

# EQUALITY BEYOND TRANSLATION: SOCIETAL BILINGUALISM IN CAMEROON

Dorine Sosso

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Under the supervision of Dr. Annie Brisset

School of Translation and Interpretation  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Ottawa

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# Abstract

Researchers are increasingly drawn to the study of societal bilingualism (or multilingualism), which is the study of the specific nature of bilingualism practiced by a nation, state, province or territory. Such studies seek to identify the institutions and legal frameworks put in place to regulate and reproduce bilingualism, as well as to understand groups which practice bilingualism. Drawing on a descriptive approach that flows from a sociological model of critical theory and conflict theory, this study is based on societal bilingualism in Cameroon, the only other country in the world, apart from Canada, that has both English and French as its only official languages. Cameroon is also one of the few African countries that do not have a local language as an official language. Acknowledging the central role of texts and their analysis in understanding social practices, this case study is carried out using critical document analysis to examine previous research, mass media products, government reports, historical data and information, laws, orders, press releases and speeches to uncover the precise nature of official language bilingualism in Cameroon. The study offers insights into the relevant historical and language background against which a critical discussion on official language bilingualism and an analysis of the legal frameworks and institutions set up to regulate and reproduce this bilingualism can be carried out. Attention is given to translation policies and to the most recent measures taken to foster State bilingualism in Cameroon. Indeed, official language bilingualism has been heavily predicated on translation, its institutions and legal framework. This timely case study traces the nation's failure, as witnessed by the current situation of unrest, to successfully implement, mainly through translation, an official language bilingualism policy that grants equal status to English and French across the national territory. This research concludes that an alternative solution would be to introduce bilingual education as well, particularly from the nursery and elementary school levels, given that, for a long time now, Cameroon has had early simultaneous bilinguals who speak both English and French before they attain school age. A brief comparison between the context of official language bilingualism within the educational system in Cameroon and in Canada highlights the fact that Cameroon has the potential to establish one of the strongest forms of bilingual education in the world.

# Résumé

L'attention des chercheurs se porte de plus en plus sur le bilinguisme (ou le multilinguisme) sociétal, à savoir sur la nature particulière du bilinguisme pratiqué par une nation, un État, une province ou un territoire. Ces études cherchent à cerner les institutions et le cadre juridique établis pour réglementer et perpétuer le bilinguisme tout en comprenant mieux les groupes qui le pratiquent. L'étude qui suit porte sur la situation du bilinguisme au Cameroun, le seul pays du monde avec le Canada ayant seulement l'anglais et le français pour langues officielles. De nature descriptive, cette étude de cas s'inscrit dans une critique sociologique ainsi que dans la théorie des conflits. Du point de vue méthodologique, il s'agit d'une analyse de discours articulée autour du principe que les textes sont essentiels pour comprendre les pratiques sociales. Cette analyse tient compte des recherches antérieures et des données historiques avant de prendre pour objet les discours et communiqués de presse, les rapports gouvernementaux, les lois et décrets ainsi que les discours officiels dans le but de cerner la nature du bilinguisme d'État au Cameroun. Le contexte historique et linguistique sert d'assise pour aborder, dans une perspective critique, la situation du bilinguisme officiel ainsi que les institutions et le cadre juridique mis en place pour le réglementer et en assurer la survie. Une attention particulière est portée aux politiques de traduction et aux mesures les plus récentes destinées à promouvoir le bilinguisme d'État au Cameroun. À la base, ce bilinguisme officiel repose massivement sur la traduction, ses institutions et la législation qui l'encadre. Au vu des mouvements d'insurrection auxquels on assiste aujourd'hui dans le pays, cette étude de cas revêt un caractère d'actualité. Elle remonte aux sources de l'échec d'une politique de bilinguisme officiel qui s'en remet principalement à la traduction pour assurer au français et à l'anglais une égalité de statut sur l'ensemble du territoire national. L'analyse conduit à conclure qu'une autre solution consisterait à assurer parallèlement l'instruction dans les deux langues officielles, surtout depuis la maternelle et l'école élémentaire puisque, depuis très longtemps, beaucoup de Camerounais parlent simultanément l'anglais et le français dès l'enfance, bien avant d'atteindre l'âge scolaire. Comparée succinctement à celle du Canada, la situation du bilinguisme officiel dans le système d'éducation du Cameroun révèle que ce pays a le potentiel voulu pour mettre en place une forme d'éducation bilingue parmi les plus robustes au monde.

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# Dedication

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

**ALAC** Atlas linguistique de l’Afrique centrale

**ALCAM** Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun

**ANACLAC** Association Nationale de Comités de Langues Camerounaises

**ASTI** Advanced School of Translation and Interpretation

**ATSA** Association for Translation Studies in Africa

**Bac** Baccalauréat

**BC** Before Christ

**BEPC** Brevet D’études Études du Premier Cycle

**BICS** Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

**CALP** Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

**CEP** Certificat d’Études Primaires

**CEPE** Certificat d’Études Primaires et Élémentaires

**CERDOTOLA** Centre de Recherche et de Documentation dur sur les Traditions Orales et pour le Développement des Langues Africaines

**CFA** Communauté Financière Africaine

**CHRDA** Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa

**CPE** Cameroon Pidgin English

**CRJFAC** Conseil Régional des Jeunes Francophones de l’Afrique Centrale

**CRTV** Cameroon Radio Television

**DELCAM** Développement des Langues Camerounaise

**DSL** Direction des Services Linguistiques

**DSCE** Document de Strategie pour La Croissance et L'emploi

**ENS** École Normale Supérieure

**EST** European Society for Translation Studies

**FM** Frequency Modulation

**FSLC** First School Leaving Certificate

**IATIS** International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies

**ICG** The International Crisis Group

**IRS** Internal Revenue Service

**IQ** Intelligence Quotient

**LC** Language Clubs

**MOL** Main Official Language

**MINEDUC** Ministère de l'Éducation

**NACALCO** National Association of Cameroon Language Committees

**NCPBM** National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and  
Multiculturalism

**NT** Natural Translation

**OECD** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**PROPELCA** Projet de Recherche Opérationnelle pour l'Enseignement des Langues  
au Cameroun

**SDA** Social Dimension of Adjustment

**SIL** Summer Institute of Linguistics

**SOL** Second Official Language

**TS** Translations Studies

**UN** United Nations

**UNDP** United Nations Development Program

**UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNHCR** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

“When a smaller and marginalized language is faced with a more dominant culture and literature, its response is guarded. While the more powerful language can show a benevolent curiosity, and extol the virtue of translation, the smaller one can legitimately feel fear.”

Sherry (2017, 65)

# Introduction

Many countries in the world have populations that speak more than one language. These languages are usually related to the history of the specific nation in question. Obviously, not all languages spoken in a nation are deemed official languages, which are those chosen by governments in a bid to regulate and unite language use all over the national territory. In many bilingual/multilingual countries, some parts of the nation might use one official language, while other parts use another. This may be seen in the bilingualism instituted in Canada for example, where certain parts of the country (such as the National Capital Region, New Brunswick) are officially bilingual, whereas other parts (such as the province of Quebec) are not. In other bilingual/multilingual countries, all official languages are used in all parts of the nation. This situation may be seen in Cameroon, for example, where even though two provinces are predominantly English-speaking and eight are predominantly French-speaking, the government has declared all ten provinces officially bilingual.

The study of the specific nature of bilingualism practiced by a nation, state, province or territory is the study of societal bilingualism (Sebba 2011, 445). Such studies seek to identify the institutions and legal frameworks put in place to regulate and reproduce bilingualism, as well as to understand groups which practice bilingualism. Cameroon is one such nation that has put institutions and legal frameworks in place to reproduce a specific nature of bilingualism.

The last two and a half years have been particularly difficult for Cameroon. It has lost its prestigious position as one of the most peaceful countries on the African continent and come to the forefront as one of the nations with the fastest growing number of displaced persons in Africa. "Human rights groups and international organizations have reported deteriorating political, humanitarian, and security conditions as a result of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, severe deprivations of liberty, and mass displacements of civilian populations" (*Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights* 2019). More than 200 villages in the Anglophone regions have been partly or completely destroyed, close to 1.3 million people in Cameroon are presently in need

of humanitarian assistance, more than 1,500 people have been killed and more than half a million people are internally displaced (Ibid.). The United Nations, the The International Crisis Group (ICG), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, among others, as well as, the media and Cameroonian human rights organizations, including the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA), “have been reporting on the crisis and expressing grave concerns” (*Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa and Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights* 2019).

The situation in Cameroon was sparked in 2016 when lawyers and teachers in the Anglophone regions (in the North West and South West regions) complained that some Francophone teachers posted to the Anglophone zones were either using French, Cameroon Pidgin English or French and Cameroon Pidgin English as the medium of instruction in Anglophone schools. Lawyers also complained that some Francophone judges posted to the Anglophone regions were using the civil law system in courts based on the common law system and were trying cases in French, with no translation or interpretation (Pommerolle and Heungoup 2017).

As a translator, I could not help but set out to inquire about the translation policies that are in place in Cameroon. To my mind, the current crisis makes it clearly obvious, to the whole world, that the nation’s attempts to, or failure to implement translation policies, as part of an official language bilingualism policy that would produce the type of results that the country was expecting, about half a century ago when it opted for official language bilingualism, can no longer continue to go unnoticed and without consequences. Even though many other factors must be taken seriously in discussions on the current state of political unrest in which Cameroon finds itself, it remains unquestionable that the obvious reason - that is, the one at the forefront - is the failure to properly implement the official language bilingualism policy embedded in the Cameroon Constitution. This policy grants equal status to English and French all over the national territory.

The concept of ‘translation policy’ (in the broad sense of the term) is not new within Translation Studies. However, translation policy, in the restricted sense, has not been used widely in Translation Studies. From the very early stages of Translation Studies as a discipline, ‘translation policy’ (in the broad sense) was fully present in various ways in some major seminal publications. It was used in various ways to represent the strategies translators use during the translation process (Levy 1967, 1179), the role that translator scholars play when they render advice regarding the place and the role of translators, translating, and translation in society at large (Holmes 1988). Translation policy was also used to refer to “the factors that govern the choice of text types; or even of individual texts, to be

imported through translation into a particular culture/language at a particular time. Such a policy will be said to exist inasmuch as the choice is found to be non-random" (Toury 1995).

