

## An appraisal of the implementation of the English language syllabus for French-speaking learners in Cameroon

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### Abstract

The present paper set out to investigate the effectiveness of the implementation of the English Syllabus for French-speaking learners in some secondary schools in the Diamaré, Mayo Kani, and Mayo Tsanaga Divisions in the Far-North Region of Cameroon. The target schools were GBHS Maroua, GBHS Kaele, and GBHS Mokolo. The main assumption was that the English language curriculum is not well implemented in the target schools. The study was carried out on a sample of 152 students, nine (09) English teachers and three (03) pedagogic inspectors. The instruments used for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data were questionnaire and interview, respectively. After the analysis of the data, the findings revealed the English language syllabus was appropriate in terms of goals, contents, and methods. However, teachers did not use the adequate methods suggested by the syllabus in their respective classrooms and they had negative attitudes toward the implementation of the syllabus. Moreover, some external and internal factors hinder the implementation of the syllabus. Thus, the English syllabus was not well implemented in those target schools. The study also made some recommendations for the good implementation of the syllabus by teachers such as the follow-up of teachers by the pedagogic inspectors to keep the former abreast with new approaches and methods; the incorporation of listening and oral skills in the examinations, and the provision of schools' libraries with the adequate resources and internet facilities.

### Keywords

Curriculum, francophones, implementation, methods.

### INTRODUCTION

The State of Cameroon, through the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, which guaranteed the individual's education as a basic right necessary for the achievement of all other freedoms, decided to guarantee education to all its citizens. This can be found in several texts and laws. In the preamble to its constitution, the State guarantees every child the right to instruction. To achieve this right

to education, a child should be given the necessary facilities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values that will enable him/her to prepare for useful living within the society.

As far as education is concerned, in spite of this linguistic policy and an attempt to harmonise the two systems of education and come out with a "Cameroonised" system of education, there has never been a conclusive decision about this



division at the educational level. It was only in 1995 that a National Forum on Education was organized in order to define the division between the past educational system and a new, more dynamic, more relevant system that would help the country overcome the challenges of the twenty-first century. This forum led to the adoption in 1998 of Law No. 98/004 of the 14th of April, which organized the Cameroonian educational system into two subsystems, English-speaking and French-speaking. Moreover, Article 15 (2) states, "The two educational systems shall co-exist with [each of them] maintaining its specificity in methods of assessment and certification" [1]. The law also redefined official bilingualism, that is, English and French at all levels of both Francophone and Anglophone subsystems.

The Cameroonian educational system has turned a new page in its history since the 1995 National Forum on Education. Reforms and innovations were the substance of the new page. These reforms and innovations were to permeate all the components of the educational system, notably the curricula. The implementation of the innovations resulted in a particular educational context that could be described at both the national and international levels.

### **The nature of English in the Cameroonian educational system**

As for the teaching of English in the French-speaking subsystem of education, an English language syllabus for Francophone Secondary General School was put in place by the ministry in charge of education with the aim and objectives of training bilingual Francophone citizens. In this subsystem of education, English is taught from pre-primary school to higher education [2], [3]. The teaching of English as a subject is compulsory.

Moreover, it is well known that the main purpose of using language is to communicate one's needs, necessities, feelings, thoughts, and ideas to others; to interact with other people. However, more than four decades after the adoption of this laudable initiative and despite the multiple efforts of the government to train and

post English teachers to the various secondary and high schools all over the country, many francophone secondary school leavers are unable to use English [3]. They do not have the required skills to "communicate orally and in writing effectively and efficiently in varied situations; develop skills and knowledge of, and about, the language in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary" [4]. Studies have revealed that these Francophone learners have positive attitudes and are motivated to learn the language. Tchindi [5] showed that despite the lack of infrastructure and teaching materials that could foster their attitude and motivation in rural areas like Fotouni and Bandja, students were motivated to learn English and had positive attitudes toward the language. Osong [6] found that students in GHS Garoua Djamboutou and GBHS Garoua are motivated but lack self-confidence when faced with the language.

Besides, Amana [7] reports that Francophone Cameroonians behave positively toward the English language and even send their children to school in the anglophone subsystem of education. He re-evaluates the rate at which Francophones are sending their children into the anglophone subsystem of education (See also [3], [8], [9]). He observes that this trend is the same at all levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary). In universities, many Francophones are enrolling for studies in English Language, Linguistics and Literary Studies [10]. Fonyuy [11] also noticed that there is a growing interest in the English medium of education. Francophones are shifting from their predominantly French medium of education to an English medium of education in urban Cameroon mainly for economic benefits. The products of such a 'métissage' could be perfectly bilingual citizens who can be described as one of the two categories of what Nkwetisama [9] terms as "Franglophones", that is, Cameroonians with a francophone background who learned English as a foreign language in school and now perform in it as if it were their first official language. In an attempt to explain this sudden rush for the English language, Bobda [2] gives the following explanation. First, the economic crisis that hit Cameroon and the consequent decline in educational standards have diverted attention on many children to new professional and educational openings in North America and various parts of the world where English is the gateway. Secondly, with the advent of globalisation, English has reinforced its

position as the international language. Thirdly, many Francophone African youths are disenchanted with the immigration laws of France, which used to be the first readily available destination. Fourthly, new political developments in countries like South Africa have opened new dimensions, where English will be needed.

