

Perceptions of, and attitudes towards, English teaching and learning in Cameroon's technical education

Innocent Mbouya Fasse¹, Alain Flaubert Takam²

¹Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, University of Douala, Douala, Cameroon

²Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug 31, 2021

Revised Jul 11, 2022

Accepted Aug 2, 2022

Keywords:

Cameroon technical education

English for specific purposes

Language management

Perceptions and attitudes

Second official language

ABSTRACT

This study examined the current practices, difficulties and impacts of English as second official language (ESOL) teaching and learning in secondary schools in Cameroon. It investigated the perceptions and attitudes of students, teachers and parents towards the teaching and learning of ESOL, including prevailing teaching and learning practices. This study stemmed from the observation that the exit profile of most students in technical secondary schools does not correspond to the official exit profile set out by the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC). It was therefore necessary to survey students, parents, and teachers with the goal of identifying areas of concern and proposing remedial solutions. Responses of these key stakeholders selected in four education institutions (including two technical high schools and two general high schools) to questionnaires have provided data for the study. Such responses offered insights into the current situation in Cameroon's ESOL, as well as into the possible utility of, and desire for, the development of ESOL courses aimed at students learning in technical schools. The inclusion and development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Cameroon's ESOL teaching and learning could help bring education stakeholders and policymakers closer to what they want to see from the country's ESOL program.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Alain Flaubert Takam

Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge

4401 University Drive West, Lethbridge, Alberta, T1K 3M4, Canada

Email: alain.takam@uleth.ca

1. INTRODUCTION

Plurilingualism, the ability of a person to communicate in more than one language, continues to be a skill that is ever-growing in importance worldwide, providing speakers of multiple languages cognitive, sociological, and professional advantages [1]–[4]. French and English (Cameroon's official languages), over 260 local languages, a widespread pidgin English and a composite language (Camfranglais) make up the linguistic landscape of Cameroon. Both official languages are compulsory in education system, from primary school all the way to the university. French is taught as the second official language to Anglophones while English is taught as a second official language to Francophones, in either case as a mandatory subject. Francophone Cameroonians, who constitute over 80% of the overall population of the country, therefore have the opportunity to learn English, the lingua franca of the world. This notwithstanding, the rate of Cameroonians who may claim to be bilingual remains low, at "22.7% for the country as a whole, of which 17.5% live in urban areas and 5.2% in rural areas" [5]. These figures clearly imply that, despite the commendable efforts of the State to promote English and French in the education system, Cameroon's official bilingualism is still divorced from individual bilingualism which was supposed to be the ultimate

result of the country's language management. One of the most fundamental reasons of this failure, according to the Compendium of Language Management in Canada (CLMC), is the "shortage of French second-language teachers and especially English second-language teachers Thus, students can graduate from high school counting the number of times they have an English class in a year, which shows that English classes are extremely rare if not almost non-existent!" [5].

From the foregoing, it can be seen that a large amount of work remains to be carried out in the desire to promote English and make it available for every pupil and every student in the country, particularly in technical secondary and high schools where classes are normally focused on trades. The shortage of English teachers is far more pronounced in technical education where students can spend years without having an English teacher. Yet, at the end of the final class of the technical education system, students "would have built competences and fundamental knowledge in addition to intellectual, civic and moral skills which will enable them to develop their language proficiencies in particular and foster their learning in general thereby equipping them for further training or enabling them to meet up with subsequent everyday challenges in their lives and occupations" [6]. It is surprising that the exit profile of many students in technical secondary schools does not in any way correspond to the official exit profile set out by the Inspectorate General of Education at the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC). This appears to contradict the objectives of the country's language planners, especially considering the potential advantages a student may have in the future thanks to having a proficiency in English, regardless of their post-secondary destination, be it in Cameroon or abroad.

In other parts of the world, the implementation of language for specific purposes (LSP) courses has shown promising outcomes, particularly in technical education schools, and the call for such programs have increased accordingly [7], [8]. Numerous works carried out in the area of English for specific purposes (ESP), whose origin is traced as far back as the 1960s as a result of technological changes in the world's markets and the increasing number of overseas students in English-speaking countries [9], have shown how students could get the most out of their language learning through this type of English language teaching and learning. ESP approach was designed, from its inception, to be learner-centered, its goal being "to prepare students whose native language is not English to either complete English language course work in specific subject areas, such as medicine or law, or perform professional, on-the-job duties using English as the medium" [7]. Robinett, Hutchinson, and Waters [9] defined it as "an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning." More broadly, LSP is described as "the teaching of a language as a second or foreign language for certain groups of students to whom the syllabus, tasks, and methodology is especially tailored to their interests and needs" [10].

ESP instruction, based on the model provided by Robinson [11], recognizes two types of instruction: English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The former type of instruction forks into two subcategories: English for professional purposes (EPP) and English for vocational purposes (EVP). The latter type of instruction also branches off into two subcategories: English for academic purposes (other than English for science and technology) and English for science and technology (EST). According to Martin [7], courses in EOP train individuals to perform on the job, using the target language to communicate while courses in EAP feature "primarily a common core element known as "study skills" such as academic writing, listening to lectures, note-taking, making oral presentations, which enable one to succeed" [7] in an academic setting that uses English.