In the restricted sense, translation policy refers to "a set of legal rules that regulate translation in the public domain: in education, legal affairs, in political institutions, in administration, in the media" and as "a means that governments can use to regulate people's access to public life and services" (Meylaerts 2011). Meylaerts (2011) finds that there is growing interest in Translation Studies research for translation policy for, "even without developing into a core term, it is more prominently present nowadays and covers both the restricted and the broad definition in a variety of subfields within the discipline".

In this study, I approach translation policy only in the 'restricted' sense of the concept. As mentioned above, it is translation policy seen as "a set of legal rules that regulate translation in the public domain: in education, legal affairs, in political institutions, in administration, in the media" and as "a means that governments can use to regulate people's access to public life and services" (Meylaerts 2011). This study is aimed at exploring language and translation policies in Cameroon as they pertain to the practical implementation of official language bilingualism in Cameroon. Not much has been done in this light, even though translation policy in this sense is of such great importance. Meylaerts points out that, as an integral part of language policies, translation policy touches "citizens' fundamental democratic right to communicate with authorities," yet, "the key role of translation policies for the implementation of citizens' linguistic rights remains a blind spot in the literature on language rights and policies" (Meylaerts 2011). In fact, "any language policy presupposes a translation policy: determining the rules of institutional language use presupposes determining the right to translation within these same institutions in a democratic society" (166).

Given the linguistic landscape in Cameroon, I wanted to find out how the decisions about translation were taken, i.e. how they were taken in the past and how they are presently being taken. Some questions remained in the back of my mind as I scanned through the mass of literature available in the field of translation studies. What plans of action have served or serve as the basis of the actions to take in the various situations that call for translation in Cameroon? Who came up with these plans? Have there been any changes in recent years relating to translation policies adopted by the government, to match all the changes that have already taken place and that are currently taking place in Cameroon? Why were translation policies designed? Were they designed solely to promote equality between the two official languages or were they also designed to promote a sort of one-sided

bilingualism that favored assimilation of the Anglophone minority? What is the role of the Translation Office of the Presidency? Is the Advanced School of Translation and Interpretation (ASTI) meeting the translation needs of the government at large according to its original mission? I wanted to try to get a clear picture of the situation in Cameroon (regarding translation policy), which could serve to answer some of these pertinent questions.

In fact, is it enough to predicate official language bilingualism so heavily upon translation? Could it be possible that the time has come to look to other avenues for the implementation of official language bilingualism? Could official language bilingualism predicated on both translation and strong forms of bilingual education help increase linguistic equality in Cameroon? Can we make use of the presence of early simultaneous official language bilinguals as a resource and as great potential for the implementation of strong forms of bilingual education that could help attain official language bilingualism in Cameroon? Their presence might also represent potential for the eventual training of many more language professionals who will champion the bilingual official languages cause.

This context-oriented case study can be categorized within the purview of the so-called “sociological turn” in Translation Studies as it examines the role and effects of translation or the absence of translation in Cameroonian society. In the next few paragraphs, I will discuss the origin of the sociological turn in translation studies to help situate this study within the proper theoretical framework.

Marco (2009) proposes four (non-exhaustive) models of research in TS: (1) textual- descriptivist, (2) cognitive, (3) culturalist and (4) sociological. The culturalist approach to the study of translation is mainly attached to the cultural turn (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990) in Translation Studies which focuses on the social, political, historical and ideological factors that affect translation. The cultural turn in Translation Studies stems from the critical movement that took place in the humanities and the social sciences (particularly in anthropology, history and literary theory) related to decolonization (Bachmann-Medick 2006, 34).

Within the culturalist approach, the researcher aims to go beyond description and unearth the socio-economic and political motives underlying norms (Marco 2009, 26) . This approach accommodates various schools of thought, including the postcolonial and feminist. “Issues such as power differentials, center-periphery tensions or cultural representation of the Other” (28) are key concepts that take center stage within this model. Also, an examination of text, unlike in the textual-descriptive model, goes beyond description and aims to unveil social, political and ideological motivations that affect translation. The “cultural turn” in TS shifted attention toward the sociohistorical and cultural context of translating

and positioned the study of translation within the study of culture more broadly, while bringing political and socio-economic factors to the forefront. As such, within this approach, researchers can insist on the importance of close textual analysis and still be preoccupied with ideology as with philosophical debates about meaning (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 24).

Key works illustrate the critique of the 'representations of Otherness' at the base of this movement. The cultural turn transposed this critique to the translation field. Notions of context (social and historic context versus solely literary context in Descriptive Translation Studies) and of the effects (social and human effects of domination and discrimination) of translation practices began to take the forefront. Hence the interest shown by Translation Studies in the sociology of Bourdieu, a sociology of symbolic power which took over from the 'cultural turn'. In this paradigm, the Eurocentric and monolithic notion of 'culture' is called into question in favour of the notion of 'society' (Brisset 2010, 78).

Sociological models investigate the external factors that influence translation, individual translators, the circumstances in which translations take place, and the effects of translation within a specific society. This present study, which concerns itself with whether bilingualism that is heavily predicated on translation can produce the kind of equality that underlies a bilingual official language policy like the one in place in Cameroon, is a study of the 'effects' of translation as well as of the lack of translation on a specific nation. More specifically, such 'effects' can include political, economic, social and ideological factors that influence society. Due to the nature of policy, scholars who deal with translation policy deal with everyday realities surrounding multilingualism and attempt to throw light on complex questions that affect the "the daily lives of real people" (Meylaerts and Núñez 2017, 10).

However, even though translation is produced within Cameroon's borders for its own purposes, these translations per se or the processes involved in the production of these translations are not the preoccupation here. The political, economic, social and ideological effects of translation or the lack of translation on the multilingual Cameroonian society are.

Translation Studies research based on sociology draws heavily from specific models proposed mainly by Pierre Bourdieu (whose sociology of 'domination' became popular in the wake of postcolonialist criticism) (Bourdieu 1992), Niklas Luhmann (a sociology of communication used to investigate translation between and within social systems) (Luhmann 1995), and, to a lesser extent, Bruno Latour (whose Actor-Network theory is used to explore the complexity of 'agency' in the translation process) but do not exclude the potential relevance of related disciplines

(Bruno 2005). Bourdieu offers a “distinctive perspective in relation to the increasingly influential culturalist and globalist research paradigms within Translation studies” (Inghilleri 2005, 125). Bourdieu’s sociological model has a lot in common with the culturalist paradigm as researchers within these paradigms mostly aim to “go beyond the mere statement of facts and reach the level of explanation by alluding to the social, cultural and ideological forces leading to conflict and change” (Marco 2009, 31).

I strongly agree with Meylaerts and Nunez’s (2017, 10) opinion that :

It should go without saying that issues of implicit or explicit translation policy affect a wide array of disciplines and topics, including (...) justice in society (De Schutter); minority rights under international law (Mowbray); language planning (Diaz Fouces); language policy evaluation (Gazzola and Grin); lingua franca in academia (Robichaud); language access in the judiciary and local government (González Núñez); and higher education (Du Plessis). (...).

As such, this descriptive study borrows heavily from research in bilingualism and explores the complex relations between translation policies and linguistic justice, integration and equal opportunity in Cameroon and “places Translation Studies in front of its social, ethical and political responsibilities, responsibilities which are shared with political and social sciences, anthropology, sociolinguistics, etc.” (Meylaerts 2011, 166).

The last few paragraphs discuss the pertinent underlying theories on which this Translation Studies research based on sociology draws. The next few paragraphs will dwell briefly on the sociological theoretical framework under which societal bilingualism research is carried out.

The study of societal bilingualism is the study of any kind of bilingualism or multilingualism beyond the social organizational level of the individual or the nuclear family (Sebba 2011, 445). Sebba (2011, 445) recognizes two broad categories under which societal bilingualism can be studied; ‘state’ and ‘community’. Under the first category, the study of societal bilingualism concerns itself with “officially bilingual states and sub-states (regions, provinces, municipalities, etc.), the precise nature of their bilingualism, and the institutions and legal frameworks which exist to regulate and reproduce it” (445). Under the second category, societal bilingualism focuses on “those groups (of whatever size) which practice bilingualism among themselves, and would concern itself with their bilingual practices, including trends over time such as language shift”(445). In the present study I approach societal bilingualism under the first category, the ‘state.’ An

exploration of the precise nature of bilingualism in Cameroon and of the institutions and legal frameworks in place to regulate and produce this precise nature of bilingualism is my main focus. Language and translation policies are part and parcel of the legal frameworks put in place to produce and regulate bilingualism in the nation.

Research into bilingual societies has been dominated by three major research paradigms: the structural-functional, the micro-interactionist and the critical linguistic paradigms (Martin-Jones 1989, 15).

The first of the three approaches, the structural-functional, was developed by Weinreich (1953), Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1972, 1989). The main focus of this approach is a quest to account for the functional division between language varieties in bilingual societies. Through comparisons, researchers seek to achieve a general understanding of the patterns of language use among bilinguals. The key concept within this paradigm is diglossia, a theoretical concept introduced into linguistics by Ferguson (1959). Diglossia refers to:

a very specific type of bilingualism or bidialectalism, where a particular speech community use[s] two related language varieties for different purposes. One variety would be used for formal and prestigious language activities, while the other one would be associated with informal, every day and low prestige ones (Sebba 2011, 452).

The structural-functional perspective is criticized for being deterministic, for focusing on large groupings like whole nations and for approaching societies as static and homogeneous entities (452).

As such, the interactionist paradigm developed mainly by Gumperz (1982) , began to emerge and unlike the structural-functional paradigm, it focused on the way individuals communicate with each other as the key to understanding societal bilingualism. According to this approach, the daily conversations between individuals can be considered the most revelatory of the symbolic values of a given language within the community's languages (Martin-Jones 1989, 16). Practical instances of communication like everyday conversations, interviews, service encounters, etc., (Auer 1984) are the focus of studies carried out within this framework. Researchers within this paradigm aim to showcase the actual patterns of language choice and language use within a bilingual society by doing a detailed analysis of various real-life, day-to-day interactions. Critics of the structural-functional and interactionist perspectives considered it a shortcoming that "none of these research paradigms was particularly concerned with power relations, economics or the historical origins of the contemporary situations they

studied, leading to criticisms that important aspects of the emergence and maintenance of bilingual communities were being overlooked” (Sebba 2011, 449).

