



INFLUENCE OF LOCAL LANGUAGE USE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GATSIBO DISTRICT, RWANDA

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Abstract:

Background: This research assessed the influence of local language use on students' academic performance in lower primary schools in Gatsibo district, Rwanda. Specifically, the research identified the factors influencing local language use in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District, in Rwanda; to analyze the students' academic performance in lower primary schools that is due to local language use and to assess influence of local language use on students' academic performance in lower primary schools in Gatsibo district, Rwanda.

Materials and Methods : The study used descriptive and correlation design with a mixed approach. The population of the study was 718 respondents including 118 teachers and 600 parents, the researcher determined the sample size of 259 respondents using Yamane formula. Respondents were chosen through purposive sampling technique, where questionnaire and documentation research techniques were used as instruments of data collection and pilot study were considered. The findings were analyzed through SPSS version 21 and interpretations were made basing on results given by respondents.

Results : To the first objective, results indicate that 91.2% agreed with class group work discussion in local language, 91.2% with the provision of tests in local language. To the second objective, the study indicates that 90.0% agreed with low level of speech development in English, 88.3% agreed with low level of writing English language, 81.9% with agreed low level of reading skills acquisition. Results to the third objective indicated that 93% agreed that government educational policies class group work discussion in local language lead to low level of language acquisition at .473 and with low level of English reading skulls acquisition at .455. The study reveal that teaching in local language is positively influencing the level of language acquisition at .434, with Low level of speaking development at .474, with low level of writing at .404 were correlated with low level of language acquisition at .430, with low level of speech at .426, with low level of writing skills at .396 and with low level of reading skills at .474. Tests in local language was correlated with low level of language acquisition at .413, with low level of speech at .396, with low level of writing at .358 and with low level of reading skills at .485.

Conclusion : *In conclusion, the study shows that factors influencing local language use are to class group work discussion, teaching, explanations, and examination tests in local language. The study felt that low level of acquisition, speech development, writing and reading skills acquisition were the results obtained by student in national exams. Finally, the above factors have a positive significance with low performance in English language since the p-value are less than 0.05. The study recommends that education stakeholders should work together to master English use. The ministry of education should to provide instructional material for English language. Further studies should be carried out in on importance of English language among students at all levels of education, effect of English language on other factors that affect the performance of pupil in English among lower primary schools.*

Key Words : *Local Language Use, Students' Academic Performance, Lower Primary Schools, Gatsibo District, Rwanda.*

i. Introduction

English-medium instruction (EMI) was become a crucial component in language-integrated learning (CLIL) in this globalized era. English advanced significantly in 20th century becoming a language of world diplomacy, commerce, education, research, and technology. Therefore English as an instructional language in learning and teaching process was contentious issue in Europe and Asia. While students find EMI beneficial in advancing their English language skills, many struggle to comprehend English lectures in class (Chen & Tsai, 2013). Despite the fact that many researches had shown an importance of pupil's first language in acquisition of the expected language (Rawan, 2016). Most of the time, pupils and teaching staff members in Asia were contented in speaking Urdu in their English- language classrooms while maintaining their first-language proficiency. Most of researches on using L1 English lessons disregard pupil's point of view or only stress those of teaching staff members more than ESL, EFL setting were adopted for most of attempts.

The dominance of French was lessened thanks to linguistic reforms, which lead to exclusion of English as a language of instructions. However, the fact that the existence of one language spoken, France had demanded the country to use French in the region. Kinyarwanda is the language of the natives, and only a small portion of people can communicate in basic French. But now that Rwanda's government has converted the entire educational system to English and forcibly remove French from official activities, Paris was not even be able to make that claim (McGreal, 2018).

As schools quickly shift to using the language for instruction in a few basic courses, thousands of teachers have received rudimentary English training in order to transform the entire system within a few years and produce a generation of English-speaking Rwandans. Officially, the move is meant to boost Rwanda's links to its English-speaking neighbors in East Africa, such as Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, with which it conducts the majority of its trade. After the 1994 genocide, Kigali has also grown closer to the US and the UK. Although Rwanda was never a British colony, the UK presently contributes about half of all of the country's foreign aid, and Kigali has requested to join the Commonwealth (Chris McGreal, 2018).

