

## Use of Texts in Teaching English Language: The Case of Selected Form Four Classes in Some Secondary Schools in Cameroon

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### Abstract

*This study describes the kinds of texts teachers use in teaching English Language in Form Four; enquires when teachers use texts in teaching English; examines how teachers use texts in teaching Form Four; evaluates the impact of the use of texts on students' performance and finds out what Form Four students think about the use of texts in teaching them English Language. To attain these objectives, the study uses observation, test and questionnaire. Two Form Four classes selected from two secondary schools in Buea, South West Region of Cameroon are used for the study. The theories used in this work are Content Analysis of Berelson (1952), Communicative Competence theory of Hymes (1960s), Needs Analysis theory as prescribed by Hutchinson and Walters (1987), Communicative Language Teaching theory by Richards (2006) and the Competency-Based Language Teaching theory as proposed by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Docking (1994). Results reveal that the texts mostly used by teachers in teaching are the ones found in the course book. These are either articles or stories written by different authors and on various subject matters. It is also discovered that teachers use texts in class mostly during reading comprehension lessons and that they customarily pre-teach vocabulary, give students time to read the texts in class silently, and then read aloud while the teachers do correction of wrongly pronounced words. At the end of the reading exercise, students answer questions about the texts. This work also discloses that texts have a significant impact in students' performance as 68.82% of students performed better after they were taught using texts as against their previous performance of 19.26%. Finally, it is realised that students have a positive mind-set towards using texts in teaching certain language elements.*

**Keywords:** Texts, English language, teaching, learning, performance

### Introduction

Teaching materials play a great role in English Language Teaching (ELT). Various researchers have pointed out the importance of texts and how they can be used in teaching English Language. Ghafar et al (2025) for example,

carried out a study on the impact of literature on the English language teaching and learning process. They point out that incorporating literary texts in the language classroom helps learners to gain more fluency in the language, develop a deeper appreciation of literature and aids them build critical and analytical skills. The role of teaching materials in ELT cannot be over emphasised. Various studies have been carried out pointing the important role teaching materials play in the language classroom. According to Dio & Estremera (2023), texts can assist learners practice language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), refine their grammar and introduce them to new vocabulary. For this reason, texts can act as a springboard for highly communicative tasks in the classroom. It is on the above premise that this study was done. Using an experiment on some Form Four students from Government High School Bolifamba in the Buea municipality, this work establishes that students can better understand certain elements of language if they are taught using texts. This study also sought to investigate the kinds of texts teachers use in teaching English Language in this class, and when and how they are exploited by the teachers.

The use of texts in Cameroon English Language classrooms is not new. Textbooks, which are the main language materials used here, contain different text types which are also used by language instructors during teaching and learning. However, these texts seem to be under exploited by most English Language teachers as they tend to focus mainly on the teaching of comprehension and a few aspects of vocabulary. Here, students are required to read passages and provide answers to specific comprehension questions either in class or as take-home assignments. Many issues that are central to the mastery of texts such as the ability to make inferences, valid judgments, identification of author's point of view, synthesising a text, relating the text to their environment, are most often neglected by teachers. It is for this reason that a study of this nature is pertinent.

In order to determine to determine how relevant texts are in teaching and learning language skills, the following research questions were asked:

What kinds of texts do teachers use in teaching English Language in Form Four?

When do teachers use texts in teaching English Language in Form Four?

How do teachers use texts in teaching English Language in Form Four?

What impact does the use of texts in teaching English Language in Form Four have on the performance of students?

What do Form Four students think about the use of texts in teaching English Language?

As a result, the objectives of the study are to:

Describe the kinds of texts that teachers use in teaching English Language in Form Four.

Enquire when teachers use texts in teaching English Language in Form Four.

Examine how teachers use texts in teaching English Language in Form Four.

Evaluate the impact of the use of texts in teaching English Language in Form Four on the performance of students.

Find out what Form Four students think about the use of texts in teaching them English Language.

