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**Teaching Translation in Cameroon Anglophone High Schools:
Challenges for Innovative Pedagogy**



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Abstract:

This paper assesses the implementation of the official GCE 'A' Level French Language Translation Programme in Anglophone High schools in Cameroon. The teaching of the Translation component has continued to be plagued by problems notwithstanding the publication of an official guide in June 1997. The study demonstrates that a large disparity exists between official course objectives and what is actually taught in the field. Teaching is basically teacher-centered with mechanical translation exercises which lack commentary, reflection and discovery. This reductionist pedagogy is largely responsible for the poor performance in the GCE 'A' Level French examination as well as the continuous loss of interest by students in the translation component of this Examination. Data for this study was obtained through the administration of questionnaires to 24 'A' Level French teachers and 171 'A' Level students from 16 high schools in the South West Region of Cameroon, as well as from direct classroom observation. The study posits that the teaching of translation in Anglophone high schools should be relevant to students' urgent needs and career expectations in the light of competency-based approaches which are in vogue in Cameroon.

Keywords:

Translation in foreign language teaching, effective teaching, translation competence, subject competence, transfer competence, professionalization

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1 Introduction

The teaching of French and English to all Cameroonians (Anglophones and Francophones), has the legal backing of the 1961 constitution, which made Cameroon a bilingual state with French and English as official languages. The dual status of each of these languages entails that both of them must be taught in both the Anglophone and Francophone education subsystems. Each thus functions both as language of habitual use in one subsystem and a foreign language in another, resulting in pedagogical challenges at the primary, secondary and university levels. The French Language Translation Programme (FLTP), which is the object of this study, is just one problem within the many still-to-be solved problems of foreign language teaching and learning in Cameroon. As Debyser rightly points out; « On ne répétera jamais assez que le français langue étrangère ne s’enseigne pas de la même manière que le français maternelle» (Debyser 1971: 11) [It should be emphasized that

teaching French as a foreign language is not the same as teaching French as a mother tongue] (my translation). To address this pedagogical gap, the former Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) published the *Programme de Français en Classe Anglophone des Etablissements d'Enseignement Secondaire Général*, in June 1997, (henceforth the FLTP).

Despite the publication of the above programme guide in June 1997, Translation teaching is mostly based on teachers' idiosyncratic practices which do not adequately reflect the real needs of the students. The needs of students as charted by teachers are often different from the felt needs of these students. Hence, performance in the G.C.E 'A' Level French in Anglophone High schools has continued to be poor. Examiners' Reports at the end of GCE marking sessions indicate that the poorest marks are registered in the translation component, and that these marks have continued to affect the overall 'A' Level French results.

What difficulties do students encounter in learning translation at the 'A' Level? What are the causes of these difficulties? That is, are they due to deficiencies of the teachers' knowledge base for teaching translation, the calibre of students enrolled in French, or the poor implementation of the FLTP? What accounts for the growing discontent of students in the translation portion of the 'A' level French examination? How does translation teaching relate with the other components of the French examination, that is, literature, essay, grammar, vocabulary amongst others? This study seeks answers to these questions in the pages ahead.

2 Theoretical Framework

The use of translation as a language-teaching technique has long been viewed with suspicion and at times condemned strenuously without any really convincing reason (Malmkjaer 1998: 6). Maley as cited in Duff (1992) describes the troubled relationship between translation and language teaching in his introduction:

Translation has long languished as a poor relation in the family of language teaching techniques. It has been denigrated as 'uncommunicative,' 'boring,' 'pointless,' 'difficult,' 'irrelevant' and the like, and has suffered from too close an association with its cousin, grammar. The scholar would study the grammar of a language, and read texts, almost invariably religious or literary, with the help of a dictionary and the acquired grammar...

Objections to the use of translation in foreign language teaching like the one above are all based on a limited view of translation. According to Hurtado "The translation process can be

divided into three phases: understanding, deverbalizing, and re-expressing,” which help students to be precise, fluent and accurate (Hurtado 1988: 43). Translation can also be performed orally and can thus, in principle, be used to develop spoken language fluency. It is further argued that since translation equivalents contribute to the formation of interlanguage competence in language learners, the learners’ ability to translate may be related to their L2 competence (Selinker 1996: 103, cited in Malmkjær 1998: 1). If this is the case, the use of translation in L2 education may foster the acquisition of the foreign language.

The relevance of translation as a useful teaching resource has met with increasing acceptance in recent years and translation in foreign language teaching today is one of the four domains of Applied Translation Studies (ATS) which are: the teaching of translation, translation in foreign language teaching, translation criticism and error analysis. Lederer was one of the first scholars to distinguish between *traduction pédagogique*, that is, the use of translation in foreign language teaching and *pedagogie de la traduction*, which refers to the training of professional translators (Lederer 1994: 129). The present study is concerned with the use of translation in foreign language teaching, which is well orchestrated in Mineduc’s (1997) *Programme de Français en Classes Anglophone des Etablissements d’Enseignement Secondaire général*. This official French programme guide demonstrates that the two forms of translation teaching are not mutually exclusive but are rather symbiotic or complementary. This paper assesses the implementation of the official GCE ‘A’ Level French Language Translation Programme in Anglophone High Schools in Cameroon.

2.1 The 1997 Official French Programme Guide

The book is divided into two parts dedicated to the first and second cycles respectively. It is written in French. Its major objective is to serve as a reference document for teachers of French as a foreign language (FFL):

Sachant que l’enseignement du français en classe Anglophone ou ‘French’ contrairement au français en classe francophone, utilisé comme langue d’instruction, ne s’exerce pas de façon permanente dans toutes les autres disciplines, il convient de proposer aux professeurs outre les objectifs et des contenus appropriés, des conseils méthodologiques qui leur permettront de résoudre les problèmes les plus fréquents. [Since the French language taught in English-speaking classrooms is not statutorily used as a language of instruction of other subjects as it is the case with French in French-speaking settings, it was necessary to come up with clearly defined objectives, course outlines and methodological procedures

that will enable teachers to solve the most recurrent problems in their classes] (Mineduc 1997: 4) (my translation).