The critical linguistic research paradigm then began to emerge within sociolinguistics at this point to integrate power relations and history as central elements needed for the understanding of language behavior in bilingual societies. Sebba (2011, 449) lists a number of studies in bilingualism studies that are based on this approach: Heller (1999, 2002), Blommaert (2005), Rampton et al. (2004) and Jaffe (1999). It is important to note though that most of these studies drew on concepts and methodologies developed in the other research paradigms and that “it will be true to say at the present time, studies within all three paradigms (as well as combinations of these, and no doubt others not covered by this typology) are being carried out in different bilingual societies” (Sebba 2011, 449). This is one such study.

Of all three research paradigms discussed above, the present study can mainly be categorized under the critical linguistic approach. Historical considerations, economics and power relations are evoked and take center stage in the exploration of the role of translation policies in official language bilingualism in Cameroon. For example, even though the Cameroonian Constitution grants equal status to English and French as official languages all over the national territory, it is clearly shown in the present study that French is a dominant official language in Cameroon.

This context-oriented case study therefore falls within the purview of the so-called “sociological turn” in Translation Studies as it examines the role and effects of translation or the absence of translation in Cameroonian society.

This study is also a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory case study. Gillham (2000, 1) defines a case as “a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context (...).” In this case I chose to study Cameroon as a well-defined geographical and political space.

Yin (2003, 2) considers a case study to be the best option needed when the researcher has the “desire to understand complex social phenomena” because “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.” Case studies seem to meet the need adequately when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the researcher does not have control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (2; 5-10). I chose to do a case study because of the nature of the research aims and questions. A case study on the role of translation policy in the implementation of societal bilingualism (official languages) can reveal a lot about bilingualism in Cameroon. A rich holistic description can provide what is needed for a clear understanding of the state of official language bilingualism.

This study provides a historical background and a detailed description of the situation in Cameroon to posit a link between bilingualism, the minority status of Anglophones, inadequate translation services, inadequate services for Anglophones in general, unequal access to government jobs, deficiencies in the education system, and the current state of unrest in the English-speaking population. Evidence for the study is built by examining a broad range of government and other documents in a bid to answer these research questions pertaining to translation.

The historical and contemporary nature of the research topic justifies the use of written texts. Laws, orders, press releases, official documents, newspaper articles, etc., constitute valuable data for the study. Building on previous research on other texts, detailed background information is provided to help circumscribe and contextualize the subject area – societal bilingualism, official language bilingualism and its implementation through the different measures chosen and including translation policies in Cameroon.

As such, chapter one concerns itself with a detailed presentation of the geographical, historical and linguistic background of Cameroon. It paints a succinct picture of the linguistic landscape, providing key information about the official languages, national languages and lingua francas used in Cameroon. This background information sets the stage and makes it possible to understand later discussions on language and translation policies in Cameroon. The second chapter throws light on the state of official language bilingualism in Cameroon, but not without first outlining key concepts that cannot be left out in research on societal and individual bilingualism. The third chapter provides definitions of key concepts like translation policies and language policies and outlines the policy decisions that have been taken in Cameroon. This section then turns the spotlight on early simultaneous bilinguals in Cameroon, a resource that could either be tapped into for the implementation of official language bilingualism or left to go to waste. In the fourth chapter, an exploration of the context in which French-English official language bilingualism is carried out both in Cameroon and in Canada highlights the fact that at the level of society, notions of "majority" and "minority" have meaning in relation, not only to linguistic, but also to geopolitical environments. This is an important factor for the English-speaking minority in Cameroon, especially in the world of globalized communication. This is a critical factor for the francophone minority in Canada (Quebec) as well. One of the main points of focus here is the different attitudes towards the institution of bilingual education (English, French) to foster societal bilingualism. In the spotlight are the differences between the two societies that could explain the different attitudes towards the institution of bilingual education observed in these countries.

The main goal in this section is to shine the light on any possible similarities, but most of all, on differences that reveal the uniqueness of the Cameroonian context. According to Marais (2011, 377), it is important for Translation research scholars who work in the African context to adopt “contextual grounded research methodologies that will be able to take cognisance of the features of these particular contexts. These methodologies should render knowledge that is particular to their context and designed to be able to perceive the uniqueness of the context” (377). These brief comparisons will therefore be designed such as to highlight the particular features of societal bilingualism in Cameroonian society.

# Chapter One:

## CAMEROON'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Cameroon is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of languages. It comes in ninth place on the list of countries of the world with the highest number of languages spoken on their territory (Eberhard, Gary, and Fennig 2019a). In Africa, it comes in second place, next to Nigeria. The twenty-five million people who live within its  $472,422\text{km}^2$  speak 4.05% of the world's languages (Eberhard, Gary, and Fennig 2019a). This chapter discusses this enormous linguistic wealth and sets the stage for the discussion on translation policies and official language bilingualism. It paints a succinct picture of the linguistic landscape and provides key information about official languages, national languages and lingua francas used in Cameroon.

### 1.1 Historical background

Anyangwe (2009) reports that as far back as the 5th century Before Christ (BC), Hanno, a Carthaginian sailor, navigated the West African coast as far as the Gulf of Guinea. While there, he was fascinated by an eruption on a high hill on the mainland. The hill, which would later be known as Mount Cameroon or Mount Fako was "such an awesome and amazing sight that he named the mountain, The Chariot of the Gods" (1). In the 15th century, Portuguese traders and missionaries came and settled, for the first time, along the coast of what would later be known as 'Southern Cameroons', (Fonlon 1969) and named the area 'Rio dos Cameroes'. 'Rio dos Cameroes' stands for 'a river of prawns' in Portuguese. The name 'Cameroon' is derived from this Portuguese expression 'Rio dos Cameroes' as after that, every European country that colonized Cameroon spelled its name differently, to suit its

language. The British named it 'Cameroon', the Germans 'Kamerun' and the French 'Cameroun'.

In the mid-19th century, through the activities of the British Baptist Missionary Society, the mountain on which Hanno the Carthaginian had stood and its surrounding area were colonized by the British, who started off by referring to it as the Ambas Bay area. Anyangwe (2009, 3) explains that the area was handed over to Germany as a new colony on March 28, 1887, thirty years after the British Baptist Missionary Society had begun activities there. Germany then made it a part of the German Kamerun protectorate and by July 12, 1884, it had brought "an ill-defined swathe of territory at the hinge of Africa" (3)<sup>1</sup> under its sphere of influence. Germany then slowly extended its control over the area, which eventually included "the whole massive area from Douala to Lake Chad down to the Congo and Rio Muni" (4). Then, in 1914, Kamerun was conquered by the Anglo-French forces at the beginning of World War I. As Germany lost the war in Europe in 1916, the allied forces took over all the territories that had been under German rule, including Kamerun.

When the League of Nations was formed, it adopted a 'mandate' system whereby one of their 'mandarius' or agents, would be put in charge of the administration of a territory on their behalf. In this vein, Cameroon was assigned to both Britain and France and was, therefore, to be administered by both nations, at the same time, on behalf of the League of Nations. Britain ruled over one section while France ruled over the other (Epah 2007, 16). At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the League of Nations' mandate ended and was replaced by the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organization. Cameroon still remained under the administration of the British and the French, this time as a Trust territory. Eventually, in January 1960 and October 1961 respectively, French Cameroon and British Cameroon declared their independence from the French and the British, the former becoming La République du Cameroun and the latter West Cameroon. Ten years later, the two became unified under the United Republic of Cameroon on May 20, 1972, at which time, English and French were declared the two official languages, making Cameroon the only other nation in the world, besides Canada, to have just English and French as official languages. Article 3 of the Federal Constitution of 1961 stated:

(3) The official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status. The State shall

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1. HR Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroon 1884-1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*, Jonathan Cape, London 1938; S Ardener, *Eye-Witness to the Annexation of Cameroon*, Government Press, Buea, 1968, Em Chiluer, *Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and Benue Lands 1889-1892*, Government Printer, Buea. 1966.

guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It shall endeavour to protect and promote national languages.

When it came time to set an educational policy, both the English and French systems of education were adopted as well. English was declared the language of instruction in Anglophone schools, while French was declared the language of instruction in Francophone schools. The Anglophone region constituted two provinces: the North West Province and the South West Province. The Francophone region was made up of eight provinces: the South Province, the East Province, the West Province, the Central Province, the North Province, the Far North Province, the Adamawa Province, and the Littoral Province. Most of the schools opened in the Anglophone regions used English as the language of instruction while most of the schools opened in the Francophone regions used French as the language of instruction. A few 'bilingual' schools were opened in some towns, with bilingual meaning that an Anglophone school and a Francophone school shared the same campus but operated as two separate schools; each with its own principal, administrative staff, teachers and pupils, and, with separate programs and curricula.

## 1.2 Languages spoken in Cameroon

Very few countries in the world compare to Cameroon when it comes to the nation's unique linguistic landscape. With as many as 247 African languages spoken on its territories (Roland and Bikia 1991, 2), three of the four groups of African languages are vibrantly represented: the Afro-Asiatic, the Nilo-Saharan and the Niger Kordofanian groups. The Niger Kordofanian is the most highly represented, while the Khoisan family is not represented at all (Echu 2003, 33). Five of the 247 languages are now extinct according to Ethnologue. These languages are Bikya, Bishuo, Nagumi, Yeni and Zumaya (Gary, David, and Charles 2017).

