Chapter #10

SUBJECT TEACHERS AND ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN SELECTED SENIOR SIX CLASSROOMS IN RWANDA

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ABSTRACT
This study was conducted in Sixth Form schools in Huye District in Rwanda. The researchers' concern was that most secondary school leavers enter university with low proficiency in English, the medium of instruction. The researchers focused on subject teachers because subject-related courses are allotted more hours than English. The study aimed to explore whether subject teachers offered any assistance in boosting students' English proficiency. The research drew on Language across the Curriculum (LAC) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches. LAC stipulates that all teachers are language teachers, that subject teachers and language teachers should work jointly, and that language should be taught across the curriculum. CLIL recommends that content be learnt through a second language and that the subject and the language be taught at the same time. For validity and reliability purposes, the current study made use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Findings revealed that only some of the subject teachers used strategies that could help promote their students' English proficiency. Findings also indicated that content and English language teachers did not collaborate and that the students were not proficient in English. In accordance with these findings, recommendations were made.

Keywords: English proficiency, subject teachers, teaching strategies, sixth form students, secondary schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Rwanda, the language-in-education policy stipulates that Kinyarwanda, the mother tongue, is the language of instruction from Primary 1 to Primary 3 while English, a second language, is studied as a subject and becomes medium of instruction from Primary 4 onwards. Proficiency in English from Primary 4 is, thus, a prerequisite for Rwandan students to deal with their studies successfully.

However, the researchers' language teaching experience in Rwandan tertiary education is that secondary school graduates admitted at university are not proficient enough in English to cope with their academic subjects delivered in this language. They lack both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as described by Cummins (1980, 2008, 2016). The researchers decided to conduct their study in secondary Sixth Form classes where students' success in the end-of-year national examinations determine their admission to higher learning institutions. Furthermore, the researchers' choice of subject teachers as research participants is that in secondary school advanced level (Forms 4, 5 and 6), content subjects are allotted much more time (280 minutes) than the English language (80 minutes). The researchers, hence, believe that subject teachers should not remain insensitive to their students' low skills in English. Rather,

as they are teaching content subjects, they should at the same time devise strategies to help their students develop proficiency in this language of instruction, which would equally promote their academic performance.

2. OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the study was to assess whether subject teachers in the selected schools played any role in the development of their students' proficiency in English. The secondary objectives were to determine whether

- subject teachers used any learning strategies to promote their students' English proficiency;
- subject teachers informed English language teachers on suitable material to design for their students;
- English teachers informed subject teachers about how to assist their students to improve their English language skills; and
- the students were proficient in English, the language of instruction.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Impact of the medium of instruction on academic performance

Mastery of the medium of instruction is one of the preconditions for students to achieve at school. According to Dafouz-Milne and Camacho-Minano (2016) and Mugirase (2020), students' level of proficiency in the language of instruction affects their academic performance in one way or another. They hold that students who have gained a good level of competence in the medium of instruction may do well academically whereas those whose skills are not developed risk failing.

In Rwanda, secondary Sixth Form students need to develop proficiency in English to cope with their content subjects. Knowledge of English will also help these students to successfully deal with academic studies once they are admitted at university. Acquisition of English language skills will, moreover, enable Rwandan university graduates to meet language-related requirements needed in the job at the national level and to compete in regional and international markets where English is the lingua franca (Mugirase, 2020; Ndimurugero, 2015).

However, boosting Rwandan students' English proficiency is no easy task as the linguistic environment in the country is not conducive to the learning of this target language (Kagwesage, 2013; Ndimurugero, 2015; Sibomana, 2014). These scholars explain that 99% of Rwandans speak Kinyarwanda, the mother tongue, so they can communicate effectively without switching to any other language. Consequently, as the classroom is the only setting where most students encounter English, teachers should work out appropriate strategies to facilitate the learning of this language.

The present study focuses on the role subject teachers should play in helping enhance Sixth Form students' English language proficiency. As already mentioned, the choice of subject teachers stemmed from the fact that content subjects are allotted a lot more hours than English in Sixth Form classrooms in Rwanda. The researchers, therefore, assume that content teachers must be aware of the important part they have to play and commit themselves to scaffolding their students' learning of both content and the English language.

