

## TEACHING FRENCH IN LESS TIME: STUDENTS' AND LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVES ON FRENCH 100 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA

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### Abstract

This study examines students' and lecturers' perspectives on the reduction of instructional time for French 100 (FRE 100), a compulsory foundation course at the University of Buea, Cameroon. The course is intended to develop students' functional competence in French for everyday, academic, and professional communication within Cameroon's bilingual educational context. A descriptive mixed-methods survey design was employed, involving 122 students selected through stratified random sampling and 10 lecturers purposively selected based on their experience teaching the course under the shortened timetable. Quantitative data were collected using a 16-item five-point questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, one-sample t-tests, confidence intervals, Cohen's d, and Holm adjustment, while lecturer interviews were analysed thematically. Findings revealed substantial concerns about rushed lesson delivery, limited lecturer-student interaction, insufficient opportunities for language practice, incomplete classroom exercises, restricted assessment and feedback, and pressure to cover an unchanged syllabus within reduced instructional time. Fourteen of the 16 questionnaire item means differed significantly from the neutral midpoint after Holm adjustment, with particularly strong support for learner-centred teaching, technology-assisted learning, additional opportunities for practice, and improved mechanisms for checking students' understanding. Lecturer accounts largely reinforced students' concerns and further highlighted workload, overcrowding, assessment conditions, and challenges to achieving the communicative and bilingual objectives of the course. The study concludes that instructional time should be considered alongside syllabus scope, communicative objectives, class size, assessment practices, and opportunities for meaningful language interaction. It recommends reviewing the organisation of French 100, protecting opportunities for oral practice and feedback, and strategically integrating learner-centred and technology-supported learning. However, as the study examines reported experiences rather than direct measures of language proficiency, further



research incorporating classroom observation and comparative proficiency assessment is recommended.

### Keywords:

*French 100, instructional time, French language teaching, student perceptions, lecturer perspectives, bilingual education, University of Buea.*

### Résumé

*Cette étude examine les perceptions des étudiants et des enseignants concernant la réduction du temps d'enseignement du French 100 (FRE 100), un cours fondamental obligatoire à l'Université de Buea, au Cameroun. Ce cours vise à développer chez les étudiants une compétence fonctionnelle en français pour la communication quotidienne, académique et professionnelle dans le contexte éducatif bilingue camerounais. L'étude adopte une approche descriptive à méthodes mixtes auprès de 122 étudiants sélectionnés par échantillonnage aléatoire stratifié et de 10 enseignants choisis de manière raisonnée en raison de leur expérience dans l'enseignement du cours selon le nouvel emploi du temps réduit. Les données quantitatives ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire de 16 items sur une échelle de Likert à cinq points et analysées au moyen de statistiques descriptives, de tests t à un échantillon, d'intervalles de confiance, du d de Cohen et de l'ajustement de Holm. Les entretiens avec les enseignants ont fait l'objet d'une analyse thématique. Les résultats révèlent d'importantes préoccupations relatives au rythme accéléré des cours, à la réduction des interactions entre enseignants et étudiants, à l'insuffisance du temps consacré à la pratique de la langue, aux exercices inachevés, aux possibilités limitées d'évaluation et de rétroaction, ainsi qu'à la difficulté de couvrir un programme inchangé dans un temps réduit. Après l'ajustement de Holm, les moyennes de 14 des 16 items diffèrent significativement du point neutre. Les étudiants se montrent particulièrement favorables aux approches centrées sur l'apprenant, à l'intégration des technologies, à l'augmentation des possibilités de pratique et à une meilleure vérification de leur compréhension. Les témoignages des enseignants corroborent largement ces préoccupations et mettent également en évidence la charge de travail, les effectifs élevés, les conditions d'évaluation et les difficultés liées à l'atteinte des objectifs communicatifs et bilingues du cours. L'étude conclut que le temps d'enseignement devrait être examiné conjointement avec l'étendue du programme, les objectifs communicatifs, les effectifs des classes, les pratiques d'évaluation et les possibilités d'interaction linguistique significative. Elle recommande une révision de l'organisation du French 100, la préservation d'un temps suffisant pour la pratique orale et la rétroaction, ainsi que l'intégration stratégique d'approches centrées sur l'apprenant et soutenues par la technologie. Toutefois, puisque l'étude porte sur les expériences rapportées plutôt que sur des mesures directes de compétence linguistique, des recherches complémentaires intégrant l'observation des classes et des évaluations comparatives des compétences en français sont nécessaires.*

**Mots-clés :** *French 100, temps d'enseignement, enseignement du français, perceptions des étudiants, perspectives des enseignants, éducation bilingue, Université de Buea.*

### Introduction

French 100 (FRE 100) is a compulsory foundation course at the University of Buea. It aims to help undergraduate students use French in everyday, academic, and professional situations. The course covers listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also supports the university's role in Cameroon's bilingual educational setting. To meet these aims, students need time to hear and use French, ask questions, and receive feedback. This article examines whether students and lecturers consider the available classroom time suitable for these activities. University language support should also recognise that students have

different educational and language backgrounds. Lea and Street (1998) show that academic literacy involves understanding the expectations of university tasks, not only correcting language errors. Wingate (2015) similarly argues for language and literacy support that includes diverse learners. French 100 is not the same as an academic-writing programme. However, these perspectives suggest a useful question: does the course give students clear guidance about what they should be able to do in French and how to develop that ability?

The timetable change examined in this study reduces face-to-face instruction from two hours to one hour per teaching session. Shorter sessions alter the time available for explanation, interaction, guided practice, and assessment. The issue is not simply whether a longer class is preferable: it is whether the available contact time, course content, teaching activities, and independent-learning support remain appropriately aligned. Language learning requires opportunities for input, interaction, and production, which makes the organisation of classroom time especially relevant to the communicative aims of French 100 (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1996; Richards, 2006).

