

**ISSN Online: 2616-8383**



**English National Examination Skills Tested and  
English Proficiency in Public Secondary Schools in  
Muhanga District, Rwanda**

**Niyonzima Venuste & Dr. Hesbon Opiyo Andala, PhD**

**ISSN:2616-8383**

# English National Examination Skills Tested and English Proficiency in Public Secondary Schools in Muhanga District, Rwanda

<sup>1\*</sup>Niyonzima Venuste & <sup>2</sup>Dr. Hesbon Opiyo Andala, PhD

<sup>1\*</sup>Post graduate student, Mount Kenya University – Rwanda

<sup>2</sup>Dean, school of education, Mount Kenya University – Rwanda

\*Email of the corresponding author: [niyonzimavenu@gmail.com](mailto:niyonzimavenu@gmail.com)

***How to cite this article:*** Venuste, N. & Andala, H., O. (2020). English National Examination Skills Tested and English Proficiency in Public Secondary Schools in Muhanga District, Rwanda. *Journal of Education*, 3(3), 58-75

## Abstract

Language transition policy where Rwanda education shifted from French to English was aimed at earning Rwanda a place in global business, diplomacy, media and entertainment thus bringing Rwanda substantial funds and developing the middle class as a goal of Vision 2020. The implementation of language transition policy should enable learners to proficiently use English in communication. The study aimed at establishing the relationship between English national examinations tested skills and English proficiency in Rwandan Public secondary schools. The correlational research design was employed. Solvin's formula was used to select the sample of size of 393 respondents including students and English teachers from the population of 19, 837. Structured questionnaires and interview guide were used to collect the data. Collected data was coded, interpreted and analyzed with the help of SPSS version 21. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic approach and Karl Person Correlational Coefficient were employed to analyze the association. Graphs, tables and textual models were used to present the collected data. The study findings revealed that 88.9% of the respondents agreed that writing skills, reading skills and language grammar were always tested while 85.8% of the respondents agreed that speaking skills and listening skills were never tested in English national examinations. The findings also showed that 33.8% of the learners were rarely exposed to listening activities to improve oral communication. In addition, the study found that 47.8% answered that oral communication was rarely given more time in teaching. Likewise, 64.5% answered that learners were always exposed to more writing activities to improve written communication. 54.2% answered that written communication was usually given more time in teaching. Moreover, 52.8% reported that learners were always exposed to more exercises related to grammar to improve language structure knowledge as it had more marks in national examination. Finally, 57.5% revealed that language structure was always given more time in learning. The computed Karl Pearson product moment correlation coefficient showed that there was a negative correlation of -0.467 and -0.12 between testing writing and reading skills respectively and focusing on oral communication respectively. There was also a positive correlation of 0.158 and 0.264 between not testing speaking and listening skills respectively and focusing on written

communication respectively. Lastly, .151 was found to exist between testing grammar and focusing on language structure. The study concluded that writing skills, reading skills and language grammar were always tested while listening and speaking skills were not tested at all in English national examination. The study recommended that English teachers focus on all language skills during their teaching and to reinforce language clubs and language competition in their respective schools to help learners acquire English language proficiency in all skills. Secondary students are recommended to focus on all language skills because they need proficiency in all English language skills during communication.

**Key words:** *language proficiency, and tested skills in national examination*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Sweet (1982) defined a language as a way of expressing ideas through sounds and speech joined together into words which are also joined together into phrases or sentences and that these combinations answer that of ideas into opinions. Bernard and George (1990) also defined language as an arbitrary system of locally used signs utilized in the cooperation of a societal group.

Council of Europe (2010) explained the purpose of language teaching and learning by arguing that people see a language as not only a communication tool but also as the basic element for personal growth, identity and thinking development compared to how it was recognized according to the old view in general. The purpose they both have is higher than a small idea which claimed that language when it is a subject as well as when it is learnt as a second language its primary purpose is commonly communication. Benny (2018) argued that the purpose of language learning is contextual communication and that one will not develop into a good rounded language user lacking the foundation built on the four language skills in learning a language namely speaking, listening, writing and reading.

