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Daniel A. Nkemleke
Editor-in-Chief
Professor, English Language & Linguistics
Department of English
Ecole Normale Supérieure
University of Yaoundé I
Email: review.syllabus@ens.cm



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Subtleties of Power and Sexuality: A Sentiment Analyses of Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife*

David Toh Kusi

ENS Yaoundé, University of Yaounde I

Currently Visiting Associate Professor of English,

Dept. of Literatures, Languages, and Cultures

University of California, Merced

Email: david.kusi@univ-yaounde1.cm

Abstract

This paper explores the sentiments underlying the complexities of power and sexuality in Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife (TWW)*, focusing on intricate power struggles and gender dynamics. While Croxall et al. (2023) have demonstrated a combination of close and distant reading of Duffy's five collections, including *The World's Wife*, previous works have predominantly relied on close reading approaches. This study, besides building on these innovative methodologies, incorporates sentiment analysis techniques to offer quantifiable insights into the themes and feminist issues Duffy addresses. The use of classical mythology, myth-creation and anthropomorphic imagery position Duffy as one of the most versatile and transformative voices in feminist discourse, challenging traditional gender norms and redefining representations of women's experiences. Her quest for self-

redefinition allows her to move from the margins to positions of assertion and agency which reinvents her poetic personae. From a postmodern and postfeminist perspective, and with the application of digital approaches, *Lexicon-based Sentiment Analysis* and *Voyant* tools, and *R-Stylo*, this paper doesn't only seek to illustrate how Duffy dismantles assumptions about women, but also questions legitimize power structures which have shaped perceptions about women. The paper also reveals instances in *TWW* where women are projected as complicit in their struggles, either through internalized patriarchal values, self-sabotage, or moral ambiguity.

Keywords: *Power, sexuality, postmodern, post-feminism, sentiment analysis, Voyant, Duffy*

Introduction

The history of women's subjugation has long been established by numerous scholars who have documented the pervasive and systemic nature of patriarchal oppression. de Beauvoir (1949), in *The Second Sex*, explored the ways in which women were historically relegated to the status of the 'Other' in a male-dominated society, while Lerner (1986) traced the origins and development of patriarchal systems, highlighting how women's roles and rights were systematically restricted. Hooks (1984) echoes similar views in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, where she examined the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, emphasizing how these factors enforced the continued subjugation of women. Horner (2003, p. 103) references a survey conducted by *The Philosophers' Magazine*, which intriguingly reveals that out of more than a thousand philosophers, academics, and students surveyed, the resulting list of the ten "greatest philosophical works" did not include a single contribution by a woman. This is despite the enduring significance of female philosophers such as Mary

Wollstonecraft, Hannah Arendt, and Simone de Beauvoir. Supporting the case for women's contributions, Horner highlights Helene Cixous's deconstruction of the binary nature of patriarchal thought and Luce Irigaray's exposure of the biases underpinning western philosophy, which resulted in searing feminist critiques of the nature of philosophy itself. According to Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus (Horner et al 103-4) many of these philosophers made the same assumptions about women:

Several themes recur throughout: the assumption that women's biological nature dictates and justified her lack of political status; the belief that woman's psychological nature is gentle, submissive, emotional, irrational; the insistence on confining women to hearth and home; the assertion that women are suited to rearing citizens but not to being citizens themselves - all these views are either explicitly or implicitly adopted by philosophers otherwise completely at odds in their moral and political philosophy.

This exclusionary mindset was not confined to philosophers alone but was also mirrored in other institutions such as law, education, and politics, which systematically denied women access to key roles and opportunities. Legal frameworks, for instance, restricted women's rights to property and voting, while educational systems largely barred them from pursuing higher education in many fields. Similarly, the political establishment upheld patriarchal norms, ensuring women were kept from participating in decision-making processes (Rowland, 2003). In literature, Mulyani (2022, p.213) quotes poetry as one of the traditional genre trinity in Western literary tradition which is also gendered. According to the critic, there were women like Sappho and her fellow women who were dedicated to writing poetry on a Greek Island 600 years before the birth of Christ, but their works and existence were silenced for a long period.

Despite more than seven decades since these foundational criticisms and discourses, systemic oppression persists, even though it may superficially seem that women's status has

improved. This confirms what the early humanists such as Louise Vives and Thomas Moore (Mulyani, 2022) argued for the importance of female education, but even they confined women to their private roles. Louise Vives, author of the influencing treatise *Instruction of a Christian Woman*, articulated it clearly that the goals of all instructions for a woman were “to make her a virtuous and wise wife, not a competitor in her husband’s public world” (p.209).

Recent scholars have built on these perspectives, highlighting the complexities of women’s ongoing resistance against patriarchal and societal constructs. Jing-yun and Ju-yuan (2018, p. 373-4) analyze Carol Ann Duffy’s poetry as a subversive tool that confronts patriarchal structures, portraying the “emancipated woman” who resists the imposed silence of previous generations. They argue that Duffy’s work “reclaims the narratives of women who have been marginalized and dominated by patriarchal structures,” thereby offering a voice to those historically silenced. Women, they add, are given chances in her poetry “to speak out for themselves, which can be seen as a form of resistance against patriarchy”. Similarly, Smith (2020, p.105) examines how contemporary feminist discourse still grapples with systemic inequities, emphasizing that current feminist figures strive to dismantle enduring stereotypes of femininity imposed by societal expectations. Patel (2021, p.89) further deconstructs these stereotypes, revealing how modern feminist writers articulate narratives of personal autonomy as a direct challenge to inherited gender norms. O’Brien (2022, p142), Kusi (2022b), and Kusi, et al. (2020), also explore this dynamic, presenting contemporary feminist literature as a platform where female protagonists actively break away from the confines of patriarchal expectations and define their identities on their own terms. It is evident against this backdrop that literature has long functioned as a platform for documenting and challenging patriarchal structures, with the analysis of

women's oppression predominantly relying on interpretive and qualitative methods within humanities discourse.

Scholars such as de Beauvoir, Lerner, and Hooks, as earlier stated, are some of the scholars who laid the groundwork, analyzing the pervasive structures of subjugation, while contemporary scholars like Jing-yun, Ju-yuan, Smith, Patel, and O'Brien continue to explore how literature both reflects and contests these systemic issues, relying on frameworks such as feminism, intersectionality, and psychoanalytic feminism. This is similar with scholars such as Rowland (2001), Poter (n.d.), Whitley (2007), and Nori (2020) who have written on Duffy. Apart from Croxall, B. et al. (2023), who conduct a computational and distant reading of Duffy's five volumes, the works examined in this study have primarily relied on close reading. Close reading is an essential approach for every literary critic, and even when computational methods are employed, human interpretation of the results remains indispensable. According to Kemeny, distant reading involves using quantitative methods to analyze texts and identify patterns that traditional reading may overlook. While this quantitative approach does not strictly require digital computers, Underwood ("Genealogy" par. 29–32) notes, as cited by Croxall, B. et al. (p. 415), that computers make the process significantly easier. However, computers are neither the creators nor the final interpreters of distant reading; they are incapable of deriving meaning from the patterns they uncover. Human readers must provide the interpretation, creating a virtuous cycle that continually returns to the texts themselves. Therefore, distant reading in this paper does not inadvertently disqualify close reading but instead adds value by producing quantifiable results. It is believed that quantifiable results could facilitate the identification of specific problems and inform policy revision or change.

This paper employs digital approaches and tools like sentiment analysis, *Voyant*, *AntConc*, and R-Stylo. These methods enable the systematic identification of patterns in emotional tone, word frequency, and narrative shifts within *The World's Wife*. The data-driven approach uncovers subtle power dynamics and demonstrates how Duffy challenges and redefines traditional representations of women in grand narratives. By doing so, it complements the qualitative insights of prior feminist scholarship while introducing a level of data scalability that traditional methods may not achieve.

Sentiment Analysis, as suggested by (SA) Shayaa (2018), Schmidt et al. (2021), Kim et al (2021), Ali et al (2023), Rebora (2023), is a computational literary approach known for analyzing “people’s opinions, sentiments, appraisals, attitudes, and emotions towards entities and their attributes.” It automates the extraction of emotional content from text by converting it into machine-readable data, like numerical values or labels, “positive” vs. “negative”, which can then be statistically analyzed or visualized. It ranges from basic word counts to complex deep learning models, each choice shaping the interpretation of the examined text and connecting it with psycholinguistic theories. The lexicon-based sentiment analysis approach, drawing on theories like Plutchik’s eight basic emotions as described by Rebora (2023), identifies how Duffy’s female characters convey agency by disrupting traditional patriarchal values through sentiment. The method captures protagonists’ complex emotional expressions—such as joy, anger, and disgust—toward power and sexuality, illuminating Duffy’s critique of societal constructs on gender norms. It reveals subtle shifts in tone and perspective, aligning with Duffy’s intent to “reimagine female voices within literary narratives” (Rebora, 2023, p. 16-7). Meanwhile, *Voyant*’s visualizations track trends related to power and sexuality, presenting an accessible view of recurring patterns in the text

Duffy's *The World's Wife*. Gomez-Adorno et al. (2018, p. 50), as cited in Kusi (2022, p. 29), define stylometry as the analysis of stylistic features that can be statistically quantified, such as sentence length, vocabulary diversity, and word frequencies (including word forms and other linguistic units). They highlight authorship attribution as one of the most common practical applications of stylometric analysis, using stylometric features as stylistic fingerprints to identify the authors of anonymous or disputed texts. Applying stylometric methods to the analysis of the poetry under study aims to examine clusters, multidimensional scaling, consensus trees, and other stylistic patterns, even though the analysis is focused on a single volume. This approach will help uncover how Duffy manipulates language to convey her sensibilities. In addition, spreadsheets will be used to calculate percentages generated by word clusters, and these findings will be presented in visual formats to reveal the complex questions related to power and sexuality in Duffy's work. Together, these tools provide a rich, data-driven framework for exploring how Duffy's poetry challenges conventional representations of femininity and amplifies diverse female voices.

Postmodern feminism, as articulated by scholars like Teresa L. Ebert (1991), re-examines the notion of a single, universal female experience. It emphasizes the diversity of women's identities shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, sexuality, and culture, thereby challenging monolithic feminist narratives. This framework resists essentialism and foregrounds the fragmented and diverse experiences of women. It considers identity as a site of intersectional struggle rather than a fixed category. In rejecting grand narratives, postmodern feminism connects with broader poststructuralist criticisms of language and power, deconstructing the systems that perpetuate patriarchal hierarchies and marginalize alternative voices. This theoretical orientation re-echoes resistance postmodernism,

which Ebert (1991) distinguishes from “ludic postmodernism.” The latter’s textual playfulness risks undermining the political dimensions of feminism by detaching critique from the material realities of oppression. In contrast, resistance postmodernism engages language as a battleground for social struggle, emphasizing the transformative potential of rewriting dominant discourses to challenge and reconfigure power relations (pp. 887–888).

The theoretical dimensions of feminism have also evolved significantly over the years, with postfeminism emerging as a key framework for understanding contemporary gender, power, and sexuality dynamics. Postfeminism, as stated by scholars like McRobbie (2004), defines a shift where feminist gains are both acknowledged and contested, reflecting a more multidimensional, sometimes contradictory stance toward gender equality. McRobbie, like Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), argues that postfeminism signals a move away from the grand narratives of feminism toward a focus on individual agency and self-representation, often embracing contradictory and ambivalent stances about feminist progress. As McRobbie (2004, p. 45) observes, postfeminism acknowledges the accomplishments of feminism while highlighting the complexities of navigating contemporary cultural expectations. Similarly, Gill (2007, p. 103) suggests that postfeminist media and cultural texts often negotiate between empowerment and objectification, offering a “new visibility” for women while simultaneously reinforcing normative sexual ideologies. These tensions further expand the analytical scope of postmodern feminist discourse by addressing the intersections of empowerment, identity, and systemic power.

Ebert (1991) underscores the necessity of maintaining feminism’s materialist grounding while using postmodern strategies to expose and dismantle patriarchal ideologies.

Drawing on thinkers like Bakhtin and Voloshinov, she posits that language is not merely descriptive but constitutive of social realities. Feminist critique, within this framework, becomes an act of “rewriting” that activates marginalized perspectives and destabilizes dominant modes of knowledge (p. 889). This interplay between cultural critique and material politics situates postmodern feminism as both deconstructive and reconstructive, enabling it to challenge essentialist views of gender while advocating for social change. Furthermore, Judith Butler’s (1990) concept of gender performativity, as quoted by Ebert, relates with this framework, emphasizing that identities are constructed and maintained through repeated social and linguistic practices. By revealing the constructed nature of gender, postmodern feminism destabilizes fixed binaries and opens space for fluid and inclusive understandings of identity.

Carol Ann Duffy’s *The World’s Wife* exemplifies the principles of postmodern feminism, particularly resistance postmodernism, through its reimagining of canonical myths, histories, and narratives. In attempts to allow traditionally silenced female figures speak, Duffy engages in a poetic “rewriting” that deconstructs patriarchal ideologies and reinscribes marginalized perspectives. Poems such as “Mrs. Midas,” “Mrs. Faust,” and “Queen Herod” employ subversive humor, irony, and intertextuality to expose and critique the gendered power dynamics inherent in traditional narratives. This relates with Ebert’s (1991) assertion that feminist discourse must disrupt patriarchal logics by revealing the exclusions and hierarchies they naturalize (p. 889). The exploration of postmodern techniques, such as parody and pastiche, in the collection reflects the tensions inherent in postfeminism, as outlined by McRobbie and Gill, navigating the interplay between empowerment and structural constraints. In portraying protagonists who assert their autonomy within traditional power

dynamics, Duffy's collection, *TWW*, navigates the complexities of female agency in a postfeminist context.

As frameworks, Postmodern feminism and postfeminist are applied in the analysis of *The World's Wife*. Duffy's poetic reimaginings reflect the resistance postmodernist approach, subverting traditional narratives, amplifying diverse female voices, and interrogating the intersections of language, power, and gender. Simultaneously, the collection embodies postfeminist tensions, acknowledging feminist achievements while grappling with the subtleties of women's roles in contemporary cultural and social discourses. Through her innovative use of form and content, Duffy demonstrates the potential of postmodern feminist praxis to challenge entrenched ideologies and advocate for a more inclusive literary and social dialogue.

Poetic Power Transformation: Sentimental Dynamics of Self-Assertion

According to Rowland (2003: 292), *The World's Wife* is a collection of various dramatic monologues by the wives of "great" men in Western myth and history, and through the wives' incendiary sarcasm, the greatness of these men is questioned, mocked, and shattered. Many of the monologues are distinctively funny, and biting humor is employed to highlight the absurdity of patriarchy. The critic further asserts that in *The World's Wife*, feminist humor serves as a powerful tool to disrupt patriarchy in Western myths, legends, and history. The governing force running through the collection is women's fuming anger over misogynistic oppression. Rowland's assertion underscores the fact that Duffy uses poetry to inscribe transformative strategies in favor of women, while also demonstrating creative finesse in her choice of words and style. She seeks to achieve what Aristotle described in *Poetics* as, "Poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history, for

poetry speaks more of the universal, history of the particular” (*Poetics*, Part IX). While Aristotle does not explicitly exclude women from practicing poetry, his emphasis on intellect, action, and heroism reflects essentialist notions historically associated with male experience.

Mulyani (2022) remarks that poetry was traditionally seen as a male-dominated genre, often barring women from expressing their experiences within it. However, canonical female poets such as Sappho, Christine de Pizan, Louise Labé, Nana Asma’u, Teresa of Avila, Juana Inés de la Cruz, Phillis Wheatley (*Gilbert* and [Gubar](#)) have consistently disproved this assumption. While Duffy does not explicitly write poetry to challenge the essentialism of the genre, her work can be interpreted through that lens. *The World’s Wife* defends the thesis that poetry is not a realm exclusive to men, but a medium wherein women also find immense delight and satisfaction in articulating their feelings and perspectives, much like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Adrienne Rich, and Sylvia Plath. Duffy aligns with Mulyani (2022: 208), who argues:

Women’s writings are not ‘deficient’ or ‘inferior’ to their male counterparts; rather, their status and difference as writers stem from patriarchal dominance and power relations that have historically subordinated and denied them equal public access to education, language, literacy, and literary production.

This statement emphasizes the historical barriers that have limited women’s literary opportunities and shaped their writing as a response to systemic exclusion. Mulyani suggests that if Anglo-American women writers such as Kristine Batey (“Lot’s Wife”), Lanyer (“Eve’s Apology in the Defense of Women”), Millay (“Ancient Gesture”), and Parker (“Penelope”) had enjoyed equity in the literary world, their writing would not necessarily have been reactionary. Instead, like their male counterparts, women’s literary works could have been an

organic expression of their lived experiences, free from the constraints of historical oppression.

One of the strategies Duffy employs in *The World's Wife* (1999) is the titling of individual poems. The collection, which contains 30 poems, includes titles such as "Little Red-Cap," "Mrs Midas," "Mrs Darwin," "Anne Hathaway," "Frau Freud," and "Penelope," among others. She chooses to reimagine well-known stories, myths, and historical figures from a female perspective, subverting the gendered narratives that have dominated literature and history. In "Mrs Darwin," she brings to light Charles Darwin's wife, and "Pilate's Wife" who she allows to offer their own perspectives on issues surrounding them. These titles immediately signal a shift in perspective, creating a space where women's experiences, thoughts, and feelings are at the forefront. The emotions conveyed through these titles range from frustration ("Mrs Sisyphus") to desire ("Salome"), from empowerment ("Queen Herod") to longing ("Eurydice"). She uses these titles as entry points, where she reconsiders familiar stories from a fresh, postfeminist perspective, dismantling the idea that great literature and poetry must revolve around male experiences and perceptions. This titling strategy not only evokes previously silenced or marginalized female characters but also demonstrates that women can express themselves with delight and absolute pleasure in poetry.

Similarly, Horner (2003, p.107) quotes Linda Kinnahan who notes that Duffy's volume moves towards regeneration of the self through the creation of a strong female identity. This identity is a complex one. According to the critic, it is founded not only on a witty irreverence for the masquerade of masculinity, as voiced by the many long-suffering wives of "great men", but also on a reaffirmation of tenderness, imagination, emotional warmth, physical sensuousness and creativity. Kinnahan further states that these qualities, portrayed as positive and life-enhancing, are not confined only to women

although they are often pitted against “masculine” self-aggrandisement and selfishness; furthermore, they are also occasionally combined with other qualities traditionally perceived as “masculine”, such as boldness, strength and single-mindedness. Thus, Duffy’s portrayal of such characteristics does not represent merely a nostalgic return to a 1970s feminist essentialist agenda. Rather, it celebrates a sort of emotional pluralism. In so doing, it seeks to challenge the conventional gendering of feeling and to focus on the redemptive power of what Alison M. Jaggar, Horner notes, has defined as “outlaw” emotions that are politically subversive.

The fact that “Mrs,” on the titles, is mentioned 11 times and 32 times in the entire corpus, as shown in the area graph below, clearly indicates that Duffy uses the prefix not only as an entity that subsumed the women and placed them in the periphery but as one that challenges traditional narratives and gives the woman authority to function as an individual with her own voice and agency. It is her attempt to center women’s stories, agency, and voices in a space where they have historically been marginalized. It also signals a reclamation and subversion of identity, as these “wives” are no longer just the spouses of famous men but individuals with their own perspectives, desires, and strengths. See *Voyant* area chart (**Figure 1**) with “mrs” in cyan occurring on most of the titles in *The World’s Wife*. In **Figure 2**, “mrs” is navy blue and occurs 32 times in the entire corpus.

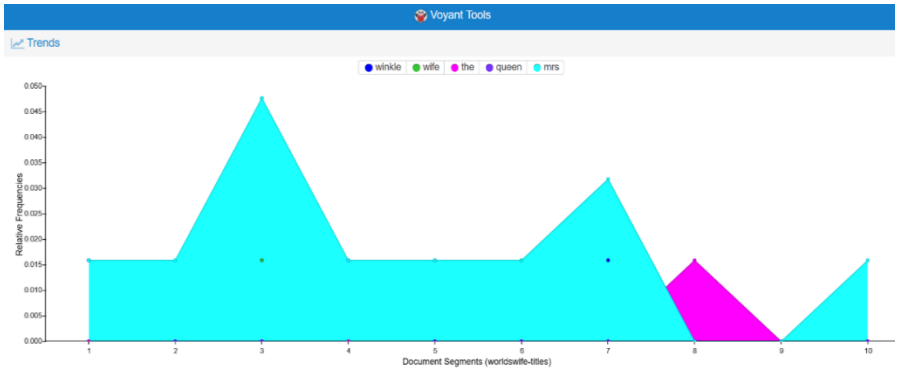


Figure 1: Area chart with “Mrs” as most frequent word (prefix) on the titles

Source: *Voyant tool*: Trend

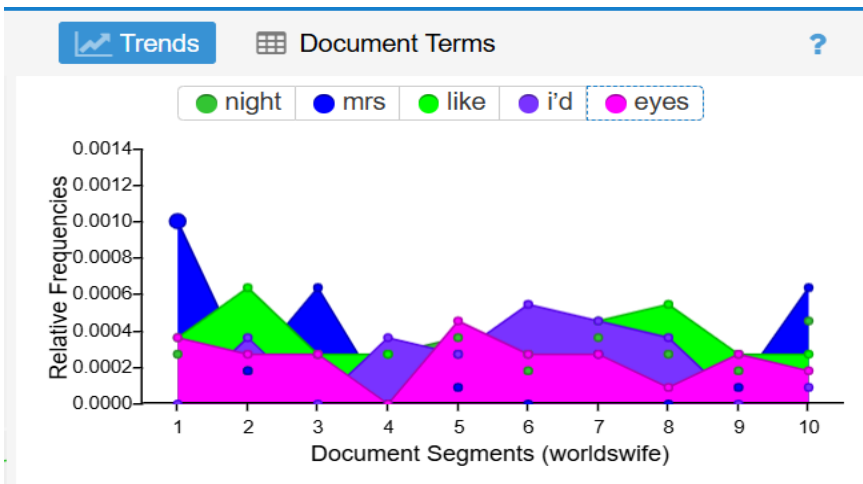


Figure2: This graph shows the 5 most frequent words in the entire corpus

([like](#) (40); [mrs](#) (32); [night](#) (31); [i'd](#) (27); [eyes](#) (27); [said](#) (23); [hands](#))

Source: *Voyant web-based tool* for visualisation trends and relative frequency

Duffy's frequent use of the word "eye" in pink as indicated in Figure 2, occurring 27 times across the collection is symbolic of a telescope through which she perceives female empowerment and consciousness, as she reflects on women's experiences. Like a beacon in the night, the recurring "eye" motif illuminates the importance of female perspective, allowing Duffy's characters to observe and interpret their worlds with clarity. In "Little Red-Cap," the persona notes the wolf's big eyes, "What big eyes he had! (stanza 2, line 4) symbolizing her awakening sexuality and growing awareness of male power. Similarly, in "Pilate's Wife," the narrator describes Jesus' eyes to die for, "His eyes were eyes to die for," (stanza 3, line 3) representing a moment of profound connection and spiritual awakening. These instances highlight how the eye serves as a mirror to the soul, reflecting heightened consciousness and enlightenment. In the attempt to emphasize the act of seeing, Duffy empowers her female characters, transforming them from passive objects of the male gaze into active observers, capable of piercing through societal veils with their penetrating vision. This focus on the female eye subverts traditional power dynamics, allowing for a more subtle exploration of female sexuality and empowerment, as if Duffy has given her characters a pair of X-ray specs to see through the façade of patriarchal narratives.

Most frequent words in the corpus, as revealed in *Voyant* Summary tool, demonstrate Duffy's determination to unfold female experiences, bodily desires, and opinions. The balance between concrete physical terms and more abstract or emotional words reflects the complex interplay of personal experience and broader societal structures that characterize postfeminist discourse. The word summary is presented here and further classified manually into Gender and Identity, Body and Sexuality, Power Dynamics, Transformation and Subversion, Emotional Landscape, and Mythical and Symbolic Elements

using the spread sheet. The objective is to prove that Duffy engages in artistic creation consciously. She gives room for the reader to follow the flow of her thoughts, and she deconstructs patriarchal paradigms with her femineity which does not make her less of a human being.

Voyant Summary of most frequent most in The world's Wife:
[like](#) (40); [mrs](#) (32); [night](#) (31); [i'd](#) (27); [eyes](#) (27); [said](#) (23); [hands](#) (22); [face](#) (22); [head](#) (20); [queen](#) (19); [hand](#) (17); [life](#) (16); [knew](#) (16); [didn't](#) (16); [till](#) (15); [love](#) (15); [look](#) (1); [got](#) (15); [came](#) (15); [bed](#) (15); [wife](#) (14); [went](#) (14); [time](#) (14); [home](#) (14); [he'd](#) (14); [felt](#) (14); [black](#) (14); [way](#) (13); [tongue](#) (13); [man](#) (13); [know](#) (13); [gold](#) (13); [faust](#) (13); [dead](#) (13); [saw](#) (12); [men](#) (12); [let](#) (12); [girls](#) (12); [day](#) (12); [air](#) (12); [right](#) (11); [moon](#) (11); [little](#) (11); [just](#) (11); [heart](#) (11); [heard](#) (11); [beast](#) (11); [words](#) (10); [stone](#) (10); [mouth](#) (10); [looked](#) (10); [long](#) (10); [good](#) (10); [ear](#) (10); [big](#) (10); [best](#) (10); [watched](#) (9); [tell](#) (9); [stared](#) (9)

Table1: Classification of most frequent words in corpus according to sentiments and significance

No	Themes	Frequently Used Words	Significance
1	Gender and Identity	Mrs, wife, queen, girls, hairy paw, bearded jaw, breath of the wolf, men king, queen	Focus on male and female perspectives and roles
2	Sexuality and Desire	Eyes, hands, face, mouth, tongue, bed, night, mistresses, sweet sixteen, love poem,	Emphasizes physical and sensual aspects of male and female experience

		thrashing fur, virgin, lust	
3	Power Dynamics	Said, knew, watched, axe, chop, scrotum, throat, bones, stones, stitched, Man, men,	appear in contexts where characters assert control or face violence, also indicates observation and knowledge
4	Transformation	Shrank, grew, changed, turned, transformed, became, metamorphosed, evolved	Suggest journeys, changes re- imagining of narratives
5	Emotional Landscape	Love, heart, felt, heard	Points to emotional experiences and perceptions from a female perspective
6	Mythical and Symbolic Elements	Moon, beast, gold, stone, Sisyphus, Thetis	Evokes mythical or symbolic imagery

Words such as “mrs,” “wife,” “queen,” and “girls” (Row 1) are expressions of gender and identity and highlight the focus on female perspectives and roles, while the frequent use of “hairy paw,” “bearded jaw,” and “breath of the wolf” (Row 1) suggest personal agency and resistance. Physical and sensual aspects of female experience are emphasized through words such as “eyes,” “hands,” “face,” “mouth,” and “tongue,” with “bed” and “night” (Row 2) hinting at intimate encounters and sexuality. As shown on the table, power dynamics are explored through words like “said,” “knew,” and “watched” (Row 3), indicating observation and knowledge from a female point of

view, while “axe,” “chop,” “scrotum,” “throat,” “bones,” “stones,” and “stitched” (Row 3) suggest female authority in contrast to “man” and “men” (Row 3) representing traditional male power. Transformation and subversion are evident in words like “shrank,” “grew,” “changed,” “turned,” “transformed,” “became,” “metamorphosed,” and “evolved” (Row 4), reflecting Duffy’s reimagining of traditional narratives. The emotional landscape is painted with words such as “love,” “heart,” “felt,” and “heard” (Row 5), often from a female perspective. Mythical and symbolic elements are evoked through words like “moon,” “beast,” “gold,” “stone,” “Sisyphus,” and “Thetis” (Row 6), used to explore deeper concepts of power and sexuality by recreating and deconstructing classical mythology. This rich vocabulary permits Duffy to challenge traditional power structures and explore female experiences through a feminist lens.

At another level, as shown in Figure 3 below, a lexicon-based sentiment analysis of *The World’s Wife* reveals a complex interplay between positive and negative language, reflecting Duffy’s subtle approach to power dynamics and sexuality in her re-creation of traditional narrative. The higher percentage of positive words (61.29%) suggests an overall empowering tone projecting Duffy as often employing a tone of empowerment and affirmation in her reimagining of traditional narratives. This positive language her protagonists’ journeys towards self-discovery, agency, and resilience. Despite the challenges and power dynamics they face, the use of positive words indicates a focus on overcoming adversity and reclamation of agency. However, the significant presence of negative words (38.71%) indicates Duffy’s acknowledgment of the challenges and struggles women face in patriarchal structures. This imbalance mirrors the postfeminists’ recognition of both progress and persistent inequalities. This also confirms McRobbie’s (2004) assertion that postfeminism acknowledges both feminist gains

and persistent inequalities and Gill's (2007, p. 163) observation that it intertwines feminist and anti-feminist ideas. Duffy's use of language subtly subverts traditional power dynamics, giving voice to previously silenced female perspectives while deconstructing societal norms. In "Mrs Midas," the enjambment, "I couldn't believe my ears.../ how he'd had a wish" (stanza 5/6) is an absurdity of male greed and its consequences on women's lives. She positions the woman in an active role. In "Mrs. Aesop," Duffy states in stanza 5, "*I'll cut off your tail, all right, I said, to save my face,*" and "That shut him up. I laughed last, longest," illustrating a woman's defiance against her husband's tedious moralizing. The mix of positive and negative sentiments also reflects the complexity of female experiences, encompassing both empowerment and frustration. This linguistic strategy intertwines with postfeminist analysis, which often explores the tensions between individual empowerment and systemic constraints, as well as the multifaceted nature of female sexuality and identity in contemporary society.

Distribution of sentiment bearing words

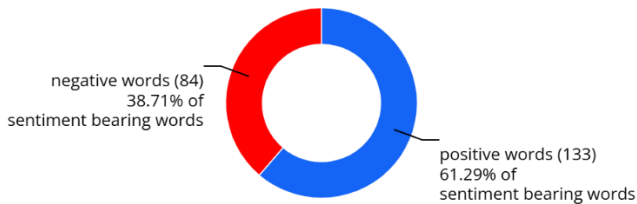


Figure3: Distribution of sentiment bearing words

(Source: *SentText*: web-based tool for lexicon-based sentiment analysis on texts)

The pie chart distribution of negative and positive word polarity in the entire text. The high percentage of positive words

(61.29%) shows that there is progress in gender issues. Meanwhile the significant presence of negative words (38.71%) indicates Duffy's acknowledgment of the challenges and struggles women face in patriarchal structures.

The pie chart distribution below (Figure4) reveals a very high percentage of neutral sentences, depicting Duffy's satirical subtleness in which she involves the reader in her thoughts and expression of feelings.

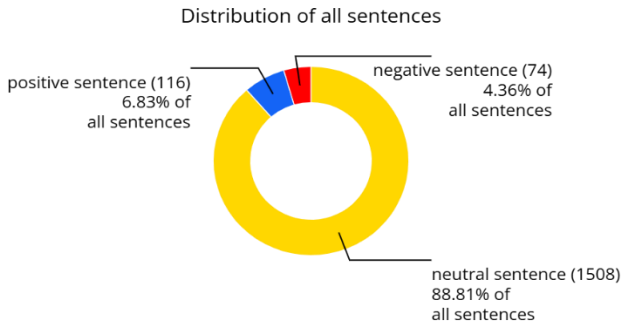


Figure4: Distribution of sentences: Polarity distribution of positive, negative, and neutral **sentences** in the entire text

Source: *SentText: web-based tool for lexicon-based sentiment analysis on texts*)

The distribution of sentences in this pie chart are very subtle. The predominance of neutral sentences (88.81%) suggests that Duffy primarily uses a matter-of-fact tone to recount these reimaged narratives, giving room for the reader to draw their own conclusions. This approach reflects what Gill (2007, p. 163) describes as postfeminism's "entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist ideas", where criticism is often implicit rather than overt. According to the postfeminist Gill,

postfeminism articulates a distinctly new sensibility ...because of its tendency to entangle feminist and anti-feminist discourses. Feminist ideas are at the same time articulated and repudiated, expressed and disavowed. Its constructions of

contemporary gender relations are profoundly contradictory. On the one hand, young women are hailed through a discourse of ‘can-do-girl power,’ yet on the other hand, their bodies are powerfully reinscribed as sexual objects; women are presented as active, desiring social subjects, but they are subject to a level of scrutiny and hostile surveillance which has no historical precedence.

These feminist and ant-feminist sentiments are perceptible in the slightly higher percentage of positive sentences (6.83%) compared to negative ones (4.36%) which indicates a subtle lean towards empowerment and reclamation of female narratives. The positive sentences might represent moments of female agency or triumph, while the negative ones could reflect the challenges and constraints women face. As earlier stated, this uneven distribution permits Duffy to present complex, multifaceted female experiences without resorting to simplistic dichotomies of gendering or male-female binaries as has been the case with first and second wave feminist scholars. It enables her to subtly subvert traditional power dynamics and critique societal norms while also celebrating female perspectives. The predominance of neutral language may also serve to normalize this femineity in retellings and positioning women’s creative exuberance in art as equally valid narratives within the literary canon.