A slight disagreement exists among researchers about the number of African languages that are spoken in Cameroon. Tove (2008, 14) expatiates on this stating that:

"Ethnologue", the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)<sup>2</sup> International reference publication, lists 279 living languages (Gordon 2005). Other sources state a lower number. Echu (2003) refers to 247 languages,

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2. The Summer Institute of Linguistics Inc., (SIL), is a faith-based nonprofit organization, founded in 1934, committed to serving language communities worldwide as they build capacity for sustainable language development. SIL does this primarily through research, translation, training and materials development. ([www.sil.org/about](http://www.sil.org/about))

claiming that some of the languages in Ethnologue are varieties of the same language. Further, Onguene Essono, a linguist and teacher at the École Normale Supérieure, University of Yaoundé, finds the SIL figures to be too high (pers. comm. 21 February 2004). For him, the number is likely to be around 250 languages instead of nearly 300. In 1974, the project, Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM), was initiated. This resulted in a description as well as a geographic overview of the language groups in Cameroon. The findings of the project were published in Dieu and Renaud (1983) and Breton and Fohtung (1991). The latter lists 248 national languages. Bitjaa Kody, in the Department of African Languages and Linguistics, Yaounde I, claims that the present number of identified national languages is 282. (pers. comm. 13 February 2004). (2008, 14)

Table 1.1 provides an overview of these national languages, classified according to the three language families that all the researchers agree on.

**Table 1.1:** Languages in Cameroon (Rosendal 2008, 16)

<b>Phylum</b>	<b>Number of languages</b>
Afro-Asiatic	60
Nilo-Saharan	2
Niger-Congo (Niger-Kordofanian)	215
Unclassified (Bung, Luo)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>

Studies carried out within the ALCAM project have identified 9 geographical zones of language distribution in Cameroon based on the classification presented in Greenberg (1963) and Guthrie (1967) (Table 1.2). Figure 1.1 shows a linguistic map compiled by Dieu and Renaud (1983), which indicates the geographical distribution of different language groups in Cameroon.

### 1.2.1 Languages of wider distribution

Some of the languages in Cameroon are languages of a wider distribution, that is, languages used by speakers who do not have any native language in common – also referred to as ‘lingua francas’. There are 9 such languages in Cameroon, spoken by different groups, as stated in the Atlas linguistique du Cameroun (Tove 2008, 21). Table 1.3 and Figure 1.2 below present the languages of wider distribution in Cameroon.

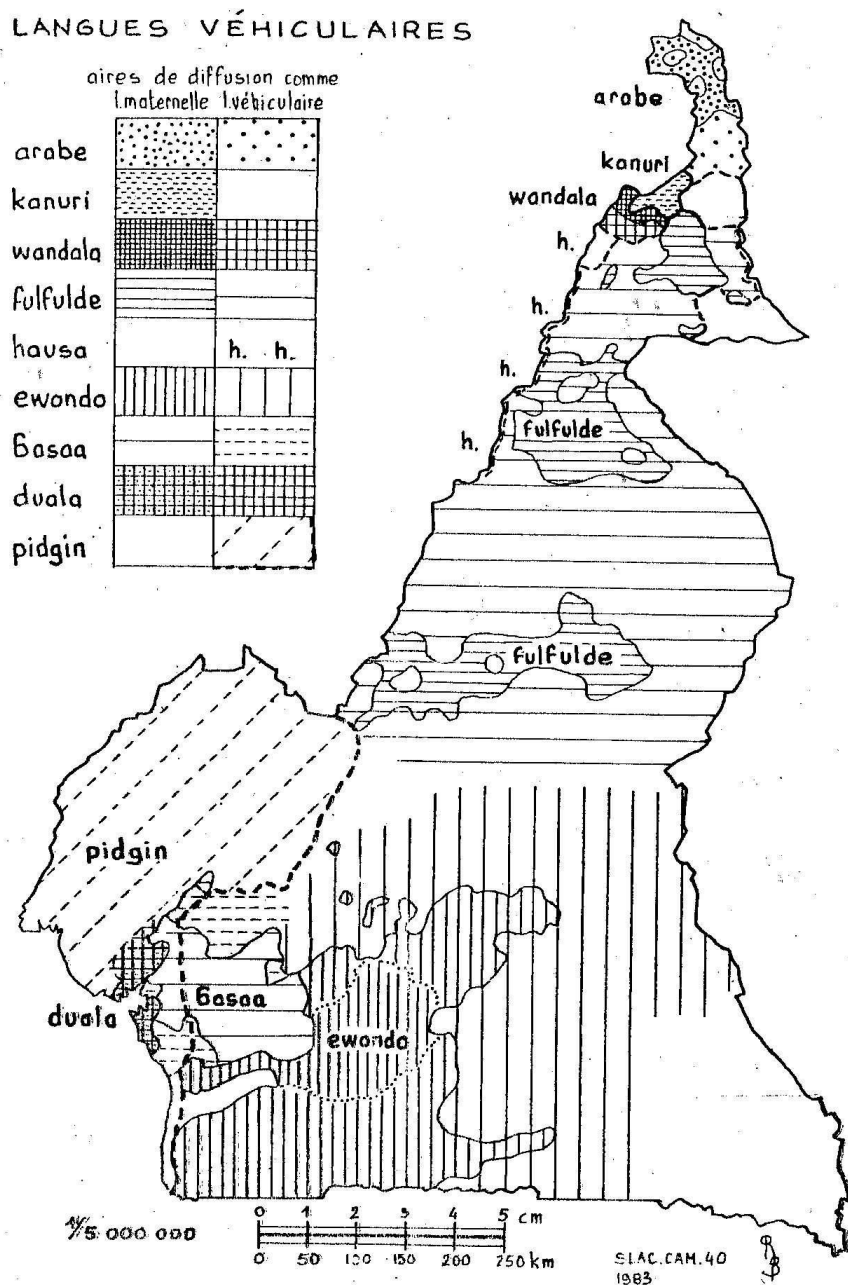


**Table 1.2:** Language zones and language families in Cameroon (Tove 2008, 18).

ZONE	PHYLUM	FAMILY
1 and 2	Afro-Asiatic Nilo-Saharan	Shua Arabic Chadic languages Chari Nile Saharan
3	Niger-Kordofanian	West Atlantic Benue-Congo Adamawa-Ubangi (most)
4	Niger-Kordofanian	Guthrie's Bantu language zones: A90 (kako group) A80 (maka group) A70 (beti-fang group) A50 (bafia group) A40 (basaa group)
5	Niger-Kordofanian	Guthrie's Bantu language zone: A 60 (sanaga group)
6	Niger-Kordofanian	Guthrie's Bantu language zones: A10 (lundu group) A20 (duala group) A30 (bube-benga group)
7	Niger-Kordofanian	Non Bantu Benue Congo: Jukonoids Cross River Bendi
8	Niger-Kordofanian	Non narrow Bantu: Eastern Grassfield
9	Niger-Kordofanian	Non narrow Bantu: Grassfield Tivoids Ekoids Beboids

**Table 1.3:** Languages of larger distribution in the different geographical areas

North	Centre, South, East	Littoral	West
Fulfulde	Ewondo	Duala	Pidgin English
Shua Arabic		Basaa	
Kanuri			
Wandala			



**Figure 1.2:** Languages as Mother Tongue (Langue Maternelle) and as Lingua Franca (langue véhiculaire).

### 1.2.2 Atlas linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM)

The ALCAM project was launched in 1974 at the University of Yaoundé I, under the supervision of Professor H.M. Bot ba Njock, who worked with MM. P. Renaud and M. Dieu (Dieu and Renaud 1983). After a regional meeting on the promotion of African languages held in Yaoundé in 1976, the project was later extended to cover other central African countries, within the context of the Agence de coopération

culturelle et technique. The Central African Project is referred to as Atlas linguistique de l’Afrique centrale (ALAC), and is supported by the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur les Traditions Orales et pour le Développement des Langues Africaines (CERDOTOLA).

ALCAM’s goal was to map all the languages present in Cameroon and show the exact locations where each language was used. The project was also meant to provide clear statistics on the classification of all those languages, with a systematic description of each one in terms of morphology, phonology and syntax. The research was also meant to document the details on the modalities of language usage, and provide a list of all scholarly works on each national language spoken in Cameroon (Tabi-Manga 2000, 72).

There is a consensus in Cameroon that the nation could only benefit from any sustained effort to promote national languages in the country. Unfortunately, little has been done when it comes to the promotion of these national languages. Unlike many other African countries that have succeeded in establishing an African language as an official language, (for example, Swahili in Kenya, Lingala in the Congo Republic), Cameroon still does not have any African language that enjoys the status of an official language. After the Southern Cameroons and La République du Cameroun became one, the Constitution drawn up for La République Unie du Cameroun did not say much about national languages, even though the Constitution itself opened with a statement that made reference to national languages:

Proud of our linguistic and cultural diversity, an enriching feature of our national identity, but profoundly aware of the imperative need to further consolidate our unity, solemnly declare that we constitute one and the same Nation, bound by the same destiny, and assert our firm determination to build the Cameroonian Fatherland on the basis of the ideals of fraternity, justice and progress. . .

Even the present Constitution starts with the same reference to ‘linguistic diversity’ – that is, the many African languages spoken in Cameroon. However, it is only when the Constitution was amended in 1996 that a direct statement about national languages was added to it.

(3) 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 (Constitution 2017).

From this foundation, many researchers have shown interest in how the State of Cameroon has endeavoured to protect and promote national languages thus far. One of them, Tabi-Manga, did extensive research on the status of the various languages in Cameroon from 1884/1885 to 2000. Even though he started from as far back as 1884, the period he works on covers the six years after the constitution was amended to include the clause on national languages. His choice of a starting point is based on the fact that it was at that period of time that the term 'Kamerun' (Cameroon in English), was chosen as the official appellation for the territory that was handed over to Germany, at the Berlin Conference, as a protectorate within the context of the partition of Africa. Prior to that, 'The Cameroons' in English, referred solely to the present town of Douala and its surrounding regions, and was called that by the British Baptist missionary, Alfred Saker, who had settled there (current Douala and surroundings) in 1845 and begun to carry out evangelistic work. Tabi-Manga explains how Alfred Saker was the first person to choose a Cameroonian language as the language of learning and training, how he and his team decided to evangelize and carry out all missionary work in Duala, and how in the same vein, he decided to translate the Bible into Duala and did a remarkable job normalizing Duala spelling (2000, 17). However, when Cameroon became a German protectorate, Alfred Saker and the whole Baptist Missionary Society (British), of course, were forced to leave. Obviously, it was because Alfred Saker and his team had chosen the language spoken by the Douala, 'the inhabitants of the land', that they faced no opposition with regards to their choice of a 'working' language. This was not the same after the Germans took over.