No matter the model of instruction that is considered, Dudley-Evans [12] distinguishes two sets of ESP characteristics: absolute and variable. The absolute characteristics of ESP are: i) It is defined to meet specific needs of the learners; ii) It makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; and iii) It is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre. On the other hand, the variable characteristics of ESP are: i) It may be related to, or designed for, specific disciplines; ii) It may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English; iii) It is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level; iv) It is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students; and v) Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems [13].

The drawing up of a careful and appropriate syllabus is key to the success of LSP teaching and learning. In her study on designing and implementing a French for specific purpose (FSP) program, Martin observed that "an appropriate FSP syllabus should involve pragmatic, experience-based instruction and be aimed at preparing learners for real-world demands. A major component of FSP courses, therefore, is experiential language learning in context" [7]. The author goes on to specify three types of successful LSP syllabi depending on teaching philosophy, learner needs, available materials, time: i) Content- or product-based syllabi; ii) Skills-based syllabi; and iii) Method- or process-based syllabi [7]. Content- or product-based syllabi are organized according to specific topics. For example, in a French for Business course, "the

syllabus might be laid out according to topic areas such as banking, telecommunications, accounting, advertising, and import-export” [7]. This type of syllabi may contain communicative situations in which “students are likely to find themselves in the target context, such as looking for housing, shopping in outdoor markets, dealing with the post office, explaining one’s symptoms to a medical doctor, and so forth” [7]. Skills-based syllabi, on the other hand, specially emphasizes at least one of the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Reading, for example may be broken down into such subskills as skimming, scanning, or reading for certain types of information [7]. Finally, method- or process-based syllabi, “tend to involve tasks that are to be performed by students, such as planning itineraries, solving problems of various sorts in the work place, or completing a project. The focus in these types of syllabi tends to be on the learner, learning processes, and on meaning” [7].

It is noteworthy that the three types of syllabi are not at all watertight. In fact, “many LSP courses combine several of these approaches to learning, adapting the syllabus to the situation at hand, including the types of instructors who teach the courses, the number, language level and attitudes of students, the number of contact hours one has with the students, and the types of materials one is able to obtain” [7]. Flexibility is therefore a key word in FSP design and implementation. As can be seen from the foregoing paragraphs, ESP may be able to play a crucial role in the teaching and learning of English in technical education in Cameroon as programs are generally focused on specific goals and post-secondary destinations. English would thus be taught and learnt in concordance with students’ specific future goals in mind.

To further explain the context of this study, Cameroon’s educational system is as unique as its linguistic landscape. In fact, the dual colonial heritage of the country (British and French colonial rules) led the independent and federal state to opt for a dual education system as well, with an Anglophone subsystem of education (ASE) derived from the British system of education and a Francophone subsystem of education (FSE), a replica of the French education system. After primary education, both ASE and FSE forks into two main orientations: general education (GE) and technical education (TE). This paper focuses on the teaching of English as second official language (ESOL) in the FSE (more especially technical education) whose operation mode is necessary to fully grasp the current study. The FSE comprises three cycles before university studies: nursery (two or three classes depending on the entry age of the pupil), primary (six classes) and post-primary (four classes for the first cycle and three classes for the second). Table 1 summarizes the organization of the FSE at post-primary level in Cameroon indicating the average number of hours of ESOL prescribed by curriculum. Regarding ESOL syllabuses, no major distinction is made between GE and TE apart from the requirement levied on ESOL teachers in TE to integrate, as much as possible, lexical items related to the trade to which belong their students. They have to do this through their own research or material development efforts. Moreover, there is no specific training for teachers of ESOL in TE in teacher training colleges, just like ESOL coursebooks set both for TE and GE are usually similar [14].

Table 1. ESOL teaching load in post-primary French subsystem of education in Cameroon

	General education (GE)		Technical education (TE)	
	Classes	Weekly hours	Classes	Weekly hours
First cycle	<i>6ème</i>	3 hours	<i>1ère année</i>	3 hours
	<i>5ème</i>	3 hours	<i>2ème année</i>	3 hours
	<i>4ème</i>	3 hours	<i>3ème année</i>	3 hours
	<i>3ème</i>	3 hours	<i>4ème année</i>	3 hours
Second cycle	<i>Seconde (Arts)</i>	4 hours	<i>Seconde (commercial)</i>	4 hours
	<i>Seconde (Science)</i>	3 hours	<i>Seconde (industrial)</i>	3 hours
	<i>Première (Arts)</i>	3 hours	<i>Première (commercial)</i>	4 hours
	<i>Première (science)</i>	3 hours	<i>Première (industrial)</i>	3 hours
	<i>Terminale (Arts)</i>	3 hours	<i>Terminale (commercial)</i>	3 hours
	<i>Terminale (Science)</i>	3 hours	<i>Terminale (industrial)</i>	2 hours

Sources: English Syllabuses, MINESEC [7]

2. RESEARCH METHOD

To address the main objectives of this article, quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires given to students of *Première* and *Terminale* classes, parents and ESOL teachers in four secondary schools in French Cameroon, totaling 196, 60, and 14, respectively. The 196 student participants were distributed as: 47 in Lycée Technique Mbouda (LTM), 38 in Lycée Technique Koumassi Douala (LTK) (for a total of 85 students in technical education), 51 in Lycée Classique Bafoussam and 60 in Lycée Joss Douala (for a total of 111 in general education). Table 2 shows the distribution of participants by categories of education and by schools to which they are attached. It indicates a difference in the parent and teacher to student participants ratio. There are more parent participants from the technical education schools: 37 parents out of 60, that is 62% of participants. The teacher participants from the technical education schools also represent 65% of participants which is 9 out of 14 teachers.

