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Rethinking Attitude towards English as a Foreign Language in Cameroon: A Case Study

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Abstract

The present work is a contribution to the debate around attitude towards English as a foreign language in Cameroon. By case-studying an under-searched area through a multi-component tool: the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery, it proposes a different reflection to the question. The test was administered to 211 Grade 11, 12, and 13 Francophone students from various urban and semi-urban schools in the city and its suburbs. It was based on the postulates that attitude is a dynamic characteristic that varies according to place and time on the one hand, and that it is far too complex to be examined from the prism of a single variable. The results revealed that of the six parameters that made up the three components of the tool, three were negative and three were positive, with the integrative orientation slightly outpacing the instrumental one. This underscores the need to envisage attitude as a multi-component variable, as well as the need to reckon with evolving social variables. In general, the results reveal that attitude towards EFL is not as desperate as usually thought. It can be intimated that recent socio-political initiatives aiming at reinforcing French-English bilingualism are gradually bearing fruits. Thus, socio-political ideologies appear to have significant effects on overall attitude towards EFL.

Keywords: attitude, EFL, official bilingualism, Cameroon, AMTB, index

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1. Introduction

Many analyses of attitude towards English as a foreign language in Cameroon have concluded that learners had an instrumental motivation towards the language (Atechi, 2015; Dyers & Agbondia, 2010; Penn Tamba, 1993), when they did not shun the language altogether (Harrow & Mpoche, 2009; Nkwetisama Muluh, 2012). In the latter case, reports say that learners usually think that English as a school subject cannot be learned and mastered. These findings have usually concluded that Cameroonians' attitude towards EFL is both negative and instrumentally orientated. Although this was backed up by cogently presented data, one can argue that attitude orientation is not the sole component of attitude, just as it suffices not to claim that attitude is negative with no description of its various explaining variables, which may add to the understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Penn Tamba (1993), one of the first works adopting the socio-educational model, hypothesised that people learned EFL in Cameroon mainly for the instrumental gain associated with the language. This hypothesis was based on the postulate that the official orientation of official bilingualism influenced learners' attitude towards the language. The study involved some 1210 learners of EFL from 11 schools in the capital city Yaoundé, aged between 14 and 22. His results mainly showed that EFL learners in Cameroon had a mainly instrumental motivation. Following government's efforts to cut down on the country's de facto bilingualism with territorial rights, Cameroon has undergone major constitutional changes that have affected its language policy. Although the official bilingualism policy has usually been seen as a failure (Nana, 2005), the 1996 revision of the Constitution has been a major turning point in the language policy of the country. This has resulted in many efforts at updating the educational language policy in several ways.

Although bilingual schools had been said to be a mere juxtaposition of two monolingual schools on the same campus in Cameroon (Echu, 2005; Takam, 2003; Takam & Fasse Mbouya, 2019), their sheer availability can be a sign of the desire to revamp bilingualism. In that vein, Author (2022) showed the sharp increase in the number of bilingual secondary schools in the 2010s, whereby from 4 in the 1970s, 2 in the 1980s, 36 in 1990s, and 104 in the 2000s, their number has increased to a laudable 155. This means that many more Cameroonians may have access to education in the other official language, which may constitute a breakthrough in the history of English-French bilingualism in the country. Thus, the spread of English as the result of the bilingual educational policy of the country has to be reckoned with in investigating attitude towards the language in Cameroon after the year 2000. Regarding the spatial setting of the investigation, a study that focuses on one urban setting only may not fairly extrapolate to other areas of the country. Although Yaoundé is the capital city of the country, it may not epitomise the whole nation, given some sociolinguistic differences that may be found here and there. In the case of the Far North, for example, there is a long history with neighbouring Nigeria which may gear attitude towards English in a different direction. Also, rural areas, or in the present case, semi-urban areas may bring in different clues to the issue. Finally, attitude towards EFL cannot just be seen as an integrative-instrumental dichotomy.

The seminal analysis of the relationship of language ideologies to language attitude by Dyers and Abongdia (2010) posits that attitude cannot be checked out of the "larger societal context that shapes such attitudes" (p. 120). Yet, ideology alone cannot account for the attitude someone exhibits with regard to languages. They logically concluded that their population was instrumentally motivated towards EFL. Again, the integrative-instrumental dichotomy seems to emerge as the main purpose for studying attitude towards language. From a pedagogical point of view, Ekembe (2013) believes teachers' practice contributed the highest share in the learners' negative attitude towards English as a foreign language. This was revealed in a perusal on attitude of learners of English as a foreign language at the University of Yaoundé 1, Cameroon. Pedagogical problems related to falling standards of English in Cameroon were also addressed.

