

# Game Education versus the Grammar-Translation Method in Vocabulary Mastery of the Mendankwe Language in Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bamendankwe-Nkwen, Bamenda-Cameroon

Nicoline Agbor Tabe, PhD, <sup>♦</sup>

&

Sirih-Nagang Nancy Nyindem, PhD<sup>‡</sup>

## Abstract

This study compares games to traditional grammar to teach vocabulary in Mendankwe-Nkwen. With a sampled population of 40 Forms 1A-C students of GBHS Bamendankwe, qualitative and quantitative data were obtained through participant observation, pre and post-tests, and questionnaires administered to the two national language teachers of the school. The class was divided into two groups (Forms 1A & B as the Control Group and Forms 1C as the Experimental Group), upon which tests were administered to establish the vocabulary levels of both sampled groups and determine which method is more productive in vocabulary mastery of the target language. Data was analysed within the theoretical framework of the constructivism theory of Jean Piaget (1964) and the Motivational theory of John Keller (1983). The findings revealed that learners who study through games retain and master the target vocabulary more than those who study through the traditional grammar-translation method. Another finding revealed that the experimental class was more lively, interactive, and engaging as learners actively used the target vocabulary as opposed to the control group. Further findings depicted that students of the experimental group used and improved their speaking, listening, and nonverbal skills through gestures, demonstrations, and dramatisation compared to those of the other group. Therefore, it recommends that educational stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, and pedagogic Inspectors) emphasise implementing games in vocabulary lessons.

*Keywords: Games, Grammar Translation, Medium of teaching, Vocabulary, Mendankwe-Nkwen.*

## Introduction

This research is a comparative study of using the traditional versus the game method of teaching Mendankwe-Nkwen vocabulary to Form 1 A-C students in GBHS Bamendankwe through a control and experimental group. This focuses on the learners'

---

<sup>♦</sup> Nicoline Agbor Tabe, PhD, Associate Professor of English language/ELT, Dean of Studies of HTTC Bambili, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon. raphnic@gmail.com

<sup>‡</sup> Sirih-Nagang Nancy Nyindem, PhD, Department of Linguistics and African Languages, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon. nancybeb@gmail.com

proficiency level before and after using traditional grammar-translation and modern game methods in teaching vocabulary in Mendankwe-Nkwen. This article is structured into four sections; the first section provides background information to situate the aptness of the research. The second section reviews the literature. The third part discusses the methodological design used in collecting and analysing the data. It throws light on the theoretical framework within which the work is hinged. The fourth section presents and discusses the research findings, and the last highlights the significance of the findings and proposes recommendations to enhance the phenomenon under research.

### **Background to the study**

Cameroon is a highly dense multilingual African country with a linguistic landscape of over 247 indigenous languages, two official languages (English and French), and a lingua franca (Cameroon Pidgin English) exploited by a population of 12,803,220 inhabitants over a surface area of 475,442 km<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, some foreign languages like Spanish and German are very present in the school system, while Arabic is the language of Islam. During the colonial period, the language policy put in place by the Germans (1884-1916), the British, and the French (1916-1960) tended to promote the colonisers' languages to the detriment of indigenous languages (Breton & Fohitung, 1991). The indigenous languages suffered severe linguistic persecution as the colonial administrators sought to eradicate them from the school system. Unfortunately, foreign languages remain superior, while indigenous languages are relegated to the background. In addition to the policy of official language bilingualism, which seeks to promote the use of English and French nationwide, Spanish and German equally occupy an essential place in the school system. Unfortunately, neither Cameroonian indigenous languages nor Arabic found their way into public school syllabi, let alone tolerated in official classes, according to Echu (2003).

Some Cameroonian parents who do not speak nor understand French and English use National languages with their children at home while they are exposed to the official languages in schools. According to Shakib (2011), during the scramble for Africa, colonisers imposed their languages onto the peoples they colonised, forbidding natives to speak their mother tongues. In some cases, they systematically prohibited native languages. Many writers educated during colonisation recount how students were demoted, humiliated, or even beaten for speaking their native language in colonial schools. The use of local, national languages dropped as the indigenous people were obliged to speak only the prestigious European languages (French and English). This led to the endangerment of some National languages as some became completely extinct because no speaker was left. Having noticed this, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) encouraged mother tongue instruction in primary education in 1953, highlighting its advantages. Educationists like Benson, 2004; Buhmann and Trudell (2008) argued that countries where students' first language is the language of instruction are likely to achieve the goals of Education for All. Public and private organisations such as the University of Yaoundé, the Institute of Social Sciences, the Summer Institutes of Linguistics (SIL-Cameroon), the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) and the National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees (NACALCO) created programmes to revive National languages. PROPELCA (Programme Operationnel pour l'Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun, translated in English as Operational Research Program for Language Teaching in

Cameroon), in collaboration with the University of Yaoundé and the Institute of Social Sciences, has been active since 1977 in the area of the unification and harmonisation of language teaching in Cameroon, be it in connection to either Official languages, National languages or Foreign languages.

