

# Chapter one: Focus on Rwanda

## The intersection of gender and language in girls' educational experiences and outcomes in Rwandan basic education

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### Background

The co-authors of this contribution from Universities of Bath, Rwanda and Leeds worked together on [A case study of girls' education experiences in English medium Rwandan basic education \(@girlsEMIRwanda\)](#), an ESRC-funded project (ES/S001972/1)<sup>10</sup>. Through a mixed-methods case study design, the project explored the ways that learning in English influenced girls' educational experiences and outcomes throughout the basic education cycle, focusing on the examination years at the end of primary (P6) and lower secondary (S3). Each researcher took responsibility for different aspects of data generation and analysis. This, and all outputs from the project, represent our collective endeavour, and are generated in collaboration with the 48 girls and 20 teachers who participated in the study.

### Research summary

Rwanda is often described as a 'success story' in girls' education, with significant gains in some areas of gender parity<sup>11</sup>. It is also one of the few countries in the world where all children learn from the first day of primary school in a dominant language, in this case, English. Munyaneza and Mugiraneza discuss, in their contribution to this policy brief (page 19), the impact that this is having on learners in the early years. In our study in Rwanda, we focused on girls at the end of both primary (P6) and lower secondary education (S3) to identify the ways that learning in English impacts on girls' experiences and transitions to latter stages of education. We focus particularly on the years of lower secondary education, when language demands of the curriculum increase, to demonstrate some of the ways that learning in English intersects with socio-economic and cultural gender-based concerns to limit girls' learning.

In the first phase of our study, we identified the trends between girls' results in the 2018 English examinations, and the rurality, poverty and gender-bias of the district in which they lived<sup>12</sup>. Key findings in this analysis include:

- While there are very high pass rates for primary English examinations (95%+), approaching three quarters (73.69%) of girls are getting a low pass grade (40-49%). This compares with just one in twenty who score over 60%. These results are broadly comparable between boys and girls. Although this is not a clear marker of English language proficiency, we suggest that these low-scoring pass grades may mean many children are transitioning to secondary education with very limited English language.
- By the end of lower secondary, approaching half of children fail their English examinations (46.62%). Here, gender differences are clear with girls more likely to fail than boys nationally (51.26% for girls; 41.33% for boys) and in every district. In four districts, more than 60% of girls are failing. Gender differences are also seen among students scoring 60+ (11.09% for girls; 17.43% for boys).
- While gender differences cannot be fully explained by analysis of how rural, poor or gender-biased the district is, there is a clear divide between Rwanda's capital Kigali and the rest of the country, both across

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<sup>10</sup> <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FS001972%2F1>

<sup>11</sup> See for example: [Girls' Education in Rwanda a Success Story in East Africa - The Borgen Project](#)

<sup>12</sup> For more information about the methodology used:

Uworwabayeho, A., Milligan, L. O. and Kuchah, K. 2021. Mapping the emergence of a gender gap in English in Rwandan primary and secondary schools. *Issues in Educational Research*, 31 (4), pp. 1312-1329. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier31/uworwabayeho.pdf>

and within genders. For example, in Kirehe district, in Eastern province, we see 63.77% of girls failing English S3 examinations (compared with 50.29% of boys in that district, and 30.53% of girls in the Kigali district of Nyarugenge). Similarly, only 3.97% of girls in Kirehe district score 60+ in their English S3 examinations (compared with 10.89% of boys in that district, and 27.88% of girls in Nyarugenge).

Qualitative findings from four schools in Kirehe and Nyarugenge, as well as Burera and Ruhango districts, offered rich context to these quantitative analyses. We conducted narrative interviews with 48 P6 and S3 girls, alongside 32 classroom observations (from across the curriculum) where we focused on the girls’ engagement and participation in class. The schools and girls were sampled to broadly reflect girls’ differing levels of achievement and attendance.

Classroom observations revealed that, particularly at S3 level, many girls struggle to follow content in English and have very limited opportunities to talk in English, leading to silence in the classroom. Interview data from girls across the four districts supported these findings with many girls stating challenges related to understanding and highlighting the importance of teacher and peer use of Kinyarwanda, the national language, for their learning. Teachers further suggested that girls are more likely to rely on memorisation and repetition of key concepts than their male counterparts. These findings suggest that while girls may be physically included in the classroom, the use of English as the LoI contributes to their *epistemic exclusion*<sup>13</sup>. By this we mean that they are given limited access to:

1. New curricular concepts;
2. Opportunities for English language development, particularly through structured talk, and
3. Sustained engagement in meaning-making activities that require exploration of and through language.

