



# Occupation-Related Attitudes towards English in the City of Kigali

Gregoire Mbonankira<sup>1,2</sup>, Alfred Buregeya<sup>2</sup> & Zipporah Kwamboka Otiso<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Rwanda, Rwanda

<sup>2</sup>University of Nairobi, Kenya

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## Abstract

The present study investigates the association between Kigali residents' attitudes towards English and their occupations nearly three decades after English became an official language and sixteen years after its adoption as the sole medium of instruction. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 252 respondents drawn from six occupational groups, namely; teachers, civil servants, traders, journalists, Catholic priests, and Muslim leaders. Furthermore, qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured and were used to explain the quantitative scores of each attitudinal statement. Descriptive statistics and the chi-square test of independence were used to analyse the data. The results revealed significant occupational differences in attitudes towards English. To illustrate, teachers recorded the highest proportion of favourable responses, with 241 of their 360 responses (67.0%) being positive. In contrast, traders registered the lowest proportion of favourable responses, with only 129 of their 440 responses (29.3%) classified as positive. The chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 230.39$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p < .01$ ) indicated an association between occupational category and attitudes towards English. The findings suggest that English is valued primarily for its instrumental benefits in employment, technology, business, and national development, although attitudes towards its educational, administrative, and social functions remain mixed. The study recommends occupation-sensitive English language planning and training, particularly for occupational groups whose responses reveal greater practical or attitudinal challenges.

## Introduction

This study examines Rwandans' attitudes towards English, using the following six occupational groups as the reference: teachers, civil servants, traders, journalists, Catholic priests, and Muslim leaders. The study was motivated by the fact that in 1996, Rwanda officially recognised English as its third official language (Republic of Rwanda, 1996), alongside Kinyarwanda, the national language, and French, the language of administration and instruction. The adoption of English was partly driven by the need to integrate Anglophone returnees from neighbouring countries, namely Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2003) recognises English,



alongside Kinyarwanda and French, as one of Rwanda's official languages. Later, in 2008, English was made the sole medium of instruction in the education system (Cabinet of Rwanda, 2008). This policy fundamentally reshaped the functions of the three languages in education and contributed to the development of differing attitudes towards English among Rwandans. Nearly three decades after English became an official language, and fifteen years after its adoption as the medium of instruction, its importance varies across occupations: Teachers use it for teaching as required by the national policy, civil servants employ it in public administration, while journalists and religious leaders choose it according to the audiences' needs or preferences. For their part, traders use English primarily when business interactions require it. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that this multi-faceted use of English in multilingual Rwanda will translate into varying attitudes towards it by the different occupational groups.

Research on language attitudes in multilingual contexts (Lambert et al., 1960; Ryan & Giles, 1982; Baker, 1992; Garrett, 2010) has generated valuable theoretical and empirical insights. However, these cannot be directly generalised to the case of Rwanda because the country's linguistic environment has evolved under distinct historical and socio-political conditions. Rwanda's language ecology has been shaped by colonial and post-genocide transformations, moving from the dominance of the French language as the official language as a legacy of Belgian rule, to the adoption of English after a new regime came to power in 1994, among whose priorities were national reconstruction and regional integration (Kagwesage, 2012 Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). As noted by Rosendal (2009), the recognition of English in 1996 and the introduction of English medium instruction in 2008 (Republic of Rwanda, 1996; Cabinet of Rwanda, 2008) elevated English as a symbol of modernisation and regional integration while reducing the former prestige of French.

A few studies on attitudes towards English specifically in Rwanda do exist: Habyarimana (2015), Tabaro (2019), and Ndizeye and Tabaro (2023). Habyarimana (2015) researched the attitudes of primary school pupils and teachers towards English and reported that they were generally positive. Tabaro (2019) focused on the attitudes of secondary school students in Kigali (the country's capital city); he reported that 92.5% of his respondents expressed favourable attitudes towards English and its global importance. For their part, Ndizeye and Tabaro (2023) investigated the attitudes towards English of the students and lecturers in the Engineering programmes at the Rwanda Polytechnic; they reported that both groups valued English for career advancement, but frequently alternated it with Kinyarwanda in practice. This finding illustrates the possible tension between the country's official language policy and the sociolinguistic realities of everyday communication. This type of tension is likely to lead to the kind of differing occupation-based attitudes towards English that are anticipated in the present study. The study is theoretically grounded in Bourdieu's (1991) linguistic market perspective, which conceptualises language as a form of linguistic capital whose social and economic value varies according to the market in which it is used. It examines both its instrumental value, reflected in employment, business, professional advancement, and access to technology, and its integrative value, associated with social interaction, communication, and identification with wider English-speaking communities.

Beyond the three studies (namely Habyarimana, 2015; Tabaro, 2019; Ndizeye & Tabaro, 2023), to the best of our knowledge, no study has yet focused on attitudes towards English in Rwanda that are held by the six occupational groups identified in the present study. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research question: *"Is there an association between Kigali residents' attitudes towards the English language and their occupations?"* It tests the hypothesis that *"There is a statistically significant association between occupational group and the city of Kigali residents' attitudes towards English"*.



