

Controversies surrounding the acquisition of English in the multilingual and multicultural context of Cameroon

Louis MBIBEH

The University of Bamenda

Abstract

The recurrent maxim that idolises Cameroon as Africa in miniature, has an undoubtable underpinning in its multilingual and multicultural configuration. No doubt, it is an aberration for an average Cameroonian not to sustain an eloquent conversation in at least three languages. This has ensuing consequences in the acquisition of English in Cameroon. This paper from an educational linguistic perspective, isolates the resultant controversies that surround the acquisition of English within the context and draws pedagogic relevance thereof. Data is collected primarily through a systematic review of literature from published articles. Results as triangulated with information from primary data collected through a focus group discussion with ELT teachers show an overt and sheepish compliance to hegemonic imported standards and a conspicuous neglect of environmental realities either by language planners, pedagogues, or even linguists to the detriment of the existing effortless realities of the linguistic environment in which the English language is acquired and used. Reliance on method to the detriment of practicality and possibility by pedagogues, is a call for concern in a richly endowed multicultural context like the one we have. The paper recommends a multicultural pedagogic approach to enhancing the acquisition of English as a second language in Cameroon. This approach will of course consider teaching identities, post methods pedagogy, translanguaging and imbibing the sociocultural dimension with adherence to the sociocultural evolution of English within the multicultural and multilingual context of Cameroon.

Key words: Multiculturalism, multilingualism, ELT in Cameroon, Second language Acquisition.

Introduction

The hallmarks of the 21st century are noticeable in the ample interconnections and interrelations which are visible in multicultural and multilingual interactions. It is no longer a matter of conjecture that the world has become a global village with varying possibilities for citizens of this global village to interact in multidimensional ways. In the 19th century, one of the key competences in the international arena was a demonstration of the ability to function in the key international languages with English leading. This made English to transcend ownership by one people and to spread all over the globe. Though this is still a reality, the tides seem to now be changing in favour of multicultural and metalinguistic abilities. Understanding this multicultural mix is crucial for children of the 21st century and an obligatory asset for functioning in today's world.

English has often been the vector and symbol of international business, trade, education and in the current dispensation, the language is vector of multiculturalism. While many countries that were somehow monolingual are trying to adapt to foreign cultures, it is evident that the medium of transmission of these cultures is English. Beyond the international arena, Cameroon has been referred to as Africa in miniature due to its multicultural and multilingual landscape. While English is jostling for positions in Cameroon with many other local languages, the teaching and learning of English within such a multicultural and multilingual context seems to meet with intricacies that need to be managed. Cameroon therefore presents a unique opportunity for pedagogic reflections on how English language could meet exigencies of the current globalization which is essentially multicultural. With this complex linguistic setting, the key question here is to trace the complexities and resultant controversies that surround teaching English in such a multicultural context. This will of course draw

ramifications for the global village context and above all for effective English language teaching in Cameroon.

It is imperative that stakeholders in the teaching learning industry are aware of the contexts in which they work, and the specific intricacies. Establishing and collating knowledge about English language teaching (later ELT) in the multilingual and multicultural Cameroon can be significant to the teaching learning industry in other to present the status quo and what future priorities could be projected for ELT. One strategy for achieving this goal is to conduct reviews of the research literature that is specific to the context. This has a great potential to assist stakeholders and others in the industry to improve their work by understanding the key ramifications within the context.

Different authors have identified issues related to English language teaching in a multicultural context like Cameroon with rather isolated perspectives. This paper, from a holistic perspective, reviews all the perspectives that have been identified over the years to have a comprehensive summary of issues surrounding English language teaching in Cameroon and draw pedagogic implications thereof. This begins with a review of the ELT teaching situation and then moves to the identification of relevant literature, the methodology used to identify and an analysis of the key findings from the literature as well as pedagogic implications.

In this paper, we provide a systematic review of the literature focused on English language teaching in a multilingual and multicultural context. This is mostly referred to published literature in peer reviewed journals with the hope of inspiring both researchers and stakeholders and for meaningful implications to be drawn from the literature and applied in the ELT industry not only in a multicultural Cameroon but also in similar contexts globally.

