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## Studying the French Language Gap among Primary Schools Students in Mali

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### Abstract

It examines the gap in French language skills among primary school students (an issue of some concern as it is the official language of instruction) for students in Mali. The study uses mixed-methods, investigating students' language proficiency quantitatively and providing qualitative data on the perceptions from students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Main results indicate significant weaknesses in French language competencies, particularly reading: 26% of students have difficulty with it. The causes of the gap are lack of exposure to French out of school, poor teaching materials, and social-economic inequalities. The study emphasizes the necessary for specific interventions, including more effective teacher training and providing adequate educational supplies as well as institutionally relevant curricula. Furthermore, by promoting community and family engagement and using technology we can develop more inclusive learning environments. Combating the francophone deficit is indispensable for making educational opportunities more equal and improving the *mana* (i.e., living conditions) of Malian students.

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### 1. Introduction

French is a cornerstone of Mali's schooling curriculum, both the language of instruction and a primary means of communication for academia and government. Nevertheless, despite its stardom, the French language proficiency of high school students throughout the country is widely varied. This difference could be the result of several factors such as regional differences, uneven accessibility to good quality education and different social backgrounds. Investigating such a language gap should help us to better appreciate the difficulties that students face in learning French, and develop successful strategies for improving their capacity for learning a new language, which is necessary both for their academic success and for professional opportunities tomorrow in Mali's multilingual society.

There is a complex linguistic situation in Mali with students' competencies of the official language, French, particularly that of primary school learners. Although the French language is used as medium of instruction, many students experience difficulties to learn it and a wide gap between them occurs that hinders their learning achievement (Aminata *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[2]</sup>. This discrepancy is often explained by the scarcity of FFL outside classrooms, low quality of teaching materials and supremacy of native languages in everyday use (Traoré & Diarra, 2019) <sup>[32, 30]</sup>. An awareness of the breadth of this language gap and its implications is important when addressing how to best create programs that advance linguistic strength among all students across Mali's primary educational sector. The overview that this issue gives us can be observed to see how, in an academic and social level in Mali, the language changes always play a leading role.

The role of the French language in the educational system of Mali is enormous as it serves as an official language and acts as a very significant medium of instruction at the primary level. As an ex-French colony, Mali has long-standing French as the medium of governance, education, and a world language which naturally affects its educational and social progress (Sarr & Traoré, 2018) <sup>[23]</sup>. Yet, despite the obvious importance and prominence of the French language, discrepancies in its mastery between primary students have started unveiling themselves detrimental to primary students' educational pathways and future prospects (Diakité 2020). The analysis is essential for informing policy decisions that will lead to improving student achievement and ensuring access to knowledge in places like Mali where French does play a significant role in the education

system. This is an attempt to investigate the dimension and existence of the French language gap among Malian high-school students, unveiling its underlying causes and possible ways out.

### 1.1. Research Problem Statement

The French language proficiency among students is vast in secondary schools in Mali and poses an educational challenge to effective communication, academic pursuit, and career opportunity. The Official language is French for teaching and administration, but students have poor mastery of French that influences their reading, writing and speaking (Traoré, 2018) <sup>[34]</sup>. This gap is often said to result from unequal access to quality language instruction, social-economic factors, and limited exposure to French outside the classroom, which prevents students from achieving overall academic success and integration into the wider Francophone community.

Language Gap in French is vital to improve the standard of education and equal access for all pupils in Mali. Language proficiency enhancement can result in higher academic performance, a greater participation in domestic and international exchanges and overall socio-economic advancement (Kone & Sylla 2020) <sup>[14]</sup>. Additionally, closing this gap promotes national development by preparing students with the language skills they need in order to exercise their rights as active citizens and engage effectively in the global community. Thus, the need to identify and minimize the determinants of French language deficiency in primary school students is imperative for enhancement of quality education and national development.

### 1.2. Significance of the Study

The focus of the French language gap between Malian children will help policy makers and education authorities in Mali to design policies that not only influence an ability but also to stimulate their interest for one of the most important languages that can lead them to a successful academic career full of opportunities ahead. Since French is the language of education and a passport to higher-level academic study and international exchanges, addressing deficiencies can contribute to improving equity in learners' learning outcomes and to enhancing their access to global opportunities.

