Crossing Linguistic Borders in Postcolonial Anglophone Africa

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Edited by

Valentine N. Ubanako and Jemima Anderson

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PREFACE

This book is intended for researchers and graduate and undergraduate students in and outside Africa who are interested in knowing about the complex linguistic ecologies emerging in Africa today. The book is partially borne out of the frustrations we have had as researchers in finding current and accurate information on the linguistic developments in Africa today and partially out of our quest to document the current linguistic situation in Africa. Many times researchers and students do not have access to current data and literature on the linguistic situations in Africa. Even when they do have access to some of these materials at all, many of them are written by researchers who do not have a firsthand experience of the situation on the ground. Much as these researchers do a good job on the basis of reported data, articles by authors on the ground give perspectives, dimensions and interpretations that are lost to outsiders. The book therefore aims at describing the emergent language situation in Africa today in the voices of linguists in Africa in one volume.

Secondly, while the linguistic situations in many bilingual communities around the world have received a lot of attention, the African situation has received far less attention compared to these other geographical regions. The intersection of the colonial languages: English and French, with Africa's many languages however presents a unique opportunity for studies on the new varieties of languages such as Sheng, Cameroonian Pidgin Creole and the indigenized varieties of English that are emerging on the continent. Our other motivation for writing this volume, therefore, is to explore and document some of the linguistic developments and experiences that have emerged in Africa following the colonial and post-colonial experience. The book does not claim to provide an exhaustive or extensive coverage of the linguistic situation in Africa today. Instead, it only partially represents the linguistic realities of the intersection of indigenous African languages, English and French in post-colonial African communities. There are many countries which are not represented in this volume. This was mainly due to our inability to readily obtain contributions from colleagues from these countries within the specified period in which we were working.

We wish to express our gratitude to all the contributors who worked very hard to meet our time schedules. We are particularly thankful to them for presenting material that has enriched the scope of this volume. We also

grateful to the anonymous reviewers who provided very constructive comments on the articles. Their inputs have greatly shaped and strengthened the quality of this book. We owe Amanda Millar, Sean Howley and the team at Cambridge Scholars Publishing a debt of gratitude as well for their support and professional editorial work. To the production editor, the copy editor, and the cartographer, we say thank you for your professional advice. Finally we are grateful to all our families, friends and colleagues in Cameroon and Ghana who have supported us in diverse ways during the preparation of this book.

Valentine Njende Ubanako (University of Yaounde 1)
Jemima Asabea Anderson (University of Ghana, Legon)

INTRODUCTION

Out of the estimated 6200 languages and dialects in the world, 2582 languages and 1382 dialects are found in Africa. The colonial legacy of language and culture in Africa varies from one country to another, as at different periods, different African nations experienced colonisation from different colonial powers. The linguistic map of Africa today can be divided in to anglophone, francophone and lusophone (Portuguese speaking) parts, as well as Arabic and Swahili speaking parts. As linguistic and geographic maps were being drawn and re-drawn, many people and their languages were displaced. The national boundaries which were drawn arbitrarily in conferences in Europe without the presence of a single African, did not take into account the cultural, historical or linguistic realities of the African people. English, which was the most widespread of all the colonial languages during the 19th century period of European colonialism, is used by many countries as an official or semi-official language, and is taught in most African countries either as a second or a foreign language. The receiving communities have not been indifferent towards English, as through the use of different strategies they have been able to adapt the language to suit their different linguistic and environmental realities. As English has co-existed for several centuries alongside African languages, it has influenced the African languages and these languages have in turn influenced English at all the different levels of linguistic analysis. What remains evident is that these communities, their linguistic colonial legacies notwithstanding, interact with one another at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. With the globalisation spirit which culminates in the breaking down of linguistic, cultural and economic barriers, it is indisputable that there will be more movement of people into new linguistic situations, with the result of this movement being the learning of new languages, contact with new varieties, re-definition of linguistic identities etc.

This publication aims at examining these different language situations in postcolonial anglophone Africa, in order to understand and account for the mechanisms that can facilitate or have facilitated linguistic integration in a global and globalising world, since regional and sub-regional integration of communities within this linguistic block will inevitably bring about movements and the breaking down of linguistic barriers.

This publication makes a cursory glance at language use in Africa spanning through Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya. With emphasis on the diachronic and synchronic description of language in anglophone Africa, the articles paint a succinct picture of the linguistic landscape of those countries where English plays a key role alongside major European languages, as well as African indigenous languages. In a bid to reiterate the vitality and dynamism of English, French and some indigenous African languages in a post-colonial context, this publication has been divided into four parts:

- language contact;
- language identity, ideology and policy;
- communication and issues of intelligibility;
- language in education.

