JETIR.ORG ISSN: 2349-5162 | ESTD Year : 2014 | Monthly Issue
JOURNAL OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH (JETIR)
An International Scholarly Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Teachers Perception of Pupils Performance in English Language in Some Anglophone Primary Schools in Kumba

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Abstract

This study examines pupils' performance in English and explores why it may be steadily declining. The main goal was to determine how teachers in some Anglophone primary schools in Kumba and nearby areas view pupils' performance in English, specifically whether they believe pupils perform poorly. Fifty-six teachers from primary schools in Meme Division, South West Region, were randomly selected to complete a 7-item questionnaire. Results showed that 80.35% of teachers agreed that pupils perform poorly in English, while 19.64% disagreed. Those who believed pupils perform poorly cited reasons such as the collective promotion system, limited time for teaching English grammar, a lack of English textbooks, and the influence of Pidgin English. By contrast, teachers who disagreed argued that learning is a process and that some pupils fail exams due to panic, not because they lack ability in the subject.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is now a global language, widely spoken worldwide. Over time, it has developed into many varieties used in different social settings. Cameroon English is one such variety that has evolved over the years. Researchers such as Todd (1982), Mbangwana (1992, 2008), Simo Bobda (1994), Amana (1998), Anchimbe (1998), Ategwa (2003), and Sala (2003) have studied its grammar. In Cameroon, English serves not only as a means of communication but also as a marker of political identity. Different scholars have given it various names: Mbasi-Manga (1973, 1976) calls it Cameroon Standard English, while Manga (1983), Simo Bobda (1983, 1986), and Mbangwana (1986, 1987) refer to it as Cameroon Educated English or simply Cameroon English. Wolf describes it as the "National Variety," and Sala (2003) calls it "Institutional English." According to Mbasi-Manga (1976), it is "a variety of English language which is a continuum from Pidgin English and which is a product of cumulative usage where orality has been decisive in determining its spoken and written norms."

Over the years, research has shown that the standard of English in Cameroon is steadily declining. English is one of the country's two official languages and is used as the language of instruction in the Anglophone education system, while French is used in schools in the other eight regions. Some schools are bilingual and use both languages for instruction. The Cameroonian education system has three main levels: primary, secondary, and higher education. At each level, students take exams to advance or earn a certificate in English. The focus of this study is on teachers' perceptions of pupils' use of English in some Anglophone primary schools in Kumba.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kaahwa, Y. T., et al. (2023), in their article titled "Perception of Teachers of English Towards Boys in English Lessons in Secondary Schools in Uganda: Implications on Students' Performance," investigate why boys perform poorly in English in Ugandan secondary schools. Their objective was to establish English teachers' perceptions of boys in English lessons in Uganda. They used purposive sampling to select respondents, and data were collected through interview guides, observation checklists, and document analysis. After analyzing the data, the researchers found that English language teachers perceived boys as uncooperative in class, stubborn, disruptive, and more disorganized, with low interest in English language subjects. They also found that some teachers were supportive and accommodating, whereas others were cold-hearted towards them. It was also established that boys' performance in UCE results has been deteriorating over the last four years, since 2018.

They recommended that teachers improve their pedagogical approaches to interest boys in English-language subjects. Also, boys should be trained in better ways to read English and to think independently, rather than always following their peers. It was equally recommended that boys should change their attitude and feelings towards the English language and take it as a serious subject.

Wijayaratne (2024), in his article entitled Students' and Teachers' Perception of the Causes of Poor Academic Performance in English of Secondary Level Students in Rural Areas; A Case Study in Three Government Schools in Kandy District, Sri Lanka, discussed the causes of poor academic performance in English language as a foreign language of secondary-level students in rural areas in Kandy district based on the students' and teachers' perceptions. He worked with students in grades nine to eleven and their respective English teachers from three different schools, whose performance was reported to be weak in the ordinary level examination. The study was carried out quantitatively. Data for the study were collected by the distribution of questionnaires. His findings indicated that problems related to students, teachers, parents, learning environment, and curriculum were identified. Study findings illustrated that students' attitudes and low self-confidence, Lack of basic knowledge and vocabulary, poor parents' motivation, financial issues, disadvantageous social background, shortage of trained teachers, lack of facilities, unsuitable and inefficient teaching methods and curriculum are the major contributing factors for the lower English level of the secondary level students in rural areas.

He recommends that teachers and the administration gather information on problems in the learning and teaching process in government schools, and that students are the most important group in the education system, so their perceptions should be valued. However, teachers can be observed by the school authorities. He also proposed that they should conduct an island-wide survey to identify the issues, designing an English language curriculum suitable for daily life regardless teacher centered exam-oriented teaching, integration of technology, the establishment of proper management to ensure the equal and fair distribution of teachers all over the country, taking relevant measures to increase the job satisfaction of the teachers, providing facilities to the unprivileged schools are the suggestions given by the researcher. He said that solving the issues mentioned in the article can help all students from disadvantaged backgrounds become competent in English.

3. DATA COLLECTION

This research used a descriptive survey design and was conducted in Kumba, located in the Southwest Region. The study focuses on primary school teachers in Kumba and includes the Mbonge and Konye subdivisions. These teachers provided information about their views on pupils' performance in English.