The ministry of education recommended a curriculum that enables schools to teach pupils from primary one to primary three exclusively in Kinyarwanda for all subjects. The idea of teaching pupils in their native language helps them understand and comprehend all the concepts easily, as various examples are given about the day-to-day life which might be easy for them to relate. The local languages are not easily forgotten, for instance, when a child is in an exam, they can just recall the example used by the teacher, hence remembering the concept, and this leads to excellence. The idea of teaching kids in Kinyarwanda for the first three classes of their primary education is a great step towards the promotion of their local language (MINEDUC, 2019).

It was good to teach little ones two or more languages at the same time with regularity, for instance; Kinyarwanda, English and French, as a child can learn all the basics simultaneously (MINEDUC, 2019). There is still the gap between, which was insignificant. When a foreign student goes there for studies, he or she may need years of prior study of the local language before they begin their courses. Doing so massively preserved Rwandan cultural values because a country's language determines their traditions and norms. However, the idea might slow down the entire future education system (at least in the short run) as it may affect the current curriculum and may greatly hinder the progress of the use of English as well (REB, 2020).

Teaching a child in a language they comprehend helps them grasp and understand deeply. When learners are taught t reading and writing in a language they already speak and understand, they experience great joy when they learn that they can interpret written texts and can write the names of people and objects around them (REB,

2020). Teaching pupils in Kinyarwanda make the learners too comfortable, which might hinder them from learning other languages. The native language allows learners to communicate and connect with one another, and it also creates a deeper understanding of the county's history (REB, 2020). Generally, the present research assessed the influence of local language use on students' academic performance in lower primary schools in Gatsibo District, Rwanda. Specific Objectives that guided this research are:

- i. To determine factors influencing local language use in lower primary schools in Gatsibo District, Rwanda.
- ii. To analyse the students' academic performance in lower primary schools due to local language use.
- iii. To assess the influence of local language use on students' academic performance in lower primary schools in Gatsibo District, Rwanda.

ii. Theoretical Literature

Local Language Use in Lower Primary Schools

This concept refers to the language considered by public institution as their official language local Language implies the general acceptance written and spoken of the applicable active territory (Harkness, 2016). It was evidenced that worldwide many dialects, millions speak secondary and official languages and millions of persons (Samuelson & Freedman 2010). Correspondingly, principal languages are experiencing diversity expressed in the context of mother tongue and local dialects. Adjustments in the language may happen owing to change produced by several elements including regions, place, area, time and duration (Aprianti & Parmawati, 2020).

Plonski (2013) denoted that UNESCO reported the pertinence associated with the use of dialect and mother tongues in educational system especially in nursery and primary schools. Unfortunately, the predominance of English in educational system did not allow educational practitioners to incorporate the use of that native language actively in nursery and primary schools. In this regard, it was not possible to use full and actively dialects and mother tongues in educational system, this means that whether English was adopted at nursery and primary schools, it seems as the greatest impediment in the contest of revealing new options. Likewise, students and children in general must be taught English language at their infancy and childhood in order to acquire skills and to explore vocabulary in the English language (Oliver, 2010).

Lower Primary Schools

Lower primary schools was the basic stage for formal educational system adopted in post nursery education. A lower primary schools (or elementary school) are a school for children between the ages of about five and eleven. It comes after preschool (Adam Hayes, 2022).

Students Academic Performance in Lower Primary Schools

Student's performance is learning outcomes as the level of pupil to complete their studies and target by acquiring certificates that represent academic achievement (Pandey, 2015). Orekan (2010) argues that the selection of language for instruction in Africa was relied on a member of elements in Africa. Based on experience of colonization, many African countries have been colonized from middle of 19th century to 1960's. According to Orekan (2010), colonial history in educational system in Africa can be summarized: firstly, the countries colonized by France are teaching in French languages, just to fit into the French system. In addition, British use of dialect language was accepted in the years of formal educational system while English has been stimulated in higher educational level.

National Exams

This refers to academic assessment employed to evaluate a test-skills, taker's abilities, competency, proficiency, division and categories. Exam may be provided orally or in a written way to execute and demonstrate skilled set out. The qualifications, discipline or exam methods differ. The nature of test formats and degree of complexity commonly acknowledged upon or permanent. Teacher learning theories, the topic, and the size of the class, school programs and requirements for accrediting schools (Pandey, 2015) usually assessed format and degree of complexity of the test.