Hinton (2011) argues that language proficiency can be defined as one's ability to accurately utilize a given language in producing and transferring meaningful and comprehensive messages. Second Language proficiency acquisition is affected by various factors. For example, McKay (2002) also argued that motivation is a factor to the acquisition of proficiency in second language as there is a high level of development in economic extension, mobility, technological media and globalization at the globe. Horwitz (1986) also provided natural exposure to second language as a factor to the acquisition of proficiency in second language saying that to promote reading skills and listening skills activities and to stress contextual chats participation. Horwitz (1986) therefore, argues that in language education that is built on such beliefs more time must be given to the capabilities in reading and listening improvement. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2010) showed that a person is considered to be proficient in English language at least if he or she scored the sum of 95 marks relevant to C level including 22 marks in listening, 24 marks in writing, 24 marks in reading and 25 marks for speaking in TOEFL.

The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda-NISR (2014) showed that Rwandan population who are able to write and read in English are 7% only. Sibomana (2006), Sibomana (2010), Laviolette (2012) and Pearson (2014) argued that there is a big limitation of the utilization of English language in every day communication as well as the mastery in English Fluency among Rwandans involving those who are educated. For example, Sibomana (2006) realized that in

Kigali Institute of Education, English language was used only in meetings of academic senate as well as in classroom setting whereas other activities or setting comprising meetings of the university board were dominated by Kinyarwanda.

### **1.2 Problem statement**

English language has been taught in Rwanda as a specific subject from 1960s and it has been used as a medium language of instruction from 2008 where the main purpose of the change from French to English was earning a place in global business, diplomacy, media, and entertainment thus bringing Rwanda substantial funds and developing the middle class as a goal of Vision 2020 as Rwanda joined East African Community and Common Wealth (Sibomana 2010).

According to competency based curriculum the teaching of English should include speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills as well as grammar to help learners to be proficient in English and every year English curriculum is assessed through English national examination. However, those same examinations do not test all the above language skills as expected in the curriculum, (Sibomana, 2016).

This leads to poor English proficiency as claimed by researchers that this has led to problem that persons who learnt English in Rwanda are good at language grammar but cannot use it in contextual communication yet the main purpose of language learning is communication (Sibomana, 2010). The findings of Laviolette (2012) and Pearson (2014) showed that there is a big problem in using English mainly English oral communication in everyday communication among Rwandans. Niyibizi (2015), also showed that 22.2% of teachers perceive themselves to be poor in English speaking while only 11.1% of rural teachers perceived themselves to be good at English speaking. This study will therefore seek to investigate the relationship between English national examinations tested skills and English language proficiency in public secondary schools in Muhanga district, Rwanda.

### **1.4 Research objective**

The research objective of the study was to determine the relationship between English national examinations tested skills and English language proficiency among public secondary school students in Muhanga district-Rwanda.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Language Acquisition Theory**

Skinner (1957) provided the first explanation of language acquisition as the behaviorism pioneer accounting for the development of language through influence of the environment. He argued that learning a language by the children is built on principles of reinforcement of behaviorists' theories where words are associated with meaning. Statements which are accurate are reinforced positively when communicative value of phrases and words are realized by the children. For example, in the case a child pronounces milk and given some milk with a smile by the mother as outcome of it, the child will discover the incentive of the result and the language development of that child will improve (Ambridge & lieven, 2011).

Chomsky (1965) criticized the views of skimmers basing on the revolution of the cognitive theories of language acquisition claiming that children cannot learn and acquire the tools necessary to process an infinite number of sentences if there is a dependence of the mechanisms



of language acquisition on language input alone. As a result, Universal grammar theory of language acquisition was developed by Chomsky (1965). This theory brought out an idea of innate, biological and grammatical categories like category of verbs and category of nouns that help the whole adults language processing and whole development of language in children. Anbridge and Lieven (2011) also argued that Universal Grammar is said to have all grammatical information necessary for combining the above categories, for example verbs and nouns into phrases. The only task of the child is learning her language words. For instance, Universal Grammar claims that by instinct the child knows the combination of a noun (a boy) and a verb (to eat) in a phrase which has meaning (A boy eats).

## **2.2 Second Language Acquisition**

Ruiqin (2015) defined second language acquisition as the studying of a language which is not native after mother tongue (L1 or the native language) has been acquired whether in the setting of the classroom in formal schooling or in the natural setting.

Doughty and Long, (2003) claim that there is an agreement of the time frame with the developing of research in the acquisition of second language, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. To do philosophy of curriculum was not enough but also researchers showed that students could not acquire and apply forms of language in the old textbooks presentation order, this mean that learners could not acquire adverbs altogether and proceed to all preposition in the same way present tense and proceed to learning past tense and continue like that. Therefore, researchers showed that language learners study the use of numerous functions of grammar and syntactic patterns in the same time, dispersed through the acquisition of the prior forms and usually contingent on the background of mother tongue, sociolinguistic content and intention in communication.

