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Revisiting Attitudes Towards English in Cameroon and the Rush for EMI: Positioning Education For All Vision

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Introduction

English has become one of the most important means for acquiring access to the world's intellectual and technical resources and English medium instruction (EMI), from a global perspective, is significantly associated with economic benefits (Hu, 2005; Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014). Specifically, English language proficiencies have been associated with access to quality education (Powel, 2005). High-value English has achieved globally and is further strengthened by its role in world trade and information and communication technology (Sah & Li, 2019). The added value is evidenced by the increasing requirement for English Language proficiency scores from students seeking quality education in higher institutions in the global north. Consequently, access to such quality education, economic, and intellectual resources tend to be restricted to those who can afford—and have access to—English and EMI. In Cameroon, like other low-resourced countries in sub-Saharan Africa, part of the strategies to overcome barriers to economic and political advantages are paradoxically understood to be the provision of access to English, a language different from the learners' mother tongue (Kuchah, 2018) and/or EMI.

In the past two decades, studies have demonstrated that a good number of francophone Cameroonians have developed keen interest in English in both local and international contexts (Anchimbe, 2005; Atechi, 2015; Kuchah, 2016, 2018; Simo Bobda, 2001). While this paints a picture of the majority francophone Cameroonians struggling to catch up with global trends, it is necessary to provide further information regarding the genuine quest for English. In this paper, I argue that the rush for English in Cameroon is embedded in EMI discourse, which too often blurs the agenda behind such rush. The prospect here is to understand how attitudes towards

English in dominantly French Cameroon are reciprocally related to the demand and supply of English by a people generally known to be living below the poverty line, how this locally links with access to resources and power relations, and how this contradicts the quest for EMI and effects social cohesion. The paper builds on such links to describe how this has complicated identity issues and created a complex English Language Teaching (ELT) landscape.

English in Cameroon and the Policy Question

The status of the English language in Cameroon is the outcome of the English-French colonisation of the country, which led to the adoption of English and French as the country's official languages in 1972 (Kouega, 1991, 2002; Mbangwana, 1989; Simo Bobda, 1992, 1994). From a classical understanding, English is learned as a foreign language (EFL) in eight of the ten regions of Cameroon. While it is learned as a second language (ESL) in the two anglophone regions, it is equally learned as a second language in some of the regions, which traditionally were believed to be fundamentally French-speaking. This is because increased mobility has resulted in high concentration of anglophones in many settlement areas in the French-speaking Cameroon. French serves as a *lingua franca* in the francophone zone whereas English is used in the anglophone areas, mostly in specific domains such as education, administration, diplomacy, and politics.

It is believed that, as a result of the world economic downturn and universal attention towards English medium education (EME), business, politics, francophone Cameroonians have developed great interest in English, leading to an extensively high demand for the language in the country (Simo Bobda, 2001). This has led to identity issues that have commonly been (mis)interpreted by the political elite for dubious motives. The francophone-led administration employs francophones with EMI educational background into state functions and refers to them

as *anglophones* as a way of justifying balance of power. Due to this and the increasing influx of anglophones into francophone Cameroon, the terms ‘anglophone’ and ‘francophone’ in the country or ‘ESL’ and ‘EFL’ are fast experiencing another pragmatic interpretation (Anchimbe, 2006).

Politically speaking, the idea behind learning English in Cameroon is the outcome of the government’s efforts to promote and consolidate the bicultural status of the country, with a documented policy of equity and fairness. Section 1.1.3 of the 1996 version of the Cameroon constitution recognises English and French as the official languages of Cameroon, “both having the same status”; it further states that “the state shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country.” This is implemented through mainstream schools and pilot linguistic centres. English is taught as a subject and is a medium of instruction in the anglophone regions of Cameroon from kindergarten to high school. In the francophone region, it is taught as a subject from kindergarten to the university level.