3.2. Subject teachers and enhancement of students' proficiency in the medium of instruction

Considering that Rwandan students' exposure to English is very limited, it is up to teachers to design techniques that can help boost the learners' skills in this language of instruction. It is normally language teachers' responsibility to promote their students' proficiency in the medium of instruction. Nevertheless, students in Sixth Form classrooms in the present study will hardly acquire this competence unless subject teachers feel they are equally concerned and endeavour to seek ways in which to offer assistance to the learners. As Lughmani, Gardner, Chen, Wong, and Chan (2016) and Moe, Härmälä, Kristmanson, Pascoal, and Ramonienė (2015) state, all teachers are language teachers. Kalinowski, Gronostaj and Voc (2019) are also of the view that all teachers are responsible for helping students meet academic language and literacy expectations. Content teachers in Sixth Forms in Rwanda should, thus, also contribute to developing their students' skills in English.

However, language learning does not take place in a vacuum. Accordingly, subject teachers ought to make use of the context provided by content to help prompt students' communication skills in the language of instruction (Chu, 2019), that is, English in the current research. This study is, hence, guided by the theories of Language across the Curriculum (LAC) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). LAC and CLIL are two pedagogical approaches to additional language teaching that recommend the integration of language learning and content learning (Lin, 2016) to develop students' academic "proficiencies appropriate for use in different contexts" (p. 11). These two approaches are appropriate for use in the context of Rwanda where English, a foreign language, plays the role of medium of instruction in a Kinyarwanda dominating linguistic environment.

3.3. Language across the Curriculum (LAC) approach

Language across the Curriculum (LAC) is a teaching and learning approach that advocates integration of the second language and content subjects so as to provide students with comprehensible and engaging learning materials that are likely to enhance their language proficiency and facilitate assimilation of subject content at the same time (Joshi, 2018; Mugirase, 2020). Joshi contends that content and language learning should be integrated because they are closely connected. He claims that mastery of the language facilitates understanding of content whereas content provides the context for language learning. According to Sumekto (2018), the central tenet of LAC is students' exposure to meaningful contexts that promote their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. He explicates that rather than providing general language comprehension, LAC is highly specialised and put an emphasis on a "particular domain of professional content" (p. 92). As for Kalinowski et al. (2019), they maintain that appropriate contexts and experiences can lead to students' language development.

The above suggests that, apart from language teachers, subject teachers in Rwanda also should mediate Sixth Form students' learning of English besides delivering content. Therefore, they need to collaborate with English language teachers to get informed on appropriate ways in which to help their students deal with language-related difficulties encountered during content classes (Lughmani et al., 2017).

In Rwanda secondary schools, nevertheless, collaboration between teachers may not lead to the targeted aims as most of subject teachers are not proficient in English (Mugirase, 2020; Sibomana, 2015). To address this challenge of teachers' low proficiency in English, trainings should firstly be organised to aid them develop skills in this target language. Then subject teachers should be trained on appropriate approaches to use to promote their students' English skills while teaching content. Kalinowski et al. (2019) purport that as academic

language is complex due to complex academic discourse embedding specific rhetorical functions (grammatical, lexical, and discursive), teachers need initial in-service trainings on ways in which they can help students master language skills across the curriculum.

3.4. Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an innovative approach that integrates the teaching and learning of content and language at the same time (Cenoz, 2015; Costa, 2016; Šulistová, 2013; Van Kampen, Admiraal, & Berry, 2015). Bonces (2012) also contends that CLIL is an educational method whose dual aim is the learning of both content and of a foreign language. In other words, CLIL emphasises the teaching and learning of content through language but also highlights the important role language plays in the teaching and learning of content.