Theories of behaviorist Skinner' (1957) theory of structural linguistics and learning stated that quantity and quality of language and response were considered as the significant indicators to determine success in language acquisition. Audio-lingual approach, a teaching method that was popular in 1050s promoted a practice and imitation methodology to the development of language and its most important figure in the audio-lingual methodology in the classroom was the teacher who was the cast into the role of drill sergeant, expert and authority figure. Learners were consigned to practice and imitate forms to the point of responses which are automatic believing that the student should simply have to slot in lexical articles applicable to the conventional conditions (Harmer & Jeremy, 2001). There was also a belief that mother tongue affected the second language acquisition and that the transfer should occur from mother tongue to the second language, as a result of errors (Ambridge & Lieven 2011)

Skinner (1957) was reviewed by (Chomsky, 1959) to explain oral behavior considerably shifted the way it looked at language, he argued that language was an activity controlled by rules and not a group of habits. Chomsky (1959) claimed that stimulus – response psychology might not effectively explain creativity involved in producing verbal expressions by the use of internalized rules. The aspect of creativity in language behavior suggests that minds of people is involved in profound process of meaning instead of memorizing responses to stimulus in the environment. The views of Chomsky of intellectual and language psychology, labeled generative transfer in the acquisition of language that needs clear instruction so as the deliberate acquisition takes place.

The theory which is most wide and prevalently held is sociocultural theory which was suggested by Vygotsky, considers cognition to be a social faculty. The theory claims that it is essential to participate in socially organized activities for acquisition to take place and that it is very significant to actively engage in socially organized dialogues. Learning is considered to be a meaningful, goal- directed and intentional activity and it is an incidental and passive ongoing activity but it is always deliberate and conscious.

### **2.3 Language Teaching**

Council of Europe (2010) claimed that the center of any language studied as a specific subject and used as an instructional medium is to be committed to approaches that are integrated to the process of language education. The implication of this is that within the setting of school system teachers altogether including those who teach it as a school subject, as a mother tongue, foreign or second language and other subjects in the school curriculum must be assigned and concerned with as well as accountability for their learners' development in competences of the target language.

Council of Europe (2010) also claimed that languages are not only perceived as a contextual communication tool but also as an important element to emphasize on for personal growth and the development of people's identity and thinking ability than it was commonly recognized in the traditional views and that all of them have the purpose which is farther than the simple concept of it. It also claimed that the goal of learning any language either as a specific school subject or as a second language, learning is commonly contextual communication. Benny, (2018) also argued that when there is not a good foundation a house cannot be built that is in the case you need your house to stay upright all the weather. Equally, one will not develop into a good rounded language user lacking the foundation built in the four language skills in learning a language namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda-NISR (2014) conducted the 4<sup>th</sup> population and housing census in Rwanda and found that 7% only of Rwandan citizens are able to write and read English. Sibomana (2006), Sibomana (2010), Laviolette (2012) and Pearson (2014) in their studies got the same findings that it is not astonishing to conclude that all the entire researches which have been done to identify English language use in Rwanda within various domains of life got the same finding that English language use within Rwandans' every day communication (involving the educated one) and the expertise in the fluency of English are very limited. For example, in the research conducted in 2006 on the status of English language social linguistics in Kigali Institute of Education, Sibomana (2006) realized that English Language use was only limited to classroom situation and meeting of the educational senates whereas other settings altogether are dominated by Kinyarwanda (Sibomana,2006).

Coming to the problems of English language teaching and learning in Rwanda we refer to the research of Lightbown and Spada (2001) in which they concluded that The teaching of English in old instructional setting like it is in the situation of Rwanda might not help to achieve the fulfillment of the kind of expertise in the language fluency which is needed for an individual to participate in everyday communication using English. The reason of this is that English language teaching in Rwanda put more focus on language structure or language itself (grammar and vocabulary) than on the information passed on by the language or in other words language accuracy is more focused on than fluency. Sibomana (2010) also argue that persons who learnt

English language in Rwanda are good in language structure (grammar) than in oral contextual language use. Progettolingue (2000) argued that parts in which the project is planned to influence have an emphasis on their development of course including processes of teaching and learning as well as performing foreign language results. Tests impact studies like learning program impact studies are more likely to be oriented to the process and results or outcome. Alderson (2004) argued that an example to illustrate the impact of language tests on language teaching is that test has higher influence on the teaching materials as well as on the content to be taught than on teaching approaches used by teachers.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