To Bobda [2], this rush for the learning of the English language could be justified by two main reasons: globalisation and the growth of English as a global language, and the need for job opportunities in English-speaking countries by French-speaking Cameroonians.

In 1994, the former Ministry of National Education [4], through its Inspectorate in Charge of the Promotion of Bilingualism, adopted the English syllabus for Francophone Secondary Schools, whose general objectives are the acquisition by learners of the four language skills, communicative skills, and extensive reading skills. Eleven years later, in 2003, the Ministry of Secondary Education [12] adopted a similar English syllabus for Francophone General Secondary Schools.

### **Specificities of the syllabus for francophone general secondary schools**

The English language syllabus for French-speaking secondary schools acknowledges the fact that English Language Teaching (ELT) is dynamic and therefore calls for English teachers to keep abreast of present-day changes so that the final products—the teachers and learners in particular—of the sub-system would sound up to date.

The language teaching theory adopted by the syllabus is based on the idea that learning is intended for communication among speakers in different social contexts, and the teaching approach is learner-centered. For that reason, learners become active actors in the learning process, and they are expected to use the language so as to communicate effectively and solve problems using the skills they have learned. Consequently, the teacher is a facilitator and an organizer who creates the learning situation and monitors the learner's strengths and weaknesses to ensure the occurrence of effective learning. Moreover, the teacher is the one who selects adequate, authentic, and realistic materials and draws up the scheme of work based on the syllabus.

As for its aim, the syllabus' ultimate aim is to foster learners abilities to communicate effectively and efficiently in varied contexts and to develop knowledge of and about language and the main sub-skills. Actually, these objectives are listed at all six levels of the cognitive domain in Bloom's taxonomy, which are "knowledge," "comprehension", "application", "analysis", "synthesis", and "evaluation". The core areas of the syllabus are listening, speaking, reading, and writing, vocabulary, grammar, themes and topics related to the learner's environment and cultural background, and supplementary reading (reading for fluency and accuracy and the development of more study skills).

Additionally, not only these goals but also the objectives for each grade/level are provided in the curriculum guidelines. For instance, by the end of the school year, the learner in "Sixième" is expected to use the four skills learned in a variety of activities to communicate effectively [12]. The specific objectives are related to listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, as well as supplementary reading. The communicative framework involves family and social life, environment, health, and well-being. It is worth mentioning that the time allotted is three hours per week.

The more the level increases, the more there are skills specific to the grade levels that are to be developed and consolidated from those learned in the previous years by the learners. In fact, there is continuity and integration in the specific objectives of each grade level.

One important thing that had been observed is that, for more than four years, the 5 hours per week allotted both in "*Sixième*" and "*Cinquième*" levels had been reduced to 3 hours per week in each level. Moreover, since August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Ministry of Secondary Education has signed Order No 264/14/MINESEC/IGE, which outlines the syllabuses for Form I and Form II of Secondary General Education [13]. The objectives of this "Programme of Study" for English-to-Francophone learners are to "communicate accurately and fluently using all four basic skills in language learning; be able to transfer knowledge learned in class to real-life situations out of the classroom; and be able to cope and survive in problem-solving situations" [13]. The syllabus for this first cycle of the subsystem covers five areas of life with specified social roles that are broken into modules. The

areas of life are the same for both the *Sixième* and *Cinquième* levels, but their modules are different.

The modules for *Sixième* are as follows. First, Family and social life (Module 1): In this module, learners are expected to use language to assert themselves as responsible members of both the narrow and extended family and of the school community. Second, Economic life and occupation (Module 2): Learner should be able to use the language to make informed choices on consumption of goods and services and explore common jobs and professions. Third, Environment, well-being and health (Module 3): Learners are expected to use the language to attend to basic health and safety needs, explore times and seasons, and have responsible eating habits. Fourth, Citizenship and human rights (Module 4): Learners are expected to use the language in real-life situations to fulfil the rights and duties of a child and basic civic duties. Fifth, Media and communication (Module 5): Learners are expected to use the language to explore audio-visual and print media, and keep abreast of modern technology.

In *Cinquième*, the modules are as follows. First, Family and social life (Module 1): learners are expected to use language to create interpersonal relationship and to talk about the home, its furniture and the daily routine. Second, Economic life and occupation (Module 2): Learners are expected to use the language to discuss more on different common jobs and professions. Third, Environment, well-being and health (Module 3): Learners are expected to use the language create environmental awareness and to explore interests and hobbies in relation to health. Fourth, Citizenship and human rights (Module 4): Learners are expected to use the language in real-life situations to explore citizens of the nation and the world (in relation to globalisation). Fifth, Media and communication (Module 5): Learners are expected to use the language to keep abreast of modern technology.