There are important implications here for the meaningful achievement of inclusion for all learners in the classroom, but our findings suggest that these may particularly unfairly impact (most) girls more than their male peers. This is due to the ways that gendered expectations and norms related to household chores and how girls should behave intersect with insecurities relating to socio-economic circumstances, and LoI demands, to create a multi-layered burden for these girls to carry.

While the nature of each individual student’s circumstances differs, some girls are more heavily burdened than others. We found this consistently in both urban and rural settings, although the socio-economic context of the school shaped the nature of the gendered issues experienced. Further analysis through the grouping of girls into typologies further accentuated that (1) the intersection of gender and language challenges are particularly focused at lower secondary level and (2) that the intersection plays out differently for different types of girls<sup>14</sup>. Table 1 outlines the five typologies of girls and the role of learning in English in their educational experiences and outcomes. The stories of Iza, Raissa, Gloria, Marie Louise and Kayitesi are personalised portrayals of each of the typologies, combining the girls’ narratives and observed behaviour in class for all girls within that typology.

**Table 1: Typologies of girls’ learning in English at S3 level**

Girls that are...	Typology overview	The role of learning in English
At risk	Living in financially and physically insecure home environments, school is primarily a social	These girls are not following most of the content in all lessons. They rely on

<sup>13</sup> Please see the references given in the introduction of this policy brief for the scholarship that has influenced our definition of the term ‘epistemic exclusion’. We are developing this in a journal article: Kuchah, K., Adamson, L., Uwizemariya, A., Dorimana, A., Uworwabayeho, A. and Milligan, L. In preparation. Silencing in the classroom: Rwandan girls’ epistemic exclusion in English Medium secondary education. To be submitted to: *Language and Education*.

<sup>14</sup> A more detailed account of these typologies is in preparation: Milligan, L., Dorimana, A., Uwizemariya, A., Sprague, T. and Uworwabayeho, A. In preparation. The differential burden of learning in English medium education for Rwandan girls. To be submitted to: *Comparative Education*.

(Iza's story)	space to escape from home worries. They are expected to drop out or fail their S3 examinations. In class, they are almost entirely silent and disengaged, particularly in the teacher-led parts of the lessons. They all live in rural areas, and some have repeated school years.	teacher and peer use of Kinyarwanda in the classroom to help access even a minimal amount of the curriculum. The classroom is the only space where they could develop their English, but they do not talk.
At the tipping point  (Raissa's story)	These are those who may just about pass their S3 examinations. They have some home burdens but try to find time for some homework. They rely on learning in the classroom, and some peer support. Their talk in class is restricted to safe responses to teacher questions. They come from all four districts.	English may be the barrier that determines whether these girls are able to pass their S3 examinations. They are reliant on teacher code-switching and peer-explanation outside of the classroom for basic and subject-specific vocabulary to enable some access to the school curriculum. They have minimal opportunities to develop their English beyond this.
Going against the odds  (Gloria's story)	Despite heavy home burdens, these girls remain engaged in class and find time (even if it is at 3:00 am) to revise to keep up. They hope to pass their S3 examinations and will do whatever they can to continue in their studies. Their teachers tend to talk negatively about them and while they often feel ignored in the classroom, they strive to engage as much as they can. They came from all four districts in the study.	They want to achieve in English but may lack confidence to speak in English in class and can see it as a barrier to more consistent teacher attention. They are motivated by seeing 'educated' people who can speak English.
Using multiple strategies  (Marie Louise's story)	These girls are on track to pass their S3 examinations, including in English. In class, they are not consistently engaged but do some talk in English. Outside of class, they draw on different types of peer support and quiet homework time to enable them to memorise and develop their understanding. They have the time to do this because of lower home demands. They are primarily based in one rural district (Kirehe).	They don't talk explicitly about language but demonstrate a range of strategies to enable them to keep up in English medium schooling, particularly outside of the classroom. Importance of peer support mechanisms suggests significant use of Kinyarwanda.
The teachers' favourites  (Kayitesi's story)	These girls are high achievers in English and across the curriculum. They are expected to transition to upper secondary school. They have minimal home burdens and engage in home study, peer support (with other high	English is less of a barrier because they have the time, space and support mechanisms needed to achieve well. In class, they sometimes have opportunities for different types of talk

	<p>achievers) and are consistently engaged and active in the classroom. Teachers speak highly of them, and they speak highly of teachers. They are mainly based in Kigali.</p>	<p>(eg summarising) and are called upon by the teacher, but suggestions that the highest achieving boys get more chance to ask questions and take risks.</p>
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The development of typologies and girls’ narratives enabled us to see that the impact of learning in English is particularly accentuated for girls most at risk of dropout and those scoring lower marks. This has significant implications for the girls’ education agenda and meaningful outcomes for all girls.