The study addresses a specific gap: there is limited evidence about how students and lecturers experience the shorter French 100 sessions. General research on teaching time cannot show which problems occur in this course. It also cannot tell the university which changes participants consider useful. The article examines students' views of learning and teaching, explores lecturers' experiences, compares the two groups' accounts, and discusses possible improvements. It studies reported experiences. It does not measure whether the timetable change causes lower achievement.

The study uses a descriptive mixed-methods survey of 122 students enrolled in French 100 and 10 lecturers teaching under the shortened timetable. Students were selected through stratified random sampling by faculty and level of study; lecturers were selected purposively for their direct teaching experience and represented approximately one-third of the course's instructors. The student questionnaire contains 16 five-point items, coded from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Eight address learning experiences and eight address teaching effectiveness or possible adaptations. Expert review and a pilot with approximately 30 students informed revisions before the main administration. Lecturer interviews explore syllabus coverage, participation, practice, assessment, workload, and recommendations.

Student responses are summarised using counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The mean is the average rating; the standard deviation shows how widely ratings differ. Two-tailed one-sample t-tests compare each mean with the neutral score of 3. The analysis also reports 95% confidence intervals and Cohen's *d*. Holm adjustment is used because 16 comparisons are made (Cohen, 1988; Holm, 1979). The lecturer interviews were recorded, transcribed, and examined for recurring themes following Braun and Clarke (2006). These themes are compared with the student responses. Neither source directly measures changes in French proficiency.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant research and explains the theoretical ideas used in the study. Section 3 presents the student

questionnaire results and lecturers' accounts. Section 4 discusses the findings under six themes: time allocation and syllabus coverage; language practice, feedback, and learner-centred teaching; differences in students' views; technology and learning beyond the classroom; institutional support and bilingual goals; and study limitations and future research. Section 5 concludes the article and identifies the main implications for French 100. The references appear in Section 6.

### **Understanding the Background**

Instructional time means more than the number of minutes on a timetable. Allocated time is the scheduled class period. Some of this period may be used for moving between rooms, taking attendance, or organising materials. The remaining teaching time also differs from the time students spend actively learning. Berliner (1990) draws attention to these differences. Carroll's (1963) Model of School Learning considers the time students spend learning in relation to the time they need. For French 100, a scheduled one-hour lesson therefore does not necessarily provide one hour of language practice.

Carroll's (1963) model includes learning ability, opportunity to learn, willingness to continue, teaching quality, and ability to understand instruction. It does not claim that more hours always produce better results. Instead, it asks whether students have enough opportunity to learn under suitable conditions. In this article, the model helps explain concerns about practice, explanation, and feedback. The study does not test every part of the model. It also does not calculate how much time each student needs to reach a particular level of French.

The value of classroom time depends partly on how teachers use it. Research on teaching and course design connects classroom activities with learning goals and assessment (Hattie, 2009; Biggs & Tang, 2011). For example, a lecturer may explain a grammar rule clearly, but students still need opportunities to use it. Covering the topic is therefore different from showing that students can communicate with the language they have learned. A review of teaching time should consider both what lecturers present and what students practise.

International comparisons also need care. The OECD (2020) reports indicators of teaching time, educational resources, and learning conditions across systems. Such information helps show that hours belong within a wider educational arrangement. It cannot determine the best duration for French 100. Students' starting levels, course goals, class size, and available support may differ greatly from those in other systems. The present study therefore uses outside research to guide interpretation, rather than treating an international figure as a timetable standard for the University of Buea.

Research on second-language learning helps explain the importance of practice. Comprehensible input is language that students can understand, even when some parts are new. Interaction allows them to ask questions and check meaning. Output is the language they produce when speaking or writing (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1996; Swain, 2005). Communicative Language Teaching uses activities such as pair work, role play, and discussion to support these processes (Richards, 2006). Such activities need time for

instructions, practice, and feedback. Short lessons do not make them impossible, but they require careful planning.

Learning also requires repeated contact with language over time. Lightbown and Spada (2021) discuss the relationship between language development and classroom practice. Nation (2013) explains the importance of repeated encounters and different kinds of practice in vocabulary learning. These accounts suggest that presenting a word or structure once is not the same as helping learners use it confidently. For French 100, the useful planning question is where students will meet, practise, and revisit new language across several lessons and independent tasks.

Assessment is part of this organisation rather than an activity added after content delivery. Formative assessment provides information that can inform subsequent teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In French 100, opportunities to check understanding, hear students speak, respond to errors, and revisit difficulties connect assessment with communicative practice. Participants' reports about incomplete exercises and limited evaluation therefore concern the relationship between teaching and feedback, not merely the amount of content presented.

Feedback is especially important when learners are developing spoken language. Lyster and Saito's (2010) review of classroom studies finds benefits from oral corrective feedback. This supports making room for responses to learners' language use, although it does not establish the effects of feedback in French 100 itself. A short lesson can include a small speaking task followed by attention to a few common difficulties. The aim is not to correct every error immediately. It is to help students notice a problem and have another opportunity to communicate.

Independent study and online learning may extend learning beyond the classroom. However, students need more than a list of materials. Constructive alignment means that learning activities and assessment should support the course's stated goals (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Blended learning combines classroom teaching with planned online activities (Graham, 2013). Neither approach assumes that digital materials automatically replace classroom interaction. Students may support technology without having reliable access to it. Their support also does not show that they complete online tasks or receive useful feedback.

Independent learning is a skill that may need to be taught. Zimmerman (2002) describes learners setting goals, monitoring their work, and evaluating progress. Asking students to "study at home" gives little guidance about these steps. A more useful task identifies what to practise, how long to spend, and how to check the result. This is a possible design principle for French 100, not evidence that the students in this study already use these strategies or that the university has provided such support.