In the context of such gendered language, (Lakoff, 1973) *Language and Women’s Place* ascertains how women’s language use is constrained by societal norms that limit their expressive power. As Lakoff notes:

It will be found that the overall effect of “women’s language”—meaning both language restricted in use to women and language descriptive of women alone—is this: it submerges a woman’s personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject-matter and uncertainty about it; and, when a woman is being

discussed, by treating her as an object—sexual or otherwise—
but never a serious person with individual views.” (p. 48)

This insight reinforces Duffy’s approach in *The World’s Wife*, where she moves beyond such linguistic constraints, challenging the gendered norms that Lakoff dismisses. She transcends traditional linguistic barriers through her astute selection of words, imbuing each poem with a profound, metaphorical significance and a philosophical depth that challenges established narratives. By weaving classical myth into her work and parodying the status quo, she skilfully redefines language to assert her own creative authority. Her portrayal of phallic narratives, as seen in “Mrs Rip Van Winkle,” is deliberately understated, rendered trivial but simultaneously elevated by the elegance of her language. Duffy to subtly satirises traditional metanarratives, highlighting their absurdity while also imbuing them with a lyrical quality that invites deeper reflection. She not only diminishes the dominance of these narratives but also reclaims and redefines them from a female perspective, showcasing her mastery in blending sarcasm with poetic beauty. This mastery not only showcases Duffy’s command of the poetic form but also her deep, intentional engagement with issues of gender, empowerment, and the fluidity of language. Her creative ingenuity reflects a postmodern concept of rewriting, where existing narratives are deconstructed and reimagined to challenge traditional ideologies and hierarchies. This process of rewriting serves as a powerful reclamation of female identity and subversion of traditional myths. Across the poems such as “Queen Kong,” “Thetis,” “Mrs Beast,” and “Mrs Faust,” she engages with a consistent strategy of role reversal and empowerment evoking previously silenced or marginalized female characters. In “Queen Kong,” she flips the gender dynamics of the classic King Kong story, presenting a female gorilla who possesses agency and desire as she states:

....I found him alone
in a clearing, scooped him up in my palm,

and held his wriggling, shouting life till he calmed.
For me, it was absolutely love at first sight.
(stanza2)

This reversal challenges traditional power structures and gender roles. Similarly, in “Thetis”, Duffy reimagines the Greek myth, portraying Thetis as a shapeshifter who actively resists male dominance. Stanza 1 and 2: “I shrank myself/ to the size of a bird in the hand/of a man.... /Then I did this: /shouldered the cross of an albatross up the hill of the sky”. The poem “Mrs Beast” further exemplifies Duffy’s feminist reinterpretation of fairy tales, with lines like “These myths going round, these legends, fairytales, /I’ll put them straight” (stanza 1, line 1-2). This is a metaphor for identity reclamation. She is directly challenging patriarchal narratives. Her use of colloquial language and modern references in these poems, such as “I’m especially fond of pastrami on rye” in “Queen Kong” (stanza 1, line 7), adds a sarcastic tone and humor to the re-created myths. This approach not only humanizes the giant ape character by humorously juxtaposing her monstrous nature with a sophisticated urban food preference but also subverts gender expectations and traditional power dynamics. As Ebert (1991) argues, language functions as an “arena of social struggle” where resistance is enacted (p. 888). By embedding resistance within her linguistic choices, Duffy disrupts patriarchal norms, offering alternative narratives that challenge entrenched ideologies. Through these techniques, she demonstrates a powerful sentiment of female empowerment, agency, and resistance, artfully unveiling the perspectives of women who have been historically muted in literature and myth.

Patriarchy traditionally casts men as dominant figures and women as subordinate. in *The World’s Wife*, Duffy reverses this status quo. According to Foucault (1976, p. 12) power is not a mode of subjugation. It is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away;

power is exercised from innumerable points, in the inter-play of non-egalitarian and mobile relations. Power relations are both intentionally and non-subjective. If in fact they are intelligible, this is not because they are the effect of another instance.... Where there is power, there is resistance... this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.

“Where there is power, there is resistance” especially when it is abusive. Duffy finds male power abusive and by deconstructing male hegemony in poetic art, she sublimates her resentful sentiments against systemic marginalisation and relegation which has radicalised women in recent years. de Beauvoir (1949) and Cixous (1998) advocated for forms of equality and equity between the sexes, even though they approach these concepts differently. In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir analyzes how society constructs women as “the Other” and argues that equality can be achieved by rejecting traditional, patriarchal roles and enabling women to participate fully in society. She advocates for a society where men and women can both pursue self-fulfillment. Cixous, known for her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa*, also advocates for equity but does so from the perspective of “écriture féminine” (feminine writing), encouraging women to reclaim their bodies and voices through language. While she doesn’t explicitly conceive her work as a call for “equal power” in political terms, she supports an equitable transformation of gender dynamics by urging women to express themselves beyond traditional, male-dominated structures. Unlike these previous feminists, Duffy uses irony, satire, and subversive storytelling to question and satirize the foundations of male authority and reveal how power can be reinterpreted or reclaimed by women. Her poems suggest that gender power dynamics can be more flexible than rigidly equitable or inequitable. Her work invites readers to consider a world where women exercise authority in unique, often subversive ways, highlighting both the inequalities they face and

their ability to challenge these constraints. Thus, while she debunks the imbalance of power, her focus is on showcasing women's strength and voice rather than explicitly advocating for equal power distribution. This is evident in poems like "Queen Herod," where the female speaker seizes control over her daughter's destiny, contrasting with a typically patriarchal narrative.

In "Little Red-Cap," Duffy reinterprets the classic fairytale with a subversive, feminist twist, with focus on power, sexuality, and transformation. She explores the relationship between the young girl and the wolf not as a simple predator-prey dynamic but as one charged with sexual tension, intellectual growth, and eventual liberation. Power and sexuality connect as Duffy navigates the complexities of desire, manipulation, and self-discovery in retelling this fairy tale. From the outset, the poem positions Little Red-Cap as a figure on the cusp of sexual awakening. Duffy immediately shifts power dynamics by portraying the girl as a willing participant in her journey into the woods, symbolizing the transition from innocence to experience. The wolf, anthropomorphized through human characteristics like holding a book and drinking wine, becomes a figure of dangerous allure. His physicality—his "wolfy drawl," "big ears," and "big eyes" (Duffy 1999)—as well as his intellectual charm, represent both a sexual and intellectual awakening for the young girl. In the words of Horner (2003:109-10) Little Red Cap's allusion to the mid-twentieth-century popular song line "sweet sixteen, never been, babe, waif, and bought me a drink" (stanza 2, line6) indicates a certain naivety but this is quickly undercut by Little Red-Cap's confession of her motives for collusion:

... You might ask why. Here's why. Poetry.
The wolf, I knew, would lead me deep into the woods,
away from home to a dark tangled thorny place
lit by the eyes of owls. (stanza3, line1-4)

In this encounter, Honer says, she plays along with the game of seduction and loses her virginity ('scraps of red'). However, through this loss she gains not only sexual knowledge but also knowledge of what will happen to her own poetic talent if she allows herself to become enmeshed in a relationship with a male writer - he will simply devour her "white dove" of language. This interpretation by Horner reveals Little Red-Cap's journey with the wolf which represents a decade-long poetic apprenticeship. During this time, she immerses herself in his literary world, finding excitement in the "words, words" of his lair. However, she eventually realizes that remaining with him would stifle her own creative voice. This epiphany is symbolized by the line "it took ten years /in the woods to tell that a mushroom/stoppers the mouth of a buried corpse"(stanza6). Empowered by this understanding, she metaphorically "takes an axe" to her surroundings, dispatching the wolf and liberating both her grandmother's legacy and her own talent. The poem's conclusion resolves the tension between silence and language, with Little Red-Cap emerging as a poet in her own right, symbolized by bird and music imagery. Her declaration Out of the forest I come with my flowers, singing, all alone (stanza7) serves as a manifesto for her poetic independence. However, Horner notes that any potential self-aggrandizement is tempered by the poem's humor, particularly in its deliberate reworking of clichés (p.110). Duffy uses this relationship to explore how female sexuality is often entangled with vulnerability and knowledge acquisition, with the girl being seduced not only by the wolf's body but also by his poetry, signifying her desire for both physical and intellectual experience.

However, the power in this relationship is not static. The act of following the wolf into the woods, described in visceral, almost violent terms as "my stockings ripped to shreds, scraps

of red from my blazer” (stanza 3, line 5), is a metaphor for her loss of innocence, both sexually and emotionally. Duffy’s use of anthropomorphism is critical here: the wolf’s human-like qualities enhance the tension between his bestial nature and his role as a seducer and teacher, symbolizing the complex interplay between dominance, knowledge, and desire. The anthropomorphic portrayal of the wolf also serves to highlight the predator-prey dynamic, but Duffy complicates this by gradually reversing the power balance. As Little Red-Cap grows wiser and more disillusioned, she recognizes the cyclical, unchanging nature of the wolf - “same old song,” “same rhyme, same reason”- (stanza 6) and takes control by killing him. This act of violence is not only a rejection of the wolf’s power but also a rejection of the passive role assigned to women in patriarchal narratives. By anthropomorphizing the wolf, Duffy makes him not only a literal predator but also a metaphorical one, representing male-dominated power structures.

The protagonist’s final act of violence: “one chop, scrotum to throat” (stanza 7), is symbolic of her reclaiming agency and rejecting the dominance that once controlled her. Her discovery of her grandmother’s bones within the wolf’s body reveals a profound intergenerational connection in the struggle against patriarchal oppression. This imagery suggests that the wolf, as a symbol of male dominance, has consumed not just the protagonist’s innocence but also the voices and experiences of women across generations. By filling the wolf’s belly with stones and stitching him up, the protagonist engages in a symbolic act of reclamation and reconstruction. The stones represent the weight of accumulated female experiences and knowledge, forced back into the system that once sought to devour them. This act of “stuffing” and “stitching” can be interpreted as a reimagining of patriarchal narratives, where women’s stories and strengths are no longer erased but integrated into the very fabric of societal structures. It’s a

powerful metaphor for how women can transform oppressive systems from within, using the very tools and structures that once confined them to create a new narrative that acknowledges their resilience and agency.

The exploration of anthropomorphism further sustains the poem's subject matter by continually blurring the line between the human and animal world, where Duffy uses this technique to comment on gender, power, and the complexities of desire. The wolf's human traits allow the poet to explore how women navigate their sexuality in a world that often objectifies them. The poem satirizes the ways in which women are both enticed and controlled by patriarchal forces but also illustrates how they can reclaim their power through self-awareness and decisive action. The protagonist's journey from innocence to experience is marked by both intellectual and sexual discovery, culminating in an assertion of agency and control over her narrative. This feminist re-reading not only challenges conventional gender roles but also hints at the complex dynamics of power and desire that underpin human relationships. In Figure 1 below, a percentage presentation of power dynamics transcendence is presented Figure 1 below.

With *R-stylo*, a word list was generated and manually classified into three categories. Power: "axe," "chop," "scrotum," "throat," "bones," "stones," "stitched," "fist," "crossbow," "gun," and "knives" were identified. Sexuality: "mistresses," "sweet sixteen," "love poem," "thrashing fur," "virgin," and "lust" were used, and anthropomorphic expression: "wolf," "wolfy drawl," "hairy paw," "bearded jaw," "breath of the wolf," "matted paws," and "howls" were considered. The total number of words in the "Litte Red Caps" was calculated. For each category, the occurrences of the relevant keywords were also counted. The percentage for each category was calculated by dividing the number of keyword occurrences by the total number of words in the poems and then

multiplying by 100. In the end the data was represented on a spread sheet in three Categories and percentages from which a pie chart was generated:

A1: Categories

A2: Anthropomorphic Expression

A3: Power

A4: Sexuality

B1: Percentage

B2: 48.3

B3: 34.5

B4: 17.2

Percentage Representation in Poem "Little Red-Cap"

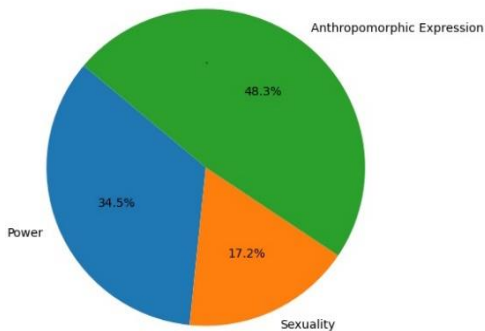


Figure5: power, anthropomorphism and sexuality in “Little Red Caps”

Source: Generated with spread sheet.

The pie chart illustrates that anthropomorphic expressions (48.3%) take the largest share in the collection of poems, emphasizing the use of human traits in animals to highlight predatory aspects of human behavior and blur the relation that had existed between men and women. Power dynamics (34.5%) follow, showcasing the exploration of control and self-

empowerment, as Little Red Caps navigate through manipulation and liberation. Lastly, sexuality (17.2%) reflects the themes of awakening desire and agency, where attraction intertwines with manipulation and liberation, denoting the transitions into self-awareness. These issues underscore the critical engagement with power, gender, and identity, demonstrating their complexity and controversy in the entire collection of *TWW*.

The poem “Queen Herod” is one of the poems in which Duffy explores the passivity of male power. It focuses on the infamous King Herod, who, according to the Gospel of Matthew, ordered the massacre of infants to prevent the rise of a prophesied king. This act of desperate violence is Herod’s attempt to cling to power, echoing the tactics of authoritarian leaders, particularly in Africa, who manipulate systems to remain in power. As the text from Matthew recounts, Herod, enraged at being deceived, resorts to violence in a futile attempt to safeguard his rule. However, in Duffy’s recontextualization, Herod is not the central force; rather, his wife assumes the decisive role, strategizing for her daughter’s protection and highlighting the passivity of his supposed power. She states (stanza5):

Afterwards, it seemed like a dream.
The pungent camels
Kneeling in the snow,
The guide’s rough shout
As he clapped his leather gloves,
hawked, spat, snatched
the smoky jug of mead
from the chittering maid-
she was twelve, thirteen.
I watched each turbaned Queen
rise like a god on the back of her beast.
And splayed that night
below Herod’s fusty bulk,
I saw the fierce eyes of the black Queen

Flash again, felt her urgent warnings scald
My ear. *Watch for a star, a star.*
It means he's here...

In this excerpt, stanza five, Duffy uses vivid linguistic elements and sensory details to shift the focus of authority from Herod to his wife, portraying her as the real agent of protection and power. The expression “The pungent camels/ kneeling in the snow” is a juxtaposition and personification of the camel kneeling in the snow as if it is a kind of submission for a mystical exercise. This conveys an exotic atmosphere in which the snow renders the camel powerless. It is a cold, winter setting, creating an almost surreal atmosphere that mirrors the queen’s internal struggle and heightened awareness. It is a feeling of strangeness in Herod too because he is rendered numb. The verbs “hawked, spat, snatched,” each harshly active, evoke the brusque energy of the guide, contrasting sharply with Herod’s later portrayal as “fusty,” suggesting his staleness and lack of vitality. The queen’s perception of the visiting “turbaned Queen[s]” as gods, combined with her memory of “fierce eyes” and “urgent warnings,” elevates her role as she absorbs the foreign Queens’ prophecies with the intensity and seriousness that Herod lacks. The urgent repetition of “a star, a star” by the black Queen conveys a prophetic warning, placing decisive responsibility on Herod’s wife. Meanwhile, Herod is reduced to an almost inanimate presence with “fusty bulk,” reinforcing his passivity. Through these linguistic elements, Duffy reinterprets the narrative to position Herod’s wife as the protector of her daughter, casting Herod himself as secondary and inactive. In addition, in contrast to the biblical depiction of King Herod as the principal agent in the massacre of innocents, Duffy’s “Queen Herod” re-creates the story, focusing on Herod’s wife as the active, decisive force protecting her daughter from future harm. Classical myths also represent one of the sources from which Duffy draws her material. Like biblical and historical narratives,

these myths have traditionally marginalized women. Duffy sees it as her feminist duty to address and redress these viewpoints, often by ridiculing legendary male figures through their spouses to reveal the passivity of male power. In her poem “Mrs Sisyphus,” Duffy castigates classical male power. The poem begins with the wife’s irritation at her husband’s obsession with the futile task of pushing a rock uphill:

That’s him pushing the stone up the hill, the jerk.
I call it a stone—it’s nearer the size of a kirk.
When he first started out, it just used to irk,
But now it incenses me, and him, the absolute berk.
I could do something vicious to him with a dirk. (stanza 1)

Here, Duffy’s use of colloquial language emphasizes Mrs. Sisyphus’s frustration with her husband’s pointless labor, a task he undertakes with a seriousness she finds absurd. He sees a silver lining, clinging to the idea that his work has some underlying worth, even though he endlessly rolls a stone with no ultimate reward. His wife, however, sees only futility and is exasperated by the attention her husband’s steadfastness attracts.

According to the myth, Sisyphus is punished by the gods for disobedience, condemned to this ceaseless labor in the underworld. Though he knows he will never finish, he is deeply committed to his task. The mythical account does not mention his wife, perhaps assuming that a man with no family obligations is free to endure his punishment alone. However, Duffy’s poem reveals a different side. Mrs. Sisyphus lies alone in the dark, her voice diminished, her smile twisted in frustration. She feels a kinship with other legendary wives, such as Noah’s and Bach’s spouses, whose husbands’ ambitious endeavors left them similarly isolated. Exploring these salient issues permit us to affirm the passivity of male power from the perspective of the spouses of great men in history. While these men are accomplished and famous, they often fail in their roles as partners. In their relationships, they appear as the weaker link.

Duffy suggests that these men may try to compensate for their personal weaknesses by perfecting their external skills. The idea of sexuality as a form of power and control subtly underscores this conviction, highlighting how personal relationships reveal a different, often passive side of so-called male authority.

Despite Duffy's attempts at women's empowerment in *The World's Wife*, some poems reveal instances where women are complicit in their struggles, reflecting the complexities of agency and accountability within postfeminist and postmodern frameworks. Postfeminism, as earlier stated (McRobbie, 2004), often highlights the ambivalence and contradictions in navigating contemporary gender dynamics, acknowledging the progress of feminist ideals while exposing areas where traditional structures persist. Similarly, the emphasis on fragmented identities and the deconstruction of grand narratives is evident in Duffy's subtle portrayal of female characters who both resist and reinforce patriarchal norms. In "Mrs. Midas," the protagonist criticizes her husband's greed but remains complicit in their deteriorated relationship, embodying resignation and dependency. This act simply re-enacts the postmodern concept of moral ambiguity, where characters defy binary categorizations of victimhood and empowerment. "Queen Herod" reimagines power dynamics by portraying a woman wielding authority in a way that mirrors patriarchal tyranny, resonating with Ebert's (1991) argument that resistance must also interrogate how power is exercised and replicated (p. 889). In "Medusa," internalized self-doubt transforms into self-destruction, showcasing the internal struggles shaped by internalized patriarchal values or self-sabotage. Postfeminist critiques of agency and internal complicity are further reflected in "Pygmalion's Bride," where conformity to societal expectations questions the balance between personal choice and structural influence.

Duffy's subtle yet critical depiction of complicity extends to "Delilah," where the betrayal of Samson to assert power underscores the moral complexities of female agency. As Ebert (1991) notes, language and narratives are spaces of social struggle, and Duffy uses these to challenge reductive portrayals of women as mere victims or unequivocal agents of resistance (p. 888). Duffy weaves postmodernist's interrogation of identity with postfeminist's exploration of empowerment and inherent ambivalences, prompting both men and women to critically examine the interplay between individual agency and societal constraints. By so doing, she uncovers the complexities of female responsibility and the enduring impact of patriarchal structures.

Conclusion

In *The World's Wife*, Duffy syllogistically examines the subtleties of power and sexuality, blending religious, classical and personal myth-making techniques and history to subvert traditional narratives of femininity. The use of sentiment analysis reveals how Duffy manipulates language to create a space where women reclaim their voices—expressing their creative fantasies, desires, and resistances in ways that unsettle entrenched patriarchal structures. The frequencies, emotional tones, and thematic patterns, as demonstrated in graphs, charts and tables with the help of lexicon-based sentiment analysis, and digital tools like *Voyant*, depict the strategic manipulation of language to recast women as agents of their own stories. Duffy's engagement with religious, classical, and personal mythmaking illustrates her capacity to confront both the aesthetic and political dimensions of women's oppression. The pie chart distribution (Figure4) reveals a predominance of neutral sentences (88.81%), which reflects Duffy's satirical subtlety and matter-of-fact tone, inviting readers to draw their own conclusions about the reimagined narratives. The slightly higher percentage of positive sentences (6.83%) compared to negative

ones (4.36%) (Figure4) suggests a lean toward empowerment and the reclamation of female narratives. This neutrality is what McRobbie addresses as “double entanglement,” where feminist ideas are both acknowledged and repudiated. The neutrality of tone in sentence distribution in the entire corpus permits Duffy to present complex, multifaceted female experiences without resorting to simplistic gender binaries, subtly subverting traditional power dynamics while celebrating female empowerment. The predominance of neutral language also normalizes femineity in retellings, which positions women’s creative exuberance as equally valid narratives within the literary canon. Duffy’s work is a very sterling contribution in feminist debate taking off from feminist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir, who argued that one is not born a woman but becomes one. She also engages with the ideas of Ebert, Butler, Cixous, Gill, and McRobbie, exploring how women navigate and resist power within patriarchal systems. She permits her characters to engage in the act of seeing through, transforming them from passive objects of the male gaze into active observers. They are capable of piercing through societal veils with their penetrating vision.

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Le Cameroun face aux crises sociales majeures : Entre enjeux humanitaires et quête de stabilité dans les régions anglophones

Alphonse Zozime Tamekamta
Département d'Histoire
Université de Yaoundé I
Email : tamekamta@gmail.com

Introduction

Jadis présenté comme un havre de paix, puis comme terre d'accueil, le Cameroun est aujourd'hui pris dans l'étau de trois crises humanitaires et sociopolitiques d'ampleur majeure. La première crise humanitaire sévissant dans l'Extrême-nord du pays depuis 2013 est liée à la terreur de Boko Haram. Compte tenu de la situation sécuritaire actuelle, la région de l'Extrême-Nord comptait en décembre 2016 environ 86 400 réfugiés dont 59 600 dans le site de Minawao (*aménagé sur 329 hectares pour accueillir 20 000 réfugiés*)¹ et près de 1 000 000 déplacés internes. La deuxième crise humanitaire est liée aux contrecoups du conflit centrafricain. Depuis 2013, plus de 258 000 réfugiés centrafricains ont fui la violence et les exactions pour s'établir au Cameroun, notamment dans les régions de l'Adamaoua, du Nord et surtout de l'Est. 79% de ces réfugiés se trouvent

¹OCHA, « Cameroun : aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2017 », décembre 2016. p.6.

aujourd'hui dans la région de l'Est-Cameroun.² La moitié de ces populations réfugiées s'est installée sur 7 sites (5 dans la région de l'Est, et 2 dans l'Adamaoua) qui ont été aménagés pour les accueillir, alors que l'autre moitié s'est installée dans les villages aux côtés des communautés hôtes. La troisième crise humanitaire, la plus importante, est liée à l'escalade de violence nourrie par les combattants sécessionnistes des zones anglophones du Cameroun (Nord-ouest et Sud-ouest) depuis novembre 2016. Il s'est agi, au départ, d'une revendication des enseignants et des avocats qui s'est muée, fin 2017, en insurrection armée, avant de dégénérer peu à peu en guerre civile.

S'agissant de la crise humanitaire dans les régions anglophones du Nord-ouest et du Sud-ouest, elle est présentée comme la pire crise humanitaire interne jamais connue par ce pays. Malgré des mesures gouvernementales antérieurement prises pour amorcer la désescalade, le drame humanitaire s'amplifie au grand dam des agences humanitaires et autres institutions internationales qui appellent au dialogue inclusif. Face aux critiques de plus en plus acerbes des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme et des institutions humanitaires internationales, le gouvernement camerounais a cru devoir élaborer en juin 2018, le plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence, d'un montant global de 12 milliards de FCFA, après un coup de cœur national lancé en direction des acteurs économiques et politiques locaux. Bien que ce plan tarde à fournir les premiers résultats satisfaisants, il est urgent d'interroger, au-delà des crises sociales connues au Cameroun, l'articulation et le déploiement de ce plan ainsi que les résultats atteints ou escomptés. Ceci étant, quelle dynamique

² European Commission/Humanitarian Aid and Civil protection, « Cameroun », *Fiche-Info Echo*, n° 15, repris par Alphonse Zozime TAMEKAMTA. Le Cameroun face aux réfugiés centrafricains. Comprendre la crise migratoire et les résiliences subséquentes., *Note d'analyses Sociopolitiques*, n°01, 01 avril 2018, CARPADD (Montréal). p.5.

contestataire s'exprime-t-elle au Cameroun et quelles en sont les réponses gouvernementales ? Plus spécifiquement, comment le plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence a-t-il été conçu, exécuté et quels en sont les enjeux humanitaire et sociopolitique?

I-Une fresque du Cameroun : mouvements à bas bruits et crises humanitaires répétitives

A-Le Cameroun : un pays singulier traversé par des mouvements à bas bruits

Le Cameroun, 475 442 km² de superficie pour 17 463 836 habitants en 2005 (22 179 707 en 2015)³, est un pays de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC), de la Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique centrale (CEEAC), de la Commission du bassin du lac Tchad (CBLT) et de la Commission du golfe de Guinée (CGG). Il est situé au cœur de l'Afrique centrale et au fond du golfe de Guinée. Il s'étend du 12° au 13° degré de latitude Nord, puis du 9° au 16° degré de longitude Est. Ce pays a la forme d'un triangle de 1200 km de côté et 700 km de base. Il est limitrophe du Nigeria à l'Ouest, avec lequel il partage 1694 km, du Tchad au Nord-est avec lequel il partage 1094 km, de la RCA au Sud-est avec laquelle il partage 800 km. Au sud, le Cameroun partage sa frontière avec le Congo-Brazzaville sur 525 km, le Gabon sur 295 km et la Guinée Équatoriale sur 200 km. Le Cameroun est ouvert au Sud-ouest sur l'océan Atlantique avec 412 km de côtes.

La construction des jeunes au Cameroun, les formes d'organisation et mobilités, les dynamiques de déploiement et leur engagement dans et hors de la politique, impulsent de nouveaux questionnements et de nouvelles recherches permettant d'approfondir la place des jeunes dans les

³ Données du 3^e Recensement général de la population et de l'habitat (RGPH), BUCREP (Bureau Central des Recensements et des Études de Population), 2005.

Révolutions de couleur ou les mouvements à bas bruits. Loin des modélisations interprétatives ou théoriques, la référence à l'engagement des jeunes dans la révolution passive ou active est d'actualité au Cameroun. En effet, les stéréotypes culturels, les codes esthétiques, les référents intellectuels, littéraires ou scientifiques, l'action collective structurent la psychologie permanemment revendicatrice de la jeunesse camerounaise. La contestation, l'insoumission, l'indignation, la revendication, la révolte, la vengeance...deviennent ainsi leur langage usuel. Dans la profusion des technologies de communication (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) qu'offre la civilisation de l'universel, elle s'est reconstituée, s'est responsabilisée, s'est systématisée et s'est refusée de se débarrasser de la peine de prendre part au combat historique pour l'émergence des sociétés, certes plurielles, mais plus résilientes.

Depuis l'époque coloniale, le Cameroun n'a pas fait l'économie de la contestation du pouvoir gouvernant/dominant. Le souvenir plus ou moins lointain rappelle : la révolte des cheminots à Douala en 1945 ; les émeutes d'« indigènes » en mai 1955 ; la lutte menée par l'UPC à l'Ouest-Cameroun entre 1958 et 1970⁴; la révolte populaire de Dolle dans le Logone et Chari en octobre 1979 (suivie d'une centaine de morts) ; la revendication pour le retour au multipartisme suivie de la répression subie par les cinquante mille marcheurs à Bamenda le 26 mai 1990 ; la grève/révolte estudiantine des universités de Yaoundé en 1991, N'Gaoundéré le 31 janvier 2002 et Buea le 28 avril 2005, etc.⁵ Les émeutes de la faim⁶ ne s'en sont pas

⁴ Alphonse Zozime TAMEKAMTA. Cameroun : piliers de la présidence Biya et perspectives. *Note de recherches* (NDR), n° 14, *Thinking Africa* (Abidjan), novembre 2014. p.3.

⁵ Le numéro 77 (février 2012) du mensuel *Les Cahiers de Mutations*, titré « Émeutes et répressions sanglantes au Cameroun : comment l'État a systématiquement maté les revendications populaires depuis 1945 », contient d'importantes révélations.

⁶ Les émeutes de la faim désignent une révolte populaire de la mase paysanne au Cameroun, du 25 au 29 février 2008. Ces révoltes, sortes de réactions populaires à la hausse des prix des denrées alimentaires (riz, blé, maïs, lait, farine, poissons), avaient secoué 7 des 10 régions du pays.

éloignées. Elles s'étaient soldées par 40 morts dont un policier (selon les sources gouvernementales), 44 édifices publics saccagés ou incendiés ; 3 000 personnes interpellées, plus d'un millier condamné à des peines privatives de liberté (six mois à trois ans)⁷.

Ces mouvements à bas bruits sont l'émanation d'une psychologie revendicatrice et même revancharde qui se structure sur le long terme dans les deux principales villes du Cameroun : Yaoundé et Douala. Les leaders de ces mouvements à bas bruits sont généralement organisés en groupes de pression syndicale, groupes de pression artistiques, groupes de pression médiatiques, groupe de pression estudiantine, groupes de pression ecclésiastique, groupes de pression littéraire et intellectuelle, etc.

B-Le Cameroun : un pays soumis au continuum humanitaire

Le Cameroun est soumis, depuis 2013, à une situation humanitaire difficile : augmentation du nombre de réfugiés (72 000 réfugiés nigériens et 258 000 réfugiés centrafricains au Cameroun) et de déplacés internes (81 693 camerounais hors de leur foyer depuis 2014 dans l'Extrême-nord), malnutrition chronique (100 000 enfants touchés dans l'Extrême-Nord), l'insuffisance du fonds humanitaire (seulement 70 milliards de FCFA disponibles en novembre 2015 sur 130 milliards prévus pour l'année 2015). Aussi, note-t-on 17 000 morts dans les 4 pays les plus touchés (Nigeria, Tchad, RCA et Cameroun) entre 2009 et 2015 ; 2,6 millions de déplacés dont 2,2 millions de Nigériens et 1 100 écoles détruites, etc.

⁷ Alphonse Zozime TAMEKAMTA. Février 2008, 10 ans après ! Retour sur le sens caché des "émeutes de la faim" au Cameroun. *Note d'enquête et de recherche*, n°01, 25 avril 2018, CARPADD (Montréal). p.11.

Autant le nombre de réfugiés et de déplacés internes s'est accru, autant les besoins humanitaires se sont multipliés. En hausse, ces besoins ne correspondent pas aux ressources financières et matérielles disponibles. Car, seuls 130 797 456 USD (environ 65 398 728 000 FCFA) requis par les Agences des Nations unies et les ONG pour couvrir l'ensemble des besoins des réfugiés en 2016, alors que le plan de réponse humanitaire 2016 pour le Cameroun (lancé en janvier 2016 par le gouvernement du Cameroun, les Nations Unies et les partenaires humanitaires) visait à mobiliser 282 millions USD (environ 141 000 000 000 FCFA) pour fournir une protection et une assistance à 1,1 million de personnes affectées par la triple crise que connaît le pays.⁸

Depuis 2015, le nombre de réfugiés et des déplacés internes s'est accru, générant par la même occasion une augmentation irréversible des besoins humanitaires et de la vulnérabilité de ceux-ci et des populations hôtes. Les agences humanitaires estiment qu'en 2017, près de 2,9 millions de personnes ont urgemment besoin de protection et d'assistance élémentaire⁹. 98% de ces personnes sont concentrées dans quatre régions (Extrême-nord, Nord, Adamaoua, Est). Le plan de réponse humanitaire 2017¹⁰, pour un coût total de 310 millions USD (plus de 155 milliards FCFA) cible 1,2 millions de personnes (soit 41% des personnes vulnérables) prioritaires réparties ainsi qu'il suit :

-Extrême-nord, 55% des besoins humanitaires du pays, destiné à couvrir les besoins humanitaires d'urgence de 199 000 personnes déplacées internes, 36 000 retournés, 86 400 réfugiés nigériens, 240 500 populations hôtes ;

⁸ OCHA, Cameroun : Plan de réponse humanitaire, janvier-décembre 2016. p.5.

⁹ **Chiffres fournis par Najat Rochdi**, coordonnatrice résidente et humanitaire au Cameroun.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

- Adamaoua, 18% des besoins humanitaires du pays, destiné à couvrir les besoins humanitaires de 71 500 réfugiés centrafricains, 55 300 populations hôtes et 372 000 autres populations vulnérables ;
- Nord, 14% des besoins humanitaire du pays, destiné à couvrir les besoins humanitaires de 7 100 réfugiés centrafricains, 17 700 populations hôtes et 365 200 autres personnes vulnérables ;
- Est, 13% des besoins humanitaires du pays, destiné à couvrir les besoins humanitaires de 180 500 réfugiés centrafricains, 135 600 populations hôtes et 61 000 populations vulnérables.

Bien que l’alerte ait été sonnée depuis plusieurs années, on note, à l’opposé, une mobilisation incomplète des ONG locales, comparativement à celles étrangères. En effet, en novembre 2015, le Bureau de coordination des affaires humanitaires (OCHA) a recensé la présence de 16 ONG internationales, 9 agences des Nations unies, 6 ONG camerounaises, 2 organisations internationales, 4 départements ministériels, 4 organisations relevant de la Croix rouge internationale. Ainsi, le choix des régions de l’Extrême nord, du Nord, de l’Adamaoua et de l’Est, comme terrain d’étude s’explique, au regard des données plus haut citées, par : la triple crise humanitaire qui affecte le Cameroun depuis 2013 et la multitude des ONG camerounaises qui y interagissent. À cette situation humanitaire déliquescence s’ajoute la crise dite anglophone, d’essence sécessionniste, avec un volet armé dévastateur.

II-Le plan d’assistance humanitaire d’urgence : articulations, exécution, innovations et efficience

A-Le contexte et les articulations

Au bénéfice de la libéralisation politique et syndicale du début de la décennie 1990, de multiples associations et groupes de pression avaient été créés dans les régions anglophones du pays. Plus agressifs, le *Free West Cameroon Movement*

(FWCM) et l'*Ambazonia Movement* de Fon Gorji Dinka prônaient la sécession. Plus modéré, le *Cameroon Anglophone Movement* (CAM) devenu *All Anglophone Conference* (AAC) revendiquait le retour à l'État fédéral. Il s'agit en réalité de deux tendances alternatives qui s'affrontaient, à intervalles réguliers. La première tendance, minimaliste, revendique le retour au fédéralisme initial. La deuxième tendance, maximaliste, autrement baptisée « Option Zéro » revendiquait la sécession. Réunis à Buea le 09 février 1994, les membres du comité exécutif national du CAM amendaient définitivement l'Initiative de paix de Buea (IPB)¹¹, document qui devait être soumis à la seconde conférence anglophone (AAC II)¹², tenue du 29 avril au 02 mai 1994 à Bamenda¹³.