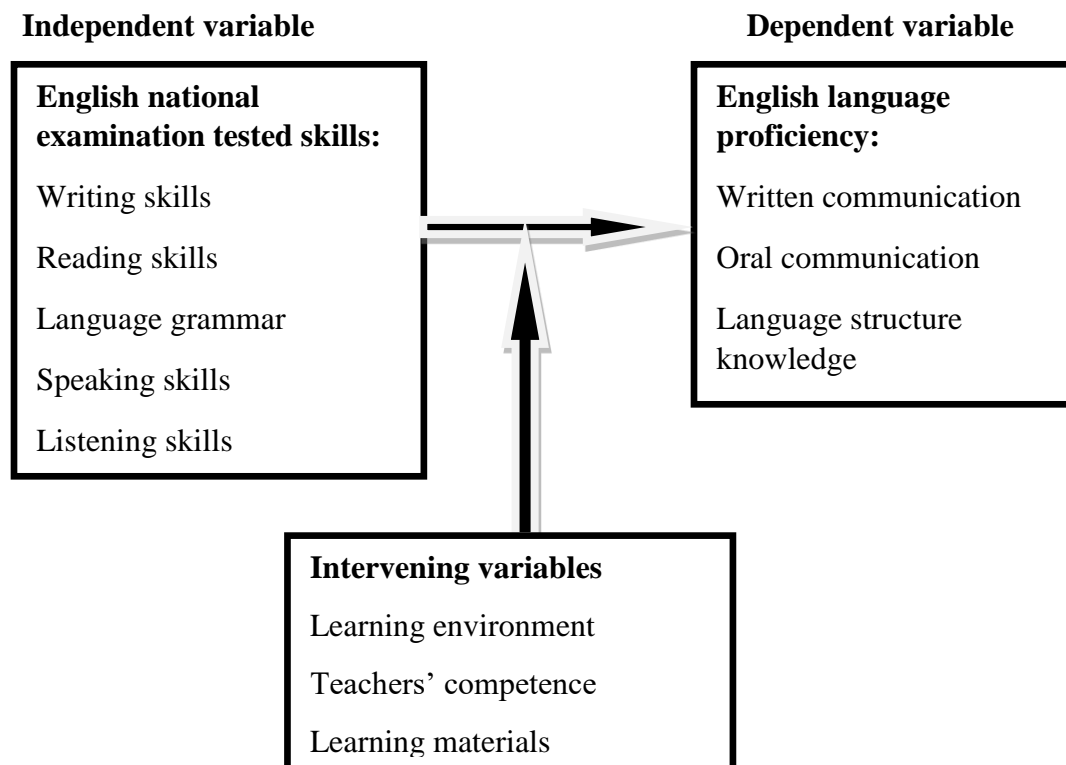
The study was conducted under the assumption of social cultural theory of Vygotsky (1987) and the theory of structural linguistics and learning of behaviorists.

Social cultural theory of language learning considers learning to be a social faculty. The theory also claims that it is very essential for second language learners to participate in social organized dialogue since it is very important for language acquisition to take place. Under this theory, learning is also considered to be a meaningful, goal- directed and intentional activity and it is an incidental and passive process but learning is always deliberate and conscious. This theory considers both language input and output in the social setting and the ability of human mind to cognitively process the language structure. Furthermore, the Vygotsky social cultural theory of language acquisition was adopted in this research because it advocates the importance of social setting communication and human mind process of language input in language acquisition.

The theory of structural linguistics and learning of behaviorists claims that quantity and quality of language and response should be considered as the significant indicators to determine success in language acquisition (Skinner, 1957). This study will focus on the ideas that testing all language skills in national examination of English will lead to engagement of learners in those skills and thus, learners will be engaged in learning activities to promote communication skills and language structure which is a cognitively processed activity in language acquisition.

## **2.5 Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework is a model which illustrates the linkage between independent variable and dependent variable.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 shows the relationship between English national examination tested skills (cause) and English language proficiency among learners (effect). Therefore, increase in testing a particular skill leads to increase in focus given to that skill by English teachers and students during the process of English teaching and learning.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study employed correlational research design to establish the relationship between English national examinations tested skills and English language proficiency among public secondary school students. The study targeted 19,837 individuals composed of public secondary school students and English teachers in Muhanga district, Rwanda. Sample of 393 was determined using Solvin's formula. The researcher used simple random, stratified and purposive techniques to find the sample. Questionnaire was used to collect data from students while interview guide was used to collect data from English teachers.