The time allotted to teach these modules is 75 hours a year, thus, three hours per week in both levels (*Sixième* and *Cinquième*). In addition, there is a teacher's guide, in which certain approaches, methods, and techniques for teachers have also been provided. It is revealed that the learner-centered approach, especially the "competence-based approach," and eclectic method should be employed in the courses. It is also stated that the collaborative learning environment should be enhanced and small group

work activities should be used even in crowded classrooms. In addition, communicative activities are highly suggested, and the teachers are required to use various methods and techniques to get the students to participate in the lesson.

In all, the syllabus focuses on the student's knowledge of the sounds, intonation patterns, and pronunciation, the vocabulary items found in the dialogues and texts, the parts of speech in simple sentences, the grammatical rules in simple sentences; the comprehension of the grammatical structures and speech acts of simple and complex sentences, the dialogues and texts listened to and read; and the daily experiences in spoken English. It also emphasizes the application of the structures, functions, and vocabulary items accurately in speaking and writing.

From the above specifications of the syllabus, it can be seen that the teaching of English to Francophones provides them with skills and strategies to cope with a continuously changing world. The syllabus helps francophone learners of English to communicate efficiently in real-life situations in Cameroonian contexts. While describing the syllabus, Nkwetisama [14] holds that the syllabus reveals very important issues, including that the socially appropriate and communicative use of language, the linguistic and general structure which include the social roles that the learners are called upon to play, the language functions and notions that are indispensable for the proper mastery of language, the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; the grammatical, lexical and pronunciation skills as well as the thinking skills.

With such a syllabus, by the end of the first cycle of secondary school, Francophones should be able to express themselves efficiently and fluently in English. The outcomes of the subsystem will be perfect bilingual Cameroonians. This syllabus is so laudable to the extent that Nkwetisama [14] holds that, "with such a syllabus, it is expected that all Francophone Cameroonians who leave high school should be the real, perfect bilinguals; but it is feared that what actually obtains of these learners is the tip of an iceberg of what they are supposed to be".

A close examination of learners' achievement rates in the English language shows that the objectives of the syllabus are far from being attained. There is a huge gap between what the students learn in the classroom setting and how they actually implement it in the real world,

which is where the knowledge is destined to be applied. The English-language curriculum for Francophone General Secondary Schools as implemented is far from achieving the goals of the educational subsystem. Several authors have noted that the state policy on education is well structured and the contents are adequately defined, but the implementation poses problems [15], [16].

These students' poor performance in English calls for a critical judgment of the mode of implementation of the francophone Cameroonian English language curriculum in order to identify the main cause of the problem as well as its solutions.

### Statement of the problem

The English language is taught to Francophone students as a foreign language from basic education to higher education [17]. Nevertheless, it has been observed that the majority of these students at the secondary and high schools, after the level of "*Terminale*" class, cannot use English effectively [15], [17]. Those who can make an effort to speak only do so during English classes.

Indeed, there is a syllabus with clear objectives and detailed instructions and explanations about its implementation; there are trained teachers to implement the syllabus, and there are inspectorates to control the implementation of the syllabus; there are also designed course books, and there are learners to whom the content of the syllabus is destined. This is probably due to malpractice or bad implementation of the approach to teaching and learning stated in the Cameroonian national curriculum for English language for Francophone General Secondary Schools. By and large, the teaching process is examination-oriented [18]. Teaching is focused on aspects of the language that are part of official examinations; these aspects include grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and essay writing. While teaching, teachers seem to deal more with these aspects instead of helping students develop communicative skills through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities.

### Aim and objectives of the study

The broad aim of the study is to assess the implementation of the curriculum in some Cameroonian secondary schools in the Far-North Region with a view to identifying the root causes of the unsatisfactory performance of students.

Some of the specific objectives include: (1) to find out the appropriateness of the syllabus in terms of goals, contents, and methods; (2) to examine the methods used by teachers in implementing the curriculum; (3) to determine the difficulties teachers encounter in the implementation of the syllabus; (4) to find out teachers' perceptions of the syllabus and their attitudes toward its implementation.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study is an investigation. The area covered in this work includes selected schools from three divisions of the Far-North Region (Diamaré, Mayo-Kani, and Mayo-Tsanaga). In this area where Fulfulde is the lingua franca, French, the language of administration and education, is rarely spoken in school; moreover, students are insensitive towards English.

The target population for this study includes EFL learners, EFL teachers from public secondary schools, and Pedagogical Inspectors of English, and the sample was constituted of two groups: EFL teachers and students of GBHS Maroua, GBHS Kaele, and GBHS Mokolo. The accessible population from these schools consisted of students in "3ème" (*Troisième*) and "Tle" (*Terminale*) classes and some EFL teachers. The sample of the study was 152 EFL learners and 09 EFL teachers drawn from public secondary schools, and Pedagogical Inspectors of English, and the sample was constituted of two groups: EFL teachers and students of GBHS Maroua, GBHS Kaele, and GBHS Mokolo. The accessible population from these schools consisted of students in "3ème" (*Troisième*) and "Tle" (*Terminale*) classes and some EFL teachers.