When the Germans occupied Cameroon, the Basel Mission took over the work and the property of the English society. They were bent on doing things differently, especially, as "the Germans thought the English had given the natives too much independence and self-government in their religious organisation" (Eyongetah Mbuagbaw and Brian 1974, 76). Apparently, one of the ways in which the Germans considered that the English had given Cameroonians too much independence and self-government was in the choice of Duala, as the main working language in most parts of Cameroon. However, because the Basel mission thought that the missionary enterprise would move ahead faster if they took advantage of the extensive work that Alfred Saker and his team had already done with Duala, the German administration under Von Soden suggested Duala continue to be used as a State language and be established as the main language of schooling (Tabi-Manga 2000, 21). However, as Tabi-Manga explains very succinctly in the passage below, this decision was the origin of the first linguistic conflict in the new 'Kamerun':

En effet, au moment où cette décision était prise, l'enclave de Victoria appartenait encore à l'empire britannique. Ce n'est qu'en 1887, selon R. Strumpf (1979), que la cession de Victoria à la juridiction allemande fut définitive. Les habitants de Victoria, alphabétisés en anglais, se sentaient supérieurs aux autres peuples de l'arrière-pays, par exemple les Bakweri, qu'ils appelaient ironiquement des «bushmen ». Ces Victoriens s'opposèrent vigoureusement à l'introduction de la langue *duala* dans leur ville au détriment de l'anglais. Pour eux, le *duala* ressemblait fortement, dans ses structures, à la langue des Bakweri. Dès lors, ils ne pouvaient accepter cette langue de «broussards ». Mais, en fait, d'autres raisons plus plausibles justifiaient ce refus. La langue *duala* n'était pas leur langue maternelle, et ensuite la connaissance de l'anglais ou de l'allemand devait leur garantir un emploi dans une structure gouvernementale ou commerciale.

Dans la communauté allemande, certaines voix, comme celle du pasteur Preiswerk, s'élevaient pour dénoncer l'inefficacité de la langue *duala* dans ce contexte. Le choix de cette langue et son érection en langue d'État impliquait la marginalisation des autres langues. Ce qui constituait, pour l'avenir, un facteur d'insécurité. La langue allemande avait donc l'avantage de la neutralité. (2000, 22)

Even if there had been an agreement that it was good to use a Cameroonian language as a state language and as the language of instruction in schools that were being set up at that time, it was impossible to come up with a unanimous choice for the particular national language to use. In 1913, there were 631 schools and a school population of 40,000 pupils in Douala, Victoria, Dschang, Buea and Yaounde. Even though the German administration had met Duala as a written language and had put Bali (a language spoken in the North West Province of Cameroon) in writing, the "educational system placed emphasis on knowledge of the German language" instead (Eyongetah Mbuagbaw and Brian 1974, 92).

No region was willing to move away from their own language to use another Cameroonian language, even though, apparently for economic reasons, they were open to the institution of German as a main language in their region.

Linguistic resistance from Cameroonians was not the only thing that made the situation complex. Conflicts between the German administration and the German Catholic Mission also played a major role in the circumstances (Tabi-Manga 2000, 29). In the heat of a very intense conflict between the German government and the German Protestant Mission as the Protestants continued with their efforts to

propagate Bali. Even though the German administration had clearly demanded that all such efforts cease, the Bali refused to cooperate with facilitating the German occupation of the grass-fields regions of Cameroon. Thus, Karl Ebermaier (the newly appointed governor) decided to bring an end to the existing linguistic conflict by discontinuing the use and spread of Duala or any national language other than Ewondo, (Tabi-Manga 2000, 29) a language spoken by the people from the south, who, at that time, had massively been converted to Catholicism and so were also much appreciated by the German military. Naturally, the Catholic Mission took sides with Karl Ebermaier in proposing that Ewondo replace Duala completely, even in Douala. The Protestants put up a fight, and so on April 7, 1914, a conference was organised in Berlin “to decide on a language policy for Cameroon, to identify and to adopt a language to be used all over its territory” (29). [my translation] In turn, the various parties proposed Swahili, Ewondo, and Hausa, but each of them were strongly opposed, so at the end of the conference, no consensus had been reached on a language of choice. In that regard Tabi-Manga states:

La conférence, finalement, se termina sans résultat substantiel. Aucune langue ne parvint à faire l’unanimité. On retint l’idée de continuer d’approfondir la réflexion et d’orienter les efforts d’aménagement linguistique vers la division du Cameroun en zones linguistique. [...] La conférence de Berlin fit apparaitre un désaccord profond entre toutes les parties intéressées. [...] Au total, aucune politique linguistique décisive ne fut décidée par le gouvernement allemand. La question restait entière et fut finalement reposée à l’administration coloniale française (2000, 31).

This situation has persisted, so much so, that up till now, many decades later, no Cameroonian language has ever been raised to the status of ‘official’ language in Cameroon. Deplorably, when the French began to administer the Cameroonian territory, they decided to put aside all other languages except French. Unlike the British and the Germans who had preceded them, the French were very hostile towards all Cameroonian languages. This will be further discussed in the section on official languages in Cameroon. Suffice it to say, this hostility greatly influenced the state of things regarding the linguistic landscape of Cameroon (Echu and Nsai 2012, 28).

### **1.2.3 National languages and the media**

In the early 1970s, local African languages began to be used over national radio stations in different regions of Cameroon in a bid to popularize the different

Cameroonian languages throughout the national territory. However, not long after Fielding reports that:

In the early 1990s, Cameroonians witnessed an ushering in of Frequency Modulation (FM) stations, as well as an easing of restrictions on private ownership of radio stations in Cameroon. Each provincial station, responding to the linguistic profile of its audience, began producing ethnic programs which entailed use of the local languages on a fixed schedule (2009, 64-65).

As far as broadcasting in national languages was concerned, the media took an approach that could be considered rather simplistic. The radio stations simply tried to ensure that each language spoken in their province was represented in some of their programs. This differed greatly from the approach in other domains such as in education, where the tendency was to choose one language over all the others. It was in this vein that "Radio Bamenda, the Northwest Regional Station, for example, allocated 23 hours each week for the 22 community languages in the region of which Mungaka is a part" (Ayuninjam 2007, 59). Table 1.4 below depicts the weekly broadcasts in national languages by Cameroonian radio stations. As Ayuninjam (2007, 59) points out, even though Anglophone provinces had the least language airtime, they were the most linguistically inclusive provinces, as they maximised the time allocated to them to broadcast in the highest number of national languages.

Table 1.5 presents some newspapers published in Cameroonian languages by 2007. Unfortunately, I did not find an updated list. It is possible that many of these newspapers are no longer being published. There was no readily available information to this regard online at the time of the study.

#### **1.2.4 Cameroonian languages and education**

In the field of education, the government of Cameroon has not yet instituted any concrete system to cater to the aspects that pertain to the protection and promotion of national languages. So far, there has been only one pilot project, carried out by Cameroonian scholars burdened by the need for the protection and promotion of national languages, that is worthy of being listed here; the *Projet de Recherche Opérationnelle pour l'Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun (PROPELCA)* started in 1978 (Tove 2008, 30).

For more than forty years, the question of 'the promotion and the protection of national languages' has preoccupied many researchers and language specialists in

**Table 1.4:** Weekly language broadcasts over radio Cameroon

Radio Station	Province	Community Languages	Total time allocation	L1 Air time	% Eng & Fre
Radio Bafoussam	West	Mamileke, Fe'efe'e, Tikari	113 hours	23 hours	20.36
Radio Bamenda	North-West	Aghem, Fulfulde, Hausa, Kedjun, Kom, LamsB', Linbum, Mbembe, Mbili, Mendankwe, Menka, Metta, Mubako, Mungaka, Ngemba, Ngie, Nkwen, Nsai, Oku, Oshie, Pinyin, Yemba,	115	5	4.34
Radio Bertoua	East	Gbaya, Kaka, Maka, Mpopong	110	17	15.45
Radio Buea	South-West	Bafaw, Bakossi, Bakweri, ejagham, Fulfulde, Kenyang, Mbo, Metta, Mungaka, Ngumba, Mundani, Olit, Oroko, Wimbam	120	9	7.5
Radio Center	Center	Bafia, Basaa, Bëti	155	34	21.94
Radio Douala	Littoral	Bakaka, Bakoko, Basaa, Duala, Yabasi	147	13	8.85
Radio Ebolowa	South	Bulu, Ewondo, Ngumba	90	10	11.11
Radio Garoua	North	Arabic, Fulfulde, Tupuri	120	34	20
Radio Maroua	Far North	Arabic, Fulfulde, Giziga, Mafa, Masa, Mofu North, Mundang, Mousgoum, Tupuri, Wandala	106	29	27.35
Radio Ngaoundere	Adamawa	Dii, Hausa, Mbum	114	19	16.67

**Table 1.5:** Newspapers in Cameroon Languages

<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Title</b>
Catholic	Bëti	<i>Nkul Zambe (God's Drum)</i> <i>Nleb Bekristen (Christian Counselor)</i>
Protestant	Bëti Duala	<i>Bulu Mefoe (News)</i> <i>Dikolo (Information)</i> <i>Mulee Ngea (The Guide)</i> <i>Mwendi ma Baptist (The Baptist Message)</i> <i>Ngenteti (The Star)</i>
Lay (cultural)	Bamileke Bëti	<i>Nifi (Something New)</i> <i>Radio-Nam (People's Voice)</i> <i>Nkul Bëti (Bëti Voice)</i> <i>Essamndzigi (The Educator)</i> <i>Mongo Bëti (Bëti Child)</i>
Lay (political)	Basaa Bulu Ewondo	<i>Njel Lon (the People's Voice)</i> <i>Sosso Efia (True Talk)</i> <i>Bebela Ebug (The Truth)</i>

Cameroon (Sadembouo 2005, 2). However, up until five decades after independence, still no Cameroonian languages are being systematically taught in nursery, primary, secondary or high schools. Also, no national languages serve as languages of instruction in these schools either. Unfortunately, the large number of languages spoken in Cameroon continues to be blamed for this dilemma. There seem to be no criteria by which one of the national languages can be chosen over the others (to be taught or to be introduced in the two sub-systems of education).