However, the number of student participants from the general education schools exceeds those from the technical education schools: 111 students out of 196, that is 57% of participants. According to the education fact sheet presented by Hali Access Network [15] on education in Cameroon, technical education is more costly and therefore tends to be less popular than general education. This gives an indication that the student population in the general education schools is higher than in the technical education schools, and therefore accounts for the lower student participants in the technical education schools.

Table 2. Participants by category of education and by school

Schools	Participants					
	Parents	% of group	Student	% of group	Teachers	% of group
LTM (TE)	3	5	47	24	4	29
LTK (TE)	34	57	38	19	5	36
Total	37	62	85	43	9	65
LCB (GE)	0	0	51	26	2	14
LJD (GE)	23	38	60	31	3	21
Total	23	38	111	57	5	35
Grand total	60	100	196	100	14	100

Students were obviously the main target of this study. Teachers and especially parents were also surveyed because, as important stakeholders who directly influence student participants, their perceptions could throw some light on student participants' attitudes towards the teaching and learning of English in French Cameroon. More importantly, teacher participation helped us have a better understanding of some of the factors that determined students' performance and active participation in ESOL. The data reported in Table 2 indicates a total of 14 teacher participants. Surprisingly, the majority of teachers were from technical schools: 9 teachers representing 65% and just five teachers from general schools representing 35%. Student participants filled in their questionnaires in the respective classes. Table 3 shows the distribution of student participants according to their school and their class.

Table 3. Distribution of student participants by school and class

Schools	Student participants by school and class							No answer
	Tle ind.	Tle com.	Tle gen.	1 ^{ère} ind.	1 ^{ère} com.	1 ^{ère} gen.	Seconde	
LTM	0	0	0	39	0	0	0	8
LTK	7	3	0	15	7	0	1	5
Total	7	3	0	54	7	0	1	13
LCB	0	0	46	0	0	0	0	5
LJD	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	12
Total	0	0	46	0	0	48	0	17
Grand total	7	3	46	54	7	48	1	30

Every parent surveyed had at least one child that was taking an ESOL class at the time of the study. Each participant received a questionnaire that was specifically designed for their participant group. As can be seen in Table 2, there is a vast difference between student and parent participants. Ideally, all parents of students should have participated, but as demonstrated, the total number of parent participants is 60 which clearly does not correspond to the total number of student participants of 196. This indicates that not all parents were available or willing to partake in the research.

All three types of questionnaires contained multiple choice and open-ended questions. Participants were able to answer as they saw fit and to skip any questions that they felt did not apply to them. The filled-in questionnaires were collected, and the data was then entered into a database. Answers to open-ended questions were categorized in order to best analyze the entire dataset, while maintaining the integrity of each individual answer. Calculations were then made using the Excel software, with the goal of analyzing pertinent observations and relations within the collected data. For the responses provided by students, parents and teachers, percentages were considered (where necessary) to develop an understanding of trends, particularly for questions concerning their motivations of, and attitudes towards, ESOL and ESP. Percentages were calculated from the number of total responses given to each specific question. Several questions involved in this study were open-ended, and several students provided more than one answer to them, resulting in a possible total of more than one answer per student. For these questions, percentages were considered individually, i.e., by the response's frequency amongst the total number of students who responded to the entire question.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Students

Unsurprisingly, most students reported French as their first language (L1): 188 students out 196, that is 96% of participants. This figure is even higher when we consider the student population of Douala where 100% of student respondents reported French as their L1. In fact, Cameroon national languages, once vehicular, have progressively lost their vehicular and even their daily practice under the pressure of French which tracks them down and threatens their use even in households [16]. The situation is even more alarming in urban centers in the French-speaking regions of the country where French has now prevailed: “French is used in interactions between children and between parents and children in urban households. All current urban parents aged 30 to 65 speak one or more Cameroonian languages; on the other hand, only 60% of their offspring have a competence in understanding and speaking the languages of their parents; 40% of children from endogamous city households have French as their only language of communication” [16].

It is also not surprising that 67 students out of 196, that is 34%, reported having at least two first languages (L1): French and a Cameroon national language. In fact, in a survey carried out by Simo Bobda and Fasse [17], it was demonstrated that Cameroonians (and those living in a similar sociolinguistic environment) can have several L1, depending on the role played by each of the languages that appears in their linguistic repertoire and according to the communication context. This study also shows a great disproportionality between female and male student participants in both technical and general schools. Firstly, there were more male student participants than female student participants in general: 109 out of 196 participants. A look at the general schools indicates 65 female students as opposed to 45 male students. On the other hand, the technical schools show that female students represented are three times less than the male students: 18 female students as opposed to 64 male students. Fielding [18] reported a low enrolment of girls in technical and vocational education in Cameroon due to the fact that they are less interested in programs that are Maths and Science concentrated.

In terms of what students like in their English classes, the majority of participants reported having a great interest in grammar lessons followed by reading comprehension lessons and vocabulary respectively. Only eight students representing 3% stated that they did not like English. This is an indication that most students, as can be seen in Table 4, have an interest in learning English. The majority of students reported an interest in grammar lessons in their English classes. It was therefore not surprising that, again, grammar lessons were for most students the aspect of English that they would like to learn more about: 90 students representing 24% of the total respondents, followed by 71 students representing 19% reporting a wish for vocabulary. Table 5 summarizes what student respondents wished to have learnt more in their ESOL classes.