On a practical level, this research can inform the development of curriculum, teacher education and resource distribution in ways that can address these inequalities making education more inclusive and effective. What could be more important than closing the language gap (well-studied for children, but what about students) so that those with linguistic potential can reach our academic standards, and not only in their outward-bound applications? For learners this is a key to both immediate and long-term futures of job prospects or further study qualifications where there are certain basic linguistic skills everyone is expected to have. This research thus has the potential to support sustainable educational growth and socio-economic development in Mali.

### 1.3. Research Questions

- What is the extent of the French language gap among primary school students in Mali?

- What factors contribute to this language gap?
- How can this gap be effectively addressed?

### 1.4. Research Objectives

- To ascertain the size of the gap in French-speaking skills.
- To investigate the role of these variables on the language gap.
- To suggest ways to close the gap.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

### 2.1. Theoretical Frameworks:

#### 2.1.1. Theories of second language acquisition (e.g., Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Sociocultural Theory)

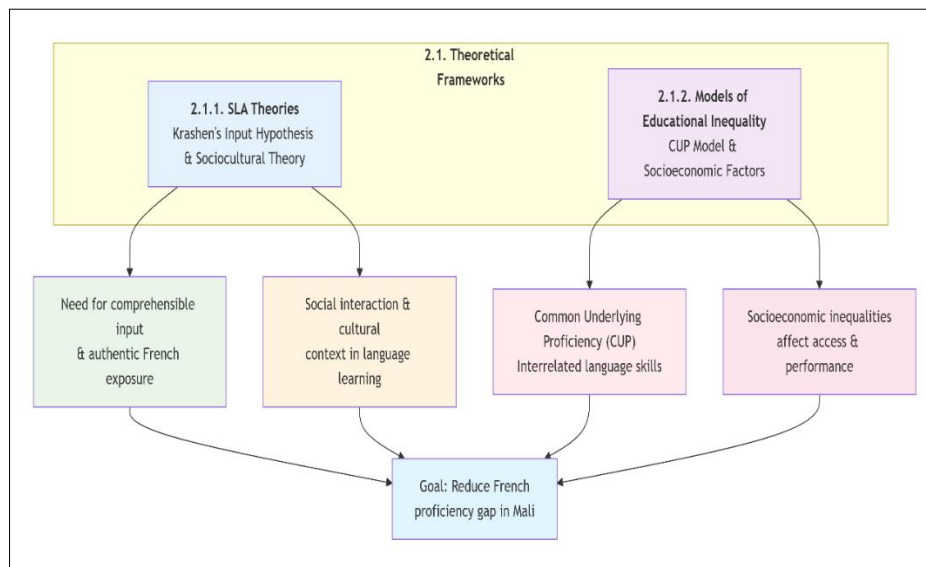
The French Language Gap of Primary School Students in Mali can usefully be understood by reference to theories of second language acquisition such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Sociocultural Theory. Krashen's Input Hypothesis maintains the necessity of comprehensible input a little beyond what the learner already knows (Krashen, 1982) <sup>[16]</sup>. In a Malian classroom setting genuine and comprehensible French input is too rare to support development of the language in most students.

Moreover, Sociocultural Theory, grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) work <sup>[37]</sup>, emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural background in language acquisition. The inability to interact meaningfully with fluent speakers and practice in context that often exists in a classroom in Mali could also account for the continued gap because students do not internalize elements without supported practice. Both theories thus imply that increasing access to CI and interaction in culturally appropriate settings could help reduce the French proficiency gap between Malian primary school students.

#### 2.1.2. Models of educational inequality and language proficiency

Educational inequality and language proficiency learning models are the key framework that explains the differences in mastery of French amongst primary school students. With French as medium of instruction, students' performance is greatly affected with their level of fluency as the ones that opens avenues for further studies (Lüders, 2010) <sup>[20]</sup>. Following Cummins (1978) <sup>[7]</sup>, the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model posits that language traits are interrelated across settings, impeding children with limited French exposure outside of school.

In Mali, other socio-economic effects including the opportunity to quality education and access to resources worsen these disparities which then lead to a language chasm amongst learners (Traoré & Konaté, 2019) <sup>[33]</sup>. This discrepancy is consistent with the larger educational disparities where minorities do not have access to the same language support and learning environment as their counterparts which negatively influences academic performance. These challenges necessitate language proficiency models in a specific area with consideration of the socio-cultural and economic dimension to advocate inclusive measures of reducing the French language divide among primary Malian students.