Sala examines the situation of English and French in Cameroon under the term he calls ‘Cameroon Phoneology’. He explores the inconsistencies and paradoxes that have surfaced from the works of different researchers on bilingualism in Cameroon. He examines the role of government, the rise in the learning of English and its impact on the status of the language in Cameroon, as well as mutual linguistic victimisation and issues of identity.

Takam explores some non-interference sources of Cameroon English (CamE) usages. He bases his study on the assumption that speakers of Cameroon English tend to systematically adapt some Standard British English (SBE) features to suit the way they perceive, understand and interpret the world. He thus catalogues and analyses such peculiarities in the data he collects from a selected number participants in secondary and tertiary education. He examines a number of domains: idiomatic and prepositional usages, perception of tense concord and plurality. He administers a test in order to obtain the percentages of the occurrence of SBE and CamE features.

Ubanako and **Munyia** carry out a study on two youth varieties in Africa (Camfranglais in Cameroon, and Sheng in Kenya). They posit that both youth varieties have more similarities than differences in terms of their own language’s origin, use, spread, users and characteristics. Through an examination of the lexical and semantic properties of both youth varieties, they arrive at the conclusion that both youth varieties make use of the same word formation processes, and thus affirm that the languages can indeed be considered as cousin languages. They conclude that despite the social, cultural, linguistic and environmental realities of

Kenya (East Africa) and Cameroon (Central Africa), and despite the physical distance which separates the youth varieties, the groups still share a good number of characteristics.

Fonka carries out a study on Cameroon Pidgincreole which has existed in Cameroon for more than 600 years. He demonstrates that the language has become a mature language and should no longer be considered a language of the underprivileged. He asserts that over the course of time, the language has changed in status; from an unwritten language to a written one; from a language of trade to a language of unofficial education, politics and technology; from a coastal language to a language that now knows no geographical boundary or limitation. Using the 'Language Socialization Approach', he shows that Cameroon Pidgincreole has indeed been able to cross linguistic, traditional and cultural borders in Cameroon. The author also demonstrates, from the evolution of the language (in terms of uses and users), that the language has become very flexible and adaptable to change as well as the users.

Jemima and Osrema are concerned with the indigenisation of English in Ghanaian literature. Drawing closely from selected literary texts, the authors posit that there is a frantic attempt or desire from the authors of those selected works to indigenise the use of English as they attempt to communicate specific African experiences and reflect their environmental realities. Situated within the extended issue of the language question in African literature (which was hotly debated in the 60s by Ngugi, Achebe, Abiola Irele and a host of others), the authors take steps to examine the main processes through which the selected authors have achieved, or try to achieve, indigenisation such as the transfer of linguistic and non-linguistic forms from Ghanaian languages and culture, coinages, affixation and semantic indigenisation. They end up by noting emphatically that these authors have indeed contributed to the development of a new variety of English in Ghana.

Dasse attempts to bridge the ideological gap that he strongly believes exists between English and French-speaking communities in Cameroon. Dasse thus seeks in this paper to examine the signal of this ideological dissention in discourse. He does this by highlighting elements of self and others in discourse within the English-speaking and French-speaking communities. He uses Nkemngong's *"Across the Mongolo"* which no doubt signals such elements. He uses the 'Critical Discourse Analysis' framework which seeks to establish a correlation between language, ideologies and society.

Kenneth Wakiuru, Jonathan Furaha and James Onyango are interested in gendered power ideologies that bind Kikuyu marriages.

Through the medium of wedding songs, the authors are interested to explore the social, economic and cultural manifestation of these gendered power ideologies. Using the 'Critical Discourse Analysis' method, the authors claim that these power and gender ideologies are important aspects in the preservation of the cultural heritage of a people, and aspects which can be passed on from one generation to another. According to them, songs are the medium par excellence through which this can be achieved. These songs which are in the Kikuyu language reflect the world view of the Kikuyu people, and the authors especially show the variation in references of how men and women are addressed.

Mforteh part tackles unofficial language policy and language planning in post-colonial Cameroon. Using the theory of dissipation, he explains the linguistic landscape in Cameroon, how it was conceived by the colonialist, and the idea that it was impossible to return to the colonialists' conceptual framework. He argues rather, that the current situation points to a return of the nation states that existed before independence. With data from selected users, the author investigates language combinations that are used in families' testimonies from both the colonial and post-colonial eras. In his findings, it stands out that 90% of the sampled population is trilingual (CL+HL+English/French) while less than 50% is exclusively bilingual in English and French. He stresses that Pidgin English is unofficially being picked up especially by offspring from parents from the former East Cameroon, who now crave their anglophone identity. It seems that no-one is indifferent to the need to revive their L1.

