



Survey of Factors Affecting English-Speaking Skills of Grade 9 Students in Day Schools of Gisagara District, Rwanda

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Abstract: *This study examines factors influencing English-speaking skills among Grade 9 students in Gisagara District, Rwanda, using a quantitative approach. The study adopted descriptive research design. To achieve this goal, a quantitative research design was utilized, with a target population of 3577 students and a sample size of 361 respondents determined using Yamane's formula. Questionnaires were used to gather data. The collected data was carefully edited and analyzed using SPSS version 21. The results revealed linguistic factors like exposure to English and pronunciation clarity are crucial for fluency. Affective factors such as confidence and motivation strongly influence students' willingness to engage in English-speaking activities. Pearson correlation analysis shows significant associations: cognitive factors correlate with linguistic. Besides, findings also revealed that there is a significant and positive correlation between and all factors and English-Speaking Skills ($r=0.811^{**}$, $p=0.000$). These findings highlight the importance of cognitive abilities in shaping linguistic and affective aspects of language learning, and emphasize the critical role of linguistic proficiency and positive affective states in enhancing English speaking proficiency among Grade 9 students. Recommendations include implementing targeted pronunciation instruction, increasing language exposure opportunities, and integrating social-emotional learning programs to foster a supportive environment conducive to language learning and proficiency development.*

Keywords: *Cognitive factors, linguistic factor, affective factors, English speaking skills, and Gisagara District*

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1. Introduction

English exerts significant global influence as an international language (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008), spoken by approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide and holding official status in sixty-seven countries, with eighteen considering it their native tongue (Julian, 2020). Since 1996, English has been Rwanda's official language, further highlighting its importance. Moreover, it dominates mass communication: Broughton, Brumfit, Pincas & Wilde (2012) note that over 70% of emails are in English, and

more than 60% of global radio programs are broadcast in the language. Major international bodies like the United Nations (2019) conduct their proceedings in English, underscoring its pervasive role in global discourse.

In academia, English proficiency has become crucial, especially for universities admitting international students (Weigle & Malone, 2016). Institutions frequently require applicants to demonstrate advanced or proficient English skills, assessed through standardized tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the

International English Language Testing System (IELTS). These assessments are pivotal for admission, ensuring that prospective students can effectively engage in coursework and academic activities conducted in English. Mastering English-speaking skills is not only an academic necessity but also essential for communication, academic achievement, and future career prospects in today's globalized world, where English serves as a lingua franca across cultures and professions (Crystal, 2003). Achieving proficiency in spoken English involves navigating a complex interplay of cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors.

The development of English-speaking skills among Grade 9 students is influenced by a complex interplay of cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors. Cognitive factors such as memory, attention, and problem-solving abilities shape their ability to comprehend and produce language (Baddeley, 2003). These factors, still maturing at this stage, affect language acquisition and usage, with working memory capacity impacting their ability to manipulate language structures and attentional control influencing focus during language tasks (Miyake et al., 2000). Linguistic factors, including vocabulary knowledge, grammatical accuracy, phonological awareness, and fluency, are critical in determining speaking proficiency (Nation, 2001; Celce-Murcia et al., 2019). Challenges in vocabulary acquisition and grammatical errors can hinder effective communication, while pragmatic competence, crucial for adapting language use in different social contexts, further influences their proficiency (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Affective factors such as attitudes towards English, self-confidence in speaking, and anxiety levels during language tasks also significantly impact performance (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985). Positive attitudes and motivation towards learning English correlate with greater effort and persistence, whereas fear of errors or negative experiences can lead to avoidance behaviors, affecting progress. Understanding these interconnected factors is essential for educators and policymakers to support Grade 9 students in developing confidence and proficiency in spoken English.

In Rwandan secondary schools, students' English-speaking ability is influenced by cognitive factors such as memory and attention, which affect language comprehension and production (Gathercole & Baddeley, 1993). Linguistic skills, including vocabulary knowledge and grammatical accuracy are critical for proficiency (Celce-Murcia et al., 2019), while affective factors such as attitudes and anxiety levels also significantly impact performance (Gardner, 1985). Educators must address these factors to support students in developing confidence and proficiency in spoken English, essential for their academic success and future global opportunities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The adoption of English as the primary medium of instruction in Rwanda since 2009 presents significant challenges for Grade 9 students attending day schools in Gisagara District to develop proficient English speaking skills. Cognitive factors such as memory, attention, and problem-solving abilities are critical in their ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English (Gathercole & Baddeley, 1993). These cognitive processes, still developing during adolescence, influence language acquisition and usage within the classroom setting. Furthermore, mastering linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and phonological awareness is essential for achieving fluency and precision in spoken English (Nation, 2001). Challenges in acquiring these linguistic skills may hinder effective communication and language development among Grade 9 students in Gisagara District.

