

## **Rwandan attitude towards English: The case study of secondary school learners in Kigali city**

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### **Abstract**

Learning a second or foreign language is always influenced by many factors. Apart from motivation, the other dominant factor is learners' attitude towards the language and its users. Considering changes that have been taking place in Rwandan education system and determination of the medium of instruction from the colonial period to the current situation where English is the sole medium of instruction, this study undertaken in Kigali city aimed to find out what are Rwandan attitudes towards English and highlight Rwandan awareness of the role English. The population involved secondary school learners, head teachers and teachers of English in participant schools, and education officials from Rwanda Education Board. To gather data, triangulation was used whereby questionnaires, personal and focus group interviews were administered to selected respondents. Analysing the findings, it was revealed that Rwandans in general and learners in particular; are aware of the importance of English worldwide and the different benefits they can gain through the mastery of English. They showed positive attitudes towards English language and the English community; and they are eager to learn and master English for a promising future, despite some challenges they face, most of them related to environment and Rwandan sociolinguistic context.

**Key words:** attitude, second language, foreign language, medium of instruction, learning

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Linguistically, Rwanda remains a basically monolingual-based country as people's daily communication is concerned due to the fact that at all the corners of the country Rwandans share one language in common, Kinyarwanda the mother tongue. Such a sociolinguistic environment play a key role on how introduced foreign languages are accommodated and to a certain extend present some challenges in the teaching and learning of foreign and/or second languages. In education, Rwandan passed through different policies as language of instruction is concerned, from pure Kinyarwanda-the mother tongue to the current English medium of instruction.

In the pre-colonial period, traditional education was offered by the use of Kinyarwanda. During the colonial period, especially under Belgian colony when modern schooling was introduced Kinyarwanda and French were used as languages of instruction whereby Kinyarwanda was used in Primary education, French introduced as a subject in primary and used as a language of instruction in secondary schools. The policy remained in use up to 1995 despite some educational challenges that occurred which were focusing on cycle duration of primary and secondary education. In 1995, after the Genocide against Tutsi Rwanda received Rwandan repatriates coming from different countries- some using English in Education while others were using French in their education.

Hence, the education had to cater for all those Rwandans and we had both French-based school medium of instruction and English-based school medium of instructions at both primary and secondary levels. At University the two languages were used and students were exposed to an intensive English or French language course in their first year of study to impart them with language required skills so that they could follow courses in both languages depending on availability and language background of the lecturer. Thus, parallel learning in French and English was introduced in Rwandan education system from primary to higher education with the following justification according to the Ministry of education:

Rwanda has chosen the path of multilingualism. This has economic, social and political justification. Apart from the mother tongue of Kinyarwanda, French and English have been introduced in all schools as curriculum subjects and as the languages of instruction from

primary grade 4. All three languages are found throughout the education system from primary to tertiary levels (MINEDUC, 2003:14).

The policy lasted up to 2008 when after finding that the use of two languages was costly, the Government declared English to be the sole medium of instruction at all levels of education in Rwanda. However, observing many challenges in implementing such a language policy, due to the fact that many teachers in exercises had got their education in French and Kinyarwanda mainly; referring to the UNESCO suggestion of offering education in children`s mother tongue up to primary three, the Rwandan government also revisited the policy and from 2013 it is stated that education up to primary three should be offered in Kinyarwanda while from primary four to higher education, English remains the medium of instruction.

Describing the problems of the implementation of the new English language policy in Rwandan schools, MINEDUC (2010) highlighted the trilingual policy stipulated in the 2003 Rwandan constitution that attributed official status to English language as an additional one to Kinyarwanda and French. As previously stated, the promotion of English reinforced the English-French parallel learning system already established at primary and secondary education since 1995 until the end of 2008 when English was declared a sole medium of instruction. The Rwanda` membership in the Commonwealth and the East African Community in 2009, and the increasing development of international partnerships were also highlighted as one of the pushing-factors to put much emphasis on the use of English. As it was not possible to maintain the use of the three official languages as media of instruction which was expensive in terms of learning materials and teachers, even financially; the adoption of English as a sole medium of instruction policy led to a new configuration of roles and relations amongst the three languages: Kinyarwanda as the bedrock of initial literacy and learning; English as the new medium of instruction; and French as an additional language. Taking into account previous education systems in Rwanda, the implementation of the new language policy, challenges in terms of human resources and materials to use could not miss as most of teachers-in service werenot trained in English. The Ministry of Education highlighted this problem as follow:

