INSTRUCTIONAL INFLUENCE ON LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT IN POST-BASIC SCHOOL ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN BURUNDI

By

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification in any other university/institution. No part of this thesis is to be reproduced without the consent of the owner and/or Moi University.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Radégonde Ndikumana, who went before seeing and tasting the fruit of her unfailing effort, and to my father, Gervais Ndayisenga, who put me on this long academic journey with tireless support and prayers throughout my study.

To my supportive family of Barnabé Nduwamungu and Primitive Manirambona for everything they did for me, to my lovely wife Adeline Niyoncuti for her understanding, loving patience, encouragement, and support, and to our beloved son Anaël Karl Irambona for putting daily smiles on my face.

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of education, instructional influences are key in shaping learners' academic achievement. In Burundi, learners' academic achievement in the English language is wanting at post-basic education level. Against this backdrop, this study aimed at investigating the instructional influences of the post-basic school English curriculum on learners' achievement in Burundi. The objectives of this study were to find out how the classroom learning environment, teachers' knowledge and skills, teaching methods, instructional materials, and assessment methods affected learners' achievement in post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi. The Communicative Language Teaching for the 21st Century and the Social Learning Theory served as the foundation for this study. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, a convergent parallel research design, and a pragmatic paradigm. Drawing on Kothari and Garge, a sample of 16 out of 32 post-basic schools was randomly selected, representing 50% of the post-basic schools in Bujumbura municipality in the languages section. From the sixteen chosen schools, sixteen teachers of English language were randomly selected, one from each school. Using Slovin's formula and stratified sampling techniques, a sample of 330 students was selected from a population of 1860 post-basic school learners in the second and third years, languages section, in the Bujumbura Municipality. Data collection instruments entailed the questionnaire, interviews, and classroom observations. Their validity was verified using expert judgement validity, and their reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha statistics. Data analysis combined both thematic analysis procedures for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative data where the means, standard deviations, and frequencies were calculated. To measure how far the instructional factors influenced learners' academic achievement, the mean limits of the five-point Likert scale was employed and was interpreted as the following: 1.00-1.79: very low; 1.80-2.59: low; 2.60- 3.39 moderate; 3.40-4.19 high; 4.20-5.00 very high. The study findings established that teachers provided a welcoming learning atmosphere in their respective classrooms and promoted peer assistance. The study also established that the classroom learning context had a high influence on learners' achievement (Mean = 3.405, SD =.5030). Additionally, it was revealed that teachers needed additional training to advance their knowledge and skills. The employment of eclectic instructional techniques was observed, with discussion, role-playing, and cooperative methods being the most frequently used. However, an alarming lack of teaching resources ranging from learners' books to audio and audio-visual aids was further unveiled. It was indicated that instructional materials had a moderate influence on learners' academic success (Mean = 3.257, SD =.690). The study found that the assessments used were communicatively ineffective as they were based on memorisation and that the feedback was not given in a timely way. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that the assessment methods used had a moderate influence on students' academic achievements (Mean = 3.309, SD =.5762). The academic performance of learners was moderately influenced by instructional factors (overall Mean = 3.395, SD =.313). The study concluded that the classroom environment was the most influential factor and that lack of sufficient instructional materials was a shared issue in most of the investigated schools. This study recommended that English post-basic school teachers be re-tooled with knowledge and skills to achieve full competency in English language teaching, the availability of teaching resources be prioritised, and school benchmarking be organised. It was, furthermore, recommended that teachers set up communicative assessments tasks to help learners exploit their potential.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CIPP: Context, Input, Process, and Product

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

DCE: Direction Communale de l'Education (French for Commune Education

Directorate)

DPE: Direction Provinciale de l'Education (French for Provincial Education

Directorate)

EAC: East African Community

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ENS: Ecole Normale Supérieure (Higher Teacher Training College)

LOA: Learning-Oriented Assessment

MoNESR: Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PI: Pedagogy of Integration

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SLT: Social Learning Theory

UB: University of Burundi

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter presents a brief background of the study, which is followed by the adherence of Burundi to the EAC and its main curriculum changes, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research objectives and their corresponding research questions, the assumptions and significance of the study, and the scope and delimitation of the study. It concludes by discussing the theoretical and conceptual framework without putting aside the definition of operational terms to be used in this study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Given that English is the language that is spoken worldwide and serves as a common and universal language, teaching English has become a trend around the world (Rao, 2019). Through it, requirements for global communication are highly fulfilled, as it is a practical means of communication in all spheres of human existence that can be used to access and employ new technologies in order to compete worldwide in the market arena. For these reasons, many countries, including Burundi, are now making heavy investments in teaching their citizens the English language so that they can compete with other nations on a global scale. To that purpose, their respective curricula have been changed or modified, and they have incorporated or strengthened English in their teaching programs.

As the main goal of teaching is to maximise learners' academic performance, they are expected to have their best academic achievement at the end of their learning process. Academic achievement plays a crucial role in generating the best graduates who will

serve as great leaders and manpower for the nation, contributing to the economic and social development of that nation (Shabana & Khan, 2012). However, reaching good learners' academic achievement levels is very demanding. There are several variables at play when it comes to academic performance. The success of learners is ultimately influenced by a number of instructional factors, such as teachers' and learners' factors, the teaching methods, assessment methods, teaching materials, and their relationships with their peers in a school learning environment like class size (Shabana & Khan, 2012; Paul, 2015). These instructional factors can interact to either positively or negatively impact learners' academic achievement. As languages are taught for communicative purposes, teaching theories should also be based on communicative principles for the learners' best learning outcomes. In the field of language teaching today, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is one of the most essential and applicable teaching and learning ideas (Savignon, 1987; Savignon, 2002).

The significant theory that has inspired and continues to influence the teaching and learning environment is the Social Learning Theory (SLT) by Albert Bandura (1977). Apart from enhancing the creativity, positive attitude, and confidence of learners in English, SLT was also found to be effective in helping learners develop productive skills in English (Samsudin, Shamsudin, & Arif, 2017; Alshobramy, 2019). Its main focus is on how an individual's overall behaviour and learning success are influenced by environmental and cognitive factors. Therefore, the instructional influences should be dealt with in order to improve learners' academic achievement by fostering language communication skills shaped by the CLT and SLT approaches. To determine the success of the teaching and learning of languages in a particular program, an evaluation should be carried out. That is why an evaluation of the

instructional influences of the English curriculum is the main key in this study to find out how far they influence learners' academic achievement in post-basic schools in Burundi. In that sense, stakeholders in education in Burundi will have a picture of how to leverage these factors to foster learners' academic success and improve learners' academic performance.

1.2.1 The national goals of education in Burundi and quality of education

Given that the world we live in is constantly changing, so must everything in it. Lest they be left behind, all countries try to adjust themselves to fit in the rapidly changing world in all domains of life, such as education, economy, sociology, culture, politics, and technology, just to mention a few. To that end, countries choose some goals and objectives to deal with in line with changing world trends. To be successful, everything has to be done through education, and curricula are designed to bridge the gap. The curriculum is central to schooling (Hewitt, 2006). It plays a pivotal role in the educational system. The term "curriculum" refers to the sum total of all learning opportunities and experiences that are offered to learners in both formal and non-formal educational settings (Ngwenya, 2019). It can be seen as the heart of education and the vehicle of countries' policies. However, given that education is not static, curriculum may be prone to change over time, as asserted by Hewitt (2006: 14), who states that schooling and curriculum are in a constant state of perpetual reform. He continues, "The state of continual reform must be regarded as part of schooling and working within and with the curriculum."

However, there should be an interconnection between all the current changes and the country's national goals. Burundi's national education goals, as outlined in the EAC framework (2014:11):

i. Ensuring Education for All

ii. Promoting human resource development

iii. Improving security and good governance

iv. Promoting equitable and lasting economic growth

v. Promoting mental and physical health

Reading between the lines of the national goals of Burundi's education, it is noticeable that quality education was not put aside. That falls in line with the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was ratified by all UN member states in 2015. On the same agenda, they agree that policies for enhancing health and education, reducing inequality, and promoting economic growth must work together to alleviate poverty and other forms of deprivation (United Nations, 2015a). For instance, the fourth goal in the SDGs calls for the globe to offer inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In target 4.1, it is stipulated that all countries must ensure that by 2030, both girls and boys will have completed a free, equitable, and high-quality primary and secondary education that results in learning outcomes that are relevant and efficient.

In the same vein, target 4.7 calls for the development of skills and knowledge for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles through education (United Nations, 2015b). To reach those objectives, the quality of education has to be taken into consideration. Garira (2020) sustains the idea by saying that attaining universal basic education may not be fully completed on its own without the provision of high-quality education (UNESCO, 2004). Through Farooq (2018: 3), we understand quality education as the fact of creating an environment where educators, parents,

government officials, community representatives, and business leaders are involved in a collaboration supplying learners with the learning resources they need to adjust to current and future academic, business, and technological changes.

In addition to that, Garira (2020: 3), citing Williams (2001), explains that the quality of education is better understood in terms of the learners' output. Citing Thijs and Van den Akker (2009), she goes on to say that "although learners' academic performance in tests and public examinations may signify good quality of education to many, a holistic understanding of education quality should be in terms of inputs, processes, and outputs in addition to outcomes of education, which include student knowledge (academic and cultural heritage), social preparation (societal trends and needs), and also personal development (personal and educational needs and interests)." From what precedes, it is crystal clear that we cannot expect relevant and effective learners' academic achievement through a shallow education.

In that regard, Gordon & Partington (1993) recognise that a school's good quality is effective when it fosters learning environments where students can successfully accomplish important learning objectives, such as approved academic standards (Ashraf et al., 2016:126). According to the same source, reaching a quality education depends on a variety of elements, including but not limited to teaching quality, teaching methodology, content of teaching, peer quality review, the availability of direct and indirect instructional resources, and the political situation. In the same way of thinking, Meyer (2018) notes that one aspect that characterises quality education in any educational setting is the instructional methods used.

The teaching methodologies used should aid learners in better understanding what they are taught and likewise gaining added value in terms of knowledge from the

material they are exposed to. It is clear from the aforementioned literature that the quality of education impacts learners' academic achievement. Given that the English program understudy mainly focuses on developing three skills, viz., oral, written, and reading skills, they should therefore be taught in a way reflecting "quality of education." However, such a goal cannot be realised if, for instance, teachers are not well equipped with relevant knowledge or if teaching methods are not appropriate. In addition to that, relevant and sufficient materials should be available; the classroom learning environment should be conducive, as should the assessments, which should be well conducted to reflect how far the attainment of the teaching objectives has gone.

The pedagogy of integration, on which the Burundi English post-basic curriculum hinges, should be well applied to develop communicative competence. Learners are expected to learn life skills in various domains and to be able to use the English language communicatively and in all domains of life through that pedagogy (Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MoNESR): Third Year Post - Basic. Burundi, 2017 Edition).

Putting all of this together, a learner's academic achievement is the result of a combination of factors that need to be well balanced for a positive and fruitful learner's achievement, which is nurtured by quality education.

1.2.2 An overview of the organization of Burundi education system and its structure

According to Article 13 of Law N01/19 of September 10, 2013, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research in Burundi is in charge of overseeing both public and private schools. Education in Burundi is decentralised, much like in many

other nations. Provincial education directions have been established countrywide since 2000, and they are in turn divided into communal offices (commune education directions). Their ultimate goal is to oversee all primary and secondary education services at the province and commune levels on behalf of the Ministry of Education (Decree No. 100/057 of May 27, 2000). It is worth noting that every provincial and municipal administration has an inspectorate office.

Burundi's educational system is divided into four levels: pre-school, basic school (primary school), post-basic school (upper secondary), and higher education (tertiary education). Starting with the nursery school level, which is not compulsory, it is created for kids under the age of six, ranging from 3 to 5. It is important to note that pre-primary education is provided by the private sector, followed by compulsory basic education, which lasts nine years and spans the ages of six to fourteen (Law N01/19 of September 10, 2013, Article 35; The World Bank Burundi: Early Grade Learning Project P161600, 2018). It is worth pointing out that basic education in public schools has been tuition-free since the 2005-2006 school year. This 2012 basic education sector reform was carried out to fulfil the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were agreed upon by all nations, as stated in The World Bank Burundi: Early Grade Learning Project P161600 (2018).

Through this treaty, it is well stated in the 4th goal of the SDGs that the world should "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities for all." In addition to that, it is stipulated in its target 4.1 that "by 2030, the entire world should ensure that all girls and boys finish free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes" (United Nations, 2015a).

As per Law N01/19 of September 10, 2013, Article 35, the nine-year structure of basic education in Burundi is divided into four cycles as follows:

i.   The first cycle comprises the 1st and 2nd grades;

ii.   The second cycle comprises the 3rd and 4th grades;

iii. The third cycle comprises the 5th and 6th grades;

iv.   The fourth cycle comprises the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades.

Based on the Decree No. 100/078 of May 22, 2019, determining the languages of instruction and staggering the languages taught in basic school, as per Article 1, the languages taught at that level are four: Kirundi, French, English, and Kiswahili. Under the same decree, article 2 stipulates that Kirundi and French are the languages for instruction. However, it is mentioned that English can also become a language of instruction where the required conditions are met. Those four languages are progressively taught in the following order:

i.   Except for mathematics, which is taught in French beginning in the fourth year, Kirundi is the language of instruction in the first and second cycles of basic education (Article 4).

ii.   French is the language of instruction in the third cycle of basic education, except for entrepreneurship, humanities, Arts, Physical Education, and Sport which are taught in Kirundi (Article 5).

iii. Kirundi and French are the languages taught from the first year of basic education, respecting the specificities of language learning (Article 6).

iv.   English and Kiswahili are taught in the third and fourth years of basic education, respectively (Articles 7 and 8).

Concerning secondary education, which is also referred to as "post-basic education," it is intended for students who have successfully passed the national exam held during their final year of basic school. It offers three streams, divided into general, pedagogical, and technical sections, and lasts between 3 and 4 years (The World Bank Burundi: Early Grade Learning Project P161600, 2018). Learners attending general education are typically intended to advance their university studies, whereas those attending the pedagogical section are being trained to become teachers in primary schools. The final stream assists learners in acquiring knowledge and equipping them with practical skills for the workplace (Ndayimirije, 2015). Following post-basic education is higher education, also known as tertiary education, which is only available to students who have passed the state examination at the end of their post-basic education. This means that upper secondary education is not compulsory in Burundi.

Apart from the private institutions, this level involves two state institutions that train teachers for the fourth cycle of basic education, which runs from grades 7 through 9. The University of Burundi (UB) and the Higher Teacher Training College, or Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in French, are the two institutions. As the language of instruction, French is the one used in all higher institutions except in the departments of English, where English is the language of instruction. The two aforementioned institutions (ENS and UB) both have English departments specialised in teacher preparation. That is where teachers of English at the post-basic school level receive their training. It is also important to quickly note that the same institutions, namely ENS and UB, offer master's programs in different fields. Doctorate programs are still offered only at the University of Burundi.

1.2.3 English language in Burundi and expected competences

In Burundi, English is classified as a "foreign language." According to Richards and Platt (1985), when English is taught in schools as a subject rather than being used as a language of instruction or communication, it is then referred to as a foreign language (EFL). In Burundi, English is simply used as a school subject, where it is not in regular use. Apart from that foreign language, English, there are other three major spoken languages in the country: Kirundi, which is the most widely spoken language countrywide (mother tongue); French, which is the official language; and Swahili, which is used as a vernacular language or a language of commerce.

Prior to Burundi's admission to the EAC in 2007, English was a taught subject in public junior/ secondary schools from the 6th form and at the university level, especially in English faculties or English departments [at the University of Burundi and at the ENS (Ecole Normale Supérieure in French for Higher Teacher Training College)]. Lately, the status of English in Burundi has recently been steadily increasing due to both general globalisation and Burundi's inclusion in the EAC where English is the official working language. As a result, English was adopted as an official language and introduced in basic schools (formerly known as elementary schools). However, there are some private schools and universities where the medium of instruction is English.

Regarding the instructional methods suggested in the Burundi post-basic English curriculum, they are based on a pedagogy of integration (PI) in which learners are put at the centre of instructions. According to Wall & Leckie (2017), referring to Dowden (2007), they say that the main purpose of a curriculum based on a pedagogy of integration is to "resituate subject matter into relevant and meaningful contexts." That

is to say that the different themes, topics, and issues that are set for class discussions are linked, for example, to the issues around them like social life, the environment, etc., rather than learning activities picked haphazardly. Through this pedagogy, Magoma (2016) says that learners get chances to learn and apply skills and knowledge from a variety of subject areas, such as the linkages between communication and the arts, the humanities and social studies, mathematics and the natural sciences, music and the arts, etc.

This pedagogy is built on the idea of helping learners become competent in all areas of life, in this case, language use. In their instructions, teachers are required to use communicative teaching strategies to give learners chances to use the English language both orally and in writing. To do this, it emphasises practical and hands-on learning activities for learners through the use of a learner-centred approach. In a CLT setting, learners learn to communicate by communicating. When combined with SLT, learners get opportunities to learn in a variety of ways—learning from one another through observation, for instance. Learners become more creative and imaginative as a result of integration situations (MoNESR: Third Year Post: Basic, Burundi, 2017 Edition).

Learners are expected to learn life skills through integration pedagogy, using the English language communicatively, for instance, in all domains of life. The MoNESR stated that English is a language that is used for communication purposes, both at the level of the EAC, of which Burundi is a member, and on an international scale. Learners are entitled to make compositions independently and express themselves orally about everyday life situations, sticking to the context and function provided (MoNESR, Teacher's Guide, Edition 2017, Languages Section: English, 2nd Year

Post-Basic). Burundian post-basic school leavers are expected, according to integration pedagogy, to be able to:

i. communicate in a range of functional situations;

ii. be able to document and search for information in English;

iii. have good linguistic knowledge, allowing free oral and written production;

iv. become immersed in the cultural, literary, and artistic aspects of the English language (MoESR, 2014).

To reach that post-basic learners' exit profile, there is a number of competencies to be developed annually. The competences to develop for second-year learners in post-basic school in the languages section are the following:

1. Oral competence

By the end of the 2nd year post-basic, a learner will be able to:

i. React orally in two minutes to an issue presented in the passage and a visual aid by producing a descriptive text on his or her own;

ii. React orally in two minutes to an issue presented in the passage and a visual aid by producing an explanatory text on his or her own

2. Writing competence

By the end of the 2nd year post-basic, each learner will be able to:

i. Produce a 250-word descriptive written text about an everyday life situation using description-bound resources.

ii. Produce a 250-word explanatory written text about an everyday life situation using explanatory-bound resources.

The competencies of the year for third-year learners in post-basic school in the languages section are the following:

1. Oral competence

By the end of the 3rd year post-basic, a learner will be able to produce orally, in a communicative situation, an argumentative exposé of at least three minutes referring to a written passage using various resources related to argumentation.

2. Writing competence

By the end of the 3rd year post-basic, a learner will be able to produce by writing an argumentative text of 250 words in a communicative situation referring to a written passage using various resources related to argumentation (MoNESR. Teacher's Guide, Edition 2017, Languages Section: English, 3rd Year Post-Basic).

Concerning the most relevant teaching aids proposed in the post-basic English curriculum, they are related to audio support (a text read by the teacher or sound material if possible), written support, and visual support (MoESR, 2014). However, what appropriate teaching materials should be used is not well defined. In a few words, this post-basic English curriculum is based on the pedagogy of integration, which puts learners at the centre of instructions. Through it, the post-basic school leavers trained under the Burundian education system are expected to finish their studies with the exit profile of an individual shaped by knowledge, know-how, and interpersonal skills (Law N°1/19 of September 10, 2013; Article 7). As this curriculum focuses on developing three language skills, mainly oral, written, and reading skills, the different oral, written, and reading comprehension tasks given are not an end in themselves but rather one of the steps in the English language acquisition process (MoNESR: Third Year Post-Basic. Burundi, 2020 Edition).

1.3 Burundi East African Community Adherence and its Curriculum Changes

Burundi became a member of the EAC in June 2007 (Republic of Burundi, Low N01/08/June 30th, 2007). The ultimate reason for joining the EAC was to cooperate in all spheres of life, including education. The EAC aims at broadening and deepening collaboration among the partner states, among others in political, economic, and social fields, for their mutual benefit (East African Community, https://www.mea. gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/east-african-community-april-2011.pdf). In order to harmonise educational and teacher preparation systems among country members, the EAC advocated for the creation of a framework for the free movement and exchange of teachers in partner countries.

In the same vein, EAC partner states agreed to harmonise the EAC systems and training curriculum. To that purpose, conducting a regional study to harmonise educational objectives, philosophies, curricula, educational structures, policies, and legal frameworks is one of the steps to go through (https://www.eac.int/education). In their treaty, the EAC partner states have a shared vision to work on. As in EAC (2014: 8–9), the treaty calls for all signatory parties to:

   i.   Coordinate their human resource development policies and programmes;

  ii.   Develop such common programmes in basic, intermediate and tertiary education and a general programme for adult and continuing education in the partner states as would promote the emergence of well trained personnel in all sectors relevant to the aims and objectives of the community;

 iii.   Harmonize curricula, examination, certification and accreditation of education and training institutions in the partner states through the joint action of the relevant national bodies charged with the preparation of such curricula;

iv. Encourage and support the mobility of students and teachers within the community;

v. Exchange information and experience on issues common to the educational systems in partner States; and

vi. Collaborate in putting in place education and training programs for people with special needs and other disadvantaged groups (EAC, 2014).

Burundi has embarked on a series of educational reforms within the framework of its educational plans in order to stay abreast of the EAC harmonisation clauses in education. Since formally joining the EAC in 2007, the educational system has observed many reforms. One of the significant reforms is the introduction of English and Swahili in public primary schools beginning with the 2005–2006 school year. Another important reform is the structure change in the educational system, which goes along with the appellation change. Primary education became "basic schools" for "Ecoles Fondamentales" in French, and secondary school, otherwise "Ecoles Post Fondamentales" in French, changed into "post-basic schools" (Decree of September 10th, 2013). The national syllabus has been revised starting with lower secondary materials (cycle 4, years 7, 8, and 9), after the same curriculum (per objective) had been used since 1989 at the primary level (Varly & Mazunya, 2018).

Thus, the new Burundi educational structure now follows the 9-3-3 system, in which 9 years stand for the compulsory basic school, followed by 3 years of post-basic school, and 3 years for a bachelor's degree. That new educational system was shifted from an old one that was structured on a 6-4-3-4 basis, that is, 6 years for primary school, 4 years for junior high school, 3 years for senior high school, and finally 4 years for undergraduate. Besides that, it is also worth mentioning that this curriculum

has been globally redesigned in terms of its goals, content, instructional methods, and evaluation procedures.

In line with the different changes made in Burundi's educational system, especially the introduction of the English language in the whole teaching system, some additional effort needs to be deployed in that domain in order to equip learners with communication skills for a wide range of employment opportunities. In that perspective, the government of Burundi wants its citizens to use the English language communicatively as they integrate into the EAC family in particular and the rest of the English-speaking world in general. To that end, learners' academic achievement in the English language should be fostered. Since there are many factors affecting learners' academic achievement (El-Omari, 2016; Kotut, 2016; Simba, 2019), this research looked at the instructional influences to find out how they affect learners' academic achievement in the English language.

1.4 Problem Statement

The ultimate goal of every educational institution worldwide is to strive for learners' academic excellence. Since the introduction of teaching English language in basic school in Burundi in the 2005–2006 school year, the Burundi government expected that all post-basic school leavers would be able to use the English language communicatively in all spheres of life (MoNESR: Teacher's Guide, Edition 2017, Languages Section: English, 3rd Year Post-Basic). To that end, the Burundi government began to heavily invest in education. This included, among other things, building schools to mitigate the influence of the growing number of learners, organising in-service training for teachers, producing instructional resources, hiring teachers, and much more (World Bank Document, 2018).

Nevertheless, despite all the concerted and laudable efforts the country has deployed to reach outstanding learners' academic achievement, it is still to be desired, especially in English language use. The low level of English communication among post-basic school leavers is wanting in the languages section based on the scant existing research on Burundi's post-basic schools. It was observed that the vast majority of Burundi post-basic school leavers from the languages section remain unable to communicate in English fluently, which puts them at a disadvantage on both a regional and international scale (Nduwimana, 2020). In the same context, the work by Mbonigaba & Muhimpundu (2018) shows that Burundian post-basic school learners fail to communicate accurately and fluently in the English language. Similarly, it was also found that post-basic school learners finish their studies without being able to show their English competence in communication (Nimpoza, 2018).

In the eyes of the researcher, this situation is a serious threat to the country in terms of English use in general. Against this backdrop, an evaluation of the current curriculum is more than necessary. If nothing is done about the curriculum in question, it will not be easy to identify where the problem of a low level of communication in English comes from, and that situation is likely to jeopardise English learners' academic performance. Therefore, with the prevailing aforementioned background in mind, it was found viable to carry out a study to evaluate instructional influence on learners' achievement in post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi in order to check how far it impacts learners' achievement.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

In the light of the foregoing discussion regarding the background to this study, the purpose of this study was to undertake an evaluation of the instructional influences of the post-basic school English curriculum on learners' achievement in Burundi.

1.6 Research Objectives

Based on the purpose aforesaid, the objectives of this study were the following:

   i.   To find out how the classroom learning environment influences learners' achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi

  ii.   To explore the extent to which teacher knowledge and skills influence learners' achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi

 iii.   To analyse the effectiveness of the teaching methods used in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi

  iv.   To evaluate the extent to which the instructional materials used in the post-basic English curriculum influence learners' achievement in Burundi

   v.   To assess the extent to which the assessment methods affect learners' achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi

1.7 Research Questions

In line with the above research objectives, this study was guided by the following research questions:

   i.   How does the classroom learning environment influence learners' achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi?

  ii.   How do the teacher's knowledge and skills influence learners' achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi?

 iii.   How effective are the teaching methods used in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi?

iv. To what extent does the availability and use of instructional materials in the post-basic English language curriculum influence learners' achievement in Burundi?

v. To what extent do assessment methods affect learners' achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi?

1.8 Justification of the Study

The curriculum is an important and central guide that determines and gives a path to the attainment of educational goals as it clarifies what is required for that aim. It was observed that the majority of post-basic school leavers in languages section in Burundi have low level of English communication skills (Mbonigaba & Muhimpundu, 2018; Nimpoza, 2018; Nduwimana, 2020). In the same way, lecturers in English departments at the universities of Burundi (UB and ENS) complain about the low academic performance in English language communication. Therefore, prompted by the prevailing situation on the ground, the idea of evaluating the current English curriculum for post-basic school came to mind.

Since instructional influences are crucial factors in determining learners' achievement, this study is more than necessary. The researcher decided to make an evaluation of how far instructional factors influence learners' achievement in order to determine which factor(s) is/are impeding learners from communicating effectively in English. It is important to note that, to the best of our knowledge, no research evaluating the instructional influences of the post-basic school English curriculum on learners' achievement in Burundi has been conducted so far.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This study will be of great importance to many people in the educational sphere around the world in a number of ways. First of all, the Ministry of Education in Burundi, as well as other Ministries of Education in other countries, will get a lot of information based on the findings. It will give them constructive feedback on how the English curriculum for post-basic school was implemented, as well as any pitfalls encountered, so that they can work on them to improve their respective curricula. In that regard, the Burundi government will receive an overview of the entire curriculum in general, that is, how the classroom learning environment of the post-basic English curriculum is, how prepared they were in terms of curriculum preparation, which strategies and techniques were used, and how far the intended objectives were attained.

Secondly, teachers of English in Burundi, together with other teachers from other countries who are using the same system, will also get an insight into their teaching strategies and techniques. The findings of this study will be a mirror of the teaching methods and instructional materials used and will uncover their appropriateness or weaknesses. In that way, teachers will know which instructional strategy to use, which material to choose, if it is worth using it or not and consequently improve their teaching performance going forward for the sake of the learner.

Furthermore, curriculum designers all over the world will be able to learn how far instructional influences shape learners' academic performance. Consequently, that will portray which variables are neglected or overlooked and work on them accordingly.

Moreover, this study will be useful to the first beneficiaries of the curriculum—students—in that they will get opportunities to be taught through a well-revised

curriculum tailored to their needs and levels, which will lead to the development of their English language communication skills. Last but not least, it is hoped that this study will assist other researchers in their academic journeys concerning curriculum evaluation and that they will use it as a reference in addition to contributing to the literature.

1.10 Scope of the Study

As indicated by the research topic of this study, the scope of this study did not extend beyond the parameters within which this study is designed to work. The study restricted itself to the instructional influences in Burundi's post-basic English language curriculum to evaluate how far they influence learners' achievement. The instructional influences encompass classroom learning environment, teacher knowledge and skills, instructional methods, instructional materials, and assessment methods. This study was carried out in public post-basic schools with language sections located in Bujumbura municipality, in the second and third post-basic school years, to be precise. Bujumbura municipality was chosen because it is an area where many post-basic schools with language sections can be found. Furthermore, Bujumbura municipality is a melting pot where all school types and features can be found throughout the country. To that end, 32 schools were used as the population of this study, where learners' questionnaires, teachers' interviews, and classroom observations were employed as data collection tools. Further, the present study employed two theories: the theory on Communicative Language Teaching for the 21st Century by Savignon (2001), together with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) (1977), and used a descriptive research design.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

Since this study was limited to one province, Bujumbura municipality, though it may have all the characteristics or features of other schools in other provinces, the results may not be generalizable to the other provinces due to the possible variables dependent on their settings.

1.12 Assumptions of the Study

Throughout this study, it was assumed that all post-basic teachers of English were qualified to teach English at the post basic level. Moreover, it was assumed that all teachers of English at the post-basic school level in Burundi were trained in using CLT methods and that SLT was taken into account as well. Another assumption was that all respondents, both teachers and learners, would willingly participate in this research with their consent and provide reliable information.

1.13 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by two theories: the theory of communicative language teaching (CLT) for the 21st century (Savignon, 2001) and the Social Learning Theory (SLT) by Bandura (1977). CLT is an approach that claims that second and foreign language instruction should focus on developing students' communicative competence, which involves the expression, interpretation, and meaning-negotiation processes (Savignon, 1997). Some of the core tenets of CLT can be summarised in the following lines: Language teaching, as outlined by Savignon (2002:6), is based on a view of language as communication, either in written or oral form in non-test situations. As a learner is put at the centre of instruction, CLT states that learners should be actively using language to accomplish tasks, taking into consideration the setting, which is crucial in determining speakers' communication skills. In the

learning environment, the CLT captivates students' interest in learning by including novel, engaging, interactive, and authentic learning activities and resources. In such a situation, learners get to work together towards a common goal, share knowledge and ideas, negotiate meaning, get help from the interlocutor, and then get feedback on their language production. To put it more simply, the setting should be conducive to learning. That is why Corder (1990:111) underlines it in saying that "learning can only take place in an appropriate environment, and it is commonplace that it is the teacher's job to create a favourable learning environment," which provides learners with opportunities to engage in real-world activities in communicative ways.

According to Medgyes (1990), for the CLT to be effective, a teacher must possess outstanding skills and knowledge. More specifically, according to Brown (2001) and Alamri (2018), a teacher should have the following four qualities, which are among other influential factors in a learner's success: technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities, which are among other influential factors in a learner's achievement. In addition to that, CLT continually advises teachers and learners to look for instructional aids and resources in their present living surroundings, societies, and communities (Dos Santos, 2017b; Tweedie & Johnson, 2018; Dos Santos, 2020). Simply put, those instructional aids and resources should be authentic in order to reflect the demands and conditions of our daily lives.

Another tenet of CLT, referring to the view of Savignon (2002:6), is that CLT acknowledges and accepts diversity as a component of language growth and use, and the use of language variety is recognised as a model for learning and teaching.

Moreover, CLT contends that there is clearly no "one size fits all" method. That is, there aren't any fixed methodologies or established sets of techniques. The use of

blended communicative strategies is advised. CLT may currently be seen and recognised, according to Nguyen (2010: 209), as an inclusive approach to language teaching that incorporates numerous approaches and methods, reasons for learning English, types of teachers, and the needs of individual classrooms and learners themselves. CLT is learner-centred approach and it puts emphasis on communication in real-life settings. Consequently, it aids teaching and learning processes by boosting their power and vitality (Alamri, 2018). Through it, different instructional activities are regularly used, like role-playing, drama, classroom presentations, group discussions, etc., which allow learners and even their teachers to interact not only with the teaching tools but also with the teaching and learning environment, and in such a way, real communication skills are promoted.

The overall goal of CLT is to engage learners in conversation in order to improve their communicative competence. It is premised, as Nunan (2013) puts it, on the fundamental principle that learners must not only learn to create statements about the experiential world but also gain the ability to use language to get things done (Tizreena, 2019). It refers to both procedures and goals in classroom learning, and its core tenet is the development of communicative competence (Savignon, 2017). This teaching approach, according to Cook (2003), is completely different from the conventional ones as it is rooted in a shift "from emphasis on form to emphasis on communication," which enables teachers to teach language use rather than language usage.

Staying on the same line of thinking, assessments are also pointed out as factors that influence a learner's achievement. Based on CLT, they should be communicative. By "communicative assessment," the researcher here refers to an assessment that helps

learners learn from it (assessment for learning/formative assessment). Through feedback, learners get to know how far they have come in terms of language use and get an overall picture of what to focus on in order to move forward. Such kinds of assessments influence learners afterwards and push them to study accordingly. It was found that formative evaluation encourages learners to develop their own "learning to learn" abilities and fosters high academic performance in order to increase their achievement levels (OECD, 2004; Hutchinson & Young, 2011).