The researcher was lucky to meet with some teachers at the Divisional Delegation of Basic Education in Kumba. After they had finished their assignment at the delegation, the researcher met with some teachers at the Divisional Delegation of Basic Education in Kumba and asked them to complete the questionnaire, explaining that their responses would be used only for academic purposes. Some teachers agreed and took about 45 minutes to participate. Additional questionnaires were completed by randomly selected primary school teachers from the Meme Division, with schools selected for accessibility. The data for the preliminary or background section were

grouped together according to the information provided. For example, trained teachers were grouped together, and untrained teachers were grouped together. The same was done for the number of years of teaching experience. Those with 1 to 5 years of experience were grouped together, those with 6 to 10 years were grouped together, etc. The next was the level of education; those with the GCE Ordinary level were grouped together, those with the Advanced level formed another group, those with the Diploma were grouped together, those with the bachelor's degree were grouped together, and the last group was made up of those with a master's degree. The last section under the preliminary section of the questionnaire was the nature of their job. Government school teachers were grouped together, part-time teachers grouped together, and the P.T.A teachers were grouped together. After grouping the different answers, a statistical analysis was conducted. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the data. The results of the data analysis were summarized using frequency tables, pie charts, and bar charts.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A summary of the information and views obtained from the informants on the 7-item questionnaire is given below:

Question 1 in the preliminary section asked teachers to indicate their highest certificate and their teaching status. Educational qualifications such as GCE Ordinary level, GCE Advanced level, diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree and above were listed for the respondents to indicate their level as seen below.

Table 1: Educational qualification

No	Question item	Certificate	Number of respondents	Frequency / %
I	What is your highest certificate?	GCE Ordinary level	10	17.85%
		GCE Advanced level	17	30.35%
		Diploma	25	44.64%
		Bachelor's degree	4	7.14%
		Master's degree and above	0	00%
		Total	56	100%
II	What is your status as a teacher?	Government teacher	16	28.57%
		Part-time teacher	25	44.64%
		P.T.A teacher	15	26.78%
		Total	56	100%

The results in this table show that, out of the 56 respondents in this study, 44.64% had a diploma, 30.35% had GCE Advanced level, 17.85% had GCE Ordinary level, 7.14% had a bachelor's degree, and 00% had a master's degree. The second question in this section sought to determine the nature of their jobs, and the following figures were recorded. Those who work as part-time teachers accounted for 44.64%, while government teachers

accounted for 28.57%. The last category comprises those who work as P.T.A. teachers, at 26.78%. After section one, the preliminary section, comes section two, which addresses the questionnaire's main questions. Question 1 checked the number of hours allocated for teaching English per week.

Table 2: Number of hours allocated for the teaching of English per week

No	Question item	Responses	Number of respondents	Frequency
1	How many hours are allocated to the teaching of English language per week?	2H 25 minutes	30	53.57%
		1H 75minutes	8	14.28%
		2H	18	32.14%
		Total	56	100%

Table 2 shows that 53.57% of 56 teachers devote 2 hours and 25 minutes per week to teaching English. That is, they spend 45 minutes daily teaching English. Those who use 40 minutes per day accounted for 32.14%; that is, they use 2 hours per week for teaching English, while 14.28% use 1 hour and 75 minutes per week, that is, 35 minutes daily. Question four checked to know how many pupils there were in each teacher's class. Below is a table that presents the findings.

Table 3: Number of pupils per class

No	**Question item**	**Responses**	**Number of respondents**	**Frequency**
2	How many pupils are there in your class on average?	10 – 20	5	8.92%
		20 – 40	13	23.21%
		40 – 60	10	17.85%
		60 above	28	50%
		Total	56	100%

As shown in Table 3, those who reported having 60 or more pupils in class accounted for 50% of the 56 respondents, followed by those with 20–40 pupils at 23.21%. The third-highest group comprised those with between 40 and 60 pupils in class, with 17.85% of 56 respondents, while the lowest percentage was among those with between 10 and 20 pupils in class, at 8.92%. The next item on the questionnaire sought to determine the main textbook used for teaching English.

Table 4: The main textbook used

No	**Question item**	**Names of textbooks**	**Number of respondents**	**Frequency %**
3	What is the main textbook you use for the teaching of English	New Cambridge primary English book 6	3	5.35%

		Senior primary English book 6	23	41.07%
		Basic English book 6	30	53.57%
		Total	56	100%

As shown in Table 4, 5.35% of 56 respondents use the Cambridge Primary English book 6; 41.07% use Senior Primary English, while 53.57% use Basic English. From our observations, some schools don't use the government-prescribed text for teaching English in primary school. They introduce books that they consider more efficient, especially for teaching English grammar. The next item on the questionnaire sought to determine whether pupils' performance in English is poor. This is seen in the table below:

Table 5: Pupils' performance? Poor or not

No	Question item	Response	Number of respondents	Frequency %
4	According to you, do you think pupils generally perform poorly in English language subjects? If yes, give three reasons; if no, give three reasons.	YES	45	80.35%
		NO	11	19.64%
		Total	56	100%

As Table 5 shows, 80.35% of respondents agreed with the statement that pupils perform poorly in English, while 19.64% disagreed. Those who said pupils perform poorly in the English language gave the following reasons:

1) Pupils perform poorly due to the collective promotion system
2) A very limited number of hours is used in the teaching of English grammar
3) They don't have English language textbooks.
4) The influence of Pidgin English
5) They perform poorly because of the lack of follow-up from parents and teachers.
6) The negative attitude of some pupils causes them to perform poorly
7) Non-mastery of the English language by some teachers.
8) Inadequate teaching material
9) Lack of an English language environment
10) A very large class size causes poor performance
11) Poor teaching methods

Below is a table summarizing responses from those who said that pupils perform poorly in English.