### ***Research design***

This study used “a mixed methods explanatory sequential design”. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p.71), “The explanatory sequential design (also referred to as the explanatory design) occurs in two distinct interactive phases. This design starts with the collection and analysis of quantitative data. The second phase is the collection and analysis of qualitative data that builds directly on the results from the quantitative phase”. The questionnaire items were informed by Gardner and Lambert (1972)'s distinction between instrumental **and** integrative orientations as further developed by Gardner (1985), enabling the study to assess both the practical value respondents attached to English (e.g., employment, business, and technology) and their willingness to identify with or interact with English-speaking communities. In this study, quantitative data were obtained through a questionnaire that measured participants' attitudes towards English across different occupations. The results of the questionnaire provided an overview of attitudinal patterns and statistical relationships between occupation and language attitudes. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with selected respondents to gain deeper insights into the reasons behind their responses and the contextual meanings of their attitudes. This design was considered appropriate for the present study because it enabled a comprehensive understanding of occupational attitudes.

### ***The sample and the sampling procedure***

This study was conducted in the City of Kigali, which had a population of 1,745,555, representing approximately 13.2% of Rwanda's total population of 13,246,394, according to the 2022 Population and Housing Census (NISR, 2022). The City of Kigali was selected as the study site because, as Rwanda's capital and principal commercial and administrative centre, it attracts people from all parts of the country and provides the greatest opportunities for interaction in English. Its cosmopolitan character and the central role of English in business, public administration, education, and international communication made it an appropriate setting for investigating Rwandans' attitudes towards the language.

Sampling was conducted in two phases: in the first phase, purposive sampling was used to select 252 respondents: 79 civil servants, 44 traders, 36 teachers, 32 journalists, 31 Catholic priests, and 30 Muslim leaders. The sample size for each occupational category was determined according to the size and accessibility of the respective strata. The smallest sample of 30 Muslim leaders was considered sufficient to ensure meaningful statistical analysis while adequately representing this comparatively smaller occupational group, consistent with the minimum sample size recommended for quantitative studies (Field, 2018). In contrast, the largest sample of 79 civil servants reflected accessibility, and diversity of this occupational group, whose members routinely use English in government administration and professional communication.

These respondents were recruited at their workplaces associated with their professions: government offices, schools, media houses, churches, mosques, and marketplaces. Data collection took place over a three-month period in 2024. To recruit some of the participants, the social network model proposed by Milroy and Milroy (1978) was used, whereby participants are identified through trusted intermediaries (“a friend of a friend”), with the assistance of two research assistants. The second phase also involved purposive sampling to select ten participants for the semi-structured interviews that were conducted after analysing their responses to the written questionnaire. Both phases meet the explanatory sequential design that involves collecting and analysing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to explain, elaborate, or clarify the quantitative findings. Thus, the qualitative phase builds directly on the results of the quantitative phase, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018)



### ***The data collection instruments***

#### *The questionnaire and the interview guide*

Data were collected using a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire consisted of ten attitudinal statements about English in Rwanda, rated on a three-point Likert-scale, containing the following options: *Disagree (D)*, *Can't Tell (CT)*, and *Agree (A)*. A similar instrument was adapted from previous studies (Sharp et al., (1973) and Agheyisi & Fishman, (1970).

The ten statements are the following:

- (i) *English is a pleasant language to listen to.*
- (ii) *English is an easy language to learn.*
- (iii) *English is a very useful language for business interactions.*
- (iv) *English is a very useful language for technology.*
- (v) *Speaking English makes someone look highly educated.*
- (vi) *English is the language best suited for education in Rwanda.*
- (vii) *English is the language best suited for administration in Rwanda.*
- (viii) *Speaking English increases someone's employment opportunities.*
- (ix) *Speaking English makes someone be perceived as being in a position of power.*
- (x) *The use of English is an important factor in Rwanda's development.*

#### *The interview*

To supplement the questionnaire data, the study employed face-to-face interviews. In line with Creswell's (2009, p. 208) two-phase design, analysis of the quantitative results guided the purposive selection of participants for the qualitative phase. The interview guide contained ten open-ended questions designed to clarify and explain the quantitative findings. Their exact wording depended on how the interviewees had responded to the questionnaire. So, questions like the following were asked: *Why, according to your response to the questionnaire, do you find English "useful for business interactions"?* (put to R14).

### ***The language of administration***

The questionnaire and the interview guide were originally designed in English. Nevertheless, to accommodate participants with limited proficiency in English, both instruments were translated into Kinyarwanda. The accuracy and equivalence of the translation were ensured by engaging a professional translator. The latter carefully translated the instruments while preserving the intended meanings of the original items. During data processing, responses provided in Kinyarwanda were back-transcribed into English to facilitate analysis and reporting while maintaining fidelity to the participants' original views.

### ***Validity and Reliability of the instruments***

The study achieved validity and reliability through several procedures. First, content validity was established by developing the questionnaire and interview guide from the study objectives and relevant literature on language attitudes and by submitting both instruments to two experts in language research for review. Their comments were incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the items. Furthermore, reliability was nurtured through a pilot study, after which ambiguous items were revised to improve consistency and clarity. The interview questions (Appendix A) were similarly refined to ensure that they elicited relevant qualitative data since they were meant to explain various evaluations obtained from the questionnaire.



### ***Data analysis procedure***

Given that for each questionnaire item, the respondents had to select only one of the three response options: *Disagree (D)*, *Can't Tell (CT)*, and *Agree (A)*. Since the statistics that were reported are frequencies, the chi-square test of independence was used to test the study's hypothesis that there was a statistically significant association between Kigali residents' attitudes towards English and their occupations. For the purposes of interpretation of the results, the response option *Agree* represents positive attitudes, and the option *Disagree* negative attitudes. As for the *Can't Tell* option, it represents undecided positions. This category was retained because uncertainty towards a language statement may reflect ambivalence or insufficient grounds for forming a definite opinion rather than the absence of attitudes. To supplement the quantitative findings, qualitative data from the interviews were thematically analysed and used as explanations or reasons why respondents decided to evaluate items using "Agree", "Disagree" or "Can't Tell". In some cases, verbatim quotations were used throughout the discussion to enrich quantitative findings.

