

English Language Learning And Its Usability In Rwandan Higher Technical Learning Institutions: A Functional Approach

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Abstract: The study investigates the status of English Language Learning and its usability in Rwandan Higher Technical Learning Institutions (HTLI) considering the function approach. Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages. The educational language policy and planning in the 1994 post genocide against Tutsi period has made English language very important of both status and Acquisitional language planning in Rwanda. Though English has gained such important position, it does not hold a valuable position (86%) in regard learning and its usability in Higher Tech Learning Institutions. In this study both quantitative and qualitative approach were adopted. Qualitative Data were collected, analysed and interpreted using ground theory method through interviews observations and textual base completed with statistical numbers. Krejcie and Morgan sampling formula and table was referred to determine the sample size of 226 from a population of 549 third year students in 2024–2025 academic year who have undergone both level 6 and level 7 English language learning and use in all RP- Musanze College programs and six (6) English lecturers. The study findings revealed that English language learning and use face significant gaps affecting English language learning and use in both academic, professional and social interactions. Such include but not limited to few hours of English practice (100%), gaps in the curriculum related to English and communication skills (100%), mother tongue interference (100%), poor English educational background at high school (83.3%) and students fear of speaking English (73%) that reflect insufficient English language skills and inadequate English proficiency or Basic Level of English proficiency A2-B1 instead of B2 at the entry of University and or Polytechnic. The study findings also revealed that though students from Level 6 that is, year one and two to level 7 or year three and four of HTLIs make noticeable progress in English language learning and use, yet they haven't attained the required proficient level. The majority of them graduate being Upper intermediate English language users (B2) at 83% while a very few numbers of level 7 reach Advanced or proficient (C1) users of English language (17%). Therefore, the study recommends HTLIs to strengthen English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning competencies and use not as merely learned and used as academic subjects but as strategic professional and social competencies; allocating more hours to Workplace English for practice; and review the English Curriculum to remedy to gaps affecting HTLI English language learning and use in both social, academic and professional settings.

Key words: Language Learning, Usability, Functional approach, English for Academic Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, Higher Technical Education.

1. Introduction and Context

Rwanda suffers from serious deficiencies in terms of trained human capital and technical professionals. Moreover, the 1994 genocide impact resulted in the massive loss of an educated and skilled workforce. This poses a great threat to Rwanda in reaching its Vision 2020 and even the 2050 targets. Therefore, Education Sector Policy pertaining to initial and continuing Technical and Vocational Education and Training was initiated in 2003. It covers all kinds and levels of technical trades to be offered in both secondary and tertiary technical education in Rwanda (Ministry of Education,2008). A Higher Technical Education Institution (HTEI) provides advanced technical and technological education at the tertiary level, often focused on industry-relevant skills, job creation and qualifications beyond secondary education. According to Cristella in UNESCO (2023) these Higher Technical Learning Institutions were created for three main areas of interventions: fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship, promoting equity and gender equality, and facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies. In line with promoting job creation, UNESCO helps to enhance the relevance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to equip all youth and adults with the skills required for employment, decent work, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning (UNESCO Global Strategy for TVET,2016-2021; UNESCO;2023). Besides, such qualifications are designed to develop advanced competencies and increase students' employability (UNESCO,2023). To put in another way, Higher Technical Learning Institutions or Tech Higher Learning Institutions (HTLI) refer to all formal post-secondary or tertiary technical training institutes, and vocational schools known as technical universities, polytechnic schools and universities of Technology. Such Tech Higher Learning Institutions deal with education, training and learning activity leading to the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and hands on skills which are relevant for employment or self employment. More specifically, Higher Technical Learning Institutions provide advanced, industry-focused education after secondary school, specializing in practical, technological, and vocational skills for specific jobs. In light of this, Higher Tech institutes answer industry's need for new high-level technical and technological skills to promote innovation processes. Thus, Higher Tech institutions serve to bridge the gap between secondary education and university, preparing students for high-skilled jobs through a combination of theoretical knowledge and hands-on training with the main goal of meeting the needs of the national workforce and filling skills gaps. (Ministry of Education,2008; World Bank,2021, UNESCO,2023; UNESCO-UNEVOC,2025). Hence, Technical Tertiary Learning Institutions aim at fostering growth, reducing poverty, and boosting shared prosperity, A highly skilled workforce, with lifelong access to a solid post-secondary education, is a prerequisite for innovation and growth: well-educated people are more employable and productive, and cope with economic shocks better. In short, technical tertiary education institutions prepare individuals not only by providing them with adequate and relevant job skills, but also by preparing them to be active members of their communities and societies (Ministry of Education, 2008; World Bank,2021).

1.1. Languages cohabitation in Rwandan education system

Geographically, Rwanda is a neighbour of former British colonies and former Belgian colonies. Historically, as a former colony of Belgium, till 1962, Rwanda was a francophone country with French and Kinyarwanda as its official languages. Such a geographical position gave a room to learn both English and French. Before Belgians had introduced French into primary school in 1929, Kiswahili was used to serve as a language of communication in the colonial administration. Most Belgian colonial masters and missionaries of all denominations were using Kiswahili. However, French was more widely spoken and more predominant than English and Kiswahili and since 1962 French has been declared an official language. As stipulated in its article 69 of the decree of the Ministry of Education of 27 August 1966, the language of instruction for primary school education was Kinyarwanda and frequently spoken in daily life and at official public functions (Kayigema & Mutasa,2017; Samuelson& Freedman,2010). Since the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, Rwanda has undergone changes and policymaking in different sectors including education. Policy-makers in Rwanda see the new language policy as a major factor in the success of Rwanda's post-genocide reforms. In this line, extensive language policies have also been made, including a 2008 Cabinet resolution shifting the medium of instruction in all public schools from Kinyarwanda and French to English (Republic of Rwanda, 2008; Samuelson& Freedman,2010).

Before 1994 English was not used at primary school. At secondary school it was studied like any other subjects and at the tertiary level it could be studied among other subjects or as a major in the department of languages and literature Kayigema &

Mutasa,2017). Additionally, before 1994 English was taught from the first to the sixth year of secondary school. Of course, the number of classes contact hours sometimes differed from one line to another. At the National Office of Curricula Development there was a department in charge of English curriculum development. English curriculum developers were recruited among university graduates who had completed three to five years of university programme. However, some were not necessarily trained to teach English, nor develop curricula of English. In addition to the formal education of English there were some organisations and embassies which offered English programmes to boost the level of English language proficiency for beginners, intermediate and advanced students.

At tertiary level, the National University of Rwanda and other institutions of higher learning offered English as a major in the department of English. Most teachers of English were trained in local universities and institutions of higher learning. Some others were trained in the neighbouring countries where English programmes were offered at various levels. Exceptionally, some teachers of English were trained in the UK, the USA, and Canada. Just after the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, with repatriated Rwandans from both French and English-speaking countries, there has been a great need for bilingual workers in the 1994 post Genocide against Tutsi period. As a result, educational reforms have taken place. The 1996 Educational Reform adopted both French and English as medium languages for instruction and as subjects. Until 2008, from Primary One to Primary Three, where possible, French and English were taught as subjects, whereas from Primary Four to Primary Six, they were both subjects and languages of teaching other subjects, except Kinyarwanda.

In fact, from 1962 till 1994 Rwanda was a member of La Francophonie and French was the language of instruction at secondary and university levels, as well as the language of business and official communication; and English was added as a third official language in 1996.

In the trilingual Rwanda of 1996, advanced primary and secondary students were able to use English or French as their primary language of instruction, and take Kinyarwanda and the other language as subjects. Since then, students from lower primary (P1-P3) who were studying in Kinyarwanda were allowed to study in either English or French and they could sit for national examinations in either one of the two languages. In higher learning institutions, students were expected to be bilingual and study in either one of the two languages depending on the language of instruction of the lecturer. At this level, both French and English enjoyed equal status (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010; Kayigema & Mutasa, 2017).

In late 2008, English became the sole medium of instruction from first grade to university level while French and Kinyarwanda were taught as subjects. This policy was amended again in 2011 and Kinyarwanda became the language of instruction up to the primary third grade (P1-P3). Still Rwanda is a member of La Francophonie and eventually became a member of the East African Community (EAC) and the Commonwealth. Currently, both French, English, Kinyarwanda, and Swahili are Rwanda's official languages but English is the dominating language in education, business, and official communication (Muhawenayo, Habimana & Heshmati, 2022). In Rwanda, the English language has risen sharply for different reasons. Such include but not limited to the Rwandan government to find ways of communicating with the external world in a more powerful international language. Subsequently, the rise of English in Rwanda is linked to its position as a global language (Kayigema & Mutasa, 2017).

