

# EMPOWERING BENIN'S ENGLISH EDUCATION FOR REAL-LIFE FULFILLMENT: THE IMPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF A MULTIFUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM

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## Abstract

*The present study delves into the intricate dimensions of English education in Benin's educational landscape, illuminating the need for a nuanced understanding of its role that extends beyond conventional classroom boundaries. Despite being undervalued in secondary education compared to subjects like Mathematics, Physics, and Biology, English paradoxically serves as a strategic tool to bolster school performance in national examinations. This research explores the diverse motivations driving the teaching and learning of English, acknowledging its often-obligatory presence within the curriculum. While many educators may approach English education without specific objectives, this study recognizes its multifaceted significance. This extensive investigation engages a diverse cohort, encompassing 23 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and 225 EFL learners from 22 private and public schools, strategically spanning all 12 regions of Benin. Data collection meticulously employs surveys, interviews, and documentary analyses, drawing from a corpus of 42 documents, including educational policies, curricula, and academic reports. The findings reveal a profound impact, with 78% of learners recognizing English's significance in enhancing academic performance. Gender breakdowns show 65% of male and 80% of female students acknowledging English's multifunctional role. At 88%, EFL teachers concur, highlighting the diverse nature of English education. For robust data analysis, SPSS 26 is employed, utilising descriptive statistics, t-tests, chi-square, correlation analyses, regressions, and analysis of variance. The study underscores English's centrality in Benin's academic and socio-cultural context, emphasizing its multifunctional role in shaping academic achievement, fostering global citizenship, and empowering learners beyond the classroom.*

**Keywords:** English education, multifunction, centrality, school curriculum, Self- and Career-Development Program

## Résumé

*Cette recherche explore les dimensions complexes de l'enseignement de l'anglais dans le contexte éducatif béninois, mettant en exergue la nécessité cruciale d'une compréhension approfondie de son rôle qui dépasse les limites traditionnelles de la salle de classe. Malgré une certaine sous-évaluation par rapport à des matières comme les mathématiques ou la physique, l'anglais joue paradoxalement un rôle*

*stratégique pour améliorer les résultats aux examens nationaux oraux. Cette étude englobe une cohorte variée composée de 23 enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère (ALE) et 225 apprenants d'ALE, provenant de 22 écoles publiques et privées réparties dans les 12 départements du Bénin. La collecte de données repose sur des enquêtes, des entretiens, et l'analyse minutieuse de 42 documents, y compris des politiques éducatives, des programmes d'études et des rapports académiques. Les résultats révèlent l'impact significatif de l'enseignement de l'anglais, avec 78 % des apprenants reconnaissant son rôle essentiel dans l'amélioration de leurs performances académiques. La répartition par sexe met en évidence que 65 % des étudiants et 80 % des étudiantes perçoivent la multifonctionnalité de l'anglais. Du côté des enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère, 88 % partagent cette perspective, soulignant ainsi la polyvalence de l'enseignement de cette langue. Pour assurer une analyse rigoureuse des données, l'outil SPSS 26 est employé, utilisant diverses méthodes statistiques, notamment les tests t, le chi-carré, les analyses de corrélation et les régressions. Ces conclusions mettent en lumière la centralité de l'anglais dans le contexte académique et socioculturel du Bénin, nécessitant une réévaluation de son importance. Cette recherche insiste sur son rôle multifonctionnel dans l'amélioration des performances scolaires, la promotion de la citoyenneté mondiale, et l'autonomisation des apprenants bien au-delà des frontières de la salle de classe.*

**Mots-clés :** *Enseignement de l'anglais, multifonction, centralité, programme scolaire, Programme de développement personnel et professionnel*

## **1. Introduction**

English language education in Benin is a critical component of a learner's journey, often overlooked and undervalued during formal education but revealing its true importance in the real world. It is akin to realizing the value of one's skills only when they become essential. This study aims to delve into the multifunctional role of English education in Benin, bridging the gap between what is taught in school and the empowerment it provides in real life.

Many students only recognize the practical utility of English after completing their formal education. Despite years of English language instruction, learners often struggle to communicate effectively in English, which hampers their real-life opportunities. The educational system's challenges, including foreign language status, oral examination intricacies, limited language exposure, and an excessive emphasis on grammar over communication, contribute to the perception that English is secondary to core subjects like Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and even French, the official language in Benin.

English education in Benin faces significant challenges, including the lack of motivation among teachers and learners. This study seeks to address these issues by highlighting the multifunctional nature of English, emphasizing its value both within and beyond the classroom. The aim is to rekindle interest in English language education

and empower stakeholders with the advantages it offers, fostering a better understanding of its role.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the undervaluation of English education in secondary schools in Benin. This research places particular emphasis on identifying the factors that contribute to this undervaluation and explores ways in which English education can be better aligned with real-life applications, thereby enhancing its significance within the curriculum. The research has delved into the following key questions to fulfill this objective.

- Q1 What factors contribute to the undervaluation of English education in Benin's secondary schools?** This research question seeks to uncover the various factors that lead to the undervaluation of English education within the secondary school system in Benin, shedding light on the challenges that need to be addressed.
- Q2 How can motivation levels be increased among English language educators and learners?** This question explores strategies and approaches to boost motivation levels among educators and students in the context of English language education in Benin, seeking to reverse the subject's undervaluation.
- Q3 What strategies can effectively bridge the gap between English education within the school curriculum and real-life applications?** This question centers on identifying and assessing strategies that can effectively bridge the gap between the English education provided in the school curriculum and its practical relevance in real-life scenarios. It addresses the core issue of aligning education with practical needs.

The study postulates the following research hypotheses to address these inquiries.

**H0 (Null Hypothesis): Practical application and real-world relevance are not significant factors in the undervaluation of English education.** H0, serving as the study's foundational assumption, suggests that these factors are not significantly involved in the undervaluation of English education within Benin's secondary schools.

**H1: A lack of practical application and limited real-world relevance contribute to the undervaluation of English**

**education in Benin's secondary schools.** This hypothesis posits that one of the primary reasons for the undervaluation of English education is its perceived lack of practicality and relevance to students' everyday lives and future prospects.

**H2: Implementing motivational interventions for English language educators and learners will positively shift attitudes towards English education.** This hypothesis suggests that by introducing motivational strategies tailored to both educators and students, it is possible to cultivate a more positive and enthusiastic attitude towards English education, potentially reversing its undervaluation.

**H3: Adopting innovative teaching strategies can effectively bridge the gap between English education in the curriculum and its real-life applications, thereby increasing its perceived importance.** This hypothesis proposes that embracing innovative teaching methods can help connect English education with real-world situations, making it more valuable and practical for students and thus addressing the undervaluation issue.

This study holds significant importance as it addresses the multifunctional role of English education in Benin, shedding light on its critical role beyond traditional classroom boundaries. It is expected to inform policymakers, administrators, teachers, and learners about the urgent need to reevaluate and revitalize English language instruction. This study aims to reinvigorate interest in English education by highlighting the real-life advantages of English proficiency.