Affective factors also significantly impact English speaking ability among Grade 9 students in Gisagara District. Attitudes towards English, self-confidence in speaking, and anxiety levels during language tasks profoundly influence their performance (Gardner, 1985). Positive attitudes and motivation towards learning English correlate with greater effort and persistence, facilitating language acquisition. Alternatively, negative attitudes or fear of making mistakes can lead to avoidance behaviors and impede progress. The cultural and historical context, where Kinyarwanda and French have traditionally dominated as languages of instruction, adds complexity to the adaptation and adoption of English as the new educational medium in Gisagara District.

Understanding how cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors collectively influence the English-speaking skills of Grade 9 students in day schools of Gisagara District is crucial for addressing the existing gaps in their language proficiency development. The current educational landscape in Rwanda, particularly in districts like Gisagara, faces challenges stemming from the transition to English as the primary instructional language. These challenges include the adaptation of students and educators accustomed to Kinyarwanda and French, the historical languages of instruction, to the demands of English fluency (Julian, 2020). Additionally, the impact of varying cognitive abilities, linguistic competencies, and affective states on students' English language acquisition needs to be thoroughly investigated. By identifying and understanding these factors, educational stakeholders can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms that cater specifically to the linguistic and cultural contexts of Grade 9 students in day schools of Gisagara District. Mitigating these challenges will not only enhance their English-

speaking proficiency but also better prepare them for academic and professional success in a globalized world where English fluency is increasingly essential.

1.2 Research objectives

The study sought to address the following specific objectives:

1. Identify cognitive factors affecting English-speaking skills of grade 9 students in day schools of Gisagara District.
2. Identify linguistic factors affecting English-speaking skills of grade 9 students in day schools of Gisagara District.
3. Identify affective factors affecting English-speaking skills of grade 9 students in day schools of Gisagara District.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Importance of Speaking Skills in Language Acquisition

Speaking skills are foundational in language acquisition, recognized as essential among the four language competencies—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—due to their role in expressing thoughts, emotions, and ideas effectively (Qureshi, 2007). Richards (2008) categorizes speaking into three critical functions: interaction, transaction, and performance. Interaction involves everyday dialogues in diverse social contexts, while transaction refers to professional exchanges for services. Performance encompasses formal speeches and presentations, crucial for public communication. Mastery of these functions not only facilitates practical communication but also integrates learners into linguistic communities (Richards, 2008).

Bahrani and Soltani (2012) highlight the importance of teaching speaking skills through balanced language input and communicative output strategies. Language input involves developing linguistic forms such as phonology, vocabulary, grammar, semantics, and pragmatics. This foundational knowledge supports learners in understanding and producing language structures effectively. Meanwhile, communicative output tasks empower learners to apply acquired language skills in real-life situations, promoting fluency and communicative competence (Crystal and David, 2003).

Additionally, speaking skills are not only crucial for everyday communication but also for academic and professional success. Effective verbal communication enhances interpersonal relationships, fosters collaboration,

and promotes critical thinking by articulating complex ideas clearly (Richards, 2008). In educational settings, proficient speaking skills facilitate participation in classroom discussions, debates, and presentations, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. In professional contexts, clear and confident oral communication is vital for conveying expertise, persuading stakeholders, and advancing career opportunities. Therefore, mastering speaking skills is essential for individuals seeking to navigate and succeed in diverse linguistic and social environments.

2.2 Cognitive and Linguistic Factors in Speaking Skills

A combination of cognitive and linguistic factors intricately influences language learners' development of speaking skills. Crucial cognitive processes such as memory and attention play a significant role. Memory aids in storing and retrieving vocabulary and grammatical structures necessary for coherent speech (Selinker, 2022), while attention enables learners to focus on language input, thereby enhancing comprehension and fluency (Robinson, 2017). Additionally, the learning environment significantly impacts shaping cognitive engagement and facilitating the integration of new language skills into spontaneous speech (Roth, 2010).

Linguistic factors are pivotal in determining speaking proficiency. Regular speaking practice is essential for learners to apply their grammar and vocabulary knowledge in real-life scenarios (Broughton et al., 2012). Mastery of grammar and vocabulary is imperative for accurate expression and effective communication in various social and professional settings (Koizumi, 2012). Furthermore, pronunciation proficiency is crucial in enhancing communicative competence by ensuring clarity and confidence in oral communication (Richards, 2008). These linguistic competencies empower learners to engage effectively in spoken language activities across different cultures.

