French and English are two official languages in Cameroon, by virtue of the Colonial history. According to Ngoh (2004) the introduction of French in Cameroon could be traced back to the defeat of Germany in Cameroon by Britain and France at the end of the First World War in 1919. French and English languages were adopted as official languages in article I, paragraph 3 of the 1996 constitution of Cameroon as amended in 2008 “the official languages of the republic of Cameroon shall be French and English both languages having the same status. The state shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavor to protect and promote national languages” p7.

In Cameroon, French language is a compulsory subject in the English speaking regions at both the basic and secondary schools since the country is bilingual and daily communication is done in French and English languages. French provides means of survival in a multicultural and multi-lingual world as well as trains students’ minds, makes them to think difficultly and “enhances cognitive

EFFECT OF TEACHING METHOD AND SCHOOL LOCATION ON STUDENTS’ ACHIEVEMENT IN FRENCH GRAMMAR IN A BILINGUAL SITUATION

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Abstract
The study investigated effect of teaching method and school location on students’ achievement in French Grammar in a bilingual situation in Higher Teachers’ Training Colleges of two Universities in Cameroon. The purpose of the study was to determine influence of location on students’ achievement using learner autonomy method. One research question and a quasi experimental design were used. The population comprised all the 120 year two student-teachers in the bilingual program. Purposive Sampling Technique was used to select the institutions and the Simple Random Sampling Technique through balloting to select the experimental and the control groups. Data was collected using a 50-item (FGAT). The instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.80. Mean and standard deviations were used to analyze data. Findings revealed that rural students performed better than urban students under learner autonomy. Recommendations include multiplying guidance and counseling units, disciplinary councils in urban schools for enhancement of lifelong education.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy, school location, disciplinary councils, French, students’
flexibility” (Hollerbach, 1985). It is a subject in the school curriculum in Cameroon and because of its importance, the ministry of education in Cameroon has spelt out some objectives through decision No: 030/D/40/MINEDUC/SGIPG/ESG of June 30, 1997 which are intended to:

• Equip this student with both linguistic and paralinguistic means of communication in situations where French language is necessary.
• Equip the student with the ability to understand others in both spoken and written situations.
• Offer to all the students, the possibility of the choice of information, expression and action.
• Give the student the opportunity to acquire knowledge in diverse domains.
• Diversify the network of information and training.
• Equip the student for international transactions.

The teaching of French as a second language is done mostly by teachers from various Teachers' Training Colleges and Graduates from the Bilingual Letters or Higher Education Institutions both in the urban and rural areas of Cameroon in order to ensure quality and lifelong Education. In English speaking schools, every Cameroonian is expected to communicate in French. To attain the aforementioned objectives the government has instituted maximum teaching time to the teaching of French language starting at level three of the primary education, 26.6% of a total of (8) hours per week.

Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) (2001)

Despite the efforts of the government and French teachers to achieve the objectives laid down in the 2008 Constitution with regards to the teaching and learning of French, Students’ achievement in this language has been on the decline in the past years in both the classroom and official examinations. This declined performance therefore puts to question the various teaching methods used by the French teachers in this discipline. Over the years, there has been an increasing emphasis on improvement of learning outcomes through innovative strategies and effective teaching methods. Tambo (2003) outlined various teaching methods and in Cameroon some of the methods include, Recitation, Drill and Practice, Lecture, Discussion, and the Communicative Language Teaching Methods. These methods are used at various levels of teaching and learning.

The Communicative Language Teaching Method is used in meaningful interaction in language acquisition. According to Ebong (2004), the communicative language teaching method which is the current teaching method used in Cameroon is based on meaningful interaction between the teacher and the learner through natural communication. It is concerned not only with the form of utterances but also with the message they convey. It also makes use of the presentation, practice and production (PPP) principle which encourages the language learner to deal with and accomplish actions which help him to
acquire the target language competence and the learner to learn by doing (Halliday, 1975).