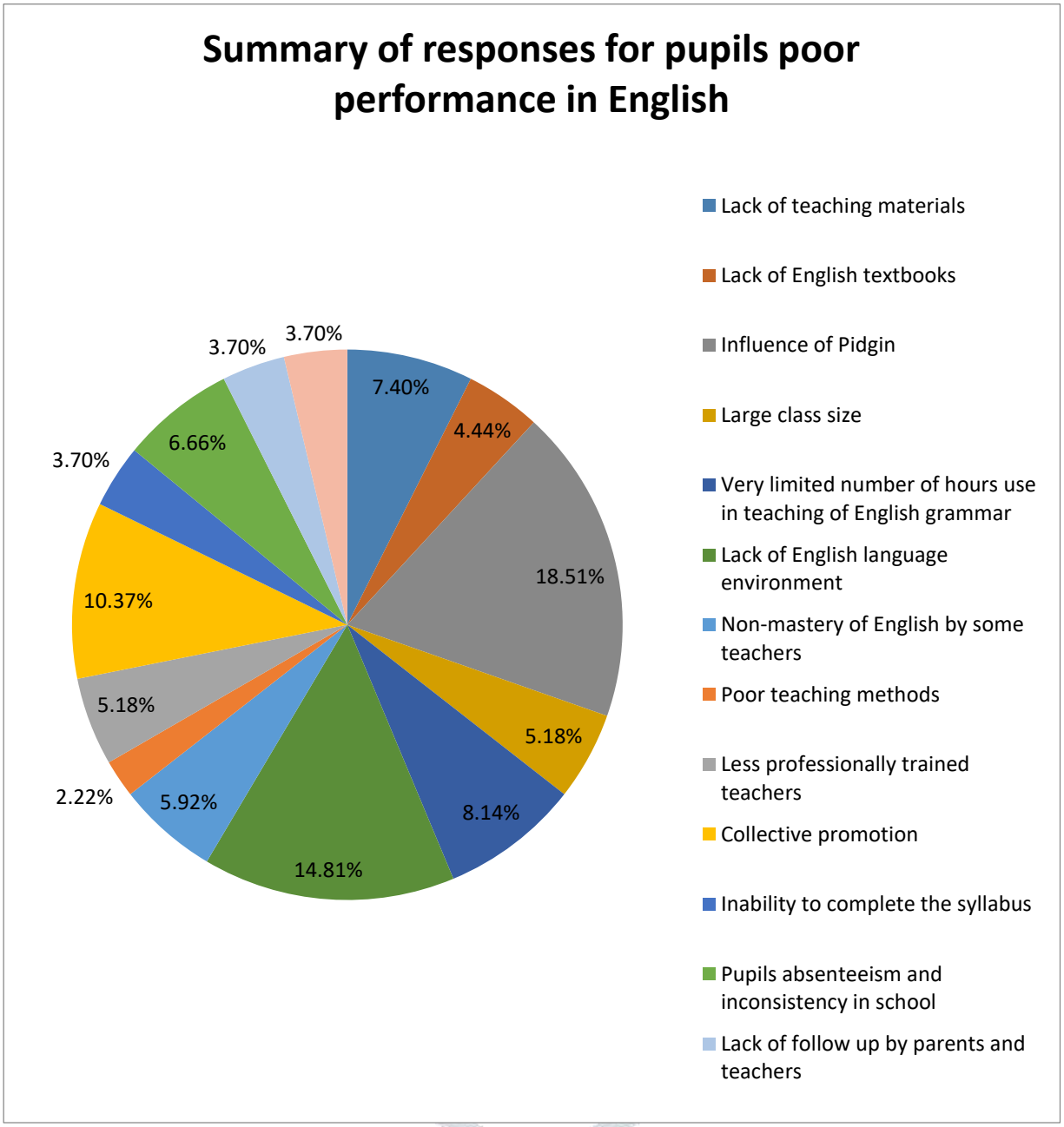
Table 6: Responses of those who said pupils perform poorly in English

Responses provided by teachers who said pupils perform poorly in English	Number of occurrences	Frequency %
Inadequate teaching materials	10	7.40%
Lack of English textbooks	6	4.44%

Influence of Pidgin	25	18.51%
Large class size	7	5.18%
A very limited number of hours are used in teaching English grammar	11	8.14%
Lack of an English language environment	20	14.81%
Non-mastery of English by some teachers	8	5.92%
Poor teaching methods	3	2.22%
Less professionally trained teachers,	7	5.18%
Collective promotion system,	14	10.37%
Inability to complete the syllabus,	5	3.70%
Pupils' absenteeism and inconsistency in school	9	6.66%
Lack of follow-up from parents and teachers	5	3.70%
Negative attitude of some pupils	5	3.70%
TOTAL	**135**	100%

