

## **Rwandans' Motivation to Learn and use English as a Medium of Instruction**

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### **Abstract**

*Studies have shown that motivation is crucial in the process of learning languages, and it remains one of the main influencing factors in L2 language learning. Though motivation is one of the influencing factors in second language learning, there are other aspects to consider when a country has to choose a language used in education. After many years of using French and Kinyarwanda in education, in 2008 the Rwandan government declared English to be the sole medium of instruction. Taking into account that four years have now passed since the implementation of this new language policy, this study was conducted in Kigali city in the academic year 2012/2013 and it involved secondary school learners and educational officials. It aimed to discover what motivates Rwandans to learn and use English. Findings revealed that Rwandans are aware of benefits they can enjoy from mastering and using English, which range from economic affairs, world globalisation, political and diplomatic relations among others.*

**Keywords:** Motivation, second language, learning, medium of instruction

### **1. Introduction**

After the 1994 Tutsi genocide which led not only to the destruction of human lives, but also to the destruction of different sectors of life, education included; Rwandans who had been living abroad as refugees for many years came back home. Most of these refugees had been living in neighbouring English speaking countries and taking their education in English while in Rwandan education system, only French and Kinyarwanda were used as languages of instruction. Hence, when schools reopened doors in 1995 Rwanda had two groups of students to cater for as language of education is concerned: French/Kinyarwanda education and English education background Rwandans. The education system needed to be revisited so that all Rwandan children could benefit from it. Taking into account those who had been learning in English and those whose education was provided in French and Kinyarwanda, the government of Rwanda declared English an official language, alongside Kinyarwanda and French. Then French-English parallel learning schools were introduced in Rwandan education system. According to the Ministry of education, this was said to be justified by economic, social and political factors: "Rwanda has chosen the path of multilingualism, and 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" (MINEDUC, 2003:14).

However, the system did not bear positive fruits since learners failed to develop communicative competence either in English or in French. This can be justified by the fact that Rwandan community is purely monolingual where Kinyarwanda keeps the lead in our daily activities. It also can be justified by the fact that when the system was introduced, Rwanda had no experts in both English and French linguistics, a challenge that the country is still facing despite its move to declaring English a language of instruction. As McGreal (2008) states, from 1996 to 2008 the language policy required the first three years of schooling be taught in Kinyarwanda, after which the students chose English or French as the primary language of instruction. University students were expected to perform equally well regardless of their linguistic choice. For the first 16 years after the genocide, French was more widely used among both groups in Rwanda, including returnees from Francophone countries. However, the linguistic reforms of 2008 advocated the shift from French into English as the language of instruction at all levels of education.

However, one can confirm that Rwandan teachers and learners, who gained no relevant prior-transition as the shift is concerned, were not equipped and ready to get engaged in a successful teaching and learning process in English. It is in this perspective that this study aims (i) to find out what should motivate Rwandans to learn English, and (ii) what are Rwandan benefits in mastering English language?

## **2. Motivation**

Though some authors claimed that it is difficult to give a brief precise definition of what is motivation, Cohen & Macaro (2007) defined it as “an inner drive, intention, or impulse to do something”. Gardner (1985) considered motivation in a second language learning context as ‘the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity’. Dornyei (2001) suggested that researchers should accept that the exact definition of motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behaviour to mean making choice of a particular action, persistence within the action and the effort or engagement expended on that action. Accordingly, motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it.

### **2.1. Motivation and the Second Language Learning**

Globally; it is known that motivation remains one of the most influencing factors in language learning. Lannartson (2008) claimed that motivation and the will to learn a second language are factors considered much more important than social ones. According to Saville-Troike (2006), individual motivation is another factor that is used to explain why some L2 learners are more successful than others. The level of effort that learners expend at various stages in their L2 development depends on how motivated they are to learn.