Les événements en cours au Cameroun, autrement appelés crise anglophone, nés des revendications corporatistes (des avocats et enseignants) des Anglophones de novembre 2016, sont sans doute le prolongement d'une insatisfaction longtemps révélée et ayant couvé pendant de longues décennies sous

¹¹ L'Initiative de Paix de Buea se proposait de négocier avec la République du Cameroun, un calendrier de retrait des fonctionnaires originaires du *Southern Cameroons* des zones francophones et vice-versa. Il suggérait également le retrait des forces armées de la République du Cameroun du territoire du *Southern Cameroons* et le rapatriement des citoyens du *Southern Cameroons* en service dans les forces armées de la République du Cameroun. En outre, l'opération « Exodus to *Southern Cameroons* » mise sur pied avait pour finalité d'effectuer dans de brefs délais, le rapatriement de tous les Anglophones au *Southern Cameroons*. Ce dernier acte a été symboliquement matérialisé en juin 1995 par la traversée à pied, du pont sur le Mounjo par John Ngu Foncha originaire du Cameroun occidental anglophone, fondateur du parti politique intitulé Kamerun National Democratic Party -KNDP-, premier ministre du Cameroun occidental et vice-président de la République Unie du Cameroun de 1961 à 1970, signataire de l'accord de Fombarc portant sur la Réunification des deux parties du pays) et Salomon Tandeng Muna (homme politique du Cameroun occidental, ancien premier ministre, ancien vice-président de la République Unie du Cameroun, de 1970 à 1972, président de l'Assemblée nationale du Cameroun jusqu'à sa mort en 1991). Lire *The Star Headlines*, Vol.4, n° 23, Friday, July 7, 1995. pp 19-20 ; *Le Messenger*, n° 445, 3 juillet 1995. p.4.

¹² Louis-Marie NKOUM-ME-NTSENY. Dynamique de positionnement anglophone et libéralisation politique au Cameroun : de l'identité à l'identification. *Polis*, Volume spécial, février 1996. p.87.

¹³ William GAM NKWI. The Anglophone Problem in Victor Julius NGOH (Ed.). *Cameroon. From Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972. A Critical Study*. Limbé: Design House, 2004. pp.200-201.

l'entretien de l'élite politique anglophone. Aussi, la gouvernance politique, empreinte de clientélisme et médiocratie, est-elle au cœur de cette conjoncture sociale qui a mué en revendications politiques. Quatre catégories d'acteurs, idéologiquement radicaux, assurent l'entretien de cette crise identitaire et politique depuis trois ans : les partisans du *statu quo* incarnés par les détenteurs du pouvoir politique de Yaoundé et s'arc-boutant sur la répression légitime ; les anglo-négationnistes (qui récusent une prétendue identité anglophone) ; les fédéralistes (anglophones) et les sécessionnistes (anglophones).

La crise anglophone en cours révèle au moins trois choses : les limites de la prise en compte institutionnelle d'une revendication historique de la communautaire anglophone du Cameroun ; la segmentation récusable du pouvoir entre la minorité gouvernante et la majorité gouvernée et les tergiversations à implémenter le transfert progressif des segments de pouvoir du centre vers la périphérie à travers la décentralisation, pourtant inscrite dans la Constitution du 18 janvier 1996, mais trop lente dans sa mise en œuvre.

Au demeurant, les réponses gouvernementales originellement apportées aux revendications corporatistes ont vite mué, faute d'un dialogue formel, en une crise sociopolitique multi-facette. Malgré quelques gestes d'apaisement (arrêt des poursuites contre certaines sécessionnistes ou affidés et libération d'autres) consentis par les autorités gouvernementales, la situation s'est métastasée par l'immixtion des myriades de groupes armés, acclamés par une diaspora identitaire incisive ; d'où le cirque permanent de la violence qui révèle chaque jour, des seuils de cruauté sans précédent. Ainsi, un premier bilan non exhaustif établi entre janvier 2017 et juin 2018 par les autorités gouvernementales fait état de : 120 écoles incendiées ; 123 attaques ayant fait 84 morts (dont 32 militaires,

42 gendarmes, 07 policiers, 02 gardiens de prison et 01 éco-garde) ; 74 994 personnes déplacées internes (PDI) dont 66 262 dans la Région du Sud-ouest et 8 732 dans la région du Nord-ouest. En avril 2019, *International Crisis Group* tirait la sonnette d'alarme à travers un bilan plus dramatique : 1 850 personnes depuis septembre 2017 ; plus de 170 villages détruits ; 530 000 déplacés internes et 35 000 réfugiés au Nigéria¹⁴.

Ce bilan sus, en inaugurant le paroxysme de la troisième crise humanitaire connue au Cameroun, l'une des plus complexes, a accru les besoins humanitaires. Le Plan de réponse humanitaire du Cameroun (2017-2020) élaboré en janvier 2018 par OCHA révèle, mise à part les effets induits de la crise anglophone, une situation alarmante. En effet, 3,3 millions de personnes avaient besoin d'une assistance humanitaire, 2,3 millions de personnes étaient en insécurité alimentaire et plus de 150 000 garçons et filles souffraient de malnutrition dont 44 700 sous sa forme sévère. Le Plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence dans les régions du Nord-ouest et Sud-ouest (2018-2019), décidé par le chef de l'État du Cameroun le 21 juin 2018, est un programme se voulant robuste, justifié par d'indicibles crimes et exactions commis dans les régions du Nord-ouest et du Sud-ouest et le drame humanitaire vécu par les populations civiles. Il en fallait, au regard des atteintes au droit à l'éducation, des atteintes aux activités économiques, des attaques contre les membres des forces de défense et de sécurité, des attaques contre les autorités administratives et traditionnelles ; des cas révélés de violation des droits de l'homme par les forces armées camerounaises et les groupes séparatistes¹⁵ ; du fréquent

¹⁴ *International Crisis Group*. Crise anglophone au Cameroun : comment arriver aux pourparlers. *Rapport Afrique*, n°272, 2 mai 2019, p.1.

¹⁵ Dans un rapport intitulé « A turn for the worse : Violence and human rights violations in anglophone Cameroon » et datant du 11 juin 2018, Amnesty International dénonçait des cas flagrants de violation des droits de l'homme par les forces de défense et de sécurité et les groupes séparatistes. De même, en juillet 2018, le Haut-commissariat des Nations Unies aux droits de l'homme s'était dit fortement préoccupé par les rapports sur de graves violations des droits de

enrôlement des enfants par les groupes armés, de l'incitation à la violence à travers les réseaux sociaux, des exactions multiples des sécessionnistes contre les populations, etc.¹⁶

B-L'exécution, les innovations et l'efficience en contexte de crise humanitaire

Le plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence s'est d'abord préoccupé d'identifier la proportion numérique et les zones d'établissement des personnes déplacées internes, réparties dans six départements (Fako, Kupe-Manenguba, Lebialem, Manyu, Mémé et Ndian) de la région du Sud-ouest et dans deux départements (Boyo et Momo) de la région du Nord-ouest. Quant aux 21 291 réfugiés recensés au Nigéria par le *HCR* au 8 mai 2018, ils étaient localisés dans les États de la Benue (soit 3525), d'Akwa-Ibom (soit 83), de Taraba (soit 680) et de la Cross-River (soit 17 003).¹⁷

Tel qu'il a été conçu, ce Plan visait cinq objectifs spécifiques : rétablir un cadre de vie propice à l'épanouissement et au développement des communautés affectées par la situation sociopolitique dans les régions du Nord-ouest et du Sud-ouest ; apporter une assistance humanitaire d'urgence aux populations en détresse ; assurer la réinsertion socioéconomique des

l'homme au Cameroun. Le 6 mai 2019, l'ONG Human Rights Watch a publié un rapport dénonçant des cas de violation des droits de l'homme (détention au secret, disparitions forcées, torture et mauvais traitements dont seraient coupables les forces de défense et de sécurité ; abus et assassinats commis par les séparatistes anglophones, etc.) dans le cadre de la lutte contre les séparatistes anglophones.

¹⁶ Le 4 juin 2019, neuf organisations de défense des droits humains (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Centre mondial pour la responsabilité de protéger, Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture, Comité pour la protection des journalistes (CPJ), Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme Cameroun (NDH-Cameroun), l'Organisation mondiale contre la torture (OMCT), Presbyterian Church (USA) et, le Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale) avait adressé une lettre ouverte au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, l'invitant à mener une « action rapide » dans le Cameroun anglophone, au regard de la détérioration de la situation humanitaire et des violations des droits humains.

¹⁷ Plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence dans les régions du Nord-ouest et Sud-ouest (2018-2019), p.12.

populations affectées ; promouvoir la cohésion sociale et le vivre ensemble et réhabiliter les infrastructures détruites. Compte tenu de la complexité de la situation et de la nécessité d'une prise en charge efficiente, cinq domaines avaient été priorisés comme susceptibles de garantir une meilleure résilience. Ainsi, dans le domaine de la santé, le Plan d'assistance humanitaire envisageait la réhabilitation des centres de santé détruits ou abandonnés, suivie d'une sensibilisation accrue pour réduire le risque des épidémies et des maladies hydriques. Dans le domaine de l'éducation, le Plan entendait réhabiliter les écoles détruites et assurer la sécurité des enseignants et des élèves pour une reprise optimale des enseignements dans lesdites écoles. Dans le domaine agro-pastoral, il était question de relancer les activités génératrices de revenus des populations par l'appui en intrants agricoles et en cheptel. Dans le domaine psychosocial, l'accent était mis dans la fourniture d'abris en urgence et la reconstruction des logements détruits. Aussi, était-il question d'une assistance psychosociale à apporter aux victimes, de la reconstitution des documents d'état civil perdus ou détruits, de lutter contre « les violences basées sur le genre, les mariages et grossesses précoces, le travail des enfants, la consommation de drogue, l'enrôlement des jeunes dans les groupes armés »¹⁸.

La mise en œuvre du Plan nécessitait deux catégories d'intervenants : les intervenants institutionnels et les autres intervenants. Pour un fonctionnement efficient envisagé, il avait été créé un comité *ad hoc*, placé sous l'autorité du ministre de l'administration territoriale, assisté du ministre des relations extérieures (institutions internationales, agences humanitaires, ONG, société civile, etc.). Dans son articulation et ses aspects innovants (évaluation quantifiable et chiffrée), le Plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence nécessitait pour sa mise en œuvre un budget de 12 716 500 000 FCFA (environ 22 900 918

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.15.

USD), escompté de l'État, de la solidarité nationale par des levées de fonds et des partenaires internationaux. De ce montant, 10 191 000 000 FCFA (environ 18 352 790 USD), étaient attendus pour couvrir, dans l'urgence, les actions à mener dans les trois mois qui suivaient. À l'observation et à l'analyse, ce Plan a charrié des espoirs certes, mais n'a pas accompli la mission cardinale qui lui était assignée. Les levées de fonds par solidarité nationale, ethno-régionalisées ou régiono-communautarisées, évanescences, n'ont pas pu déconstruire les clivages tribaux et communautaristes qui renchérisent la satellisation sociale du pays. Quelques faits d'âme surmédiatisés du comité *ad hoc* n'occultent malheureusement pas l'acuité du drame humanitaire qui se complexifie chaque jour. Si le plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence est opportunément salué, il est toutefois évident qu'il a manqué de rigidité institutionnelle et de préalables allégeant : l'amnistie sous la forme convenable en fonction des données et du contexte ; un dialogue inclusif sur les modulations institutionnelles possibles ; un nouveau format sécuritaire global et inclusif priorisant la défense populaire, gage d'un nouveau pacte de confiance du binôme armée-nation/armée-peuple. L'absence de ces préalables non exhaustifs s'est incrustée au timing délicat pour rendre ce plan peu porteur d'espoir de sortie de crise, en dépit des actions appréciables menées par le gouvernement¹⁹.

III-Le Cameroun face aux défis pluriels : entre politiques nationales d'action sociale, urgence humanitaire et quête de stabilité sociopolitique

A- L'inconnu économique et politique

¹⁹ Il peut s'agir, dans ce sillage, de la Commission nationale pour la promotion du bilinguisme et du multiculturalisme, créée par décret présidentiel n° 2017/013 du janvier 2017 ou du Grand dialogue national tenu à Yaoundé du 30 septembre au 2 octobre 2019.

Le Cameroun est à la croisée des chemins. Car, aux multiples crises humanitaires auxquelles il fait face depuis 2013, s'ajoute le programme d'ajustement destiné à favoriser une relance « vertueuse et durable » de son économie, engagé depuis décembre 2016 avec le Fonds monétaire international (FMI). En effet, le Cameroun présente des résultats médiocres en terme de développement humain. Selon Indice de développement humain (IDH) en 2018, le Cameroun était classé au 21^e rang africain et 151^e rang mondial.²⁰ Avec un taux de pauvreté estimé à 37,5 % en 2014, le Cameroun fait face à un sous-emploi de la main d'œuvre de 50 % et un taux de pauvreté de 28,7 % en 2020²¹. Selon une évaluation réalisée en novembre 2018 par la Banque mondiale, le Cameroun courrait un risque très élevé de surendettement. Ces faiblesses de l'économie nationale avaient pourtant fait l'objet des objectifs imprescriptibles contenus dans le Document de stratégie pour la croissance et l'emploi (DSCE), vision programmatique qui visait, pour 2010-2020, de : porter la croissance à 5,5% en moyenne annuelle dans la période 2010-2020 ; ramener le sous-emploi de 75,8% à moins de 50% en 2020 avec la création de dizaines de milliers d'emplois formels par an dans les dix prochaines années ; et ramener le taux de pauvreté monétaire de 39,9% en 2007 à 28,7% en 2020²². Au total, c'est dans un tel contexte que la Covid-19 est apparue au Cameroun. Plusieurs mois après, les conséquences sociales et économiques des mesures de riposte sanitaire sont désastreuses sur une économie pourtant fragile : inflation des produits de grande consommation ; endettement et dépendance à l'égard des ménages mieux nantis ; risques de déscolarisation ; affects psychologiques, etc. Tout ceci, selon le PNUD, pourrait faire

²⁰ PNUD. Indices et indicateurs de développement humain 2018. Mise à jour statistique. 2018. p. 24.

²¹ BAD. Perspectives économiques au Cameroun.

²² Document de stratégie pour la croissance et l'emploi (DSCE).

perdre 1,2 à 2 points de croissance par rapport aux prévisions de l'année en cours.

En même temps, l'avenir politique du pays est de plus en plus perturbé par la crise post-électorale issue de la présidentielle du 7 octobre 2018. Car, outre la contestation des résultats de ce scrutin par Maurice Kamto, opposant et classé en deuxième position par le Conseil constitutionnel, la classe politique camerounaise dénonce régulièrement l'absence du consensus minimale autour du code électoral. C'est pourquoi il est de plus en plus admis de penser que des entrepreneurs politiques de tous les bords, s'arcbutent sur les imperfections de l'arsenal juridique actuel pour instrumentaliser la crise anglophone. Tout compte fait, l'analyse des crises au Cameroun permet de mettre en relief les thèmes structurants susceptibles de cristalliser les plus fortes tensions entre les gouvernants et la population. Il s'agit de l'amélioration de la gouvernance et de la cherté de la vie pré/post-Covid-19, de l'équité dans le jeu démocratique, etc.

B- L'inconnu social et humanitaire

Les incursions sporadiques de Boko Haram dans la région de l'Extrême-nord et des rebelles centrafricains dans la région de l'Est-Cameroun ainsi que l'escalade de violence et les exactions d'ampleur dans les régions anglophones, font planer une incertitude sur le Cameroun. Car, le nombre de réfugiés et déplacés internes s'est accru, générant par la même occasion une augmentation irréversible des besoins humanitaires. De même, la vulnérabilité de ceux-ci et des populations hôtes constitue un enjeu humanitaire réel. Toutefois, les réponses humanitaires apportées jusqu'ici -par le gouvernement et les agences humanitaires- paraissent mal articulées et donc peu efficaces. C'est fort de cela que le Plan d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence dans les régions du Nord-ouest et du Sud-ouest ne paraît pas

suffisamment robuste pour juguler la crise en cours. Il s'agit d'un défi bien plus grand que seul le gouvernement ne peut relever. La crise anglophone, « la plus négligée au monde »²³, mérite ainsi une plus grande attention des agences humanitaires internationales.

Somme toute, le territoire national semble faire l'objet de plusieurs usages politiques du fait de l'émergence du « problème anglophone » ou de la crise anglophone. Le retour des attaques perpétrées par les adeptes de Boko Haram ou le rapt des rebelles centrafricains en territoire camerounais demeurent la cause primordiale des déplacements de population. Aussi, le timide retour des populations déplacées dans les régions anglophones et l'existence des exactions dont seraient responsables à la fois les groupes armés sécessionnistes et quelques soldats de l'armée camerounaise, constituent-ils un obstacle majeur au retour imminent de la paix ; d'où l'appel à une mobilisation accrue des agences humanitaires au Cameroun.

Conclusion

Somme toute, le territoire national semble faire l'objet de plusieurs usages politiques du fait de l'émergence du « problème anglophone » ou crise anglophone. L'actuelle crise politique sous fond de revendication identitaire qui secoue le Cameroun traduit l'inachèvement du processus postcolonial d'appropriation de l'histoire. L'instrumentalisation des différences linguistiques et culturelles est très poussée au Cameroun et constitue une source de tension et de conflit permanent. Dès lors, se pose le problème du vivre ensemble qui exige une culture citoyenne plus ancrée, et l'élaboration d'un ensemble de valeurs et principes partagés : la solidarité (lien

²³ Ces propos sont de Nigel Tricks, directeur régional du Conseil norvégien pour les réfugiés (CNR) pour l'Afrique de l'Est et le Yémen, lors d'une conférence de presse sur la situation du Soudan du Sud à Nairobi le 7 juin 2017.

d'engagement et de dépendance réciproques entre personnes, ainsi tenues à l'endroit des autres) ; la tolérance (respect de l'autre et de ses convictions) ; la justice (principe juridique et moral fondamental en vertu duquel les actions humaines doivent être sanctionnées positivement ou négativement en fonction de leur mérite au regard du droit et de la morale. Ceci implique la justice sociale, l'égalité des chances, l'équité, l'éthique) ; la responsabilité (individuelle et collective) qui suppose le devoir de répondre de ses actes. D'une manière générale la nécessité de reformuler la gestion du territoire au Cameroun en passant de « l'État-Nation » à « l'État-Espace » s'avère urgente²⁴. Sans ces matrices qui auraient pu constituer des préalables, le plan (gouvernemental) d'assistance humanitaire d'urgence ne parviendra ni à garantir durablement les enjeux humanitaires ni à assurer efficacement la stabilité dans les régions anglophones du Cameroun.

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²⁴ Lire pour complément Alphonse Zozime TAMEKAMTA. Cohabitation du binôme français-anglais au Cameroun : contexture et conjecture de la gouvernance linguistique in Daniel ABWA (sous la direction). *Bilinguisme, Multiculturalisme et Vivre-ensemble : une réflexion des universitaires camerounais*. Yaoundé, Proximité, octobre 2019. pp.25-37.

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Enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire : entre représentations des enseignants et performances des apprenants de la classe de 4^{ème} en production écrite

Christiane Mouto Betoko Bene Nkouma
Faculté des sciences de l'éducation
Université de Yaoundé I

Email : mouto.bene@univ-yaounde1.cm

&

Elvire Lemogo Momo
Faculté des sciences de l'éducation
Université de Yaoundé I

Email : lemogomomoelvire@gmail.com

Résumé

Le présent article vise à montrer l'impact des représentations des enseignants au sujet de la grammaire sur le développement de la compétence écrite des apprenants du premier cycle au Cameroun. Malgré l'évolution des méthodologies et approches de l'enseignement du français, les apprenants ont toujours des mauvaises performances en production écrite. Ces résultats qui sont de plus en plus préoccupants trouvent leur origine dans les perceptions des enseignants de français et par ricochet dans leurs pratiques didactiques. Ainsi, nous souhaitons questionner ces pratiques afin d'en analyser l'influence sur les performances des

apprenants de la classe de 4^{ème} en expression écrite. Cette démarche est nécessaire à la réflexion sur des pratiques enseignantes en conformité avec les nouvelles exigences de l'enseignement du français à l'ère de l'APC/ESV au Cameroun.

Mots-clés : représentations ; grammaire ; performances ; pratiques didactiques ; compétence écrite.

Introduction

Au Cameroun, l'enseignement secondaire est face à de nombreux enjeux. D'après la Loi d'orientation de l'éducation (1998) et le Document de Stratégie pour la Croissance et l'Emploi – DSCE (2009), l'éducation au Cameroun vise à « former dans la perspective d'un Cameroun émergent en 2035 des citoyens camerounais maîtrisant les deux langues officielles (français et anglais), enracinés dans leurs cultures et ouverts au monde en quête d'un développement durable et dominé par les sciences et les techniques de la communication ». Dans cette optique, il est donc important d'améliorer l'enseignement-apprentissage des langues officielles, notamment le français, à travers un enseignement de qualité et des choix méthodologiques adéquats. En effet, pour une communication efficace à l'écrit comme à l'oral, les règles de grammaire doivent être respectées, car « la maîtrise des règles de fonctionnement de la grammaire est utile pour exprimer les besoins de la vie courante » (MINESEC/IGE, 2014). Or, la plupart des enseignants de français ont encore une vision traditionnelle de la grammaire. Par conséquent, leurs cours de grammaire s'inscrivent très souvent dans la méthodologie traditionnelle, limitant ainsi le réinvestissement des acquis en situation de vie réelle. D'où les lacunes observées chez les apprenants de la classe de 4^{ème} en production écrite. Dès lors, nous nous posons la question à savoir : Comment les représentations des enseignants au sujet de l'enseignement-apprentissage de la

grammaire influencent-elles le développement de la compétence écrite des apprenants de la classe de 4^{ème} ? Pour répondre à cette question, nous avons émis l'hypothèse selon laquelle les représentations des enseignants au sujet de l'enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire orientent leurs pratiques didactiques, et par ricochet influencent le développement de la compétence écrite des apprenants. Ainsi, ce travail se donne pour objectif de mesurer l'impact des opinions des enseignants sur leurs méthodes d'enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire d'une part, et sur le développement de la compétence écrite des apprenants d'autre part. Nous allons recourir à la théorie des situations didactiques de Brousseau qui offre un cadre pour évaluer les pratiques pédagogiques en fonction de leur capacité à favoriser l'apprentissage. Grâce à cette théorie, nous allons évaluer les pratiques didactiques en explorant comment les représentations des enseignants façonnent leurs démarches méthodologiques qui influencent inéluctablement les performances des apprenants en expression écrite.

1. Cadrage théorique

Les concepts clés de cette étude revêtent de nombreuses acceptions selon les différents domaines disciplinaires. Nous nous proposons de restreindre leur présentation au domaine de la didactique des langues-cultures en général et de la didactique du français en particulier.

Les définitions du concept de représentations, dans le domaine de la didactique des langues-cultures, semblent être inspirées des travaux de sociologues tels Durkheim (1987) dont l'idée de « représentations collectives » renvoie à des croyances et des attitudes partagées par un groupe social. Ainsi Perron (2018) distingue deux types de représentations : les représentations objectives et les représentations subjectives. Les premières sont basées sur des faits et observations partagées.

Elles sont donc indépendantes des expériences ou des attitudes personnelles des individus. Elles créent une compréhension commune entre individus et offrent un cadre objectif pour analyser les problèmes. Dans cette logique, les conceptions de la grammaire peuvent changer et évoluer selon les méthodes²⁵ et approches utilisées : « Ainsi chaque méthode d'apprentissage a sa propre représentation de la grammaire et celle-ci change au fil des ans et selon les approches » (Perron, 2018, p.39). Pour ce qui est des représentations subjectives, elles sont influencées par les expériences, les croyances les valeurs et attitudes personnelles d'un individu. Elles sont souvent uniques et peuvent évoluer au fur et à mesure que les individus acquièrent de nouvelles expériences. Selon Perron (2018, p.42), elles renvoient aux représentations affectives et intellectuelles. Pour cet auteur, les représentations de la grammaire ont un lien significatif avec la classe linguistique de la langue maternelle de l'individu (enseignant). Elles découlent donc de son expérience personnelle et de ses croyances. Dans la même logique, Riquois (2010) considère les représentations comme étant des constructions mentales et culturelles qui façonnent les pratiques didactiques des enseignants. Aussi, Wang (2015) décrit les représentations comme des images mentales et des conceptions que les individus ont à propos de divers aspects de l'enseignement des langues. Ces perceptions qu'ont les enseignants de leurs pratiques pédagogiques n'est pas sans influence sur leur façon d'aborder la formation des élèves d'une part et leurs choix pédagogiques d'autre part.

D'après Moussouri (2010), les contextes d'apprentissage et les publics d'apprenants peuvent amener les enseignants à douter régulièrement de l'efficacité de leurs pratiques. Dès lors,

²⁵ « Méthodes » renvoient ici aux manuels de Français langue étrangère (FLE).

il recommande de prendre en compte ces représentations en les mettant en discours dans le cadre d'une formation tout au long de la vie. La prise de conscience de leurs pratiques réelles ainsi que l'identification des difficultés rencontrées devraient amener les enseignants à s'améliorer. Pour Bechiri (2018), l'enseignement de la grammaire semble faillir à sa mission, car les enseignants sont influencés par l'approche traditionnelle. Raison pour laquelle ils font encore l'enseignement magistral, en lieu et place d'une approche au service du développement des compétences. Par ailleurs, Avezard-Roger et Corteel (2020) font le constat selon lequel enseignants et apprenants éprouvent depuis longtemps un désamour pour la grammaire. Selon ces auteurs, les enseignants éprouvent des difficultés à enseigner cette matière du fait qu'ils se limitent aux connaissances théoriques et ont du mal à bâtir de véritables contenus liés à cette discipline. Pour ce qui des élèves, la grammaire est sans intérêt, inutile, parce que dépourvue de finalité. Ainsi, l'enseignement de la grammaire demeure un problème, car bien loin d'être un apprentissage fonctionnel, il demeure mécanique. Or, les nouvelles exigences de l'enseignement des langues font de la grammaire un outil indispensable au développement de la compétence de communication.

Le concept de compétence est largement utilisé aujourd'hui, aussi bien dans les activités de la vie quotidienne que dans le cadre des activités professionnelles. En didactique des langues-cultures, la compétence de communication repose sur trois principales composantes qui relèvent des domaines de la linguistique, de la sociolinguistique et de la pragmatique (Rosen et Reinhardt, 2010). Selon Tagliante (1995, p.36), « la composante linguistique [...] comprend les quatre aptitudes linguistiques de compréhension et expression orales et écrites. [...] Aujourd'hui, on oppose les compétences de réception et les compétences de production ». En effet, la compétence écrite et

la compétence orale sont les deux sous-compétences de la compétence de communication. Dans le cadre de cette étude, nous nous intéresserons uniquement au volet écrit de cette compétence.

La mise en œuvre de la compétence écrite nécessite « [...] la connaissance des éléments lexicaux, des règles de morphologie, de syntaxe, de grammaire sémantique » (Tagliante). La compétence écrite peut donc être définie comme la capacité à communiquer aisément par écrit. Malheureusement, de nombreux apprenants éprouvent des difficultés avec l'activité de production écrite comme l'atteste les travaux de Nkouété (2016). Ce dernier démontre que les mauvaises performances des apprenants du premier cycle en expression écrite sont dues aux lacunes du système enseignement-évaluation. Pour lui, le manque de qualification professionnelle des enseignants et la démotivation des apprenants sont à l'origine des mauvaises notes observées en expression écrite. Une fois de plus, les pratiques enseignantes influencent les résultats des élèves. Il s'avère donc indispensable de questionner les représentations de ces enseignants au sujet de la grammaire avant de proposer un dispositif en droite ligne avec les exigences des nouveaux programmes qui s'appuient sur l'approche par compétences (APC).

2. Méthodologie

Cette recherche se veut descriptive car elle s'attèle à l'analyse des déclarations des enseignants dans l'optique de dégager les caractéristiques de leurs conceptions et leur impact sur les performances des apprenants. Ainsi, nous avons mené une enquête de terrain au lycée bilingue de Yaoundé, auprès des publics enseignants et apprenants de français de la classe de quatrième. Grâce à la méthode d'échantillonnage raisonné, nous avons constitué un échantillon de 6 enseignants de français intervenant en classe de 4^{ème}, et de 94 élèves du même niveau

d'études. Pour ce qui est des enseignants, les critères de choix étaient les suivants :

- être enseignant permanent de français au lycée bilingue de Yaoundé ;
- avoir au moins dix ans d'expérience professionnelle car les enseignants ayant une certaine ancienneté ont plus de chance d'avoir fait l'expérience d'au moins deux approches méthodologiques ;
- intervenir dans les classes du premier cycle.

Quant à la sélection des apprenants, elle reposait sur les deux critères ci-après :

- être régulièrement inscrit au lycée bilingue de Yaoundé ;
- être élève en classe de quatrième (étant donné que la grammaire et l'expression écrite s'enseignent au premier cycle).

Tableau 1 : caractéristiques des enseignants

	<i>Sexe</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Ancienneté</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Classes tenues</i>
<i>Enseignant 1</i>	Masculin	PLEG	26 Ans	51 Ans	4 ^e Bil
<i>Enseignant 2</i>	Féminin	PLEG	11 Ans	39 Ans	4 ^e esp2
<i>Enseignant 3</i>	Féminin	PLEG	12 Ans	41 Ans	4 ^e all1
<i>Enseignant 4</i>	Féminin	PLEG	15 Ans	43 Ans	4 ^e esp1
<i>Enseignant 5</i>	Masculin	PLEG	21 Ans	49 Ans	4 ^e Ara-Ita
<i>Enseignant 6</i>	Féminin	PLEG	19 Ans	50 Ans	4 ^e all2

Tableau : Répartition des apprenants

<i>Classes tenues</i>	<i>4e All</i>	<i>4 e Bil</i>
<i>FILLES</i>	29	22
<i>GARÇONS</i>	25	18
<i>TOTAL</i>	54	40

Il s'agit des apprenants des deux salles de classe dans lesquelles nous avons pu collecter des données pendant notre enquête de terrain. Cette collecte s'est faite par le biais d'un questionnaire soumis aux enseignants. Les apprenants ont passé un test. Le questionnaire des enseignants comporte deux parties. La première partie porte sur l'identification de l'enquêté. Ici, plusieurs éléments sont recherchés, notamment l'établissement, le grade, la matière enseignée, les classes tenues et l'ancienneté. La deuxième partie est constituée de neuf questions, ouvertes et fermées, au sujet des représentations vis-à-vis de la grammaire. Quant au test soumis aux apprenants, il portait sur un sujet d'expression écrite (argumentation). L'apprenant devait rédiger un devoir d'environ trente (30) lignes dans lequel il était appelé à présenter, dans une argumentation structurée, les causes et les conséquences du chômage ainsi que quelques solutions permettant de favoriser l'insertion socioprofessionnelle des jeunes. Pour analyser les données collectées, nous avons recouru à l'analyse quantitative pour ce qui est du questionnaire, et à l'analyse qualitative pour ce qui est du test administré aux apprenants.

3. Résultats

Nous allons tout d'abord présenter les différentes représentations des enseignants identifiées au sujet de la grammaire.

3.1. Présentations des différentes représentations des enseignants

<i>Modalités</i>	<i>E1</i>	<i>E2</i>	<i>E3</i>	<i>E4</i>	<i>E5</i>	<i>E6</i>
Stratégies d'enseignement	b, c, g	b, d, e	a, b, c	b, f	a, d	b, d

Objectifs visés par le cours	b, c, e	b, c, d	a, b, c	b, d, e	a, b, c	a, b, c
Vérification de l'atteinte des objectifs	oui	oui	oui	oui	oui	oui
Moyen de vérification de l'atteinte	c	a	b	c	c	c
Étapes du cours de grammaire	d	c	b	d	a	b
Mise en œuvre effective des étapes	oui	oui	oui	oui	oui	oui
Évaluation des notions de grammaire	a, b, c	a, b, c	a, b, c	a, b, c, d	a, b, c, d	a, b, c, d
Pratique de remédiation	a	a	a	a	a	a
Appréciation globale des notes de leurs apprenants en expression écrite	Moyennes	Mauvaises	Mauvaises	Moyennes	Moyennes	Mauvaises

Le détail des différentes questions posées aux enseignants se trouve dans le questionnaire fourni en annexes. Il ressort de ce tableau qu'aucun enseignant ne recourt à une démarche unique pour enseigner la grammaire. En effet, cinq enseignants sur six (5/6) utilisent la méthode directe qui s'appuie sur des supports de base et des exercices de transformation/substitution d'une part, et la conceptualisation à partir des phrases modèles d'autre part. Trois enseignants sur six (3/6) se servent de la méthode audio-orale qui procède par le biais des exercices structuraux de substitution ou de transformation suite à la mémorisation de la structure. Deux enseignants sur six (2/6) utilisent encore la méthode traditionnelle qui demande que l'on passe par des règles à retenir suivies de quelques explications. Deux autres enseignants (2/6) se servent de l'approche communicative qui procède par des simulations et jeux de rôles ainsi que par la conceptualisation d'éléments grammaticaux à partir des productions des apprenants. Un enseignant sur six (1/6) utilise la méthode audiovisuelle qui recommande que l'on se serve des exercices de réemploi des structures en situation pour enseigner la grammaire. En d'autres termes, les enseignants 1, 2 et 3 utilisent trois méthodes, tandis que les enseignants 4, 5 et 6 utilisent deux méthodes.

Les réponses relatives à la visée de l'enseignement d'une leçon de grammaire font état de ce que tous les enseignants poursuivent de nombreux objectifs dans ce contexte. Ainsi, tous (6/6) pensent que l'enseignement de la grammaire permet d'apprendre à parler correctement la langue. Un nombre important d'enseignants (5/6) souhaitent amener les apprenants à communiquer aisément dans les situations de la vie courante. Pour trois (03) autres enseignants, les leçons de grammaire ont pour but de faciliter la compréhension des textes littéraires. Selon deux (02) enseignants, l'apprentissage de la grammaire amène les apprenants à communiquer aisément. Deux (02)

enseignants également supposent que l'apprentissage de la grammaire permet aux apprenants d'établir un lien entre les savoirs et les situations dans lesquelles ils peuvent agir.

