



## Attitudes of Chadians Studying in Cameroon Towards English

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**Abstract:** The elimination of barriers between many states in the world today has led to significant movements of people from one place to another, especially for educational motives or in search of greener pastures. Such movements often lead to the encounter with new languages and cultures, as it is the case with Chadians who move to Cameroon for further studies. Given the bilingual nature of Cameroon, which is their host nation, most of these students not only get to meet English, which is one of the official languages, but are also bound to study it so as to guarantee success in their studies. This study investigates the attitudes of some Chadians studying in the University of Yaoundé I towards English. The informants for the study are made up of 100 students drawn from four different departments of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences. The results from the analysis of the data reveal that 60% of the students show negative attitudes towards English, given that it is somewhat new to them and 40% of the students had a positive attitude towards English, especially because they consider the importance of English in the world today and also because they use it for examination purposes.

**Keywords:** Attitude, English as a Foreign Language.

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## INTRODUCTION

English language unlike most other disciplines is an indispensable tool to human existence. One can do without other disciplines but cannot do without language be it English, French, Spanish German languages. Language is the medium of communication and in as much as we communicate; we must do so through language. This tells us that, all living things do communicate whether verbally or non-verbally. Tubbs and Moss (1991:06) defined communication as “the sharing of experience and to some extent all living organism can be said to share experience”

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Documented research shows that the linguistic situation in Cameroon is complex and compounded because there exist so many

indigenous languages. Consequently, Cameroon has been described by many onlookers and Cameroonians themselves as Africa in miniature due to its linguistic situation. This observation is also shared by Fonlon (1969) who thinks that the country has the most confused tongues which are worst compounded. The problem of the exact number of indigenous languages arises between so many researchers alike.

In fact, Mpoche (2006) suggests that away from the colonial languages (French and English), there is also the existence of Pidgin English which had had a significant impact throughout the linguistic landscape in Cameroon and its role cannot not be underestimated. He thinks that the existence of so many languages in one country is a reflection of the legacy left before and after independence by the colonial masters and later by the governing powers.

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This compounded multilingualism suggests that an average Cameroonian would speak four different languages: Mother tongue, Pidgin English, English and French. It is therefore clear that Cameroon was a multilingual nation, before the introduction of English and French during imperialism.

Ngefacs (2010: 152) posits that “before colonialism came to make the linguistic situation of Cameroon more complex, this West African nation could already boast of hundreds of indigenous languages and a major lingua franca known today as Kamtok.” This suggests that the coming of colonial masters only made the atmosphere more linguistically confused. Though Cameroon is presented as a bilingual nation, because it has English and French as its official languages, it is in reality, a multilingual nation. This is because the country can now identify as many as 285 indigenous languages (Ethnologue, 2001).

Cameroon has ten regions and eight out of the ten are predominantly French speaking which represents 83% of the population and the English speaking population occupies 17% found in the two regions of the country (North West and South West). According to the 4<sup>th</sup> census done in 2015, the Anglophone proportion of the country is in constant regression; it has decreased from 21% in 1976 to 20% in 1987 and to 17% in 2005, and is estimated at 16% in 2015.

Chad on her part, has a complex linguistic landscape but not as complex as what has been described in Cameroon. Chad has French and modern standard Arabic as the two official languages. It also is blessed with over 120 indigenous languages. There is the vernacular version of the Arabic language in Chad ‘Chadian Arabic’ which has become the lingua franca there. This Chadian Arabic has more speakers than French and Standard Arabic. It is said that over 60 percent of the population speak accurately this dialect.

Lisa (2008) thinks that because Chad was colonised by France, French and Arabic are chosen to be the official languages, English does not play a leading role in formal education. He suggests that English first arrived in the country particularly in southern part of Chad around the 1920s with the arrival of Roman Catholic and Protestant Missionaries. It did not have any wider recognition until the 1970s when the American had ties with Chad, the American Peace Corps and the US military somewhat brought to the limelight the English language. Lisa (2008:12) says “For almost 85 years, English has been present in Chad”. Though English has existed for this long in Chad, its impact is not felt though there are some language centres in the

country. Lisa (2008:26) writes “In Chad, the English is more removed, yet with the powers of the modern world, it still reaches practically every corner of the globe...”

