

ENHANCING KISWAHILI ORAL PROFICIENCY THROUGH
DEBATING TECHNIQUES IN THE DIGITAL ERA: STRENGTHENING
TEACHING AND LEARNING COMPETENCE AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RUSIZI DISTRICT, RWANDA

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Abstract

This paper examines the enhancement of Kiswahili oral proficiency through digital debating techniques, focusing on strengthening teaching and learning competence among secondary school students in Rusizi District, Rwanda. Grounded in Scudder's (1980) Communication Theory, which conceptualizes communication as interactive, reciprocal, and dynamic, the study investigates the integration of digital tools in debating pedagogy and their effects on students' oral language skills. A mixed-methods design was employed, involving a purposive and stratified sample of 95 participants: 70 students, 18 Kiswahili teachers, and 7 educational administrators. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings reveal limited but promising use of digital debating techniques, including virtual debates (22.9-28.6% active student participation) and online role-plays, with 87.6% of students acknowledging their value in improving speaking skills. Students' Kiswahili oral proficiency was generally low, especially in confidence, pronunciation, and sentence construction, though participation in oral activities was moderate. Pearson correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between digital debating techniques and oral proficiency ($r = 0.839$, $p < 0.01$), and regression analysis confirmed that these techniques significantly predicted oral skill improvement ($\beta = 0.907$, $p = 0.000$), explaining 70.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.703$). Administrators reported that digital debating enhances students' confidence, fluency, and ability to organize ideas. The study underscores the need for systematic integration of digital debating in Kiswahili instruction, accompanied by teacher training and resource provision, to foster interactive learning, improve oral communication skills, and equip learners for 21st-century communication demands.

Keywords: Digital Debating Techniques, Kiswahili Oral Proficiency, Teaching and Learning Competence, Communicative Skills

In this era, rapid advancements in science and technology have significantly transformed human interaction, education and the labour market. The 21st-century workplace is increasingly competitive, demanding employees with a diverse range of employability skills. Among these, oral communication skills are at the heart of effective workplace performance due to their centrality in negotiation, collaboration, and information exchange (Idahemuka & Mlaga, 2025). In East Africa, where Kiswahili holds official language status, graduates are expected to demonstrate strong Kiswahili proficiency to thrive in the labour market. However, Standard Digital (2023) reports that across the region including Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Tanzania many graduates lack adequate

oral proficiency in Kiswahili, limiting their employability and ability to participate effectively in social, economic and professional discourse.

In Rwanda, the situation is particularly severe. Tabaro (2016) observed that graduates in Rwanda exhibit lower Kiswahili oral proficiency compared to peers from other East African countries, undermining their competitiveness in regional integration efforts. Niyomugabo (2016) found that students in Rwandan secondary schools lack oral proficiency skills primarily due to insufficient opportunities for spoken practice in formal and informal settings. Sebazungu and Ikuramutse (2023) further identified psychological and environmental barriers such as shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and minimal exposure to native Kiswahili speakers as major contributors to poor oral proficiency. This deficiency in Kiswahili oral proficiency not only limits students' academic success but also hinders their participation in socio-economic activities, regional communication and intercultural exchanges (Idahemuka & Mlaga, 2025).

These challenges underscore the urgent need to explore and adopt effective strategies to improve Kiswahili oral proficiency, particularly in the context of the digital era. Existing research indicates that debating techniques can foster oral proficiency by creating interactive, learner-centred environments that encourage critical thinking, quick responses, and sustained verbal engagement (Yumelking, Eni, & Gani, 2020; Arung, 2016).

Digital debating techniques (virtual debates, online role-plays and moderated discussion forums) extend these benefits by leveraging technology to provide greater access, flexibility and interactivity in language practice. These methods align with contemporary communicative competence models that emphasise authentic interaction and real-time feedback (Scudder, 1980).

