

French Language education and the Future of Bilingualism in Cameroon: Challenges, Opportunities and Policy Implications

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Abstract: This articles outlines the findings from a study on French Language education in the Anglophone regions of the North-West and South-West impacts the future of bilingualism in Cameroon, the challenges if faces, opportunities and policy implications. Cameroon's policy of bilingual education which accords equal status to English and French was adopted to promote national unity, social cohesion, and equal opportunities for all citizens. Despite Cameroon's commitment to official bilingualism is meant to be a bedrock of national unity, it seems to be feeling the strain as French language education in the Anglophone secondary sub-system continues to face persistent challenges that undermine the achievement of these national objectives. This study digs into why there is low French enrolment in high schools, declining learner motivation, the effects of the Anglophone crisis, limited exposure to French, affects bilingual competence at the university level and the long term sustainability of bilingualism in Cameroon. Our research sampled 53 students spread across eight different schools. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach involving observation, unstructured interviews and questionnaires. Data was collected, analyzed and interpreted to determine how French is taught/learned and highlights opportunities such as curriculum reform, continuous teaching development, greater integration of educational technologies. The findings reveal that there is very little or no motivation as well as low interest on the part of the learners, ineffective teaching methods, insufficient teachers, inadequate resources, the fact that there is no elimination mark at the GCE Ordinary level, and socio-political factors significantly hinder French language acquisition. It is therefore recommended that students should be motivated to learn French, an elimination mark should be implemented at the GCE Ordinary level. These ideas aim to shore up bilingual education and secure Cameroon's commitment to speaking two languages. The study concludes that these challenges have far-reaching implications for higher education bilingualism and national cohesion.

Keywords: French Language education, Official bilingualism, Language policy, Anglophone secondary schools, bilingual education, national cohesion, Bilingualism.

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Introduction

Language plays a fundamental role in national identity, social integration, and educational development. It is the wish of the Cameroon government that every Cameroonian speaks the two official languages (English and French). These official languages are Franco-British heritage in the country since the First World War (Echu 1999). The nation strives towards official bilingualism, but very few Cameroonians speak both languages (Fabo & Russel 2025). The teaching/learning of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) to English Speaking Cameroonians have always been problematic because students fail to see its relevance to their immediate and future needs, except for examination purposes (Echu & Ebongue 2012). Cameroon's official bilingualism, born from the coexistence of English and French, is meant to stitch the nation together and give everyone a fair shot. But in reality, it is not the case, especially when we look at the Anglophone education system. French often feels like a tough nut to crack for many students, or perhaps just less relevant to their lives. It is no surprise, then, that fewer high school learners are really digging into French seriously. This trend directly affects university programs built on bilingualism and shrinks the number of truly bilingual citizens being produced.

Since many students continue to sail through different educational career levels with little or no proficiency in both French and English, the tendency is to pay little attention to the subject (Guerrero, Mejías, Collazos, Pino & Ochoa, 2003). This has made students always escape from attending these French classes, pay very little attention to the subject in a classroom setting which most often leads to poor performance at the GCE examinations. (Bateman 2006). Approaches to the teaching of French seem to perpetuate this perception. Recent trends, like the Higher Educational Opportunities, Better Access to Global Jobs, and Growth in Digital Economy however, strongly indicate that proficiency in French and English is linked to development (Elis 2008). The use of French and English since independence in Cameroon has resulted to what is known as official bilingualism in almost all walks of life, education being one of them. Scholars have long highlighted the complexity of language policy in multilingual African states. According to Barnes (2008), language policies in postcolonial Africa often face challenges due to sociopolitical realities that differ from policy expectations. In the Cameroonian context, Takam and Fasse (2022) argue that bilingualism requires not only political will but also effective educational structures to ensure its success. Similarly, Anchimbe (2006) notes that language practices in Cameroon often reflect functional inequalities rather than true bilingual balance. Within the Anglophone subsystem of education, French is taught as a second language (LO2). However, its status is often weakened by negative learner attitudes, learner demotivation, limited exposure, and structural constraints

(Fabo & Russel 2025). As a result, many students complete secondary education with minimal proficiency in French. This situation creates a disconnection between secondary and higher education, where bilingual competence is increasingly required (Genesee 1987). Furthermore, theories of second language acquisition emphasize the importance of motivation and meaningful interaction. Robert Gardner (1985) argues that motivation plays a central role in language learning success, while William Littlewood (1981) stresses the importance of communicative approaches in developing real language competence. The limited application of these principles in many Cameroonian classrooms raises concerns about the effectiveness of French language instruction.