Table 1 shows that 152 students constituted the sample of the study, of whom 88 are students in *Troisième* classes and 64 are students in *Terminale* classes. In addition, the sample of teachers in the study is composed of nine (09) teachers. Aside from the teachers and students, three (03) regional pedagogic inspectors in charge of the promotion of bilingualism in the Far-North Region were also interviewed. The purpose of conducting interviews was to understand their perceptions of the current English language curriculum and its implementation.

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative techniques to enhance the findings.

Data was collected through questionnaires administered to teachers and students, as well as interviews with regional inspectors responsible for bilingualism promotion. Percentile rank was

used for data computation, and presentation was done using tables and bar charts. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized for data analysis.

Table 1. Research Participants

School	Number of Teachers	Number of Students		Total
		Grade Level		
		<i>Troisième</i>	<i>Terminale</i>	
GBHS Kaele	4	30	30	60
GBHS Maroua	3	28	26	54
GBHS Mokolo	2	30	8	38
Total	9	88	64	152

The data were also subjected to a number of statistical analyses intended to address the research questions posed in this study. To address the research questions, the EFL students and EFL teachers' implementation activity scores were calculated from their responses on a four- or five-point Likert scale.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study results gathered from the data collected revealed the followings.

### Appropriateness of English Syllabus for Francophone General Secondary Schools

The first question examined the appropriateness of the English language syllabus for Francophone General Secondary Schools, focusing on goals, contents, and methods aligned with the Cameroonian secondary education system's philosophy. The study revealed that both teachers and students considered the syllabus suitable, as it included activities and exercises that enhanced students' receptive and productive skills (Table 2 and 3).

Table 2. Teachers' opinions about the contents of the syllabus

Items		SDA	DA	A	SA	Total
a. Vocabulary items are comprehensible for the students	F	1	2	4	1	8
	%	12.5	25.5	50	12.5	100
b. Vocabulary activities are interesting for students	F	1	1	5	1	8
	%	12.5	12.5	62.5	12.5	100
c. Grammar activities encourage students' speaking skills	F	1	1	4	2	8
	%	12.5	12.5	50	25	100
d. Grammar content is ordered from simple to complex	F	1	-	4	3	8
	%	12.5	-	50	37.5	100
e. The topics for reading and listening are attractive to the interest of students	F	1	3	2	2	8
	%	12.5	37.5	25	25	100
f. Reading and listening activities are for the improvement of students' grammatical knowledge	F	1	4	1	2	8
	%	12.5	50	12.5	25	100
g. The speaking and listening activities are relevant for the real life situations	F	-	-	5	3	8
	%	-	-	62.5	37.5	100
h. The speaking and listening activities are applicable for students	F	1	1	5	1	8
	%	12.5	12.5	62.5	12.5	100
i. The speaking and listening activities are for the improvement of students' speaking and listening skills	F	-	1	5	2	8
	%	-	12.5	62.5	25	100
j. The writing activities are attractive to the interests of students	F	-	1	6	1	8
	%	-	12.5	75	12.5	100
k. Writing activities are applicable for the students	F	-	1	6	-	7
	%	-	14.3	85.7	-	100

Note: SDA=Strongly disagree, DA=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree, %=percentage, F=frequency.

As can be seen in Table 2, a significant percentage of the sampled teachers had positive opinions on nine of the eleven statements about the contents of the syllabus. Still, the majority disagrees on one point: that reading and listening activities are for the improvement of students'

grammatical knowledge. However, they were divided on whether the topics for reading and listening are attractive to the interests of students. This could lead to the conclusion that the respondents were satisfied with the content of the syllabus.

Table 3. Teachers' opinions about the teaching methods suggested by the syllabus

Items		SDA	DA	A	SA	Total
a. The teaching methods are the latest in the field	F	-	6	1	-	7
	%	-	87.5	14.3	-	100
b. The teaching methods are student-centred	F	1	1	3	3	8
	%	12.5	12.5	37.5	37.5	100
c. The teaching methods allow students to talk more than teachers	F	-	2	5	1	8
	%	-	25	62.5	12.5	100
d. The teaching methods allow class activities	F	-	2	3	3	8
	%	-	25	37.5	37.5	100

Note: SDA=Strongly disagree, DA=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree, %=percentage, F=frequency.

As for their opinions about the teaching methods, the results from Table 3 reported that the majority of the respondents (85.7%) are not of the opinion that the teaching methods are the latest in the field. Only 14.3% of the respondents

agreed that the methods in the syllabus are the latest in the field. However, the majority of the sampled teachers (75%) agreed that the syllabus is student-centered.