Issues related to language teaching and learning are too broad and complex to be dealt with in a single study. As such, while acknowledging that there are other useful materials, strategies and approaches to texts, this study is limited to how texts can be used as a rich source of materials to teach varied language aspects to students of secondary schools in Cameroon in general and Form Four students in particular. The study is limited to aspects of grammar, vocabulary, writing, reading techniques and critical thinking. There is an observation study to verify if teachers use texts in teaching English Language in Form Four, to describe the kinds of texts they use and to investigate when and how teachers use texts in this class. The study further assesses the use of texts on the performance of students and finally investigates the opinions of Form Four students on the use of texts in teaching them English Language.

## **Background**

The teaching of reading has been the focus of both teachers and parents and has developed immensely throughout the years (Linde, 2021). In the 1600s, the centre of reading was on the alphabet. According to Linde (2021), the focus of teachers during this era was on the memorization of lists of words. Students were taught to memorise Bible verses, poems, rhymes and short

stories. In the early 1900s, educators began to realize that students needed to read for a particular purpose and which was to find information. Parker (2021) explains that during this era, students were taught from either Noah Webster's Blue-Backed Speller or McGuffey Readers. In 1908 the book *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading* was published (Linde, 2021) demanding educators to think about the process of learning how to read. According to Parker (2021), during this era students were taught from either Noah Webster's Blue-Baked Speller or McGuffey Readers. As of the 1930s, readers and other books were printed as publishers recognised that children needed reading materials.

Today, many philosophies of reading have evolved over giving rise to "balanced literacy" (Linde, 2021). Teachers focus on skills like phonics and comprehension in teaching while students use real books in learning. Also, the teaching is based on the needs of the students and three basic components are taught. These are decoding, fluency and comprehension while focusing on assessment to evaluate students' achievement. This evolution in teaching reading is not only limited to other countries. In Cameroon, studies have been carried out on how the teaching of reading can be improved. Mbah (2019) developed a Computer Assisted Instructional Model (CAIM) for teaching English Language in secondary schools in Cameroon. Among the skills tested were listening, writing, grammar and reading. Using a quasi-experiment, he found out that students performed better when they were taught reading using CAIM than when they were taught using the traditional instructional model (TIM).

### **Methodology**

Two schools were selected for this study. They are G.H.S. Bolifamba and SUBICOL Molyko. They are a public and private school respectively. The classes that were selected for the study were Form Four. The total number of students from G.H.S. Bolifamba was 53 while that of SUBICOL was 65. As far as the methods are concerned, the study employed a mixed method research design. First an observation study was carried out to study teachers' approach to texts in their various classes and to also to know the kinds of texts that these teachers use in teaching. The research employed the non-participant observation method as the observer did not participate in the activities of the classes observed. The research made use of structured observation as concrete

observation guide with observation categories was used and every item observed was written down by the researcher.

Next, the experimental pre-test and test was employed in the study. Before the implementation of the experiment, the students of G.H.S. Bolifamba wrote a pre-test which was marked and their performances recorded. After this exercise was done, they were, thereafter, taught language elements with the use of a text by the researcher for a week (that is between 28/04/2022-06/05/2022) and then tested after the experiment. The purpose of this second test was to compare their post-test performance with that of the pre-test to see if there were any differences in their performances in the various aspects in which they were examined. After the experimental stage, the students were asked to give their opinions about the experimental lessons. This was done using a questionnaire. Forty-one students who took part in the experimental lesson gave feedback with the use of the questionnaire.

Data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data was analysed thematically. This provided great insights into the issues under study. Descriptive statistics helped us describe, illustrate and summarise the data gotten from the field. This analysis helped to provide the study with a conclusion of the distribution of the data collected, enabled us detect typos, outliers and similarities among variables. As a result, it facilitated the conduct of any further statistical analysis. The measure of frequency was used to know how frequently certain responses occurred in the study.

## **Results**

The results from the study are presented following the research questions that we set out to answer. The kinds of texts used by teachers and when and how they used them in teaching are presented based on what was observed on the field. The impact of the use of texts in teaching is presented in a comparative analysis of students' performances in the pre-test and the post-test. Finally, with the use of a questionnaire, students' views on the use of texts in teaching them various language elements are presented.