### **4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Levels at which English language skills are tested in English national examination**

The researcher sought to establish the levels at which English language skills are tested in English national examination and the findings are presented in Table 1



**Table 1: Level to which writing skills are tested in English national examination**

Level to which writing skills are tested in English National examination	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean	Sd
Writing skills are always tested in English national examination	201	56.1	109	30.4	0	0	48	13.4	0	0	358	1.71	1.01
Writing skills are given more marks in English national examination	80	22.3	214	59.8	9	2.5	55	15.4	0	0	358	2.11	.92
Writing skills are well tested in English national examination	75	20.9	164	45.8	70	19.6	49	13.7	0	0	358	2.26	.94
Writing skills are never tested in English national examination	18	5.0	35	9.8	0	0	107	29.9	198	55.3	358	4.21	1.17

**Source: primary data (2020)**

The findings from the Table 1 showed that 85.2% of the students with the mean of 4.21 and Sd of 1.17 disagreed that writing skills was never tested in English national examination. Also, 66.7% with the mean of 2.26 and Sd of 0.94 agreed that writing skills was well tested in English national examination. 82.1% with the mean of 2.11 and Sd of 0.02 agreed that writing skills was given more marks in English national examination, Finally, 86.5% with the mean of 1.11 and Sd of 1.17 agreed that writing skills was always tested in English national examination. This meant that writing skills was always well tested and given more marks in English national examination. Through interview with English teachers, all the 35 English teachers interviewed included composition and summary writing in the parts of English national examination and answered that those parts were good ways of testing writing skills of learners.

The level to which reading skills are tested in English national examination is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Level to which reading skills are tested in English national examination**

Level to which reading skills are tested	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean	Sd
Reading skills are always tested in English national examination	140	39.1	156	43.6	0	0	18	5.0	44	12.3	358	2.08	1.30
Reading skills are given more marks in English national examination	106	29.6	86	24.0	34	9.5	123	34.4	9	2.5	358	2.56	1.30
Reading skills are well tested in English national examination	67	18.7	184	51.4	61	17.0	37	10.3	9	2.5	358	2.27	.96
Reading skills are never tested in English national examination	40	11.2	14	3.9	0	0	123	34.4	181	50.6	358	4.09	1.29

**Source: primary data (2020)**

The findings in the Table 2 established that reading skills was tested in English national examination though they was not given more marks. This was shown by 85% of the students with the mean of 4.09 and SD of 1.29 who disagreed that reading skills was never tested in English national examination. Besides, 53.6% with a mean of 2.56 and SD of 1.3 agreed that reading skills was given more marks in English national examination. Further, 70.1% with the mean of 2.27 and SD of 0.96 agreed that reading skills was well tested in English national examination and 82.7% with the mean of 2.08 and SD of 1.3 agreed that reading skills was always tested in English national examination. These findings indicated that reading skills was always and well tested in English national examination.

During an interview given to English teachers, all the 35 interviewed teachers included comprehension and vocabulary part in the parts of English national examination and when asked the language skill tested through comprehension, they answered that composition part of the examination is aimed at testing learners' reading skills while vocabulary were there to test vocabulary package of learners.

**Table 3: Level to which speaking skills are tested in English national examination**

Level to which speaking skills are tested	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean	Sd
Speaking skills are always tested in English national examination	37	10.3	36	10.1	0	0	65	18.2	220	61.5	358	4.10	1.39
Speaking skills are given more marks in English national examination	28	7.8	41	11.5	0	0	78	21.8	211	58.9	358	4.13	1.32
Speaking skills are well tested in English national examination	28	7.8	23	6.4	9	2.5	92	25.7	206	57.5	358	4.19	1.24
Speaking skills are never tested in English national examination	239	66.8	68	19.0	0	0	28	7.8	23	6.43	358	1.68	1.21

**Source: primary data (2020)**

The results presented in Table 3 showed that 83% of the students with the mean of 4.19 and SD of 1.24 disagreed that speaking skills was well tested in English national examination, 80.7% the students with the mean of 4.13 and Sd of 1.32 disagreed that speaking skills was given more marks in English national examination. Moreover, 79.7% of the students with the mean of 4.10 and SD of 1.39 disagreed that speaking skills was always tested in English national examination while 85.8% of the students with the mean of 1.68 and SD of 1.21 agreed that speaking skills was never tested in English national examination. This indicated that speaking skills was not tested in English national examination.