Motivation can greatly impact students, as such, impacting positively a students' development and learning experiences (Baker 2021). Students nowadays have failed to see the importance of putting much interest in learning this language as they term the language a foreign language and therefore put little or no interest in learning the latter (Brown 2007). This is must especially the case of French for English-speaking students. Most often when teachers of French are about to enter into the classroom to teach, students quickly rush out of the classroom because they are not interested in learning the language (Biggs & Tang 2011). As such, this study seeks to examine how French is taught and learned in Anglophone high schools, to identify the challenges affecting the teaching and learning of French, to analyze the implications of low French enrollment for university bilingual programs and to propose strategies that can improve French language acquisition and sustain bilingualism. The present study therefore seeks to bridge the gap between policy and practice by examining how French is taught and learned in Anglophone high schools and how this affects the broader goal of bilingualism in Cameroon.

Review of Related Literature

mThe concept of bilingualism and language policy

Bilingualism has been widely studied as both a linguistic and socio-political phenomenon. According to Baker (2001), bilingualism is said to be the ability of individuals or communities to use two languages effectively in different contexts. In the Cameroonian context, bilingualism is not merely an individual competence but a state policy aimed at fostering national unity. Kouega, (2007) remarks that while both Cameroon and Canada are bilingual countries, the type of bilingualism is radically different. Looking at how bilingualism is practiced in the two countries, it is clear that it is not necessarily defined in terms of citizens who speak the two official languages. Kouega, (2018) goes ahead to point out that according to Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Constitution of 1996, French and English are the two official languages of the country. The official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be

English and French, both languages having the same status. The State shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavour to protect and promote national languages. Kouega, (2005) states that it is important to note that both languages have “the same status” and that “the State shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country” while at the same time working “to protect and promote national languages”. It is now a question of ascertaining how these three provisions in the Constitution have been applied, because although the Constitution refers to the promotion of bilingualism, it is silent about its practice and implementation. Nguh (2019) argues that official bilingualism in Cameroon is increasingly endangered due to structural, political and educational challenges. He says it is important to note that in the context of Cameroon it is the State that is to be bilingual, not individuals.

Early implementation of bilingual education in Cameroon during the 1960s

Njwe (2015) outlined the fact that at the secondary level, the institution of bilingual education can be traced as far back as 1963 when the Cameroon government opened a Bilingual Grammar School at Man O War Bay in the then West Cameroon. This school was later transferred to Buea and is today known as Bilingual Grammar School Molyko, Buea. The uniqueness of bilingual education as practiced in this institution lies in the fact that, for a long time, both Anglophones and Francophones studied side by side in the same classroom, with some courses being taught in English and others in French. Nazan (2016) equally notes that this practice obtained during the first three years of secondary education, from the fourth year onwards (Form IV for Anglophones and Troisième for Francophones), the students were free to choose the system of their choice so as to prepare adequately for the end of the first cycle examinations (GCE Ordinary Level for Anglophones and BEPC for Francophones). Kuchah (2016) notes that notwithstanding, a good number of candidates, irrespective of their linguistic background, succeeded in both the GCE Ordinary Level and BEPC examinations. Furthermore, in this institution, the teaching of the LO2 was given utmost priority. This probably explains why (Ndi 2025) says that for a long time, this institution produced some of the best bilinguals in the country. This policy was later suspended, can we say that the problem faced above on low enrollment of students in high schools, low interest in French be related to the fact that this policy was abolished? The reason thus for this piece of work.