**Recommendations for policy change and research:**

- If English is to continue as the Lol throughout the basic education cycle, then far greater attention needs to be paid to the ways that it may be contributing to inequitable experiences and outcomes both across and within genders.
- Girls, particularly those at risk of failing and clustered around a pass grade, need more support to develop their English language so that they can fully engage and participate in the English medium classroom. This is particularly important given that these girls are often very limited in their opportunities to do so outside of the classroom.
- Bearing in mind these significant challenges and inequities associated with the use of English as the Lol, many students (but particularly girls who carry additional burdens) would benefit greatly from the use of Kinyarwanda as the Lol.

**A girl that is at risk: Iza’s story**

Iza is 17 years old and lives in Burera, one of the most rural and poor districts in Rwanda. In Burera, around half (51.09%) of girls fail their English examination, compared with just over one third (35.16%) of boys. Iza is currently scoring less than 40% in her English marks and is described by her teacher as not attending school regularly, which they feel impacts her performance. Her teachers describe her as careless and a learner who does not make effort to improve.

Iza lives with her mother and has a father who has two wives, so he is present only part of the time. This causes conflict at home and her parents argue. She has one brother who lives at home. Iza enjoys listening to music, particularly gospel and Rwandan music as this helps her to relax. She listens to these songs when she is in the kitchen cooking. She is the main cook for the family and says that this is her duty because this is girls’ work, and she is the only remaining girl at home. Iza explains that she is very busy with domestic chores and is working hard. She rarely revises for lessons at home because she is typically busy with housework until 9:00 pm and feels exhausted and cannot revise. In addition to the heavy burden of home chores, Iza finds her home environment insecure because they live in a bad place near bars which is noisy with people fighting, which is another thing that makes it difficult for her to concentrate on her studies. She prefers to study when the place is calm without this and when no children are round making noise. Her parents do not encourage her to study and are completely disengaged from her learning, yet Iza does appreciate it when her mother discusses reproductive health with her and answers questions.

Iza seems to look forward to school as a break from her domestic work, saying that when she is at school, she can relax a bit. She appreciates the company of her friends on the way to and from school even though the journey presents her with some difficult peer pressure situations, as there are boys who come looking for girlfriends and they want her to stop and talk and that this delays her. Iza is in the class choir, which she says helps her to feel attached to her school. She misses her classmates and school during the holiday times or any time they are not going to school. Iza seems to value her friendships, commenting that she likes chatting with other learners and this is sometimes about lessons, but they share other stories, too, some which include reproductive related issues.

She does not attend school early for self-study nor does she stay after school for this. Iza seems to miss a lot of school because of her period and not having sanitary pads because her parents cannot purchase them and

sometimes the school doesn't have them either. When this happens, she goes home and doesn't return until her period is over. In the classroom, she is observed as being mostly silent, passive and not actively engaged. Even in paired activity, she is observed as not speaking. When she is selected to answer a question, she reads the answer from her notebook.

The impact of learning in English seems evident with Iza. Academically, she enjoys Maths the most because it doesn't require much speaking, writing or memorisation. She comments that other subjects have a lot more complicated English to read and memorise. She says that her Biology, Maths and English teachers teach well so that she can understand, and this is why she likes their lessons at school. She values English because she knows that she may need these language skills for employed work and because it is a Lol, and she knows that if she knew English better it would help her to understand other subjects. It seems possible that she is simply not accessing the content of other subjects because of the language barrier. She says she is not good at English and compares herself to her brother who is in S2 but is 'better' than her because he speaks English with teachers and the director of studies which has built up his confidence and helped him improve his English skills.

### **A girl at the tipping point: Raissa's story**

Raissa is 17 years old and lives in Ruhango, a rural district, but not among the most rural or poor. Her teachers describe her as someone who is 'doing okay' without any significant problems and they hope that she will pass her exams, including her English exam. She attends regularly and sometimes participates in class.