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This work considers Piaget’s 1936 theory of cognitive development. This theory shows how children construct their mental model about the world. Piaget had to counteract the idea that intelligence is constant or fixed and developed the idea that knowledge is a continuous process which definitely occurs as someone grows and also when that said person comes into contact with the environment. It should be noted that Piaget is the first psychologist to have made significant and systematic discoveries in the area of cognitive development. Generally, researchers have argued that Piaget’s theory focuses only on children and not adults. But, we are of the opinion that in as much as it focuses on children, it literarily also focuses on understanding the nature of intelligence in all human beings. He came up with four stages in his cognitive development theory which are;

- 1) Sensorimotor stage: from birth to two years
- 2) Preoperational stage: ages between two to seven
- 3) Concrete operational stage: between seven and eleven years
- 4) Formal operational stage: between Twelve and above

At the formal operational stage which we are particularly concerned, learners can think about abstract and theoretical things and use those to come up with some solutions to their learning difficulties. It is said that skills like logical thinking, deductive reasoning and skills in planning are characteristic of this stage. Gardner and Lambert (1972) obtained from their study on attitudes and motivation that learners with integrative intentions to learn language are somehow very motivated and therefore have good performances in the target language. These are therefore students who have internally and externally reasons to learn and generally strive to express themselves in that language. Herman (1980) on his part examines relation between perceptions and achievement. He claims that students generally are satisfied in any language in so far as they were motivated to learn the target language.

Baker (1992) stands on the point that students can modify their perceptions towards a language especially through school programs and activities. To him, schools play an importance role in shaping the learners’ positive perceptions. Macnamara (1973) shares Baker’s view as he posits

that the place of attitudes in language learning is very minimal because schools should be able to design programs that will motivate the learners to learn and not focus only on their motivation or attitudes. However, Naiman *et al.* instead focus on the learners' attitudes especially in foreign language situation. To them, only the learner can effectively cause proficiency in a language if he is highly motivated and not the teacher.

Tonzock (2006) did a study and investigated the classroom methods and how this has a consequent on the understanding of language by learners. Her case was secondary schools in Yaoundé. She actually uncovered that most teachers are virtually aware of the existence of so many teaching methods but at the same time, they don't make use of them. Again, Nkwetisama (2010) investigated learner, environmental and pedagogic factors that do affect the learning process of aspects in English by Francophone Cameroonians. He found out that Francophone learners of English had positive attitudes towards English language.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Gardner and Lambert (1972) observe that, learners with strong ethnocentric or authoritarian attitudes or those who have learned prejudiced towards foreign nationals are not likely to approach the language learning process with an integrative mindset. With this in mind and despite the fact that teaching has moved from the teacher to learner, Chadian students still face a serious proficiency level in EFL. To explore the success or failure in EFL context, the word 'motivation' is bound to surface and conveniently use by trainees and trainers. The absence of motivation in language learning will mean that learners even with high learners' skills will not meet up. This to say that, no matter how qualified and disciplined a teacher is, he alone cannot make these students proficient in English, the greatest job lies on the students who must be either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.

Ze Amvela writes "No matter how qualified and well-intentioned, the teacher alone cannot make them bilingual and the greatest part of the job has to be done by themselves". The Chadian students generally had a negative attitude toward English and will this low motivation density, we notice a very little good output in their performances. Thus, motivation is needed to have a good proficiency in English as UR posits that motivation makes teaching and learning easier and more enjoyable as well as more productive and thus, motivation is strongly linked to achievement in language learning. English which is the world's language, has not been given appropriate attention despite the privileges that

comes with learning the English. Chadian students fail to give this language any importance.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the statement of the problem, a number of questions came up.

