

# The Hypothetical Question of Bilingual Education in Schools in Cameroon

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## Abstract

This article examines the implementation of bilingual education in secondary schools in the Republic of Cameroon. In the wake of independence in 1960, Cameroon adopted two educational sub-systems from its former colonial masters, England and France, who administered the country as a mandated territory and later as a trusted territory after the First and Second World Wars. While the English language was used in the former British territory (current Southwest and Northwest regions), the French language was used in the former French territory (current Adamawa, Centre, East, Far North, Littoral, North, South, and West Regions). This gave birth to an official bilingual situation. It is common knowledge that a language question will arise whenever there is language contact that always requires a solution. The adoption of two foreign languages as official languages was thus a prelude to the problem of bilingual education in Cameroon. To promote bilingualism the authorities adopted a bilingual academic system that brought together both sub-systems within the same campus, intending to train young Cameroonians who will be able to produce in both English and French works of art or science of the highest class. The present article aims to find out why sixty-one years after the creation of these bilingual schools in 1963 and 1965, and subsequent ones, Cameroonians are not able to produce in both official languages works of arts and science with consummate skills. The reasons for this failure lay in the methodology adopted in the teaching of languages and the different curricula that need a thorough revision.

## Keywords

Bilingualism, Bilingual Education, Language Attitudes, Anglophone, Francophone

## 1. Introduction

According to Catherine Snow (1990), the term bilingual education is “a simple

label for a complex phenomenon”. Bilingual education is a term that refers to the teaching of academic content in two languages, a native and a second language. Varying amounts of each language are used depending on the outcome goal of the model.

At the outset, a distinction is needed between an education that uses and promotes two languages (English and French in the case of Cameroon) and an education for language-minority children. There is a difference between a classroom where formal instruction is to foster bilingualism and a classroom where bilingual children are present, but bilingualism is not fostered in the curriculum. The umbrella term, bilingual education, has been used to refer to both situations leaving the term ambiguous and imprecise.

A classification of bilingual education by [William Mackey \(1970\)](#) makes a distinction between the different patterns. His account of different patterns of bilingual schooling considers the languages of the home, the language of the curriculum, and the languages of the community in which the school is located, as well as the international and regional status of the language used in the school. A different approach to categorizing types of bilingual education is to examine the aims of such education.

After obtaining its independence in 1960 and reunification in 1961 and the creation of a Federal Republic, Cameroon opted for a bilingual system of education at the secondary level with English and French as the languages of instruction. Before independence, the country was governed by the British and French after the First World War (1918-1945) and Second World War (1945-1960). While Britain occupied 1/5 of the country (British Southern Cameroon) that today constitutes the Northwest and Southwest regions, France occupied 4/5 of the country (French Cameroon) that today constitutes the regions of Adamawa, Centre, East, Far North, Littoral, North, West, and South. For forty-two years, each colonial master imposed his language in the running of the affairs of his section of the country.

Given that at independence, there was no dominant home language that could be adopted as a national language for education and administration, the new Cameroonian authorities continued with the use of the English and French languages. It should be noted that this was a socio-political choice that was meant to bring together the Anglophone and Francophone communities under the same umbrella for social cohesion and unity. The choice of the two foreign languages meant that the country had to pursue the English and French lines of education; thus the adoption of two educational sub-systems. These were exercised differently in both sections of the country, but in 1962 the government decided to give a trial to a system where both languages were to be used simultaneously within the same academic environment and for the same goal.

Thus, the first bilingual secondary school was opened in Man-O-War Bay in the former British Cameroon. It was named, “Bilingual Grammar School” in English and “Lycée bilingue Federal” in French. Three years after, that is, in 1965, the school was moved from Man-O-War Bay to Buea and renamed “Fed-

eral Bilingual Grammar School Buea” in English and “Lycée Bilingue Federal de Buea” in French. That same year, a second Bilingual Grammar school was opened in Yaounde, the political capital. It was named “Bilingual Practicing Secondary School” in English and “College Bilingue d’Application” in French. The qualifier “practicing” was because the school was attached to the “Teacher Training College” or “Ecole Normale Supérieure” (ENS) in Yaounde where young secondary school teachers were trained. Because there was a need to bring Cameroonians closer to one another these schools seemed to provide a solution to the problem. They created an atmosphere where students from both linguistic backgrounds came together within the same campus. The schools equally created a bilingual atmosphere that reflected the new face of the Federal Republic of Cameroon after independence. In his inauguration speech of the first bilingual grammar school on May 26, 1971, the first President of the new Federal Republic, Ahmadou Babatoura Ahidjo said:

Convinced of the historic importance of this experiment for the African continent, and its relevance for the nation, the Federal government, on the marrow of Reunification, made it its business to promote bilingualism (1963).