Njeri, Furaha and Kitetu investigate the language of presenters of FM radio stations in Kenya. Placing emphasis on interactive monologues and on a specific station (Radio Citizen), the study is carried out alongside others to stress the influence of radios on their listeners (as many as 79% of Kenyans in Nairobi, Wakuru and Mombasa listen to the radio). This study examines the strategies used by one presenter (Kamau Munyua) on a popular talkshow programme. It uses the 'Structural-Functional Discourse Analysis Theory' to state that there are conversational structures and discursive strategies, as well as other linguistic and non-linguistic structures used by the presenter. The researchers go on to identify the frequencies of use of these strategies, and arrive at the conclusion that interactive monologues are possible, and now constitute an innovative manner of handling radio talkshows in Kenya.

Fonkou and Fossi make a sociolinguistic analysis of funeral discourse of the Ngeembae tribe in West Cameroon. It shows the significant role of word choices in verbal exchanges between different participants during death ceremonies. They pay particular attention to discourse during burial,

threnes, circumstances leading to death, consolations etc. Using 'Hyme's model of Speaking', the authors come up with the conclusion that *la prise de parole* respects a precise, given sociocultural code.

Nkwain outlines some discrepancies in the translation and interpretation of political neologisms in Cameroon's pluralistic democracy. Affirming the sociocultural and linguistic diversity of Cameroon, he points out that the new political rhetoric brings up certain revealing aspects which pertain to intelligibility and effective communication. He comes up with a litany of discrepancies in rendering the new forms of expression. Without necessarily judging the acceptability, truth or correctness of these expressions, Nkwain shows how the translations and interpretations of political neologisms are determined by sociopolitical variables like context, party affiliation or neutrality in politics.

Meutem's paper examines non-standard idioms in Cameroon's literature and issues of intelligibility therein. Using as many as fifteen works by seven Cameroonian writers of English expression, he traces the processes by which such idioms are created and assesses their intelligibility. He proposes that the bulk of these non-standard idioms are obtained through the translation of home language expressions, coinage and modification of Standard British English expressions. With this study, which is yet another contribution to the debate on the use of non-native items in literary works, the author affirms that since learners in Cameroon are tested on the native model of English, non-standard idioms can constitute a pitfall to these learners.

Chiatoh's paper focuses on identity bankruptcy and educational deficits in contemporary Cameroon. With focus on the issue of identity in the Cameroonian educational system, he investigates how this affects educational conception, planning and management. He notes that an educational system that fails to properly address the identity issue is intrinsically deficient in the quality of its content and delivery methods. He points out that as Cameroon continues its search for a worthwhile educational model, an alternative curriculum should be sought which pays particular attention to matters of identity in learning and accessibility. To him therefore, the use of foreign languages as the main instruments of schooling has outlived its utility and qualifies the prevailing situation which can be seen as a politically-motivated educational miscalculation.

Nzuanke assesses the practice of official (English-French) bilingualism in Nigeria through the teaching of French. Acknowledging that the linguistic policy of government does not give due consideration to the teaching and use of the French language, the author calls for a redefinition

of the concept of bilingualism pointing more to the diplomatic advantages that the country will have if it opens up to French, considering the fact that Nigeria is essentially English-speaking but is surrounded by many francophone countries in West and Central Africa. He thus proposes a different method of approach to the teaching of French as a foreign language, from the primary through to the secondary and university levels and the opening up to Cameroon and Benin through co-operation in order to consolidate the Nigerian policy of the teaching of French as a foreign language.

Ekembe works on context and the effects of explicit instruction on different language structures. Specifically, he examines the rate at which indirect speech and the passive voice are responsive to explicit instruction. Drawing his participants from secondary school (third level ESL) learners who are exposed to different codes, he arrives at the conclusion that passive voice is learned faster than indirect speech with regard to declarative knowledge, while indirect speech is learned faster than passive voice with regard to procedural knowledge. He further establishes a relationship between language structure, the learner's social environment and learning.