Comprehending the interaction between cognitive and linguistic factors is indispensable for educators and language practitioners (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). Educators can cultivate learning environments that maximize speaking proficiency by implementing strategies that optimize memory retention, attentional focus, and linguistic competence (Ullman, 2020). Providing abundant opportunities for speaking practice and delivering targeted feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are critical in nurturing learners' communicative abilities (Long, 2015). Therefore, a comprehensive approach that addresses cognitive and linguistic dimensions is crucial for

ensuring holistic development and mastery of speaking skills among language learners.

2.2 Affective Factors and Their Impact on Speaking Skills

Affective factors like attitudes, motivation, self-assurance, and anxiety profoundly influence how language learners develop their speaking skills (Henter, 2014). Having a positive outlook on learning English and being highly motivated are crucial for encouraging learners to persist and actively participate in speaking activities. Motivated learners tend to actively seek opportunities to practice language and are willing to take communication risks, which accelerates their language acquisition (Assan, 2018). Conversely, negative attitudes or low motivation can hinder progress by reducing learners' dedication to improving their speaking abilities.

Additionally, self-confidence plays a significant role in speaking proficiency. Learners who are confident in their speaking abilities are more likely to engage actively in classroom discussions, speak fluently, and experiment with language use (Illyin et al., 2021). Conversely, feelings of anxiety and low self-confidence can create mental barriers that impede effective communication. Anxiety related to speaking in front of others or making mistakes may lead learners to avoid speaking opportunities altogether, limiting their exposure to language practice and hindering their overall proficiency development (Djigunović, 2006).

Assan (2018) extensively researched the correlation between English proficiency and employment opportunities in Rwanda, unequivocally emphasizing the impact of affective factors on students' language development. The study asserts that Rwandan students' positive attitudes and robust motivation towards learning English are fundamentally shaped by cultural beliefs that perceive language as a crucial tool for social and economic advancement. Furthermore, the research strongly highlights the pivotal role of educators in creating supportive learning environments that actively cultivate these positive factors. By intentionally fostering a classroom atmosphere that actively encourages risk-taking, consistently acknowledges progress, and offers targeted and constructive feedback, educators can effectively empower students to enhance their confidence and resilience in speaking English. Additionally, the study firmly advocates for implementing targeted interventions aimed at reducing anxiety and enhancing self-confidence, ultimately empowering learners to conquer psychological barriers and achieve higher proficiency in spoken English.

3. Methodology

Researchers utilize a descriptive research design to systematically observe, describe, and analyze phenomena in their natural state. This method provides a detailed and accurate portrayal of a specific situation or population without manipulating variables or seeking causal relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is well-suited for investigating existing conditions, behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics within a defined group or context. For instance, in examining the factors influencing English-speaking skills among Grade 9 students in Gisagara District, Rwanda, a descriptive research design enables the collection of comprehensive data on cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors impacting speaking proficiency. Surveys and similar methods are employed to gather quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a thorough understanding of the factors at play (Burns & Grove, 2021).

The research design chosen for this study is justified because it allows a thorough investigation into the factors that influence 9th-grade students' English-speaking skills. It focuses on understanding how memory, attention, grammar, vocabulary, motivation, and stress affect speech development. By analyzing these factors together, rather than separately, the study aims to provide deeper insights into how language learning impacts practical education.

The population under consideration consists of 3577 ninth-grade students attending the 43 day schools in Gisagara district. To determine the appropriate sample size based on the population and a specified margin of error (e), the study applied Yamane's Formula (1973). Yamane's Formula is a commonly employed method for calculating sample sizes (n) based on these parameters.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where; n= is the minimum sample size
N= is the population from which the sample will be calculated

e= is the margin of error estimated at 10%. Substituting in the above formula, the sample size is determined as;

$$n = \frac{3577}{1 + 3577(0.1)^2} = \frac{3577}{1 + 3577(0.01)} = \frac{3755}{1 + 9.4} = \frac{3577}{10.4} = 361.05$$

n=361

The number of respondents who participated in this study were 361 respondents

The study involved administering a close-ended questionnaire to Grade 9 students from Gisagara District, using a 5-point Likert scale to capture their preferences. The questionnaire aimed to gather valuable insights into various statements related to the research topic.

After collecting questionnaire responses, quantitative analysis techniques were employed to organize and interpret the data. This process included coding, editing, and tabulating the responses, which were then subjected to analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive analysis techniques in SPSS were then utilized to generate statistical summaries such as frequencies and percentages. Regression analysis, a widely used method for examining relationships between independent and dependent variables, was utilized to further explore the study's objectives. The results derived from these analyses were interpreted to provide actionable insights and recommendations based on the findings.