1.2 Language planning and policy and Education in Rwanda

Education is the most influential domain which determines whether a language will be predominant in a given country or not. This is because all linguistic and scientific knowledge is acquired at school. The use of a language cannot be efficient unless teaching the language has taken place. It is in that line that to reinforce its education, Rwanda opted for language planning (Kayigema & Mutasa, 2017; Pamela, 2016). A community with many languages must determine the best use of them. That's why language planning exists. To clarify what language planning is, scientific discourses claimed language planning as official, management-level of governance activity concerning the selection and promotion of a unified managerial language or languages. As such, language planning refers to measures taken by official agencies to influence the use of one or more languages in a particular speech community. That is, language determination refers to choices of languages to be used for specific purposes. In that perspective, language planning brings in activities that attempt to bring about changes in the structure and functions of languages and/or language varieties. (Dalla, 2020; Nordquist, 2020; Makoni, 2017; Gafaranga, Niyomugabo, & Uwizeyimana;

2013). In the same line, these three empirical researches by Dalla, Norquist and Makoni recognize three levels of language planning namely: (1) Status planning which is geared at establishing and developing the functional usage of particular language or languages within a state'; Corpus planning which refers to 'linguistic' or 'internal' planning which is geared at establishing and developing vocabulary, morphology, and spelling, or adoption of new scripts; and Acquisition planning with main focus of influencing the allocation of users or the distribution of languages by means of creating or improving opportunity or incentive to learn them (Samuelson& Freedman,2010. And Rwanda experienced two of the language planning levels which are Status planning and Acquisition planning.

The position of English as a global language has made the rise of English use in all major public and private sectors in Rwanda. In light of that, the expansion circle period of English is marked by the use of English as a mere foreign language if not as a second language. Furthermore, in 2009 the position of English was reinforced by its adoption as a language of instruction to cope with the global and regional growth of English as the leading language of science, commerce and economic development (Pamela,2016; Samuelson& Freedman,2010).

According to various empirical researches, today, English language is the most spread and commonly used language among different nations and individuals worldwide for cultural, educational exchange, business, media, and government. It contributes multipurpose social and educational services. In Rwanda and elsewhere worldwide, English is used as a medium of instruction in a large number of universities in the national and international world. More importantly, English has become the main language of scientific communication. It is now dominant in different disciplines and books of different fields are now available in English in addition to the original versions of the national languages depending on countries they come from. In the same line, English language plays a paramount importance in unifying a vast and complex notion and in providing individuals with outlets for developing diverse skills and abilities. Thanks to technology, English language prevents different nations' isolation from the world and serves as a window to the rapid progress and development in all spheres of life (Abdelhamid,2015; Baiju,2010; Rahman,2010). In fact, the English Language is used as a tool for great achievements in various disciplines (Abdulhafidh,2015; Baiju,2010). Besides, accounting for how globalization has created the sphere of the English language smaller (Rahman,2010) the role of English language in the learning process cannot be underestimated. As such, there is no doubt that the English language has become the most important and vivid means of global communication. This research paper aims at exploring English Language Learning and its usability considering the status and functional attributes it holds in Rwandan Technical Higher Learning Institutions.

1.3. The Rise of English as a medium of instruction in Rwanda

As far as the language policy and planning is concerned in Rwanda, all the three levels of language planning were adopted namely: Status planning., Corpus planning and Acquisition planning. Rwanda currently presents a situation of a non-postcolonial environment where English plays a crucial role in many dimensions of the status of English as a concern. Thus, English is an official language in Rwanda, widely used in education, government, and business.

As different scientific literatures in linguistics posited by Bebwa Isingoma, 2025, until 1994, English in Rwanda had been in the category of English as Foreign Language (EFL). In fact, the English use in Rwanda has undergone three preliminary phases known as: Foundation, Stabilization and Nativization. The foundation phase was characterized by the use of English in international communication and only taught in secondary schools and tertiary institutions as a subject after independence. Additionally, phase 2 of Stabilization known as Exonormatively Stabilization involves stable colonial status and the establishment of English as the language of administration, law, education, etc. In Rwanda, after the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) gained a stable political and military status and stature, indeed declared English as one of the official languages and later as the sole medium of instruction from grade four up to university. Besides, this phase involves lexical borrowings from Kinyarwanda used in English and code mixing of both Kinyarwanda and English languages. Phase 3 concerns Nativization. which has undergone borrowing and loanwords from other languages like French and local or indigenous in fields such as business.

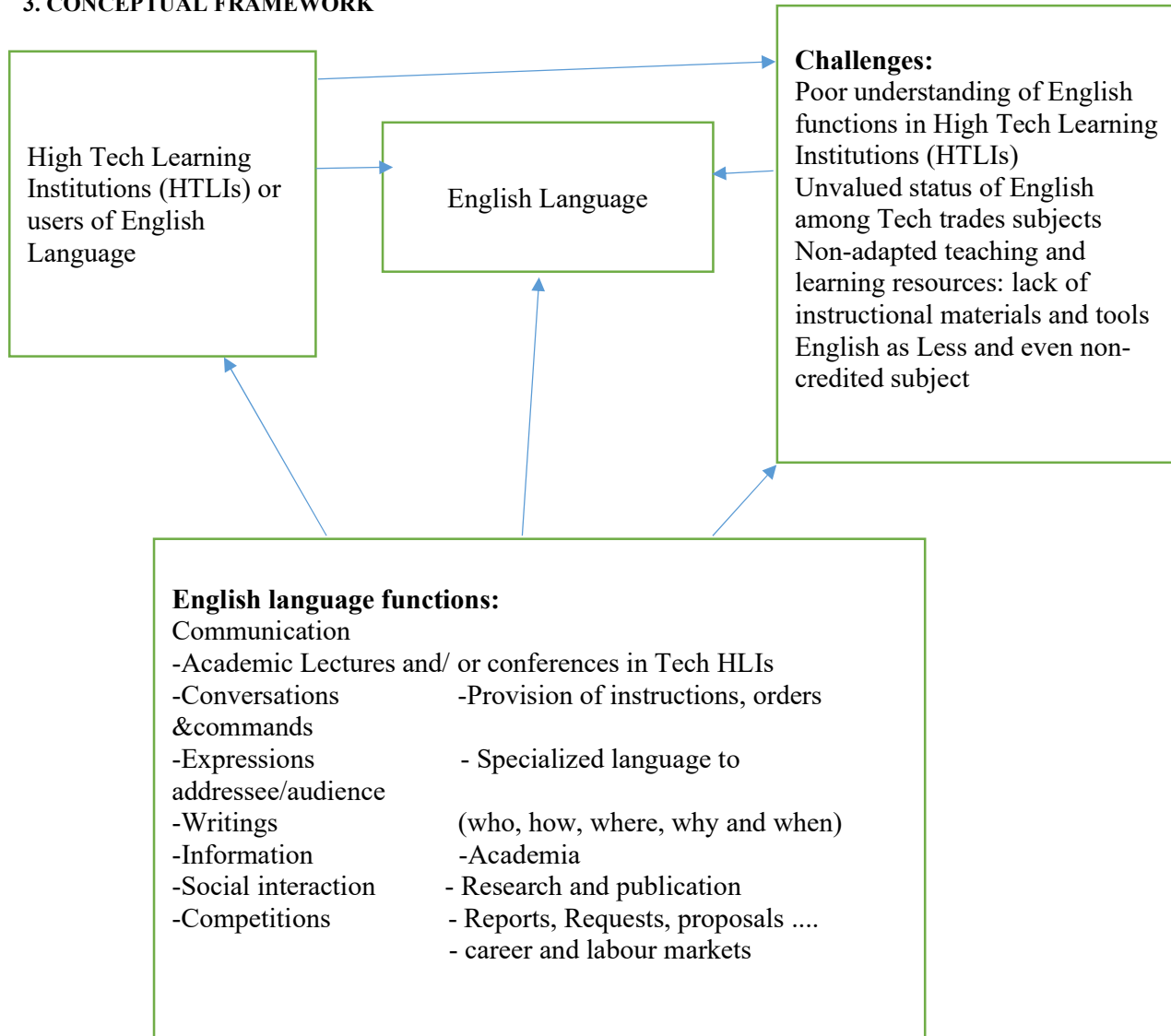
As far as the English status in education is concerned, from 2008 and through Rwandan Cabinet resolution, the Rwandan language in education policy stands at Kinyarwanda for the first three years of primary school, and English for all subsequent

grades. As such, English is adopted as an official language in Rwanda and the sole medium of instruction from grade four to university. In fact, English is an official language in Rwanda, widely used in education, government, and business, but proficiency levels vary. Following a policy shift in 2008, it became the primary language of instruction from upper primary through university, with the Ministry of Education recently announcing a transition to English as the medium of instruction for lower primary as well. While official figures show a rise in English literacy, many students and even some graduates still exhibit limited communication skills in the language, posing an ongoing challenge that the government is working to address through teacher training and other initiatives. And from 2nd December 2019, the Ministry of Education leaders held a consultative meeting with the Legal representatives and Head teachers of private primary schools endorsing the use of English language even in lower primary school grades. Therefore, all schools (Private, Public and Government Aided) are required to put in place strategies to strengthen the teaching and learning of all languages, specifically English as a medium of instruction from early grades to achieve appropriate language proficiency. This is an important requirement, and schools are required to strengthen pupil and students' debates, language competitions, appropriate measures to learn and use English language, and supporting and monitoring measures to ensure use of English language in class, on the school premises, and to ensure mastery of the language, so that it enables pupils and students to understand better and obtain higher scores in other subjects. All schools are required to strengthen teaching of Kinyarwanda to promote Rwandan cultural values, and teaching of French language to promote trilingual for global competitiveness (Rwanda Constitution, 2003; Sibomana, 2010; MINEDUC, 2019; Isingoma, 2025)