Class Group Work Discussion in Local Language

Discussions in small groups and the class as a whole can be had in the students' native tongue, and group projects allow students to interact with one another whether or not the teacher is present. Their use improves student engagement and encourages the growth of critical thinking, speaking, and interpersonal skills in learners (Pandey, 2015).

Teaching in Local Language

Teaching in local language was an involvement of pupils in order to facilitate their level of awareness and use of skills, terms and procedures. It comprises of design, content selection, provision, evaluation and reflection and all are done using local language (Harkness, 2016).

Instruction and Explanations in Local Language

Instruction and explanations in local language are mainly associated with teaching. Hence, instructions are given in local language to teach somebody something. Explanations, on the other hand, are the act of explaining something in local language (Harkness, 2016).

Examination tests provided in Local Language

An Examination tests provided in local language is a formal test that is taken in local language to show knowledge or ability in a particular subject, or to obtain a qualification (Pandey, 2015).

iii. Conceptual Framework

This section indicates the relationship between local language use and student’s performance where their indicators:

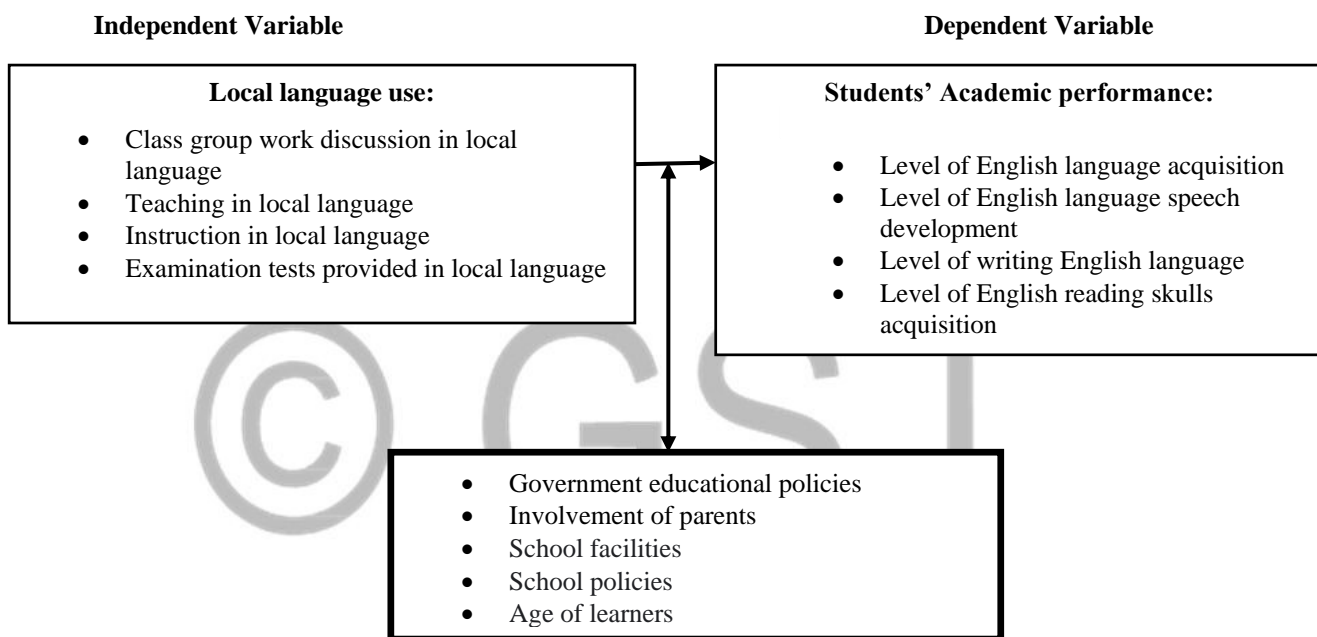


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2023)

Information in Figure 2.1 shows two sections including independent variable as local language use (composed by class group work discussion in local language; teaching in local language; instruction in local language and examination tests provided in local language) and dependent variable as students’ academic performance (composed by level of English language acquisition; low level of English language speech development; low level of writing English language and low level of English reading skulls acquisition). Therefore, all are linked by government educational policies; involvement of parents; school facilities; school policies and age of learners, as indicated in figure 2.1 above.

iv. Research Materials And Methods

Research Design

Alvi (2016), states that a descriptive study refers to a plan which collects information at special location with the purpose of defining several kind of previous conditions, identification of principles against that previous conditions are in comparison as well as determination of the correlation between specific events. This descriptive study method was owing to the fact that it was appropriate as it helped to collect information from an immense number of cases in a specific timeframe. It concerns the collection of information by use of questionnaires to a sample of teachers and head teachers and described events, organized, tabulated and depicted the variables.