Table 4. What students like the most in their English classes

Favorite elements of English	No. of students	% of group
Dialogue in class	20	7
Teaching method	30	11
Vocabulary	45	16
Reading comprehension	59	21
Grammar lessons	62	23
Essay writing	20	7
Listening and pronunciation	11	4
I do not like English	8	3
No answer	20	7
Total	275	100

Table 5. What students wish to have learnt more in their English classes

Aspects of English	No. of students	% of group
Dialogue (speech) in class	69	18
Vocabulary	71	19
Reading comprehension	41	11
Grammar lessons	90	24
Essay writing	49	13
Listening and pronunciations	42	11
No answer	16	4
Total	378	100

As shown in Table 6, almost all students believed in the fact that English has a significant role to play in their future. Here, it was evident in both technical and general schools that most students had an expectation of English becoming a part of their future. A total of 193 students representing 98% of all student participants responded positively to the anticipation of needing English in the future. None answered

negatively and only three students did not give an answer. Taking into consideration the linguistic disposition of Cameroon, it is insightful on the part of students to realize that in future, they may or will encounter English in some capacity.

Table 6. Student belief that English would play a role in their future

Schools	Students' anticipation of needing English in the future					
	Yes	% of group	No	% of group	No answer	% of group
LTM (TE)	45	23	0	0	2	67
LTK (TE)	38	18	0	0	0	0
Total	83	43	0	0	2	67
LCB (GE)	50	26	0	0	1	33
LJD (GE)	60	31	0	0	0	0
Total	110	57	0	0	1	33
Grand total	193	100	0	0	3	100

Students were also asked to identify various contexts in which English is most needed. There were 136 students admitted that the use of English is mostly required in a professional environment. In past research, it was indicated that although French and English are the official languages of Cameroon, French continues to be the dominant language in which most government services are provided with occasional English translations [19]–[25]. However, people who speak both languages are well situated to thrive in a professional setting. There were 42 students also believed that English is required for carrying out daily activities for life in general.

Table 7 shows that a good majority of students, especially those from the general education schools, acknowledged English as an important subject: 127 students in total. Quite a number of students, 49 in total, indicated that English is a difficult subject, and three students expressed their dislike for English as a subject, stating that it should totally be gotten rid of. The students who desired to get rid of English stated that their lack of understanding caused them to not be able to keep up. Nonetheless, it is still impressive to know that most students regard English as being an important subject to study.

Table 7. Students' description of English as a subject

Types of education	Students' description of English as a subject									
	A subject like any	%	An important subject	%	An easy subject	%	A difficult subject	%	A subject to get rid of	%
General education schools	25	60	75	59	15	75	32	65	3	100
Technical education schools	17	40	52	41	5	25	17	35	0	0
Total	42	100	127	100	20	100	49	100	3	100

The reasons given by the majority of students who considered English as an important subject included the fact that English is largely spoken worldwide and used for business transactions: 57 students representing 29% of the group. Also, student respondents indicated the fact that Cameroon is a bilingual country (28%), and that knowing English will open up future possibilities (28%). Some students also pointed to the fact that learning English will help them in pursuing their academic studies (12%).

Moreover, 159 students (84%) expressed an interest in working in a bilingual environment. For these students, the opportunity to improve their English language is therefore considered an important knowledge to have. On the other hand, 11% of the students answered by saying “It depends”, giving the reason that the lack of confidence in one’s capacity to learn the English language and the eventual possibility of employment appear to be important factors. Students’ responses could indicate an overall interest in learning English in general and ESP in particular. Students probably felt that knowing English related to their trades would help them in the future and, more specifically, in their future professional lives. Students reported a general interest in participating in English-French bilingual work environments which could be associated with socially prestigious and influential workplaces, as well as with higher earning positions in Cameroon and abroad. In Canada too, the other country that applies the English-French language policy, English-French bilingual work environments are associated with many socially prestigious and influential workplaces, as well as with higher earning positions [26], [27]. The use of ESP could help with student confidence, while also being able to better prepare students for future potential English-French bilingual work spaces. In a similar study carried out in Canada on the importance of being skillful French as second language (FSL), it was found out that a good ability of speak French impacts student interest in taking up future bilingual opportunities in the professional sphere, as well as their motivation [28], [29].

Concerning student participation in technical and business programs, 57% of student participants are not taking such programs. This is because most of the students are from general education schools where the only mandatory course for all students is Computer Science. The other 40% students who were taking technical and business classes were obviously all from technical education schools. For these students, some of the technical and business courses that were of interest to them included Mechanics and manufacturing in industrial technology, Civil engineering, Measurement, Drawing and Construction, as captured in Table 8.

When asked whether student participants had some previous knowledge of English as related to a technical field of study, most students (80%) had none. For the 11% of students who stated that they had previously learnt English associated to a technical field, they indicated that they had learnt from school while a few others also indicated having learnt from the internet or TV. However, the surveyed students were unanimous about wanting to learn English related to their field of study, as seen in Table 9. Undoubtedly, learning in an English for specific purpose context will help these students be able to apply their knowledge in the professional environment or even help them pursue further studies in their technical area of study.