The Editors

Valentine N. UBANAKO holds a PhD in English Linguistics from the University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon, and academic and professional certificates in the domains of language teaching (Advanced School of Education-ENS Yaounde, Cameroon) and translation (Global Translation Institute, USA and Imperial College London, UK). He is a senior lecturer in the Department of Bilingual Studies at the University of Yaounde 1 where he presently teaches English Linguistics and Translation. He has published scholarly articles and contributed book chapters in the domain of translation and English linguistics notably in; *Translation Quarterly, Geolinguistics, Papers in English Linguistics, Changing English and Fifty years of Official Bilingualism in Cameroon (1961-2011).*

Jemima A. ANDERSON is a senior lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Ghana, Legon. She holds an M.A. in General Linguistics from Indiana University, Bloomington, USA and a PhD. in English from the University of Ghana, Legon. Her research interests are in the area of pragmatics, discourse analysis, politeness and also varieties and functions of English. Some of her papers have been published in; *Journal*

of Pragmatics, *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, *Sociolinguistic Studies*, *Linguistic Atlantica,* and *Varieties of English Around the World*.

PART 1:

LANGUAGES IN CONTACT

UNDERSTANDING CAMEROON PHONEOLOGY:[1] SOME CONTRADICTIONS

BONAVENTURE M. SALA
THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDÉ I

This chapter explores the inconsistencies and paradoxes that have emerged from the way bilingualism has been reported in research in Cameroon. It tackles and assesses the role of government in fostering bilingualism, the supposed surge in English tuition and its impact on the status of English in Cameroon, mutual linguistic victimisation and issues of identity. There is enough evidence from the literature that Cameroon's bilingualism was conceived as linguistic cohabitation with two parallel languages and speech communities; that 'anglophone' is an Ethnic group, so that it is paradoxical to claim and defend Anglo-Saxon culture yet refute the status of an ethnic group; that qualifying someone as anglophone in Cameroon depends on provenance, culture and then language, in that hierarchical order; that part of the controversy in reporting bilingualism in Cameroon derives from confusion between language competence and language use, a clarification that predetermines bilingualism; that what can be called "official language identity" overshadows other identities; that state policy is not the only controller of linguistic behaviour in Cameroon, individual bilingualism is charting its course quietly; that francophones do not learn English in order to communicate with anglophones; that the true bilinguals, often referred to as "the 11th Province" unfortunately have problems of integration. We conclude that French and English are not symbionts in Cameroon, so that

[1] "Phoneology" is a term we use to refer to the conflict between linguistic and cultural criteria on the one hand, and region on the other hand, in qualifying someone in Cameroon as anglophone or francophone. It christens this complex phenomenon, where some Cameroonians who become the perfect bilinguals no longer fit in any "phone" classification, often referred to derogatorily as "the 11th province". Coinages of this sort are now common in the literature, see Anchimbe (2005) 'anglophonism and fracophonism', and Anchimbe (2006) 'linguabridity', and the term "11th province" itself used in Simo Bobda (2001). Somewhat, where coinages abound, there is a complex phenomenon to uncover.

theorising has focused mainly on linguistic cohabitation and not canonical bilingualism.

Introduction

Much has been said about Cameroon's bilingualism, including its lopsidedness (Kouega 1999, Anchimbe 2005, Mforteh 2008), its poor planning, its ineffectiveness (especially through the popular saying that it is for Cameroon and not for Cameroonians), the marked divide between theorising (e.g., its constitutional guarantee and other laws) and practice Tchoungui (1983), the changing landscape of bilingualism in Cameroon, attempts (often failed) by the government to remake it Takam (2013), a stark lack of language planning in its management (Simo Bobda and Tiomajou 1995), poor educational practice of bilingualism (Foncha 2013, Takam 2013), etc. The literature on bilingualism to date is not consistent, so that one begins to doubt the scientific basis upon which the facts are discussed therein, and the conclusions drawn and forged therefrom. This paper goes ahead to explore some of the paradoxes that have emerged from the way being francophone and anglophone in Cameroon has been constructed and forged in debates, and evaluates the stakes and paradoxes inherent in Cameroon's bilingualism and its derivatives, especially the identity problem.

Cameroon's bilingualism is peculiar in the world because it results from a colonisation that ended up in a dual trusteeship, resulting in the use of French and English as official languages. Unlike in Wales and Canada, Cameroon's bilingualism is based on foreign languages, none native to the country, even though they are increasingly being reported to take a home-language status in some middle class families. The country is also multilingual and, therefore, only bilingual officially, because close to another 300 other local languages are spoken within the national territory, alongside lingua francas like pidgin, fufulde, Camfranglais, etc; all natural results of multi-ethnicity. It has been reported by many researchers that Cameroon juggles all these languages without a clear-cut language planning policy (see Tchoungui 1983, Simo Bobda and Tiomajou 1995, Kouega 1999, 2001, Echu 2003, Anchimbe 2005, Simo Bobda and Mbouya 2005, Mforteh 2008 and Mbah 2013).