The translation component is described in the section titled ‘objectifs spécifiques’ [specific objectives] for the second cycle which concern only the high school students of the Lower and Upper Sixth forms offering French, English Literature and History at the ‘A’ Level. In line with the objectives, these two classes constitute the advanced level ‘Niveau avancé,’ which prepares students for further studies and the labour market.

En même temps qu’elles préparent aux examens de fin de second cycle elles doivent aussi avoir une fonction d’ouverture sur le monde de travail, aussi bien que sur l’enseignement supérieur [Students in high school are not only trained for the GCE ‘A’ level examination but also to gain direct entry into the world of work, as well as to pursue university studies] (Mineduc 1997: 47) (my translation).

In this vein, students are trained on how to reason, analyze and synthesize, as well as to be able to carry out research and group work. In effect, the objective is to enable students to become more functional.

2.1.1 The Translation Component

The Official French Language Programme Guide recognises translation as a legitimate and indispensable language acquisition skill and technique. Translation not only broadens the learners’ competence in the first and second languages but also develops the learner’s insight into the nature and significance of language. This happens as a result of the confrontation between languages while searching for equivalence in meaning:

L’élève trouve là l’occasion de contraster les structures de l’anglais et du français. Et ce faisant il maîtrise mieux les deux systèmes linguistiques [Translation offers the student an opportunity to master the structures of English and French better through a contrastive study of the two linguistic systems] (Mineduc 1997: 57) (my translation).

Although the ultimate goal is not to train professional translators at this level, translation nevertheless attains the status of a legitimate object of study not only as a means to an end, but also as an end in itself. Even if these translation skills cannot be equated systematically with those of the professional translator, they constitute a springboard for further learning. This offers an opportunity to practice a creative problem-solving technique:

On affinera les techniques de traduction sur des passages construits sur un canevas commun, dans lesquels on introduira des variations portant sur les temps verbaux, les pronominalisations, les synonymes, les niveaux de langue [Students are taught advanced techniques in translating pedagogically prepared texts which enable them to resolve difficulties concerning the use of tenses, nouns, synonyms and language registers] (Mineduc 1997: 56) (my translation).

2.1.2 Translation Teaching Method

Although the programme is largely circumscribed by the evaluation instruments of the GCE Board's 'A' Level syllabus (see content and evaluation below), teachers are called upon not to adopt a reductionist approach to the teaching of translation:

Hormis les préoccupations de la réussite, il conviendra de proposer pour les besoins d'apprentissage, d'autres supports au niveau réel des élèves qui appellent des techniques de classe qu'on peut transformer en conséquence [Besides preparing students for examination, teachers should also be able to exploit other means to transmit essential transferable skills to their students] (Mineduc 1997: 57) (my translation).

Conceptual analysis, text-types, and the study of both their linguistic and extra-linguistic determinants are integrated into two sets of rules, which govern both the translation process and its evaluation. In this vein, the official guide posits that:

Pour les études de texte, le professeur, il faut le répéter, proposera systématiquement un travail préparatoire ou seront mises en œuvre les outils linguistiques nécessaires à l'approche du texte. Quant au texte même, on s'attardera aussi bien à la découverte du sens qu'à l'étude de langue [Textual analysis is preceded by a preparatory exercise on areas of language difficulties. The analytical exercise will then consist in extracting meaning and extensive language study] (Mineduc 1997: 57) (my translation).

2.1.3 Text Contents

Prescribed texts for translation teaching are in consonance with the level of French in the sixth forms, and they are selected to cover all areas of translation activities. On the other hand, translation passages themselves are drawn from a wide variety of subject fields which are not limited to literary texts only. More functional texts suggested include: press communiqués, correspondences, curriculum vitae, official documents and so on (Mineduc 1997: 56). This is further emphasized as follows:

Choisir des textes non littéraires, mais plutôt de qualité pratique, tirés de préférence de la presse nationale et internationale, des extraits de romans contemporains, d'auteurs francophones [Choose pragmatic texts not literary texts, from national and international press, as well as excerpts from contemporary prose written in French] (my translation).

2.1.4 Evaluation in Translation

To adequately prepare for the GCE 'A' Level, all terminal and mock examinations shall reflect the GCE examination organised by the Cameroon GCE Board. Both class work and homework are given to students and the evaluation criteria are the same as those of the GCE 'A' Level

La traduction vers l'anglais vise la capacité de l'élève à exprimer de façon claire en anglais le contenu d'un passage en français... La traduction vers le français permet de comparer les

structures de deux langues. L'élève trouve la l'occasion de contraster les structures de l'anglais et du français. Et ce faisant, il maîtrise mieux les deux systèmes linguistiques [The translation into English activates the student's ability to clearly express the content of the French passage in English... Translation into French enables the student to compare the two languages. This leads to a better mastery of the two languages] (Mineduc 1997: 156) (my translation).

As Denise Luissier points out, évaluation must match the programme's objectives, « l'évaluation des apprentissages ne peut se définir hors de ce contexte qu'est l'activité pédagogique. » (Luissier 1989 : 11). In other words, it is imperative for learning and teaching objectives, as well as activities and evaluation techniques to be well planned for positive outcomes to be attained.

However, no matter how well a programme may have been designed, its impact would necessarily depend on its implementation by those directly concerned. The success of the implementation process itself is largely predetermined by many variables, which this research seeks to identify and assess.

3 Methodological approach to the study

This is an empirical study that is illustrated with a case study survey that makes use of triangulation, that is, the investigation of one and the same phenomenon by means of different complementary data sources. The data collecting instruments used in this study are questionnaires, archival documentation and direct observation.

The sample population is made up of 171 sixth form students from 16 high schools and 24 teachers drawn from 24 high schools and colleges in eight major towns in the South West Region of Cameroon. This number represents about 90% of major high schools in the region. This selection is also considered representative because it includes government, mission and lay private schools from all the six divisions of the SW Region of Cameroon.

