Exploring the Instructional Mechanisms of English Language Schools in Mali

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study, exploring the instructional tools in the English language schools of Mali. It is important in that it would inform both authorities and those interested in learning English about their functioning. The literature we visited did not tackle the subject per se, but the authors we read yielded a display of the history of language learning and its instructional mechanisms around the world. English language has been taught in the schools of Mali. Almost every educated Malian has gone through an English training, either by formal or non-formal ways. However, the vast majority of Malians do not speak English. This study is fathoming the mechanisms of one of the sectors thereof that might affect the capability of educated people in Mali to speak English. This study has found that, besides the financial problems that maim the commitment of learners, the plague has gangrened all the dimensions of instructional operation of these schools at different levels, which blocks the performance of learners. To curb the problem, this study suggests a thorough examination of the methods, programs, teaching personnel, and contexts of these language schools.

***Keywords**: Instruction; Language; Mechanisms; Methods; Schools.*

Résumé

Cette étude est une recherche qualitative visant à explorer le mécanisme d'enseignement dans les centres d'apprentissage d'Anglais au Mali. Elle est importante en ce sens qu'elle pourrait servir de source d'informations, et pour les autorités et pour les auditeurs intéressés par l'apprentissage de l'Anglais. La littérature que nous avons explorée en la

matière fait un exposée historique de l'apprentissage et ses mécanismes à travers le monde. L'Anglais a toujours été enseigné dans les écoles du Mali. Rares sont les intellectuels maliens qui n'aient pas passé par une expérience d'apprentissage de l'Anglais. Et pourtant, dans leur majorité, ils n'arrivent toujours pas à parler l'Anglais. Cette recherche examine le mécanisme d'enseignement de l'un des domaines clés dans le secteur qui pourrait affecter le rendement de ses auditeurs. Cette recherche a trouvé que, en plus des problèmes financiers qui freinent l'engagement des auditeurs, les dimensions d'enseignement dans ces écoles sont atteintes à des degrés différents, ce qui bloque le rendement des auditeurs. La recherche propose un examen minutieux des méthodes, des programmes, du personnel, et de l'environnement d'apprentissage de ces écoles.

***Mot clés** : Ecoles ; Enseignement ; Langues ; Mécanisme ; Méthodes.*

Introduction

English language status in international business, diplomacy, and knowledge acquisition has skyrocketed. This explains the interest that people all over the world are having in its learning and teaching. English streams have been opened in international universities. International English tests have been instituted and set as conditions for placement at universities around the world. Formal and non-formal language schools have been erected to train students and professionals in towns and townships. The world population has seen in this language a means of thriving and striving for daily challenges. The population of Mali is not an exception to that.

Learning English interested the educated community in the embryonic phase of the Republic of Mali. President Keita initiated reforms in the academic field, resulting in the introduction of some academic disciplines in Malian education system, including English. Since that era, English has been taught in Malian schools from junior high school to university,

for some majors. Besides, language schools have been built, and are still on the rise in number. It is impossible to bump into a Malian who went to State schools who would tell you that he has not gone through any English language training. Though people's use of this language are generally stunted as they aspire to other domains and occupations, their interest in English seldom thwarts. Along with their majors and occupations, many Malian intellectuals take tutorial classes in English, or go to private English language non-formal schools for refresher training programs. Malian intellectuals would always tell you that they went to at least one English language school. Some would say that they have toured three English language schools. However, very rare are those who can speak English fluently, or fill out a simple form. If the problem were individual, one would have said that it was akin to an individual's personal qualities and pattern of living. It is quasi-collective, concerning almost all of those who went to language schools. This might tickle the curiosity of researchers and spur their commitment to fathoming the causes of this hindrance. The research question of this study is then as follows: What are the instructional mechanisms of English language schools that may affect the performance of their trainees?

This study is aimed to pinpoint the factors that may affect the performance of English learners in Mali and block their ability of speaking this language. Our research scope is English language schools in Bamako.

The study is based on inductive theory, in that it does not start with a rule and apply it. It is an exploratory research aiming to probe the instructional operations in the Language schools of Mali to generate a theory. It targets neither refuting a hypothesis nor affirming an assumption. Its main objective is to identify the causes of a phenomenon that have not been

explained so far. Our plan for the display of the data we collected is as follows:

1. Methodology
2. Literature Review
3. Results and Discussion
4. Conclusion
5. Research Implication

1. Methodology

This is a qualitative study. This choice is justified by the fact that our research requires depth, interpretation, and setting characteristics, which are characteristics of qualitative approach. Moreover, our research problem involves human perspectives and complex processes that are hardly grasped through solely fixed-response instruments. It is based on phenomenalism theory in collecting data, having interview as instrument of data collection. It studies a phenomenon as it appears, and as it is experienced, by analyzing the data through looking for themes, patterns, and trends. Our method consisted, firstly, in exploring the literature about the language schools around the world: their history and instructional dimensions. The next step was to search language schools in Bamako to examine their instructional mechanisms. To collect data, we went on Internet for the language schools' listing in Bamako only. The other regions are almost lacking in this kind of schools. We could identify some 34 language schools, including 27 English language ones. We intended to involve all the language schools of Bamako in the study, in view of the small size of their population. However, some schools were not

reachable by their contact numbers. We could reach fourteen, inform them about our investigation, and sought their voluntary participation in it. Ten schools accepted, two declined, and two others were not able to meet our schedule. We adopted focus group approach, in that we interviewed only school managers because of their experience and status as source of information. After data collection, we categorized the language schools we toured, according to their operational means, into two categories, big-sized schools and small-sized ones. Big-sized schools have more than five classrooms, and they have means to prepare international tests for placements in Western universities. Small-sized schools have five classes or fewer. They decline international test preparation demands. We classified the data we collected from them into categories, according to the mechanisms we had gleaned from the literature review. In our research plan, we ordered them with no real sense of precedence. They were discussed as long as we displayed the data. A conclusion laid the lid, and a section of implication terminated the study.

2. Literature Review

Language is the topmost means of communication for humans to socialize and draw profit from each other. Learning it used to occur informally and naturally in human communities. As human communities spread all over the Earth, different languages surged in human communities. To continue socialization and drawing profit from each other, human beings had to learn each other's language. The necessity of learning other people's language is so crucial that the warp and woof of human existence rests on it. Religion, education, diplomacy, trade, and mediation are some examples of the domains that are underpinned by the interplay between human languages. In the ancient world, Egypt, Sumer, Babylon, and Phoenicia,

civilizations are said to have had exchanges in knowledge, trade, and bilateral relationships (World History, 2025). In ancient Greece, some philosophers are believed to have stayed in Egypt for some time in order to learn mathematics and science (Aristopoulos, 2026). These undertakings in diplomacy and knowledge imparting could not be possible without language. As they were nations with different languages, the mastery, or at least the understanding of the language of one another was inescapable. That indicates the importance of learning foreign languages in the ancient world.

In Africa, more precisely in West Africa, a site in Djenne, in present-day Mali, was inhabited in 250 B.C. It became a market center and an important link in the trans-Saharan trade (UNESCO, 2026). According to the archeological discoveries by Mcintosh and Mcintosh, the inhabitants of this site, called Jenne-Jeno, from 250 to 200 B. C. had some knacks in iron and ceramic style production. Some of these productions are similar to Saharan ceramic styles (Mcintosh & Mcintosh, 1979). This reveals that these ancient nations exchanged knowledge, education and trade. These exchanges passed forcibly by understanding the language of one another.

However, language learning in these epochs took place in informal contexts. It started to be standardized when some professionals of some domains started to be aware of the necessity of leaning other languages to discover new horizons in other nations' culture and knowledge. This necessity was perceived through all the ages, and it was followed by learning other people's languages.

2.1. Foreign Language Learning in the Middle Ages

The epoch of Middle Ages is viewed as one of the gloomiest pages of the history of Europe. However, no historian has the right to gloss over the efforts exerted in science, humanities, and

language domains of this period. After all, this epoch is the forefather of the epochs that followed. It cradled many movements around the world, including that of language learning.

2.1.1.In Europe

Language learning practices in the Middle Ages Europe took its roots from those of ancient Greece around 2, 500 years, and Rome around 2, 000 years ago. The practices of language learning in the former were based on rhetoric, while those of the latter were based on literature and eloquence. These practices resurfaced in the Middle Ages Europe through the classical method that emphasized grammar, translation, and classical Greek and Latin literatures. The goal was to upgrade intellectual sophistication, critical thinking, and eloquence (Murphy et al., 2014).

When the Middle Ages dawned (5th to 15th centuries), Latin language was the main language of education, more specifically, in the religious institutions. It was the lingua franca of scholarship and the theological discourse across Europe (Law, 1997). Through it, the monastic schools fostered education and literacy in many European countries through the following activities:

- The role of scriptoria: in the scriptoria, monks used to copy religious manuscripts in order to safeguard them from decay and loss.
- Translation of religious texts: in the Middle-Ages, a particular interest emerged in local languages. For the sake of bringing religious texts closer to the population, monks undertook translating them into vernacular languages.

- Didactic teaching: monks took to teach people these texts, and Latin language in which they were written. Their teaching was based on memorization and recitation (K-12 experts, 2023).

In the same era, the other nations that were going through the influence of other nations were learning the languages of the dominant nations non-formally or informally. This includes the areas that were under Arabic-Islamic rule, the countries under Ottoman domination, and the countries that used to be under Roman Empire.