Dans le souci de vérifier l'atteinte de ces objectifs, quatre enseignants (4/6) passent par des exercices de consolidation et des devoirs à faire à la maison. Un enseignant (1/6) procède par des exercices de consolidation faits en classe. De même, un autre (1/6) donne des devoirs à faire à la maison. A la question sur l'évaluation des objectifs escomptés, tous les enseignants (6/6) attestent qu'ils procèdent toujours à la vérification de l'atteinte de ces objectifs.

Les données relatives aux étapes mises en œuvre pendant l'enseignement-apprentissage d'une leçon de grammaire renseignent que plusieurs méthodes sont appliquées. Deux enseignants sur six (2/6) utilisent l'approche communicative, au service de l'APC/ESV, qui part de la conceptualisation des situations de vie pour aboutir à la consolidation. Deux autres (2/6) utilisent la méthode directe qui procède par la présentation et l'observation des formes grammaticales, la proposition des exercices de réflexion, le réemploi de la notion étudiée dans des phrases construites à partir des phrases modèles et la règle. Un enseignant sur six (1/6) procède par la méthode audiovisuelle qui se mène en quatre étapes à savoir : l'exposition de la notion à étudier ; la proposition des exercices de transformation et substitution ; le traitement des exercices et réemploi de la notion dans des phrases construites à partir des phrases modèles puis la généralisation. Un enseignant sur six (1/6) indique qu'il procède par la méthode traditionnelle qui part de la présentation et de l'explication de la règle dans l'optique de sa mémorisation et son application.

À la question relative à la mise en œuvre de ces étapes lors de l'enseignement-apprentissage, tous les enseignants interrogés

ont répondu par l'affirmative. Ainsi, aucun justificatif relevant de l'absence de cette mise en œuvre n'a été fourni.

À la question de savoir comment les notions de grammaire étudiées en classe sont évaluées, tous les 6 enseignants disent qu'ils apprécient le niveau d'acquisition des notions par les apprenants à travers la dictée, l'étude de texte et l'expression écrite. Cependant, quatre enseignants attestent qu'ils évaluent également à travers l'expression orale.

Lorsqu'il s'agit d'apprécier globalement les notes des apprenants à l'issue de l'évaluation en expression écrite, nous constatons que trois enseignants trouvent les notes mauvaises tandis que trois autres les trouvent moyennes.

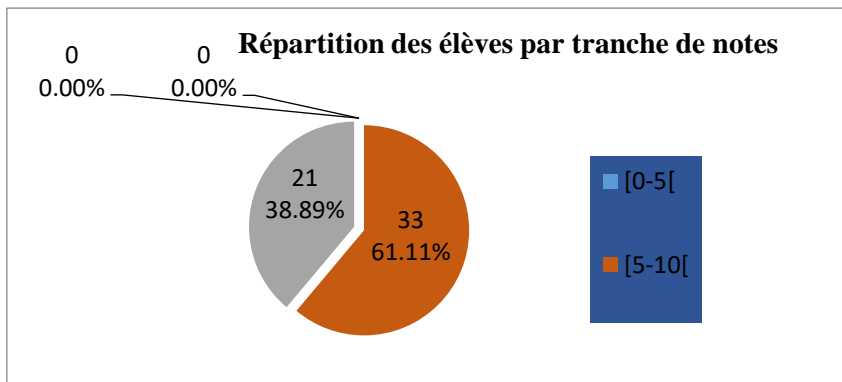
Les résultats des données collectées auprès des enseignants ayant été analysés, il est temps de passer aux résultats obtenus par les apprenants grâce au test qui leur a été soumis.

3.2. Résultats du test de compétence écrite des apprenants

Les apprenants ayant pris part au test proposé sont ceux de la quatrième All2 et de la quatrième Bilingue du lycée bilingue de Yaoundé. Ce test a été effectué sur quatre-vingt-quatorze élèves de 4^e précisément 40 élèves de la 4^e bilingue et 54 élèves de la quatrième All2. Il était question pour chaque apprenant de produire un texte argumentatif sur le sujet indiqué en annexe. L'analyse de ces productions a été effectuée à partir de la grille de correction intégrant les critères ci-après : (1) Pertinence de la production (compréhension du sujet) /6pts ; (2) Organisation des idées (cohérence) /6pts ; (3) Correction de l'expression (langue et style)/6pts ; (4) Originalité /2pts

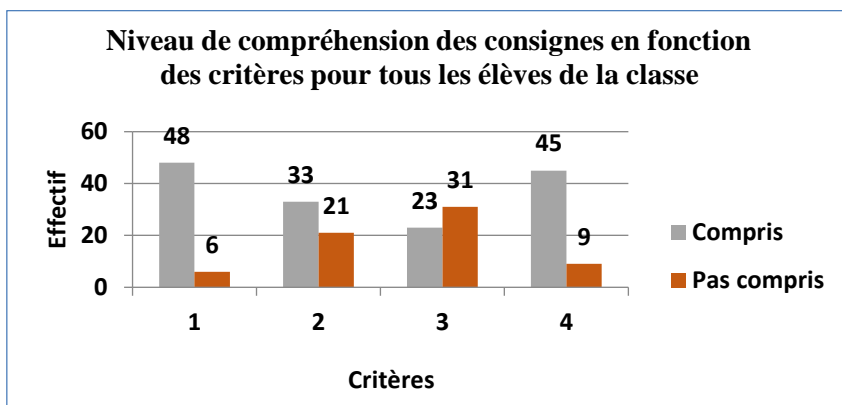
3.2.1. Résultats des apprenants de 4^eAll 2

Graphique 1: Répartition des élèves par tranche de notes



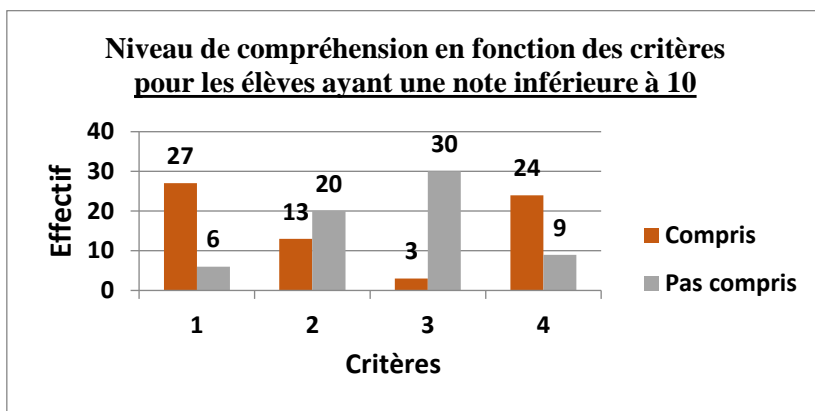
Ce graphique révèle que 21 élèves ont obtenu une moyenne supérieure ou égale à 10/20. En d'autres termes, ces élèves ont obtenu une note comprise entre 10/20 et 12,5/20. Cela fait un pourcentage de 38,8%. Toutefois, nous signalons que toutes ces moyennes correspondent à l'appréciation « en cours d'acquisition » car elles sont comprises entre 10 et 12,5/20. Au même moment, 33 élèves (soit 61,11%) ont obtenu une note inférieure à 10/20. Autrement dit, 33 élèves ne possèdent pas les connaissances nécessaires à la mise en œuvre de la compétence écrite.

Graphique 2: Niveau de compréhension des consignes en fonction des critères pour tous les élèves de la classe



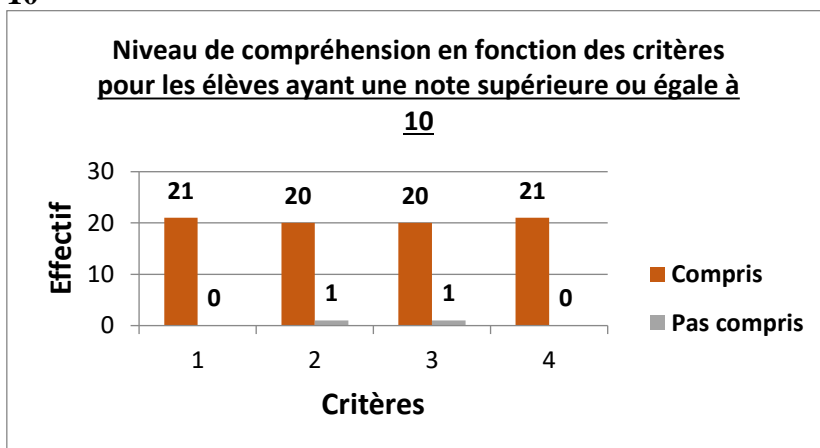
Le graphique ci-dessus présente le niveau de compréhension des consignes en fonction des critères. S'agissant du critère 1 (compréhension du sujet), il apparaît que 48 élèves sur les 54 évalués l'ont assimilé ; soit. En ce qui concerne le critère 2 (organisation des idées/cohérence), l'on observe une compréhension moyenne des apprenants ; soit 33 élèves, contre 21 qui n'ont pas compris la consigne. Pour le critère 3 (langue et style/correction de l'expression), seuls 23/54 élèves ont compris la consigne. Ceci étant, il est important de mentionner qu'au niveau du critère 3, les fautes de grammaire sont récurrentes. Nous avons constaté lors de nos corrections que les apprenants ont du mal à accorder de manière convenable le verbe avec son sujet. Quant au critère 4 (originalité/présentation), 45 élèves (sur les 54 évalués) ont bien assimilé la consigne. Au regard de ce qui précède, le critère 3 est celui ayant été le moins assimilé par les apprenants. Cela suppose que les élèves évalués ont de réelles difficultés en langue et style, donc en grammaire.

Graphique 3: Niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour les élèves ayant une note inférieure à 10



L'analyse des données issues du graphique permet d'identifier les deux critères ayant été les moins assimilés par les apprenants. En effet, si les critères 1 et 4 semblent avoir été assimilés par les élèves évalués (soit 27 élèves ayant compris le critère 1 et 24 élèves ayant compris le critère 4), les critères 2 et 3, à l'opposé, ont posé d'énormes difficultés de compréhension et d'assimilation par les élèves évalués. En effet, 20 élèves (sur les 33 ayant eu une note inférieure à 10/20) n'ont pas compris le critère 2. De même, 30 élèves (sur les 33 ayant eu une note inférieure à 10/20) n'ont pas compris le critère 3 (langue et style/correction de l'expression). En ce qui concerne ce troisième critère, nous avons constaté que les fautes récurrentes concernent les accords et la mauvaise utilisation des connecteurs logiques.

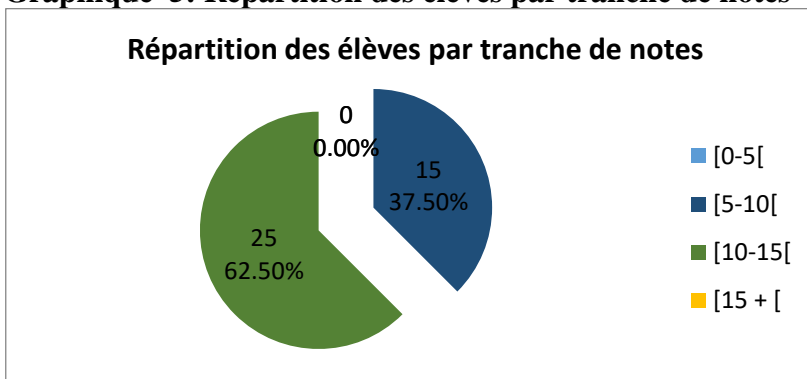
Graphique 4: Niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour les élèves ayant une note supérieure ou égale à 10



À l’observation des données contenues dans le graphique ci-haut, il apparaît que presque tous les élèves ayant obtenu une note supérieure ou égale à 10/20 ont assimilé tous les critères. En effet, tous les élèves évalués et ayant obtenu une note supérieure ou égale à 10, ont tous compris les critères 1 et 4. Pour les critères 2 et 3, un élève (respectivement) n’a pas compris la consigne.

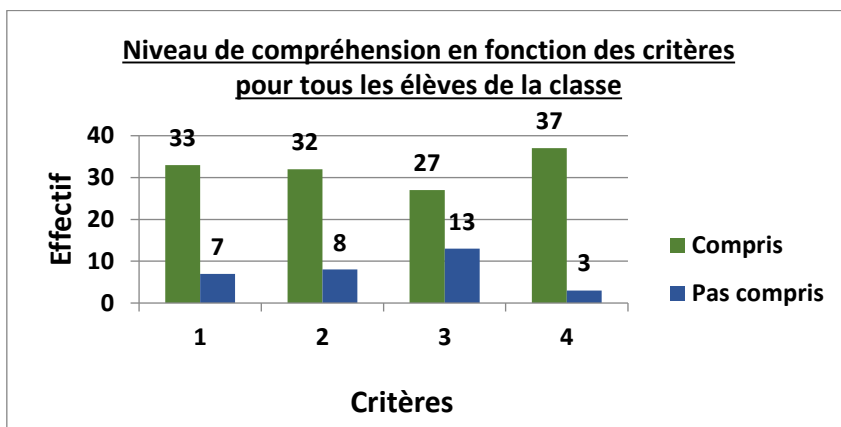
3.2.1. Résultats des apprenants de 4^e Bilingue

Graphique 5: Répartition des élèves par tranche de notes



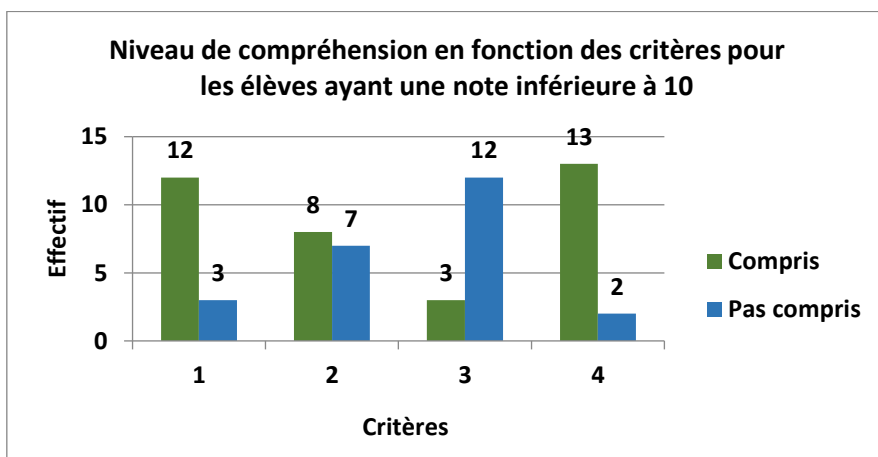
Nous remarquons à partir de ce graphique, que 25 élèves ont obtenu une moyenne supérieure ou égale à 10/20 ; soit 62,5%. De même, 15 élèves ont obtenu une note inférieure à 10/20 (en réalité, entre 05 et 09,5/20) ; soit 37,5%.

Graphique 6: Niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour tous les élèves de la classe



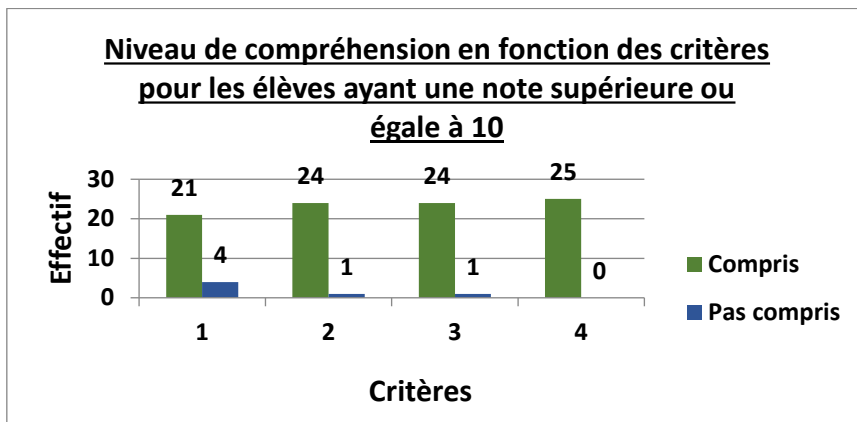
Le graphique ci-dessus, portant sur le niveau de compréhension des consignes en fonction des critères permet de remarquer que, sur 40 élèves évalués, 33 ont assimilé le critère 1. Pour le critère 2, 32 élèves l'ont assimilé, contre 27 élèves pour le critère 3 et 37 élèves pour le critère 4. Il transparaît donc que le critère 3 est celui ayant été le moins assimilé par les élèves évalués.

Graphique 7: Niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour les élèves ayant une note inférieure à 10



Le graphique ci-dessus récapitule le niveau de compréhension du sujet en fonction des critères compris par les élèves ayant obtenu une moyenne inférieure à 10. Il ressort de celui-ci que 12 élèves sur les 15 ayant eu une note inférieure à 10/20 ont compris le sujet ; 8 élèves sur les 15 ont organisé les idées de manière acceptable ; 3 élèves sur 15 s'expriment bien ou de manière passable, tandis que 13 élèves sur 15 présentent des copies lisibles et originales. Force est de constater que le critère 3, notamment la correction de la langue et du style est encore faible chez les apprenants. Ceci justifie sans doute les mauvaises notes en expression écrite.

Graphique 8: Niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour les élèves ayant une note supérieure ou égale à 10



Le graphique ci-dessus laisse paraître le niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour les élèves ayant une note supérieure ou égale à 10. Nous remarquons que 21 élèves sur 25 ont compris le sujet, 24 /25 ont bien organisé leurs idées, 24/25 s'expriment de manière correcte et 25/25 ont présenté une copie lisible et parfois originale.

4. Discussion et interprétation des résultats

4.1. Discussion et interprétation des résultats du questionnaire

Les résultats issus du questionnaire sont sans ambages : la combinaison des anciennes méthodes est peu efficace (voir les résultats du test adressé aux apprenants de la classe de 4^e AII2). Pourtant, une combinaison des méthodes anciennes associées à l'approche communicative est plus efficace en termes de résultats (notes) des apprenants (voir les résultats du test adressé aux apprenants de la classe de 4^e bilingue). Les réponses

fournies au dépouillement du questionnaire permettent d'affirmer que les étapes choisies, pour la conduite d'un cours de grammaire, dépendent de la méthodologie adoptée par l'enseignant. De ceci, on en déduit que l'approche communicative qui est recommandée par les instructions officielles en vigueur, n'est pas appliquée par tous les enseignants. Ainsi, chaque enseignant applique la méthode qui lui sied la mieux ; ce qui trahit sa représentation de l'enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire. Pour les enseignants interrogés, les notes obtenues par les apprenants en expression écrite sont soit mauvaises, soit moyennes. Ceci implique que les notes ne sont ni bonnes ni excellentes. À cet effet, il importe de questionner la méthode d'enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire ou les méthodes d'évaluation des apprenants. S'agissant de la méthode d'enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire, il est impératif d'utiliser l'approche communicative pour une meilleure acquisition de la compétence écrite chez les apprenants.

Dans cette étude, tous les enseignants affirment qu'il existe un lien direct entre la maîtrise des notions de grammaire et les notes d'expression écrite. Autrement dit, la bonne ou mauvaise maîtrise des notions de grammaire peut justifier les bonnes ou mauvaises notes d'expression écrite. Tout comme l'un des répondants, l'on est amené à penser que la grammaire permet d'appréhender l'intelligence du texte et d'exprimer clairement ses pensées. Cela sous-entend que la grammaire joue un rôle important sur le développement de la compétence écrite de l'apprenant.

Les réponses des enseignants permettent de comprendre l'opinion que chacun d'eux se fait de sa propre méthode d'enseignement-apprentissage. En effet, chacun déclare sa méthode efficace et justifie les mauvaises performances des apprenants par d'autres causes (manque d'intérêt de certains

apprenants, déficit de base solide en grammaire, etc.). Au regard de ceci, la plupart des enseignants affirment que la grammaire a une place importante dans le développement de la compétence écrite de l'apprenant dans la mesure où : la communication écrite et orale est perçue comme finalité du cours de grammaire ; les apprenants ont besoin d'intégrer les notions de grammaire apprises dans leurs productions écrites, etc.

4.2. Discussion et interprétation des résultats du test soumis aux apprenants de la 4^e All2

Dans cette classe, composée de 54 élèves, l'analyse de la compréhension des consignes du test en fonction des critères retenus permet de faire quelques constats :

- les élèves ayant eu une note inférieure à 10/20 (soit 33 élèves sur 54), connaissent encore d'énormes difficultés avec les critères 2 et 3. Cela suppose qu'il urge d'insister sur ces critères lors du processus d'enseignement-apprentissage.

- pour les notes supérieures ou égales à 10/20, le constat est le même pour les critères 1 et 4, assimilés par les apprenants. De plus, les critères 2 et 3 ont été plus ou moins assimilés.

Au regard de tout ceci, nous pouvons dire que la compréhension des critères 2 et 3 est déterminante pour obtenir une bonne note en expression écrite.

4.3. Discussion et interprétation des résultats du test soumis aux apprenants de la 4^e bilingue

La classe de 4^e bilingue est constituée de 40 élèves régulièrement évalués. Les résultats obtenus ici nous ont permis de constater que le niveau d'acquisition de la compétence écrite est moyen. Cependant, il est important de l'améliorer. En se référant au niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour tous les élèves de la classe, 33 élèves sur 40 ont assimilé le critère 1. Pour le critère 2, 32 élèves l'ont assimilé, contre 27 élèves pour le critère 3 et 37 élèves pour le critère 4. Il transparaît

donc que le critère 3 est celui ayant été le moins assimilé par les élèves évalués. Ceci étant, il est impératif d'insister sur ce critère lors du processus d'enseignement-apprentissage.

Par ailleurs, nous avons remarqué que le critère 3 (correction de l'expression/style) reste très faible chez les apprenants ; ce qui justifie sans doute les mauvaises notes en expression écrite. Ceci étant, l'accent doit être mis sur ce critère pendant les enseignements.

En ce qui concerne le niveau de compréhension en fonction des critères pour les élèves ayant une note supérieure ou égale à 10, nous pouvons déduire que l'acquisition des critères 2 et 3 a favorisé les notes passables obtenues en expression écrite. Autrement dit, en insistant sur ces critères, on pourrait avoir de meilleurs résultats.

5. Implications pédagogiques

Dans l'optique d'améliorer le développement de la compétence écrite des apprenants, à l'issue de cette recherche, nous proposons des suggestions à l'endroit des pouvoirs publics et responsables éducatifs ainsi qu'aux enseignants de français.

Un enseignement de qualité exige la combinaison de plusieurs facteurs parmi lesquels l'environnement. L'environnement scolaire doit être adéquat (infrastructures de qualité, équipements pédagogiques ; documentation, etc.) afin de favoriser la réussite de l'action éducative. Pour cela, il faut :

- construire des salles de classes adaptées à l'application des méthodes actives (classes aérées, mobilier adapté, etc.) ;
- introduire dans la formation initiale de l'enseignant (à partir de l'Ecole normale supérieure) des modules qui leur permettront de s'arrimer aux nouvelles approches pédagogiques de l'enseignement de la grammaire ;

- organiser régulièrement des journées pédagogiques visant à renforcer les pratiques pédagogiques des enseignants ;
- envisager un environnement numérique d'apprentissage pouvant permettre de faciliter l'apprentissage ;
- Les enseignants de français se plaignent très souvent des notes des apprenants. Cela suppose que les mauvaises performances en français sont une de leur préoccupation. Pour améliorer les performances des apprenants en expression écrite, les enseignants doivent :
- s'arrimer aux nouvelles orientations prévues dans les programmes officiels (il ne s'agit plus d'enseigner selon ses propres représentations mais plutôt de se conformer aux méthodologies et démarches préconisées dans les programmes officiels) ;
- organiser, par le biais des animateurs pédagogiques, des inspections-conseils permettant d'observer les pratiques de classe des collègues afin de partager les expériences ;
- contextualiser les apprentissages en mettant sur pied des situations-problèmes adéquates afin d'intéresser les apprenants ;
- mettre sur pied des dispositifs d'enseignement-apprentissage significatifs pouvant inciter les apprenants à participer à la construction de leurs propres savoirs ;
- mettre un accent sur les exercices de production qui amènent les apprenants à faire valoir leurs compétences (linguistique, pragmatique et communicative).

Conclusion

La présente réflexion était consacrée à l'enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire par le biais de l'analyse des représentations des enseignants d'une part, et des performances des apprenants de la classe de 4^{ème} en production écrite d'autre

part. Pour répondre à la question de savoir comment les représentations des enseignants au sujet de l'enseignement-apprentissage de la grammaire influencent le développement de la compétence écrite des apprenants de la classe de 4^{ème}, nous avons mené une recherche mixte auprès des publics enseignant et apprenant en classe de 4^e au lycée bilingue de Yaoundé. Par le biais de l'analyse des réponses au questionnaire, nous sommes parvenues aux résultats selon lesquels les représentations grammaticales des enseignants façonnent leurs pratiques pédagogiques, et par conséquent influencent la compétence écrite des apprenants. De même, l'analyse des résultats du test soumis aux apprenants montre clairement que la compétence écrite de l'apprenant est tributaire de la manière par laquelle l'enseignant a envisagé le cours de grammaire. Il ressort de cette étude que la majorité des enseignants demeurent influencés par les anciennes approches au détriment de l'approche communicative qui se révèle être la plus à même de garantir un enseignement-apprentissage efficace de la grammaire, car étant au service du développement de la compétence de communication (écrite et orale).

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Combatting school-based violence (SBV) in the Cameroon Basic Education Subsector

Atemajong Justina Njika
Department of English, ENS,
University of Yaoundé 1
Email: justinanjika@yahoo.com

Abstract

School-based violence poses a significant threat to the educational space in Cameroon's Basic Education Subsector, affecting not only pupils' school performance but their general welfare. This paper aims to identify the sources of school-based violence and propose effective strategies to combat it. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with pupils, teachers and administrators, this research seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various forms of violence occurring within the school milieu. Key findings highlight the prevalence of physical, emotional, and sexual violence, with contributing factors including socio-economic challenges, lack of adequate management, and cultural norms.

1. Introduction

This paper sets out to identify the root causes of school-based violence in nursery and primary schools in Cameroon and

to propose effective strategies to combat it. The survey focuses on the recurrent types of violence faced by pupils in and around the school milieu. The investigation is motivated by a general interest in the rights and safety of children, and as a researcher who formally works full time with the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon; I have had considerable experience in the university milieu for a long time and presently hold a supervisory position in the Ministry of Basic Education- catering for the needs of nursery and primary schools, non-formal basic education centres and those of out-of-school children and young adults who have never been to school. This set of learners fall within the age-brackets of 8 – 16 while nursery and primary school pupils generally fall within the ages of 4 – 12. The study proposes an integrated approach to combatting school-based violence, emphasizing community involvement, strong policy implementation, and targeted interventions such as awareness campaigns, counselling services, and enhanced security measures. By fostering a safe and supportive school environment, this research aims to improve educational outcomes and promote the holistic development of learners. The implications of these findings extend to policymakers, supervisors, and stakeholders, providing a roadmap for creating violence-free educational institutions.

2. Background and research questions

By and large, Cameroon is signatory to relevant international and regional conventions that have permitted her to coin out her own laws to regulate and punish or discipline acts of violence of any form committed against children and adolescents. A case in point is the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a treaty that highlights the right of children to be protected from all forms of violence, including violence within the school environment. Another treaty which Cameroon totally holds trusteeship, and which firmly supports the case of this study is the African

Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) which focuses on the protection of children's rights in Africa, including the right to education in an environment free from violence.

To effectively implement these international and regional regulations, Cameroon has also established several legal instruments. The first one is naturally the Cameroon Constitution of 16 January 1996, Article 26 (1) which grants the right to education for all. It provides free education, especially at the elementary and fundamental stages. According to the constitution, elementary education shall be compulsory, technical and professional education shall be made generally available, while higher education shall equally be accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education related instruments enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon include the 1998 Law to Lay Down Guidelines on Education in Cameroon, where Section 35 clearly states that the physical and moral integrity of every learner shall be guaranteed. Hence, corporal punishment and all forms of violence, discrimination, the sale, distribution and consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and drugs are prohibited. Other national instruments include Law No. 2011/024 of 14 December 2011 relating to the fight against trafficking in persons; Law No. 2023/009 of July 25, 2023 establishing the Charter for the Protection of Children Online in Cameroon; Ordinance No. 81/002 of June 29, 1981 on the civil status of persons, modified and supplemented by Law No. 2011/011 of May 6, 2011, the 2016 National Child Rights Policy Document, the 2017-2026 National Child Protection Policy Document, the National Social Protection Policy of 2017, and most recently the National Development Strategy (2020-2030).

To carry out an in-depth study of the prevailing concern of school-based violence in Cameroon, the following research questions guided the study:

- What are the main forms of school-based violence in the Cameroon Basic Education Subsector?
- What are the key factors contributing to school-based violence in primary schools in Cameroon?
- How does school-based violence impact learners' performance and their general welfare?
- What measures are currently in place to address school-based violence in Cameroon, and how effective are they?
- What strategies can be developed and implemented to effectively combat school-based violence in the Cameroon Basic Education Subsector?

3. Literature review

Literature is reviewed around different forms of school-based violence, factors or root causes of school-based violence, impact of SBV, measures and possible strategies to combat it.

3.1 Forms of violence in the school milieu

There are many forms of violence, but we have limited our study to those which characterise the school milieu. Modvar and Ubeda (2017) opine that ensuring safe environments for young children is at the core of global development agendas and supporting their claim with the acknowledgement by the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in targets 4.2, 5.2, and 16.2. underscores that violence has devastating consequences in all the domains of child development. Modvar and Ubeda further highlight some of the key forms of violence to be violent discipline, physical violence, and sexual abuse. They are however hopeful that early intervention can reduce the negative effects and risks involved. It has also been reported by ACAPS (2021) that physical violence is one of the most prominent forms in the school milieu. To him, physical violence includes acts like punching, slapping, kicking, and weapon use. These are

definitely some of the widely known forms of physical violence in primary school environments in Cameroon. Other forms of violence are maltreatment and corporal punishment, which include beating up learners, ordering learners to perch on their toes, to go on their knees and many more.

Sexual harassment is another form of school-based violence which is prevalent in the school environment. The US Department of Education Office for Civil Right (2010) defines sexual harassment as an "... unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Thus, sexual harassment prohibited by Title IX can include conduct such as touching of a sexual nature; making sexual comments; jokes or gestures; writing graffiti or displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures, or written materials; calling students sexually charged names; spreading sexual rumours; rating students on sexual activity or performance or circulating, showing or creating e-mails or Websites of a sexual nature." Summarily, sexual harassment is attempted sex, touching learners' body parts in unpleasing ways, teasing learners, or seducing them. According to Modvar and Ubeda (2017) school staff could be harrassers but most often the bulk of the harrassment is among learners themselves.

According to UNICEF (2019) other forms of violence in schools include restrictions from play, eating, moving around, or talking at will, intimidating learners, shouting at learners, favouring some children in the classroom to the detriment of others, bullying from teachers and other peers, homophobic tendencies, as well as tribalism and favouritism among others.

3.2. Factors contributing to school-based violence

According to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2012), the root causes of school-based

violence include economic hardship or poverty which has the likely hood of leading to stress and frustration, and oftentimes may manifest as violence in schools. It equally highlights that the presence of gangs in the community can influence pupils to engage in violent behaviour. The abuse of drug and alcohol impacts judgement and has the tendency of perpetuating violent behaviour in learners. Homes with dysfunctional family subtleties, domestic violence, and abuse can contribute to violent behaviour in children. Meanwhile, exposure to violence in media and the community as well as inconsistent or harsh discipline practices in schools can also be at the core of pacifying children to aggressive behaviour.

According to Plan International (2021), most men are generally not engaged in child-rearing hence they do not see children as gifts and as tender, reason why some men feel sexually attracted to young girls. However, some causes may be as a result of cultures that still encourage parents to betroth their children to men. On their part, Marsh et al (2020) strongly believe that unsafe family environments could be a major cause for school-based violence. Meanwhile, Harvard University, (2024) reveals that children who have low levels of developments as well as hyperactive children attract ruthless men to sympathize with them and who end up violating these children.

3.3. Impact of school-based violence on learners

School-based violence can have far-reaching effects on children's emotional and physical health. As reported by UNICEF (2019) and UNESCO (2015) the negative impacts of school-based violence include physical injury, which can lead to long-term health issues; sexually transmitted infections (STIs), mental health concerns like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), poor morals, and suicidal thoughts; poor academic performance as a result of increased absenteeism and

subsequently higher dropout rates. Also, children exposed to violence are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol misuse, and drug abuse. Additionally, victims of SBV often experience low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, and afterward shutdown. Furthermore, children who witness school-based violence can experience Stunting, aggressive behaviour, inattention, delays in levels of development,

3.4 Measures and possible strategies to alleviate school-based violence

Possible strategies to alleviate school-based violence include involving fathers and men in active child-rearing, making homes safe and family structures nurturing enough; sensitising and educating education communities. A major concern also is for learners to be sensitised to report incidences. Additionally, the quality of school textbooks in terms of image representation and graphics need to be improved upon. Also, a plan for SOS and reporting systems, not leaving out punishment for the ugly crimes need to be revealed to the general education public.

4. Methodology

In order to paint an extensive and comprehensive picture of the situation of the topical issue of school-based violence in the Basic Education subsector of Cameroon, a mixed-methods approach was employed. Qualitative data was collected via semi-structured interviews with head teachers, teachers, learners and supervisors. A sample of 20 participants was drawn from the schools in Yaounde using the convenient sampling technique. The participants were interviewed, that is, 4 head teachers, 10 classroom teachers, 3 learners, and 3 supervisors. Open-ended questions were asked to explore their insights and experiences. For accurate transcription, the interviews were

audio recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Focus group discussions were held with seduction stakeholders who were mainly parents, teachers, and again learners. However, these sets of learners were drawn from Non-formal Basic Education Centres. Document analysis method was also used to review school records, policy documents, and incident reports related to school-based violence. At the end, thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data.

For the quantitative methods, structured questionnaires were distributed to teachers and parents. For the teachers, the questionnaires were put on google form and the link shared with about four existing teachers' WhatsApp groups which had at least 100 teachers. However, the snowball design was used to ask teachers in these groups to share to other existing groups of teachers whom they thought did not belong to their groups. Copies of the questionnaire were printed and shared to some state-owned schools in the Mfoundi division for pupils to take home to their parents, then the parents filled and returned via the pupils.