During interview, 29 in 35 interviewed teachers answered that listening and speaking skills are not tested in English national examination. This showed that the majority of teachers answered that speaking skills are not tested in English national examination.

The level to which listening skills are tested in English national examination was depicted in Table 4

**Table 4: Level to which listening skills are tested in English national examination**

Level to which listening skills are tested	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean	Sd
Listening skills are always tested in English national examination	55	15.4	32	8.9	0	0	108	30.2	163	45.5	358	3.82	1.47
Listening skills are given more marks in English national examination	46	12.8	18	5.0	0	0	116	32.4	178	49.7	358	4.01	1.36
Listening skills are well tested in English national examination	23	6.4	41	11.5	18	5.0	104	29.1	172	48.0	358	4.01	1.25
Listening skills are never tested in English national examination	244	68.2	63	17.6	0	0	37	10.3	14	3.9	358	1.64	1.15

**Source: primary data (2020)**

The findings in the Table 4 showed that 82.1% of the students with the mean of 4.01 and SD of 1.36 disagreed that listening skills was given more marks in English national examination. Also, 77.1% of the students with the mean of 4.01 and SD of 1.25 disagreed that listening skills was well tested in English national examination. Besides, 75.7% of the students with the mean of 3.82 and SD of 1.47 disagreed that listening skills was always tested in English national examination while 85.8% of the students with the mean of 1.64 and SD of 1.15 agreed that listening skills was never tested in English national examination. Basing on these findings, it was meant that listening skills was not tested in English national examination.

Through an interview conducted with English teachers, 29 in 35 interviewed teachers answered that listening and speaking skills was not tested in English national examination. This showed that the majority of teachers answered that speaking skills was not tested in English national examination.

Table 5 below presents the descriptive statistics of Level to which English grammar is tested in English national examination.

**Table 5: Level to which English grammar is tested in English national examination**

Level to which English grammar is tested	Strongly Agree		Agree		Not Sure		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean Sd
Language grammar is always tested in English national examination	243	67.9	106	29.6	0	0	9	2.5	0	0	358	1.37 .62
Language grammar is given more marks in national examination	236	65.9	113	31.6	0	0	9	2.5	0	0	358	1.39 .62
Language grammar is well tested in English national examination	195	54.5	136	38.0	18	5.0	9	2.5	0	0	358	1.56 .71
Language grammar is never tested in English national examination	34	9.5	33	9.2	0	0	103	28.8	188	52.5	358	4.06 1.32

**Source: primary data (2020)**

The findings in the Table 5 indicated that 84.3% of the students with the mean of 4.06 and SD of 1.32 disagreed that language grammar is never tested in English national examination while 92.5% of the students with the mean of 1.56 and SD of 0.71 agreed that language grammar was well tested in English national examination. Likewise, 97.5% with the mean of 1.39 and SD of 0.62 agreed that language grammar was given more marks in English national examination. Lastly, 97.5% of the students with the mean of 1.37 and SD of 0.62 agreed that language grammar was always tested in English national examination. The findings indicated that language grammar was always tested and given more marks in English national examination.

During an interview with English teachers, all the 35 interviewed teachers included grammar and phonology part in the main parts of English national examination and answered that grammar had more marks than all the other parts of the examination.

#### **4.2 Stages in which English proficiency is acquired in Rwandan public secondary schools**

Table 6 present the stages in which oral communication skills is acquired



**Table 6: Stages in which oral communication skills is acquired**

Stages in which oral communication is acquired	Always		Usually		Some times		Rarely		Never		Total N	Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		Mean	Sd
Learners are exposed to listening activities to improve their skills in oral communication	94	26.3	38	10.6	19	5.3	121	33.8	86	24.0	358	3.19	1.56
Learners are exposed to more speaking activities so as to improve their skills in oral communication	86	24.0	59	16.5	34	9.5	121	33.8	58	16.2	358	3.02	1.46
Oral communication is well taught	69	19.3	63	17.6	11	3.1	176	49.2	39	10.9	358	3.15	1.36
Oral communication is given more time in English teaching	77	21.5	36	10.1	6	1.7	171	47.8	68	19.0	358	3.33	1.45

**Source: primary data (2020)**

Basing on the results depicted in Table 6, 47.8% of the students with the mean of 3.33 and SD of 1.45 answered that oral communication was rarely given more time in learning. Further, 33.8% of the students with the mean of 3.19 and SD of 1.56 said that learners were rarely exposed to listening activities to improve their skills in oral communication. It was also indicated that 49.2% with the mean of 3.15 and SD of 1.36 answered that oral communication was rarely well taught and lastly, 33.8% with the mean of 3.02 and SD of 1.46 answered that learners were rarely exposed to speaking activities to improve their skills in oral communication. These findings indicated that there is little focus given to listening and speaking skills which are involved in oral communication.