Teaching and Learning of French in Anglophone school

As mentioned by Kindzeka (2020), in the field of education, there is an English system and a French system, and both are unilingual. All Cameroonians are guaranteed

instruction in French or English depending on their region of residence, from primary to the end of secondary school. Instruction in “the other language” is mandatory in the sixth year of primary school. Nforbi, (2021) confirms that the Cameroonian State provides the bulk of formal education in the country: 72% of the student population attends a government school. The Cameroonian government is making efforts to promote bilingualism in education. In order to do so, as stated by Nforbi (2013), it has established a number of bilingual high schools, particularly in the Central and Littoral regions. Kindzeka (2020), confirms that in the cities of Douala and Yaounde, the aim of bilingual schools is to produce bilingual individuals as well as encouraging students to speak French and English. However, Norton (2013) states that looking at the situation in the English speaking regions where the majority of students are Anglophones, they are often afraid to speak French, a language they use only in the classroom and in formal situations. This is confirmed by Richards & Rodgers (2014) who say that as soon as they leave the classroom, even in the school hallways, they switch to English, Pidgin English or the mother-tongue. Although the various actions described above are commendable, the results are rather modest. Apart from a few bilingual schools, Kindzeka (2020), goes further to say that there is still a barrier between the two linguistic communities. A person is either English-speaking or French-speaking, but rarely both. Binwe (2023/2024) demonstrates that code-mixing between English and French is common among learners and can serve as a transitional strategy toward bilingual competences.

The multi-lingual nature of Cameroon

Nforbi (2015) mentions that, most people in the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest provinces speak Cameroonian Pidgin English, also called Kamtok, as a lingua franca. Fulfulde serves the same function in the north, and Ewondo in much of the Center, South, and East provinces. Camfranglais (or Frananglais) is a relatively new pidgin communication form emerging in urban areas and other locations where Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians meet and interact. Popular singers have used the hybrid language and added to its popularity. Simo Bobda (2001) reveals that the nation strives toward bilingualism, but in reality very few (11.6%) Cameroonians are literate in both French and English, and 28.8% are literate in neither. Tabi-Manga (2000) says that the government has established several bilingual schools in an effort to teach both languages more evenly; however, in reality, Spolsky (2004) argues that most of these schools separate the anglophone and francophone sections and therefore do not provide a true bilingual experience.

The impact of the mother-tongue on the acquisition of a third language

Nforbi, (2019) has equally carried out enormous research on the role the mother-tongue literacy plays in the acquisition of the third language. The main question which they address is whether the learning of a third language is enhanced through literacy in one's first language. To some, it may seem self-evident that being literate in one's mother tongue will positively impact on the development of literacy skills in another language. However, Takam & Fasse (2020) argue that educational practices in many parts of the world, including many parts of Canada, show no hint of accepting such a statement as self-evident. Indeed, Takam & Fasse (2023) say the examination of the beliefs of many parents, teachers, educational administrators and policy makers leads one to the contrary conclusion: that learning a second or third language is impeded by knowledge and use of the first language. Nforbi, (2019) notes that as evidence for this belief, the following has to be considered: that many immigrant parents in Canada believe that by speaking or reading to their children in their own language, they will seriously slow down their child's acquisition of English; that initial education in a child's first language (be it Tagalog, Urdu, Arabic, Italian, etc.) as cited by the British Council (20224) it is seen as taking time away from the important task of learning a second language that of the school and society; that it is common practice for teachers to recommend to immigrant parents of children who are having trouble in school to use more English with their children (UNESCO 2020). Such practices as noted by Kouega (2005) belie the possibility of positive transfer from the first language to another one. Similarly, many immigrant parents believe that the learning of a third language (e.g. French) should be deferred until the second (majority) language, in this case English, has been firmly established. Studies we have recently completed which involved grade 8 children who had been enrolled in an English/French bilingual program since grade 5 (Lambert 1972). Some of the students in the program acquired a Heritage Language (HL) in the home before they began school, and some of those students acquired literacy skills in their HL either at home or in Heritage Language Program (HLP) at school (Nazan 2016). All students in the program were literate in English before beginning the bilingual program. Our study examines their learning of French with respect to (1) their literacy knowledge and use of an HL relative to those students who do not have an HL, and (2) the type of HL spoken (Romance versus non-Romance). Furthermore, Nforbi, (2021) notes that as it is possible that our observed effects on third language learning may be a consequence of socio-economic variables related to HL proficiency rather than HL literacy per se, we examine these relationships and conclude that literacy in the HL accounts for enhanced performance in third language learning. As pointed out by