2. Problem statement

Thanks to globalization, the significance of the English language needs to be accentuated. While technologies should promote the Language learning in Higher Tech Learning Institutions, languages do not take the accountability it should hold. In fact, students with Tech- based future careers do not like to learn English saying that languages do not have a place in Tech and Engineering classes. Even the respective Tech higher Learning Institutions, academically do not account for allocating enough time to learning languages that, in some departmental trades' levels, languages are less credited even non-credited. And English is not the exception. Due to poor academic language proficiency, students frequently find it difficult to study complex technical or professional subjects in English. In the same vein, instructors may be equipped with great technical expertise but inadequate English proficiency, which might hinder the delivery of content effectively. Besides, the empirical research states that many Tech graduates leave Higher Tech Learning Institutions (HTLIs) incompetent in communication skills in English, lack fluency and confidence and fail to successfully compete on the labour market. (Hellekjaer, 2010; Costa and Coleman, 2013; Uwababyeyi, 2021). Considering the language proficiency, HTLIs should host ESL high school graduates with Upper Intermediate (B2) level which allow them to understand and interpret ideas of complex texts. Unfortunately, from the researchers' observations as one of English language facilitators, students that HTLIs receive to pursue technical and Engineering programs are of poor English proficiency. As such, this research paper sought to investigate the status of the English Language Learning and its usability in Rwandan Technical Learning Institutions (HTLIs) accounting for its functions, in academic and social settings and what to do with the English language in professional settings. Lastly, the study aims to evaluate whether HTLIs graduates (L7) leave with an improved level of English proficiency or package to cope up with the labour market.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



4. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews theories related to the topic. It explores the functional approach to English, English language status in Technical Higher Learning Institutions, Accountability of the English language and Higher Tech academic settings and English language: a driving demand in ESL Higher Tech Institutions.

4.1 Functional Approach to English Language Learning and Higher Tech Learning Institutions

According to various scientific literatures by Halliday and Malinowski, fathers of Functionalism, Derewianka and others, language should not be understood as an abstract system of rules but as a resource for making meaning. Thus, a language works in context and meaning-making. Specifically, functionalists to English language use in education declared that functional approach serves as

a paramount foundation for understanding English language learning and its usability in technical higher learning institutions in Rwanda for social or linguistic purposes and/or functions (Isingoma,2025; Brilianti&Rokhim,2024; Humphrey, Macnaught&Maton,2020; Schleppegrell, Achugar, &Oteiza,2014).

Therefore, the English language should be learnt as a functional language to fulfill specific purposes. As far as the functional approach to English language learning in Higher Tech Learning Institutions is concerned, Malinowski (1923) mentioned that a language must be studied in its social context, emphasizing that it serves practical purposes in everyday interactions. Halliday continued highlighting the main role of a language is to serve as a tool for communication and action. In light of that Halliday (1973,1978) claimed that a language should serve to create meanings. In these perspectives, in Rwandan technical higher learning institutions, English is not merely an academic subject; it is a functional tool that enables students to perform specialized tasks, including reading technical manuals, conducting experiments and class projects, writing engineering reports, collaborating in problem-based learning, report about study trips based projects, and using scientific resources or doing researches (Schleppegrell,Achugar,&Oteiza,2014;Macnaught&Maton,2020;Brilianti&Rokhim,2024;Isingoma,2025). According to Widdowson (1990), language learning is most effective when students actively participate in the discourse community relevant to their field of study. More importantly, functionalist theory thus supports curriculum approaches that emphasize content-based, task-cantered, and socially contextualized English learning, ensuring that students acquire language skills that are usable and relevant in academic, technical, and professional settings (Humphrey, Macnaught & Maton ,2020; Accurso, Gebhard & Selim, 2022; Isingoma,2025). It is in light of that both pre-advanced workplace English and Advanced workplace English were found of paramount importance to be integrated in Rwanda Polytechnic college programs subjects.

According to empirical research by different researchers, English language learning in Rwandan technical institutions is analysed through a combined functionalist lens, serving both practical communication and social integration needs. Linguistically, it equips students with technical English skills for comprehension and practical tasks, while sociologically, it connects them to broader professional and technological communities. In fact, Higher Tech students learn English language to fulfill functions including but not limited to Language as a Tool for development to achieve societal goals, as a tool to enhance Communicative Competence, that is using English language for meaningful purposes; to be used in context of situation or using English language in dependent situation; social integration and cohesion: for facilitating social cohesion and prepares students for participation in the broader society; should serve of Learning Through Language: that is, use English to construct knowledge in their specific subject areas (Schleppegrell,Achugar,& Oteiza,2014; Macnaught&Maton,2020;Permatasari, 2023; Brilianti &Rokhim ,2024).

4.2 English language status in Technical Higher Learning Institutions

Worldwide, thanks to globalization and the internationalization of higher education, the predominance of English as a medium of instruction has shown up increasingly in research and technology in technical, scientific, and engineering education (Coleman, 2006; Dearden, 2015). Additionally, much efforts were attributed to increasing EMI programs in non-English-speaking nations and /or speakers of Other languages (ESOL), English as foreign language or English as second language (EFL/ESL), establishing international alliances, and raising university rankings (Wöllter & Maiworm, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018).

English plays a crucial role in technical and higher education in numerous African nations, often acting as the primary language of instruction in secondary, tertiary, and TVET institutions (Brock-Utne, 2012). Research indicates that in countries like South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, many students begin technical programs with a low level of English proficiency, which hampers their ability to comprehend technical manuals, engineering vocabulary, and safety guidelines (Ayliff, 2019; Makalela, 2015; Komba & Bosco, 2015). The process of globalization further solidifies the prominence of English, with engineering programs frequently adhering to standards established by English-speaking nations, and international organizations such as UNESCO-UNEVOC; GIZ, SCAD, the British Council and other language training centers advocating for the enhancement of English language skills among technical educators (Yallew, 2021).

As scientific literature by (Brock-Utne & Mercer, 2014), many African TVET institutions lack English courses tailored specifically to technical or vocational communication needs. To cut the story short, English remains essential for enhancing

technical education quality and global competitiveness in Africa, but challenges persist in student proficiency, teacher preparation, and curriculum alignment.

Rwanda provides a distinct example of English-medium instruction (EMI) in Africa due to its 2008 policy shift that made English the sole language of instruction from upper primary through TVET and higher education, aiming to enhance regional integration and global competitiveness (Ministry of Education, 2008). In technical higher learning institutions such as Rwanda Polytechnic (RP) and the University of Rwanda's College of Science and Technology (UR-CST), English is exclusively used for teaching engineering, ICT, and applied sciences (Mugabo, Ndikumana and Nsabimana, 2024).

A major issue following this transition has been teacher proficiency. Many technical instructors were originally trained in French or Kinyarwanda, resulting in limited ability to deliver specialized content in English. Although professional development initiatives by the British Council and the Ministry of Education have improved teachers' language skills, notable gaps persist between general English ability and mastery of technical terminology (Kagwesage2013; British Council, 2020).

Student proficiency also strongly influences academic success. Research shows that higher English proficiency correlates with better performance in engineering modules, laboratory and workshop tasks, and technical reporting. Yet many students still struggle with academic and technical English, using strategies such as translanguaging, Calque and transposition of target language to source language/mother tongue, code mixing and switching, peer translation, vocabulary memorization, and simplified texts to cope with English as Medium of Instruction demands (Kagwesage, 2013; Mukeshimana, 2023; Majaliwa et al., 2024).

To support learners, institutions have integrated English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or English for Workplace courses into engineering and technology programs, including mandatory foundational English modules. However, such ESP or Workplace English and Soft skills and Career Development (SCAD) curricula often fail to meet industrial communication needs, and there remains a shortage of specialized technical English resources (Ndizeye, 2022).

