

## Research Article



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## Introducing the competency-based approach to ESL instruction in Cameroon: A Freirean reading

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**Abstract**

Education is not a banking process where all-knowing teachers stuff passive learners with static facts, but a dialogical process by which teachers also learn and learners also teach (Freire, 2000). In February 2013, the government of Cameroon through the Ministry of Secondary Education organized nation-wide week-long induction seminars for teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). The goal was to get the teachers of ESL to understand the nature of and how to apply the Competency-Based Approach to English Language Teaching (CBAELT). The seminar was pedagogic in that the participants comprised ‘teachers’ (Regional Pedagogic Inspectors) and ‘learners’ (teachers of ESL). This study set out to, first, assess the relationship between the principles of the Competency-Based Approach to Language Teaching (CBALT), and the basis of Freire’s Dialogical Model of education, and, second, examine the extent to which the introduction of the CBAELT was dialogical. Data were obtained through participant observation and the CBAELT seminar document, and analysed using content analysis, interpretation and argumentation. The findings reveal that the principles of the CBALT largely align with Freire’s Dialogical Model of education. However, the top-bottom manner in which the CBAELT was introduced does adequately respond to the demands of Freire’s dialogical model of education.

**Keywords:** Cameroon, dialogical, Freire, top-bottom

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**Public Interest Statement**

This paper focuses on English language teaching and learning in a second language environment, Cameroon. In a situation where there are constant mutations in English as a second language teaching and learning methods, it is important to examine if new teaching methods meet basic educational criteria- in this case Freire dialogical process.

**Introduction**

Activities in human societies are subject to reforms and the teaching of ESL in Cameroon is no exception. In the domain of education, reforms tend to describe the changes within the school system (Vasquez-Martinez et al., 2013) and these changes generally have an objective to attain or a goal to accomplish. The motivations for reforms in any educational system could vary depending on the context, priority or policies in force. While change is constant within any educational milieu, the processes and procedures that undergird this change have implications for the attainment of the objectives for the change. In 2012, the government of Cameroon through the Ministry of Secondary Education introduced a novel approach to the teaching of ESL in Cameroon. This was the Competency-Based approach, which according to Docking (1994), focuses on what learners can do with language in an authentic or real-life situation, as opposed to just knowing much about language. This approach is clearly needs-driven, on the part of the learners, and as Richards and Rodgers (2001) have pointed out, these needs have to be identified a priori. This approach to teaching ESL in Cameroon is fairly 'disruptive' because, first, the CBA is a learner-centred approach and, second, it emphasises meaningful interaction in the course of the lesson (Auerbach, 1986). These two characteristics inhabit a change in the roles of both teachers and learners of ESL. This change in roles and the need for meaningful interaction between the teacher and the student, have long been advocated for by Freire (2002). To him, an educational system is inherently oppressive, when teachers are constructed as those with exclusive rights to knowledge, and learners, as empty receptacles of that knowledge. The alternative is a humanising educational system wherein both the teacher and the learner are constructed as capable of teaching and learning from each other. The role of the teacher as a learner has been discussed and acknowledged (Garet et al., 2001; Ginsburg, 2012; Newton, 2018). Teachers' learning is said to be effective when their needs are duly identified and met through scaffolding by a trained support person (Garet et al., 2001). Within the context of the introduction of the competency-based approach to ESL instruction in Cameroon, teachers of ESL assumed the role of learners. In this role, they were trained by Regional Pedagogic Inspectors (RPIs) of English Language on the nature and application of the CBA to ESL instruction. The relationship between the teachers (RPIs of English) and the learners (teachers of ESL) in the course of the induction seminar is of interest to this study. This study therefore revisits the procedures that undergirded the introduction of the CBA to ESL instruction, in view of establishing the points of convergence with and departure from the Freirean concept of a humanising educational system. Specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent is the CBALT a response to the anti-dialogical banking system of education?
2. To what extent was the introduction of the CBA to ESL instruction dialogical?