Table 6 shows that 18.51% said the pupils' poor performance is a result of the influence of Pidgin, while 14.81% thinks it is the lack of English language environment that causes pupils to perform poorly in English, while 14.81% says the lack of English language environment is the cause of pupils' poor performance in English. Collective promotion recorded 10.37%, while limited teaching hours of English grammar recorded8.14%. Lack of teaching materials was recorded at 7.40%, while pupil absenteeism and inconsistency were recorded at 6.66%. Non-mastery of English by some teachers was recorded at 5.92%, while large class size was recorded at 5.18%. Lack of English textbooks was recorded at 4.44%, while inability to complete the syllabus, lack of follow-up by parents and teachers, and negative attitude of some pupils were recorded at 3.70% each. Lastly, poor teaching methods recorded 2.22%. The table above corresponds to the graph below.

Graph 1: Responses to pupils' poor performance



From the above graph, the influence of Pidgin is the response with the highest number of occurrences, that is, 25 times, with a percentage of 18.51%. The second-highest number of occurrences is recorded under the lack of an English environment, at 14.81%, while the collective promotion system is the third most frequent, at 10.37%. The fourth- and fifth-highest percentages of occurrences are recorded under limited English grammar teaching hours and a lack of teaching materials, at 8.14% and 7.40%, respectively. The response with the fewest occurrences is "poor teaching methods," at 2.22%. This response may have the fewest occurrences because teachers probably would not want to speak down to their teaching methods.

Those who stood for the fact that pupils do not perform poorly justified their claim with the following reasons:

1) Pupils' performance is a learning process because we learn from our mistakes
2) Some pupils fail during exams because of panic, and not because they are not good at that subject.

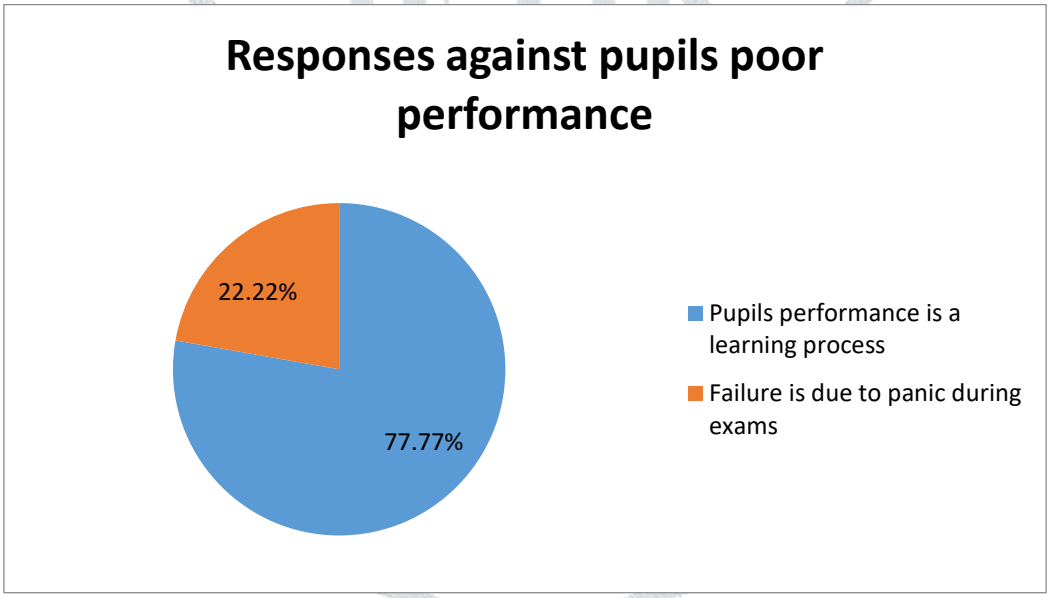
Below is a table that presents the responses of those who said pupils don’t perform poorly in English

Table 7: Responses of those who said pupils don't perform poorly in English

Responses	Number of occurrences	Frequency %
Pupils' performance is a learning process	7	77.77%
Failure due to panic during exams	2	22.22%
TOTAL	9	100%

As seen in the table, 7 of 9 respondents said that pupils' performance is a learning process, accounting for 77.77%, while 2 of 9 respondents said that pupils' failure is due to panic during exams, accounting for 22.22%. It is worth noting that only 9 of 11 teachers who said that pupils don't perform poorly in English gave reasons to justify their claim. Some gave only the answer "NO" without any reason attached. To further explain the table above, we will present it as a graph, as shown below.

Graph 2: Responses to pupils' poor performance



As seen in the graph above, pupils' performance is a learning process, with 77.77% recorded, making it the most frequent under this category, while failure due to panic during exams is the least, at 22.22%.