Participants' views matter when a university changes teaching arrangements. Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior connects people's intentions with their attitudes, the expectations they perceive from others, and their sense of control over an activity. The theory helps the article consider how students and lecturers judge the timetable and their

ability to adapt. However, the questionnaire does not measure all these parts separately. A negative view of lesson pace cannot, by itself, prove that a student becomes less motivated or learns less.

Motivation and anxiety should also be treated carefully. Dörnyei (2001) discusses ways teachers can support motivation in language classrooms. Horwitz (2001) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) examine language anxiety and its relationship with learning and processing. However, the stress item in this questionnaire is not a full language-anxiety measure. Its small difference from neutrality cannot diagnose anxiety or explain changes in achievement. The literature helps identify questions for later research, while the current finding remains a limited report of students' feelings about shortened lessons.

The two main theories serve different purposes. Carroll's model helps explain the relationship between time and opportunities to learn. The Theory of Planned Behavior helps examine how people view a change and their ability to respond. Research on communicative teaching and course design explains the practical demands of language instruction. Used together, these ideas help interpret the participants' accounts. They do not turn opinions about learning into direct measures of learning.

Cameroon's language context adds an institutional dimension to the question. Discussion of language policy highlights the place of English and French within the country's multilingual setting (Echu, 2004). The relevance of French 100 is thus broader than completion of a compulsory course, although the present study evaluates neither national bilingual policy nor graduate language outcomes. Its contribution is a focused account of the opportunities and constraints reported by students and lecturers within one university programme.

### **Statement of the Problem**

French 100 (FRE 100) is a compulsory foundation course at the University of Buea designed to develop undergraduate students' ability to use French in everyday, academic, and professional contexts. As the University operates within Cameroon's bilingual educational environment, the course has an important role in exposing predominantly English-speaking students to French and strengthening their functional competence in the language. Achieving these objectives requires adequate opportunities for explanation, interaction, guided practice, assessment, feedback, and the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

A major concern, however, has emerged following the reduction of face-to-face instructional time for French 100 from two hours to one hour per teaching session. Although the duration of lessons has been reduced, the communicative expectations and instructional demands of the course remain substantial. This raises questions about whether lecturers can adequately cover course content while simultaneously providing students with sufficient opportunities to practise French, interact with their peers and lecturers, ask questions, complete classroom exercises, receive feedback, and demonstrate understanding. The concern is particularly important in language learning,

where meaningful input, interaction, repeated practice, and language production are central to developing communicative competence.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that scheduled instructional time does not necessarily correspond to actual learning time. Activities such as movement between classrooms, attendance taking, organisation of teaching materials, and other administrative routines may further reduce the effective instructional period. Indeed, lecturers participating in the study estimated that such factors, together with overcrowded classroom conditions, may leave approximately 35 minutes of effective teaching within a scheduled one-hour session. This creates a potential tension between syllabus coverage and the learner-centred, interactive practices required for effective language teaching.

Despite these concerns, there is limited empirical evidence on how the shortened instructional periods are experienced by the students who take French 100 and the lecturers responsible for delivering the course at the University of Buea. General research on instructional time cannot adequately explain the particular challenges associated with this course or establish which aspects of its delivery students and lecturers consider most affected. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with reduced classroom time should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of reduced French proficiency or academic achievement. There is therefore a need for context-specific evidence that distinguishes participants' perceptions and experiences from objectively measured learning outcomes.

Consequently, the central problem addressed by this study is whether the shortened instructional time allocated to French 100 provides adequate opportunities for effective teaching and meaningful language learning from the perspectives of students and lecturers. More specifically, the study seeks to determine how students perceive the shortened periods in relation to lesson pace, interaction, language practice, assessment and learning; examine lecturers' experiences of syllabus coverage, participation, feedback and course delivery; establish areas of convergence and divergence between the two groups; and identify pedagogical and institutional adaptations that could strengthen the delivery of French 100 under the current time constraints. The study does not assume that shortened lessons cause lower achievement; rather, it provides evidence on stakeholders' experiences to inform decisions about instructional time, course organisation and the achievement of the communicative objectives of French 100.

## **Research Objectives**

### **General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to examine students' and lecturers' perspectives on the adequacy and implications of shortened instructional time for the teaching and learning of French 100 at the University of Buea.

## Specific Objectives

The study specifically seeks to:

1. Examine students' perceptions of the shortened instructional time for French 100, particularly in relation to lesson pace, classroom interaction, language practice, interest, stress, and perceived academic productivity.
2. Assess students' perceptions of how shortened instructional time affects teaching effectiveness, including syllabus coverage, teaching strategies, classroom exercises, assessment of understanding, and the overall teaching-learning process.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive mixed-methods survey design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine students' and lecturers' perspectives on the shortened instructional time for French 100 (FRE 100) at the University of Buea. The quantitative component was used to determine students' perceptions of their learning experiences and the effectiveness of teaching under the shortened timetable, while the qualitative component explored lecturers' experiences of delivering the course. The integration of the two sources of evidence enabled comparison of areas of convergence and divergence between students' and lecturers' accounts. The design was appropriate because the study sought to describe stakeholders' experiences and perceptions rather than establish a causal relationship between reduced instructional time and students' achievement or French-language proficiency. Accordingly, the study did not attempt to demonstrate that the timetable change caused changes in students' learning outcomes.

### Participants and Sampling

The participants comprised 122 undergraduate students enrolled in French 100 and 10 lecturers teaching the course under the shortened timetable. Students were selected using stratified random sampling, with faculty and level of study serving as the basis for stratification. This approach was intended to obtain student perspectives across different academic backgrounds and levels. The lecturers were selected purposively because of their direct experience teaching French 100 under the shortened instructional arrangement. The 10 lecturers represented approximately one-third of the instructors teaching the course. Their inclusion provided professional perspectives on syllabus coverage, student participation, language practice, assessment, workload and possible strategies for improving course delivery.