### **2.2. The Importance of Motivation in Language Learning**

The extent to which motivation influences language learning is hard to determine. For example, one does not need any motivation or positive attitudes in order to acquire the L1. However, learning a second language presents a different problem: learners need to pay attention listening to the teacher. They also have to actively participate in different activities and do assignments. The amount of exposure which a learner receives and the amount of attention and effort that he devotes to learning a second language is greatly determined by motivation. According to Yule (1996), there are several factors which combine in a profile of the successful L2 learner. Obviously, the motivation to learn is important. The author went on to point out that those who experience some success are among the most motivated to learn. Thus, motivation may be as much a result of success as a cause. A language-learning situation that encourages success and accomplishment must consequently be more helpful than one that dwells on errors and corrections. Indeed, the learner who is willing to guess, risks making mistakes, and tries to communicate in the L2 will tend, given the opportunity to be more successful”.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) claimed that motivation in second language learning is a complex phenomenon, which can be defined in terms of two factors: “learners` communicative needs, and their attitudes towards the second language community. If learners need to speak the second language in a wide range of social situations or to fulfil professional ambitions, they will perceive the communicative value of the second language easily, have positive attitudes towards it and be more motivated to learn it”. According to Ghazvini & Khajehpour (2011), motivation has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. In the same perspective, Oroujlou & Vahedi (2011) argued that motivation plays a significant role in the process of learning a language. Language teachers cannot effectively teach a language if they do not understand the relationship between motivation and its effect on language acquisition.

As presented in the above paragraphs, authors are in agreement that motivation is one of the important factors that one needs for success in second language learning. Motivation arise from different aspects and in a learning setting environment, both teachers and learners should be stimulated in different ways and this requires teachers to be more skilful in dealing with learners and also fully equipped with language knowledge and teaching learning strategies. Accordingly, when people know why they have to learn a second language and consider the value that the target language plays in the society or in social mobility, they will be more motivated to learn that language and will be able to communicate through that language.

### **2.3. Integrative and Instrumental Motivation**

Based on the role of motivation and what stipulates it, second language learners were classified as being integratively or instrumentally oriented.

According to Gardner (2001), integrative motivation reflects a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community. Saville-Troike (2006) claims that integrative motivation is based on learners' interests such as to what extent the learners are interested in the country or the culture represented by the target language group. According to Oroujlou & Vahedi (2011), with instrumental motivation the purpose of language learning is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Atef and Munir (2009) considered instrumental motivation as "learning a language because of someone or less clearly perceived utility it might have for the learner, while integrative motivation refers to learning a language because the learner wishes to identify himself with or become integrated into the society of the target language".

It is assumed that learning a language for the purpose of integrating and identifying oneself with the second speaker and culture produces better results than learning a language for the purpose of using it as an instrument to achieve some end or goal such as a job, a career, etc. "Students of second language were classified as integratively or instrumentally oriented. They were integratively oriented if, when reporting on their reasons for wanting to learn an L2, they stressed wanting to meet and converse with speakers of that L2. They were instrumentally oriented if their motivation for learning an L2 was linked to its usefulness to their careers or if it provided them with desired qualification or it made them better educated" (Macaro, 2003). Hence, one can conclude reinforcing the idea that for the successfully language teaching/learning, where feasible, both types of motivation should be fostered.

### **2.4. Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation**

According to Finocchiaro (1989), motivation is also classified as either extrinsic or intrinsic whereby extrinsic motivation, the desire to do well on an examination or in a class recitation, will often become intrinsic when the learner experiences a feeling of confidence and achievement as a result of successful performance. Oroujlou & Vahedi (2011) claimed that successful language learning is linked to the learner's passion and teachers should strive to transform initial extrinsic motivation into permanent intrinsic motivation. The authors went on to say that learners need quality instruction, input, interaction, and opportunities for meaningful output, not only to make progress, but also to maintain motivation for language learning. Hence, a good teacher, must tap into the sources of intrinsic motivation and find ways to connect them with external motivational factors that can be brought to a classroom setting. This is especially significant when English is not seen as important to the students' immediate needs, other than to pass exams.

Briefly, there is intrinsic motivation which comes about through someone's personal interest or desire. For example, if a student learns in order to get knowledge not to get marks, he is driven by intrinsic motivation. There is also extrinsic motivation, which refers to the motivation that comes from outside an individual. The outside motivation factors may be: rewards, grades, promotion, etc. In other words, intrinsic refers to integrative motivation while extrinsic refers to instrumental one.

## **3. Methodology**

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 Dörnyei (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. Sampling Procedures**

Dörnyei (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, Dörnyei (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 relied on the use of purposive random sampling and the convenience/opportunity sampling, both being part of the non-probability sampling. Dörnyei (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 bases 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, 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 2011 academic year results. All the 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 6 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). Lecturers from Kigali Institute of Education (KIE), an institution of higher learning in of training and producing qualified teachers for secondary schools; were involved as qualified trainers of the teachers of secondary schools in Rwanda.