Raissa lives with both her parents and has an older sister at boarding school. She has a lot of housework and says she cannot refuse to help her parents because they pay her school fees. She is responsible for cooking, fetching water and looking for grasses for the cow. She gets up at 5:40 am so she can do these chores and take care of fertiliser or beans and sweeps the floor before going to school. She tries to do the work quickly in the evenings so there will be time for revising which she thinks is important for keeping up with her studies. Sometimes her parents refuse to leave the lights on because they are going to sleep. She finds that when she uses the torch for light to study, she sometimes falls asleep before turning it off and then the battery is dead in the morning which means she can't revise the next night. She says that she is motivated by students who are at boarding school because they do not need to worry about house chores and these students encourage her because she wants to be like them.

Raissa revises at school in the morning with two of her friends who help her with the difficult lessons. They meet to study together in the morning. This helps her in part because she says she becomes 'distracted' when at home she cannot read and translate for herself from English to Kinyarwanda. Raissa also uses music to help her memorise. She acknowledges that it is difficult to memorise something in English if you do not understand the content or understand the meaning in Kinyarwanda, so she uses music to try to overcome this.

She enjoys History class, partly because she likes the way the teacher teaches. She explains that he translates from English to Kinyarwanda or mixes the two languages to help them understand. She is encouraged by students who can speak English without difficulty. She says that when these children are asked questions in English without needing translation to Kinyarwanda, this encourages her to try harder next time. She describes also when they are in small groups during exercises 'you must understand them in order to find what to say in front of others.' Some students won't explain everything in Kinyarwanda, and she really wants to be able to explain to herself what was not translated.

In the classroom she is observed as being 'sometimes distracted' during the teacher-led work. She is 'not active' in the teacher-led sections of three out of four lessons, but the exception is Biology when she was described as 'focused' and 'active', raising her hand and contributing successfully. However, when she was called upon randomly, she was not able to give a correct answer. In the activity, she was collaborating with her neighbours and talking to them. In the Maths lesson, she was distracted reading the book throughout the lesson, sometimes talking to her neighbours. She was sometimes listening to the teacher and seemed to be comparing what the teacher was teaching with what was written in the book. This variety of engagement and participation fits with her narrative of finding English a barrier to her understanding.

## **A girl that is going against the odds: Gloria's story**

Gloria is 17 years old and lives in Burera, one of the poorest and most rural districts of Rwanda. She lives with her parents and two younger siblings with two older siblings no longer at home. Her father drives a motorcycle and is often not able to provide school materials when Gloria asks. Because she is the eldest child at home, she does most of the housework such as fetching water, collecting firewood, preparing food, sweeping and washing. She doesn't like having a lot of work at home because this takes away time at home for revision and homework.

According to Gloria's teachers, she used to attend regularly and concentrate in class, but during the initial COVID-19 outbreak, she had taken on some short-term jobs. They think she is no longer taking her studies seriously and has a boyfriend. They wonder if she may drop-out before completing S3. She shares feelings of shame for slipping from 5<sup>th</sup> place in the class to 26<sup>th</sup>. Gloria's own words suggest that she has experienced a lot of sexual pressure, including from an older man, and that she has had to engage in sex work in exchange for food. It is also clear that financial challenges regularly worry her, and can prevent her from attending school (eg because of a lack of sanitary products). Being part of an association, which has helped her to buy a goat, has helped allay some of her concerns.

Despite these significant pressures, Gloria aspires high – to improve her living conditions and to get a job as a teacher or nurse. She is determined to reach this goal. She regularly talks about jealous neighbours who disrespect and discourage her from wanting to attend school. She feels motivated by seeing people who have office jobs and are 'educated', a marker which is often associated with knowing English well in Rwanda. One way that she shows her determination is through the time she dedicates to revision – doing schoolwork from 3:00 am at home so that there are no distractions and getting to school at 6.30 am for quiet time. These periods of quiet time were frequently discussed by girls in our study as spaces to memorise vocabulary and revise curricular concepts.

Peer support is important to Gloria – she likes to sit with learners who she says are brighter than her and they help her to understand the content and to do exercises. For example, she likes Maths at school because here she can get people to help her. However, sometimes, she explains, they will not help her because they are jealous and don't want her to get better grades than them. When she does help others, this is because explaining lessons to others helps her to master the content.