Furthermore, the Department of National Languages in Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) de Yaoundé was created in 2008 (Decree No 08/0223 MINESUP/DDES of 03 September 2008) to train teachers to teach National languages in secondary schools. More so, 21 February of every year was commemorated as the National Language Day in Cameroon in line with UNESCO recommendations. National languages such as Ewondo, Bassa, Ffulde, Shumom, Mendankwe-Nkwen, Limbum, etc., are taught in schools since an official variety has not yet been chosen for the country.

According to the Rutu Foundation, mother tongue education refers to any form of schooling that uses the language or languages children are most familiar with. This is the language that children speak at home with their parents. In Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bamendankwe, students learn many National languages simultaneously as they all reflect everyone's identity. For example, suppose the class comprises speakers of the Bassa, Nkwen, Mendankwe, Yemba, Mankon, and Ewondo; in that case, the teacher proceeds with the general alphabet of Cameroonian National Languages, and a small quantity of all the languages is taught to everybody following the program at hand. Therefore, the researcher's language of interest here is the Mendankwe-Nkwen language (Eberhard *et al.* 2020) since the Mendankwe-Nkwen students constitute the most significant part of the chosen classrooms, and it is the first language of most of its speakers where the school is found.

During the teaching practice inspection tour of Higher Teacher Training Bambili Faculty, we observed some teachers using the traditional grammar-translation method, indicating synonymy, antonyms, and definitions, in teaching vocabulary to the students in GBHS Bamendankwe, and noticed that the method used seemed to delay the vocabulary proficiency level of the students' participation as well as their retention capacity of words was slow. These methods also do not place the students at the centre of learning, thus making the class inactive. This worrying situation and motivation pushed us to seek a better method to improve our mastery of the vocabulary related to kitchen utensils.

Against this backdrop, this research was initiated to provide a better innovative method of teaching the mother tongue vocabulary in educational institutions, particularly Cameroon, giving her a complex multilingual situation. Following the above background, the paper aims to compare Form One student's performance in the mastery of vocabulary on kitchen utensils in the Mendankwe-Nkwen language when the grammar-translation method indicating definitions, synonymy, and antonyms and when vocabulary memory games including matching images and written words are used to teach Form 1A and 1B students as control group and form 1C students as experimental group. The aim of the study is broken down into the following objectives:

- To establish the pre-test vocabulary levels of the Control (Form 1A and 1B) and experimental (Form 1C) groups before the use of both methods of teaching vocabulary,
- To present the post-test results reflecting the performances of the Control (Form 1A and 1B) after using the grammar-translation method both methods in teaching Form 1A and 1B using the grammar-translation method

- To present the post-test results reflecting the performances of the experimental group (Form 1C) after using the vocabulary memory game method,
- To provide a comparison of the student's performance during pre-and post-tests for both the experimental and Control groups to propose solutions to improve the teaching and performance of the students in the target vocabulary and language.

Based on the above objectives, this research is guided by the following questions:

- What are the pre-test vocabulary levels of both groups of students in Mendankwen-Nkwen language before using both methods of teaching vocabulary on kitchen utensils?
- What are the post-test results reflecting the performances of the Control (Form 1A and 1B) after using the grammar-translation method in teaching the target vocabulary?
- What are the post-test results reflecting the performances of the experimental group (Form 1C) after using the vocabulary memory game method in teaching the target vocabulary?
- Which method is better for teaching the target vocabulary in the Mendankwen-Nkwen language to the target student?

This paper is based on the premise that students will perform better in Mendankwen-Nkwen vocabulary when taught using games than in grammar-translation. The following section reviews the literature on the topic under study.

### **Review of relevant Literature**

The role of games in empowering students to experience flexibility, risk-taking, conceptual awareness, inventiveness, and enhanced memory development cannot be underestimated in teaching vocabulary to begin, as well as the role of the grammar-translation method. This portion of the study reviews the literature on teaching through games to enhance vocabulary mastery.

Huyen and Nga (2003) researched the success of learning vocabulary through games and focused on the perception and attitudes of Vietnamese students and what they gained through their learning with vocabulary games. They collected data by observing some experienced teachers' classes at HUFV, reviewing other teachers' lesson plans for games, and interviewing some teachers and students. Over two weeks, many games such as "Hangman", animal squares, and advertisement posters were administered as instructional strategies at the Distance Education Center to get learners' reactions on whether they liked games or not and if games could help improve their vocabulary. Also, they made use of a post-class survey to elicit students' feelings and their own experiences in learning vocabulary. Furthermore, a simple questionnaire was designed beforehand to help students clearly understand the purpose of the study, and their findings revealed that games help students learn new words and phrases that appear in them and recall their existing vocabulary simultaneously. It also reveals that games are used not only for fun but, more importantly, for the proper practice and review of language lessons, thus leading to improving learners' communicative competence.

Insofar as the previous and current studies focus on games in teaching vocabulary, the two studies are different given that this current study is a comparative one comparing the traditional grammar translation method and modern games to evaluate

which one best suits the said category and level of students This study further diverges from the current study in that it focuses on the teaching of vocabulary in Mendankwen-Nkwen, a semi Bantu Grassfields language spoken in the North West Region of Cameroon. In contrast, the other study deals with teaching vocabulary in the Vietnamese language. Also, the present study exploits different game types to teach and learn vocabulary, and the games are deeply rooted in the African context, which reminds students of their cultural heritage and activities peculiar to their childhood.

