"Hhhh we use phones every day at home to do research, using Facebook but we are not allowed to use phones at school. Regulations here do not allow students to bring phones at school"*. They stated that they are not even allowed to take away a computer and that they do not have enough time to use them. At another school, students said *"We have never seen a computer in the classroom except when the Head teacher was correcting our names on the list of Sector tests"*. This implies that students do not really use ICT in teaching and learning of the English language.

Teachers also admitted that they do not use ICT tools in Teaching English as one of them stated "*We don't really know to teach a language using ICT but if they train us we can do it.*"

4.11. Discussions on the Findings

This research intended to find out the ICT tools usage and their impact in English language teaching and learning improvement in secondary schools in Nyamasheke (2021-2022). First, it sought to find out the extent of ICT use in the teaching and learning of English among teachers and students in secondary schools in Nyamasheke District, to investigate ICT resources availability for English teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nyamasheke District and to assess the impact ICT tools in teaching and learning English improvement in Secondary Schools of Nyamasheke District. This study showed that ICT is a tool that is rarely used in teaching and learning in Nyamasheke District. From the findings, the schools have computers and Smart Classrooms but these computers are only used in teaching ICT as a subject. Teachers themselves were not trained in teaching English using ICT which is problem for most of them. As students stated, some teachers use their cell phones to teach listening skills while others have never seen a computer in their classroom. Therefore, it can be concluded that ICT is not being used in English in Nyamasheke. Concerning the availability of ICT materials at schools in Nyamasheke, the research showed that all the schools investigated had computers, teachers has cell phones for themselves and one school with a projector, all the schools do not have internet connection; they are using modems, meaning that the computers available do not have internet connection. The ICT materials are not sufficient to help teachers and learners teach and learn English using ICT tools. As they cannot do research, as some students stated, when they are in computer room, they listen to music instead of doing research in improve the English skills. Finally, concerning the assessment of the impact ICT tools in teaching and learning English in Secondary Schools of Nyamasheke, the research revealed that ICT tools has little impact in teaching and learning of English. Although, students and teacher see them as viable tools that can help improve English language skills, they do not know to use them because they lack training and access to the computers available is also a challenge as they cannot be taken away from the computer rooms. As we have seen earlier, teachers attempt to use their personal cell phones inherit a problem of internet as they purchase it themselves.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that teachers and students do not use ICT tools extensively in teaching and learning English language. Most teachers revealed that they have not been trained in using modern technology in teaching English. Students revealed that the ICT tools they have at schools are not enough to help them learn English using them. Talking about the availability of ICT resources teachers and students revealed that the ICT tools they have at their schools are not sufficient in teaching English language as they have only computers, their own cell phones, a limited internet which relies on modems and one school which owns a Screen Projector. On the impact of ICT tools in improving English teaching and learning, teachers and learners had the opinion that if the ICT tools they have were enough their learning outcome would increase and would improve. It was learnt that they mostly rely on traditional methods of teaching language which is chalk and talk. It was recommended that the government of Rwanda should provide internet connection in all schools, train teachers in using ICT tools in teaching English language. Head teachers should work on a scheme that allows all teachers and learners to have access to computers from the Smart Classrooms. Teachers can learn using ICT tools through community of practice or in-service teacher training facilitated by school based mentors.

Recommendations

At school level, school administrators should set up plans that help teachers and learners access computers any time for use in English classes. They should also organize training on ICT tools usage in teaching and learning through CPD (Continuous Professional Development and COPs (Community of Practice) at school. Teachers should provide learners with English language tasks which they must carry out using ICT tools. Teacher should have initiative to do research and improve their ICT tools knowledge that can help them to teach English using all ICT materials available.

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