A descriptive and correlation study with a mixed approach was employed to gather information. This is due to the fact that it makes it possible to gather data about person’s attitude, point of views or any number of different

education or social problems. Babbie (2011) asserts that the goal of a descriptive study is to identify who, what, why, where, and how of the variables, which is what this study is trying to do.

Target Population

The target population refers to significant group of persons that service as the subject of a certain scientific inquiry (Young, 2003). The study was undertaken to benefit the general population, therefore, owing to the population sizes were so large, it was sometimes impractical and expenses for scholars to assess every member of the society. The population of the study was relied on 118 teachers from Groupe Scolaire Nyabikiri; Groupe Scolaire Ngarama and Groupe Scolaire Rwikiniro, and 600 parents; therefore, the total number of population is 718 participants.

Sample Design

This term refers to a plan of smaller number into large group. It is a subset containing the characteristics of larger population. When the target population sizes were too large for the test to involve respondents or observations, sample size were adopted in statistical test. The sample size would reflect the target population as a whole and not be biased toward any one characteristics (Kenton, 2022).

Sample Size Determination

The researcher explained the way in which a sample size may be determined before identifying participants in this study. The following mathematical formula, created by Taro Yamane in 1967, is used to calculate the sample size:

The formula was:
$$\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{718}{1+718(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{718}{2.795} = 256.887; \text{ then the sample size is 259 respondents.}$$

Table 1: Sample Size

Names of Schools	Target Population		Sample Size
	Teachers	Parents	
Groupe Scolaire Nyabikiri	45	200	87
Groupe Scolaire Ngarama	41	200	86
Groupe Scolaire Rwikiniro	32	200	86
Total	718		259

Source: Gatsibo District (2023)

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique was the process of assessing the population by collecting data and analyzing information. The purposive sampling or judgement technique was the deliberate choices owing to the qualities the respondents possess (Kenton, 2022). Therefore, this research used purposive sampling technique.

Data Collection Methods

This section discusses techniques adopted in collection information and evidences such as questionnaire and documentation research techniques, as follows:

Data Collection Instruments

The study questionnaire to collect information relevant to objectives, a questionnaire included a series of open questions concerning topics that are anticipated from respondent information. The researcher distributed these types of questions among respondents.

Administration for Data Collection Instrument

This is the way, which the researcher distributed the data collection instruments for the purpose of targeting to get the needed data of the research effectively. The study administered questionnaire to participants as the 259 research participants.

v.Results

Determination of factors influencing local language use in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District

The first objective of the study determined factors influencing local language use in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District. To achieve this objective, this study required participate to provide responses by filling the

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Class group work discussion in local language	183	71.3	51	19.9	15	5.8	6	2.3	1	0.6	1.4	0.7
Teaching in local language	185	72.5	60	23.2	5	1.8	5	1.8	1	0.6	1.3	0.7
Instruction and explanations in local language	181	70.8	52	20.5	16	6.4	5	1.8	1	0.6	1.4	0.7
Examination tests provided in local language	174	68.4	49	19.3	25	9.9	5	1.8	1	0.6	1.4	0.7

research tool. The researcher used a five Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 1 : Factors influencing local language use in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District
Source: Primary Data (2023)

Findings from Table1 demonstrates responses provided on the factors that influencing local Language use. Therefore, 71.3% strongly agreed that in their school class group work discussion in local language is the factor that influences the use of language in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District at mean response of 1.3 with a standard deviation equal to 0.7, 72.5% of participants accepted that the use of local language is frequently in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District, 70.8% of respondents agreed that in their schools, instruction and explanations in local language are the factors that influence local language use in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District, Finally, 68.4% of respondents agreed that in their school Examination tests provided in local language is the factor that influences local language use in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District.