2.1.2. In Africa

In Africa, Arab chroniclers wrote chapters about Ghana and Mali Empires, and the education system that was very common therein, more specifically in the Empire of Mali. In Ghana Empire, when Arabs started commercial exchanges with local people via trans-Saharan caravans, they brought Islam in their paraphernalia. Islam demands that the five daily Islamic prayers be said in Arabic language, notably with Quranic verses, written in classical Arabic. The proselytes that were converted to Islam had to learn the Quran by rote in order to cite it in their prayers. The Islamic religion thrived to the point that historians estimated the number of the mosques of Koumbi Salih at hundreds (Tarkhan, 1973). This spurred Arabic-Islamic culture. Some of the proselytes were interested in learning the language of the Quran. This resulted in the emergence of a schooling system that had both adult and children as students. Arabic language was learned through a holistic method, consisting in memorizing words or sentences without discerning its morphological aspects. A student read, visibly, or let us say, recognized the content of a whole book associated with the meaning given by his teacher without knowing the meaning of the individual words. This phase was followed by

an interest in Arabic as a language to comprehend its spelling, grammar, morphology, and versification. In this phase, as in the first, the teaching method mainly rested on translation and memorization (Coulibaly, 2021). This trend extended to the epoch of Mali Empire.

In Mali Empire, some Muslim families used to entrust their children to scholastic teachers. The latter had, for occupation, teaching the Quran and Arabic-Islamic subjects. Language learning was subsidiary to learning these matters. Learning methods were harsh and sometimes inhumane. Children used to be shackled, and they were never freed until they were able to cite by rote their assigned part in the Quran (Tarkhan, 1973).

One can infer from these facts that learning foreign languages in the Middle Ages was characterized by scholastic methods, based on grammar-translation and memorization, and an interest in learning the content of ancient texts. This etched the foreign language ability in the learner through the scholastic method. This developed a steady desire for knowledge, and paved the way to a movement called The Renaissance that witnessed scholars' efforts in understanding classical works written in classical languages.

2.2.*Learning Foreign Languages during the Renaissance*

When the Renaissance era started in the 14th century in Italy, Europe renewed interest in classical art and knowledge. Some scholars of the Renaissance movement, such as Petrarch, Coluccion Salutati and Niccolo de Nicccoli explored libraries through Europe in search of works by Latin authors (Reynolds & Wilson, 1974). Consequently, learning the languages in which these works were written was compulsory. Scholars committed themselves to learning Latin and Greek in order to explore the content of the works of Philosophy, Arts, Literature, Law, and Sciences in these languages. This was conducive to a

phenomenon of bilingualism in scholars. Some scholars were proficient in two or three foreign classical languages (Louis-pressbooks, 2026; K12 experts, 2023).

Furthermore, some European languages, such as Italian, French, German, and English were also adopted for literary, philosophical, and scholarly works. These languages started to supersede Latin in many formal contexts. Nevertheless, the interest in the civilization of ancient Greece was the foundation of the interest in classical languages in order to ease access to knowledge to a broader audience. Scholars translated important classical works into most of the aforementioned spoken languages for the same purpose (Nauert, 2006).

As need for foreign languages grew, research works emerged, giving path to a modern era in language learning and teaching.

2.3. Learning Foreign Languages in the Modern Time

The Grammar-Translation method was the main way in teaching modern languages in the 19th century. This method was drown on those of teaching classical languages in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It required that student memorize vocabulary lists and Grammar notions, which was tested by a series of questions and answers. This method was still surviving partly because of the prominent role of Latin and Creek in European scholarship. It did not prioritize communication. Its main goal was to have students able to reproduce grammatical rules through sentences.

In the 20th century with the onset of World War II, foreign languages stood out as necessary for communication and winning the war in the American consciousness. Specialized training programs in foreign language were set up for the

military to force quick mastery. The goal was to produce soldiers functionally fluent in some foreign languages in eight to nine months. This enterprise had a significant impact on the American approach to foreign language learning in both secondary and higher education after the war (Kaplan, 2019).

As the society grew, and human needs diversified, the branches of science and knowledge diversified. Language learning was not an exception to that. It became standardized and diversified according to the domains. Its interest center extended to enclose the domains of trade jargon, diplomacy, military, and business fields. Scholars developed approaches and methods to light up modern language apprenticeship.

2.3.1. Reform Movement in Language Teaching Methods

As we said earlier, Grammar-translation method, used in language teaching to revive dead languages, were later applied to modern language teaching. The reforms that took place, based on experience and research, allowed practitioners to replace this method after having realized its inefficiency.

We can say that reform movement started with the revolution carried out by Maximilian Berlitz and his associates in late 19th century. He was a German citizen who traveled to Paris before going on to United States. He spoke French, Greek, and Latin besides his native language. Thus, he was known as polyglot and language teacher, and was appointed professor of German and French (Berlitz site, 2026). He founded his first language school in Providence, Rhode Island in 1878, and was the forerunner of Direct Method in language teaching. He prohibited translation in language instruction, and immersed his students in target language from day one. Objects, pictures and gestures replaced translation in conveying meaning in his direct method. This immersion from day one proved effective in developing conversational skills of learners (EILANGUAGES, 2026).