**Fig 1:** Theoretical Frameworks for French language gap

## 2.2. Literature Review

### 2.2.1. French language policy in the Malian educational context

The historical, sociolinguistic and pedagogical background of the French language within Malian educational institutions has been the backdrop of its development and greatly influenced proficiency level among primary school learners. By virtue of its historical colonialism, French was made the official language of instruction and a leitmotiv for modernization (Bamgbose, 1999) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Nonetheless, although it is an institutional language of instruction, a gap in mastery remains between students and some of the factors contributing to these discrepancies include lack of French exposure outside the school environment, regional multiplicity languages and a lack of resources for teaching (Diakit , 2020) <sup>[10]</sup>. These are all factors that result in an empirically demonstrable language gap and prevents students from disadvantaged backgrounds succeeding in academic terms or socially and also economically. Recent research has emphasized the importance of context-based language policies and teaching methods to fill this proficiency gap and thus improve education (Traor , 2020) <sup>[29]</sup>.

In this context, the development of French in Mali makes it possible to question its colonial origins as well as current issues arising from multilingual situations, a major issue for educational policies and linguistic empowerment.

### 2.2.2. Linguistic divides in Francophone African nations

This paper addresses the issue of language gap among primary school students in Mali with regards to French proficiency that has serious implications for educational achievement and social mobility. Although instruction at both the primary and primary level is through French, a significant number of students (in particular those from rural settings) have difficulties mastering the language because of lack of teaching aids/equipment's, little or no exposure to the language beyond school or for socio-economic reasons among others (Lafaye & Tounkara, 2019) <sup>[17]</sup>. Further, the gap between the students' home languages (largely Bambara) and the official French curriculum leads to literacy and comprehension problems that attributes to the black-white educational gap (Diakit , 2020) <sup>[10]</sup>.

Such disparities not only undermine children's learning and engagement in school, but also restrict access to higher education and employment opportunities, perpetuating inequalities within Malian society. To address this issue, focused language policies are needed to support bilingualism practices and linguistic instruction that is sensitive to the variation in the language landscape of Mali (Kouyat  & Traor , 2021) <sup>[15]</sup>. In conclusion, the chronic French language disparity reinforces that there is a requirement for systemic change to reduce linguistic disparities and provide some measure of equal opportunity for educational development.

### 2.2.3. Factors affecting language learning in primary education

The determinants of success in language learning among primary school students are multiple: individual, pedagogical, and socio-cultural. In the case of Mali, students' enduring difficulties in French can be explained partly by a lack of authentic language environment, limited resources and fluctuations in enthusiasm and ability (Badiane, 2018) <sup>[4]</sup>. In addition, social and economic inequalities along with the impact of students' first languages tend to undermine their achievements in French language which is a sine qua non for success at school and on the job market place in Mali (Sangar  & Traor , 2020) <sup>[22]</sup>. Studies have shown that successful language learning is influenced by the quality of teaching, the classroom atmosphere and students' attitudes towards a new language (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) <sup>[19]</sup>. Knowledge of these interrelated causes is important for developing well-directed interventions that will narrow the gap in French language and improve students' proficiency at primary level in Mali.

### 2.2.4. Effect of socio-economic status, teaching quality and resources

The role of socio-economic status, quality of instruction and resource availability directly affects the success of primary school students in French language performance in Mali. Access to quality education is often dependent on individual's socio-economic disparities, as the children of wealthier families may have better learning conditions, receive more supplementary instruction and educational materials (which ultimately reduce language gap) (Bourdieu,

1986) [6]. Quality of teaching is another important factor; trained teacher who use effective pedagogy contribute positively to language acquisition, while untrained teachers impede the process (Lafond, 2017) [18].

Additionally, available resources including books availability in schools, technology and language laboratories are linked to the proficiency of their students especially in resource limited contexts such as that observed in Mali with glaring disparities (UNICEF Mali, 2019) [35]. All these factors together offer a composite picture of the terrain in which socio-economic background, pedagogical approaches and resource utilization converge to determine proficiency in French of Malian primary school students.