Bavi (2018) studied the effect of fun activities on learning English vocabulary at the elementary level. Using the Oxford Quick Placement Test 2001 to homogenise the participants and assign them into two groups and pre-tests and games such as Letter Scramble and Charade within 4-week intervals, a post-test was run to check the word achievement differences. Results disclosed that the fun activity technique is more effective in teaching vocabulary than traditional methods at the elementary level. This study is similar to the current study as it discredits the traditional methods of teaching vocabulary and acknowledges the use of games. However, it diverges from the current study, which uses a local, national language, Mendankwen-Nkwen, as the language for instruction as opposed to the English Language, which is an Official Language in our context, that is, in Cameroon. The current study differs equally from the previous one in that the games are chosen, and traditional methods differ.

Julia (2015) conducted a study on using games to teach English Vocabulary to students with exceptional abilities and needs at Rosa Sanchez De Fierre Elementary School and noted that games serve as didactic materials during the teaching-learning process of English vocabulary, facilitating language acquisition. To collect data, the researcher started with a pre-test about vocabulary administered to two students with learning disabilities attending the second year of Basic Education at "Rosa Sanchez de Fierro" public school. After a two-week intervention period, a post-test was administered to these students after having taught them using a flash card, memory card, and games such as Role play games, matching games, labelling games, guessing games, Searching games, and Board games. The pre-and post-test findings indicated a relevant growth in the students' vocabulary proficiency after the intervention plan. The results indicate that games are productive and supportive of students' language skills and proficiency. However, the current study deals with healthy, balanced students at the elementary level of GBHS Bamendankwe using a National language called Mendankwe-Nkwen as a case study as opposed to students with special needs in the second year of Basic Education at Rosa Sanchez de Fierro Public School using the English language as a case study. Both studies exploit similar procedures for data collection and dealing with learners, some of whom might not have any background in the target language.

Pirrie (2017) worked on teaching and Learning Vocabulary through Games and Translation in the EFL Classroom. Through a comparative study, the researcher sought out which methods were suitable for vocabulary teaching and learning. The research made use of games such as memory and guessing games. The students were divided into three groups, and all the groups contained mixed-ability children, the reason being that the stronger students could give a helping hand to the weaker students. The test group played the games, and the treatment group used translation to learn vocabulary. For the translation, students were given words in the target language to give their corresponding forms in Catalan. Data was collected through a pre-test to assess the students' prior knowledge of the target word and whether the experimental and Control groups had

similar vocabulary levels. Afterward, a post-test was administered using the various teaching methods. The post-test found out if the students had learned the words introduced in each session and what method proved more effective.

Furthermore, Classroom observation and interviews were exploited for qualitative data to answer the first part of the research question, which investigated how the student's regular teacher presented and revised the target vocabulary. The study revealed that students like games to translation as games were more fun, though more demanding than translation. Moreover, games seemed to motivate and encourage most students to participate, irrespective of their proficiency level, whereas translation stimulated mainly the high achievers. Nevertheless, translation also plays a significant role as it concerns vocabulary retention. Interestingly, the research revealed that the learners need some variation in class to sustain their interest and motivation because classrooms include students with different learning styles.

Consequently, it is important to use a different method to cater to all the students' needs. The earlier study and the current one are similar at the level of games and comparison but also different in methods, target students, target language, and locality of study, as the current study focuses on the Mendankwen-Nkwen language, the student's mother tongue. In contrast, English is the second language of the learners.

The above review shows the place occupied by games in enhancing vocabulary mastery. This study is unique as it focuses on mastering language vocabulary in classes of students with mixed linguistic backgrounds. This study is also unique among the learners; we find learners who have mastery of the target language and others with no level in the language. The forthcoming section presents the methodological dimension of the study.

### **Methodology**

This inquiry was conducted through a pre-test and post-test administered to the Forms 1A-C Mendankwe-Nkwen students to check their overall vocabulary level. Furthermore, the researcher divided the class into Forms 1A & B, the Control group, and Form 1C, the Experimental group. The researcher observed the teachers teaching using the grammar-translation method and vocabulary memory game method and evaluated the students' participation as far as these methods were used. Forms 1A & B were taught kitchen utensils through GTM, indicating definitions, synonyms, and antonyms, while Form 1C was taught these same lessons through vocabulary memory games, including matching images and written words. At the end of these encounters, the results of the two tests were recorded per class and compared to further validate and confirm our hypothesis.

