

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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## Reimagining English Teaching Methods: Music Integration in a Rwandan Pre-Service Teacher Training Colleges.

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### Abstrak

**Tujuan**-Penelitian ini menelaah peran pendidikan musik dalam meningkatkan keterampilan bahasa Inggris pada calon guru di Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) Rwanda setelah implementasi penuh Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) pada tahun 2021. **Metodologi/Desain/Pendekatan**-Berlandaskan perspektif mutakhir tentang pemerolehan bahasa kedua, penelitian ini menggunakan desain metode campuran. Data kuantitatif dikumpulkan melalui tes kemahiran bahasa Inggris yang diberikan sebelum dan sesudah penerapan aktivitas pembelajaran berpusat pada musik. Data kualitatif diperoleh dari wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan para pendidik TTC untuk menangkap praktik pembelajaran dan perubahan belajar yang dirasakan. Analisis kualitatif dilakukan secara induktif dengan mengelompokkan pola-pola yang berulang menjadi tema hingga mencapai kejemuhan tema, lalu kedua jenis data diintegrasikan untuk memperkuat interpretasi. **Temuan**-Hasil awal menunjukkan bahwa integrasi musik dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris meningkatkan motivasi dan partisipasi peserta didik, sekaligus mendukung kesadaran fonologis, ketepatan pelafalan, dan retensi kosakata. Aktivitas berbasis musik tampak menciptakan iklim kelas yang kolaboratif dan rendah kecemasan sehingga mendorong praktik berbahasa, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, serta mempertahankan keterlibatan selama proses belajar. **Orisinalitas/Nilai**-Penelitian ini menyumbang bukti praktis bagi pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan TTC dengan memosisikan musik sebagai pendekatan yang mudah diterapkan, responsif budaya, dan berpotensi berdampak tinggi untuk memperkuat kompetensi bahasa Inggris calon guru di Rwanda. Di luar capaian kebahasaan, temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa musik dapat menjadi sumber pedagogis yang dapat ditransfer dan relevan secara lebih luas untuk pembelajaran yang berpusat pada peserta didik lintas mata pelajaran dan konteks pendidikan yang beragam.

**Kata kunci** Pengajaran musik, Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi, Literasi Bahasa Inggris

### Abstract

**Purpose**-This study examines the role of music education in improving English language skills among pre-service teachers in Rwandan Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) following the full implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2021. **Research Methodology/Design/Approach**-Guided by contemporary perspectives on second language acquisition, the study employs a mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected through English proficiency assessments administered before and after the implementation of music-centered instructional activities. Qualitative data were generated from semi-structured interviews with TTC educators to capture instructional practices and perceived learning changes. Qualitative analysis was conducted inductively by grouping recurring patterns into themes until thematic saturation was reached, and the two strands were integrated to strengthen interpretation. **Finding**-Preliminary results indicate that integrating music into English instruction increases learner motivation and participation while supporting phonological awareness, pronunciation accuracy, and vocabulary retention. Music-based activities appear to create a collaborative and low-anxiety classroom climate that encourages practice, enhances confidence, and sustains engagement during language learning. **Originality/Value**-This study contributes practical evidence for TTC educators and policymakers by positioning music as an accessible, culturally responsive, and potentially high-impact approach for strengthening English competence among future teachers in Rwanda. Beyond language outcomes, the findings suggest that music can function as a transferable pedagogical resource with broader relevance for learner-centered teaching across subjects and diverse educational contexts.

**Keywords** Music teaching, Competence Based Curriculum, English literacy

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## Introduction

The Over the past two decades, English has consolidated its position as a key language of academic participation, professional mobility, and regional and international engagement. In education systems where English is not widely used outside school, however, the shift toward English-medium instruction (EMI) can create persistent gaps between policy expectations and classroom realities, particularly when learners and teachers have limited opportunities for sustained exposure and use. Rwanda illustrates this tension clearly. National policy moves in 2008 signalled a decisive transition toward English as the medium of instruction, while Kinyarwanda remained central in early grades and French became optional in many pathways (Pearson, 2014; UNICEF, 2017).