### **What kind of texts do teachers use in teaching English Language in Form Four?**

Two texts were used by the two teachers that were observed. The two texts were selected from the students' course book, *Mastering English Student's*

Book 4 by Besong, Egbe et al (2017). To describe the kind of texts used by the teachers in teaching, four elements are taken into consideration. These are: genre, themes, structure, and language issues.

### **Genre**

Under this category, the sort of texts that teachers use in class are examined. The two classes that were observed all used factual or non-fictional texts. The first text was an explanatory text and the subject matter was juvenile delinquency. This text is found on pages 41-43 of *Mastering English: Student's Book 4*. Donnchaidh (2023) elucidates that explanatory texts do not only provide straightforward description of things or retell what happened. They go as far as addressing the how and why of what happened. The said text is an explanatory text because it begins by elucidating the subject matter, juvenile delinquency, puts forward some causes of juvenile delinquency and ends by saying what can be done to salvage the situation.

The second text is found in the same course book and is also a factual text and particularly an information report. According to the New South Wales (NSW) Department of English (2023), this text type classifies, describes and gives factual information about a people, thing, animal or a phenomenon. In the case of this text, the author gives factual information and a description of the Bamenda traditional regalia which is referred to in the passage as “contri gown.” It tells us about its beauty, distinctness and uniqueness worldwide.

### **Themes**

The first issue treated in the selected texts is that of teenage crime. The writer of the text on juvenile delinquency holds that the family is the main pillar behind teenage crimes. Reasons such as poor parenting and gender discrimination are raised as the key causes of teenage crime. To solve this problem, the writer advises that families should teach children key moral values and live up to the norms of the society. Another issue treated by the texts is that of cultural identity. In the text, the writer displays the importance of the “contri gown” to the people from the North West region. The dress is presented as unique and of a very great value to the people to the extent that a dying man could share all his property among his children but would retain his traditional regalia.

### **Structure**

The structure of the texts follows that of expository texts. The texts are presented in a logical and organised manner beginning with an introduction, body and conclusion. Each paragraph is introduced by a topic statement. The text on juvenile delinquency begins by describing the concept of juvenile delinquency, goes forward to enumerate some causes of juvenile delinquency and ends up with ways of eradicating it. The passage on the traditional attire of the people from the grass field areas begins with a description of how the grass field people dress, what the regalia are called and when they are worn.

### Language Issues

The passages make use of simple diction that makes them very easy to understand. The predominant tense used in the passages is the simple present tense. Major diction use such as Bamenda, regalia, traditional, grass field, juvenile delinquency, crime, delinquent, criminal, family, all point out the major issues that the two texts focus on which are the traditional attire of the grass field people and teenage crime respectively.

### When do teachers use texts in teaching English Language in Form Four?

This is discussed in terms of the regularity at which teachers use texts in class and in terms of what they use these texts to teach. The table below highlights the number of times texts were used by the teachers during the observation period.

**Table 2:** How often teachers use texts

School	Date	Used
G.H.S. Bolifamba	01/04/2022	Yes
	05/04/2022	No
	09/04/2022	No
	12/04/2022	No
	15/04/2022	No
	19/04/2022	No
	22/04/2022	No
	26/04/2022	No
	29/04/2022	No
	SUBICOL	03/05/2022
05/05/2022		No
10/05/2022		No
12/05/2022		No
17/05/2022		Yes
19/05/2022		No
26/05/2022		No
28/05/2022		No

Out of the eight classes that were observed in SUBICOL and the nine in G.H.S. Bolifamba, texts were used just once in each school. This is an indication of the fact that texts are hardly exploited by teachers in their classrooms. It also shows that reading is a skill that is hardly taught by teachers.

On the aspect of the issues that teachers treat when handling texts with their students, language issues that each teacher treated when they used the different texts in teaching are examined. These language concerns are derived through the type of questions they asked students and the exercises that they engaged students in before, during and after the lessons. The language concerns have been grouped under the following categories:

### **Comprehension**

What is juvenile delinquency as presented in the text?