The Content Validity Index (CVI) was utilized to ensure the study's data validity. The questionnaire was distributed to field experts who rated the relevance of each item concerning the research objectives. The CVI was calculated by dividing the relevant items by the total number of items, thus measuring the questionnaire's ability to capture the intended content. To evaluate the reliability of the research instrument, the test-retest method was employed. This method assesses consistency over time by administering the questionnaire twice to the same group of respondents and comparing their responses. The reliability of the instrument was further examined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which measures internal consistency. A coefficient value greater than 0.7 indicates that the measurement tool consistently yields reliable results. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient exceeded 0.7, affirming the reliability of the questionnaire for measuring the variables under investigation.

This research utilized descriptive statistical methods to represent and summarize the bio data, with a focus on both descriptive and inferential statistics such as correlation analysis and multiple linear regression models.

The following econometric model was used as follow:

$$Y = a + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Whereby Y =English Speaking Skills

a= Constant

X₁ = Cognitive factors

X₂ = linguistic factors

X₃= affective factors

ε = error term

The regression coefficients, β₁, β₂, and β₃, are pivotal in generalizing the findings on the relationship between cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors and English-speaking skills. These coefficients, obtained from the multiple regression analysis, will determine the statistical support for the research questions at a 95% confidence level.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter describes the interpretation and presentation of the findings from the field. The aim of the study was to investigate the factors influencing English language proficiency among learners in Grade 9 in Gisagara District of Rwanda. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 361 Grade 9 learners in Gisagara district. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to address the results of the study.

4.1 Findings

The table below summarizes the data on response rates for grade 9 students in this survey. All 361 students were sent a questionnaire and 347 fully completed questionnaires were returned, giving an impressive response rate of 96.1%. This exceptional response rate demonstrates a high level of engagement and participation of grade 9 students in the study, indicating a high level of co-operation and interest from all students. This strengthens the reliability and validity of the survey results. The high response rate suggests that the data collected is likely to be representative of all Grade 9 students, making it a valuable and reliable source of information.

Table 1: Response Rate Source

Category	Sample Size	Questionnaires Given	Questionnaires Filled	Percentage (%)
Grade 9 Students	361	361	347	96.1%

Source: Primary Data, 2024

The response rate data presented in Table 1 show high participation and diversity among Grade 9 students. Of the sample of 361 students, 96.1% returned fully completed questionnaires. This indicates strong participation and suggests that the data collected is representative of the wider student population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) response rates above 50% are generally considered appropriate for analysis and reporting and strengthen the reliability of the data obtained in this study. A high response rate not only enhances the reliability of the survey results but also highlights the effectiveness of the survey methodology in encouraging student participation and collecting comprehensive data.

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics on cognitive factors

The study investigated the impact of cognitive factors on the English language proficiency of Grade 9 students in Day Schools of Gisagara District. The results in this section are presented using descriptive statistics. Participants were asked to express their opinions using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Their feedback was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. This section provides a detailed analysis of the data collected from participants on the independent and dependent variables. The mean is used to show how much respondents agree and the standard deviation is used to show how much they deviate from the mean.

Table 2: Cognitive factors and English-speaking skills

Statements	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Memory			
Sometimes I can't think of some ideas during the English-speaking activity	347	3.79	1.48
I make a lot of pauses or use 'ah,' 'um,' etc. to remember words during English-speaking activity	347	4.43	.87
I struggle to understand other students, so it limits my participation in English-speaking activity	347	3.80	1.59
Sometimes I mix Kinyarwanda and English during the English-speaking activity	347	4.42	1.02
Attention and Awareness			
When I make a mistake, the teacher interrupts and makes corrections	347	3.74	1.57
When I don't know the vocabulary, the teacher helps by telling me the appropriate vocabulary	347	4.68	.766
During the English-speaking activity, other students listen to me and support if necessary	347	4.11	.517
Strong and weak students in English get opportunity to participate in English-speaking activity	347	4.08	.749
Teacher listens patiently and gives feedback to individual students after English-speaking activity	347	4.25	.838
Teacher's feedback helps me improve my English-speaking skills	347	4.62	.784
Learning context/environment			
The teacher uses English-speaking activities in the lesson	347	4.39	.982
During the activity, the teacher encourages students to speak English	347	3.90	.953
The teacher uses pair and group for English-speaking activity to allow all students to speak freely	347	3.79	.981
When teacher uses pictures, I get ideas and I participate in English-speaking activity	347	4.41	.496
Acting in Role-play like dialogue helps me to feel free to speak English in front of others	347	3.95	.501

Source: Field research, 2024 –**Key:** M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

The data presented in Table 2 explores cognitive factors and their impact on Grade 9 students' English-speaking skills, providing insights into various aspects that influence language proficiency within an educational setting. Firstly, concerning memory-related challenges, the responses indicate that students frequently experience difficulties recalling ideas (Mean = 3.79, SD = 1.48) and remembering specific vocabulary during English-speaking activities (Mean = 4.43, SD = 0.87). These findings highlight the cognitive demands of language production, where pauses and filler words ('ah,' 'um') are employed to aid memory retrieval, indicating a common strategy used by students when facing linguistic challenges. Moreover, the tendency

to mix languages, such as Kinyarwanda and English (Mean = 4.42, SD = 1.02), suggests the influence of bilingualism on spoken language proficiency among students.