Although EMI policy was intended to strengthen Rwanda's regional integration and global competitiveness, research has repeatedly noted that rapid language-of-instruction transitions often place heavy demands on teacher capacity and student readiness, with risks for participation, comprehension, and instructional quality when language proficiency is uneven (Pearson, 2014; UNICEF, 2017). In this context, the English proficiency of student-teachers becomes especially consequential: Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) are not only sites where future educators must succeed academically through English, but also where they develop the communicative competence and pedagogical confidence required to teach through English in real classrooms.

Rwanda's ongoing curriculum reform further heightens this urgency. The competence-based orientation of Rwanda's education system places emphasis on demonstrable skills, learner-centred pedagogy, and the integration of knowledge, values, and practical competencies in authentic contexts (UNESCO, 2024). Within teacher education, the TTC Curriculum Framework underscores competence development and includes Creative Performance (Fine Arts and Music) as part of a broader vision for holistic teacher preparation, including social and cultural development relevant to professional practice (Rwanda Education Board, 2020). At the same time, national development planning (NST1) frames human capital development and quality education as strategic levers for transformation, reinforcing the policy relevance of innovations that strengthen foundational and cross-cutting skills, including language competencies needed for participation in a knowledge-oriented economy (Government of Rwanda, 2017).

Despite these policy commitments, strengthening English proficiency in teacher education remains a practical challenge. Large-scale initiatives such as the Secondary Teachers English Language Improvement Rwanda (STELIR) programme reflect national recognition that teacher English proficiency is pivotal for improving learning opportunities. STELIR targets intermediate-level English proficiency for both in-service lower secondary teachers and pre-service teachers in training at the University of Rwanda College of Education, signalling both the scale of need and the strategic priority given to English development within the teaching workforce (British Council, n.d.; British Council, 2025). However, classroom-level approaches that are engaging, feasible, and culturally responsive especially within TTC settings still require stronger evidence and clearer implementation guidance.

One promising approach is the integration of music education into English language teaching. The educational value of music is not limited to artistic expression; a growing body of interdisciplinary research suggests that musical engagement can support language-related processing through shared cognitive and perceptual mechanisms. Empirical studies indicate that music training can strengthen phonological awareness and auditory discrimination skills closely tied to pronunciation, listening comprehension, and early decoding while also supporting

attention and memory processes that underpin vocabulary learning and retention (Flaughnacco et al., 2015; Patscheke et al., 2016). Evidence also suggests that links between music and second-language outcomes may be particularly pronounced for speech perception and auditory-based tasks (Talamini et al., 2018). In addition, music-based activities (e.g., singing, rhythm exercises, lyric-focused tasks) can lower anxiety, increase willingness to participate, and sustain learner engagement-conditions widely recognised as essential for successful language learning, especially in contexts where learners have limited exposure outside the classroom.

For TTCs, the pedagogical potential of music is especially relevant for two reasons. First, student-teachers are adult learners who must develop functional English for academic study and professional communication, yet may still face constraints in authentic practice environments. Music-based pedagogy can create structured, repeated, and enjoyable language exposure within instructional time, potentially strengthening pronunciation, prosody, and lexical recall through rhythm and melody. Second, TTC graduates will teach future cohorts; therefore, an approach that is both effective and easy to translate into classroom practice can have multiplier effects. Notably, Rwanda's TTC curriculum already legitimises creative and arts-based learning through Creative Performance, which creates an enabling curricular space for music-integrated language pedagogy rather than positioning it as an "extra" activity (Rwanda Education Board, 2020).

Nevertheless, important gaps remain. While international literature supports theoretical and empirical links between musical engagement and language-related skills, the evidence base is still uneven across contexts, learner populations, and instructional designs (Talamini et al., 2018). In Rwanda, the intersection between (a) English development in teacher education, (b) competence-based curricular reforms, and (c) structured music education as a language-learning intervention has not been sufficiently investigated. This gap matters because successful implementation depends not only on whether music "helps," but on *how* it is integrated (e.g., types of musical tasks, alignment with learning outcomes, assessment practices), *for whom* it works best (e.g., baseline proficiency differences), and *under what classroom conditions* it becomes sustainable in TTC settings.