Table 8. Student participation in technical and business classes

Technical and business classes	No. of Students	% of group
Construction	50	28
Computer science	1	0.5
Mechanics and manufacturing in industrial technology	51	28
Civil engineering, measurement and drawing	51	28
Commerce/Economy/Office automation/Accounting	14	8
Mathematics and physics/Chemistry	10	5.5
No indication	4	2
Total	181	100

Table 9. Students' interest in learning in an ESP context

Type of education	Students' interest in learning in an ESP context			
	Yes	% of group	No	% of group
General education schools	12	41	0	0
Technical education schools	17	59	0	0
Total	29	100	0	0

For most of the students who qualified to provide an answer to the question in Table 10, having a knowledge of English is very important for technical and business jobs in Cameroon. Even for the other respondents who did not qualify, but answered anyways, most of them agreed with the fact that English is important for technical and business jobs in Cameroon. When asked to list 10 words related to their trades, the 85 qualifying respondents were able to list only 99 words, 82 of which being correct and 17 being wrong. The average number of words per qualifying respondent was 1.16 with 0.96 representing the average number of correct words and 0.19 the average number of wrong words respectively as shown in Table 11. For the non-qualifying respondents (111 in total), there was a total of 207 words with 167 being correct and 40 being wrong. The average percentage of words per non-qualifying respondents was 1.86, 1.50 representing the average number of correct words and 0.36 representing the average number of wrong words. From these results, technical education students listed even less words related to their own trades than general education students. Such results are seriously concerning and should draw the attention of policy makers to the type of English that should be offered to this student population. In any effort to improve the teaching and learning of ESOL in Cameroon, focus will need to be placed on the teaching and learning of the language that can be used practically and successfully in real-life situations and that can help graduate of technical education meet up with subsequent everyday challenges in their lives and occupations.

Table 10. Student's perception of English importance for technical or business jobs in Cameroon

Type of education	Student's perception of English importance for technical or business jobs in Cameroon									
	Qualifying respondents					Other respondents				
	Very important	%	Important	%	Not very important	%	Not important at all	%	No answer	%
General education schools	9	38	2	50	0	0	0	0	1	100
Technical education schools	15	62	2	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	24	100	4	100	0	0	0	0	1	100
General education schools	59	50	25	78	7	100	0	0	8	89
Technical education schools	60	50	7	22	0	0	0	0	1	11
Total	119	100	32	100	7	100	0	0	9	100

Table 11. Technical- and business-related words given by student participants

Technical- and business-related words	LTK				LTM			
	Qualifying respondents		Wrong word		Qualifying respondents		Wrong word	
	Right word	%	Wrong word	%	Right word	%	Wrong word	%
Construction	37	47	7	64	3	100	6	100
Electronics	10	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Plumbing	8	10	2	18	0	0	0	0
Business	24	30	2	18	0	0	0	0
Total	79	100	11	100	3	100	6	100
	LJD				LCB			
	Non-qualifying respondents		Wrong word		Non-qualifying respondents		Wrong word	
	Right word	%	Wrong word	%	Right word	%	Wrong word	%
Mechanics	9	6	1	3	0	0	0	0
Aviation	8	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	64	40	19	63	9	100	10	100
Electronics	9	6	1	3	0	0	0	0
Secretariat	32	20	3	10	0	0	0	0
Accounting	4	3	1	3	0	0	0	0
Business	32	20	5	17	0	0	0	0
Total	158	100	30	100	9	100	10	100

3.2. Parents

Like student participants, majority of parent participants reported French as their L1: 56 parents out of 60, representing 93% of participants. Only two parents out of the 60, that is 3% of respondents reported English as an L1. The difference in the number of parents reporting French or English as an L1 is quite unrelatable to the bilingual placement of the country, but understandable as the schools investigated were francophone schools. Only 15 respondents representing 25% indicated that they have both French and a national language as L1. This number is quite surprising because most Francophone parents in their forties and above have two or more L1 [15], [16].

Regarding the gender distribution of parent participants, and contrary to the high number of male participants amongst student participants, there were slightly more female parent respondents than their male counterparts: 31 out of 60, that is 52% of the total parent participants. Most participating parents evaluated their English skills as being poor or very poor. A few others do well, fairly well or very well. It is possible that parents' evaluation of lacking the necessary skills in English could be one of the deciding factors in wanting their child to learn English. However, almost all parents in this study felt that fluency in English would be important for their child: 59 parents out of 60, representing 98% of parent respondents viewed very positively the possibility for their child to have a good command of English. This unanimous response indicates the level of importance that parents in Cameroon accord to bilingualism and its benefits not just for their children but for the country as a whole.

The prospect of having a good career was the reason for children needing English: 47 parents out of 60. Also, parents believed that English is necessary for their child's success because it is an important international language. According to some parents, the bilingual context of Cameroon is an important factor in having their child equipped with English language skills. Quite notably, the number of technical education parents (TEP) who believed that English is necessary for their child, as compared to the figures for general education parents (GEP) in all four categories, might suggest the perception by parents that English applied to specific trades could be very helpful in their child future careers.

The clear desire for the parent participants in this study was that their child had the opportunity to develop a certain level of fluency in English through their ESOL program, and that this fluency could then translate into greater benefits and advantages in the workplace following their child's time at secondary school. In the meaningful process of preparing "French-speaking learners of English to use the language practically and successfully in real-life situations", the implementation of ESP teaching should play an important role, as it can offer a presentable framework that is clearly aimed towards learning an English that can be easily used by students in future professional fields. After all, by the end of secondary school, especially in technical education, the learners are expected to "have built competences and fundamental knowledge in addition to intellectual, civic and moral skills which will enable them to develop their language proficiencies in particular and foster their learning in general thereby equipping them for further training or enabling them to meet up with subsequent everyday challenges in their lives and occupations" [6].