In line with Ahidjo’s position, [Echitchi Raymond \(2020\)](#) citing [Bernard Fonlon \(1969\)](#) writes that the teaching of English and French in these schools should be to produce citizens capable of handling both English and French with consummate skills, capable of producing in both languages, as they please, works of art or science of the highest class. The question is whether sixty-one years after the opening of the first bilingual grammar school and subsequent ones, the products from such schools are able to produce in both languages, works of art or science of the highest class. This article sets out to provide an answer to this daunting question.

## 2. Language Attitudes in Cameroon

There are two approaches to the study of attitudes; the Mentalist approach, which views the phenomenon as an internal, mental situation that may give rise to certain forms of behaviour, and the Behaviourist approach which stipulates that attitudes should be studied by an observation of the responses to certain languages, that is, to their use in actual interaction ([Appel & Muysken, 2006](#)). In relation to bilingualism, [Charlotte Hoffman \(2014\)](#) defines attitude as, self-identification or identification by others, i.e., whether a bilingual feels himself or herself totally at home or identifies with his or her language(s), and whether the individual is accepted by others as belonging to both the one and the other linguistic community.

The government’s attitude in Cameroon has been to promote bilingualism and bilingual education. This attitude was seen in President Ahmadou Ahidjo’s speech in 1971 during the inauguration of the Federal bilingual grammar school-Man-O-War Bay, when he held that “...the Federal government, on the marrow

of Reunification, made it its business to promote bilingualism.” The promotion of bilingualism and bilingual education is fundamental to the country’s cohesion. The fundamental law of the country, that is, the Constitution<sup>1</sup>, in its part 1 Section 1 (3) stipulates:

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 should endeavour to promote national languages (4).

Other official texts were signed to encourage the promotion of bilingualism. On August 20, 1985, the President of the Republic signed decree no. 85/1200 instituting a project for teaching official languages to civil servants and state agents of the public and semi-public sectors. On 17 May 2002, ministerial circular No. 02/0003/MINESUP/DDES was signed to strengthen the practice of official bilingualism in State universities and institutions of higher learning. On August 3, 1990, decree no. 90/196 was signed, “instituting a bilingual linguistic training programme”. In 2017, decree no. 2017/013 of 23 January 2017 was signed to create the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM). In 2019, law no. 2019/019 of 24 December was signed on the promotion of official languages in Cameroon.

The objective of these decisions was to contribute to national unity and integration as well as to the economic, social, and cultural development of the country through the promotion of both official languages. Joshua Fishman (1976) opined that:

It is especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America...that multilingualism – often seen as the linguistic aspect of a still-vigorous ethnic or cultural pluralism – has given rise to communication problems of a serious enough nature to have prompted many national governments to initiate remedial programmes.

The recourse to bilingualism in Cameroon by the government is intended to be an aspect of these remedial programmes. Other aspects of remedial measures include the inhibition and prohibition of official correspondences in home languages and the discharge of national communication in English and French. Despite the goodwill of the government to promote official bilingualism, there is an absence of a well-defined linguistic policy in the country. This makes it difficult to implement a bilingual programme in secondary schools from where young Cameroonians will be able to produce works of art or science of the highest class after graduating.

### **3. The Controversy over Bilingual Education**

For over 50 years the concept of bilingual education has been a topic of contro-

<sup>1</sup>The Republic of Cameroon has had four constitutions since independence: 1961 (federal constitution), 1972 (united Republic of Cameroon), 1984 (Republic of Cameroon), and 1996 (Republic of Cameroon).

versy; what is it and how should it be managed? One of those who have made enormous contributions in this domain is [Maria Estela Brisk \(2006\)](#) in *Bilingual Education: From Compensatory to Quality Schooling, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Citing [Fishman \(1976\)](#) and [Lewis \(1977\)](#), she holds that the paradox of bilingual education is that when it is employed in private schools for the children of elites throughout the world it is accepted as educationally valid. However, when public schools implemented bilingual education for language minority students, bilingual education became highly controversial.