Current trends on ELT in Cameroon

Ask highlighted by Mbibeh (2013) the multilingual setting of Cameroon with sociocultural realities like intermarriages between couples from different linguistic backgrounds, intercultural activities, migration and settlement for different socio economic exigencies has resulted in the use of English as a home language in mixed marriage situations¹. For instance, families with parents from different backgrounds are noted to use English as a common lingua franca to bridge the communication gap. More to that, the offspring from such families turn to acquire English as their first language. Despite this, one may hesitate to call them native speakers of English; but if that were the case, it would be native speakers of Cameroon English. The teaching and learning of English today in Cameroon in such a context can only be a daunting reality. Needless mentioning the usual mechanical difficulties of insufficient teachers, didactic material, motivation for both teachers and learners just to name a few. While the government and stakeholders are grappling with the difficulties, there is more to these visible shortcomings. The sociolinguistic environment with well above 250 languages (Wolf 2001, Atechi 2006, Kouega 2007) is more of a mixed blessing to the ESL learner in Cameroon. The intricacies in the language (structural ramifications) have made scholars to refer to the English language as mad. In this light, Simo Boba's (2011) article talks of taming such madness of the English language. The wide spread lingua franca Pidgin English (which seems easier) is in a serious jostling for position with English and is gradually relegating English to the background in political, religious and market discourse or better still in discourse intended to meet the general population. This is definitely placing English at an elitist position vis-à-vis the other

¹ Marriage between people who speak different native languages in Cameroon

languages. That is, a language that is the reserve of a secluded class; getting back to colonial English as was the case in South Africa. The situation is so glaring that empirical research in Cameroon Pidgin English is already proposing the introduction of this language into the classroom (Fonka 2011, Atechi 2009, 2017). Above all, the multiplicity of varieties that are present in the Cameroonian context through the multimedia, only go to add more salt to injury. These rather mechanical issues are not as impelling as is the multicultural and multilingual context in which English language teaching in Cameroon is grounded. That is why many linguists have focused on describing the scenario from different perspectives thereby laying the groundwork for a review of the practice in Cameroon and impending pedagogic implications. Before we delve into the methodology, it is important to define multiculturalism and multilingualism which constitute key variables in the paper.

Multiculturalism

According to Eagan (2024), multiculturalism represents the view that cultures, races and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture. Multiculturalism from an etymological standpoint will immediately underscore the existence of many cultures. This can be misleading especially when not considered in terms of the different implications to different spheres of knowledge and domains. From this perspective, the term multiculturalism has a plethora of meanings within the sociological, political, and even philosophical domains. From a sociological standpoint multiculturalism is synonymous to ethnic pluralism which in everyday use represents the existence of varied ethnic and cultural groups or traditions in a single geographical sphere. In such a situation there will be multiple cultural practices in a single location

such as in the metropolis in Cameroon where inhabitants from various autochthonous groups have migrated for one reason or the other and settled in the townships. From a political dimension, multiculturalism examines the scale either big (for example the Anglophone and francophone culture in Cameroon) or small scale (the different ethnic cultures of the Northwest region or the Beti people as the case may be). Regardless of the scale, the capacity of the state to effectively and efficiently deal with cultural plurality within its sovereign borders is always significant in politics. The socio political crises that broke out in Cameroon in the later part of 2016 till present seems to have underpinnings on issues around non respect for multicultural dimensions of the Anglophone community (international crises group 2017) This paper while considering the complexity of ELT within the multicultural context will consider multiculturalism from a sociological perspective and common usage dimension.

Multilingualism

The term multilingualism from a sociolinguistic dimension basically refers to a situation of more than 2 languages in a speech community. (Maher, 2017, Awah 2021, Egan 2024) Such a situation could be related to a speaker of many languages or to a context in which many languages are spoken. Therefore, multilingualism can be referred to as either the ability of an individual to effectively use more than two languages or a community of speakers of 3 or more languages. A multilingual can be contrasted with a monolingual (someone who speaks one language). In today's global world as mentioned earlier, Multilingualism is a great asset to citizens of the global villages as it enables them to effectively participate in international transactions and to understand diverse socio cultural intricacies. Multilingualism

is no longer just a linguistic phenomenon, but also a sociocultural phenomenon shaped by the demands of the globalized world. In today's interconnected world, the internet provides possibilities of exposure to multiple languages.