Table 4. Students' opinions about the content and activities of the English course

Items		SDA	DA	A	SA	Total
a. I frequently use the new words in the next lessons	F	6	26	72	40	144
	%	4.2	18.1	50.	27.7	100
b. The topics of the reading texts are interesting	F	12	12	62	62	148
	%	8.1	8.1	41.9	41.9	100
c. Most of the time we do grammar exercises / activities during English classes	F	12	24	66	40	142
	%	8.4	16.9	46.5	28.2	100
d. The grammar exercises and activities are interesting	F	12	22	44	64	142
	%	8.4	15.5	31	45.1	100
e. The topics for writing activities are interesting	F	12	26	64	46	148
	%	8.1	17.6	43.2	31.1	100
f. The topics for reading texts are related to real-life situations	F	6	14	74	52	146
	%	4.1	9.6	50.7	35.6	100
g. I can understand grammar exercises and activities very well	F	14	56	38	42	150
	%	9.3	37.4	25.3	28.	100
h. I don't understand anything at all	F	62	42	16	14	134
	%	46.3	31.3	12.	10.4	100

Note: SDA=Strongly disagree, DA=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree, %=percentage, F=frequency.

On the other side, 75% of the respondents are of the opinion that the teaching methods allow students to talk more than teachers. In addition, 75% of them perceived the teaching methods as allowing class activities. As for students' opinions about the content and activities of their English courses, Table 4 clearly shows that the majority of them answered positively. 77.7% of

them frequently use the new words learned in their following lessons; 83.8% found the topics of reading interesting while 86.3% found those topics were related to real-life situations. On the other side, 86.1% of them found grammar exercises and activities interesting and 53.3% of them can understand grammar exercises and activities very well.

The conclusion drawn from the analyses of the three tables (Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4) is that the English syllabus for French-speaking Secondary Schools is appropriate in terms of goals, contents, and methods.

These findings validate several other views expressed by Essossomo [19], Nkwetisama [14], Safotso [17], and Fouda [20], who described the English language syllabus for Francophone General Secondary Schools as laudable but seemed to suffer from poor implementation. Commenting on the poor implementation of the syllabus, Essossomo [19] noted that the way the syllabus is taught in Cameroonian secondary schools reveals that it is not respected and has some problems: the textbooks designed for the teaching of English to learners are examination-oriented, laying emphasis on aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, essay writing, and reading comprehension. Consequently, teachers tend to

dwell more on such aspects than speaking and listening. The present study also corroborated Essossomo's vision since it was noted that 100% of the teachers always taught vocabulary and grammar lessons in their classes.

### On the bad implementation of the syllabus in classrooms

The second question examined the methods used by teachers in the implementation of the syllabus in their various classrooms. As concerns this point, the findings from Table 5 revealed that, even though 66.7% of them never monopolise the conversation in their classrooms and that 33.3% rarely do so, 22.2% of them conducted their classes using the Traditional Grammar Method using both French and English in their classrooms. Moreover, the lessons are most of the time grammar- and vocabulary-oriented (see Table 5).

Table 5. Teacher's teaching methods in the classroom

Items		How often teacher conducts activities in classrooms					Total
		N	R	S	U	A	
a. I am the only one who speaks in class and the students listen	F	6	3	-	-	-	9
	%	66.7	33.3	-	-	-	100
b. I discuss with the students on the topics and ask their opinions	F	-	-	2	2	5	9
	%	-	-	22.2	22.2	55.6	100
c. I organize class activities in which they work in pairs or groups	F	-	-	3	3	3	9
	%	-	-	33.3	33.3	33.3	100
d. I explain the lesson in French for their comprehension	F	2	5	2	-	-	9
	%	22.2	55.6	22.2	-	-	100
e. I read the text aloud and then ask them to answer the questions	F	4	-	3	-	2	9
	%	44.4	-	33.3	-	22.2	100
f. I ask students to do translation exercises	F	5	1	3	-	-	9
	%	55.6	11.1	33.3	-	-	100
g. I ask students to do reading practice to improve their speed and accuracy in comprehension	F	1	2	4	2	-	9
	%	11.1	22.2	44.4	22.2	-	100
h. I conduct my classes in English instead of in French	F	2	-	-	2	5	9
	%	22.2	-	-	22.2	55.6	100
i. I organize listening and speaking activities in my classroom	F	-	-	1	5	3	9
	%	-	-	11.1	55.6	33.3	100
j. I spend more time on grammar and vocabulary lessons	F	-	4	3	1	1	9
	%	-	44.4	33.3	11.1	11.1	100

Note: N=Never, R=Rarely, S=Sometimes, U=Usually, A=Always, %=percentage, F=frequency.

Table 6 confirms it, as it shows that all the respondents (100%) always teach vocabulary lessons, and all of them either always (88.9%) or usually (11.1%) teach grammar lessons. Again, 55.5% of the teachers rarely teach listening skills

or do it sometimes. Still, 77.3% of the teachers do nothing to encourage their students to do reading practice in order to improve their proficiency in English, while the syllabus stipulates that, teachers should select materials for



supplementary reading in order to develop in the learner a reading culture. Moreover, only 33.3% of the respondent teachers always organise activities for students to work in groups or pairs

(see Table 5). Again, results from Table 5 indicate that 88.8% of the teachers said their role is to transmit knowledge through explanations and examples.