Another method that emerged from research and linguistic approaches is Audio-Lingual method. This method is based on Structural Linguistics and Behaviorism approaches to language acquisition. It emerged from the context of World War II when the United Stated sensed the need of some Americans fluent in some strategic language to serve in the army. Some soldiers were immersed in language courses through a program called The Army Specialized Training Program. It emphasized drills, repetitions, dialog memorization, and pattern practice in learning language. For the occasion, language laboratories were set up and equipped with tape recorders, so that learners could listen model pronunciation and record their own repetitions for comparison. The Audio-Lingual method proved inefficient in language learning despite the fluent reproduction of the memorized patterns. It was incapable to produce flexible communicative skills (EILANGUAGES.COM, 2026).

Another method based on structural approach and close to Audio-Lingual method is structural method. The proponents of structuralism sees language as a group of grammatical rules that should be learned in specific order and time. They have as method of language teaching making learners master grammatical structures, and building language elements and skills thereupon. They stress less on vocabulary memorization. With this method, the four skills of language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – are included in the learning process (J. Bolen, 2026). This method also lacks communicative skill development.

A method, close to Berlitz schools method, emerged lately. It is based on the assumption that combining action and speech can enhance language learning. Developed by James Asher in the 1960s, Total Physical Response method pair language

teaching with physical movements and command in order to etch the meaning in learners' mind. In this method, according to Asher, students listen to a command in the target language, and immediately comply with it with physical action. The teacher would command the learner to stand up, go out, get in, open the book, show the blackboard, etc. and the learner responds physically (J. Asher, 1965: pp. 3-4). This method is visibly one-sided, with less output from the learner. It also cares less with promoting communicational skills and practices.

2.3.2. Communicative Language Teaching Revolution

In the wake of the critiques that language educationists stoked against Grammar-Translation method and the likes, a new paradigm emerged in language teaching in the 1970s and the 1980s. Instead of emphasizing drills and constructionism that characterize Grammar-Translation methods, communicative methods emphasizes fluency, interaction and real-world communication in language learning (Richards, 2006).

Concurrently, some methods akin to the communicative approach emerged. Stephen Krashen delved with his theory in language acquisition in the 1970s. He made a difference between language acquisition and language learning. He suggests that language is learned through input that the learner receives from outside. According to him, we learn a language when we understand what is said. Therefore, teaching a language should pass by providing comprehensible input instead of explicit grammar rules (Krashen, 2026).

Another method related to communicative teaching approach is Notional–Functional Syllabus. It was developed by the Council of Europe in the 19th century following the suggestions of the British linguist D.A. Wilkins about language learning, and the publication of his proposal thereof in 1972. It stresses what learners could do with the language rather than

what they know about it. This revolves around communicative functions, such as greeting, requesting, apologizing, and communicative notions, such as quantity, time, and location (MyEnglishPages.com, 2026).

Burgeoned in the 1980th, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is another method of communicative approach. It is based on putting learners to work through practical tasks in the foreign or target language. These tasks are organized around meaningful practical assignments. Learners use the target language as tool for achieving goals rather than practicing the language for its sake. In that, they focus on form occurring as needed to support task completion. The assessment of learning in this method is the outcome of the task, not only the accurate use of the target language (MyEnglishPages.com, 2026).

This literature review has shown that language learning have faced snags that crumples its efficiency. However, these hitches have been overcome by improving, refurbishing, or even supplanting some methods. Insisting on the less recommended ones today might result in no result.

3. Results and Discussion

The following results are based on the data we collected through our interviews with language school managers, and resourceful people in the sector of education.

3.1. The Start of English Language Schools in Mali

The first platform of training English teachers of Malian school was the Language Laboratory of the Ministry of Education, set up in wake of the 1960s education reforms. The new State of Mali had aimed, by this language laboratory, a broad campaign of literacy for a population intensely infested with illiteracy. The laboratory delivered courses in national

languages, spoken and written. When the graduates of English language programs in English speaking countries came back, more specifically those of Michigan University, they introduced English language in the curricula of the laboratory. Its English students who could complete its training program were the first teachers in Malian schools before the introduction of English streams in teacher training schools, such as Secondary Teachers' School and Higher Teachers' School. With the development of education and the creation of teachers' schools, the role of the laboratory of the Ministry of Education grew into designing and evaluating language programs for Malian schools, and its role as teacher trainer was reassigned to the new teachers' schools.