In Cameroon, the phenomenon of multilingualism is quite complex and dynamic ranging from a multiplicity of local languages (over 280) to the two official languages (English and French) and the pidgins that have developed and have become lingua francas in different contexts rendering the country not just a linguistic but a cultural hodgepodge. It is in effect a rich and diversified multilingual landscape that does not only pride its citizens but also contributes to the socio cultural and linguistic complexities.

According to Awah (2021) multilingualism and the use of many languages has significant implications for the country's sociocultural and interpersonal interactions, identity construction and governance process. The languages alone, reflects the country's complex culture and history, playing a crucial role in linguistic determinism, and presents critical challenges to the language industry that this study will identify from an empirical perspective.

Methodology

This study used a mixed method design for data collection and analysis. Primarily, the major source of data is secondary collected through a systematic review of relevant literature in the domain and primary data collected through focus group discussions with linguists and English Language teachers in Cameroon. The data is further analysed using qualitative approaches.

The eligibility criteria for including articles in this review from a thematic perspective included the fact that the article should focus on English language teaching in Cameroon, should identify an issue related to the domain and should relate to the Multicultural and

Multilingual perspectives. To be included in this review, each study had to meet at least one of the criteria in each of the following five categories

1. Time frame – Published in a peer reviewed journal any time from 2000 to 2024,
2. A research study on English language in Cameroon with a bias on any variable related to the impact of the multicultural and multilingual perspective.
3. The study had to be one of the following types of documents: Peer reviewed articles and review articles; grey literature like conference proceedings, book chapters, and conference presentations were included if they met the other criteria.
4. Language of publication was English
5. The article must be publicly available in an online format.

The search terms English language in Cameroon and pedagogic implications, were used as well as the researcher's experience to identify articles and screen them for inclusion. In this process, 48 articles were identified to have some relationship to the thematic areas but only 30 articles were finally used for this study considered to have met a majority of the set criteria. These articles were then further read and analysed to identify the perspective the author handled. The data extraction template was designed with key review items above. The data was synthesised and inputted into an Excel file for further analysis. We used the functions available in Excel to tabulate the data and to generate synthesise recurrent themes for each category of information collected and for more detailed analysis. From this dataset, it was possible to identify recurrence of key themes in the articles.

From the excel workbook it was possible to group articles that discussed similar content and proceed with analysis. As such a systematic review of the literature about complexities of English language learning and teaching within the multilingual and multicultural context of Cameroon was identified, a thematic analysis of the intricacies sorted out. The results from this review were then triangulated with information from primary data that was collected from ELT teachers through focus group discussions. This mixed method design gave some credibility to the results that came from the review process and content analysis frameworks were used to synthesize the results. The results obtained from the review process were triangulated with information from the FGD with researchers and teachers of English.

The results are presented following the key thematic areas identified. The following research questions guided the review of literature:

1. What are the controversies surrounding the acquisition of English in Cameroon from a multilingual and multicultural perspective?
2. What are the pedagogic implications?

Study Results

The findings show a number of controversies in English language learning resulting from the multicultural and multilingual background of Cameroon. Results show that the English language teacher and even the learner find themselves in a dilemma, the English second language context in Cameroon needs a redefinition as well as linguistic, pedagogic and language planning complexities that need to be harnessed or reviewed within this context. These complexities can only plunge the ESL teacher and learner into a pedagogic quagmire that needs to be resolved.

The preceding issues are discussed in this section and relevant analogies drawn from the literature and discussions to highlight key implications that arise from the context of study. As a reminder, the results are derived first from the secondary data and then corroborated by information from FGD with researchers and English Language teachers in Cameroon.