In spite of such lofty ambitions, the policy is judged to have failed (Ayafor, 2005; Kouega, 2019) given that the demand for English by francophones has been assessed to be backed by suspicious motives—to harvest opportunities reserved for anglophones—and is believed to be the source of tension between anglophones and francophones (Atechi, 2015). This raises issues related to the disconnected link between policy, perception, and practice. Wolf (2001) has already been critical of the policy of awarding equal status to English and French, asserting that it was politically and historically directed. He cited Chumbow (1980) as intimating that language policy was not the result of careful planning based on detailed study of a wide range of socio-economic political variables relevant to the state’s development needs. Chiatoh (2019) was even more critical of the policy, which, to him, is not ‘well-articulated.’ However,

failed ELT policies are not uncommon in international contexts. For example, the pre-modernisation era in China is reported to have had a failed ELT policy in secondary schools (Hu, 2005).

The initial state agenda behind the official bilingual policy in Cameroon was to maintain the dual linguistic nature of the country, whether or not there was the express need for it and, at the same time, ensure national integration. What currently exists is not a matter of meeting the exigencies of the constitutional provision and ensuring national cohesion and integration, given that the practice tends to be geared towards meeting global exigencies. Atechi (2015) highlighted the significant number of francophones from French medium education (FME) taking postgraduate education in English in higher education in Cameroon. The desire to catch the world train relates more to economic factors, and this has actually displaced the state's agenda to maintain national integration (Kuchah, 2018). Factors accounting for the rush to EMI today are bottom-top and are stronger than top-bottom policy intentions. Kuchah's (2018) francophone subjects all attested to the existence of more economic benefits for their children in EMI than were available for those in FMI schools. The EMI environment in Cameroon is more complicated than might be the case elsewhere. Cameroon uses colonial languages from early child education to the tertiary levels in schools.

The seemingly strong quest for English in Cameroon requires further attention in researching the rush for English. The majority of learners in the rural communities in francophone Cameroon still see English and anglophones through a political lens. Politically and culturally, anglophones in Cameroon are perceived unequal to francophones: '*ils sont toujours à gauge*' (they are always backward people) and are constantly referred to as *anglofools* by francophones. This perceived status hierarchy translates into francophones' attitudes towards

English. At the secondary school level, francophones see English as a ‘God-given’ language while in state-owned higher institutions it is referred to as ‘formation bilingue’ translated as *bilingual training* to mean English. Although its credit is equivalent to French for anglophones as well as other content courses, it is yet to receive positive appreciation as a main course from both the learners and university hierarchy. It is not uncommon to hear a francophone university lecturer ask ‘*la formation bilingue c’est quoi?*’ translated to mean ‘of what use is English?’ This question would never refer to French as a foreign language on the university campus even though the two courses have the same credit value.

Public universities do not require students to pay fees and are thus flooded by students from low-economic backgrounds whose previous attitudes towards English are carried over from tertiary education and work life. Students with stronger economic potential study in private elite institutions where the importance of English is felt by both the students and their parents. Such students are most likely to receive parental support (Kuchah, 2016, 2018), which is unavailable to learners in public schools. In a nutshell, mainstream schools are not predisposed to satisfy the demand due to limited human and technical resources. The problem of unfocused curricula, demotivated teachers, large classes, and traditional top-bottom teacher training models have been identified as the sources of an unguided ELT enterprise in Cameroon (Kuchah & Smith, 2011; Sala, 2003; Tenjo-Okwen, 2003; Wolf, 2001), globally described in the literature as ‘difficult circumstances’ (Smith, 2011; West, 1960).

Trends from English language practice, attitudes, to EMI in Cameroon

Some practical evidence demonstrating the state’s interest in promoting access to English—and French, the other official language—is reported by Kouega (2003, 2017). He cited the creation of pilot linguistic centres in major cities in Cameroon, the creation of bilingual

degree programmes, and the institutionalisation of bilingual training units in public universities as evidence of the promotion of bilingualism by the Cameroon administration. He regretted the limited success the initiative has achieved, blaming it on lack of qualified staff, large class size, lack of course materials, and unfocused pedagogies. Kouega, (2010) noted that:

some lecturers pretend to teach the bilingual training course when in fact they use the language period to teach their main subjects. The university authorities are aware of these problems and yet they tend to turn a blind eye to them. As the teaching assistants are not often paid for the job they do, some unscrupulous ones use their position to extort money from lazy students in exchange for high marks. As a result, high-achieving students in this course are usually unable to carry out a conversation in the other official language.