The challenge for the education system is that current levels of English language proficiency amongst teachers are low – in a baseline survey in 2009, 85% of primary

teachers and 66% of secondary teachers only had beginner, elementary or pre-intermediate levels of English. Teachers therefore need to develop their own language skills as well as learning to teach in English. Pupils' own exposure to English is also limited, particularly in rural areas. There is a shortage of textbooks and readers in English and the language levels of some of the learning materials that are available are above the pupils' competence levels (MINEDUC, 2010: 14).

Based on the above situation, this study was conducted in Kigali and involved selected learners from three secondary schools in Kigali City. The schools were selected taking into account their general performance based on National examination at ordinary level since participants were mainly learners from ordinary level, which is justified by the fact that it is at this level that many hours are allocated to the teaching of English. Moreover Kigali city is divided into three districts and one school was to be taken from each of the districts. A high performing school was chosen, a middle performing one and finally a low performing school. Other participants involved teachers of English and professional educationalists from Rwanda Education Board. The study aimed (i) to find out what are Rwandan attitude towards the English language and its usage as a medium of instruction; (ii) to highlight the role of attitude in learning English as second language in Rwandan schools.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1. Attitude***

One can claim that despite other influential factors in second language learning, both attitude and motivation are essential factors. Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) highlighted this stating that motivation, attitudes, and set of beliefs, about learning the language are among the determining factors that can influence efficiency of the students in language classes. As the focus of this study is on attitude, let us make an overview of how different scholars attempted to describe this concept.

It is asserted that the concept of attitude is complex and many definitions have been proposed to describe its essence. The concept of attitude is defined by Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English as the way that one thinks and feels about somebody or something; the way that s/he behaves towards something or somebody that shows that s/he thinks and feels.

According to the Macmillan English Dictionary (2007), the term “attitude” refers to someone’s opinions or feelings about something. Ellis (1986) argued that learners possess sets of beliefs about factors like target language culture, their own culture, and learning tasks they are given. For the author, the above beliefs are referred to as attitudes, which influence learning in many ways. Other authors claimed that an attitude is not directly observable and has to be inferred from individuals’ observable responses. Eagly and Chaiken (2007) claimed that an attitude is inside the person, not directly observable, and is manifested by covert or overt responses, while Ajzen (2005) stated that we cannot observe traits and attitudes, they are not part of a person’s physical characteristics, nor do we have direct access to the person’s thoughts and feelings. Hence, in order to know a person’s attitudes, it is necessary to pass through an indirect path from observable facts to inferences of unobservable realities.

Champers (1999) defined attitude as a set of values which a pupil brings to the foreign language learning experience. It is shaped by the pay-offs that she expects; the advantages that she sees in language learning. The author went on to claim that the values which a pupil has may be determined by different variables, such as experience of learning the target language, of the target language community, experience of travel, the influence of parents and friends and the attitudes which they may demonstrate and articulate. According to Latchannaand Dagnev (2009), attitude is accepted as an important concept to understand human behavior and is defined as a mental state that includes beliefs and feelings. Beliefs about language learning is directly associated with success in language classes.

For Ajzen (2005), attitude is perceived as an individual favorable and unfavorable attitude toward an object, institution, or event, which can be inferred from verbal or nonverbal behavior toward the object, institution, or event in question. He further continued to clarify the importance of personality traits and attitudes as being more than mere abstractions and most theorists assume that these attitudes and traits have an existence of their own, independent of our efforts to infer them. Indeed once inferred, traits and attitudes are used to explain the person's behavior.