She continues by opining that a pioneering study conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation ([UNESCO, 1953](#)) more than 60 years ago revealed that children educated in their second language (a language acquired in addition to the home language) experienced difficulties in school. The report, she says, of experts from around the world sponsored by UNESCO, outlines that the home language (also called the mother tongue or native language) is the best initial medium of instruction because it is the vehicle through “which a child absorbs the cultural environment” ([UNESCO, 1953](#)). Brisk equally writes that according to the report, the mother tongue facilitates literary development and learning of different subjects, and it promotes understanding between the home and the school. UNESCO recommended using students’ native language for instruction and literary development for as long as feasible. Acknowledging some practical limitations – the inadequacy of vocabulary in technical areas, shortage of trained teachers and educational material, the multiplicity of languages in a district, and popular opposition to the use of native language – the report nevertheless argues that the students should not stand in the way of making the greatest effort possible to use the mother tongue. The report equally refutes objections that are still used to oppose the use of native language in schooling; that some home languages do not have a grammar, that the child already knows the native language, that using native languages impedes national unity, and that emphasizing native languages prevents the acquisition of the second language. Brisk underlines what the Report points out, “...that all languages have grammar, written or not; that children still have a lot to learn of their languages when they enter school; that national interests are best served by optimum advancement of education, and this, in turn, can be promoted by the use of the local language as a medium of instruction” (p.50), and most significantly, that, “recent experience in many places proves that an equal or better command of the second language can be imparted if the school begins with the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction” (p. 49). The report also underscores the importance of teaching language minority students their national language (“the language of a political, social and cultural entity,” p. 46) as a second language by gradually introducing it in elementary schools to prepare students for further education.

According to Brisk, many educators and linguists echo UNESCO’s recommendations ([Cummins, 1984](#); [Ramirez, 1992](#); [Snow, 1990](#); [Wong & Valadez, 1986](#)). Yet others, most social scientists and journalists, still adamantly oppose

instructions through the native languages and believe that intense instruction in international languages is best for students. This is one of the reasons why Cameroon adopted two international languages as languages of education at independence and equally the fact that no Cameroonian language was spoken by four percent of the population at the time of independence.

Contrary to the 1953 UNESCO report which advocates for bilingual education beginning with the child's mother tongue, bilingual education in Cameroon falls short of the recommendations of UNESCO in that, it is practiced in an environment where a good language policy is absent. The question in Cameroon is what is the best model for bilingual education? In the United States, for instance, proponents of bilingual education defend models that use and promote native language development, whereas opponents favour models that only emphasise English language development. This controversy emerges from one basic difference. In the United States proponents of bilingual education believe that students learn faster when they are educated in their native languages while studying English. Opponents maintain that language minorities need English as a precondition to becoming educated; thus, the faster these students are incorporated into English instruction the sooner they will reap the benefits of schooling.

In Cameroon the absence of a clearly defined language policy thus seems to be the basis of great confusion and bewilderment in the teaching and use of the English and French languages. [George Echu \(2012\)](#) decries such absence of a language policy as it can generate into division and disintegration if it is not judiciously managed:

Bien que la politique du bilinguisme officiel ait pour objectif de resserrer les liens d'unité nationale entre les communautés linguistiques, elle peut également constituer une source de division, voire de désintégration, compte tenu de sa gestion quotidienne. On reproche aux autorités le manque d'une politique bien définie et articulée en la matière<sup>2</sup>.

The type of bilingual education programme adopted in Cameroon is the immersion model, though in practice the approach is different from what prevails in other countries like the United States. Experts in the field of bilingual education classify bilingual education into two categories with different aims and objectives: weak forms and strong forms bilingual education. The weak form comprises six types of programmes: submersion (structured immersion), submersion with withdrawal classes, segregationist, transitional, mainstream with foreign teaching, and separationist. The strong form is made of four types: immersion, maintenance/heritage language, two-way (dual language), and mainstream bilingual.

#### **4. Theoretical Frame and Methodology**

This study uses [Michel Foucault's \(1971\)](#) Power/Knowledge Discourse, which

<sup>2</sup>Although the bilingual policy has as its objective to reinforce national unity among the different linguistic communities, it could equally be a source of discord or disintegration given the way it is used daily. The blame for the absence of a well-defined policy is on the government.

states that “every educational system is a means of maintaining or modifying the appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them”. Bilingualism permits the child’s cognitive development and improves cultural awareness and academic performance. In a global world knowledge of two or more languages is a force for the individual. For the present study, data were collected from the Cameroon GCE Board (for Ordinary level and Advanced level results) and the “Office du Bac” (for Brevet d’Etudes and Baccalauréat results). These were analysed and presented in tables on percentage ratings.