The dilemma of the English language teacher

One key recurrent theme that surfaced in the review of literature and the focus group discussions was the issue of choice of variety of English in the Cameroon language teaching and learning context. The studies depict that this has been a bone of contention between ardent purists that undermine the significance of context and uphold the normative perspective of prescriptivism and flexible or rationalist pedagogues that privilege the role of context and their Cameroonian variety of English as an embodiment of their own sociocultural identities that cannot be undermined. This thematic has been handled in peer reviewed papers by Atechi (2008), Ngefac (2011) and Mbibeh (2013). Atechi (2008) exposes the pedagogic confusion in which the young teacher and learner of English plunge themselves into when exposed to the different varieties of English. The less elitist Cameroon English is relegated to the background to the advantage of hegemonic British English in textbooks and in language programs even though the ELT teacher in Cameroon has his linguistic umbilical cord planted in Cameroon English. This confusion is such that after analysing, Atechi (2008) underscores the need not to undermine the advantages that native varieties have over non-native varieties. Such advantages include documentation and codification and he prefers to conclude that dust is yet to settle on the matter. Ngefac (2011) drawing from Atechi (2008) is rather more categorical and emphatically states that imposing native

English standards in a Cameroonian classroom is undermining the cultural identity of a people and is therefore a fallacy. He further relates this scenario to a blind man leading a blind recounting field experiences of teachers introducing an RP rule in pronunciation and flouting the same role in the same classroom. This finding was corroborated by teachers who express their disappointment and frustrations when faced with such rules that have no practical presence in the non-native context and yet they are compelled to teach since it is the norm and in the program. Added to this dilemma is the presence of Cameroon English that both the teacher and learner may not ignore given the almost innate property as well as its significance in terms of the expression of the socio-cultural reality and/or identity. It is therefore no longer a tussle between British English (later BrE) and American English (later AmE) but equally between these native varieties and Cameroon English (later CamE).

Following the preceding authors, Mbibeh (2013) from a rather empirical perspective interviews 60 language teachers on this dilemma and the variety they will prefer to use in the Cameroonian context. According to his findings, the choice of CamE is related to its simplicity and closeness to the learner's social realities, whereas the choice of BrE is based on the necessity to meet the exigencies of the global village. AmE is rejected on stereotypical bases, with the claim that the variety is related to youthful language imbedded with crime oriented undertones. Statistically speaking, CamE should be used in the classroom. As sweet as the finding may look, the key issue still remains that in this multicultural and multilingual context of Cameroon the teachers find themselves in a pedagogic quagmire that needs to be resolved not with a panacea like the author purported but by understanding and accepting the status quo from a sociolinguistic dimension. That is why Berinyuy (2022) and Enama

(2022) think that despite indigenization of English in Cameroon the promotion of exonormativity continues to be the official goal of ELT in Cameroon even if this is more on paper than in practice given the evidence that teachers are entangled and cannot consistently distinguish British English from American English orthographical norms. As such the paper suggests that Cameroon English should be codified and promoted rather than promoting varieties whose orthographical aspects are not only confusing to teachers of English but tend to incarnate the colonial legacy.

Defining Second Language in Cameroon

Data from all the papers upholds the necessity to redefine English Second language in the multicultural and multilingual Cameroon. The standard definition of a second language as highlighted by Ellis (1997), Saville Troike (2006) and others, falls short of painting the picture in multilingual Cameroon especially for English as a second language. According to Saville Troike (2006:193) a second language is acquired after the first language has been established and learned in a context where it is societally dominant and used in education and employment. This definition looks very ok but for the Cameroonian context as found in the literature, children in the metropolis and those in mixed married homes (where parents speak different local languages) grow up to acquire English as the first language because no other language has been established and further develop or acquire pidgin English not necessarily in the classroom. Yet some learners acquire English, French and local languages simultaneously. The bilingual schools (see Enama 2015) offer an opportunity for a cultural and linguistic mix with children from varied backgrounds acquiring and using English and other languages in a rather simultaneous and interesting way. This context reveals the need for a review of what ESL is in the