### 2.2.5. Gaps in Existing Literature

There are several critical vacuums in the literature regarding the learning of French in primary schools. The existing research on language use indicates a lot of problems about comprehending how one learns a language and that variation

openings which exist between regions and socio-economic situations. Despite general analyses on the status of French language in education in Mali (e.g., Diakit , 2018) [8], there is paucity of studies dealing with problems or needs faced by students learning through this medium; that is methodological and instructional difficulties, as well as lack of resources.

Finally, there is little work on investigating the linguistic needs differences between rural and urban students. It's a serious problem to address because of Mali's complex demographic situation (Toure & Camara, 2020) [26]. Moreover, the majority of studies concentrate on policy archetypes without critically examining their implementation in practice and effectiveness for improving student levels (Sissoko, 2019) [24]. These lacunae highlight the importance of conducting more thorough studies considering social and cultural, economic, and institutional dimensions on French languages skills at the primary school level in Mali.

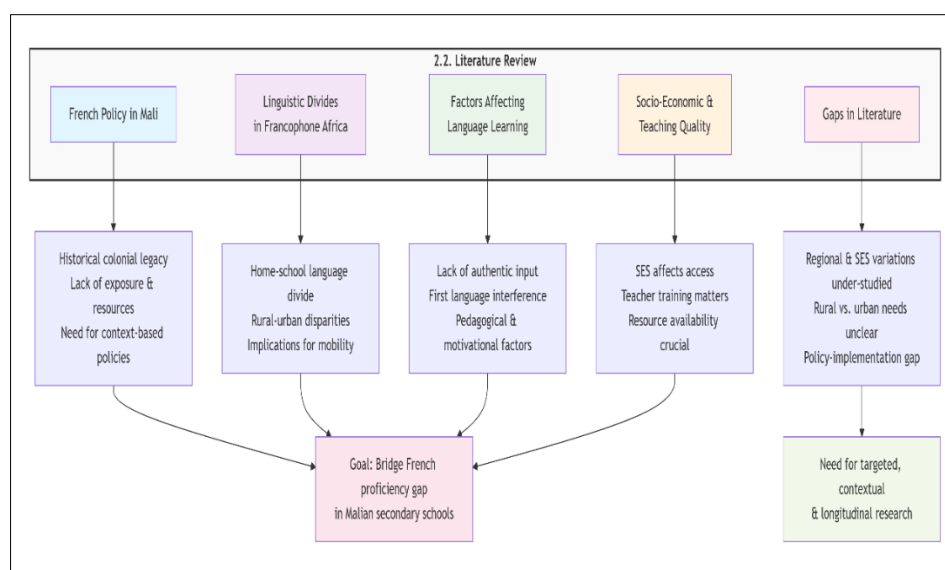


Fig 2: Literature review diagram vision

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

This is a mixed-methods investigation incorporating qualitative and quantitative research designs to investigate in depth the effects of French language gaps on lower primary school students' academic performance among other variables in Mali

### 3.2. Participants

#### • Target Population

The unit of measure was primary school students in Mali, and school administrators, teachers, and parents.

#### • Sampling Method

A purposive sampling method is adopted to choose the subjects. The selection criteria include:

- **Students:** In primary education grade 7–9 and recruited by random procedure from the schools participating in the study.
- **School Representatives:** Drawn from the schools in which participating teachers are employed, to bring institutional perspectives.
- **Teachers:** Should have at least four years' experience teaching in a primary school.

- **Parents:** Their children must be at the school specified.

#### • Sample Size

Six schools were recruited to participate in the focus groups, bringing 150 students into the project to ensure diverse representation of the student body by grade and subject. Moreover, from the same schools, 100 teachers were also selected for this study. These teachers were coming from multiple subject areas and levels of experience. Actually, 10 parents were selected to take part. Additionally, 6 school leaders from the participating schools were also surveyed to shed lights on the administrative view of teacher education and professional development.

### 3.3. Data Collection Methods

Commands evaluate student accomplishment in some core areas of French instruction with standardized French language testing. The examination comprised single objective response questions, short answer-format responses and problem-solving empirical treatment of high concepts, analytical thinking and application of knowledge to practical problems. For qualitative data, we used classroom observations and focus group discussions with students;

semi-structured interviews – in French and Bambara – with teachers, parents, and administrators.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

#### • Quantitative

Descriptive statistics, inferential analysis to assess proficiency and patterns were used to depict a snapshot of the dataset and explore ways in which skills gaps in French affect student academic performance.

