Redefining Second Language Acquisition in Cameroon and Teaching Implications

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Abstract

The linguistic situation in Cameroon presents a unique context that challenges contemporary definitions of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Traditional SLA frameworks, such as those proposed by Ellis (1997), Crystal (1997), Saville Trioke (2006) and other scholars, largely emerge from monolingual or bilingual settings where learners acquire a second language under relatively stable linguistic conditions. However, Cameroon's multilingual environment marked by over 250 indigenous languages, alongside English and French as official languages complicates the conventional understanding of SLA. This study argues that existing SLA theories do not fully account for the complexities of English acquisition in Cameroon, where factors such as diglossia, code-switching, linguistic interference, and sociopolitical influences shape language learning in ways that diverge from standard models. By critically analysing contemporary SLA definitions and their applicability to the Cameroonian context, this paper calls for a re-evaluation and contextual redefinition of SLA in Cameroon. It explores how the coexistence of multiple linguistic systems affects English learning, both in formal education and everyday interactions. The study proposes a redefined SLA framework that acknowledges Cameroon's linguistic diversity and argues for a more context-sensitive approach to language teaching and learning. Furthermore, it examines pedagogical approaches that align with this unique linguistic environment, advocating for teaching methods that leverage multilingual competence, sociocultural factors, and communicative practices relevant to the Cameroonian context. This research contributes to the broader discourse on SLA by proposing models that reflect the realities of multilingual societies and offer practical implications for educators and policymakers.

Key Words: *Second Language Acquisition, Multilingualism, English as a Second Language, Linguistic Context, Pedagogical Approaches.*

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Introduction to the Study

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has traditionally been framed within monolingual and bilingual contexts, with theories largely derived from Western linguistic traditions (Krashen, (1982). Ellis, 1982; Ellis (1997), Crystal (1997), Saville Trioke (2006). These frameworks are based on the assumption that language learners acquire a second language in a stable environment, where the primary exposure to the target language is structured and uninterrupted. However, this traditional view of SLA evidently fails to fully account for the complexities of multilingual environments, such as that of Cameroon (Mbibeh 2024). With its unique linguistic landscape, comprising over 250 indigenous languages, alongside English and French as official languages, Cameroon presents a challenging case for SLA theory. In Cameroon, English is acquired in a context that involves not only formal education but also significant influence from French and local languages (Mbibeh 2021). The role of indigenous languages, code-switching, and translanguaging practices further complicate the process of acquiring English as a second language. (Nkwetisama 2017) This complexity calls into question the applicability of existing SLA models in such a context. The purpose of this study is to critically examine the limitations of traditional SLA theories, particularly those articulated by Ellis (1997) Crystal (1997), Saville Trioke (2006). and Krashen (1982), when applied to the Cameroonian context, and propose a redefined SLA framework that better aligns with Cameroon's multilingual reality.

Through this exploration, the study seeks to identify the sociolinguistic, educational, and cultural factors that shape SLA in Cameroon, with a focus on understanding how the country's linguistic diversity influences the acquisition of English. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the broader discourse on SLA by offering a more context-sensitive framework for language acquisition in multilingual settings. This research will also explore the pedagogical implications of a redefined SLA model, with a particular emphasis on curriculum development, teacher training, and language policy reform.

Background on Cameroon's Linguistic Landscape

Cameroon's linguistic diversity is one of the most remarkable features of the country, with over 250 indigenous languages spoken by its population ((Wolf 2001, Atechi 2006, Kouega 2007, Echu, 2013). These languages fall into several language families, such as Bantu, Sudanic, and Adamawa-Ubangi, each with distinct phonological, syntactic, and lexical features. This linguistic richness has led to a dynamic multilingual environment where individuals often speak several languages, often using different languages in different contexts. The coexistence of such diverse languages provides unique challenges and opportunities for language learning and acquisition, especially when it comes to acquiring a second language like English. In addition to these indigenous languages, Cameroon recognizes two official languages: English and French. The official languages were introduced during the colonial period, when Cameroon was split between Britain and France. After gaining independence, Cameroon became a bilingual country with both English and French as official languages, with French spoken predominantly in the Francophone regions and English in the Anglophone regions (Anchimbe, 2014). This political and linguistic history has shaped not only the language policy of the country but also the way language learners in Cameroon interact with English and French. The multilingual context in Cameroon creates a unique linguistic dynamic for second language acquisition.