### **3.2. Population**

From this perspective, the study attempted to incorporate students in the secondary schools in Kigali city as the population. The sample consisted of students 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. All the schools have been operating for more than 20 years. Eight students 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. To ensure the collection of relevant information, educational officials in charge of English language and teacher management from Rwanda Education Board were involved, as well as some of the lecturers of English language and linguistics from KIE. Briefly, 24 students divided into three groups of eight students each participated in focus group interviews, and 10 educational officials for personal interviews.

### 3.3. Data Collection, Presentation and Analysis

Two research tools were used in the process of data collection: The personal interviews conducted with educational officials from REB, directors of schools involved in this study, and two lecturers of English language and linguistics from Kigali Institute of Education, and three focus group interviews undertaken with students selected in each of the schools under study. As analysis is concerned, data were mainly analyzed by means of qualitative content analysis, which is according to Cohen et al. (2011) the process of summarizing and reporting written data—the main contents of data and their messages. Tables were used to present some of the data gathered from respondents.

### 3.4. Ethical Consideration

Ethical issue is an aspect of great importance in any research involving human beings. Mackey and Grass (2005) pointed out that ethical issue must be considered in research studies involving human subjects. This stresses that participants in every research should fulfil the ethical requirements, which involves getting the consent of the participants, address confidentiality and ample information about the potential benefits and risk of the research for participating and how the researcher's role affects the study. Taking into account the above, the researcher sought permission from the Ministry of Education to gather data within the schools and educational institutions under this study. In the same perspective, the researcher guaranteed confidentiality to all the participants and promised them to use their answers for the research purposes only, whereby confidentiality and neutrality were to be respected. Respondents were then to be kept confidential and their responses be used to serve the research purposes entailed to this study. Thus, to keep the anonymity in this study, the following codes were used in place of respondents: (i) OF was used in place of Educational official whereby OF1 refers to official one, and (ii) R1SC1, R2SC3, etc were used in the analysis of data collected by students' focus group interviews: R1 stands for respondent one and SC1 stands for school one. Hence, R1SC1 refers to student-respondent one from school one.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the results of the research findings after analysing data provided by means of students' focus group interviews and educationalists' personal interviews.

### 4.1. Findings from the Students' Focus Group Interviews on their Benefits in Mastering English

A content analysis was carried out on the data collected through focus group interviews with students to find out benefits or motives in learning and mastering English as a second language by Rwandan students. Findings revealed that Rwandan benefits after mastering English are dominantly in line with extrinsic motivation, which according to respondents' views can be ranked as follow from the highest: jobs, facility in their studies, furthering studies abroad, communication, business advancement, and country development. As intrinsic motive is concerned, reasons such as watching movies and reading for entertainment were also highlighted. Pointed out benefits are presented in the table below.

**Table 1: The Benefits of Learning and Mastering English by Rwandan Students**

Highlighted Benefits per School	Extrinsic benefits	Intrinsic benefits
<i>School I (N=33)</i>	Studies -11 Jobs -8 Business and economic advancement -7 Communication -5 Development of the country -2	_____
<i>School II (N=15)</i>	Jobs -5 Communication -3 Business and economic advancement -3 Scholarships/studies -2 Country Development -1	Watching movies -1
<i>School III (N=10)</i>	Jobs -6 Communication -3 Studies -1	_____

As presented in Table 1 above, Rwandan students are aware of different benefits that Rwandans will gain in mastering English. They gave us an image of their awareness of how important English will be in their life and how eager they are to learn this international and global language. Their benefits are in line with extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Respondents are more extrinsically oriented though limited intrinsic motivational-oriented benefits were also highlighted. Some of the students' viewpoints on the role of English in business and socio-economic advancement were formulated as follow: (i) *With English we can go to the markets in East African Community and work there to earn our lives (R8, SC3); (ii) It is good to master English because in this development that is coming with EAC, Commonwealth, etc and other businesses that are related to different communities; and they use the mother tongue and English because some of them are foreigners or researchers. They use English because is -eeeh -the language of use (R6, SC2).*

With regard to job opportunities, furthering studies, the following extracts were taken from the interview transcripts. Students said: (i) *When you are going to get a job there is an interview that you make, and if you don't understand the language they speak, you are going to lose your job, and your knowledge is going to be for nothing even if you are good in the subject (R1bm SC1); and (ii) Our students, our children will need to go in other countries to learn more. When they are doing the interview, they do it in English and when you do not know English you can't pass the exam (R3, SC1).* Many students also claimed that English is significant for cross-cultural communication, *"I think there is no loss with mastering English; English is helpful. It helps to communicate with another and when English is involved, there is no barrier at all. English can be a link between foreigners and citizens of that nation" (R4, SC2).*