### ***Ethical issues***

Since this study involved human subjects as respondents, the researcher was required to apply for ethical clearance from the Directorate of Research and Innovation at the College of Arts and Social Sciences. In addition, the study considered four ethical research principles discussed by Vancly et al. (2013, p. 246-248). First, the researcher sought the informed consent from the respondents and ensured that 'participation was voluntary and not subjected to any form of coercion or threat' (Appendix B). Second, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Third, in order to guarantee anonymity, participants were coded with the letter R followed by a serial number. Finally, participants were told that the information collected was to be used solely for academic purposes. All completed questionnaires, interview recordings, and transcripts were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Presentation of the results***

This section presents and discusses the respondents' responses to the written questionnaire, as well as the interviewees' oral responses. Thus, the main results consist of the frequencies at which each one of the three response options on the Likert-scale was chosen, and for each one of the ten attitudinal statements on the questionnaire. The detailed figures of how each occupational category responded to each of the ten statements are presented in Table 1. A summary picture of the overall attitudes, that is, whether positive, negative, or neutral, is given in Table 2, while Table 3 displays the layout of the chi-square statistics used to test the study's hypothesis that, "there will be a relationship between Rwandans' attitudes towards English and their occupations".

To present Table 1 in more detail, for each occupational group, namely, teachers (n = 36), civil servants (n = 79), traders (n = 44), journalists (n = 32), Catholic priests (n = 31), and Muslim leaders (n = 30), are presented separately. The table reports the raw frequencies, and their corresponding percentages, regarding how often each group chose one of the three Likert-scale-type options to evaluate the statements. At the bottom of the three rows corresponding to the groups' answers to the three choices, a row for the total frequency counts is given. The percentages are given in bold to enable a quick comparison of which answer was more popular for which occupational group at a glance.



*Table 1: Rwandans' attitudes towards English according to their occupations*

| Attitudinal Statements                                         |    | Teachers |      | Civil servants |      | Traders |      | Journalists |      | Catholic priests |      | Muslim leaders |      | Total= 252 |      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----|----------|------|----------------|------|---------|------|-------------|------|------------------|------|----------------|------|------------|------|
|                                                                |    | Freq.    | %    | Freq.          | %    | Freq.   | %    | Freq.       | %    | Freq.            | %    | Freq.          | %    | Total      | %    |
| 1.English is a pleasant language to listen to                  | D  | 7        | 19.4 | 35             | 44.3 | 26      | 59   | 9           | 28.1 | 24               | 77.4 | 16             | 53.3 | 117        | 46.4 |
|                                                                | CT | 5        | 13.8 | 12             | 15.2 | 8       | 18.2 | 7           | 21.9 | 4                | 13   | 3              | 10   | 39         | 15.5 |
|                                                                | A  | 24       | 66.8 | 32             | 40.5 | 10      | 22.8 | 16          | 50   | 3                | 9.6  | 11             | 36.7 | 96         | 38.1 |
|                                                                |    | 36       | 100  | 79             | 100  | 44      | 100  | 32          | 100  | 31               | 100  | 30             | 100  | 252        | 100  |
| 2.English is an easy language to learn                         | D  | 7        | 19.4 | 32             | 40.5 | 29      | 66   | 7           | 21.9 | 16               | 51.6 | 14             | 46.6 | 105        | 41.6 |
|                                                                | CT | 6        | 16.6 | 7              | 8.9  | 9       | 20.4 | 5           | 15.6 | 4                | 13   | 4              | 13.4 | 35         | 13.8 |
|                                                                | A  | 23       | 64   | 40             | 50.6 | 6       | 13.6 | 20          | 62.5 | 11               | 35.4 | 12             | 40   | 112        | 44.4 |
|                                                                |    | 36       | 100  | 79             | 100  | 44      | 100  | 32          | 100  | 31               | 100  | 30             | 100  | 252        | 100  |
| 3.English is a very useful language for business interactions. | D  | 1        | 2.8  | 12             | 15.2 | 19      | 43.2 | 2           | 6.2  | 2                | 6.4  | 11             | 36.7 | 47         | 18.7 |
|                                                                | CT | 1        | 2.8  | 4              | 5.1  | 7       | 15.9 | 5           | 15.6 | 4                | 13   | 3              | 10   | 24         | 9.5  |
|                                                                | A  | 34       | 94.4 | 63             | 79.7 | 18      | 40.9 | 25          | 78.1 | 25               | 80.6 | 16             | 53.3 | 181        | 71.8 |
|                                                                |    | 36       | 100  | 19             | 100  | 44      | 100  | 32          | 100  | 31               | 100  | 30             | 100  | 252        | 100  |
| 4.English is a very useful language for technology             | D  | 0        | 0    | 10             | 12.6 | 17      | 38.6 | 1           | 3.1  | 2                | 6.4  | 11             | 36.7 | 41         | 16.2 |
|                                                                | CT | 1        | 2.8  | 3              | 3.8  | 7       | 16   | 5           | 15.6 | 4                | 13   | 3              | 10   | 23         | 9.1  |
|                                                                | A  | 35       | 97.2 | 66             | 83.5 | 20      | 45.4 | 26          | 81.2 | 25               | 80.6 | 16             | 53.3 | 188        | 74.6 |
|                                                                |    | 36       | 100  | 79             | 100  | 44      | 100  | 32          | 100  | 31               | 100  | 30             | 100  | 252        | 100  |
|                                                                | D  | 21       | 58.3 | 39             | 49.3 | 22      | 50   | 14          | 43.7 | 24               | 77.4 | 14             | 46.7 | 134        | 53.2 |