5. Results and findings

The results are analysed following the key variables of the investigation.

5.1 Types of school-based violence

After analysing the data collected from teachers of some selected schools in the Mfoundi Division in the Centre Region of Cameroon, it was realized that some of the major types of school-based violence were highlighted to be physical violence which was qualitatively explained to be physical harm inflicted on pupils. These include hitting, kicking, or corporal punishment. Other forms of violence identified were verbal abuse, bullying, gang activities, and gender-based violence.

5.2 Factors leading to school-based violence

From the data analysis, questions that probed into factors that contributed to school-based violence, creating a complex environment where violence can occur, included poor upbringing by parents. Probing further from the teachers and head-teachers via interviews, they reported that inconsistent or harsh parenting practices led to aggressive behaviour in children. Lack of parental involvement and supervision was highlighted to have worsened this issue. Factors like challenging socioeconomic backgrounds were likewise highlighted as they explained that poverty and economic hardship could lead to stress and frustration, which may manifest in the form of violent behaviour in schools. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds may also lack access to positive role models and support systems. Some parents identified poor school quality, highlighting that schools with inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and limited resources can create an environment where violence is more likely to occur. The lack of a supportive and conducive learning environment can lead to frustration and aggression. Head teachers revealed that the lack of conducive learning environments in some government primary schools could be breeding ground for violent behaviour from children, adding that schools that do not promote positive and inclusive atmosphere were the ones struggling with higher rates of violence. A lack of effective disciplinary policies and support systems can contribute to this issue as well. Another factor identified was that the on-going Anglophone crisis in the restive North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon has led to increased violence and instability, affecting schools in these areas with some behaviours transferred to other parts of the country. Cultural factors were also identified as factors that encouraged violent behaviour in schools. The data revealed that specifically, traditional beliefs in corporal punishment or gender-based discrimination were at the base of these. Peer

pressure and gangs could equally encourage violent behaviour among pupils. The teachers revealed that peer pressure can lead to bullying, physical fights, and other forms of violence.

5.3. Effects of school-based violence on learners

From the surveys, interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis, it was revealed that school-based violence can have profound and long-lasting effects on learners' performance and overall welfare. The key ones that surfaced were a decline in learners' academic performance, absenteeism as a result of fear and trauma, an increase in dropout rates, psychological and emotional well-being, anxiety and depression, low self-esteem, and physical health.

5.4. Strategies to effectively combat school-based violence

It was projected that a multi-faceted approach is required. These included:

Strengthening parental involvement: Involve parents in school activities and decision-making processes. Encourage regular Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings to discuss pupils' behaviour and progress. Carry out parental education programmes where workshops for parents on positive parenting techniques and the importance of modelling non-violent behaviour.

Improving school infrastructure: Guarantee that schools have safe and secure infrastructure, including proper lighting, fencing, and surveillance systems.

Inclusive Facilities: Provide facilities that cater for the needs of all pupils, including those with disabilities, to create a more inclusive environment.

Training of teachers: Provide teachers with training in conflict resolution, classroom management, and handling violent behaviour. Also provide teachers with psychological support to equip them offer support to pupils who have experienced violence.

Community engagement: Foster partnerships between schools, local communities, and law enforcement to create a supportive network as well as provide community-wide awareness campaigns to educate about the impacts of school-based violence and the importance of a safe learning environment.

Implementing comprehensive policies: Develop and enforce clear anti-violence policies within schools, including zero-tolerance for bullying and harassment and also establish confidential reporting mechanisms for learners to report incidents of violence without fear of retaliation.

Promoting positive school climate: Implement programmes that promote positive behaviour, respect, and inclusion among pupils. Develop peer mentoring and support programmes to foster a sense of community and mutual respect among learners.

Providing counselling and support services: Ensure that schools have access to trained counsellors who can provide support to victims of violence. Create support groups for pupils to share their experiences and receive emotional support.

Exploiting technology: Use technology such as surveillance cameras and incident reporting apps to monitor and address instances of violence. Educate learners about online safety on the impact of cyber bullying.

Encouraging Student Involvement: Involve learners in decision-making through club activities and leadership programmes. Inspire learners to participate in awareness programmes and campaigns against school violence.

Continuous assessment and improvement: Conduct regular assessments of school safety policies and practices to identify areas for improvement. Implement feedback mechanisms to gather input from learners, parents, and teachers on the effectiveness of anti-violence strategies.

6. Conclusion

The findings highlight the intricacy of school-based violence and the need for a multi-faceted approach to address it.

While some progress has been made by the Ministry of Basic Education, significant challenges remain. Continuous efforts are required to create a safe and supportive learning environment for all nursery schools, primary schools, and non-formal basic education centre for learners. These insights provide a foundation for developing targeted interventions and policies to effectively combat school-based violence in the Mfoundi Division and beyond.

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Modernist Setting: The Bedrock of Narrative Strategy. A reading of Graham Greene's *The Living Room*

Elizabeth T. Ayuk-Ako
Department of English
Higher Teacher Training College,
University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon
Email: lizbil2013@gmail.com

Abstract

In recent times, theories on modernist setting are not only exploring and expanding the potential and influential place of setting in literature and literary criticism, but more importantly, “settings sustain and animate a variety of meanings and forms” in literary productions (Mikhail Bakhtin, 85). Taking cue therefore from Erving Goffman’s, examination of human representation in literary works, this essay analyzes Greene’s play, *The Living Room*, from the perspective that setting is solidly fundamental and a reliable narrative strategy. The integral setting captures and influences essential discourse of the play. The life and world view of the characters are reflected in the nature of the setting while action is tailored by the fragmented nature of mood created by the underpinning narrative structure. Greene’s physical setting impacts action as well as thought. The existential thoughts of characters and their actions are the direct consequence of the series of fragmented settings. Setting, far from being just a place and time where and

when action takes place, is “. . . a central subject of the work” (Goffman 9). This paper aims to demonstrate that the religious and moral dilemmas, and internal struggles of the major characters to understand the world in which they live and to give meaning to their existence are all captured in the manner in which the play is set. It equally seeks to identify characteristics of modernist setting as narrative strategies and how these epitomize the conflict and fear that only the young, Rose must resolve.

Keywords – Bedrock, narrative strategy, modernist setting, action, thought.

Modern literature has variously been defined as a literature of protest and innovation. Modern English literature saw some of its greatest innovation in form and structure. In his article “Identity and Dissent in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman* and D.H Lawrence’s *The Rainbow*, Athanasius Ayuk states that “The desire to break away from what was considered at the time as a moribund social set up was symptomatic of an age sick of itself” (163). The culminating point therefore, of anti-Victorianism, and anti-Edwardians that were marked by publications and opinions of “ironic debunking” by Lytton Strachey, Thomas Hardy, and Virginia Woolf, about the nature of art and the human condition, did not only contribute to the “skeptical irresolution, but have equally established that “... modernity disrupted the old order, upended ethical and social codes, cast into doubt previously stable assumptions about self, community, and the world (Ramazani and Stallworthy 960-61). Such disruptions involved a shift from traditional to modern settings. The Artistic and creative protests and innovations ushered in at the dawn of a new literary tradition as the “World broke in two” were not therefore, according to Bill Goldstein, limited to assumptions about literary content (2). The structure and narrative elements of literature, be it the novel or drama, were also seriously questioned and reviewed. Bill has examined

Playwrights like Samuel Becket, and Harold Pinter's¹ contribution to English theatre. He argues that they portray the "plotlessness, the minimal characterization and setting, the absurdist intimation of an existential darkness. . ." (979) in British theatre to demonstrate the importance of avant-garde setting. The "radically diminished" setting of *Waiting for Godot* is a "projection of the individual and social turmoil of the mid-twentieth century" (Peter Mudford, 37). Greene's writings and narrative strategies in *The Living Room* evidence these modernist preoccupations in literary productions.

In recent times, theories² on modernist setting have not only explored and expanded the potential and influential role of this structural and narrative element in literature, but opinions also hold that "settings sustain and animate a variety of meanings and forms" even though such "accounts of literary settings are rare" (Bakhtin 84). Goffman demonstrates the modern writer's response to traditional literary structures. He asserts that modernists condemned the idea that "the way to convey character was by describing the house in which she lived" (9). Goffman's micro – sociological approach to everyday life considers setting as the "scenery and stage props"³ necessary for the presentation of a social face. The social face of the mid-twentieth century English life is presented by the setting of *The Living Room*, (henceforth referred to as TLR). The

¹ Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, and Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot* are canonical plays with fragmented and absurd settings that reflect the disorder and dilemma of modern Man.

² Twentieth Century literature has, in the most part, received critical attention on the nature of subject matter and characterization. By the end of the century, some critics noted that Modernist setting is crucial to 20th Century cultural production though it seem not to have caught critical notice. To read more on theories on modernist setting, see Bakhtin, M. (2010). "Forms of Time: Notion of the Chronotope" in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Goffman, E. (1959). Micro-Sociological Approach to everyday life in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, and *Modernist Setting* by Hannah Freed-Thall & Dora Zhang. Vol 3 <https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0042>.

³Goffman invokes the term setting to describe not just place and time. Stage props like furniture, decor, physical layout and other background items constitute a setting. See [Modernismmodernity.org/forums. Modernist-setting](https://www.modernismmodernity.org/forums/modernist-setting).

surroundings of the family mansion enable us view setting not only as a circumscribed time or place or a stabilizing set of props but more importantly, “as a dynamic scenario, or mobile zone of encounter” (9). Such zones of encounter that portray the absurdities, uncertainties, and a sense of abandonment in the twentieth century have been described in Greene’s works as Greeneland⁴. Peter Mudford examines Greene’s “Portraits and Self-portraits” in his novels and concludes that “In style the anguished was always tempered by the narrative control” (6) in Greene’s literary productions. Modernist settings are therefore worlds into which characters navigate and experience the nature of human existence. Setting is not just time and place where a story is set. More than that, it reflects the modernist concern on experimentation, fragmentation and the search for meaning in a world of innovation. Modernist setting focuses on psychological intertextuality, time experimentation, dislocation and urbanization (Jonathan Flatley Para 3). The backdrops, artifacts, mood and atmosphere of the setting in the play capture the disjointedness of modern life, a sense of alienation by Rose, Michael and James, disorientation and the interconnectedness of human life and experience.

Taking the cue from modernist discourse on the innovative nature and importance of setting in modern literary productions⁵, this essay analyses Greene's play, *The Living Room*, from the perspective that modernist setting is a "solidly fundamental and a reliable" narrative strategy. (Goffman 9). The integral and fragmented setting captures and influences the essential discourse of the short play. The unfulfilled life and existential

⁴ Greeneland is a term that has become synonymous Graham Greene’s fictional worlds in most of his works. According to Ruth Franklin, the mention of Graham Greene inevitably evokes “Greeneland,” reviewers’ shorthand for the fictional terrain where all of Greene’s novels seem to be set—a desolate colonial outpost with unforgiving weather, which is inhabited by mid-level civil servants, simple-hearted locals, and adulterous wives.” For detail discussions See Franklin, R. (Sept. 2004) *God in Detail: Graham Greene’s Religious Realism (The New Yorker)*.

⁵ For more information on this see Stephen K. (2011). *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction*. (Cambridge: UP)

world view of the main characters, especially the women, is netted in the experimental setting of the short play characterized by its fragmented and absurdist nature; while action is tailored by the mood created by the underpinning narrative strategy. In the review of a collection of essays in *Modernist Setting*, “The first investigation of its kind” on setting, the editors describe

. . . setting as a primary shaping force of modernist form. Setting makes for a compelling theoretical object precisely because its reach is so broad and boundaries so difficult to delimit: What in a film or a novel or a play doesn’t have to do with setting? How do we extricate it from character and plot? And at what scale should we approach it, . . . setting encompasses everything from World historical events to minute local details. (para 1)

The different contributors to this collection like: Jonathan Flatley, Louise Hornby and Adam Frank have ingeniously demonstrated the central role of setting in a literary text. This paper, therefore, seeks to analyze the dynamics of innovative narrative structures and human experience indicative of the moral and religious dilemmas, and suggestive of the aesthetic consciousness of the era. The paper equally examines the symbolic representation of setting in forging a meaningful existence by the protagonist. Greene uses the physical setting to portray the inner lives and emotions of his characters. Michael and Rose are disorientated as the difference between internal and external realities become obscured. This reality becomes poignant when cast against the backdrop of absurdity and uncertainty that shaped twentieth century literature.

By the end of the nineteenth century, world view about many concepts and beliefs on Catholicism was changing. The outbreak of the two World wars, the emergence of new philosophical and psychological theories in Europe had tremendous repercussions on humankind’s religious, social and literary perceptions of the world. The world was undergoing a

transformation process in which the individual and society were gradually at the center of human concern and endeavours. Many British writers like James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and the Italian poet, Tommaso Marinetti were obsessed with this growing change in society. They advocated for literature that depicts human nature in its true self, condemned the superficial representation of human life by the Romantics. These modern writers re-evaluated previously held beliefs about the essence of human existence and the reality about human fate. While his contemporaries were more concerned with the manner through which reality and truth were represented, Greene went further in his questioning of Roman Catholic Christian morality and human nature reflected in the kind of settings he portrays and into which he casts his protagonists. Settings in Greene's literary works leave little to be desired by characters who crave for self-fulfillment. Ironically, it is in such dislocations that they assert their uniqueness (Melfi 2004).

The significance of setting as a narrative structure is therefore pivotal to the present discussion, as it puts into perspective the direct relationship between structure and content, and in the case of Greene, between his grand theme and the dis-located environment. *TLR* captures Greene's disgust for oppression. Through seedy, sleazy and exotic environments "[where] . . . human nature hasn't had time to disguise itself", Greene portrays the predicament of human existence (*The Power and the Glory* 30). If the question of experimentation with literary forms was the new and urgent urge for literary production in the twentieth century, postmodernity has taken even more complex dimensions. Although Greene may not have been an Avant guard modernist like James Joyce, T.S Eliot and Virginia Woolf, his structural narrative strategy is a response to the general frustration, rejection and innovation that defined that literary epoch. For a better analysis of the setting and understanding of its impact on the world view of characters in

TLR, our discussions will be guided by the formalistic approach to literary criticism. As a critical theory, it emphasizes the relevance of close reading of a text, analysis of the narrative structures and an insightful interpretation of the literary text. The Russian formalists, New Critics as well as the Structuralists adhere to the text as an autonomous or self-contained work of art. Based on the works of Boris Eikhenbaum and his contemporaries, “Formalists assume that the keys to understand a text exist within the text itself” (Britannica 3). In the mid-20th century, writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, and T. S. Eliot, employed principles of formalism: experimentation with form, materiality, critique of traditional narrative and stream-of-consciousness techniques to question and subvert traditional literary forms and give relevance to readers’ perspectives. The analysis therefore investigates how the quality of the work’s organic unity contributes not just to the aesthetic quality of the play but also captures the content.

In Greene's short play, *TLR*, there are three settings: the Chalet, reduced to the living room, the Regal Court, and the Dennis residence. These perform a crucial role in shaping the narrative strategy to reveal thoughts and desperate actions. Greene meticulously crafts the setting to provoke action, and to convey important modernist themes of fragmentation and dislocation, ultimately becoming the bedrock of the narrative. Roses' death resolves the puzzle about the living room. The setting is therefore symbolic of the human struggle and challenges to come to terms with the complexity of human nature and experience. It does not only provoke action, but it also engages the characters into profound difficult thoughts and discussions on existential themes and the recurring ambivalent nature of God and Catholicism in Greenland.

The setting of *The Living Room* is distinctively modern: fragmented and absurd in nature. The major setting of the two-act play is a chalet in the Swiss Alps. The choice of location adds

depth and atmosphere to the story. The chalet, huddled amidst towering mountains, offers a sense of isolation and remoteness, mirroring the characters' emotional and psychological turmoil. Through exterior and interior views of the chalet, the Regal Court and the Dennis residence, Greene artfully develops a story from these disjointed scenes, each occasioning actions that reveal existential thoughts about human life and the mistrust of institutions by twentieth century Man. Writing about Greene's artistry, Mudford, in "Portraits and Self-Portraits" remarks that "Greene reflected what was changing, ambivalent, and demanding in the world around him". The novelist's observation about the period during which he lived and wrote is captured in his own words: 'We are at the heart of the disorder' (10). The experimental setting in the play captures the disorder that marked the twentieth century. The playwright's use of fragmented and absurd setting as a narrative strategy in *The Living Room* is fundamental to the story. His unique settings, be it in novels or plays stand out as important narrative elements to have earned the appellation, Greenland, by most Greene critics. Greenland is "seen as an area of human consciousness in which the absence of God leaves the psyche abandoned to its own internal debate, attempting to find a ground for its being" as it is the case for Rose and Michael (TLR 50).

The absurd and fragmented nature of the chalet is contrastively portrayed through the exterior landscape and interior structure and space. "It looks quite a big house from outside", Michael remarks on Helen's statement about the "clustered" nature of the living room (22). An absurd and fragmented structure is one that is chaotic, disorderly and lacks structure, making it difficult to navigate and to understand. The surrounding landscape of the chalet, on the other hand, is vast and majestic, serving as a contrastive backdrop for the internal conflicts of the characters. The mountains are imposing and unyielding yet "Through a tall window at the back we see only

the tops of the trees outside” (TLR 15) intimating the restraint nature of the characters' conditions, perceptions, and relationships. Greene skillfully incorporates the natural landscape into the narrative as a metaphor for characters' entrapment and their inability to escape their muffled emotional and existential conditions.

The interior of the chalet is depicted as absurd, austere, and minimalist, emphasizing the absence of warmth, imposed firm restraint, and self-denial among the characters. It is immediately apparent to the reader that there is “. . . something strange about the living room” as soon as the curtain is drawn. The “oddness, the uneasiness of this room . . . a lavatory . . . out of a living room” set the mood and atmosphere of absurdity. Even the furniture doesn't quite fit the “unusual shape” of the bedroom. The stage direction paints a picture of this oddness: *“Almost at the same moment we hear water pouring away from a basin in a closet, behind the second door. That for a moment seems to focus the oddness, the uneasiness of this room, for who would expect a lavatory to open immediately out of a living-room as though it were-really a bedroom?”* (TLR 15). Greene's alertness in presenting the pertinent preoccupations of his time is seen in the meticulousness and lucidness of the setting. The description of the room depicts the sterility, uncertainty, and fear, further emphasizing the impact of place on the actions and thought processes of the characters.

The Regal Court is not much different from the living room. Greene writes, “It's where people go to make love” declares Rose (47). Although Rose hints at the fact that this public and crowded environment would be an alternative to their aborted escape, and where both could express and experience some sort of brief satisfaction and happiness, away from the strange, obfuscating and life denying living room, it is not much different from the living room with its’ “bestly little French gilt clock on the mantlepiece” that constantly reminds them of the

limit of their stay, a reflection of the temporal nature of their relationship (63). The Dennis residence is a bleak house to the reader. The sparse information about the house reflects the near absence of life in it. With the lone child dead, it is inhabited by an unhappy and disconnected couple; with a telephone used by the hysterical Mrs. Dennis to monitor her husband who is hardly present. Such an environment, one would imagine, breeds the same mood of fear, uncertainty, a sense of abandonment, and hopelessness like the living room. This is the house in which Michael must live with his wife. These series of disjointed scenes represent different aspects of the characters' life, especially, that of the protagonist. This fragmentation demonstrates the fragmented nature of the protagonist's existence as he struggles to comprehend the essence of his existence in the world. I cannot agree more with Goffman's assessment that "setting is a category that modernism can't get rid of, because it is simply the ground of fiction" (9).

Religious and social settings in Greene's works, be it *The Ministry of Fear*, *The Heart of the Matter*, or *The Living Room*, leave little to be desired by his characters who crave for self-fulfillment. Whether in Sierra-Leone or London, Greene's settings are "The Landscape of Grief" (Mary Melfi 55). Greene's stance against modern oppressive institutions and evil is revealed in *The Power and the Glory*, through "seedy, sleazy, and exotic environments [Where] . . . human nature hasn't had time to disguise itself" (30). Settings in *TLR* do not only help the audience to relate themselves to the characters; Greene's settings actually 'sustain and animate' the narrative.

The living room, the Regal Court and Dennis's residence are integral to the play. The time, "An afternoon in January" and the environment that the characters find themselves influence their actions, and thoughts. By confining them to a particular setting, Greene defines the characters' physical and mental engagements. Like in Elwyn White's novel, *Charlotte's Web*,

Michael, Rose, James, and his sisters' behaviours become integral parts of the setting. The fragmented setting is thus, the bedrock of Greene's narrative strategy. The actions and thoughts of the protagonist and other main actors are controlled and confined by their environment. Their actions and perceptions about existence, and the nature of the supreme being is as absurd as the places and time in which they live.

Fragmented Settings and Absurd Actions.

In the light of his contemporaries, Greene's two acts play, is built on a restrained setting. A typical feature of the sophisticated setting in *The Living Room* is its fragmented nature that occasions absurd actions by characters. The story unfolds in a series of disjointed scenes, each provoking actions that develop the central existential themes of the short play. The stage direction of Scene I of Act One opens with a description of the strange and odd setting of the living room:

The Living Room. An afternoon in January.
At first sight, when the curtain rises, we are aware of something strange about the living room. The house is an ordinary Holland Park house and there is nothing at first sight on which we can positively lay a finger and say, 'this is wrong', or 'this is strange'. Through a tall window at the back we see only the tops of the trees outside and the window is oddly barred up half its height. Is it that the furniture – in a fashion difficult to define – doesn't quite fit, as though it had been chosen for a larger room of a different shape? There are two doors to the room – one is open to the landing, the other up a small flight of stairs is closed. . . . The oddness, the uneasiness of this room, for who would expect a lavatory to open immediately out of a living-room as though it were – perhaps we are now reaching the heart of the problem – really a bedroom? (15)

Michael and Rose are immediately responsive to this strange and sleazy environment as soon as they step into the house. They “*stand stiffly, a little apart, looking round the*

room” The position of the living room, on the third floor is concerning. “[*He moves restlessly around, but comes back to exactly the same spot, three feet away from her girl*]” The protagonist’s agitation and restlessness is prompted by the mood created by the setting. “What an odd room! It’s the wrong shape. . . Nothing quite fits. I wonder where that goes to (16)? This feeling of apprehension instinctively prompts Michael to disguise his guilt, their love affair, with a lie. Goffman’s statement on setting could not have been better put: “To conceive of setting as an enabling force is to think of it in terms of reciprocally embedded subjects and environments. Settings, . . . are not discrete moments or locations but assemblages of material and virtual spaces in which anything can be an ‘actant’” (7). The bedroom turned into a living room, the lavatory in a living room, the closed doors and furniture that do not fit; the window that is oddly barred half its height, are the ‘actants’ of the play. They are integral structural elements upon which Greene’s narrative revolves. The living room is “The Browne family skeleton” invisibly watching and capturing every action (16). The uncertainty about the nature of the room, keeps the lovers, Michael, and Rose on edge. Michael’s attempts to justify their lateness, their efforts to comfort each other by holding hands and awkwardly keeping a distance between them, Michael’s rambling about his “perfect planning” of how they spent the night, his caution to Rose about the use of the word “darling” are all conscious actions to disguise his sexual affair with Rose.

Ironically, the living room is a binary opposition to the protagonist. The fragmented and absurd nature of the room betrays his effort to disguise and be cautious about their affair to the Browne family. In a normal environment, they would be warned by footsteps approaching. The Browne ladies would not be in and out to use the lavatory. But Greene’s living room is far from normal. It is typical of Greenland landscape portraying

the dysfunctional nature of the twentieth century British society. The strangeness of the room is emphasized as Miss Teresa Browne suddenly pops out from the closet as the lovers engage to kiss. “*They leap to their original positions as the door opens*”. Teresa’s strange reaction towards them as she enters the room only heightens the protagonist’s anxiety and reveals Rose’s fear:

MICHAEL: “Why did she go out like that? Why didn’t she speak? Do you think she saw us?”

ROSE: No. Perhaps she heard something.

MICHAEL: There wasn’t much to hear. (TLR 17)

Locked behind the door, unknown to them, Aunt Teresa overheard all their conversations. Later, Teresa sarcastically reminds Michael “What a good thing you’re a careful man Mr. Dennis!” Her mock blindness and deafness are to reiterate the absurdity of the setting of a living room in a bedroom. Her action further builds the fear and anxiety in the lovers.

The absence of privacy exposes Rose’s plan to escape from “. . . a wood of old people” (19) and sparks a series of events that culminate to her death. The bedroom, turned into a living room in this play resonates Goffman’s description of modernist setting as a “. . . mobile zone of encounter” (9). Had it been, otherwise, Rose’s death may have been averted. But because Greene’s fragmented and absurd setting is an integral part of the play, characters’ actions and fate are confined and defined by the setting. In the privacy of her room, not the living room that serves as an arena of public encounter, Helen would not have seen Rose’s suitcase ready to leave. Had all other rooms in which someone had died not been closed for fear of death and to avoid more deaths, Rose should have had a room to herself. Since “They don’t like using a room in which somebody has ever died”, despite their piety, Rose is forced to face the ordeal of this strange room (29). *Helen comes in, sees the suitcase, and stops*”. As soon as “*Rose crosses the room and picks up her suitcase*”, Aunt Helen is stirred up for action (49). Goffman’s

description of setting as “scenery and stage props necessary for the presentation of a social face” highlights the importance of the bathroom in a living room to the events that lead to Rose’s frustration and suicide. The bathroom in a living room, as a stage prob, disorients Michael and Rose. Teresa’s sudden appearance from the closet presents as a foil against Rose, and an opportunity for Helen to orchestrate her “imperious” authority over her nieces’ vision of life. “Teresa! She’s going away. We’ve got to stop her”, she declares. Everything about the setting is absurd, not just Teresa’s “tomfoolery” (49). To Helen’s pleasant surprise, Teresa’s “Compulsive neurosis” has worked perfectly to stop Rose from experiencing her authentic self. Rose Pemberton is trapped in this absurd house, with absurd people for another three weeks. She must help care for her sick aunt, Teresa. Greene’s setting in *The Living Room* serves as a springboard for important actions that develop the narrative.

James’ life is constrained by his physical environment than by his handicap. Greene portrays a sterility of the spirit, reinforced by the Priest’s milieu. He is estranged both from the world and from himself not just because he cannot walk but more so because for twenty years, he is stuck up on the third floor in this “strange house” (29). At the end of Act Two, scene I, Father James laments about the hopelessness and meaninglessness of his life. Empathetic and ready to help, Rose’s proposal for him to get to see and enjoy the outside beauty of nature:

ROSE: Now I’m here, can’t we go out together to the river and the park?

JAMES: Yes. I’d like to now and then. But it means hiring a couple of men. It’s a long way down the stairs, and I’m heavy. But I’m not going to use you my dear. I hope soon you’ll be getting married.

ROSE: There’s plenty of time. (32)

A priest who should be the spiritual force to the desperate is himself caged away from the world for twenty years because of a “foolish idea” that he, a priest could not stop from the beginning. The verbal irony foreshadows Rose’s fate. James’ world view about love and marriage in the twentieth century is as cramped and pathetic as the living room. His inability to act and give assurance and hope to Rose when she comes for help is obvious as she laments: “Can’t you give me anything to hope for?” James is like a typical Greenland Priest, “[*struggling for words but can find none – except formulae*] Dear, there’s always the mass. It’s there to help. Your rosary, you’ve got a Rosary, haven’t you? Perhaps Our Lady . . . prayer (74). What this act achieves is to increase the young woman’s anxiety and the sense that her existence is worthless because God is an abstraction. That the individual and the collective are not at parallels. “If I stay here, I’ll have nothing but that closet and this – living room. . . I don’t believe. I don’t believe” she retorts (*TLR* 74-75). The setting is clearly a surrogate of its habitants. The lovers’ mounting anxiety and frustration is the direct consequence of the nature of the modernist setting. Rose is gradually alienating herself from the family and from the church. As aptly examined in *A History of Civilization*, Greene demonstrates that “The struggle for existence and indeed the whole armory of Darwinian ideas were far from suggesting a future of peace, cooperation, and the absence of frustration and suffering” (149). Rose is overwhelmed by the desire to be happy and the urge to flee from these “– three old people and all the closed rooms” that limit her vision of the world and the possibilities, of self-fulfillment (*TLR* 42). In the determination to commit to her authentic self and her world view about love and marriage, Greene confines the lovers to another fragmented setting, the Regal Court. In the British culture, the Regal court is associated with grandeur, heroism, and magnificence. It is Regal because it is suitable for a King or Queen, and because it is beautiful and

impressive. At the end of Act One, Scene 2, Rose introduces the Regal court as an alternative place for the lovers: “It’s where people go to make love. So, everybody says. I’ll go there and come back here. I’ll meet you there every day. Or I’ll take my bag and go away with you – for years” Rose tells Michael (47). Curiously we are told very little about this supposed haven of love. It appears to be as absurd as the living room, with “. . . a beastly little French gilt clock on the mantelpiece. One day I’m going to smash it’s pretty face” (*TLR* 63). The Regal court is not “simply immobile backdrop”, but is typical of a modernist setting, it is a “world into which characters are thrown” (Goffman 9), experimenting with time and human experience. It therefore furthers Greene’s exploration of the human existence. Goffman’s assertion that modernist “setting scatters and releases as readily as it frames and contains” aptly relates to Rose’s frustration with their hopeless experience at the Regal court. Her growing search for meaning and her struggle to find a sense of belonging spur her to action; what is achieved by going to the Regal Court “twenty-seven times” in three weeks is a growing sense of frustration, desperation, and anxiety. Unknown to her, she is drifting away from what she wants, “Oh, peace and children and getting older. Outside the Church” (63) Rose painfully tells Father James. Hopelessness and sterility of the love encounter at the Regal court is ominously present through the little clock constantly reminding both the time to leave. Greene’s reference to the clock as a symbol of time passing, like in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* is pertinent as a stage prop. “Uncle, it isn’t wonderful at all. It’s sad, sad. . . . I’m tired. I don’t know what to do” she declares in desperation as she slumps to the floor by his chair (*TLR* 63). This feeling of nothingness⁶

⁶ This state of worthlessness and heightened desperation that leads to suicide is very recurrent in Greene’s works. Be it Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*, or Sarah in *The End of the Affair*, or Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*, the dilemma of spiritual faith and the Greenland they exist in, lead to that sense of nothingness. This is because, in addition to the hopelessness and uncertainty the characterized the century, Greene’s characters, notes Mudford, most often struggle with

is a foreshadow of her next crucial action, suicide. An action prompted by the dilemma of choosing between the self and the society. In *Graham Greene*, “Portraits and Self-Portraits”, Mudford points that Greene’s artistry is evident in the way he projects “the individual and the social turmoil of the mid-twentieth Century (37). To Greene, such struggle is not just legitimate but essential to the individual’s meaningful existence. The role of the society as an enabling force for Man’s personal growth is captured by Jacque Berthoud in his reading of Conrad’s fiction: “The self is not merely something that belongs to the individual; it is something that belongs to the society. A social role is therefore necessary for the achievement of personal identity . . . for it has to be a role in which the individual believes” (59). Greene’s use of the modern narrative strategy of setting, captures and paints the “social turmoil” that defines the Twentieth century. The effective use of the technique demonstrates that the self is indeed “something that belongs to the society” and not to the individual. Rose’s suicide is, however, a strong statement against such assumptions.

The most dramatic action in Greene’s short play is Mrs. Dennis’ staged suicide and Rose’s actual suicide act. The effectiveness of the encounter between Rose and Marion and the result of her visit is enhanced by the nature of the setting. As prompted in the stage direction, [*“Mrs. Dennis is a woman of about forty – five, with prematurely grey hair and a strained neurotic but determined face. She comes in and looks uneasily about her as though the strangeness of this living room communicated itself even to her”*]. In an ordinary living room, the two rivals would not have been isolated to themselves. Rose would not have had to enter a closet to fetch water. The strong light that pours into the room through the oddly barred window would not have been a distraction to Marion’s trick to kill herself

abandonment and survival. There are usually “So many odds against one that to live will be more miserable than to die” (See *Graham Greene*. 1969, 50).

as “[*Rose turns away to find the switch. Mrs. Dennis begins to pour some tablets into her hand. . . . When Rose sees what she is at, she runs to her and snatches the bottle which she throws into a corner of the room*]” (68).

Hellen and Marion have succeeded to sow the seed for the process of Roses’ sense of nothingness. The encounter between the trio, brings Rose face to face with her own finitude. The realization that she is no longer able to be anything renders her vulnerable. The living room, Michael and Marion become elements of “threat” from which she must extricate herself. Listening to the couple debate about suffering, happiness, and youthfulness, “[*Rose turns sharply away. She can’t bear any longer the sight of them together. They are unmistakably man and wife*]” She begins to think and Helen’s “secret triumph” to destroy the relationship, is taking form. Modernist emphasis on the influence of “. . . milieu on character” is poignantly evident in *The Living Room* (*Modernismmodernity.org*, para. 9). Within three weeks, Rose has changed. Time and place have taken a toll on her, mentally and physically. *Three weeks ago she was a muddled, enthusiastic, excitable child. She looks several years older now. . . . Disappointments, decisions and frustrations have filled the weeks, and she has had time to think*” (57). The actions of all those around Rose: Michael, Helen, James, Marion, the Regal Court and especially the odd, cramped, strange room have facilitated the process and nature of thought for Rose. She comes to the mode of self-awareness⁷, of the futility of her existence in the world she finds herself in. Unable to get any meaningful help, hope and assurance from anyone, the choice to “make myself be” is facilitated by the setting (Hannah, Arendt 16): “Won’t somebody help me? [*She begins to shake the tablets out of the bottle. When she has them all in her hand, she makes an attempt to pray, but she can’t remember the words*]” (TLR 75).

⁷ To read more about Heidegger and Sartre’s discussion on “Anxiety, Nothingness, the Absurd”, see *Moral Philosophy* (Peter Singer. *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

In a typical Greeneland manner, Greene portrays a heroic escape through suicide. An act and choice common with twentieth century revolt against institutional norms that stifle human existence.