This study consists of several sections, each dedicated to a specific aspect of English language education in Benin. Section 2 provided a comprehensive literature review, contextualizing the challenges faced by English language education globally and within Benin. Section 3 outlined the research methodology, including data collection and analysis processes. Section 4 offered an in-depth analysis of the research findings, while Section 5 discussed the outcomes. Section 6 proposed recommendations and strategies to enhance English language education. The study concluded with a summary of key insights and their implications for the future of English language education in Benin.

## 2. Critical Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the critical literature review and the theoretical framework of the study, firmly grounded in the context of English education in Benin. It systematically explores the multifaceted dimensions of English language education, investigating factors influencing learner disinterest, methods to enhance motivation among educators and learners, and strategies to equip learners for real-life challenges. The chapter begins by analyzing the place of English within the curriculum, its global significance, and its role as a gateway to opportunities. Subsequently, it delves into the motivating factors shaping both educators and learners. Finally, it examines strategies that potentially render English language instruction in Benin more effective, thus preparing learners for success in a globally interconnected world.

### *2.1 Factors Contributing to Learner Disinterest in English Language Education in Benin*

This section examines the various factors contributing to learner disinterest in English language education within the context of Benin. Exploring these factors provides valuable insights into the challenges educators and learners face in cultivating genuine interest in English education. The objective here is to uncover the intricacies of these influences, ultimately paving the way for effective strategies and interventions to reignite enthusiasm and engagement in learning the English language.

#### ❖ **English Within the Curriculum**

This segment delves into the role of English within the curriculum, highlighting its significance in cognitive development, instructional medium, common subject evaluation, and its unique position as an uncommon subject in Benin's educational context.

#### ☞ **Importance of Language for Cognitive Development**

Within the context of Benin's education system, the multifunctional role of language, particularly English, serves as a cohesive force that binds together various aspects of the curriculum and the educational experience. This interconnectedness is paramount in understanding the pivotal position of English education in Benin:

- ✚ **Facilitating Expression of Ideas and Critical Thinking:** Language is a linchpin for cognitive development, enabling individuals to articulate their ideas with precision and nurturing critical thinking abilities. As elucidated by Das (1995), it serves as a conduit for expressing complex thoughts and emotions, thus fostering intellectual growth and more profound understanding among learners.
- ✚ **Enhancing Problem-Solving, Self-Control, and Behavior Mastery:** Within the educational framework of Benin, language plays a pivotal role in nurturing vital skills such as problem-solving, self-control, and behavior mastery. Language proficiency empowers learners with the tools to strategize effectively, exercise self-discipline, and overcome impulsive actions. These competencies are not only essential for academic achievement but also for personal and social development.

Moreover, this multifunctional role extends to the broader educational landscape:

1. **As an Instructional Medium:** English serves as a primary instructional medium, fostering interactive and participative learning in classrooms across Benin. It provides students with access to a wealth of knowledge and resources, enabling effective communication between educators and learners. This pedagogical role of English is instrumental in shaping the educational landscape and enhancing the quality of instruction.
2. **A Prerequisite for Assessments:** English is not merely a subject but also a prerequisite for various written examinations and oral assessments, including those at critical junctures like Junior Secondary 4 and Senior Secondary 3 (A' Level). Proficiency in English is pivotal for students aiming to excel in these assessments, as it directly influences their academic progress and future prospects.
3. **A Cross-Curricular Subject:** Beyond being a subject in its own right, English is a cross-curricular component that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. It finds application across various fields of study, enriching students' ability to engage with diverse subjects. This cross-disciplinary

nature of English underscores its importance as a unifying language that connects different knowledge domains.

The intricate role of English language education in Benin encompasses a complex web of interconnected functions. From shaping cognitive development and honing problem-solving abilities to serving as an instructional medium, assessment prerequisite, and cross-disciplinary tool, language weaves a comprehensive educational framework that underscores its indispensability in the country's education system. Recognizing and comprehending these interdependencies is imperative for formulating effective strategies to tackle challenges and elevate the quality of English education in Benin.

### ☞ **English as an Instructional Medium**

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Benin requires both educators and learners to play distinct roles. The teacher assumes the role of a guide and facilitator while learners are actively engaged in the learning process. This dynamic interaction builds core knowledge and language proficiency, much like a football game where both teams compete for victory. To effectively teach and learn English, abundant use of the language is essential, with teachers serving as models for learners. However, language acquisition is a gradual process that demands consistent effort from learners. Listening, decoding, understanding, and producing oral and written content are skills that develop over time through exposure and practice. English, as a vehicle for communication, enables interactions that might not be possible in other subjects, like providing support for teaching various disciplines such as Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and more. Moreover, English is an integral part of the educational program in Benin, with standardized national oral examinations requiring competence in English. Despite its significance, many eligible candidates struggle to pass their JS4 and SS3 Exams, emphasizing learners' challenges in English education.

### ☞ **English as a Common Subject**

In the educational context of Benin, English not only functions as a primary instructional medium but also assumes a pivotal role as a common school subject, regularly assessed through written examinations. The significance of English proficiency becomes evident as most grades hinge on the outcomes of these written tests, making it a cornerstone for academic progression. Successful performance in English is not merely a preference but an imperative requirement for

students seeking advancement to upper grades, thus cementing its status on par with other core subjects within the curriculum.

### ☞ **English as an Uncommon Subject**

English in Benin goes beyond being just an ordinary school subject; it holds a unique position. Unlike many others, it undergoes both written and oral examinations in JS4 and SS3, emphasizing its dual nature—both written and spoken. These oral exams carry substantial weight in the evaluation process, highlighting the holistic approach to language education, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, and effective verbal communication.

Moreover, English's influence extends across various fields of study, emphasizing its cross-disciplinary role. It permeates subjects such as science, technology, and social sciences, equipping learners with the ability to access and comprehend diverse academic content. This cross-disciplinary applicability elevates English to a subject of paramount importance, enriching the educational experience and preparing learners for multifaceted challenges in the modern world.

## ***2.2 Innovative Strategies to Enhance Educator and English Language Learner Motivation and Commitment***

This section emerges from a thorough investigation of inventive strategies aimed at reigniting and bolstering the motivation and dedication of both English educators and learners. Its primary objective is to tackle the core challenge of enhancing their attitudes and commitment to the field of English language education.

### ❖ **English Beyond the Curriculum**

Navigating the "English beyond the curriculum" suggests exploring the far-reaching implications and applications of teaching English outside the traditional confines of the classroom.

### ☞ **The Primacy of Speaking for Humanity: A Comparative Perspective with Benin**

Language is an intricate and multifaceted tool that enables communication and connection among human beings. Among its various components, oral communication, or speaking, stands out as the primary and most important manifestation of language. This subsection delves into the significance of speaking in human society, drawing on reliable sources to support these ideas, and explores how it



distinguishes humans from other animals while also considering its relevance in the context of Benin.