|                                                                                 |    |    |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|
| 5. Speaking English makes someone look highly educated                          | CT | 3  | 8.3  | 5  | 6.3  | 9  | 20.5 | 7  | 22   | 4  | 13   | 5  | 16.7 | 33  | 13.1 |
|                                                                                 | A  | 12 | 33.3 | 35 | 44.3 | 13 | 29.5 | 11 | 34.3 | 3  | 9.6  | 11 | 36.6 | 85  | 33.7 |
|                                                                                 |    | 36 | 100  | 79 | 100  | 44 | 100  | 32 | 100  | 31 | 100  | 30 | 100  | 252 | 100  |
| 6. English is the language best suited for education in Rwanda                  | D  | 7  | 19.4 | 36 | 45.5 | 22 | 50   | 8  | 25   | 12 | 38.7 | 12 | 40   | 97  | 38.5 |
|                                                                                 | CT | 21 | 58.3 | 19 | 24.1 | 17 | 38.7 | 17 | 53.1 | 16 | 51.6 | 11 | 36.7 | 101 | 40.1 |
|                                                                                 | A  | 8  | 22.2 | 24 | 30.4 | 5  | 11.3 | 7  | 21.9 | 3  | 9.7  | 7  | 23.3 | 54  | 21.4 |
|                                                                                 |    | 36 | 100  | 79 | 100  | 44 | 100  | 32 | 100  | 31 | 100  | 30 | 100  | 252 | 100  |
| 7. English is the language best suited for administration in Rwanda             | D  | 7  | 19.4 | 40 | 50.6 | 25 | 56.8 | 8  | 25   | 13 | 42   | 13 | 43.3 | 106 | 42   |
|                                                                                 | CT | 24 | 66.6 | 22 | 27.8 | 18 | 41   | 19 | 59.4 | 16 | 51.6 | 16 | 53.3 | 115 | 45.6 |
|                                                                                 | A  | 5  | 14   | 17 | 21.5 | 1  | 2.2  | 5  | 15.6 | 2  | 6.4  | 1  | 3.3  | 31  | 12.3 |
|                                                                                 |    | 36 | 100  | 79 | 100  | 44 | 100  | 32 | 100  | 31 | 100  | 30 | 100  | 252 | 100  |
| 8. Speaking English increases someone's employment opportunities                | D  | 0  | 0    | 11 | 14   | 20 | 45.5 | 1  | 3.1  | 2  | 6.4  | 11 | 36.7 | 45  | 17.8 |
|                                                                                 | CT | 4  | 11.1 | 3  | 3.8  | 5  | 11.3 | 4  | 12.5 | 4  | 13   | 3  | 10   | 23  | 9.1  |
|                                                                                 | A  | 32 | 88.9 | 65 | 82.2 | 19 | 43.2 | 27 | 84.4 | 25 | 80.6 | 16 | 53.3 | 184 | 73   |
|                                                                                 |    | 36 | 100  | 79 | 100  | 44 | 100  | 32 | 100  | 31 | 100  | 30 | 100  | 252 | 100  |
| 9. Speaking English makes someone be perceived as being in a position of power. | D  | 0  | 0    | 11 | 14   | 19 | 43.2 | 1  | 3.1  | 2  | 6.4  | 11 | 36.7 | 44  | 17.5 |
|                                                                                 | CT | 2  | 5.5  | 3  | 3.7  | 5  | 11.3 | 4  | 12.5 | 4  | 13   | 3  | 10   | 21  | 8.3  |
|                                                                                 | A  | 34 | 94.5 | 65 | 82.3 | 20 | 45.5 | 27 | 84.4 | 25 | 80.6 | 16 | 53.3 | 187 | 74.2 |
|                                                                                 |    | 36 | 100  | 79 | 100  | 44 | 100  | 32 | 100  | 31 | 100  | 30 | 100  | 252 | 100  |
| 10. The use of English is an important factor in Rwanda's development.          | D  | 0  | 0    | 13 | 16.5 | 18 | 41   | 2  | 6.2  | 2  | 6.4  | 11 | 36.7 | 46  | 18.3 |
|                                                                                 | CT | 2  | 5.5  | 5  | 6.3  | 9  | 20.4 | 4  | 12.5 | 6  | 19.4 | 3  | 10   | 29  | 11.5 |
|                                                                                 | A  | 34 | 94.5 | 61 | 77.2 | 17 | 38.6 | 26 | 81.2 | 23 | 74.2 | 16 | 53.3 | 177 | 70.2 |
|                                                                                 |    | 36 | 100  | 79 | 100  | 44 | 100  | 32 | 100  | 31 | 100  | 30 | 100  | 252 | 100  |



### Distribution of attitudes towards English across the six occupational groups

Table 2 below presents the overall distribution of attitudes towards English across the six occupational groups. Because each respondent rated 10 attitudinal statements, the frequencies reported in the table represent the total number of responses rather than the number of individual respondents. Consequently, the total responses for each occupational group equal the number of respondents multiplied by ten.