English, while an official language, is often learned as a second language in most parts of the country (Mbibeh 2021). In Francophone regions, English is typically learned through formal instruction in schools, with limited exposure to everyday usage (Kouega, 2008). This results in a situation where learners may have passive exposure to English in the media and formal settings, but less frequent interaction in natural, communicative environments. As such, learners' acquisition of English may differ significantly from those in more homogenous ESL environments. In contrast, in Anglophone regions, English is more commonly used for everyday communication, yet it still exists alongside indigenous languages like Pidgin English, which serves as a lingua franca for many (Fonka 2014). The interaction between these languages adds another layer of complexity to English acquisition, as learners might code-switch frequently between English and local languages, blending linguistic structures in ways that complicate traditional SLA models (Mbibeh 2024). This phenomenon makes it difficult to apply linear SLA models to such a fluid language environment, where learners often use their entire linguistic repertoire in language acquisition.

Furthermore, Cameroon's language policy, rooted in its colonial history, has not fully embraced the indigenous linguistic diversity of the country (Ayafor

2005). The educational system prioritizes English and French, but little attention is given to promoting the use of indigenous languages in formal settings (Anchimbe, 2014). The emphasis on English and French, combined with the marginalization of indigenous languages in the educational system, has implications for both SLA theory and pedagogical practice. It raises questions about the effectiveness of traditional SLA models that emphasize structured immersion and exposure, particularly in a context where learners' primary exposure to the target language is mediated by multilingual influences and sociopolitical factors.

Importance of Studying SLA in Cameroon

The study of SLA in Cameroon holds significant importance both from a theoretical and practical perspective. The existing models of SLA, often developed in monolingual or bilingual Western contexts as earlier mentioned fail to account for the linguistic realities faced by Cameroonian learners. With over 250 indigenous languages influencing English acquisition, alongside the political and sociocultural factors that come into play in education, there is a critical gap in understanding how English is acquired in such a multilingual setting. More specifically, SLA frameworks that focus on linear language learning processes do not adequately capture the multifaceted nature of language acquisition in multilingual contexts like Cameroon, where learners are exposed to English, French, and several indigenous languages simultaneously.

From a practical standpoint, understanding SLA in Cameroon is essential for improving the quality of English language teaching and learning in the country. As English becomes increasingly important in global communication and in accessing educational and economic opportunities, it is vital to ensure that learners in Cameroon acquire English effectively. In turn, this would have broader implications for educational policies, teacher training, and curriculum design, ensuring they align more closely with the country's unique linguistic context.

Problem Statement

The introductory part of this paper has so far established those contemporary definitions of SLA, are largely based on the assumptions of stable bilingual or monolingual environments. These models tend to emphasize language acquisition as a linear process that progresses from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) through exposure, interaction, and formal instruction. However, this framework does not account for the complexities of language learning in multilingual contexts like Cameroon, where learners are exposed to multiple languages, some of which may interfere with English acquisition.

In Cameroon, the relationship between English, French, and indigenous languages is more fluid than in typical SLA models. Learners often engage in code-switching, use translanguaging, and rely on multiple linguistic resources in their day-to-day communication. As a result, the conventional SLA definitions do not fully explain how English is acquired in this highly diverse context. Thus, there is a need for a new approach to SLA that accounts for the unique linguistic environment in Cameroon.

Research Questions

This study aims to critically examine the inadequacy of contemporary SLA theories when applied to the Cameroonian context. The primary objective is to challenge the assumptions of traditional SLA models and develop a more context-sensitive approach to language acquisition. Specifically, the research will explore the following questions:

1.   How does the multilingual context of Cameroon impact the acquisition of English as a second language?

2.   In what ways do existing SLA theories fail to account for the complexities of language learning in Cameroon?

3.   What alternative SLA frameworks can be proposed to better reflect the realities of English acquisition in this multilingual society?

4.   How can teaching methodologies and language policies be adapted to better support SLA in Cameroon?

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer new insights into SLA theory, particularly in multilingual contexts. By redefining SLA to better reflect Cameroon's unique linguistic landscape, this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective language teaching methods and inform policy reform that recognizes the importance of multilingualism in language education. This could not only benefit learners in Cameroon but also provide valuable lessons for other multilingual societies facing similar challenges in SLA.