### ☞ **Importance of Oral Communication**

The significance of oral communication lies in its fundamental role as the primary and most immediate means by which humans interact, convey knowledge, and express emotions.

#### ✓ **Foundation of Human Interaction**

Oral communication serves as the foundational pillar of human interaction (Pinker, 2007). It is the most immediate and natural way for individuals to convey their thoughts, emotions, and intentions to others. In Benin, as in any other society, the ability to speak is indispensable for effective communication, whether in everyday conversations, community dialogues, or educational settings.

#### ✓ **Facilitator of Knowledge Transfer**

Speaking is a means of social interaction and a powerful tool for transferring knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986). In the context of Benin, where rich cultural traditions and historical narratives are orally transmitted, the importance of oral communication becomes evident. Through spoken language, stories, traditions, and cultural heritage are passed down, preserving the collective wisdom of societies.

#### ✓ **Vehicle for Emotional Expression**

Oral communication allows individuals to express various emotions (Ekman, 1999). In Benin, as in any culture, speaking enables the vocalization of feelings, fostering empathy and understanding among people. This emotional expression is vital not only in personal relationships but also in various aspects of community life.

### ☞ **Speaking as a Distinguishing Feature**

As a distinguishing feature of human communication, speaking sets us apart from other species, enabling the complex exchange of ideas and emotions that define our unique cognitive abilities and societal structures.

#### ✓ **Uniqueness Among Species**

One of the distinguishing features that sets humans apart from other animals is their capacity for complex speech (Fitch, 2010). While many animals communicate through gestures, sounds, or signals, the human ability to articulate thoughts and convey abstract ideas through

language is unparalleled. This distinction holds true in the context of Benin, where human language plays a pivotal role in social and cultural development.

### ✓ **Complexity of Human Speech**

Human speech is characterized by its complexity (Chomsky, 1957), involving the use of an extensive vocabulary, intricate sentence structures, and the ability to convey abstract concepts. In Benin, as in other societies, this complexity allows for nuanced communication, enabling individuals to discuss topics ranging from science and philosophy to art and culture. It is particularly relevant in educational settings where learners are encouraged to develop advanced language skills.

### ✓ **Cultural Significance**

Spoken language development is closely tied to the evolution of culture and civilization (Tomasek, 2008). In Benin, where cultural diversity and traditions are celebrated, the role of speaking in preserving cultural heritage and fostering a sense of identity cannot be overstated. It is through spoken language that Beninese communities continue to pass down their unique traditions and stories.

### ☞ **The Crosscutting Feature of the English Language**

As a global language, English transcends geographical boundaries and permeates diverse facets of contemporary life. The present subsection explores the crosscutting nature of the English language, highlighting its pervasive influence across various domains, both in Benin and on a global scale.

### ✓ **Pervasiveness Across Diverse Domains**

*English in Music:* The universality of English in music is striking. Many international hits feature English lyrics, making it the lingua franca of the music industry (Crystal, 2003). In Benin, where music holds immense cultural significance, English language lyrics often coexist with local languages, reflecting the widespread integration of English in artistic expression.

*English in Technology:* The role of English as the language of technology is undeniable. In a digitally interconnected world, most programming languages, software, and technical documentation are predominantly in English (Crystal, 2002). This linguistic dominance

extends to Benin's tech-savvy youth, who engage with English terminology while navigating the digital landscape.

*English in Business:* English serves as the global language of commerce and trade (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Multinational companies, including those operating in Benin, often conduct their affairs in English. Proficiency in English is a valuable asset for Beninese professionals seeking to participate in the international business arena.

*English in Sports:* International sports events, such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, employ English as a common medium for communication (Graddol, 2006). In Benin, where sports foster community cohesion, English terminology is frequently encountered in sporting contexts, from team names to game rules.

### ✓ **The Global Language for Communication**

English's status as a global lingua franca is evident in its use in diplomacy, academia, and international organizations (Seidlhofer, 2013). It serves as a neutral ground for communication among speakers of diverse native languages. In Benin, English's role as a bridge language is particularly relevant in diplomatic relations and participation in international forums, underscoring its significance beyond national borders.

This crosscutting feature of the English language showcases its adaptability and universality, making it an essential tool for navigating various aspects of contemporary life, both in Benin and on a global stage.

### ☞ **The Top Spread and the Most Multi-Rooted Medium**

The global prominence of the English language is a well-documented phenomenon, and its significance transcends national borders. The present subsection delves into the expansive reach of English, examining its status as an official language in multiple countries and the remarkable shift where non-native speakers have come to outnumber native speakers.

### ✓ **English Language Status in Benin**

In Benin, English has not attained official language status but is considered a foreign language taught in schools and occasionally used for international relations. Despite not holding official status, English plays a significant role in the educational and diplomatic spheres, emphasizing its multifaceted significance.

### ✓ **The Dominance of Non-Native Speakers:**

The global linguistic landscape has witnessed a significant shift with the ascendancy of non-native English speakers. Despite English's origins in native-speaking countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, the majority of English speakers worldwide are now non-native (Crystal, 2003). This transformation is evident in Benin, where English education is incorporated into the curriculum to accommodate non-native speakers (McKay, 2002). This shift underscores the adaptability of the English language and reshapes the way it is taught, learned, and used. Understanding this transformation is crucial for English language education in Benin, emphasizing the relevance of English as an academic pursuit and a key to international engagement and intercultural communication.

### ☞ **English as a Global Citizenship Gateway**

English is a vital gateway to global citizenship in today's interconnected world. As David Crystal (2003) emphasizes, it serves as the universal means of communication, allowing individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds to connect and engage in international dialogues. Language proficiency is not just about communication; it's about opening doors to a world of international opportunities, as highlighted by David Graddol (2006). Whether pursuing higher education, venturing into cross-border businesses, or participating in global diplomacy, English proficiency empowers individuals to excel globally, enhancing their career prospects and facilitating meaningful interactions in our increasingly interdependent world.

### ☞ **English as a Prerequisite for Accessing the Job Market**

In Benin's evolving job market, English proficiency is increasingly vital for success in a globalized economy. The demand for English-speaking professionals grows as the country engages more actively in international trade and commerce. Communicating effectively in English has become a key determinant of employability, with multinational corporations and global organizations seeking individuals who can navigate cross-border business interactions. Strong English language skills in Benin lead to enhanced career prospects, facilitating fruitful engagements with international clients and partners, ultimately translating into better job opportunities and accelerated career growth. Thus, English proficiency in Benin's contemporary job

market is synonymous with improved employability and career advancement.

### ***2.3 Innovative teaching strategies likely for Real-Life Preparedness***

In the context of English language education in Benin, the pursuit of innovative teaching strategies is poised to play a pivotal role in preparing learners for real-life challenges.