For Costa (2016), CLIL is effective at all educational levels in that it increases students' motivation and language skills, and allows "deep processing of the subject matter or both the subject matter and language skills" (p. 20). Costa goes on to say that the teaching of subjects such as, History, Geography, Mathematics, and Biology through a foreign language promotes incidental acquisition of the language. Cenoz (2015) holds that, in language programmes with language-driven ends, CLIL refers to content-based themes or type B CLIL, and when applied in content-driven lessons, it is referred to as type A CLIL. In the present study, aims are based on mastery of English communication skills during subject content taught in English, i.e., on type A. Thus, the concern here is more of content-and-English integrated learning (Dalton-Puffer, 2011) than any other additional language.

Obviously, content cannot be learnt if students have difficulty understanding the language in which it is taught (Lin, 2016; Mora-Flores, 2019). Content subject teachers, hence, need to develop language-related practices during subject content classes to promote students' proficiency in the language of instruction through content and language integrated learning programmes (Hu & Gao, 2020). They have to promote their "learners' academic English skills while using specialized techniques to teach and have students engage with the subject area topics in a comprehensible manner" (Short, 2017, p. 4238). In line with this, Freire (1974) and Lin (2016) argue that subject teachers should make the content of their lessons comprehensible and encourage learners to negotiate meaning through interacting in the language of instruction. Accordingly, teachers ought to identify students' learning needs and strive to develop their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to ensure academic success (Cummins, 1979, 1984; Lin, 2016). Marino (2014) also purports that in a setting where content subjects are learnt through English, as in the secondary Sixth Form schools in Rwanda, it is capital that students be assisted to develop academic language. Moe at al. (2015) explain that

> By emphasizing the language required to participate in content classes, teachers are able to set objectives that relate not only to the acquisition of content-related information, but also to the language functions necessary to negotiate meaning in that content area. (p. 52)

In Rwanda, subject teachers must employ teaching and learning techniques aimed at facilitating Sixth Form students' acquisition of English language skills so as to enable them to cope with highly complex academic language and later with job requirements. Jabbarova (2020) states that perfect proficiency in English is generally associated with career growth. Thus, Sixth Form school teachers in Rwanda must promote students' academically and professionally-oriented communicative skills.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Whereas a research design is like a plan or structure that ties all the components of research together (Akhtar, 2016; Creswell, 2012), a research methodology refers to a set of techniques that guide the researcher in conducting research (Igwenagu, 2016). Both research design and research methodology depend on the nature of the research problem. It is in this perspective that this study used a quantitative and qualitative case study research design to obtain more valid and more reliable data. Quantitative and qualitative case study research paradigms allowed the researchers to obtain quantifiable data, to conduct an in-depth investigation into a real-life phenomenon occurring in its real setting (Hoang-Kim et al., 2014; Ridder, 2017), and to triangulate the data.

4.1. Setting and participant selection

The participants in this study were secondary Sixth Form science teachers and their students from four selected schools in Ngoma Sector in Huye District of the Southern Province in Rwanda. Two of the schools were public and the other two were private. They were labelled School 1, School 2, School 3 and School 4 for the sake of anonymity. These schools were chosen among others because of their proximity to the researchers' workplace, which allowed them to concurrently conduct their study and to fulfill their academic activities at the University of Rwanda where they are lecturers. Purposive sampling was used and Biology and Mathematics classrooms, the only common subjects in the four schools, were visited. The subject teachers (of Biology and Mathematics) from these schools were respectively given the pseudonyms T1 and T2, T3 and T4, T5 and T6, and T7. All of them were men. Schools 3 and 4 shared the same Biology teacher, T5, so he was observed at both schools.

Concerning the students, 76 participants were selected from the four schools (19 from each) to answer the questionnaire. As the visited classroom at School 4 consisted of 19 students, the researchers thought it fair to choose the same number of participants from each of the remaining three schools. As for the interviewed students, their number was 40 (10 from each school). The respondents were students who volunteered to take part in the study.

4.2. Research questions

The following four research questions guided the study:

1. Do subject teachers use teaching and learning strategies that enhance their students' English proficiency?
2. Do subject teachers inform English language teachers on suitable material to design for their students?
3. Do English language teachers inform subject teachers about how to assist students to improve their English language skills?
4. Are the students proficient in English, the language of instruction?