In conclusion, one can affirm that most of the respondents did not ignore the importance of English currently and that everyone who expects to have a better life should learn or acquire it though it is not always a guarantee for better life as few of them pointed it out. Few students found no immediate connection of the mastery of English to a better life in terms of jobs, studies and communication. For example, one respondent said, *"On my side, I cannot see that when you master English you will get a better future because whatever we pass through is what God has prepared for us. For me, what I can say is that English is very important for us, but I cannot say that when you make it a master you will get a better future" (R8, SC2),* while another one claimed, *"I am not sure of the idea if you know English or master that language means that you can have a better future, but English is very important" (R4b SC2).*

#### **4.2. Findings from Educationalists' Interviews on Rwandan Motives to Learn and use English**

As this study focuses on finding out what should motivate Rwandans to learn and use English after many years of French usage, a question was set and addressed to educational officials to find out what they consider to be motives or benefits that Rwandans will gain through the new English language educational policy. The interview-guiding question was formulated as follow: *The government of Rwanda through the ministry of education declared English a medium of instruction at different levels of education. According to you, what should motivate Rwandans to learn and use English language?*

As presented in Table 2, findings from Educational officials' views on what should motivate Rwandans to learn and use English, officials ranked the following from the highest to the lowest: Regional and global integration, English as the most used language internationally, English as the language of Sciences and ICT, doing business, job opportunities, communication and interactions with foreigners; travelling, Rwandan geographic situation, studies and scholarship opportunities, English as the language of superpowers( USA &UK) and other main donors, diplomacy/international relations and politics, and finally the superiority of English to other world languages.

**Table 2: Educational Officials` views on Rwandan Motives to Learn and use English**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Official Respondents (N=10)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
(i) Regional and worldwide integration as a member of commonwealth and the East African communities		10
(ii) English is the most used language all over the world		8
(iii) English is the language of Sciences and ICT		7
(iv) Doing Business		6
(v) Job opportunities		5
(vi) Communication and interactions with foreigners		4
(vii) Traveling		3
(viii) Rwandan geographical situation-being not an island but a landlocked in the Central-East Africa		3
(ix) Studies and scholarship opportunities		3
(x) English is the language of Superpowers (UK & USA) an other main donors		3
(xi) Diplomacy, international relations and politics		2
(xii) Superiority of English to other world languages		1

Educational officials' provided reasons for Rwandans to focus on learning English can be classified under two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic reason/motivation. Notably, all the top five most frequent reasons given are extrinsic reasons. The following are some extracts and information taken from the data with regard to these reasons:

- *Rwandans should be really motivated since Rwanda is not an island and Rwanda declaring English a medium of instruction was taking into account that it is part and parcel of the East African Community (EAC). It also has gone further becoming a member of Commonwealth and they use English. Such a decision of making English a language of instruction at all levels of education in Rwanda is one of the ways to encourage Rwandans to learn, master and speak English, a language which is commonly used in trade (OF1).*
- *First of all, it is, if I am not mistaken, a language which is spoken by the majority of people around the world. And it is the language which is used in business, ICT and education as well. I think that the mastery of English will help our country to widen its business sector and also facilitate people, especially teachers and researchers to get access to different materials, most of them written in English (OF3).*

Briefly, respondents' views incorporated access to information, knowledge, and scholarships which will make Rwandans more competitive as job opportunities are concerned. There are integrative motives for them as members of the East African Community and the Commonwealth, communities largely using English. There are also instrumental motives such as furthering studies in English speaking countries; fitting in the regional and international market as far as job opportunities is concerned.

## **5. Conclusion**

Rwandans consider the role played by English all over the world and are motivated to learn it in order to cope with the world globalisation where English keep taking the lead among used languages. According to students, Rwandan motives to learn English are mainly in line with instrumental motivation though integrative motivational facts were also highlighted, especially by educational specialists, which can be justified by the fact that their analysis is deeper than that of young Rwandan students who had been learning and thinking in French and Kinyarwanda before shifting to English. By extrinsic motivation, most respondents opted to say that mastering English will open doors for Rwandan students to many job opportunities, facilitate their understanding in other taught subjects, further studies in English speaking countries, etc.

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