In the late 1970s, the preoccupation with the state of African languages in Cameroon became very acute, so a group of Cameroonian researchers, educators and language specialists decided to come together to brainstorm and to find some possible solutions to the problem (3). The key questions that they asked were:

- How could they structure or organize the teaching and learning of national languages so that all linguistic groups in Cameroon were included in any projects they came up with?
- How could they promote high quality teaching of national languages in a way that would include the most remote parts of the country, and not just the rural areas?
- What language(s) would be used as a language(s) of instruction in the teaching of the different national languages?

- How could the teaching and learning of Cameroonian languages be carried out in such a way that a divide would not be created between the different language units, especially as there are no straight cut, methodical boundaries between the various regions that speak the different national languages? Some of the regions are so spread out that they continue into neighboring countries (Sadembouo 2005, 3).

In a bid to further reflect on and provide answers to these questions, Cameroonian researchers, educators and language specialists came up with a concrete plan - the PROPELCA, as mentioned above. As Sadembouo (2005) puts it, its main goal was to develop models for the teaching of national and official languages in nursery, primary and secondary schools. The plan was that these models would first of all be tried out in select nursery, primary and secondary schools around the nation, and once the pilot projects were successful, these models would then be applied all over the national territory.

L'objectif principal du projet fut de développer des modèles généralisables d'enseignement des langues maternelles et des langues officielles. Après 15 ans d'expérimentation réussie et d'extension par l'augmentation croissante et progressive du nombre de langues impliquées et du nombre d'écoles, PROPELCA sera adopté comme programme généralisable en 1995 lors des États Généraux de l'éducation. Ce programme préconise l'enseignement des langues nationales sans exclusive et des langues officielles, selon le modèle de «trilingue extensif »développé par le Prof.Tadadjeu Maurice (1990)Sadembouo (2005, 3).

The four models proposed by PROPELCA were Sadembouo (2005, 4-5):

Le modèle 1 se rapporte à l'enseignement du français et de l'anglais, respectivement aux anglophones et aux francophones, au niveau du secondaire. Il vise le bilinguisme officiel (français/anglais) par l'acquisition de certaines connaissances présélectionnées du programme dans la seconde langue officielle des apprenants. Mis en pratique et généralisé dans tous les établissements, ce programme devrait permettre à tous les élèves arrivés en fin de premier cycle d'être de bon bilingues en français et en anglais, c'est-à-dire, dans les 2 langues officielles du pays.

Le modèle 2 se rapporte à l'enseignement de la langue maternelle et de la première langue officielle familière des apprenants au niveau des 3 à 4 premières années du primaire. Cette pratique est appelée à se renforcer dans les deux dernières années du cycle d'éducation de base et servir de tremplin pour le modèle 3. La langue maternelle, langue première de l'apprenant est enseignée et utilisée comme vecteur

d'instruction dans ces classes, tandis que la première langue officielle familière, langue de la province d'origine de l'apprenant, est d'abord pratiquée à l'oral la première année et l'enseignement de l'écrit n'intervient qu'à partir de la 2<sup>e</sup> année, puis elle se perfectionne progressivement. Ce programme vise au terme de la 4<sup>e</sup> année du primaire un bilinguisme équilibré des enfants en langue première, leur langue maternelle et en première langue officielle, grâce à une pratique orale et écrite des deux langues. Nous laissons de côté les autres motivations et buts de ce modèle 2. Signalons que l'enseignement de la 2<sup>e</sup> langue officielle peut être introduite déjà à la fin du cycle primaire à l'oral, sans attendre la 6<sup>e</sup> où elle est de rigueur. Le bilinguisme de ce modèle 2 est un bilinguisme identitaire : la langue maternelle identifie l'apprenant à sa culture et à sa localité d'origine et la 1<sup>ère</sup> langue officielle à sa province d'origine.

Le modèle 3 se rapporte à l'enseignement de deux langues nationales comme matière au premier cycle du secondaire : les deux langues sont respectivement «une langue d'ouverture »au choix de l'établissement, différente de celle des apprenants, ayant une certaine véhicularité d'une part, et d'autre part, «une langue d'inculturation », langue maternelle ou quasi-maternelle des apprenants. Ce programme vise surtout l'ouverture des apprenants à une autre culture camerounaise et favorise de ce fait l'intégration des peuples de différentes langues et cultures appelés à vivre ensemble. Mais en le faisant, l'apprenant doit aussi bien s'imprégner de sa culture, surtout s'il n'a pas eu l'opportunité d'apprendre à lire et à écrire sa langue maternelle au niveau du primaire.

Le modèle 4 se rapporte à l'usage intensif de la langue maternelle au préscolaire là où ce niveau d'éducation est opérationnel, le préscolaire n'étant pas obligatoire. La langue officielle familière peut être introduite à l'oral à la fin de ce cycle pour préparer le bilinguisme identitaire au niveau du primaire.

From the models presented above, it is evident that the PROPELCA project was a serious endeavor in Cameroon that adopted a global vision for the linguistic future of the nation. It is unfortunate, though, that it only remained a project and never moved forward to full-fledged implementation all over Cameroon (Chiatoh 2014, 385).

Chiatoh (2014) explains that language development is a low priority concern for the government of Cameroon and so there is very little or no local financial support to sustain them. This situation affected the PROPELCA programme which enjoyed financial assistance from the University of Yaounde in its timid experimentation stage in the 1980s to its steady growth in the early 1990s. It however "lost its university support and was only rescued from total collapse by the timely creation of the National Association of Cameroon Language Committees National Association of Cameroon Language Committees (NACALCO) in 1996 by the PROPELCA technical team" (385). Once NACALCO was set up, it secured international funding for its activities and succeeded in the late 1990s and early 2000s in setting up 23 training centres operational in 38 languages, with 629 teachers trained in 224 schools (152 private and 72 public)(Tadadjeu, Mba, and Chiatoh 2001, 13) Unfortunately, "when NACALCO lost its international sponsorship in the later half of the 2000s the programme suffered a serious decline and has not recovered since then"(Chiatoh 2014, 385).

The first phase of the project focused on official language bilingualism at the secondary school level, while the other three phases were meant to focus on the protection and promotion of local languages in the educational system. Phase 2 targeted primary schools, Phase 3 targeted secondary schools and Phase 4 targeted nursery schools (Tadadjeu and Mba 1996, 63). Unfortunately, due to practical difficulties such as those of being unable to identify eligible nursery schools, and the lack of appropriate financing, Phase 4 only commenced in 1994. It is unfortunate that very little was done at the nursery school level, especially, as that level serves as a foundation for the rest of the educational system. The goal of Phase 4 was to try to instill in the Cameroonian child, from the very beginning,

through the use of their national language (i.e. Cameroonian languages, excluding former colonial languages), a dominant sense of nationality that would shape their behavior from a very early age.

The project was supposed to be a tool that would help educators instill in the children a sense of belonging, by orienting their games and their unconscious acquisition of knowledge in their social environment, in their national language. The successful implementation of Phase 4, in particular, would also have made integration into the nursery school system a lot smoother for the Cameroonian children who were fluent only in their national language when they first began school (Tadadjeu and Mba 1996, 64). As only English and French are used in the school system, everything is strange and new to these children who, beyond a doubt, would be more comfortable if they could use a language that they had already mastered in the new environment that nursery school represents.

Tadadjeu and Mba report that by 1996, the PROPELCA project had been running for 15 years, with a lot of success:

Les quinze dernières années de mise en pratique effective de l'enseignement expérimental des langues camerounaises à l'école primaire, comme au secondaire, ont produit des fruits assez intéressants, tant dans le domaine de la formation des enseignants que des enseignés, et tant dans le domaine du développement du matériel didactique que du rayonnement social et scientifique de l'entreprise. Cet enseignement a connu, jusqu'à ce jour trois phases importantes, à savoir l'expérimentation (1981-1987- 1987), l'extension (1988-1992) et à présent la généralisation (64).

According to the National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees Association Nationale de Comités de Langues Camerounaises (ANACLAC) ), in the 2000/2001 academic year, only 34 of the over 200 Cameroonian national languages had been taught in 300 schools in Cameroon. Two national languages were selected to be taught in schools in the Central Province, 3 in the East Province, 5 in the Extreme North Province, 2 in the Littoral Province, 1 in the North Province, 9 in the North-West Province, 4 in the South West Province, and 4 in the West Province. A total of 120 students took lessons in public and private schools dispensed all over the national territory by a total of 322 teachers.

In 2006, there were 166 standardized Cameroonian languages of which 36 were taught in primary schools. The Old and the New Testament of the Holy Bible had been translated into 18 Cameroonian languages, the New Testament into 40

Cameroonian languages, and portions of Scripture into 30 Cameroonian languages (Zeh 2014).

Tadadjeu and Mba Tadadjeu and Mba (1996) further explain that within the framework of the PROPELCA project, the University of Yaoundé I set up a teacher's training program (for primary and secondary school teachers) that made use of multiple strategies and included regular periods of internships, along with intense working sessions, that eventually produced a select few who became supervisors of the said teacher training programs. These supervisors were fully trained to help train other teachers, organize internship programs and assess teachers' performance in the schools that took part in the pilot project. One thing that came out very clearly in this endeavour was the fact that the (very specific) context or language situation in Cameroon made it quasi-impossible to teach national languages without the use of the two official languages, English and French (65).

Chumbow and Simo Bobda Chumbow and Bobda (1996) report that some (African) educationalists believe that there are negative effects of mother tongue education on the acquisition and mastery of English (or French, as the case may be), in Africa. These educationalists fear that English (or French) "is bound to lose to the national languages most of its role, status and functions" (413). This position goes to show how much some Cameroonians in particular, have internalized European attitudes towards African languages. The PROPELCA project did help show that most of these fears were unfounded. It was very clear that "in some adult literacy programs, for example, the national languages did not necessarily encroach upon the domain of the official languages, since the adults involved [did] not know these languages" (413). Sometimes instead,

[...] there is even the possibility, as in the case of Nufi<sup>3</sup>, of adults reaching English or French through literacy in their mother tongues. The function of the mother tongue as facilitator in the learning of the official language is even more in evidence in the PROPELCA project, where it is shown that pupils in experimental classes eventually perform better in English and French than those in the control groups. This seemingly paradoxical phenomenon would suggest that while mother tongue education limits the quantity and time of use of English at school, it eventually improves its quality (414).