*Table 2: Overall attitudes towards English per occupational category*

|                        | Teachers |      | Civil servants |       | Traders |       | Journalists |       | Catholic priests |       | Muslim leaders |       | All groups together |
|------------------------|----------|------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|----------------|-------|---------------------|
| Negative attitudes     | 50       | 14%  | 239            | 30.2% | 217     | 49.3% | 53          | 16.6% | 99               | 32%   | 124            | 41.3% | 31%                 |
| Neutral attitudes      | 69       | 19%  | 83             | 10.5% | 94      | 21.4% | 77          | 24%   | 66               | 21.3% | 54             | 18%   | 17.6%               |
| Positive attitudes     | 241      | 67%  | 468            | 59.3% | 129     | 29.3% | 190         | 59.4% | 145              | 46.7% | 122            | 40.7% | 51.4%               |
| <b>Total responses</b> | 360      | 100% | 790            | 100%  | 440     | 100%  | 320         | 100%  | 310              | 100 % | 300            | 100%  | 100%                |

The results reveal clear differences in attitudes towards English across occupations. Teachers exhibit the most favourable attitudes, with 67% of their responses being positive, compared with only 14% negative and 19% neutral responses. Journalists also display highly positive attitudes, with 59.4% positive responses, while only 16.6% are negative. Similarly, civil servants demonstrate generally positive attitudes, as 59.3% of their responses are positive, whereas 30.2% are negative and 10.5% are neutral. These patterns suggest that occupations in which English is frequently used tend to hold more views that are favourable. By contrast, traders express the least favourable attitudes towards English. Nearly half of their responses (49.3%) are negative, while only 29.3% are positive and 21.4% are neutral. Religious leaders also exhibit comparatively less favourable attitudes. Among Catholic priests, 46.7% of the responses are positive compared with 32% negative and 21.3% neutral responses. Muslim leaders show an even less positive pattern, with 40.7% positive responses and 41.3% negative responses, while 18% remain neutral.

### The chi-square test layout for the hypothesis

Following Levshina (2015, p. 210), observed frequencies refer to “the frequencies that you observe in the data, i.e. the actual numbers in the table.” Accordingly, the present study first reports the observed frequencies and corresponding percentages of negative, neutral, and positive responses across the six occupational groups. The upcoming table presents the figures in terms of frequencies, in a typical chi-square computation layout. The hypothesis to be tested, namely that “, has one dependent variable, namely ‘attitudes’, which in turn has three options, called ‘values’ in the literature, which are ‘negative’, ‘neutral’, and ‘positive’. Its independent variable is ‘occupations’, which has six values, namely ‘teachers’, ‘civil servants’, ‘traders’, ‘journalists’, ‘Catholic priests’, and ‘Muslim leaders’. The observed frequencies (fobs) are



the real ones counted by the researcher, while the expected frequencies ( $f_e$ ) refer to “the number of cases that would appear if there were no systematic relationship between the variables, a pure chance relationship” (Best et al. 2016, 409).

**Table 3:** The chi-square test layout for the hypothesis that “there is a significant relationship between Kigali residents’ attitudes towards English and their occupations”.

| OCCUPATION       | ATTITUDES |        |         |        |          |        |       |
|------------------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|----------|--------|-------|
|                  | NEGATIVE  |        | NEUTRAL |        | POSITIVE |        | Total |
|                  | fobs      | fe     | fobs    | fe     | fobs     | fe     |       |
| TEACHERS         | 50        | 111.71 | 69      | 63.28  | 241      | 185.00 | 360   |
| CIVIL SERVANTS   | 239       | 245.15 | 83      | 138.87 | 468      | 405.97 | 790   |
| TRADERS          | 217       | 136.53 | 94      | 77.34  | 129      | 226.11 | 440   |
| JOURNALISTS      | 53        | 99.30  | 77      | 56.25  | 190      | 164.44 | 320   |
| CATHOLIC PRIESTS | 99        | 96.20  | 66      | 54.50  | 145      | 159.30 | 310   |
| MUSLIM LEADERS   | 124       | 93.10  | 54      | 52.74  | 122      | 154.17 | 300   |
| Total            | 782       |        | 443     |        | 1,295    |        | 2,520 |

Here is the chi-square computation formula:  $\chi^2 = \sum \left[ \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} \right]$ . Thus, if we replace the symbols in the formula with the corresponding figures, we get the final value of 230.39. This calculated  $\chi^2$  value (of 230.39) is much higher than the critical value of 18.31 at  $p < .05$  or that of 23.21 at  $p < .01$  at 10 df (Appendix C.: “Abridged Table of Critical Values for Chi-Square”, in Best et al., 2016, p. 409).



## **Discussion**

### ***Rwandan teachers' attitudes towards English***

The analysis reveals that teachers hold predominantly positive attitudes towards English. Most respondents viewed it as useful for technology (97.2%), business, and national development (94.5%), as well as a source of employment opportunities (88.9%). Additionally, 66.8% found it pleasant to listen to, and 64% considered it easy to learn. Two main factors may explain these favourable attitudes. First, many teachers encountered English either as their medium of education or as a school subject. Second, since English is now the sole medium of instruction, teachers have little choice but to adopt it. However, enthusiasm was not uniform. The interviewee R14, uncertain about whether English suits education in Rwanda, revealed: "We were used to teaching in French when suddenly the government obliged us to teach in English in 2009. Because we were not trained in English, we started struggling with it." This response helps explain the low 22.2% agreement with the statement that English is best suited for education. Pearson (2014) similarly observes that the 2008 shift from French to English was abrupt, top-down, and mandatory, leaving teachers unprepared. Furthermore, 14% of teachers were least convinced that English is the language best suited for administration.