Responding to these needs, the present study examines music education as a potentially transformative approach to enhancing English proficiency among student-teachers in Rwandan TTCs. It is anchored in the practical demands of EMI and teacher preparation, while also aligning with national and curricular priorities that emphasise competence development, learner-centred pedagogy, and innovative teaching strategies (Government of Rwanda, 2017; Rwanda Education Board, 2020). By generating context-specific evidence on the outcomes and mechanisms of music-integrated English instruction, the study aims to inform both classroom practice and policy deliberations on scalable strategies for strengthening teacher language competence.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do students at Rwandan TTCs currently speak English?
2. How do students' language learning and competency change when music education is incorporated into the English curriculum in TTCs?
3. Which specific music-based activities are perceived to contribute most to English proficiency development among TTC students?

By investigating these questions, the study contributes to scholarship on arts-integrated pedagogy and second-language learning in African teacher education contexts, while offering actionable implications for TTC curriculum implementation and teacher professional capacity-building initiatives.

## Literature Review

This study draws on Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory, which argues that learners possess different profiles of strengths, including musical intelligence (Gardner, 1983). In language education, MI supports differentiated instruction by legitimizing varied entry points to learning beyond text-heavy approaches, which is relevant in TTC contexts where student-teachers may have uneven English exposure and diverse learning preferences. MI therefore provides a pedagogical rationale for using music to widen participation and reduce barriers to oral practice (Gardner, 1983).

Beyond MI, the music language interface literature offers mechanism-based explanations. Music and language share overlapping cognitive resources for processing structured sound sequences, especially rhythm and prosody, which can influence speech perception and production (Patel, 2008). Empirical studies further indicate that music-based engagement can support language-related skills. For example, structured music training has been linked to gains in phonological awareness and related literacy outcomes (Flaugnacco et al., 2015; Patschke et al., 2016), while singing has been shown to facilitate recall of foreign-language phrases compared with spoken conditions (Ludke et al., 2014). Evidence syntheses also suggest that music aptitude or training may contribute to second-language performance, particularly in auditory-perceptual tasks (Talamini et al., 2018).

Music may also strengthen language learning through affective pathways. In multilingual and EMI-leaning environments, anxiety and low confidence can suppress classroom participation; music-based activities can provide low-stakes, repetitive, and enjoyable opportunities for oral practice (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). Motivation-focused work shows that integrating music through lyric-based tasks and learner-centered activities can sustain engagement and deepen interaction with target-language input (Kao & Oxford, 2014). In Rwanda, feasibility is supported by TTC curricular space that includes Creative Performance (Fine Arts and Music), making interdisciplinary integration more realistic in teacher preparation settings (Rwanda Education Board, 2020).

Despite these insights, there is limited context-specific evidence on music-integrated English pedagogy in Rwandan TTCs, particularly studies that combine measurable English outcomes with educator perspectives on implementation. This study addresses that gap by examining how music-based activities can be incorporated into TTC English learning and what changes in proficiency and classroom engagement are associated with this integration.

## Methods

The research utilized a mixed-methods approach, particularly an exploratory sequential framework. The reasoning is to start with qualitative approaches to investigate the views, experiences, and methods related to music and English education. This was utilized to achieve a thorough comprehension of how music is incorporated into the curriculum and its effect on English learning. The sample consisted of 210 participants: 200 were student teachers, 5 were English teachers, and 5 were music teachers. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions took place with teachers and student teachers regarding their experiences with music and language acquisition. Document analysis was conducted by examining documents like syllabi, lesson plans, and other curricular materials that incorporate music and English. Thematic analysis of the data

was conducted through coding and the identification of themes from interview transcripts and FGDs. Next, quantitative approaches were employed to confirm the influence of music education on English proficiency by creating measurable connections between music instruction and English proficiency results. The population comprised student-teachers studying in Rwandan TTCs, as well as English and music instructors at the TTCs. Purposive sampling was conducted for the participating TTCs with established music programs, while stratified random sampling was utilized for quantitative surveys and assessments from all representative colleges. A total of 200 student teachers were chosen from 5 TTCs. Surveys were utilized to evaluate perceptions of music in English education, usage frequency, and perceived efficacy. English proficiency assessments were conducted once more to assess the learners' skill levels, and finally, classroom observations were carried out to examine the teaching methods and the function of music. Data was examined through descriptive statistics, emphasizing frequency, mean, and standard deviations

## Result and Discussion

In Present levels of English proficiency among students at Rwandan TTCs. The data was obtained using CEFR-aligned English proficiency assessments that evaluate the four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The goal was to set the foundation for assessing the possible effects of music education on English language advancement.