The target population of the study comprises teachers of National languages in GBHS Bamendankwe who are (02) in number, (02) in GBHS Downtown, (02) in GBHS Bamenda, and (01) in Mankon giving an overall total of (10) teachers. The research sampled only the national language teachers of GBHS Bamendankwe and the students of Form 1A-C in Mendankwe-Nkwen, with 40 males (14) and females (26). The classes were grouped as follows:

- Forms 1A & B = 25 Mendankwe-Nkwen students (Control group)
- Form 1C = 15 Mendankwe-Nkwen students (Experimental group)
  - Age range: 9-13 years
  - Pre-school condition: registered in the school
  - Health status: Healthy

The researcher conducted her research in GBHS Bamendankwe because the school was confirmed to offer National language lessons. The researcher chose this level of students because they are beginners, which concerns the teaching and learning of the National language. Also, the researcher chose the Form 1 level because it is the only class in the school that studies national languages. The Department of National Languages was operational in ENS (Ecole Normale Supérieure) de Yaounde in 2008, and the successful candidates underwent training for three years and were posted to schools to teach National languages. For this reason, not all the schools were lucky enough to have teachers in this field.

The mixed (qualitative and quantitative) method of data analysis was employed, and the data was processed, making use of Microsoft Excel 2019 and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25. The results obtained from the questionnaire administered were presented on statistical tables reflecting the percentages of each indicator of the pre and post-test, respectively. The collected data were accumulated, categorised and analysed, keeping in mind the study's objectives.

Studies on language teaching and learning cannot be dissociated from theories of language acquisition and learning, given that they explain the cognitive process through which languages are acquired and imply the pedagogy and the teaching methods used.

This research is hinged on the constructivism theory of Piaget (1980) and the Motivational theory by Keller (1987). The constructivism theory indicates that humans create knowledge through the interaction between their experiences and ideas, and according to Elliot *et al.* (2000, p.256), constructivism is "an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their knowledge and that the experiences of the learner determine reality". In this research, this hypothesis underpins various student-centred teaching methods and techniques which contrast with traditional education, whereby teachers passively transmit knowledge to students. The theory is relevant to this study as it unveils that the conventional vocabulary teaching mode always takes the teacher as the primary teaching channel, listing the meaning and collocation of each word in isolation without the article's context and asking students to memorise it mechanically. As a shortcoming, the theory does not consider the aspect of motivation during instructions.

On the other hand, the Motivational theory is employed to highlight the significance of teaching and learning a language. Motivation is a condition that activates and sustains behaviour toward a goal and can help activate slow learners to meet up with fast ones. When a child is motivated intrinsically and extrinsically, he/she participates actively in all classroom activities. According to Keller (1987), motivation is a brainstorming approach to designing the motivational aspects of learning environments to stimulate and sustain students' motivation to learn, and it plays a crucial role during the teaching-learning process. It is used in this study to demonstrate how learners learn and provide opportunities for them to develop in genuine and satisfying ways. Keller's theory suggests that if teachers utilise the four categories of learning (attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction) and incorporate a design system linked to this theory's instructional content, students' motivation will increase.

### **Results and Discussions**

Considering the primary objective of this research, which is to establish the vocabulary level of Mendankwe-Nkwen students in the Control and Experimental groups before

and after the introduction of GTM and games, the students of 1A-C were assessed. Forty learners were given a pre-test, and their scores were recorded and presented in the tables below.

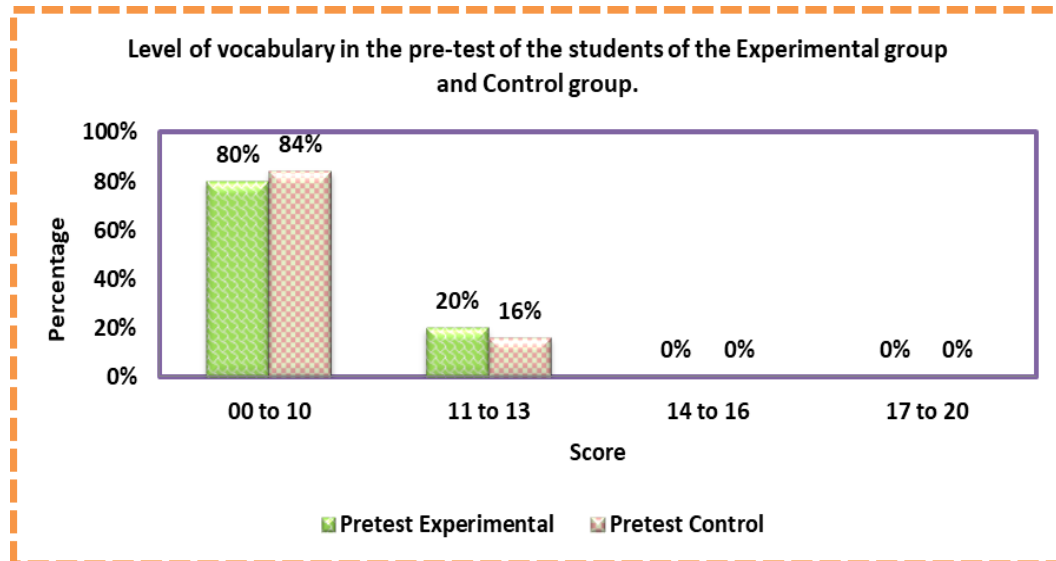
**Table 1a & b: Level of vocabulary in the pre-test of the students of the Experimental and Control group**

Students of the Experimental group		
Score	Frequency	Percentage
00 to 10	12	80%
11 to 13	3	20%
14 to 16	0	0%
17 to 20	0	0%
TOTAL	15	100%

1b)

Students of the Control group		
Score	Frequency	Percentage
00 to 10	21	84%
11 to 13	4	16%
14 to 16	0	0%
17 to 20	0	0%
TOTAL	25	100%

The statistics in Table 1(a & b) above reveal that after the pre-test was administered, 80% of students from the Experimental group (Form 1C) recorded scores ranging from 00-10, while 20% registered scores ranging from 11-13. Alternatively, 84% of students in the Control group (Forms 1 A & B) recorded scores ranging from 00-10, while 16% got scores from 11-13. This means that no students obtained marks from 13 upward. This is represented in Graph 1 below.