Similarly, R69's view reflected that of the majority of teachers (58.3%), who disapproved the notion that speaking English necessarily indicates a high level of education. They argued that English has evolved into several varieties, some of which are not mutually intelligible. Thus, proficiency in a particular variety of English cannot, by itself, be regarded as evidence of a speaker's high education. His view aligns with Huntington (1996)'s, as cited in Wardhaugh (2010), who noted that English has been indigenised into diverse forms, sometimes mutually unintelligible. Another respondent, R27, a university teacher, questioned the appropriateness of English as the medium of instruction:

If I were given the opportunity to design the language policy of our country, I would set French as the medium of education. The majority of Rwandans understand and speak French better because of their linguistic background – many lived in Rwanda, Burundi, or the DRC before the war, where French was widely used.

R27's view suggests that English, though now the language of instruction was imposed through policy rather than organically adopted. This sentiment echoes Tacitus's observation that, as cited by Crowley (1996, p. 114), "The language of the conqueror in the mouth of the conquered is ever the language of the slave." Overall, teachers valued English primarily for its utility in employment, business, education, technology, and national development. This aligns with Bamgbose (2011), who found that teachers in post-independence contexts often view English as a means of upward mobility. In Rwanda, where English became the language of instruction in 2008, such positive attitudes also reflect its status as a professional necessity (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). However, teachers express reservations regarding the role of English in national language policy.

### ***The Rwandan civil servants' attitudes towards English***

The analysis of the results related to civil servants' attitudes towards English reveals two key findings. Civil servants overwhelmingly agreed that English is useful for technology (83.5%), prestigious (82.3%), well suited for business interactions (79.7%), enhances employment opportunities (82.2%), and contributes to Rwanda's development (77.2%). Using the above adjectives, civil servants meant that proficiency in English gives access to technology, that speaking English inspires respect and admiration for its speakers, facilitates business interactions, and boosts the country's development. Nevertheless, 30.4% and 21.5% of this group considered English the best language for education or administration, respectively, indicating that despite using English, 78.5% of civil servants did not



endorse it as an ideal language for administrative purposes in Rwanda. When asked to justify their opinions, respondent R45 explained that English was inappropriate for administration as follows:

Very few people in Rwanda can understand this language. You can walk around a rural Akagari (Cell: the smallest administrative unit in Rwanda) without finding a single person who can speak or understand English well.

Furthermore, a significant portion of civil servants who went against the statement that English is the best suited language for administration may include those who spoke French as their second language. This ambivalence can be explained by the abrupt administrative mutation from French to English, which posed linguistic and professional challenges for many public workers (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010; Straus & Waldorf, 2011). Since civil servants are directly involved in the state bureaucracy, their cautious attitudes may indicate the practical challenges they face when using a relatively new official language. These findings suggest that civil servants regard English primarily as a language of professional advancement rather than one ideally suited for public administration.

#### *The Rwandan traders' attitudes towards English*

Traders expressed the least favourable attitudes towards English. The majority disagreed that English is easy to learn (66%), pleasant to listen to (59%), useful for business (43.2%), or useful for technology (38.6%), although opinions on the latter two items were more divided. Only 11.3% of traders believed English is best suited for education, and just 2.2% supported its use in administration. Likewise, less than half believed that English improves employment opportunities (43.2%), confers power (45.5%), or contributes to Rwanda's development (38.6%). These findings suggest that traders' comparatively limited exposure to English in their daily economic activities constrains their perception of its practical benefits. This interpretation is consistent with Mbonankira<sup>1</sup> et al., (2026), who found that traders in the city of Kigali exhibited predominantly negative affective attitudes towards English, characterised by low confidence, discomfort, and limited enjoyment in oral communication.

On the other hand, qualitative data support the moderate instrumental orientation expressed in statements 8, 9, and 10. One interviewee (R122), an importer, emphasised that English proficiency is essential for interpreting product specifications, complying with regulations, conducting transactions, and navigating formal banking processes. However, the same participant noted the frustration many local traders experience when they fail to express in English what they know in Kinyarwanda. This difficulty likely contributes to the generally mixed or negative attitudes observed, particularly in relation to items aligned with integrative motivation, which involves a desire to connect socially and culturally with the target language community. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), integrative motivation reflects an openness to the identity, values, and lifestyle of the language's native speakers. This motivation appeared relatively weak among the surveyed traders. Briefly, although integrative motivation towards English appears low among Rwandan business people chiefly due to absent or limited proficiency in English, the instrumental value of English is widely recognised. English is largely viewed as a practical necessity in Rwanda's increasingly globalised and Anglophone-oriented commercial landscape. These findings underscore the need for targeted language policy interventions

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<sup>1</sup> Mbonankira et al., wrote a paper, titled 'Exploring Kigali traders' attitudes towards English in commercial interactions. The Social Empowerment Journal published it on 30 June 2026.



and training programmes that address the functional language needs of traders, particularly those without access to advanced formal education.