Although this method stands out as an improvement from the previous teaching methods, it is still not seen as a solution so far to the problems of French language teaching and learning in Cameroon and of course this includes large size classes, according to Schaetzel and Ho (2003). Some difficulties in the use of the communicative language teaching method include poor classroom design and reluctant students relating to the acquisition of language elements and desired skills. According to Offorma (2002) one of the disappoints of the communicative language teaching method is the upshot of its realization in presenting learners with language elements too far ahead of their existing competence which will simply lead to over load and prevent them from dealing with the language. Offorma further justifies that this is because these elements lie outside their zone of proximal development cited in Vygotsky, 1978 and that since only one student-teacher exchange can take place at a time, neither the quantity nor intensity is adequate enough to develop the desired skill. There is also the problem of clashing requirements of both the teaching and examination syllabus and the lack of a morally supportive work context which does not give teachers the time or freedom to create, initiate and motivate students towards learning the language for communication (Beale, 2002).

The major shortcomings of the aforementioned method account for the poor performance of the students in both the internal and external French examinations; thus failing to meet the expected learning goals in both the Urban and Rural areas. According to Bowman, Burkart and Robson (1989:21) “there has been a growing realization that people learn in different ways, and that methods that suit one person may not suit another”. Going by the above statement, and based on experience, the communicative language teaching method which is the predominant method used in the teaching of languages, presents a catalogue of limitations which could not promote the teaching of French in order to solve the students problems. Based on these limitations, there is therefore need to try a viable method that could promote the teaching and learning of French leading to better achievement of the students in French examinations. The learner autonomy method was tried in this regard in teaching students both in the urban and rural areas.

**Conceptual, Theoretical Frameworks and Studies on the Learner Autonomy Method**

Learner autonomy is the learner’s attitude towards learning. Holec (1981) defines learners’ autonomy as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning”. In other words, the learner will be responsible for his own learning process which will help him in lifelong education. Benson (1997) notes that Learner Autonomy can have at least five different connotations.

a. For situations in which learners study entirely on their own.
b. For a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning
c. For an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education
d. For the exercise of learners responsibility for their own learning.
e. For the right of the learners to determine the direction of their own learning

Little (2000) opines that the more autonomous language learners are, the better language learners they become; they should take control of the affective, cognitive and social processes in their learning.

Theoretically Deci and Ryan (2000) focus their theory of motivation and personality on the extent to which human behavior is autonomous or controlled, through self-determination that is, whether it is self-determined or imposed by external forces. They argue that the wrong questions are asked about motivation. They wonder, for example, “how can we motivate others”, rather than, “how can we create the conditions within which others will motivate themselves? The motivational values in individuals are both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations are derived from human’s innate needs for competence and self-determination while extrinsic motivation lies on the continuum from non-self-determination to self-determination intrinsic motivation and autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation lead to positive academic performance (Pintric and Degroot,1990, Grolmick, Ryan and Deci 1991).

Therefore internalization of a personally-valued behavior as a result of increased perceived competence relatedness with significant others and autonomy would give rise to willingness to perform the activity although this activity may remain uninteresting. In other words the self determination theory is a lamplight of motivation and personality on the learners autonomous behavior. Beside Nunan (1995) investigated the effect of an autonomous learning environment on learners-learning process for over a twelve-week period, he observed that the learners become more communicative than before, they preferred a more process-oriented approach to language learning than a product oriented approach and they began to take control of their own learning.