(p. 4)

This situation is not typical of the University of Yaounde II where Kouega conducted his study. Apart from lack of motivation resulting from poor classroom practices, Ekembe (2013) noted confusion arising from the perception of curriculum demands of English in different departments of the Faculty of Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences of the University of Yaounde 1. Evidence of poor classroom practices is equally reported by Kouega (2010): Only 32.35% of his respondents took down notes in/practised English during EMI lessons and these were mainly anglophones. This is seen mainly as a teacher quality issue. It is important to underscore the general fluidity that exists in the whole ELT landscape. The current curriculum in use for both the primary and secondary education makes vague claims about learning targets, with no overt statements on proficiency benchmarks at each key learning stage. For example, the policy statement on the exit profile of learners in the first cycle of francophone secondary school states that learners will *communicate accurately and fluently using all four basic skills in language learning*. This

applies to the English language syllabus for secondary and tertiary—where it even exists—levels.

A growing concern about francophones rushing to EMI and English in the secondary school has been reported by Anchimbe (2007), Kuchah (2016, 2018), and Mforteh (2008). This is creating a divide between communities as noted by Mforteh (2008). He warned against rural-urban dichotomies created by access to the second official languages. As he explained, Cameroonians not living in the urban areas may find no use for French or English except when they do business with outsiders. More evidence of the dichotomies is provided by Laitin et al. (2019), who emphasized the differential levels of exposure to English. In mainstream francophone primary and secondary schools, it is difficult to claim that learners have access to or rush to English as is commonly stated. While previous EMI studies in Cameroon all acknowledge that the urban trend is unrepresentative of the rural areas, it clearly stands that rural communities either do not qualify to fall within the rush to English and EMI equity discourse.

Kuchah (2016) already noted that the rush to English in Cameroon is backed by parental choices that may not be consistent with the interests of the learners. Given that the learners already find themselves in the classroom, there is the possibility of associating the lack of interest to poor classroom practices, as it has been noted that teaching is highly teacher-centered in Cameroon (like in other sub-Saharan African countries; see Nomlomo and Vuzo, 2014), with an emphasis on structural units of the language at the expense of real time learning. This reflects teacher quality and reveals potential lack of proper teacher training. Teacher quality (Nkwentisama, 2012) and teacher proficiency (Laitin et al., 2019) in English have been reported to be a crucial determinant of output in the classroom. The continuous claim on declining English Language standards in Cameroon is blamed on teacher proficiency (Achiri-Taboh &

Lando, 2017; Fontem, 2012). Although this is possible, there is no evidence in Cameroon correlating earlier English Language standards—before the standards started falling—to high teacher language proficiency. In this case, to talk of ‘declining’ or ‘falling’ standards of English and associating it with teacher proficiency seem to be too general a claim. These studies provide useful insights on learning outcomes with very limited consideration to the organic nature of the learning environment. The trend in the last decade has been to investigate students as a community of learners found within a broader ecology (Davis et al., 2015; Kuchah, 2016, 2018; Laitin et al., 2019; Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014). This, of course, is essential in determining real attitudes towards English, which is often confounded with the rush to EMI. It is this seemingly tiny line that has created a complicated ELT landscape in Cameroon worthy of investigation.

Methodology

This descriptive survey design follows erstwhile approaches on focusing on students in their learning environment (Davis et al., 2013; Kuchah, 2016). The survey design was deemed appropriate as it gives us an opportunity to directly elicit learners’ opinions about their choices in ways that preclude foreign influence on their attitudes towards a particular subject discipline. Through surveys, we sampled the opinions of state-owned secondary school students and teachers in two categories of schools. The first category was made up of schools in typical rural areas with a population living below the poverty line, limited access to technological resources, electricity, and very limited or no access to English out of the school environment. The schools involved in the study were Lycée d’Ekekom, situated some 50km from the nation’s capital city, Yaounde, and Lycée de Pong Solo. The second category includes schools in the urban city of Yaounde, the country’s political capital, with a higher standard of living, increased access to technological resources, and recurrent contact with English in and out of the school environment.