Cameroonian context given that the standard definition of English as a second language does not tie with the Cameroonian multilingual context. This could have been minimized but the pedagogic implication calls for a review. That is why Nkwetisama (2017) thinks that *ELT in Cameroon does not seem to be* moving an inch from the obsolete ideologically loaded one-size-fit-all top-down prescriptions on what, when and how to teach English. He shares his experience confronted by issues of methodology in his cooperating teachers who failed to understand the context in which they were teaching and adhering to native speaker norms which did not fit the context. There is according to him a linguistic genocide that must be grappled with in what Mbibeh (2021) alludes to the David /Goliath mythical fight in which of course David defeats the domineering and imposing Goliath native standards. The implication of following native speaker or “standard” definition of English as a second language in a context like Cameroon is that the methodological prescriptions for teaching English in this context are bound to be a failure given that context specific issues as described by Agbor Tabe (2021) will not be accounted for and language will remain in the classroom without an inkling on the real life situations that are present in the multilingual and multicultural perspectives.

Pedagogic Issues

Given that the study focused on language learning and teaching in a multicultural and multilingual context, it was evident that most papers handled pedagogic issues. However, this section looked at papers that handled classroom practical issues in a multilingual context. In this domain most literature was grey literature from seminar reports and from the schools of education where the main focus is classroom practice to the detriment of issues around the language. In this light, Nkwetisama (2017) postulates that

... discussions on ELT in national, regional and divisional level workshops, seminars and conferences; and even lectures in English Departments of Teacher Training Colleges in private and state-owned universities often centre on micro pedagogical matters like teaching methods and techniques, use of information and communication technologies, the “how to’s” in classroom management... and Little attention is paid on more macro dimensions of ELT like the political, social and cultural issues which include language policies and their implications in the classroom as well as the crucial role of the teacher in (re)creating these policies in the classroom.

Though these issues may seem intangible, irrelevant or inconsequential than pedagogic ones, he further highlights that the social, cultural and political dimensions of ELT – are embedded in all the decisions and the cultural expectations, identities in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and nationality which should inform and constrain classroom practices. It is rather unfortunate that the critical pedagogical perspective is sacrificed in English language teaching and even in the training schools and issues of imposing methodology are privileged. That is why it is challenging to engage a language teacher in issues of critical interest about the language they are teaching and it is easier to talk about methods which as we shall see later are even not suitable for the multicultural context of teaching English in Cameroon. Failure to imbibe the socio cultural dimension and focusing more on the mechanical pedagogic skills of a good teacher is significantly detrimental to teaching in a multicultural context like Cameroon.

Even at the level of choice of didactic material, evaluating learner language and classroom practice a lot of limitations have been mentioned. According to Mbibeh (2023) the second language classroom in Cameroon today leaves much to be desired. The plethoric enrolments with averagely more than 70 students per class, has been decried over the years as a major impediment to the effective teaching/learning of English. With the deteriorating economic situation of parents, learners barely have reference books even if the textbooks in themselves are criticized for the bias on local colour and standards. At a time when the teaching of English is being associated with modern communication facilities, it is a pity that this is still a nightmare for most Cameroonian classrooms where energy is unavailable not to talk of the necessary didactic equipment. Needless to mention the difficulty that arises from the insufficient number of teachers not leaving out the training these teachers receive. It is within this backdrop that Fasse (2007:62) comments that it is common ground to hear teachers say “In my classes, I merely take care of the first five rows of students” and similar other statements. A good number of English language teachers in Cameroonian secondary schools are degree holders from various state universities with little or no pedagogic knowledge that is needed in the teaching of this language. English language teaching in the primary section is done mostly by secondary school leavers with either the G. C. E ordinary or advanced level in either 4 or 2 subjects respectively. No precaution is taken to select those who succeeded in English language. Even those who are supposed to have received training in the schools of education are no better given the fraudulent means most of them use to get in and out of the training school. May be the current closure of competitive entrance exam into teacher training colleges will result in those who are dedicated to teach but the key issue will continue to remain that of

imbibing the sociocultural component to language teaching and adopting a post method pedagogy in a multicultural context like the one in Cameroon.