#### • Qualitative

A thematic analysis was used to identify perceptions, attitudes, and contextual factors and themes to the themes from interviews. The analysis examined emerging patterns in student qualification and discipline-related knowledge, learning rigour and student developmental requirements which helped to further clarify the elements that affect learners.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

The present research was conducted in adherence to the ethical guidelines, ensuring that participants' rights and

welfare were protected. Written informed consent, privacy and cultural consciousness were attained, and responses from clients could not be traced back to individual participants. The consent has been approved by competent educational authorities before collecting the data and all institutional regulations were followed. These steps preserved the integrity of the study and protected participants.

## 4. RESULTS

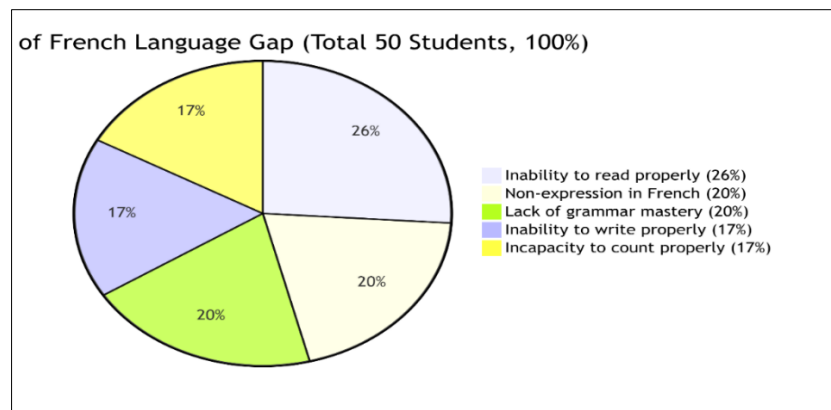
### 4.1. Quantitative results

#### 4.1.1. Extent of the French Language Gap

These data explore the school difficulties among students and disability of reading is the most common difficulty (12 pupils/26%, being slightly more frequent among boys). Other major issues are writing and counting; each 9 students (17%). And 20% of students then have difficulties expressing themselves in French and applying grammatical rules; this affects boys and girls equally. Implications: These results reveal a necessity for focused educational programs to target these core subjects and improve the performance of students.

**Table 1:** Extent of the French Language Gap

Extensions	Effectives		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Both	%
Inability to read properly	8	4	12	26%
Inability to write properly	4	5	9	17%
Incapacity to do the properly counting	4	5	9	17%
Non-expression in French	4	6	10	20%
Lack of mastery of grammatical rules	5	5	10	20%
Total	25	25	50	100%



**Fig 3:** Extent of French Language Gap

#### 4.1.2. Causes behind the Language Gap

Table 3 Factors influencing students: the most influential is no library affecting 27% of students. Among other factors, 27 per cent of students do not receive follow-up, a similar share (27 per cent) has insufficient rates of qualified teachers. No

courage is also a concern, touching 23% of students. These problems seem to be relatively similar among boys and girls showing that they are not sex-related. In general, results suggest the necessity for academic resources and support that will contribute to positive student experiences.

**Table 2:** Factors Contributing to the Language Gap

Factors	Effectives		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Both	%
Lack of library	10	6	7	27%
Lack of courage	3	4	7	23%
Inadequacy of the qualified teacher	4	5	8	23%
Lack of follow-up	8	10	8	27%
Total	25	25	50	100%