Oroujlou&Vahedi (2011) went on to claim that a specific definition of attitude should be in line with Smith’s perspective, which stipulated the following:

An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or a situation, predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner. An attitude is relatively enduring because it is learned, it can be unlearned. Because it is learned, it can be taught. Liking a foreign language can be learned. No student is born liking or disliking it. If the student enter to the class with fairly neutral attitudes about the language, or even positive ones, and has a personality structure which will permit him to have an openness and willingness to perceive and respond, his attitudes about language and language learning will be strongly influenced by the situation itself. Attitudes develop within a frame of reference. Attitudes are situational and can therefore be generalized. Language, teacher, class, book and homework are within the frame of reference of learning and within the situation of school. A student who doesn't like learning and school, teachers and homework can walk into foreign language classroom and quickly generalize his dislikes. Therefore, good attitudes and feelings are needed to raise the efficiency of the students in language learning classes (Smith, 1971, cited in Oroujlou&Vahedi, 2011:4)

From the above definitions, one can assert that people may have positive or negative attitudes towards languages. Attitudes become negative when the subjects have unfavourable judgments to the speakers of that language or their community, and consequently to their language itself. On the other hand, they are positive if this judgment is favourable. Defining it, Gardner refers to Allport (1954, cited in Gardner, 1985:8) who said, "An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with each it is related". For clarification, pointing out the above, the author did not suggest that teachers should be unaware of sound theoretical bases derived from linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and other sciences. But they should devote more attention to the study of characteristics within the teacher, the learners, and the community in which they live and in which the learning institution is located - the real, human factors which may well have a greater impact on learning than the most rigorously constructed scientific theory. Teachers should strive to develop interest and attitudes needed for learners to sustain their motivation.

## ***2.2.The role of attitude in second language teaching and learning***

As highlighted previously, attitude is the like or dislike towards a particular action. Attitude is among key factors that influence language teaching/learning process. Eshghinejad and Gritter (2016) stated that attitude is considered as an essential factor influencing language performance and received considerable attention from both first and second language researchers. Writing on attitude in language learning, Baker (1994) stated that the importance of attitude in three major reasons. The first reason is that it is a part of every individual's system. Second, attitude survey reflects people's thought and believes. Third, attitude has been studied and investigated for over than sixty years and different topics ranging from religion to languages used attitudes as an important explanatory variable.

According to Oroujlu and Vahedi (2011) negative attitude and lack of motivation can lead to obstacles in learning a language, though a student's negative attitudes can be changed and turned into positive ones and facilitate getting a positive result. Having positive attitude towards learning a language is a good start to learn a language. For teachers, if a teacher has negative attitudes towards teaching, s/he cannot dedicate much time preparing lessons and thinking about techniques to use while teaching, hence, his teachings cannot be well conducted. For the learner, it is also very dangerous when a learner does not love his teacher or does not like the course to be taught.

Moreover, it is said that in second language learning, the other factor, which often affects people's attitudes towards a target language is the social dynamic or power relationship between the languages. In such a perspective, members of a minority group learning the language of a majority group may have different attitudes and motivation from those of majority group members learning a minority language. Hence, those from majority and dominant group will likely develop negative attitudes towards learning a language of a minority group, especially if the language has no direct impact on their common life, while those from minority group may likely feel more motivated to learn a language used by the majority group. Lightbown and Spada (2006) claimed that even though it is impossible to predict the exact effect of societal factors such as social dynamic or power relationships between languages; in second language learning, the fact that languages exist in social context cannot be overlooked when we seek to understand the variables which affect success in learning. Children as well as adults are sensitive to social

dynamics and power relationships. The authors go on to say that depending on the learner's attitudes, learning the second language can be a source of enrichment or a source of resentment.

Hedge (2000) supported the above confirming that social attitudes towards English language learning will partly determine how much effort teachers have to put into motivating children but so will social exposure to the language. The author went on to say, that the presence of English in the community will immediately facilitate practice opportunities such as writing reviews of English films and TV programmes keeping a diary for extra-curricular activities. Its absence creates greater but not insuperable challenges for teachers, who need to think about sources of authentic input, about manageable cut-of-class practice and about creating a balance of skills work to make the most productive use of class and out-of-class time. According to Efurosibina (1994), attitudes towards languages are crucially influenced by the education functions they perform. The author went on to support the idea assuming that education affects the individual's upward mobility, future progress and ability to participate in many aspects of national life.