These were Lycée de Mbalgong and Lycée Bilingue d'Application Yaounde, situated in the heart of the capital city. The classes involved were 8th, 10th, and 12th grades. The segmentation of student population was to ensure a representation of the target student population.

Student Survey

The first set of data collection was to elicit students' attitudes towards English using an open-ended question. They were asked to identify any subject they would prefer removed from the list of subjects in their curriculum and briefly state why. They did this as a class task administered by their respective school vice principals from whom consent for the research was sought. Two major issues were considered in letting the students choose from the range of subject disciplines in their curriculum and leaving the task to be run by the school authorities: 1) asking students to express their attitudes exclusively towards English might condition them and give them limited options for being natural; and 2) allowing the English language teacher to run the task with students might create face-threatening circumstances, which could lead to biased opinions from students. The participants anonymously wrote their responses on pieces of papers in French and handed them to their vice principals. Their responses were read through and treated according to the frequency of responses. Responses that did not receive a frequency of up to ten instances of occurrence were disregarded for the study. In all, we had responses from the following number of students.

Table 1*Sample Student Size*

Class	Lycée d'Ekekom	Lycée de Pong Solo	Lycée Bilingue d'Application	Lycée de Mbalgong	Total size
5 ^e	70	65	138	140	413
3 ^e	113	92	172	136	513
Tle	68	56	166	151	441
Total	151	213	476	427	1367

Students' responses were read through to identify recurrent themes and the first three frequent themes were selected and ranked.

Teacher Survey

It was deemed necessary to find out students' attitudes towards English from English language teachers given that they had direct contact with the students. They did this as a separate and independent task from the students' task. Twenty-nine teachers were required to express their opinions on whether or not their students—on a general note—like English. They were expected to fill in a small sheet of paper carrying the following task: *Say whether or not your students generally love English - Yes/No- and briefly state, in not more than two sentences, why you think they like or dislike English.* Due to the actual disproportion of teachers in rural and urban schools we had the following teachers sampled: 22 from both the urban schools and seven from rural schools. The responses from teachers were read and classified according to recurrent themes. Themes that occurred less than three times were not considered for data analysis.

Results

Given the need to explore the degree of variance between students in rural and urban schools, the results have been separated into two major columns: rural and urban schools. However, it was considered necessary to state other subjects which students did not

recommended, so as to paint a natural picture of the schooling atmosphere. The results have been placed here according to the urban-rural dichotomy and not in line with the learners' level of study. The frequency of the subjects not recommended from the curriculum was calculated per instance of occurrence and their percentage statistically worked out from the three highest subjects that were not recommended. Participants' responses have been ranked as follows:

Table 2

Students' Preferences for School Subjects to Be Removed From the Curriculum

Rank.	Subjects to be removed from the school curriculum	Rural areas			Urban areas		
		Lycée d'Ekekom	Lycée de Pong Solo	Total	LBA de Yaounde	Lycée Bilingue de Mbalgong	Total
1	English	116 (76.82%)	179 (84.04%)	295 (81.04%)	257 (54%)	261 (61.12%)	518 (57.36%)
2	Maths	22 (14.56%)	25 (11.73%)	47 (12.77%)	121 (25.42%)	112 (26.23%)	233 (25.80%)
3	PCT	13 (8.61%)	09 (4.23%)	22 (06.44%)	98 (20.59%)	54 (12.65%)	152 (16.83%)

NB: PCT (Physique Chimie Technologie is Physics, Chemistry, Technology)

The table demonstrates that, amongst the various areas of studies, English (with a significant margin from the other content subjects in the two contexts) is the subject learners would not want to have in their school curriculum. Their opinions to remove English from the syllabus stood at 57.36% for urban schools and 81.04% for rural schools. The disparity between the subjects not recommended by students is far wider in the rural schools than in the urban schools. These results shed light on one commonly over-looked area in the discussions related to learners' attitudes towards English. The quest for EMI in Cameroon cannot be correlated with attitudes towards English. In the urban schools, there is the possibility that those who have

understood the need for English are not in mainstream schools. Even with this, Kuchah's (2018) subjects reported having difficulties in English. High income earners send their children to elite schools and this cuts across both FMI and EMI schools. This may not necessarily be associated with the figures provided to explain the commonly stated rush for English. The attitudes expressed by the subjects sampled for this study may not be strongly applicable to learners found in EMI.