Gloria says she hates when teachers ignore her when she asks a question, or when she doesn't get a straight answer from them; sometimes because she uses Kinyarwanda and is chastised. She says she worries about losing self-confidence to speak in English in class when she's called on. In the classroom, Gloria is observed as being 'very active' during the teacher-led portions of three out of four lessons. She contributes during teacher-led questions in all lessons. Her answers are not always correct, but it is noted that she doesn't appear to be discouraged as she continues to raise her hand. She often raises her hand to contribute to the discussion of the activity but is not frequently called upon. At one point in the Geography lesson, Gloria asked a question, "What is the difference between vegetation and climate?". The teacher encouraged a student to answer and the girl sitting next to her answered the question. Her determination to keep trying to contribute despite her worries about being able to contribute well in English sets her apart from many other girls in our study.

Overall, Gloria seems to get a great amount of joy and pleasure from learning and understanding things well and challenges herself to tackle difficult subjects or topics. She is determined, tenacious and set to pass her examinations, including English, despite the financial and gendered challenges that she faces.

## **A girl that uses multiple strategies: Marie Louise's story**

Marie Louise is 16 years old and lives in Kirehe, a very rural district of Rwanda with the highest failure rates for girls in secondary English in the country (63.77% of girls fail, compared with 50.29% of boys). She is one of the girls that is expected to pass her English examination, currently scoring a merit grade. While she is described by teachers as a learner who attends very regularly, they say she does not participate actively in class and suggest that this is because she has poor concentration. Teachers comment that there is a good relationship between the school and her parents, who often visit the school.

Marie Louise lives with her parents and one brother who is a motorist and regularly arrives home late. She helps her mother to do some of the housework but doesn't have a lot of chores at home. She appreciates that her brother stays at home on weekends because this enables her to join her classmates at school for their self organised revision

sessions. These sessions, and other peer support time, are important for Marie Louise to support her access to curricular content in English.

Marie Louise draws on peer support groups and quiet study time to help her to do well. She says that working in groups of active learners helps her a lot because when every member can contribute, they can help one another. She explains what she knows, and she also learns from others' explanations or exercises. These peer support sessions are multilingual. Marie Louise also really appreciates quiet time, away from peers interfering with her studying, so that she can memorise English content from lessons. She studies every evening at home to go over the content they've covered in all the lessons of the day. She feels that if she doesn't that the amount of learning will pile up and she will not recall it. She says she needs to do this to stay on the same page and not get lazy and she worries that if she didn't, that her marks would slip because even with this practice, she is around the 50% mark.

Marie Louise admits that there are some subjects she enjoys revising at home because she can read and understand them at home, such as entrepreneurship. She reads 'soft' books in English to help her improve her English vocabulary but wishes there were more school books available to her through the school library. Her father helps her with English and French during the holiday. These are all strategies that Marie Louise draws on to enable her to develop her English and access curricular content; and she has time at home and can attend school regularly to be able to use these strategies.

During class, across lessons she is observed as not being consistently well engaged. During teacher-led sections in Chemistry and History & Citizenship she is observed taking notes while the teacher talks, but in Maths and Geography it is noted that she is not always actively engaged. Marie Louise seems to make the greatest effort to participate in Maths when she raises her hand to volunteer answers to evaluation questions. In the three other subjects it is noted that she is sometimes chatting with others in Kinyarwanda during the activities. It is clear from these classes that Marie Louise looks to the teacher, her peers and her books to support her learning and that she needs Kinyarwanda to help access the curriculum.

### **A girl that is a teacher's favourite: Kayitesi's story**

Kayitesi is 16 and lives in Nyarugenge, the district of Kigali with the highest pass and distinction rates in the country. Kayitesi is expected to get a merit or distinction in her S3 English examination. In Nyarugenge, this puts her among the top 30% of her class, while nationally among the top 14%. She attends very regularly and is expected to transition to S4 at the end of the year. Her teachers describe her as a bright and conscientious girl. Her parents encourage her to study hard and they follow up on her work, encouraging her not to look for distractions. Kayitesi does not talk about any financial or insecurity concerns in her home and she has a lot of time to revise. Kayitesi likes to study Biology and History and likes to revise at home because it's quiet and there aren't distractions like mobile phones or a TV on. She studies these subjects at home because they are easier for her and if she's taken good notes, all she needs is some time to memorise them in a quiet place. For these she doesn't need exercises and formulas with other learners. She likes to read English schoolbooks because they are good stories, and she says that when you try in reading you improve your knowledge.