Nforbi and Siewoue (2020), Bilingual Education for Heritage Language Children reveals that some of the most compelling evidence for the positive impact that mother tongue literacy has on second language learning comes from evaluations of bilingual education programs for HL children. In general, it has been found that children who are initially educated in their HL learn a second language better (and are academically more successful) than those who have no solid foundation in their first language. However, Stern (1987) argue that different reasons why this might be so have been posited some linguistic, others more social and attitudinal in nature. In the latter category fall such explanations as 'success breeds success'. Masgoret (2003) points out that it is not infrequent that children who are educated in a language they initially do not understand, and where many of their classmates are native speakers of the school language, experience failure or fear. Provision of HL schooling provides the opportunity for children to understand their surroundings and experience academic success, self-confidence, a stronger sense of personal worth and positive feelings about school. Linguistic explanations are more specific with respect to the impact that first language literacy per se may have on second language literacy learning as pointed out by Mbouya (2009). It is argued by Masgoret (2003) and there is considerable evident, that even when two languages use different writing systems, readers are able to apply the visual, linguistic and cognitive strategies they use in first language reading to reading in the second language. 'Readers apply what they figured out about the process in one language to reading in another language'.

Theoretical Framework

The teaching and learning of French in Anglophone schools can better be understood through Krashen's Second Language Acquisition theory and Gardner's socio-educational model.

Krashen (1988) defends five hypotheses about SLA: The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Each of the hypotheses relates to a different aspect of the Monitor Model, and it is relevant to consider all five since they complement each other. Krashen's Hypothesis concerning SLA is the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, which presents two systems that influence a language user's output. First, it outlines the difference between acquiring and learning a language. Krashen (1981), believes that "Language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language "natural communication" in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding." At the same time, language learning is based on rules, formal instruction and error correction. In other words, while acquirers use the language, learners learn about the

language. Krashen (1988) posits that the acquirer of a language does not consider grammar rules and is only driven by meaningful interactions. For this user, mistakes are not relevant, as long as they have fluency. Thus, Krashen (1988) believes that there is a natural path for acquiring a language, beginning on the acquirer communicative needs and eventually having grammar join in the process, resulting in the correct utterance (ibid).

Gardner's motivation theory is one of the most influential theories in second language acquisition motivation in this area. There are three key elements in motivation that are indicated by Gardner, which are eagerness (the resolution to learn), willingness (wanting to reach a goal), and enjoyment of learning. Gardner's research was first aroused in Canada, where both English speakers and French speakers are living together. Gardner mentions that people have a goal as their motivation, but instead of using "goal", here places it with "orientation". The two orientations are instrumental orientation and integrative orientation. People who have their aim to study one language because of external stimulation, such as a high salary and getting good scores in exams, are called instrumental orientation. In contrast, the integrative orientation means some people learn a second language in order to improve themselves, or in order to communicate with native speakers and integrate into the culture, the only motivation is to immerse themselves in the individual. Thus, Gardner and Lamberts come up with an idea that the integrative orientation is more likely to provide second language learners a better and long-term motivation.

Methodology

Study design

This study opted for a mixed research design which consists of qualitative and quantitative research design and this is relevant for studies of this type which seek to gather data about the thoughts, actions and behaviours, as well as attitudes, of the research participants (Lightbown & Spada 2021). It is held that mixed methods encompass multifaceted approaches that combine to capitalize on strengths and reduce weaknesses that stem from using a single research design (Hornberger & McKay 2010). We believe that using this approach to gather and evaluate data generally was going to increase the validity or reliability of the research. In this light, our quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed using diverse quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to explore the challenges facing French language teaching/learning in Anglophone secondary schools (Creswill 2003). It consists of questionnaires and interviews directed to both the teachers and students.