### ***2.2.1. Attitude towards the second language community***

In discussing the attitudes towards the second language community, Littlewood (1984) claimed that when a learner is favourably disposed towards the speakers of the language he is learning, there are two main ways his motivation is likely to benefit: (i) The learner with more favourable attitudes will wish for more intensive contact with the second language community, whereby favourable attitudes reinforce the extent to which a learner perceives communicative need; (ii) In situations where circumstances do not actually compel members of different language groups to have contact with each other, the learner's attitudes may determine whether s/he perceives any communicative need at all. Gardner (1985: 41) said, "A review of literature indicates that attitude measures do differ in their degree of relationship with achievement in the second language, suggesting that some indices are more relevant than others". For example, studies involving attitudes towards learning the language generally obtain higher relationships with achievement than studies of attitudes toward the second language community, and the patterns appear more consistent. As the author stated, to be sure one might expect that students with favourable attitudes would be more attentive, serious, rewarded, and the like, than those with negative attitudes, but even so such attitudes might not be related to achievement. An individual could

hold positive attitudes but prefer not to study the language in school because of a feeling that such a context is inappropriate, or because of a dislike for the teacher, for example. Moreover, Al-Musnad (2018) claimed that in social psychology a key tenet is the assumption that attitudes exert a directive influence on behaviour since someone's attitude towards a target, influences the overall pattern of the person's responses to the target

As a conclusion, it is observed that people`s attitude towards the target language play an great role as success is concerned in the teaching/learning process of a second language. The social status attributed to a given language in a community also is of great importance to affect learners` attitudes towards that language. Since, negative attitude towards the target language or its speakers can affect one`s determination and perseverance to learn that language, learners with such attitudes should be helped until their negative attitudes turn into positive ones.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

In data collection a mixed method design relying on the use of triangulation of different research instruments was employed. Hence, questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations were used to gather supportive information. As a mixed method-based research, this study relies on the use of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches though qualitative remains predominant. It is based on mixed methods research which, according to Heigham and Croker (2009) can be used in case study and action research; and can use observations, interviews, open-response questionnaire items, verbal reports, and diaries to collect data. A mixed methods research is defined as a research approach or a procedure for collecting, analysing, and ‘mixing’ quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study in order to understand a research problem more completely (Heigham and Croker, 2009).

#### ***3.1. Sample, population and representativeness***

Each research is conducted based on a chosen sample from the population under the study and in most of the cases the sample is to be representative for the generalisation of the findings to the whole population. According to Dornyei (2007), the sample is a group of participants whom the researcher actually examines in an empirical investigation, while the population is the group of people whom the study is about. Representativeness on its side refers to how participants involved in the research reflect the members of the entire population.

### ***3.1.1. Sampling procedures***

Dornyei (2007) stated that sampling strategies can be divided into two groups: (a) scientifically sound ‘probability sampling’, which involves complex and expensive procedures that are usually well beyond the means of applied linguistics, and (b) ‘non-probability sampling’, which consists of a number of strategies that try to achieve a trade-off, that is, a reasonably representative sample using resources that are within the means of the ordinary researcher.

Writing on non-probability sampling and how it is perceived in applied linguistics research related issues, Dornyei (2007) pointed out that most actual research in applied linguistics employ ‘non-probability samples’. However, the author went on to assert that in qualitative research, such purposive, non-representative samples may not be seen as a problem, but in quantitative research, which always aims at representativeness, non-probability samples are regarded as less than perfect compromises that reality forces upon the researcher.

Bearing in mind the importance of non-probability sampling techniques in applied linguistics and in qualitative research cases, this study relies on the use of purposive random sampling and the convenience/opportunity sampling, both being part of the non-probability sampling. Dornyei (2007) stated that the most common sample type in L2 research is the ‘convenience’ or ‘opportunity sample’, where an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience of the researcher: members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer. It is on these base that one school was chosen in each of the Kigali city Districts.

In the above perspective, taking into account the Rwandan education structure and performance of learners in different schools in Kigali city, the researcher decided to work with one school classified among the top performing ones, one of medium performance and one of low performance based on national examination results at the end of ordinary level. All the involved schools are public or government subsidised. The aim was to make the sample more representative since there are many schools called Nine Year Basic Education (9YBE) or Twelve Year Basic Education (12YBE) throughout the whole country as well as in Kigali city. These schools host both primary cycle (from year 1 to year 6) and secondary cycle (from year 7 to year

9 or year 12). A host of factors lead to low performance of learners in some schools, such as dealing with learners who have failed to pass the national exam at the end of the primary cycle; being in the environment where these learners feel as if they are still in primary or primary extension; lack of relevant teaching materials, and the fact that Rwanda's education sector is still facing difficulties of having qualified English teachers since the language of instruction was changed in 2009 without any relevant prior preparation.