However, the government is evidently interested in Cameroonians being perfectly "officially" bilingual, as pointed out in *Ngefac* (2010:154). Apart from the often cited Constitutional guarantee of bilingualism, the other official language (henceforth OOL) is taught in all schools in the country from primary to university level. The general objectives of

syllabuses of the OOL at all levels usually evoke making the students proficient. The OOL is tested in all competitive entrance exams in the country. The government created linguistic centres in all regional headquarters to promote the OOL for those who did not either have, or wasted, the opportunity of learning it at school. These instances testify political will.

It is therefore clear that, though there may be no formal roadmap for bilingualism in Cameroon, the government may not be completely passive in promoting it, as one can glean from the literature. Yet, the perfect bilingual in Cameroon has a problem integrating into the country's *phonescape*. It is paradoxical that the fruit of an effort should have no price tag, as suggested in Mbangwana (2004:24) in the following words: "Just give a hint to Cameroonians that in order to occupy certain high profile positions in the republic it requires that such holders of posts should be bilingual in English and French then you will see how concerned Cameroonians will be trying to be bilingual."

What is Bilingualism?

It is necessary in a study of this nature to define bilingualism both from a general perspective and from the particular context of Cameroon.

The General Context

Defining bilingualism (and characterising the bilingual individual) has been controversial, varying according to the kind of yardstick. One such yardstick is the proficiency continuum. Bloomfield (1933:56) defines bilingualism as "native-like control of two languages". He equates bilingualism to equilingualism. Weinreich (1964) defines it simply as "the practice of alternately using two languages," with no implication of competence. Competence driven approaches to defining bilingualism have yielded terms such as *balanced bilinguals, dominant bilinguals, recessive bilinguals* and *semilinguals,* describing where the bilinguals position themselves in the macro-skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Other descriptors used in defining bilingualism include context of acquisition (i.e. whether the languages are learnt naturally or in the classroom), the domain of use of the languages (such as family, friendship, church, education and job), and social orientation (where influences within the society can impact on how bilinguals perceive themselves and how bilinguals are perceived). Some theorists tone down too much expectation from bilingualism. Anderson (1977) in an attempt to resolve the impasse

simply says bilingualism is “knowledge of two languages”. Hoffman (1991) concludes that it may be up to any community to adopt its own definition of bilingualism. It is therefore evident that bilingualism can be defined in many ways, and that, context is important in illuminating each definition.

However, a handful of theorists agree that any discussion of bilingualism must consider the fact that bilinguals are part of a wider socio-cultural milieu and any such discussion must account for the way they use the languages in the community. Their degree of competence in both languages is greatly influenced by the way in which each language is used. It must also consider the domain of use. Crystal (1987:366) contends that “in all cases, it should be stressed, bilingual education is not simply a matter of language learning: it involves the acquisition of all knowledge and skills that identify the minority culture.” Auer (2009), discussing the inconclusiveness of defining bilingualism, remarks that:

> […] the impasse can only be overcome if bilingualism is no longer regarded as ‘something inside speakers’ heads, that is a mental ability, but as a displayed feature of participants’ everyday linguistic behaviour. Bilingualism must be looked upon primarily as a set of complex linguistic activities, and only in a ‘derived’ sense as a cognitive ability.

The Cameroonian context

The theorists cited above were attempting the definition of bilingualism in countries that are not ‘officially’ bilingual, or where one of the languages is native to the country. Defining bilingualism in the Cameroonian context must consider the expectations of the laws of the country, especially the constitution, because Cameroon’s bilingualism derives from an indelible historical background of reunification.

Article 1 paragraph 3 of The 1996 Constitution of Cameroon states:

> The official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status. The State shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavour to protect and promote national languages.

It mentions equal status of English and French but does not say whether they are parallel languages or each Cameroonian is expected to learn and use both languages. This is why ‘promoting bilingualism’ has pre-occupied authorities in the country. This has desperately birthed a

handful of official texts attempting to enforce the use of both languages. This is the situation of the presidential text signed on 4th June 1998.

> The Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic is especially in charge of the promotion of bilingualism. In this regard, he conceives and formulates the national bilingualism policy. He should, if necessary, propose to the Head of State any measures likely to encourage the use of our official languages and the promotion of bilingualism in the country.

A law of April 14, 1998 in section 15 states:

> 1) The educational system shall be organised into two systems. The English-speaking subsystem and the French-speaking subsystem, thereby re-affirming our national option of bilingualism.
>
> 2) The above mentioned educational system shall co-exist with each other preserving its specific method of evaluation and award of certificates.