The major disparity in the opinions of students in rural and urban schools links with earlier studies shedding light on this gap. Mforteh (2008) noted that "there has been a considerable change in attitudes towards the language where it is attributed to determination and links to the world beyond France and the Central African region" (p. 4). Yet, the world beyond France and Central Africa is largely unknown to learners in rural communities. Attitudes towards English in rural schools are far more negative than those in urban schools as found in the table. Arguably, most rural schools are occupied by students from indigenous communities, which have very limited exposure to English and are largely unaware of global trends. While this raises the whole question of equity and fairness in access to world's resources, a more critical issue raised is the power disproportion this creates. Access to quality education has been demonstrated to be seriously associated with English Language proficiencies and this is concomitantly related to both economic advantages and power. With this, there is going to be a serious mismatch in access to opportunities. Students in urban cities are likely to have access to available opportunities and grow richer while those in rural communities will remain poor. Although the credit weight for English in the two contexts is the same and higher than other subject disciplines, it tends to become more of a weapon of class stratification and inequality. This credit weight negatively affects students' cumulative achievement in rural communities, and this

accounts for the disparity in general achievement standards in the two contexts and explains the increasing gap between the poor and the rich.

One common factor to negative attitudes towards languages other than the home language is teaching methodology. Classroom practice was not a variable considered for this study although students' responses suggest it is closely associated with their attitudes towards English. The learners' reasons for which English should be removed from the school curriculum were found to be common across contexts as ranked in the table.

Table 3

Respondents' Reasons for Which English Should be Removed From the School Curriculum

Rank	Thematic coding of students' responses	Instances of occurrence	Percentage
1	It is difficult to learn	611	44.7%
2	I don't understand it	283	20.7%
3	It is boring	190	13.9%
4	The teacher does not explain his lessons well	98	7.17%
5	I don't see why I am learning it.	25	1.83%

The data in the table largely suggest two non-exclusive dimensions: those who claim the language is boring with instances of 13.9% and those who claim not to understand it with instances of 20.7% may be prejudiced while those who blame the teachers (7.17%), and those who claim that it is difficult to learn (44.7%) all suggest teacher quality as a variable causally linked to this. From comparative reasoning, teacher quality cannot explain this as the teachers in rural communities are supposedly trained on a common scale with those in urban areas. Within the context of the study, there exists no state policy aimed at training teachers for specific contexts, whether rural or urban. We cannot, however, be insensitive to the fact that urban

schools in Cameroon have more trained teachers than rural schools and worthy of note is the fact that this is neither any institutional practice nor government policy. In such a situation, the teacher variable may not explain the situation. The learners' environment, exposure to English, access to modern resources, and limited understanding of global trends may better explain the situation. Where the need for English and its scope on the global scene is not felt, negative attitudes are most likely to ensue. Yet, both the training of teachers and policy disregard this, and the learners grouped on cohort basis are expected to cover the same curriculum and meet the same learning targets across the two contexts. This is where the rush for English and EMI in Cameroon displays some complications that are overlooked when attention is paid to simple figures. Why is there a rush for English, yet students generally express negative attitudes towards English?

Out of the 22 English Language teachers sampled, 18 (81.81%) from Lycée de Mendong and Lycée Bilingue de Mbalgong acknowledged that their learners dislike English for the following recurrent reasons:

- *The students do not see why they are studying English.*
- *They don't just like the language; all they want is marks.*
- *They consider it difficult and call it a 'God-given' language.*