4.3 Accountability of the English language and Higher Tech academic settings

In this era of globalization whereby English language plays a key role as global language in various areas, Higher education Institutions (HEI) should provide accountable importance to the learning of the English language and attracts both their academic staff and students to its continuous improvement (Dearden 2014; Crystal 2003,). In light of that, Naka and Spahija scientific literature claimed a crucial importance of English in various academic aspects including but not limited to international academic exchange among scientists, scholars and researchers. In the same line, like in other non-English speaking countries like Rwanda, English language is contributing to both professional and academic development of university lecturers of higher learning Institutions as well as on the side of students since English is considered as a prerequisite of all other non-language learnings subjects dedicated to each program. Besides, English is considered as lingua franca or internationally considered as a language of communication on academic planets. It also brings focus and coherence to the language of schooling and helps educators make choices to prioritize and coordinate content and language integration. (Luciana C. de Oliveira, 2016; Naka & Spahija; 2025)

As different scientific literatures highlighted, the acquisition of English language skills in Tech Higher Learning institutions help students to be functional with English like interact in and cope up with a given situation; communicate in ways that meet the needs of the audience and situation; apply English skills in a range of meaningful contexts, become increasingly independent in their learning, apply English skills in a range of meaningful contexts. Additionally, learning English emphasizes language use for particular purposes, with particular audiences, and in particular sociocultural contexts (Hyland, 2018; Shevchenko, 2015; Belcher, 2004).

4.4. English language: a driving demand in ESL Higher Tech Institutions

Schools and parents around the world endorse the need for learning English as part of education. English can bring access to education and jobs, promote social mobility, and connect people. In this perspective, one can hesitate to declare that education is

the most influential domain which determines whether a language will be predominant in a given country or not. This is because all linguistic and scientific knowledge is acquired at school. The use of a language cannot be efficient unless teaching the language has taken place (Kayigema & Mutasa,2017)

Primarily, the English language is used for linguistic competence as the goal of language learning. Language serves of a tool to interact or to communicate, in a sense, means to convey thoughts, ideas, concepts, or even a feeling (Rabiah,2012). English is counted as a major subject in the national curriculum. Based on the analysis of new employment adverts, English competence is a key component in the labour market. One significant aspect of communicative competence is learning to use language for a variety of functions. Such functions include: asking for information, explaining, making a request, structuring discourse communication repair expressing and finding out attitudes; (3) deciding on courses while the working, socialising; etc (Jung & Chang's; Rabiah,2012)

Language is the first medium used by people to share their thoughts and information with other people. Moreover, English plays a very important role as a tool for interaction. In that line, it is worth recognizing the important role of the English language among non-native speakers (NNS) interactions and the bi-directionality in communicating in globalized Adil,2022). Furthermore, English is considered a source of progressive identity and personal development. The concept of identity is closely related to language learning, as learners are (re)constructing and (re)negotiating their identities in various social contexts through this process, as well as their social mobility for imagined community. A community that is literate and skilled in English is also a community that has social, economic, and political power (Sham Haidar & Fan Gabriel Fang ;2019). More importantly, English is considered superior to local languages not just because of its communicative advantages but mostly because of its symbolic power. As such, a High-Tech Learning Institution graduate equipped with English language skills is well positioned for a good future, a future with human dignity if not public deference; a future with material comfort if not prosperity; a future with that modicum of security, human rights and recognition, which all human beings desire (Chang,2011).

People who can speak and understand the English language can easily get a job in different kinds of big and international companies such as teaching, writing, sales and marketing. People who can understand and speak the English language can grab the opportunity of teaching in different schools, colleges, and universities. People who can write and understand can easily grab the opportunity of writing in newspapers and magazines. Sales and marketing are very difficult jobs. it required the best ever skills of speaking and presenting to others your product. If your English is good enough, you can grab the opportunity as a sales and marketing manager in different kinds of big companies. (Haidar.S & Fan Fang,2019).

As stated in scientific literature, the English language is the most popular and common in the world. In today's modern world, the English language has become the basic language of education. In most schools, colleges, and universities, the education is in the English language. For understanding the books, lectures, and assignments it's necessary to learn the English language first. Moreover, most of the science subjects and upcoming technology and inventions are in the English language. Especially, in tech universities where this research focuses on all types of engineering, the English language is very important. More importantly, most engineering books are written in the English language for understanding and learning engineering books, practical works and ethical laws, understanding the English language is very important. In the same line, most of the students want to go to foreign countries to study. Survival without understanding and speaking the English language in foreign countries is very difficult. So, learning the English language is very important for those students who want to study in foreign countries, particularly, students belonging to countries and regions where the English language is not their native language to access New Career opportunities. Thus, they learn the English language to go outside of the country or to foreign countries for studies and jobs search (Adil,2022; Chang, 2011).

To study in foreign countries and survive in foreign countries, learning the English language is very essential. So, students who belong to non-native English language countries learn the English language as a second language. However, English also serves a gatekeeping role for most jobs. For instance, High Tech graduates who are not skilled in English even hesitate to apply for jobs they are interested in either inside or outside the country. Thus, a High-Tech graduate who does not know English is sometimes considered incompetent for not having the linguistic capital that is valued on the labor market. (Haidar.S & Fan Fang,2019;

Adil,2022). In other words, people who can easily understand and speak the English language can easily grab opportunities since companies need English-speaking employees. Therefore, graduates from Higher Education, particularly High-Tech graduates should be equipped with English skills to better fit the Labor market.

5.METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research scope and design

The current research was carried out in one of the eight colleges of Rwanda Polytechnic- RP- MUSANZE College, in the Northern Province of Rwanda. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used as the study intended to investigate the status of the English language learning and its usability in Rwanda accounting for functions it holds in higher Technical Education in academic settings and what to do with English language in both social, academic and professional settings. According to Creswell (2014) quantitative research is an approach of testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables, using numerical data analysed through statistical procedures. While qualitative research is defined as an approach of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem methods (Creswell&Poth, 2018)

5.2. Target population, sample size and sampling techniques

The population is the group of individuals who have the characteristics in which the researcher is interested and about whom inferences are to be made (Cresswell ,2014). In this study, the researchers purposely considered year three students, academic year 2024-2025, because they were supposed to have studied all English modules taught at Advanced level programs in Rwanda Polytechnic sampled college. In this line, the targetful population concerns all students of Level 7 in all programs of RP-Musanze College since they have undergone both Level 6 and Level 7 English modules Known as Pre Advanced Workplace English (CCMEN601) and Advanced English (CCMEN701). As such the target population concerns 549 from all Lev 7 in thirteen programs of RP- Musanze College. As it is claimed in the empirical research by Nicoleta (2020), with reference to the European Language Framework on the level of foreign language competence, the high-school graduates need to be at B1 level. As such, university students are supposed to advance from this level with the foreign language training in the areas of their studies till to B2; C1 and C2. In light of that, both Level 6 and Level 7 learning of Workplace English in Technical Higher Learning Institutions should qualify their students as proficient users of English to fulfil both academic and social functions of the language. The population size and sample size of this research had made reference to the table of Krejcie and Morgan theory (1970). In fact, the population is the group of individuals who have the characteristics in which the researcher is interested and about whom inferences are to be made.” Shukla, Satishprakash, 2020; Jilcha Sileyew, 2020) According to Krejcie and Morgan formula, $N =$ the population and $S =$ sample size. In this vein, all level 7 students in RP- Musanze college are 549 students and 6 English lecturers while the sample size equals to $226 = 552N$ according to Krejcie&Morgan Table.

Concerning the sampling techniques, both simple random, purposive systematic and stratified sampling techniques were referred to. In this perspective, Mukama & Nkusi (2019) explain that random sampling is mainly used when the sample group must represent all people who share the same characteristics, referred to as the target population. Every individual in the random sample is selected by chance simply because they belong to that target population.” While purposive systematic and stratified sampling, the researcher selects participants who will provide information because they are believed to possess it better than others.” Therefore, randomly and purposely few individuals from level7 were selected to represent others.

Morgan theory (1970). In fact, the population is the group of individuals who have the characteristics in which the researcher is interested and about whom inferences are to be made” (Krejcie and Morgan,1970; Shukla, Satishprakash,2020). According to Krejcie and Morgan formula, $N =$ the population and $S =$ sample size. In this vein, all level 7 students in RP- Musanze college are 549 students and 6 English lecturers while the sample size equals to $226 = 555N$ according to Krejcie&Morgan Table.

5.3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TOOLS/TECHNIQUES

As far as data collection and analysis tools are concerned, both Interview, questionnaire, documentation and ground theory approach and SPSS were used. The interview was designed to both students, facilitators of English and a few numbers of facilitators of subjects in English language while the questionnaire was addressed to sampled students of Level 7 in all programs from different departments of RP-Musanze College.

Grounded theory refers to ‘the process of generation of theory which is based on collection of data from multiple sources. Within grounded theory, data are commonly collected through interviews, observations, focus groups, documents, and memos. According to empirical studies by Charmaz (2024) and Corbin & Strauss (2023), grounded theory enables researchers to collect rich qualitative data while continuously refining research questions and theoretical categories throughout the study. Thus, the grounded theory approach aims to collect data and interpret the data from the textual base (for example, a collection of field notes or video recordings). After the process of interpreting, the data base is categorised into different variables and then the interrelationship between these variables are analysed and studied. In this research the ground theory method was used as qualitative research method while deciding on planning data to collect and analyse for blends of data collection, analysis and interpretation through both observations in the real time and opened questions in interviews with students and facilitators in a proper research area of interest and transcribe codes as their level of English proficiency (Charmaz, 2024; Corbin & Strauss, 2023; Shahid N Khan, 2014). Additionally, in this research paper, students and facilitators' perceptions of the status, function of English, and students' level of proficiency in English for the workplace were highlighted and explored. The respondents' feedback and or answers were grouped thematically in accordance with research questions.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses, analyses and interpret data collected from sampled group and presents results and findings of the study.