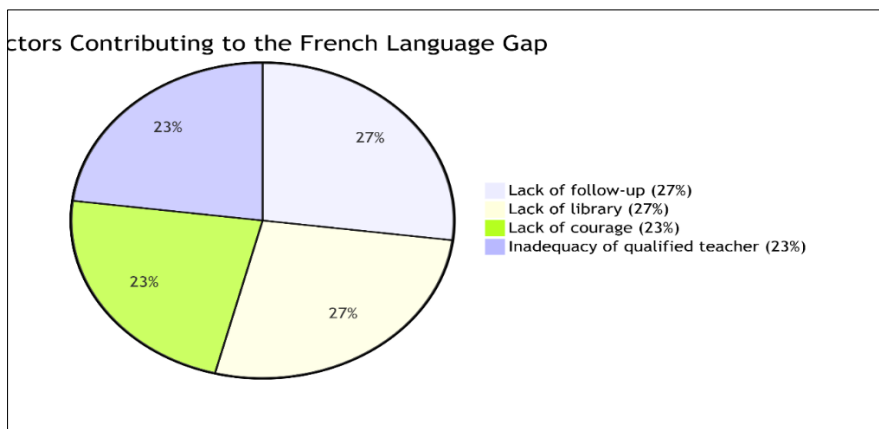


Fig 4: Factors contributing to the French Language Gap

**4.1.3. Strategies for Addressing the Gap**

This information indicates policies to optimize education, with infrastructure and quality being the most important (30%). Hiring of proficient teachers is also crucial (20%), and so are parental monitoring and teachers' in-service education

(both at 17%). The strategy least favoured is to improve conditions for students and teachers (16%). In general, better resources and support are needed for better educational results.

Table 3: Strategies for Addressing the Gap

Strategies	Effectives		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Both	%
Recruit qualified teachers	4	4	6	20%
Emphasize parental monitoring	2	3	5	17%
Provide the school with sufficient and high-quality school infrastructure	10	8	9	30%
Give teachers access to continuing education	2	4	5	17%
Putting students and teachers in the right conditions	7	6	5	16%
Total	25	25	50	100%

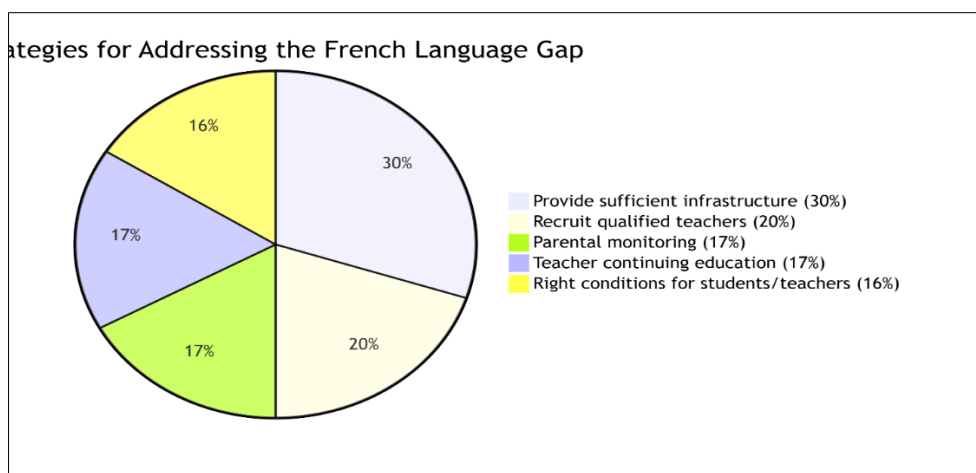


Fig 5: Proposed strategies for addressing the French Language Gap

**4.2. Qualitative results**

**4.2.1. French Language Gap challenges**

The interviews indicate little student enthusiasm for academics. A school principal reasoned, "they are unable to make a proper sentence without fault especially in French when they speak and the fall is felt everywhere one turns here in terms of mediocre speech". Some parents also stated that "Students cannot speak French, read or write. When we speak to them in French at home, they cannot replay in French"

Also, some teachers underscore the fact that: "We believe that (the) double shift impacts on the pupil's level in French

since we cannot complete our curriculum within a school year". And others said, "It's the overpopulated student and the fact of introducing national languages in school system, 8Vol is abandoning of learning by syllabic method since basic".

**4.2.2. Challenges to the language gap factors**

"Kids these days can't speak French at all. There are many explanations for this drop. We can say that they have become uninterested; and children are only taught at school" (School principals). It is clear from this pathological portrait that the students are bashing their parents but it also appears to be a

case of increasing lack of parental monitoring; when the parents stop monitoring (or worse, perhaps, caring) then teachers simply let loose. Also, some teachers said, “there is the scarcity of textbooks and instructional materials”.