On the other side, the purposive random sampling is also “a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Oliver, 2006)”. Based on this principle, the researcher involved agents from Rwanda Education Board and directors of the schools as relevant respondents making daily follow-up of the implementation of the English language policy within Rwandan secondary schools; and also policy makers, especially those from Rwanda Education Board (REB). As pointed out before, lecturers from Kigali Institute of Education were involved as qualified trainers of the teachers of secondary schools in Rwanda.

Moreover, cluster sampling was also used in this study. According to Mugenda (2003), cluster sampling involves selection of an intact group, and all the members of such an intact group are then included in the sample and each member becomes a unit of observation. Hence, every student in one of the senior two classes at the schools that the researcher worked with was supposed to be a respondent though those who were present on the day and time of distributing questionnaires are the ones who participated in this research.

### ***3.1.2. Population***

From this perspective, the study attempted to incorporate learners in the secondary schools in Kigali city as the population. The sample consisted of learners from three secondary schools selected among all the secondary schools located in Kigali city: Lycee de Kigali from Nyarugenge District; G.S. Rugando from Gasabo District; and E.S Kanombe/EFOTEC from Kicukiro District. Students in one senior two classes at each school responded to the questionnaires distributed to them, while eight learners were randomly chosen from each class to participate in the focus group interviews with the researcher. The decision of taking one school

from each District was made disregarding the differences in numbers of secondary schools located in each District. Therefore, the representativeness is about one school from each District and three schools for the whole Kigali city as spatial limitation is concerned. Teachers of English at the three schools under this study, directors of these schools also formed part of the sample population. To ensure the collection of relevant information, educational officials in charge of English language and teacher management from Rwanda Education Board (REB) were involved.

Briefly, as far as population is concerned the study involved 123 secondary school learners, and 11 teachers of English who responded to their respective questionnaires. It also involved 24 learners divided into three focus group interviews of eight learners each, and 10 educational officials for personal interviews.

### **3.1.3. Representativeness**

With regard to representativeness of the sample, one can confirm that the sample is certainly a bit far from being representative taking into account the number of secondary schools located in Kigali, the number of learners and teachers of English in all the schools of Kigali city. However, if one has to categorise and consider learners' level and schools performance, the sample is representative since it goes from the highest school in performance to the lowest one through the one with middle performance. Hence, there is much hope that the findings of this research provide a general image of what takes place within schools in Kigali city in particular and throughout the whole country in general.

### **3.1.4. Data analysis and Interpretation**

For data analysis and interpretation, findings were categorised and classified according to the aspect tested. Tables and percentage calculations were relied on followed by researcher's comment on the information presented. Direct quotations from interviewees were used to reinforce or support data gathered by means of questionnaires. Interpretative analysis also served as one of the means to present and describe gathered data from different respondents. To refer to educational officials views, 'OF' (official) was used for direct quotes of different educational officials.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. Rwandan attitude towards English language and English world in general

As one of the aims of this study attempted to find out Rwandan attitude towards the learning of English, items were formulated to gather data for this purpose. To get data on how English is perceived among Rwandans and the learners' attitudes towards English as a newly introduced language of instruction; attitude-related items were included in the teachers and learners' questionnaires and in the interviews conducted with educational officials.

#### 4.1.1. Teachers' views on learners' attitude towards English language

To find out teachers' views on learners' attitude and how learners perceive English, a question was set in the form of a statement as, "My learners find English..." and teachers had to choose one among the 3 provided alternatives. Findings are presented in the table below followed with a brief interpretation.

**Table 1: Teachers' perceptions on students' English learning in the classroom**

Statement	Alternative (s)	Respondents
<i>My learners find English....</i>	Very easy to learn	5
	A bit difficult to learn	5
	Very difficult to learn	1

As it appears in the Table 1, five teachers who represent almost a half of the participants confirmed that learners find learning English very easy while a similar number pointed out that students find it a bit difficult. Only one teacher had an opinion that learners find learning English very difficult. Those who find learning English easier will likely have positive attitude towards that language while those who face a lot of difficulties in learning it will dislike it and tend to develop negative attitudes towards it if no measures are taken to help them change their attitudes.