## Paulo Freire's Dialogic Pedagogy

### Background

Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educator whose theory of critical pedagogy has had profound implications for teaching and learning across the globe from the 1970s till date (Shih, 2018). It is the responsibility of what is considered a school, to transmit the values of the society (Freire, 2000). For schools to effectively achieve this, the teachers therein need to incarnate values and attitudes required by learners to make a contribution towards positive change in the society. However, Freire noted with dissent that schools were dissociated from the society, in terms of the content and how it was being delivered to the learners. The need to integrate the society (through realia), therefore formed the basis of Freire's educational philosophy, the hallmark of which was dialogue. According to Kazepides (2012), dialogue has gained traction in recent times, as a tool against oppression. Freire was reacting to what he describes as the banking method of education. This is an educational philosophy/practice where the teacher is all-knowing and the learner is empty and a receptacle of all and only what the teacher knows. In its place, Freire advocates for a dynamic dialectical approach to education. This approach is based on an understanding of humanity and the society, which must form the basis of the principles and approaches that underlie teaching and learning. To Freire (2000), humanisation and dehumanisation are two verifiable realities in every historical context or society. Dehumanisation manifests as injustice, exploitation, violence and oppression to mention but these. Humanisation on the other hand, is the process of regaining humanity lost through dehumanisation. It is characterized by a yearning for freedom and justice, the struggle to recover humanity, the emancipation of labour, the overcoming of alienation, and the affirmation of the individual. Freire's philosophy borders on the need to recognise humanity and reclaim it from all forms of dehumanisation through what he calls struggle. Struggle is used to mean the act of overcoming one's oppression without seeking to oppress the oppressor. This is because any attempt at liberating one's self from oppression by oppressing the oppressor would create an imbalance and avail a recipe for an endless cycle of oppression. The process of humanisation proceeds from the recognition, by the oppressed, that they are a party to their oppression through the process of adherence. Adherence is the perceived necessity of oppression as a condition for recognition. For instance, sub-oppressors (oppressed group members engaged in the act of oppression) engage in adherence when they feel that their recognition (manhood), depends on their ability to oppress others. To break loose from oppression and regain humanity requires the oppressed to recognise the cause of their oppression (and the oppressor), and take active steps towards liberating themselves as well as the oppressors and sub-oppressors.

In the domain of education, oppression is manifestable in the teacher-student relationship, which according to Freire is understood in terms of the narrative character. Within the banking system of education, teaching is constructed as the deposition of knowledge into an ignorant learner by the exclusively knowledgeable teacher. Table 1 features some of the roles of the teacher and the student within the banking system of education.

Table 1. *Roles of the Teacher and the Student within the Banking System of Education*

SN	Teacher	Student
1	The teacher is an active participant.	The learner is a passive participant.
2	The teacher narrates.	The learner listens.
3	The teacher is knowledgeable.	The student is ignorant (though unwilfully).
4	The existence of the teacher depends on the ignorance of the student.	The student is dispossessed of the responsibility of educating the teacher.
5	The description of reality is static.	Students reproduce what they have internalised from the teacher's narration.
6	The teacher does not deploy examples from the learners' existential experiences.	The students cannot apply knowledge from the classroom to the society.
7	The teacher is a 'gift' giver and whose gift is knowledge.	The student is the receiver of the teacher's 'gift' (knowledge).
8	The more knowledge the teacher has the better the teacher is.	The more passive a student is, the better.