Similarly, Kwetisama Muluh (2012) blames the "teacher talk and chalk and course books" (p. 516) that seems to spoil all the laudable efforts found in curricula and programmes. That is why the author proposed the implementation of the competency-based approach. Chiatoh (2014) on his part proposes the introduction of the mother tongue as a way of improving on the learning of English in Cameroon. Clearly, the three works above tackled attitude from directions that do not seem to allow for a general index of attitude towards EFL in Cameroon. In the same vein, the emergence of a Francophone variety of English is regarded by Atechi (2015) as an indication of a revamping of the attitude of Cameroonians towards English. This is described as the result of the extraordinary and unprecedented scramble for English by French-speaking Cameroonian after the "economic meltdown that took the country by surprise in the early 1990s" (25).

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However, attitude as a 'psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor' (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1), would rather in this case, be that of parents, not pupils. Confirming this recent apparent positive attitude towards English through the rush for English medium education, Ekembe (2021) however shows that attitude towards EFL is still negative in Cameroon. Although his approach avoided bias on the part of the learners, through a very rigid procedure, his results do not tell what the attitude towards EFL is in the settings investigated, but rather compares the preference of students on a list of subjects. The author lists the causes of this poor attitude as being teaching methodology, lack of practice, difficulty and purpose for learning English among others, however, the correlation is not stringently based on objective statistical tools.

The present work intends to propose both a general index of attitude towards EFL in a spatial-temporally determined area of Cameroon. It is based on the hypothesis that recent advances in the educational language policy must have had positive impacts on learners' attitude towards EFL. Also, it intimates that different areas of the country may have different attitudes towards English, according to their specificities. Finally, it projects that the socio-educational model would yield denser and richer results than have been proposed so far in the literature.

2. Background to Francophone Education in Cameroon

Cameroon is a French-English bilingual country. This happened as the result of its colonial history. Cameroon became a joint French-British Mandated territory after WW1. Actually, it had been a German Protectorate since 1884. When Germany lost the war, its African possessions were redistributed to the victors. French Cameroon was therefore assigned to France, which received 4/5 of the territory neighbouring its other possessions that fell under French Equatorial Africa. England was assigned the fifth of the territory in the West which neighboured Nigeria, one of its colonies (Kouega, 2007). Until their respective independence in 1960 and 1961, French and British Cameroons were ruled separately. The southern part of British Cameroon actually obtained its independence on the condition to join French Cameroon in a federal state. The two parts of the territory were later reunited in 1972 (Reunification), but with each part keeping sovereignty over a number of issues including education and justice.

However, in the education domain, the two subsystems that resulted from this dual colonial heritage (the Anglophone and the Francophone subsystems) do not have clear-cut territorial boundaries. Although each subsystem is meant to be specific to individual linguistic territories, this division is difficult to materialise in education. This nuanced claim stems from two main facts. On the one hand, there is no *Lycée* in the Anglophone Regions and there is no Government High School in Francophone Regions. On the other hand, the country has created bilingual *Lycées* and GHS. A *lycée* is a high school in the Francophone subsystem of education built on the French model. It starts in *Sixième* (Grade 1) and ends in *Terminale* (Grade 7). This cycle gives access to three diplomas: the *BEPC (Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle)* which is obtained in Grade 4/*Troisième, Probatoire* which is obtained in Grade 6/*Première,* and *Baccalauréat* obtained in Grade 7/*Terminale.* At primary school level, the two subsystems are found in all linguistic zones. The completion of primary Francophone subsystem awards the pupil the *CEP (Certificat d'Études Primaire)* which is obtained in *Cours Moyen* 2/Primary 6. French is the medium of instruction throughout, though successive adjustments of the language policy of the country have gradually increased the amount of English used. In the Francophone subsystem of education, English is taught as a subject from the first to the last year at both primary and secondary/high school level. In high school (the setting of this research), English is taught in all series (arts and science), and with the same coefficient. In addition, a recent innovation requires all subjects taught in French to be summarised in English at the end of the lesson. However, most teachers fail to do so, mainly because of language lapses. Moreover, the English textbook focuses on general English, and is the same for all series. This is also true for technical and vocational schools.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted here is the socio-educational model. The method of data collection and analysis that ensues provides specific details on measuring the attitude index as chosen for this work. Gardner's model of second language learning is based on the premise that "the learning of a second language involves both an ability and a motivational component and that the major basis of this motivation is best viewed from a social psychological perspective" (Gardner & Lalonde, 1985, p. 1), language learning involving two main tasks: a cognitive task and an emotional one. It started in the 1950s with Lambert's (1955) "research on bilingual dominance and the development of bilingualism" (Gardner, 2010b) cited by Taie and Afshar (2015), and further developments were continuously made until early 2000. Basically, the socio-educational model has four main components.