In terms of the overall satisfaction with the teaching and learning of ESOL, parents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with the way English was taught in their child's school: 51% for satisfied parents, that is 29 out of 56 respondents and 49% for unsatisfied parents, that is 28 out of 56 respondents as well. The almost split response from parents indicate that the teaching of English has some room for improvements.

In answering the question on their level of satisfaction with the English teaching and learning in their child's school, parents provided some interesting comments. More generally, observing an improvement in their child's performance was enough reason for most parents to be satisfied with the teaching of English in their child's school. For others, the English program was good, thus well-structured and delivered. Some parents also cited good grades and their child's commitment as a reason for their satisfaction with the teaching of English.

On the other hand, parents attributed their dissatisfaction with the way English was taught in their child's school to a number of reasons. Eight parents out of the 28 that provided a comment reported that the teachers were incompetent and did not put much effort into teaching the subject. Seven parents expressed their dissatisfaction by stating that the teaching of English was too shallow, and thus resulted in no improvement on the part of their child. The dissatisfaction of some three parents came from the belief that all subjects should be taught in English in a sort of English immersion classes. To help their child improve their English, some parents who were dissatisfied with the way the subject was taught immerse their child in an English setting or have them participate in English summer camps. Others also provide private classes for their child in English. Several resources such as books, audio, and visual materials as well as family members are also employed to help improve English skills.

There were seven respondents (25%) found the teaching of English to tech and business students to be average; five out of 28 respondents (18%) believed it to be below average. Only a few found the teaching of English to be fairly good, good, very good or excellent. This probably suggests that parents would like to witness an improvement in the way English is taught to tech and business students.

A variety of suggestions were provided by parents to help improve the teaching and learning of English in technical education. There were 8 out of 28 respondents (29%) would like more English hours to be added to the school timetable; six respondents (21%) would like a specialized English in the timetable. Others suggested having more rigorous teaching/expectations, setting aside a day of the week where all courses would be taught in English, making the English program more intensive. That desired strengthening of English teaching and learning would go hand in glove with the improvement of the quality of teachers.

More generally, parents' opinion summarized in this study are in line with the new curriculum which officially aims at shifting the paradigm from the teaching and learning of the English language "as an isolated school subject for its own end, or for the sake of passing an examination" to the teaching and learning of English that contribute "to the learner's overall capacity to be autonomous in using the language in real-life situations", making it a problem-solving tool, and as an instrument for national and international integration [6], [7]. Unfortunately, this has not been the case yet, but the data from this study clearly shows that parents are eager to see their children learn the type of English they can use in an authentic situation, be it in their professional life, in furthering their studies in a specific area, in real life contexts, in becoming a better citizen by using both official languages of the country. That is why many parents are ready to make extra effort to help their children improve their English, particularly by immersing them in an English setting, getting them tutors or putting at their disposal extra resources.

3.3. Teachers

Most teachers reported having English as their first language: 8 out of 14 respondents (57%), five teachers (38%) reported French as an L1. Only one teacher reported a native language as an L1, while four others indicated having more than one language as an L1, especially one national language and/or Pidgin English and one official language. Table 12 shows a representation of more female teachers than male teachers: 9 out of 14 teachers (64%). A look at the technical schools especially shows that female teachers outnumbered male teachers although according to a survey by VSO Cameroon [30], in technical secondary schools, female teachers are overwhelmingly outnumbered by males, with a slight increase in recent years on the part of female teachers. The reason for having more female teachers in this context can generally be attributed to the fact that languages in general are subjects often taught by female teachers.

Most teachers evaluated their students' performance in English as poor in all four language skills especially those teaching in the technical education schools. A look at students' performance by teachers suggests reading skills to be the strongest with speaking as being the weakest. There were 12 teachers (86%) indicated that they mostly use English as the main language of instruction, two others (14%) indicated that it all depends on contexts. Additional comments provided by teachers suggest that 50% of teachers would like to use French for some clarifications while the other 50% insisted on the exclusive use of English.

Table 12. Teachers' evaluation of their students' performance

Type of education	Language skills	Teachers' evaluation of their students' performance											
		Very well	%	Well	%	Fairly well	%	Poorly	%	Very poorly	%	No ans.	%
GET	Reading	0	0	0	0	5	26	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Speaking	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	15	1	10	1	33
	Writing	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	10	1	10	1	33
	Listening	0	0	1	33	2	11	1	5	0	0	1	33
Total		0	0	1	33	8	42	6	30	2	20	3	100
TET	Reading	0	0	1	33	3	16	4	20	1	10	0	0
	Speaking	0	0	0	0	1	5	6	30	2	20	0	0
	Writing	0	0	0	0	5	26	2	10	2	20	0	0
	Listening	1	100	1	33	2	11	2	10	3	30	0	0
Total		1	100	2	67	11	58	14	70	8	80	0	0
Grand total		1	100	3	100	19	100	20	100	10	100	3	100

Table 13 shows that teachers evaluated their students' participation to be fairly well especially during reading activities. Other activities such as speaking and writing are generally not areas of interest to students. There were nine teachers (64%) who agreed that the choice of class activities greatly influenced students' participation. Also, teacher and student engagement as well as resources available (textbook, computer, internet) for teaching and learning were cited as major factor that influenced participation in class.