3.2. Non-formal English Language Schools in Mali

We can say that the first non-formal language school in Mali was the Laboratory of Language of the Mistry of Education, mentioned above. In 1984, after many relocations around Bamako, this laboratory ended up finding a cozy building in the premises of Secondary Teachers' School on the hill of Badalabougou. At the same year, Mali started a collaboration project with Great Britain that resulted in granting refresher and degree training scholarships to Malian teachers of English. This project, ended in 1994, changed the name of language laboratory into *Centre de Langues* (language center). To date, the center is still located on the hill of Badalabougou. Besides designing and evaluating the programs of English and German for Malian schools, it teaches French, English, and German, but English is its hallmark. It also offers translation services. Currently, the center is the most famous in language teaching in Mali as it is affiliated to the State formal educational structure. This formal status has bestowed upon it a celebrity, which is not forcibly an indicator of the best performance among the competing language schools.

Concomitantly, the language courses of the Project for the Development of Livestock in the Western Sahel was vying for excellence, attracting good teachers. It was a replica of the language laboratory of the Ministry of Education. It was initially created to train the foreign staff of the project in national languages. Its tremendous ways and means to achieve its goals were the underpinning factor of its success. English section was introduced therein by Ousmane Fofana, a graduate of the University of Michigan language program, who had passed through the language immersion program, organized by the USA Embassy in Bamako on President Modibo Keita's request. He worked at the laboratory of the Ministry of Education on his return from the US. He applied for a reassignment to the project of livestock development. There, he was assigned to create an English section in the language laboratory of the project. The new English section was intended to train the Malian staff of the project in English. It also trained other people not working for the project. It continued to be active in its mission alongside the livestock development program. It even outlived it. When the project took end in the mid-1970s, it was dubious about yielding its language laboratory to the Mistry of Education lest it would die of mismanagement and lack of means. Some national workers, led by Ousman Fofana, organized themselves in an economic interest group and took over the laboratory. It changed its name and status and became a non-formal language school following the same mission through paying services. The school in its new form relocated with the immense means of the ancient laboratory, granted by the livestock development project. It became *Projet pour le Developpement Scholaire, Cours de Languae*, (language courses of School Development Project), and settled in a private status and different premises. It blossomed, and

was the only private non-formal language school in the late-1970s in Mali. It is still functioning to date.

After the revolution of March 1991, and the booming of private sector, non-formal school sector constituted a sector of interest to language teachers and specialists. Language teachers, more specifically English teachers took to organize classes for all categories of interested people in the language of Shakespeare. Usually, these undertakings did not live up to the ambitions of their promoters. Concurrently, some secretarial services indulged in teaching languages, but flopped because of lack of means that could maintain customer loyalty.

In the 1990s, some missionary agencies were involved in language school business to attract people to their credos. A Christian missionary agency set up a school the subscription to which was conditioned to the accomplishment of some Christian services and a membership card. Auditors of all walks of life used to subscribe to this school because of love for English language. Another missionary language school became well known in the first half of the 2000s. This one was not strict on religious subscription conditions, but it was a paying enterprise, joining subtle proselytism to learning the cherished language of the youths. This language school gained some popularity because of its teaching and learning methods. Not only did auditors enjoy classes, but also they enjoy the social environment of learning. In the same epoch, Malian teachers of English established an English language school, but this one did not live long.

In the few last years, some big language schools were created in Bamako, and sundries of small ones sprout all over. Some of them are functioning incognito and have no creation permit. Some of them seek clientele through posting

information on their instruction offer on marketing websites. To date, the number of English language schools in Bamako posted by School&College Listing, Enest-platform, and Go-Africa on Line goes up to 27. Some of them do not have an elaborate contact link. Some of them function on demand when contacted, and they have no permanent premises. These different issues should spur the curiosity of researchers in order to fathom the mechanisms of these language schools and gauge their instructional ability.

3.2.1. Instructional Mechanism of English Language Schools in Bamako

English language school creation has been a niche for many educators and businesspersons in Bamako. For the permanent functioning of their buildings, language schools have different approaches as concerns the requisite elements for the functioning of a language school per se.

3.2.1.1. Context/classrooms

In formal schools and universities, traditional classrooms are still the main context of learning foreign languages. In non-formal English language schools of Bamako, the basic context for the operation is still traditional classrooms. However, in most language schools of Bamako, this takes different shapes.

Classrooms in big language schools of Bamako are categorized into halls for receiving big groups, and small rooms that are arranged for the classes of VIPs and small groups. They are generally equipped with fans and air conditioners. Water coolers are available at public spaces. Another context of learning in big language schools is the work places of some auditors, such as VIPs and well-off students. These workplaces sometimes lack adequate pedagogical facilities when those of

the school are not portable. In addition, workplace classes are sometimes interrupted if they are held at the end work hours, as some auditors request it. A last context of learning of these schools is family compounds when some auditors request that their classes be delivered at home during the weekend. This informal context is tinged with many hitches that could tarnish the quality of both teaching and learning. Classes are interfered with noises and voices, and the attention of the learner is intermittently diverted by these voices and noises. Sometimes, family issues to be settled urgently interrupt classes that are not sometimes resumed for the rest of the class hour.