This law clearly spells out the parallel conception of bilingualism in the country. It shows that a Cameroonian should either study in English or in French, and not necessarily in both languages. This contradicts pilot immersion programmes in the country since Man-o-war Bay, as is the case with the "bilingual classes" at Lycée Bilingue d'Etoug-Egbe. Takam (2013:46) echoes parallelism in the following words:

> […] telle qu'elle se pratique sur le terrain, on a l'impression que la politique de bilinguisme officiel ou étatique ou institutionnel a pour but de permettre à chacune des deux communautés linguistiques en présence de préserver son unilinguisme, laissant au gouvernement central seul la pratique et la gestion du bilinguisme au sein des organismes qu'il contrôle. *Field practice leaves the impression that the policy of official, state or institutional bilingualism aims at letting each linguistic community preserve its monolingualism, so that only the central government controls and manages bilingualism in the organizations that it controls.(*author's translation*)*

As can be noted from government objectives in Cameroon, bilingualism is seen from the Bloomfieldian perspective of the mastery of two languages. It includes bi-literacy, as the languages are taught in schools and evaluated at all public exams. However, Constable (1977) had earlier interpreted the government's vision in the following words: "Although French seems to be predominant, the official intent is to establish bilingual primary schools to create completely bilingual individuals. This approach is costly, difficult, and perhaps unnecessary."

Government laxity

The will of government in actively promoting bilingualism, however hard it is to pin down, is not also social consent. Researchers generally have not appreciated government efforts in promoting bilingualism. The status of English in Cameroon today can be imputed to some institutional factors. First, the British colonial masters were stingy with their English, as seen in the late introduction of schools, and a controversial encouragement of local languages. Second, the Cameroonian government does nothing to encourage the use of the language, with no clear-cut language policy in this respect. Simo Bobda and Tiomajou (1995) have pointed out that “due to the absence of clearly defined objectives, the policy regarding bilingualism in Cameroon has remained over the years vague with a political rather than a linguistic goal.” Simo-Bobda (2001:11) states that “faced with what they see as accumulated injustice perpetrated against their language, themselves and their culture, anglophones have, after a quarter of a century of existence with their francophone countrymen, started to react in all kinds of ways”. Echu (2003:39) notes that bilingualism does not protect the English language and culture of Cameroon. Mforteh (2008:40) (following Tchoungui 1983, Kouega 2001 and Anchimbe 2005) observes that the policy of bilingualism is more evident on paper than in practice. Simo-Bobda and Mbouya (2005:2122) lament that “the language situation in Cameroon is further compounded by the total absence of a language policy which would regulate the use of the languages. This compels each language to fend for itself, and creates more confusion.” All these statements clearly point to the disappointment of observers on the quantity and quality of government’s efforts towards bilingualism. It is paradoxical that government efforts should focus on acquisition, and neglect the use of the languages involved in the bilingual contest.

Much has also been said about the inequality of bilingualism in state matters. At the level of state universities, Mforteh (2008:40) notes that between 1963 and 1993, university education in Cameroon forced many anglophones to be bilingual. This, he continues, “led to the discriminatory treatment of anglophones, considered for the most part as deficient partners in the linguistic union, people whose opinions were not sought because they were expressed in a language that was not understood by the leaders.” Fonyuy (2010) also mentions the inequality of bilingualism at the tertiary level in state universities. Media airtime is another domain where equilibrium of bilingualism has been measured. Anchimbe (2006:4) cites unequal airtime partition of programmes on CRTV as one demonstration

of the anglophone plight in Cameroon. Vakunta (2012) estimates the quantity of French on CRTV at 95%. Governance has also been used as a yard stick for measuring disequilibrium. Anchimbe (2005), supporting Kouega (1999), notes that "in the late 90s and even today, administration is conceived in French and only translated (if need be) into English. The military, the national assembly, treaties and diplomatic exchanges are arranged in French". Echu (2003:39) considers the bias in appointments of high government civil servants. According to him, the domination of francophones could be explained by the demographic factor and also the lack of an effective language policy that guarantees the rights of minorities. The inequality of bilingualism in state business has been interpreted as part of the anglophone problem in Cameroon.

Evaluating Cameroon's bilingualism

A few researchers have expressed the opinion that bilingualism could be a unifying factor. Fonyuy (2010), is known to be the most optimistic study on Cameroon's official bilingualism. She contends that the changing status of English in Cameroon is fortunate as "the gap between the two Cameroons (francophone and anglophone) is being narrowed by the global spread of English", francophones making more effort (ibid:34ff). However, she laments that the rise in English tuition for francophones and English as L1 for anglophones is making local languages more vulnerable. More English in Cameroon means less mother tongue. Fonyuy (2010:41) remarks that "parents have seen the global opportunities offered by the language and they need no state language policy to do so." She goes ahead to describe the phenomenon of rushing to learn English as "seeds being nurtured for effective, official bilingualism-to-be in Cameroon." Anchimbe (2006) concludes that if the rush for English by francophones continues, defining anglophone and francophone by linguistic commonalities would disappear. This shows that effective bilingualism is the best way to carve a true Cameroonian identity, one not tarnished by *phoneological* concerns.