- 1) Are Chadian students adequately motivated to learn the English language?
- 2) If yes, what kind of motivation is predominant in them
- 3) What generally is their attitude towards the English language and why?

#### HYPOTHESES

Based on the questions asked above, the following hypotheses were visible.

- 1) The Chadian students' poor output in English language is because of a very low intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
- 2) Any individual motivation is just for the purpose of exams and moving to the next class rather than the zeal to learn the language
- 3) The low motivation is noticed due to the negative attitude toward the English language

#### RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Most EFL learners have same ability to learn the language though we might notice each person has unique abilities and therefore, learners differ at the level of rates and retentiveness. Garder (1993) is of the opinion that most humans have different intelligence which is really found in all but with different abilities. The intention of this study is to demonstrate that Chadians students come to class having multiple learning abilities. Though they are Chadian nationals, they come from different regions in chad and therefore learning abilities are different. This work aims to investigate the level of willingness to learn the English language by Chadians, it seeks examine the reasons for their poor performance in English language. So, we want to find out if the students are adequately motivated, and if they are, what type of motivation is involved and lastly what is their attitude towards the English language.

#### Definition of key terms

##### **Attitude**

Attitude is considered to be certain way of thinking or a particular manner of feeling about an issue, event or subject. It is way of responding positively or negatively towards a particular idea, object or person. Attitude may change someone's perception of the way he or she view things or the world. Collins dictionary defines attitude as "Your attitude to something is the way that you think and feel about it, especially; when this shows in the way you behave". Gardner citing Allport (1954:45) defines "attitude is a mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a

directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situation with which it is related". This tells us that attitude has to deal with the mind and perception. It treats the way we perceive certain things and situation and this helps to shape our behaviors. In the case of this present study, we look at the way Chadian students perceive the English language and how this perception influences their motivation and output in the language.

### **Language**

So many people use language but cannot effectively say what it is. The definition of language remains a problem to many scholars and researchers the world over though we have had myriad of definitions from reputable scholars. In this light, we attempted variety of definitions advanced by some famous linguists the world over. Algeo and Pyles (2004) defined language as "a system of conventional vocal signs by means of which human beings communicate". Two key words are noticeable here, system, conventional, vocal and signs. Again, Edward Sapir (1921) describes language as "a purely human and restrictive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols". Ferdinand de Saussure defines language as "a system of signs" and Hall, 1964 talks of language as the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral, auditory arbitrary symbols.

### **English as a foreign language**

This refers to the study of English by non-native speakers in areas where it is not even the medium for communication and generally abbreviated as EFL. It is a perfect example of Kachru's 1985 expanding circle. Alodwede (2008) states that a language is said to be foreign when it is used in a context where it is not considered ethnic. Quirk *et al.* (1985) citing Mc Arthur (2001:8), says "By foreign language we mean a language that is used by someone for communication across frontiers or with people who are not his countrymen".

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to carefully investigate this issue, a questionnaire with close and open-ended questions was administered to informants to get their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language. With this, we were able to get the informants negative and positive responses towards this language. Again, to effectively understand their

motivation density, we also carried and oral questioning (interviews) with the Chadian students learning English in Cameroon. By so doing, they freely expressed their likes and dislikes for the language and it went a long way in shaping this research work.

### **Participants**

A total of 100 participants helped to this research, all male between the ages of 23 and 35. These are foreign students from the Republic of Chad who have come to Cameroon to study in its higher institution. (University of Yaoundé 1). We concentrated on the Chadians students studying in four Departments; Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology. In the faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences of the University of Yaoundé 1, there is a bilingual training program which entails that all students with French background take English as their foreign language and students from the Anglo Saxon background take French as well. It is against this backdrop that we decided to examine the Chadian students who join their Cameroonian counterparts to learning English as a foreign language. This course is therefore offered during the first semester and sees a myriad of teachers coming in, especially as monitors to teach. The year is 2021/2022 academic year.