During an interview with English teachers, 25 in 35 interviewed teachers answered that language skills which was not tested in English national examination was not given more focus and listening and speaking skills which was involved in oral communication was answered by 29 out of 35 teachers that they were not tested.

Furthermore, stages in which written communication skills are acquired is illustrated in Table 7

**Table 7: Stages in which written communication skills are acquired**

Stages in which written communication is acquired	Always		Usually		Some times		Rarely		Never		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean	Sd
Learners are exposed to more writing activities to improve their skills in written communication	231	64.5	104	29.1	9	2.5	9	2.5	5	1.4	358	1.47	.79
Leaners are exposed to more reading activities to improve their written communication	185	51.7	146	40.8	9	2.5	9	2.5	9	2.5	358	1.63	.86
Written communication is well taught	179	50.0	124	34.6	31	8.7	24	6.7	0	0	358	1.72	.88
Written communication is given more time in teaching	107	29.9	194	54.2	9	2.5	39	10.9	9	2.5	358	2.02	.99

**Source: primary data (2020)**

Findings in Table 7 show that 54.2% of the students with the mean of 2.02 and SD of 0.99 answered that written communication was usually given more time in teaching. Besides, 50% of the students with the mean of 1.72 and Sd of 0.88 answered that written communication was always well taught, 51.7% with the mean of 1.63 and Sd of 0.86 answered that learners were always exposed to more reading activities to improve their written communication skills Finally, 64.5% with the mean of 1.47 and Sd of 0.79 answered that learners were always exposed to more writing activities to improve their skills in written communication. These findings indicated that activities related to reading and writing skills which were involved in written communication were given more focus in English teaching.

During an interview with English teachers, all the 35 interviewed teachers answered that they expose learners to language skills tested in English national examination and they also answered writing and reading skills which were involved in written communication and tested in English national examination.

Table 8 depict the stages in which knowledge of English language structure

**Table 8: Stages in which knowledge of English language structure**

Stages in which English language structure is acquired	Always		Usually		Some times		Rarely		Never		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	Mean Sd
Learners are exposed to more exercises related to language grammar to improve their language structure knowledge as it has more marks in national examination	189	52.8	159	44.4	10	2.8	0	0	0	0	358	1.50 .55
Leaners put more focus on language grammar to improve language structure knowledge as it has more marks in national examination	134	37.4	186	52.0	15	4.2	23	6.4	0	0	358	1.80 .80
English language structure is well taught	153	42.7	100	27.9	52	14.5	44	12.3	9	2.5	358	2.04 1.14
English language structure is given more time in learning	206	57.5	124	34.6	28	7.8	0	0	0	0	358	1.50 .64

**Source: primary data (2020)**

Findings in Table 8 showed that 42.7% of the students with the mean of 2.04 and Sd of 1.14 answered that English language structure was always well taught and 27.9% answered that English language structure was usually well taught, 52% with the mean of 1.80 and Sd of 0.80 answered that learners always put more focus on language grammar to improve language structure knowledge as it has more marks in national examination. Further, 37.4% reported that learners usually put more focus on language grammar to improve language structure knowledge as it has more marks in national examination. The results also indicated that 52.8% with the mean of 1.50 and SD of 0.55 established that learners were always exposed to more exercises related to language grammar to improve language structure knowledge as it had more marks in national examination. Moreover, 44.4% reported that learners were usually exposed to more exercises related to language grammar to improve language structure knowledge as it had more marks in national examination. Finally, 57.5% with the mean of 1.50 and SD of 0.64 answered that English language structure was always given more time in learning while 34.6% answered that English language structure was usually given more time in learning. These findings indicated that grammar of the language was given more focus and time by both the teachers and learners because it had more marks in national examination.

During the interview with English teachers, 19 of the interviewed 35 English teachers reported that more focus was given to grammar which helps learners to have enough language structure knowledge because grammar had more marks in English national examination.