The banking system of education has been described as both oppressive and unsustainable. One reason is because it suppresses creative enterprises on the part of the students and disconnects them from their lived experiences. According to Freire (2000), this educational system serves the interest of the oppressor and invariably inspires an alternative pedagogy for the oppressed. In this alternative, teachers have an ability to learn and students must have the ability to teach. This is what is known as the reconciliation of the teacher-student contradiction. This is necessary because the virtue of pedagogy stems from the fact that it has to be devoid of manipulation, which is a tool of oppression. Any revolution against the banking system of education must therefore have as goal to implement a co-intentional education, where both teachers and students are identified as subjects, knowledge is co-created by the teacher and the student, and praxis is shared between the teacher and the student. Co-intentional education is based on the notion of dialogue without which the will of the oppressor would prevail. Freire's views about dialogue were influenced by his experiences and are premised on the following:

### **The basis of Freire's dialogue**

Freire (1970) had earlier noted that, education should be designed in a way as to promote free and critical thinking amongst learners through dialogue. Freire's dialogical, as opposed to the banking system of education, is based on three general principles viz:

**The right to speak**

Everyone retains the right to speak as it is in speaking that they name the world which they inhabit. The deprivation of anyone from speaking is an exercise in dehumanisation, a manifestation of which is oppression. By democratising speaking, the recipe for dialogue is established.

**Dialogue is not monodirectional**

Dialogue cannot take place by one party 'depositing' ideas on the other, nor can it be obtained when one party is compelled to (usually unwilfully) ingest the 'depositions' made by another party. This would be characteristic oppression. There is need for information and ideas to flow without restriction, from all directions, if dialogue must be achieved.

**Dialogue is not argumentation**

Dialogue is not to be understood as a polemic between those seeking to name the world, but as a quest to impose the truth.

**Dialogue between the teacher and the student**

In pedagogy, Freire has identified 5 elements crucial to any dialogue between the teacher and the student.

**Love**

According to Freire, education is an act of love and the goal of education should be to create or co-create a world where it is easy to love. Freire (2000) considers love to be an expression of courage on the subject expressing love, and commitment on the parties involved. This commitment is only possible if the participants are considered equal and trustable. As Freire (2000) puts it 'if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue' (p. 90).

**Humility**

Humility is the opposite of arrogance. The success of any act of dialogue necessitates humility on the part of the participants, especially as they seek to co-create reality or name the world (Freire, 2000).

**Faith**

Successful dialogue also depends on faith in the ability of others to make and remake, create and recreate, and their vocation to the fullness of their humanity. Any dialogical being therefore needs to have faith in the participants in a dialogue, even before having the chance to meet them. Any dialogue without faith is inclined to fester into paternalistic manipulation (Freire, 2000).

**Hope**

For dialogue to take place, the participants need to have hope, the absence of which can forestall the goal of the dialogue. Such hope must be expressed actively and not by the folding of arms. To Freire (2000) 'if the dialoguers expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounter will be empty and sterile, bureaucratic and tedious' (p. 92).

## Critical Thinking

According to Freire (2000), critical thinking is an important recipe for dialogue. This is the kind of thinking that acknowledges the bond between people and the world, that perceives reality as dynamic, and not static, and that is not dissociated from action. This thinking sharply contrasts with naïve thinking which is marked by the acceptance of what has been oppressively normalised.

## The Competency-Based Approach to Language Teaching (CBALT)

The Competency-Based Approach to Language Teaching (CBAELT) derives from Competency-Based Education (CBE), an educational movement which emerged in the United States of America in the 1970s. In general, CBE advocates learning and teaching based on learning outcomes. In this approach goals and objectives are defined in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviour, which students should possess at the end of a course of study. By extension, the CBLT, therefore, focuses not only on learners' knowledge about language but on the acquisition of skills and attitudes that enable them to use language to communicate (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The CBALT emerged against a backdrop of structuralist approaches to language teaching. These approaches emphasized knowledge about language structure, the outcome of which was that language learners tended to imbibe enormous information or knowledge about language even when such knowledge did not translate to an ability to effectively use language in real-life situations. The CBALT fed off this weakness to propose a model of teaching language that emphasized the acquisition of competencies that facilitated effective communication out of the classroom. Enunciated in the 1970s, Freire's dialogic model of education is somewhat consistent with the key features of the CBALT which also gained traction in the 1970s. According to Auerbach (1986) there are eight features which characterize the CBALT as outlined below.