However, gaps remain in the literature. While Tabaro (2016), Niyomugabo (2016) and Sebazungu and Ikuramutse (2023) identified the causes of poor Kiswahili oral proficiency in Rwanda, they did not propose concrete strategies for enhancing it, particularly in technology-integrated contexts. Similarly, although Arung (2016) and Yumelking et al. (2020) demonstrated that debating and digital debating techniques can enhance oral proficiency, their studies focused exclusively on English language learning. This leaves a critical gap regarding the application of these strategies to Kiswahili in secondary school contexts. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the enhancement of Kiswahili oral proficiency through debating techniques in the digital era, with a focus on strengthening teaching and learning competence among secondary school students in Rusizi District, Rwanda.

Problem Statement

Despite Kiswahili's status as an official language in East Africa and its growing importance in the regional labour market, many secondary school graduates in the region, including Rwanda, lack adequate oral proficiency, which limits their competitiveness and communicative effectiveness. In Rwanda, this challenge is

particularly pronounced, with studies reporting that graduates perform below their East African counterparts in spoken Kiswahili due to limited practice opportunities, psychological barriers such as shyness and anxiety, lack of confidence, and minimal exposure to proficient speakers (Tabaro, 2016; Niyumugabo, 2016; Sebazungu & Ikuramutse, 2023). While these causes are well-documented, existing research has not adequately addressed practical, technology-driven strategies to improve oral proficiency in Kiswahili. Moreover, although evidence from English language studies suggests that debating and digital debating techniques can significantly enhance oral skills (Arung, 2016; Yumelking, Eni, & Gani, 2020), there is a lack of research applying these approaches to Kiswahili in Rwandan secondary schools. This gap creates a pressing need to investigate how debating techniques, integrated with digital tools, can be leveraged to strengthen Kiswahili oral proficiency and overall teaching and learning competence in the digital era.

Objective of the Study

General Objective: The general objective of this paper is to examine how debating techniques supported by digital tools can improve Kiswahili oral proficiency among secondary school students in Rusizi District, Rwanda.

Specific Objectives: To identify the level of using digital debating techniques in selected secondary schools in Rusizi District; To assess students' Kiswahili oral proficiency in selected secondary schools in Rusizi District; To analyze the effects of digital debating techniques on students' Kiswahili oral proficiency in selected secondary schools in Rusizi District

Theoretical Framework

This paper was guided by Scudder's (1980) Communication Theory, which views communication as a continuous, dynamic, and reciprocal process involving the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions between individuals. A central pillar of the theory is its emphasis on interaction, where meaning is co-constructed through active participation and feedback between the sender and receiver. This theoretical perspective guided the study by shaping the design of digital debating activities that required real-time exchanges, critical thinking, and responsive feedback among participants. It also informed the interpretation of findings by providing a lens to explain how structured, technology-assisted debates created authentic communicative contexts that improved students' Kiswahili oral proficiency and strengthened teaching and learning competence among secondary school students in Rusizi District, Rwanda.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Rusizi District, Rwanda, a region where Kiswahili is taught as part of the secondary school curriculum. The area was selected due to its representative mix of urban and semi-urban schools, providing diverse contexts for examining the integration of digital debating techniques in enhancing oral proficiency. A mixed-methods research design was employed to

capture both quantitative and qualitative data. The population of the study was 268 participants, including 233 secondary school students, 28 Kiswahili teachers, and 7 educational administrators in Rusizi District. These groups were considered relevant because of their direct involvement in teaching, learning, and managing the implementation of Kiswahili instruction. Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used to select participants. A total of 95 participants were included: 70 students, 18 Kiswahili teachers and 7 educational administrators. The sample size was determined based on Slovin’s formula. Stratification ensured representation across different schools and teaching levels within the district. Data were collected using questionnaires for students and teachers, while semi-structured interviews were used for administrators. This approach enabled the study to gather numerical data on effects of debating techniques on Kiswahili oral proficiency in selected secondary. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 30), including descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis to examine relationships and predictive effects. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, perceptions, and experiences related to digital debating techniques and their impact on Kiswahili oral proficiency in selected schools.