In regard to what precedes, it is obvious that CLT takes into account different factors that influence learners' achievement in the learning sphere. That is to show how important this theory is in a country like Burundi, where communicative competence is prioritised in English language teaching. It falls in line with the policy of teaching English in Burundi as it has a rich and solid theoretical base that appeals to eclectic methods. Thus, in the light of the foregoing theory, instructional influences should be leveraged in order to help learners develop communication skills in the target language, which is English in our case.

Regarding the Social Learning Theory (SLT) by Bandura (1977), it is a more natural approach theory that enables people learn from their environment, in which they learn from one another. That is achieved by observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviour, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. It addresses how environmental and cognitive factors affect a person's overall behaviour and learning performance. The SLT aims to show that there are numerous ways in which people can learn. It is true that people often make decisions based on their own reflections, but their environment has a much greater influence on how they behave and what they learn (Janse, 2018; Alshobramy, 2019). Bandura (1977) stated that behaviour is

learned from the environment through the process of observational learning before being imitated.

Prior to imitation, there is a cognitive or mental process called the mediational process. However, SLT, often referred to as the "observational learning theory," acknowledges that every seen-behaviour is successfully learned. Consequently, the success of social learning can depend on the variables present in both the model and the learner. To be more precise, the model can either be the teacher or the learner. To clarify that, Bandura (1977:27) elaborates on this point by stating that learning would be immensely difficult, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely exclusively on the results of their own actions to guide them on what to do. Fortunately, the majority of human behaviour can be learned through observation and modelling. By observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and this coded information serves as a guide for action on subsequent occasions. He also highlighted that, to be effective, there should be a room for practice in order to rehearse what they have seen or heard. According to him, this activity should be performed well in social contexts in order to get improved via reactions and feedback from others.

For that reason, there are some requirements and steps that need to be taken into account in the modelling or mediational process:

i. *Attention:* Based on their models, pupils need to pay attention to or concentrate on a given task in order to learn (adapt or imitate) the behaviour. Learning cannot occur until the learner imitates the model. Those models could be either their teachers or fellow learners, or anyone else who can inspire them as well.

ii. *Retention:* At this stage, people internalise information as they learn it before repeating or reproducing it. Later, when we want to respond to a situation similarly to how we observed it, we can use that saved information. However, the influence of a model largely depends on how effectively a person (the learner) can retain and remember the behaviour or action they have observed or heard once the model is no longer present or available.

iii. *Reproduction:* When necessary, we reproduce our previously acquired behaviour or knowledge. Our ability to respond can be developed by our respective mental or physical practises. At this point, the person puts what they have observed (watched) or heard into practice.

iv. *Motivation:* Any task must have motivation to be completed. People are more likely to perform the modelled action if incentives and prizes are provided. It is important to remember that in order to imitate or follow the model; motivation must be both extrinsic and intrinsic. It's a kind of reinforcement.

SLT is very important in language learning, as research demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between its use and the development of learners' communication abilities in speaking and writing (Samsudin, Shamsudin, & Arif, 2017; Alshobramy, 2019). Furthermore, it was also found that SLT makes it easier to create settings that empower learners and encourage them to participate more actively during the learning process (Horsburgh and Ippolito, 2018). That is the outcome of being exposed to and impacted by multiple learning sources, different teaching strategies, teamwork, group discussions, peer coaching, giving presentations in front of their peers, etc., where they can learn from one another (Alshobramy, 2019). Through observation and listening, they get connected, learn from each other, and help one another along the way. For instance, learners collaborate, communicate, and exchange ideas to solve

some challenging problems. It is important to note that, in addition to being facilitators, teachers can also serve as peer coaches for students.

In a nutshell, the two theories complement each other and share many features. To start with, they both put the learner at the centre of instruction. Apart from that, the CLT is based on a multidisciplinary approach, which involves the use of different teaching strategies and various teaching resources. Similar to this, SLT, which shows that people can learn in multiple ways, suggests the use of different teaching strategies and requires the availability of various teaching materials in the teaching and learning process. Additionally, it demonstrates how the learning environment influences learners' achievement.

Combined, the two theories are very important and complementary in developing or increasing communicative competence to cater to the needs of each learner in class. As a result, from a theoretical standpoint, a conceptual framework can be developed. To that end, the researcher first of all looked at the independent variables. An independent variable is a variable that a researcher manipulates in order to cause a change, effect, or influence to occur on another variable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Burke & Christensen, 2014), which is a dependent variable. The independent variables dealt with in this study are the instructional influences, which are namely the classroom learning environment of post-basic schools in Burundi, teacher knowledge and skills, instructional materials, instructional methods, and assessment methods. The dependent variable is the learners' achievement in the English language.

Apart from independent and dependent variables, there are other factors or variables that may indirectly influence the learner's achievement and that cannot be put aside—intervening variables. An intervening or mediating variable is a variable that occurs

between two other variables in a causal chain (Burke & Christensen, 2014). In the study at hand, those variables are learners' and teachers' attitudes and learners' ability and characteristics. Putting all the information above together, the researcher came up with the conceptual framework as reflected below.

1.14 Conceptual Framework

The figure below is a visual representation depicting the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent one.
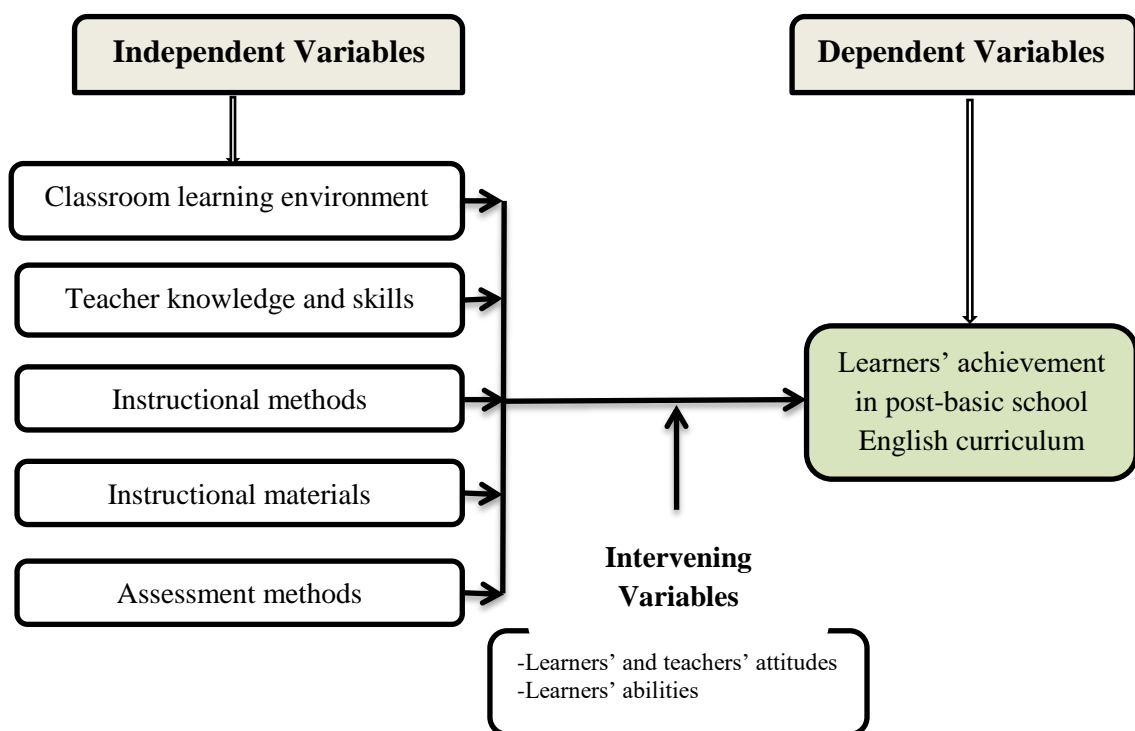
Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: The researcher

From the conceptual framework, the relationships between the different variables are made clear. In other words, we can understand how these factors or variables participate in the learners' outcomes as a dependent variable. The influential variables, otherwise independent variables, dealt with in this study are classroom learning environment, teacher knowledge and skills, instructional materials,

instructional methods, and assessment methods. These ones determine the nature of learners' achievement. According to literature, however, learners' outcomes may also be influenced by other factors with minor effects known as "intervening variables." In this study, learners' and teachers' attitudes and learners' abilities are singled out.

1.15 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Assessment: Assessment in a curriculum is the process of gathering information about a student's learning. It is a way to have an opinion on learners' ability, achievement, proficiency, or progress. This includes a variety of ways to document what the student knows, understands, and can do with their knowledge and skills. It is the process of determining whether or not the expected learning outcomes or objectives have been met. It is done through the use of tests and examinations.

Basic School: In Burundi's education system, it is the primary school level, which spans 9 years. It starts from grade one and goes up to grade nine. It is attended by learners ranging in age from approximately six to fifteen years old.

Classroom learning environment: The classroom learning environment is the distinguishing features of the school or the classroom interior setting, environment, or atmosphere, which informs about the educational, environmental, and social factors within a given classroom.

Communicative Approach: An approach to language teaching that is based on the principle that learning a language involves learners communicating in real meaning.

Communicative Competence: It is a term used to mean the ability to understand and use proper social behaviour, and it necessitates the user's active participation in the

production of the target language. Here, it is used to refer to the capacity learners have to use the target language appropriately in different life situations.

Curriculum: It refers to "the sum total of all learning experiences and opportunities that are provided to learners in the context of formal and non-formal education" (Ngwenya, 2019). In this work at hand, this study was centred on the post-basic school English curriculum for Burundi learners' achievement in English.

Evaluation: The terms assessment and evaluation are used synonymously. It refers to a systematic process of determining the criteria and standards for judging quality and deciding whether those standards should be relative or absolute, collecting relevant information, and applying the standards to determine value, quality, utility, effectiveness, or significance (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). In the classroom, evaluation refers to the process of verifying what students have learned in relation to the desired instructional objectives. This study is an evaluation of the instructional influences of the post-basic school English curriculum on learners' achievement in Burundi.

Instructional Influences: In this context, instructional influences are referred to as "in school" or "school-based" instructional factors that influence learners' achievement.

Instructional Materials: There are those materials used in the teaching process. They include but are not limited to teachers' guides, learners' books, reading books, television, radio, video, computers, microphones, handouts, head projectors, etc.

Instructional Methods: Methods are the instructional decisions, approaches, procedures, and routines that teachers use to engage all students in meaningful learning.

Learner-centred: Also known as student-centred, activities are based on the interests, needs, and desires of the students. It is an approach that requires learners to take an active part in the lesson.

Learners' Achievement: It measures the amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time. It refers to a learner's performance in academic realms such as reading, language arts, math, etc. In this work at hand, it refers to the ability of a learner to use the English language in a communicative way.

Learning Environment: It describes the various physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which learners learn. In this work, "learning environment" refers to a classroom where interactions between learners, teachers, teaching materials, and the learning environment itself occur, as this study is limited to school-based instructional influences.

Post-Basic School: In Burundi's education system, post basic school is the secondary school that comes just after basic school. It spans three years. Learners in Forms 1 through 3 are estimated to be between the ages of sixteen and eighteen.

Teacher Knowledge and Skills: It is a body of professional knowledge that encompasses both knowledge of general pedagogical principles and skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught. Its emphasis may be on one or more of the following kinds of teacher knowledge: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds (Shulman, 1986, p. 8). In relation to what precedes, this study shall investigate what teachers know and are able to do in the teaching sphere.

1.16 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the historical background of the study, which shed light on the problem statement before tackling the purpose of the study. Moreover, it highlighted the objectives of the study along with their corresponding research questions. It also illustrated the significance and assumptions of the study. The scope and limitations of the study were also discussed. At the end of this chapter, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks were presented before wrapping up with the operational definitions of key terms.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

Before delving into a review of existing literature on instructional influences, this chapter provides various definitions of curriculum before diving into a review of the literature on the topic in general. Instructional influences are to be understood as school-based instructional factors. When unpacked, they encompass elements such as teacher knowledge and skills, instructional materials, instructional methods, the learning environment (classroom learning environment), and assessment methods. These factors were investigated to discover how far they influence post-basic school English learners' achievement in Burundi. At the very end of this chapter, identified research gaps were highlighted.

2.2 Curriculum Defined

Given that it has been described by many authors and researchers in various contexts and historical periods, the term "curriculum" in education appears challenging to define succinctly and unambiguously. For example, Ornstein & Hunkins's (1998:1) claim that "curriculum as a subject of study has been defined as elusive, fragmented, and confusing" reflects this. The Latin word "currere," which means "racecourse" or "racing the educational race to obtain a course in an educational institution or system," is the etymological source of the word "curriculum" (Syomwene et al., 2017). From the plethora of existing definitions of the term "curriculum," some are defined below in the following lines. Erarslan (2016:11), quoting Bharvad (2010:72), defines curriculum as "the sum of all experiences, which are to be supplied in an educational institution." It is also conceived as "a decision-making activity that blends the intention and the process by which the intention becomes operationalized into

classroom reality." This reality, however, necessitates negotiation and modification because of a range of contextual factors (Thornton & Chapman, 2000, as cited in Erarslan, 2016). In the same point of view, Ornstein & Hunkins (1998:10) define curriculum as a "plan for acquisition or a written document that provides techniques for reaching desired goals or ends." Drawing on Ornstein and Hunkins (1998:10), many authors, notably Saylor (1981) and Pratt (1980), combine the idea by claiming that a curriculum is a plan or a set of organised formal education or what is intended to achieve, containing learning opportunities for people to be educated.

In its most simplistic form, Doll (1996:15) on his side, as cited by Hlebowitsh (2005:3), states that "the curriculum of a school is the formal and informal material and process through which learners gain information and understanding, develop skills, and change attitudes, appreciations, and values under the auspices of that school." In addition to that, curriculum can be viewed as the organised interaction of students with educational resources, teaching and learning tools, and various systems for assessing or verifying the extent to which the learning objectives have been met (McBrien, 1997). Differently put, we might say that curriculum can be taken as a vehicle or a device through which the intended policies or goals of a particular country are put into action and become concrete in educational contexts. In that sense, it is regarded as a web of interrelated teaching and learning activities put together in order to reach certain learning outcomes.

In a nutshell, though the term "curriculum" appears to have different meanings, we may infer that it is a kind of signpost that directs teachers on what to do, how to approach it, and when to do it and why. That signpost serves as an umbrella under which important concepts or terms such as teaching aims, goals, and objectives,

content, as well as learning experiences can be considered without excluding assessment methods. In all cases, what matters in education is that the educational goals or objectives of a particular country are attained in one way or another, as long as the means by which those goals or objectives will be reached are clearly elaborated and stated in that "document" or "program." In other words, the content, or "what to teach," and the "how to teach" it (the teaching methods or strategies to use) should be well stated and organised. More importantly, it should respond to the needs and current demands of the respective societies being served.

2.3 Instructional Influences

Instruction is a combination of teaching and learning activities. It cannot be independent of the interactions between teachers and learners (Akdeniz, 2016). Instructional influences are then regarded here as a combination of in-school teaching factors that influence learners' achievement. Referring to the view of Magulod (2017), those factors are the ones within a given school or classroom that affect a learner's academic achievement. We can mention, for instance, teachers, students, materials, teaching methods, the learning environment (classroom learning environment), and assessment methods as examples of factors that influence learning success. Then, this section highlights the components that fall under instructional influences, mainly teacher knowledge and skills, instructional materials, instructional methods, the learning environment, and assessment methods. Finally, this section is wrapped up by a brief discussion on learners' achievement before dealing with the third chapter.

2.3.1 Teacher knowledge and skills and their implication to learners' academic achievement

Shulman (1986) in Ben-Peretz (2011:1-2) agrees that teacher knowledge has recently drawn the attention of policymakers and educators, which has attracted the attention of scholars in global education. At first glance, the term "teacher knowledge" looks straightforward at first glance, but do we really know its meaning? If we do, do we actually know its importance in education? Let us explore each of them in the paragraphs that follow.

Defined as "a body of professional knowledge that encompasses both knowledge of general pedagogical principles and skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught" (Ben-Peretz 2011), Diezmann & Watters (2015) mention that it is a body of knowledge that assists teachers in adapting the subject matter or material they are teaching in ways that help a diverse range of students with varying prior knowledge and skills learn more effectively (Bradfield, 2017). Drawing on the definitions above, it is obvious that teacher knowledge is a multidimensional construct, as it encompasses all that is related to what a teacher has to know about the subject to teach and why to teach it. In addition, he or she must understand why and who to teach (learners).

In an educational setting, teacher knowledge is of paramount importance. It is a critical factor in determining students' success (Goldfeld et al., 2021). As we go through the literature, we now discover how crucial teacher knowledge is. It can be taken as a rolling wheel that enables learners to get connected to and meet their needs as the teaching and learning process unfolds, and that informs the learner's achievement. Teacher knowledge is centred on helping teachers fulfil their primary

responsibility: teaching the subject matter using suitable pedagogical concepts and abilities (Ben-Peretz, 2011).

It was observed that teachers with better content knowledge lead to higher learners' achievement (OECD, 2012). Likewise, many other studies keep pinpointing the importance of teacher knowledge in education, especially on the learners' side, by acknowledging that a learner's achievement increases or decreases according to teacher knowledge and skills. This is exemplified in the work undertaken by Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005), and Brooks (2012) as cited by Téllez & Mosqueda (2015) when they underline the critical importance of the teacher's knowledge in learners' academic achievement. It was discovered that it is necessary to search for the ideal combination of teacher knowledge and skills together with other attributes or teacher qualities as they contribute to increasing students' achievement. That implies that the lack of one or another competence in English teaching will, for example, negatively affect learners' academic achievement. An illustration of this is the study carried out by Téllez & Mosqueda (2015), in which they argue that teachers who lack sufficient knowledge of English learners' assessment are likely to have their English language students doing work that is not appropriate for them or not at their level. It may be either too simple or too complicated, and consequently inefficient.

On the contrary, the same authors went on to say that efficient teaching and learning result from teachers with expert knowledge and abilities or skills who are able to determine their pupils' language levels and have them work based on their instructional capacity or competencies.

From the reviewed studies above, no one can ignore the correlation between teacher knowledge and skills and learners' achievement. The latter will increase or decrease

depending on how well or poorly equipped teachers are in matters of knowledge and skills. It is true that teacher knowledge and skills are not the only determinants of learners' achievement, but looking at the role teachers play in education, they are one of the most influential factors in that area. Teachers' front-line interactions with students are more linked to student learning outcomes than others involved in driving educational missions (Pang & Miao, 2017). Without teachers, teaching will have another meaning. In a few words, the lack of appropriate teacher knowledge and skills in education will lead to low levels of learners' achievement. Seeking to understand it more, let us explore together what teacher knowledge and skills imply in relation to what teachers should know to successfully go about their teaching and learning activities.

The issue of knowing what a competent teacher should know and be able to do—that is, teacher knowledge and skills and their implications in education—has been dealt with by many scholars and authors. Shulman (1987), for instance, indicates that there are seven categories of teacher knowledge, including content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of educational contexts, pedagogical content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values (Ben-Peretz, 2011; Mulholland, 2014; Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2015; and Shing et al., 2015).

Drawing on Shulman (1987), conclusions can be drawn on how each of the foregoing categories is related to the learner's achievement.

The lack of one or another category in teacher knowledge and skills will end up impeding the success of teaching and learning, after which the learner's achievement becomes questionable. As a result, none is more important than the others because

they are all interdependent or symbiotically linked in influencing students' achievement. Combined, those categories make up what we can call the "qualities of a teacher." A knowledgeable and skilled teacher is a valuable asset in the educational system because he or she is well-versed not only in subject matter but also in pedagogy. Under this condition, learners' achievement is also likely to increase due to the positive correlation between teacher knowledge and skills and learners' achievement (Darling-Hammond and Ball, 1998; Ferguson and Ladd, 1996; Sanders and Horn, 1994; Wright, Horn, and Sanders, 1997, as cited by Odden et al., 2001).

As we wrap up this section, it is crystal clear that enhancing educational quality is one of the biggest concerns in the field of education in terms of helping learners acquire and improve skills for the 21st century competitive environment. In the view of the OECD (2020), it is mandated that teachers in the modern era are expected to improve students' 21st-century skills in increasingly diverse classrooms, guided by expanding research on teaching and learning. … To do so, they are required to apply updated teaching strategies, use creative teaching techniques and practices, and mobilise various sources of knowledge. Then, one may ask himself, "Where do teachers get and develop the required knowledge and skills to help learners meet their needs?" To address that question, let us explore together the topic "teacher preparation for EFLT" in the section below.

The importance of teacher preparation is a hotly debated topic in the educational field (Goldhaber et al. 2013). To answer many issues haunting the education sector, like how student achievement can be increased, teachers' preparation to help prospective teachers get ready for the teaching profession, and the like, is of the essence. Teacher training is defined as a process of helping instructors acquire new knowledge that

leads to more effective classroom instructional practices (Farrell, 2008, as cited in Sunyakul & Teo, 2020). In other words, it can be understood as the various trainings that students or teacher candidates must complete as part of a certain institutional or educational requirement. That is mostly done through training programs. In the view of Omar (2014), a training program is "a process by which people are taught skills and given the necessary knowledge or attitude to enable them to carry out their responsibilities to the required standard in their present job and to undertake greater and more demanding roles for effective job performance." To be a professional teacher, we, as a researcher, opine that prospective teachers should pass through three stages, which are in-class preparations (finishing coursework related to teaching), pre-service teacher education or practicum, and in-service training for professional development.

A number of studies have shown that teacher preparation has a positive and significant impact on learners' achievement (Boyd et al., 2008; Goldhaber et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2021). Moreover, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2014) also confirms that teachers who are well prepared produce learners with higher academic achievements. Another study done in Pakistan showed that teachers' training influences learners' achievement (Sultan & Shafi, 2014).

From teacher preparation, we can deduce that well-prepared teachers gain enough knowledge and skills that enable them make complex or difficult teaching look effortless regardless the material in question and the level of learners. If a given country wants teachers to be teachers by profession, not by name, they should train them regularly, whenever needed. To that end, teaching programs should be revisited whenever necessary to update the knowledge and skills of teachers in order to

improve teaching and learning, which leads to better job performance (sound learners' achievement, for instance). That's why training teachers, be it pre-service or in-service, is necessary to upgrade their knowledge and skills based on the different trends of this evolving world.

Looking at what the literature above provides, we can see how important and influential teacher preparation is in education. Though some effort has been deployed in education, the government of Burundi should put more strength into preparing teachers to get well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to meet learners' dreams.

2.3.2 Instructional materials and their implication to learners' academic achievement

The literature is replete with definitions of instructional materials. Onyeachu (2010) defines instructional materials as ways and means of making the teaching and learning process simple, more meaningful, and understandable. Additionally, the term "materials" encompasses anything that is utilised to make easy the learning of language (Tomlinson, 2001, as cited in Batd & Elald, 2016). Guthrie et al. (2017), on their side, define instructional materials as any object or tool used in the teaching process, such as books, other printed matter, video and audio recordings, digital content, and computer software.

In addition to that, Crystal (1987) and Tomlinson (2001) mention that the teaching materials may also encompass "linguistic, visual, auditory, or kinesthetic forms, which can be presented in print, through live performance or display, on a cassette, CD-ROM, DVD, smart board, or the internet" (Batd & Elald 2016). Relying on the definitions above, the term "instructional materials," otherwise known as "teaching

resources," can be understood as any tools or didactic materials designed to make the learning and teaching process possible. Like that, they enable teachers to make the lessons much clearer to enhance learners' academic achievement.

As we dive deeper into literature, we discover that instructional materials have a common role, regardless of their formats or types, in influencing the classroom teaching quality through different interactions to enhance communicative language use. Whatever function they may serve, the primary goal of instructional materials is to encourage learners to use the language communicatively (Iskandar, 2018). That is, they are created to support and promote effective teaching and learning experiences in the educational sphere, helping learners meet their dreams. Onyia (2013) emphasises it by stating that instructional materials are tools that assist not only teachers in delivering instructions effectively but also increase learners' academic achievement. Olokooba (2021) adds that they help learners gain real-world learning experiences.

The instructional materials are used to enhance the knowledge and abilities of learners while also keeping track of their information retention. Research by Edessa (2017) informs us that teaching materials enable learners to build the required knowledge and skills in order to grasp the realities that lead them to develop successful professional careers. In this way, they contribute to the overall growth and upbringing of learners. Furthermore, learners benefit in that they assist them in clarifying some important concepts by arousing and maintaining their interests, as well as providing them with opportunities to share important experiences for new learning, allowing the learning to become more permanent (Marbas, 2015).

Similarly, Mbeng's (2018) findings demonstrate that instructional materials encourage learners to actively participate in the learning process. They increase response to

questions, help learners improve communication competence, provide immediate feedback, and permit learners to increase attention in the classroom. Moreover, they also enable learners to quickly grasp the content and master the learned material, and as a result, their academic achievement is promoted.

Highlighting the significance of instructional materials, many other scholars dealt with the same topic and came up with a number of roles or advantages those materials play in education. Dike (1987), cited by Onyia (2013), takes them as alternative avenues of communication via which a teacher or instructor might obtain condensed information and make it more vivid for his learners. As research continues to prove that instructional materials play a tremendous role in language teaching, many authors have shown that the success of the language program depends on the teaching materials, demonstrating that they even create interest, curiosity, and motivation in learners to actively participate in learning as they cater to learners' various learning styles.

They also assist teachers in overcoming physical challenges, saving time, and supplying meaningful and useful information sources in the process of teaching (Pakkan, 1997, as cited by Batd & Elald, 2016; Işk, 2018; Olokooba, 2021; Okwelle & Allagoa, 2014, as cited by Tekir & Akar, 2020). Data from several sources has demonstrated that instructional materials affect learners' achievement. This is exemplified in the work undertaken by Nwike and Onyejegbu (2013), whose research findings prove that students who are taught using instructional materials perform better than those taught without them (Alkali et al. 2016).

In light of everything mentioned above, instructional resources play crucial roles in education as they help both teachers and learners in their teaching and learning

processes. What's more, apart from enhancing the teaching and learning process in education, instructional materials create opportunities for learners to engage in authentic learning through touching, feeling, and/or seeing them. Thus, how can teachers select the appropriate instructional materials to use?

A judicious selection of instructional materials in education is very important. Since they serve the purpose of aiding in the simplification of the learning process and making it practical, effective, and more understandable for students, instructional materials are not chosen haphazardly because they are thought of as the foundational tools that define the quality of education students receive in schools (Onyia, 2013). In choosing instructional materials, teachers are advised to choose the ones that are of good quality and adaptive to all learners, as recent research shows that the quality of instructional materials can also influence and create a big difference in learners' learning, meaning that their achievement is also implied (Bugler et al., 2017; Armstrong, 1994; and Gardner, 1993 in Tekir & Akar, 2020).

Moreover, the same authors advise that teachers should take into account learners' differences as their needs are totally different. The instructional materials should be tailored to what learners are expected to do in line with the national standards. Since choosing appropriate instructional materials is not that easy, what are the criteria teachers should take into consideration when selecting the quality of instructional materials? Many scholars and authors proposed some important criteria to take into account while selecting instructional materials. Bugler et al. (2017) propose the following:

1. Accuracy, visual appeal:

    a. no errors; correct information,

     b. well written, and

     c. strong visual appeal

2. Alignment to standards, depth of knowledge:

     a. aligned to standards,

     b. efficiently addresses standards,

     c. appropriate depth of knowledge, questions, and activities

3. Ease of use, support:

     a. Easy for teachers, students, and parents to use,

     b. complete set of instructions, materials, activities, assessments, and answers

     c. appropriate support for new teachers

4. Engagement, ability to meet student needs:

     a. Engagement: Sparks student interest; relevant,

     b. Differentiation: Appropriate material by skill level, language ability, cognitive capability, and learning style,

     c. Cultural and background knowledge: Culturally relevant; aligns with prior background knowledge,

     d. Diverse activities: Group and individual, hands-on, requires movement, longer investigations.

Furthermore, Guthrie et al., (2017) also proposed some general criteria to use in selecting and evaluating instructional materials of quality by saying that they should be:

     i. aligned to the curriculum and the objectives of the instructional program;

     ii. appropriate for recommended age/grade levels;

     iii. accurate in terms of content;

     iv. reflective of the pluralistic nature of a society in question;

v.   representative of differing viewpoints;

vi.   appropriate format for the subject matter;

vii.   recent copyright date as appropriate to the subject;

viii.   acceptable literary style and technical quality;

ix.   cost effective in terms of use.

In addition to that, Marbas (2015) suggests a number of factors to consider while selecting quality and appropriate instructional materials. She opines that educators should mind about:

i.   **Content**: they ought to be in line with the curriculum and standards. Additionally, they must be accurate, valid, and reliable with examples from the real or authentic world. Apart from being free from bias, they should also be tailored to the requirements and interests of every learner at every ability level. Like that, they improve the conceptual understanding of learners and stimulate their higher-order thinking skills.

ii.   **Equity and Accessibility:** They ought to be durable, easily stored and transported, and easily accessible to everyone. Materials should be easy to update, adapt, and customise to match the school's resources.

iii.   **Appropriateness**: The materials ought to be relevant for both the topic matter and the learner's capacity or levels of learning.

iv.   **Presentation**: the comprehensiveness of student and teacher resources, the alignment of teaching components, the organisation of the teaching resources, the readability of the teaching resources, the pacing of the content, and the ease of use and durability of materials.

v. **Learning**: Motivational techniques; teaching of a few "big ideas"; explicit instruction; direction and support; learner active participation; targeted teaching techniques; targeted assessment strategies

vi. **Cost**: they should not be expensive.

Teachers should first consider why they are selecting the educational materials they are using, regardless of which instructional tool they employ. As mentioned by Richards (2001:251) in Batd & Elald (2016), teachers are advised to be aware that instructional materials are typically used to serve as the foundation for much of the language input learners obtain and the language practice that takes place in the classroom.

In the light of what precedes, we can state that the instructor or teacher must first understand the needs and learning level of his or her learners, for whom the teaching materials are selected. Putting it another way, the instructor or teacher ought to select educational resources that address the demands for language learning and check if they are appropriate for the communicative needs of learners. More importantly, instructors should keep in mind that there are as many instructional materials as there are diverse objectives to attain.

To emphasise that, Hutchinson & Waters (1987), as cited in Batd & Elald (2016), assert that educational materials cannot be judged as good or bad. That is why, in the case of evaluating educational resources, teachers must make every effort to determine whether they are suitable or appropriate in the light of the purpose they are intended to attain. Then, teachers should choose educational materials that fall in line with learners' backgrounds and stay away from those that stereotype or create a kind

of discrimination among learners. It is also worth mentioning that teachers should be creative in developing the teaching materials.

To that end, they should not only use the materials availed to them but also be able to develop additional teaching materials in addition to what is provided to them by the schools or their respective institutions. Tomlinson (2001) made it clear in Batd & Elald (2016) when he said that "teachers are also material developers and ultimately responsible for the materials that their learners use." Another important point to remember is that these materials should be inspiring. In addition, they should not only be diverse in that they present various degrees of difficulty, but they also ought to encourage learners to use them. Furthermore, these educational resources should be significant and genuine. They should also be varied in order to accommodate individual learners' demands in terms of their uniqueness and diversity.

2.3.3 Instructional methods and their implication to learners' academic achievement

For more than a century, many English language teaching (ELT) researchers and academics have been preoccupied with the question of how to successfully teach and learn English (Tlfarlolu, 2020). According to Landy et al. (2020), quoting Cerghit (2006:46), a "method" is defined as "the assembly or the system of processes or modes of execution of the activities engaged in the learning process, integrated into a single flow of action, in order to attain the intended objectives."

In fact, it is an "overall strategy for systematic presentation based on a chosen approach," which means that a method is the practical manifestation of an approach through a procedure in a system. "It is referred to as the procedure inside an approach" (Gill & Kusum, 2017). In that way, it is understood as any teaching

manoeuvre that can be used to facilitate students' learning and satisfaction (Dorgu, 2015). Simply put, "teaching methods" can be defined as a type of technique teachers use to motivate and direct learners or a means of providing them with guidance and encouragement for learning.

In the realm of teaching and learning, teachers interact with their learners. In doing so, "teaching methods" denote different techniques that are employed by teachers to present their subject matter to the learners in the classroom in accordance with the educational goals to bring about learning (Dorgu, 2015). So, what are the different types of instructional methods teachers might use to make teaching and learning happen?

In the classroom setting, there are a number of teaching techniques that teachers can implement in their day-to-day activities to help learners learn. Examples include experimentation methods, discussion methods, and demonstration methods (Syomwene et al., 2017), which can be classified into two categories: teacher-centred and learner-centred methods. The first category encompasses lecturing and demonstration methods, while the second category includes discussion and presentation.

Starting with teacher-centred methods, Mascolo (2009) defines it as a teaching strategy that refers to imparting knowledge to learners in a setting where the instructor has the main responsibility (Serin, 2018). According to Muganga and Ssenkusu (2019), the teacher-centred method is perceived as "an educational system that relies upon rote learning and memorization." Most researchers agree that it is a technique through which teachers merely transmit the course content to learners in the form of handouts, notes, and lectures, which the learners would later memorise. This indicates

that the involvement of learners in the teaching and learning process is minimal to nonexistent. The method itself relies on behaviourist theory, which is based on the idea that behaviour changes are caused by external stimuli (Skinner, 1974, as cited in Serin, 2018). Its philosophy assumes that learners learn from external stimuli, in this case, teachers. Some examples of teacher-centered methods are demonstration and lecture methods, or expository methods.