From the respondents' response to the question of what reasons could account for pupils' performance in the English language paper, an elaboration of each suggestion is made by the researcher. The different factors elaborated in this section are: limited teaching materials, inadequate textbooks and less professionally trained teachers, collective promotion system, lateness to school on the part of teachers, absenteeism by teachers, inability to complete the syllabus, less interest in children's understanding of lesson, pupils' absenteeism and inconsistency in school, truancy, use of local language in the classroom, lack of interest and motivation in the teachers lessons and failure to do homework, parents inability to provide textbooks and basic school needs for their children, less interaction with children's teachers etc. Below is the explanation of the causes of poor performance.

4.1 Explanation of the causes of poor performance

Respondents who said pupils perform poorly in English presented some possible reasons for pupils' poor performance in English. These points are elaborated below:

Pupils perform poorly due to the collective promotion system.

In Cameroon, primary schools have a system known as collective promotion, introduced by the government. Collective promotion is not based on performance or skill acquisition; rather, it is a policy in which a child moves from an inferior class to a superior one. The main objective of collective promotion is to minimize the cost and wastage of educational resources caused by high repetition rates. According to Mihiretie (2011), "children are promoted to the next class in the hope that they will improve next year. They do not improve as expected, and parents complain". It is apparent from Mihiretie's (2011) observation that learners cannot master the literacy skills required by the universal basic education (UBE) goals. Goal 5 states that all aspects of education should be improved to ensure excellence for all, so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, particularly in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Collective promotion does not help pupils' performance, nor does it minimize cost or wastage; rather, it affects pupils' performance in class. For example, in a class of about 40 pupils, only about 5 or 6 can read properly. Some of them are worse than pupils in the nursery school, as evidenced by their examination scripts. If they are given the opportunity to repeat a class, it would help them to master what they couldn't master the previous academic year. This system of collective promotion has a negative toll on pupils' performance in class.

Inadequate teaching and learning materials

Teaching and learning materials have been found to be inadequate in the Meme division of Cameroon's south-west region. These materials are mostly visual and include wall pictures, chalk and chalkboards, maps, charts, and magazines. These teaching and learning materials help because pupils can see and often feel what the teacher teaches. They act as stimulants; that is, they guide pupils in responding to questions and make pupils happy. The teacher's lesson becomes more interesting and easier to understand, and the assimilation of the major concepts becomes easier. Inadequate teaching and learning materials in some schools in the Meme division make it difficult for pupils to understand the lessons, leading to poor performance. The lack of suitable teaching materials reduces the effectiveness of teaching. As Broom (1973) pointed out, the availability and creative use of media enable pupils to learn more and retain what they learn better. This, in turn, improves their performance. However, this situation is limited to some schools in the Meme division.

Professional qualification of teachers

A professional qualification is important in education. The professional skill of the teacher establishes a productive classroom atmosphere from the start by means of good organization and carefully planned teaching structures (Farrant, 1980, p. 169). Professional competence often translates into high-quality teaching, with the expectation that it will influence pupils' learning. However, in Meme division there is limited number of professional teachers, that is, those who have undergone training, shows that they are unable to use their teaching skills, that is, preparing their lesson notes, questioning, explaining things clearly to pupils, classroom management, creating a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere for different lessons, and to ensure that pupils understood the lesson given to them. Hence, pupils in these schools perform poorly on the FSLC English language paper.

Lateness and the regular absence of teachers

Some teachers in schools in the Meme division arrive late and are often absent. When teachers arrive late to school, they do not begin classes on time. Lateness and absenteeism reduce instructional time and lead to an incomplete syllabus. Some teachers in schools in the Meme division, therefore, are unable to cover the syllabus before the end of the year, resulting in lower pupil output.

Completion of syllabuses

It has been observed that very few English Language teachers complete their syllabuses by the end of the school year. The completion of the syllabus for each subject in each class provides the foundation for the next class to be built upon. When the syllabus is incomplete, content that should be taught in the next class, which is based on the previous class, cannot be taught. If the situation continued, there would be an accumulation of content not taught, which would affect pupils' performance. The non-completion of a syllabus has a cumulative effect on pupils, such that as they move from grade to grade, they encounter materials they lack the foundation to study. Consequently, poor performance would be the result.

The teacher's interest in children's assimilation of the lesson

Some teachers show little or no concern about the children's understanding of the lessons. The output and outcome (performance) are linked to pupils' understanding of the lesson taught. The more pupils understand lessons, the higher their performance in examinations. Since some teachers show little or no concern for children's understanding of the lessons, the result is poor performance. As Aggarwal (1994) pointed out, "best learning takes place when the teacher is successful in arousing the interest of the students. The guidance of the teacher is mainly a matter of giving the right kind of stimulus to help them to learn" (p. 191)

Teacher work habit

Some teachers in the Meme division show less commitment to their work, especially in government schools. Teacher commitment and work habits are low. Most of them lack enthusiasm and are unable to teach effectively. This attitude prevents pupils from learning effectively and acquiring much of the classroom content and knowledge, resulting in poor performance. This supports Lockheed et al.'s (1991) claim that professional commitment and a lack of motivation lead to poor attendance and unprofessional attitudes towards students, which in turn affect students' academic performance.

Lateness and regular absence on the part of pupils'

Lateness and absenteeism are among the major factors contributing to pupils' poor performance in the FSLC English language paper. Pupils in some schools are often late and regularly absent. The consequence of lateness, absenteeism and irregular school attendance is the inability to understand material that is taught on one's own. Persistent absence from classes and lectures also results in a loss of content and knowledge. They lose in terms of what was taught. As a result, assignments and exercises are not completed properly, leading to poor performance in examinations.