Linguistic Issues

While there has been a clarion call by Mbibeh (2013, 2021, 2023), Ngefac (2011), Nkwetisama (2017) and many more for the introduction of Cameroon English in the classroom, the complexity of defining the English these linguists are calling for its introduction to the classroom leaves much to be desired. Though we do not lose sight of the enormous description of the language from different levels of linguistic analysis, there still remain pertinent questions to be answered. This is the argument that die heart pedagogues advance to keep aside dust to settle as Atechi (2008) will put it though the issue of waiting for dust to settle might turn into engaging in a mythical journey to oblivion given that we do not know who will sound the trumpets for Cameroon English to be considered codified (Mbibeh 2021). Questions such as what exactly is Cameroon English? What is its phonology, grammar syntax etc may sound inconsequential given the enormity of descriptions already done by eminent linguists and household names in the domain in the likes of Massanga, Mbangwana, Simo Boda, Atechi, Mforteh, Sala, Anchimbe, Ngefac, Nkemleke just to name these few. Each of the domains described by these linguists still have burning questions and Mforteh (2008) wonders whether Cameroon English is just another Fad. For instance, from a phonological perspective, what is considered Cameroon English pronunciation still leaves much to be desired in the papers. While Massanga and Mbangwana talk of educated English, Ngefac (2008) classifies Cameroon English into 3 social strata as baselectal, acrolectal and mesolectal. The literature exposes local colorations of Cameroon English as in lamnso

English, Kom English and an emergent and vibrant francophone English as described by Kouega (2018). It becomes a herculean task for a pedagogue to know which direction to follow. What should be sanctioned as an error in Cameroon English for instance are some of the burning conjectures that draw the teacher and observer aback. Language pedagogy is essentially normative, so the challenge of defining Cameroon English either from the Massanga, Mbassi Manga, Mbangwana, Bobda perspectives or from a socio phonological perspective looking at what is the etiquette for classroom practice leaves much to be desired in the pedagogic landscape.

Sociolinguistic perspectives and ELT

In effect, the focus of this paper has been to review the sociolinguistic variables of multiculturalism and multilingualism and their effect on English language learning in Cameroon in line with data from the current literature. This section examines the perspectives of linguists around sociolinguistic dimensions such as policy, planning issues, political issues just to name these few. To begin, with the acculturation theories propounded by John Schumann explain second language acquisition as second culture acquisition. From this perspective, it is practically impossible to attain efficiency in a language without imbibing the sociocultural component. Culture shock may set in when learners meet completely new phenomenon hitherto unknown to them. The Burning question for Cameroon English is what culture will a learner of English in Cameroon approximate in such a multicultural context? According to Mforteh (2006) an aspect of culture with implications to language learning in Cameroon such as honorifics is so varied and diversified. There is a glaring difference between honorifics in the Northwest and South West regions which can

plunge a learner into culture shock. Which paralinguistic signals should the learner adhere to? There is a glaring dichotomy between the rural context and urban contexts and Mbibeh (2021b) has expatiated on the challenge learners in rural areas face in urban learning environment contexts.

Furthermore, issues around language policy and planning in Cameroon were grappled with at independence of the young nation in 1960. When the law makers in Article 1 section 1 adopted English and French as official languages, no attention was paid to the variety that was to be used. This has continued in the further modifications of the constitution where no mention is made of Cameroon English. This can only be as Nkwetisama (2017) postulates either that they are not away or that they completely undermine the status quo and that paradoxically, instead of vitalising and using our local languages, policy makers, citizens, teachers and parents seem to have been made to believe in the imperialistic tenets of the English language and English language education. Acquisition and learning of any language follows language policy and planning and therefore the significance of such planning in a complex multilingual context like Cameroon is hectic and needs to be considered carefully (Ayafor 2005). The bilingual education policy that made students to learn both English and French such as the bilingual grammar schools, the current pilot bilingual programs have some resemblance to the context of multilingualism in Cameroon but still falls short of the contextual realities given that the French and English referred to in these programs is not Cameroonian. (Kouega 2005, 2018 and Kouega and Dempowo 2022, Kiwo 2023 on official bilingualism in Cameroon)