Take the lecture method as an example and investigate its effects on student achievement. The lecture method, as argued by Kapur (2020), is thought to be the oldest type of instruction. It entails the teacher giving the students a steady stream of verbal information in a monologue style (Landy et al., 2020). It can also be described as a "process in which information passes from the notes of the lecturer into the notes of the student without passing through the minds of the latter" (Gilstrap & Martin, 1975, in Abdulbaki et al. 2018). This demonstrates how this method gives teachers more time to speak than it does their learners. Through it, teachers are more active than their learners, and the latter become docile listeners (Kapur, 2020), and this situation results in creating a high degree of passivity among learners. This teaching method is very far from the CLT method, which puts learners at the centre of instruction. Thus, one may ask himself what qualities teachers who use the lecture method should have.

Teachers who use this method ought to, as highlighted by Kapur (2020), be skilled communicators who can convey their ideas properly. On top of that, they should also carry out their tasks in a well-organized manner to promote student learning. On the other hand, the learners are expected to pay close attention and listen keenly to their teachers. Although the lecture method has some benefits, such as being economical in

terms of planning, flexible as it can be used with most subject areas, and straightforward to implement in class (Abdulbaki et al. 2018), it also presents many drawbacks from a learning theory standpoint. There is a large number of published studies (e.g., Djudin, 2018; Gibbs, 1981, as cited in Abdulbaki et al. (2018); Ibrahim et al. 2020) showing that learners who were taught using lecture methods show low achievement compared to other teaching methods.

Additionally, it was found that when teachers just use the lecture method in their teaching activities, it quickly creates a boredom feeling in learners, and as its implication, learners lose interest and enthusiasm for what instructors are teaching (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Obanya, 2004; Durosaro & Adgoke, 2011; Afurobi et al., 2015). Boja (2014), as cited in Ibrahim et al. (2020), also makes clear that lectures are not only useless but uninteresting as well. That is valid in that lecturing is primarily a one-way method of communication in that it does not involve significant learners' active learning participation (Abdulbaki et al. 2018), in which learners end up listening, writing, and writing down what they hear without or with less understanding. In short, it is a method focusing on the teacher rather than the learners, who are the first recipients of teaching and learning activities. They are therefore there to memorise what their teachers have given them. Because most of the learners are likely learning to pass the subject, there is a feeling that learners are simply learning to please their teachers, and as a result, they won't be able to apply what they have learned outside the classroom due to the lack of personal involvement in the learning process. The result, for example, in language learning is that they will be unable to use the language communicatively because they were not given a room for practice. To put it another way, their academic achievement will be low as they were not included in the teaching and learning process.

Even though that is the case, it is still beneficial to be aware that there are particular situations where lecture approaches are equally useful. That is when lecturers are well-prepared and account for the level of their learners. According to Westfood (2008:18), lecture tactics are a valid method of instruction if the primary goal of instruction is to provide learners with critical information. He also mentions that lectures are perfectly appropriate in colleges and upper levels of secondary education. In his view, learners under these circumstances are typically equipped with the sufficient study skills, attention spans, and self-management drive needed to benefit from this method. Likewise, Westfood (2008:19), quoting Good and Brophy (2008), admits that "lectures, when presented efficiently and enthusiastically, can spark attention, challenge students' thinking, and raise issues that students will wish to follow." Thus, teachers should take these factors into account when opting to use the method under discussion rather than using it simply because it is cheap and easy to use. In a few words, the younger the learners are, the less appropriate the lecture method becomes.

Contrarily, learner-centered methods place more attention on the experiences of learners than the prior method (teacher-centered), which placed more emphasis on teachers' experiences (Muganga & Ssenkusu, 2019). The learner-centred method is a teaching strategy that provides learners with a learning environment where they can hone their skills and comprehension (Serin, 2018). It is pointed out that the goal of learner-centred instruction is to cultivate the learners' inbuilt abilities and intelligence through an improved transmission process (Ahara, 1995, as cited in Tizreena, 2019). In the same perspective, McCombs and Vakili (2005) and Tizreena (2019) assert that the learner-centred teaching method revolves around the promotion of learner responsibility and self-regulation in their own learning process.

This teaching approach uses techniques including real-world materials, cooperative learning, and inquiry-based investigations (Muganga & Ssenkusu, 2019), which enhance learners' soft skills grounded in practical experience instead of memorising theories. This falls in line with the CLT approach, which is constructed on the idea of learning the language and learning to use it instead of learning the language itself (Dos Santos, 2020, citing Savignon, 1987; Savignon, 2002). To put it another way, the CLT method is intended to assist learners in mastering the target language's communication skills in that it creates room for them to practice. From the information provided above, it is clear that learner-centred approaches involve students in all aspects of the teaching and learning process. It offers several benefits to students in numerous ways. Learners receive instruction through a hands-on method that enables them to advance their skills (both hard and soft). Moreover, because it places so much emphasis on each learner, it is understood that it employs a variety of teaching approaches to satisfy each learner's specific needs. With the use of a variety of teaching methods, each learner feels involved in the learning process, and as a result, each learner is able to reflect on what he or she is learning and how he or she is learning it, which is the basis for increasing their academic achievement. Drawing on CLT, language instruction in the classroom should concentrate on tasks that assist learners to express themselves in the target language (Tizreena, 2019). The two theories—CLT and SLT—informing this study provide learners with sufficient room to practise collaboratively.

Some of the collaborative activities that can be used in learner-centred teaching methods include, for example, peer review exercises, group and peer presentations, debates, peer and group work on class activities, poster forums, and group discussions (Tizreena, 2019). Through these activities, learners get to discover themselves and

their own knowledge. Muganga & Ssenkusu (2019), quoting Sawyer (2008), admit that "these abilities typically correspond to the real-world soft skills needed by today's knowledge-based or creative economy, including problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, innovation, and creativity." Then, CLT assists learners in practising in the classroom what they will be doing in non-test situations, or, simply put, outside in the real world.

Given that learners are from different backgrounds, each individual brings into the classroom his or her knowledge and experience and learns from one another as they interact in the classroom. That concurs with Tizreena's (2019) points of view when she asserts that learner-centred methods help learners collaborate in that they build relationships between learners and instructors. Similarly, learner-centred methods place an emphasis on cooperative learning activities in which a group of learners team up to achieve a certain goal (Condelli & Wrigley, 2009, as cited in Serin, 2018). That is also valid for Bandura's (1977) observational theory, known as SLT, which allows learners to learn from one another in a number of ways by observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviour, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others.

Through different learning activities, learners get the opportunity not only to listen to or observe a model but also to practise what they have observed or heard. It was found that using a learner-centred method is one of the best strategies through which learners enhance their social interactions, not only in a given community but also in a community school system (McCombs, 1997, as cited in Junior, 2020). Given that it promotes student-to-student interaction, it simultaneously helps them acquire the critical thinking necessary for problem solving. As a collaborative teaching method, it

also helps in the development of their social skills through teamwork tasks without putting aside the skills related to decision-making and the like.

Through discussion sessions, for example, they get to know how to make arguments and at the same time improve their listening and speaking skills. So, what about the proposed teaching methods in the post-basic English language curriculum in Burundi?

The proposed teaching methods in the post-basic English language curriculum in Burundi are based on "the pedagogy of integration," which hinges on a learner-centred approach. It is a teaching method that incorporates real-life scenarios into the classroom. To put it more simply, it is a pedagogy that brings the outside inside the classroom. To this end, teachers set up communicative contexts or situations in which learners are asked to relate and integrate what they have learned (even in other subjects) to real-world issues. With the help of their teachers, learners create scenarios according to their own levels and share them with their classmates orally, for example in the form of a debate, role-playing form, or any other form of presentation like a written one.

With the assistance of their teachers, learners can discover many things, accumulate knowledge, establish themselves, and get the opportunity to construct their own subjective knowledge framework depending on the situation they are put in. Learners gain more direct experience in such an environment because they are learning by doing through practice, which involves communicating in English. Through it, learners' ability to adapt to different real-life situations is created, which helps them develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers of English in Burundi's post-basic schools are then requested to use this approach—"pedagogy of integration"—to help learners learn by doing and encourage their creativity. It instils

in learners the spirit of independence and reliance on themselves, which results in thinking critically, becoming autonomous learners, and planning their own things instead of parroting what their teachers have said or taught them.

Unlike the teacher-centred methods, which assume that learning should start from outside learners, this pedagogy of integration recognises that learning starts from within learners. If properly applied, it is an approach that guides learners down a smooth scaffolding path to stimulate the process of their autonomous reasoning. As a concluding note about this section of teaching methods, the literature has shown us the variety of some teaching methods. However, each type of method has its advantages and consequences. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to know which one(s) to select based on what he or she is teaching or aiming at. Despite the fact that many research findings, such as those from Mpho (2018) and Emaliana (2017), reveal that many teachers use teacher-centred methods, teachers should adopt eclectic teaching strategies as there is no one-size-fits-all teaching method. In that regard, each individual learner feels involved in the learning process because there are a variety of teaching methods that suit or match each learner's learning style. To be successful, teachers should select teaching methods that take into account not only the objectives to be achieved but also the diversity of their students.

That is to say that choosing a given teaching method should not be done haphazardly. It should be tailored according to the subject itself as well as to the various learners' learning levels and adapted accordingly. Westwood (2008: 16) highlights that by saying that "a teaching method must be picked for its suitability in a given context: no single method of teaching can be used for all types of subject matter or for achieving all educational goals." Additionally, the same source indicates that a given teaching

method should take into account the unique characteristics of each individual learner and the type of learning that method is intended to bring about in order to be appropriate and efficient.

It is therefore advised that teachers should ensure that whichever teaching method they choose from a wide range of options will increase learning and retention (Alvarez-Bell et al., 2017; Bidabadi et al., 2016; Granjeiro, 2019; Tews et al., 2015, as cited in Murphy et al., 2021). They have to make sure that those teaching methods allow learners to communicate in the target language. They should be based on the CLT and SLT approaches, which put learners at the centre of the teaching and learning activities.

However, some research shows that, though many foreign language teachers aim to incorporate the CLT technique as much as possible into their classrooms, many teachers still do not understand how to manage and implement the strategy correctly for their learners (Dos Santos, 2017b). Based on that, teachers should then be trained on how to implement CLT approaches and the various activities associated with them, so that all learners feel welcome in the environment where they are involved in the teaching and learning process. In that way, the communication skills, which are the learners' achievements, will ultimately be improved.

2.3.4 Learning environment and their implication to learners' academic achievement

The learning environment is referred to as 'the diverse physical settings, contexts, and cultures in which students learn (Ibem et al., 2017). In the same vein of thinking, anything that takes place in a department, classroom, faculty, or university can be considered a part of the learning environment (Al Rukban, 2010, as cited in Ibem et

al., 2017). Reading between the lines of the same source, the learning environment is often referred to as the classroom, though learners may sometimes learn in a wide variety of settings, like outside of the school and in outdoor environments.

In this work at hand, the learning environment is going to be limited to classroom settings, as we know it has various meanings according to the way it is used (Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015). If we talk about learning environments, there is no way we can fail to mention the culture of a school or class, that is to say, its governing ethos and characteristics, which include the different interactions between learners and their teachers and how they treat one another without forgetting the different ways in which teachers may set up an educational environment to promote learning.

The learning environment encompasses all the surroundings that make it possible for the learner to find solutions to their issues and have access to the resources they need to reach their objectives (Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015). From there, we understand that it is concerned with the physical environment of the classroom, as well as the social structure, atmosphere, norms, and values.

It follows that having access to interacting with the learning environment, that is, interactions between learners and materials, learners and other learners, and learners and teachers, helps learners learn well. It has been demonstrated in the literature that studies on learning environments focus on many aspects such as behaviour management, classroom rules and discipline, student motivation, the size of the class, teaching methods, the set-up of classroom tools (tables, desks, etc.), and even the colour of the classroom (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2002; Slavin, 2000; Snowman & Biehler, 2003, as cited in Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015) that the learning environment

is among other factors influencing learners' achievement. Thus, what is its contribution to shaping their achievement?

Although it has been observed that many teachers do not pay attention to the role of context in their teaching activities (Kabir, 2010), numerous studies have conclusively shown that the learning environment is one of the potent factors that contribute to students' success in reaching good academic achievement (OECD, 2008; Maat et al., 2015; Stadler-Altmann, 2015; Odeh et al., 2015; Suleman, Aslam, & Hussain, 2014; Irambona & Kumaidi, 2015; Bax, 2003b; Kennedy & Levy, 2009 in Balchin & Wild, 2020; Stoimcheva- Kolarska, 2020; The Glossary of Educational Reform: Learning Environment, 2021).

In addition to that, it was also found that the learning environment significantly influences how learners learn and impact their academic achievement (Vinales, 2015; Odeh et al., 2015; Eziyi et al., 2017). That influence could, however, be negative or positive. As an illustration, some research findings show, on the one hand, that the learning environment has a negative influence on learners' achievement (Farombi, 1998, as cited in Odeh et al., 2015), and that is the case when the classroom setting lacks "good school climate, instructional materials, discipline, physical facilities, or when it has poor teacher quality." "The type of location of the school is also questionable, or when the classroom size is small and yet it is overpopulated."

On the other hand, other research findings show that the school environment can positively influence learners' achievement if it is improved (Abenga, 1995, as cited by Odeh et al., 2015). From these findings, we can simply say that learners always perform or respond to the circumstances or situations prevailing in their surroundings.

If possible, school administrators, including teachers, should do their best to create a good atmosphere or a healthy learning environment for the learners' benefit. Teachers ought to consider classroom settings when planning lessons; otherwise, achieving teaching goals will be difficult, if not impossible (Irambona & Kumaidi, 2015). Correspondingly, Brown (2001) highlights that teachers should establish a positive, stimulating, and energising atmosphere by establishing rapport with their students, balancing praise and criticism, and by generating "energy." In the view of the same author, "rapport" is understood as the relationship or connection you establish with your students, which is built on trust and respect and leads to students feeling capable, competent, and creative. To reach that level, we think that learners need not only a pleasant atmosphere but also a free learning environment created by their teachers by showing them respect, offering them help, as well as listening to them carefully and accepting their diverse opinions. There is no reason why learners should not be motivated to actively participate in class in such a positive environment. As a result, their academic achievement will improve accordingly.

According to Brown (2001), the term "energy" is used to refer to a creative aura that is sparked by the interaction of learners' engagement and drives them towards higher attainment. That is why Gondwe (2020), quoting Musonda (2009), says that teachers should establish suitable learning environments, and in that sense, learners are encouraged to explore their ideas, concepts, and challenges in order to achieve meaningful learning.

Furthermore, teachers should know that a conducive classroom setting is the one that facilitates teaching and learning processes (Oliver & Reschly, 2007; as cited in Prameswari & Budiyanto, 2017; Asiyai, 2014; Ibem, Alagbe, & Owoseni, 2017;

Duyan & Ünver, 2016). One of the ways to do so is for teachers to create many stimuli in the learning environment and then let learners collect the information that they choose from these available stimuli (Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015), in that it was found that students are profoundly affected by what is around them—what they see, hear, and feel—when they enter the classroom (Brown, 2001).

Many factors, both natural and man-made, influence the learning process and academic achievement in a learning environment. Given that the learning environment is made up of all the physical sensory components such as colour, lighting, space, social interaction, and furniture that characterise the place in which learners are expected to learn (Brown, 2001; Ibem, Alagbe, & Owoseni, 2017, citing Anekwe, 2006), the learning environment should be taken into consideration when developing teaching programs or curricula. On the same note, Lewinski (2015) highlights a few factors of the learning environment (classroom architecture) that may have an impact on the learners' learning results. They include light, colour, acoustics, seating arrangement, and temperature. To create a healthy learning environment, Brown (2001: 193) suggests that teachers should control, in case they have any power over them, the following elements and make sure that:

i. The classroom is neat, clean, and orderly in appearance.

ii. Chalkboards are erased.

iii. Chairs are appropriately arranged.

iv. If the room has bulletin boards and you have the freedom to use them, can you occasionally take advantage of visuals?

v. The classroom is as free as from the external noises as possible (machinery outside, street noise, hallway voices, etc.),

vi.   Acoustics with your classroom are at least tolerable.

vii.   Heating or cooling systems (if applicable) are operating.

In a similar vein, Paul and Ratna (2017) asserted that a supportive physical learning environment is the one that maximises interactions between teacher and student and also among students. They went on to say that it should be secure, orderly, and clean in addition to being well-ventilated, roomy, and adequately lit; acoustically sound, with good air circulation at an appropriate temperature, as well as having other environmental features that do not interfere with the learners' mental health and, consequently, offer a favourable learning environment.

Drawing on the foregoing, teachers and respective Ministries of Education should value learners' ideas and ways of thinking by ensuring that the classroom situation provides opportunities to encourage learners to be engaged in their learning process, which is the bridge paving the way to their good academic achievement. As a researcher, I can say that teachers should bear in mind the role played by the classroom learning environment and get prepared accordingly in whatever they do in language teaching, starting from lesson planning till the evaluation stage, as it is one of the pertinent factors affecting the learners' achievement. Teachers are then advised to create a learning environment that is conducive and sparks learners' enthusiasm for learning.

Furthermore, positive teacher-student relations matter a lot in that they have the power to either facilitate or hinder learners' success. For instance, it has been demonstrated that positive relationships between teacher and learner are crucial in establishing a setting that promotes learning (OECD, 2010). Under such a condition,

AlSadoon (2017) notes that the learning environment minimises behavioural issues and maximises learning results. In this light, it can be worked on by improving it for the sake of learners' benefits.

More importantly, learning environments should be designed in line with the needs of learners as research showed that learning environments designed with learners' needs in mind and their characteristics increase their motivation and positively impact their academic success (Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015; Chen & Duh, 2008; Dascalu, Bodea, Moldoveanu, Mohora, Lytras, & de Pablos, 2015; Millwood, Powell, & Tindal, 2008 in Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015). In the same vein, the learning environment should be inclusive, a place in which each and every individual learner feels at home. That is what Mavidou & Kakana (2019) mean when they say that a learning environment that welcomes every difference and provides appropriate challenge to everyone enhances self-efficacy and facilitates learning (Subban, 2006; Tomlinson & Kalbfeisch, 1998).

Drawing on the existing literature, the Ministry of Education in Burundi should establish optimum conditions in classroom settings to raise learners' academic achievement. After diving into the existing literature related to the learning environment, we can notice how important learning contexts are in influencing learners' achievement in many ways. As far as this research is concerned, I, as a researcher, wanted to know to what extent the classroom learning environment influences learners' achievement to ensure its relevance to learning.

2.3.5 Assessment methods and their implication to learners' academic achievement

In our everyday lives, people frequently check to see if what they are doing is going according to how they want it to. Moreover, they want to know if what they are

aiming for has been achieved as planned. The same is true for educators and other education stakeholders, who are constantly curious about how far educational objectives have been achieved. To that end, assessments will act as a gauge for measuring the discrepancy between the desired and observed outcomes. Therefore, what does assessment mean, and why do we assess? What types of assessments can we observe in classroom settings?

Teaching is connected to assessment, and their relationships are unbreakable and mutually dependent on each other (Landy et al., 2020). According to Saefurrohman & Balinas (2016); Shaari & Mohamad (2020), assessment has nowadays become an essential part of effective teaching and learning. Before entering into the matter per se, let's try to explore the meaning of assessment. Many academics have attempted to define the term "assessment" and have come up with a variety of meanings, including the ones listed below: Rawlusyk (2018:2) defines assessment as "a variety of tasks by which teachers collect information regarding the academic performance and achievement of their students" (Gronlund, 2006). It can also be understood as the process of collecting and discussing information from a variety of sources in order to gain a thorough understanding of what learners know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; it culminates in the use of assessment results to improve subsequent learning (Huba and Freed, 2000). According to Walvoord (2010), as cited in Tractenberg (2021), assessment is defined as "the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available in order to inform decisions that affect student learning."

We may infer from the definitions given above that assessments keep track of what and how well students have learned, and as a result, they serve as a window through which teachers can view the success of their instruction and identify areas for improvement. Assessments, by the same logic, paint a picture of how far learners have come in satisfying their requirements as the learning process unfolds. Assessments are used in education for a variety of reasons, but the major goal of assessments in schools should be to show students where they are in the learning process. That is to help them know what they are secure with in terms of their knowledge, understanding, and skills and help them identify areas for improvement (SSAT: Schools, Students, and Teachers Network et al., 2017).

Talking about curriculum evaluation at large, one of the obvious reasons for assessing it is to determine whether the principles that led to the development of the curriculum in question remain closely related after it has been implemented (Marsh & Willis, 2007). Classroom assessment plays a very important role in education, and according to Baxter (1997), there are mainly four reasons why learners are assessed: (i) to compare students with each other (through norm-referenced evaluation); (ii) to see if students meet a particular standard (through standard referenced evaluation); (iii) to help the student's learning; and (iv) to check if the teaching program is doing its job (Straková, 2016:138).

In addition to that, the purpose of assessment may be to:
  i.   Allow learners to reflect on learning over time.
  ii.   Be used to find out where students are before they start something new.
  iii. Help teachers reflect on their pedagogy.
  iv.   Help teachers to develop a better understanding of the student as a learner

v. Help to identify learning issues to support the planning of strategic interventions.

vi. Provide a basis for a meaningful dialogue with students, parents/carers and other stakeholders, such as school leaders, governors and OFSTED (The Officer for Standards in Education), about students' progress (SSAT et al., 2017).

Marsh & Willis (2007:274) say that there are many reasons teachers undertake classroom assessments, including but not limited to "improving teaching and to better meet the needs of students; examining any effects of introducing a new curriculum; justifying school practises to the public; responding to dissatisfaction with school procedures; and settling conflicts within the school about power, roles, or personalities." In the same perspective, the purpose of assessment, in the view of Walvoord (2010) and Tractenberg (2021), is information-based decision making. This idea also concurs with Hattie (2015), a professor of education and the director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, Australia, when he said that the primary purpose of assessment in schools should be to provide teachers and school administrators with interpretative data on their effects on learners so that these professionals have the best information about how to move ahead with teaching and how to adjust and adapt.

In other words, it seeks to identify the level of success of learners, their areas of strength and weakness, and the techniques to adopt to enhance their learning outcomes (Earl & Giles, 2011; Muchlis et al., 2020). Although the literature reveals and provides us with the various and important reasons for assessing learners, there are some, including Burundian teachers, who are not making use of the informative

data from assessments to enhance learners' outcomes. Most of them merely use assessments because they have no other option due to the school's requirements. Teachers should therefore learn to integrate assessment as one of the most effective elements to use in the teaching and learning process, as it serves as a barometer to inform teachers on how well their students are doing.

However, Hattie (2015) highlights that this powerful step will not be truly maximised when these assessments are not timely, relevant, informative, and related to what teachers are actually teaching. That is to say, teachers ought to know when, why, and what to assess. On top of the reasons why assessments are done, Brown (2001: 421) explains the value or importance of classroom assessments by showing how assessments and teaching are partners in the learning process. He asserted that:

i. Periodic assessments, both formal and informal, can increase motivation in that they serve as milestones of student progress.

ii. Assessments can spur learners to set goals for themselves.

iii. Assessments encourage retention of information through the feedback they give on learners' competence.

iv. Assessments can provide a sense of periodic closure to various units and modules of curriculum.

v. Assessments can encourage students' self-evaluation of their progress.

vi. Assessments can promote students' autonomy as they confirm areas of strength and areas needing further work.

vii. Assessments can aid in evaluating teaching effectiveness.

In accordance with what precedes, it is clear that classroom assessments play a range of roles at various levels of the education sphere. They play tremendous roles in

influencing the development of learners to a considerable extent. Furthermore, teachers also benefit from assessments in a variety of ways, in that their teaching methods can be shaped by feedback from assessments. In a few words, teachers will be assisting students in improving their academic achievement if classroom evaluations are well-chosen. Therefore, teachers should remember that classroom assessments are not only an integral part of the teaching process (McInerney and McInerney, 2005; Westfood, 2008), but also a gauge of learners' achievement. In that sense, its purpose is not only a matter of getting the students' score and determining whether they have passed the requirements or not but also pushing or helping them to succeed with a good outcome (Saefurrohman & Balinas, 2016).

Talking about classroom assessment in Burundi, there are two types of assessment that are in regular use in the educational system, namely formative and summative assessment. An assessment is defined as formative when decisions based on it can most directly affect student learning. When an assessment takes place after instruction is complete, it is summative, providing a summary of the effectiveness of the instruction rather than information that may be used to modify training in order to improve learning outcomes for a given cohort (Banta, 2015, as cited in Tractenberg, 2021).

Because each evaluation is done with a specific goal in mind, we distinguish three but related goals: assessment *for* learning, assessment *as* learning, and assessment *of* learning (Manitoba Education, 2006; Saidapur et al. (2017). It is worth mentioning that both assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning are under the umbrella of formative assessment, whereas assessment *of* learning falls under summative

assessment (Department of Education and Training in Victoria, 2021). Let us explore each of them in detail in the next paragraphs.

Assessments *for* learning, sometimes referred to as formative assessments (Tran, 2015; Saidapur et al., 2017), are conducted at various stages of the learning process. It is a learning-oriented assessment (LOA), which is a concept that represents assessment for learning (Carless, 2015). Their purpose is to make each learner's understanding evident (visible) so that teachers can decide what to do to support learners' progress (Manitoba Education, 2006). In addition to that, they primarily put emphasis on offering feedback and monitoring the quality of the learning process, which can have a favourable impact on learning processes (Westbroek et al., 2020). They are all about informing learners of how far they have reached in the learning process in order to empower them to take the necessary action to improve their academic performance. In the light of the Department of Education and Training in Australia (2021), it is said that assessment for learning takes place when teachers use inferences about learners' development to guide their instruction. It typically occurs at some point during the teaching and learning process to help learners understand what they have been taught (Saidapur et al., 2017). At the same time, it aids teachers in putting learners at the centre of their lessons (Jones, 2005).

Research reveals that teachers who use formative assessment approaches and techniques are said to be in the best position to cater to the various learners' demands due to the differentiation and adaptation of the teaching methods they use to raise levels of students' achievement and consequently reach greater equity in students' outcomes (OECD, 2008). If this is done correctly, teachers will have the opportunity

to get to know their students well, giving them the ability to differentiate instruction in the sense that each learner receives a customised learning experience.

As a matter of clarification, Mavidou & Kakana (2019) define differentiated instruction as "a teaching and learning approach that gives a context to modify several aspects of the curriculum in order to address effectively the demands of all learners." In that perspective, Saefurrohman & Balinas (2016), quoting Black & Wiliam (2015), highlight that "assessment *for* learning" is not being implemented in just the traditional sense of assessing learning for accountability purposes like grades, graduation, admissions, certification, or licensure. Instead, it has become a medium for "embodying and setting the stage for learning."

Differently put, assessment *for* learning is any type of evaluation whose ultimate goal is first to develop learners' learning before meeting other instructional goals. In doing so, teachers collect a range of information regarding their learners' learning process, which in turn serves as the foundation for figuring out what they need to do to push their learners' learning forward (Manitoba Education, 2006). Drawing on the foregoing, we can conclude by saying that assessment for learning refers to all frequent and interactive classroom questions between teachers and learners that enable the understanding of the subject matter being taught, and as a result, learners' output will be advanced to another level accordingly.

Additionally, they also assist teachers in realising the instant opportunity to pinpoint learners' needs and show them the right direction to take in adjusting their teaching as their lessons unfold. Teachers should know the importance of and make use of both assessment for learning and differentiated instructions in their teaching activities because both assessment for learning and differentiated instructions imply a focus on

learning processes and affect students' learning positively (Corno, 2008; Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006; Tomlinson et al., 2003; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Yin et al., 2014), as cited in Westbroek et al. (2020). In this case, assessment for learning will be used as an investigative tool to determine what their learners already know and are capable of, as well as any issues they may have run into and possibly any gaps they may have.

Team (2014) proposes five main assessment *for* learning strategies that teachers should consider in order to reach that important stage where learners can monitor their own learning process, which are: (i) clarifying learning intentions and criteria for success; (ii) engineering effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding; (iii) providing feedback that moves learners forward; and (iv) activating learners as the owners of their learning (Muchlis et al., 2020).

Furthermore, teachers should also adopt a different approach to enable learners to develop their interests, abilities, talents, and personalities. These include some classroom activities like close observations, discussions, questioning, conversations, quizzes, computerised tests, learning logs, games, simple projects, role-playing, storytelling, or any other techniques that are likely to provide them with information that will be helpful for their planning and their teaching (Manitoba Education, 2006; Shaari & Mohamad, 2020). It is good to note that assessments for learning are based on short-term objectives.

Concerning assessment *as* learning, which also falls under the category of formative assessment, the Department of Education and Training in Victoria (2021) makes reference to it as a type of formative assessment that occurs when students reflect on and analyse their progress in order to determine their future learning objectives. The

ability of students to monitor their own learning and use the feedback from that monitoring to make modifications, adaptations, and even significant changes in what they understand is what Manitoba Education (2006) defines as assessment as learning. Through assessment as learning, learners have the chance to evaluate their own performance in terms of their learning. Deneen & Hoo (2021), citing Boud (2001), claimed that self-evaluation is a technique whereby students use academic performance criteria to create assessments of their own learning or behaviour in order to foster reflection and produce practical understandings about their academic performance compared to established standards. Differently put, this type of evaluation aids learners in getting a picture of who they are as students in their learning process, learning about themselves, becoming aware of how they learn, and seeing how far they have come. They are given opportunities to get involved in the educational activities while using feedback from their peers, from their teachers, and even from themselves. In that way, they become more motivated and customise their learning. It is also understood that assessment as learning aids learners in learning by assisting them in coming up with appropriate techniques to change or begin the next stage of their learning process, as well as how to review their learning style if they find it difficult. As indicated by Manitoba Education (2006), this type of learning focuses on learners and uses assessment as a process of metacognition for students. Muchlis et al. (2020), citing Earl and Gile (2011), state that assessment as learning refers to the assessment of students' metacognition skills and literacy.

However, to conduct self- or peer-assessment, one needs to have actively developed critical thinking skills. It is not easy for learners, especially in high school, to get engaged in their own challenging understanding of their learning progress and to collect information from their own prior knowledge in order to use it for their new

learning without a hand from their teachers. Teachers must instil in students a culture of self-evaluation so that they can become independent learners and, as a result, monitor themselves in order to adjust their own learning.

To reach that target, Jones (2005:20) advises teachers to provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own work, make sure that they give each learner the assistance they need so they can identify flaws in their own work, and direct them through the process of self-assessment so that strengths are fully recognised and weaknesses are not exaggerated to the point of damaging learners' self-esteem. It is clear that if learners are accustomed to and have integrated the peer- and self-assessment habit, they will be able to perceive and identify where they are in the learning process. Likewise, it helps them develop critical thinking about their learning process as it provides each of them with feedback on their work. It is also important to note that assessment of learning is also based on short-term objectives.

As concluding words, formative assessment, that is to say, assessment for and as learning, includes course work, where students receive feedback that helps them identify strengths, weaknesses, and other things to keep in mind for future assignments. It also encompasses various discussions that are done between teachers and learners, as well as end-of-unit assessments that provide learners with the chance to pinpoint important areas for their own personal growth and development (Brown and Knight, 1994).

The important takeaway from what precedes is that assessments for and as learning do not only assist learners to understand their own learning but also help them develop appropriate learning strategies. Their results are employed to change and enhance

teaching and learning strategies throughout a lesson for the betterment of learners' academic performance.

Unfortunately, it was found that many teachers lack the actual skills necessary in designing and implementing quality assessment tools that can determine whether or not meaningful learning is taking place (Mugimu & Mugisha, 2017, quoting Jonassen, 2004; Babaii & Asadnia, 2019, as cited in Ghorbanpour et al., 2021). This is the reason why teachers, in whatever form of formative assessment they set for learners, should be mindful that formative assessment is not an end point in learning but a means of improving it. Teachers should know that formative assessments are very influential factors when it comes to increasing learners' achievement.

The third purpose of assessment, which is the assessment *of* learning, falls under summative assessment. Assessment *of* learning typically comes at the end of a course or unit of instruction and its purpose is to determine the degree to which the instructional goals have been met and to grade or certify the learners' achievement (Manitoba Education, 2006). It is also regarded as assessment for summative purposes or summative assessment (Ussher & Earl, 2010, as cited in Muchlis et al., 2020). That is the reason why its purpose is summative evaluation, which is intended to certify learning and give reports for parents and students about the progress of students in school, typically by rating pupils in relation to other students in their class (Earl, 2003, in Muchlis et al., 2020).

It is the final phase in the teaching process that defines how to improve the teaching process and teacher development in the future (Griffin & Care, 2015 in Mustafa et al., 2021), and it occurs when teachers use evidence of student learning to make judgements on the learner's achievement against goals and standards (Department of

Education and Training in Victoria, 2021). Unlike assessments for and as learning, which are based on short-term objectives, assessments of learning are based on long-term objectives.

Manitoba Education (2006) stated that it is used to refer to "strategies designed to confirm what students know, demonstrating whether or not they have fulfilled curriculum outcomes or the aims of their individualised programs, or to certify proficiency and make decisions about students' future programs or placements." Drawing on the literature above, we can realise that this form of assessment can be referred to as "assessment behind outcomes" as it is based on long-term educational objectives.