Another item in the questionnaire sought to find out whether teachers of English have an idea on whether the English language enables learners to understand other subjects taught in English easily. The reason behind such a question lies in the fact that if learners manage to understand other subjects due to the knowledge they gain in English, they may have positive attitudes

towards that language and then be more motivated to learn it. Results are presented below in Table 2.

**Table 2: Teachers' assessment on learners' attitudes towards subjects taught in English**

Question	Alternative	Respondents
<i>Do you think Rwandan students find it easy to study other subjects taught in English? (N=11)</i>	Yes	4
	No	6
	Unsure	1

As presented above, six teachers opted to say that their students do not find it easy studying other subjects taught in English which can affect students negatively and make them loose interests in making effort to learn it. However, four teachers revealed that students find it easy learning other subjects taught in English, which also bring hope that as long as Rwandan schools strive to get qualified teachers of other subjects in English, and those ones who are also experienced in language teaching, a positive attitude could be developed among all students.

Briefly, the findings showed that though Rwandan students have positive attitudes towards the learning of English and are motivated to learn and use it, they still need to be made more aware on why English medium of instruction. They need to be informed on how important English will serve them in their life which will arouse much interests and positive attitudes to learn this language and other subjects in English with a will to succeed.

#### ***4.1.2. Learners' attitudes towards English language and English world in general***

Items in the learners' questionnaire were set out to evaluate their attitude towards English. This was done with respect to the fact that it is claimed that if people's attitudes towards a language; the culture it vehicles; its people and its role in general, is positive they will likely get interested in learning that language. Contrarily to this, if people's attitudes towards a target language tend to be negative, they will likely lose interests in learning that language, or just put little emphasis on learning it. Under this aspect, one question was set to elicit ideas from learners on whether English has a significant value in the daily life of Rwandans. It was formulated in the following terms, "*Does English have a significant value in Rwandan daily life?*"

Responding to the above question, sixty-eight learners (56.6%) opted to say that English has a significant value in Rwandan life; forty-four learners (35.7%) said that they are not sure, while eleven learners (9.1%) claimed that it has no significance in Rwandan daily life. Though a large number of the respondents claimed that English has a significant value in Rwandan daily life, considering the number of learners who opted to oppose such a view, and those whose position is “not sure”, one can certainly conclude that effort is still needed to create an environment where Rwandan learners could get much more exposure to English.

Another item aimed to find out if learners find it necessary for Rwandans to dedicate some of their time to learning English language or not. The item was formulated as, “*Do you think that it is necessary for Rwandans to dedicate some of their time to learning English?*” They had to choose among “‘Yes’, ‘No’, and ‘Not sure’”. Findings revealed that sixty-nine learners (58.40%) supported the view that it is necessary to spend much time learning English language; thirty-nine learners (33%) opposed the idea while fifteen of the learners (12.1%) were not sure. Briefly, from the results, a little more than half of the learners still think that English has a big value in Rwandan everyday life, which is somehow an indication that English is gradually making its presence felt within the Rwandan community despite the non-conducive environment.

The other item aimed to find out learners’ perceptions when someone addresses them in English. Findings are presented below.

**Table 3: learners’ feelings when somebody talks to them in English**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<i>How do you feel when somebody talks to you in English? (N=109)</i>	Very Happy	61	55.9%
	Happy	47	43.1%
	Bored/Annoyed	1	0.9%
<i>What do you think of your English lesson? (N=123)</i>	It is very good	90	74.3%
	It is good	30	24.7%
	I don’t like it	3	2.4%

As it is presented in Table 3, sixty-one (55.9%) of the respondents claimed that they feel very happy when people talk to them in English. Forty-seven respondents (43.1%) said that they feel

happy while one respondent (0.9%) of those who managed to respond to this question claimed that s/he feels bored and annoyed whenever spoken to in English. Most of students manifested positive attitudes towards English and claimed that a positive attitude toward English language makes them feel that one day they will become fluent speakers of English. As far as attitudes towards English lessons are concerned, ninety respondents (74.3%) said that the English lessons are very good for them. Thirty respondents (24.7%) were of the view that English is a very good lesson, while three of the learner-respondents confirmed that they do not like it at all. Again, the findings show that majority of the students expressed positive attitude towards English.