Secondly, attention and awareness appear crucial in English language activities. Students perceive teacher interventions in response to errors (M = 3.74, SD = 1.57) and vocabulary support (mean = 4.68, SD = 0.766) as supportive measures. This indicates that teacher feedback and guidance play a pivotal role in students' language development, facilitating error correction and enhancing vocabulary acquisition during real-time classroom interactions. Additionally, the perception that both strong

and weak students have opportunities to participate (M= 4.08, SD = 0.749) reinforces the importance of inclusive practices in fostering an equitable learning environment.

Finally, regarding the learning context/environment, students show positive responses to teaching strategies that promote English language activities, such as using images

to stimulate ideas (M= 4.41, SD = 0.496) and engaging in role-playing scenarios (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.501). These methods not only enhance engagement but also provide frameworks for utilizing language in diverse contexts, thereby boosting students' confidence and willingness to actively participate in spoken English activities.

Table 3: Linguistics factors and English-speaking skills

Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Exposure for English-speaking practice			
I have a lot of opportunities to speak English with other students at school	347	4.68	.766
I have a lot of opportunities to speak English at home	347	4.11	.517
I use English to get services in my daily life	347	4.08	.749
I use textbooks to practice individual English-speaking skills after the lesson	347	4.25	.838
I listen to radio or TV news/show in English to practice my English-speaking skills	347	4.62	.684
Pronunciation			
I like studying phonetics to improve my pronunciation	347	3.95	.501
I know how to check the pronunciation of a word in a dictionary	347	4.39	.982
I check the pronunciation of a new word to be able to pronounce it correctly in conversation	347	3.90	.953
The teacher clarifies the pronunciation of important words during the lesson to help students improve their pronunciation	347	3.79	.981
I do not often speak English because other students do not understand my pronunciation	347	4.41	.796
Vocabulary			
I don't speak English because I do not know many vocabulary items	347	3.90	.749
I improve my English vocabulary using English-Kinyarwanda dictionary	347	3.97	.947
I practice every new vocabulary in English conversation	347	4.24	.722
I read stories /text in English to improve my vocabulary for English-speaking skills	347	3.67	.983
I play word games to improve my vocabulary for English-speaking skills	347	3.88	.695

Source: Field research, 2024 –**Key:** M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 3 presents an analysis of linguistic factors influencing English proficiency, revealing insightful findings from the data. Participants displayed active engagement in English-language activities within and outside educational settings, as evidenced by high mean scores for English speaking opportunities at school (M =

4.68, SD = 0.766) and at home (M = 4.11, SD = 0.517). These scores indicate a supportive environment encouraging regular English interaction, crucial for developing speaking fluency. Moreover, integrating English into everyday situations (M = 4.08, SD = 0.749) emphasizes its relevance beyond academic contexts,

enhancing proficiency in international real-life scenarios. Participants also demonstrated proactive approaches, such as using textbooks for personal practice (Mean = 4.25, SD = 0.838) and engaging with English-language media (Mean = 4.62, SD = 0.784), indicating their dedication to improving speaking skills through structured study and authentic language experiences.

Despite a moderate interest in studying phonetics (M= 3.95, SD = 0.501), participants showed high confidence in using a dictionary to check their pronunciation of words (M= 4.39, SD = 0.982). However, transferring this knowledge into effective conversation (M= 3.90, SD = 0.953) and satisfaction with teacher support in clarifying pronunciation (M= 3, 79, SD = 0.981) highlight areas where practice and support with additional resources can strengthen proficiency. Concerns about communication

barriers due to pronunciation problems (M = 4.41, SD = 1.02) highlight the fundamental role of pronunciation in influencing overall confidence and speaking frequency.

In terms of vocabulary acquisition and usage in spoken English, participants employ diverse strategies despite challenges related to vocabulary limitations (Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.749) that hinder frequent English usage. Effective approaches such as dictionary use (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.784) and regular conversation practice (Mean = 4.24, SD = 0.838) are employed to expand their lexical repertoire. While reading English texts (Mean = 3.67, SD = 0.766) and participating in word games (Mean = 3.88, SD = 0.517) are considered moderately effective methods for vocabulary enhancement, encouraging heightened engagement in these activities could further enhance language skills.