As for the small language schools, they seem to have no choice because of lack of means. What is looked for is a classroom at the dimension of a tradition Malian single room: generally, four square meters. The classroom is destined to receive big and small groups. Big groups are divided into fewer numbers, and distributed to different class hours. The rooms of small schools are less accommodated for classes. Generally, aeration system is failing. Either it lacks, or it is unplugged for financial issues. Small language schools also deliver classes at work places and families.

3.2.1.2. Teachers

In the 1970s, English language schools functioned by the knacks and cunning of the language institutes' graduates of some American and British universities. When the graduates of the Institute of Language of University of Michigan returned home, they were the first English teachers at the Language Laboratory of the Ministry of Education located in the premises of Mamadou Konate Scool. Some graduates from Britain joined them later. These teachers were generally language certificate holders. Their training revolved around general English and international phonetics.

In the 1980s, the teaching personnel of the only two English language schools, *Projet de Developpement Scolaires (Prodesco)* and *Centre de Langues* started to receive new blood. Bachelor holders of Higher Teachers' School started to back the efforts of the forerunners by the linguistic experiences they went through with the native English speakers who had come to build a genuine English learning hub at the school. Some of these native speakers were sometimes called for some classes at language schools. Besides, when some few Malian nationals finished their PhD programs in the USA, their competences were also requested.

After March revolution in 1991, the missionary language schools functioned thanks to the efforts of some native language missionaries. They were not forcibly English-majored teachers, but they could teach the language perfectly to non-native speakers through their native culture and pronunciation, with the aid of videos and cinemas, which constituted a first experience in language teaching in the country. At the same time, the teaching personnel of English language schools transformed into only Bachelor holders. This trend has continued to date.

These days, language instruction in small-sized English schools is held by Bachelor teachers. Some of those teachers are graduates of the old system of Bachelor degree that was obtained after four years of study. Some of them hold three-year Bachelor of the new system of LMD. However, during our investigation, we chanced on some Master's holders from the Maghreb countries who were hopelessly seeking higher niches for their degrees.

In most of big-sized English language schools, the teaching personnel are composed of a mixture of Bachelor and

Master's holders. We even fell on some of them who had the ambition of transforming their schools into universities, and they refused Bachelor holders' teaching services. In well-off big-sized language schools, some Master's holders from the USA teach as part-time teachers.

As for the status of teachers at English language schools, teachers are part-time workers, for the vast majority. Generally, the administration, whose staff also participate in instructional operation, is held by tenured teachers. We could meet only a language school manager who said that he did not hire part-time teachers, for the good functioning of his building according to his own principles.

It is noteworthy to point out that the teachers of these language schools rarely go through refresher training programs. We could find only two big language schools who said that their tenured teachers receive training abroad. We also met two small school promoters who said that they train their teachers periodically how to teach in classroom. These local tutoring sessions could hardly pay off if the trainer of the trainees is not well trained. This is the case sometimes. If teachers are not well trained, auditors' frustration surfaces, more specifically the adult ones.

3.2.1.3. Language Learners

English learning in Mali started with professionals in the 1970s. Starting with the language school of the Project on Livestock and Meat in the Sahel, to the school of Project for the School Development, adult auditors constituted the body of language learners. The learner- objective in these schools differs in category.

In the 1960s and 70s, the learning objectives of English

language schools were to facilitate communication with their foreign workforce, teach English in the new Republic schools, and train professionals in English in the scope of their services and domain of specialties. When the Ministry of Education laboratory of language was set up, it was a hub of training for the agents of the new companies and services of the State. The workers of the laboratory still living to date brag of training the pilots of the first Mali airline company, Air Mali in the 1960s. They attended the classes of the laboratory at its premises in Mamadou Konate School in order to learn vocabulary and formulaic expressions akin to their job. Likewise, the auditors of the livestock project workers learned the vocabulary in the field of livestock and husbandry, besides communication skills. Besides professional auditors, some students used to be trained by these language schools to be prepared for study abroad.

In the 1980s, when English language became an established academic subject in schools, and gained formal training streams in teachers' schools, English teachers increased in number, and English language was perceived as an indispensable language that was conquering other languages in all domains around the world. Consequently, multinational companies became eager for sending their workers to English language schools, not only to train them in the vocabulary and formulaic expressions of their domains as usual, but also to equip them with a language that could help them in acquiring knowledge elsewhere in their domain and farther.

In the 1990s after the revolution, this trend held. Besides, as students developed interest in studying in the USA, Canada, and Great Britain, another category of learner-objective surged. As the universities of these countries require of students a certain level of proficiency that is attested by some tests, such as ALIGU and TOEFL, both professionals and academic

students had to join language schools to prepare these international tests. It became more so when the Asian universities required the same conditions for placement in their universities. This has been the case until now. However, English language school auditors' choice of school differ owing to many factors.