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The first component, motivation, encompasses three elements, namely 1) the desire to learn, 2) attitudes towards learning the language, and 3) motivational intensity. This three-component structuring of motivation is due to the fact that it is a complex phenomenon that cannot be measured with one parameter alone. The second component of this model is integrativeness or integrative motivation. This is the cultural aspect of the model. Its importance lies in the fact that "the motivational component is influenced to some extent by factors that affect an individual's willingness to accept "foreign" behavior patterns" (Gardner & Lalonde, 1985, p. 1). The third component, orientation, is defined by Gardner (2001b, p. 16) as "classifications of reasons that can be given for studying a language, and there is little reason to believe that the reasons, in and of themselves, are directly related to success". This merely points to the direction of the motivation, whether integrative or instrumental. Integrative orientation indicates the desire to learn a language to identify with the other culture or the native people, while instrumental orientation shows that the learner wants some measurable reward from learning the language, thus a utilitarian or material aim on the part of the learner. The last component of the model is attitude towards the learning environment. This may be the course itself, the teacher, the school, or any other extra-curricular activity that may make the learner have a more or less positive attitude towards second language learning.

3. Methodology

Below is detailed the methodology of data collection and analysis. It takes up population and sampling, tool, procedure, and measure.

3.1 Population and Sampling

The population for this study was sampled both proportionally and purposefully. Irrespective of their ethnic language, two hundred and eleven (211) *Seconde, Première,* and *Terminale* students (11th, 12th and 13th Grade of Francophone general education) were sampled in both urban and rural secondary schools in the Far North Region, Cameroon. These three grades were selected because younger learners were found to face difficulties in handling the questionnaire in a pilot study carried out on twenty 6ème and 5ème students (7th and 8th Grade of Francophone general education). The population is described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Sampled population

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulated percentage
Male	103	48,8	48,8	49,3
Female	107	50,7	50,7	100,0
Total	211	100,0	100,0	

Table 1 shows an interesting balance in the sampled population, although it does not necessarily represent the distribution of gender in the entire population under study. However, this potential disparity is not likely to affect results validity.

3.2 Tool

The main instrument used for data collection was questionnaire built along the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Gardner (1985), and addressed the following areas:

1. Motivation, divided into a) attitude towards learning English, b) desire to learn/class anxiety, and c) motivational intensity.
2. Attitude orientation (integrative/instrumental)
3. Attitude towards the learning environment, divided into a) parental support, b) attitude towards the English teacher, and c) attitude towards the English class.

Each component was organised using the most appropriate measure. The informants were asked to choose one of ten options related to attitude towards learning English. The options ranged from "Learning English is wonderful"

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(Number 1) to "I will drop English immediately when I leave high school" (Number 10). This was ranked such that the lower the index the better the attitude towards learning English. English learning anxiety followed a similar pattern. However, motivational intensity used a 4-point Likert scale where the lower the score the higher the intensity.

Attitude orientation was a little more subtle to describe. The respondents were proposed 8 reasons for learning English. The first four reasons were integrative, while the last 4 were instrumental. The two sets were analysed as two different blocks. Attitude towards the learning environment had three sets of questions representing its three subcomponents, namely parental support, attitude towards the English teacher, and attitude towards the English class. Parental support was made up of 10 propositions related to how much support the parents show to their offspring in learning English in school. The respondents were asked to choose the proposition that better matched their parents' support. Here, the higher the score the better the parental support. Attitude towards the English teacher and the English class were assessed through a 4-point Likert scale where the lower the score the better the attitude.

3.2.1 Measure

The attitude index was analysed in this work in several stages. First, individual indices were calculated for each main variable listed above. Then a general index of attitude was established in the form of an index list that compares the index of each variable with the standard index calculated from the AMTB. For this analysis, IBM SPSS package version 20 was used. Means and standard deviations were the main tools used for measuring.