Findings

The Level of Using Digital Debating Techniques in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: The following table presents students’ responses regarding the extent to which digital debating techniques are used in their Kiswahili lessons.

Table 1 : Students’ Perspectives on the Level of Using Digital Debating Techniques in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std
	Freq	%										
My Kiswahili teachers regularly use digital debating techniques (e.g., virtual debates, online role-plays) during lessons.	12	17.1	28	40.0	8	11.4	16	22.9	6	8.6	2.65	1.24
I actively participate in digital debates organized in my Kiswahili class.	8	11.4	32	45.7	6	8.6	20	28.6	4	5.7	2.71	1.16
The school provides sufficient digital tools and resources to support debating activities.	12	17.1	24	34.3	8	11.4	18	25.7	8	11.4	2.80	1.16
Digital debating techniques are helpful in improving my speaking and communication skills in Kiswahili.	2	2.9	2	1.4	1	1.4	60	80.5	5	7.1	3.91	0.67

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

The results in Table 1 show that a majority of students disagreed (57.1%) that their Kiswahili teachers regularly use digital debating techniques, while only 31.5% agreed. Similarly, 57.1% disagreed that they actively participate in digital debates, compared to 34.3% who agreed. Regarding the availability of resources, 51.4% disagreed that the school provides sufficient digital tools, whereas 37.1% agreed.

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However, a large proportion (87.6%) agreed that digital debating techniques are helpful in improving speaking and communication skills in Kiswahili, with only 4.3% disagreeing. These findings imply that while students recognize the potential benefits of digital debating, its actual integration into lessons and access to resources remain limited.

To complement students' views, teachers were also asked to indicate their perspectives on the extent to which digital debating techniques are used in Kiswahili teaching. The following table presents a summary of their responses.

Table 2 : Teachers' Perspectives on the Level of Using Digital Debating Techniques in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std
	Freq	%										
I regularly use digital debating techniques (e.g., virtual debates, online role-plays) in my Kiswahili lessons.	2	11.1	7	38.9	4	22.2	4	22.2	1	5.5	2.72	1.12
My students actively participate in digital debates during Kiswahili lessons.	2	11.1	9	50.0	1	5.6	4	22.2	2	11.1	2.72	1.27
The school provides adequate digital tools and resources to support debating activities.	4	22.2	7	38.9	2	11.1	3	16.7	2	11.1	2.55	1.33
Digital debating techniques help improve students' Kiswahili speaking and communication skills.	2	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	16	88.9	0	0.0	3.66	0.97

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

The results in Table 2 show that a majority of teachers disagreed (50.0%) that they regularly use digital debating techniques in Kiswahili lessons, while only 27.7% agreed. Similarly, 61.1% disagreed that students actively participate in digital debates, compared to 33.3% who agreed. Regarding the availability of resources, 61.1% disagreed that the school provides sufficient digital tools to support debating activities, whereas 27.8% agreed.

However, a large proportion (88.9%) agreed that digital debating techniques help improve students' Kiswahili speaking and communication skills, with only 11.1% disagreeing. These findings imply that while teachers recognize the potential benefits of digital debating, its actual use in lessons and the availability of necessary resources remain limited.

Administrators' Perspective on Students' Perspectives on the Level of Using Digital Debating Techniques in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District Interviews were conducted with head teachers and deans of studies to explore the use of digital debating techniques in Kiswahili lessons. One head Teacher said:

"Few teachers use digital debates due to limited devices and internet access, so student participation remains low". (Primary Data, 2025)

Limited infrastructure restricts the integration of digital debating, matching students' and teachers' reports. In addition, one Dean of the study said:

"Some teachers use online role-plays occasionally, but lack of training affects quality and frequency". (Primary Data, 2025)

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Teacher capacity is a key factor in implementing digital debating effectively. These findings suggest that enhancing Kiswahili oral proficiency requires both resources and teacher training.