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3. Nufi is a language spoken by the Bamileke in Cameroon. It is also known as Fe 'fe, Fe'efe'e or Bafang. It was one of the four languages taught at some schools in Douala during the PROPELCA project, along with Duala, Basaa and Banjun.

It is evident that the knowledge and skills that these adults gained as they learned Nubi could very easily be transferred to the acquisition of English and/or French if they chose to learn these official languages. The following subjects were to be taught in national languages in the school system: (Sadembouo 2005)

- Nursery school
  - Games, drawing, coloring, sensory education
- Primary school
  - Principles of reading, principles of writing, moral education, arithmetic, cultural studies, observational sciences – life and nature, sensory education.

Students who were privileged to take part in the PROPELCA project also found it very beneficial for their cognitive development and for the transfer of their acquired knowledge and skills to their official language. Researchers in charge of the PROPELCA project also found that the project affected student attitudes towards school. In fact, the project seemed to have unearthed a new generation of Cameroonians. Tadadjeu and Mba attest that many children who took part in the PROPELCA project no longer saw school as a boring chore, but actually enjoyed going to school: “Une nouvelle génération qui ne voit plus en l’école une corvée, mais une agréable continuité entre le milieu familial et le milieu éducatif” (Tadadjeu and Mba 1996, 65). Gerbault Gerbault (1997, 180) described the PROPELCA project as “one of the best documented and most complete examples of a literacy program, including materials development, a teacher-trainer programme, and evaluation.”

Thus, for many decades now, decision makers have had difficulties with the language situation in Cameroon. The PROPELCA project was heavily based on the theory that it was [is] impossible to pick a single Cameroonian language and make it ‘the’ language of instruction in the educational system throughout the whole nation. This quasi impossibility of having to choose a single local language (over more than 200 others) to be the official language of the nation has been used as an excuse for a very long time. However, this has now been redefined as a ‘false problem’. It is similar to the situation in India, where Indian educationalists and policymakers embraced multilingualism as the rule in their country and so selected different languages to be used in different locations as ‘the’ language of instruction (Saha 2017, 63). India has “47 languages used in education as the medium of instruction, 87 in press, 71 in radio, 13 in cinema and 13 in state administration. The

major literary languages of the country are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu and (..) English (Saha 2017, 63). Might it be possible to think in these lines in Cameroon?

With PROPELCA, it was recognized that every Cameroonian language had elementary educational functions – each language could very well be used “orally in the first three classes of primary school” (Gerbault 1997, 180). PROPELCA was also designed so that Cameroonian children could learn a second national language in primary school.

When the PROPELCA project was put into place, only 27 Cameroonian languages had fully developed writing systems with available teaching materials. Materials available for (teacher/language) training included the General Alphabet of Cameroonian Languages, a guide for the development of writing systems for African languages, and the basic principles of language education in Cameroon - discourse analysis, semantics and translation (180). The General Alphabet of Cameroonian Languages was produced by Développement des Langues Camerounaise (DELICAM), a sister project to PROPELCA, that began in 1981. The main objectives of DELICAM were “the standardization of Cameroonian languages, the organisation of functional literacy in these languages and their teaching in formal education, as well as fostering communication in them” (Chumbow and Bobda 1996, 413).

In the very early stages of the PROPELCA project, the need to set up publishing facilities to produce the basic materials needed for the first forty languages was discussed lengthily. For each language, there was a need to print one pre-primer, two primers, one reader, three math textbooks and one text for transition to the relevant official language. Pre-primers were part and parcel of a multi-strategic method where a well structured and extensive pre-reading period was set: letters were cut out of cardboard for learners to hold in their hands, so that they could make a link between the real world and the world of literacy. Learners then learned to recognize the shapes of letters and to describe them using concrete items in their immediate environment (Gerbault 1997, 180).

Considering the design of the project, I think that if the PROPELCA project had been carried out as planned, the story would be very different in Cameroon today. There would now be a good number of national languages fully present in the school system, many decades later.

However, since it is ‘better late than never’, it is necessary for Cameroonian language professionals to put their heads together once more to try to overcome the challenges Cameroon currently faces as far as the teaching of national languages in

schools is concerned. It has become even more imperative, with the advent of the new generation of Cameroonian children, who do not necessarily have the privilege to learn (a) national language(s) at home, that national languages be taught in schools. In this light, Chiatoh (2014, 377) finds that it has become evident that governmental language policy largely (..) promotes education that is ill-adapted to national needs and realities by failing to recognise national languages as fundamental resources in the achievement of quality and accessible schooling. He posits that “with increasing demands for mother tongue-based education, the adoption of an alternative approach to language planning is not only real but also urgent” and presents “the community response framework as an appropriate alternative platform for planning and managing mother tongue-based education in a linguistically fragmented Cameroon” (377).

### **1.3 Official languages in Cameroon**

When Cameroon gained independence from France and Britain, the newly appointed Cameroonian leaders chose English and French as official languages. The United Republic of Cameroon’s constitution clearly expressed the fact that English and French would have the same status in the nation.

#### **1.3.1 French**

France developed a general language policy that it applied in all its African colonies, including the part of Cameroon that it administered as a trusteeship. France’s main goal was to produce an ‘African elite’ through an educational system identical to that of France while the masses were to be given basic instruction in spoken French, reading and writing French, arithmetic and vocational skills (Moumouni 1968, 42).

#### **1.3.2 English**

By the end of the 1940s, the British officers in Cameroon began to frequently make statements about the language situation in Cameroon. They seemed to be of the opinion that “the free development of minds” of Cameroonian infants “must not be hampered by making the assimilation of ideas unnecessarily difficult by presenting them in a language not readily understood” ... and that “the use of the vernacular as a means of instruction must continue” (UK 1947; 1948, 134). However, it turned out that these words were just lip-service to satisfy the United Trusteeship Council

as no effective control mechanism was put in place by colonial education authorities to ensure the effective application of the vernacular policy.

In 1923, the British reported that “the first end in view is the formation of character, the second, the acquirement of the English language,” (Cameroons 1923, 51) and when the first *Memorandum on The Educational Use of The Vernacular* was passed in 1927, conservative opinion in the British Colonial Office reacted immediately. They warned strongly that “[...] to displace English from its present position in elementary schools will be a very serious political mistake to make, as well as an educational blunder” (Cameroons 1926, 148). The British had an administrative head or resident living in Cameroon, who warned school authorities not to use native languages for instruction, not “[...] even in the initial stages [...] [as it] will be detrimental to the standard efficiency” if English is not introduced at the very beginning. The resident insisted that “Cameroon was a country of innumerable languages ... so English ... is to be the medium of instruction in Cameroon” (148). Although they claimed that “the mother tongue of children may *aid* in instruction”, the British still insisted that “English be the medium of instruction in schools in Southern Cameroon and all textbooks used must be English” (Ndille 2016, 21). This explains how the English language acquired such very firm roots in the Cameroonian educational system.

When Friday-Otun Friday-Otun (2015) reported on Lodhi’s description of the language situation in Africa, he divided the various countries into different groups, based on their linguistic tendencies. In his work, he presents:

- The countries that have set an African language as their first or second language: Ethiopia (Amharic), East Africa (Swahili), Somalia (Somali) and Malawi (Chichewa).
- The countries that have one African language as their mother tongue: Botswana (Setswana), Burundi (Kirundi), Lesotho (Sesotho), Rwandan (Kinyarwanda), Somalia (Somali) and Swaziland (SiSwati).
- The countries that have one African language as their lingua franca: Central African Republic (Sango), Kenya and Tanzania (Swahili), Mali (Bambina), Senegal (Wolof).
- The countries that have one predominant African language: Dahomi (Gee), Malawi (Chichewa), Niger (Hausa), Burkina Faso (Mossy) and Zimbabwe (Shone).

- The countries that have several dominant indigenous African languages competing with one another: Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and others), Ghana (Akan, Twi), Sierra Leone (Mende, Temme), Zaire (Tshiilubd, Kikonso).
- Then, the African countries with no predominant African language: Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Mozambique (Friday-Otun 2015, 54).

Even though it has no predominant African language, Cameroon is also listed as one of the countries with an endoglossic language policy that is, a society that tends to promote one language (English in the Anglophone areas or French in the Francophone area) along with Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Somalia. Those with an exoglossic language policy are Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Liberia. Countries with an exoglossic language policy that promote more than one indigenous language are Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Zaire. Other exoglossic countries with endoglossic tendencies are Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Swaziland and Uganda (55).

Cameroon, therefore, seems to be the only multilingual African country with endoglossic tendencies, where the languages promoted are European. Cameroon is the only African country that has set up both English and French - two foreign languages, as official languages. In fact, it is actually the only other country in the world, besides Canada, with just English and French as official languages. Ndille (2016) holds that:

The failure of the nation to replace these languages at independence demonstrates a failure in our search for uniqueness; a Cameroon-centric identity. I conclude that contrary to popular opinion that English and French put Cameroon on an advantageous position in our globalized world, and beyond that fact that these languages demonstrate the permanency of neo-colonialism, the country is pseudo-represented on the global market place of national languages if globalisation means a melting pot of local/national cultures; one identity fed by multiple sources (Burbules and Torres 2000:193); a renewed importance of the local and the dissolution of erstwhile colonial identities (Mebrahtu et al 2000: 46); unity in diversity; and most especially the obsolescence of the explanation of difference in terms of centre and periphery or my colonial master and I (Slater 1998: 655) in (Ndille 2016, 17).

According to Ndille, it is not advantageous to continue to hold on so tightly to English and French to the detriment of Cameroonian national languages because that would imply that the voices of these Cameroonian national languages would continue to be absent on the global scale.

## 1.4 Other foreign languages present in Cameroon

Other foreign languages are completely absent from the public domain in Cameroon and are only present in the educational system. Thus, they tend to become irrelevant to those who learned them, unless those individuals immigrate to countries where that foreign language is spoken. Some embassies in Cameroon offer language courses (mostly taken by those who intend to travel).

For quite a while now, Spanish and German have been taught within the educational system as subjects - throughout the school cycle in Francophone secondary schools, but not in Anglophone ones. Francophone students can choose to study Spanish or German as a specialisation, which opens them up to the possibility of continuing in the same vein at the University level. In this regard, "Francophones have an edge over Anglophones in the mastery of foreign languages.... such a situation may be another source of frustration for the Anglophone minority" (Echu 2004).