In a nutshell, educational assessments are important parts of any teaching or learning process. They are regarded as one of the most significant educational resources available for a number of tasks, such as maximising learning and inspiring students to boost their academic performance in order to fulfil certain objectives and standards (Oyinloye & Imenda, 2019). In other words, they serve as the guiding beacons if they are effectively incorporated into the teaching and learning system, and as a result, both teachers and students know how effective the teaching and learning activities are and the degree to which the teaching objectives have been reached. Teachers need to choose communicative assessments that help students learn by discovering their weaknesses and strengths in order to study accordingly. Learners need to know their progress and their flaws in their learning process. To be successful, teachers should choose appropriate assessment methods in connection with the learning outcomes already set during the planning phase.

They should also remember that assessments are more than just a grading system at the end of a course; they are a useful mirror that reflects how teaching and learning activities are progressing. It is also worth knowing that assessment is an integral part of instruction in that it shows whether or not the goals of education are being met, rather than considering it an afterthought. Through feedback, learners will know how successfully they have managed to fulfil their needs or what needs to be done in order to master all the learning requirements. Teachers will know what to do in the next lessons, such as organising remedial classes.

In terms of post-basic English teachers in Burundi, they should first understand the role of assessments at each stage of the learning process and use them so that learners become implicitly involved in their own learning process rather than viewing them as simple recipients to fill in. Those assessments should be valid and communicative. Ultimately, learners' achievements will be upgraded.

2.4 Learners' Achievement

As conceived by the Ministry of Education in Minnesota (2017), learners' achievement is understood as the current level of a student's learning. In the view of Education Evolving (2016), we say that learners are achieving when they have gained the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will prepare them to lead happy and successful lives. Based on previous research, we can conclude that the most common indicator of educational achievement is a learner's performance in academic domains, such as mastering language skills.

As we discussed at the outset of this second chapter, learners' achievement is conditioned by many factors. As far as this research implies, instructional influences were looked into to discover how far they influenced learners' achievement in post-

basic school English in Burundi. It is an amalgam of teacher knowledge and skills, instructional materials, instructional methods, classroom learning environment (learning environment), and assessment methods. Since the main purpose of language learning is its use, it should be evaluated through the learner's achievement or their ability to communicate in that language.

There has been a lot of research done to figure out what factors affect learners' achievement, such as by Atchia and Chinapah (2019), Waweru et al. (2013), Farrington et al. (2012) in Maponya (2020), and Kocak et al. (2021), who discovered that students' factors, parental background, school factors, and teachers' factors—psychological, socio-economic, socio-demographic, learning theories, and teaching strategies—are among the main ones. However, few studies, if any, have so far tackled how far instructional influences affect learners' achievement; hence, the purpose of this study.

2.5 Study Gap

Securing solid and full potential for learners is the salient priority of education. When we dig deeper into the existing literature, we discover that there is plenty of research that has been conducted globally to look into the factors that influence learners' achievement. We can begin by mentioning the studies carried out outside of Africa, such as those undertaken in the United States (Virginia) in Hanover Research (2019). The purpose of that study was to identify factors that influence learners' achievement. It was found that those factors are complex, multifaceted, and interconnected and mostly relate to the characteristics and skills of the learners themselves, their social relationships with peers, teachers, and families, as well as larger familial and societal systems.

That simply indicates that those factors were linked, for instance, to socioeconomic status, school quality, and community problems. According to them, these factors can be divided into two categories: school-based and non-school-based factors. Curriculum design, instructional techniques, and teacher quality are examples of the former, whereas the latter are those over which the school has little or no control. They include, for instance, family income, parenting styles, and crime rates. Another study conducted in Korea by Suhaini et al. (2020) focused on identifying the factors that influence learners' academic achievement. The study's conclusions showed that a variety of factors, including those related to teachers, students, schools, and families, had an impact on students' achievement. They may influence learners' achievement positively or negatively.

Son & Cho (2020) conducted a study in Korea on analysing factors that affect academic achievement in a globalised environment. Its purpose was to examine the factors affecting the academic achievement of international students in degree programs in a global education environment. It focused on social, academic, cultural, and economic factors together with some other factors in terms of their personal traits, attitudes, or backgrounds that were found to affect the academic performance of the foreign students.

Moreover, Shah & Zamri (2021) conducted research in Malaysia on factors that influence the academic performance of pharmacy students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Selangor, Malaysia. Their purpose was to assess the correlation between the academic performance of students and student factors, family factors, university infrastructure factors, and faculty factors. After the analysis, the findings proved a positive relationship between the foregoing factors.

In addition to studies done outside of Africa, various investigations on the same subject have also been done inside of Africa. For instance, see Olufemi et al. (2018), whose study was conducted in Nigeria and focused on factors affecting students' academic performance in colleges of education in southwest Nigeria. The factors under consideration were students' socioeconomic characteristics, parental background and home-related issues, school facility availability, instructional material availability, and students' reading habits. The findings revealed that students' factors, school factors, parental background, and teachers' factors all have serious influence on students' academic performance.

Furthermore, Maganga (2016) conducted a study on the contextualised determinants of academic performance in secondary schools in the Ilala district of Tanzania. The purpose of this study was to determine how students' English proficiency affects their academic performance. It also related to how the teaching and learning facilities affect learners' achievement. Employing a qualitative research design, it was found that many factors such as learners' factors (age, distraction, poor knowledge of vocabulary items), lack of enough teaching materials, evaluations (skipping of formative evaluations), and lack of leadership (lack of counsellors) were the main causes of the poor academic performance in examinations.

In Mauritius, Atchia & Chinapah (2019) focused on relevant factors that affect the learners' achievement. After the analysis, the study came to the conclusion that these factors were linked to socioeconomic factors, school leadership, the student factor, the teacher factor, and private tuition (tutoring). In the same country, Nghambi (2015), in a study on determining the factors leading to poor academic performance in community secondary schools, found that the poor academic performance in form

four examinations was related to factors such as teachers' unfavourable working environment, poor supply of teaching and learning materials (61.6%), a high teacher-student ratio (1:65), and poor teaching methodology (46%). The results also showed that students' academic success was influenced by the extent to which their parents were involved in their children's education.

In Kenya, Nambuya (2013), in her study on establishing school-based factors that influence academic performance at the KCSE in secondary schools in Teso South District, found that human resource, physical resource, financial resource, and learning technique were the core elements that affected students' academic performance. In addition to Nambunya's study, other research done by Jepketer (2017) on investigating the influence of teaching strategies on students' performance in academic achievement and co-curricular activities in public secondary schools in Nandi County showed that apart from the influence of the teacher, other factors like school management, students, resources, and government policy affect students' academic performance.

Furthermore, another study conducted in Kenya by Mutindi (2018) aimed at establishing the school-based factors that influence students' academic performance in the KCSE in public secondary schools in Kathiani Sub County. This descriptive study, which was informed by the Education Production Function Theory, discovered a positive and substantial correlation between students' KCSE performance and teacher suitability, access to resources for instruction, physical facilities, and head teachers' supervision responsibilities.

While most other research has examined the factors influencing learners' achievement, this research by Abaidoo (2018) focused on assessing the factors that

contribute to the improvement of junior high students' academic performance in Gomoa Manso Basic School in Ghana. The findings showed that student factors—regular studying, self-motivation, punctuality, regular class attendance, hard work, and interest in a subject; teacher factors—completion of the syllabus, use of teaching/learning materials, frequent feedback to students, and giving students special attention; parent factors—showing concern in their children's academics and providing them with their academic needs; and school factors—availability of text books and teaching/learning materials—have a positive relationship with academic performance and are also significant.

2.6 Summary of the Chapter

In a nutshell, this chapter basically reviews recent literature pertaining to the topic being investigated and tries to fill the knowledge, methodological, and contextual gaps that have been identified throughout the literature. The existing literature for this study hinges on the following variables derived from instructional influences. When it unfolds, instructional influences include classroom learning environment—learning environment, teacher knowledge and skills, instructional materials, instructional methods, and finally assessment methods. Each variable has been developed in detail regarding the way they shape learners' achievement. Further, the reviewed literature was critical in establishing a relationship between this study and other related studies. As shown through the literature, it is crystal clear that studies seeking to evaluate or investigate factors impacting learners' achievement have been conducted are abundance.

Despite the fact that several previous studies have been conducted to assess or investigate factors influencing the achievement of learners worldwide, there is a lack

of studies conducted to evaluate how far instructional influences impact learners' achievement, hence, a knowledge gap was identified. Additionally, the majority of them tend to focus on a single element or on limited factors that influence the learners' achievement without dealing with how far they do so. That is the case, for instance, for Jepketer (2017); Namasaka et al. (2017); Atandi et al. (2019), Isa et al. (2020), who focused only on the impact of teaching methods on the academic performance of learners.

Another methodological gap is that most of the research done in this area used either the quantitative approach or the qualitative one. Consequently, it is assumed that there are some features that were not fully exploited by using a single paradigm. A mixed-methods approach is used in the current study to blend both paradigms and better understand the issues under study. To the best of my knowledge, no research has yet been done in Burundi, where this study was conducted, to fill the prevailing knowledge and contextual gaps so far. Then, these knowledge, contextual and methodological gaps need to be addressed. That is why this current study aims to evaluate how far the instructional influences affect learners' academic achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi. In this way, the findings of this research will give a picture of which aspect(s) or elements of instructional influences should be worked on in order to improve and/or increase overall learners' achievement.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses information about the research methodology, starting with the philosophical research paradigm, followed by the research approach and research design. In addition to that, it goes on to describe the target population and sampling size, along with the sampling techniques to be used to get informants, before finishing with the data collection instruments section. It also encompasses the pilot study to check the validity and reliability of data collection tools before dealing with data analysis per se.

3.2 Philosophical Research Paradigm

Depending on which research problem they are addressing, researchers in a given field are guided by a wide range of viewpoints or orientations. A paradigm is a way of looking at the world, and it is composed of particular philosophical presuppositions that lead and direct thoughts and actions (Mertens, 2010). In the same way of thinking, Kivunja & Kuyini (2017), quoting Mackenzie & Knipe (2006), mention that the term "paradigm" is used to describe a researcher's "worldview" in educational research. In a similar tone, Creswell & Clark (2011); Lincoln (1990); Patton (2002); Rossman & Rallis (2003), quoted by Kaushik & Walsh (2019:1), contend that "worldview," as a synonym for "paradigm," is defined as "a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world."

Research paradigm, as it is read in Kaushik & Walsh (2019), citing Kuhn (1970), is a terminology that is employed to refer to the generalizations, values, and beliefs that a community of experts shares regarding the nature of reality and knowledge. A

particular researcher's paradigm is a kind of abstract collection of beliefs and principles that shapes how she or he perceives, interprets, and interacts with the world. It is taken as the lens through which a researcher views the world. In fact, it is the conceptual lens through which the researcher evaluates the methodological components of their research project to decide on the research methods that will be applied and how the collected data will be analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In a few words, paradigms can be understood as assumptions about how someone sees or thinks the world works, or simply the way they believe the world should work.

According to Creswell (2009; Mertens (2010); Leedy & Ormrod (2015); and Kaushik & Walsh 2019), the four different perspectives or worldviews that can be distinguished in the social sciences are constructivism, postpositivism, transformative advocacy, and pragmatism. In the view of Creswell (2013; Creswell and Clark (2011); and Lanham (2006), as cited in Kaushik and Walsh (2019), postpositivist researchers view inquiry as a series of logically related steps and base their claims of knowledge on objectivity, standardisation, deductive reasoning, and control within the research process. In terms of constructivism, also referred to as interpretivism (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015), its proponents think that people create reality through their interactions with their surroundings. To put it more simply, constructivism teaches us that reality or truth is framed by different interactions people make. It is constructed and is constantly evolving.

Another paradigm that has been observed in social research is the transformative paradigm. Also known as the participatory paradigm, it is carried out with the intention of empowerment and reform. According to the tenets of this philosophical paradigm as captured in Mertens (2003), cited by Creswell (2013:25–26), it holds the

view that knowledge is not neutral and reflects the power and social ties in a society. Therefore, the purpose of constructing that knowledge is to assist individuals—especially those who are marginalized—in improving the society in which they live.

The last philosophical paradigm, or school of thought, covered in this section is pragmatism. It is a philosophical paradigm that provides a set of knowledge and inquiry presumptions that support the mixed methods approach and distinguish it from purely quantitative approaches founded on (post) positivism and purely qualitative approaches founded on interpretivism or constructivism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Thinking in the same way, Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003), as cited in Mertens (2010: 35), identify pragmatism as one of the paradigms that offers an underpinning philosophical framework for mixed methods research. In addition, it's worth noting that pragmatic researchers emphasise the "what" and "how" of the research problem (Creswell, 2003). With it, it is agreed that there is no single reality, and its proponents assume that reality is constantly a subject of negotiation, discussion, and interpretation. It is also believed that there is no single optimal method for solving problems, but that the best method is the one that answers the problem under study, or more specifically, the process or methods that "work" for a particular or specific research problem to be addressed, which may entail the use of multiple methods when understanding a research problem (Creswell, 2012; Creswell, 2013).

Therefore, pragmatism opens the doors to using multiple techniques, different paradigms, and assumptions, as well as different types of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). Based on what has been said thus far, we might simply describe pragmatism as a situation in which someone—in this case, a researcher—deals with

things in a reasonable and realistic way as opposed to just considering theories to handle the research problem under study. With pragmatism, the researcher first of all gets to know the root of the problem at hand and the best course of action.

Looking at the problem to be addressed in this study, the researcher employed the pragmatism paradigm as a philosophical orientation or worldview since this study requires both strands of data: quantitative and qualitative data. In this way, the researcher got an opportunity to go deeper into collecting rich information to properly answer the research questions.

3.3 Research Approach

In the sphere of research, there are three research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2009). As this study evaluated the extent to which the achievement of post-basic school learners was impacted by the instructional influences in the English curriculum in Burundi, it required data triangulation from different sources. Regarding the research problem to be addressed, the researcher therefore used a mixed-methods research approach that is quantitatively driven. Mixed research involves the mixing of quantitative and qualitative research methods, approaches, or other paradigm characteristics (Burke & Christensen, 2014). According to Erarslan (2016:72), quoting Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner (2007), a "mixed method" approach is defined as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study or set of related studies." Furthermore, a mixed-methods research approach is a process for gathering, analysing, and "mixing" qualitative and quantitative research paradigms in a single

study to comprehend a research problem (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The choice of this approach was made in light of the nature of the problem to be addressed, which necessitates both quantitative and qualitative data for more in-depth supplementary information to address the research questions. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018: 32), mixed-method research combines particularity and generality, "patterned regularity" and "contextual complexity," insider and outsider perspectives (emic and etic research), focusing on insider and outsider perspectives to obtain a more thorough and complete understanding of phenomena than single-method approaches.

The fundamental premise of employing mixed methods in combination, according to Creswell (2012: 535), is that both quantitative and qualitative methods offer a deeper grasp of the research problem and question than either method by itself. With the combination of quantitative and qualitative data as stated by Creswell (2012:535), quoting Miles & Huberman (1994), we have a highly potent mix. There are many other good reasons behind using mixed methods, as acknowledged by Bryant (2006) and Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), quoted by Leedy and Ormrod (2015), when they state that a research problem and its sub-problems can only be fully addressed by gathering, analysing, and interpreting both quantitative and qualitative data (completeness reason). They continued by stating that the quantitative components of the study can compensate for qualitative research weaknesses and vice versa (complementarity reason).

Simply put, it is clear that the use of both strands of data is crucial if we wish to deeply understand the research issue under investigation. Central to what is mentioned

above is the understanding that both strands have distinct strengths and drawbacks. However, combining qualitative and quantitative research draws on their distinctive strengths and offsets their weaknesses. By approaching the issue from this angle, more than one paradigm will be used to address the issue at hand.

3.4 Research Design

The research design, according to Kothari (2009:31), is the conceptual framework within which the study is carried out; it serves as the guideline used to collect, measure, and analyse the data. In other words, it is a structure that demonstrates how the researcher outlines what will be done from the outset of the study, that is to say, from the research problem stage until the final stage of data analysis. In the same way of thinking, Yin (2003) defines it as "the logic that connects the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial study questions."

In the research arena, we distinguish three core designs: the convergent design, also known as the concurrent or parallel design; the explanatory sequential design; and the exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In line with the research problem to be addressed, this study was conducted using the convergent mixed methods design, also known as the concurrent or parallel design (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2019). It is good to mention that in this study, quantitative data were more dominant than qualitative data.

This means that after the concurrent qualitative and quantitative data collection is complete, data analysis follows, and then the results from both paradigms are brought together to be compared or combined before being interpreted to help better understand the research problem. The same idea is embraced by Creswell & Creswell

(2019), who explain that the investigator using this approach often gathers both forms of data at or around the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results. In the same way of thinking, Creswell (2009:213) argues that the primary goal of mixing during this technique, which is typically found in an interpretation or discussion section, is to really integrate the data, such as to transform one sort of data into another type of data so that they can easily be compared. Simply put, the reason behind it may be to either integrate or compare the results of the two databases side by side in a discussion. In the view of Morse (1991) in Creswell & Plano Clark (2018), the intent of this design is to gather a range of complementary data on the same topic in order to better grasp the research challenge. This research design is appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to thoroughly understand and evaluate to what extent instructional factors affect learners' achievement in post-basic schools in Burundi.
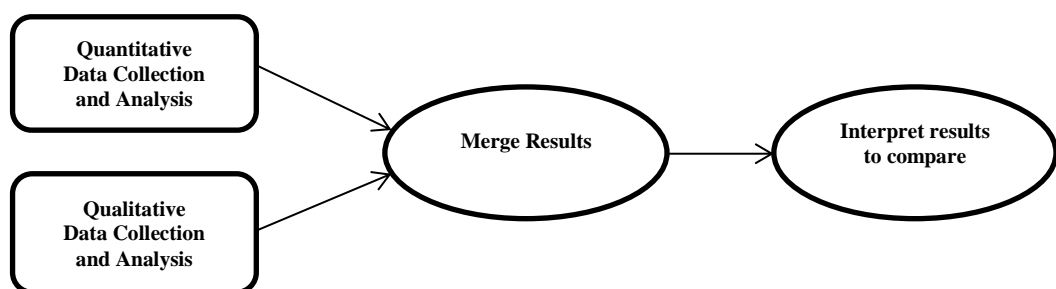
Figure 3.1: Convergent Parallel Design (Adapted from Creswell & Creswell (2018)

Speaking of the two strands of data, they were collected in different ways. A questionnaire generated quantitative data by using closed questions. These questionnaires were addressed to English post-basic school language learners in Burundi. Concerning qualitative data, they were collected from classroom

observations and from interviews addressed to teachers of English in the selected schools.

Table 3.1: Blueprint of the Research Design

Research questions	Approaches	Independent Variables	Data collection Instruments
1. How far does the classroom learning environment influence learners' achievement of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi?	Quantitative & Qualitative	Classroom context	Questionnaire, interview, and observation
2. How far do the teacher's knowledge and skills influence the learners' achievement of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi?	Quantitative & Qualitative	Teacher knowledge and skills	Interview & Classroom observation
3. How effective are the teaching methods in helping post-basic school learners to use English language communicatively?	Quantitative & Qualitative	Instructional methods	Questionnaire, interview, and observation
4. To what extent does the availability and use of instructional materials in the post-basic English language curriculum influence learners' achievement in Burundi?	Quantitative & Qualitative	Instructional materials	Questionnaire, observation, thematic analysis, and interview
5. To what extent do assessment methods affect learners' achievement of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi?	Quantitative & Qualitative	Assessment methods	Questionnaire and interview

3.5 The Study Area

This study was conducted in Burundi, specifically in Bujumbura Municipality, which is one of the 18 provinces of Burundi. It is located in the western part of Burundi. It borders Bujumbura Rural Province from the north, east, and south. In its western part, it borders Tanganyika Lake; across it, the southern part of the DRC, named Uvira city of Kivu province, is captured. It covers a total area of approximately 127 km2 with an estimated population of 1,225,142 people. Bujumbura Municipality, or Mairie de Bujumbura in French, is subdivided into three communes, namely the commune of Muha, the commune of Mukaza, and the commune of Ntahangwa, after which three commune education directorates are named. This research includes all the post-basic schools located in Bujumbura Municipality, specifically the ones that have language sections, as the research population. The map is shown in Appendix E.

3.6 Research Population

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003:9), the term "population" refers to an entire group of people, things, or events that share some common observable features. Oso and Onen (2005) also refer to it as the total number of research participants or individuals in whom the researcher is interested. The target population for this study is made up of all 32 post-basic schools in Bujumbura Municipality that have a language section. The targeted learners were the ones who were in the second and third years of post-basic school in the languages section. The reason behind that choice is that they have more experience at the post-basic level compared to the first years at the same level. The population of this study is made up of all post-basic school English teachers in the languages section in the area under study, as well as all learners at the said study level. Post-basic schools having a language section in Bujumbura Municipality are 32 in total, and they are distributed as follows:

1. DCE Muha (Commune Education Directorate of Muha)

Lycée de la Convivialité, Lycée Communal Kanyosha, Lycée Municipal Gitaramuka, Lycée Municipal Kibenga, Lycée Municipal Musaga, Lycée Municipal Ruziba and Petit Séminaire de Kanyosha.

2. DCE Mukaza (Commune Education Directorate of Mukaza)

Lycée Municipal Rohero, Lycée Notre Dame de Rohero, Lycée Clarté Notre Dame de Vugizo, Lycée Municipal Mutanga, Lycée Municipal Buyenzi, Lycée du Lac Tanganyika I, Lycée du Lac Tanganyika II, Lycée de la COMIBU Buyenzi, Lycée Municipal Bwiza, Lycée Municipal Nyakabiga and Lycée Scheppers Nyakabiga.

3. DCE Ntahangwa (Commune Education Directorate of Ntahangwa)

Lycée Municipal Buterere, Lycée Municipal Cibitoke, Lycée Municipal Nyabagere I, Lycée Municipal Gikungu, Lycée Municipal Gihosha, Lycée Municipal Gasenyi, Lycée du Saint Esprit, Lycée Municipal Kamenge, Lycée Municipal Kinama, Lycée Sainte Famille Kinama, Lycée Municipal Ngagara, Lycée de la Dignité Ngagara, Lycée Saint Marc and Lycée Reine de la Paix Ngagara.

3.7 Sampling Methods and Sample Size

Orodho & Kombo (2002) stated that a sampling method or sampling procedure is the process of selecting a number of people or things from a population in such a way that the selected group or sample contains components that are representative of the characteristics of the entire group. It is then a process in which the researcher chooses a representative sample from a given population.

In research, there are a number of sample designs that are used to get a sample, and their choice depends on what kind of research is being carried out. A sample,

according to Creswell (2012:142), is a subset of the target population that the researcher intends to study in order to draw conclusions about the target population as a whole. It is also referred to as the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute a sample (Kothari, 2009). That sample size, according to Kothari, should be optimal. He explained that an optimal sample is the one that satisfies the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, dependability, and adaptability. In the same vein, Kothari and Garge (2014) propose that the sample size should be 10% if the population has more than 1000 respondents, 30% if the population has more than 100 but less than 1000, and 50% if the population has more than 10 but less than 100.

Thus, the researcher used 50% when selecting post-basic schools with a language section. With the help of that formula, a number of 16 schools from 32 post-basic schools were chosen and then randomly selected afterwards. As the researcher used one teacher of English per school, the simple random technique was applied to get one teacher of English in case there was more than one.

However, if a given school had only one teacher of English, that one was automatically selected. At the end, 16 teachers of English chosen from 16 schools were used as a research sample. Due to the large number of learners in the area of study, the researcher applied Slovin's formula (Nguyo, 2015), which was sustained by stratified sampling techniques (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Creswell, 2009; Kothari, 2009), in order to get the total sample size of learners from all three Cummune Education Directorates. The Slovin's formula assumes a degree of variability (proportion) of 5% and a confidence level of 95%.

The formula is stated as the following: n $= \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ where: "**n**" stands for *sample size to use*; "**N**" stands for *total population size*, and "**e**" stands for *the level of precision or margin of error*. In this study the level of precision is 0.05.

In order to come up with the sample size of the learners from each class, taken in this case as a stratum, the researcher used stratified sampling techniques for proportionality reasons. Stratified random sampling, in the view of Leedy & Ormrod (2015:179), has the advantage of guaranteeing equal representation of each of the identified strata. The choice of that method is motivated by the characteristics of the population in question. Creswell (2009:148) mentions that it is good to identify the characteristics used in stratifying the population, for instance, gender, income levels, and education. The population under study is made up of classes with varying numbers of students, as well as students at various levels of study. That is well clarified in Creswell's 2009:148, where he says that "when randomly selecting people from a population, these characteristics may or may not be present in the sample in the same proportions as in the population; stratification ensures their representation." Kothari (2009:62) stated that the population under stratified sampling is divided into a series of sub-populations that are each more homogeneous than the entire population (the different sub-populations are called "strata"), and then we choose items from each stratum to make up a sample. The following formula is based on the ratio of learners in each selected class per school and allows the researcher to proportionally get the real number of respondents from each of the sampled strata, or classes.

According to Kothari (2009:63), the formula of proportionate stratification can be formulated as follows: $n_i = \frac{Ni}{N} x\, n$ where $\boldsymbol{n_i}$ = sample size for stratum (i) or class (i), $\boldsymbol{Ni}$ = population for stratum (i) or class (i), N = total population size, and $\boldsymbol{n}$ = total

sample size. To determine the number of sampled learners in each class, a straightforward random sampling procedure was applied. To do this, the researcher assigned a number to each individual learner, put them in a box, and mixed them before randomly picking numbers one by one until the desired number of respondents was reached.

So, applying the Slovin's formula, $n = \dfrac{1860}{1+1860(0,05)^2}$

$$= \dfrac{1860}{5.65} = 329, 2. \text{ Thus } n = 330 \text{ learners}$$

Table 3.2: Distribution Frame of Sampled Schools, Learners and Teachers per School and per DCE in Bujumbura Municipality

NB: Schools with English Language Sections Only

N0 of Schools	Sampled Schools	Number of Students 2nd year	Number of Students 3rd year	Number of Sampled Students 2nd year	Number of Sampled Students 3rd year	Number of Teachers 2nd year	Number of Teachers 3rd year	Number of Sampled 2nd & 3rd years
				DCE Muha				
1	Lycée de la Convivialité	52	30	9.2	5.3	1	1	1
2	Lycée Municipal Kanyosha	78	54	14	9.6	1	1	1
3	Lycée Municipal Musaga	137	144	24	26	2	1	1
				DCE Mukaza				
4	Lycée Notre Dame de Rohero	15	14	2.7	2.5	1		1
5	Lycée Clarté Notre Dame de Vugizo	34	22	6	3.9	1	1	1
6	Lycée Municipal Mutanga Sud	40	31	7.1	5.5	1	1	1
7	Lycée Municipal Buyenzi	43	63	7.6	11	1	1	1
8	Lycée de la COMIBU Buyenzi	10	12	1.8	2.1	1		1
				DCE Ntahangwa				
9	Lycée Municipal Cibitoke	71	64	13	11	1	1	1
10	Lycée Municipal Nyabagere I	64	69	11	12	1		1
11	Lycée Municipal Gikungu	65	66	12	12	1		1
12	Lycée Municipal Gasenyi	73	88	13	16	1		1
13	Lycée du Saint Esprit	15	8	2.7	1.4	1	1	1
14	Lycée Municipal Kamenge	36	37	6.4	6.6	1	1	1
15	Lycée Municipal Kinama	36	47	6.4	8.3	1	1	1
16	Lycée Municipal Ngagara	150	192	27	34	1	2	1
	Total per each school level	919	941	163	167			
	Total for 2nd & 3rd years	1860		330		29		16

3.8 Research Instruments

Kaonde-Ng'andu (2014), as cited in Friday (2016: 44), explains that research instruments are understood as the tools that the researcher uses in collecting the necessary data. This current study used a variety of data collection tools to evaluate the instructional influences on the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi. This is to say that the researcher used triangulation methods of instruments, also called intermethod mixing (Burke & Christensen, 2014), for data diversity in order to increase the reliability of the results. To produce effective results, a researcher needs to choose appropriate research tools that match well with the research problem and address the research questions. This falls in line with Fisher & Stenner (2011), quoted by Almutairi (2018:109), who acknowledge the importance of choosing appropriate data collection methods when conducting research because if inappropriate methods are chosen and do not meet the study's aims and objectives, research outcomes may be impacted. In this regard, three different data-gathering tools were utilised: questionnaires, a semi-structured personal interview, and an in-class observation scheme.

3.8.1 The questionnaire for learners

This present research used a questionnaire as one of the data collection instruments. With questionnaires, researchers obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personalities, and behavioural intentions of research participants (Burke & Christensen, 2014). The learners' questionnaire collected quantitative data from close-ended questions designed in a five-point Likert scale format to enable the informants to express themselves by rating their responses to a particular statement.

The questionnaire was given to learners of post-basic schools in the language section exclusively in the second and third years of the aforementioned section. The choice of the said learners was motivated by the fact that they are better positioned to answer questions related to the curriculum than learners in the first post-basic school year. It is worth mentioning that questionnaires are the most popular tools used in research to collect data. According to Abejehu (2016:26), quoting McMillan and Schumacher (2006:252), it is stated that the questionnaire is the most widely used technique for a good number of reasons: it is relatively cheap, has the same questions for all subjects, can guarantee secrecy, and includes questions written for specific purposes. In addition to that, questionnaires are advantageous since they provide the advantages of standardised and open responses to a variety of topics from a wide sample or population without forgetting that they can be affordable, reliable, valid, quick, and simple to complete (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

The learners' questionnaire consisted of four parts or sections, in which each section examined one research variable at a time. These four sections then hinge around the following variables: Section A examines the classroom learning environment, while Section B examines to what extent the instructional methods influence learners' achievement. Section C collects information from learners on how far instructional materials influence learners' achievement, and Section D is about examining how far assessment methods influence learners' achievement. All four parts consist of closed-ended questions to collect quantitative data, and they are constructed based on the five-point Likert scale (see Appendix A).

3.8.2 The interview for teachers

Another data collection tool that was used in this research is the person-to-person interview. It was chosen because it allows for the use of multiple sensory channels, such as verbal, nonverbal, visual, auditory, etc. (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Furthermore, face-to-face interviews offer the special advantage of allowing a researcher to establish relationships with potential participants and subsequently win their cooperation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015: 61). Moreover, during an interview, the interviewer gathers detailed information from the interviewee in order to collect the necessary data needed to meet the aims or objectives of the study in question (Orodho, 2012). Then, to get the information from teachers through interviews on various variables, semi-structured interview questions were used, and a voice recorder was employed to record the proceedings of the interviews. This semi-structured interview is composed of five sections. Apart from Section A, which provides general details about the school and some background on each respondent in general, the remaining sections are constructed around the four variables as shown in the learners' questionnaire. However, this data collection tool is mainly meant to collect qualitative data through open-ended questions (see Appendix B).

3.8.3 The classroom observations

Direct classroom observation was another data collection tool used in this research. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018: 542) assert that "observation is more than just looking," quoting Simpson and Tuson (2003: 2; Marshall & Rossman (2016). "It is the process of looking (often systematically) and noting people, events, behaviours, settings, artifacts, routines, and so on." Johnson & Christensen (2004: 186), as quoted by Nuraini (2019: 129), define observation as "the watching of behavioural patterns of people in certain situations in order to obtain information about the phenomenon of

interest." In this regard, nonparticipant classroom observations assisted the researcher in seeing the classroom's atmosphere, or simply put, what is happening inside the classrooms in terms of but not limited to the teaching methods used, learners' participation, and the availability of teaching materials, to name a few.

To facilitate that task, the researcher elaborated an observation grid in advance to follow through on how qualitative data was collected. It is made of four sections in which Section A gives the general information related to the class size, name of the school, and the like, while Section B evaluates the classroom learning environment in relation, for example, to the atmosphere inside the classroom, availability of teaching materials, physical state of the class, etc. The next Section C is related to the teaching methods teachers used during the classroom visit. Concerning Section D, it is about teacher knowledge and skills, which deal with classroom activities. This tool is shown in Appendix C.

3.9 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Before collecting the data, it is wise to ensure that the data collection tools will yield meaningful results. To that end, validity and reliability are required.

3.9.1 Pilot study

In scientific research like this, it is very important to conduct a pilot study before starting with data collection per se. In this study, the researcher tried out the data collection tools before using them in order to get an insight about their appropriateness and adequacy. Through the pilot study, the researcher identified potential challenges that might have occurred while using the data collection tools and resolved them for improvement purposes. The pilot study is particularly important in research in that it enables the researcher to test the instruments they will use, which

consequently helps establish the content validity of scores on an instrument and improve questions, formats, and scales (Creswell, 2014). In that context, reliability will also be measured in addition to validity.

In a nutshell, a pilot study assists the researcher in determining whether the research instruments are accurate, unambiguous, or comprehensive for the respondents in order to avoid any ambiguity that may arise during the data collection process and rectify or remove them to align them with the research objectives. It is worth mentioning that the pilot study was conducted at two post-basic schools located in Bujumbura municipality that shared the same characteristics as the ones that were sampled for the sake of collecting accurate data using valid and reliable data collection tools. As far as the pretesting sample is concerned, the researcher used 10% of the total research sample, as proposed by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), who state that in a pilot study, the sample should not be very large and should range between 1% and 10%. After applying that formula, 10% of the 16 sampled schools give an estimate of 2 schools that were involved in the study group. In the same light, 33 learners (10% of 330 sampled learners) constituted the pilot study respondents.