A very limited number of hours is used in the teaching of English grammar.

Another factor contributing to pupils' poor performance is the number of hours spent teaching English, especially the grammar section. Given English's global importance, it should receive more attention. The limited number of instructional hours affects pupils' learning. This is because some children are naturally slow learners, so if a lesson is taught hurriedly, they cannot understand it, thereby affecting their performance in class.

Provision of breakfast by parents

Most parents do not provide breakfast for the pupils. Breakfast plays a very important role in the morning teaching and learning process. It makes pupils attentive in class and helps them to concentrate on the lessons being taught. However, when pupils are hungry, they become distracted in class and cannot concentrate on the lessons. This is the case of some pupils in schools in the Meme division. The lack of breakfast shows that they were not active in class and could not focus on the lesson, which affects their academic performance. They need a stable frame of mind to study and improve their performance.

Lack of basic needs among pupils

Very few children have all their basic school needs, such as a school uniform, school bag, exercise books, pencils, a ruler, and pens, provided in the Meme division, especially in rural areas. This means that the majority of the pupils did not have their basic school needs provided for by their parents. The absence of basic school needs does not provide a stable mind and a comfortable environment for children to study. They are unable to concentrate during classroom learning. The lack of some exercise books and writing materials left the children unable to complete their exercises and assignments in class. This, in essence, led to low academic performance.

Pupil's home and parental educational background

The geographical location and parental background affect pupils' performance in the FSLC English language examination. Rural schools are located mostly in farming communities, while urban schools are located in areas where different categories of citizens, such as the educated, uneducated, and peasants, live. The fact that pupils from both rural and urban areas in Meme division are mostly from peasant backgrounds leads them to perform poorly in English. This is because their illiterate and peasant parents find it difficult to teach their children at home. When children bring assignments from school, there is no one to assist them with them. This hampers their performance in English language grammar.

This factor of pupils' backgrounds in the Meme division plays a significant role in their motivation to study English, since there is no one to follow up with them. Farming and how to make money at a tender age are all they think about.

Socio-economic background

Also, parents' socio-economic background plays a role in a child's English performance in primary schools in Cameroon, especially in the Meme division. Socio-economic background refers to an individual's social class or level. It is often qualified in respect to education, income and occupation. How regularly a child speaks English would determine their performance in class. In the Meme division, both rural and urban areas consist of small villages where the dominant language is the mother tongue or Pidgin. The dominance of the mother tongue in these areas influences pupils' use of English. This is because a child easily acquires the language they listen to every day.

Furthermore, the use of Pidgin English everywhere in the division, that is, at home, school, and around the neighbourhood, influences pupils' use of the English language and their performance in public examinations like the FSLC examination.

Parents' lack of interaction with their children's teachers.

Some parents do not interact with their children's teachers. It is said that interactions with teachers enable parents to understand the problems their children face in school and how to address them. This could also put pupils on alert and help them study at school, as they are aware that their parents could visit and inquire about their performance in class. In the Meme division, interactions are limited; parents don't know what is happening in the schools regarding their children. As such, it is impossible for them to guide and help improve their children's performance.

The lack of English language textbooks

This study considered the availability of English Language textbooks in some schools as one of the causes of poor performance of pupils in the FSLC English language paper. English Language textbooks are the basic textbooks used in schools. They provide a common resource for expanding pupils' vocabulary and improving their use of grammar. Exercises are often given, and pupils use these textbooks to do their exercises and

assignments. This enables them to understand the lessons better and to check, from their own performance, whether they have understood what has been taught.

Extracts are taken from these textbooks for pupils to take home as common homework tasks. This facilitates parental involvement in teaching and learning. The lack of textbooks in some schools in the Meme division means pupils are unable to complete their homework, which in turn prevents them from improving their academic performance.

The reason for pupils' inability to access English-language textbooks could be that the dominant population of the Meme division consists of farmers who produce only food crops for home consumption. Those who sell part of their crops do so in very small quantities, thus making a little money. So, the lack of money in both rural and urban areas of the Meme division makes it difficult for parents to buy books for their children. When they manage to pay the school fee, they consider it enough for the academic year. Whereas children from well-to-do families easily succeed because of their access to money, and can comfortably afford English-language textbooks for their children, giving them an edge over those from poor homes.

The negative attitude of some pupils leads to poor performance.

Another reason pupils perform poorly in English is their negative attitude towards studies, particularly English grammar. Some of them consider English grammar boring; hence, they don't study, and the effect is evident in their performance in class. This negative attitude among pupils is evident in that most of them, after school, instead of doing their assignments, rush to the farm to assist their parents or meet with friends to play ball.

The lack of teachers

The shortage of teachers is another cause of poor performance among pupils in the FSLC English language paper. Most teachers posted to interior villages in rural areas rarely visit these areas. This is because everyone wants to live in the urban towns. This attitude among most teachers is not helpful to pupils in rural areas; hence, it leads to their dismal performance in English. In these areas, a single teacher teaches about 3 to 4 classes a day, making follow-up with pupils practically impossible.