3.2.2 Reliability Test

The reliability of the construct was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. It concerned individual two subsets of the data: Motivation (Motiv) and Attitude towards the Learning Environment (ATLE). The results revealed that Motivation scale with 11 items (α= .848) and Attitude towards the learning environment scale with 11 items (α = .833) were found to be reliable. Attitude orientation could not undergo this reliability test because it derived data from the items representing different scales. In fact, of the 8 items of the attitude orientation variable, four were integrative and four instrumental. However, since they were not checked separately so that each orientation would have had four scales representing its four levels, there were 8 scales instead. The decision to do so was to provide a framework of decision where the informants would provide a ranking from "negative" to "positive", where they could be labelled as more or less of one orientation. Actually, having the two subsets separate would definitely result in awkward interpretation of attitude orientation.

3.3 Procedure

The administration of the instruments was systematically made to ensure that the appropriate respondents were met. The questionnaire was first tested on fifteen 6ème students (7th Grade in the Francophone subsystem of general education). This pilot phase revealed that the age of the respondents posed a methodological problem. The length of the questionnaire and the complexity of the questions required a higher level of cognition. Thus, *Première* and *Terminale* students underwent the final survey. To administer the questionnaire, whole classes were summoned at once. The researchers took a little time to explain how to fill in the questionnaire, as well as its purpose. The respondents were advised to answer from their first impression, without thinking it over too much. This aimed at avoiding untrue answers, given that we believed that first time reaction is closer to reflexes, and is much more likely to be genuine. The exercise lasted for approximately one hour.

4. Results

The results obtained are presented here in three sections, each one representing a variable that constitute the AMTB, namely motivation, attitude orientation, attitude towards the learning environment.

4.1 Motivation

Motivation was divided into a) attitude towards learning English, b) language learning anxiety, and c) motivational intensity. Each was analysed in isolation before a general index for motivation was calculated.

4.2 Attitude towards Learning English

This was transformed into numerical data. The respondents were asked to choose among 10 English language learning attitudes the one that best corresponded to what they thought. The results are compiled in Table 2 below.

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Table 2. Attitude towards learning English

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulated percentage
1	Learning English is wonderful	23	10,9	11,0	11,0
2	I like learning English	65	30,8	31,0	41,9
3	English is an important subject on the curriculum	32	15,2	15,2	57,1
4	I intend to study English as much as possible	50	23,7	23,8	81,0
5	I like learning English	23	10,9	11,0	**91,9**
6	I hate English	5	2,4	2,4	94,3
7	I prefer focusing on other subjects than English	8	3,8	3,8	98,1
8	Learning English is a waste of time	2	,9	1,0	99,0
9	I think it is stupid to learn English	1	,5	,5	99,5
10	When I leave school I will drop English at once because I am not interested	1	,5	,5	100,0
	Total	210	99,5	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,5		
Total		211	100,0		

The ten referents to attitude towards learning were organised into two groups of five, the first five being positive and the last five negative. Table 2 shows that the first five referents cumulated 91.9% of the choices of the respondents, which shows an overwhelmingly positive attitude. Also, the referents within the positive group were ranked from the strongest to the weakest, while those of the negative group were ranked from the weakest to the strongest. One notes that the second line, which corresponds to the second strongest positive attitude hits the highest score (30.8%). This implies that although the respondents are not "passionate" about English, there is a high degree of positive attitude all the same among them. The calculation of mean and standard deviation yields interesting data for the construction of an index, as seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of attitude towards language learning

	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard mean error
Attitude towards learning English	210	3.2619	1.68386	.11620

The mean obtained in Table 3 (3.2619) situates attitude towards language learning closer to the referent "English is an important subject on the curriculum". This implies that though the subject is not cherished, it is however deemed important, at least a school subject by the respondents. Yet, standard deviation mitigates this point in as much as it is high at 1.68386 which implies that attitude towards language learning is not evenly spread among the population.