The teachers' questionnaire is made up of 40 questions: it elicits information on their profiles and qualification, the availability of the official guide, the understanding, exploitation, usefulness of the guide and motivational considerations. The students' questionnaire, on the other hand, comprises 25 questions and it elicits information about their background profiles, opinions on the implementation of the translation programme, usefulness of the programme and motivational considerations.

A direct observation was conducted and a chart was designed to record students' and teachers' activities in class. It provides information on demonstrated teachers' styles and preferences, their methods of addressing the language and translation deficiencies of students, the quality of available material and their exploitation for communicative translation teaching. A checklist was designed by the researcher to assess quality of teacher talk, questioning methods and choice of material. These variables were operationalized as teachers': professional qualities, interaction with students, classroom management, planning and organisation, teaching competence, and personal qualities.

4 Results and analysis

This section presents survey results on the pertinent question of the status of translation in language teaching in Cameroon and the major pedagogical problems involved: How is translation taught? To whom is translation taught? What are the educational goals of teaching translation? And with what means is translation taught?

4.1 Teachers of FLTP

No.	School	Town	Teacher's Qualification	Class Taught	
				Lower Sixth	Upper Sixth
1	CCAS Kumba	Kumba	BA, DIPES 11	1	1
2	P.H.S. Kumba		BA	1	1
3	CCC High School		BA, MA	1	1
4	St Francis College		BA	1	1
5	Divine High School		BA	1	1
6	G.B.H.S. Kumba		BA, DIPES 11	1	1
7	Lycée Molyko	Buea	BA, DIPES 11	1	1
8	G.H.S. Bokwango		BA, DIPES 11		1
9	Baptist High School		BA		1
10	Buea Bilingual college		BA		1

11	St Joseph College		BA		1
12	Inter-Compreh College		BA		1
13	G.H.S. Limbe	Limbe	BA, DIPES 11	1	1
14	Saker Baptist College		BA, PGD		1
15	G.B.H.S Limbe		BA, DIPES 11		1
16	G.B.H.S. Bangem	Bangem	DIPLEG 1		1
17	G.H.S	Tiko	DIPLEG 1		1
18	Christ the King College		BA		1
19	IMPAAS Tiko		BA		1
20	G.H.S. Mundemba	Mundemba	BA		1
21	G.H.S Mamfe	Mamfe	BA		1
22	P.H.S. Besongabang		BA		1
23	Q.R.C. Okoyong		BA		1
24	Seat of Wisdom College	Fontem	BA		1

Table 1: Demographic Information on Teachers of FLTP from 24 Schools

The above statistics show that a total of 24 FLTP teachers, drawn from 24 high schools in the South West Region filled the questionnaire. This number represents about 90% of major high schools in the South West Region. This selection is representative because it includes schools from public, mission and lay-private sectors drawn from all the six divisions of the South West Region of Cameroon.

The figures indicate that a total of 15 teachers out of the 24 are holders of a BA degree only, representing 62%. In effect, this percentage of teachers has not received any professional training. On the other hand, only 6 teachers hold a professional postgraduate diploma in education. One (1) teacher holds a professional MA degree in translation from ASTI.

Consequently, only these 7 out of the 24 teachers (that is, 26%) are academically and professionally apt and equipped to teach in high schools.

A total of 12 teachers (that is, 50%) are holders of a combined English/French degree, while the rest obtained theirs in fields like general arts, foreign languages, French and licence LMF.

No.	Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex	Male	22	91.6
		Female	2	8.4
2.	Nationality	Cameroonians	24	100
		Foreigners	0	0
3.	Specialization	Bilinguals	12	50
		Non bilinguals	12	50
4.	Qualification	Professional teachers	7	29.1
		Non-professionals	17	70.9
5.	Years of experience as a teacher	0 – 9	21	87.5
		10 - 20	3	12.5
6.	Membership in AEF SO	Members	20	83.3
		Non-members	4	16.7
7.	Own copy of guide	Yes	18	75
		No	6	25
8.	How often the official guide is consulted	Frequently	3	12.5
		Occasionally	9	37.5
		Never	12	50
9.	Difficulties of understanding the guide	High technical terminology	2	18.1
		No practical methods or approaches	3	27.2
		Translation/bilingualism not clear	3	27.2
		Not elaborated	3	27.2
10.	Measure to overcome difficulties	Pedagogical seminars	5	20.5
		Consulting experts	2	8.3
		Consulting books	1	4.2

		Good French at the base	1	4.2
11.	Types of texts translated	Literary	15	62.5
		Variety	8	33.3
		Indifferent	1	4.2
12.	Objectives guiding choice of text	In line with GCE	15	62.5
		To master many domains	4	16.6
		To ease communication	2	8.3
		Improve on general knowledge	2	8.3
13.	Teaching Aids used in class	Dictionaries	7	29.1
		Textbooks	4	16.6
		Magazines	2	8.2
		None	7	29.1
14.	Types of exercises given to students	Vocabulary	5	20.8
		Grammar Exercises	4	16.5
		Idiomatic Exercises	3	12.5
		Sentences for translation	3	12.5
		Translation techniques	1	12.5
15.	Translation problems of students	Comprehension	5	20.8
		Language	18	75
		Translation techniques	10	41.6
		Use of tenses	2	4.2
16.	Translation teaching methods assessed ¹	Efficient and accurate methods	4	16.6
		Inefficient and inaccurate methods	9	37.5
17.	Language of Instruction in class	French	1	4.2
		English	1	4.2
		Both	22	91.6

¹ Categories established by the researcher based on the activation of translation-in-language-teaching competency indicators which include: translation, language, cultural, domain specific, extralinguistic, strategic and instrumental skills enhancement as spelt out in the official guide.