The Dennis residence is portrayed as an obscure, cold, and empty home that breeds obsessive actions and behaviour. All that the reader knows about this house is that it inhabits a couple that is so disconnected from one another. Perhaps the most visual object the audience remembers of the house is the telephone used by the hysterical wife to tract the husband and the bottle of pills that she would use at every given opportunity to stage her death threats, and the barred door. Worried, Rose reports: “She tried to kill herself”, Oh no, she didn’t. I know that trick of hers”, says Michael. [*To his wife*] You promised never to do that again” (TLR 69). With the lone child dead, a man hasn’t known love for ten years, a hysterical wife who is terrified by the thought of abandonment, the Dennis residence is a lackluster place. Apparently, nothing to occupy Marion or give her peace. She is hysterical and obsessed with the fear of losing her husband, the fear of being alone. The bottle of pills and telephone are metaphors for the barrenness and lack of communication between the couple. Marion’s obsession and anxiety to tract the husband’s movement, to know and to meet with Rose is driven by the barrenness and emptiness of this house that has nothing to be called home. At the end of the argument between the three, Marion gives up and tells Michael: “You won’t have to be hysterical anymore. You can go home. [*She catches on the word.*] I mean to the house – and pack” (TLR 71). Marion catches on the word, ‘home’ because there is no home. Like the living room, a reflection of a world destroyed by the two world wars, it is a modernist setting that offers only despair and emptiness, and a growing sense of abandonment. The use of the telephone and bottle of pills as symbols for the void and emptiness within the marriage further enhances the

understanding of the fragmented settings as bedrock of the narrative.

Setting and Existentialist Themes in *The Living Room*.

The above discussions demonstrate how Greene's modernist setting in the short play, *The Living Room* plays a significant role in negotiating actions. These actions reveal the modernist concern about the meaning of human existence. Confined and unable to extricate himself from the living room, Michael, and Rose's relationship become the pillar on which the narrative revolves and evolves. Their quest for a meaningful life and their struggle to have a sense of belonging in the world is captured in the absurd nature of the setting, settings that disrupt traditional notions of order and decorum. If according to Goffman ". . . setting is a category that modernism can't get rid of, because it is simply the ground of fiction" (9), then one can argue that the content of the play comes to life and is sustained to the end, thanks to this narrative structure. The series of fragmented settings that occasion absurd actions, present aspects of the protagonist's and Rose's' life. Through themes such as free will, anxiety, and fear, suffering and happiness, alienation and death, and disillusionment and betrayal, Greene's narrative portrays the protagonist's and his lover's existential dilemmas.

Michael is overwhelmed by his internal struggle to find happiness and in an unorthodox portrayal of his effort to give meaning to his life, Greene portrays him as a child seducer whose intention must be examined and evaluated within the pious confines, shape, and nature of the strange living room. He is trapped in a ten-year marriage void of warmth and happiness. Despite love for Rose as he reveals to Father James, it is evident that he is at the wrong place. The living room and its inhabitants have a different perception of love. In response to his declaration, Helen exclaims: "Frank? It's – it's revolting. Seducing a child at her mother's funeral" (37). Later in Act Two, Scene Two, in condemnation of the lovers' encounters at the

Regal Court, Helen reiterates: “She told you she was going away with him. It’s a mortal sin. . . . Because he is a married man” (59). The living room is an embodiment of twentieth century religious and cultural clash. All it offers, according to Father James is “. . . our dead goodness. Holy books, holy pictures, a subscription to the Altar Society. Do you think, if she had come into a house where there was love, she wouldn’t have hesitated, thought twice, talked to us . . .” (TLR 61).

The kind of love that brings happiness between individuals, that expresses and reveals their authentic self is obfuscated by abstract and presumptuous religious values and precepts. It stands in-between the Church and the society, that “Goodness that sits and talks piously and decays all the time”, and “living with a woman I don’t desire – a hysteric” who fears to be lonely (41).

Michael’s dream for a simple and ordinary human life with Rose, and “To have a family” is as insurmountable as the mountain that is barely visible through the oddly barred window from the living room. Greene employs the window as a metaphor for the limited world view of the inhabitants on the nature of love and the mountain as a reflection of the monumental challenges for the lovers’ struggle for self-fulfillment. Helen and Teresa, and the barred window are foils that must stop the thought process for any meaningful meditation and decision making. Each time Michael or Rose goes to the window, probably for the possibility of a better contemplation and understanding of the issues at hand and the World in which they find themselves; they are suddenly interrupted. When Dennis Michael shows up at the Browne residence the next morning, as he had promised before his departure, he feels uncomfortable in the strange living room. Immediately “[*He goes to the window and looks out. TERESA BROWNE enters.*] (33), interrupting whatever new awareness, knowledge he might have perceived looking out to that

mountain, to the wider and realistic world. In the same way, after the two lovers resolve to go away, and to meet at Lancaster Gate Station in one hour, “[Rose closes her suitcase, then goes to the window. She tries to peer out between the bars, then climbs on a chair to see better. Teresa enters and crosses the room to the bathroom. As she closes HELEN comes in, sees the suitcase and stops. ROSE turns]

HELEN: “I hope you are not opening the window, dear?” (49). The author’s words in the stage direction and props are functional to the effect of the intrusion on the thought process of the actors. After the discovery of the ploy to prevent her from seeing her lover, the two resolve to leave. But Rose needs a moment to think, something she has been resisting to do. Perhaps, this quiet and reflective moment would have given her a different perspective, an alternative action to her present situation. Greene’s modernist setting must contain such possibilities. Written in a century that has variously been associated with tension, conflict and innovation, the setting of *The Living Room* could not have been otherwise. Her effort to peer between the bars are stopped by the intruders, Helen, and Teresa. Helen’s fear of the window being opened could be said to reflect her fear of opening to the world of new realities, possibilities, and happy life experiences. The living room alienates the women from themselves and from the World.

Typical of Greene’s use of irony and an accurate representation of the dilemma of the twentieth Century human condition, there is no happiness or love without pain and suffering. Soren Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre’s⁸ view on the chaotic situation of 20th century society and Man’s choice of

⁸ On the 20th Century and the human condition, Soren Kierkegaard argues that the chaotic situation of the society leaves human beings only with the choice of having faith in God for survival and true knowledge of themselves while Sartre’s concept of “existence precedes essence” posits that existence is self-making in the situation since to exist is precisely to constitute an identify irrespective of nature or culture. (www.britannica.com/biography/Ariston-of-Chios).

survival, and responsibility towards a meaningful existence aptly situates Michael and Rose's dilemma. The modernist setting of *TLR* allows for an existential exploration of the concepts of happiness and suffering. The living room is a symbolic court space within which Father James and Michael, Rose and Marion are given the opportunity to explore the complicated and paradoxical nature of love, happiness, pain, and suffering. They could either have faith in God for survival and true knowledge of themselves or act without control, according to Sartre by taking responsibility for their existence instead of relying on God.

When Act One, Scene II opens, the living room is turned into a mock court room between the pious and the psychologist. Michael is in the stand. He tells the Jury, "Two people are on trial. I won't answer any questions – unless Rose wants me too" (36). This is the second trial. Earlier today, his wife had passed "her verdict of guilty" (38) on his affair with Rose. This court session dissects the pros and cons on love and pain. There can be no "love affair without trouble" Father James declares (39). However, Rose wants to have "Peace and children and getting older. Outside the church" (*TLR* 63). To Greene, love and pain are intertwined. For Rose to have peace and enjoy love with Michael, his wife, Marion, must suffer to be lonely without her object of security, the husband.

Greene's modernist setting allows for a nuanced exploration of human subjectivity on questions of love, happiness, pain, and suffering. The characters' perceptions of these issues are influenced by their individual desires, biases, and fears. The reader is called upon to reflect on the complexities of human perception. It is difficult to talk with certainty about which of the characters' opinion is authentic. The effectiveness of the modernist setting is evident in Greene's ability to use it as a means of exploration of human subjectivity and the complexity

of Man's experiences. It is as though each of the characters in the work are echoing Joseph Conrad's belief that:

Everyone must walk in the light of his heart's gospel. No man's light is good to any of his fellow's that's my creed from beginning to end that's my view of life – a view that rejects all formulas, dogmas and principles of other people's making, these are only illusions. We are too varied. Another man's truth is only a dismal lie to me. (John Lester 21)

As Peter, Glenville rightly states in the introduction to the play, *TLR*, it is “. . . no apologia for Catholicism. . . . The play is not for or against Catholics, it is about them – or rather about certain individuals who find themselves in a terrible dilemma; a dilemma pushed to its farthest limit” (10). Greene's setting: the mood, props, and the strangeness are necessary elements to push his characters to their farthest limits. Rose's suicide is therefore a good condition for the tragedy.

The series of fragmented settings symbolize fear and anxiety. The living room and Regal court, and Dennis' house offer nothing but fear and anxiety, abandonment, and a sense of worthlessness. The fear and dilemmas experienced by the protagonist, Rose and Marion reflect the conflicts and tensions that characterize the twentieth century. The opening description of the setting presents an atmosphere of fear and doom. We are “... *aware of something strange about the living room*” (*TLR* 15). Everything about the living room is insane, the “[*oddness, the uneasiness, even the shape is problematic*]”. It is a bedroom that has been transformed into a living room. This reversal of order immediately creates fear and a premonition for doom as the lovers step into it. From the first scene, Michael and Rose are nervous, restless, and afraid even though the object of fear is not evident. Responding to Rose's concern about his nervousness, he says:

MICHAEL: “Oh, it's myself I'm worrying about. I'm afraid you're going to disappear. In a wood of old people. I'm

afraid I'm losing you – the minutes are hurrying. What happens tomorrow?" (*TLR*, 19). True to his fears, when Michael arrives the next morning, he is informed that he cannot see Rose. The fear of losing his newfound love, of being judged by the Catholics, the fear of being condemned to live with a hysteric woman knowing they will both "break sooner or later" (42), mounts up to frustration and anxiety. The events of the story that culminate to the encounter between Rose and Marion and the debate about the nature of love and happiness all reflect the characters' state of anxiety. Michael is filled with pity for his wife who has no friends. In the dilemma of whether to stay and comfort the young woman he is in love with, or go after his wife out of sympathy, he abandons Rose to herself. Confused and desperate, with no one to help her, Rose comes to "self-understanding that accompanies a certain mood into which I may fall, namely anxiety" (Singer, para.6). It is this state of nothingness that would trigger Rose's suicide.

The living room becomes a threat to Rose's meaningful existence just like the clock on the mantel piece in Regal Court that disrupts the seeming peace both get with each other after their brief sex sessions with its persistent reminders of the end of their stay. Marion's hysteria is accentuated by the fear of loneliness in the house if Michael should leave. She just wants to have him around even without the sexual warmth, this simply reflecting vulnerability in Greene's women.

On the other hand, Teresa, and Helen manifest fear of death by closing every room where someone has died in. The huge house that one sees from outside is now just a cluster. The only available room on the third floor is turned into a living room. This is where Rose must sleep. Though Father James simplifies the reason for the closed rooms and how it started as a foolish idea, Rose gives a profound insight into why Helen is so afraid about her love affair with Michael:

ROSE: And I know why. Love is normal. Love is being born and growing older and having children and dying. She can't bear that. She wants to build a wall of closed rooms – and in the middle there's this *living* room. Nobody will ever die here. Perpetual motion. Nobody will ever be born here. That's risky. I can camp here all night because I'm young, there's no danger, but a man mustn't come and see me here because life might not stand still. We might make love and that means getting older, running risks – in your precious museum piece of a room. Period 1902". (TLR 58)

To accomplish her goal as expressed above, Helen secretly invites Marion to meet Rose, probably with the intention of persuading her to leave Michael. This encounter is not only the climax of the play, but Rose's death is a heroic rejection rather than a cowardly escape⁹. It equally serves as the cleansing of the Browne family residence and destruction of the spell of fear. Teresa finally overcomes fear and insists to sleep in the living room.

Looking at the tragic end of the short play, perhaps, Greene challenges the reader to guard against solipsism, the fear that 'Everyone walking in the light of his own heart's gospel'. May create chaos. Perhaps the World needs some cohesion, a balance between individualism and collectivism. However, Rose's suicide, like Helen's nonchalance towards the death of her niece could also be considered as acts of self-preservation. As absurd as it may seem, Rose's death could be seen as the anguish of freedom. In her quest for stability and self-identity, she rejects her strange family, the church in which she refuses to believe in and even Michael who betrays her trust. Unlike Father James who fails to act against his physical alienation from the

⁹ Greene's characters who most often find themselves in the dilemma of choices, have been variously described as depraved Catholics, 'holly sinners and loyal mistress'. Consequently, their death cannot be seen as heroic even though some Greene critics qualify Scobie, Sarah, and Whiskey Priest as modern heroes. The "operate against the grain of hagiological tradition". For further reading on the nature of saints' life, see R.H. Miller's (1990) "Understanding Graham Greene *Understanding Contemporary English Literature*. U of South Carolina P, pp.1-89)

World by adhering to the closure of rooms in the house and confined to the third floor, the young lady chooses to alienate herself from the church, family, and Michael. She comes to the realization that her engagement in the world threatens to alienate her from her authentic self. Her choice to exit by suicide, Michael's extensive debate with Father James on the nature and reason for Rose's death, and the nature of God's mercy illustrate their search for meaning and struggle to find a sense of belonging in a world that refuses their individuality. Greene's portrayal of his major characters' internal struggles and their existential dilemmas reflect the modernist preoccupation with the individual's effort to find purpose in a world devoid of traditional values and norms. The world lived by Greene and his contemporaries is not different from that in which his characters are trapped. As the great writers of the twentieth Century felt the urge and were "impatient to break free—but from the stifling enclosure of literary tradition", so do Rose and Michael struggle to free themselves from the living room (Goldstein, 5).

In conclusion, the modernist setting in Greene's *The Living Room* serves as a bedrock upon which the play's narrative strategy is built. Greene's setting shows a clear departure from the elevated, chronological and ornamental description of a setting to portray character, to one that captures not just place and time, but the complex, uncertain and fragmented nature of life itself. The determination to assert one's uniqueness and to protest beliefs and the manner of existence of the preceding eras, justifies Rose's death by suicide. It performs a crucial role in orchestrating actions and conveying the themes of pain, suffering, and happiness, fear and anxiety, alienation, and betrayal. Greene's use of a series of fragmented settings that serve as narrative scheme and a profound exploration of his characters' struggle to make meaning of their existence in a dysfunctional world makes a good read of the short play. The narrative strategy engages the reader in the persistent yet thought

provoking debate about the truth about the individual against the society and its institutions. The sketchy setting of the play reflects human chaos, our collective psychic barrenness and our perennial existential angst which makes life our ultimate prison house. Greene's structural elements artistically crafted in his peculiar style, reveal modern Man's skepticism towards their society. Rose's death and Michaels' arguments against God, "is a call for justice to meet the physical as well as the spiritual needs of people" (Mark, Bosco 54). The three settings, the living room, the Regal Court and the Denis Residence make this balance impossible. The absurd and fragmented locations disorientate the characters. The physical and the spiritual remain disconnected from themselves, from each other and from the society.

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Artificial Intelligence a tool for revolutionizing teaching and learning of the English Language in Cameroonian Higher Education Institutes

Adolph Mbe
Department of Didactics of Disciplines
Faculty of Education
University of Yaoundé 1
Email: tanyiadolf@yahoo.fr

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate Artificial Intelligence tool use in the teaching and learning of English Language in Cameroonian Higher Education Institutions. The problem stems from the low level of language skills among English learners in Higher education institution. The sample size for this study was made up 315 participants randomly selected. The study adopted a descriptive survey. A mean of 2.83 respondents agreed that AI tools facilitate teaching and learning process of English in classrooms. Further, a mean of 3.39 respondent strongly agreed that AI can be used to overcome the difficulties of teaching and learning English. AI will lead to a significantly improvement in the teaching and learning of the English in higher education institutions in Cameroon.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Teaching, Learning, English Language and Higher Education Institution.

1. Introduction

In the 21st Century the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in classroom has improve classroom learning experiences and making teaching more engaging as students have real time help using multimedia, virtual classrooms, language learning applications, and internet platforms. According to a Google report on May 22, 2023, AI will bring major changes to the world of education, including in Africa, Asia, Europe and America. Shantanu Sinha. The vice president of Google for Education explains that AI has several benefits and negative impacts in the educational context. He said that AI has great potential to be developed in the future and to contribute to the digitalization of education. The use of AI also hurts the world of education. One of the negative effect is the dependence of teachers and students on AI which may reduce their ability and willingness to learn. Apart from that, AI also can control national education policies (Andik et al., 2023). AI technologies can provide every student with personalized one-to-one tutoring (Dickson, 2017). By combining advanced machine learning, natural language understanding, and speech technologies with on-demand human instructors, innovative language-learning services provide more effective, and much more affordable teaching than traditional language-learning techniques. AI therefore provides a lot of personal assistant for teachers and students, for example, the lesson writer Apps is one of the most favorite Apps among teachers (Gumawang 2018).

Generally, AI can facilitate learning by providing personalized learning contexts, which expedites students' independent learning (Liang et al., 2021; Yong, 2020). It enables students to study at their convenience, receive feedback, and be assisted and guided in their learning with minimal intervention from the teacher (Keerthiwansha, 2018). AI can make students more relaxed when talking to a machine, repeat tasks endlessly,

practice the language skills (Kim, 2019); it can provide learning experiences tailored to students' individual needs (Gao, 2021), offer revise suggestions, and record students' progress (Zhou, 2019). For educators, AI 'provides a new platform for the creation of an intelligent and personalized English teaching environment' (Li, 2017:35). AI-based systems can assist educators in a variety of ways and reduce the burdens (Yong, 2020); this includes checking attendance using facial recognition, automatically evaluating students, correcting English pronunciation (Na, 2021), 'tracking and recording the expressions and behaviors of students' (Z. Hou, 2021:5), collecting resources, marking homework, and answering questions for students (Y. Hou, 2020). With the current low level of language skills among English learners in Higher education in Cameroon, this technology promises to make a positive impact. As traditional strategies for teaching and building language skills are inadequate, institution are seeking new solutions. The following questions guided this study: (1) What AI tools are use by teachers to facilitate teaching and learning process in classrooms? (2) How can AI be used in overcoming teaching/learning difficulties of English in higher institute universities?

2. Literature Review

AI in education refers to the integration of AI into the educational practices to ensure that the entire learning process is effectively supported. The literature has discussed the application of AI technology in education in general and ELT in particular. In this regard, the literature expects AI-based technology products to bring about good changes in English education is largely available. For example, Yong (2020) states that "AI + big data" marked the start of a system capable of automatic correction of English composition; one that uses a large corpus to correct lexical items, collocations, and sentence structure. In terms of listening skills, AI-based technology can

select appropriate listening material from a large corpus in keeping with students' needs and abilities in English. In the field of oral training, the AI-based robots are able to speak, put questions and respond to students' questions (Thin et al., 2020). In the field of translation, AI machine translation is constantly improving with the various kinds of software that are widely used (Dai, 2022).

AI plays an important role in implementing one-to-one personalized teaching and learning (Huang et al., 2021). AI systems are able to collect and analyze students' characteristics, and thus automatically adjust lessons and present them to students in a manner that suits their needs and abilities (Gao, 2021; Wu, 2020). According to Huang et al. (2021), AI-driven systems can create personalized situational learning plans tailored to the students' abilities, so systems can provide learning activities, track student progress, create tests and evaluate students, and provide instructions as needed. Based on big data, AI can record all kinds of data of students, including modeling, analyzing, evaluating learners, and providing data support for teachers so they adjust their teaching methods and meet the requirements of teaching (Yang, 2020).

Speech recognition has also led to wider applications in ELT. The integration of speech recognition technology in existing systems has led to the development of applications offering unprecedented benefits for language learning, particularly related to speaking (Kannan & Munday, 2018). One of the widely used applications that enable students to engage in a spoken dialogue is chatbots or chat robots (Luo & Cheng, 2020). Chatbots have a great scope; they can be utilized both as a tutor and as a personalized learning tool (Haristiani, 2019). In particular, Rebman (2006) underlined two main qualifications related to speech recognition technology: translation of speech to text and conversion of text to speech.

Image recognition, face recognition, and text recognition are AI technologies that can provide technical support for instructors, students, and institutions. Utilizing AI-based recognition, issues like safety on campus and classroom monitoring can be addressed and tackled (Huang et al., 2021). Moreover, face analysis using face recognition technology can help in checking student attendance and accurately identifying the current class size, which helps reduce teachers' tasks and enables them to manage class more effectively (Thin et al., 2020). Image recognition technology can considerably reduce the workload of teachers by scanning and marking exams and obtaining text content from digital text images for instance.

In education, another application of AI is machine translation. The emergence of machine translation in the realm of AI has made great strides in expediting the teaching of English (Yong, 2020). Although machine translation is still not perfectly accurate (Li et al., 2021), Fedosov et al. (2019) posit that it can be employed whilst working with training materials when teaching a foreign language. Machine translation can also serve as a tool to motivate learners to learn English and to alleviate their learning fears (Tsai & Liao, 2021).

The development of chatbot systems that can respond to the human voice has brought tremendous opportunities to ELT. Chatbot is an AI-based computer program that engages in oral and written conversations and interacts with learners in any theme by providing intelligent conversations using human-like lingo (Haristiani, 2019). According to Haristiani (2019), many chatbots offer text combined with speech, which enables learners to take part in both listening and reading activities. Chatbots have many advantages for language learners such as improving student autonomy and allaying learner anxiety as well as their being convenient since users can use them regardless of the time and location (Shin et al., 2021).

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research method. A questionnaire was designed to measure the point of view of a sample of higher institution students in Cameroon. The tool employed the 4-point Likert scale (strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1. A sample size for 315 participants from higher education institutions in Cameroon were used for the study. These institutions included University of Yaoundé 1, University of Yaoundé 2, Catholic University of Buea, University of Bamenda and University of Maroua. Based on the sampling approach, the researcher should be able to describe the views of the sampled population in a way that may be generalized to the population (cf. Amin, 2005). The questionnaire reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha for the fields and for the tool as a whole (Table 1).

Table 1. Measuring Questionnaire Reliability

<i>No</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>No of Items</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>
1	AI tools used by teachers to facilitate teaching and learning process English in classrooms	5	0.85
2	AI can be used to overcome of the difficulties of teaching/learning English	7	0.89
Total		12	0.87

From table 1 above the Cronbach's alpha coefficient proof to be highly reliable for the study with a value of 0.87 making the instrument suitable for the study.

4. Results

Results are presented in Table 2. Five items were designed in the questionnaire to respond to this section. All the five items designed to measure respondent's view of AI tools used by

teachers to facilitate teaching and learning process English in classrooms have a mean greater than 2.5 which is the cuff of mean.

Table 2: AI tools used by teachers to facilitate teaching and learning process English in classrooms

No	Statement	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	STD
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	Education Copilot an AI tool that helps English teachers develop their curriculum	110	34.9	126	40.0	51	16.2	28	8.9	3.01	0.932
2	I frequently used tools like Google Translate and DeepL to help me in writing assignments.	114	36.2	134	42.5	48	15.2	19	6.0	3.09	0.867
3	I used AI-powered writing tools like Grammarly for spelling & grammar checks	143	45.4	104	33.0	49	15.6	19	6.0	3.18	0.907
4	I use Chatbots like the Virtual Talk App like Mondly, Memrise, Babbel, Duolingo, ChatGPT, Andy and Rosetta Stone	103	32.7	146	46.3	46	14.6	20	6.3	3.05	0.853
5	Class Point AI to generate question out of powerpoint Slides	8	2.5	49	15.6	140	44.4	118	37.5	1.83	0.778
Grand Mean										2.83	

Source: Mbeh,2023

- 44% of the respondents agree that Education Copilot is AI tool that helps English teachers develop their curriculum,
- 42.5% of respondent also agree they use Google Translate and DeepL in writing assignment,

- 45.4% of respondent strongly agree AI-powered writing tools like Grammarly helps them in spelling & grammar checks,
- 46.3% of respondent agree they use Chatbots like the Virtual Talk App such as Mondly, Memrise, Babbel and Duolingo, ChatGPT in English language teaching and learning.
- and finally 44.4% of respondent strongly disagree on Class Point AI to generate question out of PowerPoint Slides as most of them didn't know what it was all about.

With a grand mean of 2.83 respondent agree that AI tools have a significant influence on teaching and learning of English language in Higher Education institution in Cameroon. In Table 3, seven items were designed in the questionnaire to respond to the question whether AI can be used to overcome difficulties in teaching/learning English in higher education in Cameroon. All the items were designed to measure respondent's view of AI to overcome of the difficulties of teaching/learning English.

Table 3: AI can be used to overcome of the difficulties of teaching/learning English

No	Statement	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean	STD
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	Using Information Retrieval techniques to build the ability to comprehend reading passages.	130	41.3	165	52.4	18	5.7	2	0.6	3.34	0.616
2	Employing Machine Translation to develop students' translation skills	166	52.7	136	43.2	10	3.2	3	1.0	3.48	0.609
3	Using Automatic Speech Recognition techniques to learn correct pronunciation.	147	46.7	153	48.6	12	3.8	3	1.0	3.41	0.614
4	Using Text-to-Speech techniques for blind and	111	35.2	154	48.9	40	12.7	10	3.2	3.16	0.763

5	visually impaired students. Using open digital language dictionaries to enrich the student's vocabulary.	174	55.2	122	38.7	17	5.4	2	0.6	3.49	0.630
6	Using intelligent programs to augment speaking skills for English learners.	163	51.7	132	41.9	15	4.8	5	1.6	3.44	0.662
7	Employing a writing evaluation technique to teach paragraph and essay writing	164	52.1	134	42.5	15	4.8	2	.6	3.46	0.619
Total										3.39	

Source: Mbeh,2023

- 52.4% of respondent agree on Using Information Retrieval techniques to build the ability to comprehend reading passages,
- 52.7% of respondent strongly agree on employing Machine Translation to develop students' translation skills,
- 48.6% agree upon Using Automatic Speech Recognition techniques to learn correct pronunciation, 48.9% of respondent agreed on Using Text-to-Speech techniques for blind and visually impaired students,
- 55.2% of respondent strongly agreed on Using open digital language dictionaries to enrich the student's vocabulary,
- 51.7% of respondent strongly agree on Using intelligent programs to augment speaking skills for English learners,
- and finally 52.1% of respondent strongly agree on employing a writing evaluation technique to teach paragraph and essay writing. With a grand mean of 3.39 respondent strongly agree that AI overcomes learning

and teaching difficulties in higher Education institution in Cameroon.

5. Discussion

From our results it is evidence that AI tools facilitate teaching and learning process, in Higher Education institution in Cameroon. The result from the question showed that application such as Duolingo, Google Translate (Hemas et al,2018), and Grammarly can assist them in learning or English assignments in various aspects of skills, ranging from writing, listening, to speaking (especially pronunciation) (Zheng et al, 2020). The effectiveness of the use of AI in training and improving English skills has been done in several studies.

In addition, AI can also take the form of chatbots that facilitate communication, to improve one's language skills (Lu and Wang, 2019). Then, in other studies, the use of AI was shown to improve writing skills and lower the fear of writing (Manzo et al 2021). Fear in the use of foreign languages, especially speaking to students can cause student achievement scores in learning to decrease. The higher the level of anxiety, the achievement of student scores in foreign language learning will decrease

Teaching English as a second language requires training in and practicing language skills. Since the opportunity to practice these skills in real life situations are often not available, students' chances of mastering these skills are diminished. Therefore, it is necessary to switch from traditional strategies to communicative ones, and rely on digital tools to face difficulties in teaching/learning English (Haupinm, 2016: 4). Within this new digital environment, today's classrooms must provide our students with lessons where the outside world of emerging technologies is bridged to the classroom and act as guide. Learners should feel that they can have an online identity in networking spaces in order to increase opportunities for

learning, to foster collaboration, motivation and knowledge sharing (Mbeh, 2022).

The needs, functions and requirements of educational institutions have evolved beyond the traditional setting. New technologies like Audio-visual aids, print, mass media, computers, and teleconferencing have been introduced in schools for teaching, learning and management of schools. This ICT tools use in management and teaching integrate AI tools which facilitate institutional management (Ako,2024).

AI keeps track of the errors of the learner, the teacher can identify the errors that are in a risk of being fossilized and the ESL teacher can design special lessons for those students. AI can be used to store all the personalized lessons of a particular student and if he/she misses a class, they will have to do the lesson before coming to the class in the following week. Since the lessons are stored and the system marks their answers, they are not in a risk of missing the lessons. Moreover, in the traditional scenario, the ESL teacher does not have time to pay individual attention to every student (Keerthiwansa,2018).

The results of the present study are compatible with Al-Gayyar's study (2014), which emphasizes the importance of employing AI applications in the teaching/learning programs for their effectiveness. In addition, strategies and practical application of AI programs should be mastered. The results agree with those of Al-Far and Shahin (2019) in the field pertaining to the effectiveness of smart applications in teaching and learning, especially in abstract processes. They are consistent with the results of Al-Omari's study (2019), which has indicated the importance of training in using AI applications especially for their effectiveness in developing cognitive aspects.

They concur with the results of Al-Yajizi's study (2019), which indicates that it is necessary to offer university staff

training in how to employ AI applications for university education according to their needs. The results are compatible with the study of both Al-Farrani and Al-Hejaili (2020), which indicate the effectiveness of AI applications in discovering the multiple talents of students and their importance in determining students' educational and cognitive preferences, and consequently the streams they may join.

6. Conclusion

AI have revolutionised the teaching and learning of English language in Cameroon higher institution. This technologies provide technical support for instructors, students, and institutions. Student can learn at their pace while keeping track of their activities. Studying the training needs of the university teaching staff in the light of the AI applications and strategies.

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Psycho-educational devices and inclusive education in situations of multihandicaps : between competencies and educational discriminations in some primary schools in the Mfoundi and Wouri Divisions

Cyrille Ivan Chaffi
University of Yaoundé I
Faculty of Education

E-mail: cyrille.chaffi@univ-yaounde1.cm

Résumé

Le présent article vise à identifier les obstacles à une éducation inclusive de qualité en situation de polyhandicap. L'éducation inclusive nécessite un dispositif psychologique et pédagogique adapté, pouvant faciliter un transfert qualitatif de l'intégration, vers l'inclusion scolaire. Il explore les dispositifs psychopédagogiques indiqués pour la gestion des classes à polyhandicaps, en considérant les attitudes et compétences pédagogiques des enseignants qui y interviennent. L'échantillon est constitué de 69 participants des bassins pédagogiques du Mfoundi et du Wouri ayant rempli des échelles Likert à cinq niveaux. Les analyses descriptives et inférentielles des données ont été faites à travers SPSS version 24. Les résultats obtenus font état de ce que, les participants présentent une attitude négative en ce qui concerne cette inclusion scolaire en situation de polyhandicaps, justifiée par le manque de matériel didactique adéquat couplé à un manque de formation indiquée. Ainsi, un

matériel et supports didactiques adéquats et de qualité, une réorganisation du travail à l'école, ainsi qu'un soutien psychologique seraient des dispositifs favorables pour une meilleure gestion des classes hétérogènes.

Mots clés : Dispositifs psychopédagogiques, Education inclusive, compétences, discrimination, Polyhandicaps.

1. Introduction

This section is focus on the major obstacles in implementing quality inclusive practices in mainstream schools and to analyse different aspects towards inclusive education. The researcher assumes that there is a correlation between teacher's attitude towards inclusion and between Didactic materials/pedagogic Aids and inclusion.

Inclusive and quality schooling are new educational deals that aim to promote equal opportunities and the success for all children with and without disabilities (Tchombe, 2019). This fundamental right to education poses several significant challenges in Cameroon, especially inclusive education in situations of multiple disabilities. Inclusive education refers to the individual support provided to students with special educational needs in a regular classroom setting, without need of restructuring the educational environment (Benoit, Bonvin, & Angelucci, 2019). This implies that the physical presence of a child with specific needs is not enough; the school should develop psycho-educational devices likely to promote each learner's engagement, emulation, and socialisation. In other words, this is to transform the classical school to suit different needs.

In some public primary schools of Yaoundé, inclusive classes have amongst them, students said to be "normal" and students living with disabilities of various forms; such as the autistic students, the visually impaired, the hearing impaired, the

motor disabled. These disabilities are characterised by disturbances in motor, cognitive and perceptual efficiencies. It has been shown that children living with disabilities, despite their particular handicap, are able to learn throughout life, like any other persons.

Paradoxically, while these children's needs increase, inclusive classes with multiple disabilities are less well-endowed in terms of inclusive psycho-pedagogical devices than ordinary classes, thereby reducing the chances of achieving quality inclusive education. According to Tchombe (2014), up to 68.95% of teachers in inclusive classes do not have a professional and academic qualification in inclusive classroom management. Students living with disabilities are unable to adapt to their class because they participate very little or not at all in school activities, and for 67.86% of teachers, are inclusive education policies ineffective (Tchombe, 2017). This can be seen through fairly poor scores in reading, arithmetic, and writing as compared to other students, the dropout rate, and especially the lack of a remedial system during examinations. Their presence in classrooms is undoubtedly a sign of integration, but not a sign of inclusion, since they are out of phase with students said to be "normal" (Tchombe, 2017; Tremblay, 2012).

Yet quality inclusive education aims to eliminate gender inequalities in education and ensure equal access for vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations, at all levels of education and vocational training (SDG, 4.5). To promote quality inclusive education, innovative pedagogical and technological approaches, quality and suitable didactic materials, a favourable learning environment and competent teachers are a necessity. In inclusive classes with multiple disabilities, the school environment should adapt itself to allow all children to progress in different ways and achieve the same results (Caraglio, 2017).

Consequently, the main question is: *Do the psycho-educational devices currently in place allow students in class with multiple disabilities to be included and to experience fulfilling schooling ?* This question has to be clarified by the analysis of inclusive education within the context of many disabilities.

1.1 Inclusive education with multiple disabilities

Inclusive education is a process that aims to increase participation and reduce exclusion by effectively meeting the different needs of all students in school. It takes into account the personal educational needs of all children and young people in marginalisation and vulnerability situations. Its objective is to provide these children with equal rights and educational opportunities. Besides, inclusive education has been recognised as the most appropriate means to guarantee universality and non-discrimination in the Education For All (EFA) project (Barry & Benoit, 2013; Chobeaux & Maraquin 2017; Tchombe 2017).