Table 6. Frequency of teaching of the skills

Skills		How often teacher teaches language skills in classrooms					Total
		N	R	S	U	A	
Listening	F	-	4	1	1	3	9
	%	-	44.4	11.1	11.1	33.3	100
Speaking	F	-	-	1	2	6	9
	%	-	-	11.1	22.2	66.7	100
Reading	F	-	1	-	1	7	9
	%	-	11.1	-	11.1	77.8	100
Writing	F	-	-	2	4	3	9
	%	-	-	22.2	44.4	33.3	100
Grammar	F	-	-	-	1	8	9
	%	-	-	-	11.1	88.9	100
Vocabulary	F	-	-	-	-	9	9
	%	-	-	-	-	100	100
Pronunciation	F	-	-	2	3	4	9
	%	-	-	22.2	33.3	44.4	100

Note: N=Never, R=Rarely, S=Sometimes, U=Usually, A=Always, %=percentage, F=frequency.

This non-application of the adequate method surely explains the difficulties that students have in the English course: 73% do not understand the meanings of vocabulary items; 62.7% have difficulties with grammar rules; 62% do not understand listening texts; 79.4% have difficulties speaking; 60.9% cannot write in

English; 74.3% have difficulties reading; and 52.9% have problems with pronunciation (see Table 7). At this point and based on the percentages, it can be concluded that EFL teachers do not use adequate teaching methods as suggested by the English Syllabus for Francophone General Secondary Schools.

Table 7. Students' difficulties in English courses

Items		What are the problems you face during English classes?				Total
		SDA	DA	A	SA	
a. Understanding the meaning of vocabulary items	F	2	38	54	54	148
	%	1.3%	25.7%	36.5%	36.5%	100
b. Understanding the grammatical rules	F	14	42	60	34	150
	%	9.3%	28%	40%	22.7%	100
c. Understanding the listening text	F	4	40	50	39	142
	%	9.9%	28.2%	35.2%	26.8%	100
d. Speaking in English	F	18	26	54	46	144
	%	12.5%	18.1%	37.5%	31.9%	100
e. Writing paragraph in English	F	24	30	44	40	138
	%	17.4%	21.7%	31.9%	29%	100
f. Understanding a reading text	F	10	28	78	32	148
	%	6.8%	18.9%	52.7%	21.6%	100
g. Articulating sounds (pronunciation)	F	10	56	40	34	140
	%	7.1%	40%	28.6%	24.3%	100
h. I don't understand anything at all	F	68	24	26	16	134
	%	50.7%	17.9%	19.4%	11.9%	100

Note: SDA=Strongly disagree, DA=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree, %=percentage, F=frequency.

Several works on educational innovation have identified a disconnection between curriculum policies and classroom practice in terms of teaching principles. In Japan, for instance, Gorsuch [21] found that, while the curriculum policy emphasised the development of students' communicative competence through all four skills, Japanese teachers instead taught their students to memorise grammatical rules and accuracy in the language. Orafi and Borg [22] reported a similar situation in Libya, where teachers were reluctant toward the implementation of the new Communicative English curriculum.

Tonzock [23] (see also [17], [24]), in her survey about the methodology used in the classroom and its effects on learners' participation and understanding of English as a foreign language in Yaounde, noticed that most teachers were aware of the existence of a plethora of methods suggested by the syllabus, yet they did not use them. She found out that most teachers used communicative methods but ignored aspects like learners' feelings. This remark also ties in with the findings of this work, where 77.8% of the teachers feel comfortable with the CLT method but ignore other teaching techniques. Techniques like role-play, group or

pair work, and games were scarcely used despite their useful effects on learners. These techniques enable learners to effectively and efficiently use what they learn in the classroom in real-life situations. Therefore, accepting and implementing this change in Cameroonian schools will mean that "the teacher has to go from his his/her traditional and old-fashioned fixed teaching techniques to a kind of flexible, learner-centered, and functionally communicative approach to learning, which will match international standards" [25].

### On factors influencing the implementation of the curriculum

As for the third question, it examined the difficulties that teachers faced in the implementation of the syllabus in their classrooms. In other words, it sought to find out factors that hinder or impede the implementation of the English Language Syllabus for Francophone General Secondary Schools. The findings revealed that there are four factors that hinder the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms (see Table 8 and 9): (1) professional development needs; (2) language proficiency; (3) working conditions; and (4) teaching experience.

Table 8. Internal Factors on curriculum implementation

Items		SDA	DA	A	SA	Total
a. The limited teaching time makes it difficult for me to practice students' spoken English in classrooms	F	-	6	3	-	9
	%	-	66.7	33.3	-	100
b. My workload and class size make it difficult for me to achieve the objectives of the syllabus	F	2	4	3	-	9
	%	22.2	44.4	33.3	-	100
c. My role as a teacher is to transmit knowledge through explanations and examples	F	-	1	4	4	9
	%	-	11.1	44.4	44.4	100
d. It is difficult for me to develop students' listening and speaking abilities to the extent that they communicate	F	-	6	3	-	9
	%	-	66.7	33.3	-	100
e. Group work or pair work activities in classrooms are useless because I cannot monitor my students' performance and prevent them from using French	F	3	6	-	-	9
	%	33.3	66.7	-	-	100
f. My students have the opportunity to improve their English at the linguistic centre	F	1	3	4	1	9
	%	11.1	33.3	44.4	11.1	100
g. Limited teaching hours hinder my ability to engage students in group or pair work activities.	F	2	3	4	-	9
	%	22.2	33.3	44.4	-	100