If the professional auditors are the common share of both small-sized and big-sized schools, many small-sized schools show some reticence about receiving international test candidates. This is mainly due to the lack of didactic tools that are required for preparing candidates to permit them to excel in the different facets of the tests.

Marketing aspect is another factor of distributing language school auditors. The big-sized schools are generally more aggressive, and have more means to market their buildings. This allows them sometimes to land contracts with international NGOs and the UN structures in the country.

Another category of auditors is young students during vacations. Their parents send them to language schools for different objectives. If some of them are going to these schools for academic performance, others go therein for the mastery of English language as indispensable international language. Besides, some parents hold their children in these schools to take them from the street, and preserve them from pointless loitering across the town.

A last category that we found in English language schools is academic students. These students are generally studying in English streams of higher education faculties. They have problem getting on with the discourse and cadence of academic courses because of their low level in English. They recourse to English language schools for remedy. Some well-off families send their children to Ghana to curb this problem.

Overall, one can say that the factor of distributing students in English language schools is financial. The financial means of schools allow them to carry out efficient marketing strategy that attracts auditors. The financial means of auditors is also a determinant factor for their choice of schools. If the financial means of an auditor is stable and good enough, the program and teaching method of the language school might play a role in his choice.

3.2.1.4. Programs

Hundred percent of the language schools we went through for our interview said that they draw their courses from some books' contents as program to teach their auditors. These books compete in quality, level, and the way of displaying contents. Most of time, they are imported documents or series of books by some language institutes of America or Great Britain. The contents of these books are generally grounded in general English. Learners are exposed to them, no matter what they came for. In addition, the content of these books are strictly linked to the realities and life amenities of Western countries. This has pushed some schools to adapt some contents to local realities and learner-objective. We chanced on two schools that have designed their own books according to their objectives and vision. This operation became a necessity after, at least, two years of teaching experience in the school. On the contrary, some small language schools clink to a specific kind of book series regardless of their appropriateness for what their auditors want. This become a source of frustration on the part of adult learners.

Another aspect of these books is the overload of the contents. The book choice of some small schools are less wise. Sometimes, the units are too long for the level they are meted out for. Generally, the learning activities in these books are not

exhausted, and learners go up to the next level with some assignments undone, despite their pertinence to some necessary skills.

All these issues instigated many big schools to reform the contents of these books, which leads sometimes to adding some parts and expurgating some others. In the 1970s, when language schools felt the weight of the mission entrusted to them by national and international services, they used to conduct research about the terminology, vocabulary, and formulaic expressions of the learners' domains and specialties. A former senior manager of language schools of that time said that they used to go into banks, goldmines, hospitals, etc. to learn about their terms, and translate them into English. They would make adapted texts out of these gleanings, which gave shape to the programs of specialized groups of learners besides their exposure to general English. Books may be a solution for learning programs in language schools if they are adapted to the level requirements of training, which constitutes another snag for language schools.

3.2.1.5. Learning Levels

Nowadays, to determine levels, two major models are generally ruling language schools, that of Common European Framework of Reference CEFER, and that of American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language ACTFL. The former goes by A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 levels. The latter promotes Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished levels. However, in the language schools of Bamako, this seems to be a mishmash.

During our tour in the language schools of Bamako, we did not fall on a single school that said having solely one of these models. A manager would say that the school is using CEFER, but also using ACTFL, seemingly confused about the

differentiation. The problem is the meeting point of the two models. How to match the levels of CEFER, which are six levels, with those of ACTFL, which are four levels, is the challenge.

This problem seems to solve itself clumsily in some language schools of Bamako. The levels thereof seems to be linked with the time determined for it. If an auditor spends three months, for instance, at the school, he is supposed to have passed a level regardless of his progress level in the program or book taught. Rare are those schools that put their auditors to test. Strangely enough, one of the school promoters told us that the question of level is sometimes personal. In his school, a group of auditors in one classroom could include different levels, according to the progress and proficiency of each auditor. This happens in some small schools where classroom availability is a challenge. However, where we uncovered this phenomenon is not lacking in classrooms. The argument of our interviewee was that it was a way of handling the disparate proficiency levels that the auditors come to school with. Sometimes, categorization according to these level assortments requires tiny groups of auditors that demand different classrooms, and the financial means of the majority of these schools cannot afford it. If the groups are not well assorted, it is corollary that the teaching methodology used to face the problem becomes a work of genius. This is another big issue in our interviewee language schools.

3.2.1.6. Teaching Methodology

In educationists' quarters today, the terms Approach, Method, and Strategy are used interchangeably. However, this seems to be a mishandling of these notions. Consequently, practitioners in the field of language learning do not feel any restriction in using whatever term they want.