### Instruments for Data Collection

Two instruments were used for data collection: a student questionnaire and lecturer interviews.

The student questionnaire consisted of 16 items measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument was organised into two principal dimensions. Eight items examined students' learning experiences under the shortened timetable, while the remaining eight examined perceived teaching effectiveness and possible adaptations to limited instructional time. The learning-experience items addressed issues such as the adequacy of lesson duration,

rushed lessons, stress, interest in French 100, student–lecturer interaction, opportunities for language practice and perceived academic productivity. The teaching and adaptation items addressed lecturers’ pace of syllabus coverage, use of teaching strategies, opportunities to evaluate students’ understanding, completion of classroom exercises, perceived quality of teaching and learning, additional instructional time, learner-centred teaching methods and the use of technology and online materials. The qualitative component involved interviews with the lecturers. The interviews explored their experiences relating to syllabus coverage, student participation, opportunities for language practice, assessment, workload and recommendations for improving French 100.

### **Validity and Pilot Testing of the Instrument**

The questionnaire was subjected to expert review to assess the appropriateness and clarity of its items. It was subsequently piloted with approximately 30 students, and observations from the expert review and pilot exercise informed revisions to the instrument before the main data collection. The article indicates that the pilot exercise examined internal consistency but does not report a reliability coefficient such as Cronbach’s alpha. Consequently, a specific numerical reliability level should not be claimed. This limitation is acknowledged in the study.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Quantitative data were collected from the 122 participating students using the questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews with the 10 lecturers. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The two datasets were initially analysed separately and subsequently compared to determine how students’ perceptions corresponded with lecturers’ experiences of teaching French 100 under reduced instructional time.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data from the student questionnaire were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to summarise responses to individual questionnaire items. The mean represented the average response to each item, while the standard deviation indicated the degree of variation among participants’ responses. To determine whether the mean response to each item differed significantly from the neutral position, two-tailed one-sample *t*-tests were conducted against the scale midpoint of 3. The analysis further reported 95% confidence intervals and Cohen’s *d* to indicate the magnitude of the difference between each observed mean and the neutral midpoint. Because 16 separate comparisons were conducted, the Holm adjustment was applied to control for the increased risk of Type I error associated with multiple statistical tests.

The five Likert response categories were treated as approximately equally spaced for purposes of the statistical analysis. However, recognising the ordinal nature of these responses, the inferential results were interpreted alongside the frequencies and percentages for each response category rather than relying solely on item means and significance tests.

Qualitative data from lecturer interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, following the approach of Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview transcripts were examined for recurring patterns and themes relating to instructional time, syllabus coverage, classroom interaction, language practice, assessment, workload and proposed adaptations. The resulting themes were then compared with the quantitative student findings to identify points of convergence, divergence and complementarity between the two participant groups.

### Scope and Methodological Delimitation

The methodology was designed to investigate participants' reported experiences and perceptions rather than objectively determine the effect of reduced instructional time on French-language achievement. The study did not include classroom observations, before-and-after proficiency tests, or an experimental comparison of different lesson durations. It therefore does not establish that shortened French 100 sessions cause lower language proficiency or academic performance. This distinction is important because the findings should be interpreted as evidence of how students and lecturers experience and evaluate the shortened timetable, rather than as direct evidence of its causal impact on learning outcomes. The mixed-methods approach nevertheless provides complementary evidence from the principal stakeholders and offers an empirical basis for institutional discussion about instructional time, course design and the delivery of French 100.

## FINDINGS

This section presents the student questionnaire results first and the lecturer accounts afterwards. All response categories are included in the tables. This is important because participants do not always agree. The lecturer accounts are summaries linked to participant numbers, not word-for-word quotations. Section 4 then compares the two sets of evidence and discusses what they mean for French 100.

### Students' learning experiences

Table 1 reports responses to the eight learning-experience items. The highest mean concerns the need for more classroom practice (L7:  $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ), followed by the view that classes are rushed (L2:  $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). Agreement or strong agreement accounts for 87 of 122 responses to L7 (71.3%) and 86 responses to L2 (70.5%). Students also report limited interaction (L6:  $M = 3.60$ ), lesson periods that are too short (L1:  $M = 3.58$ ), and negative effects on perceived academic productivity (L8:  $M = 3.53$ ).

**Table 1. Students' perceptions of shortened French 100 lesson periods**

| Statement                                                          | Strongly agree<br>n (%) | Agree<br>n (%) | Neutral<br>n (%) | Disagree<br>n (%) | Strongly disagree<br>n (%) | M    | SD   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------|------|
| L1. French 100 lesson periods are too short for effective learning | 26 (21.3)               | 46 (37.7)      | 30 (24.6)        | 13 (10.7)         | 7 (5.7)                    | 3.58 | 1.11 |
| L2. Shortened lesson time makes French classes rushed              | 27 (22.1)               | 59 (48.4)      | 21 (17.2)        | 11 (9.0)          | 4 (3.3)                    | 3.77 | 1.00 |
| L3. I feel stressed when lessons are shortened                     | 17 (13.9)               | 37 (30.3)      | 33 (27.0)        | 29 (23.8)         | 6 (4.9)                    | 3.25 | 1.12 |
| L4. Short periods reduce my interest in French 100                 | 19 (15.6)               | 27 (22.1)      | 20 (16.4)        | 46 (37.7)         | 10 (8.2)                   | 2.99 | 1.25 |

|                                                                                       |           |           |           |           |          |      |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------|------|
| <b>L5. Current lesson duration is sufficient for learning French effectively</b>      | 11 (9.0)  | 34 (27.9) | 22 (18.0) | 45 (36.9) | 10 (8.2) | 2.93 | 1.16 |
| <b>L6. Shortened lesson time limits interaction between students and the lecturer</b> | 16 (13.1) | 68 (55.7) | 15 (12.3) | 19 (15.6) | 4 (3.3)  | 3.60 | 1.01 |
| <b>L7. Learners need more classroom time to practise French language skills</b>       | 29 (23.8) | 58 (47.5) | 21 (17.2) | 13 (10.7) | 1 (0.8)  | 3.83 | 0.94 |
| <b>L8. Shortened lesson time negatively affects academic productivity</b>             | 23 (18.9) | 50 (41.0) | 22 (18.0) | 23 (18.9) | 4 (3.3)  | 3.53 | 1.10 |