It is easy to read optimism in Alobwede's (2008) questioning of the nomenclature used for labelling the languages used in Cameroon. 'Kamtok' to him is inappropriate as the name of Cameroon's pidgin. Labelling local languages as national languages is paradoxical because, as he says, what we call ethnic groups were in reality nation-states prior to colonisation. The carving out of Cameroon was just some arbitrary phenomenon, responding to every norm except the respect of territorial boundaries. To him, therefore, foreign languages are the languages spoken

in what are now the various localities of Cameroon. French and English, and Pidgin English are therefore national languages, being the only languages truly uniting the multiethnic country. Local languages are so mutually unintelligible that they have no true national character.

On the contrary, Echu (2003:12) notes that while being a unifying force, official language bilingualism also constitutes a factor of disunity or conflict. Such a situation has created a sense of cultural identity among anglophones that arises from their use of the same language (English becoming a symbol of group solidarity) in an environment perceived as hostile to them both linguistically and sociopolitically. Thus, the policy of official language bilingualism has created an anglophone/francophone divide in Cameroon that is seen in recent years to constitute a serious problem for the state. Consequently, while being a unifying force, official language bilingualism engendered disunity. Nkwain (2011:96) goes on to identify conflicts of natural and artificial language use, while contending that "conflict is an inevitable consequence of the language contact phenomenon, and though it could serve as a resource when carefully harnessed, it could still constitute the origin of outright physical conflict". Foncha (2013) on his part laments that bilingualism in Cameroon does not play an integrative role. He suspects that government laxity results from the fear of sparking national disintegration, given the delicate nature of Cameroon's reunification.

Conflict is also generated from proficiency-related issues with the use of English. Anglophones feel that their English usage is better because of more exposure from early childhood, their education system and a wider domain of use. Many francophones also think their English is better, perhaps because it is not contaminated by pidgin as that of their fellow anglophones presumably is. Anchimbe (2006) notes that it is paradoxical that despite the fact that English in Cameroon is mostly taught by anglophone teachers who were trained locally, some scholars claim that the variety of English francophones learn and speak is different from that spoken by these same Anglophones.

Tests of proficiency have been conducted by student-researchers to determine which English is closer to British English, mostly at the levels of phonology and lexicology. Whilst the state-of-art of the New Englishes debate finds such goals unfeasible, it is often easy to see the role of emotions in such investigations. The question of who owns English in Cameroon underlies many debates about bilingualism in the country.

Statistical issues

One overly misreported phenomenon is statistics about *phoneology* in Cameroon. First, it is not clear how much of Cameroon is French and how much is English. Ze Amvela (1986:126) reports that 5/7 of Cameroon is francophone and 2/7 is anglophone. About 2 decades afterwards, Anchimbe (2005) states that Britain occupied 1/5 of Cameroon and France the rest (therefore, 4/5). Mforteh (2008) says Britain annexed 30% and France 70%. Mbah (2012:2) holds that France colonised 3/4 and the English had the remaining ¼. Takam (2013) thinks Cameroon is 75% francophone and 25% anglophone. Secondly, other statistics relate to the quantity of English and French used in Cameroon. Echu (2003:39) remarks that, since 1961, the use of English in institutions of higher education goes in favour of French to the detriment of English, given that 80 % of the lectures are delivered in French as opposed to 20 % in English. Vakunta (2012) estimates that 95% of programmes on CRTV, the official radio and television house, are in French. The invention of statistical data is part of the inconsistency of discussing bilingualism in Cameroon.

Statistical conjectures have very often been motivated by administrative geography, which has no clear effect on language demography and space, based very often on the regional administrative divisions rather than on fact. Recently, others have estimated the ratio of English to French at 2:8. This is crude speculation, deriving from overgeneralising the number of regions. The proof is that moving from 2/7 (Ze Amvela (1986), to 2/10 just because the then North Province was split into 3 regions; and the Centre-South Province into two, lacks empirical backing. This definitely takes a serious toll on decision-making. The real population of anglophones in Cameroon cannot in any way be gleaned from the number of anglophone regions. A veritable population of anglophones in Cameroon will only come from a census of anglophones. That would, however, be after a clarification of who an anglophone really is in the country.