The issue of inclusive education in Cameroon addresses limitations related to its conceptualisation and effective implementation. Examples of primary schools in Yaoundé and Douala, where pupils said to be “normal” dwell in the same classroom with students living with disabilities of several forms such as social and instrumental disabilities or motor and cerebral infirmities are legion. All these are the responsibility of a single teacher who must teach, assess them and make sure that all have the same understanding of the concepts taught. Several children with disabilities are integrated into school, but the results obtained are quite low compared to other students.

Students living with disabilities remain the neglected ones of the Cameroonian education system because, for students with special educational needs, the gap is sometimes large between what is prescribed and the reality of their schooling in ordinary classes. Furthermore, there is no clear effort deployed so that the said students be truly taken care of with an adapted psycho-

educational device. Following this school of thought, some authors proposed theoretical models of integration (Rousseau, 2015), evaluation methods, and inclusive education support (Bonvin, 2011; Barry and Benoit, 2013). However, disability in a situation of inclusion significantly limits any teacher's aptitude, even more so in a situation of multiple disabilities, couple with the absence of adapted pedagogic tools that can facilitated the inclusion of students with disabilities.

1.2 The Psycho-educational devices

The schooling of students with special educational needs, especially in an inclusive classroom situation with multiple disabilities, places at the heart of education, the debate on the issue of school diversity, and the proper educational devices to be developed to take these differences into account. Therefore, inclusive education would imply a paradigmatic shift by transferring the student's special needs to mainstream schools. This requires putting all students in situations that encourage them to mobilise in a differentiated approach, the same skills and performance. To do this, the school should develop a set of psycho-educational devices allowing all students to learn and fully participate in school life, especially those living with disabilities. The educational system here can be seen as, a set of resources, strategies, methods and actors interacting in the context of a school with multiple disabilities to achieve quality inclusive education (Benoit, 2014).

The educational system aims to improve all learners' education and to enable them to develop skills in relation to the prescribed curriculum. In this case, this presupposes competent human resources, educational supports leading to efficient learning situation in an inclusive classroom with multiple disabilities (Chobeaux & Maraquin, 2017). Amongst psycho-pedagogical devices, particular attention can be placed on attitude, didactic material, teaching aids. To better understand

this theme, the study made use of the attitude and differentiated pedagogy theory.

2. From the Theories of attitude and self-efficacy belief

Attitude refers to an individual's internal disposition that underlies his perception, personal beliefs, and behaviour towards an object or a situation (Tapia et Roussay, 1991). Strongly correlated with an opinion or a value judgment, attitude is prescriptive and descriptive. In other words, it functions as an organiser of behaviour, a preparer of action. Attitudes are predispositions that lead a person to respond, favourably or not, to a situation or a person (Doré, Wagner and Brunet, 1996). In this context, the lack of information or absence of prior experience with inclusion, especially in a classroom situation with multiple disabilities, may contribute to a less positive attitude. The attitude of teachers is essential for the successful implementation of inclusion programmes. Negative attitudes towards inclusion correspond to less effective instruction and may lower academic performance for students with disabilities (Cook, Cameron et Tankersley, 2007).

As the attitude can be either positive or negative, inclusive education's failure would also be due to a low sense of self-efficacy, which would negatively influence the teacher's pedagogical tasks. The sense of self-efficacy in this study refers to the perceptions and beliefs that teachers have about their ability to achieve educational goals in a classroom situation with multiple disabilities, which could be an essential factor of lasting demotivation, which would lead to negative discrimination towards children living with disabilities in inclusive class. Also, that "people who believe strongly in their possibilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be overcome rather than threats to be avoided, which increases the interest they find in them" (Lecomte, 2004, P. 60).

This underestimation of teachers' skills, according to Bandura (1986), is also linked to their personal experience and by fear of failure because of the lack of personal mastery of differentiated teaching in the classroom with multiple disabilities can be perceived as a source of demotivation; It is also a significant indicator in the construction of solid beliefs about one's ineffectiveness in applying differentiated pedagogy. This practice implies that all students can learn and succeed depending on the learning methods or objects that can be customised to meet the disability (Falvey et Givner, 2005; Snell and Janney, 2005).

To do this, the teacher must, in three stages (prior to learning, during learning, and after learning), analyse the situation of each pupil in order to highlight the prior skills that the student must necessarily master. It is a question of identifying the pupils' achievements, identifying mental procedures, and determining the assistance to be provided. Secondly, during learning, and depending on the difficulties identified, the teacher can differentiate the work organisations (individual or pair work, support for a homogeneous group, or collective management). He can differentiate available educational tools, differentiate by content and vary the teaching aids.

Thirdly, the teacher can manage through remediation the pupils in difficulty (propose to analyse the error, explain by other approaches and supports such as ICTE, material, drawing ...), provide enrichment activities and autonomy (Bussy, 2010; Battut et Bensimon, 2006;). Based on a psycho-pedagogical questioning, we reflect on the adequacy between attitudes, teaching material, pedagogy, and multi-handicaps class support.

Do psycho-educational devices in the classroom with multiple disabilities promote inclusive education for students living with disabilities? In other words, is there a relationship

between psycho-educational devices and school inclusion in a classroom situation with multiple disabilities? Also, we posit as a general hypothesis that psycho-educational devices in the classroom with multiple disabilities have a significant influence on the educational inclusion of students living with disabilities. The research hypotheses are articulated as follows.

- Ha₁: Teachers' attitudes have a significant influence on the educational inclusion of students living with disabilities in class with multiple disabilities.
- Ha₂: Didactic Materials and pedagogic Aids have a relevant impact on the educational inclusion of students living with disabilities in the classroom with multiple disabilities.

These variables, in our study will be measured from the following methodological approach related to the issue of psycho-pedagogical devices

3. Methodology

This study is based on a mixed empirical approach, made up of 69 teachers from the Mfoundi Division (37 teachers) in the Centre Region and from the Wouri Division (32 teachers) in the Littoral Region, selected for convenience. The average age is 32 years, with valid percentage of 61.4% representing the proportion of females surveyed and 38.6% representing the proportion of males. The average number of years of experience in inclusive classes is six (6) years; the youngest has less than a year of service while the oldest has 13 years of service as a teacher and nine (9) years in inclusive classes.

The study was conducted in Yaoundé and Douala, where the respondents were accidentally encountered on duty at the time of the schools' survey. A questionnaire and interview guide were constructed to collect data for a holistic understanding of the barriers to effective inclusive education. Each corpus is made

up of items related to teachers' attitudes towards disability (items 1-6), teaching material and teaching aids (items 7-13) as well as school inclusion (items 14-20). Apart from the socio-demographic variables, all the other items correspond to ordinal measurement scales of the 5-points Likert scales (Absolutely false-1-2-3-4-5-Absolutely true).

The instruments were pretested with a Cronbach α reliability index of 0.867. This phase made it possible to collect the data which were analysed with statistical tools (descriptive and inferential analysis) with regard to quantitative data, and the content analysis with the process of qualitative analysis of Corbin and Strauss (2008), whose results are supported by verbatims obtained from semi-structured interviews. These elements will help to understand the factors that contribute to or hinder the effective implementation of quality inclusive education. Thus, teachers' attitude, Didactics materials and pedagogic Aids were measured and the following results were obtained.

4. Results

The quantitative analysis regarding the main variables of this study on the inclusive domain revealed the following results.

4.1. The attitude of teachers

Most of the teachers (86.7%) have difficulty identifying different disabilities and do not know how to do it. This develops a negative attitude (89.5%) towards disability and especially when it comes to dealing with deaf, autistic and visually impaired students because they (77.3%) have not received adequate training about the different pedagogical approaches, in particular, differentiated pedagogy in the sense that faced with teaching/learning activities, some pupils could experience episodic or lasting difficulties. It is also observed a rejection of

otherness which manifests itself in the non-educational support of children living with disabilities,

According to 82.1% of respondents, they do not take care of students living with disabilities because they perceive them to be as an obstacle to teaching and should be directed to specialised structures.

"For example, in this classroom, I have 89 students among which there is a (1) visually impaired, two (2) others with several deformities that I cannot describe. When delivering my lectures, I first need to take those I can work with normally and then take care of the other three if time permits. It's hard for me to take care of everyone at the same time which poses the problem of the pace of learning, and with that I can't complete my syllabus " (A teacher).

This rejection or negative discrimination of otherness can also be explained by the fact that teachers (75.1%) state that they have a low feeling of individual effectiveness when it comes to dealing with these different disabilities, because they do not have a pedagogy likely to lead all students towards quality inclusion in school which should take into account the epistemology of each discipline, the skills targeted, the needs and interests of learners to facilitate their empowerment. To do this, the teacher must have access to suitable and quality teaching materials.

4.2 Didactic Materials and pedagogic Aids

Inclusive programs should therefore not neglect the teaching material simply because it is with these materials that teachers will have to implement this social policy. Regarding this study, the results show 91.7% of respondents acknowledged not to have the appropriate teaching material to cater for children living with disabilities at the same time as children not directly bearing disabilities. These same respondents claimed to use the same teaching material for all learners. This teaching material is not suitable in an inclusive class with multiple disabilities for it

must allow a permanent exchange between the pupil and the taught discipline, favour a progression that aligns with the learner's rhythm, develop a lively reaction during the production of responses.

The absence of this material according to respondents (89.6% of responses) has more impact when teaching lessons in Mathematics and spelling especially for the visually impaired students.

« It is always very challenging to teach in the conditions where I have blind students with me. How to teach mathematics, perhaps also spelling to such pupils without a material which goes with their handicap? We manage as best as we can, for we have not been trained for such situations. During examinations, we give them simplified calculations, especially arithmetic to make things easier; meanwhile others have a more challenging test. For the blind, we call on someone who knows braille to translate questions and we also rely on him for the grading of the paper, there we do not know if the output of the child is properly translated by this expert » (Teacher Y).

Apart from the absence of teaching materials, there is also an absence of teaching aids.

About this aids, the distribution of the respondents' opinions reveals a very strong frequency, 74.5% say they do not have teaching aids for pupils living with disabilities. These teaching aids represent a fairly important lever for the progress of learning. They help to master the elements taught. On the other hand, 22.4% said they were in possession of designs, toys as teaching aids. These supports are valid for certain pupils. Children with specific needs should have support that takes their disability into consideration, especially in inclusive classes with

multiple disabilities. "*We could be provided with computers and with software that we see elsewhere as word predictors, mathematics software, which will allow these students to be at the same level and advance like the others*" (Teacher W).

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient R was used to test the hypotheses of this study which come in two folds:

Ha₁ -*Teachers' attitudes significantly influence the educational inclusion of students living with disabilities in class with multiple disabilities.*

The calculated value of the correlation coefficient is $r = 0.672$, which means that there is a strong positive relationship between the two variables of this hypothesis. The value of **p** being = **0.042 < 0.01**, the study therefore accepts the alternative hypothesis, and concludes based on the analysis of the data of the present research that there is enough evidence to ascertain the existence of a strong relationship between the attitudes of the teachers and the educational inclusion of pupils living with a disability in a class with multiple disabilities ($r = 0.672, p < .01$). In other words, it appears that teachers have a negative attitude with regard to this inclusion in school in a situation of multiple disabilities.

This negative attitude is developed and reinforced by the lack of training for the management of this type of class as well as the absence of psychological support to help them manage heterogeneous classes. A lack of know-how, develops the fear of doing wrong, even a feeling of lack of self-confidence, the teacher is unable to organise and execute the prescribed course of action to produce the desired results.

The second fold to be tested is:

Ha₂- *The teaching materials and teaching aids have a relevant impact on the educational inclusion of students living with disabilities in the classroom with multiple disabilities.*

The correlation test reveals a coefficient $r = 0.569$, which results in the existence of a strong relationship between the two variables of this hypothesis. The value of p being $< .01$, leads to the study accepting the alternative hypothesis, and to conclude that the analysis of the data of the present research reveals is a strong positive relationship between the didactic material and other teaching aids and school inclusion of students living with disabilities in heterogeneous class ($r = 0.569$, $p < .01$).

The absence of adequate teaching material and teaching aids has a strong influence on the consistency of the teacher's Self; there is a strong inconsistency between the teacher's potential and his achievements and his ability to develop to the best of his abilities within the framework of his teaching. From the tests of hypotheses, we observe that there is a strong correlation between psycho-pedagogical devices in classrooms with multiple disabilities and school inclusion of students living with disabilities.

This research extends and contributes to previous works carried on inclusive education in Cameroon. With the results obtain from this study, what can be its consistency with other studies?

5. Discussion of Results

The philosophy of quality school inclusion advocates practices that promote all learners' participation through activities that are more conducive to the development of the skills of all learners, especially the most vulnerable. To this effect, a set of adequate and flexible psycho-educational devices must be implemented to ensure the acquisition of the same praxeological elements by all learners (Tchombe, 2019).

While the Government of Cameroon keeps talking about inclusive education, field accounts show that it is still an

ideology because there is no noticeable difference between ordinary schools and inclusive schools especially, those where there are classes with multiple disabilities. Teachers still have negative attitudes about disability and are very poorly equipped with respect to pedagogical support. In this context, it is a situation in which teachers focus on the pupil's deficiencies, resulting in a feeling of an inability of this pupil to progress, which is perceived as an educational regression.

One respondent reiterated and underlined that the teachers neglect these children mainly because of their inability to solve cognitive problems, and especially with regard to their handicap, cannot follow the same school rhythm as the others. This suggests that the view of the teaching staff must also change. This is the misinterpretation of Slee (2011) for whom the fight against social and school exclusion is thus a societal and collective responsibility and calls for the more individual responsibility of each of the school's actors and more generally of the community educational.

To this end, the training and retraining of teachers on educational practices, on behavior management, as well as supporting children in classes with multiple disabilities, is an essential factor for increasing the feeling of personal effectiveness (Gaudreau & al., 2013; Odom & al., 2010) and the achievement of inclusive quality education. Again, a knowledge of Psychology is an essential prerequisite for inclusive education best practices, particularly for the creation of an appropriate learning environment, the development of practical pedagogical approaches and a better knowledge of children living with disabilities. These elements will allow teachers to have a better perception of children living with disabilities and change their attitudes towards them.

The work of Bonvin (2011) and Silverman (2007) underline that the attitudes and beliefs of teachers directly affect

their behavior with students and therefore have a strong influence on their relationships and especially their teaching practices. These attitudes in a situation of disability, especially in classes with multiple disabilities, most at time arise from a lack of knowledge of the teaching methods to be adopted and especially from the absence of teaching material and adequate teaching aids. The feeling of effectiveness of teachers is mainly focused on their incapacity to carry out their task by relying on their experiences and know-how and feel helpless in the face of quality school inclusion in a situation of multiple disabilities, which also requires material and appropriate teaching aids.

Needs in terms of quality inclusive education require not only an adapted curriculum, supported customized teaching methods and adequate didactic materials and supports. This means having tools that take into account the diversity and heterogeneity of learners who aim to achieve skills of equivalent value for all. There are no educational devices and supports for better intervention in the classroom with multiple disabilities.

Differentiated pedagogy is of significant importance for teachers in a diverse class, especially with multiple disabilities. Through this pedagogy, they try to work on the same set of skills in everyone, sometimes taking different paths depending on the learner. To do this, teachers develop adapted strategies in a classroom that will make it possible to ensure that all learners are engaged, that the teachings are consistent, uniform and promote abstract reasoning in a context of flexibility. For this practice to be effective, it is necessary to have suitable devices and teaching aids. Inclusive teaching material is non-existent in inclusive and experimental primary schools in Yaoundé and Douala.

This makes it challenging to optimise skills development and achieve inclusive educational goals. Differentiated pedagogy is nowadays based on ICT for Education for its

emergence, especially in regular classes with multiple disabilities. ICTE can promote the implementation of this pedagogy via tools for diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of each individual, a multiplication of supports for learning, the possibility of increasing the student's opportunities for action and his autonomy through educational supports such as images, sounds, animated objects, texts, simulators which take into account the cognitive specificities of all students (Baltut, 2006; Przesmychi, 1991).

An inclusive education system relies on mainstream schools adopting a more inclusive approach that can enable learners to acquire and apply all the skills targeted. To do this, a change in attitudes about people living with disabilities is needed to make students and teachers more tolerant and open to quality inclusive education. Besides, identifying and applying pedagogical approaches, materials, and teaching aids adapted to all learners' differences. The problem of school inclusion does not rest on the learner but on the education system, which has failed to reorganise the ordinary school into an inclusive school, especially in situations of multiple disabilities.

This still creates a real gap between the theory of the inclusive school and its application which risks to endure if in a holistic way, a referential for the reception, an inclusive curriculum which relates to the cognitive, emotional, social and creative development of the child, enabling everyone to learn, to know, to do, to be, and to live together, are not created. Therefore, there is an urgent need to transform the educational environment by building and modernising educational facilities that take into account the learner and their disability, which will allow a change of attitude towards inclusive quality education.

However, because of poorly trained personnel in inclusive education, weak self-efficacy, negative attitudes of teachers, lack of adapted didactics materials and pedagogic aids, inclusive

education have become ineffective specifically in situations of Multihandicaps.

6. Conclusion

Inclusive school in a setting with multiple disabilities requires implementing the adoption of a positive attitude, adequate and quality teaching materials and supports and a reorganisation of work at school for a more social and educational approach. It is not about creating a unique school environment that applies to everyone but rather a flexible approach allowing everyone to acquire the same skills for absolute autonomy. From the analysis above, the redefinition of the curriculum, pedagogical approaches, hosting infrastructures, the definition of the inclusive profile of teachers and their training, teaching materials and adapted teaching aids all appear necessary for inclusive quality education. Therefore, to curb these insufficiencies about inclusive education they should be a symbiotic relationship between teachers, parents, the Local Educational Authority, the school environment and the Ministries in charge of education in Cameroon. There is a strong need to first of all, equip inclusive schools with inclusive didactic and pedagogic tools, and create mechanisms to change the knowledge, attitudes and reinforce the competencies of teachers on inclusive education. This will develop a lasting motivation among teachers for a complete transformation of the education system that meets learners' needs in inclusive education.

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Graduates' gratitude: The generic structure of dissertation acknowledgements in Cameroon English

Mary Shey

Department of English

Ecole Normale Supérieure

University of Yaounde 1

Email: mmshey2@gmail.com

Abstract

While dissertation acknowledgements are proving to be fertile data for studies in English for Academic Purposes and English in the Outer Circle, they seem to have so far received inadequate attention in Cameroon. Genre studies and linguistic analysis have been used to describe and analyze academic texts around the globe (Swales 2004; Hyland 2004; Schmied 2016; Nkemleke 2014, 2016, 2023). This paper investigates instances of conventionalised generic structures in dissertation acknowledgements in Cameroon English. Using a textual approach which is broadly genre-based, and with close reference to Hyland's (2004) study on dissertation acknowledgements, the study analyses the generic structures of 200 dissertation acknowledgements collected from some major faculties of three State Universities in Cameroon over a period of 24 years (1990-2014). The analyses reveal that dissertation acknowledgements in Cameroonian English converge as well as they diverge with the three-tier structure proposed by Hyland (2004). The results, however, show some variations in them 'Moves' and 'thanking acts' across disciplines. The study concludes that dissertation acknowledgements by Cameroonian students are fast

developing their own conventions when compared with those written elsewhere.

Keywords: Dissertation acknowledgement, thanking, gratitude, move, step.

1. Introduction

The area of New Englishes has attracted a lot of research over the past several decades. Many researchers have undertaken to investigate and describe what becomes of the English language when it breaks the bounds of the British Isles (e.g. Smith 1976, 1987; Kachru 1986; Rampton 1990; Widdowson 1993). It has been explained how and why the English language gained its status as a world language or as the pre-eminent means of communication around the globe (e.g. Brut-Grifler 2001). Issues like the spread of English around the world leading to the origin and development of New Englishes; their grammars (phonology, syntax, patterns of usage) and other distinctive features are not unfamiliar areas of research (Platt et al. 1984; Rosewarne 1996).

Discourse analysis and text linguistic approaches have also been used to describe features of these New Englishes. Text types such as book introductions, book blurbs, research articles, research abstracts, newspaper articles, private letters, job applications, electronic mails and business letters have proven to be fertile data for research in New Englishes in recent years (e.g. Thompson 2001; Nkemleke 2004). The notion of genre and its application in academic writing in English in the Outer Circle has also witnessed growing interest in the last decade. The rhetorical features of academic texts such as research articles, book blurbs, journal abstracts, students' dissertations, and editorial correspondences have been the subject of research in recent years (Swales 2004; Hyland 2004; Schmied 20016; Nkemleke 2014, 2016, 2023). Specific features of dissertation acknowledgements have been investigated by Hyland and Tse

2004; Nkemeleke 2006; Al Ali 2010; Mengwei and Jiang 2010; Lasaky 2011 and Cheng (2012). A dissertation acknowledgement (herein after DA), according to Hyland (2003), is a cinderella genre which is neither strictly academic nor entirely personal. DAs, as a text type, seem to possess their own peculiar features and have reflected the moral, psychological, socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their authors (Al-Ali 2010; Hyland 2004; Hyland & Tse 2004).

Apart from Nkemeleke (2006), the rhetorical features of dissertation acknowledgements have not received due attention in Cameroon, at least to the best of our knowledge. The present enquiry attempts to extend Nkemeleke's study to a larger scope with data representative enough of the whole national territory. We also enlarge our interest from cultural contextualisation to incorporate disciplinary conventions, communicative purposes and the expression of private intentions in the text type. Given that genre analysis is the study of how language is used in specific contexts, we base our investigation and analysis on the cognitive, socio-cultural, historical and linguistic contexts in Cameroon to establish the peculiar generic features of dissertation acknowledgements.

This article is divided into six sections, some of which are further divided into subsections. After the introduction, we move to theoretical premise which is mainly focused on the genre theory. The third section focuses on empirical literature and is divided into three main sections namely dissertation acknowledgements as a community practice, genre analysis of dissertations and generic structure of dissertation acknowledgements. The fourth section outlines the methods of data collection and analysis while the fifth section presents the results quantitatively and advances some discussions. The sixth section gives a general conclusion.

2. The concept of genre

Genre is defined according to Swales (1990), as a recognisable communicative event characterised by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Bhatia (2002) elaborates this definition into six salient points for easy understanding: 1) that genres are recognisable communicative events with a peculiar set of communicative purposes shared by members of a professional or academic community; 2) that genres have certain conventions by which they abide; 3) that expert members of a given professional community have a better understanding of the genre in question; 4) that generic resources serve the purpose of expressing private and organisational intentions; 5) that genres reflect social action in specific social context; 6) that each genre is an integral unit in terms of textual, discursive and contextual factors.

Bhatia (*ibid.*) admits that genre, in the first place, is characterised by a given or an identifiable communicative purpose which it is intended to fulfil. He further admits that there are nevertheless a number of factors that influence the nature and construction of a genre. Those factors include content, form, intended audience and medium or channel. According to him, the internal structure of a genre depends greatly on a shared set of communicative purposes.

According to Swales (1985), different types of genre portray constraints on allowable contributors in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. This means that a particular genre has its boundaries along which its writers are confined. This definition of genre seems to claim that genres are highly perceptive and static within their various professional and academic communities. Yet Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995:6) express a seemingly contrary view to it in the following

terms: ‘...genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to conditions of use and genre knowledge is therefore best conceptualised as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary cultures’.

In a synthesis of these seemingly contrary views, Bhatia attempts a more comprehensive definition of genre which is simply a blend of the two views which he elaborates in the following points.

- Although genres are identified on the basis of conventionalised features, yet we know that they are constantly developing.
- We often find typical textualization patterns, yet we know that members of a professional community exploit them to create novel patterns.
- We know that genres serve typical socially recognized communicative purposes, yet we often find genres being exploited to convey private intentions.
- We all manage to identify individual generic artefacts, yet in the real world they are often seen in hybrid, mixed and embedded forms.
- Genres are often given typical names, yet different members of discourse communities have varying perspectives and interpretations of them which sometimes are contested.
- We believe that genres are independent of disciplinary variations, yet we often find disciplinary conflicts in many of them, especially in academic genres.
- We often associate genre analysis with typical textual investigations, yet we find good analyses using a variety of methods, including textual analysis, ethnographic techniques, cognitive procedures,

computational rigour and critical awareness, just to name a few.

From the above discussion, one can understand that a good application of the genre theory is one that draws from the conventionalised communicative purposes of the genre in question to identify and/or establish innovations within the genre. Bhatia captures it by positing that a good genre theory takes into consideration “the real world of discourse which is complex, dynamic, constantly developing and often less predictable” (Bhatia 2004:25).

Drawing from these ideas, in our analysis of DAs in Cameroon English, we will be taking into consideration the various conventions in the use of discourse and generic resources, that is, the various rhetorical situations within the academic and professional discourse community, which characterise the genre. We are also concerned with the way members of the academic community (writers and readers of DAs) try to exploit, appropriate, interpret and innovate generic expectations and conventions in order to realize their communicative purposes and private intentions.

3. Dissertation acknowledgements as a community practice

Bhatia (2002) asserts that textual analysis should move from the surface-level properties to incorporate how a text is likely to be interpreted. For a text to be properly interpreted, the reader needs to be initiated into some basic social/community principles of the context or environment in which the text was constructed (Nkemleke 2004). Also “language is always used within a community – be it a community bound by socio-political ties or by the practice of common academic disciplines and nonacademic professional groups.” (Nkemleke 2011:6.) Given that academic writing is being conventionalised increasingly and is fast developing its own norms about how

things are said and done (Hyland (2009) observes that it would partly depend on the individual's projection of a shared professional context. In the same line, Nkemleke (2011) notes that the expectations, conventions and practice of such writing can best be conceptualised based on the knowledge and understanding of that shared context.

According to Nkemleke (*ibid.*), the idea of community is always implied in any language study be it sociolinguistic, constructivist or socio-scientific. This is because the resources of language (that is, its grammar and lexis), are fairly static while community conventions, norms, rules and beliefs are relatively dynamic. To him,

how individuals and groups draw from these resources to construct meaning depends on a whole range of parameters: from formality to informality, educated to less educated, written to spoken, etc. It follows from this premise that as members of a defined group engage with one another in using language, particular ways of "saying" and "doing" will emerge and become entrenched. These will gradually come to be accepted as the norm of common practice and of recognition of membership into the group." (pp6).

Therefore, in our analysis of DAs as a community practice within the academic milieu, we pay attention to those features that have come to be recognized, accepted and conventionalised as to how things are 'done' and 'said' within the Cameroonian academic community. We consider the linguistic resources (which are fairly static) often employed by the authors and also take a closer look into the shared beliefs and values that have conditioned such conventions. Basing on Nkemleke's (2011) consideration of the broad nature of academic writing, we dare to assume that DAs constitute an important community practice within the academic community in Cameroon.

3.1. Approaches to acknowledgements in academic texts

As earlier mentioned, acknowledgements have proven to be very fertile data in academic research (Bazerman 1988). Over the last few decades, they have attracted the interest of biometricians who used a quantitative method in seeking to establish links between research networks and relationships among academic journals (Cronin 1991, 1995; Cronin et al. 1993; Cronin and Overfelt 1994). Studies on acknowledgements have taken different perspectives: genre analysis, move analysis and pragmatic analysis using data from different cultural and academic settings. Since these studies differ in data, they consequently differ in methodology and results. However, such studies have been conspicuously neglected in the literature in Cameroon.

3.1. Genre analysis of dissertation acknowledgements

Studies on genre analyses of DAs have based their investigations on their rhetorical structures and linguistic realisations. Pragmatic analyses have focused more on the strategic use of thanking expressions by writers and the analysis of the meanings of words and sentences in context, the inferred private intentions of writers and the status and relationships of those involved (Gianoni 2002; Hyland; 2004; Hyland and Tse 2004; Nkemleke 2006; Al-Ali 2010; Afful & Nwinlaaru 2010). From a genre analytical perspective, for example, Gianoni examines the socio-pragmatic constructions and textualizations of acknowledgement texts in English and Italian research articles and brings out the rhetorical preferences by English and Italian writers. His conclusions are based on aspects of generic complexity and staging, personal involvement and peer-reference, authorial responsibility and pragmatic conspiracy. Mingwei and Jiang (2010) investigate English language acknowledgements accompanying 40 MA and PhD dissertations composed by student writers in Chinese Mainland with the aim

of revealing their structures and the lexico-grammatical patterns used to realize the ‘moves’ and ‘steps’. They bring out similarities and differences between the acknowledgement texts produced in the Chinese Mainland and those produced in Hong Kong. Al-Ali (2010) examines the generic structures and linguistic patterns of gratitude expressions used in acknowledgements accompanying 100 Arabic PhD dissertations. He analyses the various rhetorical component options used by writers to convey gratitude. He also analyses the role sociocultural factors play in shaping the genre in question. He concludes that writers of Arabic DAs tend to use certain linguistic features that reflect complex relationships among academic and social community members.

3.2. Generic structure of dissertation acknowledgements

The generic structures of DAs in relation to their communicative purposes have been identified through a move analysis. Hyland (2004) examines acknowledgements accompanying 240 PhD and MA dissertations written by non-native speakers of English in a variety of disciplines (namely: Electronic Engineering, Computer Science, Business Studies, Biology, Applied Linguistics and Public Administration) at five Hong Kong universities and proposes a move structure including three moves: that is, 1) the reflecting move, 2) the thanking move and 3) the announcing move which has been adopted by Hyland and Tse 2004; Nkemleke 2006; Al-Ali 2010; Mengwei and Jiang 2010; Afful & Mwinlaaru 2010; Lasaky 2011 and Cheng 2012). These moves are further divided into steps as follows:

Table 1: Generic structure of DAs after Hyland (2004)

Reflecting move	Introspective statement on the writer's research experience
Thanking move	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions

. Presenting participants	Introducing those to be thanked
. Thanking for academic assistance	Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, feedback, etc.
. Thanking for resources	Thanks for access to data and clerical, technical and financial support
. Thanking for moral support	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy and patience
Announcing move	Statement delineating responsibility and inspiration
. Accepting responsibility	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws and errors
3.2. Dedicating the thesis	A formal dedication of the thesis to an individual

Hyland remarks that the ‘Thanking Move’ is the main move and the ‘Reflecting’ and ‘Announcing Moves’ are optional and therefore serve just as frames.

4. Data and methods

This research is based on 200 DAs collected from three major faculties of three State Universities in Cameroon over a period of 24 years (1990 to 2014). The choice of State Universities was guided by the availability of data in large quantities. The texts were collected from six disciplines in three main fields namely the humanities (English language and Literature), social sciences (History and Economics), and hard sciences (Biology and Physics). The analysis was done both at qualitative and quantitative levels. It involved reading through each text manually to determine the number of moves and steps in it. The texts from each discipline were analysed separately and results are presented in frequency tables. Comparisons and generalisations are made depending on what is revealed from the analysis of the data from each field. These comparisons were guided by our background

knowledge about each field validated by the responses obtained from some interviews that were conducted with expert members of that specific academic community.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. Findings

From our analysis, DAs written by Cameroonian students reveal a demonstration of differences in the number and frequency of ‘steps’ employed in each discipline. We found out that the DA could be divided into five main ‘moves’ with each ‘move’ being divided into ‘steps’ as presented below. It is worth noting that ‘move two’, ‘move three’ and ‘move four’ seem to be more compulsory while ‘move one’ and ‘move five’ seem to be more optional.

Move one: Introduction

Step one: Opening

Step two: Presenting participants

Step three: Thanking God

Move two: Thanking for academic support

Step one: Thanking supervisor

Step two: Thanking other lecturers

Step three: Thanking for peer mentorship

Step four: Thanking for access to material

Move three: Thanking for moral support

Step one: Thanking family members

Step two: Thanking friends and well-wishers

Move four: Thanking for technical assistance

Step one: Thanking informants

Step two: Thanking the typist

Move five: Closing

Step one: Invoking blessings and promising to share good results

Step two: Accepting responsibility

Step three: Making an excuse

Step four: Closing

These steps are presented below as 1-15 for easy management. It is simply a chronological presentation of the steps as presented in the different moves above.

Step one: Opening

Step two: Presenting participants

Step three: Thanking God

Step four: Thanking supervisor

Step five: Thanking other academics

Step six: Thanking for peer mentorship

Step seven: Thanking for access to material

Step eight: Thanking family members

Step nine: Thanking friends and well-wishers

Step ten: Thanking informants

Step eleven: Thanking for practical assistance

Step twelve: Invoking blessings and promising to share good results

Step thirteen: Accepting responsibility

Step fourteen: Making an excuse

Step fifteen: Closing

Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages of the steps in each discipline. The last column (mean) presents the sum of all the frequencies of each step across the disciplines. It provides the basis for our generalisations.

Table 2: Frequencies of steps in DAs in Cameroon English

Step	Language	Literature	History	Economics	Physics	Biology	Mean
1	10 (20%)	09 (36%)	00 (00%)	05 (20%)	08 (32%)	05 (20%)	37 (19%)
2	40 (80%)	39 (78%)	19 (%)	10 (40%)	07 (14%)	14 (56%)	129(65%)
3	10 (20%)	13 (26%)	01 (%)	14 (56%)	12 (48%)	11 (44%)	61 (31%)
4	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	25 (%)	25 (100%)	25 (100%)	25 (100%)	200(100%)
5	34 (68%)	33 (66%)	21 (%)	24 (96%)	25 (100%)	25 (100%)	162 (81%)

6	44 (88%)	40 (80%)	19 (%)	25 (100%)	23 (92%)	15 (60%)	168 (84%)
7	23 (46%)	25 (50%)	16 (%)	04 (16%)	07 (28%)	20 (80%)	95 (48%)
8	27 (54%)	30 (60%)	06 (%)	17 (68%)	20 (80%)	23 (92%)	123 (62%)
9	25 (50%)	33 (66%)	13 (%)	25 (100%)	17 (68%)	00 (00%)	113 (57%)
10	25 (50%)	3 (06%)	12 (%)	03 (12%)	00 (00%)	14 (56%)	57 (29%)
11	16 (32%)	19 (35%)	07 (%)	01 (04%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)	43(22%)
12	1 (02%)	11 (22%)	01 (%)	01 (04%)	01 (04%)	00 (00%)	15 (08%)
13	00 (00%)	4 (08%)	10 (%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)	14 (07%)
14	09 (18%)	7 (14%)	06 (%)	04 (16%)	01 (04%)	00 (00%)	27 (14%)
15	06 (12%)	3 (06%)	00 (%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)	09 (05%)
Total	320	264	156	158	146	152	1253

Fig. 3 presents the mean value of the details of table 2 above across disciplines.