Graph 1: Level of vocabulary in the pre-test of the students of the Experimental group and Control group.

Graph 1 above presents the pre-test scores of the Control and Experimental groups. It reveals that 84% of learners in the Control group got scores from 00 to 10, while 16% got scores from 11 to 13. None of the two groups got scores of 13 and above.

Furthermore, comparatively, the results of the Control and the Experimental groups after applying games in teaching vocabulary in Mendankwe-Nkwen reveal varying outcomes. The testing group was taught two vocabulary lessons (periods of the day and kitchen utensils) without using games. In contrast, the treatment group was taught these same lessons using games (Board Race, Pictionary game, Taboo game, guessing game, Card Matching game, Simon Says game and Be Quick). After this, both groups were tested based on their various teaching methods. The scores are reflected as follows:

**Table 2 (a): Level of vocabulary in the post-test of the students of the Experimental group (Using Games) and Control group**

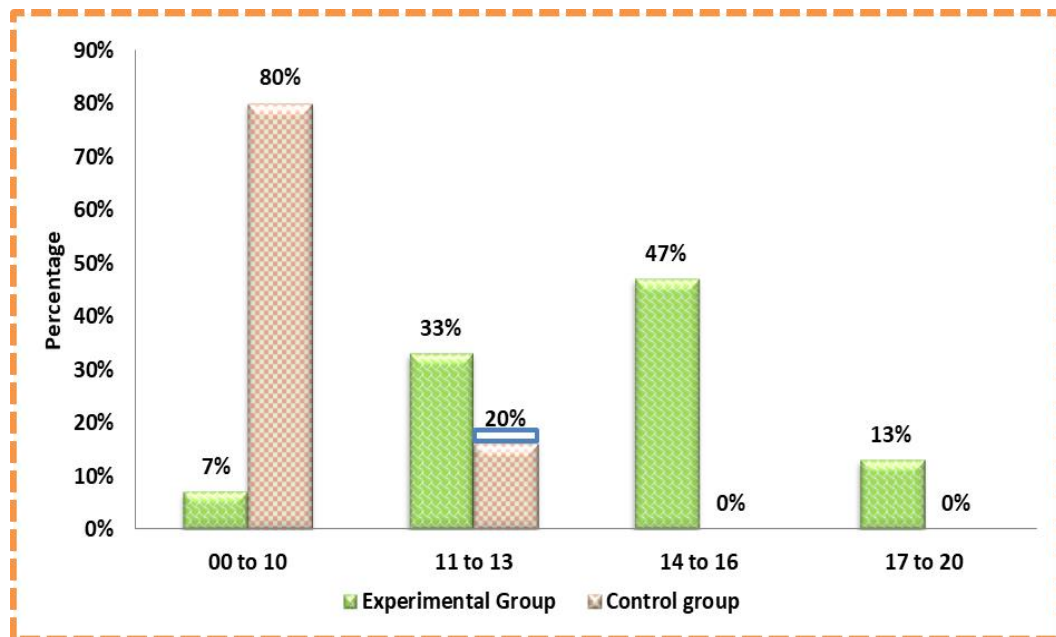
Students of the Experimental group (Using Games)		
Score	Frequency	Percentage
00 to 10	1	7%
11 to 13	5	33%
14 to 16	7	47%
17 to 20	2	13%
TOTAL	15	100%

(b) Students of the Control group		
Score	Frequency	Percentage
00 to 10	20	80%
11 to 13	5	20%

14 to 16	0	0%
17 to 20	0	0%
TOTAL	25	100%

Table 3 (a) indicates that 7% of students in the Treatment group recorded scores from 00 to 10, 33% recorded scores from 11 to 13, 47% recorded scores from 14 to 16 and 13% recorded from 17 to 20. These scores reveal that the Experimental group has shifted from one level to another, indicating an increase in the vocabulary level after the introduction of games. Meanwhile, in the testing group, 80% of the students obtained scores from 00 to 10, 20% recorded scores from 11 to 13, and 0% recorded scores from 14 to 16 and 17 to 20, respectively. Based on the above statistics, the Experimental group improved their vocabulary level after introducing the games. However, the Control group's results remained stable as they did not exceed their previous rate scores. This information is best seen in the graph below.