Theoretical Framework

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories have evolved over the years to explain how individuals acquire a second language, yet these theories are often grounded in Western linguistic traditions that assume relatively stable linguistic environments (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2019). Among the most influential

theories is Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes comprehensible input as a prerequisite for language acquisition. Ellis (1997) expands on this by discussing interlanguage development and the cognitive mechanisms underlying SLA. However, these models largely assume that learners are acquiring a second language in environments where exposure to the target language is structured and relatively uninterrupted. In contrast, Cameroon's linguistic reality is characterized by high levels of multilingualism, code-switching, and sociopolitical complexities that challenge these established frameworks.

Overview of Contemporary SLA Theories

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories have evolved over time, with many of the foundational models established in monolingual or bilingual contexts. One of the most influential early frameworks is Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, which argues that language learners acquire a second language most effectively when exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence, often referred to as "i+1." This theory emphasizes the role of comprehensible input in language acquisition, suggesting that the learner's exposure to the target language should be structured and that language acquisition is largely a passive process involving exposure rather than active production. Krashen also introduced the concept of the "affective filter," which suggests that learners' emotional and motivational states impact their ability to acquire a language.

Another significant contribution to SLA theory came from Ellis (1997), who explored interlanguage theory, which posits that second language learners go through transitional stages as they move from their first language (L1) to the target language (L2). Ellis highlights the cognitive processes involved in SLA, arguing that learners create an intermediate "interlanguage" that blends elements of their L1 with the target language. This process is dynamic and evolves over time as learners receive feedback and further exposure to the target language. Ellis also emphasizes the importance of both implicit and explicit learning mechanisms in SLA, positioning the learner as an active agent in the language acquisition process. Furthermore, Saville Trioke (2006:193) bearing in mind the intricacies above, believes second language acquisition is the process of acquiring another language after the basics of the first language have been established. This second language is learnt in a context where it is societally dominant and needed for education, employment and other basic purposes in contrast with a foreign language that is not used within the context in which it is learnt.

Although these theories have provided valuable insights into SLA, they tend to assume a relatively controlled and homogeneous linguistic environment where learners are primarily exposed to the target language in a consistent manner. However, the realities of language acquisition in multilingual environments, such as Cameroon, present unique challenges that are not fully addressed by these traditional frameworks.

Why These Theories Do Not Fully Apply to Cameroon's Linguistic Reality

The traditional SLA models developed by Krashen and Ellis assume relatively linear and structured processes of language learning, often based on the premise that the second language learner has clear access to a target language and is immersed in it in a formal or informal environment. In contrast, Cameroon's linguistic landscape is far more complex and fluid (Mbibeh 2021). The country is home to over 250 indigenous languages (Wolf 2004), alongside French and English as official languages, creating a dynamic and multilingual environment that complicates the linear trajectories assumed in conventional SLA models.

In particular, Krashen's Input Hypothesis assumes that learners receive comprehensible input in a relatively uninterrupted environment, a scenario that is not applicable in Cameroon. English acquisition often occurs in fragmented, context-dependent ways, with learners navigating between English, French, and their indigenous languages on a daily basis. In the Francophone regions, where English is primarily taught in formal educational settings, learners have limited exposure to natural, communicative use of the language. On the other hand, in Anglophone regions, English coexists with local varieties like Pidgin English and indigenous languages, which creates a complex linguistic environment that involves constant code-switching and language blending (Kouega, 2008). This fluidity in language use challenges the assumptions of stable input conditions required by Krashen's model.

Moreover, Ellis's (1997) interlanguage theory, while useful in describing the transitional stages that learners go through in SLA, overlooks the possibility that learners in multilingual contexts like Cameroon may develop hybrid linguistic systems that combine features from multiple languages. Instead of a linear progression from L1 to L2, learners in Cameroon may operate within a

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complex network of languages that inform one another. This blending of linguistic systems complicates the "interlanguage" phase and renders the process of second language acquisition much more dynamic and context-dependent than Ellis's model suggests.

The Need for a Redefined SLA Framework

The necessity to redefine English Second language in the multicultural and multilingual Cameroon has was echoed by Mbibeh (2024) in his review of the different complexities surrounding English language acquisition in Cameroon moving from technical to theoretical complexities. In this light, he highlighted one of the complexities to be that the standard definitions of SLA used so far fall short of painting the picture in multilingual Cameroon especially for English as a second language. The definitions might look ok but for the Cameroonian context as found in the literature, children in the metropolis and those in mixed married homes (where parents speak different local languages) grow up to acquire English as the first language because no other language has been established and further develop or acquire pidgin English not necessarily in the classroom. Yet some learners acquire English, French and local languages simultaneously. This multilingual backdrop complicates the assumed trajectory of SLA, as learners develop hybrid linguistic competencies influenced by multiple linguistic inputs.