3.9.2 Validity of the research instruments

Validity is said to be the most important criterion in research in that it shows how well a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Kothari, 2009). In a research context like this, it is important to know if the research instruments will adequately address the relevant research issues under study. This procedure, in accordance with Orodho, Khatete, and Mugiraneza (2016), guarantees that the content is appropriate, complete, and logical for the targeted variables and that the samples of items accurately represent the content to be measured. Therefore, to ensure the

trustworthiness of the data collection tools, that is, to check if they will measure what they are supposed to measure, the researcher used expert judgement validity (Huck, 2000; Bryman & Teevan, 2005:58) to investigate the face validity, construct validity, and content validity of the questionnaire, classroom observation checklists, and interview schedule as well. Face validity, in the view of Bryman & Teevan (2005:58), refers to "the measure of appearance reflecting the content of the concept in question."

The same authors go on to discuss how to establish face validity by asking experts in a subject to serve as judges and decide whether the measure appears to reflect the notion or concept in question. Regarding content validity, it is a type of validity in which diverse aspects, skills, and behaviours are accurately and effectively measured. In other words, it refers to the extent to which the data collection tools include the content that they are intended to measure. This implies that measurements of each research variable must be representative. Reading Yusoff (2019), content validity is the extent to which a measurement tool captures the concept being measured. Content validity assesses the degree to which measurement instrument features are relevant, representational, and comprehensive of the construct for a given assessment purpose (Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2019; quoting Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995). In a few words, it is beneficial to determine whether the content is fully representative of what it is supposed to measure. In that light, the data collection tools will include items that directly address the research objectives for validity purposes.

When talking about construct validity, Flake, Pek, & Hehman (2017) understand it as the process of integrating evidence or data to support the meaning of a number that is assumed to represent a psychological construct. Stated differently, construct validity measures are validated by comparing them to measures of other constructs as

established by theory. In this research, construct validity was measured by checking whether the relationships underpinning the theories portrayed in each research variable were reflected in the research instruments. To that end, the researcher first of all handed the foregoing research instruments to his supervisors to seek their advice on the relevance of the data collection instruments in relation to the objectives of the research study. After that, the researcher worked on the proposed amendments from his supervisors in order to make the research instruments fall in line with the research variables before starting the data collection process per se.

3.9.3 Reliability of the research instruments

Reliability refers to whether scores on an instrument are internally consistent (that is, are item responses consistent across constructs?), stable over time (test-retest correlations), and whether test administration and scoring were consistent (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In other words, reliability refers to consistency (Cohen, 2009). That is what Orodho et al. (2016) mean when they say that reliability is the degree to which a particular measuring instrument produces equivalent results if repeated severally. In research, there are many techniques for estimating the reliability of research tools. In this research, Cronbach's alpha statistics was used to check the internal consistency of the scales (Creswell, 2014).

As mentioned in the pilot study section, this study used 33 learners which stands for 10% of 330 sampled learners selected from 16 sampled post-basic schools located in Bujumbura municipality. Only two schools—or 10% of the 16 sampled schools— were included in this pilot study.

To start with, the researcher first of all proceeded with coding quantitative scores from learners' questionnaires in Microsoft Excel before copying them into SPSS.

After that, Cronbach's alpha was computed in SPSS to check the level of internal consistency of the learners' questionnaires. The internal consistency (reliability) of questionnaires is considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha is not less than 0.70, that is to say, $\alpha \geq 0.70$ (Nunnally, 2000). On the contrary, the items whose Cronbach's alpha was found to be less than 0.70 were judged unreliable, thus revision of those items was called for improvement purposes. Following the reliability test, the tables 3.3 and 3.4 below show, respectively, the extent to which each construct was reliable and the internal reliability.

Table 3.3: Construct Reliability Coefficients of the Study

Variables	Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha)
Classroom learning environment	0.778
Instructional Methods	0.764
Instructional Materials	0.819
Assessment Methods	0.784

Table 3.4: Internal Reliability of the Study

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.789	.795	37

3.10 Data Collection Procedures

Before heading out into the field, the researcher first looked for approval from the School of Education at Moi University to carry out the research. The researcher then travelled to Burundi, where the data were collected. With the approval letter from Moi University, he attached the research instruments to it and handed them to the Provincial Director of Education in Bujumbura Municipality to request the research permit for data collection. The research permit helped the researcher get permission from the different communal directorates of education in Bujumbura Municipality. As

Bujumbura Municipality Province (Bujumbura Mairie Province) covers three communal directorates of education (the communes of Muha, Mukaza, and Ntahangwa), the researcher then presented a copy of the research permit he got from the Provincial Director of Education in Bujumbura Municipality to the three municipal directors of education in order to facilitate me with the data collection process in their respective areas under their jurisdiction.

After the permission was granted, the researcher met with the principals of the sampled schools and requested their permission to move around schools to book appointments with teachers for time management before starting to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed to the sampled learners and left to be collected later, after they had had enough time to read and fill it in. During the same process, 16 English teachers from the 16 sampled schools participated in interviews and classroom observations to collect data to verify how far instructional influences affect learners' achievement. In schools with more than one teacher, a random sampling procedure was used to obtain one since the researcher wanted to use one teacher per school. Interviews were conducted in eight schools as well as classroom observations.

3.11 Data Analysis Procedures

After all quantitative and qualitative data had been gathered, the next step was data analysis. Because the study is guided by a convergent mixed methods design, the data were analysed separately before being compared or completed to yield a holistic analysis of how far the instructional influences shaped learners' achievement in the English post-basic school in Burundi. In this regard, the quantitative data were analysed, applying descriptive methods to answer the research questions with the help

of the Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 in order to evaluate the level of influence of instructional factors on learners' achievement. Descriptive analysis describes the world or a phenomenon by addressing who, what, where, when, and to what extent it exists (Loeb et al., 2017). To that end, the researcher measured the central tendency of the quantitative data set to get the mean, measures of dispersion or variation (standard deviations), and measures of distribution (percentages or frequency). To reveal the findings of the study, the means of the statistical data were interpreted based on the mean limits of the five-point Likert scale category as proposed by Aziz et al., (2020), citing Moidunny (2009), ranging from 1.00–1.79 = strongly disagree, 1.80–2.59 = disagree, 2.60–3.39 = neutral, 3.40–4.19 = agree, and 4.20–5.00 = strongly agree. All of the mean limits that were applied to this research were interpreted as follows, using Erarslan (2016:106) and Aziz (2020) as a combined reference:

Table 3.5: Interpretation of Means

Mean score	Interpretation of Mean
1.00-1.79	Very Low
1.80-2.59	Low
2.60- 3.39	Moderate
3.40-4.19	High
4.20-5.00	Very High

Interview and classroom observation qualitative data were analysed using theme analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2013) guidelines. It involves transcription, reading and familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finalising the analysis.

Table 3.6: A Summary on Data Analysis Procedures

Research Objectives	Data Collection Instruments	Types of Data	Data Analysis Methods
1. To find out how far the classroom learning environment influences learners' achievement of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi	Questionnaire interview, and observation	Ordinal Nominal	Descriptive Thematic Analysis
2. To explore the extent to which teacher knowledge and skills influence learners' achievement of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi	Interview, and observation	Ordinal Nominal	Descriptive Thematic Analysis
3. To analyse the effectiveness of the teaching methods used in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi	Questionnaire, interview, and observation	Ordinal Nominal	Descriptive Thematic Analysis
4. To evaluate the extent to which the instructional materials used in the post-basic English curriculum influence learners' achievement in Burundi	Questionnaire, interview, and observation	Ordinal Nominal	Descriptive Thematic Analysis
5. To evaluate the extent to which the assessment methods affect learners' achievement of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi	Questionnaire and interview	Ordinal Nominal	Descriptive Thematic Analysis

3.12 Ethical Considerations

When conducting research, a researcher should follow certain ethical guidelines (Schulze, 2002). With regard to data collection, the researcher followed all of the necessary processes before collecting data in the sampled schools to get ethical permission. In the same vein, the researcher booked appointments with the various schools for data collection after getting the research permit from the Provincial Directorate of Education in Bujumbura Municipality. As far as the rights of respondents are concerned, an ethical issue comprises confidentiality and anonymity, voluntary participation, and the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour (Orodho et al., 2016). To that end, the researcher promised his respondents that the collected

data would only be used for academic purposes and treated with the utmost confidentiality and privacy and that their identities would not be displayed anywhere in the thesis since they were not asked to mention their names on the questionnaire or during the interview.

Concerning informed consent or voluntary participation, respondents were informed that their participation in the study is completely voluntary and that the study would have no effect on them in any manner. Informed consent, according to Holmes (2006), refers to a research participant willingly choosing to take part in a study based on thorough disclosure of all pertinent information and the recipient's knowledge of it, irrespective of whether it is informed consent or assent. In that process, participants were given enough information about the study before the distribution of the research tools. The study's potential benefits and usefulness were also made clear to the participants. As far as data collection and analysis are concerned, the researcher admitted to never fabricating the data and promised to be honest in reporting the exact results as they came out.

3.13 Summary of Chapter

This chapter outlined the diverse details concerning research design and methodology employed throughout this study. It also tackled the issues of study area, target population, and sample size without putting aside the sampling procedures. It also discussed the research data collection tools and how they were tested for validity and reliability. Moreover, this chapter presented how data were analysed before addressing the ethical considerations the researcher took into consideration.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND

DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

In this fourth chapter, the researcher first of all presented the findings based on the information gathered from learners' questionnaires, teachers' interviews, and classroom observations. The researcher used a variety of data collection tools to optimise triangulation data and gather adequate and sufficient information about the problem at hand. The collected quantitative data were analysed using descriptive analysis, where the measures of distribution (percentages and frequencies), measures of dispersion or variation (standard deviations), and the central tendency (mean) were tabulated. For further clarification, the qualitative data were shown in figure form.

Based on the convergent research design, the quantitative data collected through the learners' questionnaire were sustained or confirmed by the qualitative data, which were collected through interviews and classroom observations in the process of data analysis. Thematic analysis was employed as an analysis method for qualitative data.

This descriptive study aimed to evaluate the instructional influence of the English curriculum for post-basic schools on students' achievement in Burundi. The findings of this study were intended to address the following research objectives:

  i. To find out how far the classroom learning environment influences learners' achievement in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi

  ii. To explore the extent to which teacher knowledge and skills influence learners' achievement of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi

iii.   To analyse the effectiveness of the teaching methods used in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi

iv.   To evaluate the extent to which the instructional materials used in the post-basic English curriculum influence learners' achievement in Burundi

v.   To evaluate the extent to which the assessment methods affect learners' achievement of the post basic school English curriculum in Burundi.

4.2 Response Rate

Three different types of research tools were used in this study: classroom observations, a semi-structured interview with English language teachers, and a questionnaire given to students. To that purpose, 330 students were included in the study's sample, indicating that 330 students in total were asked to complete a questionnaire. The response rate was 100% after the questionnaire had been collected. Nevertheless, the researcher discovered during data entry that 316 copies of the questionnaire were entirely filled out, while 14 copies were only partially filled out. These figures correspond to 95.75% and 4.25% of the sample group, respectively. If the return rate is greater than 65%, it is considered appropriate for analysis, according to the standard set by Creswell (2012). As a result, it provides important information about the trustworthiness of the collected data. In the section that follows, data were presented, analysed, and interpreted.

4.3 Quantitative and Qualitative Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.3.1 The classroom learning environment

This first objective sought to find out how far classroom learning environment influenced the achievement of learners of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi. To address that research objective, a descriptive statistical analysis was first

employed, using a five point Likert scale, where Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5. Table 4.1 of the findings including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations was displayed alongside Figure 4.1 for additional understanding. Table 4.1 below gives the findings' executive summary. These data were supplemented by qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations for data triangulation purposes.

Table 4.1: Influences of Classroom learning environment on Learners' Achievement

Items	SD	D	N	A	S A	Mean	SD
Our teacher creates an inclusive and caring classroom environment in which I feel welcome	12	26	57	121	100	3.85	1.072
	3.8%	8.2%	18.0%	38.3%	31.6%		
Our English teacher greets us when he/she enters the classroom	10	8	29	97	172	4.30	.964
	3.2%	2.5%	9.2%	30.7%	54.4%		
Our English teacher motivates us to speak in English	6	10	24	121	155	4.29	.883
	1.9%	3.2%	7.6%	38.3%	49.1%		
Our English teacher calls us by name	9	20	49	136	102	3.95	.994
	2.8%	6.3%	15.5%	43.0%	32.3%		
In our classroom, we as learners collaborate by studying together	22	31	59	113	91	3.69	1.185
	7.0%	9.8%	18.7%	35.8%	28.8%		
My classroom surrounding is quiet (free of noise from outside)	55	76	57	84	44	2.95	1.327
	17.4%	24.1%	18.0%	26.6%	13.9%		
Our classroom is overpopulated	74	65	59	80	38	2.81	1.360
	23.4%	20.6%	18.7%	25.3%	12.0%		
The class size has a negative effect on the English learning process	102	91	51	52	20	2.35	1.260
	32.3%	28.8%	16.1%	16.5%	6.3%		
The physical conditions of school and classroom have a negative effect on my English learning process	112	76	49	47	32	2.40	1.363
	35.4%	24.1%	15.5%	14.9%	10.1%		
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation						**3.405**	**.5030**

Legend: **(SD)** = Strongly Disagree, **(D)** = Disagree, **(N)** = Neutral, **(A)** = Agree, **(SA)** = Strongly Agree, Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation
Source: Research Data (2022)

The statistics from table 4.1 show that the majority of learners 221 (69.9%) admitted that their respective teachers created a highly conducive and inclusive classroom environment, as is proven by the mean of 3.85 and its corresponding standard

deviation of 1.072. 269 (85.1%) of the students reported that their English teachers greet them when they enter the classroom (mean = 4.30, SD =.964).

This is in line with the data we gathered from teacher interviews, in which every instructor confirmed that they greet their learners before teaching them when they enter the classroom. In addition to that, the researcher's observations of classroom activities also supported this. One of them claimed that before doing anything else, he always extends a greeting. He put it in the following way:

> *"When I enter the classroom, the first thing I do is greet my learners, because this is the best policy, especially when you want to start something with people. We have to know how they are because you cannot work together with someone you do not know how he/she feels."*

In the matter of speaking English, 276 (87.4%) of the respondents also accepted that they get very high motivation from their teachers (Mean = 4.29, SD =.8830).

That relatively coincides with the information the researcher gathered from teachers' interviews. When asked if they motivate learners to learn English and why they do so, most of the interviewees answered that they motivate them by focusing on the importance of English. One of the respondents stated that he does it because knowing English is like holding the key to the universe. He stated it in the following words:

> *"I always motivate them. I do it because I want them to know why they are learning English and to see the importance of it. I tell them that if they know English, the door of the universe will be open for them."*

Another instructor claimed that he inspired his learners by emphasising that English is used everywhere, from their immediate surroundings to the rest of the world. He outlined the many benefits of knowing English for individuals looking to continue their education abroad. The way he put it was as follows:

> *"I motivate them when teaching, for example, by showing them the importance of English, especially in our everyday lives, because, as you see, even when you look around us, many things are written in English, and even when they go to study outside of this country to continue their studies, most of the countries use the English language. That's why most of the time I emphasise the importance of learning the English language."*

From the classroom observations, the researcher noticed that there were some teachers who tried to inspire their learners. The majority of them used various strategies, such as telling short stories to get students in the study mindset.

When asked if their English teachers knew them, 238 (75.3%) of the learners affirmed being known by name by their teachers (Mean = 3.95, SD =.994), implying that their English teachers knew a great number of their learners by name. This is a crucial aspect of education in that it helps all learners feel included in the teaching and learning activities. Looking at the mean above, however, the findings from classroom observations showed that many teachers were simply calling upon the names of the very few learners who were active. In general, they were typically pointing at them when it came to answering a given question.

Additionally, learners were asked to rate their relationships based on how well they work and study together. The findings showed that 204 (64.4%) of the learners had positive interactions since they claimed that they collaborated when studying (mean = 3.69, SD = 1.185). It is encouraging in that way they can benefit from one another. Through the classroom observations, the researcher saw that learners were cooperating and having group discussions. When they were given topics for debates, for instance, it was clear that they were supporting one another. This is aligned with the information got from teachers' interviews.

Teachers were asked to briefly describe the context of their classrooms in terms of the relationship between them and their students on the one hand and among students on the other. This is in accord with the findings from teachers' interviews. Teachers were asked to briefly describe the context of their classrooms in terms of the relationship between them and their students on the one hand and among students on the other. The findings showed that the rapport on both sides was good. Students were helping each other while working in teams. They were cooperative. From the words of one respondent, she reported it in the following way:

> *"My students in my class work well together. They like helping one another, especially if it involves working in groups. And even when I am not in class, for example, if I leave something to do as an exercise or an assignment, they work together, and this has a great impact on their achievement because we make them autonomous. Without our help, they can still do something. About the relationships between my learners and I, they are good because we interact. We interact when I am teaching. They react to my questions if it is a question that is asked; they are participative, in one word."*

Concerning the surroundings of the respective schools, the majority of the learners, represented by 128 (40.5%) of the total respondents, affirmed that the noise from outside their classrooms disturbed them in class (Mean = 2.95, SD = 1.327). In other words, the school surroundings were moderately noisy. That was witnessed by the researcher during his classroom observations. It is true that some schools were located in very tranquil areas, away from any major disturbances, but there were others that were built in busy cities with lots of traffic, people, and even machinery sounds. One of the teachers who participated in the interview complained that teaching a large number of learners is a big challenge since he has to shout to make himself audible.

Similarly, table 4.1 indicates that 118 (37.3%) of the learners mentioned that their classrooms were crowded (Mean = 2.81, SD = 1.360). In other words, they indicated that their classrooms were moderately crowded. However, the findings from

classroom observations were different from that. In most of the visited schools, only six of the 16 sampled schools had few learners per class, ranging from 8 to 40 learners per class. Other classes were overpopulated. It was clear that teachers were having difficulty getting all students to participate. Teachers frequently found it difficult to move freely between rows to assist students working in groups. On the same issue, the following excerpt from one interviewee says it all:

> *"The problem we have is the number of learners. In some classes, we have a large number of learners. In that case, it is not easy to help all of them. But today, we can use the strategy of groups, group discussion, according to the new program,"*

In light of the current circumstances, teachers were asked to recommend ways that the classroom environment might be improved. The majority of them pleaded for expanding schools or creating additional classrooms to help balance out the excessive class sizes. When asked if the number of their classmates affected negatively the way they learned, the majority of the learners 193 (61.1%) acknowledged that their respective class sizes had a low or little impact on their English learning process (Mean = 2.35, SD = 1.260). Concerning the physical conditions of the schools and classrooms' effect on learners' learning processes, the majority of them 188 (59.5%) rated it at a low level of effect or influence (Mean = 2.40, SD = 1.363).

The overall mean of the extent to which the classroom learning environment influences learners' achievement is 3.405, with a standard deviation of .5030. That implies that the classroom learning environment has a high influence on learners' achievement, according to the learners. For more clarification, see figure 4.1, which depicts the extent to which each aspect of the classroom learning environment influenced the achievement of post-basic school English learners in Burundi.
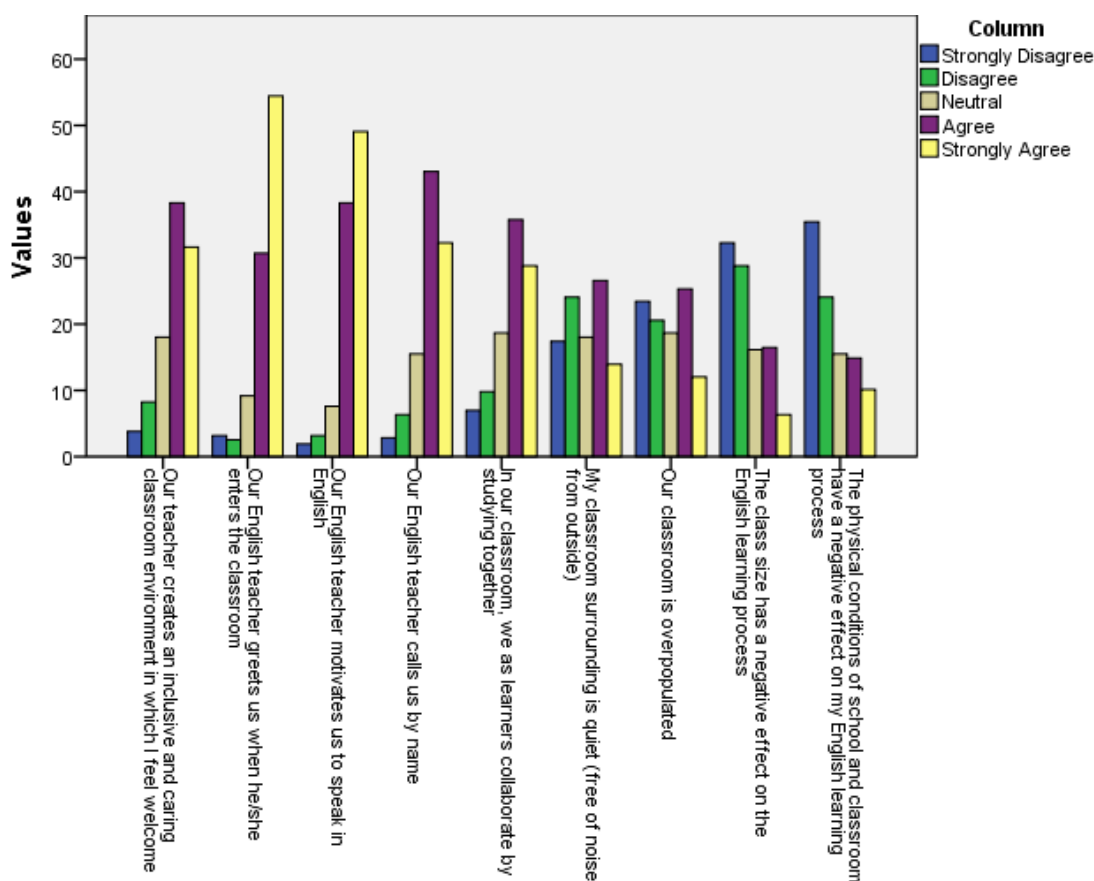
**Figure 4.1: Influences of Classroom learning environment on Learners'
Achievement**

4.3.2 The teacher knowledge and skills

Through the second objective, the researcher sought to determine the extent to which
teacher knowledge and skills impact the achievement of learners in the post-basic
school English course in Burundi. To that purpose, teachers were asked to indicate
which strategies they employ to make learners understand when it comes to
explaining a new concept. They were also questioned about whether they had ever
taken part in any in-service training and, if so, how important it was to them. In
addition to that, the researcher wanted to know if the knowledge and skills they
acquired were enough for them to embark on teaching English in a post-basic English
class. Additionally, they were asked to discuss any challenges they faced in teaching

English at the post-basic school level. The researcher was also curious to know if teachers knew the value of providing feedback to learners and what kind of feedback they provided to them.

First and foremost, it was discovered that all of the teachers investigated graduated from English departments. Most of them were from English teaching institutions: the Institute for Applied Pedagogy (IAP) and the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS), and a few were from the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences. In addition to that, the study revealed that their experiences ranged from four to twenty years.

From the conducted interviews, the majority of the teachers stated that they utilised a variety of tactics, mostly explaining in simple terms, illustrating, and, in the unlikely event that the student still did not grasp the topic, simply translating as a last resort. As an illustration, the following extracts explain it.

> *"As we teach, we have to check the understanding of our learners, and there are many strategies to do that. What I usually do is use the question-and-answer strategy. If it is a new vocabulary, for example, I try to explain it in different ways. If it is something I can draw, I do it. I do not like translating because they may get used to it, and that becomes a problem for them."*

Another one of them stated it in this way:

> *"If there is a new concept, I do my best to make them understand it. Either by drawing, showing... I do my best, but I do not like translating. I do not appreciate people who translate from one language to another. It makes pupils very lazy because they get used to translation."*

There are others, however, who have stated that they do not have much time to waste because the curriculum is extensive. They said that they simply translated in Kirundi, the mother tongue, or in French. Comparing that with what was observed during the classroom visits, the researcher confirmed it. He could see some teachers striving

using different tactics to make learners understand. A few of them were translating into other languages but after trying alternative strategies.

On the same occasion, the researcher found that all teachers of English underwent in-service training, although attendance rates varied. The range of participation was from one to five times. When asked how long the training took, they said that they received two weeks of training annually.

However, all respondents stated that the training they received was insufficient and requested additional training. One of them said that teaching is a process, and they should be kept updated since they are using a new teaching system. On the teachers' side, the majority concurred with it, admitting that in-service training was very crucial in that it provided them with opportunities to learn new things like teaching strategies and connected them with others through sharing experiences. It helped them to improve their capacity and knowledge in addition to becoming familiar with the new teaching material in question. They admitted, in short, that it kept them informed.

On the learners' side, training helped them, through teachers; get more knowledge as their teachers gave what they had received. Regarding the issues they faced related to the content of the program, they acknowledged that the program itself was good, but the problem was how it was written. They said in their capacity as teachers, they had to correct some mistakes, such as grammatical and writing errors. That was their shared challenge. In other words, if teachers were not attentive, students could pick up mistakes and consider them to be correct.

Under the same section, it was discovered that teachers knew the value of giving feedback to their learners. All of them confirmed that they gave feedback to their

learners since they learnt from it. It helped them know how their studies were progressing. Most of them mentioned that they liked giving oral feedback on the assessments because it was easier to do after picking out the common or main mistakes. Some of them admitted that they even provided remedial teaching when necessary. One of them noted that: … *it is necessary because it helps them to realise how they are progressing in their studies. Then, it is very helpful.*

Another one uttered that

> *"… After a test, we have to share together and see what could be answered, answers for each question. There is what we call remediation. After noticing that the test was not successful enough, we have to make a remediation about this same notion so that we are sure that all learners have understood it."*

The findings from the interviews generally demonstrated that teachers of English provided feedback to their students. Even though a few of them claimed to use both oral and written feedback, the majority only used the former.

Combined, the findings showed that the majority of the teachers of English had a general pedagogical knowledge of the subject in question. Most of them knew what they were teaching, and they had no significant difficulty related to the content of the course. They were pedagogically equipped. Even though there were one or two teachers who were not that confident, the majority of them had good communication skills. However, only a few of them were asking their students questions to ensure that they understood. The question of time management was also another challenge for many of them. It was noticed that most of them were hardly finishing the lesson in the allotted time. The strategy used by many teachers was to assign the practise section as homework in case they failed to finish the lesson. Due to the large number of pupils in some classes, the findings showed that teachers were having difficulties to

know all of the learners. Teachers generally knew the ones who are active in classes, teachers reported.

4.3.3 Instructional methods

Since teaching goes with instructional methods, the researcher wanted to analyse, through the third objective, the extent to which instructional methods influence the achievement of learners of English at the post-basic school level in Burundi. To facilitate the work, the researcher employed a five-point Likert scale, in which Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, and Strongly Agree = 5. The results were reported in Table 4.2, which shows frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These data were supplemented by qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations for data triangulation purposes. Figure 4.2 was drawn for more clarification. The summary of the findings is presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Influences of Instructional Methods on Learners' Achievement

Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
In most of our classes, our English teacher talks too much and doesn't give us enough time to express ourselves (lecture method)	36 / 11.4%	60 / 19.0%	44 / 13.9%	100 / 31.6%	76 / 24.1%	3.37	1.336
Our English teacher gives us some projects to work on for example writing reports, poems, novels, etc. (Class projects)	66 / 20.9%	72 / 22.8%	82 / 25.9%	59 / 18.7%	37 / 11.7%	2.77	1.293
Our English teacher asks us to discuss some topics in class while teaching English (Discussion method)	8 / 2.5%	38 / 12.0%	46 / 14.6%	122 / 38.6%	102 / 32.3%	3.86	1.077
Our English teacher asks to cooperate and collaborate to solve the problems in groups (Cooperative method)	27 / 8.5%	42 / 13.3%	50 / 15.8%	107 / 33.9%	90 / 28.5%	3.60	1.261
In our English classes, we work in groups and each learner has a role to play while presenting it in front of the class (Role play)	15 / 4.7%	24 / 7.6%	51 / 16.1%	116 / 36.7%	110 / 34.8%	3.89	1.110
Our English teacher likes asking us oral questions while teaching (question and answer)	21 / 6.6%	34 / 10.8%	65 / 20.6%	136 / 43.0%	60 / 19.0%	3.56	1.114
The teaching methods used in class help me to communicate in English even outside the classroom (Communicative method)	50 / 15.8%	34 / 10.8%	39 / 12.3%	112 / 35.4%	81 / 25.6%	3.44	1.389
The teaching methods used enable me to get the ability of studying independently /autonomously in the process of learning English language	14 / 4.4%	18 / 5.7%	31 / 9.8%	122 / 38.6%	131 / 41.5%	4.06	1.066
Our English teacher likes teaching using a variety of teaching methods (Eclectic teaching methods)	7 / 2.2%	29 / 9.2%	50 / 15.8%	124 / 39.2%	106 / 33.5%	3.93	1.030
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation						**3.613**	**.596**

Legend: **(SD)** = Strongly Disagree, **(D)** = Disagree, **(N)** = Neutral, **(A)** = Agree, **(SA)** = Strongly Agree, Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation

Source: Research Data (2022)

Table 4.2 encompasses a variety of teaching methods teachers may use while teaching English to learners in Burundi. The results show that the lecture method, which had a high rating with a mean of 3.37 and a standard deviation of 1.336, was mentioned by 176 (55.7%) of the students (Mean = 3.37, SD = 1.336). It can also be shown that Burundi's post-basic school teachers of English did not frequently use class projects like writing reports, poems, novels, etc. The poor rating, which is indicated by 96 (30.4%) of respondents accepting that their English professors did so (Mean = 2.77, SD = 1.293), demonstrates that.

Similarly, the data 222 (70.9%) demonstrates that English teachers gave students the chance to discuss a few themes in class (Discussion technique) (Mean = 3.86, SD = 1.077). Additionally, 197 (62.4%) of the learners agreed that their respective teachers of English asked them to work cooperatively and collaboratively in solving problems throughout their learning process. This cooperative strategy had a mean of 3.60 and a standard deviation of 1.261. The respondents also acknowledged that they were given the chance to practise roleplaying in front of their peers. That was chosen by 226 (71.5%) of the respondents, with a mean of 3.89 and standard deviation of 1.110. When it comes to using the question-and-answer technique, the majority of respondents, 196 out of 316 (or 62.0%), admitted to using it frequently (Mean = 3.56, SD = 1.114).

Additionally, 61% of the students stated that the classroom teaching strategies (communicative method) helped them communicate in English outside of the classroom (Mean: 3.44, SD: 1.389).

The results of the study showed that 61.0% of the respondents acknowledged that their respective teachers of English employed instructional strategies that allowed students to study independently/autonomously while learning the language (Mean = 4.06, SD = 1.066). The table also reveals that 72.7% of respondents said their teachers preferred employing a range of teaching techniques (eclectic teaching techniques; Mean = 3.93, SD = 1.030) to engage students in learning.

The majority of the teachers seemed to prefer employing eclectic teaching approaches when we closely analysed the table above (Mean = 3.93, SD = 1.030). Furthermore, there were two other frequently employed teaching techniques: role-playing

techniques (Mean = 3.89, SD = 1.110) and discussion techniques (mean = 3.86, SD = 1.077).

According to the findings of the interviews, the use of eclectic teaching methods predominated. The majority of the respondents acknowledged that they had to use a combination of the teaching strategies because each theme covered all the language skills. They said that the most recommended teaching strategy involved placing learners in discussion-based groups where they got opportunities to share ideas. One of them reportedly said that:

> *"Normally, we have to use all of those methods because there is an appropriate time for them for writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Normally, we have to use them because, for each theme, they must be there."*

In the same way of thinking, another interviewee mentioned it in the following way:

> *"We have to mix; we have to use many methods. For instance, when you are teaching vocabulary, it is a lecture method which is used. When you want them to understand the text, I have to explain vocabulary, then you have to put them in groups. They discuss and share their views. That is discussion and cooperative methods. You understand that it is a combination of methods."*

However, the findings from classroom observations revealed that, except for reading, which was done individually, most of them were busy with group discussions. In some cases, the question-and-answer technique was occasionally used, but not in a way that could incite learners to think critically. When used effectively, question-and-answer techniques drew connections between what they were learning and the questions they were asked. Unfortunately, most of the questions that were used were very shallow. In addition to that, the researcher wanted to discover if teachers gave the same importance to the four language skills in their teaching activities. Even though there were some who mentioned that they concentrated on reading and writing

since those are the ones which were tested in the national test, the bulk of them responded that they focused on all of them because they were all connected.

Despite the fact that things were as they were, it was found that there were some issues in teaching the four language skills. The main challenges they ran into in that regard were related to teaching resources, specifically the lack of teaching resources. Without a radio and recordings, they noted that it was challenging to develop listening skills. In addition to that, another issue brought up was related to teaching reading skills. They said that the pupils' books were not sufficient. That was proven by the researcher himself in his classroom visits. In most of the schools visited, radios were not available. Another problematic case observed was the scarcity of student books. Despite teachers' knowledge of the interconnectedness of all language skills, listening skills were not given the same priority as other language skills, if not completely disregarded.