## 5. Bilingual Education at the Secondary Level

As earlier mentioned, immersion education is the bilingual model adopted by the Cameroonian educational system for bilingual secondary schools. Immersion education has bilingualism as an outcome and therefore represents a “strong” form of the term bilingual education. It should be noted that there are different types of immersion programmes. The term “immersion education” is thus an umbrella term that encloses “early total immersion”, “middle immersion”, and “late immersion”. The programme in Cameroon tilts towards early total immersion. This programme aims at enabling the child to read, write, speak, understand, and use both English and French at a relatively young age.

To promote immersion education, the government published two programmes (curricula) for both Anglophone and Francophone students which were in use for over forty-two years (1972-2014). These programmes were; *Programme de Français en classe Anglophone des Etablissements Secondaire*<sup>3</sup> and *English Syllabus for Francophone secondary schools*. Both programmes aimed at fostering and reinforcing individual bilingualism in secondary school students. Quality curricula for bilingual students must reflect high expectations of the academic system. This is what Fonlon cited by Raymond Echitchi (2020) meant when he advocated that:

The teaching of English and French in these colleges should be to produce citizens capable of handling both languages with consummate skills, capable of producing in English and French, as they please, works of art or science of the highest class.

A good curriculum should aim at helping students to be thoughtful, solve problems, and make use of their language abilities. With these goals in mind, educational experts came up with the two aforementioned curricula for both sub-systems. What one notices from the titles of the programmes is that they are for two distinct schools: an all-English-oriented-school on the one hand, and an all-French-oriented-school on the other hand. They are not specific for a good bilingual programme for schools. This already poses a problem of content. The notion of bilingual school in Cameroon therefore, is simply two distinct schools on the same campus to separately host children from two linguistic back-

<sup>3</sup>French programme for Anglophone classes in General secondary schools.

grounds; Anglophones and Francophones. The teaching approach in these schools is not different from that in monolingual secondary schools where Anglophone students have all their courses in English and the French language as the only course in a language other than English. Equally the Francophones have all their courses in French and the English language as the only course in a language other than French.

Courses like Mathematics, Physics, Geography, Chemistry, etc. are not taught in the second language. This is in contrast with the ideals of the first bilingual secondary school created in 1963. In the Man-O-war Bay experience, the best language students from Form 2 and 5e<sup>4</sup> came together in the same classroom in Form 3 (4e bilingue) and were taught all the courses in both languages. They continued together to Form 4 (3e bilingue) where they all took the Brevet d'Etudes Primaire<sup>5</sup>. After Form 4, a student could either continue to Form 5 or to 2e depending on his/her choice. Unfortunately, this experience was short-lived. Though there are no statistics on the number of graduates from this experience, records show that products from this school had a good mastery of both official languages. As time went by the population of the country increased and so did the school population. There was thus an acute need for more trained teachers. The training programme that had been in use since independence did not reflect the changing times with the advent of new technologies. Running such a programme became very expensive for the country.

Quality curricula for bilingual students must reflect high expectations of the academic system. A good curriculum should aim at helping the student to be thoughtful, to solve problems, and to make use of language ability. During the 2014/2015 academic year, new curricula for secondary schools were designed, superseding the ones that had been in use for over forty-two years. Do these new curricula help the learner to be thoughtful and to solve problems, especially do the curricula help the learner to make good use of the official language abilities or are the curricula simply copies of the previous ones? One may be tempted to answer in the affirmative given that the new curricula are designed to reflect national and international needs in terms of knowledge, know-how, and attitudes. Cast in the Competence-Based Approach to teaching and learning, the curricula draw from the vision of education contained in the Education for All goals (EFA), the Dakar (2000) Framework for action, Sustainable Development Goals to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', the national education policy and the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP, 2010) which carries Cameroon Vision 2035.

As stated by Alemnge Fedelis (2021), at the introduction of the curriculum for Francophone schools, it is stated that:

English Language Teaching (ELT) is in a state of flux and teachers of English have to be abreast with current trends so that the products of the system would not sound outdated in what they do with language. The products

<sup>4</sup>The French sub-system runs from 6e to 1<sup>er</sup>. i.e. Form One to Upper Sixth.

<sup>5</sup>The examination that sanctions the end of the first cycle at the secondary level



of the system would have to use language to cope with the many varying situations and contexts in which they find themselves at all times. Language should be taught in such a way that the learners are provided with study skills and strategies to cope with an ever-changing world. In other words, language is taught for effective communication (2002).