**Table 1: CEFR Distribution of English Proficiency**

CEFR level	Number of Students	Percentage
A1 Beginner	30	17.5
A2 Elementary	80	35
B1 Intermediate	60	30
B2 Upper intermediate	25	12.5
C1 Advanced	10	5.0
C2 Proficient	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	

### Breakdown of skills by proficiency

- Listening:** The majority of students found it difficult to follow fast-paced, native-level audio recordings, with 40% of students receiving an A2 score and only 10% receiving a B2 or higher.
- Speaking:** 50% of students are at an A2 or below level. Low confidence, a small vocabulary, and bad pronunciation are common problems. Only 8 percent of participants had a B2 level.
- Reading:** With 45% of students receiving a B1 or higher, reading proficiency was comparatively greater. Many people still struggled to understand scholarly writings.
- Writing:** 60% of writing is still at an A2 level or lower. Grammar, coherence, and academic writing structure were found to be frequently flawed.

The majority of Rwandan TTCs, or 52% of them, are functioning at elementary level A2 or below, and only 17.5% have attained upper-intermediate level or higher (B2+), which is typically required for teaching and academic instruction. However, students from TTCs with music-integrated programs performed slightly better in vocabulary and listening sections by 5–10%. The data shows that students in Rwandan TTCs have a generally low level of English proficiency, with

the majority failing below the thresholds (b2) for effective instruction in an English-medium environment (MINEDUC, 2022). These findings highlight the need for innovative culturally resonant pedagogical approaches, like the use of music, to enhance language development

### **The effect of music education on the development of English proficiency and acquisition**

In Rwandan TTCs, incorporating music instruction into the English curriculum provides a comprehensive strategy for improving students' language learning and competency. In addition to being in line with Rwanda's educational policies, this integration takes advantage of the cognitive and cultural advantages that help overcome current difficulties in learning English.

#### **1. Developing verbal and cognitive abilities**

It has been demonstrated that participating in music education enhances a number of cognitive processes that are essential for language acquisition. Research indicates that music instruction can improve processing speed, memory, and attention-all of which are critical for learning a second language. Better vocabulary retention, enhanced listening skills, and a deeper comprehension of English grammar rules can result from these cognitive enhancements. One music teacher has this to say, "Music is critical in developing both verbal and non-verbal skills. This is evident especially, when students always recite a song or songs with big vocabulary". Gardner is the view that through various activities such as singing the words with correct rhythm and intonation, the learner develops musical intelligence. This is in line with developing English speaking skills, because when learners or students sing, they will be using the same avenue to let out their voices, that is the mouth.

#### **2. Addresses problems in English Language Proficiency**

Due to differences in teacher and student proficiency, the adoption of English as the primary language of teaching in Rwandan schools has presented difficulties. Research shows that while teachers and students in both urban and rural areas believe they are highly proficient in Kinyarwanda, their perceptions of their English competence are not equal. This discrepancy may make it more difficult to understand and communicate in English. By offering a stimulating and encouraging setting for language work, incorporating music education can help to lessen these difficulties. Students' confidence and proficiency can be increased by engaging in music-related activities like singing, rhythm exercises, and lyric analysis, which can help them become more at ease with English sentence structures and pronunciation. One particular teacher was quoted saying, "This is true because the confidence that could have been developed in singing, particularly a set piece, prepares learners to address some of the problems related to English proficiency".

#### **3. Promoting cultural relevance and Engagement**

When Rwandan-inspired music education is included, students' English language learning can become more engaging and significant. By translating classic songs into English or creating original songs that utilize English vocabulary and grammar, students can see how their language skills are used in everyday circumstances. This approach enhances language acquisition while fortifying connections to one's own culture and the English language in many ways. In support of this, one English teacher claims, "Translating Rwandan songs into English will help boost the confidence and linguistic skills from one cultural context to another". This sounds correct because culture has to be relevant for a particular group of people bound by the same cultural ties.