*Graph 2: Vocabulary Level in the post-test of the students of the Experimental group (Using Games) and Control group*

The data in Graph 2 above reveals excellent improvement in the scores on the performance in the post-test taught using games. 7% of students got scores from 00 to 10, 33% got scores from 11 to 13, 47% got scores from 14 to 16%, and 13% got scores from 17 to 20. Meanwhile, the Control group remained constant, with 80% of students getting scores from 00 to 10 and 20% getting scores from 11 to 13. The Control group did not go beyond 13/20 after the post-test was administered when taught using the traditional method.

**Table 3: Comparison of the level of vocabulary in the Experimental group according to the pre-test and post-test**

Score	Students of the Experimental group			
	Frequency in the Pre-test	Percentage in the Pre-test	Frequency in the Post-test (Using games)	Percentage in the Post-test
00 to 10	12	80%	1	7%
11 to 13	3	20%	5	33%
14 to 16	0	0%	7	47%
17 to 20	0	0%	2	13%
TOTAL	15	100%	15	100%

The statistics in Table 3 on the performance in the pre-test indicate that the vocabulary level of the students taught in the traditional method (without using games) was insignificant. In contrast, the outcomes of the post-test show that the students' vocabulary levels had increased when taught using games. In the pre-test, 80% of the students got scores from 00 to 10, while only 7% recorded scores from 00 to 10 in the final test. In the pre-test, 20% of the students got scores from 11 to 13, while 33% recorded scores from 11 to 13 in the post-test. Furthermore, in the pre-test, 0% of students recorded scores from 14-16, while in the post-test, 47% recorded scores from 14-16. Lastly, in the pre-test, 0% of the students recorded scores from 17 to 20, while in the post-test, 13% recorded scores from 17 to 20. The analysis results certified that the student's vocabulary level after the game application has improved compared to their previous level without games.

Contrarily, the scores on the vocabulary level in the pretest and aftertest of the control group revealed no significant difference between the scores of the two tests since the traditional method (synonyms, antonyms, definitions, translation, etc.) of teaching was applied.

**Table 4: Comparison of the level of the vocabulary in the control group according to the pre-test and post-test**

Score	Students of the control group			
	Frequency in Pre-test	Percentage in the Pre-test	Frequency in Post-test	Percentage in the Post-test
00 to 10	21	84%	20	80%
11 to 13	4	16%	5	20%
14 to 16	0	0%	0	0%
17 to 20	0	0%	0	0%
TOTAL	25	100%	25	100%

As expressed in the scores in Table 4 above, there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of the Control group students after they were taught vocabulary without using games. In the pre-test, 84% of the students recorded scores from 00 to 10, while 80% recorded scores from 00 to 10 in the post-test. Furthermore, 16% of the students recorded scores from 11 to 13 in the pretest, and 20% recorded scores from 11 to 13. However, none exceeded these scores, as 0% did not score between 14 to 16 and 17 to

20 in both the foretest and aftertest. This justifies the fact that the vocabulary level of the students in the control group did not change because of the teaching method used (traditional method).

### **Discussion**

The data collected and analysed reveal that teachers' use of educational games to improve students' vocabulary in Mendankwe-Nkwen significantly affected the students' vocabulary proficiency and development. The exercises (tests and games) carried out with these students show a significant change in their assimilation of vocabulary after applying games.

The scores indicate that teaching vocabulary using games in Mendankwe-Nkwen significantly impacts students' vocabulary proficiency. This can be seen through the scores of the students in the experimental group in the pre-test (80% of students got scores that ranged from 00-10, 20% got scores from 11 to 13, 0% got scores from 14 to 16, and 00% also got scores from 17 to 20.) and post-test (7% of students got scores from 00 to 10, 33% got scores from 11 to 13, 47% got scores from 14 to 16, and 13% got scores from 17 to 20). Furthermore, the research reveals that games entertain, teach, motivate, and enhance learners' fluency. This finding aligned with that of Nguyen & Nga (2003), confirming that games help students remember new words quickly.

Also, students in the Experimental group had more fun as they interacted, cooperated, and were encouraged to be the winners. More so, this result corroborated that of Ashraf *et al.* (2004), who see educational games as creating an enjoyable environment in the classroom that enhances learning quickly. In other words, amusement activities are advantageous and effective in learning the target vocabulary in Mendankwe. They motivate because they usually involve friendly competition and create a cooperative learning environment.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the skills considerably acquired when vocabulary is taught in Mendankwe-Nkwen using games are listening and speaking skills, with speaking skills overshadowing listening. This is expressed through the responses of the Experimental group students, wherein 87.5% acquired the speaking skills while 12.5% acquired the listening skills. This aligns with the work of Sorayaie (2012), who sees games as tools to enhance students' communicative skills as they can use the language wherever they find themselves. More so, Uberman (1998) stated that students can use the target language easily after learning and practising new vocabulary through games. The view is shared, and much light shades on it as Ersoz (2000) sees games as frequently motivating, relevant, engaging, and comprehensible since they can be used to practice all language skills and to communicate.

More so, data obtained from responses from the questionnaire reveal the non-use of games by teachers during their vocabulary lessons in Mendankwe-Nkwen for various reasons, namely, time-consuming, heavy and demanding workloads, limited time for instructions, etc. They claim that the workloads are heavy and that limited time is provided to accomplish them. Nevertheless, they view games as an entertaining and educative method of teaching vocabulary. This finding aligned with the work of Allen (1983), in which he highlighted that games are essential in teaching vocabulary because they highlight the necessary and vital words to achieve the games' objectives. In the same light, Vernon (2009) attested that games effectively teach vocabulary to young learners.