Concerning the question about using learner-centred methods and the challenges they faced, the majority revealed that they employed group discussion, which was a method that fell under the category of learner-centred methods. It was even the one that the curriculum suggested, one respondent added. However, the majority complained that it was challenging to use that strategy due to the large number of learners in classes. As an illustration, here are some excerpts:

> *"OK. The learner-centred method is what they recommend we use. That's why we first of all urge them to work individually for a certain time, and then they go in groups to compare their answers. And then, in that case, more answers come from them. And then they say that the learner is at the centre of learning. The challenge is, as I previously stated, time and a large number of learners."*

In addition to that, another one responded that:

> *"Yes, I do. But it is not easy to use. I face many challenges. Sometimes I have to form groups of 10 learners. It is not easy. Another problem that I am facing in this type of teaching is that I am confused when I am dealing with a lesson. There is a lot noise. They are discussing, but we do not know whether they are talking about the task or talking about their own issues. We do not know."*

Comparing the interview findings with those from classroom observations, the researcher confirmed them. It was consistent with what he saw. Teachers, for example, had no trouble managing classes with a small number of students. However, in some overpopulated classes, teachers were having hard times. In one reading class, the researcher saw how hard it was for the teacher to make all learners participate. Moving in rows was also an additional problem. As mentioned by one of the respondents above, it was not easy to know whether they were busy with the topic or busy with their own affairs. Because of the time, he could not finish the lesson in the allotted time, and yet, a few learners got the opportunity to share what they had discussed in their respective groups.

Apart from that, teachers were further asked to suggest the teaching method(s) they think other teachers should use in order to help learners develop their communicative skills. According to the results from the different interviews, most of them preferred the group discussion method. As justification, they said that group discussion could be taken as an umbrella for all other teaching methods. In the view of the researcher, it made sense to some extent because group discussions could readily incorporate several learner-centred strategies, such as cooperative learning and role-playing.

The overall mean and standard deviation for the construct under research were 3.613 and 0.596 respectively. According to the pupils, this signified that the instructional methods had a high influence on their academic success. To be more specific, figure

4.2 illustrates how much each element of teaching methods influenced Burundian English learners' post-basic school achievement.
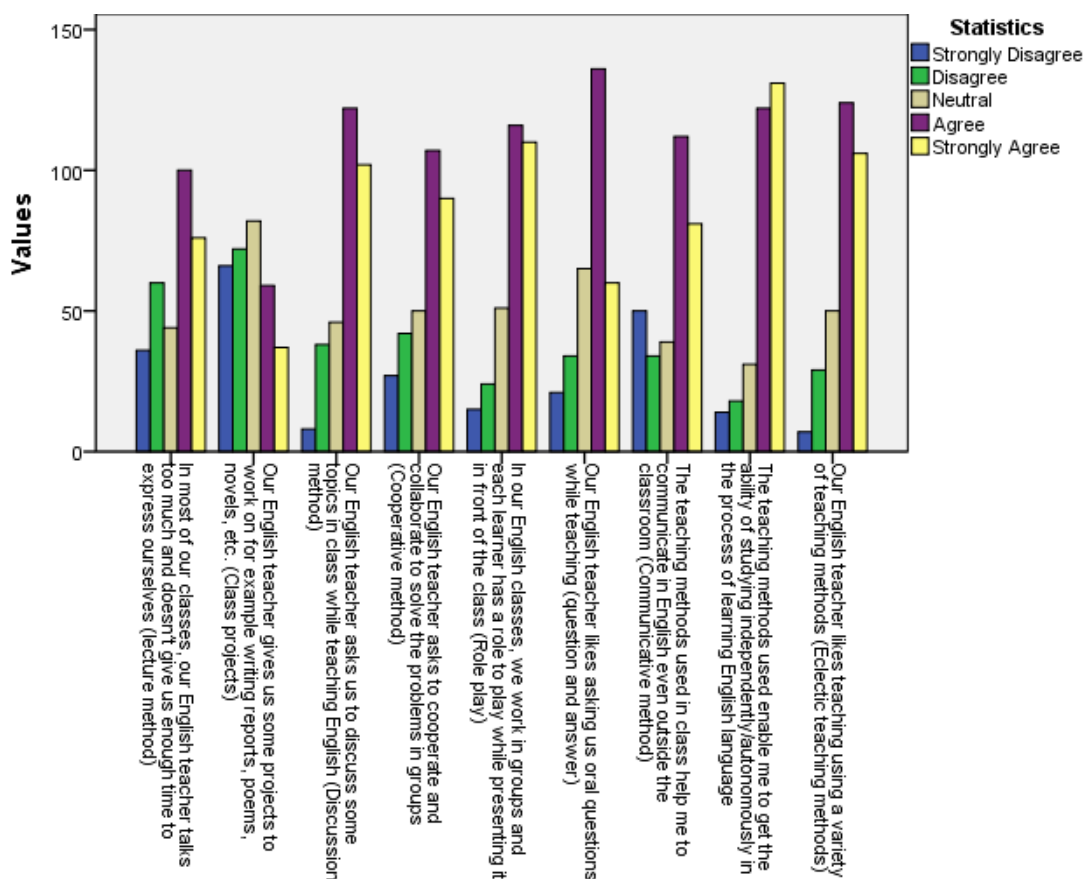
Figure 4.2: Influences of Instructional Methods on Learners' Achievement

4.3.4 The instructional materials

With the fourth objective of this study, the researcher wanted to make an evaluation of the instructional materials in order to determine how much they influenced the achievement of learners in post basic school in Burundi. A five point Likert scale was used to facilitate the work, in which Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5. Table 4.3, which presents frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarises the analysis' findings. These data were supplemented by qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations for data

triangulation purposes. Figure 4.3 was also provided for more clarification. Table 4.3

below gives the findings' executive summary.

Table 4.3: Influences of Instructional Materials on Learners' Achievement

Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
I understand the content of the English pupil's book	18	35	53	133	77	3.68	1.127
	5.7 %	11.1 %	16.8 %	42.1 %	24.4 %		
The English pupil's book include enjoyable activities with songs, dramas, role plays and games	66	56	37	81	76	3.14	1.489
	20.9 %	17.7 %	11.7 %	25.6 %	24.1 %		
Each learner has his/her English pupil's book	43	59	35	85	94	3.40	1.425
	13.6 %	18.7 %	11.1 %	26.9 %	29.7 %		
The content in the English pupil's book provides me with realistic activities to transfer learning into practice in my real life	64	68	39	80	65	3.04	1.451
	20.3 %	21.5 %	12.3 %	25.3 %	20.6 %		
Our English teacher uses projector, radio, videos in English lessons	43	55	64	99	55	3.21	1.298
	13.6 %	17.4 %	20.3 %	31.3 %	17.4 %		
In our school, we listen to English news and watch movies/other programs on TV	60	56	49	79	72	3.14	1.443
	19.0 %	17.7 %	15.5 %	25.0 %	22.8 %		
The available teaching materials help me to develop my communication skills	46	48	72	92	58	3.21	1.310
	14.6 %	15.2 %	22.8 %	29.1 %	18.4 %		
The lack of teaching and learning materials influences my academic achievement	40	66	63	84	63	3.20	1.320
	12.7 %	20.9 %	19.9 %	26.6 %	19.9 %		
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation						**3.257**	**.6901**

Legend: **(SD)** = Strongly Disagree, **(D)** = Disagree, **(N)** = Neutral, **(A)** = Agree, **(SA)** = Strongly Agree, Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation

Source: Research Data (2022)

Table 4.3 presents the results of the study on how much instructional materials affect

Burundian post-basic school students' academic performance in an English course. It

demonstrates that 210 (66.5%) of students said the content in the English student

book they use in class is comprehensible (Mean = 3.68, SD = 1.128). This means that

the content of the pupils' books were understood at a high level by the learners. Only

a small number of learners 53 (16.8% of the learners) had problems with the content of the pupils' books. Additionally, 157 out of 316 students, or (49.7%), said that their books had pleasant activities including songs, plays, role plays, games, and the like (Mean = 3.14, SD = 1.489). That falls in line with what the researcher observed while conducting his classroom visits. He realised that the activities included in the students' books were representative of what the students actually perform or see in their daily lives. Pictures were, however, missing from those materials. They were insufficient, as most English teachers have stated. Pictures provided more fascinating insights into the subject matter being studied.

Additionally, the majority of the learners 179 (56.6%) revealed that each learner had a pupil's book. That was rated at a mean of 3.40 with a standard deviation of 1.425. However, that did not match with what was seen on the field because many learners in most of the visited schools had issues with books. It was seen that six students shared a single book in some schools. Those pupils' books, according to 145 (45.9%) of the learners, contained realistic activities that helped them put what they learned in class into practice in their everyday lives (Mean = 3.04, SD = 1.451). Data from teachers' interviews supported these findings because all teachers acknowledged that the activities found in learners' books are authentic. The themes in those books were familiar to the students. They were the ones they typically faced in their everyday lives.

Concerning the use of teaching aids like projectors, radios, videos, and TVs, 154 (48.7%) of the respondents said that they were used in their English lessons (Mean = 3.21, SD = 1.298). In other words, in the eyes of the learners, the use or availability of these teaching materials was moderate. But these findings did not line up with what

was observed on the field. In most of the visited schools, teachers were complaining about a shortage of teaching materials. The interviews' findings showed that the majority of the schools visited had teaching materials-related problems. Most of the respondents complained about the prevailing alarming situation. It was found that the available and usually used instructional materials were generally pupils' books and teachers' guides. In many schools, the respondents revealed that the available pupils' books were not enough. Many learners shared one book. Concerning other teaching materials, they were not available. We can mention, for example, radios, tapes, TV sets, projectors, etc. Those findings concured with the ones of Ndayimirije (2015) in her study appraising the adequacy and implementation of the English Language Curriculum for State Primary Schools in Burundi. Her study unveiled that there was a lack of teaching materials including audio teaching aids. On the same issue, one interviewee clarified it in the following words: *"Apart from the teacher's guides and pupils' books, we have nothing, nothing. No extra reading books. There was no television, no projector, or radio... The teaching materials we are provided are not enough."*

His counterpart also complained about the lack of teaching resources. She mentioned that she faced a lot of challenges related to the instructional materials. Other than the students' books, which were insufficient, she was not given any further teaching resources to use in her classroom activities. She stated it as follows: *"… Another problem that I have is about materials, about teaching materials. I lack materials. Only books…Even the books that are there are not sufficient. They are old; some pages have been torn out, and they are missing."*

Similarly, another interviewee expressed it in the following way:

> *"The real problem we face is the availability of school materials. There are not many books, but the environment is good. We are in a place which is calm, but the number of students we teach exceeds 40 per class. Briefly, there are many students in our classrooms, and we are not able to control every student. And also in the library, we do not have English novels for the students because they need to read to improve their speaking skills. Students complain about that."*

From the classroom observations, the researcher got a chance to witness what had been said by teachers. In four of the schools the researcher visited, radios were available. One of the respondents revealed that they did not make use of them since they do not have tapes for teaching listening. Another one revealed that the radio is there just like a toy since it had not worked for a long time. Regarding the availability of pupils' books, the researcher saw that in some classes, you could find a class of more than sixty learners sharing 20 books. Despite the fact that the use of groups was recommended in teaching, the researcher failed to understand how learners managed to do their homework since books alone were not sufficient. When asked how learners manage to do assignments like reading, one of the respondents answered in the following way:

> *"Sincerely, I do not give such kind of activities, do you know why? It is because in the first year we have seven pupils' books, only seven. Even for texts, they have to copy the whole thing. That is a problem, a big problem. It is not easy. However, the content of the books is OK for teaching the four language skills. I have also some other books, personal books I use to support my teaching, to add some information on a given lesson".*

During his classroom visits, the researcher came to the conclusion that teachers were really working hard to help learners improve their communicative skills with the few existing teaching materials. Some teachers were unable to cope with the alarming situation because it required creativity or simply the use of hidden curriculum.

Learners were also asked to rate how well they listened to English news and watched TV movies or other entertainment. Reading the aforesaid table, it was found that 151 (47.8%) of the students reported that listening to English news and watching movies or other TV shows had a mean of 3.14 and a standard deviation of 1.443. This simply meant that the rate of listening to English news and watching movies, as well as other programs on TV, was moderate. The table also showed that 150 (47.5%) of respondents (Mean = 3.21, SD = 1.310) claimed that the instructional resources at their disposal had moderately aided them in improving their communication abilities. A lack of teaching and learning resources, according to 147 (46.5%) of respondents (Mean = 3.20, SD = 1.320), had a moderate effect on their academic performance.

The overall mean of the construct was 3.26, and its standard deviation was 0.690, according to the findings. That indicated that the instructional materials had a modest or moderate impact on students' academic success. Figure 4.3, which illustrates the specifics of how each element of instructional materials affected students' progress, provided further explanation.
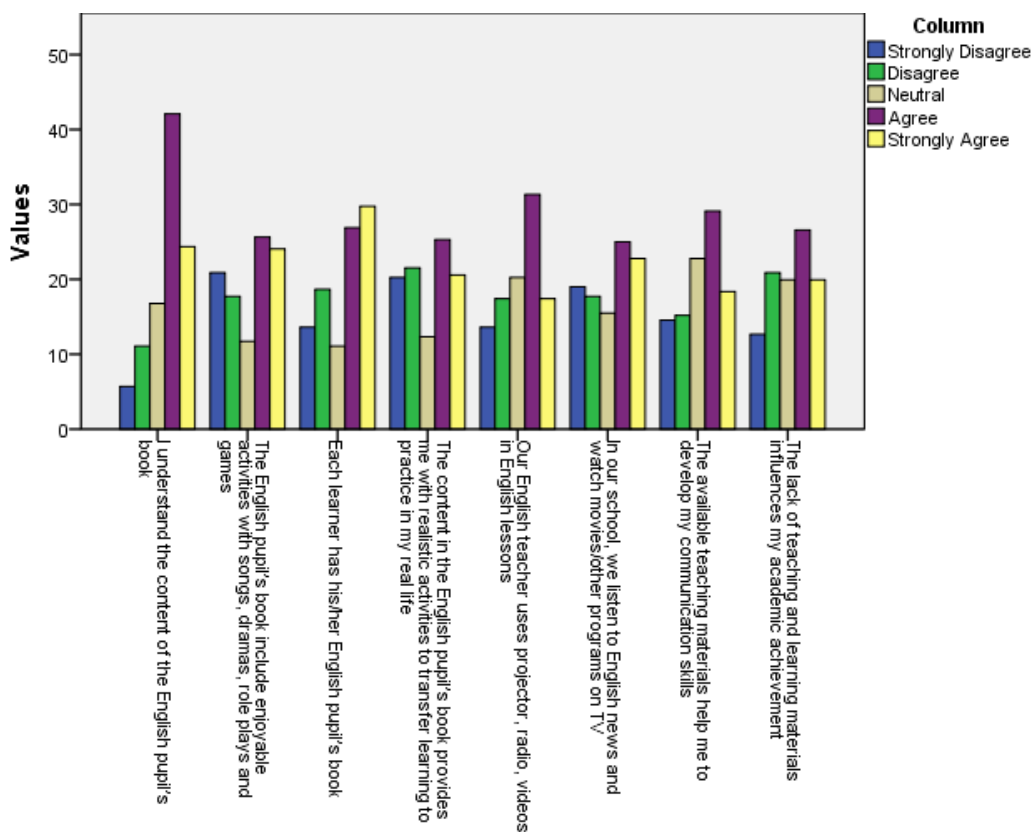
Figure 4.3: Influences of Instructional Materials on Learners' Achievement

4.3.5 The assessment methods

The fifth research question sought to evaluate how far the assessment methods teachers used influenced learners' achievement. A five point Likert scale was used to facilitate the task, in which Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5. Table 4.4, which presents frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarises the analysis' findings. These data were supplemented by qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations for data triangulation purposes. Figure 4.4 was also provided for more clarification. Table 4.4 beneath provides an overview of the results.

Table 4.4: Influences of Assessment Methods on Learners' Achievement

Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
The assessments we have are related to what we learnt in class	27	43	80	112	54	3.38	1.16
	8.5%	13.6%	25.3%	35.4%	17.1%		
Our English assessments require memorisation of what we learnt in class	16	40	59	141	60	3.59	1.08
	5.1%	12.7%	18.7%	44.6%	19.0%		
The feedback I get regarding my assignments/learning activities helps me to improve my way of learning and studying	26	62	56	117	55	3.35	1.21
	8.2%	19.6%	17.7%	37.0%	17.4%		
We always get copies of our tests after the teacher has finished to mark them	27	48	55	124	62	3.46	1.20
	8.5%	15.2%	17.4%	39.2%	19.6%		
Our English teacher puts some comments on our copies of tests	36	57	48	107	68	3.36	1.30
	11.4%	18.0%	15.2%	33.9%	21.5%		
Most of the assessments we get focus on listening skills	41	74	59	94	48	3.10	1.28
	13.0%	23.4%	18.7%	29.7%	15.2%		
Most of the assessments are in oral form	62	70	80	64	40	2.84	1.30
	19.6%	22.2%	25.3%	20.3%	12.7%		
Most of the assessments are about reading	41	72	65	86	52	3.11	1.29
	13.0%	22.8%	20.6%	27.2%	16.5%		
Most of the assessments are in written form	28	32	49	122	85	3.64	1.22
	8.9%	10.1%	15.5%	38.6%	26.9%		
We only get assessments at the end of the semester	75	69	66	69	37	2.75	1.34
	23.7%	21.8%	20.9%	21.8%	11.7%		
I believe there is a relationship between feedback from my assessments and my school achievement	18	28	53	129	88	3.76	1.12
	5.7%	8.9%	16.8%	40.8%	27.8%		
Overall Mean and Standard Deviation						**3.309**	**.5762**

Legend: **(SD)** = Strongly Disagree, **(D)** = Disagree, **(N)** = Neutral, **(A)** = Agree, **(SA)** = Strongly Agree, Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation

Source: Research Data (2022)

The items under the fifth objectives of this study sought to measure the extent to which assessment methods influenced the achievement of learners of English at the post-basic school level in Burundi.

Reading the table above, we can see that 166 (52.5%) of the learners mentioned that the types of assessments they get are linked to what they have learnt in class (Mean = 3.38, SD = 1.16). To put it another way, the assessments they received were moderately aligned with what they learned in class. Moreover, the same table shows that majority of the learners (201), representing (63.6%) of the respondents, claimed that those assessments are based on memorising what they have learnt in class (Mean = 3.59, SD = 1.08). This implies that those assessments were highly based on memorisation rather than on general understanding.

These findings, however, did not match up with the findings of interviews, where several teachers confessed that they frequently asked questions of general understanding because post-basic learners were no longer at the stage of memorisation of grammar rules and structures.

For instance, one of the interviewees said that they chose a mixture of assessments based on understanding and on memorisation. He admitted that at the post-basic level, the tests tended to focus more on general understanding than on memorisation, which contradicted the findings above. He put it in the following way:

> *In learning, it is the combination of the two (memorisation and general understanding) because we cannot learn when we have not memorised. But as far as my learners' level is concerned, the tests are not based on memorisation because if I give them an evaluation based on grammar, for example, what I ask them to memorise are the rules on grammar. If you do not memorise the rules of grammar, you cannot give a correct answer. If it is about writing an essay, there is nothing to memorise. It iss based on a general understanding.*

From that interview excerpt, we could understand that learners at the post-basic level had reached the point where they could use what they had learned at the basic school level. They were expected to be proficient in the English language and to be productive and creative in the use of it. In that way, learners got room to be productive and creative.

Moreover, the researcher wanted to discover if learners knew the importance of getting feedback. The data in table 4.4 indicated that 172 (54.4%) of the learners asserted that the feedback they got helped them improve their study habits (Mean = 3.35, SD = 1.21). This demonstrated that the majority of learners moderately valued the importance of feedback. Curiously, the majority of teachers admitted that they gave feedback to their learners because they knew its importance. A positive thing was that the findings in the table indicated that a total of 186 learners, or 58.8% of the respondents, reported that they received copies of their assessments after their respective teachers of English finished marking them (Mean = 3.46, SD = 1.20). This indicates that the majority of teachers were returning copies to their learners to check after assessments. Teachers valued the importance of feedback at a very high level, even though the findings showed that there were still a number of teachers (23.7%) who did not give back copies to their learners after evaluation, which was against teaching ethics.

Furthermore, the chart shows that 175 (55.4%) of the learners claimed that their teachers of English made some comments on their copies of the assessment (Mean = 3.36, SD = 1.30). That signified that more than half of teachers provided some feedback in written form. In contradistinction to that, the findings from interviews indicated that most of the teachers gave feedback orally after learning about the

common issues experienced by many learners. When asked why, the majority responded that it was due to the large number of learners. They admitted that putting comments on each learner's copy was practically impossible.

In terms of the focus of the assessments, the learners revealed that 142 (44.9%) of the assessments they took were based on listening skills (Mean = 3.10, SD = 1.28). However, 132 (41.8%) of respondents reported that the majority of the assessments they received were not oral tests. In other words, according to the respondents, 33.0% of the assessments were oral (Mean= 2.84, SD = 1.30). According to the results (Mean = 3.11, SD = 1.29), 138 (43.7%) of respondents indicated that the majority of the tests they had involved reading. The findings show that 207 (65.5%) of the students thought that written assessments made up the majority of the tests they took (Mean = 3.64, standard deviation = 1.22). Based on these findings, it is very simple to classify how English skills were assessed. The writing skills took the lead with 207 (65.5%), followed by the listening skills, which were evaluated at 142 (44.9%) of other skills. Furthermore, reading skills occupied the third position with 138 (43.7%). The last and least evaluated skills were oral, which were rated at 104 (33.0%) of the total language skill assessments. In few words, oral skills got less attention.

When asked what period of the year they usually got assessed, (45.5%) of the respondents or 145 affirmed that most of the assessments they did were not done at the end of the semester (Mean = 2.75, SD = 1.34). That suggested that some assessments were administered as progressive tests during the teaching and learning process.

These findings matched with the ones got from interviews. Most of the interviewed teachers said that they evaluated learners during and after the teaching process. In

fact, the findings were twofold: one group preferred assessing in the course of the teaching-learning process, whereas another went for during and after the teaching-learning process. It was noticed, however, that the majority preferred the latter. As exemplified below, one respondent stated that:

> *As you know, learning is a process. Suppose I have been teaching for a week. In the middle of a theme, I evaluate because it is not good to evaluate after a long period. It is good we evaluate step by step.*

Another respondent expressed a similar point of view and even added that assessments should be conducted from the beginning to the end of the teaching and learning process. In his view, a good teacher should proceed in that way. He clarified that:

> *Normally, if you are a good teacher, you assess them at the beginning, during the lesson, and at the end of the lesson. We assess them at the beginning to check their prerequisites, in the middle to check if they are following, and at the end to check if they have understood everything.*

The chart also reveals that 217 (68.6%) of the respondents (Mean = 3.76, SD = 1.12) thought there was a connection between feedback from assessments and academic accomplishment. Based on the mean score, learners accepted that there was a very high connection between the two elements.

In a similar vein, the researcher was interested in whether teachers were aware of the rationale underlying student assessments. Interviewed, the findings showed that most of the teachers concurred on one thing: checking if learners understood what was being taught. There are others, in addition to that, who reported that they did it for teacher self-evaluation. It is also worth noting that some educators evaluated their students in order to receive marks so that they could advance to the next level. The following excerpts summarised it all. One respondent uttered that:

I evaluate my learners because I want, first of all, to see if they have mastered the lesson. And secondly, to evaluate myself to see if what I have given them has been grasped. If they do not succeed, I have to review or go back to the lesson and make them understand.

Similarly, her colleague acknowledged the following:

First of all, you evaluate what you taught, and then you evaluate to see if learners understood what you taught. That is the first objective. And then the second objective is, as you know, for a student to move from a low class to a high class, they have to consider the marks they got. That is why I have to evaluate.

The overall mean of the construct was 3.31, and the overall standard deviation was .577, as shown in the table. In the view of the learners, the assessment methods used had a moderate influence on their achievements. For further clarification, see figure 4.4, which illustrates how much each component of the construct influenced learners' achievement in Burundi.
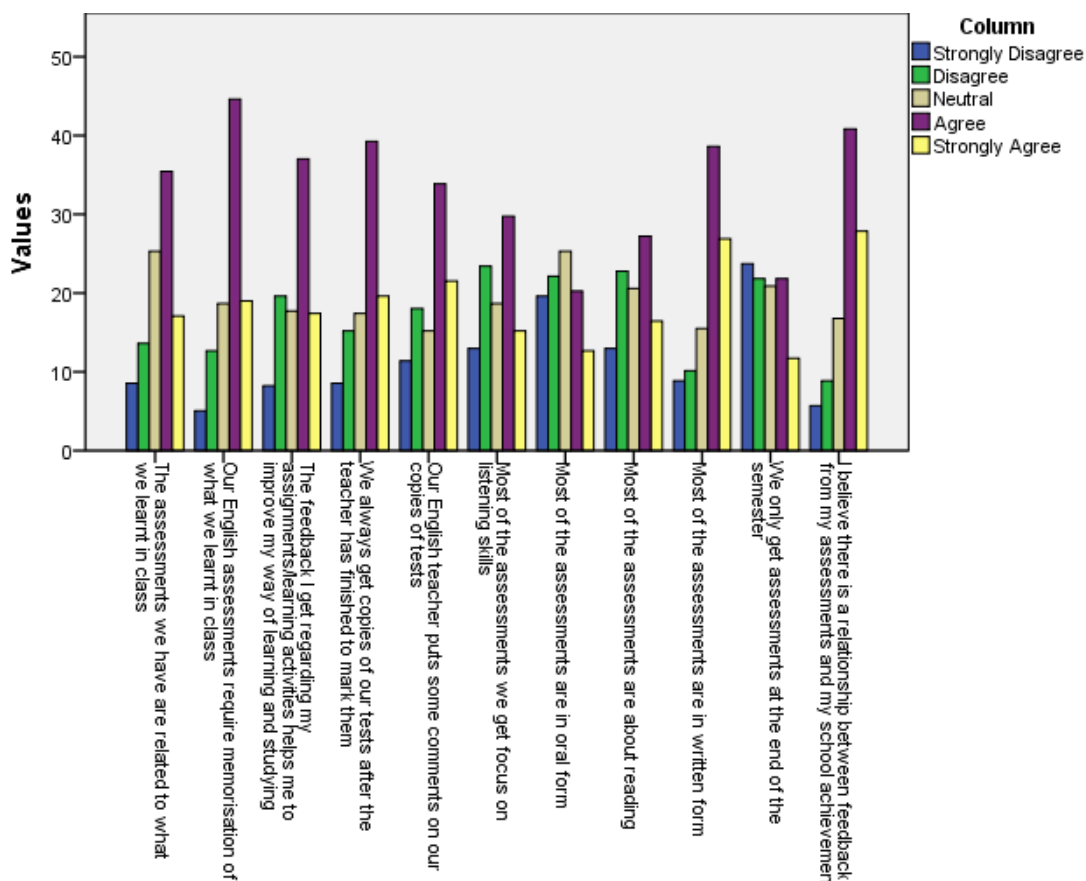
Figure 4.4: Influences of Assessment Methods on Learners' Achievement

4.4 Discussion of the Findings

In relation to this section, it presents a discussion of the study findings, which hinge around the research objectives. As indicated at the outset of this work, this study evaluated the instructional influences of the post-basic school English curriculum on learners' achievement in Burundi in terms of classroom learning environment, teacher knowledge and skills, instructional methods, instructional materials, and assessment methods. To that end, the section that follows expands on the discussion of both quantitative and qualitative data findings per objective.

4.4.1 The classroom learning environment

According to Ibem et al. (2017), citing Al Rukban (2010), the "learning environment" is described as everything that is happening in the classroom, department, faculty, or university. Then, when we talk about the learning environment here, we mean everything that takes place in the classroom and its surroundings, such as interactions, the culture that prevails there, and everything else that happens in the classroom that shapes learners' achievement. It typically focuses on a variety of aspects such as behaviour management, classroom rules and discipline, motivation of students, size of the class, teaching methods, the setup of classroom tools (such as tables, desks, etc.), and even the colour of the classroom (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2002; Slavin, 2000; Snowman & Biehler, 2003, as cited in Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015; Odeh et al., 2015).

In the same vein, Farrant (1991) and Farombi (1998) took "learning environment" to mean all accessible resources that assist learners in achieving their learning outcomes. This encompasses the books, software, audio-visual materials, and educational technology hardware, as well as the size of the classroom, seating position and

arrangement, and the availability of tables, chairs, chalkboards, and shelves on which instruments for practical are arranged. The aim of the first objective was, then, to find out how far the classroom learning environment influences the achievement of learners of the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi.

After the analysis, this research found that the teachers of English did their utmost to foster a highly welcoming and conducive classroom learning atmosphere (Mean = 3.85) and this showed how close the majority of the teachers were to their learners. They could not start teaching unless they first greeted the students (Mean = 4.30). Findings from classroom observations and teachers' interviews found that teachers greeted learners before beginning lessons. In addition, the findings of the teachers' interviews showed that all teachers tried their best to create a conducive classroom learning environment for their learners. Teachers stated that it is usually challenging to deal with people when you do not know who they are or how they feel; therefore, if you want to develop a strong relationship with your students, you must get to know them, even their names.

These findings are consistent with what a study entitled "The Impact of School Learning Environment on Students' Academic Performance in Senior High Schools in the Greater Accra Region, Ghana." by Baafi (2021) found out. The results demonstrated that there was a strong relationship between student-teacher relationships and the students' academic performance ($r = 0.60$; $p < 0.05$). In the same way, Kerubo's (2020) research findings proved that positive interactions between teachers and their learners have an influence on their academic performance. This was in relation to what Waldman (2016) found when she noted that before students succeed academically, there were some conditions or factors related to a conducive

learning environment that must be fulfilled. In addition to feeling supported and respected in their learning environment, learners must also feel physically and mentally safe.

In terms of language learning, teachers should ensure that the learning environment they provide for their students is conducive. Dewaele & Pavelescu (2021) meant the same thing when they said that teachers are the key players in creating enjoyable environments in the ecology of second language teaching. This is to say, they should create a learning environment that encourages interactions between learners and teachers as well as between learners and instructional materials that enable them to use the language in a communicative way. It is widely accepted that it is the responsibility of the teacher to create a "favourable learning environment" that gives learners opportunities to engage in real-world activities in communicative ways. This is what Corder (1990) meant when she said that learning can only take place in an appropriate environment. This supports Syomwene's (2016) assertion that a positive learning environment improves communication, whereas a nervous and stiff one brings invisible hindrances to it. Teachers of English must then foster a welcoming learning environment in the classroom in order to encourage students to feel included and engaged in the teaching and learning process.

Teachers should, however, remember that creating conducive learning environments does not happen overnight. It is a protracted process that requires time and self-involvement in the beginning. In the view of Loveless (2022), it is a long process that is done through conscious procedures, such as by interacting positively with their learners, showing positive behaviours, etc., which foster learning activities in the learning environment. Teachers should keep in mind that they are the learners' parents

at school, and as a result, they should cultivate positive relationships with their students so that they feel welcome and are not afraid to approach them or ask them questions when the occasion arises. Then, for the benefit of their students, teachers should continuously work to establish and maintain a positive rapport with their students. This is because, as demonstrated by the OECD (2010), effective teacher-student interactions are crucial in developing an environment that is conducive to learning. However, Pishghadam et al. (2021a) acknowledged that in order for them to be effective, they should be educated on how to create that joyful learning environment by demonstrating respect and care toward students and building on positive teacher-student interpersonal ties.

In terms of motivation, the learners' questionnaire indicated that they were very highly motivated to speak English (Mean = 4.29). That is a fantastic start, in that motivation is a big factor in any activity, especially in the language learning process. Mehndroo & Vandana's (2020) assertion that motivation is regarded as a significant feature of everyone's desires, actions, and needs supports this. In light of that, it is simple to claim that motivated learners develop the eagerness, or enthusiasm, desire, and curiosity required to grasp the importance of learning. The researcher witnessed that in some schools where the majority of the learners were actively participating, trying to express themselves in English. The enthusiasm to learn English was also validated by the fact that a number of learners approached the researcher after he had finished making classroom observations and asked for advice on how they could enhance their English communication.

Even though motivation alone cannot indicate the learners' academic achievement, it carries more weight in determining their success. With it, learners are kept abreast of

their learning endeavours. Without motivation, nobody can expect positive rewards if they aren't motivated. This idea is in consonance with the opinion of Bandura (1977) who stated that any task requires motivation in order to complete it. That motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic.

This agrees with findings from research conducted in China on the relationship between language learning motivation and the choice of language learning strategies among Chinese graduates, which demonstrated that intrinsic and extrinsic factors are important factors in determining the success of language learning (Xu, 2011). That goes in tandem with earlier studies like those by Qin & Wen (2002), Qin (2003), and Jiao & Liang (2022), which demonstrated that motivation is a key factor in second language learning as well as in determining learners' academic success. In second language learning, it was found that motivation can shape learners' success or failure as it directly has an impact on all aspects of the learning process, starting with how frequently the learner uses their learning strategies, their learning willpower, the way they set their studying goals, and their learning persistence (Qin & Wen, 2002).

In a similar vein, this can be concluded from Guo & Bai's (2022) research findings, which showed that academic achievement increases or decreases depending on how high or low the motivation is. It was found that the stronger the motivation to learn English, the higher the English achievement, and the weaker the motivation to learn English, the weaker the English achievement.