Stereotypes

French and English became official languages in Cameroon in the 1961 constitution, an incidence that has evolved stereotypes, often negative, with one community viewing the other with scorn. Ze Amvela (1986) remarks that one such stereotype was that francophones are arrogant; and anglophones, submissive.

French dominance

Substantial research has reported French dominance in Cameroon. Kouega (1999:112) remarks that Cameroon's bilingualism is “a one way expansion of bilingualism, with speakers of English operating increasingly or fully in French, but their French-speaking counterparts remaining largely monolingual.” Echu (2003) also discusses French dominance, citing the Buea 1993 declaration of the All Anglophone Movement. Anchimbe (2005) observes that the period from 1990 to 1994 was the lowest point of English in the history of Cameroon, francophones identifying it with violence and opposition in the post 1992 presidential election problems. English was “reduced to a derogatory and stereotype emblem of the anglophones”. Mforteh (2008:42) notes that “French was and is still regarded as the language to be learnt if one wants to survive and succeed within Cameroon.” Ngefac (2010) makes reference to anglophone feeling that bilingualism is lop-sided. French is therefore to be seen as the language of power and leadership in Cameroon.

French, by every indication, is the default language in Cameroon when communication in any other language breaks down. First, Ze Amvela (1986:126) concludes that French is an H-language (High Language) in Cameroon by the law of majority. This definitely accounts for why the number of anglophones who speak French is inversely proportionate to that of francophones who speak English. He continues that when conversation breaks down, francophones “stubbornly stick to French” while anglophones give up and continue in French, thereby “giving himself the opportunity to practice his French”. The advance in anglophone bilingualism and the stagnant nature of francophone bilingualism “clearly works against the policy of bilingualism advocated in Cameroon.” Second, the *Cameroon Tribune* of 29th January 2008, in one of its articles, reports on National Bilingualism day, created by ministerial decree in 2002, where the Governor of the Littoral Region is imploring his subjects “to come out of their comfort zone and make use of their second official language”. While demonstrating government intension that all Cameroonians become bilingual, it also paints a picture of Cameroon’s bilingualism where an anglophone student says “How are you?” and the francophone answers “Ça va et toi?”, but unfortunately, the conversation always ends in French. When this happens, one party is stubbornly refusing to communicate in another language, whether he or she knows it or not. Many anglophones have found themselves speaking French to one another when they meet for the first time outside of an anglophone region.

These are signals that French is the language used in creating new acquaintances outside of anglophone regions.

Low status of English

Until about a decade ago, the literature on bilingualism reported the low status suffered by English and anglophones in Cameroon (see Ze Amvela 1986, Kouega 1999, Simo-Bobda 2001:11), considered a minority. Ze Amvela (1986:125) points out that francophone parents were reluctant in sending their children to bilingual schools because they were afraid the children would learn pidgin, anglophones being associated with pidgin. "[Many] Francophone students have claimed that their anglophone counterparts speak 'bad English', or worse, cannot speak English." This meant that the negative assessment of the anglophone accent in Cameroon discouraged francophones from learning English earlier on. This has a tendency of offending anglophones and evolving a feeling of an inferiority complex that can, even worse, confound conflicts. Ze Amvela (1986:128) also notes that the American accent attracts a favourable attitude from francophones.

Anchimbe (2006:4) thinks that linguistic victimisation is mutual in Cameroon. Both anglophones and francophones have been victims or perpetrators of linguistic victimisation. Each group victimises speakers of the [other's] language in a bid to prioritize their own language. Nkwain (2011:87) remarks that "in Cameroon, the race for linguistic supremacy by English, French, PE and HLs is on-going. Though placed on the same scale as French, English is far outweighed and its use and users continue to groan under the plight of consistent marginalisation in the different domains of use." Enyih (2009) laments that "almost half a century of that Union, I dare say that the option has made very little progress. It has remained an option and largely so." Bilingualism "is something much more than inter-tribal marriages or attending bilingual institutions". He continues by pointing out that official "texts are interpreted sometimes poorly and with French voice interferences, and translations on scripts or billboards carry diminutive English versions as if to show how dependent English is on French".

Victimisation of this kind is easily deducible from the ways anglophones and francophones refer to each other. Anchimbe (2006) discusses some catchy offensive phrases like "*anglo", "anglofou", "anglofool*" and "*les anglos là*" used for the anglophone Cameroonians and "*frog", "francofou*" and "*francofool*" for the francophones. Nkwain (2011:91) discusses what he calls ethnonyms, which are provocative