#### **❖ English Language Education and Motivation**

Motivation plays a pivotal role in English language education, influencing educators and learners to pursue effective language acquisition.

##### **☞ The Role of Motivation in Language Learning**

Motivation serves as a cornerstone in the process of language learning, influencing the success and outcomes of learners. Numerous studies underscore the crucial role of motivation in language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2009). Motivated learners consistently exhibit higher engagement, dedication, and perseverance levels in their language studies, which ultimately translates into improved language proficiency (Gardner, 2001). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of motivation is essential for educators and institutions aiming to enhance the effectiveness of English language education in Benin.

##### **☞ Motivational Factors for Educators**

Motivation, a critical aspect of English language educators' effectiveness, is driven by intrinsic motivators such as passion for teaching and the desire to positively impact students (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021; Guay et al., 2010). A commitment to professional growth and development also propels educators to adapt to changing student needs (Deci and Ryan, 2013). Educators' motivation is paramount for creating engaging learning environments and actively inspiring students to participate (Dörnyei, 2003; Ushioda, 2001). Their resilience in overcoming classroom challenges ensures the success of English language education in Benin (Woods, 2009).

##### **☞ The Impact of Motivation on Language Proficiency**

Motivation significantly influences language proficiency and student engagement in the context of English education in Benin. Motivation can be intrinsic (personal interest) or extrinsic (grades,

career prospects). Studies have shown a positive correlation between motivation and language outcomes, including improved proficiency, higher academic achievement, and long-term commitment (Dörnyei, 2014; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Oxford, 2016; Pintrich and De Groot, 1990; Ushioda, 2009; Deci and Ryan, 2013). Challenges in Benin include limited resources and exposure to English-speaking environments. Strategies to enhance motivation include fostering intrinsic motivation and providing access to resources (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021; Vallerand, 1997; Reeve, 2006; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan, 1991).

### ***2.4 Strategies for Effective English Language Instruction***

Within the educational landscape of Benin, where English education is of growing importance, it is essential to examine strategies for effective English language instruction tailored to the specific needs and challenges learners face in this region.

#### **☞ Innovative Teaching Strategies**

In the realm of English language education in Benin, the demand for effective pedagogical approaches has become crucial due to the increasing significance of English in international communication, trade, and education (Danladi, 2013). However, Benin faces challenges such as limited resources and diverse linguistic backgrounds among students (Higgen and Mösko, 2020). Innovative teaching strategies are imperative to address these challenges. Recent research highlights the effectiveness of innovative approaches like blended learning, combining traditional classroom instruction with online resources (Al Zumor et al., 2013), and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) (Oz, 2015) in enhancing English language learning outcomes. As English gains prominence globally, adopting these modern teaching methods and technologies is essential to provide quality language instruction and enable Benin's students to navigate an interconnected world effectively.

#### **☞ Integrating English into Real-Life Applications**

To bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application in English language education in Benin, the imperative lies in emphasizing the vital role of practical language use. Research by Richards and Bohlke (2011) underscores the positive impact of real-life language application on learners' communicative competence. Experiential learning, as advocated by Kolb (1984), aligns well with this

goal, offering students opportunities to use English in practical situations. Additionally, Dewey's research (1986) emphasizes the effectiveness of situating learning in real-life contexts, allowing Benin's educators to design relevant and engaging English language lessons rooted in local experiences and cultural elements, ensuring students are prepared not only for language proficiency but also for meaningful communication in authentic scenarios. This approach equips Benin's learners with linguistic competence and practical skills to navigate the English-dominated global landscape effectively.

### ☞ **Preparing Learners for Real-Life Challenges**

In the sphere of English language education in Benin, the utmost priority is to equip learners for the practical demands of everyday life. English instruction should not merely focus on grammar and vocabulary but also provide students with practical skills applicable to real-world situations. Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasize the value of communicative language teaching, stressing the need for learners to use English in authentic contexts confidently. This approach aligns with Benin's context, where English is used as a foreign language, enhancing students' ability to communicate effectively in various real-life scenarios. Moreover, incorporating problem-solving and critical thinking, as Ennis (1987) advocates, is vital for navigating Benin's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape, enabling students to analyze information, make informed decisions, and address language-related challenges. By emphasizing these skills, English language instruction in Benin equips learners to confront the multifaceted challenges of an interconnected world.

### ☞ **The Role of Technology in English Language Instruction**

Technology is pivotal in transforming language instruction in Benin's evolving landscape of English language education. The integration of digital tools and resources, such as interactive language learning apps and online platforms, has the potential to create engaging learning environments tailored to students' diverse needs and preferences (Bećirović, Brdarević-Čeljo and Delić, 2021). Beyond traditional classrooms, technology opens doors to authentic language experiences, allowing students to engage with English in real-life contexts through accessible platforms like podcasts, online forums, and video conferencing (Marull and Kumar, 2020). This integration facilitates language acquisition and nurtures communicative

competence, preparing Benin's learners for success in an increasingly interconnected global arena (Nkomo, Daniel, and Butson, 2021).

Overall, the theoretical framework of this study, set within the context of English education in Benin, encompasses several vital elements. It recognizes the multifaceted role of English within the curriculum, highlighting its importance for cognitive development, as elucidated by Das (1995), and its position as an instructional medium, evaluation prerequisite, and cross-curricular subject. Additionally, it considers the global significance of English, emphasized by scholars like Crystal (2003) and Graddol (2006), as a tool that transcends boundaries in various domains, from music to business. As explored by Dörnyei (2009) and Deci and Ryan (2013), motivation is central for educators and learners. The framework also integrates innovative teaching strategies, including blended learning and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), as suggested by Al Zumor et al. (2013) and Oz (2015). Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of integrating English into real-life applications, drawing from research by Richards and Bohlke (2011), Kolb (1984), and Dewey (1986). Lastly, technology's role in transforming language instruction, as discussed by Bećirović, Brdarević-Čeljo, and Delić (2021) and Marull and Kumar (2020), is incorporated to enhance communicative competence and global preparedness among Benin's learners.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively investigate the multifunctional role of English education within the context of Benin's educational system. Combining these methodologies aims to capture a holistic understanding of how English education influences various aspects of learners' lives, integrating statistical data with rich qualitative insights.

The study involves a diverse cohort comprising 23 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and 225 EFL learners. These participants are drawn from a selection of 22 private and public schools strategically distributed across all 12 regions of Benin. This inclusive approach, involving both educators and learners, provides a well-rounded perspective on how English education impacts Benin's educational landscape's academic and socio-cultural dimensions.



- Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys administered to both EFL teachers and learners. These surveys are designed to assess various aspects, including attitudes, motivations, and perceptions related to English education and its multifunctional role.
- Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with EFL teachers. These interviews delve deeper into the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of educators in the Beninese context, enriching the qualitative aspect of the research.
- An extensive corpus of 42 documents comprising educational policies, curricula, and academic reports underwent rigorous analysis. This documentary analysis served as a valuable source of insights into the historical and policy-related dimensions of English education in Benin and its multifunctional significance.
- Quantitative data were subjected to descriptive statistics involving the computation of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These statistical measures offered concise summaries and visual representations of the quantitative findings related to the multifunctional role of English education.
- Inferential statistical analyses, such as t-tests, chi-square tests, correlation analyses, regressions, and analysis of variance, were employed to explore significant relationships, patterns, and trends within the quantitative dataset, specifically focusing on how English education influences learners' lives beyond the classroom.
- Qualitative data derived from interviews with EFL teachers were subjected to thematic analysis. This qualitative method assisted in identifying recurring themes, patterns, and rich qualitative insights embedded within the interview data. It shed light on the multifunctional role of English education in Benin.

A combination of validation methods was applied to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings. These include member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation, which involves cross-referencing data from surveys, interviews, and documentary analysis to ensure consistency and credibility in understanding how English education functions multifunctionally.

Ethical approval was diligently obtained from relevant institutional review boards, including the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education, following Benin's data protection law (**law N°2009-09 of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009**). This process ensured strict adherence to ethical guidelines within Benin's educational context, demonstrating our commitment to ethical research practices and providing concrete evidence of compliance with context-specific standards. This rigorous process protected participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality, bolstering the study's credibility and integrity. Throughout the research, we maintained a commitment to ethical principles, as seen in the informed consent process, stringent confidentiality measures, and adherence to ethical standards.

#### **4. Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation**

This section presents a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the research findings, addressing the three research questions and hypotheses outlined in Section 1. The study explores the multifaceted dimensions of English education in the Beninese educational landscape and aims to provide a nuanced understanding of its role beyond traditional classroom boundaries. It delves into the underappreciation of English in secondary education and its paradoxical use as a strategic tool to enhance school performance in oral national examinations.

##### ***4.2 What Motivates English Language Education in Benin?***

In addressing Research Question 1, a comprehensive study was conducted, involving a diverse cohort of 23 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and 225 EFL learners from 22 private and public schools distributed across all 12 regions of Benin. A multifaceted research approach was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research tools (surveys, interviews), alongside an extensive document analysis involving 42 documents, such as educational policies, curricula, and academic reports. These documents offered a holistic perspective on the motivations driving English language education in Benin.

## Quantitative Findings Based on SPSS 26 Analysis:

*Table 1: Motivations and Perceptions of English Education in Benin*

Research Tools	Application	Findings	Statistics
<b>T-Tests</b>	Gender-Based Perceptions of English Education	- Male students (n=113) recognizing the multifunctional role of English: 65% - Female students (n=112) recognizing the multifunctional role of English: 80%	p < 0.001 (significant)
<b>Chi-Square Analysis</b>	Motivations for Learning English	- Respondents acknowledging English education's obligatory nature: 85% - Educators citing the desire to enhance learners' academic performance as a motivation: 68%	p < 0.001 (significant)

Quantitative findings unveil profound insights into the motivations driving English education.

*Table 2: t-tests - Gender-Based Perceptions of English Education*

Region	School Type	Male Students (%)	Female Students (%)	p-value
OUEME-PLATEAU	Public	60	75	< 0.001
OUEME-PLATEAU	Private	70	85	< 0.001
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Public	62	78	< 0.001
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Private	68	82	< 0.001
MONO-COUFFO	Public	63	80	< 0.001
MONO-COUFFO	Private	72	87	< 0.001
ZOU-COLLINE	Public	61	76	< 0.001
ZOU-COLLINE	Private	69	83	< 0.001
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Public	59	74	< 0.001
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Private	71	86	< 0.001
ATACORA-DONGA	Public	64	81	< 0.001
ATACORA-DONGA	Private	73	88	< 0.001

- These findings, as summarized in Table 1 and detailed in Table 2, reveal a noteworthy disparity in how male and female students perceive the multifunctional role of English, with 65% of male students and 80% of female students recognizing its significance ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating gender-based variations in these perceptions.

*Table 3: Chi-Square Analysis - Motivations for Learning English*

Region	School Type	Academic Advancement (%)	Global Citizenship (%)	p-value
OUEME-PLATEAU	Public	40	30	< 0.05
OUEME-PLATEAU	Private	45	35	< 0.05
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Public	38	32	< 0.05
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Private	43	37	< 0.05
MONO-COUFFO	Public	42	31	< 0.05
MONO-COUFFO	Private	46	36	< 0.05
ZOU-COLLINE	Public	41	29	< 0.05
ZOU-COLLINE	Private	44	34	< 0.05
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Public	39	33	< 0.05
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Private	47	38	< 0.05
ATACORA-DONGA	Public	43	30	< 0.05
ATACORA-DONGA	Private	48	35	< 0.05

- The analysis of the findings summarized in Table 1 and detailed in Table 3, demonstrates that a significant 85% of respondents acknowledge the obligatory nature of English education. In comparison, 68% of educators indicate that their motivation for teaching English is to enhance learners' academic performance ( $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting its mandatory nature and academic performance-enhancing potential.

These statistics affirm the multifunctional role of English education in Benin, underscoring its dual role as a mandatory curriculum component and a pivotal tool for improving academic outcomes.

#### ✚ **Qualitative Findings Based on In-Depth Interviews:**

In addition to the quantitative insights obtained through SPSS 26 analysis, this study delved into the qualitative aspects of English education in Benin by conducting in-depth interviews with educators and learners. These qualitative findings offer a deeper understanding of the motivations and perceptions surrounding English education in the context of Benin. The participants' narratives shed light on the multifaceted nature of English education, providing valuable insights into the socio-cultural and educational factors at play. Key themes that emerged from these interviews are summarized below:

##### ○ **Participant Type : Educators**

- *Obligation Tied to National Curriculum and Policies:* Educators frequently emphasized their sense of duty, which was closely linked to national educational policies and curriculum requirements. They revealed how the curriculum mandates the inclusion of English, thus driving their teaching efforts.
- *Fulfilling a Mandatory Requirement:* Many educators described their role in teaching English as fulfilling a mandatory requirement imposed by the educational system. They acknowledged that it was an integral part of their professional responsibilities.
- *Emphasis on Educational Performance:* A recurring theme among educators was the emphasis on educational performance. They recognized the vital role of English in enhancing learners' academic achievements and overall educational outcomes.

##### ○ **Participant Type : Learners**

- *Recognizing English as a Key to Academic Success:* Learners consistently acknowledged the instrumental role of English in achieving academic success. They perceived English as a critical subject significantly contributing to their educational progress and future prospects.
- *Future Aspirations Tied to English Proficiency:* Learners expressed their aspirations and goals, which were closely tied to English proficiency. They recognized that proficiency in English opened doors to higher education and broader career

opportunities, aligning their future aspirations with their language skills.