### **Procedure**

All the informants were sufficiently told of the aims and scope of the study. a questionnaire was distributed to them. The participants were then asked to independently answered the questions found in the questionnaire and without mentioning their names but they had to indicate their age and sex.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, the interviews were transcribed and then translated into English for data analysis. Responses from the questionnaire administered were classified into tables to show degree of density when it comes to motivation, the table though self-explanatory, we went further to analyze the results presented in those tables. The analysis is done based on Jean Piaget's 1936 theory of cognitive development in language.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDING**

In order to investigate if Chadian students are adequately motivated to learn the English language, their responses toward the language were carried out and the following were obtained.

**Table 1: Chadian students' Responses and Frequency**

Result	Number of Informants	Frequency
I learn the language just to pass the course	60	60%
My pass surprises me Because I am generally not serious	20	20%
I give particular attention to English because I want to be bilingual	05	05%
I don't like the language at all	15	15%

The responses above are an indicative of the students' low motivation in English language. 60 informants who made up 60 percent said their motivation to learn the language is purely for examination purposes, they simply study and or learn English language in the university because it is a prerequisite for moving to the next class and not because they want to learn to speak or write in English. Of the one hundred informants, twenty (20%) said their pass in the language is generally a surprise given that they do not work hard to have good scores. They actually confessed that they are generally not interest in English as compared to the other courses.

Again, fifteen of them (15%) said they overtly do not like the language. They merely struggler to have a 'cant' (capitalisee non tranferable), and work harder in the other courses to cover up the gap. Lastly, the last set of respondents claimed that they give particular attention to the language. This set is just five persons making up 05 percent. This is a demonstration that these students generally do not have any motivation to learn the English language except for the 05 percent. Consequently, this table shows interestingly two phenomena. One, which is that, their motivational frequency is low, and lastly, they only give preference to the language in order to pass the

course and move to the next level. Coming from a country where they speak French and standard Arabic as official languages, their first contact with the English language is at the university.

The five percent that reported that they actually studied hard and are motivated to learn the language do so because they are aware of the role English language play in the world stage. In fact, they said they wish to continue their studies out of Africa and possibly in American or other countries and they cannot do so if they don't learn the English language. This small portion of those who are motivated to learn the language also do so because the have anti French sentiments, the hate the French policy. Lisa 2008:26 puts it that "Chadians tend to be curious about English because they distrust the French." According to him, here is a popular song in the south which is "quand les Blancs sont arrives, la geure a commence". (when the whites came, the war started).

We also rated Chadian students' attitude towards the English language and compared it to other nine courses they take in a year and the following responses were registered. Cooper and Fishman (1977) are of the opinion that "language attitude is central in social science".

**Table 2: English language Compared**

Responses	Number of Informants	Frequency
I like English more than the other courses	05	05%
I had to study English because it is in the program	75	75%
English is just like any other course in the university	20	20%

The table above is an illustration that these Chadian students have a negative attitude toward English language as compared to other courses offer in the various department chosen. First, they come from a country where English is not an official language, secondly, they do not have extrinsic motivation to learn the language. Their motivational density in this language is very low partly because they have it that it is difficult to make it in it and also because they do not readily see the need when the get back to chad. As shown in the table above, five percent of the respondents claim that they like English more than the other courses offered.

This percentage is very immaterial because it does not match to the other frequencies. Seven five percent of the informant said they had to learn English simply because it is found in the program and moving to the next class requires a certain mark in this course. Beside this, Chadian students said they were not motivated to learn the language because most of their classmates chiefly Cameroonian students from Francophone background who took the course together with them also shown a negative attitude towards it. To them, it was common knowledge to note that their

classmates prefer to stay away from the course but do well to attend classes in the other courses. This greatly influenced their input and consequently a low motivational density.