According to the passage, why do courts punish teenagers?

Why is family the most important unit in the society?

What is the government's responsibility towards curbing adolescent issues as presented in the passage?

How many causes of juvenile delinquencies are discussed in the passage?

According to the passage, who are those who wear the Bamenda traditional wear?

What is the advantage of wearing this traditional wear?

Why are the regalia regarded as a unique cultural heritage in Cameroon?

### **Vocabulary**

According to the passage, "most" in the phrase "most of the delinquent teenagers" is used as a/an...

What does "norms" in line 12 mean?

Which word in the passage has the same meaning with the word "portrays"?

### **Societal issues**

Why are traditional dresses important to us?

Describe the traditional attire of your tribe.

The writer's intention in paragraph two is....

Main idea and supporting details

The main idea discussed in the last paragraph is.....

The above analyses portray the various language elements that teachers engage in when doing reading in the class. Four basic linguistic concerns are addressed. These are comprehension, vocabulary, relating texts to society and sorting out main ideas and supporting details from texts. However, looking at the number of questions from each of these language issues it shows that comprehension is the main focus when the texts are being treated. This is because more questions on comprehension are asked.

### **How do teachers use texts in teaching English Language in Form Four?**

Here, we are looking at the strategies that are used by the teachers and the kinds of activities teachers engage students in using texts. These activities can be divided into three: pre-reading, while reading and post reading activities.

**Table 3:** Teachers' reading strategies

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>G.H.S. Bolifamba</b>	<b>SUBICOL</b>
<b>Reading aloud</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Silent reading</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Peer reading</b>	No	No
<b>Teacher reading</b>	No	No
<b>Students take turns</b>	Yes	Yes

The above table shows reading strategies teachers use when teaching. From the presentation, we realise that the main reading strategies employed by the teachers are reading aloud, silent reading and students reading in turns.

**Table 4:** Teachers' activity

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Questions/Exercises</b>
<b>Pre-reading</b>	Vocabulary Meaning of words: regalia, psyche, juvenile delinquency, delinquent
<b>While reading</b>	None

**Post reading**

Students answer questions from the course book

Tables 3 and 4 show teaching strategies and activities employed by teachers in the classes that were observed. As seen above, it was noticed that the teaching strategies and activities were very limited. While limited activities were carried out during the pre and post reading, nothing was done while the students were reading.

**What is the impact of the use of texts on students' performance?**

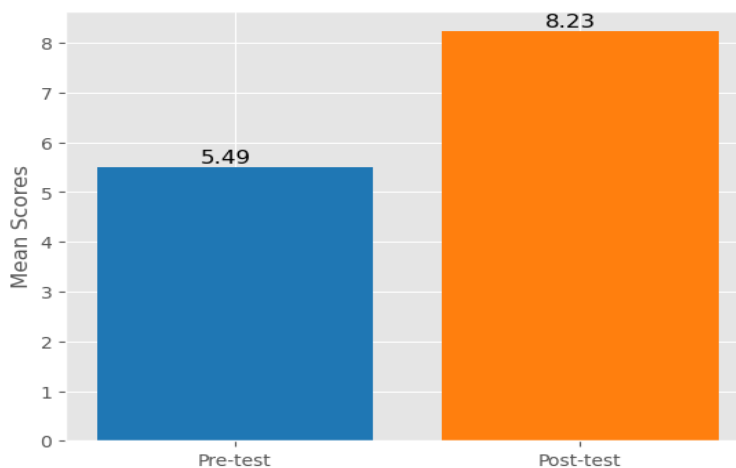
The paired sample t-test was used to assess this objective.