Analysis of the students' Academic Performance in national exams

Participants filed questionnaire; the researcher also analyzed different documents about secondary school performance in English in lower primary schools. Respondent's opinions are rated using strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Table 2 Students' Performance in National Exams that is due to Local Language Use

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
English language acquisition	174	67.8	61	24.0	11	4.7	10	3.5	0	0.0	1.4	0.7
The use of English speech	165	64.6	66	25.1	18	7.0	7	2.9	0	0.0	1.4	0.7
Writing English language	169	66.1	57	22.2	19	7.6	7	2.9	4	1.2	1.5	0.8

English reading skills acquisition 155 60.8 75 29.2 18 7.0 5 1.8 4 1.2 1.5 0.7

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Results presented in the Table 2 through the questionnaire, the researcher the students' performance in national exams that is due to local language use, information is given in Table 2 which demonstrated that 67.8 of participants accepted the existence of low level of English language acquisition is the factor that analyses the students' performance in national exams, 64.6% show a strongly agreement, low level of English language speech development was the factor that analyses the students' performance in national exams. Moreover, 66.1% accepted the schools, low level of writing English language is the factor that analyses the students' performance in national exams, 60.0% of schools, and low level of English reading skulls acquisition is the factor that analyses the students' performance in national exams.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	Std
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Government educational policies assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations	159	62.0	76	29.8	14	5.8	7	2.3	0	0.0	1.4	0.7
Involvement of parents is the factor that assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance	171	66.7	56	22.2	18	7.0	9	3.5	2	0.6	1.5	0.8
School facilities are the factors that assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance	153	59.6	82	32.2	14	5.8	7	2.3	0	0.0	1.4	0.8
School policies are the factors that assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance	180	70.2	53	21.1	16	6.4	7	2.3	0	0.0	1.5	0.7

Influence of Local Language Use in Lower Primary Schools on Students' Academic Performance

The study established the effect of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda.

Table 3: Influence of local language use on students' Academic Performance

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Results presented in Table 3 demonstrated that 62.0 % agreed that Government educational policies assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda; 66.7% of respondents agreed that involvement of parents is the factor that assess the influence of using local language in lower schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda; 59.6% respondents agreed that school facilities are the factors that assess the influence of local language in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda, 91.8% show an agreement on policies as a factors that assess the influence of using local language in primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda, 70.2 of respondents agreed that School policies are the factors that assess the influence of using local language in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda,

70.2% of respondents agreed that that Age of learners are the factors that assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda.

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Table 4: Correlation Analysis

		Language acquisition	Speech development	Writing English language	Reading English acquisition
Class group work discussion in local language	Pearson Correlation	.473**	.448**	.369**	.455**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	256	256	256	256
Teaching in local language	Pearson Correlation	.435**	.474**	.402**	.472**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	256	256	256	256
Instruction and explanations in local language	Pearson Correlation	.430**	.426**	.396**	.474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	256	256	318	256
Examination tests provided in local language	Pearson Correlation	.413**	.396**	.358**	.480**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	256	256	256	256

*(Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Results presented in Table 4 demonstrated the correlation matrix between local language use (class group work discussion in local language, teaching in local language, instruction and explanations in local language, and examination tests provided in local language) and dependent variables (low level of English language acquisition, low level of English language speech development, low level of writing English language, and low level of English reading skills acquisition) results indicate that class group work discussion in local language was associated with low level of English acquisition with 0.473, low level of speech development (0.448) low level of writing English language at .369 and with low level of English reading skills acquisition at .455.

The findings reveal that teaching in local language was associated with level of performance in English acquisition (0.434), low level of speech development (0.474), low level of writing English language at .404 and low level of English reading skills acquisition (0.472).

Therefore, instruction and explanations for local language was associated with low level of acquisition (0.430), low level of using English speech development at 4.26, low level of writing English language at .396 and with low level of English reading skills acquisition at .474. Examination tests provided in local language was linked with low level of English acquisition (0.413), and low level of speech development (0.396) and low level of writing English language at .358 and with low level of English reading skills acquisition at .485.