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4.3 Language Learning Anxiety

Language learning anxiety was made up of 10 referents to class anxiety where the first five expressed high anxiety and the last five low anxiety. The results are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 4. Language learning anxiety

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulated percentage
Valid		5	2,4	2,4	2,4
1	I feel embarrassed to answer questions during the English class	14	6,6	6,6	6.6
2	I am not confident when I speak during the English class	18	8,5	8,5	15.1
3	I always feel like other students speak English better than I do	41	19,4	19,4	34.5
4	I am always anxious and confused when I speak during the English class	12	5,7	5,7	40.2
5	I am afraid my am afraid to make a fool of myself when I speak English	28	13,3	13,3	53.5
6	I feel at ease when I answer questions during the English class	38	18,0	18,0	71.5
7	I am confident to speak during the English class	10	4,7	4,7	76.2
8	I speak better than some of my classmates	9	4,3	4,3	80.5
9	I am not anxious when I speak in the English class	3	1,4	1,4	81.9
10	I do not mind my classmates' critiques when I speak English	33	15,6	15,6	97.5
	Total	211	100,0	100,0	99.9

The striking feature of language learning anxiety is definitely not its mitigated result. Actually, high anxiety cumulated 53.5 % of the total score, while low anxiety scored about 44%, intimating that learners are quite anxious to speak English in class. However, the means observed in Table 5 below can already indicate that learners' learning anxiety is quite high.

Table 5. Language learning anxiety Mean and standard deviation

	N	minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
English Learning Anxiety	206	1	10	5.28	2.774

Table 5 shows a relatively high anxiety, but also reveals a heterogeneous distribution of this language anxiety.

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4.4 Motivational Intensity

Motivational intensity comprised a set of ten questions that checked the amount of effort the learners put in with regard to English. The data being designed in a Likert scale form, the respondents were statistically located on the motivational intensity ladder. This is displayed in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Motivational intensity

Modalities	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
I think of what I studied in the English class	205	1	4	2.11	.722
If English was not taught in school	206	1	4	2.04	.851
When I stumble over a notion during the English class	202	1	4	1.96	.992
I do my English assignments	204	1	4	2.02	.784
Given the way I study English, I can frankly say that	204	1	4	1.81	.930
If the English teacher needs a student for an additional work, I accept or offer to do it	204	1	4	1.81	.986
When the teacher returns exam scripts	204	1	4	2.30	.739
During the English class, I participate	204	1	4	2.27	.871
If I had access to a TV channel broadcasting in English, I would watch it	206	1	4	2.12	.883
When a song in English is broadcast on TV or over the radio, or elsewhere	206	1	4	1.68	.817
				2.012803 5669455	

The motivational intensity of the population, as shown in Table 6 reveals an average mean (2.013% on a four-point Likert scale), and a standard deviation smaller than 1. A general analysis of motivation is displayed in Table 7 shows very complex results whose relevance is discussed later.

Table 7. Motivation

	Attitude towards language learning	English Learning Anxiety	Motivational intensity
Mean	3.2619	5.28	2.015
Maximum	10	10	4

Table 7 shows that motivation towards English, in its three components, can be said to be just above average. In fact, although attitude towards language learning is fairly positive, the learners are relatively anxious to learn the language, and perhaps do not put in the necessary effort in terms of motivational intensity. Borrowing from our modalities, one can summarise motivation as follows: 1) the learners consider English an important subject on the curriculum; 2) however, they are anxious to learn the language, and 3) their effort to learn the language is just fair. This component

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of attitude has generally been overlooked in research with regard to Francophone learners. In general, an overemphasis of attitude orientation has usually overshadowed these other important aspects of a general index of attitude towards English by French-speaking Cameroonians (Francophones). The latter have usually been described in general terms as having an instrumental attitude (Atechi, 2015; Dyers & Agbondia, 2010; Penn Tamba, 1993), which in essence cannot highlight the complexity of attitude.

4.5 Attitude Orientation

Attitude towards a language can be seen in terms of instrumental and integrative orientations. The two orientations, though checked together, were kept separate in the analysis.

4.5.1 Integrative Orientation

The first four modalities in this section of the questionnaire tackled the integrative orientation of attitude and the results are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Integrative motivation

Modalities	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Learning English is useful because it will help me communicate with Anglophones and British/Americans	180	1	8	3.78	1.999
Learning English is useful because it will help me communicate with many people	180	1	8	3.78	2.099
Learning English is useful because I will better understand English and appreciate British culture	180	1	8	4.58	2.153
It is important to learn English for I would more easily associate with other cultural groups	178	1	8	4.79	2.336
				4.23274032	

With a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 8, the mean observed at 4.23274032 shows that integrative motivation is just above average, with the variable being relatively spread among the population. As a reminder, the tool was set such that the smaller the mean the more integrative the attitude.