Note: SDA=Strongly disagree, DA=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree, %=percentage, F=frequency

### Professional Development Needs

The findings on this point revealed that all the teachers needed to know more about new approaches; that there is a need for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and understanding of

language and language learning (88.8%); and that there is a need to change professional interests and needs over time (62.5%). Moreover, only 37.5% of them are evaluated anonymously by their students (see Table 9). Feedback from

students assists teachers in improving their teaching techniques and methods as part of professional development activities.

Several researchers have shown the importance of teachers' professional development [26]–[28]. Nyarigoti [29] acknowledges that continuing professional development needs to help teachers "keep abreast

of the merging knowledge base in order to refine their conceptual understanding and practical skills". Professional development is a critical link to improved teaching. Teachers should constantly develop not only their knowledge of the subject matter but also their knowledge of pedagogy [30].

Table 9. External factors on curriculum implementation

Items		SDA	DA	A	SA	Total
a. I was taught by Grammar Translation method	F	3	1	5	-	9
	%	33.3	11.1	55.6		100
b. I was taught by the Communicative Language Teaching method	F	-	-	6	2	8
	%	-	-	75	25	100
c. The way I learned English as a student influences the way I teach	F	2	1	5	1	9
	%	22.2	11.1	55.6	11.1	100
d. I feel comfortable with the Communicative Language Teaching method	F	-	2	2	5	9
	%	-	22.2	22.2	55.6	100
e. I feel comfortable with the Grammar-Translation method	F	3	3	2	1	9
	%	33.3	33.3	22.2	11.1	100
f. My level of English-speaking ability influences my teaching	F	1	1	6	1	9
	%	11.1	11.1	66.7	11.1	100
g. My teaching experience helps me in my teaching	F	-	-	6	3	9
	%	-	-	66.7	33.3	100
h. I would like to learn more about the competence-based approach	F	-	-	5	4	9
	%	-	-	55.6	44.4	100
i. I attend seminars and workshops for my professional development	F	-	-	3	6	9
	%	-	-	33.3	66.7	100
j. I would like to improve my language teaching through professional development	F	-	1	4	4	9
	%	-	11.1	44.4	44.4	100
k. I would like to improve my language teaching by working on a graduate degree	F	-	3	4	1	8
	%	-	37.5	50	12.5	100
l. My students evaluate me anonymously	F	-	5	2	1	8
	%	-	62.5	25	12.5	100
m. I have access to English teaching resources	F	-	1	6	1	8
	%	-	12.5	75	12.5	100
n. I have access to no English teaching resource	F	5	-	1	1	7
	%	71.4	-	14.3	14.3	100
o. The size of my classes influences my teaching	F	-	5	1	2	8
	%	-	62.5	12.5	25	100
p. My workload influences my teaching	F	-	5	1	2	8
	%	-	62.5	12.5	25	100
q. My students' English abilities influence my teaching	F	-	3	2	3	8
	%	-	37.5	25	37.5	100

Note: SDA=Strongly disagree, DA=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree, %=percentage, F=frequency.

### *Language Proficiency and Teaching Experiences*

In an attempt to justify students' low proficiency in English, Li [28] stated that the average secondary school student has a very small English vocabulary. They know a limited number of English structures. So they have great difficulty expressing themselves in English when

they are assigned to do communicative activities. Gradually, they lose interest in trying to speak English and become too discouraged to speak it any more [28].

In this case, students become resistant to class participation. They sit motionless, take notes while the teacher lectures, and speak only when

they are spoken to. This may explain why 66.6% of the respondents said their students either participate only when they understand or do not put any effort into learning English (see Table 9). These students' disinterestedness toward English is surely due to the fact that they are not exposed to the language. Moreover, Richards [31] claimed that teachers are a key factor in the successful implementation of curriculum innovation. Among the teacher factors, teaching experience is one of the central elements. This is proven by the high percentage scored in the present study, where 100% of the teachers acknowledged that their teaching experiences helped them in their teaching (see Table 4). The majority of those who affirmed it had between 2 and 5 years of teaching experience.

#### *Resources and Working Conditions*

Resources and working conditions have been considered essential in determining the successful implementation of an innovation or change in ESL and EFL contexts. Everard, Morris, and Wilson [32] classified three resources—material, financial, and human—as the most important. This has been proven in the

present study since 88.8% of the teachers complained of the sizes of the classes and the workload, and 44.4% of them mentioned the students poor background in English and lack of textbooks (see also [25]).

Added to these factors, the interviews with the pedagogical inspectors revealed that among the challenges that the teachers face in implementing the syllabus are the following: Overcrowded classes; a lack of books; difficulties adapting the syllabus to the local realities; a lack of willingness of teachers to have the syllabus, exploit it, and implement it; and learners' low level due to weaknesses accumulated because of the lack of teachers.