Students’ Kiswahili Oral proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: The following table presents students’ perspectives on their Kiswahili oral proficiency in selected secondary schools in Rusizi District.

Table 3 : Students’ Perspectives on Their’ Kiswahili Oral proficiencyin Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
I can confidently express my ideas in Kiswahili during class discussions.	16	22.9	36	51.4	4	5.7	8	11.4	6	8.6	2.31	1.19
I can pronounce Kiswahili words correctly and clearly when speaking.	12	17.1	32	45.7	8	11.4	12	17.1	6	8.6	2.54	1.21
I can construct meaningful sentences and organize my thoughts effectively in Kiswahili.	34	48.6	24	34.5	2	2.9	6	8.6	4	5.7	1.88	1.17
I actively participate in Kiswahili oral activities, such as debates, role-plays, and presentations.	14	20.0	13	18.6	4	5.7	33	47.1	6	8.6	3.05	1.35

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

The results in Table 3 show that most students have low Kiswahili oral proficiency. For example, 74.3% disagreed that they can confidently express ideas, and 83.1% disagreed that they can construct meaningful sentences. However, 55.7% reported actively participating in oral activities like debates and role-plays.

The following table presents teachers’ perspectives on students’ Kiswahili oral proficiency in selected secondary schools in Rusizi District.

Table 4 : Teachers’ Perspectives Students’ Kiswahili Oral proficiencyin Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std
	Freq	%										
My students confidently express their ideas in Kiswahili during class discussions.	4	22.2	10	55.6	1	5.6	2	11.1	1	5.6	2.22	1.11
My students pronounce Kiswahili words correctly and clearly when speaking.	3	16.7	9	50.0	4	22.2	0	0.0	4	22.2	2.61	1.33
My students can construct meaningful sentences and organize their thoughts effectively in Kiswahili.	8	44.4	7	38.9	0	0.05	1	5.6	2	11.1	2.00	1.32
My students actively participate in Kiswahili oral activities, such as debates, role-plays, and presentations.	6	33.3	0	0.0	1	5.6	8	44.4	3	16.7	3.11	1.60

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

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The results in Table 4 show that most teachers perceive students' Kiswahili oral proficiency as low. Large proportions disagreed that students confidently express ideas (77.8%) or construct meaningful sentences (83.3%). Pronunciation was also weak, with 66.7% disagreeing. Participation in oral activities was better, with 61.1% agreeing.

Administrators' Perspective on Students' Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: After gathering data from students and teachers, the researcher conducted interviews with head teachers and deans of studies purposively selected from secondary schools in Rusizi District. The interviews focused on the question: "*How would you describe students' Kiswahili oral proficiency in your school?*" The following extracts summarize the administrators' perspectives: Administrator 1 said:

"Many of our students struggle to express themselves clearly in Kiswahili during class discussions and presentations. Even when they know the content, they hesitate to speak due to lack of confidence." (Primary Data, 2025)

This indicates that students' oral proficiency is low, primarily due to psychological barriers, which aligns with the Communication Theory (Scudder, 1980) emphasizing the role of interaction and confidence in effective communication. Administrator 2: said

"While some students participate in oral activities, most are reluctant and require encouragement. Digital tools could help, but they are not widely used in our schools." (Primary Data, 2025)

This suggests limited exposure to digital debating and speaking opportunities, reinforcing the need for structured interactive platforms as advocated by the Communication Theory. The administrators' insights confirm that students' Kiswahili oral proficiency is limited, with confidence and interaction being key constraints.

Effects of Digital Debating Techniques on Students' Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: To examine the relationship between the use of digital debating techniques and students' Kiswahili oral proficiency, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 : Correlation Analysis between Digital Debating Techniques on Students' Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District

		Digital Debating Techniques	Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Kiswahili
Digital Debating Techniques	Pearson Correlation	1	.839**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	88	88
Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Kiswahili	Pearson Correlation	.839**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	88	88

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

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

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Table 5 shows a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.839$, $p < 0.01$) between digital debating techniques and students' Kiswahili oral proficiency, indicating that increased use of digital debates significantly improves speaking skills.