4.5.2 Instrumental Orientation

Instrumental orientation of attitude is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9. Instrumental orientation

Modalities	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
It is important to learn English because it will help me in my future career	1	8	4.02	2.495
It is important to learn English because I would have access to quality information	1	8	4.61	2.161

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It is important to learn English because it will help me secure a good job	1	8	4.52	2.178
People will respect me more if I speak English	1	8	5.73	2.287
			4.7196809193631	

The mean calculated in Table 9 above shows that instrumental orientation of attitude is just a little higher than the integrative one. Here too, the attitude is heterogeneously spread among the population. In general terms then, attitude orientation seems to be in favour of integrative, whereby it scores 4.23274032, while instrumental attitude scores 4.7196809193631 mean. Despite the fact that this is not very important a difference, the sheer fact that integrative orientation of attitude is higher than the instrumental one is a major turn. In effect, previous researches have always highlighted the instrumental orientation of attitude towards EFL in Cameroon (Atechi, 2015; Dyers & Agbondia, 2010; Penn Tamba, 1993). Although this different result may be related to the setting investigated, it should be noted that earlier works have not provided comparative results that revealed the extent to which instrumental orientation outpaced integrative ones.

4.6 Attitude towards the Learning Environment

Attitude towards the learning environment is divided between parental support, attitude towards the teacher and attitude towards the English class. Each is taken up in turn below.

4.6.1 Parental Support

Parental support is the amount of interest parents put in as regards the learning, in the present case, of language by their children. It was evaluated along 10 modalities of which 5 were negative and 5 positive. The tool was set up such that the lower the mean the better the parental support. The result is simplified in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Parental support

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Parental Support	199	1	10	5.13	2.796

The mean (5.13) shows that parental support is just below average. This expresses a mild support from parents, who would never go the extra mile to support their offspring to learn English. They do not go up to discouraging them, yet their support is not strong. This mean seems to reject the claim that the rush for English medium education owes more to parents' interest than the real attitude of learners. However, this has to be mitigated by the fact that EMI begins in nursery, and in some cases at primary level, and it eventually concerns a different area of investigation. Actually, once in the EMI the learners do not longer have English as a foreign language, and cannot therefore fall in line with the context of the present study.

4.7 Attitude towards the Teacher

Attitude towards the English teacher was checked through 6 modalities, and the mean obtained can be seen in Table 11 below.

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Table 11. Attitude towards the English teacher

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Friendliness	156	1	4	2.04	.875
Competence	163	1	4	1.70	.686
Efficiency	134	1	4	1.87	.744
Organisation	157	1	4	1.82	.820
Politeness	144	1	4	1.80	.763
Creativity	146	1	4	2.18	.968
	116			1.90252143	

Interestingly, the attitude towards the English teacher is just below average (1.902). It should also be noted that this attitude is quite evenly spread among the population, and can be seen as a constant, or a widely shared view among the population.

4.8 Attitude towards the English Class

Similarly to attitude towards the English teacher, attitude towards the English class was also checked through six modalities. The results in Table 12 below reveal the mean and standard deviation obtained.

Table 12. Attitude towards the English class

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
The English class is agreeable	149	2.06	.782
The English class is fascinating	142	2.30	.875
English is easy	138	2.48	.794
English is interesting	156	1.88	.782
English is simple	139	2.40	.865
English is necessary	150	1.79	.747
		2.15033928	

With quite a relatively homogenous distribution among the population, attitude towards the English class appears to be above average (Mean=2.150). This shows a fairly positive attitude towards the English class, which contrasts with the English teacher. The index of attitude towards the learning environment shows that parental support is just above average. On the other hand, attitude towards the English teacher falls below average on mean calculated. Finally, attitude towards the English class falls just above average. This falls in line with Ekembe's (2021) earlier claims that teaching methods (and therefore the teacher) is found by students to be responsible for their negative attitude towards English. Yet, our results show that the English class in itself is not disliked as implied in previous research (Harrow & Mpoche, 2009; Nkwetisama Muluh, 2012), despite a very high standard deviation. One issue that is still to be scrutinised is parental support. The present results show that it is just above average, and may clearly stand in support of previous findings that relate the rush for English medium education, a situation that has been equated to the rush for English, not to learners' personal attitude, but to their parents desire to offer better opportunities to their offspring through English (Ekembe, 2021).

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5. Discussion of the Findings

The present results are now discussed in terms of their implications for a general index of attitude towards English as a foreign language in Cameroon. Then, the educational implications are discussed.