And last but not least, to all the voices of the other parents, we know you are insulting your children’s intelligence. For example, with these comments “*we are feeling in homeschooling that things are not going well. When we talk to them at home in French, they’re tired, but in Bambara they are excited and they will respond to you no problem. And, with these gaps, they also often have to redo a year, are sometimes pushed out of school*”. (Parents)

#### 4.2.3. Strategies for Addressing the Gap

To address these, the state needs to attract its best trained as teachers. For instance, school administrators agree “recruit teachers and provide schools with appropriate textbooks and teaching materials”. Parents are recognized throughout as announced “the state should prioritize quality education than quantity education. Unqualified teachers must be tested every year if negative, to replace those that are too mediocre with qualified trained ones like IFM teachers already on the street”.

Additionally, for the teachers “Leave the teachers aside, belonging to this method of teaching should be minimized and also stop the double shifts, schools should have all what is necessary for teaching: books, instructional/teaching facilities as well as not to use any way of teaching in a random manner”. For this intervention, we need to end the double shift and supply the establishments with proper equipment. And still others affirm “Do it so that teachers will work by vocation and not by the lack of job”.

### 5. Discussion

#### 5.1. Gulf in French at school in Mali

##### 5.1.1. Measurement and appraisal of levels of proficiency

The testing of French skills among primary school students in Mali demonstrates that serious deficiencies remain in the language, some serving to inhibit solid linguistic exchange and academic achievement. While French is the national language for instruction, a high percentage of students have difficulties in oral and written skills partly because of inadequate resources, teaching practices, and limited contact with the target language outside classrooms (Traoré, 2018) [27]. The use of standardized testing to reliably determine skill levels is necessary for detecting areas of weakness and prescribing effective interventions in language. This kind of focused assessment helps to make sound decisions about curriculum development and teacher preparation with real-world consequences on educational performance and language barriers in Mali (Kéita & Coulibaly, 2020) [13].

##### 5.1.2. Regional and demographic disparities

Geographical and ethnic disparities are major factors in the French language skills gap of primary students in Mali, as students in urban areas such as Bamako tend to outperform their rural peers because they have more access to resources, qualified teachers and exposure to French-language media. Social status also plays a significant role in these inequities as students from more advantageous backgrounds tend to receive extra support and educational opportunities, which exacerbates the proficiency gap between groups (Diarra & Koné, 2019) [12]. Solving these inequities will require localized interventions that target equal distribution of

resources and language advocacy in the underprivileged regions to enhance more homogenous proficiency throughout France.

#### 5.1.3. Effect on their studies and subsequent career opportunities

The implication of this very weak exposure of primary students to the French language in Mali reduces their academic performance and also future education, as well as jobs placement, because it is known that all higher institutions are not taught in Bambara but teach and write at least for their exams/training mainly in French (Traoré, 2018) [27]. They are also among the most excluded from school and often do not understand exercises, which may impact their exam scores and subsequently limit their opportunities to advance with their classes. This language barrier also limits access to wider job prospects, across the country and around the world where French is still a significant language of communication and commerce.

Resolving this language problem would consequently be a key factor supporting educational equity and social mobilisation in Mali

### 5.2. Factors that contribute to this language gap

#### 5.2.1. Educational infrastructure and teaching quality

Education facilities and quality of teaching are also contributing significant factors towards this language gap in Mali. The school environments are not conducive to effective language instruction and schools lack teaching materials, while teachers in many cases lack adequate training, especially at rural level where infrastructure is generally underdeveloped (Traoré & Diarra, 2020) [30]. Such shortfalls limit students' capacity for achieving fluency in the country's official languages, such as French, and exacerbate the divide between urban and rural inhabitants.

Strengthening infrastructure and teacher training will be key to narrowing this linguistic gap and ensuring equality of educational opportunity among students throughout Mali.

#### 5.2.2. Student background and exposure

Socio-economic status, geographical location and access to educational resources exert influence on the language gap in Mali due to students' varied backgrounds and variation in exposure levels to various languages (Toukara & Diabira, 2017) [25]. In rural or low-income family areas, with little exposure to formal language instruction and multilingual environments, students have disadvantages in speaking abilities compared to their peers who live in urban and/or more privileged areas. Moreover, the prevalence of particular languages in schools/disadvantage can work to marginalise indigenous languages and yet widen the gap. Such discrepancies call for interventions that are tailored to the background of students in order to ensure equity in terms of language opportunities across the regions of Mali.