The bilingual schools (see Enama 2015) offer an opportunity for a cultural and linguistic mix with children from varied backgrounds acquiring and using English and other languages in a rather simultaneous and interesting way. This context reveals the need for a review of what ESL is in the Cameroonian context given that the standard definition of English as a second language does not tie with the Cameroonian multilingual context. This could have been minimized but the pedagogic implications there off are compelling. That is why Nkwetisama (2017) thinks that ELT in Cameroon does not seem to be moving an inch from the obsolete ideologically loaded one-size-fit-all top-down prescriptions on what, when and how to teach English. He shares his experience confronted by issues of methodology in his cooperating teachers who failed to understand the context in which they were teaching and adhering to native speaker norms which did not fit the context. There is according to him a linguistic marginalization that must be grappled with in what Mbibeh (2021) alludes to the David /Goliath mythical fight in which of course David defeats the domineering and imposing Goliath native standards. The implication of following language in a context like Cameroon is that the methodological prescriptions for teaching English in this context are bound to be a failure given that context specific issues as described by Agbor Tabe (2021) will not be accounted for and language will remain in the classroom without an inkling on the real-life situations that are present in the multilingual and multicultural perspectives. Given the limitations of traditional SLA theories in the Cameroonian context, there is a pressing need for a redefined framework that takes into account the complexities of multilingual environments.

The sociocultural theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Lantolf (2000) offer a more flexible lens through which to view SLA in multilingual contexts. These theories emphasize the role of social interaction and the cultural context in shaping language acquisition, highlighting the fact that language learning occurs not just in isolation but through active participation in a social network. In Cameroon, where learners are constantly engaging with multiple languages in various social contexts, sociocultural perspectives can better explain how learners acquire English and use it in their daily lives. The concept of translanguaging, as proposed by García and Wei (2014), further strengthens this framework by acknowledging that learners fluidly move between languages in ways that are not and should not be constrained by traditional boundaries between L1 and L2.

Furthermore, the field of multilingual language acquisition provides valuable insights into how learners in highly diverse linguistic contexts such as Cameroon combine elements from various languages to form hybrid linguistic systems. In these settings, learners often do not follow a clear-cut linear path from L1 to L2 but instead develop a complex linguistic identity that blends multiple languages and linguistic structures. Therefore, SLA models in such environments must recognize that language acquisition is not a straightforward, one-directional process but a multifaceted, fluid practice that involves constant negotiation between languages and in the Cameroonian context it should be understood and negotiated as such.

Sociocultural perspectives on SLA, such as those proposed by Vygotsky (1978) and Lantolf (2000), offer a more adaptable approach by emphasizing the role of social interaction and cultural context in language learning. These perspectives suggest that learners acquire a second language not in isolation but as active

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participants in a social network where multiple languages interact. In Cameroon, where language use is heavily context-dependent and fluid, these sociocultural perspectives provide a more fitting framework than purely cognitive or structuralist models of SLA.

Furthermore, the concept of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014) offers a useful lens for understanding English acquisition in Cameroon. Translanguaging refers to the fluid movement between languages as learners draw on their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate. In Cameroonian classrooms and everyday interactions, learners frequently switch between English, French, and indigenous languages to facilitate comprehension and expression. This challenges the rigid L1-to-L2 transition assumed in traditional SLA models and calls for an SLA framework that acknowledges linguistic hybridity as a central feature of learning in multilingual settings. Therefore contemporary SLA models must be adapted to better account for the Cameroonian context. With the phenomenon of code-switching in Cameroon, a practice where learners mix English with their indigenous languages or French, the application of monolingual SLA theories is further compounded. This research proposes a shift from viewing SLA as a process of sequential language acquisition to one of continuous negotiation among multiple languages, a more fitting perspective for Cameroon's linguistic environment.

By embracing this fluidity, the study argues that SLA theories need to evolve to better reflect the complexities of language learning in Cameroon. This approach is not only relevant to academic discourse but also crucial for effective language teaching in multilingual contexts, as it allows for the integration of multiple linguistic influences in the learning process.