#### **On teachers' attitudes towards the syllabus**

The fourth question surveyed teachers' perceptions of the English Language Syllabus for Francophone General Secondary Schools. According to Carless [33], teachers' attitudes are derived primarily from their own experiences as learners, their professional training, their teaching experiences, their interaction with colleagues, and the cultural values and norms of the society in which they live.

Table 10. Teachers' opinion about the English Syllabus for Francophone in general

Items		SDA	DA	A	SA	Total
a. The syllabus aims to develop students' communicative competence	F	-	2	6	-	8
	%	-	25	75	-	100
b. The syllabus aims to develop students' reading, listening, writing, speaking competence	F	-	1	3	4	8
	%	-	12.5	37.5	50	100
c. I feel that the syllabus is a clearly written document	F	1	4	3	-	8
	%	12.5	50	37.5	-	100.
d. I understand what I am expected to teach under the guidance of the syllabus	F	-	3	3	2	8
	%	-	37.5	37.5	25	100.
e. I understand how I am expected to teach under the guidance of the syllabus	F	-	1	4	2	7
	%	-	14.3	57.1	28.6	100.
f. The English syllabus for Francophones is complicate; it is difficult for me to follow in my classrooms	F	-	3	5	-	8
	%	-	37.5	62.5	-	100.
g. I feel the syllabus is very practical	F	-	2	3	3	8
	%	-	25	37.5	37.5	100.
h. I feel the syllabus is more theoretical than practical	F	-	4	3	1	8
	%	-	50	37.5	12.5	100.

Note: SDA=Strongly disagree, DA=Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree, %=percentage, F=frequency.

This is true, as shown by the percentages scored in the findings from Table 10: 62.5% of the teachers found that the syllabus was not clearly written. This may mean that some adjustments need to be made or a sort of 'teacher's guide' is needed. This surely explains

why they all want to know more about the competency-based approach. Again, the fact that 66.7% of the teachers affirmed that there is a relationship between the way they were taught English as students and the way they teach it in classrooms can be explained by the fact that their

majority (55.6%) was taught by traditional methods, thus they behave in classrooms as instructors. This further explains why 55.5% of them rarely or sometimes teach listening skills in their classrooms, why all of them usually or always teach grammar and vocabulary in their classrooms, and why 33.3% of them ask their students to do translation exercises.

Moreover, 50% of the respondents did not find the topics/themes for reading and listening activities interesting for students (see Table 2). Again, Table 9 shows that the majority of the participants (55.6%) were taught by the Grammar Translation method. Over 66.7% of them acknowledged that the way they learned English as students had an influence on the way they teach (see Table 9).

These findings corroborate other researchers' works [20], [25], [34]. As Waugh and Punch [35] put it, when teachers' attitudes match the innovation, the result is their positive attitudes toward its implementation. However, when their attitudes are incompatible with the innovation, the result is a negative attitude toward its implementation, thus resistance to change.

In addition to the above findings, the study also revealed that the majority of the teachers said their students have negative attitudes towards English lessons.

Students have difficulties in almost all the language skills; their major problems in doing listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities are related to word pronunciation, spelling, listening to words, and words' meanings; When writing their exams, students have problems mainly in the grammar and vocabulary sections.

Most of the students, in order to improve their English, read English documents, look up difficult words in a dictionary, and interact in English with people who speak the language at home or at school; again, they love English because either it is one of the official languages spoken in Cameroon or because it is the world language.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the appropriateness of the syllabus in terms of goals, contents, and methods, the

findings have revealed that teachers do not use adequate teaching methods and techniques in the implementation of the syllabus. In their classrooms, they act as instructors, explainers, and transmitters of knowledge to students who are considered "empty vessels," whereas the syllabus recommends that they be facilitators of learning and negotiators of lesson content and process; that they be responders to learners needs and encourage them in their learning activities.

However, the blame could not be put on teachers and their techniques or approaches alone. The findings have also revealed that there are other factors impeding the implementation of the English language curriculum in the selected schools. These are teaching experience and language proficiency, resources and working conditions, and needs for professional development.

Recommendations for improving the implementation of the syllabus are as follows. First, school administrators should equip their schools with adequate teaching materials. Moreover, to solve the problem of overcrowded classrooms, the number of students per class should be reduced to sixty (60) students. This will allow teachers effectively organise activities in their classrooms; thus implementing the curriculum. Second, teachers should make an effort to organise group and pair work activities in their classrooms and avoid acting as instructors in their classes. They should also not rely on textbooks for guidance in teaching English. Moreover, they should attend pedagogic seminars and continuous in-service training. In addition, teachers should vary their classes and make them more attractive and lively by involving students in much more activities; they should also not just focus on the coverage of the programme, but more attention should be paid to students' communicative competences. Third, students should make an effort to participate during their English classes by answering and asking questions whenever they have difficulties. Those who are shy in class can see their teachers outside the classroom and expose their problems. In addition, students should make an effort to have a course book or a bilingual dictionary that could help them look up difficult words and their meanings.

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