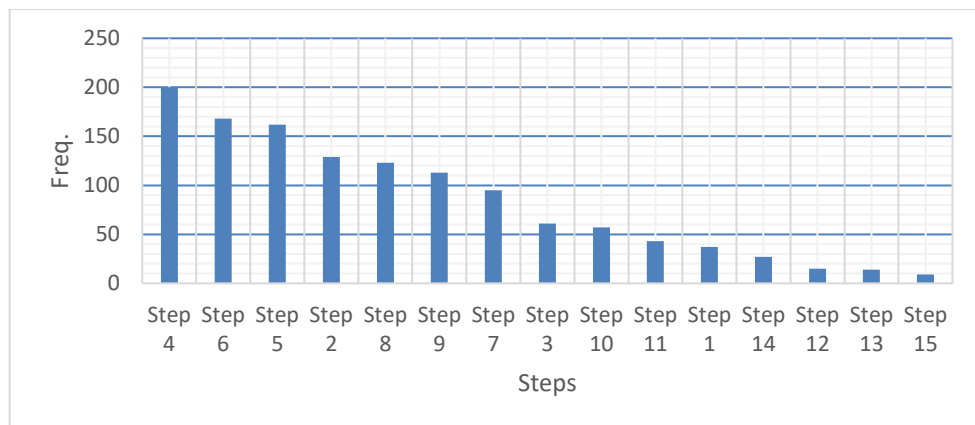


Figure 3. Mean value of favoured steps in DAs in Cameroon English

5.2. Discussion

The above figures reveal that dissertation acknowledgements in Cameroon take the following trends.

Move 1: Introduction

This move corresponds to Hyland's 'Reflecting Move' where the author introduces the acknowledgement text either by an introspective statement, presenting participants or thanking God.

Sep 1: Opening

This step seems to be optional as it was present only in 19 % of the total corpus. It occurred in 32% of the corpus from physics students, 20% from English language students, 18% from Literature students, 05% from Biology and Economics and practically absent in the corpus of History students. This may suggest that there are some disciplinary conventions as far as introducing the acknowledgement section of the dissertation is concerned. This step is peripheral to the thanking steps given that it has little to do with those receiving the thanks. In most cases it focuses rather on the researcher and his experience in carrying out research. Where this move featured, it occurred at the very initial position of the text.

The opening of an acknowledgement text offers the author an opportunity publicly to contemplate on the experience he had while carrying out research. It involves the academic struggles the researcher has gone through given that in most cases it is their first attempt at venturing into research. This means that relying only on the researcher's own effort and resources (intellectual, financial, material and otherwise) would not be possible or would not have produced the same result within the same time frame. In this way, the researcher also has an opportunity to acknowledge the fact that reliance on other people becomes indispensable in such a *great endeavour*. This public contemplation is usually done through different ways, namely an introspective statement on the research experience, a proverb, thanking God who made available those *good* people who brought in help and gave them strength and guidance or an

introspective statement on communal life as seen in examples and 2 below.

1. I thank the Almighty God for giving me a life, health and strength to attend this level and carry out this research. (Physics, University of Buea.)
2. Nobody can claim to be powerful enough to carry out a research work of this nature without the help of many people. In fact, given that this work was my first step into research, I needed the assistance of more experienced people to drive it to its end. (Literature, University of Yaounde.)

Step 2: Presenting participants

This step closely followed the opening step and featured in 65% of the total corpus. It was more common in the English Language, Literature, History and Biology texts and less common in the Economics and Physics texts. The purpose of this step is principally textual (Hyland 2004); to introduce the people to be thanked who are often named in the next steps. It serves as a prologue to signal the purpose of the text which is to acknowledge all who participated in one way or another to the writing of the dissertation. In presenting the participants, the author also summarises the kind of help or assistance brought in by those participants (moral, financial, intellectual, etc.). This step does not only provide the writer with a means of offering inclusive thanks to all the participants whose names might not figure in the list, but also serves as a signal that a list is following.

3. What I am appending here is not just a catalogue of debts and gratitude but a testament of fellowship, love and abiding solidarity. I am to acknowledge the immense help of the following people. (Literature, ENS Yaounde)

4. I wish to express my gratitude to those people whose works and personal discussions helped me in shaping the facts I have expressed in this study. (History University of Bamenda)

This step generally occurred in the lengthier and wordier texts which contained several thanking steps.

Sep 3: Thanking God

This component of the DA is quite optional and occurred only in about 31% of the total corpus. It often appeared either at the initial position after the reflecting move or at the final position of the acknowledgement text. This move generally contains expressions of thanks and praises to God for such favours as strength, courage, endurance and people of good will.

5. I am very grateful to God Almighty for giving me good health and the wisdom to be able to reach this stage in my educational career. (Literature, University of Yaoundé)
6. Above all, I thank God Almighty for guidance, protection and provision of strength and grace throughout my studies. (Biology, University of Buea)

Move 2: Thanking for academic support

This section of the acknowledgement text concentrates mostly on academic participants.

Step1. Thanking Supervisor

The importance of this step is seen in the fact it appears in all the 200 DAs that constituted our corpus. The supervisor received thanks in a special way that distinguishes his assistance from that which was brought in by other academics.

Examples 7 and 8 below illustrate the fact that the supervisor is a central character in the writing of a dissertation.

The reasons for the thanks offered to the supervisor range from intellectual to moral, material and even financial. Students count it a great privilege to have their supervisor read, correct and re-read their work. The time taken to do this is counted as an enormous sacrifice on the part of the supervisor in favour of the student. This could be due to the fact that university lecturers are often very busy and usually having many students to supervise at a time.

7. For the fulfilment of my dreams which this work constitutes, I heartily express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. XX who relentlessly provided me with the guidance and assistance needed for the realisation of this work. (Literature from ENS Yaounde)
8. First and foremost, I would like to heartily thank my superhero, mentor and supervisor, Associate Professor XX for his continued encouragement and invaluable suggestions. It has been an honour and a great pleasure for me to be his master's student. His contribution of time and ideas made this research productive and worthwhile. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my master's studies. (Physics, University of Buea.)

From these examples, it can be observed that thanking the supervisor goes beyond simple gratitude; it exhibits both recognition of the supervisor's contribution and perhaps the germ of career building. This is a sign that the contribution of the supervisor serves as a bond that will bind him and the supervisee in a mechanism of indebtedness for years to come.

Step 2: Thanking other academics

This step is almost as recurrent as thanking the supervisor as it occurred in 81% percent of our corpus. It was far less

common in the English Language and Literature texts (68% and 66% respectively) while it featured in almost 100% of the other disciplines. In most cases, it closely comes after thanking the supervisor. The strategic dimension of thanking for academic assistance is very vital in the recognition of other academics who did not necessarily supervise the research work but played the role of teachers or advisers. Hyland (2004) holds that the mentioning of other academics is a rhetorical strategy that serves the private intention of getting the write-up accepted when it is submitted to experts for approval. This step, Hyland mentions, still serves the academic communicative purpose of foregrounding the activities which structured the writer's experience during the research.

Thanking other academics also helps the author to acknowledge the fact that an achievement like a research work is not only the result of the supervisor's guidance but of the contributions of all those who have taught the candidate throughout all his years in the university. It may also help the author to express his membership in the specific academic community in which the dissertation is constructed. Some would even go as far as extending gratitude to their secondary school teachers who introduced them to a particular field of study. These numerous thanking acts directed to members of the departmental or university staff help to buttress the fact that learning or an academic achievement owes its existence to that of the teacher.

9. In the course of this research, the researcher also received academic support from her lecturers notably, Dr. XX, Dr. XX, Dr. XX, Prof XX, Prof XX and Dr. XX, in the domain of research writing. The contributions of Dr. YY in reading this work and providing useful input deserve our gratitude. I also thank the entire staff of the History Department for

their assistance throughout my period of study.
(History, University of Bamenda.)

The above example reveals a lot of names listing of individuals who could only have played a peripheral role in the dissertation exercise such being head of the department or lecturers in the same or in neighbouring universities. Some authors, especially Economics and Physics students, acknowledged the university, faculty and department, each as an institution, before acknowledging lecturers as individuals. Non-teaching staff members are often not left out.

Step 3: Thanking for peer mentorship

This step was one of the most frequent steps that were found in our corpus. It occurred in 62% of the general corpus. It suggests the fact that not all the authors were confident enough of their aptitude and therefore invited a friend or course mate to read through the work for suggestions before it is submitted to the supervisor. This step could be included in Hyland's 'thanking for academic assistance' but with the slight difference that in our corpus the author places himself at the same level with the proofreader while elevating and praising other academics above himself. The thanks in this section of the DA were offered mostly to friends, classmates and relatives when it comes to reading through the manuscripts to correct structural mistakes.

10. Special congratulations go to M. XX and family for proof-reading and making not only corrections but proposals to the body of the work as well as invaluable comments to improving the quality of the work. (History, University of Bamenda)

Step 4: Thanking for access to material or documents

In most of the cases, this step either followed the ‘thanking other academics’ step or it came much later in the acknowledgement text. In some cases, different people were acknowledged for access to material at different stages within the text. The kind of material here ranges from copies of books, articles, libraries, offices (e.g. for consultation of archives), internet services and laboratories. It occurred in about 48% of the total corpus and was more common with Biology and History texts.

11. XX was very helpful in producing all the distribution maps and XX for previewing. The IITA/IRAD soil laboratory in Yaounde assisted in handling the soil analysis. The curators of the Herbaria YA, SCA and MO assisted me during the verification of specimens. (Botany, University of Buea.)
12. My sincere appreciation equally goes to the workers of the National Archives Buea. I also want to thank workers of the libraries of the University of Yaounde 1, Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) Yaounde, the University of Bamenda and the University of Dschang. They provided me with material needed for this study. (History, University of Bamenda)

We observed from our corpus that History students constructed lengthier and more elaborate acknowledgements for access to material than other disciplines. This could be due to the fact an authentic research work in History relies more on written sources than individual reasoning or intelligence and most of it can only be got from archives, libraries and resource centres while those of the humanities rely on the primary data

for their research and may not need to visit many documentation centres for information.

Move 3: Thanking for moral support

Thanking for moral support was the most scattered of all the steps given that almost all the participants received thanks for moral support—ranging from the Almighty God to supervisors, to other academics, family members, classmates, friends, pastors/priests, and fellow Christians.

This category of thanks consists of expressions of feelings of gratitude for spiritual and moral support, encouragements, patience, care received from family members, relatives, friends, colleagues and members of the community during the period of research or during the writer's whole academic life. Parents and guardians received thanks for their love, care, prayers, shelter and financial support; husbands/wives were thanked for their encouragement, financial support, patience and sacrifice and children received thanks for encouragement and sacrifice.

Step 1: Thanking family members

The next class of participants that received considerable attention and was almost competing with the supervisor and other academics is the family. This step occurred in about 80% of the corpus. Here the notion of 'family' (and 'community') following Nkemleke's (2006) consideration receives another instance. The family members who received thanks in the acknowledgements range from biological parents, to spouses, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins and even the whole extended family. Gratitude was expressed to family members for various reasons, financial, moral, material and spiritual support. Students in the humanities and social sciences offered long lists of names while those in the natural sciences generally mentioned family as a whole often in one sentence.

13. I thank all my family members, my father and especially my mother for all the encouragements they have been giving me so far and particularly in the accomplishment of my dissertation. Lastly, I owe thanks to my elder sister's husband XX for his financial support. I owe thanks to my dear elder sister YY for moral support, encouragement, advice, financial support, in fact, for everything she has done to make this work come true. Words alone cannot express my profound indebtedness to her. I wish I could do more than just thanking her. (English Language, ENS Yaoundé.)
14. I am highly indebted to my husband, Mr. XX, the man who made me the woman I am today. His wishes, incessant encouragement, understanding, sacrifice, moral and financial support during the period of my studies remain indelible in my mind. I am equally grateful to my children who gave me a lot of courage, showed me love and their prayers made me forge ahead. (Literature, University of Yaoundé 1)

It is worth noting that this step was scattered all over the acknowledgement text even though in many of the cases it appeared after the thanks offered for intellectual assistance.

Step 2: Thanking friends and well-wishers

This step occurred in 57% of our corpus. This category of gratitude was expressed to other members of the “community” that are neither academics nor family members. They may be neighbours, pastors, priests or imams, or just friends and other acquaintances. Commitment to the social community was

greatly evident in the data represented by gratitude to extended family members, friends, loved ones and relatives. This echoes the African conception of the term “family”.

15. I also say thank you to my guardian Mr. XX and his wife, YY, for the shelter and financial assistance. I will not leave out their son, XX who often rushed to give me potable water even when need did not arise.

(Literature, ENS Yaounde)

Move 4: Thanking for technical assistance

The gratitude in this move was generally expressed to participants who are neither members of the academic community nor of the family.

Step 1: Thanking informants

This component includes gratitude and thanks addressed to participant subjects and those who provided the basic information that constituted the primary data analysed during the research endeavour. This step occurred in 29% of our corpus and was more common with the English Language, History and Biology students. Its absence or limited presence in the Literature, Physics and Economics texts could be explained by the fact that a research work in those disciplines would not greatly rely on information obtained from individuals but on laboratory specimens and observations. The importance of the informant in such a research work can be illustrated by examples 16 and 17 below.

16. I wish to register my immense gratitude to Dr. XX of the University of Dschang who helped in this direction by acting as a guide in the location of informants in the West Region of Cameroon. (History, University of Bamenda.)

17. I am grateful to XX (manager of TELCAM Cocoa Ltd Muyuka), XX (Christian Common Initiative

Group MUCCIG), XX (Ikata Farmers' Cooperative Society (IFAFCOOP), XX (Bafia Field Cooperative society), XX (MUNYEFCOOP) as well as Solidarity Farmers' Cooperative Society (SOFACOOOP) for providing with the necessary information to accomplish this work. (Economics, University of Bamenda.)

Step 2: Thanking for practical assistance

As the reader approaches the end of the acknowledgement text, the components are gradually becoming more optional. In an era of innovation in technology, dependence on experts in communication technology is not the order of the day. This notwithstanding, some authors still hold those who take time to typeset their research work in very high esteem. This step occurred in about 20% of the English language, Literature and History texts and was practically absent in the Biology, Physics and Economics texts.

18. Finally, I deeply thank XX for typing and organising this work. (Literature, ENS Yaoundé)

Move 5: Closing

This move serves as a general conclusion or epilogue to the acknowledgement text.

Step 1: Invoking and promising to share good results

This step was quite uncommon in most of the DAs that as it occurred in only about 8% of the corpus. It is predominantly sociocultural and helps to illustrate the communal belief that any good thing obtained should be shared with those who contributed to its success.

19. I owe a perpetual debt of gratitude to my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. XX who have sacrificed a lot for my well-being up to this level. My prayer has

always been that God should grant them abundant and long life so that they reap the fruit of their labour. (Language, University of Yaoundé 1)

Step 2: Accepting responsibility

This step is also uncommon as it occurred in only about 7% of our corpus. Here the author holds himself accountable for any flaws, lapses or shortcomings that might have been produced in the course of writing the dissertation. This serves as a means of avoiding to betray any of the persons they could have mentioned as contributors in the realisation of the work.

20. Above all, I assume responsibility for all errors, interpretations and conceptions which may be found faulty in this work. (History, University of Bamenda)

Step 3: Making an excuse

Here, the author regrets their inability to express gratitude to all those who contributed in one way or another to the success of the research work. This step occurred either at the beginning or towards the end of the acknowledgement text.

21. This work owes its realisation to so many people that I can't make mention of all the names here. To those whose names do not appear here, I extend the same degree of thanks as to those whose names appear. (Literature, University of Yaoundé 1)

Step 4: Signing off

This step is predominantly textual and serves as a conclusion to the acknowledgement section of the dissertation. It usually involves a general 'thank you' to all those who have or have not been mentioned in the text or the author simply gives thanks to God who made available all the resources necessary for the

realisation of such a *great* piece of work. In some cases, the closing could be an African proverb.

22. To these generous people, I say thank you remembering that one hand cannot tie a bundle. (Language University of Yaoundé 1.)

6. Conclusion

The overall structure of the dissertation acknowledgement in Cameroon English reveals the contribution of each component to the main communicative purpose of mapping out credit and gratitude to those who contributed one way or another to the research experience of the writer. The analysis of the corpus reveals some differences across disciplines as far as the internal structure of the text is concerned. Generally, the DA text in Cameroon English would contain many of the 15 steps revealed in the analysis. However, no single text contained all of the steps. The lengthier texts were produced by History, Literature and English Language students while the shorter ones were produced by Economics, Physics and Biology students. The most favoured steps include ‘thanking the supervisor’ (100%), ‘thanking other academics’ and ‘thanking family members’ (81% each). The last four steps (that is, ‘invoking and promising to share good results’, ‘accepting responsibility’, ‘making an excuse’ and ‘closing’) were the most unfavoured (8%, 7% and 5% respectively). These were almost practically absent in the natural sciences.

Regarding the internal structure of DAs, our data reveals that DAs in Cameroon English do not fit neatly into the three-tier structure proposed by Hyland (2004). While all the elements of the ‘Reflecting Move’ and ‘Thanking Move’ occur in our data, there are some points of divergence as to the sequencing of the different steps in each move. For example, ‘thanking for moral support’ in our corpus could feature in all the steps of the thanking move. That is, deities, the supervisor, other academics

and peers received this category of thanks. Also, in addition to ‘an introspective statement on the writer’s research experience’ which constitutes Hyland’s move 1, our data reveals three other interesting components: an African proverb, thanking God or an introspective statement on community life.

Instead of ‘public statement of responsibility and inspiration’ which constitute Hyland’s move 3, our data reveals rather a long list of participants that are rather peripheral to the academic construction of the thesis. These include friends, neighbours, hosts, extended family relations, church or mosque members and whole cultural or traditional communities as observed by Nkemleke (2006) in his consideration of ‘society’ and ‘family’.

Another interesting component in our data that appears to be absent in other studies out of Cameroon was how much time, space and energy Cameroonian writers spend thanking informants for providing the data for their research and thanking business centres for typesetting their work. This recalls that difficulty in getting access to technology and infrastructure is a crucial call for concern in the research endeavour in Africa as a whole and in Cameroon in particular (Schmied 2018).

Still another point of divergence between our data and Hyland (and other researchers) is what we term “conclusion”. Here, the author invokes blessings on all these *good people* who contributed to his success and promises to share any positive results with them. He would also regret that the list of participants to such a great success was so long that he could not thank everybody. Finally, ‘formal dedication’ of the thesis to an individual is not part of the acknowledgement page in Cameroon English.

We therefore conclude that although dissertation acknowledgements in Cameroon converge relatively with those

produced elsewhere in the Inner and Outer Circles of Kachru's concentric circles (see Hyland 2004; Mingwei and Jiang 2010; Afful and Mwinlaaru 2010; Al-Ali 2010; Lasaky 2011), they also reveal, to a considerable extent, what Nkemleke (2006) terms 'Cameroonianness' thereby adding more diversity to the peculiar status enjoyed by Cameroon English as an Outer Circle variety of English.

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Phonological Features in the Pluralization Process in English

Franca Okumo
Department of Linguistics
Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State.
Email: okumoff@fuotuoke.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper examines the phonological features in the process of pluralization in English. It sheds light on how sounds interact in contexts applying rules and patterns that make for a harmonious flow in interactions and how these phonological features impact on communication at large. It provides insight into how phonology molds sounds into beautiful and meaningful expressions. The researcher purposively samples data showing the process of voicing in pluralization. It employs the qualitative method for the analysis of the data. Applying the generative phonological framework, the findings indicate that English pluralization process employs the phonological processes of voice assimilation, prevocalic voicing assimilation and sibilant assimilation. The exceptions regardless which displays the eclectic nature of English language. The study concludes that sounds are not just bundles of unordered meaningless abstraction, but that meanings are encoded in sounds to bring harmony to the listener. This paper provides valuable insights to the ESL classroom teacher

Keyword: features, pluralization, sounds, voice assimilation, prevocalic voicing assimilation, sibilant assimilation.

1. Introduction

Language is the vehicle through which we communicate ideas and thoughts. Each time we interact; we are uttering meaningful sounds. The sounds thus, form the basis of every conversation. This is why phonologists argue that, sounds are the building blocks to communication. The melody in language is embedded in the rich harmonious combination of sounds which is the main focus of phonology, to look at how sounds are patterned to bring about nuanced pronunciation. Phonology shapes the sounds of speech into beautiful expressions by the application of certain phonological rules that govern the occurrence.

According to Omachonu (2000), phonology studies the way a language speaker systematically utilizes a selection of sounds in order to express meanings. These sounds are well organized and combined in an acceptable manner to form utterances. Crystal's (2005) concern was to find order within the variations that occur as we produce sounds. The significant sound constitutes differences in meaning which helps us gain insight into the nuanced ways sounds encode meaning and combine in a language. This is done through discovering the principles that govern the way sounds are patterned in a language. There are phonological rules which determine what sounds should occur in a particular environment or after certain sounds. So, phonological rules help the grammar of a language to know the pronunciation of an utterance or a word as in the case with the rules of pluralization. Understanding these patterns is crucial for learners aiming to master the nuanced communication skills required for proficiency in English.

It is interesting to note that phonology plays a crucial role in the formation of plurals in English. Although the process of pluralization is a fundamental part of English grammar, yet, it has its roots embedded in phonology. The variation of the plural morpheme follows distinct patterns bearing traces to phonological principles. The plural morpheme is influenced by the sound that precede it. This shows that there are rules that govern the phonological processes. These rules place restrictions on how sounds change in different environments and what conditions the change.

This paper examines the phonological nuances in the process of pluralization in English using the pluralization of nouns in English as a lens to understand how sounds encode meaning and combine in complex ways to harmonize our thoughts.

2. Literature review

2.1 Phonological processes

Phonological processes are those changes that segments undergo that lead to a surface realization of an underlying phonological form. The underlying form represents the form in isolation before interactions with other sounds in context, whilst the surface form represents that form that has gone through modifications. Speech sounds are subjected to various modifications that make them more similar to their neighbours. Phonological processes ensure that sounds are smoothly produced in utterances to make it pleasing to the ear. This implies that the surface phonetic form which is the actual speech produced, represents the realization in speech of the phonological or abstract underlying form (Osisanwo 2012). Okumo (2018) notes that these processes are accounted for in the language by phonological rules. This means that

phonological rules are used to capture the changes that occur and thus make generalizations about the language.

Phonologists agree that there are different types of phonological processes ranging from assimilation to deletion, insertion, contraction, metathesis, coalescence, amongst other. Hudson (1986), however, divides phonological processes into five categories which are: segment omission, class deficiencies, phonetic substitution, assimilation and voicing alterations. Amongst these categories, this study focuses on the process of assimilation. Assimilation occurs when sounds look more like the sounds in their neighboring environment. The sound which causes the change is the conditioning sound while; the one affected by the change is the assimilated sound (Katamba 1989, Yul-Ifode 2014). They represent processes that happen automatically in everyone's mental grammar since they are unconscious processes.

2.2 The Process of Pluralization

Pluralization is the process of changing nouns from singular to plural form. It involves the addition of a morpheme which carries the notion of the plurality. This plural morpheme 's' is phonologically distinguished based on the context of occurrence. It can take the forms of [s], [z] or [iz] based on the adjacent sounds. Hugg (1971) records that the plural formation of English nouns is a complex process that involves the interaction of different factors and most importantly, the final consonant before the plural morpheme. It involves a morphophonemic process of applying a phonological rule to the underlying representation of the singular forms. Thus, the plural formation is phonologically determined. According to Ndimele (2005), the phonologically conditioned plural morpheme is influenced by the voicing of the preceding sound, thus, when it is preceded by a voiceless consonant except itself, it takes the form [s], when preceded by a voiced sound, it takes the form [z]

whilst it becomes [iz] when preceded by a sibilant. Through the use of these phonological rules, we can see how sounds are conveyed to signal meaning and create harmony.

3. Methodology

The study employs the use of qualitative data drawn from samples and secondary data to analyze how sounds are used meaningfully to convey plurality following some phonological patterns and principles. The researcher compiles a lists of 80 English nouns with their plural forms. The words are transcribed to see at a glance the interaction of sounds and plurality. It purposefully selects nouns that have the phonological features of voice assimilation. To analyze the data, the qualitative phonological approach was used to explain the phenomenon occurring. The generative phonological framework propounded by Chomsky and Halle (1968) was employed to analyze the phonological processes involved in pluralization. Phonological features were used to conduct a feature analysis of the plural forms and phonological rules were formulated to account for the process

3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the data used in the analysis of the work and analyses the data.

Table 1: Sample data for analysis

S/N	Singular nouns	Plural nouns			
1.	Cat	Cats	14.	Desk	Desks
2.	Plant	Plants	15.	Short	Shorts
3.	Mat	Mats	16.	Lock	Locks
4.	Seat	Seats	17.	Bike	Bikes
5.	Hat	Hats	18.	Coat	Coats
6.	Lap	Laps	19.	Fork	Forks
7.	Bat	Bats	20.	Hat	Hats
8.	Tap	Taps	21.	Plate	Plates
9.	Chat	Chats	22.	List	Lists
10.	Pant	Pants	23.	Pack	Packs
11.	Book	Books	24.	Path	Paths
12.	Pet	Pets	25.	Bath	Baths
13.	Cup	Cups	26.	Wealth	Wealths
			27.	Length	Lengths

28.	Hearth	Heaths
29.	Sheet	Sheets
30.	Ship	Ships
31.	Troop	Troops
32.	Stomp	Stomps
33.	Seep	Seeps
34.	Creep	Creeps
35.	Steep	Steeps
36.	Hint	Hints
37.	Chalk	Chalks
38.	Stalk	Stalks
39.	Turf	Turfs
40.	Golf	Golfs
41.	Dog	Dogs
42.	Pen	Pens
43.	Car	Cars
44.	Table	Tables
45.	Apple	Apples
46.	Bird	Birds
47.	Bag	Bags
48.	Museum	Museums
49.	Live	Lives
50.	Thief	Thieves
51.	Calve	Calves
52.	Wife	Wives
53.	Shelve	Shelves
54.	Bed	Beds

55.	Wall	Walls
56.	Girl	Girls
57.	Chair	Chairs
58.	Banana	Bananas
59.	Shoe	Shoes
60.	Window	Windows
61.	Computer	Computers
62.	Door	Doors
63.	Video	Videos
64.	Studio	Studios
65.	Phone	Phones
66.	Ball	Balls
67.	Key	Keys
68.	Drum	Drums
69.	Wool	Wools
70.	Marriage	Marriages
71.	Batch	Batches
72.	Blemish	Blemishes
73.	Approach	Approaches
74.	Utterance	Utterances
75.	Vase	Vases
76.	Verse	Verses
77.	Vice	Vices
78.	Warehouse	Warehouses
79.	Sense	Senses
80.	Ridge	Ridges

3.1 Phonologically Conditioned Plural Morphemes

According to Ndimele (2005), the phonologically conditioned plural morpheme is influenced by the voicing of the preceding sound, thus, when it is preceded by a voiceless consonant except itself, it takes the form [s], when preceded by a voiced sound, it takes the form [z] whilst it becomes [iz] when preceded by a sibilant. This type of interaction is called assimilation. Phonologists such as Yul-Ifode (2007), Hyman (1978), Osisanwo (2012) and others, agree that assimilation takes place when segments become more like the sounds in their surrounding environment. In English, the formation of the plural morphemes is based on the phonological characteristics of the last segment of the singular nouns. The plural morpheme is basically [s] but the realization depends on the sound properties of the singular noun. The following phonological processes underlie the pluralization process in English: voicing

assimilation, prevocalic voicing assimilation and sibilant assimilation.

Voicing Assimilation

Voicing assimilation occurs when the singular noun ends in a voiceless consonant, the plural form becomes voiceless, [s]. When it ends in a voiced consonant, the plural form becomes a voiced consonant [z]. The following examples from the data show voicing assimilation:

1.
 - a) Cat /kæt/ → [kæts]
 - b) Book /bʊk/ → [bʊks]
 - c) Lap /læp/ → [læps]
 - d) Path /pæθ/ → [pæθs]
 - e) Golf /gɒlf/ → [gɒlfs]

From the examples above, observe that when the singular noun ends with a voiceless consonant that are not sibilant, such as /p t k f θ/, the plural morpheme ‘s’ automatically becomes voiceless [s]. Note that the five sounds above are the voiceless consonant sounds in English that are not sibilants. Whenever they end singular nouns, the phonological structure of the morpheme becomes constrained by the phonological environment of voicelessness to agree in voicing. This implies that when the final consonant in the singular noun is a voiced consonant such as /b d g v ð m n/, the plural morpheme becomes a voiced consonant [z] as shown in the examples in 2 below:

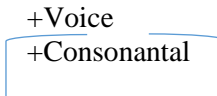
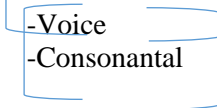
2.
 2. Bed /bed/ → [bedz]
 3. Bag /bæg/ → [bægz]
 4. Cube /kju:b/ → [kju:bz]
 5. Shelve /ʃelv/ → [ʃelvz]
 6. Pen /pen/ → [penz]

- 7. Drum /drʌm/ → [drʌmz]
- 8. Clothes /kləʊð/ → [kləʊðz]

From the above examples in 2, the nouns obey the rule of voicing assimilation where the final consonant sound changes from a voiceless sound to a voiced sound. We can capture the rule of voicing assimilation by a rule thus:

- Rule 1:
- a) A consonant is voiced in the environment of a voiced consonant
 - b) a consonant is voiceless in the environment of a voiceless consonant

We can formalize this rule in features:

- a). [+ Consonantal] → [+ Voice] / — 
- b). [+ Consonantal] → [- Voice] / — 

Prevocalic Voicing Assimilation

Prevocalic voicing assimilation is a key process in the pluralization process in English. Hugg (1971) notes that prevocalic voicing assimilation is a morphophonemic process that occurs when a voiceless consonant appears before a vowel sound in the plural suffix. The voiceless consonant is then replaced with its corresponding voiced counterpart before the addition of the suffix. This rule is in line with the phonological rule of voicing as stated by Hugg and others, that voiceless singular consonants become voiced when they end in voiced sounds including vocalic sounds. Since all vowels are voiced, the plural morpheme has to agree in voicing with the final sound which is a vowel. In discussing the phonological processes in English, Chomsky and Halle (1968) state that prevocalic voicing assimilation is a Phonological rule governing English pronunciation. They occur when a voiceless consonant becomes

voiced when preceded by a vowel sound. Below are a few examples from the table in 58-64 showing prevocalic voicing assimilation:

3.

- a) Banana /bəna:nə/ → [bəna:nəz]
- b) Shoe /ʃu:/ → [ʃu:z]
- c) Window /wɪndəʊ/ → [wɪndəʊz]
- d) Door /dɔ:/ → [dɔ:z]
- e) Computer /kəmputə/ → [kəmputəz]

From the data above, we can see that the plural morphemes are all voiced because of the final vowel that ends the singular nouns. There are however, some exceptions to this rule which does not apply to words that end in '-is' or 'ch'. For such kind of words, the final sibilants influence the plural morphemes to become sibilants. This is treated in the sub-section below.

The rule of prevocalic voicing assimilation can be summarized in a rule thus:

Rule 2: Voiceless consonant becomes voiced when preceded by a vowel



Sibilant Assimilation

Sibilant assimilation is a Phonological process of pluralization where a sibilant consonant influences the neighboring consonant to become a sibilant. This type of assimilation is progressive in that the sound is conditioned by the following sibilant sound. The data in examples 70-80 shows clearly words that end with sibilant sounds at the singular forms.

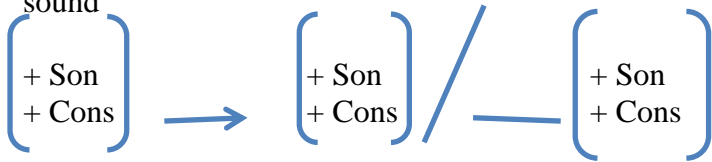
4.

- a) vice /vais/ → [vaisiz]
- b) verse / vɜ:s/ → [vɜ:sɪz]
- c) batch /bætʃ/ → [bætʃɪz]
- d) sense /sens/ → [sensɪz]

From the examples above, we can observe the process of progressive sibilant assimilation. Here the /s/ influences the following /z/ to maintain the sibilant quality of the following sound. Although the process above overlaps with the prevocalic voicing assimilation because the presence of the vowel sound changes the voicing of the sound from being a voiceless sibilant to a voice sibilant. This is due to the influence of the voicing of the vowel. The entire process is consistent with the pattern. The both processes complement each other for a better understanding of the pluralization process.

The process of sibilant assimilation can be summarized in a rule as:

Rule 3: A sibilant maintains the quality of the following sound



4. Conclusion

This study has highlighted the interplay between morphology and phonology. It shows how phonological patterns can influence the pluralization process in English. Although the process of pluralization is a fundamental part of English grammar, yet it has its roots embedded in phonology. The paper demonstrates how sounds can be used meaningfully to create harmony and fluidity in speaking. This is in line with Omachonu (2000) who opines that phonology studies the way a language

speaker systematically utilizes a selection of sounds in order to express meanings. These sounds are well organized and combined in an appropriate manner to form utterances. This is the case with the formation of plural nouns in English. It carefully selects the sounds that resonate with the meaning to be conveyed. The implication of this is that phonology creates the avenue to determine what meaning is to be conveyed at a time, hence, it is the building block to proper communication. The formation of English plural forms applies the use of phonological processes such as: voicing assimilation, prevocalic voicing assimilation and sibilant assimilation. These processes ensure that sounds are produced smoothly in utterances to make it pleasing to the ear. This paper thus shows the phonological rules that captured the underlying process going through modification. This shows that there are rules that govern the phonological processes. These rules place restrictions on how sounds change in different environments and what conditions the change. The paper is in line with Chomsky and Halle's (1968) assertion that sounds are not just bundles of unordered units; rather they are well organized in a hierarchical structure, governed by phonological rules and patterns such as phonotactics and assimilation. The phenomenon indicates that sounds in languages are not just random but ordered. This is why the pluralization formation of nouns in English are seen through the lens of phonology. The knowledge of how this works will help the speakers of English to be a better communicator. This study is useful in pedagogy because it helps teachers and learners to understand the complex interplay that occur in the process of plural formation.

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