4.3. Data collection techniques

Some researchers prefer to use the quantitative research method while others may opt for the qualitative method. Quantitative approach is used to answer research questions that require statistics, and qualitative approach for questions requiring words (Williams, 2007). In this study, the researchers made use of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms to gain more understanding of the phenomenon under study. According to Yeasmin and Rahman

(2012, p. 155), "the deficiencies of any one method could be overcome by combining methods and thus capitalizing on their individual strengths".

Both approaches enabled the researchers to apply various research techniques. The quantitative method allowed them to administer and obtain data from questionnaires. With the qualitative method, the researchers conducted classroom observations and semi-structured interviews for the sake of data triangulation.

4.3.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaires are generally viewed as an objective research tool capable of producing generalisable results (Harris & Brown, 2010). Thus a questionnaire consisting of five yes/no questions was administered to the secondary Sixth Form students (N=76) from the selected schools. The list of questions is provided below.

1. Do you easily follow teachers' explanations provided in English?
2. Do you easily interact in English during classrooms?
3. Can you easily read and understand texts written in English?
4. Do you write correct English?
5. Do content subject teachers help you improve your English skills?

The above questions were posed to gain evidence of patterns with statistics; nevertheless, as results from questionnaires can be threatened (Harris & Brown, 2010) in a way or another, semi-structured interviews were also conducted.

4.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

This study was also informed by semi-structured interview data. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 students and 7 teachers (4 teachers of Mathematics and 3 teachers of Biology; Schools 3 and 4 shared the same Biology teacher) during their spare time. Interviews for teachers consisted of four questions and interviews for students of five questions as indicate the following protocols:

Interviews for teachers	**Interviews for students**
1. While delivering your lessons, do you use any teaching strategies to promote your students' English proficiency? 2. Do you ever collaborate with English language teachers to help them design suitable materials for students? 3. Do English language teachers ever inform you about ways in which you can help students improve their language skills? 4. How proficient are your students in English?	1. How often do you interact in English during classrooms? 2. How well do you follow teachers' explanations in English? 3. How well do you understand texts written in English? 4. How correctly do you write in English? 5. Do subject teachers use any strategies to help you enhance your English proficiency? If yes, what are they?

As shown above, subject teachers responded to four questions and students to five questions. The questions were asked in accordance with the guides in the box. For Ricci et al. (2019), all participants are asked the same questions in the same order. However, where appropriate, responses from the set questions were followed by probing ones to allow the researchers gain richer insights from participants' own views in their real world. Interviews were tape-recorded and notes were written in researchers' research diaries to avoid omitting

relevant information. The recorded data were then transcribed and cross-checked with the participants for the sake of reliability.

Another technique used for data collection was classroom observations.

4.3.3. Classroom observations

Observations were conducted in Mathematics and Biology classrooms in January 2020. Depending on the researched schools' schedules, some observations were carried out before noon and others in the afternoons. Each classroom was visited three times to allow the researchers to describe classroom practices efficiently. This aligns with Hamilton and Finley's (2019) view that participant observation normally helps in describing how things are. Lessons were tape-recorded and notes were taken so as to include classroom management and teaching techniques in collected data. Recorded data were later transcribed for presentation and analysis.

4.4. Data analysis

Data presentation and analysis were done concurrently. Whereas quantitative data were translated into tables, qualitative data were inductively analysed. Large data sets from interviews and observations were sorted into broader themes and common themes were grouped into typologies for analysis. Thus, common themes were determined by gathered data. This complies with Maguire and Delahunt's (2017) position that important patterns in the data are identified and grouped to answer the research question.

4.5. Ethical considerations

This study is the researchers' own work, and all sources used in the paper were acknowledged by using in-text citations and by writing references. Both researchers worked jointly from beginning to the completion of the paper. Furthermore, the researchers sought informed consent from the participants and respected their anonymity. All students who participated in the study were eighteen years old and over, so there was no need to seek authorisation from their parents. Information obtained from participants was used for research purposes only. Finally, this paper has not been submitted anywhere else.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings emerging from the research data provided information on the subject teachers' teaching strategies, their collaboration with English language teachers, and the level of students' proficiency in English.