At the introduction of the curriculum for Anglophone schools, it is written thus:

L'enseignement du Français à tous les Camerounais trouve son fondement légal dans la Constitution du pays qui décrète l'Etat bilingue. Pour le français en classe Anglophone, les enseignants du secondaire ont souvent procédé de manière très intuitive; Les classes et les contenus ont toujours varié d'un établissement à un autre. Ces enseignants, dépourvus pour la plupart d'une formation initiale adéquate, n'ont pas toujours su faire la part du Français langue de scolarisation et du Français pour apprenants Anglophones donc la méthodologie est proche de celle du Français langue étrangère. Aussi se sont-ils le plus souvent comportés partout comme en classe francophone: ils enseignent la langue comme ils l'ont reçue. Il était donc important de concevoir un document cadre, d'autant plus qu'il en existe déjà un qui régit l'enseignement secondaire général et dans lequel une bonne partie est consacrée aux programme d'Anglais pour apprenant francophone<sup>6</sup>.

Though both curricula are more symmetric for both English and French, the intention, structure, contents, and methodologies must take into consideration the multiplicity of factors that make a difference, such as the sensibility and degree of preparedness of the students, vis-à-vis language, cultural diversity, the social and economic characteristics of their living environment: most especially the different situations which can create these differences. Given that young Cameroonians are exposed to many realities: radio, television, cinema, social media, artistic works, and, diverse contacts with those of the other linguistic groups, that can be different factors.

The English syllabus for Francophones focuses on eight principal aspects: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, knowledge about language, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The ultimate aim here is to enable learners to be able to communicate orally and write effectively, and in varied situations. Each level of study has specific objectives. For Level 1 (6e)<sup>7</sup>, the specific objective is to

<sup>6</sup>The teaching of French to every Cameroonian is based on the legality of the Constitution which decrees a bilingual country. In the teaching of French to Anglophones, teachers at the secondary level have often done so in an intuitive manner. The contents have varied from one school to the other. The teachers, most of whom lack basic adequate training, fail to differentiate between the teaching of French for academic purposes and the teaching of French to Anglophone learners with a methodology similar to that of French as a foreign language. The teachers behave as if they were in a Francophone classroom: they teach the language as they learned it. There was thus a need to conceive a framework, given that governing general secondary education already existed and in which there was a programme for the teaching of English to Francophone learners.

<sup>7</sup>6e (Form 1), 5e (Form 2), 4e (Form 3) 3e (Form 4), 2e (Form 5), 1e (Lower sixth), Tle (Upper sixth).

enable the students to understand spoken and written words and to express themselves effectively in a variety of speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities. For Level 2 (5e), the specific objective is to consolidate and upgrade the students' skills acquired in the first year and for them to understand spoken and written language and to express themselves effectively in a variety of speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities. For Level 3 (4e), students are expected to be able to consolidate and upgrade skills acquired and learned in Levels 1 and 2 and understand a variety of spoken and written language and express themselves effectively in speaking and writing activities. For Level 4 (3e), students are expected to be able to consolidate and upgrade skills acquired and learned in the last three Levels and understand a variety of more difficult spoken and written language and express themselves effectively in speaking and writing activities. For Level 5 (2e), students are expected to be able to consolidate all language skills, upgrade their linguistic competence and perform effectively in varied situations of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They should be able to match style and response to the audience and purposes. For the two final Levels, 6 (1e) and 7 (1e), students are expected to be able to consolidate all their language skills, upgrade their linguistic competence and communicate with fluency and accuracy in varied listening, speaking, reading, and writing situations with confidence. They should be able to match style and response to audience and purpose.

For the Anglophones, the French syllabus aims at four main finalities: to develop and enrich the learner's personality; to promote individual and social blossoming of the student; to promote equality among the students; to foster national unity and integration. At the end of the secondary level, the student is expected to be able to use the French language with ease in different communicative situations. Contrary to the English syllabus for Francophone students which has a specific objective for each level, the French syllabus for Anglophone students has two main specific objectives for the first and the second cycles. For Forms 1, 2, and 3, the specific objective is to develop in the student, the capacity to acquire the skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that will enable him/her in communicative situations. For Forms 4 and 5, the specific objective is to reinforce what was acquired during the first cycle and to perfect linguistic acquisition to guarantee autonomy for the student in situations where French is used, for him/her to be able to express his/her wish, desires, and thoughts.