18	Direct observation teaching assessment	Professional qualities	2.6	B. AV.
		Interaction with students	2.5	B. AV
		Classroom management	2.0	B. AV
		Planning and organisation	1.8	B. AV
		Teaching competence	2.3	B. AV
		Personal qualities	2.1	B. AV
		Overall average	2.2	B. AV
19.	Direct observation of Teachers' performance	Teacher A	1.6	Unsatisfact.
		Teacher B	2.7	B. AV.
		Teacher C	2.0	B. AV
		Teacher D	2.4	B. AV
		Teacher E	2.2	B. AV
		Teacher F	2.0	B. AV
		Teacher G	3.2	AV
20.	Difficulties in applying the Official Guide	GCE programme runs parallel to it	5	20.5
		Lack of teaching aids	3	12.5
		Students are weak	3	12.5
		It has no teaching method	2	18.1
		Lack of textbooks	2	18.1
21.	Shortcomings of current practice in the field	Attention only focused on GCE	8	33.3
		No official manual	7	29.2
		Unqualified teachers		
		Unidirectional practice in translation	4	16.6
		No translation from 1 st cycle to 2 nd cycle	3	12.5
			2	18.2
22.	Major objectives of Sixth Form FLTP programmes	Preparation for university	5	20.5
		Preparation for a life of work	10	41.6
		Opportunity for further maturity	9	37.5

23.	Teachers' recommendations for improvement	Guide to be distributed to teachers	5	20.5
		Supervised implementation of guide	10	41.6
		Re-introduction of translation into English	7	29.2
		Organise seminars	2	18.2
24.	Support for the creation of a separate discipline of translation	Yes	14	58.3
		No	7	29.2
		Indifferent	3	1.5
25.	Reasons in support	Improve use of both languages	6	25.0
		Focused emphasis on translation	4	16.6
		Teachers/students will become more serious	4	16.6
		More efficiency and greater opportunity of survival of the art	3	12.5
		Very welcome in the era of professionalization.	3	12.5
26.	Manual used in class	Whitmarch,'s <i>Advanced French Course</i>	4	16.6
		Akuri's <i>Guidelines to translation</i>	6	25.0
		Poubom's <i>translation in schools</i>	1	4.1
		Whitmarch's <i>A new simpler French course</i>	1	4.1
27.	Teacher's position concerning unidirectional translation in practice	In support	8	33.3
		Against	16	66.7

Table 2: Summary, Survey of Teachers of FLTP

The results presented in Table 2 show that the number of female teachers is smaller than that of men, (8.4% as against 91.6%). These figures indicate that men are predominantly involved in teaching translation. The survey equally shows that all teachers are nationals with 50% of them being holders of a bilingual degree, which is an essential prerequisite in the teaching of translation. The figures also point out that only a very small proportion (29.1%) of the teachers is professionally trained.

Conversely, 50% of the teachers have spent at least 5 years in the field. Only 9 teachers (37.5%) are freshmen while three (3) have more than 10 years of teaching experience. This demonstrates that only 12.5% of the teachers are more experienced and reliably informed in this discipline. Lastly, the majority of teachers (83.3%) are registered members of the South West Association of French Teachers (AEFSO). However, 87.5% of them have never participated in any translation seminar. According to the results of the survey, 75% of teachers of FLTP are aware of the existence of the official guide. However, only 50% of these teachers have copies of the programme obtained mainly through the school library. The figures also reveal that among those who own copies (that is, 50%), only 3 teachers (that is, 12%) consult their copies frequently, while 9 (37.5%) consult them occasionally. This leaves 12 (that is, 50%) who operate independently, without consulting the official text.

Thirteen out of 24 teachers (that is, 54.2%) understand the specific objectives and content of the FLTP in the official guide. The other 11 teachers (that is, 45.8%) find difficulties in understanding the text due to its presumed high technical style. The results also reveal that a majority of teachers (among those who cannot understand the guide) hope to overcome their difficulties through the organisation of regular pedagogical seminars (42%), and making efforts to consult with professionals in the field (17%). In order to make the programme more comprehensible, most teachers are of the opinion that copies should be distributed to more teachers (28%) and regular pedagogic seminars should be organised (24%). Still, others believe that the problem could be overcome if more qualified teachers were injected into the system (19%).

Furthermore, the survey reveals that 55.5% of teachers are circumscribed by the GCE examinations specifications to translate only literary texts. However, a minority of them (33.3%) treat a variety of texts to meet both functional and communicative purposes. The survey also reveals that most teachers do not use teaching aids (29.1%) during the

translation class. Those of them who make use of teaching aids consult dictionaries (29.1%) and textbooks (16.6%). Exercises given in class focus mainly on vocabulary (20.8%) and translation of short sentences (12.5%). The survey shows that 92% of the teachers use both English and French in class. The popular justification is that both languages are actively required by students in future.

The results further confirm that teachers have difficulties in implementing the FLTP in the classroom. One of the major handicaps is that the GCE programme is paradoxically not a reflection of the FLTP objectives. 62.5% of the teachers do not use any manual in translation. They consult magazines, journals, dictionaries and grammar books when they prepare their lessons. Only 4 teachers use *The New Advanced French Course* by Whitmarsh. Others resort to printed notes prepared for examination purposes. Furthermore, most teachers (66.6%) are against the unidirectional translation practice into French only. They believe among other things that the exclusion of translation into English is based on a false assumption that Anglophones are already perfect in English and therefore need more French than English.

The results on direct classroom observation highlight the features of classroom practice of some seven (7) teachers drawn from public, mission and lay private schools in Kumba. The figures suggest that, for the most important professional skills, teachers obtain mean ratings below average. Only 5 out of a total of 31 skills grouped under the six headings (Professional qualities, Interaction with students, Classroom management, Planning and organisation, Teaching competence, Personal qualities) obtain an average mean of 3 and above.

Furthermore, 7 skills record an unsatisfactory mean of below 2. When calculated on the basis of the scale value of 5 assigned to the five response categories, it can be concluded that translation teaching performance in high schools is below average. It follows that only one teacher out of the seven is average (that is, 14.2%). Teacher B and D are however capable of improving their performance with hard work. One of them holds a degree in Translation. Teachers' performance is therefore inextricably linked to qualification, experience and professional training.