6.1 Status of English Language in Rwandan Higher Technical Learning Institutions

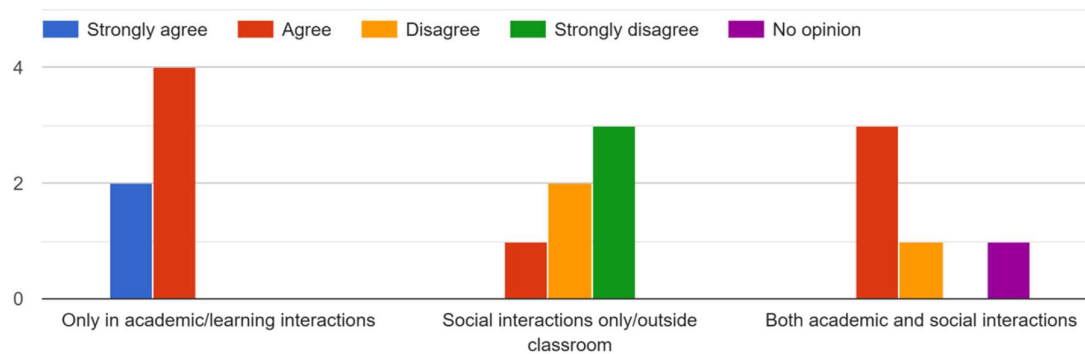
As asserted by (Coulmas, 2025; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997) Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages. With reference to language planning in Rwanda, English has been subjected to specific language planning decisions that have elevated its status. English is a medium of instruction, an official and administrative language. Nevertheless, both students and English Lecturers from PR-Musanze College revealed at 86% that English does not hold a valuable position in the learning process compared with other subjects particularly in practical activities and allocated hours. Respondents clearly declared that many students still need more time to improve their speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills. Limited classroom hours make it difficult to provide sufficient practice for effective academic work and everyday communication in English. This indicates a gap in current language acquisition outcomes and suggests a potential disconnect between policy and practical implementation or perceived importance. More importantly, this finding resonates with applied linguistics and language education discussions which proclaim English become the world's leading lingua franca (ELF) in non-native English-speaking countries. The issues of limited instructional time and the need for more practice in specific language skills likening speaking, writing, reading, listening are common themes in second language acquisition (SLA) as empirical evidences like Lightbown and Spada (2013) and Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) in their works on “How Languages are Learned” and “language policy and planning,” provide frameworks for understanding how language policies are enacted and perceived at the institutional level, which could shed light on the discrepancy observed in PR-Musanze College, a Higher Technical Learning College.

Simply put, while English is officially recognized and used as a medium of instruction in Rwanda, RP- Musanze College' students and lecturers' perceptions observed that English language lacks value in the learning process. This is compounded by insufficient classroom time leading to inadequate development of essential English language skills and competencies in both academic and outsidings interactions. This situation claims a need for re-evaluation of English language pedagogy and resource allocation within Rwanda Polytechnic Colleges.

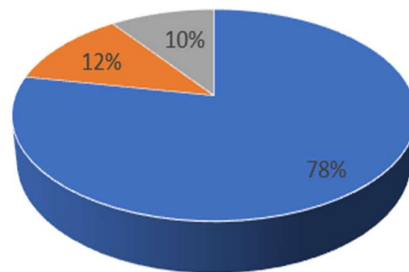
6.2 Higher-Tech academic communities' attitudes towards using English

Figures below describe both RP -Musanze students and lectures' views on whether students in Higher Technical Learning Institutions like to use English language and the level at which English language is used in academic, professional and social settings. That is, the extent at which Higher Technical Learning Institutions English learners like to use English in academic and social interactions.

From your observations, RP Musanze College students like using English:



Higher Tech Learning Institutions Students views on whether they like using English language

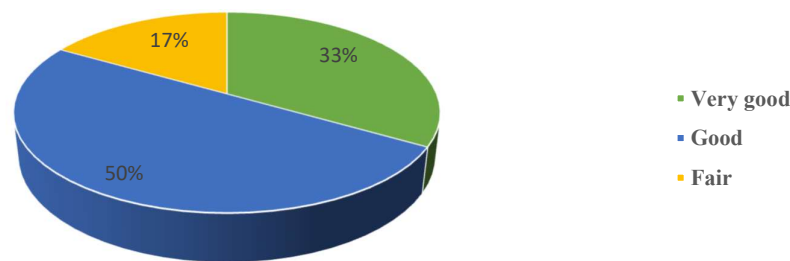


- HTLI Students like using English only in academic interactions 172/220
- HTLI Students like using English only in social interactions 26/220
- HTLI students like using English in both academic and social interaction 22/220

From the data above both graph and pie chart about respondents 'views about Higher Technical Learning Institutions (HTLIs) students use English in academic/learning interactions and social interactions outside the classroom and in both academic and social settings, both lecturers' and students' observations related findings highlight that Higher Technical Institutions' students are more comfortable using English in academic and/or learning-related situations than in social settings. While all six English Language lecturers asserted that students like using English only in academic interactions whereby 4 agreed and 2 strongly agreed with the statement; out of 220 students surveyed, 172 (78%) also reported that they like using English mainly during academic interactions. This suggests that students associate English primarily with classroom activities, assignments, presentations, and examinations rather than with everyday communication. These findings cope well with scientific literatures by Nias (2024) and Tran and Miralpeix (2024) which declared that though students recognize the importance of English, they tend to use it mainly for academic purposes, while their use of English outside the classroom remains limited. Tran and Miralpeix (2024) clarified the same view highlighting that learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts often associate English with academic achievements and educational success rather than with social communication. In light of that, referring to sampled Higher Technical College; RP-Musanze College Lecturers and both Nias's and Tran and Miralpeix empirical researches, claimed lack of participation in English speaking activities beyond the classroom to reduce opportunities for English language learners 'practice and development in HTLIs.

Regarding social interactions outside the classroom, the majority of respondents expressed negative perceptions. Three lecturers strongly disagreed, two disagreed, and only one agreed that students like using English in social settings. Concerning students' views on the subject, 26 students (12%) indicated that they like using English only in social interactions, while 22 students (10%) reported that they enjoy using English in both academic and social interactions. Thus, few students have successfully integrated English into their daily lives This indicates that Higher Tech English students are generally reluctant to communicate in English in social interactions either with peers or other people out of the language classroom. Findings on these questions suggest that Higher Technical Learning Institutions students generally perceive English as an academic language rather than a social language. Additionally, such use of English limits the effectiveness of English for instruction only in fostering comprehensive language proficiency and marks a notable disparity in English usage between the classroom and academic environment daily social life. Therefore, HTLIs are recommended to strengthen English speaking clubs, debate sessions, peer discussion groups, English-only zones and or corners to encourage their students to use English in both academic and social contexts.

**Please, as an English lecturer, rate the level of your
Level 6 English language students in class and outside
interactions. They are: Elite; Excellent; Very good; Good;
Fair .**