Unfortunately the new curricula are still not for bilingual schools but for monolingual ones. Apart from the new objectives and the fact that they consider aspects of new technologies, the methodologies have not changed. Scientific and social science courses are still not considered in teaching of the second official language. Failure to teach courses other than language courses in the second official language defeats the purpose. Cameroonians should not be expected to produce works of art or science of the highest degree in both official languages if the system continues to fail to include the teaching of art and science courses to all students in both languages.

## 5.1. Evaluation

An evaluation at the end of an academic cycle is an essential component of every system that aims at quality. As regards language study, it is important to verify and do regular controls to sustain efforts to rectify teaching techniques and procedures.

For the Francophone student at the secondary level who pursues the syllabus, he/she will write three certificate examinations at the end of levels 4, 6, and 7 and will obtain the following certificates; Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle, Probatoire<sup>8</sup> and Baccalauréat respectively. The syllabus does not only prepare the students to succeed in these examinations but prepares them to develop skills and strategies in the English language that are supposed to help them cope with all other examinations of similar levels and strength. For the Anglophone student, there are two types of evaluations: a teaching evaluation, which is done every two units, and which is an internal evaluation, or a continuous assessment. It falls within the learning process and the results are used to revise orientation and to fill necessary gaps. There is also the final evaluation which comes at the end of each cycle. This comprises mock examinations and every other examination that permits an evaluation of the level of students to make decisions.

The languages taught to students at the secondary level are first and foremost considered from a practical-functional point of view. Their teaching should be based on essentially communicative aspects of the language, especially at the first and second levels. Unfortunately, language learning is rendered more difficult for students in most parts of the country given that most of them have only sporadic contact with their second official language out of the classroom. Teaching is more difficult because of several factors which include:

- The growing number of students per class at the secondary level all over the country. This makes it difficult to put in place an effective linguistic pedagogy,
- The difficulty to get sufficient adequate teaching material which is necessary for the teachers' lessons,
- The place of French in the English sub-system of education: second official language to Anglophones, French is often taught as an additional subject, whereas it has to be valorised giving its status,
- The place of English in the French sub-system of education: second official language to Francophones, English is taught as an additional subject, whereas it has to be equally valorised giving its status,
- Shortage in quantity and quality of language teaching staff in most bilingual secondary schools in the country.

## 5.2. Difficulties

Some difficulties hinder the effective implementation of a good bilingual education programme in secondary schools in Cameroon. Among these is the absence

<sup>8</sup>An intermediary examination is taken at the 6th level in preparation for the "Baccalauréat" (Advanced Level).

of a well-elaborated language programme. In the absence of this, teachers train bilingual students based on programmes elaborated for monolingual secondary schools.

A second difficulty is the poor quality of the teaching staff. For a teacher to transmit knowledge effectively, especially the knowledge of a non-mother tongue, he or she must be able to understand the learner's linguistic background. This is not always the case with most second language teachers in schools in Cameroon. An investigation carried out revealed that a good number of teachers in bilingual schools are not themselves bilingual. This is mostly the case with those who teach French to Anglophone students. This revelation prompted an investigation into the pedagogic programme for the training of bilingual teachers at the level of the government Teacher Training Colleges.

A third difficulty is the absence of adequate didactic material for the teaching of languages. There is a total absence of language laboratories and modern communication technology equipment. The teaching of languages is still done traditionally. With the advent of new information and communication technologies (ICT), there is an urgent need for bilingual schools to be equipped with modern language laboratories.

### 5.3. Success Rates

To evaluate the success rates of second language teaching and learning in secondary schools, an analysis was done on the performance of students in their second language in four major examinations as compared with other courses in their curricula: the General Certificate of Education (GCE Ordinary level), the General Certificate of Education (GCE Advanced level), the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (BEPC), and the Baccalauréat (BAC) for five academic years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. These are the general results of all the courses offered in the examinations during the given period.

**Table 1** shows that in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020, the French language scored less than 50% success rate. For the five years, the subject had the lowest general percentage of 30.4% after Mathematics with 27.8%. It should be noted that for the five years, the subject registered the highest number of absences. Of the 26,476 students who registered for the subject, 10,081 effectively sat for it while 16,395 were absent. This gives a total absence rate of 70%. This percentage is very high for a programme that aims at promoting bilingualism. There is thus a call for concern on the part of decision markers.