5.1. Teaching and learning strategies

Students' answers to question 5 of the questionnaire (see Table 1) and to interview question 5 and subject teachers' responses to interview question 2 provided information on the teaching and learning strategies used in subject classes.

Table 1.
Students' responses to question 5 of the questionnaire.

Question 5	Yes	No	Total number of students
Do content teachers help you improve your English skills?	70 (92.1%)	6 (7.9%)	76 (100%)

Table 1 indicates that seventy (92.1%) out of seventy-six (100%) respondents to the questionnaire affirmed that content teachers used strategies that aimed to develop their English language skills. Only six (7.9%) students replied that their teachers did not provide any support.

To interview question 5, thirty-four (85%) out of forty participants (100%) answered that their teachers helped them enhance their English language proficiency. These students named strategies such as oral presentations, video use, group discussions, reading and summary writing, debates, dictionary use, shift to Kinyarwanda, use of IT tools, and inter-class competitions. One (2.5%) student out of the forty interviewed claimed that the subject teachers did not devise any learning techniques to promote the learners' English proficiency whereas five (12.5%) respondents gave irrelevant answers.

Subject teachers' responses to interview question 2 also informed the researchers on the teaching techniques they supposedly used to improve their students English language skills while teaching subject content. These were group discussions, presentations, debates, dialogues, dictionary use, essay writing, use of ICT tools and collaboration with English language teachers.

Classroom observations also enabled the researchers to note the teaching strategies that subject teachers deployed in their classrooms and to determine whether these techniques helped promote their students' English language proficiency. The predominating learning techniques observed were pair and group discussions and presentations, question-answer technique, teacher talk, and code-switching as discussed below.

5.1.1. Pair and group discussion

Pair and group discussions normally allow students to engage in peer interactions wherein the more knowledgeable students scaffold their group mates with low English skills. In addition, group activities enable the students to feel self-confident so they can negotiate meaning freely. According to Crandall (1999), small group discussions and interactions enable students to develop cognitive, metacognitive, social and linguistic skills. For peer interactions to be effective, teachers have to monitor the group activities and make sure everybody is involved. During classroom observations, the researchers noted that only some teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, and T6) managed the group activities well, thus stimulating their students' engagement in active interactions while others (T5 and T7) did not.

5.1.2. Oral presentations

Oral presentations are another learning technique that may raise students' confidence, their ability to exchange ideas in the target language and their critical thinking ability (Brooks, 2015). In T1's and T2's classrooms, group discussions resulted in interactive presentations. In T3's classroom at School 3, individual presentations were also well done, and the whole class actively participated. Nonetheless, the researchers wondered why T5 did not use the same strategies with his students at School 4 considering that they had difficulties expressing themselves in English and obviously needed more assistance in this language of

instruction. Lack of students' English language proficiency at School 4 was also displayed in T7's classroom. The teacher gave the students opportunities to present what they had discussed in groups but they failed to explain their ideas in English. Both T5 and T7 should have tried various activities requiring students' interactions in English, the language in which they were instructed.

5.1.3. Question-answer technique

The question-answer technique is normally used by teachers to test the learners' knowledge and understanding of lessons. This strategy enables teachers to get feedback from students and allows the latter to make use of their critical thinking (Whitver, 2017). To stir up students' critical thinking and problem solving skills, teachers should ask higher-order thinking questions and minimise lower-level questions. It is questions of the higher-level type that are likely to boost students' proficiency in the language of instruction. However, questions that most of the subject teachers put were not challenging and did not give the students enough opportunities to express their thoughts in English.

5.1.4. Teacher-talk

The researchers observed that teacher-talk was another dominant technique that was used by five teachers (T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7). Teacher-talk is an old approach to teaching and learning that regarded the teacher as the only knowledgeable person in the classroom and whose job was to inculcate knowledge to docile learners. In this teacher-centred learning, students were expected to listen passively to the teacher and swallow whatever she was imparting to them (Ahmed, 2013; Emaliana, 2017). Lei (2009), nonetheless, posits that teacher-talk can have good or bad impact on students' communication depending on the quality rather than on the quantity of talk. He explains that good teacher-talk fosters students' communicative interactions in class. As mentioned above, this is not what happened in the five classrooms. Most of the teachers' questions did not aim at promoting the students' communicative skills but rather tested their understanding of the course content. Furthermore, the researchers noticed that the teachers made use of eliciting questions for the same purpose. In short, the teacher-talk technique did not give room to the students' active interactions.