4.2 The Students of the FLTP

No.	Name of School	Town	Class

			L6	U6
1	CCAS Kumba	Kumba		9
2	P.H.S. Kumba			9
3	CCC High School			15
4	Lycée Molyko	Buea		13
5	Baptist High School			14
6	Inter-Comprehensive College			6
7	G.B.H.S Limbe	Limbe		14
8	Saker Baptist College			16
9	G.B.H.S. Bangem	Bangem		10
10	G.H.S. Mundemba	Mundemba	9	
11	Christ the King college	Tiko		10
12	G.H.S.			14
13	IPAAS			4
14	G.H.S. Mamfe	Mamfe		9
15	QRC Okoyong			5
16	Seat of Wisdom College	Fontem	14	
TOTAL			23	148

Table 3: Population Distribution of FLTP Students in 16 High Schools

Of the 24 schools short-listed, eight (8) did not register any students offering LA1 series (French, English literature and History) especially in the Upper Sixth class. The questionnaires were addressed mostly to Upper Sixth (U6) students because they are more enlightened consumers (having spent close to two years in the programme), and are therefore capable of making more valid and mature judgements on the functioning and structure of the programme. However, Lower Sixth (L6) students were not completely left out.

The statistics reveal that very few students are enrolled in LA1 series when compared with other disciplines or series. The highest number of students comes from Saker Baptist College, Limbe, with sixteen (16) students in U6. The reflections of these 171 students of LA1 on issues relating to the implementation of the FLTP, its usefulness and their motivation will constitute the object of survey in this section.

No.	Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex	Male	41	23.9
		Female	130	76.1
2.	Class	Lower Sixth	23	13.4
		Upper Sixth	148	86.6
3.	Nationality	Cameroonians	169	98.8
		Foreigners	02	1.2
4.	Linguistic Affinity	Anglophones	158	92.3
		Francophones	13	7.7
5.	G.C.E. 'O' Level French grade	A	24	14.0
		B	70	40.9
		C	70	40.9
		D	3	1.7
		BEPC	3	1.7
6.	Worst marks in French to U6th	P1. Multiple Choice	8	4.6
		P2. French literature	37	21.6
		P3. A. Essay in French	69	40.3
		P3. B. Translation	75	43.8
7.	Average in Upper Sixth	0 – 4	31	18.2
		5 – 9.9	45	26.3
		10 – 14.9	90	52.6
		15 – 20	5	2.9
8.	Reasons for doing English and French (LA 1 series)	To become bilingual	76	44.4
		To become a Translator	85	49.7
		To become a journalist	15	8.7
		Career purpose	7	4.0

		Because of 'O' level results	5	2.9
		Love for the French language	2	1.7
		It is easy	1	0.5
9.	Types of Texts translated in class	Literary texts	104	72.5
		Newspaper texts	02	1.3
		Excerpts	37	2.6
		Past GCE texts	7	4.0
		Variety	8	4.6
10.	Kind of exercises given in a translation class	Translation	57	33.3
		Grammar/Translation	6	3.5
		Grammar	15	8.7
		Dictation	5	2.9
		Translation techniques	2	1.2
		Assignments	35	20.4
		Translation of short sentences	13	7.6
11.	Difficulties encountered in translation	Use of tenses	75	43.8
		Vocabulary	55	32.1
		Translation techniques	26	15.2
		Idiomatic expressions	14	8.1
		Grammar	11	6.4
		Conjugation	22	12.8
12.	Do you like the way your teacher teaches?	Yes	43	25.2
		No	125	73.1
		Indifferent	3	1.7
13.	Improvement expected from teachers	Should be more lively	18	10.5
		Better translation techniques	17	9.9
		More practice	16	9.3
		Identify students' problems	14	8.1
		Improve on teaching	15	8.7
		Need for practical tests	08	4.6
		Use of variety of texts	06	3.5

14.	Description of the teacher's teaching method	Traditional methods	114	66.6
		Modern methods	55	32,1
		Innovative methods	2	1.3
15.	What changes do you recommend for action?	Translation into English	136	79.5
		More competent teachers	113	66.0
		Translation teaching activities	113	66.0
		Textbooks	70	40.9
		Student motivation	73	42.6
16.	Types of translation passages loved by students	Literary texts	58	33.9
		Excerpts from newspapers	26	15.2
		Texts from a variety of subject fields	108	63.1
17.	Do you support the re-introduction of translation into English	Yes	124	72.5
		No	47	27.5
18.	Do you support the creation of a separate discipline of translation?	Yes	142	83
		No	18	10.5
		Indifferent	11	6.5
18.	Arguments in support for translation into English	Complete/balanced programme	115	67.2
		Solve many English problems	09	5.2
		Broader translation skills	50	29.2
		Boost true bilingualism	50	29.2
		Perfect both languages	40	23.3
		Adequately prepare as future translators	70	40.9

Table 4: Summary, Survey of Students of FLTP

The results of the survey reveal that the proportion of girls doing LA1 is above that of boys (76% as against 24% respectively. Conversely, the students of LA1 are predominantly Cameroonians and 92.3% of these are Anglophones. With regards to their previous experience, a high proportion of these students (that is, 81.8%) scored 'b' or 'c' grades at the

French 'O' level. Only 24 students representing 14% scored the excellent grade of 'A', while 3 students were admitted into the programme with a failing grade of 'D'.

During the promotion examination to Upper Sixth (U6) and Mid-Year exams for Lower Sixth (L6) students, the worst marks were recorded in translation. The average for French as a discipline showed a 55% of students scoring above 10. However, only 5 students (that is, 2.9%) scored excellent average scores of above 15. Most students doing LA1 series (that is, English literature, History and French) are interested in becoming translators (49.7%).

The survey on the type of texts used in class shows the predominance of literary texts. 124 students (that is, 72.5%) testify to this, while 32 (that is, 18.5%) confirm that excerpts are used. The major areas of difficulty for students concern predominantly the use of tenses (43.8%), vocabulary (32.1%), translation techniques (15.2%), and conjugation (12.8%). A total of 125 students (that is, 73%) dislike their teachers' teaching methods.