At the GCE Advanced level, the French language has the 7th best results (54.2%) for the period indicated. Although this is a slightly average score, it can be understood that the course is not mandatory as it is at the Ordinary level. Students who sit for the subject at the Advanced level do so out of their will. For the five years, only 1279 sat for the subject with an absence rate of 1.79% (23). Of the fourteen subjects offered by the GCE Board, only Further Mathematics and Geology had registered numbers lower than the French language (**Table 2**).

**Table 1.** Percentage of results by subject at the GCE ordinary level.

SN	Subject	No. Reg.	Absent	Sat	% pass 2016	% pass 2017	% pass 2018	% pass 2019	% pass 2020	Average/ 100%
1	Additional Math	2200	804	1396	45	41	34	74	38	46.6
2	Geography	23,413	3955	19,458	48	47	57	72	68	58.4
3	Food & Nutrition	1468	74	1394	74	82	77	72	80	77.0
4	History	19,480	541	18,939	68	61	56	65	66	63.2
5	Human Biology	5374	1163	4211	60	48	42	62	37	49.8
6	<b>French</b>	<b>26,476</b>	<b>16,395</b>	<b>10,081</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30.4</b>
7	Accounts	327	46	281	63	62	56	54	57	58.4
8	Commerce	6486	1706	4780	54	44	37	52	49	47.2
9	Biology	15,291	701	14,590	60	65	59	51	49	56.8
10	English Literature	15,451	4155	11,296	42	53	52	51	52	50.0
11	Physics	5582	1298	4284	43	41	36	51	45	43.2
12	Religious study	18,895	2105	16,790	58	49	58	50	53	53.6
13	English language	29,162	5201	23,961	35	41	34	42	41	38.6
14	Chemistry	9156	420	8736	59	53	51	39	45	49.4
15	Economics	25,612	661	24,951	43	63	41	34	43	44.8
16	Mathematics	26,977	3873	23,104	47	21	17	18	36	27.8

Source: GCE Board - Buea.

**Table 2.** Percentage of results by subject at the GCE advanced level.

SN	Subject	No. Reg.	Absent	Sat	% pass 2016	% pass 2017	% pass 2018	% pass 2019	% pass 2020	Average/ 100%
1	Further Math	905	0	905	85	82	77	82	78	80.8
2	Biology	3398	28	3370	66	65	60	77	66	66.8
3	Physics	1580	15	1565	60	56	53	67	53	57.8
4	Pure Math/Mechanics	1581	1	1580	64	67	65	67	63	65.2
5	Religious Studies	3254	0	3254	75	63	71	58	78	69.0
6	Chemistry	3525	62	3463	47	37	35	57	44	44.0
7	<b>French</b>	<b>1279</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1256</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>54.2</b>
8	Geology	430	5	425	60	74	75	55	53	63.4
9	Pure Math/Statistics	1605	0	1605	44	52	41	53	44	46.8
10	Geography	3720	0	3720	51	26	41	52	48	43.6
11	English Literature	2747	89	2658	34	40	54	44	32	40.8
12	Philosophy	1578	0	1578	45	58	60	43	39	49.0
13	Economics	4161	13	4148	39	41	25	42	37	36.8
14	History	5149	0	5149	42	28	41	32	26	33.8

Source: GCE Board - Buea.

At the BEPC examination from 2016 to 2020, the English language had a general average success rate of 50.6%. For the five years, the subject scored above 50% only twice, in 2017 and 2019. Out of a total number of 721,705 students who sat for the course, 192,194 were considered successful, although only 98,597 had an average of 10/20 and above. This means that some students who had an average of less than 10/20 were considered successful in the examination. We can conclude that for a period of five years, 192,194 students out of 721,705 passed the course with a success rate of 26.63% (Table 3).

For five years, the English language obtained a success rate of 38.12% at the Baccalauréat examination in Cameroon. Between 2016 and 2020, the subject obtained a success rate slightly above 50% (50.26) only once, i.e. in 2017 (Table 4).

**Table 3.** Statistiques des notes en Anglais au BEPC de 2016 à 2020.

Session	Nombre inscrits	Nombre admis	Admis avec note supérieure ou égal à 10/20	% admis avec note supérieure ou égal à 10/20
2016	117,604	39,418	15,027	38%
2017	129,934	37,303	26,120	70%
2018	143,296	41,185	19,054	46%
2019	159,617	47,479	27,245	57%
2020	171,254	26,809	11,151	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>721,705</b>	<b>192,194</b>	<b>98,597</b>	<b>50.6%</b>

Source: Office du Baccalauréat – Yaounde.