**Table 5** Paired-Samples T-Test Results for Impact of Texts on Student Performance

Group	Mean	SD	T	Df	p (two-tailed)
Pre-test	5.49	1.29	-3.84	19	.00031
Test	8.23	1.38			

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the impact of the use of texts in teaching English Language on student performance. There was a significant difference in the scores for the pre-test (M = 5.49, SD = 3.61) and test (M = 8.23, SD = 3.65);  $t(57) = -3.84, p = .00031$  (two-tailed). These results suggest that the use of texts has a positive impact on student performance. The mean score increased from 5.49 to 8.23 and the t-statistic is -3.84 with a p-value of 0.00031 (two-tailed). This suggests that the use of texts in teaching English language has a positive impact on student performance. This is represented in the chart below.

**Test Results**



### What do Form Four students think about the use of texts in teaching English Language?

To answer this question, a questionnaire was designed which contained four elements all aimed at getting the opinion of the students about the sample experimental lessons they had.

**Table 6:** Did you enjoy the lessons?

Yes	%	No	%	No Response	%	Total
40	97.56	00	00	01	02.41	41

A total number of 40 students responded to this question while one student did not give an answer to it. All 40 students who responded to it said they did enjoy the lessons, making a percentage of 97.56 students who enjoyed the lessons.

**Table 7:** Is there a difference between the reading lessons your teacher and the experimental lessons?

Yes	%	No.	%	Total
41	100	00	00	41

All 41 respondents said that the way their teacher taught using texts and the way the experimental lessons were treated were different.

**Table 8:** Differences identified by students between experimental and ordinary lessons

Category of answers	No.	%
We read the passages and answer the questions from our readers.	21	51.21
Our teacher did not teach the text in details.	06	14.63
We read the passage at home and answer questions in class.	05	12.19
We did not learn about things like thesis statement, topic sentence, compound nouns.	04	09.75
No response	05	12.19
Total	41	

36 (87.80%) out of the 41 respondents gave an answer to this question while 5 (12.19%) did not attempt the question. As indicated on the table, five differences between the manner their teacher treated texts and the manner the experimental lessons were done were outlined by the students. The most striking remark as pointed out by the students was that reading was done following the traditional method in which learners read and answered some questions on the passage they have read as directed by the course book. This statement made by the students is considered the most prominent one because 51% of them attested to this.

**Table 9:** Did you like the way the text was treated in the experimental lessons?

Yes	%	No	%	No Response	%
40	97.56	00	00	01	02.43

40 (97.56%) out of the 41 students who responded to this question said that they enjoyed the lessons.

**Table 10:** Reasons students enjoyed the experimental teaching approach

Answers	No.	%
<b>The things that were taught were easy to understand.</b>	09	21.95
<b>I understood the lessons well.</b>	17	41.46
<b>We learned so many things in the lesson.</b>	04	09.75
<b>Because of the way the teacher was teaching.</b>	01	02.43
<b>I like the way the teacher was teaching.</b>	01	02.43
<b>I understood the passage better.</b>	03	07.31
<b>We studied the passage in detail.</b>	01	02.43
<b>We had the opportunity to do some practice.</b>	01	02.43
<b>No response</b>	04	09.75

From the above table, eight categories of answers were given by the students. 37 (90.24%) out of the 41 students who responded to this question gave positive replies. 4 (09.75%) did not respond to the question. 17 (41.46%) out of the 41 students said they enjoyed the lesson because they understood them well. This makes it the most outstanding response that we had from this subject.

**Table 11:** Would you like subsequent texts to be treated in similar manner?

Yes	%	No	%
41	100	00	00

All 41 students said that they would like other texts to be treated in similar manner. This gives a 100% positive response to the fact that the learners wanted subsequent reading lessons to be done in a similar manner. The implication is that handling texts in such a manner is pleasurable and beneficial to students.

**Table 12** Reasons supporting students' adoption of the new teaching approach

Answers	No.	%
<b>It makes understanding easier.</b>	08	19.51
<b>It taught me so many things.</b>	09	21.95
<b>It was interesting.</b>	10	24.39
<b>I understood the passage better.</b>	02	04.87
<b>We had the opportunity to practise grammar and vocabulary</b>	01	02.43
<b>We will learn the subject better.</b>	06	14.63
<b>Because I liked the class.</b>	01	02.43
<b>I learned so many things I did not know.</b>	01	02.43

<b>The class was not boring.</b>	02	04.87
<b>I enjoyed the class.</b>	01	02.43

As indicated on the table, ten categories of answers were elicited from this question. All 41 students attempted the question with positive responses. This shows that using texts in teaching language is an enjoyable experience to the learners.