These results imply the existence of an association in using local language use with student performance in English in primary schools. The present research concur with a research done in Tanzania by investigating English proficiency (Dodd, 2016). This author argued that an estimated of 10% of form four students are at the beginner's level in using English in their courses, 75% on form one was done in Kiswahili and insignificant number of them (20%) are tested on their level of reading and are accepted to be very low.

vi. Discussion of Findings

Results on the factors influencing local language use in lower primary schools in Gatsibo District indicates that 71.3% strongly agreed that in their school class group work discussion in local language is the factor that influences local language use in lower primary schools, 72.5% respondents agreed that in their school Teaching in local language is the factor that influences local language use in lower primary schools, 70.8% of respondents agreed that in their schools, instruction and explanations in local language are the factors that influence local language use in lower primary schools.

Furthermore, 68.4% of respondents agreed that in their school Examination tests provided in local language is the factor that influences local language use. The present study did not reject observation and remarks of Mugaru (2018) revealed that treatment groups in quasi-experimental classes were instructed in Kiswahili while the control groups were instructed in English. Results to the second objective concerning the analysis of the students' performance in national exams that is due to local language use indicates that 68.8 accepted the language

acquisition is the factor that analyses the students' performance in national exams, 64.6% confirms the low level of English language speech development was the factor that analyses the students' performance in national exams, 66.1% respondents agreed that in their schools, low level of writing English language is the factor that analyses the students' performance in national exams with the mean. Results concurs with the necessity of improved teaching through the Elts Primary Six (Dodd, 2016). Criper and Dodd conducted a study in Egypt on how the British government was committed in funding the project with the conditionality of using English in educational sector in Egypt. They suggested that English did not stop to be an instructional language in primary schools Mohamed Jah (2016) conducted a study on consequences of adjusting the use of language in junior secondary school science exams.

Results to the third objective related to the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda. Therefore, the research indicated that 62.0% of participants accepted Government educational policies assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda; 66.7% of respondents agreed that involvement of parents is the factor that assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda, 91.8% agreed that school policies are the factors that assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda and finally 70.2% agreed that that Age of learners are the factors that assess the influence of local language use in lower primary schools on students' performance in national examinations in Rwanda. The findings reveal that teaching in local language was associated with low level of English acquisition at 0.483, with Low level of English language speech development with 0.474 and low level of writing English language at .404 and low level of English reading skills acquisition at .472.

Therefore, this was a research that assessed the level of English performance that was in Tanzania education system supported by British (Dodd, 2016). In this regard, the research provided three results (i) expected % of form four pupils at the beginners in English language teaching and learning process; (ii) estimate 95% of the teaching in form one done is Kiswahili and fewer than 20% of University student who are examined on their reading level are established to be extremely low.

vi. Conclusions and Recommendations

Reconsidering the results from the present study discussed in chapter and the contrast made with past researches, the researcher elucidated concluding remarks per objectives: To the first objective and research question, the study concludes that the findings from the present research show that the factors influencing local language use in lower primary schools of Gatsibo District are: Class group work discussion in local language, teaching in local language, instruction and explanations in local language, examination tests provided in local language.

To the second objective and research question, after analyzing student performance in English language, the study concludes that low level of English language acquisition, low level of English language speech development, low level of writing English language and low level of English reading skills acquisition were the results obtained by student in national exams.

Finally, to third objective and research question, the study establish relationship between use factors for using local language and student performance in using English in lower primary schools located in Gatsibo District. Therefore, a correlation matrix between independent variables (class group work discussion in local language, teaching in local language, instruction and explanations in local language, and examination tests provided in local language) and dependent variables (low level of English language acquisition, low level of English language speech development, low level of writing English language, and low level of English reading skills acquisition) show positive significance since the p-value were less than 0.05. Relying on the results gotten, the researcher provided the following: Partners in educational activities in the district under study should collaborate with the community for improving the level of speaking, reading, writing and listening English as a language of instruction.

The Ministry of education should provide more instructional materials for English language with the intention of enhancing English language proficiency. They should provide enough trainings intended to boost teachers' ability to teach using English to prepare the future manpower who is able to provide students with English language skills which will enable them to compete worldwide at the labor market. The study recommends future researches to carry out studies in the following subject: The effect of creating awareness on importance of English language among students at all levels of education; the influence of English language on Rwandan economic development; effect of English as a language of instructional on Rwandan pupils' learning outcome, and other factors that affect pupil's performance in English language.

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