Note. N = 122. Responses are n (%). Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree; neutral midpoint = 3. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

The distributions also show substantial variation. The stress item has a mean only slightly above neutrality (L3: M = 3.25, SD = 1.12). Reduced interest (L4: M = 2.99, SD = 1.25) and the sufficiency of the current duration (L5: M = 2.93, SD = 1.16) produce means close to 3. These averages do not indicate uniform individual neutrality: 46 students agree or strongly agree with L4, whereas 56 disagree or strongly disagree; for L5, the corresponding counts are 45 and 55. Opposing responses therefore contribute to the near-midpoint averages.

The average score alone does not fully explain students' views. For example, an average close to neutral for interest in French may hide clear differences between students who agree and those who disagree. Some students may remain interested despite limited practice time, while others may feel discouraged by the pace of lessons. However, the questionnaire does not establish the reasons for these differences. Further research is therefore needed to understand students' individual experiences rather than assume that shorter lessons affect everyone in the same way.

### Perceived teaching effectiveness and adaptations

All eight teaching and adaptation items have means above 3 (Table 2). The highest means concern learner-centred methods when time is short (T7: M = 3.84, SD = 0.84), technology and online materials (T8: M = 3.83, SD = 0.89), and limited time for lecturers to check understanding (T3: M = 3.82, SD = 0.91). Students also support additional lesson time (T6: M = 3.78, SD = 0.99).

**Table 2. Students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness and possible adaptations**

| Statement                                                                              | Strongly agree<br>n (%) | Agree<br>n (%) | Neutral<br>n (%) | Disagree<br>n (%) | Strongly disagree<br>n (%) | M    | SD   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------|------|
| <b>T1. Lecturers rush through topics because of limited lesson time</b>                | 25 (20.5)               | 58 (47.5)      | 21 (17.2)        | 16 (13.1)         | 2 (1.6)                    | 3.72 | 0.99 |
| <b>T2. Shortened lesson time reduces the use of effective teaching strategies</b>      | 23 (18.9)               | 61 (50.0)      | 21 (17.2)        | 15 (12.3)         | 2 (1.6)                    | 3.72 | 0.96 |
| <b>T3. Lecturers have little time to evaluate students' understanding during class</b> | 26 (21.3)               | 61 (50.0)      | 24 (19.7)        | 9 (7.4)           | 2 (1.6)                    | 3.82 | 0.91 |
| <b>T4. Classroom exercises are often incomplete because of limited time</b>            | 23 (18.9)               | 62 (50.8)      | 21 (17.2)        | 13 (10.7)         | 3 (2.5)                    | 3.73 | 0.97 |

|                                                                                                          |           |           |           |           |         |      |      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|------|------|
| <b>T5. Shortened lesson time affects the quality of teaching and learning</b>                            | 19 (15.6) | 59 (48.4) | 21 (17.2) | 19 (15.6) | 4 (3.3) | 3.57 | 1.04 |
| <b>T6. More lesson time would improve students' academic productivity in French 100</b>                  | 28 (23.0) | 57 (46.7) | 22 (18.0) | 12 (9.8)  | 3 (2.5) | 3.78 | 0.99 |
| <b>T7. Teachers should adopt more learner-centred methods when lesson time is short</b>                  | 24 (19.7) | 62 (50.8) | 30 (24.6) | 4 (3.3)   | 2 (1.6) | 3.84 | 0.84 |
| <b>T8. Technology and online materials can help reduce the negative effects of shortened lesson time</b> | 25 (20.5) | 63 (51.6) | 24 (19.7) | 8 (6.6)   | 2 (1.6) | 3.83 | 0.89 |

Note. N = 122. Responses are n (%). Scale: 5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Students report incomplete classroom exercises (T4: M = 3.73), rushed coverage (T1: M = 3.72), reduced use of effective strategies (T2: M = 3.72), and concerns about teaching and learning quality (T5: M = 3.57). The final three items combine a preference for more time with support for pedagogical and technological adaptation. They are not evaluations of an intervention implemented by the study, and the responses do not establish that any proposed adaptation improves learning.

### Item-level comparisons with neutrality

Table 3 compares each item mean with the neutral score of 3. Each test has 121 degrees of freedom. Cohen's *d* is calculated as  $(M - 3)/SD$  and describes the size of the difference from neutrality. Holm-adjusted *p*-values account for the 16 tests. The analysis treats the five response categories as approximately equally spaced. Because these are ordered ratings, readers should consider the tests together with the response counts in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 3. One-sample tests against the neutral midpoint**