Students have made proposals in view of helping their teachers out from their use of unorthodox methods. These include: the need for more classroom animation (10.5%), reinforcement of translation techniques (9.9%), the need for more practical exercises (9.3%), and the need to assess students' needs (4.6%). Lastly, there is also the necessity for more practical or authentic texts (4.6%).

From students' descriptions of their methods, most teachers adopt the traditional approach to translation teaching which involves mostly identifying areas of difficulty before translation proper or asking students to write their proposals on the board for correction or doing an immediate joint class correction of a worked text. There is little concern for improving the language needs of the translation students because over 90% of the approaches adopted show an absence of pre-text analysis. 14 students testify to the predominance of the practice where teachers abandon students to work on their own. The role of teachers as resource persons and facilitators is compromised by unorthodox applications in about 54% of identified approaches. There is no respect for established principles in the official guide.

The statistics on the use of translation activities reveal that 19 out of some 31 identified communicative activities (that is, 61.3%) are never exploited in the classroom. The 19 activities unfortunately represent the most innovative in current research on the FLTP Guide. The results also show that the absence of translation into English and poor teaching

techniques constitute the major shortcomings of the current practice of the FLTP in the field. Those who consider this a failure recommend: the reintroduction of a section of translation into English (72.5%), the recruitment of competent teachers (76%), and the application of translation teaching activities (76%).

Conversely, 83% of the students advocate for the creation of a separate discipline of translation in high school for various reasons amongst which are: to intensify the study of the two languages (67.2%), to reinforce bilingualism (29.2%), to adequately orient and groom future translators (40.9%) and make the translation programme more rewarding (29.2%).

5 Discussion

This study demonstrates that the exclusive use of literary texts, the excessive influence of the traditional GCE examination over classroom conduct, the predominance of practice that has no bearing on preparing students for a life of work in line with today's context, the reductionist practice of unidirectional translation, the absence of an official translation manual and the continuous admission into the programme of students with failing grades in French are among many of the unorthodox practices in the field.

5.1 The Usefulness of the Official FLTP Guide

In effect, the strength of the FLTP lies in its new orientation in promoting translation competence by maintaining a balance between language, subject, and transfer skills, so that translation learning should also result in the reinforcement of language skills. According to Neubert (1995: 412) translation competence consists of: "language competence, subject competence and transfer competence." These aims include greater consideration of students' practical abilities, experiences and interests. However, the use of the official LTP is by no means secure in Anglophone high schools and its role as a promoter of innovative teaching seems to be ignored by most teachers. Worse still, most teachers are not even aware of the existence of an official curriculum guide on the teaching and learning of translation in particular, and French in general. This clearly paints a perverse picture.

It seems obvious that after many years of largely unguided teaching, there is possibly an unconscious fear of new challenges at the back of the mind of most FLTP teachers. This

explains why most teachers professed difficulties in understanding the official text even though the instrument has been clearly outlined.

On the other hand, the uncontrolled influence of the GCE Examination over outlined principles and procedures leaves the FLTP at the mercy of this traditional evaluation instrument. Hence, the difficulty of reaching the desired goals through teaching the necessary skills outlined in the official guide can also be attributed to the teachers' inability to sustain a balanced perspective between the GCE and the official curriculum. The educational objectives of translation as a course in Anglophone high schools can be attributed to poor implementation (or lack of it) of the official FLTP guide.

5.2 Teaching Methods in the FLTP

According to Neubert (1995), the perennial problem of how to teach translation in language learning has in recent years become increasingly guided by the dominant aim of promoting both the learner's communicative and translation competence. There is no doubt that the translation text consists of language and its primary focus for analysis should be the pattern made by language. That is why the official FLTP prescribes an integrated language and translation study as the basis for any effective translation teaching methodology at this level.

The results of the survey show that the teaching of translation is muddled with limited awareness of methodology and principles of procedures. In fact FLTP teachers can be said to have perennial problems of learning to teach translation. The negative status of the FLTP teachers is inescapable as a majority of them are unprofessional and non-bilinguals who show no interest even in seminars organised for their own self-edification. A professionally untrained teacher is likely to have no personal commitment to his subject. The teachers observed exhibited a detached position, invariably playing down their functions as a simple means of sustaining their livelihood. They show no personal commitment to reading translation theory as a necessary build-up for their career. Many teachers have their own educational objectives and ideas about achievements that are limited by their narrow perspectives, neglect of relevant factors and misjudging of priorities. More often, most FLTP teachers fall back upon a more traditional classroom role in which the teacher sees himself as merely imparting knowledge.

Translation teaching adopted a traditional procedure: reading, vocabulary study, translating, and correction of worked scripts at home and revision. It is not uncommon to find a situation where the FLTP teachers translate passages in an examination-centred approach, which largely ignores a deeper insight that privileges the mastery of global skills that students should gain from their confrontation with a translation text. In fact, there is little room for either students' responses or their involvement during class sessions. An exclusive use of this kind of approach is likely to turn to tedium in the classroom. Practice which is not informed by any theoretical framework, as Gentile points out, "suffers from the idiosyncrasies of the practitioners reducing the teaching of skills to regurgitation of recipes" (Gentile 1991: 344).

5.3 Translation Teaching Activities

The official programme envisages translation commentary as a moment for activities of reflection and exploration of the unknown. In view of adequately exploring this global aspect of translation, the official FLTP guide has designed several activities including oral translating, discussion, summarizing, note-taking, text analysis, reporting commentaries, reformulation, debate, and so on. In devising activities which integrate language and translation, the experts have borne in mind the notion that learning is promoted by involving as many of the students' faculties as possible. The availability of a variety of activities enable the teacher to concentrate on addressing students' weaknesses in particular skill areas – speaking, listening, reading, understanding and translating.

This move to consider language activities in their social context has influenced thinking on translation in what has been referred to as 'communicative' translating (Newmark 1981: 38). This competence is an interesting combination of linguistic, socio-cultural, historic, and semiotic awareness. In this way, students gain additional familiarity with many different uses of language because engaging creatively with translation enables students to shift the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspect of foreign language systems.