## Discussion

The following observations can be deduced from the above analysis. First, it was realised that most of the texts used by the teachers to teach English Language are factual/non-fictional texts as opposed to literal/fictional texts. According to Tevdovska (2018), such materials are useful because they are rich sources of input to learners and because of the authenticity of the tasks that learners are asked to do as they exploit such texts in class. However, Koutsompou (2015) point out three main reasons why literary texts are more preferable to be used in a language class than conventional texts. According to her, the use of literary texts in teaching exposes learners to both their culture and the cultures of others, gives learners knowledge of the subtler and varied creative uses of language and helps them in their individual growth and maturity.

Another issue that was observed was that reading was not taught regularly as compared to other aspects such as grammar and vocabulary. This is true of what Durrance (2017) says about teachers' preparatory programmes in pre-service curricula and what research says about teaching reading. According to her, training on reading is not adequate in many teacher preparatory programmes and that even when reading is taught, it does not include all the essential components of reading. She states that teachers "can't teach what they do not know" and emphasises that teacher preparation programmes should make sure that they teach teachers how children learn to read as well as how to help children who struggle with early literacy skills.

It was also discovered that the main skill that was tested during the reading lessons was comprehension. This is because more questions on comprehension were asked than the others. However, research has shown that teaching reading comprehension goes far beyond asking comprehension questions. The *English Book of Education* (2023) points out that each text is made up of words, phrases, sentences, ideas and descriptions. So, it does not make sense if

students just have to read it, answer some questions that follow and then drop it and move to something else. Carter (2015) points out essential reading components such as phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary and fluency. She points out strategies such as identifying key elements in a story and summarising, predicting, questioning, making connections, writing and journaling. These are elements that were found lacking in the classes observed.

As concerns the strategies employed by teachers, the main reading strategies that were observed were reading aloud, silent reading and students reading in turns. The presentation falls short of the many reading strategies cited by The English Book of Education (2023). Teacher and student activities were also limited. These limited activities will obviously hinder students' understanding of the texts they read. The *English Book of Education* (2023) highlights three reading comprehension stages. These are: pre-reading, while reading and post-reading activities. According to them, these stages of reading should be included in every reading activity carried out by the teacher in class. Judging from the above observation, the classes observed tend to be lacking in some of these reading stages thus making the teaching of reading inadequate. Dickson (2023) underlines nine post-reading activities teachers should engage students in. These are: summary writing; creating a quiz; playing a game; doing further research; retelling information; making an outline; writing questions; writing a story; and identifying target structures like tense and modal verbs. Apart from answering questions, these activities were absent in the observation lessons.

On the issue of the implication of teaching with the use of texts on students' performance, the results from the pre-test and the test confirm what Ghafar et al (2025) say about the use of texts in teaching English Language. They all posit that using texts in English Language lessons has positive impacts on students' language acquisition as they learn language more easily and provide quality content which greatly enhances proficiency.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has assessed teachers' exploration of texts when teaching reading comprehension in some Form Four classes in Cameroon secondary schools. Two schools were used as case study. The work investigated when texts are used in teaching, evaluated the use of texts in teaching and finally examined students' opinion on the use of texts in teaching. The results from the study

indicate that: factual texts are mostly used in teaching; reading is neglected as it is scarcely taught in class; teachers engage students in limited reading activities; texts have a positive influence on students' language acquisition when they are well exploited; and that students have a positive attitude towards the use texts when they are used in teaching them language elements. The study therefore suggests a review of the training of would-be teachers and or the re-training of in-service teachers on more enjoyable and effective approaches to the teaching of reading in Cameroon's secondary education.

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