1. A focus on successful functioning in society which means that language is taught in order to prepare the students for the different demands of the world.
2. A focus on life skills to determine that language is always taught as a medium of communication in concrete tasks in which specific language forms/skills are required.
3. Task or performance-centered orientation; the focus on what the students can do with the language instead of knowledge of the language.
4. Modularize instruction emphasizes that the competencies which are taught have to be systematically separated into manageable parts so that the teacher and the students can handle the content and realize their progress.
5. Outcomes that are made explicit a priori. "Outcomes are public knowledge known and agreed upon by both the learner and the teacher. Therefore, the students clearly know what behavior and skills are expected of them.
6. Continuous and ongoing assessment which means that the students are tested to determine which skill they lack and after they have had instructions on that skill, they are tested again to ascertain whether they have achieved the necessary skills or not.
7. Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives; the assessment is based on the students' performance of specific behavior instead of traditional paper-and-pencil-tests.
8. Individualized, student-centered instruction. The instructions given by the teacher are not time-based but the focus is on the progress the individual students make at their own rate.

### Research design and methods

This study uses a qualitative observational research method known as participant observation. Consistent with this method, the researchers purposefully monitored the proceedings during the induction seminar that actuated the CBA to ESL instruction in Cameroon. Based on the organisation, activities and interactions that unfolded in the course of the five-day seminar, deductions have been made regarding the research questions posed in this study. In order to rid the study of subjective analyses, a summarised snapshot of the induction seminar proceedings has been provided. This description (snapshot) is analysed using the techniques of interpretation and argumentation, not only of the seminar proceedings but the features of the CBALT, with respect to how they align (or not) with Freire's educational philosophy in general and dialogical model of education in particular.

### The induction seminar on the introduction of the CBA to the teaching of ESL

In February 2013, the government of Cameroon through the Ministry of Secondary Education organized nation-wide week-long induction seminars to apprise teachers at the Observation Sub Cycle (OSC- that is Form one and two) in the Anglophone system of education, of the principles and practice of the Competence-Based Approach to English Language Teaching (CBAELT). Those invited to the seminar were teachers of ESL, EFL and Literature. The induction seminar under study too place in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. In specific terms, the aims of this new programme of study as detailed out in the seminar documents from the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC, 2013) had the following objectives:

- To enable the learners to act competently in real-life situations that require them to communicate in English;
- To enable learners to use English as a medium of instruction and learning for all other subjects;
- To encourage learners set their own learning goals and evaluates their own progress;
- To help learners use language to acquire knowledge and thinking skills and to make rational judgments;
- To prepare learners to communicate in English in an international context.
- To develop the learner's ability to apply knowledge of language systems and develop behavioural strategies and skills necessary for social adaptation. (p. 4)

A series of life skills that the learner is expected to develop by the end of the course as also detailed out in the seminar document include the ability to:

- Think critically;
- Solve problems;
- Demonstrate interpersonal skills;
- Demonstrate life-management skills. (P.4)

It was also expected that this approach would enable learners to assume a variety of roles as speakers, listeners, readers and writers in a wide variety of situations. The learners were equally expected to deal with the relatively simple situations at first and gradually move on to increasingly complex ones thus progressively expanding their language and skills.

Meanwhile, the following outcomes were expected from learners according to the MINESEC (2013) seminar document circulated during the seminar.

- Read and respond to a variety of texts and demonstrate a positive attitude towards reading and language;
- Listen and respond to information from a wide variety of sources – radio, TV, speeches, sermons, songs, etc;
- Speak fluently and expressively on a range of topics;
- Present and develop ideas effectively in speech and writing for a variety of purpose and audiences;
- Write legibly, coherently and cohesively for different purposes and audiences;
- Demonstrate knowledge about language and non-print / electronic media;
- Think critically and solve problems in everyday life situations. (P.6)