School Location, Teaching Methods and Students’ Achievement

Location is a geographical area; school location means a place or area where a school is situated. Location differences may play a greater role in students’ achievement. Achievement of students in urban area may not be the same as those in rural area due to socio-economic influences. On school location and performance, Ezeugwu (2011) stated that schools in different locations(urban, semi-urban and rural) adopt different methods of teaching and experience differences in number and quantity of the teachers which arise to the differences in students’ achievement in the various subjects areas including French . Bell (1975), Kostman (1977) and Simmelkaer
(1979) in their studies reported that educational institutions in the urban area share common features of learning impediments such as reading retardation, high absenteeism, drug abuse, students’ vandalism, apathy and as well overcrowding. These vices account for the causes of poor performance in urban schools as compared to schools in the rural areas. However, in contrast Ogunlade (1973), Lawin (1973), Anwana (1979) and Obot (1991) all disagreed on this view. They maintained that schools in the urban are well staffed, and with good facilities in them. These factors induce better performance in the urban than the rural area schools. In the same line, Abidogun (2006) opined that rural areas have greater challenges concerning educational development than the urban centres, due to the socioeconomic peculiarities and instructional structures of these rural areas. The learners in a learner autonomy situation have the freedom to express themselves in different language skills; instead of these learners to be spoon fed with prepared knowledge from the teacher, they take charge of their learning relying on their own ability. This is in line with this ancient proverb which says “give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a life time” the teaching –learning process in our educational institutions is limited to “giving our students fish” (that is prepackaged knowledge) and far from “teaching them how to fish” (learning how to fish) In other words, the teaching and learning of French language should place the learner at the centre of this process, where this learner learns how to learn rather than being passive and only relying on the teacher. This type of situation does advance the learner neither on academic performance nor in achievement in the language. The Learner Autonomy Method theoretically as already seen sounds very good and effective in the teaching and learning of various academic disciplines; This study aims at finding out the effect of the method and location on students achievement in French Grammar and languages as a whole. learner autonomy could improve students’ achievement in French and languages as a whole. The communicative language teaching method has not yielded enough fruits in improving on students’ results. Despite the merits of this method, students’ results in French are still in a decline in the Cameroon General Certificate Examination. French Teachers’ Associations and Government have put in efforts through seminars and workshops to redress this situation to no avail. Students’ achievement level both in the Urban and Rural areas in French at the Cameroon General Certificate Examination (C G C E) Ordinary Level results has been on an inconsistent drop since the year 2000 in the English Region in Cameroon for the past ten years: 21.23%, 29.92%, 55.89%, 17.66%, 25.48%, 2.63%, 24.68%, 24.21%, 23.81% and 21.87% respectively. Source: Cameroon General Certificate Examination Board (CGCEB). The Chief Examiners’ Report (2010) points out that the poor
performance in French is as a result of non-mastery of basic French principles, lack of interest and lack of effective and appropriate teaching methods by some teachers. This researcher is worried about this trend of decline; given that these students in the Urban and Rural areas are taught by trained teachers from Teacher Training Colleges and their performance in class and official examinations are still poor, could this be as a result of the way the students learn, the type of educational facilities available and the teaching method recommended for use in Teachers’ Training Colleges? There is therefore the need to try a new method of teaching French in the Urban and Rural areas if the students are expected to improve on their performance and achievement in French. The problem of the study, posed as a question is therefore; what is the influence of location on students’ achievement in the teaching of French Grammar using the learner autonomy method in the bilingual situation?

Purpose of the study
The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of school location on students’ achievement in French Grammar in a bilingual situation using learner autonomy as a teaching method.

Specifically, the study sought to:
1. Determine the influence of location on students’ achievement in French Grammar using the Learner Autonomy Method.

Research Question
One research question guided the study:
1. What are the mean achievement scores of the rural and urban students taught French Grammar using the Learner Autonomy Method?

Method
The quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design was adopted. Four intact classes were used. Population of the study was one hundred and twenty student-teachers in the second year Bilingual letters of the High Teachers Training Colleges of the Universities of Bamenda and Yaounde Ngao-Ekele in Cameroon. All the one hundred and twenty student-teachers were used meaning that there was no sampling because the population size was manageable in the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the institutions; the four intact classes, two experimental and two control groups were selected through the simply random sampling technique using balloting. The research instrument was a fifty-item French Grammar Achievement Test (FGAT) based on the course outline for FRE 216 French Grammar. This instrument involved position of adjectives, variations in gender and in number and the formation of adverbs from adjectives divided into six sections from A to F. The instrument was face and content validated by two experts in measurement evaluation, one expert in foreign language French in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, two experts in the Bilingual letter from the Higher Teachers Training Colleges of the
The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Kendall coefficient of concordance to analyze the results from the trial testing, and it yielded an index of 0.08 which was a pointer that the instrument was reliable for the study. A table of specification guided the researcher in constructing the FGAT.

Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviations. Four Bilingual Letters lecturers who served as assistant researchers were used for two days on the use of the method and how to use the lesson plans. Fore-most, the FGAT was administered on all the subjects of the study as pretest. Thereafter, the treatment was administered for a period of four weeks. The experimental group was taught using the learner autonomy. At the end of the treatment period, the FGAT was rearranged and administered on the subjects as posttest. All the tests administered, were scored using a marking scheme prepared by the researcher. The extraneous variables such as initial group difference, effect of pre-test and posttest and subject interaction were controlled.