Regression Analysis between Digital Debating Techniques on Students' Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: This section presents the results of the regression analysis, including the model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficients, to examine the extent to which digital debating techniques predict students' Kiswahili oral proficiency in selected secondary schools in Rusizi District.

Table 6 : Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.839a	.703	.700	.72305

a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Debating Techniques .

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

Table 6 shows a strong positive relationship ($R = 0.839$) between digital debating techniques and students' Kiswahili oral proficiency. About 70.3% of the variation in oral proficiency is explained by these techniques ($R^2 = 0.703$), indicating a substantial predictive effect.

Table 7 : ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	106.494	1	106.494	203.699	.000b
	Residual	44.961	86	.523		
	Total	151.455	87			

a. Dependent Variable: Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Kiswahili

b. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Debating Techniques .

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

Table 7 shows that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 203.699$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that digital debating techniques reliably predict students' Kiswahili oral proficiency.

Table 8 : Regression Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.351	.186		1.881	.063
	Digital Debating Techniques	.907	.064	.839	14.272	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Kiswahili

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

Table 9 : Regression Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.351	.186		1.881	.063
	Digital Debating Techniques	.907	.064	.839	14.272	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Kiswahili

Source: (Primary Data: 2025)

Administrators' Views on Effects of Digital Debating Techniques on Students' Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: All

the administrators (100%) indicated that digital debating techniques positively influence students' Kiswahili oral proficiency by enhancing their confidence, fluency, and ability to organize ideas during class discussions. They emphasized that when these techniques are consistently applied, students demonstrate greater participation and clearer expression in Kiswahili.

From the perspective of Scudder's (1980) Communication Theory, this outcome reflects the importance of interactive, reciprocal communication where feedback and engagement co-construct meaning, leading to improved oral skills. The implication is that schools need to invest in digital tools and provide targeted teacher training to fully leverage the benefits of digital debating techniques.

Discussion

The Level of Using Digital Debating Techniques in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: The findings from students, teachers, and administrators collectively point to a limited but promising integration of digital debating techniques in Kiswahili language instruction. Students generally expressed awareness of the value of such techniques in enhancing oral proficiency, yet reported that they are rarely implemented in practice. Teachers acknowledged the pedagogical potential of digital debates but indicated constraints related to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training, and limited time within the curriculum. Administrators, while unanimously supportive of the idea, also highlighted budgetary and logistical challenges that hinder consistent application.

This convergence of perspectives suggests that while the concept of digital debating is positively received by all stakeholders, the level of actual use remains low due to systemic barriers. From a pedagogical standpoint, this underutilization is a missed opportunity, as debate-based learning particularly when supported by digital tools offers authentic, interactive, and student-centered platforms for practicing Kiswahili speaking skills. The situation reflects the classic "innovation lag" in educational technology adoption, where awareness and acceptance outpace operational implementation.

The findings align with Scudder's (1980) Communication Theory, which emphasizes interaction, feedback, and active participation as core elements of effective communication learning. Digital debates inherently foster these elements by requiring learners to articulate, respond, and refine their ideas in real time. Consistent with Yumelking, Eni, and Gani (2020: pp. 105–107), the results imply that schools in Rusizi District need to prioritize investments in digital resources and teacher training to bridge the gap between potential and practice. In doing so, the integration of digital debating techniques could move from being an underused concept to a routine component of Kiswahili oral skills development.

Students' Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: The findings from students, teachers, and administrators present a consistent picture of generally low Kiswahili oral proficiency among learners in

the district. While there are signs of active participation in some oral activities such as debates, role-plays, and presentations, this engagement has not translated into strong expressive, pronunciation, or sentence-construction skills. Both students and teachers reported difficulties in confidently expressing ideas and organizing thoughts in Kiswahili, with administrators adding that low confidence is a major barrier, even among students who have adequate content knowledge. This combination of skill gaps and psychological factors suggests that the oral proficiency challenge is multifaceted, involving not just linguistic competence but also affective and contextual dimensions.