5.1.5. Code-switching

The triangulated data indicates that teachers and students also made use of the code-switching practice. Code-switching refers to the commix or use of different languages in an utterance in a single conversation (Shafi, Kazmi, & Asif, 2020). In this study, some of the teachers, namely T4 and T6, confessed that, due to their limited English proficiency, they resorted to this learning technique to facilitate their students' understanding of the subject content. Moreover, although T3 did not acknowledge his lack of competence in English, classroom observations revealed that he had difficulty expressing his ideas in this language, so he code-switched between English and Kinyarwanda. This gives code-switching a negative connotation as it reveals the teachers' lack of English proficiency, which is a hindrance to the students' development of skills in this language of instruction.

However, in a bilingual or multilingual environment, code-switching appears to be a natural phenomenon that helps in raising students' voice, that is, in incorporating their input into the lesson (Alam & Ghani, 2020). This can be confirmed by some of the students' shift to Kinyarwanda during group discussions. Obviously, the students negotiated meaning and constructed common knowledge through their mother tongue, and groups using Kinyarwanda seemed very active probably because this language facilitated their understanding of scientific concepts.

5.2. Subject teachers' collaboration with English language teachers

Although subject teachers asserted during interviews that they collaborated with English language teachers, they seemed not to grasp the meaning of this concept. They understood collaboration as merely requesting and having assistance from English language teachers when they came across English language-related problems. Nevertheless, collaboration means more than that. It implies that subject and English language teachers ought to work jointly in their endeavor to strengthen the students' proficiency in the language of instruction as well as their academic performance. Furthermore, there is a contradiction in what T4, T5 and T6 maintained regarding collaboration with English language teachers. Responding to interview question 2, they claimed that collaboration took place, but at another time they stated the overloaded timetable did not leave them time to engage in this exercise.

This lack of collaboration between subject and English language teachers constituted a hindrance to the development of students' English proficiency. In fact, the researchers realised that students were not given exposure to academic genres that could help them master rhetorical functions used in their respective subjects. The researchers also observed that some of the subject teachers did not bother addressing English language difficulties that their students encountered and that prevented them from grasping content. This was possibly due to the teachers' ignorance about how to appropriately address the problem or simply to their not caring about the issue.

5.3. Students' English language proficiency

Data emerging from the questionnaire and interviews administered to the students disclosed that most of them did well in English.

Table 2.
Students' responses to questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the questionnaire.

Questions	Yes	No	Total number of students
1. Do you easily follow teachers' explanations provided in English?	75 (98.7%)	1 (1.3%)	76 (100%)
2. Do you easily interact in English during classes?	57 (75%)	19 (25%)	76 (100%)
3. Can you easily read and understand texts written in English?	59 (77.6%)	17 (22.4%)	76 (100%)
4. Do you write correct English?	59 (77.6%)	17 (22.4%)	76 (100%)

Table 2 shows that seventy-five (98.7%) out of the seventy-six (100%) respondents asserted they easily followed teachers' explanations provided in English, fifty-seven (75%) easily interacted in English during class, fifty-nine (77.6%) easily read and understood texts written in English, and fifty-nine (77.6%) wrote good English. One (1.3%) student confessed she had difficulties following teachers' explanations, nineteen (25%) participants did not interact easily in class, seventeen (22.4%) could not read and understand written texts easily, and seventeen (22.4%) avowed they did not write English correctly.

Of the forty (100%) students who participated in interviews, twenty-nine (72.5%) followed explanations provided in English well, twenty-nine (72.5%) others interacted in English often, twenty-six (65%) understood texts written in English well while twenty-eight (70%) wrote in English correctly. Eleven (27.5%) respondents claimed they did not follow

explanations well, eleven (27.5%) rarely interacted in English, fourteen (35%) had problems grasping the meaning of written texts, and twelve (30%) did not write correct English.