**Table 4.** Statistiques des notes en Anglais au BAC de 2016 à 2020.

Session	Effectifs	BAC ESG	BAC AF, CI et F	BAC G	Total	% de réussite
2016	Inscrits	38,475	2211	3029	43,715	30.79
	Présents	37,180	2164	2871	42,215	
	Admis	11,966	807	639	13,412	
	%	32.18	37.93	22.26	30.79	
2017	Inscrits	41,396	2378	3324	47,098	50.26
	Présents	40,634	2335	3207	46,176	
	Admis	23,508	1111	1455	26,074	
	%	57.85	47.58	45.37	50.26	
2018	Inscrits	42,822	3114	4096	50,032	28.69
	Présents	41,528	3019	3636	48,183	
	Admis	8557	1129	1021	10,707	
	%	20.61	37.40	28.08	28.69	
2019	Inscrits	47,758	2426	4156	54,340	38.99
	Présents	46,443	2374	3985	52,797	

**Continued**

	Admis	17,511	977	1520	20,008	
	%	37.70	41.15	38.14	38.99	
	Inscrits	51,994	2544	5265	59,803	
2020	Présents	50,801	2486	5115	58,402	41.89
	Admis	18,961	1146	2162	22,269	
	%	37.32	46.10	42.27	41.89	
<b>Réussite Totale</b>					<b>247,773</b>	<b>38.12</b>

Source: Office du Baccalauréat – Yaounde.

Looking at the success rates of English for Francophones and French for Anglophones, it is evident that both the curricula and the teaching methodologies for official languages as second languages in Cameroon need thorough revision if Cameroon has to render its secondary schools bilingual to a point as to produce, “not merely state bilingualism, but individual bilingualism: so that every child that passes through the educational system shall be able to speak and write both English and French with consummate skills”.

These poor results, caused by the absence of a solid bilingual base at the secondary level, are reflected in the results of many students at the tertiary level, especially Anglophone students who register in majority francophone-oriented universities in Cameroon.

There are eleven state universities in Cameroon; two are Anglophone-Saxon while the eight others are mostly French-oriented.

## 6. Conclusion

An integrated educational system, which does not begin at the secondary level, will hardly succeed at the higher level to take up linguistic challenges. The official bilingual policy in Cameroon needs a methodical review. Many Cameroonians welcome the courageous ministerial order No.66C/MINEDUC/CAB of 16th February 2001 of the Ministry of National Education to make French and English languages compulsory in the First School Leaving Certificate<sup>9</sup>. Thus, English and French are today taught side by side at the primary level. If this is properly done, then the pupils, during their full primary cycle should be able to have sound basic knowledge of the practical language to which they should have recourse after graduating and which should provide them a sound linguistic basis for further studies as they move to the secondary cycle. Such linguistic training is the first step aimed at promoting national unity. At the secondary and higher levels, the training should aim at cultivating and fostering; not only national unity but also national integration and produce perfect bilinguals to run state affairs. Its use should be more vigorous, widespread, well-defined, and enjoyable. To achieve these, there is a need to take some measures which include:

<sup>9</sup>The certificate a child obtains at the end of the primary cycle.

- An adaptable pedagogy to the increasing number of students in classrooms,
- A methodology that will accommodate itself to the essence or the withdrawal of pedagogic auxiliaries,
- Trans-disciplinary learning of languages,
- The teaching and learning of courses other than language courses should be included in the curricula. Science and art courses should be taught in both official languages.

These proposals will encourage the interaction of students. They will create a framework within which the teacher will organize him/herself taking into consideration the particular situation of his/her classroom. The proposals equally fall within the framework of communicative perspectives, even though there is no breakoff from other methods of teaching languages (traditional methods and audiovisual global structure-AVGS) because this should be an evolution, not a revolution.

In her debate on bilingual education, Brisk (2006) points out that bilingual and cross-cultural curriculum supports the goals of developing bilingual skills in students. In Cameroon, second language development among students will be enhanced by a school context that values languages and promotes interaction between English-speaking and French-speaking students. Brisk believes that familiarity with cultures supports second language learning and enriches factual knowledge and cognition development. Incorporating the school curriculum aspects of the bilingual students' cultures will improve their knowledge of the world tangibly. This is because people of other cultures approach problem-solving, personal interaction, and learning differently. Experiencing and discussing such differences expand students' perspectives. Brisk concludes by saying that at a time when technology facilitates contact with people of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the world, it is obvious that schools need to prepare all students to communicate and relate in an increasingly interactive world.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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