### **Snapshot of the induction seminar proper**

The induction seminar which lasted a week, had two categories of participants: Regional Pedagogic Inspectors (RPIs) for ESL, EFL and Literature in English, and teachers of ESL, EFL and Literature in English. Given the duration (5 days) of the seminar, all Heads of Departments alongside two other teachers were invited per school. The justification was that not all teachers could attend and leave the learners untaught for one week. Also, it was expected that the Heads of Departments alongside the others who attended would in turn organise training sessions in their various schools to acquaint the others with the nature and application of the CBA to ESL instruction. The RPIs were tasked with inducting the teachers into the CBA to the teaching of ESL, EFL and Literature in English. The seminar had morning and afternoon sessions and featured different workshops according to the needs and subject(s) taught. The following observations during the five-day seminar stood out.

1. The RPIs assumed the role of teachers while the teachers assumed the role of learners throughout the seminar.
2. The seminar witnessed a steady decline in attendance much to the dissatisfaction of the RPIs
3. The first workshop involved all the teachers and focused on an introduction to the CBA to teaching language and literature.
4. Though a novel approach, most of the teachers could identify semblances with previous approaches used in teaching language and literature
5. During the workshops, the RPIs were more active in providing guidance while the teachers were more passive by mostly accepting what they were being told
6. In a few workshop sessions where teacher participation was the focus, this was limited to their past professional experiences and expertise and not on the applicability of the CBA to ESL instruction.

### **Results**

#### **The nexus between the CBA to ESL instruction and Freire's dialogical system of education**

The first question this study set out to address is the extent to which the CBALT aligns with



Freire's problem-posing model of education, which is the alternative of the anti-dialogical banking system of education. Interestingly, both the CBALT and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* were advocated in the 1970s. As evident on Table 2, both the CBALT and Freire's educational philosophy converge on many fronts when one considers the features that underpin the CBALT. In other words, the CBALT and Freire's educational philosophy largely converge in their opposition to the anti-dialogical banking system of education.

Table 2. *The Nexus between the CBA to ESL Instruction and Freire's (2002) Dialogical System of Education*

No	Feature of the CBALT	Connection with Freire's (2000) educational philosophy
1	A focus on successful functioning in society which means that language is taught in order to prepare the students for the different demands of the world.	'Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is spectator, not re-creator' (p.75). 'human beings emerge from the world, objectify it, and in so doing can understand it and transform it with their labor' (p.125)
2	A focus on life skills to determine that language is always taught as a medium of communication in concrete tasks in which specific language forms/skills are required	In the banking model the teacher does not draw from real life skills but exists rather to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration— contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. (p.71).  In the problem-solving model, 'no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are "owned" by the teacher (p.80)
3	Task or performance-centered orientation. The focus on what the students can do with the language instead of knowledge of the language	Within the banking system of education, 'the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.' (p.72)  Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers (p.83).

5	Modularize instruction emphasizes that the competencies which are taught have to be systematically separated into manageable parts so that the teacher and the students can handle the content and realize their progress.	‘...only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher’s thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication’ (p.77).
6	Outcomes that are made explicit a priori. “Outcomes are public knowledge known and agreed upon by both the learner and the teacher Therefore the students clearly know what behavior and skills are expected of them.	‘How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? How can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart from others—mere “its” in whom I cannot recognize other “I”s? How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of “pure” men, the owners of truth and knowledge, for whom all non-members are “these people” or “the great unwashed”? How can I dialogue if I start from the premise that naming the world is the task of an elite?’ (p.90)
7	Continuous and ongoing assessment which means that the students are tested to determine which skill they lack and after they have had instructions on that skill, they are tested again to ascertain whether they have achieved the necessary skills or not.	
8	Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives. The assessment is based on the students’ performance of specific behavior instead of traditional paper-and-pencil-tests	

9	Individualized, student-centered instruction. The instructions given by the teacher are not time-based but the focus is on the progress the individual students make at their own rate.	
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### The alignment between the introduction of the CBA to ESL instruction and Freire's dialogic

The second question this study set out to address is the extent to which the introduction of the CBA to ESL instruction in Cameroon can be considered dialogical. The participants during the induction seminar were RPIs (considered teachers), and teachers of ESL, EFL and Literature in English (considered learners). The 'teachers' had the week-long task of inducting the 'learners' into the nature and application of the CBA to ESL instruction. By interpreting the seminar proceedings in the light of the basis of Freire's dialogue and his prescription of the relationship between the teacher and the student, the results on Table 3 were obtained.