Also, most primary school teachers tend to teach for a short period, save up money, and then travel abroad in search of greener pastures. They don't bother about the welfare of their pupils in class. This negative attitude among teachers adversely affects pupils' performance in English.

Non-mastery of the English language by some teachers

There is a popular saying that "you cannot give out what you don't have, and you can only give out what you have". Another cause of pupils' poor performance is some teachers' lack of mastery of English language. If a teacher does not master a course, what would he/she teach children, thus confirming the above statement that "you can only give out what you have" Some of these teachers lack mastery of English due to their academic level and lack of training.

Some of them enter the teaching profession with an ordinary level certificate and have not been trained in any of the government teacher training schools for primary school teachers. Some schools recruit such teachers for cheap labour; they avoid hiring trained teachers, whose salaries would be higher than those of untrained teachers. The lack of training among these teachers leaves them unsure of what to teach, thereby affecting pupils' performance in class and in public examinations such as the FSLC.

The lack of school facilities and inadequate teaching material

The lack of facilities is another reason for the poor performance of pupils in the English language paper of the FSLC examination. In the rural communities, most schools lack adequate facilities to ease learning. For example, the lack of classrooms hinders learning. Also, the lack of teaching aids and didactic materials contributes to poor

performance in English. However, the availability of classrooms and didactic materials in some schools facilitates English teaching and learning.

Poor teaching methods

The teaching method is a contributing factor to students' poor performance in the Meme division. Some teachers are not trained to teach and don't master any teaching method. In class, they don't know where to start or where to end. Even preparing a lesson note is difficult, not to mention following the steps in the lesson notes to disseminate knowledge. In Cameroon today, CBA is the approach being used, but if you ask such teachers, they won't tell you what this teaching and learning method is all about.

The teaching method today can be compared with that of some decades back, as Ayafor (2015) notes. In comparing both teaching methods, she said

> Teaching methods for English in those days followed traditional prescriptive grammar and sound and word building, whereas nowadays, teaching is instead focused on communication, not emphasizing correctness of grammar. Traditionally, learners of English in Anglophone Cameroon were taught the rules of grammar, verbs including tenses, parts of speech and their functions in the clause…. Today, children are taught spelling through memorization; flashcards containing words are shown to the children, so they memorize them.

The difference in the teaching methods of the past and the present accounts for the fact that pupils in primary schools then could write and speak English fluently, unlike now, where a class six child cannot read or spell words correctly. Thus, poor teaching methods lead to poor performance in English among pupils.

From the above discussion, it is evident that several factors, such as geographical background, pupils' negative attitudes, the lack of an English-speaking environment, the shortage of teachers, and the lack of school facilities, account for the poor performance of pupils in the FSLC examination. The next section proposes remedies to the problem.

Question 6 asked about the strategies that could be used to improve pupils' performance in the FSLC English language paper.

4.2 What strategies could be used to improve pupils' performance in the FSLC English language paper?

In response to question 5, teachers put forward the following suggestions:

1) The government should ensure that there is enough teaching material.
2) Teachers should make the learning atmosphere conducive for pupils
3) Pupils should be more involved in the teaching and learning exercise.
4) Parents should endeavour to buy English language textbooks for their children
5) Parents should assist their children at home in doing their homework.
6) Children should be encouraged to study English and sensitised to the benefits of the English language across the globe.
7) Only teachers who are skilled in the English language should be recruited to teach English.
8) The English language should be given more teaching hours.
9) Only trained teachers should teach English.
10) Children should be motivated by awarding the student with the highest score in the English language with cash gifts and a scholarship.

Below is a table to quantify various strategies to improve pupils' performance in the F.S.L.C English language paper.

Table 8: Strategies to improve pupils' performance in the F.S.L.C English language paper.

Responses	**Number of occurrences**	**Frequency %**
The government should ensure that there is enough teaching material	45	19.56%
Teachers should make the learning atmosphere conducive for pupils	7	3.04%
Pupils should be more involved in the teaching and learning exercise	20	8.69%
Parents should endeavour to buy English language textbooks for their children	30	13.04%
Parents should assist their children at home in doing their homework	6	2.60%
Children should be encouraged to study English and sensitized on the benefits of the English language across the globe	10	4.34%
Only teachers who are skilled in the English language should be recruited to teach English	25	10.86%
The English language should be given more teaching hours	47	20.43%
Only trained teachers should teach English	33	14.34%
Children should be motivated by awarding the student with the highest score in the English language with cash gifts and a scholarship	7	3.04%
TOTAL	230	100%

As seen in the table above, which presents strategies to improve pupils' performance in the F.S.L.C English paper, the English language should be given more teaching hours (20.43%), while the government should ensure that there is sufficient teaching material (19.56%). Only trained teachers should teach English, recorded at 14.34%, while parents should endeavour to buy English-language textbooks for their children, recorded at 13.04%. Only

skilled teachers of English should be recruited, recorded at 10.86%, while pupils should be more involved in the teaching and learning exercise, recorded at 8.69%. Children should be encouraged to study English and sensitized on the benefits of the English language across the globe, recorded 4.34%, while teachers should make the learning atmosphere conducive for pupils, and children should be motivated by awarding the student with the highest score in English language with cash gifts and scholarship, recorded 3.04% each. Lastly, parents should assist their children with homework at home, which was recorded at 2.60%.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

As seen above, many factors contribute to pupils' poor performance in the FSLC English language paper. This study seeks to propose possible solutions to them. To resolve a problem, various stakeholders should be involved. In this case, the stakeholders include parents, teachers, pupils, policymakers, and the government. In short, society at large should contribute its quota to achieve the desired results. These proposed remedies for the poor performance of pupils are those made by teachers. Each point is elaborated by the researcher, who also offers her perspective on addressing pupils' poor performance.