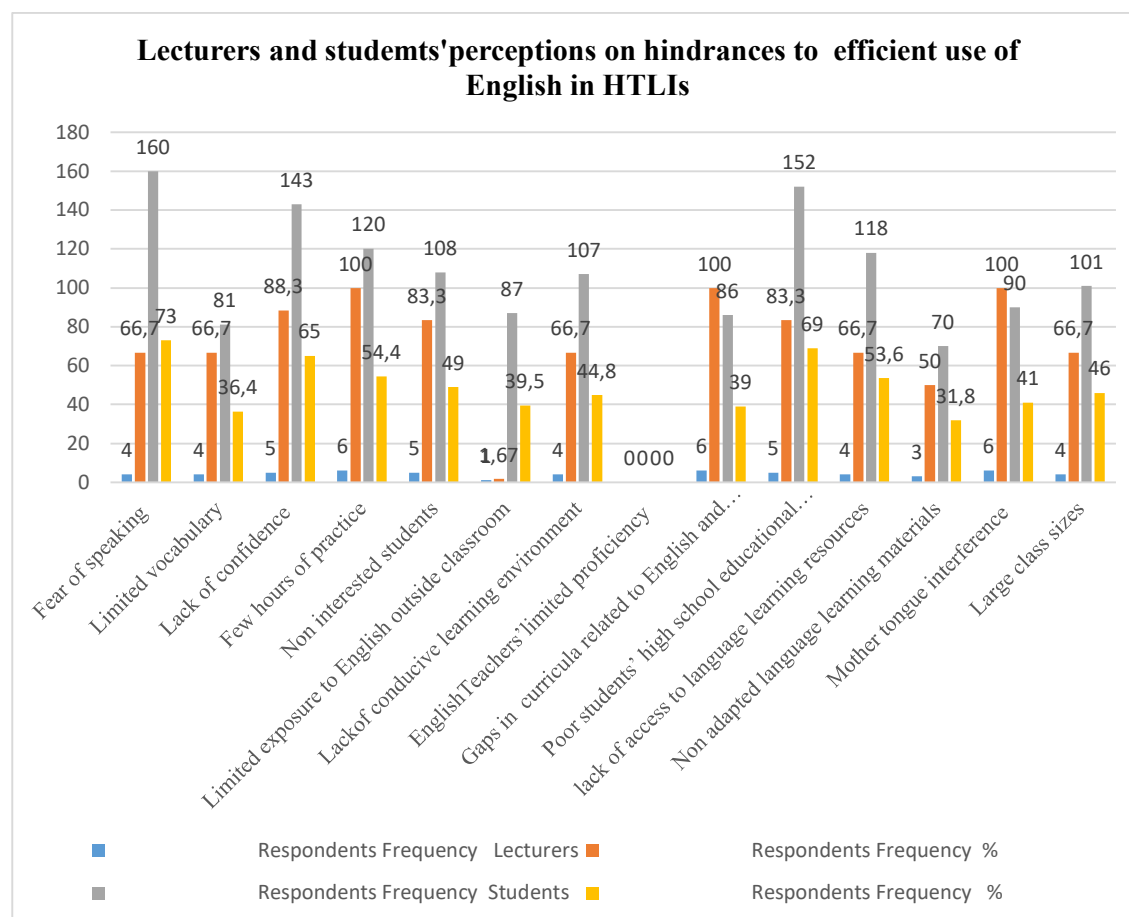


The CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) classifies English proficiency into three main levels each includes two levels: A (Basic), B (Independent), and C (Proficient). A-level users (A1&A2) can only manage simple everyday communication, while B1 and B2 users can handle familiar academic and social situations with increasing fluency and

independence. C-level users (C1&C2) communicate fluently and accurately in complex academic and professional contexts outside (Council of Europe, 2020).

Therefore, while considering the students' level of proficiency, a large number of Level 6 students are good at using English at 50% while 17% are fair in using English. These results suggest that most of students (50%) have attained lower satisfactory level of English, which may enable them hardly to participate in academic activities conducted in English. These findings correlate with this study's problem statement, which highlights that Higher Technical Learning Institutions (HTLIs) devote limited attention to English language learning by allocating few hours to English learning modules; and that many students enter technical programmes with inadequate English proficiency. According to lecturers' observations and CEFR classification, the same findings claimed poor English learning background to lead HTLIs students to be classified in basic users of English (A2) and a few numbers in lower intermediate (B1) at the rate of 33% when interacting in both language classroom and outside.

Although the majority of students demonstrate good or satisfactory proficiency, the existence of students with only fair proficiency indicates that language learning and use in HTLIs challenges persist. This may affect students' ability to understand complex technical content, communicate confidently, and compete successfully in the labour market. Thus, these findings strongly confirm the need to strengthen English language teaching within HTLIs considering both classroom and outside interactions.



When asking for factors that make Level 6 students to be in good, fair and poor level of using English, the results reveal both similarities and differences between lecturers' and students' perceptions regarding the hindrances to the efficient use of English in

Higher Technical Learning Institutions (HTLIs). Lecturers unanimously identified few hours of English practice, gaps in the curriculum related to English and communication skills, and mother tongue interference (100%) as the major barriers. Lecturers also perceived students' lack of interest (83.3%) and poor educational background (83.3%) as significant challenges affecting English language use. These findings suggest that lecturers mainly attribute students' English language challenges to institutional shortcomings, curriculum limitations, and learner motivation. These findings are supported by Brock-Utne and Mercer (2014) and Hyland (2018), who emphasize that effective English learning requires well-designed curricula and sufficient opportunities for language practice.

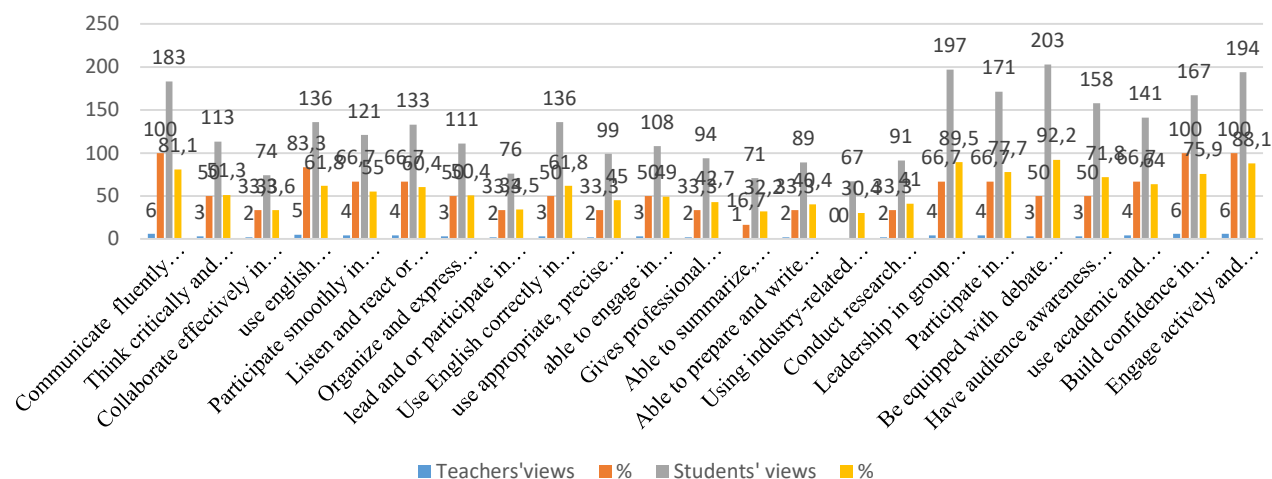
In contrast, students identified fear of speaking English (73%), poor high school educational background (69%), and lack of confidence (65%) as the most significant barriers to using English effectively. They also highlighted few hours of English practice at the rate of 54.4% and limited access to language learning resources (53.6%) as major challenges. These findings indicate that students are more concerned with personal language competence and limited opportunities to develop their communication skills. The results are consistent with Kagwesage's views (2013) and Mukeshimana (2023), who found that fear of making mistakes and inadequate English proficiency discourage learners from actively participating in English language as a medium instruction. Likewise, Mugabo, Ndikumana, and Nsabimana (2024) reported that many students enter technical programmes with insufficient English skills, which affect their academic performance.

Although lecturers and students differ in their perceptions about some factors; both groups agree that inadequate English practice and weak educational preparation hinder the effective use of English in HTLIs. A notable difference is that lecturers view students' lack of interest as a major obstacle, whereas students are more likely to attribute their difficulties to fear of speaking, lack of confidence, and weak educational backgrounds. The findings suggest that improving English language use in HTLIs requires both institutional interventions, such as strengthening English and communication skills within the curriculum and increasing opportunities for language practice, and learner-centred interventions, including designing confidence-building activities, provision of access to appropriate learning resources, and establishing motivational strategies that encourage students to use English in academic and professional contexts.

6.3. Description of HTLIs Level 7 students' linguistic competencies

When both students and lecturers were asked to rate the areas of improvements in accordance to the L7 students' linguistic abilities with reference to CEFR (Common European Framework for language Reference) classification; the charts below indicate both students and lecturers' views as a picture of Level 7 students progress and description of their linguistic competences at the completion of the dedicated Advanced English for workplace modules.

Level 7 students ' areas of improvement in using English in both social and academic interactions from level 6



Comparing language competencies that L7 students and graduates would be endowed with and what language skills HTLIs students would be equipped with at the completion of the Advanced English for workplace modules, the data show that as students progress from Level 6 to Level 7, they demonstrate noticeable development in English communicative competence, which can be linked to the CEFR B1 to B2 progression. At Level 6 generally report to A2- B1 level whereby students are typically able to communicate in familiar academic and social situations but with limited fluency, confidence, and accuracy. However, the results indicate that by Level 7, HTLIs students demonstrate features of B2 or Upper-Intermediate level at 83%, especially in interactive and academic communication (European Council,2020)

Based on the findings, the Level 7 students in Higher Technical Learning Institutions are mainly at B2 level or upper Intermediate, and a few numbers reaching lower intermediate or B1 in language skills and proficiency after completing all the English modules dedicated to both Level 6 and 7. The majority of level 7 year3 met the B2 or upper intermediate or independent English users' characteristics. From these findings, it is clear that, the majority of HTLIs students complete or graduate being at the proficient language skills that they should be equipped with while entering Technical Universities or Polytechnics. In fact, when students complete their Level 7 in HTLIs, are not yet at the level required for full academic and professional and social interactions competences.