Paradoxically, most of these activities are hardly exploited in class. Activities are frequently unplanned and random. In fact most students observed in classrooms felt frustrated as they had to spend too long on observation alone when they were eager for a more active role.

5.4 Translation Text-Types

Translation is an act of communication involving texts from which the class can presuppose, implicate, infer and transfer meaning. As Boudin points out, the text is the axis around which learning revolves, “ce n’est jamais l’objectif final qui crée la motivation pédagogique mais le point image median” (Boudin 1989: 64). Both translation and language teaching involve a development of a feeling for language and of response to ‘texts’.

The official programme recommends the use of variety of texts drawn from different subject fields which offer a varied body of valuable authentic material such as, time tables, forms, pamphlets, cartoons, advertisements, newspapers, birth certificates, films, video programmes, to mention but a few. Hence, a fresh insight into uses felt to be close to the students’ concerns is addressed. Different students’ aims require translation to serve different functions, which are best performed by using a variety of texts.

The practice in the field violates the basic principles of the official guide. Contrary to the specification of the official programme, it is ironically the GCE Examination that seems to define teaching objectives independent of what is in the official curriculum. It is true that the existence of a literature component in the ‘A’ Level French programme provides a familiar context for literary translation. The examination authorities may have been led to believe that this fact alone could ease translation difficulties.

However, translators know that literary translation is a difficult domain of translation which involves not only the transfer of ordinary information but also the aesthetic characteristics whose goal is to produce an aesthetic effect. This is certainly above the language level and reasoning of students at this level. Furthermore, literary texts are circumscribed language acts and are usually translated in a vacuum completely disconnected from students’ workaday experiences. Translation should be sensitive to the sociological issues pertaining to the dynamics of language. The awareness of language variation can be an important prerequisite for responding sensitively to translation as language in use. Only the use of a variety of texts can guarantee this.

Even if these students cannot be transformed into professional translators, this awareness can provide a basis for a principled method by which reading and interpretation skills of budding translators can be developed. Translation texts provide examples of language

resources being used to the full and the student is placed in an active interaction role in working with and making sense of this language.

5.5 Translation Directionality

Directionality refers to whether translation is done from a foreign language into a mother tongue or vice versa. The official prescription is that both direct and inverse translations should be practised. Given that linguistic competence is rarely symmetrical, inverse translation in FLTP should impart translating skills while direct translation is essentially a pedagogical instrument of testing competence in the foreign language. Learning a foreign language creates a natural condition analogous to that of translation. The two language systems exert a strong influence on one another such that a foreign language learner no longer perceives his language in the same way as when he embarks on learning a new one.

Translation is the subject at this level which best resolves the problem of dissimulation which occurs at the level of interference, through a close examination of the specificity that defines each language's genius. Ladmiral makes a legitimate claim of the role of translation as a necessary language skill: "En effet la question se pose sérieusement de savoir même s'il n'y a pas lieu d'assigner (comme cinquième skill) à l'enseignement des langues une compétence traductive ou traductrice quasi ou préprofessionnelles.» (Ladmiral 1984: 43).

The FLTP in Anglophone high schools in Cameroon is a product of the contact between the English and French languages in the spirit of mutual language development. The restitution of bidirectionality is highly solicited by students and teachers in strict conformity with the official programme.

6 Recommendations

In this section, recommendations are made aimed at improving the prevailing situation and on how it could best be adapted to meet students' needs in pursuing a degree course in translation or bilingual letters in much the same way as in other subject areas.

6.1 The Status of the FLTP Guide

Although the official FLTP was published way back in 1997, teachers still find it difficult to adopt the innovations contained in it and to discard old practices. This is largely due to the

lack of orientation in the exploitation of the programme outlines and principles. To do this, copies of the guide must be made available to teachers. The mass media and in-service education should be intensified to help these teachers upgrade their skills by exposing them to the latest ideas, techniques, research results and other indispensable publications in translation. Schools and national inspectors should also encourage the organisation of workshops, symposia and seminars. Teachers should also be encouraged to conduct research into problem areas of translation practice and the findings of these research activities could then be used to improve the relevant spheres of translation in Anglophone high schools.

6.2 Deficiencies in the Teaching of FLTP

The problem of ineffective implementation of the FLTP innovative pedagogy stems from the poor training of teachers. There is visibly a cause and effect relationship between teachers' training, performance and output. With over 50% of FLTP teachers who are non-bilinguals, the problem of translation teaching is partly caused by the confusion in distinguishing good French teachers from quack ones. It would be necessary to open research cycles in our teacher training institutions to impart the virtues of research and the culture of continual professional development. Also, the bilingual degree should equally prepare students to become teachers of translation in addition to language and literature, in order to adapt the programme to the needs of the students and the market.

It would also be necessary to recruit graduate students from translation schools to teach translation in our schools. Translation schools should, in turn, be prepared to respond to the increasing needs for translation in education, communication and research. Lastly, the present poor state of translation teaching can be addressed through the regular organisation of workshops, colloquia, seminars and in-service training for teachers. It is important to encourage teacher's associations in various disciplines, and membership should be compulsory.

6.3 The Gender Gap in FLTP Teaching

Translation teaching in Anglophone high schools is fast gaining ground as a male-dominated discipline (91.5%). Paradoxically, there are more girls than boys doing translation in high

schools (76%). Although sufficient data on the precise workload for female teachers are not available, they are mostly confined to the first cycle, and this is motivationally discouraging for the majority of girls choosing the subject. This study posits that if women could consider teaching as one field of fostering their social status, they must be prepared to venture into those domains hitherto believed to be reserved for men. Fischbach is of the opinion that “Translation is one of the few careers open to women ... which need not be sacrificed at the altar of marriage or abandoned for the enchantment of motherhood” (Fischbach 1964: 3).