In such a multilingual context described by Mforteh (2006) as the Tower of Babel the development of Pidgins and creoles are characteristic of such a melting pot of languages. This is the case in

Cameroon where Pidgin English has developed and evolved to a language on its own (Fonka 2014, Atechi 2009, 2017, Kouega 2015). Other pidgins and variants include, Kamtok, Mbokotok that according Ngefacs (2010) transcend regional, educational, linguistic and social boundaries and ‘Camfranglais’ that is serving the communicative needs of urban youths in Francophone towns, and ‘Mbokotok’ that has asserted itself as the language of rustics. A learner of English in this context needs to grapple with all these sociolinguistic intricacies and there is definitely no way their ability to approximate native norms will not be influenced by these languages. While the pedagogue has dismissed these languages as bad grammar that must be purged out of the language classroom, linguists think that the ‘languages’ are significant for communication in Cameroon and more of lingua francas to bridge communication gaps in a multilingual Cameroon and therefore need to be promoted to give that identity that defines Cameroonians. Having this caveat in mind, the learner of English is bound to handle these intricacies.

One current evolving issue that can arise in multilingual contexts is conflict related to language. The current and ongoing socio political crises in the Northwest and South West regions of Cameroon has a linguistic dimension to the causes in addition to other political issues described by (ICG 2018, Agbor Tabe 2022, Ngongkum and Fonka 2023). The crisis has shown that in a multicultural and multilingual context, the need to respect concurrent identifies is primordial if not a deadly conflict like what is being observed in Cameroon for the past 6years is possible. The pressure exerted by British norms in multilingual Cameroon has been referred to in the literature as linguistic genocide which according to Nkwetisama (2017) must be averted. Besides the negative implications of the conflict, the ensuing development and

modification of Cameroon English especially from a lexical perspective cannot be overemphasized (Agbor Tabe 2022). A key implication to acquiring English in a multilingual context like Cameroon is therefore to accept that the sociocultural evolution of the country has significant implication for language learning and must be considered and used rather than scorned. Many authors have thus embraced the language and are even using it for peace building (see Nengi and Nkwetisama 2022) as this project Fuh Njih and Basile Difouo (2023) on language, literature and peace building.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has so far identified controversies that surround the acquisition of English in a multilingual and multicultural context like the one in Cameroon. The evidence for discussion has been drawn from secondary literature of published articles by authors in the domain and corroborated by focus group discussions with researchers and teachers of English. Such controversies were discussed with reference to defining second language acquisition in Cameroon, pedagogic, linguistic and sociolinguistic implications of learning English in a multilingual and multicultural context. One key conclusion of the study is that there is an overt compliance to imported standards and a neglect of environmental realities either by language planners, pedagogues, or even linguists to the detriment of the existing effortless realities of the linguistic environment in which the English language is acquired and used. While linguists understand the need for the cultural component to be associated to language learning just a few of them do come out strongly to condemn reliance on imported hegemonic native speaker norms. The almost sheepish reliance on method to the detriment of practicality and possibility by pedagogues, is a call for concern in a richly endowed multicultural context like the one we have.

The paper recommends a multicultural pedagogic approach to enhancing the acquisition of English as a second language in Cameroon. This approach should of course consider teaching identities like Anglophones, francophones, and franglophones, rural and urban contexts as well as cosmopolitan contexts. This means there will be little to no reliance on dictated methodologies but a post method pedagogy as propounded Kumaravadivelu (2023) will be of great significance. Given the multilingual contexts with many languages translanguaging as propounded by Cen Williams (see Conteh 2018) can be a necessary option. There must be a complete breakaway from the current classroom practice that does not consider real life situations as expatiated by Agbor Tabe (2021). A conspicuous reliance on methods pedagogy and training of teachers on the what, when and where to teach must be undermined to focus on imbibing the sociocultural dimension and a post method pedagogy. Linguistically speaking, though the need for continuous codification is imperative as studies have shown, it is important not to wait for trumpets to sound (Mbibeh 2021) but to recognize and adhere to the sociocultural evolution of English within the multicultural and multilingual context of Cameroon.

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