Table 4: Affective factors and English-speaking Skills

Statements	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Confidence			
I am not confident to speak out because I am not sure of what I am going to say	347	4.67	.572
I am not confident to speak English because other students laugh at me	347	4.12	.826
I am not confident to speak because I think my English is still poor	347	4.07	.749
I am not confident to speak when I don't understand the topic	347	4.24	.832
Anxiety			
Fear of making mistakes in grammar affects my English-speaking skills	347	4.67	.472
Fear that other students will laugh at me when I make mistakes affects my English-speaking skills	347	4.12	.729
There are shy students who can't speak in the class	347	4.07	.749
I feel shy to speak English in front of people	347	4.24	.932
Motivation			
The students use English in classroom (school) communication even when the teacher/authority is not around	347	4.63	.984
Speaking good English can give me many benefits	347	3.21	1.342

Source: Field research, 2024 –**Key:** M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

Table 4 above provides a detailed analysis of affective factors influencing participants' English-speaking skills, supported by mean scores and standard deviations across three key dimensions: confidence, anxiety, and motivation. Participants consistently express significant challenges related to confidence in their speaking abilities, as evidenced by mean scores ranging from 4.07 to 4.67, with standard deviations between 0.572 and 0.832. These findings indicate a prevalent lack of assurance, influenced

by concerns such as fear of making mistakes and perceived inadequacy in English proficiency. It is crucial to address these confidence issues, as it is a critical factor for improving participants' willingness and ability to engage effectively in English communication.

Anxiety-related statements further reinforce participants' apprehensions, particularly regarding fears of grammatical errors and potential ridicule from peers. Mean scores

ranging from 4.07 to 4.67 are accompanied by standard deviations between 0.472 and 0.932, highlighting the pervasive impact of anxiety on English speaking skills. These anxieties may impede participants' practice and hinder their fluency development. Implementing strategies to mitigate anxiety and foster a supportive learning environment could significantly enhance participants' confidence and motivation to engage actively in language learning.

The participants' levels of enthusiasm towards using English vary across different contexts. The high mean scores for statements related to using English in school communication (Mean = 4.63, SD = 0.984) clearly indicate a supportive environment that strongly encourages regular language use. However, the lower mean score for recognizing the benefits of speaking good English (Mean

= 3.21, SD = 1.342) unmistakably points to potential areas for improvement in intrinsic motivation and personal commitment to language learning goals.

4.1.2 Correlation analysis

The study employed the Karl Pearson correlation coefficient (r) to assess linear relationships between variables. This coefficient ranges from +1 to -1, with 0 indicating no correlation, positive values indicating a positive linear relationship, and negative values indicating a negative linear relationship. This statistical method evaluated significant correlations between the independent and dependent variables, and the findings are provided below.

Table 5: Correlation coefficient

		Cognitive factors	Linguistics Factors	Affective factors	English Speaking skills
	Pearson Correlation		1		
Cognitive factors	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	347			
Linguistics Factors	Pearson Correlation	.339**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002			
	N	347	347		
	Pearson Correlation	.357**	.540**	1	
Affective factors	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		
	N	347	347	347	
English Speaking skills	Pearson Correlation	.306**	.811**	.701**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.000	.000	
	N	347	347	347	347

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

Table 5 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients that analyze the relationships between cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and English-speaking skills. Significance levels are provided for each variable. Firstly, cognitive factors are significantly correlated with language ($r = 0.339$, $p = 0.002$), emotional ($r = 0.357$, $p = 0.001$), and communication skills ($r = 0.306$, $p = 0.00$), indicating a moderately strong positive association. Individuals with stronger cognitive abilities demonstrate superior language skills, experience positive emotions related to language learning, and exhibit enhanced fluency in English speaking. Secondly, language proficiency significantly

correlates with emotional factors ($r = 0.540$, $p = 0.000$) and English-speaking skills ($r = 0.811$, $p = 0.000$), highlighting strong positive relationships. Language proficiency is closely linked with motivational aspects and confidence in language use, facilitating better English-speaking abilities. Lastly, emotional factors are significantly correlated with English speaking proficiency ($r = 0.701$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that positive emotions such as confidence and motivation are crucial in enhancing English communication skills. Those who feel more confident and motivated in their language abilities tend to demonstrate better proficiency in spoken English.

4.1.3 Regression analysis

In this section, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify predictors and their contributions to

the criterion variable. The analysis aimed to predict a single dependent variable using a set of independent variables, with Table 6 presenting the model summary of the findings.