Results
Research question 1
1. What are the mean achievement scores of the urban and rural students taught French Grammar using the Learner Autonomy Method?

Table 1: Achievement mean and standard deviation scores of urban and rural students in French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pre-test Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev</th>
<th>post-test Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev</th>
<th>Gain score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57.90</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>84.07</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62.40</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>94.00</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the achievement mean scores of urban and rural students taught French using the learner autonomy method. Urban students had achievement mean score of 84.07 and standard deviation of 8.30 for the post-test against 94.00 and standard deviation of 5.87 for the rural students. For the pre-test, rural students recorded a mean of 62.40 and a standard deviation of 4.00 while the urban obtained a mean score of 57.90 and standard deviation of 10.30. Rural students had a higher gain score than the urban students. The higher achievement means score favoured the rural students in the pre-test and post-test, there is a difference in the achievement mean scores of rural and urban students taught French Grammar using the learner autonomy method. Therefore, rural students performed better than the urban students.

Findings
The findings from this study are:
1. The Learner Autonomy Method, based on existing on literature review was found to be effective in enhancing students’ achievement in French Grammar.
2. Rural students performed better than the urban students taught using the Learner Autonomy Method.

**Discussions**

The study revealed that students taught using the Learner Autonomy Method performed differently in the urban and rural areas. The learner autonomy method provides the students with tangible skills and attitude to face the teaching and learning process, this the students are fully aware that their success in the learning process lay in their hands, so they take charge of their own learning (Holec 1981). It could also be as a result of:

1. Learners deciding the content of their learning and how they go about it.
2. The fact that the students in this group have the capacity of identifying goals, formulating their own goals and can change the goals to suit their own learning needs and interest.
3. They are able to use learning strategies and monitor their own learning (Dickinson 1995)
4. The fact that pupil learner autonomy is a precondition to increasing successful learner linguistic competence (Grenfell 2000).

The above finding confirm the observation of Cem (2008) which revealed that learners in the experimental group taught using learner autonomy scored higher than those in the control group taught using the conventional method. The positive effect of learner autonomy has been demonstrated with difficult aspects in French grammar qualifier adjectives and has been established to be a powerful intervention method in students’ achievement in French Grammar.

The findings of this study revealed that rural students performed better than the urban students using the Learner Autonomy Method, this implies that school location has an influence on students’ achievement. This study is in line with that of Bell (1975), Kostman (1977) and Simmelkaer (1979) who in their studies, found out that educational institutions in the urban area share common features of learning impediments such as reading retardation, high absenteeism, drug abuse, students’ vandalism and apathy. These vices as well as overcrowding account for the causes of poor performance in the urban areas even though in contrast Ogunlade (1973) Lawin (1973) Anwana (1979) and Obot (1991) all disagreed on this view, maintaining that schools in the urban are well staffed and with good facilities in them.

**Conclusion**

The Learner Autonomy Method from the existing literature sounds good; a method which enhances students’ achievement in various academic subjects. The study revealed that rural area students performed better than the urban area students in French Grammar using Learner Autonomy an innovative Method. However, the quest for life-long learning and innovative teaching methods should be the ultimate goal of every nation, thus a sound educational package void of school location differences and imbalances is necessary.
Recommendations
The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

1. Professional bodies and Government should organize workshops for French Teachers on how to use Learner Autonomy an innovative method for the enhancement of students’ achievement in both the urban and rural areas.

2. Instructional structures should be developed and educational facilities be made available in the rural areas also rural area teachers should be highly motivated to continue to enjoy teaching in the rural areas, thus checking location imbalances.

3. Disciplinary councils and committees should be created or reinforced especially in urban schools to check indiscipline related to vices found in the urban area such as drug abuse, high absenteeism, students’ vandalism and students who commit such crimes should be disciplined accordingly.

4. Guidance and counseling units should be multiplied in the urban areas to draw the attention of the urban students on the disastrous consequences of the vices on their studies in the urban areas.

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