Defining a New SLA Framework for Cameroon

To effectively address the challenges of SLA in Cameroon, this study proposes a new framework that integrates the complexities of multilingualism and reflects the unique sociolinguistic and cultural landscape of the country. This framework considers the importance of learners' entire linguistic repertoire, which includes their knowledge of several languages that interact in complex ways. It positions multilingualism as an essential component, recognizing that learners in Cameroon develop hybrid linguistic competencies that are shaped by interactions among multiple languages.

The proposed framework aligns with sociocultural theories of SLA, particularly those of Vygotsky (1978) and Lantolf (2000), which emphasize the role of social interaction in the language acquisition process. According to Nkwetisama (2011), language learning in Cameroon occurs not only in formal educational settings but also in the community, where learners engage in social interactions involving multiple languages. This social interaction influences how learners acquire English, as they continuously navigate between linguistic systems. By integrating sociocultural perspectives into SLA, the proposed framework offers a more contextualized understanding of the acquisition process in Cameroon.

Another key component of the new SLA framework is the incorporation of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging, or the fluid use of multiple languages in communication, has become a central feature of language use in Cameroon. Mbibeh (2021) notes that Cameroonian students often blend elements of English, French, and their indigenous languages in their speech, reflecting their multilingual competencies. The redefined SLA framework proposes translanguaging as a core practice, enabling learners to draw on all available linguistic resources to aid comprehension and communication, thus reflecting the linguistic practices that are common in Cameroon. This model also challenges the idea of language proficiency as a monolingual construct. In Cameroon, proficiency in English is often assessed in isolation, ignoring the role of other languages in shaping a learner's ability to communicate effectively. This study suggests that language proficiency should be understood more flexibly, taking into account how learners use their entire linguistic repertoire in multilingual contexts.

Translanguaging as developed by Garcia (ibid) should be intergrated. It is not a sign of linguistic deficiency but rather a strategic use of available linguistic resources. By incorporating multilingualism into the SLA framework, the study shifts away from the notion that learners must isolate English from their other languages in order to acquire it. Instead, it proposes a more holistic view of SLA that views learners' entire linguistic repertoires as valid and essential for communication. Furthermore, this perspective on multilingualism challenges traditional views of language proficiency. In Cameroon, learners may be considered proficient in English even if they frequently switch between languages. The ability to communicate

effectively across multiple languages should be recognized as a valuable skill, and the proposed SLA framework encourages a broader understanding of what it means to be proficient in a second language.

The proposed SLA model for Cameroon is context-sensitive, taking into account the unique linguistic and cultural dynamics that shape language acquisition in the country. This model emphasizes that language learning in Cameroon cannot be understood solely through the lens of traditional SLA theories but must be viewed through the complex interaction of English, French, and indigenous languages. By positioning multilingualism as a central element of SLA, the study advocates for pedagogical approaches that reflect the realities of the classroom. Mbibeh (2024) underscores the importance of context in SLA, arguing that teachers must recognize the multilingual nature of the classroom and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

One way to implement this context-sensitive model is by promoting teaching methods that encourage the use of translanguaging and communicative competence. Traditional grammar-based approaches are not effective in multilingual classrooms where students are already adept at using multiple languages. The redefined SLA framework suggests that teachers should move beyond a focus on isolated language structures and instead focus on helping students navigate real-world linguistic situations, where multiple languages are in play. Finally, the study proposes that the Cameroonian government and educational authorities should consider policy reforms that reflect the multilingual realities of the country. Language policies that promote bilingual or multilingual education and support the use of indigenous languages alongside English and French will foster an environment where students' linguistic diversity is seen as an asset rather than a challenge. This would not only enhance SLA but also ensure that education is more inclusive and reflective of the nation's linguistic diversity.

Pedagogical Implications

Effective Teaching Strategies for SLA in Cameroon

In light of the unique multilingual environment in Cameroon, effective teaching strategies for SLA must go beyond traditional approaches that focus solely on grammar and isolated language skills. Teachers must recognize that students do not acquire English in a vacuum but as part of a multilingual system where multiple languages influence the process of acquisition. Cameroonian learners engage in code-switching and translanguaging, seamlessly moving between English, French, and indigenous languages in their everyday interactions. Therefore, effective teaching strategies should embrace this linguistic fluidity, allowing students to draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to make sense of English.