Table 6. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.855 ^a	.731	.727	.56311

a. Predictors: (Constant), cognitive factors, linguistics factors and affective factors

The data in Table 6 reveals that when considering cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors together, they explain an impressive 73.1% variation in English speaking skills among the participants. This robust relationship highlights the strong predictive power of these factors on English proficiency. With an adjusted R² value of 0.727, the model remains reliable even when factoring in the

number of predictors. Furthermore, the model's accuracy in predicting English speaking skills, based on cognitive abilities, language competencies, and affective states such as motivation and confidence, is evidenced by the standard error of the estimate.

Table 7. Summary of ANOVA results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	156.849	3	52.283	164.885	.000 ^b
	Residual	57.710	182	.317		
	Total	214.559	185			

a. Dependent Variable: English Speaking Skills

b. Predictors: (Constant), cognitive factors, linguistics factors and affective factors

Table 7 presents the ANOVA results examining the impact of cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors on English speaking skills. The analysis reveals a highly significant relationship ($F = 164.885$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that these variables collectively explain a substantial variance in participants' English-speaking proficiency. The Regression Sum of Squares (156.849) signifies the portion of variance in speaking skills accounted for by the predictors, contrasting with the notable F-statistic highlights the robustness of the model in predicting English-speaking skills, indicating that this ability is not merely the result of

random chance. These results emphasize the critical roles of cognitive abilities, linguistic competence, and affective factors such as motivation and confidence in shaping individuals' proficiency in spoken English. Strengthening these factors through targeted educational interventions could improve language learning outcomes and promote enhanced communicative competence in English-speaking environments. These insights could prove valuable for educators and policymakers looking to optimize language development strategies.

Table 8. Summary of regression coefficients result
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	-.472	.154		-3.075	.002
	Cognitive factors	.470	.041	.475	11.342	.000
	Linguistics factors	.763	.057	.540	13.420	.000
	Affective factors	.161	.048	.142	3.322	.001

a. Dependent Variable: English Speaking Skills

Table 8 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis, with English Speaking Skills as the dependent variable and Cognitive factors, Linguistics factors, and Affective factors as predictors. The analysis reveals that all three predictors—Cognitive factors (B = 0.470, Beta = 0.475, $p < 0.001$), Linguistics factors (B = 0.763, Beta = 0.540, $p < 0.001$), and Affective factors (B = 0.161, Beta = 0.142, $p = 0.001$)—have significant positive relationships with English Speaking Skills. These results indicate that improvements in Cognitive abilities, Linguistic proficiency, and positive Affective states related to language learning are associated with enhanced proficiency in speaking English.

Authors such as Lightbown and Spada (2013) and Gardner (1985) support these conclusions, emphasizing that cognitive factors like memory and attention, linguistic factors such as vocabulary and pronunciation, and affective factors including motivation and confidence are crucial determinants of language acquisition and communication skills development. The significant t-values and low p-values (< 0.001) further validate these relationships, indicating robust statistical evidence for the impact of these factors on English speaking proficiency.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

This section presents the results of the study's specific objective. The findings about the study's objective are discussed and linked to the relevant literature. Specifically, the literature is used to interpret the collected data on the research objectives, which aimed to evaluate factors affecting English speaking Skills

The first objective of the survey was to identify cognitive factors affecting English-speaking skills of grade 9 students in day schools of Gisagara District. The findings revealed a complex interplay of cognitive factors, with students Facing common challenges in recalling ideas and vocabulary during language activities. They employ strategies like pauses and language mixing to navigate these hurdles, indicative of the cognitive effort required for language production, especially in bilingual contexts. Teacher interventions and supportive feedback play a

crucial role in addressing these challenges, fostering linguistic accuracy and confidence among students. Equally important is the inclusive practice of providing equitable participation opportunities for all students, regardless of proficiency level, which promotes a supportive learning environment. Effective instructional strategies such as visual aids and role-play further enhance engagement and language comprehension, underscoring their role in scaffolding students' language development and fostering proficiency in English communication.

Recent studies in language acquisition corroborate the findings on cognitive factors influencing English-speaking skills among students. Research by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) spotlights the cognitive demands involved in language production, particularly in bilingual settings where memory retrieval and language switching are prevalent challenges. Similarly, a study by Koffi and Zounon (2023) examines the impact of cognitive load and bilingualism on English-speaking skills in students from multilingual environments in West Africa. Their findings reveal that high cognitive load during language tasks, compounded by frequent code-switching, significantly affects language production and fluency.