From a communicative learning perspective, these limitations point to insufficient opportunities for sustained, interactive, and reciprocal exchanges in Kiswahili. Scudder's (1980) Communication Theory highlights that effective communication skills are developed through active interaction, feedback, and meaningful participation.

In the observed context, although oral tasks exist, they are not frequent or structured enough to systematically build confidence and fluency. The reluctance of students to speak up, as highlighted by administrators, reinforces the importance of creating safe, supportive, and interactive learning spaces where learners can take risks without fear of judgment.

The results align with previous studies (Sebazungu & Ikuramutse, 2023; Tabaro, 2016) which found that while classroom oral activities can be beneficial, their impact is significantly limited when they are infrequent, lack structure, or fail to integrate modern tools that increase student engagement. This underscores the potential of digital debating techniques, which can provide structured, engaging, and interactive platforms for oral practice. By integrating such techniques with targeted teacher training and adequate resources, schools could address both the skill and confidence deficits identified in this study, ultimately improving students' Kiswahili oral proficiency.

Effects of Digital Debating Techniques on Students' Kiswahili Oral Proficiency in Selected Secondary Schools in Rusizi District: The findings indicate that digital debating techniques have a substantial positive influence on students' Kiswahili oral proficiency. The correlation results revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.839$, $p < 0.01$), showing that increased use of these techniques is associated with higher speaking competence. Regression analysis further demonstrated that 70.3% of the variance in oral proficiency can be explained by the application of digital debating techniques, with the model achieving high statistical significance ($F = 203.699$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that digital debating is not only related to but also a strong predictor of oral communication skills in Kiswahili.

Administrators unanimously reported that digital debating enhances students' confidence, fluency, and ability to organize ideas, leading to more active participation and clearer expression during class discussions. From the

perspective of Scudder's (1980) Communication Theory, these outcomes reflect the value of interactive and reciprocal communication in developing language competence. The results align with prior studies (Yumelking, Eni, & Gani, 2020), which emphasize the effectiveness of structured, interactive activities in improving language skills. The implication is that schools should prioritize investment in digital tools and provide targeted teacher training to maximize the benefits of digital debating techniques for Kiswahili oral proficiency.

Conclusion

The first objective sought to determine the level of use of digital debating techniques in selected secondary schools in Rusizi District. The study established that although students, teachers, and administrators recognize the potential value of these techniques for improving Kiswahili oral skills, their actual implementation remains limited. This gap is largely attributed to systemic challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and time constraints in the curriculum. The findings point to an "innovation lag" in the adoption of educational technologies, where acceptance and awareness outpace operational integration, thus limiting the potential benefits of digital debates in the classroom.

The second objective examined the current state of students' Kiswahili oral proficiency. The results revealed generally low levels of expressive ability, pronunciation accuracy, and sentence construction skills among learners, despite some participation in oral activities. Low confidence emerged as a key barrier, with students often reluctant to contribute in class even when they possess relevant knowledge. This indicates that oral proficiency development requires both linguistic and affective support, highlighting the importance of creating structured, interactive, and psychologically safe learning environments that encourage risk-taking and active participation.

The third objective assessed the effects of digital debating techniques on Kiswahili oral proficiency. The study found a strong and statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.839$, $p < 0.01$), with regression analysis showing that these techniques explain over 70% of the variance in oral proficiency. Administrators unanimously confirmed that digital debating boosts students' confidence, fluency, and organizational skills in oral communication. Anchored in Scudder's (1980) Communication Theory, these results affirm that interactive, feedback-driven learning activities can substantially enhance language skills. The implication is clear: investing in digital tools and targeted teacher training could transform digital debating from an underused innovation into a powerful, routine strategy for advancing Kiswahili oral proficiency. The study recommends broader integration of digital debating in Kiswahili lessons, supported by teacher training and adequate digital resources, to boost students' communication skills for the 21st century.

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