Kayitesi is highly motivated and was admitted to a public boarding school after her good grades in P6 but didn't like the life there so her parents agreed for her to join a day school near her home. She dreams of working hard. She wants to be among the best performers in the national examination because she wants to be selected to an excellent boarding school to continue to study Maths, Chemistry and Biology. She is encouraged by the teachers' and headmaster's stories of good learners and the success that resulted from their hard work at their school and elsewhere. These success stories motivate her, and she wants to be like them so that her teachers will talk about her in the future. She is also motivated by seeing people who have studied successfully and have a good life thanks to education.

Kayitesi often comes to the early morning study time at school (6:30 – 7:20 am) and she likes this time because there are few students there and it is quiet. She also likes to work with other learners who are doing well – they learn together to help each other, particularly in Science, helping each other to learn more complex curricular content in English. During lessons, Kayitesi says she likes paying attention to the teachers and asking questions when she doesn't understand something. She enjoys it when the teacher gives exercises to check their understanding and makes corrections amongst them. She enjoys studying Maths, Chemistry and Physics because these are the subjects

with which she requires more support, and in school she can get that support from teachers and classmates with whom she discusses and does exercises. She likes that her teachers encourage her to study hard, particularly the Physics and entrepreneurship teachers who she says care much for her. She dislikes the noise and stories from her classmates who talk when the teacher is not there and narrate movies. She says she is interested in those things but prefers to keep them for break time. For her, class should be for class activities and other things come at break time.

Kayitesi is described as 'very active' during the teacher-led portions of all lessons and is described as 'engaged' in all activities, except in Chemistry. In all lessons, she raised her hand to contribute, and the observer notes that her contributions were successful. In History & Citizenship, it is noted that she raised her hand more than four times and she spoke for more than three minutes explaining the history of revolution in France. She appears to be following along, even if she is not writing answers in her notebook. In some lessons, she is fully engaged with the activities and contributes to lessons with success. In other lessons, she does not raise her hand, but is selected at random to answer a question. In one case, she was unable to give the correct answer, but the teacher encouraged her to stand up and try again.

## Personal reflections on researching language of instruction and girls' education in Rwanda

Aline Dorimana and Aloysie Uwizemariya

### Background

Aline Dorimana is a PhD candidate at the College of Education, University of Rwanda. Aloysie Uwizemariya is a Lecturer in English for Academic Purposes at the College of Education, University of Rwanda. They were the lead researchers on the data generation for the [A case study of girls' education experiences in English medium Rwandan basic education](#) project, including conducting interviews with the case study girls, teachers and headteachers and observing the girls in English Medium Classrooms. Here, they reflect on their own experiences as women growing up in Rwanda and new insights that they have developed on the intersection of language and gender through their involvement in the project.

### Introducing Aline and Aloysie

*Aline:* I did my primary education in Northern province of Rwanda. I remember that the language of learning was French with one hour of English as a lesson per week. The class was composed of more girls than boys and the sitting was arranged so that a boy sat with a girl. The front desk near the door was my seat. Our teacher (female, who used to teach us many subjects in French) placed me in front not only because I was a brilliant student but also because she knew that I could not find time to revise lessons at home due to home activities (including collecting cow's grass and fetching water) and lack of light. So, I had to sit in front and maximise my learning at school. I remember that when we had homework, I used to do it on my way home or going to collect grasses or I used to make light with firewood so that I could do the homework. I did this because I hated being the last of the class, I had always to be among the top five. I could not speak French, but I could understand the question and respond in fake French or sometimes I included some words in Kinyarwanda when I failed to find the good French word. French was for beautiful girls from rich and educated families who were over proud and confident to speak. The English teacher (male) was a fresh graduate. He was good in the language and used to approach boys more than girls.

I felt that being able to speak English required me to be overproud and completely transform my speaking style, which I could not do. I only performed well in tests and got good grades since I had to be among the top. Girls were lucky when we had a female teacher. This teacher used to be closer to girls than boys and she even taught us how to pass exams with good grades. She taught us how to memorise definitions and even paragraphs. I remember she used to sit at the back of the room and tell us to repeat three words many times with closed eyes until we could remember the same words after a while. This exercise was productive on the girls' side as girls outperformed boys in subjects where memorisation was evident like in science and technology. However, boys could explain things better than girls.