#### *The Rwandan journalists' attitudes towards English*

Journalists generally demonstrated favourable orientations towards English. Strong majorities agreed that English increases employment opportunities (84.5%), is associated with positions of power (84.4%), contributes to Rwanda's development (81.2%), is useful for technology (81.2%), and is useful for business (78.1%). Also, half of journalists (50%) considered it pleasant to listen to, while 62.5% regarded it as easy to learn. This inclination can be understood in relation to the media's international orientation, where English grants access to global information flows and enhances professional visibility (Nseka, 2014). Journalists' attitudes reflect the professional advantages English provides in connecting Rwanda to regional and global media landscapes. However, uncertainty was notable regarding the seventh and sixth statements, with 59.4% and 53.1%, respectively, unable to take a clear stance. When asked why they were uncertain about the latter statements, respondent R102 explained.

During my journalism education, I was exposed to both French and English as media of instruction. As a result, I am unsure which language is well suited for education and administration in Rwanda.

This response suggests that the simultaneous use of French and English as media of instruction in Rwanda before the 2008 transition to English may have contributed to journalists' ambivalent views on the role of English in education and related domains.

#### *The Rwandan Catholic priests' attitudes towards English*

The results reveal a nuanced view of how Catholic priests perceive English in Rwanda. Overall, they expressed strong instrumental attitudes, valuing English for its practical functions. 80.6 % of respondents found it useful for technology, business and employment opportunity, while 74.2% of them reported it as an important factor for national development. This reflects an instrumental motivation according to which people learn a new language for practical benefits (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). For many priests, English is less a cultural asset than a tool for engaging with Rwanda's economic and technological transformation. However, they showed limited integrative motivation and little emotional attachment to the language. While only 9.6% agreed that English is pleasant to listen to, that it signals high education, and that it is best suited for instruction, 35.4% found it easy to learn.

Similarly, interview data reinforce this scepticism. Respondent R187 described English as "a foreign language," reflecting the Church's longstanding association with French. The latter is the historical language of worship, education, and administration in Rwanda. Consequently, English is often perceived as externally imposed rather than personally meaningful. R187 also questioned the standardisation of English, noting the existence of numerous English varieties, many of which are not mutually intelligible:

Being able to express oneself in one type of English cannot show that someone is highly educated... many people now strive to speak it at all costs. So, speaking English is not necessarily a mark of academic achievement.

These reflections suggest that while Catholic priests acknowledge the functional value of English, particularly with its role in development, technology, and opportunities beyond the Church, they remain emotionally and culturally distant from it. Their generally low integrative motivation likely stems from the Church's persisting ties to the French language. At this junction, it worth showing



how the qualitative findings help explain the particularly low favourability (9.6%) among Catholic priests towards English as a marker of educational attainment. R187 challenged the assumption that speaking English necessarily demonstrates that an individual is highly educated, arguing that proficiency in one variety of English does not in itself constitute evidence of academic achievement. The respondent further observed that many people now strive to speak English “at all costs,” implying that its widespread social value may encourage English use independently of educational attainment.

#### ***The Rwandan Muslim leaders’ attitudes towards English***

Rwandan Imams and Sheikhs display a cautious and complex stance towards English, marked by pragmatic acceptance and cultural ambivalence. Their responses indicate moderate instrumental motivation. They value English for its practical benefits rather than emotional or cultural appeal. Over half (53.3%) agreed that English enhances/nurtures business, employment opportunities, facilitates technological engagement, contributes to national development, and conveys social power. This reflects an understanding of English as a necessary tool for participation in a modern and globalised society. In contrast, integrative motivation appeared weak. Many respondents viewed English as culturally distant and personally unfamiliar: 53.3% disagreed that it is pleasant to listen to, 46.6% found it difficult to learn, and 46.7% rejected the notion that speaking it signifies high education. Only 3.3% of the respondents agreed that English is best suited for education while 23.3% find it fit for education. These attitudes suggest that English lacks cultural resonance within Rwandan Muslim communities. Interview data shed light on further context. R195 noted:

I am not very conversant with English. My first language is Kinyarwanda, and my second is either Arabic or Kiswahili. I studied Political Economy in Arabic, so it is difficult to decide whether English is appropriate for education or administration.

These results reflect the multilingual reality of Rwandan Muslim leaders, for whom Arabic and Kiswahili play stronger religious and educational roles. English, though useful, remains an additional foreign language with limited institutional presence. Consequently, their low integrative motivation may stem from both linguistic distance and the historical dominance of Arabic in Islamic contexts.

In conclusion, the exploration of this question demonstrates that occupational groups in Rwanda hold predominantly positive attitudes towards English because of its perceived instrumental value. English is widely regarded as a language of business, technology, employment, social mobility, and national development. However, perceptions of its pleasantness and ease of learning differ across occupations, and its appropriateness as the language of education and administration remains a matter of debate.

#### **The statistical significance of the results**

Establishing the significance of the results discussed above required testing the research hypothesis that there is a significant association between occupational group and the city of Kigali residents’ attitudes towards English. This hypothesis was tested using the chi-square test of independence. The computation yielded a chi-square value of  $\chi^2 = 230.39$ , at 10 degrees of freedom, calculated as  $df = (6 - 1)(3 - 1) = 10$ . This value (of 230.39) is much higher than the critical value of 18.31 at  $p < .05$  or that of 23.21 at  $p < .01$  at 10 df (see Appendix G. “Abridged Table of Critical Values for Chi-Square”, in Best et al. 2016, 409). It can thus be concluded that the hypothesis of an association between Kigali residents’ attitudes towards English and their occupations was strongly supported, which means that the null hypothesis of no association has been rejected.