Children participate and pay more attention because they enjoy themselves and do better during and after the games.

Findings further reveal that teachers still use the traditional method to teach vocabulary in Mendankwe-Nkwen. Analysis has proven that this method does not increase or enhance the students' proficiency in vocabulary. This finding corroborates the work of Riahipour and Saba (2012), who stated that traditional activities such as memorising long vocabulary lists, derivations, repetitions of words, translation, and fill-in-the-blank exercises are boring for students. They stated that using a long list of words and their translation items does not guarantee that remembering will occur. Therefore, by using vocabulary games, the learning process is going to be more valuable. This method can make vocabulary more enjoyable.

### **Significance of the study**

This study is essential because it highlights that teaching vocabulary using games makes the classroom lively as the students are happy and enthusiastic about the lesson. More so, students learn many virtues such as tolerance, acceptance of defeat, love for one another while playing, etc.

Game instructional learning is instrumental in promoting the acquisition of listening, speaking, and nonverbal skills like gestures, postures, demonstrations, and dramatisation, facilitating learning during game education.

Also, it highlights the relevance of vocabulary as the core of any language learning, and proper care should be taken when teaching the language. Learning vocabulary through games creates in students a sense of Organisation as every game is bound to follow the rules and steps, which, with enthusiasm, brings out the winner of the game while learning. So, it drills them to be patient and understand the rules and regulations of the game before embarking on it.

### **Conclusion**

This research aimed to compare the performance of Forms 1A & B students of GBHS Bamendankwe and that of Form 1 C of the same school when the traditional grammar translation method and modern vocabulary games are used in teaching vocabulary. As an objective to achieving this goal, the research established the vocabulary levels of a control and experimental group through a pre-test before the use of both methods in teaching vocabulary, presented the results reflecting the performances during the post-test after using both methods, and lastly, compared both methods to propose solutions better to enhance the teaching and boost the performances of the students.

Data obtained from observation administered questionnaires, and tests served as the primary sources of information. The research was carried out with 40 students of Forms 1 A, divided into the control group (Forms A &B) and the Experimental group (Form 1C). These groups were taught vocabulary lessons using the traditional method and games. The testing (Control) group was taught vocabulary through Traditional grammar-translation methods, including definitions, translation, antonyms, synonyms, etc. In contrast, the treatment (experimental) group was taught these same lessons using modern educational memory games constituting images, pictures, and speaking and written word activities. Both groups were tested before and after the introduction of games in the lessons. Their performances and scores were recorded accordingly, bringing

us to this study's significant findings. The findings reveal that students perform significantly better when taught with games in Mendankwe-Nkwen vocabulary.

Further findings revealed that learners' classroom participation, interaction, and motivation were very engaging with the game education as opposed to the traditional grammar-translation method. Game instruction helped learners actively use the target vocabulary in Mendankwe-Nkwen (target language) instead of the translation method, which did not give the learners the chance to use the target language actively. Consequently, this study recommends that national language teachers integrate educational games into their vocabulary lessons or resort to other strategies to teach vocabulary. Moreover, the traditional method should be put aside, for it only makes the class dull and the lesson teacher-centred.

## References

- Abbott, G. (2000). Language in Lifelong Education for Third World Development. *Development in Practice*, 10(2), 216-222. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4029377>.
- Allen, R. C. (2009). *The British Industrial Revolution from a global perspective*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Allen, V. F. (1983). *Techniques in teaching vocabulary*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- AshSer, J. (1977) *Learning Another Language Through Actions: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook*. California: Sky Oaks Productions.
- Asher, J. (1977). *Methods and Approaches to English Language Teaching*. Retrieve from <https://www.u3kessays.com/essays/englislanguage/methods-and-approaches-of>.
- Ashraf, H. *et al.* (2004). The impact of online games on learning English vocabulary by Aranian (low-intermediate) EFL learners. *procedia-social and behavioural sciences*, 98, 286-291.
- Bakhsh, S. (2016). Using games to teach vocabulary to young learners. *English Language Teaching*, 9, 120. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n7p120>.
- Baranowski, T., Buday, R., Thompson, D.I., & Baranowki, J. (2008). Playing for real: video games and stories for health-related behaviour change. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 34 (1), 74-82.
- Bavi, F. (2018). The effect of fun activities on learning vocabulary acquisition for middle school English language learners. Liberty University: Lynchburg.
- Benson, C. (2004). *The Importance of Mother Tongue-Based Schooling for Educational Quality*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation.
- Billman, J. & Sherman, J. (1996). *Observation and Participation in Early Childhood Settings: A practicum Guide*, Allyn & Bacon, Boston.
- Bilola, E. (2003). *La langue française au Cameroun*. Bern, Lang.
- Bot Ba Njok, H. M. (1966). *Le problème linguistique au Cameroun: Educational development 1884-1970*. Bethesda: Internationales Scholars Publications.
- Breton, R. & Fohtung, B. (1991). *Atlas administrative des langues nationales du Cameroon*. Yaounde/Paris : CERDOTOLA/CREA-ACCT.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). White Plains, NY Pearson Education.
- Buhmann, D., & Trudell, B. (2008). Mother tongue matters. *Local languages are a key to effective learning*. Paris France: UNESCO.