With reference to the second objective which aims to identify linguistic factors affecting the English-speaking skills of grade 9 students in day schools of Gisagara District, the study revealed the critical role of linguistic factors in shaping Grade 9 students' English-speaking proficiency. Students benefit significantly from ample opportunities to practice English both in educational settings and at home, contributing to increased fluency and confidence in spoken communication. However, challenges persist in mastering pronunciation, highlighting the need for targeted instructional support to improve accuracy in spoken English. Strategies such as using dictionaries for pronunciation checks and engaging in vocabulary practice through reading and interactive activities show promise. It's inspiring to see the potential of these strategies, as they reinforce the importance of creating supportive language-learning environments that encourage practical language use, address pronunciation challenges, and foster comprehensive vocabulary development among students. This inspiration can

motivate educators to continue their efforts in fostering students' English-speaking proficiency.

Research by MacIntyre and Charos (1996) supports the importance of environmental factors, such as opportunities for language practice, in enhancing language proficiency. They emphasize that regular exposure to spoken English in various contexts significantly improves learners' fluency and confidence. Furthermore, studies by Okeke and Anozie (2023) highlights the impact of immersive language environments and access to diverse English language media on students' speaking proficiency in East Africa. Their findings suggest that exposure to English through varied contexts, including digital platforms and community interactions, enhances both fluency and confidence.

Regarding the third objective, the affective factors influencing the English-speaking skills of Grade 9 students in day schools within Gisagara District, the research findings stressed the significant impact of affective factors in shaping the English-speaking abilities of these students. Notably, confidence emerges as a critical factor, with students highlighting uncertainties in speech, concerns about language proficiency, and fear of social judgment as key barriers to speaking English with confidence. Addressing these challenges through supportive classroom environments and targeted interventions could significantly enhance students' self-assurance. Additionally, anxiety about making mistakes and fear of peer judgment noticeably affect language fluency, emphasizing the importance of fostering a supportive atmosphere where students feel safe to practice and learn from errors. Moreover, intrinsic motivation plays a pivotal role, with students acknowledging the advantages of being proficient in English despite varying perceived benefits.

These findings align with Dewaele (2005) research, which explored the impact of anxiety and motivation on second language acquisition among university students. That study revealed that high levels of anxiety were linked to lower language proficiency and reduced willingness to communicate in the target language. Conversely, strong motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation driven by personal interest and enjoyment in language learning, was positively associated with higher proficiency levels and increased engagement in speaking activities.

Furthermore, a study by Li and Zhu (2023) explored how language learning apps and online platforms can provide interactive and personalized practice opportunities, significantly benefiting learners' engagement and proficiency. Their research demonstrated that the use of technology in language learning not only offers flexible and accessible practice but also allows for real-time feedback and tailored learning experiences.

Similarly, Nguyen and Rhoades (2024) examined the impact of virtual reality (VR) environments on language acquisition, finding that immersive VR settings can create realistic and engaging contexts for language practice, thus improving learners' speaking skills and cultural understanding. These findings underscore the growing importance of integrating technological advancements into language education to enhance learners' proficiency and motivation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the intricate dynamics influencing Grade 9 students' English-speaking skills in day schools of Gisagara District. Cognitive factors like memory retrieval and language mixing present notable challenges in language production, addressed through strategies like pauses and supportive teacher interventions. Linguistic factors, including ample practice opportunities and targeted pronunciation instruction, significantly enhance students' fluency and confidence. Affective factors, particularly confidence levels and anxiety management, emerge as pivotal in shaping students' willingness to engage in English-speaking activities. The model summary validates these findings, revealing that cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors collectively explain a substantial portion (73.1%) of the variance in English speaking skills among participants. This indicates a strong predictive relationship between these factors and proficiency in speaking English. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.727 confirms the model's robustness after accounting for predictors, reinforcing its reliability. The standard error of the estimate (0.56311) accents the model's accuracy in predicting English speaking skills based on these critical dimensions of language learning. These insights emphasize the importance of comprehensive educational strategies that cater for cognitive, linguistic, and affective dimensions to foster optimal English proficiency development in secondary education settings.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, this study suggests the following recommendations:

1. Develop and implement learning programs for students focusing on cognitive strategies such as memory enhancement techniques, language control exercises, and effective speaking strategies. These programs can help students overcome memory lapses and language mixing

challenges, improving their ability to communicate fluently in English.

2. Provide targeted training for teachers on effective pronunciation teaching methods, including phonetic exercises, use of pronunciation dictionaries, and providing corrective feedback. Implementing structured pronunciation lessons and practice sessions can significantly enhance students' pronunciation accuracy and confidence in spoken English.
3. Develop and integrate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs into the curriculum to address affective factors such as confidence, anxiety, and motivation. SEL activities should focus on building students' self-confidence, managing performance anxiety related to speaking English, and fostering intrinsic motivation for language learning. By nurturing positive emotional states and attitudes towards language learning, students will feel more empowered and motivated to engage actively in English-speaking activities.

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