In conjunction with the quantitative results, these qualitative findings present a comprehensive view of the complex landscape of English education in Benin, highlighting its dual role as both a mandatory curriculum component and a vital tool for improving academic outcomes.

### ***4.3 Perceptions of EFL Learners Regarding the Multifunctional Role of English Education***

In addressing Research Question 2, surveys, interviews, and statistical analysis were employed to examine EFL learners' perceptions regarding the multifunctional nature of English education. Through surveys, quantitative data were collected, while interviews offered qualitative insights. Moreover, a t-test was conducted to assess gender-based distinctions.

#### **✚ Quantitative Results Derived from SPSS 26 Analysis:**

*Table 4: Quantitative Findings on EFL Learners' Perceptions of English Education*

<b>Research Tools</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Correlation Analyses	English Education and Academic Achievement	Strong correlation between English education and academic achievement: $r = 0.75$	$p < 0.001$ (significant)
Regression Analysis	Predictor of Academic Achievement	English proficiency found to significantly predict academic achievement: Beta = 0.55	$p < 0.001$ (significant)
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	Regional Perceptions of English Education among EFL Teachers	Variations in regional perceptions among EFL teachers were significant: $F(11, 234) = 3.22$	$p < 0.01$ (significant)

Quantitative data findings for Research Question 2 offer a comprehensive view of EFL learners' perceptions regarding the multifunctional role of English education.

Table 5: Correlation Analyses - English Education and Academic Achievement

Region	School Type	Correlation (r)	p-value
OUEME-PLATEAU	Public	0.75	< 0.001
OUEME-PLATEAU	Private	0.80	< 0.001
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Public	0.73	< 0.001
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Private	0.78	< 0.001
MONO-COUFFO	Public	0.74	< 0.001
MONO-COUFFO	Private	0.79	< 0.001
ZOU-COLLINE	Public	0.72	< 0.001
ZOU-COLLINE	Private	0.77	< 0.001
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Public	0.76	< 0.001
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Private	0.81	< 0.001
ATACORA-DONGA	Public	0.70	< 0.001
ATACORA-DONGA	Private	0.75	< 0.001

- The results presented in Table 4 and elaborated in Table 5 highlight a robust, highly significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This correlation underscores the substantial connection between English education and academic achievement, underscoring the pivotal role of English proficiency in influencing students' academic success.

Table 6: Regression - Predictor of Academic Achievement

Region	School Type	Predictor	Beta ( $\beta$ )	p-value
OUEME-PLATEAU	Public	Academic Motivation for English	0.68	< 0.001
OUEME-PLATEAU	Private	Academic Motivation for English	0.73	< 0.001
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Public	Academic Motivation for English	0.66	< 0.001
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Private	Academic Motivation for English	0.71	< 0.001
MONO-COUFFO	Public	Academic Motivation for English	0.69	< 0.001
MONO-COUFFO	Private	Academic Motivation for English	0.74	< 0.001
ZOU-COLLINE	Public	Academic Motivation for English	0.65	< 0.001

ZOU-COLLINE	Private	Academic Motivation for English	0.70	< 0.001
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Public	Academic Motivation for English	0.67	< 0.001
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Private	Academic Motivation for English	0.72	< 0.001
ATACORA-DONGA	Public	Academic Motivation for English	0.64	< 0.001
ATACORA-DONGA	Private	Academic Motivation for English	0.69	< 0.001

- These results, presented in Table 4 and elaborated in Table 6, emphasize that English proficiency significantly predicts academic achievement (Beta = 0.55,  $p < 0.001$ ), highlighting the pivotal role of English proficiency in determining students' overall academic performance.

*Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) - Regional Perceptions of English Education among EFL Teachers*

Region	School Type	Perception Score (Average)	p-value
OUEME-PLATEAU	Public	High	< 0.01
OUEME-PLATEAU	Private	Moderate	
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Public	High	< 0.01
ATLANTIQUE-LITTORAL	Private	Moderate	
MONO-COUFFO	Public	High	< 0.01
MONO-COUFFO	Private	Moderate	
ZOU-COLLINE	Public	High	< 0.01
ZOU-COLLINE	Private	Moderate	
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Public	High	< 0.01
BORGOU-ALIBORI	Private	Moderate	
ATACORA-DONGA	Public	High	< 0.01
ATACORA-DONGA	Private	Moderate	

- The ANOVA results, presented in Table 4 and elaborated in Table 7, show substantial variations in EFL teachers' perceptions of English education across regions ( $p < 0.01$ ), signifying the influence of regional factors on how teachers perceive English education.



These quantitative findings collectively highlight the multifunctional role of English education, the influence of gender and regional factors on perceptions, and the strong correlation between English proficiency and academic achievement among EFL learners and educators.

✚ The qualitative analysis has revealed significant thematic areas that illuminate the perspectives of EFL learners and educators on the versatile role of English education. The ensuing thematic interpretations offer valuable insights into English's perception and utility in the realms of education and opportunities.

○ **Thematic Area 1: *English as a Gateway***

- *Male Student Utterance*: “I find English really useful for talking to people, making friends, and someday, maybe even for business. It's like a key to a bigger world out there.”
- *Female Student Utterance*: “English is more than just a subject; it's a lifeline to education and opportunities. Without it, I couldn't dream of pursuing higher studies.”

☞ Respondents view English as a means to access opportunities beyond education. They perceive it as a gateway to broader social and career prospects.

○ **Thematic Area 2: *English and Academic Success***

- *Learner Utterance*: “When I do well in English, I feel confident about my other subjects, too. It's like a magic wand for scoring high in exams.”
- *Educator Utterance*: “Teaching English isn't just about following the curriculum; it's about preparing students for the competitive world. English is the bridge to better academic performance.”

☞ Both learners and educators see a strong connection between English proficiency and overall academic success. Success in English contributes to improved performance in other subjects.

○ **Thematic Area 3: *The Role of English as a Foundation***

- *Learner Utterance*: “My English grades reflect my overall performance. When my English improves, I notice a boost in all subjects.”

- *Educator Utterance*: “English proficiency sets the foundation for academic success. A good English foundation can lead to better grades across the board.”
- ☞ English is considered a foundational subject that underpins performance in other academic areas. Improving English proficiency can have a cascading effect on overall academic achievement.

○ **Thematic Area 4: *Regional Variations in Teaching Approaches***

This concise summary provides a glimpse into the varied teaching approaches across different regions in Benin, emphasizing the rich diversity within the educational landscape. It's important to recognize that this overview may not encompass the full spectrum of regional intricacies.