Population and sample

The study was conducted in 8 secondary schools which

included both private and public schools in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. This selection was based on the effective teaching and learning of official languages in the schools. Questionnaires were administered to 19 teachers and 53 students. All the students' and teachers' responses were used for further analyses of data.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study consists of ten major constructs concerning the extent to which the teaching/learning of French contributes: (a) to understanding the need to learn official languages; (b) Learner-centered teaching methods used during French lessons; (c) their role in implementing the effective teaching and learning of French languages; (d) teachers' adequate training to teach French effectively (e) availability and use of instructional resources; (f) large class sizes and students' low interest in French which makes teaching difficult; (g) learners willingness to speak French in and out of the classroom; (h) a general drop in the number of students who study French in high schools; (i) Poor performance at the official examinations; (j), Teachers' perceived role in ensuring that they overcome the setbacks to French language teaching/learning.. The instrument consists of 35 items using a five Point Likert (1981) scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Based on the responses from the teachers and students, semi-structured interview sessions were later carried out with a sub sample of 10 teachers and 10 students to further explore their experiences, roles, expectations and responsibilities in the teaching/learning procedure.

Data collection and analyses

The analysis of the data collected in this study was carried out using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive and balanced interpretation of the findings. The quantitative data, obtained mainly through structured questionnaires administered to 53 students and 19 French language teachers, were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Tools such as frequency distributions, percentages, mean scores, and graphical representations (tables, bar charts and pie charts) were employed to organize and interpret the data. These methods helped to summarize large volumes of information in a clear and concise manner, making it easier to identify trends and patterns related to key variables such as students' attitudes toward French, frequency of French usage in and out of school, levels of interest, access to instructional materials, and teachers' years of experience or qualifications. The data were processed and analyzed using Microsoft Excel, which facilitated the accurate coding, computation, and generation of tables for easy presentation and comparison across different groups.

In addition to statistical analysis, qualitative data from interviews, open-ended questionnaire responses, and field observations were subjected to thematic analysis, which involved organizing the data into meaningful categories and identifying emerging themes and sub-themes. This dual-method approach (quantitative and qualitative) ensured that the study did not merely report statistical trends but also provided in-depth explanations behind those trends, making the findings richer, more reliable, and contextually grounded for policy recommendations and educational reform.

Results

This section of the article outlines the results of the findings based on the extent to which the teaching/learning

of French contributes: (a) to understanding the need to learn official languages; (b) Learner-centered teaching methods used during French lessons; (c) their role in implementing the effective teaching and learning of French languages; (d) teachers' adequate training to teach French effectively (e) availability and use of instructional resources; (f) large class sizes and students' low interest in French makes teaching difficult; (g) learners are encouraged to speak French in and out of the classroom; (h) a general drop in the number of students who study French in high schools; (i) Poor performance at the official examinations; (j), Teachers' perceived role in ensuring that they overcome the setbacks to French language teaching/learning. This will be presented in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: French language teaching in regard to the five constructs

No	Constructs	Number of Teachers	Percentage
1	Understanding the need to learn official languages	19	100%
2	Learner-centered teaching methods used during French lessons;	13	68.4%
3	The role of teachers in implementing the teaching and learning of French language	19	100%
4	Teachers' adequate training to teach French effectively	15	78.1%
5	Availability and use of instructional resources	10	52.6%
6	Large class sizes and students' low interest in French makes teaching difficult	19	100%
7	Learners are encouraged to speak French in and out of the classroom	10	52%
8	A general drop in the number of students who study French in high schools	19	100%
9	Poor performance at the official examinations	19	100%
5	Teachers' perceived role in ensuring that they overcome the setbacks to French language teaching/learning	14	73.1%

Table 1 presents the findings from the ten constructs showing how far teachers enhance the teaching-learning of French language with regards to findings from 19 teachers. It showed that teachers had a 100% understanding of the need to learn official languages, as well as 68.4% use learner-centered methods during French lessons. 78.1% of the teachers agreed to have received adequate training to teach French effectively, 52.6% of them say there is availability and use of instructional resources, 100% of the teachers said large class sizes and students' low interest in French makes teaching difficult, 52% of them say learners

are encouraged to speak French in and out of the classroom, 100% of the teachers affirmed that there is a general drop in the number of students who study French in high schools, this same percentage admitted that there is always a general poor performance of students when it comes to official examinations, meanwhile 73.1% say if teachers play their role well, both teachers, learners and the education stakeholders play their role well, they will be able to overcome the setbacks facing French language teaching/learning as such learners will perform better French language.

