English Language Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards Multilingualism and Equity

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This article details English language education within the specific multilingual contexts of Ghana and Cameroon, highlighting how their distinct language policies and implementation practices reflect broader complexities within the sociolinguistic landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa. The interplay between linguistic imperialism, linguistic instrumentalism, national interests, and current challenges in language education is explored, with an emphasis on the experiences of teachers and students. By analyzing case studies from these nations, the authors underscored the role of multilingual education in enhancing ELT, promoting inclusivity, and fostering equity. Further discussed in this paper are the ways to influence educational policy and practice by advocating for multilingual approaches that optimize learning outcomes and inclusivity. Finally, the authors highlight parallel tendencies toward linguistic instrumentalism in Ghana, Cameroon, and Japan, and argue that a deeper understanding of these trends—especially as they relate to multilingualism, translanguaging, and English education in Africa—can yield valuable insights for crafting more equitable, context-sensitive language-education policies and practices worldwide.

本稿はガーナとカメルーンという多言語的な文脈での英語教育を考察し、両国の言語政策とその実施の実態が、サブサハラ・アフリカでの社会言語学的状況の広範な複雑性をいかに反映しているかを明らかにする。言語帝国主義、言語道具主義、国家的利益、そして現在の言語教育における課題が交錯する中で、教師や生徒の経験に焦点化した事例研究を通して、多言語教育が英語教育の質の向上、包摂性の促進、公平性の確保に果たす役割を強調する。また学習成果と包摂性を最大化する多言語的アプローチを提唱することで、教育政策と実践への影響についても論じる。さらに、ガーナ、カメルーン、日本に共通する言語道具主義の傾向を取り上げ、特に多言語主義、トランスランゲージング、アフリカにおける英語教育との関連において、こうした傾向を深く理解することが、より公平で文脈に即した言語教育政策と実践を世界的に構築するうえで有益な示唆を与えると主張する。

Africa is poised to play an increasingly significant role in shaping global demographic, cultural, and linguistic landscapes. By 2050, it is estimated that one in four people on the planet will be African, underscoring the continent's youthful and rapidly growing population (Paice, 2021; Walsh & Morales, 2023). Despite this, TESOL scholarship and praxis have remained largely disengaged from the intricacies of African linguistic and educational dynamics (R'boul, 2023). With over 130 million Africans speaking English as an official or secondary language across 27 countries, a linguistic diversity encompassing one-third of the world's total languages, as well as a recent call to decolonize language education, Africa represents an opportunity to re-examine, deeply explore, and appreciate the diversity and complexity of language education policy and practices worldwide. In this article, we aim to introduce the linguistic complexities and disparities regarding language and education in Africa to TESOL educators in Japan who may not be familiar with the details of language policy in African contexts, drawing on the linguistically diverse West and Central African nations of the Republic of Ghana and the Republic of Cameroon, the countries or origin of three out of the four authors, as case studies. Through these cases, we explore the tensions between indigenous and former

colonial languages and identify actionable steps to enhance equity and multilingualism in education.

One core overarching concept in language and education in Africa is known as the *language question*, which is a term coined by postcolonial scholars and sociolinguists to encapsulate the multifaceted challenges surrounding language use, instruction, and identity in postcolonial African states (Bamgbose, 1991; Kamwangamalu, 2016). This question probes how indigenous languages can be promoted as media of instruction to counteract the dominance of former colonial languages such as English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, and how linguistic equity and inclusion can be championed instead of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). It seeks to interrogate the tensions involved in sustaining native African languages alongside former colonial and dominant languages of wider communication, aiming ultimately to foster multilingualism and enhance educational outcomes.

In this article, the authors introduce the complexities surrounding the language question in Africa and its relevance to TESOL scholarship and praxis by doing the following:

1. Examining the linguistic dynamics of Ghana and Cameroon as case studies to illuminate broader patterns and challenges and proposing equitable solutions.
2. Encouraging educators, researchers, and curriculum developers to reflect on the language question in Africa.
3. Highlight commonalities between Cameroon, Ghana, and Japan by drawing attention to the pervasive influence of the notion of *linguistic instrumentalism* (Wee, 2003; Kubota, 2011), or "a view of language that justifies its existence in a community in terms of its usefulness in achieving specific utilitarian goals, such as access to economic development or social mobility" (Wee, 2003, p. 211).

As the global TESOL and applied linguistics community grapples with issues of equity, representation, and decolonization, it is imperative to include African perspectives in these conversations. Doing so not only enriches our understanding of linguistic diversity, but it also challenges hegemonic tendencies, such as the primacy of norm-providing Inner Circle 'native speaker' Englishes, the monolingual bias in English language teaching, and the hierarchical valuation of former colonial languages over indigenous and minority languages (Hall & Cook, 2012; Mohanty, 2010; Rose & Galloway, 2019), that have long dominated the field. In the sections to follow, our survey of the language situation in Ghana and Cameroon will be presented, followed by implications and key takeaways.

The Impact of Linguistic Imperialism on Indigenous Languages in Ghana

Linguistic imperialism refers to the gradual abandonment of native languages by indigenous communities, adopting a hegemonic foreign language as a dominant language for education, socio-economic mobility, and other critical domains (Agyekum, 2018; Nkomo & Nhongo, 2023). In Ghana, this phenomenon is widespread, stemming from colonial policies that continue to influence postcolonial educational and governmental structures, positioning English as superior to the indigenous languages in fields such as science, governance, and commerce (Adika, 2012; Obeng, 2020; Soma & Zuberu, 2022). Consequently, native languages are devalued, reinforcing the belief that they lack utility in modern contexts (Bonney & Campbell, 2022). This devaluation undermines linguistic diversity, perpetuates societal inequalities, and threatens cultural identity and educational outcomes. Ghana, home to many indigenous languages, continues to face these challenges as English dominates official and public life (Adongo & Nsoh, 2023; Appiah & Ardila, 2021; Ojong & Addo, 2024). This section details the language-in-education policies and stakeholder contributions to the marginalisation of native languages, concluding with recommendations for preserving linguistic diversity.

Current Language Situations in Ghana

The linguistic landscape of Ghana is diverse, with over 80 indigenous languages (Sabirova & Tenkorang, 2021; Sherris, 2020). Various scholars have reported differing figures, as it is often challenging to distinguish between what qualifies as a language and what constitutes dialects of other languages (Bodomo et al., 2009). Despite this richness, English, introduced during colonial rule (Adika, 2012; Yevudey & Agbozo, 2019), remains the sole official language (Ofori, 2024; Reilly et al., 2023). The current language-in-education policy mandates English as the medium of instruction from primary school grade 4 and remains the medium of instruction from introduction through to the university level, largely favored over indigenous languages (Bonney & Campbell, 2022; Ofori, 2024; Owu-Ewie, 2006).

The cultural importance of indigenous languages, however, cannot be overstated. They are vital for preserving heritage and fostering identity (Asamoah-Poku et al., 2023). Some of these indigenous languages face a decline, particularly in schools where English dominates. The Safaliba language, for instance, illustrates this marginalization, as speakers struggle to maintain its relevance in formal education (Sherris, 2019; 2020).

The Effects of Linguistic Imperialism

One of the consequences of linguistic imperialism is peripheral linguistic imperialism. As described by Yevudey and Agbozo (2019), peripheral linguistic imperialism is when dominant indigenous languages are imposed on speakers of minority languages. To reiterate, the language-in-education policy stipulates that "the Ghanaian language dominant in the locality of a school should be used as the medium of instruction, along with English if preferred, for kindergarten and the first three years of primary school (ages 6-8), after which English-only instruction takes over" (Bonney & Campbell, 2022, p.98). The dominant Ghanaian languages referred to here are 11 out of the over 80 languages: Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi, Fante, Ewe, Ga, Dangme, Dagbani, Nzema, Gonja, Dagaare, and Kasem–the only languages with written forms (Sabirova & Tenkorang, 2021; Sadat & Kuwornu, 2017). This means that, although some students acquire basic literacy skills in selected Ghanaian languages (Obeng, 2020; Mahama & Bawah, 2022), these are often languages other than their mother tongues. This mismatch creates a disconnect between students and their native linguistic heritage, undermining their sense of identity and belonging. Furthermore, in certain urban schools, instruction is conducted exclusively in English, which contributes to the marginalization of indigenous languages within the educational system (Bonney & Campbell, 2022). Therefore, there is evidence that English serves high purposes and prestigious roles, followed by government-sponsored languages, with other indigenous languages ranking afterward (Reilly et al., 2023).

This educational preference for English, as noted by Guerini (2007) and Dako and Quarcoo (2017), reinforces the idea that the English language is superior to local languages in Ghana. Consequently, some speakers of some indigenous languages often experience diminished self-esteem, feeling that their native tongues are less valuable or prestigious. This not only erodes cultural pride but also weakens the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, threatening their survival and cultural continuity. Over time, this prioritization of the English language aggravates the decline of Ghanaian languages and perpetuates linguistic and cultural inequities (Asamoah-Poku et al., 2023; Yeboah, 2023).

Educational Outcomes of Using Indigenous Languages

Research consistently highlights the benefits of incorporating Ghanaian languages in education (Bonney & Campbell, 2022). Collison (1974), cited by Bonney and Campbell (2022), demonstrated that students taught science in a Ghanaian language explained concepts more effortlessly than those taught in English. Similarly, Davis et al. (2013) found that students learning mathematics in their indigenous language showed better comprehension. Other works by Ahadzie et al. (2015) and Casely-Hayford and Hartwell (2010) corroborate this assertion. Despite these findings, the systemic marginalisation of Ghanaian languages persists (Bonney & Campbell, 2022). The educational system emphasizes English literacy as a marker of educational success (Appiah & Ardila, 2021; Osseo-Asare, 2021; Reilly et al., 2023), whereas indigenous Ghanaian languages are mainly appreciated for their role in reflecting identity, fostering community, and preserving culture (Reilly et al., 2023). This prioritization diminishes the role indigenous languages could play in promoting literacy and the development of critical thinking skills.

Stakeholders' Contributions to Marginalization

Several stakeholders contribute to the marginalization of Ghanaian indigenous languages. On the part of the government, language policies favor English, as evident in language-in-education policies (Ofori, 2024), nationwide standardized examinations (Adika, 2012; Quainoo et al., 2020), curricula (Darkwah, 2012; Mohammed, 2022), and resource distribution. Limited investments are made in developing orthographies, textbooks, or teacher training for indigenous languages (Adika, 2012; Yevudey & Agbozo, 2019). Authorities in educational institutions also prioritize English proficiency (Adobaw-Bansah & Essah-Ntiful, 2017; Dako, 2001), relegating indigenous languages to extracurricular activities. The English language is a core subject, whereas indigenous languages are electives; students therefore attach too much seriousness to studying the English language to the detriment of indigenous languages. Literacy is often equated with English fluency (Bonney & Campbell, 2022; Dako & Quarcoo, 2017; Mahama & Bawah, 2022), marginalizing students proficient in native languages. For parents, the English language is perceived as a key to socio-economic advancement (Bonney & Campbell, 2022; Reilly et al., 2023). Many parents demotivate their children from learning indigenous languages, fearing it may hinder their prospects. As noted by Guerini (2007), some parents are often disappointed in schools that try to utilize an indigenous language as a medium of instruction. For students, the societal prestige associated with English creates peer pressure to devalue native languages. Students sometimes stigmatize peers who excel in indigenous language studies (Guerini, 2007), reinforcing the cycle of marginalization.

Recommendations for a More Inclusive Language Policy in Ghana

The dominance of English in the educational system of Ghana exemplifies linguistic imperialism, leading to the gradual erosion of some indigenous languages and their associated cultural identities (Sherris 2019; Ansah & Agyeman, 2015). While studies, past and present, affirm the educational benefits of mother-tongue instruction, systemic barriers perpetuate the inferiorization of local languages. To address these challenges, the Ghanaian government must reform language-in-education policies to integrate indigenous languages into the curriculum and make some of these languages core subjects. Public awareness campaigns can elevate the status of local languages, and stakeholders must collaborate to ensure equitable resource distribution. Through the preservation of linguistic diversity, Ghana can create a more inclusive and culturally rich society.

Merits of English-medium Instruction in Ghana

Despite the plethora of challenges associated with English-medium Instruction (EMI) in Ghana, the adoption of English as an official language and language in education also has upsides for key stakeholders. In this section, the merits of EMI and English as an official language are discussed as they relate to government and policymakers, teachers, students, and society.

Government and Policymakers

English is the common language for education in Ghana's linguistically diverse society. Although research (Ahadzie et al., 2015; Casely-Hayford & Hartwell, 2010; Davis et al., 2013) indicates that educating children in their native language is most effective, implementing this approach in Ghana presents significant challenges. The primary obstacle is that while indigenous languages are widely used for daily communication, they lack academic and scientific vocabulary, making them unsuitable for educational purposes (Owu-Ewie, 2006). Consequently, there are no textbooks in indigenous languages for STEM subjects or social sciences. Additionally, there is a shortage of teachers trained to instruct in indigenous languages (Appiah & Ardila, 2021), as teacher training, except for Ghanaian language educators, is conducted exclusively in English. This reliance on English simplifies educational administration and policy implementation for the government, policymakers, and curriculum developers.

An alternative approach would require a complete overhaul of the education system by developing Ghanaian languages for academic use, publishing educational materials in these languages, and training multilingual teachers. However, this process would considerably increase educational costs, placing an unsustainable burden on an already fragile economy grappling with numerous social and economic challenges. Thus, English serves as a unifying medium for education in a linguistically heterogeneous society and remains a cost-effective solution.

Teachers

Teaching students from diverse linguistic backgrounds is remarkably simplified for Ghanaian teachers due to the unifying role of English (Mahama & Bawa, 2022; Nketsiah, 2018). Students will likely speak various first languages in a typical Ghanaian classroom, particularly in larger towns and urban areas. Similarly, teachers often do not share the same first language as their students (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). In such cases, English is the common language bridging the linguistic gap between students and their teachers (Agbozo, 2015). A common language enables teachers to communicate effectively and impart knowledge to their linguistically diverse student body. Without English, many teachers would face significant communication challenges that would be incredibly difficult to overcome.

Moreover, Ghanaian teachers benefit from international employment opportunities due to their English proficiency. Many have secured positions as English teachers in Asian countries (Treve, 2020) and as educators across various subjects in Europe and North America (Akanmori, 2017; Arthur, 2016). These roles not only offer a means of livelihood but also provide access to a higher quality of life in developed economies, opportunities that would be unattainable if their teaching expertise were confined to native languages.

Students

For students in Ghana, English serves as the gateway to education, without which many would be excluded from formal learning. This reality stems from the fact that most Ghanaian languages remain undeveloped for academic purposes. To illustrate the impact of this language situation, we examined three linguistic communities in Ghana. The first is the Safaliba community in northwestern Ghana, a minority group of approximately 10,000 people whose first language is Safaliba. In schools, Safaliba children are primarily taught in English and the nearby dominant Gonja language, neither of which is mutually intelligible with Safaliba (Sherris, 2020). This leaves students navigating education through two unfamiliar languages, which poses substantial barriers to effective learning.

The second community is the Lateh people in southern Ghana, numbering around 130,000. While the Lateh language is their native tongue, students are taught in English and Akuapim, the dominant regional language (Ansah & Agyeman, 2015). Similar to the Safaliba case, this practice isolates students from their linguistic roots and complicates their educational journey. The third group is the Efutu people, also in southern Ghana, with a population of about 110,000. Efutu students are educated in English, the dominant language of the region, and Fante. Ansah and Agyeman (2015) document a striking example where students read a text in a third language, Twi. While Twi, Fante, and Efutu are Akan languages, only Twi and Fante are mutually intelligible, further alienating Efutu students in the schooling system.

These cases highlight the prevalence of peripheral linguistic imperialism in Ghana and the instrumental role of English for educational stakeholders in a country where indigenous languages are not sufficiently developed for formal education. For students, EMI provides access to quality education and serves as the operational language in most vibrant schools. Without English, students in communities like Safaliba would face the difficult prospect of being educated in a language they do not understand or in a native language that lacks a writing system and educational materials. Moreover, English-speaking Ghanaian students gain access to educational and economic opportunities both locally and internationally (Bonney & Campbell, 2022). At home, English-speaking students can gain admission into tertiary institutions and employment in the public and private sectors. Internationally, many universities in Europe, Asia, and North America have waived English language requirements for Ghanaian applicants to undergraduate and graduate programs, recognizing English as Ghana's de facto language of education (Piller & Bodis, 2024). Additionally, a substantial number of Ghanaians emigrate for expanded opportunities (Asiedu, 2010) that Ghana's small economy cannot provide. Therefore, English proficiency not only provides students with educational access but also makes graduates globally competitive.

Society

English plays a crucial role in promoting national cohesion and stability in Ghana's multi-ethnic and linguistically diverse society. In a study by Mahama (2023) on attitudes toward adopting a Ghanaian language as a national language, participants expressed openness to using Ghanaian languages other than their own for cross-ethnic communication. However, they strongly opposed the idea of elevating a single Ghanaian language to the status of an official or national language. The participants argued that such a move would overshadow smaller ethnic and cultural identities, exacerbating divisions. Mahama also observes that while most Ghanaians identify as English-speaking citizens, they maintain strong cultural ties to their respective tribes. Consequently, while Ghanaians use local lingua franca out of necessity, they are not eager to adopt another Ghanaian language as their own.

Thus, English, despite its limitations, functions as the unifying force that holds Ghana's multi-ethnic society together and ensures governability. Promoting a single local language, such as Twi, the most widely spoken Ghanaian language, could marginalize non-Akan languages and be perceived as *neocolonization* by non-Akan ethnic groups. Such a policy might inadvertently spark ethnic tensions, turning language promotion into a catalyst for division rather than unity. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Ghana; similar ethnic tensions arising from language imposition have been observed globally. In Spain, the imposition of Spanish on Catalonia speakers has been a contentious issue (Hueglin, 1986; Woolard, 2018). In Quebec, Canada, there have been ongoing tensions between French and English-speaking communities (Nelde, 2017). The opposite is also true in provinces outside Quebec, where the official language is English. Additionally, language policies in Sri Lanka that prioritized Sinhala over Tamil sowed discord, contributing to a nearly three-decade-long civil war (DeVotta, 2004; Eckstein, 2018). Mahama (2023) suggests that a Ghanaian language could only be widely accepted as a national language if it provides the same level of utility as English. Until then, English remains the pragmatic choice for fostering national cohesion and facilitating governance in Ghana's complex linguistic and cultural environment.

The Intersection of Multilingualism and Translanguaging in the Cameroonian Educational Context

Cameroon, located in Central Africa, is often referred to as "Africa in Miniature" due to its remarkable cultural and geographical diversity (Kindzeka, 2020; Fon, 2019). The country is home to approximately 260 languages spoken by various ethnic groups (Kindzeka, 2020; Fon, 2019). Its linguistic ecology is shaped by a dual colonial legacy, with English and French as official languages enshrined in the 1996 Constitution, alongside Pidgin English and over 260 indigenous languages (Kindzeka, 2020; Fon, 2019). This rich linguistic diversity makes Cameroon a critical context for exploring multilingualism and translanguaging in education. International organizations, such as the Council of Europe (2007), emphasize the importance of multilingual education for fostering global citizenship, advocating the use of mother tongues to enhance cultural identity and global competence. Likewise, Moller-Omrani and Sivertsen

(2022) emphasize the importance of multilingualism in fostering social integration and improving access to employment opportunities.

While European countries have successfully integrated multilingualism into their curricula, African nations, including Cameroon, face challenges rooted in colonial legacies and linguistic diversity (Kindzeka, 2020; Echu, 2004). Cameroon's bilingual heritage, shaped by its colonial history under Germany, Britain, and France, underpins its linguistic policies (Kindzeka, 2020; Echu, 2004). The 1996 Constitution recognizes English and French as official languages alongside approximately 260 indigenous languages (Kindzeka, 2020; Echu, 2004). Additionally, Pidgin English serves as a widespread lingua franca. This rich linguistic diversity highlights the potential of multilingualism and translanguaging as tools for equitable education. Addressing these historical and contemporary dynamics is essential for developing inclusive language policies and educational practices in Cameroon (Fon, 2019; Takam & Fassé, 2020).

The Role of the EMI in Cameroon

Cameroon's education system is shaped by its bilingual colonial heritage and diverse linguistic landscape. English plays a significant role as a medium of instruction, particularly in Anglophone schools, which follow the British educational model. These schools emphasize critical thinking and creativity, with English used for teaching core subjects such as science, mathematics, and history from primary through tertiary levels (Takam & Fassé, 2020; Kouega, 2004). Despite this system, the use of EMI in education has far-reaching implications for students' success, as it impacts access, quality, and outcomes in Cameroonian education. English dominates instruction in Anglophone schools, enabling students to acquire proficiency in a globally dominant language. This proficiency prepares students for international opportunities, such as higher education and employment in English-speaking countries. However, challenges persist. Many Anglophone schools, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, suffer from inadequate resources, teacher shortages, and interruptions caused by socio-political unrest in the Northwest and Southwest regions (Fon, 2019; Mforteh, 2018). These factors limit the consistent delivery of quality education in English, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged students.

Effects of English-Only on Student Academic Success

The use of EMI in Cameroon significantly affects students' academic performance and future opportunities from primary education through secondary, to higher education. While English offers access to global opportunities, it also presents challenges that can limit equitable access to quality education and academic success for many learners (Ojong & Addo, 2024; Ojong, 2023).

English as a Gateway to Global Opportunities

Proficiency in English offers students in Cameroon a competitive edge in international job markets and higher education. English is a global lingua franca, and its mastery opens doors to employment opportunities in multinational companies, international organizations, and other English-speaking countries (Etonge, 2016). Moreover, fluency in English enhances students' chances of securing scholarships and excelling in academic institutions abroad, particularly in countries where EMI is primary. This aligns with Cameroon's broader educational goals of fostering global competitiveness and preparing students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023). However, this emphasis on EMI can unintentionally marginalize students who are not fluent in the language. While those who excel in English benefit from these global opportunities, students with limited English proficiency often face difficulties transitioning to higher education or finding employment in competitive markets. This creates an unequal playing field and reinforces existing educational disparities (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023).

Barriers for Non-English Speakers

For students from Francophone or indigenous language-speaking backgrounds, EMI poses significant challenges. Many of these students lack prior exposure to English, which becomes a barrier to understanding core subjects taught in the language. Consequently, these students struggle to grasp complex concepts, leading to poor academic performance and, in some cases, failure (Anchimbe, 2013; Chumbow, 2013). The inability to effectively engage with EMI often results in a lack of motivation among students, as they feel disconnected from the learning process. This disconnection can contribute to higher dropout rates, particularly in rural and underserved areas where resources for supporting language acquisition are scarce (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023). Furthermore, students who cannot meet the English proficiency requirements for higher education face challenges in gaining admission to their desired institutions. This limits their career prospects and perpetuates cycles of poverty and underachievement (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023; Ojong, 2023; Ojong & Addo, 2024).

Resource Disparities

The effectiveness of EMI is also undermined by significant resource disparities. Many Anglophone schools in Cameroon lack adequate teaching materials, such as textbooks and supplementary resources, that are written in English and tailored to the local context (Takam & Fassé, 2020). Additionally, there is a shortage of well-trained educators proficient in English, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions. These educators often lack the skills needed to teach both subject matter and language acquisition, further disadvantageous to students who are not fluent in English (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023). The lack of resources and trained teachers contributes to widespread educational inequities. Students in underprivileged areas are less likely to develop the English proficiency required for academic success, leading to lower pass rates in national examinations and reduced opportunities for advancement. These disparities are particularly pronounced in regions affected by socio-political unrest, where interruptions to schooling exacerbate the challenges of delivering quality education in English (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023).

High Dropout Rates and Limited Opportunities

The combined impact of language barriers, resource disparities, and socio-political challenges has resulted in high dropout rates in Cameroonian schools. Students who cannot cope with EMI often leave school prematurely, lacking the qualifications needed to secure meaningful employment or pursue further education (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023). Those who remain in the system may fail to gain admission to their desired institutions due to insufficient English proficiency, further limiting their prospects. While EMI offers significant benefits, its implementation in Cameroon has also led to unintended consequences (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023). Addressing these challenges requires crucial recommendations, such as improving teacher training, providing resources for English language acquisition, and developing inclusive curricula that support students transitioning from other linguistic backgrounds (Essossomo, 2015; Nasangel & Ngum, 2023).

Multilingualism and Translanguaging for an Inclusive Learning

Addressing the challenges of using EMI in Cameroon requires a proposed multilingual and translanguaging framework to make education more equitable and accessible. Multilingualism involves using multiple languages in communication and recognizes linguistic diversity as a resource for learning (García & Wei, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Translanguaging, a dynamic pedagogical approach, allows students to draw from their full linguistic repertoire to enhance comprehension and critical thinking (García, 2009; García & Otheguy, 2020). For example, Cameroonian students might use English, French, and indigenous languages like Ewondo or Fulfulde to clarify ideas during class. Research shows that translanguaging promotes cognitive flexibility, validates linguistic identities, and fosters inclusivity, enabling marginalized groups to access education more equitably (Velasco & García, 2014; García & Wei, 2013). Integrating translanguaging into multilingual classrooms can transform linguistic diversity into a tool for academic development.

Pedagogical Translanguaging and Multilingual Framework

The pedagogical translanguaging and multilingual framework (PTF) proposed by Akem Solange Ojong is an inclusive, equity-driven pedagogical recommendation designed to ensure that all educational stakeholders, including students, teachers, school administrators, and parents, experience a sense of acceptance, integration, and equal access to learning opportunities. This framework recognizes educational equity and inclusiveness as a fundamental human right, irrespective of the student's linguistic, socioeconomic, or cultural background (Ojong, 2022). The PTF supports inclusive learning environments by leveraging multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies to create an equitable educational context for all learners.

Core Principles/Recommendations of the Framework (PTF)

The PTF is built on three core principles that reflect essential aspects of equitable and inclusive education through multilingual and translanguaging strategies. These principles guide the implementation of inclusive educational practices and align with García & Wei's (2013; 2014) concept of pedagogical translanguaging, emphasizing dynamic language practices that foster linguistic equity and academic success for all learners.

Language-Friendly Pedagogy

Educational environments must recognize and accommodate the full range of languages students bring to the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to create multilingual learning spaces where students feel comfortable expressing themselves in any language they know. For example, in a multilingual Cameroonian classroom, allowing students to explain ideas in their native languages can help bridge

comprehension gaps and increase engagement. This principle supports García & Wei's (2014) idea that language use should be fluid, enabling students to access their full linguistic repertoire to support learning.

Bilingual and Multilingual Teaching Approaches for University Students

Instructional methods should adopt bilingual and multilingual teaching strategies, such as translanguaging, alternating languages, and differentiated instruction (Ojong, 2022; 2023;Ojong & Addo, 2024). Teachers should alternate between official and indigenous languages for explanations, ensuring all students grasp core concepts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). This principle resonates with García & Wei's (2014) pedagogical translanguaging approach, which views language use as an interactive and flexible process.

Inclusive Learning Experiences

The PTF prioritizes inclusive education where all students, regardless of language or socio-economic background, can thrive. Differentiated learning strategies (Ojong, 2022; 2023) and translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014) are key to supporting linguistically marginalized students. Governments and school administrators should prioritize funding for multilingual education through grants, partnerships, and community resources, focusing on infrastructure, teacher salaries, and materials. Multilingual education in contexts like Cameroon promotes inclusivity and equity by valuing home languages and dynamic teaching. Strong policies, teacher training, and community support are essential for success.

Implications and Conclusions

The core aim of the authors in the present paper was to demystify the role of language and education in Africa through the exploration of the language question in both Ghana and Cameroon. In these nations, the tensions between indigenous and former colonial languages that are languages of wider communication persist, but the potential to allow for implementational spaces for multilingual practice needs to be realized. The colonial legacy shared by these two nations shows how linguistic instrumentalism (Wee, 2003; Kubota, 2011), a pragmatic and utilitarian way of viewing language as a commodity, especially in educational policy and practice, is alive and well in African contexts. Neoliberal discourses of English in both Ghana and Cameroon continually position the language as a gateway to economic success, but at times this positioning downplays challenges in realizing pedagogical success, as well as the critical role that indigenous or national languages can play in language and content learning. This utilitarian and pragmatic, but neoliberal view of language is no stranger to Japan as well, as parallels can be drawn. Kubota (2011) argues that linguistic instrumentalism in Japan supports the increasing prioritization of English education by linking English proficiency to both national development and individual economic gain, reflecting broader neoliberal ideals of human capital within a knowledge-based economy. However, this often occurs to the detriment of more inclusive and learner-centered approaches to teaching that realize equity, multilingualism, translanguaging, and inclusion through innovative practice. It is hoped that the insights drawn from the cases of Japan, Ghana, and Cameroon will contribute to a deeper understanding of the linguistic complexities faced in diverse contexts, while also underscoring the urgent need to move beyond linguistic instrumentalism toward more equitable, context-sensitive, and socially just educational practices.

Bio Data

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