## Conclusion

This study investigated whether there is a statistically significant association between occupational group and the city of Kigali residents' attitudes towards English. It used quantitative and qualitative data collected from 252 respondents including 36 teachers, 79 civil servants, 44 traders, 32 journalists, 31 Catholic priests, and 30 Muslim leaders in the City of Kigali. Data obtained through a questionnaire were analysed using the chi-square test of independence, while qualitative interview data were used to supplement and explain the statistical findings. For example, the low favourability (9.6%) among Catholic priests towards English as a marker of educational attainment was explained by their view that English proficiency does not necessarily signify academic achievement. The results demonstrated a statistically significant association between occupational groups and attitudes towards English, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Generally, occupations that require the frequent use of English, such as teaching, journalism, and public administration, presented significantly more favourable attitudes than those in which English plays a less central professional role, such as trading and religious leadership. These findings indicate a significant association between occupational group and the city of Kigali residents' attitudes towards English. Nevertheless, this association should not be taken as evidence that occupational demands or exposure to English caused differences in attitudes, since these factors were not directly measured. Thus, the study recommends integrating occupation-specific considerations into English language planning and training, particularly for teachers and traders, whose response patterns contributed most substantially to the observed occupational differences. Such creativities should be informed by different attitudinal dimensions identified by the measurement model and tailored to the linguistic needs of these occupational groups rather than applying them uniformly across all occupations.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: The interview Guide**

The interview revolved around the questions below. They were specifically put to the respondents identified with *R* and a serial number between brackets after each question.

- (i) Why, according to your response to the questionnaire, do you 'neither agree nor disagree' that English is the language best-suited for education in Rwanda? (question put to R69 and R45)
- (ii) Why, according to your response to the questionnaire, do you 'strongly agree' that speaking English makes someone look highly educated? (put to R69 and R187)
- (iii) Why, according to your response to the questionnaire, do you find English inappropriate for education in Rwanda? (put to R211)
- (iv) Why, according to your response to the questionnaire, do you find English inappropriate for administration in Rwanda? (put to R99, R102, and R195,)
- (v) Why, according to your response to the questionnaire, do you refute the idea that English is a very useful language for business interactions in Rwanda? (put to R122, and R 99)
- (vi) Why, as your response to the questionnaire, did you say that English is not a pleasant language to listen to? (put to R187)
- (vii) Why, according to your response to the questionnaire, do you find English "useful for business interactions"? (put to R14).
- (viii) Why, according to your response, were you uncertain about whether English suits education in Rwanda? (Put to R14).
- (ix) Why, ..... R27

### **Appendix B: Example of an Informed Consent Form**

#### **Informed Consent Form for Research Participants**

**Title of the Study:** Occupation-Related Attitudes Towards English in Rwanda

#### **Researcher:**

Name of Researcher: Gregoire Mbonankira

Department/Institution: Modern Languages and Culture

Contact details: Tel: 0788419133; email: [mbonankira66@gmail.com](mailto:mbonankira66@gmail.com)

#### **Introduction**

You are invited to participate in a research study that aims to investigate attitudes towards English among different occupational groups in Rwanda. Before agreeing to participate, please read the following information carefully. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to ask any questions before making your decision.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand participants' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding the use and importance of English in different social and professional contexts.

#### **Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be requested to complete a questionnaire and/or take part in an interview. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, while the



interview will take approximately **6 minutes**. With your permission, the interview may be audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription of your responses.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

All information collected from you will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name will not appear in any report, publication, or presentation resulting from this study. Instead, codes or pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity.

### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no significant risks associated with participating in this study. Although you may not receive direct personal benefits, your contribution will help improve understanding of language attitudes and language use in Rwanda.

### **Data Protection**

The information collected will be used solely for academic purposes. All completed questionnaires, interview recordings, and transcripts will be securely stored and accessed only by the researcher.

### **Consent Statement**

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

**Participant's Name:** Rusanganwa Joseph

**Signature/Thumbprint:**

**Date:** 26 June 2024

**Researcher's Name:** Mbonankira Gregoire

**Researcher's Signature:**

**Date:** 28 June 2024



Appendix C: Abridged Table of Critical Values for Chi-Square

| df | Level of significance |       |
|----|-----------------------|-------|
|    | .05                   | .01   |
| 1  | 3.84                  | 6.64  |
| 2  | 5.99                  | 9.21  |
| 3  | 7.82                  | 11.34 |
| 4  | 9.49                  | 13.28 |
| 5  | 11.07                 | 15.09 |
| 6  | 12.59                 | 16.81 |
| 7  | 14.07                 | 18.48 |
| 8  | 15.51                 | 20.09 |
| 9  | 16.92                 | 21.67 |
| 10 | 18.31                 | 23.21 |
| 11 | 19.68                 | 24.72 |
| 12 | 21.03                 | 26.22 |
| 13 | 22.36                 | 27.69 |
| 14 | 23.68                 | 29.14 |
| 15 | 25.00                 | 30.58 |
| 16 | 26.30                 | 32.00 |
| 17 | 27.59                 | 33.41 |
| 18 | 28.87                 | 34.80 |
| 19 | 30.14                 | 36.19 |
| 20 | 31.41                 | 37.57 |
| 21 | 32.67                 | 38.93 |
| 22 | 33.92                 | 40.29 |
| 23 | 35.17                 | 41.64 |
| 24 | 36.42                 | 42.98 |
| 25 | 37.65                 | 44.31 |
| 26 | 38.88                 | 45.64 |
| 27 | 40.11                 | 46.96 |
| 28 | 41.34                 | 48.28 |
| 29 | 42.56                 | 49.59 |
| 30 | 43.77                 | 50.89 |