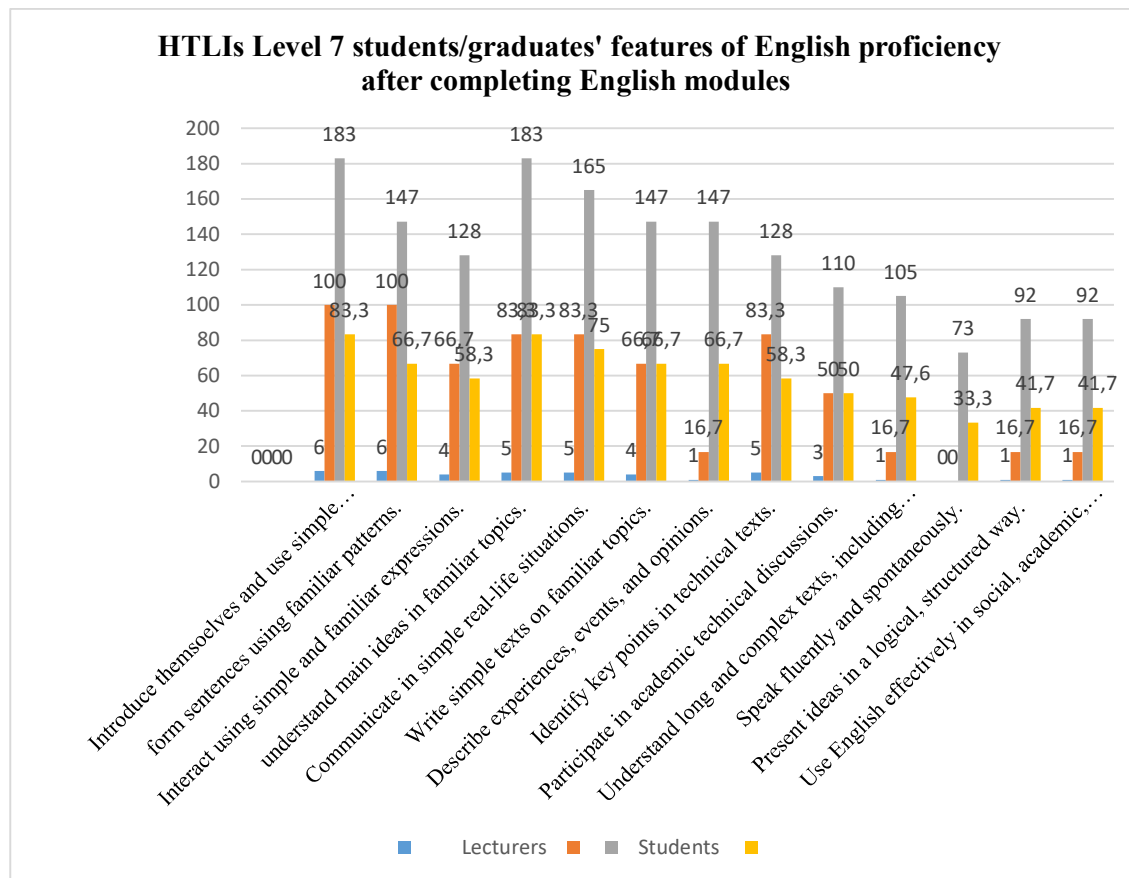
With reference to CEFR classification of proficiency levels, the empirical evidence shows that Level 6 students mainly have A2-B1 English proficiency with limited progression toward B2 when they entered Rwanda Polytechnic, that is when they were in Level 6 or year 1 and year 2 depending on level in which the English module is placed. At this stage, they can introduce themselves, use simple expressions, communicate in familiar situations, and write basic texts, which correspond to A2-B1 level. This correlated with Mugabo, Ndikumana, and Nsabimana (2024) who reported that many students enter technical programmes with insufficient English skills, affecting their academic performance.

However, at the completion of Level 7, findings report that the majority of Rwanda Polytechnic students demonstrate B2-linguistic competences and skills such as understanding complex texts, participating in academic discussions, and presenting ideas clearly and fluently and few students report in C1 level of proficiency.

Despite these abilities, a proportion of students still graduate without sufficient communicative competence to function effectively outside the classroom. According to lecturers' views (around 20%), some graduates still lack key practical English skills, which

may make them incompetent in real workplace or professional environments (Hellekjaer, 2010; Costa and Coleman, 2013; Uwababyeyi, 2021), especially where fluent communication, technical language use, and spontaneous interaction are required.

To round up this point, in Rwanda, still HTLIs graduates leave Technical Universities and or Polytechnics having insufficient linguistic competences that they struggle in meeting communication skills as one of crucial employability skills and competing on labour market. In light of the study problem statement, the study findings claim a strong need to enhance academic English and English for specific purposes (ESP) training to improve students' readiness for the labour market and their further studies. To put in another way, by the end of Level 7 Advanced English for workplace modules, HTLIs students should be equipped with both industrial, professional and practical English language skills.



Regarding academic communication, none can ignore that with reference to Competence Based Curriculum, a student in technical trade is rated competent when he/she succeeded at 70%. Therefore, from the data in charts above, more than half of the students identified weaknesses in participating in discussions and presentations (55%), listening and responding appropriately (60.4%), using English independently (61.8%), and using formal, informal, and technical English appropriately (61.8%). These findings indicate that learners require greater exposure to authentic speaking opportunities and task-based classroom activities. Ellis and Shintani (2023) emphasize that task-based language teaching enhances learners' fluency, interactional competence, and confidence because it engages students in meaningful communication rather than isolated language practice.

Students also reported crucial needs in professional communication skills, including writing emails, reports, and project proposals (40.4%), conducting research assignments (41%), giving professional presentations (42.7%), and summarizing complex

professional concepts (32.2%). These findings suggest that learners require stronger English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) competencies. According to Hyland (2022), academic and professional success increasingly depends on learners' ability to communicate specialized knowledge effectively through oral and written prototypes.

The lowest-rated competency by both lecturers (0%) and students (30.4%) were poorly using industry-related language during internships or practical sessions. Although relatively fewer respondents identified this as a priority, the finding may reflect limited exposure to workplace environments rather than adequate competence. Basturkmen (2023) notes that ESP programmes should integrate workplace communication tasks before internships to prepare learners for authentic professional interactions.

The findings reveal that students consistently experience communication difficulties directly in classroom participation, presentations, and professional contexts, while teachers evaluate performance primarily within classroom settings. The results therefore suggest a need to redesign English language programmes to include more learner-centred, communicative, collaborative, and professionally oriented learning experiences. The same findings indicate that learners need stronger communicative competences, including fluency, collaboration, and critical thinking. According to Richards (2022), communicative language teaching develops learners' ability to use English effectively in authentic academic and professional situations. Likewise, Trilling and Fadel (2023) argue that communication, collaboration, and critical thinking are essential twenty-first-century skills for higher education and employment.

Students also reported considerable need to improve participation in discussions and presentations, listening and responding appropriately, using English independently, and applying formal and technical English. These findings are clarified by Ellis and Shintani's (2023) view that task-based and interactive learning activities enhance learners' confidence, fluency, and communicative competence.

Although professional communication skills such as report writing, presentations, research, and workplace communication received comparatively lower ratings, they remain important for academic and career success. Hyland (2022) stresses that higher education should equip learners with academic and professional communication skills required in workplace contexts. To round up the point, the findings suggest the need to strengthen learner-centred, communicative, and professionally oriented English language instruction.

6.4 Attributes to be accorded to English language in HTLIS

Considering the importance that should be given to English language in Higher Technical Learning Institutions, the charts below describe data of both students' expectations from what to do with English on the labour market and lecturers suggestions accounting for English language value or accountability.



The data present RP- Musanze College students' perceptions regarding the importance that English language should hold in HTLIs in higher technical education. In line with that, with reference to its importance for transition period to employment, the data in relation with what to do with English after graduation, the students demonstrate a good awareness of the value and accountability of English language in Higher Technical Learning Institutions, particularly regarding employability, workplace communication, and professional development.