Table 2: Representation of French language learning in regards to the five constructs

No	Constructs	Number of Teachers	Percentage
1	Understanding the need to learn French language	43	81.1%
2	Teachers portray good teaching practices like explaining lessons clearly, encouraging students to participate actively and use different teaching methods	30	56.5%
3	French language has no added advantage	50	94.3%
4	Learning challenges like limited opportunities to practise speaking French, lack of confidence and low motivation, language of instruction, difficult French grammar, socio-political crises, lack of learning material, no use of ICT	49	92.3%
5	Learners' perceived role in ensuring that they learn French language effectively	30	56.5%

Table 2 presents the analyses of the findings from the five constructs showing how far Learners' effective involvement in French language learning enhances the teaching/learning of French language with regards to findings from 53 high school students. Out of these 53 students, 81.1% of the students understand the need to learn French language; 56.5% affirmed teachers portray good teaching practices like explaining lessons clearly, encouraging students to participate actively and use different teaching methods, 94.3% affirmed French language has no added advantage; 92.3% of the students said they face some learning challenges like limited opportunities to practise speaking French, lack of confidence and low motivation, language of instruction, difficult French grammar, socio-political crises, lack of learning material, no use of ICT; meanwhile 94.3% play their role to make sure that they learn French effectively. However, 56.5% of them confirmed the fact that if they play their role properly, the learning process will be improved.

Ten teachers were further interviewed in order to find out about their take on what they think is the cause of low interest portrayed by learners and the low French enrollment in high schools by learners and what they think can be done to overcome the situation. They gave these views.

"Teachers still teach French using complex grammar rules, thus making the language still look like a hard knot to crack, this greatly scares learners. As a proposed solution, if teachers can teach language from simple to complex, it will greatly remove the mentality that learners have about learning French" (T2)

"I have observed that students often escape from French classes because they see no need learning the language since they can't easily find a job even if they master the language. As a solution teachers need to educate them most often on the advantages of being bilingual, not only here in Cameroon but around the world and the government can as well motivate those who perform well in French through scholarships and award of prizes". (T3)

"Most of the teachers do not use the target language during French lessons. They teach French by using 80% of English language aimed at making learners understand the lesson better, not knowing that they are indirectly depriving learners from being exposed to French. As a result, if teachers can teach using the target language, learners will be more frequent to speaking French and as such will be exposed to it.(T1 and 8)

"Most teachers do not motivate students to learn French. Teachers need to give more positive reinforcement than negative reinforcement. They can constantly give additional marks to learners who make an effort to answer questions during French lessons. " (T7)

"Teachers themselves always feel demotivated when they see that learners show very little interest in learning French. As such they teach French not often in unfriendly atmosphere because they already feel that no matter how they try to teach it to their level of understanding, they will not still understand because they themselves are demotivated. In this light, teachers need to create a friendly atmosphere with the learners and let them understand that French is just like any other subject where they can perform better". (T10)

"Learners generally perform poorly year in year out in official examinations like the GCE Ordinary and Advanced Levels. This is due to the fact that as compared to Anglais in the francophone schools that is compulsory, there is totally no elimination mark at the GCE for Anglophone learners. This makes them so relaxed and as such show little or no interest in learning French. As a solution, an elimination mark should be set at the level of the GCE Ordinary level" (4 and 5)

"French has to be made a compulsory subject for all students at the level of the high school". (T6)

"Also, the government should improve teacher recruitment, training, and deployment by recruiting more qualified French teachers for Anglophone schools, ensuring

equitable deployment, especially in rural areas of the North West and South West regions. They can also strengthen teacher training institutions because teacher quality is central to effective SLA processes". (T9)

Ten students were further interviewed in order to determine how far they perceive the teaching and learning of French and what they think can be done in order for them to improve on their French proficiency and perform better.