Teachers' understanding of students' attitudes towards English possibly affect the way they approach their job. For teachers to state that students do not have a reason for learning the language seems to demonstrate an implicitly negotiated bond between them and students in which teaching the students is done for the sake of job requirements and not to enhance learning. This explanation is supported by learners' perception of the difficulty of the language. Their perception of the difficulty of the 'God-given' language demonstrates their feeling of resignation to learn it, as they claim only miracles from God can help them learn it. This exposes the

pedagogic complications arising from the interface between learners' attitudes and teacher practices in a context of restricted opportunities where learners' choices are submerged in parental decisions. The remaining four teachers who claimed that their students love English were not categorical. Three of them claimed that *some* students love the language because:

- *they interact with anglophones in their neighbourhood;*
- *they already know the importance of English;*
- *they seem to be having parental encouragement.*

One of the teachers claimed that all her students like English because, as she stated, she has made the students like the language: *they like the language because I encourage them and tell them the importance of English in the world today.* It has already been stated that francophones consider English extremely difficult. It was curious to notice that students '*don't see why they are studying English*' in a city where access to modern trends in civilisation is supposed to be unlimited. It is equally very complicated explaining why parents send some of their children to EMI schools and the others to FMI schools and those in FMI schools consider English a 'God-given' language even when they live in the same house. Secondly, it is difficult to explain why students who have access to modern (Information and Communication Technology [ICT]) tools and interact with anglophones in their neighbourhood still have negative attitudes towards English similar to those expressed by students whose environment gives them no access to English.

Two of my colleagues in the college of education- Ecole Normal Superieure (ENS) Yaounde via personal communication told me they sent some of their children to EMI schools and others to FMI schools to widen their scope of available potential opportunities. They confessed there was a marked difference between the children in terms of behaviours. They claimed those in FMI schools refer to their siblings as 'anglophones.' I inquired if they equally

saw those children as anglophones and they said that, from their behaviours, they were anglophones. This strongly indicates that the term ‘anglophone’ may not practically resonate with English, but rather with a particular culture. My interaction with these colleagues not only demonstrates perceptions related to the range of opportunities the different educational sub-systems offer. It rather reveals the cultural dimensions that are associated with EMI schools in Cameroon that are not consistent with attitudes towards English.

The rush to EMI schools in Cameroon originates from parents’ appreciation of the range of opportunities available for their children if they have higher English proficiencies (Kuchah, 2016, 2018), and this is almost exclusively an urban affair. Equally, the rush for English in Cameroon may be appreciated from students in language centres and not from those in mainstream schools. This is backed by economic power and the demand for higher proficiency with the need to higher life goals far from just learning English, meeting domestic expectations, and curriculum targets. Building from the students’ attitudes in the race for English, higher English proficiencies and quality education, students from rural communities, like those in mainstream schools, are cut off from the race as they mostly demonstrate negative attitudes towards English.

Attitudes Towards English, EMI, and Equity

Students’ large negative attitudes towards English as seen in the data polarises government’s policy intention to train Cameroonians to be bilingual in two official languages. Unfortunately, they have to learn the language. Even worse is the fact that the language carries a higher credit load than other subject disciplines in an educational context in which achievement is measured on cumulative basis. With such cumulative assessment, learners’ performance in a subject discipline tends to influence overall achievement and the tendency in Cameroon has been

for learners to have their weakest performance in English especially in certification exams. Their performance in certification exams is consistent with their negative attitudes towards the language.

Cameroon's policy interest in making learning English an obligatory subject discipline with a higher credit weight is to give added value to English as a way of pushing students to associate importance to the subject. Given that this is not backed by consideration of local realities, it tends to disregard the relationship between motivation, relevance, achievement in learning, knowledge acquisition, and context. The higher credit weight given to a subject discipline learners consider a 'God-given' language or something they judge non-relevant is far more of an expression of power over humans or an implicit opportunity for a segment of the population than an attempt at creating conditions for Cameroonians to gain access to the world's resources. UNESCO (2009) stressed the reciprocity of access and quality as a measure for inclusive education. This implies "being proactive in identifying barriers that many encounter in educational opportunities in addition to resources needed to overcome those barriers" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8).