E. Anthony (1963) delved in this issue by his famous paper entitled "Approach, Method and Technique" in which he stated: "Techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach" (p.63). According to him, an approach is broader than a method. It can include multiple methods. A method is broader than a technique. It can incorporate a variety of teaching techniques in classroom. A technique, such as drilling, choral repetition, can be used in several methods.

Almost, all of our interviewee schools said that they use communicational method. We think that this term is victim of a trendy use of specialists and researchers. Consequently, practitioners use the term, sometimes void of essence, because it is trendy. Of course, our interviewee schools use some techniques of communicational method, but the learning tools that these schools possess, and the types of teachers they hire reveal that they use some techniques related to Grammar-Translation, Audio-lingual, Structural, and Communicational methods.

In the language schools of the 1960s to 1990s, the basic method of teaching languages was Grammar-Translation. The teachers of that time could hardly afford better methods because they were trained thereby. Classes were based on studying English Grammar, and formulating model sentences to show mastery. Texts were read and explained in French. Their components were analyzed and memorized. Audio-lingual techniques were also used concurrently in some schools where radio-cassettes were used for auditors' repetition and drilling on pronunciation model. Nowadays, many big language schools put their auditors through some techniques of communicational methods, such as free conversation, debates, and commenting the visualized sketches. The big issue in the matter is human resources. Teachers rarely go through

refresher training. The internal follow-up that they are submitted to does not provide the required feedback.

Conclusion

We can conclude from the findings of this study that the inability of those who attend the classes of English language schools in Mali is imputed to many flaws in the learning process and mechanisms. The main factor is linked with the teaching methods in these schools. The methods applied in most of these schools have proven inefficient. Audio-lingual method, for instance, that is prevailing in small-sized schools was proven limited in the American soldiers experience who had learned foreign languages thereby. They were good at reproducing excellent formulaic expressions, but they lacked natural communication skills. Moreover, they forgot what they learned after few months. The factor of context is another dominant element in auditors failing to communicate in English. Classical classrooms that are monitored by a teacher-based authority, with auditors receiving inputs that are irrelevant to learner-objectives, are not the exquisite environment for a communicative practice of a foreign language. In addition, the officials who complain about failing to speak English are victims of the negligence and slack regulations of schools. Families and offices are not appropriate for learning languages if strict directives and environmental conditioning do not rule the classes, and they should be defined prior to the instructional operations. Teachers are also a determinant factor thereof, not only through their method, but also by their commitment in instructional process. Many part-time teachers show indifference in their assignments and behave as if they were at school just to fill in the class hours and receive money later. The learning programs of English language should also be combed through in order to teach auditors something pertinent to their

goal. This should reveal to English school promoters and managers the necessity of reviewing their learning and teaching mechanisms. The simple term of communicative method has nothing useful if void of sound implementation. This implementation passes forcibly by training trainers. Teachers should be trained in modern teaching methods, so that they could handle the different level cases of their heterogeneous auditors. Besides, schools should create informal environments in which learners can practice English in an immersion context. This can be arranged in the schoolyard, or during short trips ruled by strict recommendations of speaking the language. The school should be strict on the choice of teachers who are to monitor such immersion activities. Every program should take into account the realities of learners: levels, non-nativity, culture, academic background, etc. Documents destined to native learners should not be taught if they are not submitted to examination and adaptation. One of the big determining factor of the failure English language schools in their mission is the lack of evaluation in almost all of them. The lack of evaluation demote learners' interest and loosen their commitment. They feel not bound to anything, and worst, they usually think that the mere attendance of a school building is a guarantee of mastering the language without commitment. They run after pompous names of schools, forgetting that their personal commitment is a pledge of their success. This is hardly perceived by young learners. The school has the obligation of infusing that in them.

Research Implication

The conclusions of this study imply the failure of the policy that the State of Mali is adopting towards language schools. Language schools are evolving out of the control of the State. There is no law regulating the creation of these schools,

let alone texts governing their functioning. This may be the main reason for the State not to get interested in what is going on in these schools. However, this argument cannot hold if we know that Madrasas are private schools, but they are functioning under the supervision of School Districts and Centers of the Enhancement of Educational Activities. After all, the auditors of these schools are State taxpayers. Not only does their waste of money constitute a costly balance to their income and resourcefulness, they, themselves, constitute a breach by which strange cultures and civilizations could creep into the education and mores of the nation. Language is generally learned alongside its civilization, and its learning begets acculturation. Moreover, the presence of fake language schools whose certificates are wedged in job application files is a foible in the human resource competences. It results in a false estimation of the intellectual capacities of the country. It means the presence of some agents in the services with fake competences that are not reliable where they are expected. This should be a reason for the State to interfere in the existence of these schools by monitoring their judicial status, and supervising their functioning mechanisms.

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