| Item | M    | SD   | t(121) | Exact p  | 95% CI for M | d     | Holm p   |
|------|------|------|--------|----------|--------------|-------|----------|
| L1   | 3.58 | 1.11 | 5.78   | 5.96e-8  | [3.38, 3.78] | 0.52  | 2.98e-7  |
| L2   | 3.77 | 1.00 | 8.49   | 6.15e-14 | [3.59, 3.95] | 0.77  | 6.76e-13 |
| L3   | 3.25 | 1.12 | 2.43   | 0.016    | [3.05, 3.45] | 0.22  | 0.049    |
| L4   | 2.99 | 1.25 | -0.07  | 0.942    | [2.77, 3.22] | -0.01 | 0.966    |
| L5   | 2.93 | 1.16 | -0.70  | 0.483    | [2.72, 3.13] | -0.06 | 0.966    |
| L6   | 3.60 | 1.01 | 6.55   | 1.49e-9  | [3.42, 3.78] | 0.59  | 1.05e-8  |
| L7   | 3.83 | 0.94 | 9.71   | 8.02e-17 | [3.66, 4.00] | 0.88  | 1.04e-15 |
| L8   | 3.53 | 1.10 | 5.35   | 4.22e-7  | [3.34, 3.73] | 0.48  | 1.69e-6  |
| T1   | 3.72 | 0.99 | 8.05   | 6.50e-13 | [3.54, 3.90] | 0.73  | 5.20e-12 |
| T2   | 3.72 | 0.96 | 8.26   | 2.10e-13 | [3.55, 3.89] | 0.75  | 1.89e-12 |
| T3   | 3.82 | 0.91 | 9.96   | 2.01e-17 | [3.66, 3.98] | 0.90  | 2.81e-16 |
| T4   | 3.73 | 0.97 | 8.30   | 1.72e-13 | [3.56, 3.90] | 0.75  | 1.72e-12 |
| T5   | 3.57 | 1.04 | 6.12   | 1.20e-8  | [3.39, 3.76] | 0.55  | 7.22e-8  |
| T6   | 3.78 | 0.99 | 8.67   | 2.30e-14 | [3.60, 3.96] | 0.79  | 2.76e-13 |
| T7   | 3.84 | 0.84 | 11.04  | 5.10e-20 | [3.69, 3.99] | 1.00  | 8.16e-19 |
| T8   | 3.83 | 0.89 | 10.30  | 3.03e-18 | [3.67, 3.99] | 0.93  | 4.55e-17 |

Note. N = 122. CI = confidence interval. Positive *d* values indicate means above 3. Exact *p*-values below .001 use scientific notation. Holm *p* is adjusted across 16 tests. The 95% confidence intervals are intervals for individual items, not simultaneous familywise intervals.

After adjustment, 14 of the 16 means differ statistically from 3. T7 has the largest standardised difference (*d* = 1.00), followed by T8 (*d* = 0.93), T3 (*d* = 0.90), and L7 (*d* = 0.88). These values show how far the average ratings are from the neutral point, in

relation to the variation in responses. They do not show the size of any change in achievement. They are also not measures of the policy's effect on learning.

L4 and L5 do not differ statistically from neutrality. Both have a Holm-adjusted p-value of .966, and both confidence intervals include 3. L3 shows only a small difference ( $d = 0.22$ ). Its adjusted p-value of .049 is just below the .05 threshold. Concerns about stress are therefore weaker than concerns about pace, practice, and interaction. A mean close to 3 does not mean that every student selects Neutral. It may also result from disagreement between students.

### **Lecturers' accounts of course delivery**

The interview analysis identifies a negative evaluation of the shortened arrangement across the 10 lecturer accounts. Participants describe the change within a longer reduction in the course's provision, including a move from more than two semesters to a single semester. These accounts provide context for their evaluations but are not a reconstruction verified against historical timetables. Lecturer 3 reports fewer opportunities for practice, while Lecturer 1 associates the change with difficulties in teaching and student performance. Lecturers 2 and 4 estimate that transitions, attendance-taking, and overcrowded conditions leave approximately 35 minutes of effective teaching within a scheduled session.

A recurring concern is the relationship between reduced time and an unchanged syllabus. Lecturer 1 describes pressure to condense lessons, and Lecturer 3 reports prioritising selected topics instead of covering the programme comprehensively. Lecturer 4 considers the ten scheduled sessions insufficient and proposes twelve two-hour sessions. This is a participant recommendation rather than an allocation evaluated by the study. The accounts point to perceived pressure to choose between coverage and more sustained work on particular language tasks.

Lecturers associate that pressure with limitations in explanation and practice. Lecturer 1 describes students leaving with an incomplete understanding of lesson content. Lecturer 3 reports greater emphasis on grammar and vocabulary at the expense of oral communication, while Lecturer 2 links overcrowding to difficulties with attention and note-taking. The reported concerns about comprehension and retention are professional perceptions; no independent tests of these outcomes accompany the interviews. Participation and feedback form a related theme. Lecturer 1 reports that exercises are often completed collectively because there is insufficient time to assess individual students or respond to questions. Lecturer 2 describes facilities and overcrowding as obstacles to communicative teaching. Lecturer 4 reports restricted oral and written participation, and Lecturer 3 describes increased reliance on lecture-based delivery. These accounts identify interaction and assessment as areas in which participants experience the shortened session as constraining.

The lecturers distinguish written performance from ability to communicate. Lecturer 3 argues that success on grammar and vocabulary tasks can coexist with limited oral ability. Lecturer 4 raises a concern about examination malpractice in overcrowded assessment settings. These statements are reported concerns rather than verified findings about

assessment misconduct or demonstrated discrepancies between written scores and oral proficiency. Lecturer 2 similarly associates the combined pressures of time, crowding, and limited engagement with poorer comprehension, retention, and productivity.

Workload and costs extend the accounts beyond the classroom. Lecturer 2 reports that completing the unchanged syllabus requires additional sessions, travel, and time without corresponding compensation. The study does not independently establish the frequency of these additional sessions or their financial cost. Nevertheless, the account indicates that adaptation may involve additional demands on lecturers rather than a simple reduction in their work.

Finally, Lecturer 3 questions whether the available exposure to French is sufficient to support the programme's bilingual aspirations. The participant describes a risk that French 100 becomes primarily a completion requirement rather than a sustained opportunity for communicative development. This concern situates the course within institutional language aims; it does not establish the national consequences of the timetable change.

## **DISCUSSION**

The discussion brings together students' responses, lecturers' accounts, and the research reviewed in Section 2. Each subsection addresses a particular aspect of course delivery or interpretation. Throughout, reported experiences are distinguished from directly measured learning outcomes.

### **Time allocation and syllabus coverage**

The student and lecturer accounts agree most clearly about what happens during lessons. Students report rushed teaching, limited interaction, incomplete exercises, and too little practice. Lecturers describe pressure to cover the syllabus and difficulty making time for communication and feedback. This agreement supports the conclusion that many participants experience the timetable as limiting. However, both sources depend on what people report. Their agreement does not prove that teaching behaviour changes or that French proficiency falls. The focus on practice and feedback is consistent with research that treats language development as a gradual process supported by classroom activity (Richards, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

The distinction between scheduled time and time available for learning helps explain the reported pressure on lesson time. Lecturer estimates of approximately 35 minutes after transitions and administrative routines suggest that the scheduled one-hour session may overstate the time available for teaching and practice. These estimates require observational verification, but they direct attention to the organisation of the session rather than its duration alone. This reading is consistent with the distinction between allocated and engaged time and with the importance of opportunity to learn (Berliner, 1990; Carroll, 1963).

The pressure to cover an unchanged syllabus adds to the pressure on lesson time. If the same content is fitted into a shorter period, lecturers may perceive a choice between

completing topics and allowing students to work through them. The accounts of summarised explanation, collective exercise completion, and reduced oral participation describe that tension. Constructive alignment provides a useful response: contact time, tasks, assessment, and intended outcomes should be reviewed together rather than assuming that all existing activities can be compressed without consequence (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

### **Language practice and feedback**

Opportunities to practise French are a major concern in the student responses. L7 combines a high mean with 71.3% agreement or strong agreement, while L6 identifies interaction as a concern. Lecturer accounts of reduced speaking opportunities provide a complementary perspective. Input, interaction, and output are relevant here because the intended outcome is functional language use, not only exposure to grammatical content (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1996; Swain, 2005). The implication is to protect opportunities for learners to use French and receive responses to their use, while recognising that this study does not measure the amount or quality of practice actually provided.

The responses also show concern about formative assessment, which uses information about students' understanding to guide teaching. T3 concerns limited time to check understanding, and T4 concerns unfinished exercises. Lecturer descriptions of collective completion and restricted individual questioning suggest difficulties obtaining information about particular learners. The pedagogical concern is that presentation of content can proceed without sufficient opportunities to identify and address misunderstanding. Formative assessment literature supports treating feedback as part of the learning process rather than as a separate activity competing with content delivery (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Research on oral corrective feedback provides further support for examining how learners receive and use responses to their spoken language (Lyster & Saito, 2010).

In practical terms, a brief check of understanding can help a lecturer decide what to do next. Students might write one short response, explain an answer to a partner, or identify the point they still find difficult. These are examples of possible teaching choices, not activities observed in this study. Their value depends on whether the lecturer uses the answers to guide explanation or practice. This follows the central purpose of formative assessment: evidence from students should inform the next teaching and learning step (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

The preference for learner-centred methods in T7 also concerns how time is used. Pair and group tasks may provide more learners with opportunities to participate, but task organisation, class size, facilities, and feedback remain relevant. The interview accounts caution against recommending communicative activities without considering the conditions under which lecturers must implement them. Communicative Language Teaching provides a rationale for participation, while the evidence here identifies perceived constraints on putting that rationale into practice (Richards, 2006). Repeated opportunities to use and revisit language are also important when planning such tasks (Nation, 2013; Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

### **Differences in students' views**

Students' responses to the shortened timetable vary across the questionnaire items. The means for L4 and L5 are close to 3, and the difference for L3 is small. Students can remain interested in French while being unhappy with the pace of lessons. Wanting more practice also does not mean that every student rejects the current lesson duration. These items ask different questions. The response counts show differences between students that would disappear if the article described everyone as dissatisfied. Research on language motivation and anxiety supports examining these experiences separately rather than treating dissatisfaction, stress, and loss of interest as the same issue (Dörnyei, 2001; Horwitz, 2001).

The Theory of Planned Behavior helps explain why these distinctions matter. Ajzen (1991) separates attitudes, perceived expectations, perceived control, intentions, and behaviour. The questionnaire mainly records views and preferences. It does not fully test these different parts of the theory. For example, supporting online materials is different from intending to use them, having access to them, and completing the tasks. The theory helps organise interpretation, but the evidence must still be limited to what the study measures.

### **Technology and learning beyond the classroom**

Students strongly support technology and online materials in item T8, but its role requires a practical design rather than a general recommendation to put materials online. Structured listening or reading preparation could reserve classroom time for interaction, and follow-up tasks could extend practice. Such arrangements would require accessible materials, clear task purposes, appropriate feedback, and realistic expectations of student participation. Blended learning is therefore a possible complement to contact time, not an intervention whose effectiveness is demonstrated by the questionnaire (Graham, 2013). Additional online work also needs to be considered alongside the lecturer accounts of workload.

Research on computer-assisted language learning places learning goals before the choice of a tool (Chapelle, 2003; Hubbard, 2009). A recording, online quiz, or shared text should serve a clear purpose. For example, listening preparation may help students enter a class ready for discussion. Yet uploading a recording is not enough if learners cannot access it or do not know what to listen for. The university would need to check access, explain tasks, and provide a way for students to raise difficulties. These conditions should be reviewed before online work is treated as a replacement for contact hours. Clear goals and opportunities to check progress also connect these tasks with the development of independent learning skills (Zimmerman, 2002).

### **Institutional support and bilingual goals**

A review of French 100 should address both time allocation and the conditions of delivery. Reviewing contact hours alongside syllabus priorities would establish whether communicative objectives can reasonably be pursued within the existing arrangement. Protecting oral practice and brief checks of understanding, reducing avoidable transition costs, and reviewing class size and assessment conditions address different parts of the

reported problem. Lecturer 4's proposal for twelve two-hour sessions is one option for deliberation, but the study does not establish that this specific allocation is sufficient or optimal. This approach follows the principle that learning goals, activities, assessment, and available resources should be planned together (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Nation & Macalister, 2010).

Implementation also requires consultation. Fullan (2016) emphasises the importance of the people involved in educational change. For French 100, lecturers can explain which activities take time and which practical barriers they face. Students can describe difficulties with pace, instructions, or access to learning materials. Their views should inform a review alongside timetable records and evidence of learning. Consultation does not mean that every request can be met. It helps the institution understand the likely consequences of a change before adopting a new arrangement.

The bilingual purpose of French 100 gives the review of course delivery a clear educational focus. The question is whether course design offers credible opportunities to develop functional French rather than merely satisfy a programme requirement. Lecturer 3's concern supports examining that relationship at course level. It cannot be extended into a conclusion that the timetable change undermines national bilingual policy, since the data concern one programme and do not measure broader language outcomes (Echu, 2004). More broadly, university language support should respond to students' varied backgrounds and make learning expectations clear (Lea & Street, 1998; Wingate, 2015).

### **Study limitations and future research**

The findings on French 100 need to be understood within the limits of the study. It concerns one university, one compulsory course, 122 students, and 10 lecturers. The available information does not show how closely the student sample matches the wider course population. No sample-size calculation was made before data collection. Classroom observations and before-and-after proficiency tests are also absent. Furthermore, reducing the length of a session does not automatically show the change in total semester hours. That calculation requires records of the number of sessions and the time actually taught.

Participants may not remember every detail accurately. They may also give answers they believe are expected. The researcher's staff position could influence responses and interpretation. The interview record does not document a formal check that no new themes were emerging, participant checking of transcripts, or separate coding by a second researcher. The pilot examined internal consistency, but no alpha coefficient is reported. A particular reliability level therefore cannot be claimed. These limits make it important to report disagreements and avoid presenting perceptions as measured outcomes.

A stronger evaluation would combine stakeholder accounts with observations of actual teaching time, curriculum-coverage records, participation and feedback measures, and comparable assessments of French proficiency. Longitudinal or comparative evidence could distinguish changes associated with the timetable from those associated with class size, prior proficiency, teaching practices, or resources. The current findings identify priorities for such evaluation and provide a basis for institutional discussion; they do not

settle the causal or resource-allocation questions. Such an evaluation would connect evidence about time and learning opportunities with evidence about what learners can actually do (Carroll, 1963; Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

A useful next evaluation could begin with a small, clearly described course change. For example, the university could protect a regular period for oral practice while keeping a record of actual class time. It could then examine participation, completion of tasks, and comparable language assessments. Any comparison would need to consider students' starting proficiency and differences between classes. The purpose would be to find out whether the change helps learning, rather than relying only on whether participants like it. The present findings identify concerns that such an evaluation could investigate.

## Conclusion

This study examines how 122 students and 10 lecturers experience shorter French 100 lessons at the University of Buea. The strongest concerns relate to the daily work of teaching and learning: rushed delivery, limited interaction, insufficient practice, incomplete exercises, and pressure to cover the syllabus. Students also support learner-centred methods and technology. Lecturers describe similar classroom difficulties and raise additional concerns about workload, assessment conditions, and the course's bilingual purpose. Together, the two sets of accounts identify areas that deserve institutional attention.

The student findings are not uniform. Fourteen of the 16 item means differ from the neutral score after Holm adjustment. However, the items on reduced interest and the sufficiency of the current duration do not. The difference for stress is also small. These results show why concern about lesson pace should not be treated as proof that all students lose interest or experience the same difficulty. The response distributions preserve these differences and give a more balanced account than a general statement that students reject the timetable.

The main educational point is that the value of instructional time depends on the opportunities it provides. Explaining more topics does not necessarily give students more chances to speak, ask questions, correct misunderstandings, and use new language. This interpretation is consistent with the importance of opportunity to learn and meaningful language practice (Carroll, 1963; Richards, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 2021). The study therefore supports examining both the amount of classroom time and the activities carried out within it. It does not identify a single number of hours that will meet every learner's needs.

A practical response is to review lesson duration together with syllabus scope, communicative goals, and assessment. The university could consider additional contact time, clearer priorities within the syllabus, and protected periods for oral practice and feedback. These options should be considered alongside class size, classroom conditions, and lecturers' workload. The aim is to make the planned learning activities realistic within the available resources, in line with principles of course design and formative assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Lecturer and student consultation can help identify which changes are workable.

Technology can support this response when it extends purposeful learning. Online listening, reading, or practice tasks need clear instructions, suitable access, and a way for students to receive help. They should prepare learners for classroom interaction or help them revisit it, rather than simply move unfinished work outside the lesson. Research on blended and computer-assisted learning supports this attention to design (Graham, 2013; Chapelle, 2003; Hubbard, 2009). The strong student support for technology is useful evidence of preference, but it is not proof that an online approach will improve achievement.

The conclusions remain limited to reported experiences in one course at one university. The study does not include direct observations of teaching or measures of proficiency before and after the timetable change. Agreement between students and lecturers therefore cannot establish that shorter sessions cause lower achievement. Future evaluation should combine their views with records of actual teaching time, evidence of participation and feedback, and comparable assessments of French ability. The article's contribution is to identify clear priorities for that evaluation: provide realistic opportunities to practise French, support lecturers in delivering them, and judge proposed changes through evidence of learning as well as participant experience.

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