Finally, six items set out in the form of a Likert scale were formulated in the learners' questionnaire with the aim of measuring learners' attitude towards English. The learners had to grade each item according to its importance.

**Table 4: Learners' general attitudes towards English**

<b>Statements</b>	<i>Alternative , Respondents &amp; Percentage</i>				
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1. I wish I could speak like native speakers of English (N=120)	90 75%	21 17.5%	4 3.3%	3 2.5%	2 1.6%
2.The future of people who use English is very good (N=122)	58 47.5%	39 31.9%	18 14.7%	5 4.0%	2 1.6%
3.I like reading English Newspapers and watching movies in English (N=123)	54 43.9%	50 40.6%	7 5.6%	11 8.8%	1 0.8%
4. English should be taught as a subject only, and not be used as a language of instruction (N=120)	6 05%	7 05.8%	8 6.6%	60 50%	39 31.9%
5. I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English (N=121)	5 4.1%	20 16.5%	26 21.4%	44 36.3%	26 21.4%
6. Where I live, learning English is not necessary (N=119)	4 3.6%	5 4.2%	8 6.7%	43 36.1%	59 49.5%

From Table 4, which is based on the ranking of items by learners, one can certainly confirm that majority, if not all of them have positive attitude towards English and are aware of its importance not only in Rwanda, but also worldwide. Most learners selected either “strongly agree” or “agree”. With *strong agreement*, ninety learners (75%) wished they could speak English like native speakers as it appears within the findings of the first statement in the table. Regarding the future of people who use English, fifty-eight learners (47.5%) were of the view that the future of people who use English is more promising, while thirty-nine learners (31.9%) agreed with the statement. Concerning reading in English, fifty-four learners (43.9%) strongly agreed that they like reading English Newspapers, while fifty learners are in agreement with the statement. In line with the statement “*I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English*”, 44 learners (36.3%) are in disagreement with the statement, while 26 learners (21.4%) opted for neutral or strongly disagree.

As statement four and six are concerned, respondents also tackled them in a way that still shows that they owe much value to English. For example, with the statement “*English should be taught as a subject only, and not be used as a language of instruction*”, 60 learners (50%) chose disagree with this statement while 39 learners opted for strongly disagree. Taking into account the role that English plays in the places where learners, “*Where I live, learning English is not necessary*”, 59 learners (49.5%) opted for strongly disagree with the statement while 43 learners (36.1%) disagreed with it.

To summarize, Rwandans in general and secondary school learners in particular have positive attitude towards English and see the English language as an international tool for people to get in touch, remain connected and move with the world. They have expressed interest in learning English, but also recognize the challenges they face in practicing English to develop the English skills learnt and acquired at school for communication purposes outside the school setting.

#### ***4.2. Findings from education officials’ interviews on Rwandan attitude towards English***

To ascertain Rwandan perceptions and their general attitude towards English, a question was addressed to each of the educational officials through personal interview with regard to how they think are Rwandan attitudes towards English.

When collected data were subjected to the interpretative analysis, it was observed that respondents believe that Rwandans perceive English in a positive way and they know its global importance. In as much as Rwandan attitude towards English are positive, much effort is made to learn or acquire this language whenever opportunities are offered to them. One of the respondents claimed: *“Eeeh, the perception I think as far as I am concerned is very good because from the way you see people enthusiastic in learning the language -be it in schools, be it outside the schools in institutions like these days, for example we have members of staff who have been trained in the use of English language and everybody seems to be really very enthusiastic about the whole. So, their attitude is good” (OF5)*. In the same perspective, another respondent talking about Rwandans’ perceptions and attitudes towards English said, *“I think their attitude is positive as compared to if it were French which is being introduced in our country because first of all it is not difficult - eeeh English language is not difficult to learn as for the people who are formerly French speakers. If you see how in almost 3 years since the English language policy was officially introduced and declared a language of instruction to replace French, people are trying to use English despite some challenges which cannot miss if one has to consider our community” (OF3)*.