5.1 Theoretical Implications for a General Index of Attitude towards EFL in Cameroon

The results obtained in the present study show the complexity of the analysis of attitude towards EFL in Cameroon, and therefore the difficulty to establish a simple numerical general index of attitude, both as a general fact and in the present setting. To clarify this theoretical complexity we begin with a reminder of the results obtained for each component of the framework adopted, and which comprises 1) motivation, 2) attitude orientation, and 3) attitude towards the learning environment. Then, we show how though pertinent the model is, especially in a bid to establish a clearer picture of attitude towards EFL in Cameroon, it may not easily provide a statistically pertinent general, easily measurable, and ready-to-use figure.

First, motivation, which was made of attitude towards language learning, language learning anxiety and motivational intensity, was found to be mitigated among our population. In that vein, they considered English an important subject on the curriculum, but were anxious to learn, and finally did not put extra effort in learning English. Secondly, attitude orientation was not clearly in favour of either an instrumental or an integrative orientation, despite a slight advantage for integrative motivation. Finally, attitude towards the learning environment, which consisted of parental support, attitude towards the English teacher and attitude towards the English class showed similarly complex results. Parental support was just above average, which showed a slightly negative support on the part of the parents. Secondly, although the learners had a slightly negative attitude towards the English teacher, they held the English class a little in higher favour. From these results, rather than a general index of attitude towards EFL we propose a tabular description of its various manifestations. This is first done in a simple tabular representation in Table 13.

Table 13. General index of attitude towards English as a foreign language

Attitude towards EFL							
Motivation			Attitude orientation		Attitude towards the learning environment		
Attitude towards language learning	Language learning anxiety	Motivational intensity	Integrative	instrumental	Parental support	Attitude towards the English teacher	Attitude towards the English class
+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+

Several observations can be made from Table 13 above. First, attitude towards EFL in Cameroon, and especially in the present setting, can be described as neutral. This owes to the fact that, while on the one hand motivation and attitude towards the learning environment are neutralised (3 negative and 3 positive), attitude orientation is not clearly in favour of either integrative or instrumental. Furthermore, motivation is stronger than attitude towards the learning environment in the setting of our investigation, with the former having two positive modalities and the latter one. This shows that intrinsic attitude is quite good among the population, whereas the learning environment is not pretty conducive. Thirdly, the fact that integrative orientation of attitude is relatively higher than the instrumental one seems to intimate that the variables used to account for this conclusion in previous studies may pose a theoretical problem.

Actually, Atechi (2015) convoked the socio-economic meltdown of the 1990s in Cameroon to explain the rush for English by Francophone Cameroonians, hence justifying an instrumental orientation of attitude that had earlier been postulated by Penn Tamba (1993). Although this seems to be true, the present data mitigate this position to a greater extent. In fact, the recent rush for English has usually been seen through English medium instruction. Yet, it should be noted that the choice of an EMI is not made by the learner, but by his/her parents, whose attitude can actually be

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used to justify this rush. We anticipate here that this integrative attitude could instead be related to the aggressive bilingualism policy implemented in Cameroon for the past four decades. The government has been championing bilingualism as one of the main pillars of the sheer existence of the Cameroonian nation. Thus, various programmes have been initiated to that effect in schools, over the media, and in the general administration. In that vein, Cameroonians of all walks of life are likely to encounter English wherever they go.

This, together with the fact that English has not yet been raised to the status of compulsory condition for a job, contributes to making the integrative orientation more logical. Hence, one may see motivation and attitude towards the learning environment as the determining forces behind attitude orientation, such that highly positive attitude towards the learning environment may result in higher instrumental orientation of attitude and vice versa. These results also underline the fact that attitude is more a trend than an index. The various variables may differ across time and space. It can be intimated that attitude may vary according to time and situations, such that what is positive here may be negative there.

5.2 Implications for the Teaching of EFL

The rush for EMI in Cameroon as underscored by Echu (2005) and Ekembe Enongene (2021) seems to be a serious issue in Cameroon today. This clearly shows that there is a real interest on the part of French-speaking Cameroonians to undergo an English-medium instruction. Although this may wrongly imply that learners have a positive attitude towards EFL, it instead posits that parents instead display this attitude. However, this attitude does not account for second language acquisition, since it cannot determine success. In fact, as long as it is not a psychological tendency expressed by the learners themselves, it cannot explain the likelihood of success or failure.