Table 3. *The Alignment between the Introduction of the CBA To ESL Instruction and Freire's Dialogic*

S/N	Aspect of Freire's Dialogic	Evidence
1	The right to speak	<p>The induction seminar was interactive and the 'teachers' were generous with the time accorded to the 'learners' to ask questions, share professional experiences, and contribute to the discussions.</p> <p>However, the freedom to speak was not extended to the 'learners' as far as the topics of discussion were concerned. The 'teachers' exclusively introduced the seminar topics and sets of goals. The first two questions on the first workshop document for instance were 'What is the CBA?' and 'Have you heard of the CBA before now?'</p> <p>This implies that the 'learners' did not participate in the decision regarding the pedagogic framework to adopt for the teaching of ESL.EFL or Literature in English.</p>
2	Dialogue is not monodirectional	<p>On key issues such as CBA syllabuses, lesson preparation, lesson delivery, and assessment, the flow of information was largely monodirectional. For instance, the 'teachers' busied themselves with reading out, explaining, and exemplifying the above key issues with almost no input from the 'learners.' Occasionally, however, some 'learners' drew from their knowledge and experience to contribute to these sessions.</p>

3	Dialogue is not argumentation	The seminar did not seek to impose the truth as expected of this principle. Rather, the ‘teachers’ took on the defensive in the course of the different workshops to argue for the suitability of the CBA to ESL instruction in Cameroon.
4	Love	Love is based on commitment, and commitment issues from the status of dialoguers as equals. During the week-long induction seminar, attendance witnessed a steady decline, a probable indication of lack of commitment. In addition, the power imbalance between the ‘teachers’ and ‘learners’ manifested in the ‘talking teachers’ and ‘listening learners’ binary, diminished the equality needed for genuine love to be expressed. The manner in which the seminar was introduced was marked by what Freire terms ‘lovelessness’
5	Humility	Humility is the opposite of arrogance and arrogance is manifestable is a dialoguer’s projection of ignorance on others and knowledge on themselves. The introduction of the CBA to ESL in Cameroon was arrogant by the presumed knowledgeable ability of the ‘teachers’ and ignorance of the ‘learners’, as regards knowledge and application of the CBA to ESL instruction.
6	Faith	The facilitators during the week-long induction seminar did not seek the opinion of the teachers regarding the suitability of the CBA to ESL instruction, as reflected in some of the questions asked. (‘What is the CBA?’, ‘Have you heard of the CBA before now?’). This robbed the process of the faith which dialoguers must have with respect to the abilities of others to make decisions.
7	Hope	Hope is built on one’s incompleteness. The facilitators (‘teachers’) during the induction seminar acknowledged their incompleteness by occasionally seeking the opinions of the ‘learners’ with regard to the contents of the training. The hope expressed by the ‘teachers’ is traceable to the need to organise the induction seminar to begin with, in the hope that the interactions therein, would cocreate reality. However, the steady decline in attendance, and the presumed ignorance of the ‘learners’ are inimical to the hope of the ‘learners’ vis-à-vis the manner in which the CBA to ESL instruction was introduced.