#### **4. Holistic teacher Development**

Programs for teachers that promote or incorporate music education can produce well-rounded teachers who are capable of utilizing a variety of instructional strategies. Teachers who have received training in music education are more likely to use innovative and engaging teaching techniques, which can enhance learning results and student engagement. These educators can also act as role models by showcasing how music and language instruction can coexist in the classroom. Learners can observe how their linguistic abilities are used practically in situations that are known to them. This method not only improves language learning but also strengthens ties to the English language and one's own culture.

## 5. Aligning with National Educational Goals

Rwanda's larger educational goals, such as encouraging instructors and students to become more fluent in English, are in line with the inclusion of music instruction in the country's English curriculum. This is due to the fact that courses like the English proficiency course for TTCs are designed to improve the four language skills-speaking, writing, reading, and listening—in order to equip aspiring educators to provide instruction effectively.

### Specific musical activities/ interventions more effective in enhancing English proficiency among Rwandan TTC students

#### 1. Song based vocabulary building

This involves introducing new terminology through slow, English songs with clear lyrics, such as "Are you sleeping, Brother John?" It's possible to urge students to introduce new words. Once more, students might be asked to listen, define some new terms, or fill in the blanks. This exercise improves pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, and listening skills. Language skills including listening depends on teaching strategies based on using songs in English course (Buyandalai & Tumurbat, 2022). Teacher B claims that, "*Songs play a pivotal role in developing some essential English language skills like, pronunciation and intonation, to some extent some spellings*". This is in line with Gardner that music intelligence is transferable to linguistic one. In his studies, Mora (2000) discussed the possibilities of using music in language learning using the basal properties of music, such as melody and intonation as useful agent in language development.

#### 2. Practicing pronunciation through chants and rhymes

To rehearse English sounds, the teacher may employ rap, nursery rhymes, or rhythmic chanting. The instructor may employ brief rhythmic poetry or tongue twister examples to help students improve their intonation, phonemic awareness, and pronunciation. Using chants and rhymes in language training is a fun and useful way to help students pronounce words correctly. Chants' repeating and rhythmic structure aids in pupils' internalization of the target language's emphasis, intonation, rhythm, and sound patterns. Teacher B argues that, "*by emphasizing sound correspondences in a memorable way, rhymes in particular help to improve articulation and phonemic awareness*". Through active, oral participation, this method not only improves pronunciation but also increases learners' confidence and fluency. Chants and rhymes can have a particularly powerful effect on child language acquisition or on pre-service teachers getting ready to instruct young students.

### 3. Lyric and song writing

Students are instructed to use new vocabulary or grammar structures to create short English songs or alter the lyrics of well-known songs. Group songwriting contests or group class songs on specific themes, such as education, peace, love, or patriotism, may be organized by the teacher. Grammar, creative writing, speaking, and teamwork are among the abilities that need to be improved. A creative and student-centered method of language development is to involve students in lyric and songwriting exercises. Teacher C claims that, *"with this approach, students are encouraged to try out different words, grammar rules, and sentence structures in relevant contexts"*. Students can convey their feelings, cultural values, and personal experiences through writing lyrics, which strengthens their bond with the language. Writing songs also helps to teach language skills including pronunciation, rhythm, and rhyme. This practice in pre-service teacher training not only improves language proficiency but also gives aspiring teachers creative ways to use music to teach English in their own classrooms.

### 4. Musical story telling

A narrative song needs to be transformed into a play by the teacher. Students use their own words to expand the plot or act out the lyrics. Hotel California is one of the songs that will be featured. This approach improves speaking, listening, comprehension, and storytelling abilities. This method might work particularly well in low-resource environments where musical culture and oral tradition are strong but traditional learning resources are scarce. Teacher educators can enhance English language acquisition while building on well-known ethnic customs by implementing musical storytelling. In a classroom setup, the instructor can investigate how musical storytelling, namely through rhythm, repetition, and contextual storytelling, enhances students' comprehension of spoken English. In addition, compared to traditional training, the teacher can evaluate how new vocabulary incorporated in stories and songs is learned and maintained more successfully. Additionally, investigate whether using musical storytelling exercises boosts students' self-assurance while speaking English and promotes more imaginative language use.