Findings from the interviews with subject teachers revealed that four teachers (T1, T2, T4, and T5) were satisfied with their students' level of English proficiency.

Nevertheless, data emerging from classroom observations and from what the researchers noted while they were interviewing the students conflict with the above. The data revealed that at all four schools, a good number of students strove to understand teachers' explanations, or to interact and write in English. This situation suggests that it is important that subject teachers in Rwanda develop awareness of their role in helping enhance students' English proficiency and that they should not leave the task to English language teachers only.

6. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, this study explored whether subject teachers in selected schools in Rwanda designed strategies to help their students develop proficiency in English, a foreign language and the medium of instruction in the country. Appropriate teaching strategies are one of the key elements that contribute to enhancing students' proficiency in the language of instruction (Fewell, 2010). The research findings showed that the main strategies used in the visited subject classrooms were pair and group discussions, presentations, question-answer technique, teacher-talk, and code-switching.

In some classrooms, pair and group discussions were effectively conducted as the teachers moved around the classroom to monitor the activities and to encourage all group members to actively take part in the tasks and interact in English. However, in some other classrooms, the teachers did not play their role properly. So some of their students either did not contribute to the group discussions or interacted in Kinyarwanda only. However, pair and group activities are techniques that teachers must encourage because they give room to students to freely interact in the medium of instruction and to learn from each other. As mentioned earlier, code code-switching can also be a good learning strategy if it is not overused.

Concerning classroom presentations, some teachers made all students present their group work, which gave them the opportunity to practise English, the language of instruction. Other teachers did not. Nevertheless, oral presentations should be assigned to students regularly for they allow them to practise speaking skills in the medium of instruction and to develop public speaking skills.

The findings also showed that teacher-talk predominated in the subject classrooms and that students were not provided with enough opportunities to deeply engage in interactions. The question-answer technique was also dominant in the visited classrooms. Nonetheless, most of these questions were lower-order questions that could not promote students' higher-order thinking and prevented them from using English in ways that could enhance their proficiency. Teachers would support their students' language learning more if they mostly asked higher-order questions to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Secondly, the study sought to know whether subject teachers collaborated with their counterpart English language teachers to inform each other on how to scaffold their students' learning of English. Findings indicated that collaboration was almost non-existent, which was an impediment to the development of the students' English proficiency. Content and English language teachers in Rwanda have to be aware that they need to collaborate to develop teaching and learning strategies that can help boost their students' English proficiency.

Lastly, the present research aspired to determine how proficient the students were in English. Despite most students' claim that they were good enough at English, the researchers noticed that they were not as good as that. Indeed, the students needed more support from their teachers to reinforce their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport (2002) purport that limitations are unavoidable in any research. The current study also had limitations in scope and time. The researchers would have wished to investigate more than four schools and to observe more subject classrooms for a longer period of time, yet their tight teaching workload was an obstacle. The other impediment was the little availability of secondary Sixth Form students. In fact, the researchers could not be given more time to carry out their study because these students were preparing to sit for national examinations, so the subject teachers were striving to cover all the planned content.

As recommendations, content-subject teachers in Rwanda should feel concerned about their students' proficiency in English and use appropriate strategies to allow them to both acquire knowledge of scientific concepts and develop their English skills. Being the ones spending more time with the students, they should avail more time for activities promoting the students' English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In addition, collaboration between content subjects and English language teachers would enlighten both groups of teachers about better ways to mediate their students' learning.

Rwanda Ministry of Education should also organize trainings on how subject teachers can help students develop their English skills and increase the time allocated to the English course in secondary advanced level classrooms.

7. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The contributions in this paper can lead to new research directions in the field of Applied Linguistics/Language Education. For the generalisation of findings on whether Rwandan content teachers help students develop English proficiency, it would be necessary to conduct further research in Rwandan Sixth Forms across the country. Research should be conducted in English language classrooms, too, to explore whether teachers effectively help promote their students' basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. The same research would investigate whether these teachers draw learning materials from the students' fields of study to raise the latter's motivation and their thirst to learn.

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