Another respondent also believes that Rwandans have positive attitude towards English and that they find learning it easier than learning French, which was the L2 for many years. The official’s viewpoints were given in Kinyarwanda, the mother tongue, and then translated into English by the researcher. S/he said:

*Eeeh, icyongereza,  
icyambere Abanyarwandabagihaagacirocyanecyanekoubonaugereranyijen`igihecyaberey  
enk`itegekogukoreshwa mu Rwanda,  
ubonakougereranyijen`urundirurimitwahozedukoresharw`Igifaransa,  
Abanyarwandabakiriye icyongerezakuberakocyougereranyijen`Igifaransakiroroshye-  
Icyongerezakiroroshyekukoubona baba ariabiga, baba arin`abatigaibintubakoresha muri  
rusange no kuvugabizacyanekurenzaukobakoreshaga Igifaransa.  
Kukoiyobiba Igifaransantabwoimyakaitatugusaahotugezeabantubataribarigezebakoresha  
Icyongerezaarikoububakababarabyakiriye kandibakagikoreshaurebye muri “sectors”  
zosez`ubuzima, ubonabagerageza. Translated as [Eeeh, English!- the first is that*

*Rwandans appreciation to English is positive compared to the time-span since English was declared a language of instruction in Rwanda. If one compares English to French, the languages that we had been using before, Rwandans have positively welcome English because it appears to be not complicated as French. English is simple. If one takes into accounts those at schools and the non-school attendants, what they try use the language in general shows that they develop in English quicker than when French was used. This is because considering the steps made so far, if it were French, in three years since English was introduced; people who have never used English language should have not made such a progress. But now, English has been implemented and is used in almost all the sectors of life, what shows that Rwandans are making considerable effort](OF10).*

However, one of the officials though accepting that the Rwandan attitudes towards English are positive pointed out that attitudes vary according to their age and interests. According to this respondent, the majority of old people and those whose education was offered in French are still hesitant in using English while among the youth, English is highly appreciated. S/he said, *“Eeeh, their attitudes towards the language may vary with individuals. I am convinced that the young people do enjoying learning and speaking English vis-a-vis for instance Kinyarwanda because English is an international language as opposed to Kinyarwanda which is basically local. Others would enjoy learning English because it is relatively easier to learn English than it is to learn French [.....] Eeeh, but, of course when you go to people who are not so young, people of my age who are compelled to learning English so that they can continue serving, they might consider it as not a so welcome opportunity because it is more difficult to learn a language when you are old than when you are young, but overall I think they are motivated. So, the attitude towards English is -eeeh, I can say is overall positive” (OF4).*

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the above analysis, the observations made in concerned schools, one can assert that Rwandans in general and secondary school learners in particular; perceive English in a positive way. They are aware of its importance as a significant global language. However, though Rwandans, particularly students learning English in the classroom, show determination to learn and use English; they still need much more exposure to develop communication skills in English.

Moreover, despite existing socio-linguistic and environmental challenges teachers and learners recognize the importance and the role of English all over the world and many more different benefits they will gain by mastering English, which enhance their positive attitude and be more motivated in the teaching and learning process of English and using English as a language of instruction. They consider education; job opportunities availed in English compared to other languages used, economic, regional and global integration, political reason, etc as some of their motives to master English. Hence, they have positive attitude towards English and they are motivated to get involved in the teaching and learning process despite existing sociolinguistic and non-conducive environment towards learning foreign/second languages.

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### **BIOGRAPHY**

Cyprien TABARO is a Ph.D holder currently working as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Humanities and Language Education, School of Education at the University of Rwanda-College of Education. He was educated at Kigali Institute of Education (BA /English-History-Education, 2003); the University of Westminster (MA in Applied Language Studies, 2008) and the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (PhD in Applied Linguistics, 2014). He started working with Kigali institute of Education; currently known as the University of Rwanda-College of Education in 2005. Previously, he taught English language at Lycée de Kigali. Dr Cyprien TABARO also lectured on part-time basis at Rwanda Tourism University. In leadership, he served as an Ag. Head, Department of Communication Skills, and had been a subject leader in Language Education. He wrote and published articles in international peer-reviewed journals. He is a reviewer and an editor of the Rwandan Journal of Education. His research interests are in line with different aspects of applied linguistics with a focus on second/foreign language learning/acquisition, L2 motivation, code-switching and translanguaging, language education, language for specific purposes, sociolinguistics, language policy and language planning, etc.