### 5. Combining English lyrics with traditional Rwandan melodies

The instructor must make an effort to either develop fresh English lyrics for well-known local songs or adapt traditional Rwandan music into English. This will link language acquisition to learners' cultural identities. Translations of vocabulary, skills, and cultural comparison are among the abilities that must be acquired. An approach to language learning that is sensitive to cultural differences is provided by fusing traditional Rwandan tunes with English lyrics. This approach makes the learning process relevant and interesting for students by using well-known musical structures to introduce and reinforce English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Learners can develop language proficiency while promoting cultural pride and identity by using the local musical history. This approach encourages pre-service teachers to employ indigenous knowledge systems in the classroom and equips them to design meaningful, inclusive lessons that honor and represent the cultural backgrounds of their students.

## 6. Methods of call and response

The teacher must turn a narrative song into a drama. Students act out the lyrics or extend the story using their own dialogues. Songs to be used are like "*ndagukunda*". This method enhances listening, comprehension, speaking and narrative skills. Call-and-response patterns are frequently seen in Kinyarwanda music, especially in folk and traditional songs. In these patterns, one group or vocalist starts a melodic phrase (the call), which is subsequently repeated or responded to by another group or singer (the response). Teacher C claims that, "*This method is employed to draw in the audience and foster lively interaction amongst the artists*". This aspect of call and response is typical of most African traditional songs, meant to involve everyone in the music making process. It is the bedrock of teaching directly or indirectly language, especially when learners are playing.

## 7. Using Rwandan Traditional Melodies with English Lyrics

The teacher must endeavor to translate traditional Rwandan songs into English or write new English lyrics for familiar local tunes. This will connect learners' cultural identity with language learning. The skills to be learnt include vocabulary translations, skills and cultural comparison. The teacher must use interactive songs where the teacher sings a line and students repeat or respond. For instance, Hello, how are you? I am doing well. This method is very captivating and has its roots in African oral traditions. Students improve their speaking, listening, and fluency. Age-appropriate and culturally sensitive music selection is the teacher's responsibility during the implementation phases. It's also important to think about scaffolding activities according to skill levels. Cultural issues like peace, the environment, education, and health must be incorporated into musical activities. The songs must be utilized as warm-ups, main exercises, or even evaluation instruments.

### Integrating music education within Rwandan TTC's current courses in an efficient manner

Integrating music education into the Rwandan existing curricula of TTCs can enhance pedagogical approaches, foster creativity and improve English proficiency. This can be accomplished through the following.

#### 1. Embed Music in core pedagogical training

An organized approach to music education is outlined in the 2020 TTC curriculum framework, with a focus on composition, music theory, sol-fa exercises, and playing musical instruments. The integration of these elements throughout the three-year TTC program guarantees that music education is a core component of teacher preparation. Among other things, students studying music theory are expected to categorize key signatures, explain musical symbols, and comprehend tempos and dynamics. Students are expected to learn how to use the solfège syllables (DO, RE, MI FA SO LATI DO) with a range of note values during sol-fa exercise. Students are encouraged to play both traditional and contemporary musical instruments, including the western piano, *umuduri*, *umwirongi*, and *iningiri*. (The 2020 TTC Curriculum Framework).

#### 2. Utilise music to enhance English Language skills

For TTC students, music can be a very effective instrument for enhancing their English language skills. Use song-based vocabulary building, for example. This means introducing and reinforcing language through English songs, which will help with pronunciation and memory. Additionally, pupils' pronunciation has to be encouraged by using rhymes and rhythmic chanting

to learn English sounds and increase their phonetic awareness. The instructor must also assist the students in writing unique songs to learn language structure and in evaluating song lyrics to comprehend grammar and syntax. In order to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, more educators should try to integrate traditional Rwandan music with English lyrics.