We sought to know if these students are aware of the importance of English in the world today and had the positive responses registered. Most of them if not all were of the opinion that English plays a vital role in the world stage. They unanimously agreed that English is useful in the domains of business, technology, governance, scholarship, diplomacy and others. But the question that seriously begs for an answer is, if these students are aware of the importance English has globally, what could possibly account for their low motivational density in the subject? Answers to this are bound; first, they do not see themselves moving

of the confines of their country. They mostly want to have a degree and go back to their country and work. So, the question of English helping them globally is rolled out. They are aware that the same scenario does not hold true in Chad. Chad is chiefly French speaking and Modern standard Arabic. Consequently, when these students passed in this course, it is not because of their intelligence and not attitudes or motivational level employed.

We also sought to know the link between their attitudes and their performances in the course and the following results were gotten from the gotten across the four departments as per their performances in the 2021/2022 academic year. This was in effect to see the correlation between attitudes, motivational level, and achievements.

**Table 3: Comparison between Chadian Students Attitudes, Motivation and Achievement**

Dept.	Num.	Passed	Failed	Percent
Philosophy	20	8	12	40%
Psychology	43	15	28	34.%
Sociology	12	5	7	41.%
Anthropology	25	09	16	36%
Total	100	37	63	37%

Before we continue, it is necessary to let the audience understand that a passed here as per the table, refers to those who had a minimum of fifty and above. This in anyway does not suggest that they were stopped from going to the next level. Having had a low mark in the course, they had higher grades in others courses to compensate for it. The University of Yaoundé 1 operates a system whereby, a mark between 35 and 49 though below average, is considered as a 'CANT', which means that a student can score 35 in a particular course and conveniently covers up with a higher grade in another course. This therefore means that, the data in the above table does not necessarily deter these Chadians from going to the next level.

When we look at the table, we realized that there is significant correlation between attitudes and achievements. The students have a low motivational density and it is reflected in their outputs. As it is often said, garbage in garbage out, we can conveniently see how this is manifested in this table. This only goes a long way to confirm the hypothesis that Chadian students are not motivated to study English. No matter how much the teachers put in, these students are inadequately motivated to study. This tells us that, teachers alone cannot sufficiently handle students' performances in a particular language or subject. Motivation in the learners must be a pull factor as Petty (1991:32) writes

*...a prerequisite for effective learning, and the greatest challenge that many teachers face is to make their students want to learn. For if students do not want to learn, their learning efficiency will be so low that they learn virtually nothing.*

The quotation above bear testimony to the fact learners need to be motivated before any effective learning can take place. Teachers alone cannot account for students' positive output. Out of a general number of 100 informants interviewed, only 37 said they had a passed in the course making a percentage passed at 37%. 63 informants did not pass in English though they agreed that they could cover up with grades from the other courses. They appeared rather not disturb because they knew that somehow, the system makes it in such a way that a student can fail in a particular course and make up with another course provided he or she performs better in it. The little portion of students who work hard in English only did so to obtain a pass grade in English and do not care about their proficiency in the language. This is explains why their English language proficiency leaves much to be desired.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper had set out to answer three key issues that were raised in the preliminary stages and these were; Are Chadian students adequately motivated to learn the English language? With this, the study had found out that Chadian students' poor

output in English language is because of a very low intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Secondly, we set to answer the following question; If the students are motivated, what kind of motivation is predominant in them? This work revealed that any individual motivation in the students was just for the purpose of exams and moving to the next class rather than the zeal to learn the language and be proficient.

The last preoccupation this work had to deal with is; what generally is their attitude towards the English language and why? It was observed that the low motivation is noticed due to the negative attitude toward the English language. The teacher then has a herculean task to stimulate interest in the student toward the learning of the English language. He should provide them with practical exercises that will enable them enjoy learning English. They should be made to understand that a good command of English is the gateway to economic growth in the world today. Broughton writes that

*A good command of English in a second language situation is the passport to social and economic advancement and the successful user of the appropriate variety of English identifies himself as a successful member of that language community (1980:6).*

This explains why English is observably the number language in the world today and it is used in all cycles, education, science, entertainment, technology etc. A command of this language leaves the individual fulfilled and satisfied as he or she has a sense of belonging in the ever growing industrious world dominated by English.

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