8	Critical thinking	The introduction of the CBA to ESL instruction in Cameroon was not preceded by any consensus between the 'teachers' and 'learners' with respect to the choice of a teaching approach to adopt. On the contrary, the 'learners' were restricted to sharing experiences and ideas considered relevant to the CBA to ESL instruction without the option of debating the suitability of this approach. The passive reception of information on the nature and application of the CBA to ESL instruction is inconsistent with the critical thinking that is expected to characterise the relationship between the teacher and the student.
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## Discussion

Educational reforms are consistent with most educational programmes around the world. The introduction of the CBA to ESL instruction in Cameroon in 2013 was one of such reforms. An assessment of the main features of the CBA to ESL instruction reveals that most of them align with Freire's problem-solving model of education. This is supported by the fact that Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in which most of his views on education are expressed, was first published in the 1970s when the CBALT was also picking up steam. To Freire (2000), the problem-posing model of education rescues learners from imposed passivity and crowns them with active and thinking faculties that can freely engage in the task of solving practical problems. As Auerbach (1986) has equally pointed out with respect to the CBA, the goal is to prepare learners for the demands of the real world, reason why assessment within the CBA is performance-based. This also means that teachers of ESL in Cameroon need to import realia into the classroom in order to prepare learners to be able to effectively communicate and be communicated to in authentic situations. To Soames (2010), realia are things from everyday life that can be brought into the classroom with the purpose of establishing a connection between words, phrases, or sentences and the objects they represent in real life. The successful application of realia can help pull down the walls between what is taught in class and what obtains in the world beyond the classroom (Nkwetisama, 2012).

This study has equally revealed the nonalignment between the manner in which the CBA to ESL instruction was introduced, and what Freire considers to be the basis of a genuine dialogue and the principles that must undergird the relationship between a teacher and a student. As revealed in the analyses, the manner in which the induction seminar unfolded did not accord to the 'learners' the full right to speak, largely instituted a monodirectional flow of information about the CBA to ESL instruction from the 'teachers' to the 'learners', and was marked by an argument for the suitability instead of a revelation of the truth about the CBA to ESL instruction. In addition, the relationship between the 'teachers' and the 'learners' during the seminar was devoid of the love, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking needed for genuine dialogue to take place. This probably explains the steady decline in attendance and the disaffection observed amongst the 'learners' in the course of the seminar. This is also linkable to the massive failures in implementing the CBA to ESL instruction. According to Siéwoué (2014), the challenges teachers face implementing the CBA to teaching EFL include understanding the new approach, lesson

planning, lesson delivery and evaluation. In educational reforms therefore, it is vital for the relationship between ‘teachers’ and ‘learners’ to integrate the principles of love, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking as a basis for proposing and instituting pedagogic reforms. Dialoguers (‘teachers’ and ‘learners’) must retain the full rights to speak, react to issues without any form of restriction, and collectively engage in the search for truth instead of argumentation. This is otherwise known as a horizontal relationship between dialoguers (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). Educational reforms inspired by love, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking can also help mitigate the failures of the scope that are currently associated with the application of the CBA to ESL instruction in Cameroon, despite its potential to vitalize the teaching/learning of ESL. As Friere (2000) has pointed out, a good number of political and educational programmes do not succeed because they are usually designed by people who consider only their views of what is real, ‘never once taking into account (except as mere objects of their actions) the men-in-a-situation to whom their program was ostensibly directed’ (p.94). As shown in the current study, the views of the ‘learners’ with respect to how the CBA to ESL instruction would be introduced, were not sought. Nonetheless, this study does not establish a causative link between the manner in which the CBA to ESL instruction was introduced and the challenges encountered in its application, though this is inferable.

### **Conclusion**

The CBA holds promise for the teaching of ESL in Cameroon. However, it has not been successfully applied from its introduction in 2013. The manner in which this approach was introduced (top-bottom) has confirmed a disincentive to the effective application of this approach. The evidence in this regard is drawn from Freire’s dialogical approach to education. One specific reason for the unsuccessful application of this pedagogic approach is the fact that the teachers of ESL, EFL and Literature in English were not cast to play active roles in the conception, planning and execution of this pedagogic approach. This harbours the motive to estrange them from the obligation and commitment to apply this approach to the teaching of ESL.

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### **Authorship and level of Contribution**

Terence Nsai Kiwoh and Jude Kaki Chia contributed, on equal basis, to the design and implementation of this research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

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