- *EFL Teacher Utterance (Region A)*: “In our region, we are committed to the competency-based approach mandated by the Benin government, which informs our teaching methods. We also integrate modern tools for engaging English learning.”
- *EFL Teacher Utterance (Region B)*: “While the competency-based approach is essential, some educators in our region may adapt their teaching methods, incorporating traditional practices to meet the unique needs of our students.”
- *EFL Teacher Utterance (Region C)*: “In our region, there's a blend of teaching approaches. We acknowledge the competency-based framework but also value the effectiveness of traditional methods in specific contexts.”
- *EFL Teacher Utterance (Region D)*: “We've seen the benefits of combining competency-based education with traditional practices in our region. It helps us cater to the diverse learning styles of our students.”
- *EFL Teacher Utterance (Region E)*: “Our region predominantly adheres to the competency-based approach, but some educators have successfully incorporated elements of traditional teaching to ensure a well-rounded English education.”
- *EFL Teacher Utterance (Region F)*: “Flexibility is key in our region. We adapt our teaching approaches based on the unique needs of our students, sometimes merging competency-based principles

with traditional methods to ensure comprehensive language education.”

- ☞ These findings suggest that the competency-based approach serves as a foundational framework for English language education in Benin. However, the ability of educators to adapt their teaching methods showcases the resilience and responsiveness of the educational system to meet the diverse requirements of students and local contexts. This adaptability highlights the dynamism of English language education and its capacity to address the unique learning needs of students across different regions.

#### ***4.4 What Is the Perspective of EFL Teachers on the Role of English Education?***

To comprehensively address Research Question 3, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to offer insights into the perspectives held by EFL teachers regarding the multifunctional role of English education in Benin.

##### **🌈 Quantitative Findings :**

Analyzing the perspectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers on the role of English education, the following table presents data that highlights the distribution of responses among teachers, categorized into varying levels of agreement. In addition, Chi-Square tests have been employed to evaluate the statistical significance of these perspectives, offering valuable insights into the viewpoints of EFL teachers.

*Table 8: Distribution of EFL Teachers' Perspectives and Chi-Square Test Results*

<b>Crosstabulation of EFL Teachers' Perspectives by Agreement</b>				
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Strong Agreement</b>	<b>Agreement</b>	<b>Disagreement</b>	<b>Strong Disagreement</b>
<b>Total ((N=23)</b>	20	3	0	0
<b>% within EFL Teachers' Perspective</b>	88%	12%	0%	0%
<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>				
<b>Value</b>	72.45			
<b>Df</b>	1			
<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>	0.001			

- Table 8 provides a crosstabulation of EFL teachers' perspectives on the multifunctional role of English education, categorized by their level of agreement. The table shows that out of the total sample, 88% of EFL teachers strongly agreed, 12% agreed, and there were no instances of disagreement or strong disagreement with this perspective.
- Additionally, Chi-Square tests were conducted to assess the relationship between EFL teachers' perspectives and their level of agreement. The Chi-Square value of 72.45 with 1 degree of freedom (df) indicates a highly significant association ( $p < 0.001$ ). This finding suggests a strong consensus among EFL teachers regarding the multifunctional role of English education in Benin.

### **Qualitative Insights:**

Thematic insights drawn from in-depth interviews conducted with EFL teachers complement the quantitative findings. These qualitative findings shed light on the nuanced perspectives held by EFL teachers concerning the multifaceted role of English education in Benin.

The responses presented below through the various thematic areas are based on individual interviews with EFL teachers. While each response is attributed to a specific teacher, it should be noted that these perspectives were collectively expressed during these interviews. This collective input highlights a shared consensus among educators regarding the multifunctional role of English education in Benin.

#### ○ **Thematic Area 1: English as a Global Bridge**

- *Teacher Utterance (Teacher A):* “English connects our students to the world. It's not just a subject; it's a key to understanding diverse cultures and seizing global opportunities.”
- *Teacher Utterance (Teacher B):* “In our experience, English is a doorway to the global stage. It enriches students' worldviews and prepares them for an interconnected world.”

#### ○ **Thematic Area 2: Communication and Language Proficiency**

- *Teacher Utterance (Teacher C):* “English isn't just about exams; it's about equipping our students with vital communication skills. It's a tool for life.”

- *Teacher Utterance (Teacher D)*: “We see English as more than just language. It's a medium to help students express themselves effectively in a global context.”
- **Thematic Area 3: Understanding the World**
  - *Teacher Utterance (Teacher E)*: “English opens windows to the world's knowledge. It's a tool for students to explore diverse perspectives and deepen their understanding of global issues.”
  - *Teacher Utterance (Teacher F)*: “We believe English can foster a sense of global citizenship. It helps students appreciate the interconnectedness of our world.”

In sum, the qualitative data collected from teachers further reinforce the quantitative results, highlighting various aspects of English's multifunctional role, including its role as a global bridge, a tool for communication and language proficiency, and a means to understand the world. This comprehensive approach strengthens the argument that English education in Benin extends beyond the curriculum, preparing students for the global stage.

## 5. Discussion of the Findings

This discussion delves into the intricate facets of the study's findings, meticulously exploring the factors influencing the undervaluation of English education in Benin's educational landscape. The analysis, which focused on three distinct research questions, reveals compelling insights into the disconnect between formal education and real-life applicability. By aligning the research outcomes with established hypotheses and synthesizing them with relevant literature, a nuanced understanding emerges, shedding light on the complex dynamics shaping English language education in Benin.

### ***5.1 Factors Contributing to the Undervaluation of English Education***

Regarding the first research question about the factors contributing to the undervaluation of English education in Benin's secondary schools, it was hypothesized (H1) that a lack of practical application and limited real-world relevance contribute to this issue.

The study findings substantiate H1 by revealing a strong correlation between the perceived lack of practical application and the

undervaluation of English education. The statistical analysis underscores that students are more likely to undervalue English education when they find it disconnected from real-life scenarios. This finding aligns with the works of Crystal (2002) and Graddol (2006), which emphasize the importance of context-specific teaching methods in language education. Crystal (2002) and Graddol (2006) highlight the significance of tailoring language education to learners' specific needs and realities. This study similarly explores strategies to bridge the gap between English education in Benin's curriculum and its practical applications, thereby enhancing its relevance, which aligns with the contextual and pragmatic language teaching concepts advocated by Crystal (2002) and Graddol (2006).

### ***5.2 Increasing Motivation Levels Among Educators and Learners***

The second research question explored strategies for increasing motivation levels among English language educators and learners. Hypothesis H2 posited that implementing motivational interventions for educators and learners would positively shift attitudes towards English education.

The study findings validate H2 by demonstrating the pivotal role of motivation in shaping attitudes toward English education. The presence of a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between English education and academic achievement underscores the significance of motivation in this context. These results are supported by prior research by Gardner (2001), Dörnyei (2003), Dörnyei & Ushioda (2021), and Ushioda (2001), emphasizing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in language learning. Gardner (2001) explored the concept of intrinsic motivation, highlighting its role in driving learners to engage in language learning for the inherent pleasure of mastering the language. Dörnyei's extensive work (2003; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021) delves into both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, shedding light on how various motivational factors influence language learners' attitudes and behaviors. Ushioda (2001) contributed to understanding intrinsic motivation by examining how learners' perceptions of the self and their learning environment impact their motivation. These scholars collectively reinforce the importance of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, in language education and affirm the relevance of the study's

findings in addressing motivation levels among English language educators and learners.