The findings from the learners' questionnaire also showed that a great number 238 (75.3%) of their learners claimed to be known by name by their English teachers (Mean = 3.95, SD =.994). If these findings were true, they would help not only in

developing or strengthening relationships between students and teachers but also in motivating students because they would feel like insiders in the teaching and learning process. It would help them to feel comfortable and, consequently, open up, express themselves freely, and look for support when necessary if they felt at ease. Unfortunately, it was discovered during classroom observations that many teachers were merely calling the names of the very few learners who were active. In general, they were typically pointing at them when it came to answering a given question.

Concerning how learners collaborate by studying together, it was discovered that 204 (64.6%) of students, with a mean score of 3.69, admitted that they were collaborating by studying together. This suggests that learners had a high level of collaboration. This was validated by the interview findings, where teachers asserted that learners assisted one another, especially in groups. They admitted that their learners had developed that spirit of working together even in the absence of their teachers. The results of the classroom observation provided confirmation of that. In some reading or speaking comprehension lessons, the researcher saw that learners were working in groups when they were given topics to work on before sharing them with the whole class. He could see how they were helping each other in case there was a learner who had some understanding issues. That demonstrated how learners are sociable when they collaborate and do things together.

Based on Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, collaborative work gives learners opportunities to observe what their teammates are doing. In doing so, they assist one another by demonstrating, showing, or modelling how the task in question is done before retaining it through rehearsals. Collaborative learning will also assist learners in replicating what they have seen, retained, or learned from their teammates as

observers. Learners become more motivated as they keep repeating what they have observed or heard from their peers based on social (classroom) comments or feedback. Teachers should incorporate SLT into their teaching because it allows students to learn from one another in the sense that learners can sometimes pay more attention to their friends and age-mates than they do to other adults. That collaboration then enhances their academic achievement.

The findings of the study further showed that more than 40% of the classroom surroundings were not totally conducive. The results from the learners' questionnaire showed that 128 (40.5%) of the investigated schools were in noisy places, with a mean score of 2.95 and a corresponding standard deviation of 1.327. This implies that the classroom surroundings were moderately quiet. That was supported by the classroom observations, when the researcher saw that there were some schools that were built by the road. We could mention, for instance, Musaga and Kanyosha Municipal Lycées, whose walls are erected at less than 10 metres from the road. Other schools were either located in busy areas, like near markets, or simply close to the roadways. We could mainly mention Gikungu Municipal Lycée, Mutanga Municipal Lycée, COMIBU Buyenzi Lycée, Buyenzi Municipal Lycée, Kamenge Municipal Lycée. Those findings agreed with those from teachers' interviews.

Most of the teachers from the concerned schools claimed that it made their teaching activities difficult in that they had to shout in order to make all learners hear what they said. Additionally, they affirmed that learners had a difficult time catching what was being taught. From this, we can simply deduce that this situation jeopardises the teaching and learning activities by impairing learners' ability to hear lessons clearly

and exhausting teachers. On the learners' side, it kills their learning enthusiasm and reduces their academic achievement as it makes it hard for them to learn properly.

The impact of environmental noise on academic performance has been the subject of numerous earlier studies. Their studies demonstrated that noise had detrimental effects on learners' academic achievement (Connolly et al., 2015; Gilavand & Jamshidnezhad, 2016; Buchari & Matondang, 2017). For instance, the results of a study conducted in the United Kingdom by Conetta et al. (2015) concerning the perceptions of school acoustics and the impact of noise on teaching and learning in secondary schools found that the noise had a negative impact on learners' learning.

Additionally, it was discovered to be worse in schools with open classroom layouts or those erected near sources of external noise. According to Buchari & Matondang's (2017) research, the noise can impair students' ability to speak clearly in the classroom and cause a loss of concentration and focus while performing schoolwork. The findings further demonstrated that, because learners were constantly exposed to noise, it could even lead to a decline in academic performance. This was also in congruence with Gilavand & Jamshidnezhad's (2016) research conducted in Iran that looked at the effect of noise in educational settings on the learning and academic achievement of elementary pupils in Ahvaz. The study showed that the noise had a negative effect on learning in educational institutions such as elementary schools as well as on academic performance.

All of those findings demonstrated how learners attending schools located in noisy places or busy areas endured during their academic journeys. The government should then consider the effect of noise when it comes to building schools. The sites of

schools should be among the other salient factors to consider. If not, learners will become scapegoats.

Results from the questionnaire given to the students revealed that 118 (37.3%) of them mentioned that their classrooms were overcrowded. Its standard deviation was 1.360, and its mean score was 2.81. Based on the mean score, this implied that learners said that their classrooms were moderately populated in general. However, Park et al. (2020) discovered that overcrowding conditions in classrooms affected students' academic performance negatively in that it made it harder for them to learn.

Curiously, when asked whether the class size had a negative effect on their English learning, only a small number of students 72 (22.8%) admitted that the class size affected their learning process. Its mean score was 2.35, with a standard deviation of 1.260. In the learners' points of view, class size had a low influence on their English learning process. On the contrary, 193 (61.1%) of the learners mentioned that the class size did not have any influence on their English learning journey.

However, most of the interviewees did not embrace that idea. Findings from their interviews showed that it is hard to assist each learner in large classes. Consequently, it makes the learning process difficult, especially in languages like English, where learners must learn the language practically. The researcher noticed that most of the visited classes had more than 50 learners each, something that was also confirmed by teachers. Some teachers were complaining about the large number of learners they had. They claimed that the government should expand schools or construct additional classrooms to decrease the number of learners in large classes. There was no doubt that teachers and learners in that situation were having hard times. It was found that in

some schools, one bench was shared by three and sometimes four learners. Because learners were not comfortably seated, the researcher wondered how they would do their assignments. This was yet another factor that might influence how learners learn. As an illustration, the researcher saw how few learners were given opportunities to speak during a lesson. That is a significant issue, especially in language learning, because practise is the key to learning. Both verbal and written English communication should be taught to them. To put it another way, it indicated that the English learning process of students was impacted in some way.

Learners' findings contradicted those of Ayeni & Olowe (2016), who found that the classroom size had an influence on learners' teaching and learning. According to them, large classes were more challenging in a number of ways, including but not limited to the management of the class, learners' control, planning and assessment, and not to forget marking copies. They further mentioned that it is easier, for example, to spot problems among learners and give them feedback in smaller classes, identify their specific needs, and adjust the teaching strategies to meet those needs, which is not possible in large classes. These findings also went in tandem with those of Odeh et al. (2015) and Ayeni (2016), who observed that the size of the classroom affected students' achievement regardless of the size of the class.

In the same way, findings of a research conducted by Bethel University (2019) on students' achievement confirmed that the 32% reduction in class size increased students' achievement. The study added that teachers in small class sizes get opportunities to offer their learners personalized instructions, which is not possible in larger classes. Thus, their academic performances go up.

This agrees with the views of Mondjila (2019), whose research findings showed that there was a correlation between class size and learners' academic performances in that the study proved that small class sizes performed better than large class sizes. Similarly, studies conducted in the USA demonstrated that smaller schools may help increase learners' academic achievement in that they help parents, learners, and teachers see themselves as part of a community (Barrett et al., 2019). This means small classes facilitate easy collaborations and consequently make it easy to help each other when needed. To help learners learn fruitfully, it is incumbent on the government to build more schools so that learners can study comfortably. If nothing is done, students and teachers will be held accountable for problems over which they have no control. Learners especially will be scapegoats, and using the English language communicatively will only be in official documents.

The findings of this study also showed that only a small number of learners—79 (25.0%)—agreed that the physical conditions of school and the classroom had a negative effect on their English learning process. With a mean score of 2.40 and a standard deviation of 1.363, this means that the physical conditions of school and the classroom generally had a low influence on their English learning process.

In contrast to what the researcher discovered from classroom observations and teachers' interviews, 188 (59.5%) of the learners stated that the physical conditions of school and the classroom did not have any influence on their English learning process. Many schools were not in optimal locations since they were located in noisy places, which made it difficult for the learners to focus on their learning process and made them susceptible to distractions of any kind. Besides that, it was found that many classes were overcrowded. Literature has demonstrated that these are among other

factors that hamper the teaching and learning process. It was shown that safe and healthy spaces have a positive influence on learners' outcomes (Barrett et al., 2019).

The overall mean of the learners' questionnaire indicated that the classroom learning environment has a high influence on learners' achievement (Mean = 3.405, SD =.5030). These findings were consistent with those of Abenga (1995) and Farombi (1998), as cited in Odeh et al. (2015), who discovered that the learning environment can influence learners' achievement in either a positive or negative way. It was found that it negatively affected learners' academic performance when there was a lack of "good school climate, instructional materials, discipline, physical facilities, or poor teacher quality" in the classroom setting. In addition to that, the school's location is another factor.

Furthermore, they discovered that class sizes, both small and large, can have an impact on students' achievement. The learning environment, on the other hand, will affect learners' achievement positively when it is improved. Aneke & Akpusugh's (2022) findings concured with what precedes in that they found that school buildings that are unattractive and overcrowded classrooms are among other factors that affect learners' academic performance negatively in secondary school. The same research also revealed that poor and inadequate physical facilities and obsolete teaching techniques lead to poor academic achievement among students.

Another research conducted in Nigeria by Shamaki (2015) on the influence of learning environments on students' academic achievement at the senior secondary school level in Yobe State, Nigeria, agrees with the findings of Aneke and Akpusugh (2022). It was found that there was a significant difference between the mean

academic performance of students taught in an ideal learning environment and that of students taught in a dull learning environment. Similarly, Mudassir & Norsuhaily (2015) conducted a study to examine how school environments influence students' academic performance in selected secondary schools within Kuala Terengganu, which proved that the learning environment impacts learners' academic performance. In their study, it was discovered that learners who studied in schools with appropriate facilities, good teachers, and a favourable environment performed better than those who studied in schools with fewer facilities, unqualified teachers, and a less enabling environment. These findings imply that any teaching and learning activity should take the learning environment—in this case, the classroom learning environment—into account. If not, it will always hamper learners' academic performance. Improvements to the school environment have been demonstrated to have a favourable impact on learners' achievement in numerous studies (Abenga, 1995, as cited by Odeh et al., 2015). On the contrary, if it is disregarded or given less attention, it will have a detrimental effect on students' academic success (Farombi, 1998, as cited in Odeh et al., 2015). That is why Grosmman, et al., 2013; Kane, et al., 2013) mentioned that the classroom learning setting should support real interaction of various activities with learners for their academic success. From time to time, it should be adjusted to attract learners based on what is being targeted and the level of the learners. On the same note, Abdullah et al. (2020) observed the necessity of reforming the learning environment so that it becomes reliable and realistic in relation to the real-world situation or context. It should evolve along with the trend of progressive and innovative technology.

To put it briefly, learning context influences learners in many ways as it helps to create, according to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, settings that empower students and foster greater participation from them during the learning process (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018). That is because students are exposed to and impacted by a variety of learning resources, such as varied teaching methods, teamwork, group discussions, peer coaching, giving presentations in front of their peers, etc., where they can learn from one another (Alshobramy, 2019). In such a way, they get opportunities to be connected, learn from one another, and strengthen one another along the journey through observation and listening.

4.4.2 The teacher knowledge and skills

According to Ben-Peretz (2011), teacher knowledge and skills are understood as a body of professional knowledge that includes both knowledge of general pedagogical principles and skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught. On top of that, Diezmann & Watters (2015), as cited by Bradfield (2017), acknowledged that it is a body of knowledge that assists teachers to adapt the subject matter or material they are teaching in ways that help a varied collection of students with varying prior knowledge and skills learn more effectively. To put it another way, teacher knowledge and skills can be understood as all that is required for a teacher to be called a teacher. This means having an understanding of the course and the content to be taught as well as the adequate teaching methods, techniques, and skills to transfer that content, i.e., having good communication skills.

In relation to the CLT method, teachers should be well equipped to help learners use language communicatively in language teaching and learning. In the view of the OECD (2020), it is important that modern teachers foster their students' 21st century

skills in increasingly diverse classrooms, guided by teaching and learning research. In order to do this, they are expected to apply modern instructional tactics, employ creative teaching techniques and practices, and mobilise many sources of knowledge. According to Medgyes (1990), for the CLT to be effective, a teacher must possess outstanding knowledge and skills. More specifically, Brown (2001) and Alamri (2018) mention that each teacher ought to possess the following four qualities, which are among other important aspects of a learner's success: technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal abilities, and personal qualities.

In other words, teachers who are equipped with knowledge and skills fulfil the qualities of a good teacher. In the educational realm, teacher knowledge and skills are among other influential factors that play a tremendous role in determining learners' achievement. It was found that teachers with better content knowledge about the subject helped learners succeed more (OECD, 2012). In addition to that, teachers should be aware of the needs of their learners so that they can tailor their teaching accordingly. In this work at hand, the researcher wanted to evaluate how far teacher knowledge and skills influence the academic achievement of post-basic school learners of English in Burundi.

After the analysis of the teachers' interviews, it was found that most of the teachers employed a range of strategies to aid their learners in understanding new concepts. The tactics they used, among others, were, for instance, explaining the term or the expression in straightforward language or using illustrations. The findings also indicated that translation was generally used after trying many other methods. According to one of the teachers, she said that she did not like translating because learners who are accustomed to it become lazy, and as a result, they fail to

communicate effectively in English. On the same note, the researcher noticed during the eight classroom observations that some teachers were rushing because they were running out of time, and three of them regularly employed translation techniques. This suggests that the teachers in question were not sufficiently equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to adequately explain new concepts or expressions to their learners. But the use of the question-and-answer technique, explaining in different ways, was in regular use in the other five classes.

The use of blended communicative strategies is in line with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for the 21st century (Savignon, 2001). According to her, CLT is recommended for teaching English. Based on Savignon's (2001) CLT, Nguyen (2010) holds the view that CLT is regarded and accepted as an inclusive teaching approach to language teaching, which takes into account various approaches and methods, motivations for learning English, different types of teachers, and the needs of individual classrooms as well as students themselves.

This demonstrates that a variety of criteria must be combined in order to effectively teach English as a communicative language. In other words, effective or communicative language teaching is not just a matter of conveying content and pedagogical knowledge and using all the novel teaching methods and techniques (Pishghadam et al., 2019). It goes much further than that. It is an emotionally charged undertaking, according to Xie & Derakhshan (2021), where language instructors interact and communicate with each learner as they enthusiastically teach the subject matter in an enjoyable learning setting. All the teachers were qualified to teach English, and their teaching experiences ranged from four to twenty years, according to the study's findings.

Additionally, it demonstrated that each of them received teaching training on how to teach the new program they were using, which is good. However, they all admitted that the training they got was not enough. They claimed that more training should be organised by the government so that they stay updated. That is in line with the findings of the reviewed literature. It was discovered that new teachers are not sufficiently prepared to meet the needs of their learners, and most of the teachers with experience still have issues adapting or switching their teaching to new standards (Barbara, 2004). She went on to say that teachers need to be trained in order to deepen their knowledge and enhance their skills to meet the demands of their learners.

In the view of the researcher, this makes sense in that training helps them get new information as sciences are not static. According to research, teacher training improves learners' academic performance (Kerubo, 2020; Hafeez, 2021; and Ulla, 2018). Kerubo (2020) added that teacher training broadens the teacher's skill set and keeps them up to date with new information, while Hafeez's (2021) research concluded that teacher training plays a crucial role in choosing the best teaching method for teaching, assists in improving academic achievements, and arouses learners' interests. Putting all of this together, we can conclude by saying that the findings showed that the investigated teachers generally had the required skills to teach English at the post-basic level in Burundi. They asserted that the training they got was not enough and that they need more training sessions for deepening their knowledge and skills.

However, they generally fell into seven categories of teacher knowledge, as acknowledged by Shulman (1987). As research findings by Khan et al., (2016) and Barbara (2004) found that teachers' capacity, or their knowledge and skills, have an

influence on learners' learning and success, it is necessary to train teachers to boost their knowledge and skills if they are to assist students in using the English language easily in their daily lives. Khan et al., (2016) observed that teachers who have good knowledge and information about the concerned field can readily help learners promote their academic success. Barbara (2004) found out that the quality of teachers, that is, teacher knowledge and skills, are the single biggest indicator of learners' success. She went on to say that of all the other variables, teacher training, ability, and experience account for the most variation in learners' academic attainment. She contended that if teachers are equipped with knowledge of the material, understand the way their students learn, and have experience using effective teaching methods, it will lead learners to reach higher levels of achievement. Teachers are very influential in education. Drawing on SLT, Bandura (1977) acknowledged that people learn by observing what those around them do. In this case, teachers are one of the other models that students learn from or identify with. They have an impact on how students learn, either directly or indirectly. If it is speaking, learners imitate how their live models (teachers) speak. Therefore, they ought to mirror the skills or traits learners are looking for.

The government of Burundi should always take into account the importance of teacher knowledge and skills by training teachers whenever needed. Otherwise, the Burundi government's efforts to help all post-basic school leavers, precisely the ones from language section, use English communicatively in all domains of life will end up in smoke.

4.4.3 The instructional methods

Instructional methods are, according to Al-Rawi (2013), the mechanisms or techniques used by the teacher to organise and carry out a number of educational means and activities in order to attain certain goals. Dorgu (2015) understood them as different strategies that teachers use to convey their subject matter to the learners in the classroom based on the instructional objectives to bring about learning. Teaching methods can also be understood as the means or strategies teachers use to impart knowledge to their learners by employing some methods based on the learners' attributes (Munawaroh, 2017). In other terms, "teaching methods" refers to the various techniques and strategies teachers employ in order to meet predetermined goals. The goal in the case at hand is to be able to use the English language in communication.

In education, there are many teaching methods that are regularly used by teachers. We can single out lectures, class projects, discussion, the cooperative method, role-playing, question-and-answer, communicative, and eclectic teaching methods, among others. These instructional methods can be broadly divided into two main categories, which are teacher-centred and learner-centred (Syomwene et al., 2017). Eclectic teaching methods can be classified as the teacher-student interactive methods as they combine strategies used by both teacher-centred and student-centred approaches (Pooja, 2017). However, each teaching style possesses its own strengths; thus, they may influence learners' academic performance differently.

Lee & Boo (2022), citing Adams & Engelmann (1996) and Rosenshine & Stevens (1986), described teacher-centred instruction as being planned and directed by teachers to present the content of the course to learners through traditional lectures or

demonstrations. Isa et al. (2020), citing Tebabal & Kahssay (2011), said that teacher-centred is the traditional approach, which does not offer any activity to the learners by making them passive. As a result, learners receive knowledge from their teachers without building their engagement with the material in question. The researchers went on saying that this approach also involves memorising; it is therefore less practical and more theoretical. It is good to remember that in communicative language learning, the CLT mandates that teachers place their learners at the centre of instructions. Like that, they are given enough room to participate and contribute as much as possible.

A teacher-centred approach, however, does not involve learners in the process of teaching and learning. It jeopardises leaners by making them lazy as they are busy taking notes. In teacher-centred learning, teachers play crucial roles in the learning process as they are regarded as information providers or evaluators to monitor the learning process of their learners, who are, by the way, taken as passive information receivers (Emaliana, 2017). This implies that learners under this method put all their emphasis on their instructor. It becomes one-way communication.

Research has found that teacher-centred strategies have negative effects on learners' achievement. In a study conducted in Kenya by Wabwoba et al. (2021) on evaluating the impact of teacher-centred teaching methods on students' academic achievement in the English language on National Tests in Nairobi, the findings showed that a teacher-centred approach was negatively correlated with learners' academic achievement at -0.1308. Based on their findings, they concluded that teachers go for alternative dialogic approaches like group discussions, collaborative teaching, and other teaching strategies to increase students' opportunities to use the English language for purpose.

To that end, training is the key to expanding their teaching repertoires. However, a study by Ludigo et al. (2019) found out that a teacher-centred approach that included instant feedback, continuous or repeated practice, and reinforcement was positively correlated with learners' achievement. The study then recommended that when teachers use that strategy, they should provide immediate feedback to their students and encourage continuous practice.

In contradistinction to the teacher-centred approach, the learner-centred approach puts learners at the centre of instruction, which is one of the CLT tenets. Learners taught using this approach are very active in that this approach embraces the concept of discovery learning and encourages them to be more practically effective (Brindley, 2015, cited by Isa et al., 2020). It is a method that emphasises what learners do rather than what teachers do. According to Savignon (2003), she asserted that communicative language teaching (CLT) places emphasis on learners in terms of both processes and goals. Putting it differently, it respects the learning needs of learners and the way they learn, and it places learners at the centre of instruction (Aytaç & Kula, 2020, citing Blumberg, 2008; Brown, 2003). According to McCombs & Miller (2007) and Pedersen & Liu (2003), cited by Lee & Boo (2022), student-centred instruction is understood as instructional practices in which learners are urged to direct their own learning, to learn by doing, and to work collaboratively with other students.

According to previous studies, a learner-centred approach improves students' academic success. For instance, according to the Aytaç & Kula (2020) study, which evaluated the effect of student-centred approaches on students' creative thinking skills, there was a statistically significant correlation between the learner-centred

approach and student achievement. Additionally, it demonstrated that whenever student-centred approaches are employed in lessons, there is a positive effect on the creative thinking skills of learners.

While analysing the impact of student-centred instruction on EFL learners' attitudes and achievement in English Language Teaching by Kassem (2019), it was reported that student-centred learning enhanced EFL students' affective variables and achievement in comparison to a teacher-centred approach. The study advised that foreign language teachers should shift their instruction strategy to a student-centred approach and create classroom environments that are conducive to learning. The study also recommended including a student-centred approach in the training programs for aspiring foreign language teachers in order to equip them with active learning skills. In the same perspective, research by Emanet & Kezer (2021) revealed that a student-centred approach outperformed the traditional ones in terms of math achievement, attitudes, and anxiety.

As the literature showed that post-basic school leavers from the languages section in Burundi had a low command in the English language, the researcher wonders whether this low level of English use was linked to teaching methods or not. If they did, the researcher in this section wishes to assess the extent to which the instructional methods influenced learners' English achievement at the post-basic school level in Burundi.

The research revealed that role play (Mean = 3.89, SD = 1.110), discussion techniques (Mean = 3.86, SD = 1.077), and cooperative methods (Mean = 3.60, SD = 1.261) were the most commonly used teaching methods, in addition to the eclectic methods that came out on top. According to learners, it was found that the three teaching

methods influenced their academic achievement at a high level. Based on the teaching methods applied, the findings indicate that the most used teaching methods were learner-centred methods. Concerning the lecture method (a teacher-centred approach), that was classified as the sixth; it was found to have a moderate effect on their academic achievements (Mean = 3.37). The findings also revealed that, out of eight teaching methods, the classroom project was the least used (Mean = 2.77).

This, in the researcher's opinion, indicates that learners were not given more time to discover their talents. In the process of teaching and learning languages, it shouldn't be disregarded. It benefits learners in a variety of ways, including increasing their ability to learn autonomously and creatively. The findings by Wahbeh et al. (2021) indicated that class projects enhance language learners' personal and teamwork skills by boosting their communication abilities among themselves or with their teacher. It also fosters confidence and respect among language learners.

Although teachers were using a range of teaching methods, the teachers' classroom observations and teacher interviews revealed that the most commonly used ones were group discussion and collaborative methods, which is aligned with Payne & Whittaker's (2000) results. They concluded that one of the key instructional strategies for getting students involved in their learning journey is group discussions. On the basis of the aforementioned research findings, however, this contrasts with that of Hassan & Akbar (2020), who found that the lecture method was the most effective teaching strategy. It was found that it influenced learners' achievement scores at 65.6%, followed by question and answer, which influenced them at 49.2%. The discussion and demonstration methods affected them at 49.5% and 39.6%, respectively.

The analysis of the learners' questionnaire proved that the majority of teachers 230 (72.7%) used eclectic methods in their teaching activities. It had a mean score of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 1.030. This suggests, in the learners' opinion, that the use of various teaching methods had a high influence on their learning. The researcher's findings from the interviews with teachers are supported by this conclusion. They acknowledged using a range of teaching methods to help learners understand their lessons. This means that teachers using a variety of teaching strategies switch from using teacher-centred ones to learner-centred ones that put learners at the centre of instruction. This strategy tries to meet each learner's needs in the sense that teachers try to cater to the maximum number of learners' needs.

The overall mean of the construct showed that the teaching methods had a high influence on learners' achievement (Mean = 3.613). To help learners use English communicatively, teachers should then be keen in choosing teaching methods as it was discovered having a high influence on learners' academic success. In few words, they should differentiate teaching methods accordingly. They should choose and use teaching methods that incite learners learn English through English.

Since learners have different characteristics, various needs, and learning paces, it is up to the teacher to choose and use adequate teaching methods according to the subject matter to meet each learner's needs. In teaching and learning English, for instance, teachers should ensure that all learners are included in the learning process and enjoy equal chances to learn. As recommended by Syomwene (2016), teachers should strive to have the learners feel that they have the potential to be the best at language learning. They should strive to use learner-centred methods of teaching as opposed to teacher-centred methods.

4.4.4 The instructional materials

In education, instructional materials are crucial. Edessa (2017) asserts that instructional resources assist learners in gaining the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for picking up factual notions that drive them toward the development of professional careers. They make it easier for learners to actively engage in their learning process (Mbeng, 2018), which enhances their communication skills and enables them to pay closer attention in class.

Moreover, they help them to quickly grasp the content and master the learned subject, and as a result, their academic achievement is promoted. Aneke & Akpusugh (2022) claimed that poor and inadequate physical facilities, obsolete teaching methods, and overcrowded classrooms all contribute to learners' poor academic achievement. Thus, teaching materials should not be randomly chosen. Quist (2000), as cited by Syomwene (2016), acknowledged that the teaching materials should be interesting, relevant, and adequate. That means that there should be a variety of teaching materials to cater to all learners' needs.

The research showed that the learners' books and the ones that were available were not that engaging, as mentioned by a good number of teachers. They noted that some parts of the books lacked illustrative pictures. They said that pictures add more meaning to a given text, apart from arousing learners' learning curiosity. The research revealed that 49.7% of learners indicated that the English books they used included pleasant activities such as songs, dramas, role plays, and games. Its mean score was 3.14, indicating that their English books had moderately enjoyable activities. According to the pedagogy of integration, it is stated that learning activities should be relevant to real-life situations and realistic. The study discovered that the themes that

are included in the books were authentic as they were based on issues that learners currently face or will confront in their daily lives.

However, it was found that even the available instructional resources were insufficient. Teachers in most of the schools indicated that the sole teaching supplies were the learners' books and the teacher's guide, and even those were not enough. For example, it was discovered through teacher interviews and classroom observations that all learners were sharing books. This situation, where teachers were teaching English using sole chalk and boards and expecting learners to use English communicatively, is alarming and needs to be addressed by the government. This finding concurs with Jallow's (2021), who found out that learners and their teachers in the Central River Region (CRR) were seriously affected by a lack of learning and teaching materials. The study showed that the lack of adequate teaching resources in some of the schools in the region hindered the learning and teaching processes. A study conducted by Ahmed & Qasem (2019) in South Yemen yielded similar results when they found out that in most of the schools investigated, they did not have any auditory or visual teaching aids necessary for teaching languages like cassettes, recorders, computers, projectors, etc. In addition to that, it was found that the textbooks were also not enough, and two or more learners were sharing in some of the investigated schools.

According to the result of the learners' questionnaire, the available instructional resources they had access to had helped them improve language moderately (Mean = 3.21). This suggests that the government should multiply the instructional materials in order to increase learners' academic performance. The overall mean score of the construct showed, according to the learners, that academic achievement was

moderately influenced by the instructional materials (Overall Mean = 3.257, SD = .6901). This is absolutely true because instructional materials play a preponderant role in shaping learners' academic achievement. For example, the literature proved that access to instructional materials is a key factor in learners' academic achievement at the secondary school level (Olugbuye, 2017). This implies that learners should be given opportunities to use the available teaching materials to allow them hands-on skills for practice. Moses's (2020) research found that there was a significant relationship between the use of instructional resources, their accessibility, and their availability with respect to biology students' academic performance.

According to research, the main priorities for teaching are that resources be available, relevant, and sufficient because they influence the achievement of learners in many ways (Mwiria, 1995; Ekwueme & Igwe, 2001; Igu, Ogba, & Igwe, 2014; Nyawinda, 2015). In the case of English learning, for example, insufficient and inadequate teaching materials are counterproductive. Learners need to be exposed to a variety of teaching materials in order to explore and develop their skills.

Based on one of the core tenets of CLT as outlined by Savignon (2002), which is based on a view of language as communication either in written or oral form in non-test situations, and on the objectives of the MoNESR (2014), which state that Burundian post-basic school leavers are expected to: (i) communicate in a range of functional situations; (ii) document and search for information in English; (iii) have good linguistic knowledge allowing free oral and written production; and (iv) become immersed in the cultural, literary, and artistic aspects of the English language, one might wonder how these expectations can be met in schools that lack teaching materials. For example, how can learners write well when they do not have books to

read? How can they be able to communicate in crowded classrooms when they do not get opportunities to speak? How can we expect a learner to speak well when he or she has never heard how a native speaker speaks? How can they be able to document and search for information in English in schools where they do not have access to computers? These are the questions the government should ask itself if it wants learners to use English communicatively.

According to SLT, Bandura (1977) mentioned that people learn in a multitude of ways. In his view, people learn more from the environment where they are, through what he called "observational learning," by looking at what models do and imitating them later on. Among the three identified basic models of observational learning, which are (i) a live model, (ii) a verbal instructional model, and (iii) a symbolic model, the teaching materials are included in the last group model. According to Nabavi & Nijandi (2012), a symbolic model encompasses real or fictional characters exhibiting behaviours in some books, films, or cinema, television programs, or some online media. Drawing on SLT, instructional materials are taken as symbolic models. The government of Burundi should then provide the symbolic models to facilitate learners' development of the productive skills indicated in the curriculum under study.

4.4.5 The assessment methods

Assessment can be defined as a general term that encompasses all techniques used to collect data about the knowledge, ability, attitudes, understanding, and motivation of children (Ioannou-Georgiou, 2003). According to Amua-Sekyi (2016), it is defined as all of the activities that teachers and students engage in to collect data that can be employed to change how they teach and learn. This covers observation of teachers

and the analysis of student work such as homework, tests, essays, reports, practical procedures, and classroom discussion of issues. All of these are concerned with assessing the knowledge that a student may or may not have. Similarly, Huba & Freed (2000) understand it as "the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning."

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that assessment is a continuous process with the goal of understanding and enhancing students' learning. In education, like in many other domains, assessment plays a tremendous role in that it helps to know if people are on the right track as planned.

Teachers administer assessments in the classroom for a variety of reasons. According to Baxter (1997, as cited in Straková, 2016), the reasons behind classroom assessments are, for example, (i) to compare students with each other (through norm-referenced evaluation), (ii) to see if students meet a particular standard (through standard referenced evaluation), (iii) to help the student's learning, and (iv) to check if the teaching program is doing its job. According to Marsh & Willis (2007), they note that the reasons include but are not limited to "improving teaching and to better meet the needs of students; examining any effects of introducing a new curriculum; justifying school practices to the public; responding to dissatisfaction with school procedures; and settling conflicts within the school about power, roles, or personalities." In doing so, teachers should ask themselves if the assessments they are

administering to their learners are directly connected to the objectives of the lessons. Those assessments should reflect the evidence showing that learning has occurred.

After analysing the student questionnaires, the study showed that the assessments learners did were moderately aligned to what they learned (Mean = 3.38) and that the majority of the learners 201(63.6%) considered that the assessments they had taken were highly relied on memorisation (Mean = 3.59). These findings are similar to those of the teachers' interviews, which revealed that the majority of the assessments required more memorisation than general comprehension. As justification, they said that administering oral or composition tests was challenging due to the large number of learners.

These findings demonstrate that learners were not given time to demonstrate their knowledge or simply to be creative or inventive. In other words, to be productive by applying what they were taught. Memory assessments do not provide learners with the opportunity to work on their skills, such as writing or speaking. After becoming used to these forms of assessment, learners spent most of their time studying for the grades, memorising facts instead of studying for understanding. Drawing on the CLT, the assessments should be communicative. Teachers should stop using the traditional testing techniques, which rely only on one of the language components and overlook the others. In other words, those kinds of tests are insufficient for a thorough assessment of learners' communicative skills. That is why Savignon (2003) asserts that language assessment must switch from quantitative to more qualitative approaches in order to enhance communicative language teaching (CLT). In her study, "Assessment, Student Learning, and Classroom Practice," Amua-Sekyi (2016) found that high school teachers were administering assessments that promoted

memorisation rather than critical thinking. Referring to the Ghanaian Ministry of Education (2012), she agreed that if that situation continues in the education system, learners will only do well on memory items and questions and perform poorly on questions that require higher-level thinking skills. Based on that assertion, that is the fear of the researcher in case teachers do not change the assessment strategies, which are dependent on memory testing.

Teachers should encourage students to effectively communicate through creative writing and speaking during assessments to demonstrate their understanding. DuDevoir (2018) observed that "learning and fully understanding a concept will assist learners to come up with more creative ways to solve problems, and they will be able to apply the concepts in different circumstances and blend new knowledge with what we already know." The implication of this is that teachers abandon conventional methods of evaluation in favour of authentic ones which encourage learners' critical thinking and promote their academic achievement. Nozari & Siamian's (2015) research, which found that learners who were tested using authentic methods outperformed those assessed using traditional methods, supports this.