One effective strategy is to integrate translanguaging (Conteh 2018) into the classroom, where students are encouraged to use their first language(s) alongside English to facilitate comprehension and expression. Translanguaging can be particularly useful in the early stages of language learning, as it allows students to build connections between the languages they already know and the target language (García & Wei, 2014). Teachers can encourage students to use their knowledge of French or indigenous languages to aid in understanding English vocabulary and syntax. This approach promotes a deeper, more nuanced understanding of language and helps students bridge the gap between the languages they know and the language they are learning.

Moreover, communicative language teaching (CLT) should be adopted as a core strategy. CLT emphasizes real-world communication over rote memorization and grammar drills. By using CLT, Cameroonian educators can help students develop practical language skills that are essential for navigating the multilingual society in which they live. For example, in a classroom where code-switching is common, students can be encouraged to use all their languages in class discussions, fostering a more natural and context-sensitive approach to language acquisition.

Policy and Curriculum

Given the multilingual context of Cameroon, curriculum design must be reimagined to reflect the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students. The current curriculum, which prioritizes formal grammatical rules and standard English proficiency, may not be fully aligned with the needs of learners who are immersed in a multilingual environment. To better support English language acquisition in this context, the curriculum should be revised to incorporate elements of translanguaging and multilingual pedagogy, ensuring that the learning process is aligned with the realities of the classroom.

Curriculum design should also take into account the sociocultural context of language use. The study has shown that, language acquisition in Cameroon is not a linear process but a dynamic interaction between multiple languages. Therefore, the curriculum should

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allow for flexibility, enabling teachers to adapt their teaching strategies based on the languages students are most comfortable with. Moreover, the curriculum should integrate local languages and cultural practices, creating a more inclusive and relevant learning experience. For instance, textbooks and learning materials could feature examples from various indigenous languages to help learners see the connections between their first language(s) and English rather than completely dismissing it.

At the policy level, recommendations for educational reform must focus on fostering a multilingual, inclusive approach to language teaching. The Cameroonian government could introduce policies that promote bilingual education or multilingual education programs, where English is taught alongside indigenous languages and French. These policies would not only enhance language acquisition but also promote national unity by recognizing the country's linguistic diversity. Furthermore, the government should support research into how multilingualism affects language learning in Cameroon, ensuring that policies are informed by local realities and not based solely on Western models of SLA.

Role of Teacher Training and Technological Integration

Effective teacher training is crucial in implementing a context-sensitive SLA model in Cameroon. Teachers need to be equipped with the skills to teach in a multilingual classroom, where students bring diverse linguistic backgrounds. Teacher training programs should emphasize the importance of translanguaging and multilingual strategies, enabling teachers to create inclusive learning environments where all students' linguistic resources are valued.

Training should also focus on how to design lessons that promote communicative competence, rather than solely focusing on grammar and linguistic structures. Teachers should be trained to use technology effectively in the classroom to create interactive and engaging lessons. Technological tools, such as language learning apps, online resources, and digital media, can facilitate SLA in a multilingual setting. For example, apps that allow students to practice English while incorporating their knowledge of French or indigenous languages can be particularly effective in helping learners bridge linguistic gaps. Additionally, professional development opportunities should be provided to teachers, focusing on the latest research and methods in multilingual education. Given the rapid technological advancements

and the increasing use of online learning platforms, it is essential for teachers to stay updated on innovative teaching methods that leverage technology to support SLA. The integration of digital tools can facilitate personalized learning, where students can engage with content at their own pace, reinforcing their language skills through interactive exercises that reflect their multilingual reality.

Finally, teachers should be encouraged to collaborate with each other and with linguists, sociolinguists, and education experts to develop teaching strategies that reflect Cameroon's linguistic diversity. This collaboration can help build a teaching community that is focused on improving SLA outcomes and ensuring that English language acquisition in Cameroon is both effective and relevant to students' lives.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has explored the limitations of contemporary Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, particularly those articulated by Ellis (1997) and Krashen (1982), when applied to the context of English language acquisition in Cameroon. It has highlighted the unique sociolinguistic and multilingual environment in Cameroon, where over 250 indigenous languages coexist with French and English as official languages. Traditional SLA models, which often assume a stable, linear process of language acquisition in monolingual settings, fail to capture the complex dynamics at play in Cameroonian classrooms. Instead, these models overlook the influence of code-switching, translanguaging, and the multilingual environment, which are integral to the language learning process in Cameroon.