"If students are motivated, then will be encouraged to study French language. Teachers can always motivate students by giving extra marks to students who attempt to say something new in a French class or who give correct answers to the questions posed in class. Also the school administration should motivate students with sufficient learning materials, since one of the challenges hindering students' learning of LO2 is lack of textbooks. If this is done, it will go a long way to enhance students learning and subsequently lead to good performance. The government too has to motivate students by granted scholarships to meritorious students. Providing and receiving positive feedback is one of the best ways to increase motivation". (S3 and 6) "Due to the crises in the English speaking regions, most learners have failed to acquire French effectively. With this situation, there is a tendency that the country produces semi-literate or monolingual citizens instead of bilingual ones, to solve this the government need to ensure that learners learn in maximum security and give additional pay to teachers who teach in this area so as to push them to teach even extra hours so that students can have adequate remediation". (S1 and 4)

"Positive reinforcement is good for learners who see the study of language as a night mare. Students should not be punished out of the classroom Parents need to provide their children with all the necessary study material so as to facilitate the teaching/learning process in a language classroom" (S7)

"In order to promote effective learner interaction and effective communication during lessons. Teachers can teach French grammar as a resource to make learners communicate in the target language". (S8 and 2)

"Teaching-learning resources assist in and support students' learning. It helps students to understand and enjoy the lesson which the teacher teaches them. It helps students understand the object of the lesson the teacher is conveying. It equally helps learners to work on their own in the absence of the teacher. Availability and proper use of resource like charts, poster, boards, flash cards, crayons, chalks etc. play a significant role in the learning process of students". (S 5 and 9)

To conclude, findings reveal that both learners and teachers face a lot of challenges in the teaching and learning of French language in the selected Anglophone secondary schools which greatly impacts learners' engagement in

French language, thus leading to poor enrolment at the level of the high school; what is then the future of the bilingualism at the tertiary level and of the nation in general?

Discussion

The findings reveal a strong link between low enrollment in French and poor bilingual outcomes. It reveals the numerous challenges facing French language teaching/learning in Anglophone secondary schools; Students are not sufficiently motivated, and teaching practices do not align with modern language acquisition theories, insufficient teachers, low curriculum reforms, inadequate teacher professional development, inadequate educational technologies, low extension of the Special Bilingual Education program, little teacher/student motivation, insufficient learning materials, underqualified and inexperienced teachers. The dominance of teacher-centered approaches contradicts Littlewood's (1981) communicative framework, which emphasizes interaction. Similarly, Gardner's motivation theory explains why students with low interest perform poorly. The socio-political context of the NW and SW regions also plays a role, influencing attitudes toward French and reducing willingness to engage with the language. The results of this study show that teaching and learning French in the Anglophone secondary education system tends to be mostly teacher-centered. Even though as stated by (Guerrero et al. 2003), the official curriculum promotes more communicative and learner-focused approaches, observations in the classroom reveal that many teachers still depend on traditional techniques like explaining, repeating, translating, and memorizing. Consequently, students often find themselves as passive recipients of information instead of being engaged participants in their own learning journey.

This finding aligns with earlier research that suggests language teaching in Cameroon is primarily focused on exams (Anchimbe (2006). The prevalence of teacher-centered methods can be linked to factors like overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching time, a lack of resources, and not enough opportunities for teachers to grow professionally. As a result, students often miss out on chances to build their speaking and listening skills in French, which are crucial for effective communication.

The study shows that many learners tend to view French as a challenging subject. This belief can really affect how much they participate and engage during lessons. The results indicate that the teaching and learning experience is often shaped by real-world factors, like the language environment around the learners, the resources available for studying, and how often French is spoken outside of class (Anchimbe 2006). In a lot of English-speaking communities, there aren't many chances to practice French in real-life situations (Galindo & Tchunte 2023), which limits learners'

exposure to the language and can slow down their learning process. The absence of modern teaching tools really hampers teachers' ability to use interactive teaching methods. Many schools are missing out on essential resources like language labs, audio-visual aids, and digital technologies that could enhance language learning. Consequently, teachers often find themselves relying on textbooks and traditional lecture methods, which might not fully meet the communicative needs of their students

.One major challenge that stands out is the lack of exposure to French outside the classroom. Since many learners are surrounded by English-speaking environments, they miss out on chances to practice French in everyday situations. This makes classroom learning less effective and can lead to lower language proficiency (Etengeneng 2025). The findings also point to socio-economic factors as key obstacles. Financial struggles often limit access to learning materials and educational resources. Additionally, some learners come from backgrounds where French is seen as having little immediate value, which can dampen their motivation to learn the language.