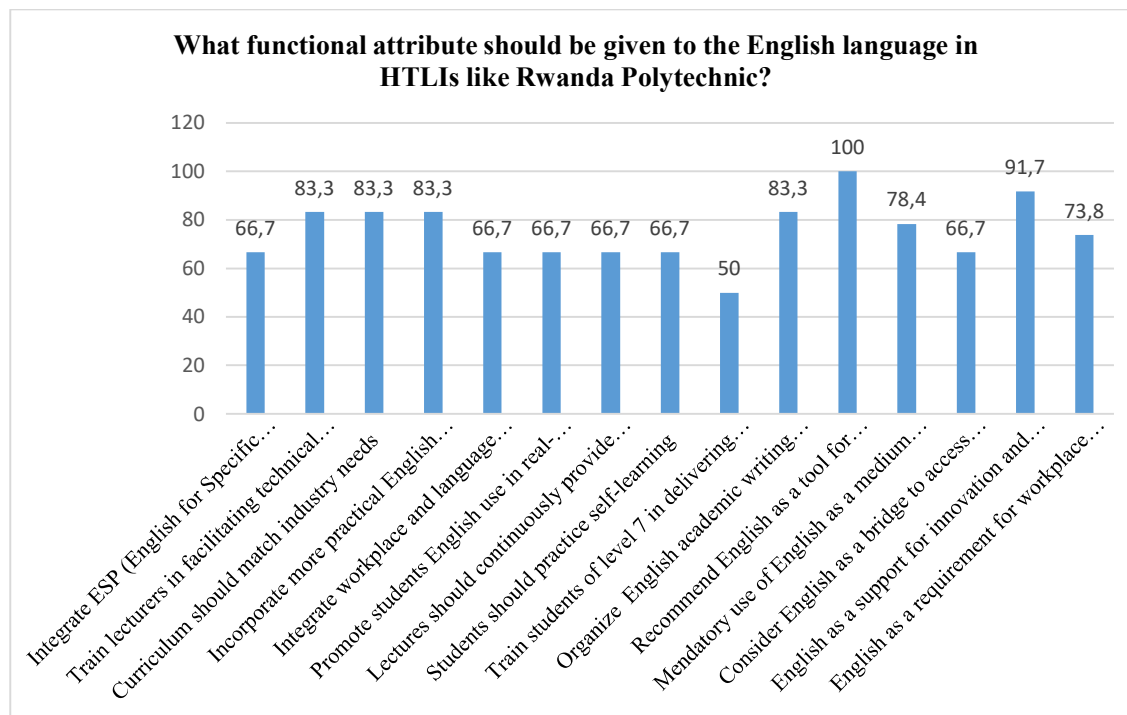
The results show that students highly value English as a language that enhances workplace interaction and employability whereby the response of promoting interaction with others holds (93.6%), helping perform job interviews (91.7%), and improving verbal communication (83.3%). These findings suggest that students recognize English as an essential communication tool required for teamwork, customer relations, interviews, and professional networking. Scientific literatures report communication as one of the most important employability skills for the future workforce. Similarly, employers increasingly value graduates who possess strong communication skills in addition to technical expertise. In the same perspective, English enables graduates to communicate effectively with employers, colleagues, and clients through speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Effective communication reduces workplace misunderstandings and improves teamwork. Some of the same scholars' value English language in HTLIs claiming it to be the dominant language of international business and professional communication, making proficiency an essential employability skills World Economic Forum ,2023; the International Labour Organization,2022; Crystal, 2022)

Furthermore, 75% of students believed that English facilitates mobility and enhances communication with employers, while 66.7% considered English important for career readiness and writing professional documents. These responses indicate that students understand that English extends beyond classroom learning and contributes to professional performance, workplace documentation, and career progression. This finding agrees with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023), which argues that graduates need a combination of technical skills and effective communication abilities to succeed in modern labour markets. In the same line, empirical study by Moore (2021)reports that many employers consider English proficiency as a key criterion during recruitment. The same scholar argues that graduates with strong English communication skills and communication competence particularly in English are more competitive on the labor market and significantly increases their chances of securing employment in both public and private sectors.

Though at the low rate, the research findings also revealed English Language as instrumental for Level 7 students as graduates to be since it helps them to read technical documentation (58.3%) and accessing the global labour market (58.3%). Moreover, English is the dominant language of scientific publications, technical standards, engineering manuals, digital technologies, and

international research collaboration. This observation consistently aligns with UNESCO (2021), which emphasizes that English language enables access to international knowledge, technological innovation, and global collaboration.

To cut the long story short, the findings demonstrate that English proficiency is essential for employability, workplace readiness, innovation, and effective technical communication. English thus plays a critical role in preparing graduates from Higher Technical Universities and Polytechnics for successful entry into the workforce.



As far as functional attribute that English language should hold in Rwandan HTLIS, the data present respondents' perceptions regarding the importance that English language should hold in HTLIs and ways and strategies to strengthen English language competence in higher technical education. In line with that, lecturers from the sampled High Tech Learning Institution namely RP- Musanze College through their suggestions or recommendations highlighted that English language learning in HTLIs should be more accountable. Lecturers suggested more ingredients to add in English language learning so that students can improve their English use in both academic and social settings. It is in this regard the study findings revealed that lecturers identified English as a crucial tool for employability and career development at the rate of 100% and English as Support for Innovation and Problem-Solving in Industry (91.7%). The strongest respondents' assertiveness of English as a Tool for Employability and Career Development at 100% and English as Support for Innovation and Problem-Solving in Industry at 91.7% demonstrate widespread recognition that English proficiency has become indispensable in the global labour market. Besides, innovation increasingly depends on access to international research, collaboration, and technical documentation. These finding copes well with the World Economic Forum (2023) which identified communication skills among the most important employability competencies and the International Labour Organization (2022) which claimed English proficiency to significantly enhance graduates' competitiveness in international employment.

Additionally, both Organizing English Academic Writing Competitions, Incorporating More Practical English Activities, Training Lecturers in Facilitating Technical English in SCAD classes, match up between Curriculum and Industry Needs at the rate of 83.3%. In the same perspective, Mandatory Use of English for Technical and Vocational Communication (78.4%) and English as a Requirement for Workplace Readiness and Professionalism (73.8%) were viewed as other crucial assets to enhance English

language learning and its usability in Higher Tech Learning Institutions. From these findings, respondents believe that consistent language use develops confidence, workplace communication competence and contributes directly to workplace readiness and professionalism. An empirical study by British Council (2022) reports that academic writing competitions enhance writing quality, motivation, critical thinking and extracurricular language activities substantially improve learners' writing competence. In that line, research by UNESCO (2021) supports increased use of English in technical education where English serves as the primary language of science, technology. The same views were supported by international collaboration and International Labour Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development saying that communication competence, particularly in English, enhances workplace performance, career progression, and professional mobility (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023; the International Labour Organization, 2022).

More importantly, RP- Musanze Lecturers suggested both integrating and or enhancing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into higher technical education curricula, considering English as a Bridge to Global Knowledge and Technology, promoting Students' English Use in Real-Life Tasks, provision of Continuous Language Feedback by Lecturers, Students' opportunity for more Self-Learning practice, Integrating Workplace and Language Problem-Based Assessments at 66.7% as other prominent interventional strategies to promote English learning and use in HTLIs. This suggests that a majority recognize that both Pre – Advanced and Advanced workplace English instruction alone is insufficient for preparing students for technical professions. Scientific literatures posited that ESP equips learners with discipline-specific vocabulary, communication skills, and professional competencies relevant to engineering, technology, and vocational occupations (Kausar, 2025; Basturkmen, 2022) while The World Bank (2022) reports that English proficiency enables greater participation in international knowledge exchange, innovation, and technology transfer.

In a nutshell, from respondents' views English should not merely learned and used as an academic subject but as a strategic professional competency. Thus, emphasizing on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), authentic learning, industry-aligned curricula, lecturer professional development, and workplace communication should be as essential components of quality technical and vocational education.

7.CONCLUSION

The educational language policy and planning in the 1994 post genocide against Tutsi period has made English language very important of both status and Acquisitional language planning in Rwanda. Moreover, due to its multiple functions, English language gained a critical position in education from nursery to tertiary education level in general and with strong emphasis on tertiary education level in particular. In light of that, English language learning and use plays a crucial role in Higher Technical Learning Institutions (HTLI) since it prepares graduates from both Technical Universities and Polytechnics for successful transition to the workforce. In fact, English language learning and use enhances communication, technical competence, professional writing, teamwork, entrepreneurship, and global career opportunities in both local, regional and international labour markets. More importantly, English language proficiency is found a fundamental employability skill for graduates of Higher Education in both Technical Universities and Polytechnics. Nevertheless, the status and or position that English language learning and use holds in HTLIs was not found satisfying comparing with the multirole it plays. The study findings revealed that English language learning and use face significant challenges affecting English language use in both academic, professional and social interactions including but not limited to few hours of English practice, gaps in the curriculum related to English and communication skills, mother tongue interference, poor English educational background at high school that reflect insufficient English language skills and Basic Level of English proficiency A2 instead of B2 at the entry of University or Polytechnic. Due to those English learning and use barriers, though HTLIs students go through both Pre Advanced workplace English, Advanced workplace English, Team Management skills, English language for Cross-cultural Diversity ... and Corporate and Institutional Communication skills modules for some programs of HTLIs, the findings revealed that students from Level 6 or year one to level 7 or year three and four in HTLIs do not progress sufficiently in English language learning and use. The majority of HTLIs students graduate being in upper intermediate (B2) level of proficiency and a very few numbers of students being in C1: Advanced users of English language. The empirical study recommends HTLIs to strengthen the English learning and use not as merely learned and used as an academic subject but as a strategic professional and social competency; allocating more hours to

English practice; and review the English Curriculum to remedy to gaps affecting English language learning and use in both social, academic and professional settings.

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