It is therefore important to consider the educational implications of the present work within the limits of English as a foreign language. As they stand, the present results fall in line with Nkwetisama Muluh's (2012) conclusions that the teaching method highly contributes to falling standards in English. However, it should be noted that the attitude towards the teacher, as revealed by the present findings, is just below average, and may not be justified by poor teaching methods only. Actually, this attitude may instead be related to language speaking anxiety, which makes the learner fearful of the teacher. Further correlations may be necessary to unambiguously establish this. What is obvious from these results is that the teaching of English in Francophone schools is still marred with a number of problems including high language anxiety, low parental support, and negative attitude towards the English teacher. Also, even when the attitude was not negative, it was merely average, as the results show.

On the strength of these results, one can intimate that EFL in the setting investigated fails on a concatenation of factors, both social and pedagogical. In effect, parental support, which is a social variable, may contribute to negative attitude towards the language when parents show overt neglect for a subject by not providing textbooks, help, or encouragement for the subject. The parent implicitly tells the learner which subjects are important, and the child behaves accordingly. This is one of the reasons why the coefficient of English was increased some years ago by educational authorities. Thus, parents should be at the forefront of the battle for better attitudes towards EFL.

However, if one contends with Curdt-Christiansen (2013a, p. 3) that policy at the state level is often one of the most influential factors that contribute to parental decisions on whether they "provide continuity for intergenerational transmission and resistance to language shift", one may also posit that low parental support can be related to the fact that official bilingualism is still to be made practical to many parents. On the other hand, teachers should be more creative, friendly, and above all better trained (more competent). Finally, anxiety should be dealt with in the EFL class. This can only be done if there is a certain degree of flexibility in the syllabus. Generally, too much is covered, but just a little is mastered. Teachers should be allowed to tailor their programme to suit their teaching contexts, and the educational authorities should take this into account in official examinations.

As a general matter therefore, educational policies with regard to English as a foreign language should not be mere declaration of good intentions. Government decisions to enforce English should be visible in a large spectrum of domains, not only in school. In fact, one can anticipate that if a good policy is not transcribed in terms of either integrative or instrumental motives, parents may not see any interest in encouraging their students to study it. As an illustration, if a country shows overt disdain for English culture as a paragon of Western culture imperialism, parents will not see any interest in making their offspring learn it. This can be seen in postcolonial countries like Cameroon, where the nativisation of English is quite latent despite the RP being the tacit educational norm (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2022). Also, teachers constitute an important component of the teaching chain, and can heavily determine attitude.

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6. Conclusion

The present study was a contribution to the debate around attitude towards English as a foreign language. The debate has been even harsher in Cameroon where English has been viewed as outclassed by French both numerically and politically. However, the turn of the 21st century saw a sharp linguistic ideological U-turn in the country. This required a reassessment of EFL learners' attitude towards the language against new socio-political paradigms. Also, the study focuses on one neglected area of the country: the Far North Region of Cameroon. This choice was dictated not only by the prejudice the region had faced on the part of researchers in the field, but mainly because it displayed the potential for providing novel and striking results.

The analysis actually revealed complex results which show that attitude towards EFL cannot be cogently seen from one prism. Contrary to previous works which have usually tackled selected aspects of attitude, the present study holds that several variables should be taken into account in examining it. Also, the fact that one variable is negative does not imply a total negative attitude towards English as a foreign language. In effect, although our sample was found to like learning English, they had a high learning anxiety that could affect overall attitude. Taking this into account, language practitioners could therefore lay more emphasis on how to reduce language speaking anxiety in their learners in order to increase their overall attitude. Again, one notes that parental support, which was low, did not prevent learners from displaying a positive motivational intensity. This simply shows that improved parental support could make overall attitude even higher. Moreover, it appears that no single area of Cameroon at any given point in time would epitomise the entire country with its linguistic and social diversities.

Our results clearly debunked early claims that Cameroonians disliked English or had a more instrumental orientation towards the language. By so doing, it does not reject those claims per se, but simply shows different results in a different setting at a given point in time. Also, segmented theoretical approaches seem to portray attitude towards EFL in Cameroon as a dramatic situation. Here again, our results show that the situation is not so desperate. Although certain aspects of attitude were actually found to be negative, others were far less as negative as usually portrayed. Therefore, looking at the issue from one angle may only establish the correlation with that variable, without taking into account the whole system that makes up attitude. It emerges that EFL policies should not only focus on learners. Teachers, parents, and teacher trainers should all harmoniously be interwoven in the teaching fabric to yield positive results. These are those who create the necessary environment for the proper acquisition of the language through appropriate attitudes.

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