#### 4.3 Relationship between English national examinations tested skills and English language proficiency

The researcher sought to examine the relationship between English national examinations tested skills and English language proficiency. The findings is presented in Table 9

**Table 9: Correlation between English language skills tested in national examination and learners' language proficiency**

		Correlations		
		Focusing on written communication	Focusing on oral communication	Focusing on language structure
Testing writing skills	Pearson Correlation	-.026	-.467**	.475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.620	.000	.000
	N	358	358	358
Testing reading skills	Pearson Correlation	.266**	-.012	-.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.815	.286
	N	358	358	358
Testing Grammar	Pearson correlation	.322**	-.150**	.151**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.005	.004
	N	358	358	358
Never testing speaking skills	Pearson Correlation	.158**	-.196**	-.377**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.000
	N	358	358	358
Never testing listening skills	Pearson Correlation	.264**	-.428**	-.387**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	358	358	358

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

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### Source: Primary data 2020

The correlation coefficient presented in Table 9 shows a negative correlation between testing writing skills and focusing on oral communication at -.467 while there is a positive correlation between testing writing skills and focusing on language structure at .475. There is a positive correlation between testing reading skills and focusing on written communication at .266 while there is a positive correlation between testing grammar of the language and focusing on written communication at .322. The results also showed that a negative correlation between testing grammar of the language and focusing on oral communication at -.150 and a low positive correlation between testing grammar of the language and focusing on language structure at .151. On the other hand, the computed Karle Pearson product moment correlation coefficient shows a positive correlation between not testing speaking skills and focusing on written communication at .158 A correlation between not testing speaking skills and focusing on oral communication at -.196 and a low negative correlation with focusing on language structure at -.377. Finally, there is a positive correlation between not testing listening skills and focusing on written communication at .264 a negative correlation between not testing listening skills and focusing on oral

communication at -.428 and a positive correlation between not testing listening skills and focusing on language structure at -.387 was found

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

Basing on the findings of the study, it was concluded that writing skills, reading skills and language grammar were always tested while listening and speaking skills were not tested at all in English national examination. Both teachers and students in secondary schools put more focus on those skills which were tested in English national examination since students want good results while teachers need their students to get good results in national examination to be promoted in the higher levels of education. The researcher also concluded that there is a relationship between testing various language skills and English language skills proficiency acquisition basing on the research findings. Therefore, the increase in testing a particular language skill will lead to the increase in a corresponding area of language proficiency.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATION**

The study recommended that English teachers to focus on all language skills during their teaching and to reinforce language clubs and language competition in their respective schools to help learners acquire English language proficiency in all skills.

Secondary students are recommended to give the focus to all the language skills because they need proficiency in all English language skills during communication.



## REFERENCES

- Alderson, J.C. (2014). *Wash back in Language Testing: Research Contexts and Methods*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, 2004.p. ix-xii.
- Ambridge, B., & Lieven, E.V.M. (2011). *Language Acquisition: Contrasting theoretical approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benny, L. (2018). *Booy-camp and the fluent in 3months*. Black Friday collection.
- Bernard, B., & George, L. T. (1990). *Outline of Linguistic Analysis: Linguistic Society of America*: univ. Micrifilm.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. MIT Press.
- European council, (2010). *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the European Language Portfolio, and language learning in higher education*.
- Hinton, G. E & Sarikaya, R. (2011). *Deep belief net for natural language call routine*. Watson research center, Yorktown Heights
- Laviolette, G. (2012). *English Language Acquisition and Mastery: Rwanda's Urgent Economic Need*. The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 43-48.
- Lewis, M. & Benny.G. (2014). *Fluent in 3 Months: How Anyone at Any Age Can Learn to Speak Any Language from Anywhere in the World (PDF)*. New York.
- Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (2001). *Factors affecting second language learning. English language teaching in its social context*, p (28-43).
- McKay, S. L. (2002). *Teaching English as an International language: Thinking goals and perspectives*: Oxford University Press
- Pearson, P. (2014). *Policy without a plan: English as a medium of instruction in Rwanda*. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 15 (1), 39-56.
- Sibomana, E. (2006). *A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the English Language Use at Kigali Institute of Education*. (Unpublished BA Dissertation, Kigali Institute of Education).
- Sibomana, E. (2010). *Challenges faced by postgraduate French speaking students who are learning in English: a case study of Rwandan students in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand*. (Unpublished MA Research Report, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg).
- Skinner, B.F. (1957). *Verbal Behavior*. Acton, MA: Copley Publishing Group.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). *Teaching listening and speaking: From theory to practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Rowland, C. F.; & Noble, C. L. (2010). *The role of syntactic structure in children's sentence comprehension: Evidence from the dative*. *Language Learning and Development*, 7(1): 55-75.