As observed by teachers in the field, there is a need for the government to provide enough teaching materials for primary schools. There are schools where teaching materials such as textbooks, English-language dictionaries, pens, pencils, and teaching aids are unavailable. That is why some teachers resort to using their personal resources to teach pupils; however, it would be difficult for a primary school teacher's meagre salary to meet school needs. This is a serious problem that requires the government to take drastic, swift action.

There are cases where the government makes provisions, but recalcitrant head teachers use them for personal matters. Teaching materials don't arrive on time; sometimes they reach the school halfway through the academic year. In such cases, the government should ensure that teaching materials get to schools on time. They should make provision for all school necessities.

The next proposed remedy to the poor performance of pupils in the English language paper in the FSLC examination is for teachers to ensure a conducive learning atmosphere for pupils. It has been observed that some teachers make the learning environment unbearable for children. They are unnecessarily wild. They beat children for the slightest thing they do, hence instilling fear and panic in the hearts of pupils. When a child is afraid, learning and understanding become a problem. Panic is the order of the day in some classes. So, it is suggested that teachers be friendly and playful with pupils, especially since they are kids. Fear can scare away a child from school, hence giving birth to a juvenile delinquent child, which could have been prevented by the attitude of the teacher.

Also, the play-based teaching and learning method should be enforced. This teaching and learning method involves playing with children; in the course of play, you teach them, and they learn. Pupils readily assimilate a lesson delivered through this method, so it should be encouraged and enforced by teachers of primary school children. Pupils should be more involved in the teaching and learning exercise. They should also use the CBA teaching method, which is pupil-centered.

The next proposed solution to the poor performance of pupils is for parents to endeavour to purchase English-language textbooks for their children. Some parents in the Meme division think it is enough to pay a child's school fees and buy him books, pens, and a school uniform. They don't see the need to buy textbooks for their children. To such parents, the lessons given in class are enough to advance the child to the next class. They fail to know that extra exercises at home will do a lot of good to the child and their overall performance in class. So, parents should buy English-language textbooks for their children to help them improve their grades.

It doesn't suffice to buy English textbooks; they should ensure that their children use them. This is because at the end of an academic year, there are pupils whose books are as if they were just bought. They never open it to read or practice the exercises in the book. When a child owns a book but does not study with it, the result will be the

same as that of those who never had the book. So, it is imperative that parents ensure they use the book. This doesn't just go to parents; teachers should also regularly assign work from these textbooks to make sure they are being used. With this, pupils' performance will improve.

Another proposed solution is for parents to assist their children with their assignments at home. There are pupils who never do their homework. After school, some of them prefer to play with friends rather than do their homework. In such cases, the parents of these children should check to ensure they complete their assignments. They should follow up by regularly checking their bags for assignments and by giving them exercises at home to keep them busy. This would go a long way toward curbing poor performance among pupils in English.

To ensure recruitment, teachers should be allowed to sit for a test to demonstrate their proficiency in the subject they will teach. I think this would go a long way to put an end to unskilled labour. An unskilled teacher can only transfer what he or she has, thereby raising a generation of children who do not master the English language.

Another proposed remedy is to increase the number of teaching hours. This is very important for pupils' performance. What obtains in the field is that most schools spend only 2 hours per week on English language teaching, while others spend about 1 hour and 75 minutes per week on English language. This is grossly insufficient. The number of hours spent on a particular subject determines the outcome, so it is imperative that school authorities look into this issue. Given the importance of the English language worldwide, it is suggested that the school authorities ensure that the time devoted to teaching English is increased to at least 4 hours per week. That is, 2hours out of 4 should be used on the teaching of English language grammar, while the remaining hours are used for the other section. This would go a long way toward improving pupils' performance in English, particularly in grammar.

Another proposed remedy for pupils' abysmal performance is to introduce an award for the candidate with the highest score in English. Some children perform poorly in English due to a lack of motivation, so offering awards and cash prizes will boost their motivation for this subject. This would promote competition in class, thereby improving their English performance.

Furthermore, to address poor pupil performance, they should be given responsibility for teaching. That is, before each lesson every day, the teacher should point out those who will teach what was taught the previous day in class. Those who are selected stand in front of the class and teach. This will cause children to fear being selected when they are not prepared, leading them to always be prepared, since they don't know when they will be called up to teach. With this method, pupils' performance in the subject will drastically improve. If all the above suggestions are implemented, the researcher believes that performance in English at the FSLC examination will be far better than the current level. The last item on the questionnaire sought to find out whether teachers had comments to make in respect of 'pupils' performance.

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