6.4 Innovative Teaching Methodology

There have been no major reforms to address the generalized disequilibrium existing between the GCE and the official text as one would have expected after a major curriculum renewal. One cause of disillusionment is the lack of teachers’ trainers whose duty it is to guide teachers in the implementation of studied ideas and methods. Without this guidance, many untrained teachers find these guidelines rather too superficial. This study recommends that the training of trainers be intensified and more seminars organised for heads of department, who will, in turn, pass on the new methods to their colleagues in their respective schools.

Conversely, in a bid to impart essential translation skills to students and enable them to acquire linguistic, discursive and cultural competence within the framework of developing their sense of analysis and synthesis, of creativity and judgement, this study recommends the use of valuable authentic materials for translation practice, exercises on language enrichment, exercises on cultural enrichment, and exercises in personal involvement.

In this vein, the following pedagogical approaches and activities are indispensable: inaugural activities made up of orientation and warm-up sessions before translation begins; text analysis made up of exercises that elicit students’ familiarity with the text’s structure, form and function; snowball activities involving progressive activities like group work, team competition, language worksheets, oral activities; feedback activities which create a forum for exchange of experiences and studied ideas between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves; workshop sessions which provide a forum for discussion and examination of practical issues in translating; and research/field work sessions which provide a forum for extracting information and terminology from real communicative settings.

These activities would activate and maintain interest and involvement by using a variety of student-centred activities to supplement the source text as a language laboratory, to facilitate the tapping of knowledge resources and group experience, to help students to explore their own responses to translation, to prompt the frequent use of the target language, and to integrate language and translation in a mutually inclusive manner.

6.5 Selection of Texts for Translation

The choice of translation texts ought to be predicated on the interest of the students and on the subject matter as well as graded according to their presumed language proficiency and reasoning. These texts should constitute a source of joy and discovery of the unknown that will be remembered for a long time. All tests should be drawn from current or topical issues of interest and they should be sufficiently representative. Above all, they should offer opportunities for the practice of a variety of activities and relevant translation techniques around the chosen subject field.

In line with the expectations of teachers and students, this study proposes the introduction of a variety of texts that are easily accessible. This will enable students who wish to pursue a career in translation to be adequately prepared for the art as it is the case with other disciplines like history, literature or economics. This study equally recommends the use of texts of a certain linguistic texture that can enable students to reinforce their language mastery and use in context and style. This will help overcome the misconception in some quarters that translation is a handicap to the acquisition of linguistic, discursive and cultural competence. Lastly, for motivational purposes, most of the texts should relate to the problems of youth, like love, unemployment, or rural exodus, to mention but a few.

6.6 Official Evaluation

The official evaluation instrument should reflect the official curriculum and objectives and school examinations should in turn be expected to adhere strictly to official specifications. This is not the case with the Cameroon GCE, which is parallel to the official FLTP Guide. In line with official specifications, this study envisages the introduction of four texts from different subject fields other than the literary domain. At least two texts each will be set for direct and inverse translation respectively in the GCE examination.

The study also recommends the introduction of an oral translation examination. This will take the form of an oral report based on a short text to be studied by the candidate and communicated orally in the candidates' own language; and the objectives of the examination and evaluation will need to be evaluated on at least two levels, both as translations and as evidence of target language competence.

6.7 The Need for Bi-Directionality

The decision to eliminate translation into English in 1995 was a bad one because it presupposes that Anglophone students are already perfect in English, which is not true. The poor results in the 'O' Level English GCE testify to this. Teachers and students as well as the official FLTP guide condemn one-way translation and are in support of the restoration of this paper because translation requires the mastery of two languages. So the One-Way translation practice is therefore not beneficial to the process of translating.

Students should have an opportunity to express and perfect themselves in their working languages – English and French. Unidirectional translating creates a gap with regards to reinforcing the study of English and it is not therefore a practical utility in a bilingual country like Cameroon. As future translators mostly, the students should be open to both languages through the direct and inverse translation practice, which will enable them to translate in both languages, thereby broadening their translation skills and competences.

6.8 A separate discipline of Translation

Since one of the objectives of the FLTP in Anglophone high schools is to prepare students for the labour market and further studies, students should be trained to acquire the necessary skills, which involve among other things, the intensification of the art of translating begun in the first cycle. This ultimate aim makes translation attain the status of a legitimate object of study not only as a means to an end but also an end in itself. It is believed in this study that these objectives can only be attained if a separate discipline is created. Both teachers and students strongly support the creation of this new discipline, which will be a culminating point of those studying English and French for instrumental purposes.

It will create a greater opportunity for intensifying the study of the two languages, as this will awaken interest and determination. Students will have enough time and opportunity to do all exercises, and teachers will be more serious. A separate discipline will also boost the understanding, mastery and use of both languages and give Cameroon's bilinguals more practical skill.

6.9 The Declarative Knowledge of FLTP Students

The FLTP students are mostly average in performance, and this weakness is generally attributed to their insufficient training opportunities in the first cycle. In fact, the link between Form Five translation work and that of the second cycle bears no resemblance. The absence of any manual that envisages this language skill as a choice component to students is regrettable. As a skill of practical importance at this level, access to progressively graded texts in lower sixth and upper sixth could have been well prepared in the first cycle, thereby ensuring a smooth transition. This study proposes the introduction of a manual in the first and second cycles that incorporates language, literature and translation in line with the official guide. This manual should include pedagogical guidelines on translation approaches, practice activities and graded texts to the taste and level of the students.

6.10 Information and Communication Technology

Access to information technology in most high schools should, in effect, revolutionize the culture of the translation classroom. Translation pedagogy is dealing with a new communication culture in which the potential growth of information is wide open. This study proposes the exploitation of simple ways of appropriating networked communication and an Internet-based model of information flow to improve on the teaching of FLTP. The Internet is an infinite and inexhaustible library for translation study resources.

7 Conclusion

A clear picture of the problems plaguing the effective teaching of the FLTP in Anglophone high schools in Cameroon has been successfully presented and the evaluation has been substantiated with a good number of objective tools. The analytical instruments used have greatly helped to corroborate this researcher's personal experience as an FLTP teacher and examiner for close to two decades.

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