Additionally, the study discovered from the learners' questionnaire that the feedback from assessments moderately influenced their ways of learning (Mean = 3.35). These results are in line with those from the teachers' interviews. Most of the teachers acknowledged that the feedback they gave to their learners was not detailed. They were picking out the general remarks and working on them orally. The same observation was made in Amua-Sekyi's (2016) research when teachers indicated that their busy schedules prevented them from providing in-depth feedback. As a result,

they were simply assigning grades to the learners, and their academic performance was reviewed in general.

Furthermore, it was found that teachers did not put feedback on each learner's copy. The researcher believes that it is not the proper course of action. Since learners do not have the same learning problems, teachers should have devoted more time to putting comments on each learner's copy. The study also revealed that most of the feedback was given late, after they had already moved on to another topic. This result is in perfect agreement with those of Amua-Sekyi (2016), who discovered that learners failed to engage in discussing their work when it came to speaking. However, that was linked to the fact that learners were receiving feedback late. Learners claimed that they occasionally received their feedback on time, sometimes after other topics had been covered. The researcher suggests that teachers should give feedback before moving on to the next concept, particularly when the subsequent lesson draws on the previous one. When feedback on students' work is given too late, Amua-Sekyi (2016, citing Covic & Jones (2008); Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006)) claims that its relevance is lost. The provided feedback ought to be useful to the learners (recipients), and it is only helpful if it is given quickly enough and worked on for the learners' work and academic performance.

Moreover, the study found that the skills were assessed in the following decreasing order: writing skills (Mean = 3.64); reading skills (Mean = 3.11); listening skills (Mean = 3.10), and speaking skills (Mean = 2.84). This demonstrates that most of the assessments focused on writing (Mean = 3.64), which was rated at a high level in comparison to other language skills. The least assessed skill was speaking, as proven by the lowest mean score of 2.84. This shows that speaking skills were rated at a low

level by learners. The results of the teacher interviews support these findings as well. Teachers acknowledged that the large classes they had were the cause of all of that, which left them with a lot of copies to mark for written assignments and a lot of students to listen to for oral tests. This is also an observation shared by Maliva et al. (2022) in their investigation on English Language Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices of Oral Language Skills in Secondary Schools in Tanzania. Their study also discovered that, due to time constraints, fewer oral language assessments were conducted in large classes compared to small classes. According to Lam (2019), the purpose of oral language assessment is to help learners develop their interactional competence, which is pivotal for communication.

As a matter of fact, the researcher wonders how learners can improve their speaking skills if they are not evaluated to identify their weaknesses and achievements in that area. Teachers should balance all the language skills in evaluation, given that they all intervene in language communication. Since this research found that the written assessments dominated other skills, we discovered that those written assessments were based on reproducing what learners took notes on in class, such as fill-in exercises or other short questions based on recall, if we read between the lines. This assessment strategy undermines the CLT theory, which grants learners room for self-exploration in relation to skills.

The overall mean score of the classroom assessments was 3.309. This suggests that the assessment methods influenced learners' achievement at a moderate level. Drawing on this finding, it begs the question of whether teachers know the different reasons behind assessments. Assessments should not only be conducted for getting marks but also for shaping learners' ways of studying in order to improve their

communication skills, among other reasons for testing. Testing for grades will place learners in situations where they will be comparing themselves to their peers rather than focusing on ways to improve their communication skills. In the view of Earl and Giles (2011 in Muchlis et al., 2020), the aims of assessments are to discover learners' achievement, their weaknesses and strengths, and which strategies to adopt in order to improve learners' learning outcomes.

Therefore, teachers should always keep in mind that assessments are done for a variety of reasons and that they influence learners' achievements in one way or another, particularly through timely feedback. Instead of choosing assessments that require learners to remember correct language forms, teachers should use communicative language assessments, which encourage learners to make an effort to answer in a manner reflecting how the English language should be employed in real-world communication. In other words, those assessments should cover both productive and receptive skills, which are proofs of how well English is understood and used.

According to the findings, the overall mean of all constructs was 3.395, with a standard deviation of .313. In the view of the English post-basic learners in Burundi, their academic performance was moderately influenced by instructional factors. This may be the result of a combination of many factors discovered above, such as the lack of teaching materials, teachers' training on the new curriculum, which was not enough, assessment based on memorization rather than on learners' creativity, and the lack of timely feedback on assessments. Hirschhorn (2019) stated that if we are to value language use in terms of the communicative ability to achieve an aim, it is then

eminently possible and probably desirable to assess functional, communicative, and strategic competence.

As a reminder, the MoNESR in Burundi expects that post-basic school leavers be equipped with good linguistic knowledge in both writing and oral production about everyday life situations, be able to document and search for information in English, and become well-versed in the cultural, literary, and artistic aspects of the English language (MoESR, 2014; MoNESR, 2017). To reach the aforementioned aims, the Ministry of Education should provide all that is necessary for learners to develop their communication skills, as this is the primary goal of the new curriculum. This includes, among others, training teachers on how to set up communicative assessments based on CLT methods.

4.5 Chapter Summary of the Main Findings

This chapter dealt with the data analysis, interpretation, and discussion before they were presented with respect to the research objectives. The results demonstrated that the teachers did their utmost to create inclusive classroom environments by establishing good rapport with their learners. It also turned out that most of the post-basic school teachers generally had the knowledge and skills enabling them to teach English at the post-basic school level. Concerning teaching methods, the study showed that most of the teachers were employing eclectic teaching methods in their teaching. The research further revealed that the majority of the post-basic schools in Bujumbura Municipality lacked teaching resources. Finally, it was discovered that the assessment methods were not communicative. The chapter that follows presents a summary of the findings, a conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which instructional factors influence learners' achievement in the English curriculum in post-basic schools in Burundi. This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations arising from the findings presented in chapter 4. This study was significant because no research had been conducted on how much instructional factors influence the achievement of post-basic school English curriculum learners in Burundi. With a convergent parallel research design, this mixed-methods research employed a questionnaire, classroom observations, and a semi-structured interview to get the information needed for triangulation purposes. The study's findings hinged on the research variables from which the research objectives were derived. These are (i) the classroom learning environment, (ii) the teacher's knowledge and skills, (iii) the instructional materials, (iv) the instructional methods, and (v) the assessment methods. The data in this study were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively, and they were then presented in tables and figures, after which a thorough description was done. A summary of these findings is provided in the section that follows.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The research findings are presented based on each research variable in relation to the research objectives, as was outlined in the introductory section.

5.2.1 The classroom learning environment

The first objective was to find out how far the classroom learning environment influenced learners' achievement of the post basic school English curriculum in

Burundi. After the analysis, the study revealed that teachers created a welcoming learning atmosphere in their respective classrooms and promoted peer assistance. It was also established that learners were motivated to speak English by their teachers in different ways, which enhanced their learning process. It was finally revealed that the classroom learning context had a high influence on learners' achievement (the overall mean was 3.405, with a standard deviation of.5030).

5.2.2 The teacher's knowledge and skills

The second objective was to explore the extent to which teacher knowledge and skills influence learners' achievement in Burundi's post-basic school English program. The study demonstrated that all teachers of English underwent training related to the new curriculum, even though they were unevenly trained. The training was organised once a year for a period of two weeks. The attendance rate ranged from one to five times. In terms of the English language level used and the teaching methods proposed in the English books, it was discovered that the majority of the teachers had no issues related to that. However, the study revealed that all of the teachers requested additional training for more updates as what they had received was not sufficient. The data revealed that teacher knowledge and skills highly influenced learners' achievement.

5.2.3 The instructional methods

Concerning the third objective, which was to analyse the effectiveness of the teaching methods used in the post-basic school English curriculum in Burundi, it was found that the majority of the teachers were using eclectic teaching methods. The most used ones were discussion methods, role playing, and cooperative methods. Furthermore, class projects were the least used instructional method (mean = 2.771 and SD =.293)

when compared to other teaching methods. Another important conclusion was that the study revealed that the instructional methods used provided learners with the ability to study autonomously. Finally, the findings on this objective indicated that the instructional methods had a moderate influence on learners' achievement. (The overall mean was 3.613, with 0.596 as the standard deviation).

5.2.4 The instructional materials

The fourth objective was to evaluate the extent to which the instructional materials used in the post-basic English curriculum influenced learners' achievement in Burundi. The research demonstrated that the English language used in the learners' textbooks was tailored to their level. Besides that, it was found that the activities in the learners' textbooks were not that enjoyable. That was due to the fact that songs, dramas, role plays, and games were not sufficient. In addition, it was found that the activities in the English learners' textbooks were authentic in that the different themes were based on issues that learners currently face or will face in their daily lives. However, it was found that the learning activities were not enough in that some themes were not sufficiently developed. Finally, the data revealed that instructional materials had a moderate influence on students' academic achievement (overall mean = 3.257, standard deviation = 0.6901).

5.2.5 The assessment methods

The fifth and final objective was to determine the extent to which the assessment methods influenced Burundian students' academic achievement in the post-basic English program. It was found that the assessments were in line with what students learned in class. However, those assessments were found to be communicatively ineffective because the majority of them were based on memorization. Additionally, it

was found that the feedback was not timely provided to learners, which means that students could not benefit from it. Moreover, the study established that language skills were not given equal importance. Writing skills were given more weight in the evaluation than other language skills. Speaking skills were the least evaluated. Finally, the data revealed that assessment methods had a moderate influence on students' academic achievements (the overall mean was 3.309, with a standard deviation of 0.5762).

5.3 Conclusions of the Study

This study evaluated the extent to which instructional factors influence Burundian learners' achievement on the English curriculum in post-basic schools. From the research findings, it was shown how far each of the studied independent variables influenced the achievement of learners on the English curriculum in post-basic schools in Burundi. It was established at the end that learners' academic performance was moderately influenced by instructional factors. To recap, the independent variables studied were: classroom learning environment; teacher knowledge and skills; instructional materials; instructional methods; and assessment methods.

Then, based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

i. The analysis of the classroom learning environment showed that it influenced learners' academic achievements at a high level. This might have been the result of some factors, including overcrowded classes, noisy environments, and the condition of some classrooms, just to mention a few. This high level of influence it had on learners' academic achievement should not be overlooked. According to the literature, classroom learning environment can either positively or negatively affect students' academic progress. In large classes, for

instance, all learners receive less attention, not only from their teachers but also from their peers. As a consequence, their academic performance suffers. And since attention is one of Bandura's SLT conditions for creating an ideal learning environment, the learning cannot take place as it should. These conditions are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation for a positive social learning to occur. The government should then work on that to help learners reach their full potential, as it has a high level of contribution to their learning.

ii. In terms of teacher knowledge and skills, it has been determined that all teachers participated unevenly in the teaching preparation programs for the new English curriculum. However, even though all of them admitted to having the knowledge and skills necessary to teach at the post-basic level, they claimed that they needed additional training for more updates. It is incumbent for the government, together with other influential stakeholders involved in education, to organise more teacher trainings, seminars, etc. to reinforce teachers' knowledge and skills so that they impact more learners' academic performance.

iii. Another significant conclusion to draw is that the majority of the post-basic schools in Burundi had insufficient instructional resources ranging from books to audio and audio-visual teaching aids such as radios, CDs, projectors, TVs, etc. This situation begs the question of how teachers were teaching listening skills. Teaching resources should be made available to support the process of language learning because it was found to have a moderate influence on learners' academic achievement.

iv. Furthermore, most of the visited teachers employed eclectic teaching methods, which enabled a large number of learners to participate. It was found that group discussion, collaborative methods, and role-playing were frequently employed. The integrated pedagogy, as well as the CLT by Savignon, urges the use of a variety of teaching methods to accommodate each learner's way of learning. Teachers should, however, include class projects as another teaching method because they help students learn more thoroughly and become more motivated, confident, and creative. The government should facilitate by training teachers on different teaching methods and supporting learners to cope with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

v. Assessment methods had a moderate influence on learners' academic achievement as they were not communicative. The study showed that most of the assessments were based on memorization, and the feedback was not given on time. Consequently, this situation inhibited both teachers and learners from making use of the feedback. To some extent, this entails that most of the assessments for learning were not useful. They should inform both teachers and learners how the teaching and learning activities are unfolding.

5.4 Recommendations

Drawing on the study's findings, this study set a number of recommendations, first addressed to the government of Burundi, then to teachers of English, finishing with those for further researchers, as follows:

5.4.1 Recommendations to policy

i. English post-basic teachers should be re-tooled with knowledge and skills in order to be fully competent in English language teaching. In that perspective,

they need to be trained on how to create evaluations, especially the development of communicative assessments. In the same vein, teachers should be educated on how to effectively use feedback. It is an indicator, if not a barometer, of the teaching and learning activities in that it uncovers the weaknesses and strengths of teaching methods and learners in a given subject.

ii. Instructional resources should be made available. The study revealed that there was an alarming lack of teaching aids, ranging from books to audio and audio-visual teaching materials, in almost all of the visited schools. This could be one of the main reasons for the low level of English use among post-basic school leavers, because learners cannot pronounce English well if they haven't heard it spoken by native speakers, at least on TV or radio. For example, Bandura's (1977) SLT, or observational learning, stipulates that people learn best in the environment where they are, imitating a model. As language and culture are connected, how can we expect someone to act, imitate, and master someone's culture when he or she hasn't seen them act, at least on TV? The government should supply all the missing teaching and learning resources to help the teaching and learning process move smoothly.

iii. The government should organise and facilitate school benchmarking so that teachers get opportunities to learn from other schools performing better than them. Like that, it enables them to notice and share good practices and then set standards that push them forward in their teaching activities for the benefit of the learners.

iv. To get rid of the overcrowded classrooms, the government of Burundi should look for a way of constructing more classrooms for that purpose.

5.4.2 Recommendations to practice

i. Since the study showed that most of the post-basic teachers evaluated learners with written tests that directed learners to memorise structures, for example, they should instead set up assessments that encourage learners to put into practise what they have learned in class. Those assessments should accurately depict a learner's experiences using English in non-test situations (communicative language assessments). To reach that aim, it will entail both the integration of the four language skills and weighing them accordingly.

ii. Teachers should collaborate with their counterparts working in the same schools and, when possible, with others working in their immediate vicinity for some teaching-related discussions. In that way, they can learn from one another and improve their knowledge and skills.

iii. Teachers should also inspire learners to form English clubs where debates, discussions, and other activities are organized. Teachers should then, most of the time, join for more insightful assistance when needed.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

Learners' academic performance is among the salient topics that need to be addressed in education. Since learners' academic performance is influenced by many factors and this study only evaluated how school-based instructional factors influence the academic achievement of post-basic school English curriculum learners in Burundi, there is still room for further studies.

i. Prospective researchers can carry out another study to find out how much non-school-based factors influence the learners' academic achievement in the post-basic English curriculum in Burundi.

ii. Since the education system in Burundi embraces multilingualism, further researchers may also focus on finding out how that system impacts learners' academic achievement in the English curriculum at the post-basic school level in Burundi.

iii. This study was limited to the Bujumbura Municipality; hence, a different researcher may broaden it to the entire country so as to more fully generalise the findings.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Learners' Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

My name is Alfred Irambona, a PhD student from Moi University, Kenya. I am conducting a research entitled: **Instructional Influences of the Post-Basic School English Curriculum for Learners' Achievement in Burundi.**

As your answers will constitute the pillars of my research, I am humbly asking you to respond to all interview questions honestly and accurately and the information you are going to provide will only be used for academic purposes and will be treated with maximum confidentiality. Do not mention your identity anywhere in this questionnaire. As your answers will constitute the pillars of my research, you are kindly requested to answer the questionnaire honestly.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

For each question, kindly indicate how far you agree or disagree with the given statements by ticking (ᵛ) under the rating that best fits your choice. For example:

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Our English teacher uses learner centred teaching methods			ᵛ		
2	The teaching methods help me to increase my active participation					ᵛ

Section A. Classroom learning environment

This section comprises some statements regarding how you perceive the classroom learning environment in relation to English learning. For each statement indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Our teacher creates an inclusive and caring classroom environment in which I feel welcome					
2.	Our English teacher greets us when he/she enters the classroom					
3.	Our English teacher motivates us to speak in English					
4.	Our English teacher calls us by name					
5.	In our classroom, we as learners collaborate by studying together					
6.	My classroom surrounding is quiet (free of noise from outside)					

7.	Our classroom is overpopulated					
8.	The class size has a negative effect on the English learning process					
9.	The physical conditions of school and classroom have a negative effect on my English learning process					

Section B. Instructional methods

This section comprises some statements regarding how you perceive the effectiveness of the teaching methods used in your English classes. For each statement indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5

Item	**Statement**	1	2	3	4	5
10.	In most of our classes, our English teacher talks too much and doesn't give us enough time to express ourselves (lecture method)					
11.	Our English teacher gives us some projects to work on for example writing reports, poems, novels, etc. (Class projects)					
12.	Our English teacher asks us to discuss some topics in class while teaching English (Discussion method)					
13.	Our English teacher asks to cooperate and collaborate to solve the problems in groups (Cooperative method)					
14.	In our English classes, we work in groups and each learner has a role to play while presenting it in front of the class (Role play)					
15.	Our English teacher likes asking us oral questions while teaching (question and answer)					
16.	The teaching methods used in class help me to communicate in English even outside the classroom (Communicative method)					
17.	The teaching methods used enable me to get the ability of studying independently/autonomously in the process of learning English language					
18.	Our English teacher likes teaching using a variety of teaching methods (Eclectic teaching methods)					

Section C. Instructional materials

This section comprises some statements regarding how you perceive the instructional materials used in your English classes. For each statement indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I understand the content of the English pupil's book					
20.	The English pupil's book include enjoyable activities with songs, dramas, role plays and games					
21.	Each learner has his/her English pupil's book					
22.	The content in the English pupil's book provides me with realistic activities to transfer learning to practice in my real life					
23.	Our English teacher uses projector, radio, videos in English lessons					
24.	In our school, we listen to English news and watch movies/other programs on TV					
25.	The available teaching materials help me to develop my communication skills					
26.	The lack of teaching and learning materials influences my academic achievement					

Section D. Assessment methods

This section comprises some statements regarding how you perceive assessment methods in English subject. For each statement indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Scale: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
27.	The assessments we have are related to what we learnt in class					
28.	Our English assessments require memorisation of what we learnt in class					
29.	The feedback I get regarding my assignments/learning activities helps me to improve my way of learning and studying					
30.	We always get copies of our tests after the teacher has finished to mark them					
31.	Our English teacher puts some comments on our copies of tests					
32.	Most of the assessments we get focus on listening skills					
33.	Most of the assessments are in oral form					
34.	Most of the assessments are about reading					
35.	Most of the assessments are in written form					
36.	We only get assessments at the end of the semester					
37.	I believe there is a relationship between feedback from my assessments and my school achievement					

End of Questionnaire

Thank you very much for your cooperation

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Teachers

My name is Alfred Irambona, a PhD student from Moi University, Kenya. I am conducting a research entitled: **An Evaluation of the Instructional Influences of the Post-Basic School English Curriculum for Learners' Achievement in Burundi.** As your answers will constitute the pillars of my research, I am humbly asking you to respond to all interview questions honestly and accurately and the information you are going to provide will only be used for academic purposes and will be treated with maximum confidentiality. If you feel uncomfortable during the course of the discussion, you are free to withdraw from this interview. Thank you

Section A: General details

School …………………..……….................................... Class………………………...

Period…………………… Date ………………….……...Teacher: …………………

General information

1. a) Can you briefly introduce yourself, please?
    b) Which school/department or faculty did you graduate from?
    c) How long have you been teaching English at Post-basic school level?

Section B. Classroom learning environment

2. a) When you enter the classroom, do you always great your learners?
    b) While teaching, do you motivate them to learn English? Why?

3. Are there any difficulties you encounter in teaching English at post-basic level caused by the classroom learning environment? If yes, which ones? (**Probing keys**: For example regarding class size, availability of teaching materials, classroom conditions/size, location of the school, etc.)

4. a) Would you mind describing briefly how the context of your classroom is (**Probing keys:** for example the inside classroom relationships, that is to say, relationships between learners themselves, or you and your learners, the school surrounding, etc.)?

   b) Basing on how the classroom learning environment is, what do you suggest can be done in order to make it   more conducive?

Section C. Teacher knowledge and skills

4. In case your learners do not understand a given concept, which strategy do you use to check their understanding? (**Probes**: Giving them assignments, giving them tests, using question/answer strategy, translating it? etc.).

5. a) Since you started teaching, have you ever participated in any in-service training or in any activity alike? If yes, was the time allotted to that activity enough?
   b) How important is in-service training to you?
   c) Actually, do you think that the knowledge and skills you have are sufficient to teach English in post-basic English class?

6. In relation to the content of the program, which difficulty do you encounter in teaching English at the post-basic school level?

7. a) Do you think that giving feedback to your learners is necessary? Kindly justify your answer
   b) If you do, do you always give feedback to your learners after each assignment?
   c) Is the feedback written on their copies or it is done orally?

Section D. Instructional methods

8. a) Among the teaching methods proposed in the post-basic English curriculum, which one (s) do you use the most and why? (**Probing keys**: Group discussions, Role plays, Lecture method, Class projects, Question and answer, Demonstration, Drama …).

   b) Among the four language skills, which one (s) do you focus on and why?

9. a) In your teaching activities, do you use the learner-centred method? If yes, do you find it easy or difficult to use? Which challenges if any do you encounter? And how do you solve them for the sake of the learners?

10. Based upon the different teaching methods you use in teaching English, which one(s) would you recommend to other Teachers of English for communicative English learners' improvement?

Section E. Instructional materials

11. a. What kinds of instructional materials are provided for you as a teacher?
    b. Which one(s) do you use most of the time?
    c. Do you think that the available teaching materials are enough and tailored at the learners' level?

12. Basing on the role of teaching materials, do you think that the available teaching materials help learners to use English language communicatively? Briefly explain?

13. Basing on the available teaching materials at your disposal, do you think that they can influence the way you teach? Briefly explain your answer.

Section F. Assessment methods

14. a) Would you kindly tell me the reasons why you assess your learners?

    b) In the teaching-learning process, at which step/level of the course do you judge is appropriate to assess learners? (**Probing keys**: at the beginning, during or at the end)

    c) What kind of assessments do you usually give them? (**Probing keys:** The ones based on memorisation, understanding, individual, in groups …?).

    d) What form of assessments do you usually set for your learners? (**Probing keys**: Oral, listening, reading or writing?).

15. According to you, do you think that the assessments you give to your learners help them improve their way of studying to enhance their academic achievement? Kindly justify how

16. Do you think that the kinds of assessment you set for your learners help them to increase their level of using English in a communicative way? Briefly explain

17. a. Do you believe that the assessment methods you use in class can change the way you teach? Justify briefly.
    b. If yes, to which extent do you agree that assessment methods you use affect the way you teach English? (**Probing keys**: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5)

Thank you very much for your Time and Cooperation.

Appendix C: Consent Form for Research Participants

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH TOPIC: *Instructional Influences on the Post-Basic School English Curriculum for Learners' Achievement in Burundi*

RESEARCHER'S NAME: Alfred Irambona

INSTITUTION: Moi University

PROGRAMME ENROLLED: Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum Studies

CONSENT:

I accept to participate in the above mentioned study.

I understand and I have been assured that the names of the participants shall be anonymous and that the findings shall be treated with utmost confidentiality.

I understand and have been assured that I can withdraw from the study anytime if need be and inform the researcher,

SIGNED:

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT…………………………….…DATE…………..………………

RESEARCHER……………………………..…… DATE…………………………

Appendix D: Classroom Observation Grid

Section A: General details

School ……………........................... Class…….. Number of Students…………

Period………… Date……….. Lesson focus/topic ……….……………Teacher ……..
.
Section B: Classroom learning environment

Comments about the classroom learning environment in matter of:
Location of the school
…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………..…………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………..
Physical state of the class
…………………..………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………..
………………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..
Atmosphere inside the classroom
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………..
The availability of teaching materials
………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………..…………………………………………………………………………
………………….………………………………………………………………………

Section B: Teaching methods

Group discussions   ( )
Role plays   ( )
Lecture method   ( )
Class projects   ( )
Question and answer   ( )
Demonstration   ( )
Others:
…………………………………………………………………………………….….
……………………………………………………………………………………...…
…………………..…………………………………………………………………………
……………………….……………………………………………………………………
…………………………………..…………………………………………………………

Section C: Teacher knowledge and skills

|	Classroom activities	Comments
1.	The teacher introduces well the lesson	
2.	Attitude in class (between learners and learners- teacher, teacher-learners and teacher's confidence)	
3.	Teacher's creativity	
4.	The teacher sticks to his/her preparation notes	
5.	The teacher tries to integrate skills in his/her lesson	
6.	The teacher tries to involve as many learners as possible in his/her teaching	
7.	Teacher tries to make pupils interact in pairs/groups	
8.	The teacher creates opportunities for learners to use English	
9.	The teacher asks learners questions for clarification	
10	Strategies to explain new concepts (translation, examples, drawing, …)	
11	Language used to explain new vocabulary items (difficult, simple, clear, …)	
12	The teacher uses accurate/correct structures	
13	The teacher concludes well the lesson	

Section D: Instructional materials

		Comments
14	Available instructional materials	
15	Pupil's book	
16	Teacher's guide	
17	Instructional materials mostly used	
18	Conditions/state of available instructional materials	

**Section E: Assessment methods**

		Comments
19	Types of assessments given to learners (formative, summative)	
20	Form of assessment: oral (individual, discussion teacher-learners), written (individual, in groups?)	
21	Purpose of assessments (for, of, as learning?	

Appendix E: Map of Burundi with the Study Area
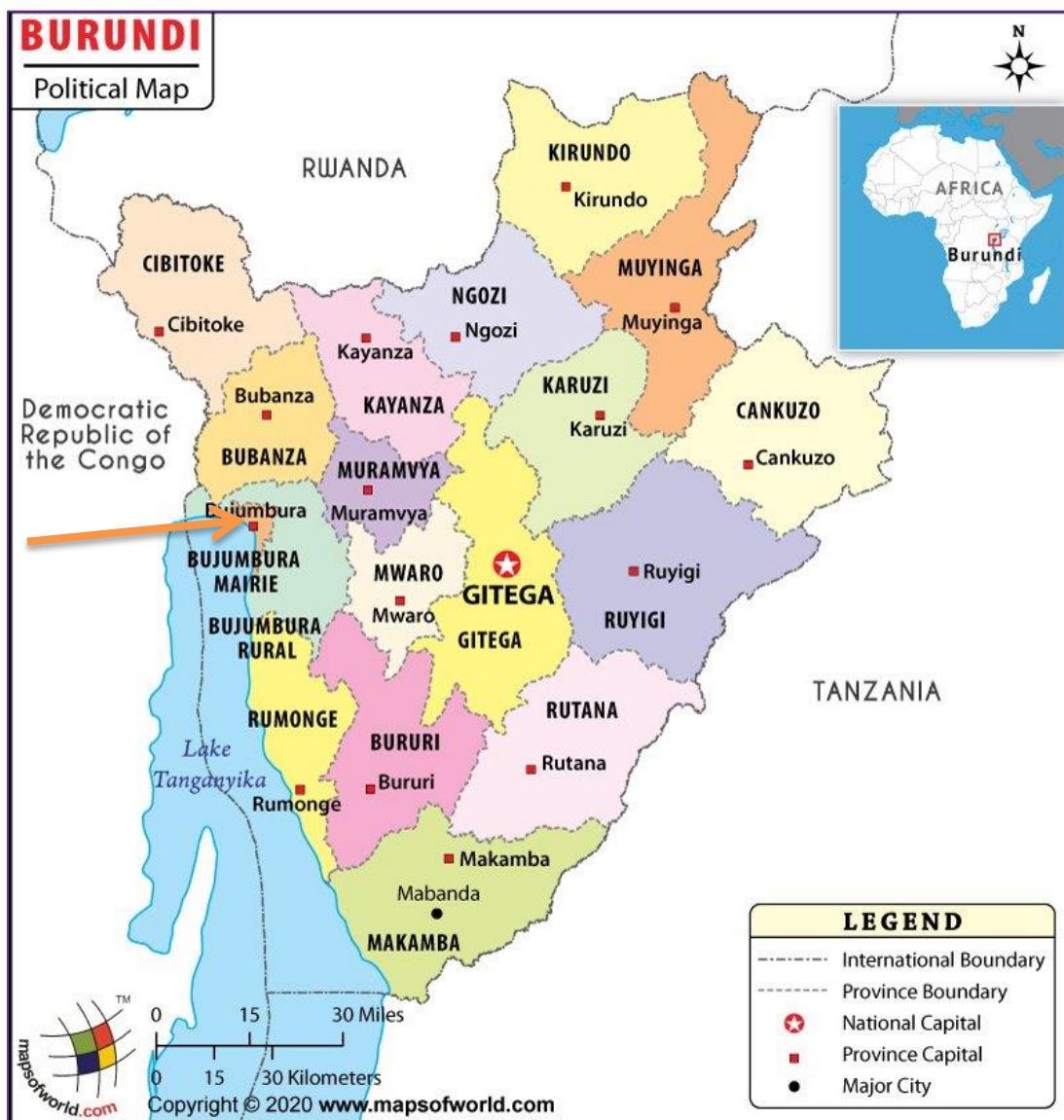
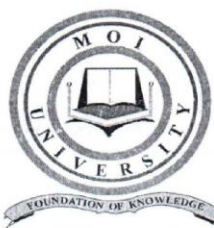**Legend:** The arrow points on Bujumbura Municipality

Appendix F: Map of Bujumbura Municipality
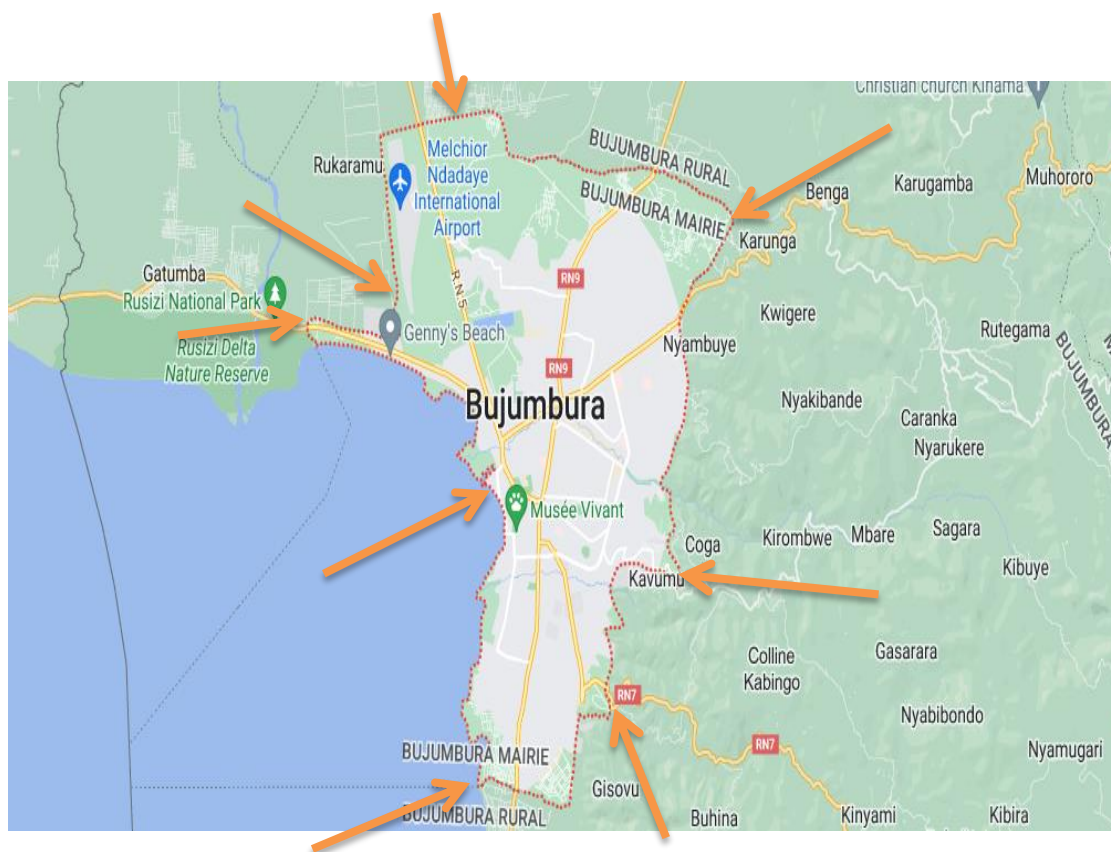
Map data ©2022 Google   2 km

Legend: The arrows point on Bujumbura Municipality

Appendix G: Research Authorisation

MOI UNIVERSITY
Office of the Dean School of Education

Tel. Eldoret (053) 43001-8/43620	P.O. Box 3900
Fax No. (053) 43047	Eldoret, Kenya

REF: EDU/D.PHILCM/1009/19   **DATE** 22nd APRIL, 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: **RESEARCH PERMIT IN RESPECT OF ALFRED IRAMBONA EDU/D.PHILCM/1009/19.**

The above named is a second year Doctor of Philosophy student in Curriculum studies at Moi University, School of Education, Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media.

It is required of his PhD studies to conduct a research project and produce a research report. His research topic is entitled:

"An evaluation of the Instructional Process of the Post Basic School English Curriculum for Learners' Achievement in Burundi"

Any assistance given to enable him conduct research successfully will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

PROF. J. K. CHANG'ACH
DEAN, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

(ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution)