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## **A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ENG 100 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA: IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CAMEROON'S BILINGUALISM FRAMEWORK**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the transition from the two-semester English language programme (ENG101/102, 4 credits) to a single-semester course (ENG100, 2 credits) at the University of Buea, Cameroon. Within the context of Cameroon's constitutional bilingualism framework and the Education Orientation Law No. 98/004 of 1998, this study investigates whether the compressed programme adequately supports English language development for students at the country's flagship English-medium university. As the serving coordinator of the ENG100 programme (2025-2026 academic year), the researcher brings insider knowledge of implementation challenges while maintaining scholarly rigour through systematic data collection and analysis. Drawing on instructor reports, class attendance data, and analysis of infrastructural and administrative challenges, the study reveals significant implementation problems including delayed course commencement due to poor freshman orientation, severe classroom shortages (one 250-seat amphitheater for 8,000-12,000 students), and instructor dissatisfaction stemming from unclear governance structures and payment irregularities. Attendance records show extreme variability, with classes ranging from 0 to 300 students, suggesting systemic failures in course organization. Grounded in language policy implementation theory and Ruiz's language-as-resource orientation, the findings indicate that reducing course duration and credit value while simultaneously facing logistical and administrative challenges undermines the programme's effectiveness in developing English language competency. The paper argues for a reconsideration of this approach, particularly regarding content coverage and skills development, to ensure compliance with national bilingualism mandates and adequate preparation of students in English as an official language of Cameroon.

### **Keywords:**

*Sociolinguistic Analysis, Eng101/102 To Eng100, University Of Buea, English Language Development, Cameroon's Bilingualism Framework.*

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## **Résumé**

*Cette étude examine la transition du programme d'anglais sur deux semestres (ENG101/102, 4 crédits) à un cours d'un seul semestre (ENG100, 2 crédits) à l'Université de Buéa, au Cameroun. Dans le contexte du bilinguisme constitutionnel camerounais et de la loi d'orientation de l'éducation n° 98/004 de 1998, cette étude analyse si le programme condensé favorise adéquatement le développement des compétences linguistiques en anglais des étudiants de la principale université anglophone du pays. En tant que coordinatrice du programme ENG100 (année universitaire 2025-2026), la chercheuse apporte une connaissance approfondie des difficultés de mise en œuvre, tout en garantissant une rigueur scientifique grâce à une collecte et une analyse systématiques des données. S'appuyant sur les rapports des enseignants, les données de fréquentation des cours et l'analyse des défis infrastructurels et administratifs, l'étude révèle d'importants problèmes de mise en œuvre, notamment le retard dans le début des cours en raison d'une mauvaise orientation des nouveaux étudiants, une grave pénurie de salles de classe (un amphithéâtre de 250 places pour 8 000 à 12 000 étudiants) et l'insatisfaction des enseignants découlant de structures de gouvernance peu claires et d'irrégularités de paiement. Les données de présence révèlent une forte variabilité, avec des classes comptant de 0 à 300 étudiants, ce qui suggère des défaillances systémiques dans l'organisation des cours. Fondées sur la théorie de la mise en œuvre des politiques linguistiques et sur l'approche de Ruiz considérant la langue comme une ressource, les observations indiquent que la réduction de la durée des cours et du nombre de crédits, conjuguée aux difficultés logistiques et administratives, compromet l'efficacité du programme en matière de développement des compétences en anglais. Cet article plaide pour une réévaluation de cette approche, notamment en ce qui concerne le contenu et le développement des compétences, afin de garantir la conformité avec les exigences nationales en matière de bilinguisme et une préparation adéquate des étudiants à l'anglais, langue officielle du Cameroun.*

## **Mots-clés :**

*Analyse sociolinguistique, Eng101/102 à Eng100, Université de Buéa, Développement de la langue anglaise, Cadre de bilinguisme du Cameroun.*

## **Introduction**

This research emerges from the researcher's dual role as both the serving coordinator of the ENG100 programme (2025-2026 academic year) at the University of Buea, and as a scholar committed to examining language policy implementation in African higher education contexts. The researcher's position as coordinator provides privileged access to implementation challenges that might otherwise remain obscured in institutional documents or filtered through administrative narratives. However, this insider status also requires explicit acknowledgment of potential biases and deliberate methodological safeguards to ensure scholarly rigour.

The motivation for this study stems from direct observation of systemic problems that threaten both educational quality and institutional compliance with Cameroon's bilingualism laws. As coordinator, the researcher witnessed, daily, the struggles of

instructors teaching in improvised spaces, students inability to register their courses on the University's online platform, students' inability to locate their lecture halls, teachers going to class to meet empty halls and administrative dysfunction that leaves staff unpaid and demoralized. These observations compelled the researcher to move beyond anecdotal frustration toward systematic documentation and analyses. The study represents both professional accountabilities, expressed in the bid to understand and address problems within the researcher's purview, and scholarly contribution to the limited literature on language policy implementation in Cameroon's higher education system.

The researcher's positionality as an insider-researcher offers advantages including access to real-time data, understanding of informal institutional dynamics, and credibility with instructor-participants who shared candid reports knowing their concerns would be documented and analyzed. Simultaneously, as the researcher, acknowledge potential limitations including confirmation bias and the challenge of maintaining critical distance from a programme i coordinate. To mitigate these concerns, we employed transparent data collection methods, preserved instructor reports verbatim, and grounded analyses in established theoretical frameworks rather than personal judgment.

### **Background and Context**

Cameroon's linguistic landscape is defined by its constitutional commitment to bilingualism, with English and French designated as co-equal official languages. The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon (1996) establishes this dual-language framework, mandating state promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. This commitment is further reinforced through Law No. 2019/019 of December 24, 2019, which governs the promotion of official languages, and Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998 (the Education Orientation Law), which enshrines bilingualism at all educational levels as a factor of national unity and integration.

However, as recent scholarship demonstrates, constitutional commitment to bilingualism does not guarantee effective implementation. Research on language policy in Cameroon reveals persistent tensions between official bilingualism ideology and practical realities. The country has struggled since the 1960s to achieve meaningful official bilingualism for national unity, with education serving as the primary mechanism for implementation yet producing only mitigated results (Echu, 2003; Kouega, 2007). In practice, French has been dominant, leading English-speaking communities to feel marginalized. This singular factor accounts for one of the most igniting contributor to the ongoing Anglophone crisis that has sparked violence and secessionist movements ( also in Fosso, 2019). Education policy has played a key role in this marginalisation, reinforcing underrepresentation and the absence of culturally and linguistically responsive education for Anglophone communities.

Within this legislative and sociopolitical framework, the University of Buea occupies a unique position. Established by presidential decree in 1985 and going fully operational by 1993, the University was conceived in the English-speaking tradition following the British educational system-the Anglo-Saxon system. It was created specifically to provide higher education in English within Cameroon's bilingual framework, responding to demands from English-speaking students who faced challenges integrating into the predominantly French-medium University of Yaoundé. The university's founding represented both recognition of Anglophone marginalisation and institutional commitment to addressing it through English-medium higher education.

Despite its English-language focus, the University of Buea must comply with national bilingualism laws, requiring both French language instruction (through Functional French courses) and robust English language programmes. The Use of English programme has traditionally served as a cornerstone general education requirement at the University of Buea, and in all State universities under the popular appellation of 'formation bilingue/bilingual training where it evolves side -by-side with French. Fundamentally for the University of Buea, the programme is designed to ensure all students, regardless of their major, develop adequate competency in English as one of Cameroon's official languages. This requirement is particularly critical given the university's diverse student body, which includes both Anglophone and Francophone students, with the latter needing English proficiency for academic success in an English-medium institution and both categories benefitting from the global access affordances of English proficiency.

### **Curriculum Transition**

For years, the Use of English programme was offered as a two-semester sequence: ENG101 and ENG102, collectively worth 4 credits and spanning an entire academic year. This structure allowed for comprehensive coverage of foundational English language skills including grammar, composition, critical reading, and academic writing. Recently, however, the University transitioned to a single-semester course, ENG100, worth 2 credits. This represents a 50% reduction in both instructional time (from 2 hours to 1 hour a week) and credit value.

The transition from ENG101/102 to ENG100 raises critical questions about the adequacy of English language instruction in meeting both students' academic needs and the nation's bilingualism objectives. While curriculum consolidation can sometimes improve efficiency, the simultaneous reduction in both duration and credits, coupled with the logistical and administrative challenges documented in this study, suggests potential deficiencies in content coverage and skills development. This concern is particularly acute given findings from research on compressed courses, which indicates that while some compressed formats can maintain learning outcomes through intensive pedagogical restructuring, poorly implemented compression, especially amid infrastructural constraints, risks compromising educational quality (Scott & Conrad, 1992).

This research contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship on language policy implementation in multilingual African contexts, particularly within higher education in Cameroon. It provides empirical evidence on the practical challenges of maintaining language education standards amid curriculum reforms and resource constraints. The findings have implications for language planning and educational policy at the University of Buea and potentially other institutions within Cameroon's bilingual university system. Moreover, the study speaks to broader questions about the sustainability of constitutional bilingualism commitments when faced with administrative and infrastructural realities.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

#### **Language Policy Implementation in African Higher Education**

Language policy implementation in African higher education has emerged as a critical area of scholarly inquiry, particularly given the continent's linguistic diversity and colonial legacies. Research consistently demonstrates significant gaps between progressive language policies and their practical implementation. A country like South Africa whose

experiences have been documented extensively over three decades post-apartheid provides referential evidence. Findings reveal that despite comprehensive policies designed to integrate African languages into teaching, research, and administration, implementation remains uneven due to limited resources, inadequate academic materials, and the predominance of English (Bamgbose, 2011; Wolf, 2016). Similarly, multilingual universities across Africa face persistent challenges in translating language rights into educational practice.

Cameroon's situation reflects broader African patterns while presenting unique complications stemming from its dual colonial heritage (English and French) and its official bilingualism framework. The country's language policy has been characterized as a "historical happenstance" rather than deliberate planning, an outcome of combining former British and French territories that presented an "easy way out of a quandary language situation" by adopting both colonial languages (Fonlon, 1969). This pragmatic solution, while avoiding potential conflicts over indigenous language selection, has created ongoing tensions between constitutional commitments and implementation realities.

Scholars examining Cameroon's bilingual education emphasize that the two subsystems, Anglophone and Francophone, operate largely in parallel rather than integrated, with limited success in producing genuinely bilingual citizens (Ayakoroma, 2014). The bottom-up dissemination of dual-medium programmes has faced numerous obstacles, and concerns about the survival of bilingualism itself, prompting calls for comprehensive policy revision. Recent research on linguistic diversity in official language instruction reveals that teachers rarely integrate elements of linguistic diversity because policy does not encourage such integration and they receive no training on the concept, highlighting implementation failures that extend beyond resource constraints to include lack of pedagogical support and unclear policy directives (Mokake, 2019).

### **Language Rights and Educational Access**

The concept of language rights in education has gained prominence in sociolinguistic scholarship, with researchers emphasizing that language policies must do more than exist on paper. Rather, they must actively promote access and success for all students. Studies examining language policy implementation for student access in South African higher education demonstrate that universities' promotion of monolingualism impedes students' access to knowledge and limits academic achievement (Tabe-Ojong & Fon, 2020). This finding resonates with Cameroon's context, where inadequate language instruction in either official language can disadvantage students throughout their academic careers.

The notion of linguistic citizenship, (individuals' rights to use their languages and participate fully in society), intersects with educational policy through the concept of linguistically responsive education (Anchimbe, 2007). When institutions fail to provide adequate instruction in official languages, they effectively deny students their linguistic rights and compromise their educational opportunities. For Anglophone students at the University of Buea, inadequate English language instruction threatens both their immediate academic success and their long-term professional prospects in a bilingual nation where competency in both official languages increasingly determines career opportunities. To these can be added a disenfranchisement of ease of access to global opportunities offered by the dominance of English.

## **Curriculum Compression and Learning Outcomes**

The broader literature on curriculum compression and course credit reduction offers mixed findings relevant to the ENG100 transition. Research on compressed courses, typically defined as maintaining the same contact hours over shorter time periods, suggests that with appropriate pedagogical restructuring, compressed formats can maintain or even enhance learning outcomes for motivated adult learners (Scott & Conrad, 1992). Studies comparing compressed and traditional semester courses have found small differences in workload and no meaningfully large negative impact on student performance when course loads increase.

However, these findings require careful interpretation in the University of Buea context. First, most research on successful compressed courses assumes adequate infrastructure, and clear administrative support. None of these conditions currently characterize the ENG100 implementation. Second, compressed course research typically examines formats that maintain total instructional hours through longer class sessions over shorter periods, whereas ENG100 represents an actual reduction in both time and credits, cutting the programme by half rather than merely restructuring it. Third, successful compression often depends on student characteristics (motivation, preparation, time management) that may not apply uniformly to first-year students with varying English language backgrounds, varying establishment timetables, varying pre-knowledge of the importance and institutional governance of this University-wide course (with so many confusions on whether it actually affects one's graduation possibilities) among many other factors that impede on student motivation greatly.

Literature on credit hour requirements in general education emphasizes that credit allocation should reflect learning outcomes and skill development needs rather than arbitrary administrative convenience (Musa, Musa, & Adebayo, 2020). While some scholars argue for reducing general education requirements to address student debt and retention challenges, such reductions must be justified by demonstrated curriculum redundancy or improved pedagogical efficiency and not simply imposed amid resource constraints. The question for ENG100 becomes whether halving the programme's duration and credits represents pedagogically sound consolidation or educationally damaging compression.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks: language policy implementation theory (Ricento, 2000) and Ruiz's (1984) orientations to language planning.

### **Language Policy Implementation Framework**

Ricento's (2000) framework for analyzing language policy distinguishes between policy formulation and policy implementation, emphasizing that the latter often reveals the true priorities and power dynamics within institutions. This framework recognizes that language policies exist within nested contexts, national, institutional, and classroom levels, each with actors who interpret, resist, or modify policies based on local conditions and interests. Implementation failures often stem not from policy inadequacy but from misalignment between policy goals and the material, human, and political resources required for realization.

Applying this framework to the ENG100 case reveals multiple levels of implementation

failure. At the national level, Cameroon's constitutional bilingualism and education laws establish clear mandates for language instruction quality. At the institutional level, the University of Buea's transition from ENG101/102 to ENG100 represents a policy decision that ostensibly responds to curriculum reform imperatives but may actually reflect resource constraints and administrative expediency. At the classroom level, instructors struggle to implement even the reduced programme amid infrastructural inadequacy and administrative dysfunction, resulting in a further gap between policy intentions and educational realities.

### **Ruiz's Orientations to Language Planning**

Ruiz (1984) identified three fundamental orientations to language planning: language-as-problem, language-as-right, and language-as-resource. These orientations shape how institutions approach language policy and allocate resources. The language-as-problem orientation views linguistic diversity as an obstacle to overcome through assimilation or standardization. The language-as-right orientation emphasizes individuals' entitlements to use their languages and receive services in those languages. The language-as-resource orientation recognizes languages as valuable assets that can benefit individuals and society when developed and deployed strategically.

The ENG100 case reveals tensions between these orientations. Officially, Cameroon's bilingualism framework aligns with language-as-right and language-as-resource orientations, recognizing English and French as equal official languages deserving institutional support and viewing bilingual competency as beneficial for national unity and individual opportunity. However, the implementation of ENG100, with reduced instruction time, inadequate facilities, and unpaid instructors, suggests a language-as-problem orientation in practice, where English language instruction is treated as a burdensome requirement to be minimized rather than a valuable investment in students' competencies.

This theoretical framework guides the analysis of findings by highlighting how implementation failures reflect deeper institutional priorities and resource allocation decisions. It also suggests that meaningful improvement requires not merely addressing logistical problems but fundamentally reorienting institutional attitudes toward English language instruction as a strategic resource warranting adequate investment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The implementation of ENG100 has been marked by significant operational challenges that threaten the course's effectiveness. Preliminary observations reveal multiple systemic issues: delayed course commencement due to inadequate freshman orientation leading to late student registration; severe infrastructural constraints with only one amphitheater (capacity 250) allocated for a student population of 8,000-12,000, with each group receiving merely 1 hour of instruction per day and per week; instructor frustration stemming from unclear governance structures, particularly regarding payment arrangements where faculties/establishments charged with compensating staff frequently fail to disburse payment or provide payment schedules; and instructors independently struggling to secure teaching spaces and locate students.

Instructors' reports indicate dramatic variability in class attendance, with some sessions recording zero students while others exceed capacity limits. This chaotic implementation environment, combined with the reduced instructional time and credit value, raises serious

concerns about whether ENG100 adequately supports English language development in accordance with Cameroon's bilingualism laws and educational policies.

### **Research Objectives**

This study pursues three specific objectives:

1. To analyze the implications of transitioning from a 4-credit, two-semester Use of English programme (ENG101/102) to a 2-credit, single-semester course (ENG100) for English language development at the University of Buea.
2. To document and examine the administrative, infrastructural, and pedagogical challenges affecting the implementation of ENG100 and their impact on course effectiveness.
3. To evaluate whether the current ENG100 structure adequately fulfills the university's obligations under Cameroon's bilingualism framework, particularly Law No. 98/004 of 1998 and Law No. 2019/019 of 2019.

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative case study design with descriptive statistical analysis of attendance data. The research focused on the ENG100 course implementation during the 2024/2025 academic year at the University of Buea, examining the transition from the previous ENG101/102 structure.

#### **Data Sources**

Data for this study were gathered from multiple sources:

- 1) Instructor reports: Written communications from ENG100/101 instructors documenting classroom attendance, student participation, and teaching conditions from the first and second semesters of the 2024/2025 academic year to first semester November, 2025-2026 academic year. These reports were shared via an official instructor communication platform.
- 2) Attendance records: Quantitative data on student attendance across multiple ENG100 sections over a four-week reporting period in 2024- 2025 and semester one of the 2025-2026 academic years.
- 3) Administrative documents: Course schedules, classroom allocations, and documentation related to the transition from ENG101/102 to ENG100.
- 4) Legal/policy documents: Cameroon's Constitution (1996), Law No. 98/004 of 1998, Law No. 2019/019 of 2019, Presidential Decree No. 90/196 of 1990, and University of Buea policy documents regarding general education requirements.

#### **Participants**

The study involved instructor reports from approximately 15-20 ENG100 instructors teaching various sections of the course across different faculties: the Faculty of Science, College of Technology (COT), Faculty of Engineering and Technology (FET), Faculty of Law and Political Sciences (FLPS), Faculty of Arts (FA), Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (FAVM), Faculty of Education (FED) and Faculty of Social and Management Sciences (FSMS). The student population comprised first-year students enrolled in ENG100,

estimated at 8,000 for 2024-2025 academic year and 12,000 students (2025-2026 academic year) for this University-wide course. The Faculty of Health Sciences was not used in this study for their courses schedules for all departments addressed the Eng100 teaching satisfactorily with massive student motivation, enrollment and class attendance recorded.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Instructors' reports were collected through ongoing communication among course instructors and the course coordinator over a four-week period for the first and second semesters in 2024 and the first semester in November 2025. Instructors spontaneously reported their classroom experiences, attendance figures, and challenges encountered. These reports were compiled and analyzed for recurring themes and patterns. Attendance data were extracted from instructor reports and organized chronologically to identify trends for reporting in this paper.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis was conducted on instructor reports to identify thematic patterns related to: (a) attendance patterns and variability, (b) infrastructural challenges, (c) administrative issues, (d) instructor frustrations, and (e) student behavior and registration problems. Attendance figures were analyzed descriptively to calculate ranges, identify patterns of growth or decline, and document instances of zero or near-zero attendance. Policy documents were analyzed through a critical language policy lens to establish the legal framework for bilingualism and English language instruction requirements, against which the ENG100 implementation was evaluated using Ricento's implementation framework and Ruiz's orientations to language planning.

### **Findings**

The data reveal multiple interconnected challenges affecting the implementation and effectiveness of the ENG100 course. Results are organized thematically based on the analytical framework.

#### **Attendance Patterns and Variability**

Attendance data demonstrate extreme variability across sections and weeks, indicating systemic organizational problems. Examples from instructors' reports include:

**Zero or near-zero attendance:** Multiple instructors reported classes with no students or fewer than 5 students. On November 2024, one instructor reported:

*"I met just three students in class." Another reported "we didn't see any yesterday."*

In the second week of classes in November 2025, one instructor noted

*"I was in class last Friday from 1-3 but didn't see a student in class. I'm here today with the same scenario."*

Another instructor reported: 'had 4 students yesterday.'

Gradual increase pattern: Some instructors reported progressive growth over weeks.

*"We met no student on the first day of class, had 66 students for the second class and today 250."(November, 2025 third week)*

**Moderate attendance:** Several classes-maintained attendances between 20-100 students. Examples include "7-8 had a class, A250 with 23 students present," (*Second semester 2024-2025*). "We registered 26 students," (*Second semester 2024-2025*). "I am just through with my class for today A250, 7-8 with 97 students in attendance."**(Second semester 2024-2025)**

**High attendance:** A few sections achieved substantial attendance. One Tuesday group reported "close to 300 students in both groups" over four weeks, (*Firts semester 2024-2025*). Another noted "Wednesday 1-2 and 2-3 is almost at 150 effective attendances.", (*First semester 2024-2025*).

**Week-to-week inconsistency:** Even within the same class or group, attendance fluctuated dramatically. One instructor noted "Last week I had 4 students, today I had 26., (*First semester 2025-2026*). "Another reported their Tuesday group "Last week we had 09 students, this week we had 19 students in attendance. "*First semester 2025-2026*). This variability suggests that while some sections successfully organized and attracted students, many others struggled with student turnout, particularly in the initial weeks. The extreme range, from 0 to 300 students, indicates lack of standardization in course implementation across sections.

### **Infrastructural Constraints**

Severe classroom shortages emerged as a critical impediment to effective instruction. The data revealed:

**Amphitheater inadequate space and capacity violations:** Amphitheater 250 (A250), designated for many ENG100 and other University-wide courses (06 of them in total for 2 hours each a day) designed for 250 students, was inadequate to cater for the estimated 8000 - 12000 freshmen (2025 statistics for enrollment). Reports document instances where attendance exceeded or approached this limit, creating overcrowding concerns. With an estimated 8,000-12,000 first-year students required to take ENG100 and only one designated amphitheater providing 1 hour per day per group, the mathematical impossibility of adequately accommodating all students becomes apparent. Even with multiple time slots, the facility cannot serve the entire student population adequately.

**Classroom relocation challenges:** Instructors frequently resorted to alternative venues. One instructor noted; "*Just from class this afternoon, 3-4pm at restau 2 (shifted to Restau 1).*" (*First semester 2025-2026*). Another reported; "*Teaching at Restau 1, last class was Restau 5, we just keep moving,*" "*However, I make sure I write at the door entrance of Restau 2 (where the class is normally scheduled to take place) indicating where the class is being held.*"(*First semester 2025-2026*).

**Instructor burden:** The responsibility for securing alternative teaching spaces fell on individual instructors rather than being systematically organized by the administration, adding to instructor workload and frustration. All halls being a priori assigned the instructors counted on luck not be thrown out or to even find one free.

## Administrative and Governance Issues

Multiple administrative failures contributed to course implementation challenges.

**Payment irregularities:** Payment irregularities for Instructors by establishments/faculties charged with paying staff is another major hurdle. Prior to the new dispensation of the 2024/2025 academic year concerning the Use of English administration, the Faculty of Arts ran the programme and paid the instructors. This move was assessed as being unfair to the Faculty of Arts' budgetary management as they appeared to run a University-wide course allegedly at their own expense with basically no subventions neither from the other establishments nor from the University. As a result, the new dispensation authorized all establishments to pay the teaching staff of the Use of English assigned to their establishments. In no apparent formal citations and governance text, payment issues and the supply of material for the students now appeared like some gentlemen agreement, with no terms clearly defined on paper with clear cut guidelines. Additionally, no payment calendar or schedule was provided to assure instructors of when compensation would arrive, creating financial uncertainty and job dissatisfaction. The absence of clear administrative oversight regarding payment and course organisation left instructors uncertain about their employment status and responsibilities.

**Poor freshman orientation:** Inadequate orientation for first-year students led to late registration and confusion about course requirements. One instructor noted "I received so many complaints from first year students of having registered for ENG101 instead of ENG100," (*First semester 2024-2025*), indicating that even basic information about which course to register for was not effectively communicated. Many were simply unaware while again registration procedures into the University, portal opening and activation by establishments appeared to impose delays as many were still unregistered several weeks after classes had started.

**Course switching problems:** Students apparently moved between groups without coordination, (most times in response to the fluctuating timetables of their core-courses) as one instructor reported that students who attended one week "said they had signed in to a different group" the following week, making it impossible to maintain consistent class rosters. (reported 11 times across all semesters under study).

**Delayed course commencement:** The combination of late student registration and unclear administrative procedures resulted in courses beginning significantly behind schedule, further compressing the already limited instructional time.

### Instructor Frustration and Morale

The cumulative effect of these challenges manifested in instructor dissatisfaction:

**Expressions of frustration:** Instructors explicitly communicated their struggles. One stated "I will be glad if the coordinator can address this situation. This is the third week with the same scenario" (*First semester 2025-2026*) after experiencing zero attendance for three consecutive weeks.

**Uncertainty and insecurity:** Instructors expressed uncertainty about whether classes would continue, as reflected in statements like "As of now, we do not know how next week will look like." (*First semester 2025-2026*)

**Attempts to maintain professionalism:** Despite challenges, instructors attempted to provide quality instruction to students who attended, with one noting "The students were taught, and 1 mark awarded to each of them for their participation in class. A small class can be very interesting eh "(First semester 2025-2026), (using humor to cope with an extremely unusual small class size). Instructors also took initiative to maintain communication with students by registering phone numbers and coordinating independently, WhatsApp groups to facilitate class coordination.

### **Content Coverage and Skills Development Implications**

While the data primarily document logistical and attendance issues, the implications for content coverage and skills development are significant:

**Reduced instructional time:** The transition from 4 credits over two semesters (ENG101/102) to 2 credits in one semester (ENG100) represents a 50% reduction in formal instruction time for English language development.

**Delayed start compounding time loss:** Late course commencement due to registration problems and administrative issues further eroded the limited instructional time available in a single-semester format.

**Inconsistent learning experiences:** Students in well-attended sections received regular instruction, while those in poorly attended sections experienced fragmented learning with minimal peer interaction and inconsistent instructor availability.

**Question of adequate preparation:** Given that Use of English serves as a foundational competency required for academic success across all disciplines, the compressed format raises questions about whether students receive adequate preparation in grammar, composition, critical reading, and academic writing skills.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal a troubling disjuncture between Cameroon's legislative commitment to bilingualism and the practical realities of English language instruction at the University of Buea. This discussion examines the implications of these findings within the broader context of language policy implementation theory, Ruiz's orientations to language planning, and the existing literature on language education in African higher education.

### **Language Policy Implementation Gap: From Rights to Reality**

Applying Ricento's language policy implementation framework to the ENG100 case illuminates how well-intentioned policies can fail when institutional capacity and commitment do not align with policy goals. At the national level, Cameroon's constitutional framework and educational laws, particularly Law No. 98/004 of 1998, which enshrines bilingualism at all educational levels as a factor of national unity and integration, establish clear expectations for language instruction quality. Law No. 2019/019 of 2019 further mandates that state employees must render services in either official language and that public entities must promote official languages.

However, implementation at the institutional and classroom levels reveals significant policy-practice gaps. The University of Buea's transition from ENG101/102 to ENG100 represents an institutional policy decision that, regardless of its stated rationale, effectively

undermines national language policy objectives by reducing instruction time by 50%. This reduction might be defensible if accompanied by pedagogical restructuring, enhanced instructional quality, or improved learning outcomes, but the data reveal none of these compensating factors. Instead, the reduction coincides with severe infrastructural inadequacy, administrative dysfunction, and instructor demoralization, creating conditions antithetical to quality language instruction.

This pattern aligns with broader findings on language policy implementation in African higher education, where progressive policies frequently fail due to limited resources, inadequate materials, and insufficient institutional commitment (Obondo, 2007; Trudell, 2016). As research on South African universities demonstrates, the gap between language policy and implementation can persist for decades despite constitutional mandates and institutional commitments. The University of Buea's experience suggests similar dynamics, where Cameroon's bilingualism framework remains aspirational rather than operational in crucial respects.

### **Orientation Shifts: From Language-as-Resource to Language-as-Problem**

Ruiz's framework for understanding orientations to language planning provides insight into the institutional values revealed by the ENG100 implementation. Officially, Cameroon's bilingualism framework aligns with language-as-right and language-as-resource orientations, recognizing English and French as equal official languages deserving institutional support and viewing bilingual competency as beneficial for national unity and individual opportunity. The very establishment of the University of Buea in 1993 as an English-medium institution reflected a language-as-resource orientation, recognizing the value of providing higher education in English.

However, the current implementation of ENG100 reveals a troubling shift toward a language-as-problem orientation in practice. When a university reduces language instruction by half without pedagogical justification, allocates grossly inadequate facilities (one 250-seat amphitheater for 8,000-12,000 students), allows instructors to go unpaid or face payment uncertainty, and provides no systematic administrative support for the programme's coordination, it treats language instruction as a burdensome requirement to be minimized rather than a valuable investment in students' competencies.

This orientation shift has profound implications. Students perceive institutional priorities through resource allocation, so, when language courses are poorly supported while other programmes receive adequate facilities and administrative attention, students understand implicitly that language competency is undervalued. Instructors similarly internalize institutional priorities. When they must independently secure teaching spaces, chase down payment, and coordinate with students via personal phone numbers and their airtime, they recognize that their work is not institutionally valued. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle where reduced investment yields poor outcomes, which then justifies further disinvestment.

This pattern resonates with critiques of official bilingualism in Cameroon more broadly, where scholars have documented the dominance of French despite constitutional equality of the two official languages (Ngwana, 2014). The marginalisation of English-speaking communities and the ongoing Anglophone crisis reflect, in part, systemic failures to invest adequately in English-language education and services. When the flagship English-medium

university cannot adequately support English language instruction, it exemplifies and perpetuates this broader marginalisation.

### **Infrastructural Crisis and Institutional Capacity**

The severe shortage of teaching spaces, one 250-seat amphitheater for 8,000-12,000 students, represents a fundamental mismatch between institutional capacity and enrollment that renders effective universal instruction mathematically impossible. This situation exemplifies what scholars have termed the "massification" of African higher education, where we observe rapid enrollment growth without proportionate investment in facilities, faculty, and support systems. The University of Buea's expansion has clearly outpaced infrastructure development, creating conditions where even well-designed curricula cannot be effectively implemented.

The overflow into restaurant spaces (with noise from kitchen staff cooking, students clamoring to eat and no electricity in the rooms for later afternoon classes' visibility), and the instructors' need to independently secure and relocate teaching venues demonstrate adaptive coping mechanisms and also highlight systemic planning failures. These improvised solutions cannot substitute for adequate, purpose-built educational infrastructure. Moreover, the constant venue changes create confusion for students, contributing to the attendance problems documented in this study. One instructor's practice of writing location changes on the door of the scheduled venue, while being commendably proactive, represents individual compensation for institutional failure rather than a sustainable solution.

This infrastructural crisis must be understood within the broader context of higher education financing in Cameroon and Africa generally. Universities face competing demands for limited resources, and decisions about facility allocation reflect institutional priorities. That a general education requirement serving the entire first-year population (including repeating students) receives one amphitheater (which is still used by other establishments and for choir practices, all with justified authorisations, thereby causing clashes) while other programmes presumably receive better accommodation suggests that Use of English instruction is not prioritised in resource allocation decisions. This material reality speaks louder than policy documents or administrative rhetoric about bilingualism commitments.

### **Administrative Dysfunction and Governance Failures**

The payment irregularities and absence of clear governance structures reported by instructors represent serious administrative failures that directly impact teaching quality. When instructors are not paid or do not know when payment will arrive, their economic security and professional dignity are compromised. This situation violates basic employment principles and likely contributes to poor instructor turnover, reduced motivation, and difficulty recruiting qualified instructors from the pool of permanent staff as many see their involvement into ENG100 teaching as an unnecessary disturbance.

The decentralisation of payment responsibility to individual faculties/establishments without adequate oversight or enforcement mechanisms has created a system where contractual obligations to instructors can be ignored with impunity. This governance structure, or lack thereof, undermines not only individual instructors but the entire educational enterprise. Research on teacher motivation consistently demonstrates that fair compensation, job security, and professional respect are fundamental to effective teaching.

Demoralised, unpaid instructors cannot be expected to deliver high-quality instruction or invest energy in developing innovative pedagogical approaches.

Furthermore, the absence of systematic course coordination, evidenced by instructors independently securing spaces, tracking students via personal phone numbers, and expressing uncertainty about class continuation, suggests a breakdown in basic administrative functions, most precisely by the figure head status of the coordinator, presented as an instructions implementer rather than a consultant. A general education requirement serving the entire first-year population should be supported by robust administrative systems including centralized scheduling, facilities management, student registration support, and instructor coordination head, who is duly supported and accompanied.

This administrative dysfunction reflects broader challenges in Cameroon's higher education governance. Research on university administration in African contexts highlights persistent problems including unclear lines of authority, inadequate management training, politicization of administrative appointments, and insufficient operational budgets or deprivation, confiscation and access denial by senior authorities under whose tutelage the sub-units are placed. The Use of English Unit and the ENG100 case exemplifies these systemic issues, demonstrating how governance failures at institutional and national levels cascade down to affect classroom instruction and student learning.

### **Student Experience and Educational Equity**

From a student perspective, the ENG100 implementation failures create significant barriers to learning and raise serious equity concerns. Poor freshman orientation leading to late registration means students miss critical early instruction and fall behind immediately. Research on first-year student success consistently emphasizes that early experiences shape students' academic trajectories; when students begin their university careers with confusion about course registration, inability to locate classes, and delayed instruction, they receive the message that they are not priorities and that institutional systems will not support them.

The extreme attendance variability documented in this study, ranging from 0 to 300 students and more (an instructor reported 500) suggests that many students are simply unable to access the course consistently. While some of this variability may reflect student motivation or competing demands, the administrative and infrastructural problems documented here indicate that systemic factors, not merely student behavior, drive these patterns.

Educational equity demands that all students have access to quality instruction regardless of which section they are assigned. However, the data reveal profound inequities in student experiences. Students fortunate enough to be in well-organized groups with consistent instructors, adequate facilities, and growing enrollment receive meaningful English language instruction. Students in poorly organized sections may attend multiple sessions without seeing an instructor or classmates, effectively receiving no instruction despite paying fees and fulfilling registration requirements. This inequity is particularly troubling given that Use of English serves as foundational preparation for all subsequent academic work; students who receive inadequate instruction face disadvantages throughout their university careers.

Moreover, these inequities may have differential impacts on Anglophone versus Francophone students. For Francophone students entering an English-medium university, the Use of English course represents critical language support enabling their academic success. Inadequate instruction may contribute to academic struggles, programme switching, or attrition. For Anglophone students, while they may have stronger English language backgrounds, the course should develop academic English competencies (formal writing, critical reading, analytical thinking) essential for university-level work. Inadequate instruction denies both groups the preparation they need, but may disproportionately harm Francophone students whose English language needs are more acute.

### **Curriculum Compression Without Pedagogical Justification**

The literature on compressed courses suggests that course compression can maintain learning outcomes when accompanied by deliberate pedagogical restructuring, intensive instruction, and appropriate student support. However, the ENG100 case represents compression without any of these enabling conditions. The transition from 4 credits over two semesters to 2 credits in one semester halves instructional time without apparent curriculum redesign, pedagogical innovation, or enhanced support services.

Language acquisition research consistently demonstrates that developing academic language proficiency requires sustained, systematic instruction over extended periods. English language competency encompasses multiple domains: grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, academic writing, critical thinking, and oral communication. A comprehensive Use of English programme must address all these areas. The two-semester structure of ENG101/102 allowed sequential skill building, with ENG101 focusing on foundational grammar and composition skills and ENG102 advancing to more complex analytical writing and critical reading. The single-semester ENG100 format rather necessitates superficial coverage of all areas with selective emphasis on certain skills at the expense of others.

Given the additional time lost to late starts, inconsistent attendance, and logistical disruptions, the actual instructional time available in ENG100 falls far short of what language development requires. If classes begin three weeks late (as suggested by instructor reports documenting ongoing startup problems in mid-November), a semester-long course loses approximately one-fifth of its instructional time before even addressing the 50% reduction in overall programme duration. The cumulative effect is devastating as students end up receiving only one-quarter to one-third of the language instruction time previously available through ENG101/102.

This compression appears driven by administrative convenience or resource constraints rather than pedagogical rationale. No evidence suggests that language instruction needs changed, that students enter university with better English preparation requiring less instruction, or that instructional methods improved sufficiently to accelerate learning. The compression therefore represents a policy decision prioritizing institutional efficiency over educational quality, a decision with predictable negative consequences for language learning outcomes.

### **Implications for Cameroon's Bilingualism Project**

The University of Buea's situation carries implications beyond the institution itself for Cameroon's broader bilingualism project. The University was created specifically to provide quality English-medium higher education within Cameroon's bilingual framework, responding to Anglophone marginalisation in French-dominant universities. Its founding represented both recognition of a problem and commitment to addressing it institutionally. The University's symbolic importance therefore exceeds its enrollment numbers for it represents Cameroon's commitment to linguistic equality and Anglophone inclusion.

When the flagship English-medium University cannot adequately support English language instruction, the most foundational component of English-medium education, it signals that the bilingualism project itself may be failing. If even an institution explicitly created for English-language education treats English instruction as a low-priority requirement deserving minimal resources, what does this suggest about the state's commitment to English as a co-equal official language?

This question gains urgency in the context of the ongoing Anglophone crisis, which reflects decades of accumulated grievances about marginalization, underfunding of English-language education, and systematic favoritism toward French-speaking regions and institutions. Research documenting the dominance of French despite constitutional equality, the parallel rather than integrated operation of Anglophone and Francophone education systems, and concerns about the survival of bilingualism itself suggests that the ENG100 case exemplifies broader systemic problems rather than isolated institutional dysfunction.

The lack of meaningful bilingualism in Cameroon has been attributed to insufficient political will, inadequate resources for English-language education, and structural factors favoring French. The University of Buea's experience with ENG100 provides micro-level evidence of these macro-level patterns. When universities reduce English language instruction amid resource constraints while presumably maintaining other programmes, when instructors go unpaid while other university expenses continue, and when administrative systems fail to support English courses while functioning adequately elsewhere, these decisions reflect priorities that undermine bilingualism regardless of constitutional or rhetorical commitments.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, theoretical analysis, and literature review, the following recommendations are proposed:

#### **Immediate Actions: Addressing Crisis-Level Problems**

- Establish payment guarantees: The university administration must immediately address instructor payment irregularities by either centralizing payment processing or establishing enforceable accountability mechanisms for faculties/establishments responsible for payments. A published payment schedule should be provided to all instructors at the beginning of each semester, with guaranteed payment dates. Failure to meet payment obligations should trigger administrative consequences for responsible parties.
- Secure adequate teaching facilities: Multiple amphitheatres and large classrooms must

be designated for ENG100 instruction. A centralised scheduling system should optimize use of available facilities. If existing infrastructure is insufficient, temporary solutions (such as multiple smaller sections or online/hybrid delivery options) should be implemented immediately while long-term facility expansion is pursued.

- Implement comprehensive freshman orientation with the English Programme Coordinator's participation. A mandatory, structured orientation programme should clearly explain course requirements, registration procedures, and academic expectations. Information about ENG100 (course number, credit value, importance, schedule) should be prominently featured. Registration should be supervised to prevent errors, with immediate correction of registration problems.
- Establish centralized course coordination: ENG100 requires dedicated administrative support including a coordinator with authority and resources to manage scheduling, facilities, instructor support, student communication, and problem-solving. The coordinator position should be properly resourced and empowered to make operational decisions.

### **Medium-Term Reforms: Curriculum and Pedagogical Improvements**

- Conduct comprehensive curriculum review: A committee of language education specialists, experienced instructors, and relevant stakeholders should undertake a thorough review of the Use of English curriculum and programme. This review should assess whether ENG100's current structure adequately addresses learning objectives previously covered by ENG101/102. If gaps are identified, the curriculum should be restructured, potentially restoring a two-semester sequence or substantially increasing ENG100's credit value and contact hours.
- Develop standardized learning materials: To ensure consistency across sections and support instructors, the program should develop standardized textbooks, workbooks, assessment instruments, and pedagogical resources. These materials should be available to all instructors and students at the semester's beginning.
- Implement instructor professional development: Regular workshops on English language pedagogy, compressed course design, large class management, and assessment should be provided. Creating a community of practice among ENG100 instructors would facilitate sharing of effective strategies and collective problem-solving.
- Establish quality assurance mechanisms: Regular assessment of student learning outcomes, instructor evaluations, and program review should be instituted. Data on attendance, pass rates, skill development, and student satisfaction should inform continuous improvement.

### **Long-Term Systemic Changes: Institutional and Policy Reform**

- Advocate for infrastructure investment: The university should develop a facilities master plan that includes adequate instructional space for general education requirements serving large student populations. This plan should be presented to government funding authorities with clear justification for capital investment. External funding sources (development partners, grants) should be pursued.
- Reform governance structures: The university should clarify administrative structures governing general education programs, establishing clear lines of authority, resource allocation procedures, and accountability mechanisms. The current fragmented approach where individual faculties/establishments control aspects of general

education delivery without central coordination requires reform.

- **Align resource allocation with policy commitments:** If Cameroon's constitution and laws mandate quality bilingual education, resource allocation must reflect this priority. The university should conduct a resource audit examining whether English language instruction receives equitable support compared to other programs. Disparities should be addressed through budget reallocation.
- **Engage with national language policy discourse:** The University of Buea, as the flagship English-medium institution, should actively participate in national conversations about bilingualism implementation. University leadership should document challenges, advocate for adequate funding, and propose policy reforms to strengthen English-language education nationally.

### **Research and Evidence-Building**

- **Conduct learning outcome assessments:** Systematic research should compare English language proficiency of students who completed ENG101/102 versus ENG100 to determine whether the compressed format adequately develops required competencies. Longitudinal tracking of students' academic performance in subsequent courses requiring English skills would provide evidence of program effectiveness.
- **Document best practices:** Sections that successfully achieve high attendance and positive learning outcomes should be studied to identify effective strategies that can be scaled across all sections.
- **Engage students' perspectives:** Student surveys, focus groups, and interviews should systematically gather information about their experiences with ENG100, perceived adequacy of instruction, and recommendations for improvement.
- **Comparative institutional research:** Studies examining how other universities in Cameroon's bilingual system implement Use of English or equivalent requirements could identify successful models and common challenges.

### **Conclusion**

This study has documented serious implementation challenges affecting the ENG100 course at the University of Buea following the transition from a two-semester, 4-credit Use of English programme to a single-semester, 2-credit course. The findings reveal a convergence of curriculum compression without pedagogical justification, severe infrastructural inadequacy, administrative dysfunction, and instructor dissatisfaction that collectively undermine the course's effectiveness in developing English language competency.

Analyzed through language policy implementation theory and Ruiz's orientations framework, these findings reveal troubling gaps between Cameroon's constitutional and legal framework for bilingualism and the practical realities of English language instruction. Law No. 98/004 of 1998 (Education Orientation Law) and Law No. 2019/019 of 2019 (Promotion of Official Languages) establish clear mandates for quality language instruction, yet the ENG100 implementation suggests a shift from language-as-resource to language-as-problem orientation in practice, where English instruction is treated as a burdensome requirement to be minimized rather than a valuable investment.

The extreme variability in attendance, from zero to 300 students across sections, combined with delayed course commencement, classroom shortages (one 250-seat amphitheater for 8,000-12,000 students), and payment irregularities that demoralize instructors, creates an

educational environment fundamentally incompatible with effective language learning. These problems reflect not isolated institutional failures but systemic patterns documented in research on language policy implementation in African higher education, where progressive policies frequently fail due to inadequate resources, insufficient political will, and misalignment between stated commitments and resource allocation.

As the serving coordinator who has witnessed these challenges firsthand, I write this paper not merely as academic critique but as urgent call for action. The students struggling through ENG100 under current conditions deserve better. They have chosen or been assigned to Cameroon's flagship English-medium university expecting quality English language education that will prepare them for academic success and professional opportunities in a bilingual nation and the world. Instead, many face confusion, inconsistency, and inadequate instruction that threatens their educational trajectories.

The implications extend beyond the University of Buea to Cameroon's broader bilingualism project and the Anglophone crisis. When the institution specifically created to provide English-medium higher education cannot adequately support English language instruction, it exemplifies and perpetuates the marginalization of English-speaking communities. The ongoing crisis reflects decades of accumulated grievances about systematic underfunding and political marginalization; the ENG100 case provides micro-level evidence of these macro-level patterns.

Meaningful reform requires more than addressing logistical problems. It demands fundamental reorientation of institutional attitudes toward English language instruction as a strategic resource warranting adequate investment. This requires political will, financial commitment, administrative reform, and sustained attention from university leadership and government authorities. Only through such comprehensive commitment can the transition from ENG101/102 to ENG100 be justified, not as a cost-saving measure that compromises educational quality, but as genuine curricular improvement that maintains or enhances language learning outcomes.

Cameroon's bilingualism framework promises equal status for English and French. The University of Buea must fulfill this promise through quality language instruction supported by adequate infrastructure, clear governance, and fairly compensated, professionally supported instructors. The alternative, continued drift toward inadequate instruction amid resource constraints and administrative dysfunction, undermines not only individual students' futures but Cameroon's constitutional commitments and social cohesion. This study documents current failures in the hope that evidence will catalyze action, ensuring that future cohorts of students receive the English language education they need and deserve.

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