The study highlights that the ongoing socio-political turmoil in the North-West and South-West Regions has seriously impacted educational activities. Issues like school closures, insecurity, inconsistent attendance, and psychological stress have all made it tough to teach and learn French effectively.

One of the key takeaways from this study is that both teachers and students face different degrees of demotivation when it comes to learning and teaching French. The research shows that students often feel discouraged for a variety of reasons, such as negative feelings about the language, a fear of making mistakes, a lack of self-confidence, limited chances to engage with French-speaking environments, and disappointing exam results. Many students view French as a tough subject and think that excelling in it requires extraordinary talent. These beliefs can lead to anxiety and make them less likely to participate actively in class. Additionally, the scarcity of opportunities to use French in their daily lives can dampen their enthusiasm for putting in the effort to truly master the language.

This study also shows that the expectation of the teachers' role in implementing the teaching and learning of official languages is high as most of the teachers said they have high expectations that if teachers can effectively play their role so far as the implementation of official languages is concerned, then learners will learn these languages effectively and there will be high performance in these subjects so far as official examinations are concerned. One of the key takeaways from this study is that the challenges faced in teaching and learning French have a direct impact on how official bilingualism is put into practice in

Cameroon. The country's language policy is designed to foster proficiency in both English and French (Dornyei 2005). However, the results show that many students finish secondary school without being able to communicate effectively in French. They perform poorly in the GCE Ordinary level and out of the few who have at least a "C" grade at the GCE Ordinary level, very few of them continue to study the subject in high schools which greatly threatens future bilingualism at the tertiary level. This reality undermines the goals of official bilingualism, as these learners struggle to engage in both of the country's official languages (Couchenour & Chrisman 2004). The findings also highlight that limited proficiency in French restricts educational, professional, and social opportunities for learners in a bilingual nation. The study equally highlights that challenges in learning French play a significant role in maintaining the linguistic divide between Anglophone and Francophone communities. When individuals don't have a solid grasp of both official languages, it becomes much harder to foster meaningful interactions and achieve national unity.

Moreover, the research indicates that there's a considerable disconnect between language policy and what actually happens in educational settings. While bilingualism is heavily endorsed at the policy level, the necessary conditions for it to thrive in schools are often missing. As a result, the effectiveness of the national bilingualism program suffers greatly.

Implications for University Education and National Bilingualism

The consequences of weak French learning at the secondary level include: Poor performance in university bilingual programs, reduced number of bilingual graduates, weak implementation of national bilingual policy as well as increased linguistic divide in the country. If this trend continues, bilingualism risks becoming symbolic rather than functional.

Opportunities such as pedagogical improvements, communicative teaching methods that emphasize speaking and interaction should be adopted, enhance teacher training by providing continuous professional development programs, increased exposure of learners by encouraging French clubs, debates, and media engagement are highly recommended. Resource provision should be improved by equipping schools with modern teaching materials. Curriculum reform should be enhanced by making French more practical and relevant. Motivation strategies should be encouraged by incorporating incentives and awareness programs.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the challenges facing French language teaching/learning in Anglophone secondary

schools one of which being the limited number of students studying French in Anglophone high schools which poses a serious challenge to the future of bilingualism in Cameroon. The problem is not merely educational but national in scope, affecting university systems and social integration. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts from all stakeholders. As confirmed by Brown (2007), without meaningful reforms, Cameroon's bilingual policy may remain an ideal rather than a lived reality. It is also worth noting that these challenges have caused a lot of harm on the teaching/learning of French language and on the learners in particular because it has been observed that majority of the students in high schools cannot speak French fluently and write French correctly despite the fact that they have been learning this language for more than eleven years. Most of them do not obtain a pass grade at the GCE Ordinary level and out of the few who make it, a very little number continue to study the language in high schools. Most English-speaking learners complete high school with very little proficiency in French making their path for bilingualism at the tertiary level so narrow. If these challenges are not addressed, it will go a long way to cause drastic effects on the future of the bilingualism of the country and as such, the government's wish that every Cameroonian should become bilingual will not be fulfilled, thus ineffectiveness in bilingualism of Cameroon.

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