Where access to knowledge is embedded in learning a foreign language irrespective of perceived valued needs and relevance, learners' achievement standards are most likely to be affected, and there is going to be constant disproportionate accessibility to opportunities. This explains why the rush for EMI is limited to a few urban elite areas and is linked with economic empowerment (Kuchah, 2016). A more crucial aspect of such injustice is the provision of common learning targets across the rural and urban contexts in Cameroon, irrespective of availability of human capital and access to learning resources. Learners from both contexts demonstrate negative attitudes towards English as if to say the disproportion of learning

resources has no effect. Worthy of note are the differences in attitudes from the two contexts: 57.36% of the learners in the urban school did not recommend English in their curriculum against 81.04% of those in rural schools. If attitudes towards a language determines achievement, a 23.68% disparity in the link between attitudes and achievement is representative of the achievement gap between learners in rural schools and those in urban schools. Whether or not the source of disparity is from classroom practices or from other major forces, there is no policy statement that recognises context variation in English language learning in Cameroon. All the learners follow the same curriculum and are required to meet the same standards in all types of assessments. Where educational achievement and access to English are linked with economic empowerment (Sah & Li, 2019), the data in this study suggest greater chances for learners in urban schools. To further substantiate the injustice is that just few elites are enrolled in EMI schools.

Conclusion

The majority of learners in Cameroon—and others in sub-Saharan Africa—are found in mainstream or public schools, practically understood to be reserved for the poor. Public schools, for the most part, have been noted for their paucity of resources and human and material capital necessary for access to English and a quality education and this contradicts the Education for All (EFA) vision. Yet, the requirement to educate all children together means that appropriate ways of teaching that respond to individual differences beneficial to all learners have to be developed. In this respect, the demands related to different school subjects must be seen in the context of the individual pupil's opportunities and needs (UNESCO, 2009). Some major studies have connected the rush to EMI in Cameroon with positive attitudes towards English (e.g., Atechi, 2005; Mforteh, 2008) while others have treated attitudes towards English from an exclusive EMI

perspective, mostly associating it with economic ambitions (e.g., Anchimbe, 2007; Fonyuy, 2010, Kuchah, 2016, 2018).

The data in this paper suggest that the high demand for English in Cameroon is ambiguous if stated in terms of simple figures. The quest for EMI does not directly link with positive attitudes towards English both in terms of motives, access to quality education, and social justice. Kouega (2010) has already noted that university students have very limited English proficiency from the secondary schools. Explanations for the limited proficiencies can be anticipated as a general claim of negative attitudes towards English, and this is commonly shared by English language teachers. It is acknowledged that both socio-economic and classroom factors contribute to the students' negative attitudes towards English in the classroom in both urban and rural schools. This contradicts the overall claim about the rush to English in cities, especially as negative learners' attitudes towards English are reported by English Language teachers in public schools in the cities. It is suggestive that either teachers lack the procedures to sustain learners' interest in English or the rush to English is not genuine. Too often, the discourse on the quest for EMI simplifies existing attitudes towards English that are still traditionally rooted in the status hierarchy which polarises anglophones and francophones in Cameroon.

The highly negative attitudes expressed by the respondents in this paper support existing claims that the rush to EMI is backed by ulterior motives. This has created a wide barrier between people expected to live together and is continuously widening the prevailing large power gap, increasing social injustice with anticipated devastating consequences on cohesion in the country, contrary to the UNESCO Education for All vision. As local and international commitment increase the pressure to use English in business, ICT, and politics, major attitudes towards English still remain significantly negative from the majority of francophones. A small

elite class exploits the situation and advocates for EMI for perceived advantages. The financial implications associated with this and the ensuing benefits tend to lead to exclusive education and consequently widen the gap between the rich and the poor. The situation is further complicated by COVID-19 that has imposed distance learning on people living in a context where access to technological resources is limited to a few privileged. This has created a complexity of English learners with identities that blend parental intentions with learners' perception of their target language community, which tend to lead to misconstrued attitudes towards English.

ELT research about classroom discourse and identities that ignores such an avalanche of information in Cameroon is most likely to be misleading, especially if the research is essentially designed to be quantitative. The data in this study hints that classroom practices and teacher quality may have a significant impact on attitudes towards English. This proves the importance of conducting further qualitative study on this topic to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between attitudes towards English and the rush to EMI in Cameroon.

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