- Byrne, D. (1995). *Games. Teaching Oral English*. Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited: pp 101-103.
- Cohen, L. (2009). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Cruikshank, D. R., & Telfer, R. (2001). Classroom games and simulations. Pdf. *Theory into Practice*, XIX (1), 75-80.
- Decree No 08/0223 MINESUP/DDES of 03 September 2008 created a Department of Cameroonian Languages and Cultures of the Higher Teachers Training College Yaounde.
- Decree No 263/14/MINESEC/IGE of 13 August 2014 defines the syllabus of 4e and 3e.
- Decree No 419/14/MINESEC/IGE of December 2014 defining syllabus of 4e and 3e
- Echu, G. (2003). Multilingualism as a Ressource: The Lexical Appropriation of Cameroon Indigenous Languages by English and French" in *TRANS Internet-Zeitschriftfurkulturwissenschaften* no.13/2002  
<http://www.inst.at/trans/13Nr/echu13.htm>.
- Elliot, S. N., Kratochwill, T. R., Littlefield, C. J., & Travers, J. (2000). *Educational psychology: Effective teaching, effective learning* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill College.
- Esoz, A. (2000). Six games for EFL/ESL classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(6).  
<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Ersoz-Games.html>.
- Essonon, J. M. (1981). De l'enseignement des langues nationales dans le secondaire : Les problemes d'organisation. M. Tadadjeu (Eds.) *L'Enseignement des langues au Cameroon/Language education in Cameroon* (pp. 104-118). Yaoundé University of Yaoundé
- Febrinsyah, I. (2016). Improving students' vocabulary mastery through Bingo game for grade X of SMAN 4.
- Folon, B. (1969). The language problem in Cameroon. *Abbia*, 22, 5-40.
- Gairns, R., & Redman, S. (1986). *Working with words: A guide to teaching and learning vocabulary*. (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hadfield, J. (1990). *a Collection of Games and Activities for Low to Mid-Intermediate students of English. Intermediate Communication Games*. Hong Kong: Thomus and Nelson and Nelson and Sons Ltd.
- Huyen, N., & Nga, K. (2003). Learning vocabulary through games. *The Asian EFL Journal-press*. A division of Time Taylor International LTD.
- Julia, E. P. B. (2015). Using games to teach English vocabulary to students who have special abilities at Rosa Sanchez De Fierro Elementary School, Academic year 2013-2014. <http://dspace.unl.edu.ec/jspui/handle/123456789/11682>
- Keller, J. (2000). *How to integrate learner motivation planning into lesson*.
- Keller, J. (1987). Development and use of the ARCS model of motivational design.
- Kendon, A. (2004). *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kosonen, K. (2005). *Education in local languages: Policy and practice in Southeast Asia. First languages first: Community-based literacy programmes for minority language contexts in Asia*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.
- Kouega, J. P. (2008). *Bilingualism at Tertiary Level Education in Cameroon: The Case of the University of Yaoundé II (SOA)*. ISB6: Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Bilingualism. <http://archiv/gwin/gwiss.uni-hamburg.de/isb6/proceedings/kouega.pdf>.

- Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (2020.). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (23rd ed.). SIL International.  
<https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/most-spoken-languages>
- Pirrie, A. L., (2017). Teaching and learning vocabulary through games and translation in the EFL classroom: A case study.
- Riahipour, P. & Saba, Z. (2012). ESP Vocabulary Instruction: Investigating the Effect of Using a Game Oriented Teaching Method for Learners of English for Nursing. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, (3) 1258-1266. DOI:10.4304/JLTR.3.6.1258-1266.
- Shakib, M. K. (2011). The position of language in development of colonisation. *Journal of Languages and Culture* Vol. 2(7), pp. 117-123, <http://www.academicjournals.org/JLC> ISSN 2141-6540.
- Sorayaie Azar, A. (2012). The effect of games on EFL learners' vocabulary learning strategies. *International Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences*, 1(2), 252-256. doi: 10.17142/ijbas-2012.1.2.10.
- Thornbury, S. (2004). *How to teach vocabulary*. (3rd Ed). England, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Uberman, A. (1998). The use of games for vocabulary presentation and revision. *English Teaching Forum*, 36 (1) (1998), pp. 20-27, Retrieved 11 September, 2022, from <http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol36/no1/p20.htm>.
- UNESCO. (1953). *The use of vernacular languages in education*. In *Monographs on fundamental education VIII*. Paris, France: UNESCO.
- Vernon, S. (2009). *The benefits of using Games*. Retrieved June 20th, 2022, <http://www.englishgames.com>.
- Wadsworth, B. J. (2004). *Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development: Foundations of constructivism*. New York: Longman.  
[www.cabtal.org](http://www.cabtal.org)