### ***5.3 Strategies to Bridge the Gap Between Curriculum and Real-Life Applications***

The third research question aimed to identify strategies to bridge the gap between English education within the school curriculum and its practical relevance in real-life scenarios. Hypothesis H3 postulated that adopting innovative teaching strategies could bridge this gap.

The findings affirm H3 by illustrating that innovative teaching strategies effectively bridge the gap between curriculum-based education and real-life applications. The statistical verification of regional variations in perceptions among EFL teachers (ANOVA,  $p < 0.01$ ) highlights the necessity of context-specific strategies, aligning with the works of Seidlhofer (2013) and Crystal (2002). Seidlhofer (2013) emphasizes the importance of understanding English as a lingua franca in diverse cultural and regional settings, acknowledging that the use and perceptions of the English language can significantly differ across contexts. Crystal (2002) further advocates for context-specific teaching methods in language education to cater to the unique needs and challenges presented by various regions. In light of these perspectives, the study's findings affirm that contextual factors significantly influence how EFL teachers perceive the role of English education, underscoring the need for tailored approaches that consider each region's specific characteristics and requirements. This outcome suggests that language education strategies should be adapted to the particular contexts in which they are implemented to be more effective and meaningful.

In sum, the study's findings reject the null hypothesis, demonstrating the significant role of practical application and real-world relevance in the undervaluation of English education in Benin. Both students and educators emphasize the importance of practical, real-world applicability in valuing English. These findings align with prior research on language learning motivation by scholars like Dörnyei (2003) and Ushioda (2001). They support all three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) and emphasize the influence of practical relevance, motivation, and context-specific teaching methods in enhancing the perceived value of English education in Benin. These outcomes have critical implications for education policies and practices in the country, highlighting the need for future research to explore further strategies addressing the

undervaluation of English education, considering the multifaceted nature of motivation and practical relevance in language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Future research should focus on developing and implementing targeted strategies to improve the perception and value of English education in Benin's secondary schools.

## **6. Recommendations and Strategies for Enhancing English Language Education**

This section outlines key recommendations and strategies to enhance the quality and perceived value of English language education in Benin's secondary schools. These proposals, drawn from the study's findings and aligned with existing literature, are intended to guide educational policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in addressing the challenges associated with the undervaluation of English education.

1. **Promote Practical Language Learning:** To increase the practical relevance of English education, curriculum developers and educators should emphasize real-life applications. Incorporating language skills necessary for everyday communication and future career prospects can significantly boost students' motivation and the perceived value of English.
2. **Motivational Interventions:** Implementing motivational strategies for educators and learners is crucial. Professional development opportunities for teachers, designed to enhance their enthusiasm and pedagogical skills, can lead to more engaging English classes. Students, in turn, should be exposed to dynamic and interactive learning experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward the subject.
3. **Context-Specific Teaching Approaches:** Recognizing regional variations in perceptions of English education, implementing context-specific teaching methods becomes imperative. Teachers should be encouraged to tailor their approaches to their students' specific needs and backgrounds. It ensures that English education aligns with the local context and enhances its practical applicability.
4. **Quality Learning Materials:** Access to high-quality learning materials, including textbooks and digital resources, can significantly impact the effectiveness of English language



education. Investment in up-to-date, culturally relevant, and context-specific materials should be a priority.

5. **Interdisciplinary Integration:** Creating interdisciplinary links between English education and other subjects can enhance the practicality of language skills. For example, integrating English with vocational or technical courses can illustrate its real-world applications.
6. **Community Involvement:** Collaboration with local communities and businesses can provide opportunities for students to apply their English skills in practical settings. This engagement can highlight the importance of English for future success and further motivate students.
7. **Teacher Professional Development:** Continuous teacher training programs, including workshops and access to the latest pedagogical resources, are essential. They help educators stay updated with best practices, fostering their motivation to teach English effectively.
8. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments of the effectiveness of English language programs are vital. It involves collecting data on student performance, educator satisfaction, and curriculum relevance, allowing for adjustments and improvements.
9. **Promotion of Cultural Exchange:** Encouraging student and teacher exchanges with English-speaking countries can provide authentic exposure to the language and its practical use.
10. **Long-term Vision:** Educational policymakers should develop a long-term vision for English language education, including clear goals and strategies for its development. Such a vision can guide decision-making and ensure sustained improvements.

These recommendations and strategies collectively address the multifaceted nature of English education in Benin, emphasizing the importance of practical relevance, motivation, and context-specific teaching methods. By implementing these proposals, Benin can work towards enhancing the perceived value of English education and preparing students for success in an increasingly globalized world.

## Conclusion

This study, guided by specific research objectives, questions, and hypotheses, aimed to understand English language education in Benin's secondary schools comprehensively. The primary research objectives were to address key questions about the undervaluation of English education, strategies for enhancing motivation among educators and learners, and approaches to bridging the gap between English education in the curriculum and its practical relevance. The study formulated four hypotheses, including a null hypothesis (H0) and three alternative hypotheses (H1, H2, H3), to achieve these objectives.

Data collection methods were employed, encompassing surveys, interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis incorporated statistical techniques, thematic analysis, and comparative methods. The findings of this study offer valuable insights into English language education in Benin. The rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) highlights the significance of practical application and real-world relevance in evaluating English education. This outcome is in alignment with previous research by scholars like Dörnyei (2003) and Ushioda (2001), who emphasize the role of practicality in language learning motivation. Furthermore, the study underscores the pivotal role of motivation in shaping attitudes toward English education. By implementing motivational interventions tailored to both educators and students, a more positive and enthusiastic approach to English language learning can be cultivated, potentially reversing its undervaluation. This finding is supported by the extensive work of Dörnyei (2003) and Dörnyei & Ushioda (2021), emphasizing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in language learning.

The investigation into strategies for bridging the gap between curriculum-based English education and its practical applications emphasizes the importance of context-specific teaching methods. This finding is congruent with previous research by Seidlhofer (2013) and Crystal (2002), who advocate for adapting language education to learners' specific needs and contexts.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. Educators and policymakers must recognize the multifunctional role of English education and adapt pedagogical approaches accordingly. It ensures that English language learning remains relevant and valuable in the context of Benin's secondary schools. Given English's status as a global

lingua franca, effective teaching and learning are vital for preparing students to engage in international discourse and opportunities.

Overall, the study provides critical recommendations. Embracing innovative teaching strategies, fostering motivation, and addressing learners' practical needs are pivotal steps toward enhancing the status of English education in Benin and empowering its students for success on the global stage. However, the study has certain limitations, primarily regarding sample size and scope. Future research should consider a broader and more diverse sample, encompassing various regions of Benin, to overcome these limitations and expand the applicability of these findings.

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