There were 11 teachers (78%) who acknowledged students' communication difficulties to be mostly related to speaking. According to teachers, this difficulty can be associated with students' lack of interest in the subject, self-consciousness, lack of practice as well as phonological challenges. Other eight respondents (57%) reported that majority of students are able to read well, five respondents (36%) also reported that students do well during writing activities. Further comments illustrated that it is easier for students to read and write because they can mimic good examples set forth, in addition to the fact that students are highly motivated and are able to often practice reading and writing activities.

Table 13. Teachers' evaluation of their students' participation

Type of education	Language skills	Teachers' evaluation of their students' participation											
		Very well	%	Well	%	Fairly well	%	Poorly	%	Very poorly	%	No ans.	%
GET	Reading	1	50	1	11	1	7	1	7	1	9	0	0
	Speaking	0	0	2	22	0	0	1	7	1	9	1	20
	Writing	0	0	0	0	1	7	3	21	0	0	1	20
	Listening	0	0	2	22	0	0	0	0	2	18	1	20
Total		1	50	5	56	2	14	5	36	4	36	3	60
TET	Reading	0	0	0	0	5	33	2	14	2	18	0	0
	Speaking	1	50	1	11	2	13	2	14	2	18	1	20
	Writing	0	0	1	11	4	27	2	14	1	9	1	20
	Listening	0	0	2	22	2	13	3	21	2	18	0	0
Total		1	50	4	44	13	86	9	64	7	64	2	40
Grand total		2	100	9	100	15	100	14	100	11	100	5	100

Almost all teachers (64%) were using the textbook series *Stay Tuned* as the principal teaching material in the classroom. A few others were using such textbooks as *Way Ahead in English*, *Breakthrough* and other grammar books. Regarding the suggestions for improving the teaching and learning of English in TE, two GET and three TET believed that the English program should start at an early stage of the learning cycle, five respondents representing 36%. Others (one GET and three TET) thought there is the need to develop strategies that will engage students' interest for English. Finally, two TET and one GET insisted on the need to improve English teaching materials and to increase the English weekly teaching time respectively to further facilitate the ESOL teaching and learning.

More generally, for the teaching of English applied to technical and business subjects, the teachers in this study emphasized the need for new resources that could help them engage students by providing authentic tasks and topics that relate to students' career goals and day-to-day lives. Similarly, teachers wanted to see more resources that could be focused on the active skills, especially the speaking and writing skills. The need for such teaching resources further shows the relevance and potential of ESP teaching, considering, as cited, language for specific purposes' focus on "pragmatic, experience-based instruction ... aimed at preparing learners for real-world demands" [7]. After all, the powers that be urge English teachers, especially those in technical education, to "endeavor to use vocabulary/lexis and register that is specialty-

specific in the fields of Carpentry, Bricklaying, Mechanics, Electricity, Electronics, Refrigeration, Welding, Commerce, Dressmaking, Plumbing, Surveying, High-tech, Information and Technology, General Engineering,” [6] but fail to put at their disposal the necessary resources and training to achieve such great objectives. The development of ESP resources may be able to help teachers further engage their students when teaching English, fostering greater motivation, interest, participation, and learning.

4. CONCLUSION

All three groups involved in this study showed interest in the teaching and learning of English related to authentic contexts, real life situations. Students, parents, and teachers involved in technical education were even more interested in technological and business English within the ESOL program at the secondary school level, and all groups saw the potential benefits of such learning, particularly in terms of future career opportunities in Cameroon and beyond. The inclusion and development of ESP, focused on technological and business French, in Cameroon’s ESOL teaching and learning could help bring everyone closer to what they want to see from the country’s ESOL program: students can get used to, and learn, the type of English that will directly help them in their future careers; parents can see their child’s improved fluency in English, which will then translate into better skills and, thus, opportunities for their future careers; and teachers can receive awaited new and updated teaching resources that engage students by presenting them with topics that are relevant to their current and future lives. This prospect could be made easier if, for example, the country’s Ministry of Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher Education could come together to reform the training of English teachers in different colleges of education. This reform could include the introduction of language for specific purposes in the training of language teachers by, for example, creating a language department at the Higher Teacher Training College for Technical Education (ENSET). Further studies could therefore investigate the conditions and prerequisites for the introduction of ESP in technical education in Cameroon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the University of Lethbridge through the Community of Research Excellence Development Opportunities (CREDO) program and the University of Lethbridge Research Fund (ULRF). The authors would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Precious Owusu-Ware as research assistant.