#### 5.2.3. Curriculum implementation and pedagogical approaches

Quality curriculum delivery and a range of teaching methods are important to bridge the language gap in a country like Mali, which is characterized by linguistic plurality and resource constraints that do not always favour educational equity," he said. Insufficient adaptation of curricula to local languages and contexts, together with teaching methods based on rote learning also widens gaps between students,

particularly among speakers of minority languages (Badiane, 2016) <sup>[3]</sup>.

To fill the gap, inclusive pedagogical approaches using local languages and culturally relevant materials are necessary to increase understanding and participation with better learning outcomes for all students (Amin & Diallo, 2018) <sup>[1]</sup>. Creative impact of expected outcomes and how they will be achieved the provision of rigorous, high quality learning materials appropriate to the socioeconomic and linguistic realities in Mali is critical to achieving a more just society where all children have access to good education.

### 5.3. Effectively strategies for addressing

#### 5.3.1. Curriculum enhancement and teacher training

Curriculum development and teacher training are important ways to better solve the educational problems of Mali, such as learning outcomes or context relevance. Localized content and creative teaching methods can help to further students' learning platforms and engagement. Pervasive teacher training in active learning, inclusive education and technology is needed to provide teachers with the expertise they need for effectively implementing curriculum reforms (UNICEF, 2020) <sup>[36]</sup>.

These strategies not only improve the quality of education, but also contribute to sustainable development through building institutional capacity in the education sector in Mali.

#### 5.3.2. Keeping pace with advances in the teaching methodologies and delivery tools

In Mali, the inclusion of new methods and technology is an optimistic road for the improvement of educational efficiency and to reduce problems such as lack of good education, low access to schools and teacher scarcity. By making use of digital tools, mobile-based learning apps and interactive multimedia content resources, educators can break down the geographical and infrastructural barriers to create more inclusive and participatory learning settings (Traoré & Diakité, 2020) <sup>[30]</sup>.

Such technological interventions not only enable personalized learning to take place but also assist teacher training and professional development leading to improved student outcomes. The strategic use of new tools is still a critical element to building long-term and saleable solutions to these educational challenges in Mali as its educational infrastructure continues to grow.

#### 5.3.3. Community and parental involvement

Community and parent support are very important to successfully deal with developmental difficulties in Mali, since they encourage participation in both educational and social activities (Sangaré, 2020) <sup>[21]</sup>. Involve local community members and parents in decisions about the content of this type of intervention to make it more potentially relevant and sustainable, as contra-culture strategies will not last.

With such involvement children not only experience improved access to quality education but the social cohesion and sense of shared responsibility so critical for longer-term development results in Mali is built. Accordingly, to ensure that effective strategies are implemented which address the country's context of socio-economic challenges requires the building of strong collaboration at community/parent/institutional level (Sangaré, 2020) <sup>[21]</sup>.

### 5.4. Limitations of the Study

The study itself does acknowledge a number of shortcomings in the methods and scope. First, the characteristics of the sample varied spatially and no doubt did not cover as widely as possible French-language proficiency in all parts of Mali, which may limit generalizability. Further, self-reported data collection has its own limitations leading to biases and reduced accuracy. The limitations of the study also included difficulties reaching certain rural areas, with potential impact on the representativeness of the sample. Studies with larger, more geographically diverse samples and more than one method of data verification to improve reliability should be considered in future research.

### 6. Conclusion

The article on the language gap in French among primary school pupils in Mali attests to some of these challenges and nuances that beset proficiency and educational achievement. The results show that there are large differences in proficiency, which is related to the fact that students have little exposure outside of school and limited school resources and it is also shown that socioeconomic inequality plays a role. Dealing with these issues demands multi-faceted approach including teacher training of higher quality, better educational facilities and the development of culturally-appropriate curriculum.

Also, by nurturing community and parental engagement, as well as native applications of technology we can promote more inclusive classroom settings. By filling the French language void, Mali can help to foster fair educational opportunities and improve students' future socio-economic prospects that will benefit the country as a whole...as well as it be competitive in the wider worldwide marketplace.

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