### 3. Use ICT to support Music Education

Information and communication technology (ICT) integration has the potential to improve music education. For classes on music theory, composition, and performance, the instructor can make use of internet resources and tools. This fits in nicely with distance learning, which uses online music education modules to reach more people, particularly in far-flung places. Teacher E claims that, *“using multimedia tools to produce dynamic and captivating music courses is another way to encourage the usage of interactive tools”*. ICT is critical in reinforcing some English language in sync with music education. The use of videos, music software writing enhances the development of English skills because in all these activities, the element of composing using correct spellings, for example is fundamental.

### 4. Professional Development for Educators.

To successfully integrate music into curricula, the government must provide some training for teachers, such as workshops and seminars on music education and how it fits into teaching practices; facilitate collaborative teaching and learning so that teachers can share resources and best practices; and work with the responsible ministry to update the curriculum on a regular basis to incorporate modern music education methods and resources. These efforts have been funded by UNICEF and IEE with the goal of strengthening the capacities of TTC stakeholders (IEE Rwanda).

### 5. Community and cultural engagement

In order to enhance music instruction, TTC teachers must interact with the community and incorporate cultural components. In order to maintain cultural heritage, this involves introducing Rwandan traditional music, known as *Gakondo*, into the curricula (Gasemba, 2015). In addition, students must participate in community performances, whereby local communities host musical events and performances to highlight students' abilities and promote community service. Programs for cultural exchange also need to be pushed. This exchange program helps students expand their musical horizons by facilitating exchanges with other institutions.

### Conclusion

Theory In conclusion, using music, especially songs, to improve English competence in Rwandan TTCs is both beneficial and dualistic. When combined with game songs and a variety of rhythmic patterns and lyrical storytelling, music engages students in a way that traditional teaching approaches typically fall short of. As observed in local community mobilization efforts, this arrangement is crucial. Furthermore, new studies have demonstrated the particular impact that music has on students. Language development skills are acquired through musical encounters that incorporate foreign languages. This greatly improves students' language and cognitive skills. Incorporating musical activities into English literacy programs helps students enhance their language skills and gets them ready for a multicultural setting. Importantly, the inclusion of music

and other topics in the curriculum opens the door for integrative methods that can alter the way we teach different forms of reading in the modern classroom.

Music educators should develop structured initiatives that use music competitions as a vehicle for strengthening English instruction, particularly by designing activities that intentionally target vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency within performance tasks. The responsible ministry should support this effort by organizing periodic teacher workshops that equip English and music teachers with practical strategies for integrating music into the teaching of English competence. In addition, TTCs should institutionalize regular music contests to sustain motivation and provide repeated opportunities for students to practice English in meaningful, low-anxiety contexts. To ensure pedagogical alignment, English instructors and music teachers should collaborate closely to decide which English elements (e.g., targeted vocabulary sets, grammar patterns, pronunciation features, and classroom discourse routines) should be embedded in songwriting tasks and performance rubrics.

Future research could examine the long-term effects of teaching English through music on pre-service teachers and their future learners by tracking outcomes across several years to understand classroom transfer, fluency development, and retention. Comparative studies across multiple teacher training institutions within Rwanda and potentially in neighboring countries—could also help clarify how institutional culture and geographic conditions shape the effectiveness of music integration. Although this study focused on English, further studies should investigate how music might be incorporated into other subjects (e.g., science or mathematics) and how such cross-disciplinary approaches influence overall teacher preparation. Given resource constraints in many settings, research should also explore how mobile applications and digital music tools can strengthen music-based pedagogy, with particular attention to usability and accessibility. Finally, after pre-service teachers enter the workforce, studies could assess how music-integrated English instruction influences pupil outcomes in primary or secondary classrooms, using approaches such as case studies and systematic classroom observations.

#### **List of abbreviations**

Not applicable

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Not applicable

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#### ***Ethics approval and consent to participate***

Not applicable

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Not applicable

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Not applicable

**Competing interests**

All authors declare that there are no relevant conflicts of interest related to this research.

**Author contributions**

OG responsible for the conception and design of the study, OG solo collection data, manuscript writing, analysis, and interpretation. Author also reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript

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