REFERENCES

- [1] J.-C. Beacco and M. Byram, “From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe.” Council of Europe, 2007.
- [2] F. Lauchlan, M. Parisi, and R. Fadda, “Bilingualism in Sardinia and Scotland: Exploring the cognitive benefits of speaking a ‘minority’ language.” *International Journal of Bilingualism*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 43–56, Feb. 2013, doi: 10.1177/1367006911429622.
- [3] J. Wallin, “Bilingual education for young children: recent research. Guest editor’s note,” *Rangsit Journal of Arts and Science*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1–4, 2017.
- [4] E. Bialystok, “Bilingual education for young children: review of the effects and consequences,” *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, vol. 21, no. 6, pp. 666–679, Aug. 2018, doi: 10.1080/13670050.2016.1203859.
- [5] Compendium of Language Management in Canada (CLMC), *International Perspective*. Cameroon: English-French bilingualism, IEEE, 2020.
- [6] Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC), Republic of Cameroon, “Programme of study. English Language to French-speaking learners (Anglais). Secondary technical education (Tle).” Cameroon: Inspectorate General of Education, 2000.
- [7] E. Martin, “Designing and implementing a French-for-specific-purposes (FSP) program: Lessons learned from ESP,” *Global Business Languages*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 15–34, 2010.
- [8] L. Movchan, “Development of Plurilingual Competencies through Vocationally Oriented Language Learning in Sweden,” *Comparative Professional Pedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 44–50, Sep. 2014, doi: 10.2478/rpp-2014-0034.
- [9] B. W. Robinett, T. Hutchinson, and A. Waters, “English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centred Approach,” *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 72, no. 1, p. 73, 1988, doi: 10.2307/327576.
- [10] J. G. Laborda, “Revisiting Materials for Teaching Languages for Specific Purposes,” *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 102–112, 2011.
- [11] P. Robinson, *ESP Today: A Practitioner’s Guide*. UK: Prentice Hall International, 1991.
- [12] T. Dudley-Evans, “English for specific purposes,” in *Teaching English to speakers of other languages*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- [13] T. Dudley-Evans and M. J. S. John, *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- [14] A. F. Takam and I. F. Mbouya, “Language Policy in Education: Second Official Language in (Technical) Education in Canada and Cameroon,” *Journal of Education and Learning*, vol. 7, no. 4, p. 20, May 2018, doi: 10.5539/jel.v7n4p20.
- [15] Hali Access Network, “Education Fact Sheet,” 2018, [Online]. Available: <http://haliaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Cameroon-Education-Facts-Sheet.pdf>.
- [16] Z. D. Kody, “La dynamique des Langues camerounaises en contact avec le français,” University of Yaounde I, 2005.

- [17] A. S. Bobda and I. F. Mbouya, "Revisiting some linguistic concepts and beliefs in the light of the sociolinguistic situation of Cameroon," in *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*, 2005, pp. 2122–2132.
- [18] P. Fielding, "Gendered Perspectives in Higher Education: Women in Science and Engineering in Cameroon," Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, 2014.
- [19] J.-P. Kouega, "The Language Situation in Cameroon," *Current Issues in Language Planning*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 3–93, Jul. 2007, doi: 10.2167/cilp110.0.
- [20] J.-P. Kouega, "Forty years of official bilingualism in cameroon," *English Today*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 38–43, Oct. 1999, doi: 10.1017/S0266078400011251.
- [21] A. F. Takam, "Politiques linguistiques et gouvernementalité au Cameroun: quelques enseignements tirés de la résistance ethnolinguistique au Canada," *Cinquante ans de bilinguisme officiel au Cameroun*. pp. 43–64, 2012.
- [22] A. F. Takam, "Bilinguisme officiel et promotion de la langue minoritaire en milieu scolaire: le cas du Cameroun," *Revue Electronique Internationale De Sciences Du Langagesudlangues*, vol. 7, pp. 26–48, 2007.
- [23] N. P. Mbangwana, "Cameroon Nationhood and Official Bilingualism: A Linguistic Juxtaposition?" *Revue Internationale des Arts, Lettres et Sciences Sociales (RIALSS)*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 15–38, 2004.
- [24] I. M. Ayafor, "Official bilingualism in Cameroon: instrumental or integrative policy?" in *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*, 2005, pp. 123–142.
- [25] A. S. Bobda, "Life in a Tower of Babel without a language policy," in *'Along the Routes to Power,'* Berlin, Boston: DE GRUYTER, 2012.
- [26] G. Savoie, *The Comparative Advantages of Bilingualism on the Job Market: Survey of Studies*. Strategic Research and Analysis, Canadian Heritage., 1995.
- [27] Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, "Frequently Asked Questions." 2021, [Online]. Available: <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/resources/frequently-asked-questions>.
- [28] S. Amott, "Giving Voice to Our Core French Students: Implications for Attrition and the Discourse on the Benefits of Learning FSL in Ontario," *McGill Journal of Education*, vol. 54, no. 3, pp. 519–541, Jun. 2020, doi: 10.7202/1069768ar.
- [29] S. Amott et al., "The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in Canada: A research agenda," *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 31–54, 2017.
- [30] G. D. Daoust, *Actions and Interactions: Gender Equality in Teaching and Education Management in Cameroon: Summary Report*. VSO Cameroon, 2013.

BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS



Innocent Mbouya Fasse     is Associate Professor at the University of Douala. He specializes in Sociolinguistics and Language education issues. He is currently the Head of the Science of education Laboratory (LASED) of the Advanced Teacher Training College for Technical Education (ENSET) of the University of Douala and head of the Translation Unit of the same University. He can be contacted at email: fasse_mbouya@yahoo.fr.



Alain Flaubert Takam     is Associate Professor of French and Linguistics at the University of Lethbridge. His current research focuses on language in education planning, especially acquisition planning, that is, language planning as it relates to the teaching and learning of minority languages in a bilingual or multilingual context. He is also interested in endangered language revitalization, contact linguistics, language variation, the sociolinguistics of translation and socio-pragmatics. He can be contacted at email: alain.takam@uleth.ca.