The study proposed a redefined SLA framework that incorporates these linguistic realities, emphasizing the need for a more context-sensitive, flexible approach to language teaching and acquisition. By integrating elements of sociocultural theory, translanguaging, and multilingual language acquisition, this framework provides a more accurate reflection of how English is learned and used in Cameroon. This redefined model not only challenges existing SLA paradigms but also offers valuable insights into how language teaching can be adapted to meet the needs of learners in similarly complex multilingual settings.

Future Directions for Research and Policy Reform

While this study has made a significant contribution to rethinking SLA in Cameroon, several areas remain

ripe for future research. First, further empirical studies are needed to investigate the effectiveness of multilingual teaching strategies, such as translanguaging, in improving English acquisition in Cameroonian classrooms. Longitudinal studies that track the progress of students learning English in multilingual environments will provide valuable data on how different strategies impact language proficiency over time.

Second, research into teacher attitudes toward multilingualism and translanguaging is crucial. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment, and their understanding of multilingualism will influence how effectively they implement innovative teaching strategies. Investigating how teachers perceive the integration of indigenous languages and French in SLA could inform professional development programs and help design more effective training initiatives.

At the international level, this research could serve as a model for other multilingual countries grappling with similar challenges in language acquisition. The redefined SLA framework proposed in this study could be adapted to different multilingual contexts, fostering a broader, more global understanding of how language acquisition operates in complex linguistic environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for educators, policymakers, and researchers:

1. Curriculum Reform: Revise the English language curriculum to incorporate multilingual pedagogical strategies, including translanguaging, which acknowledges the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students. The curriculum should allow for flexibility in teaching, making space for learners to use all their linguistic resources.

2. Teacher Training: Provide comprehensive teacher training on multilingual education and SLA theories that reflect Cameroon's linguistic diversity. Teachers should be equipped with the skills to teach English effectively in a multilingual context, using innovative strategies such as code-switching and translanguaging.

3. Policy Support: The government should introduce policies that encourage multilingual education, integrating indigenous languages and French with English in the curriculum. This approach will not only improve language acquisition but also promote cultural understanding and national unity.

4. Technological Integration: Leverage technology in the classroom to support SLA. Digital tools and language learning apps can provide personalized, interactive learning experiences that align with the multilingual realities of students.

5. Future Research: Encourage further studies on the effectiveness of multilingual teaching strategies, the impact of sociocultural factors on SLA, and the role of indigenous languages in language learning. Research should focus on developing context-sensitive SLA models that are relevant to specific sociolinguistic environments.

Conclusion

This study has critically examined the applicability of contemporary Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories to the unique multilingual context of Cameroon. Through an exploration of traditional SLA frameworks—particularly those proposed by Ellis (1997) and Krashen (1982)—it has become evident that these models, which primarily stem from monolingual and bilingual contexts, do not adequately capture the complexities of language acquisition in Cameroon. The Cameroonian linguistic landscape, with its diverse array of over 250 indigenous languages alongside English and French as official languages, creates a unique environment where language acquisition cannot be understood through conventional SLA paradigms.

The research has demonstrated that existing SLA models, which assume a linear and structured progression from first language (L1) to second language (L2), fail to account for the fluid, dynamic, and multilingual reality in which English is acquired in Cameroon. Factors such as code-switching, language interference, and the blending of indigenous languages with French and English are central to how learners develop English proficiency in the country. In response to these challenges, the study proposed a redefined SLA framework that better aligns with Cameroon's linguistic diversity and offers a more context-sensitive approach to language acquisition.

Moreover, this study has significant pedagogical implications. It calls for the integration of multilingual strategies into SLA teaching methodologies, emphasizing the importance of translanguaging and communicative language teaching (CLT) to enhance English acquisition in multilingual classrooms. It also highlights the need for curriculum reforms and policy

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changes that prioritize bilingual and multilingual education, recognizing and leveraging the linguistic resources that students bring to the classroom. The role of teacher training in adapting to these innovative pedagogical strategies and the integration of technology further supports the development of an inclusive and effective English language learning environment. The study thus advocates for a paradigm shift in SLA theory and practice, urging a re-evaluation of how second language acquisition is defined and approached in multilingual settings such as Cameroon. By embracing the complexity of Cameroon's linguistic landscape, future research and policy reform can foster a more inclusive, relevant, and effective framework for SLA, offering valuable insights for similar multilingual contexts globally.

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