As a novelty, introductory courses to a number of foreign languages are now taught at the ASTI at the University of Buea. It is indicated on the school website<sup>4</sup> that students can now take the following courses as part of the program for the Master's in Translation Studies:

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4. <http://www.ubuea.cm/researchprofile-asti/>

**ARL 201** Introduction to Arabic I

**SPL 201** Introduction to Spanish I

**GEL 201** Introduction to German I

**POL 201** Introduction to Portuguese I

**CHL 201** Introduction to Chinese I

These can be taken in the first semester of the second year, and are prerequisites to the following courses that can be taken in the second semester of the second year of studies.

**ARL 202** Introduction to Arabic II

**SPL 202** Introduction to Spanish II

**GEL 202** Introduction to German II

**POL 202** Introduction to Portuguese II

**CHL 202** Introduction to Chinese II

Arabic, Chinese and Portuguese courses are of interest to students from both educational subsystems since these languages are not taught in primary, secondary or high schools in Cameroon. German and Spanish attract mostly students who went through the Anglophone subsystem, since these languages are not taught at any level in the Anglophone subsystem. As mentioned above, students from the Francophone subsystem have an opportunity to learn these languages in secondary school.

One of the main reasons why educationalists must have thought it wise to introduce these languages at ASTI is the fact that most international organisations require their language specialists (translators, editors, revisers) to have a passive knowledge (at the very least) of a third language. Since many translation departments in international organisations in Africa are staffed by ASTI graduates, it seems necessary for the institution to open up to other foreign languages.

## **1.5 Lingua Franca**

### **1.5.1 Cameroonian Pidgin (English), Cameroonian Creole English or Kamtok**

Tabi-Manga (2000, 17) describes Cameroonian Pidgin English as an efficient language that emerged around 1845, concomitantly with Duala, the local language

that Alfred Saker, the Baptist missionary, and his team promoted as the language of evangelisation. This Pidgin English was mainly constructed (structurally) on the English language paradigm, but it welcomed words from French, German, Portuguese and a vast range of Cameroonian national languages. For most Cameroonians, it was a very accessible language - it was easy to learn as it was comprised of many familiar words from many national languages. It thus very quickly became the main language of commerce and negotiation. In fact, Tabi-Manga reports that in 1864, when King Akwa and King Bell sent a petition to the British government expressing their 'desire' for 'annexation' by the British, their petition was written in Cameroonian Pidgin English. When things did not work out as they had wished, and King Akwa and King Bell had to turn to Schultze, the German consul established in Gabon, their 'petition' to Germany was reportedly also written in Cameroonian Pidgin English (Tabi-Manga 2000, 18).

Current debates on Cameroonian Pidgin focus mainly on issues like the proper appellation of the language, the writing and sound systems that should be adopted for the language, its acceptability as a language of instruction in the Cameroonian educational system and its potential as the official language in Cameroon (Nkengasong 2016, preface). Several studies have been carried out on Cameroonian Pidgin as 'a lingua franca' or a language that is used over widespread areas. Some studies are diachronic (Todd 1969, Mbassi-Manga 1973, Mbangwana 1991) while others are descriptive, with an analytic approach that focuses on the syntax, the morphology and the phonology of the language as independent features (Ayafor 1996, 2000, 2004, 2006 and Ngefack 2009, 2011, 2014).

Nkengasong (2016, 1) describes this language as a fast-growing language that is "undergoing very rapid transformation in a constantly changing world," whose varieties are developing very rapidly in the different parts of Cameroon. He further describes it as the 'lingua franca' in everyday life in many regions of Cameroon, especially, as many "individual speakers, market men and women, media practitioners, social groups, preachers, politicians, creative writers increasingly find the language very beneficial for reaching out to the cross-section of the Cameroonian public, especially, at the grassroots level" (1). It is a language that is generally very well spoken and understood by all, both in urban as well as in rural areas. Nkengasong firmly believes that "of all the Cameroonian languages, including the indigenous and the official languages, Pidgin is the fastest growing language among the educated and the uneducated, the Anglophones and the Francophones, and the ethnic and the social groups" (4). For this reason, he deemed it necessary to write a book that describes the orthography, the sound system, the word formation processes, the major word classes, the minor word

classes, and the sentence structures of Cameroonian Pidgin. In it, he provides a corpus of proverbs in Cameroonian Pidgin and a glossary of over 1,000 popular Cameroonian Pidgin words and expressions, which are essentially loaned borrowed from indigenous Cameroonian languages as well as from foreign languages, including English and French.

Both the educated and the uneducated speak Cameroonian Pidgin English, and it seems so widespread that it is estimated that about 60 percent of the Cameroonian population speak it. Nkengasong (2016, 7) is among those who prefer the appellation “Cameroonian Pidgin” mainly because this language is predominantly an expression of Cameroon’s multicultural and multilingual landscape. As well, its grammar and vocabulary are derived from a variety of sources, including the indigenous languages, and English and French (9). Several varieties of Cameroonian Pidgin are spoken in different parts of Cameroon. “There is intelligibility in these varieties, although each variety is suited to or is created by its own specific cultural values as well as its morphological, syntactic and idiosyncratic features” (9).

According to Mbangwana (2004, 23), 97.8% of Anglophone Cameroonians speak Cameroonian Pidgin, while only 61.8% of Francophones living in urban areas speak it. In terms of its function and spread, Cameroonian Pidgin has known the most success over English and French, as well as over the more than 240 indigenous languages in the country. Ayafor (2000, 4) also describes Cameroonian Pidgin as “the language that is most widely used” and “that has already developed into a creole.” He is among the many scholars who refer to this language as “Kamtok”, which is the Cameroonian Pidgin appellation and short form for “Cameroon Talk”. The adoption of “Kamtok” as the appellation to be used is still a hotly debated topic. “Kamtok” has the advantage of being a Cameroonian Pidgin word itself. If one were to consider Cameroon English and Cameroon French as languages on their own right, “Kamtok” would rightly reflect the fact that words were borrowed from all sorts of Cameroonian languages to form this lingua franca.

As for Cameroon Pidgin English, in the Cameroonian context, the codename “Pidgin English” Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) may not be appropriate as it suggests that the language is either “uneducated English”, “bastardized English”, “the error system of English”, or “pidginized English” (8). ‘Cameroon Pidgin’ in short, seems to be a more apt description of the language. Ngefac (2016, 19) prefers the appellation “Cameroon Creole English” since in his opinion, this term “carries the ecology and identity of Cameroon.” He asserts that it also “carries the local dynamics and ecology of Cameroon, like all indigenous Cameroonian mother-tongues, so can conveniently symbolize national identity. Indigenous

languages and Cameroonian Creole English, rooted in the sociocultural and pragmatic realities of Cameroon, tend to display a similar structure that is reminiscent of these contextual realities" (Ngefacs 2016, 22).

In this vein, Neba *et al.* (2006, 46) have shown that the syntactic structure of Cameroon Pidgin strongly resembles that of certain Cameroonian national languages. They carried out a study in which they compared the syntactic structures of Bafut, Meta and Cameroon Pidgin. Their results showed that the structure of Cameroon Pidgin is quite similar to that of Bafut and Meta in terms of grammatical structures like tense, aspect and mood. Ngefacs (2016, 30) feels strongly that the status of this language has grossly been misrepresented. It has been described as a jargon, a pidgin or a substandard English. He firmly believes that this language is none of the above, but is actually a Cameroonian Creole English that:

[...] has evolved into a fully blown creole, and the main variety of the language spoken in the English-speaking parts of the country is already decreolizing because of its constant contact with the superstrate language. Being a full creole, not just a jargon or a pidgin, it displays systematic describable linguistic peculiarities at all linguistic levels and is significantly emblematic of its ecological and cultural habitat. If the real developmental status of this language as a creole is recognized, people are likely to be more enthusiastic and positive about its standardization agenda and adoption as one of the official languages. [...] The only way forward in my opinion, is for Cameroonians in general and decision-makers in particular, to redefine their identity, change their attitudes towards their local potentials and give the language its proper developmental status. It is also crucial for local scholars to develop more research interest in this language and intensify efforts for its codification (Ngefacs 2016, 29)

According to him, if the government of Cameroon really wanted to standardize a local language and raise it to the status of an official language, Cameroonian Creole English would be a very good candidate, for a number of practical reasons as it is clearly a language that cuts across the Anglophone and Francophone zones like no other language in Cameroon (22). Many arguments can however be raised against his opinion starting first and foremost with the appellation of the language. 'Cameroon Creole English' sounds exclusionary of French and so there is room to wonder how Francophone Cameroonians would react to it being elevated to official status. This is however material for a different debate.

Ngefacs (2016) provides key information about the status of Cameroonian Creole English as he considered some very important questions about the language. He dwells on the reasons why postcolonial multilingual Cameroon absolutely needs an official language that carries the ecology, identity and local dynamics of Cameroon, why Cameroonian Creole English is a good candidate for standardization and why it should be promoted through official, educational and research efforts. He explains what in his opinion are the challenges or obstacles involved in the standardization and promotion of the language, and wonders what can be done to overcome some of these obstacles. He also discusses some of the prospects that this language might have (20).

One of the main obstacles to change in the language situation in Cameroon is so aptly described by Bokamba (2007, 27) when he talks about “the inability to recognize and utilize indigenous resources [...], one of the main causes of African underdevelopment.” If Cameroonians continue to internalize the colonial philosophy on the status of African languages, and thereby continue to ignore local languages, no local language will ever be standardized, promoted and raised to the status of an official language. Cameroonians need to see in Cameroonian Creole English a great resource to be utilized in order to give it the rightful status that it deserves (21).

Ngefacs (2016, 22) lists, among the reasons why Cameroonian Creole English seems to be one of the best options for standardization as a national official language in Cameroon the fact that “one necessarily needs formal education to be able to understand and speak ex-colonial languages such as French and English. However, a local language, such as Cameroonian Creole English is simply acquired and the ability to speak and understand it does not depend on formal education at all” (22). While it is true that it might simply be acquired without formal education, I beg to disagree with the statement that “one necessarily needs formal education to be able to understand and speak ex-colonial languages such as French and English.” This was obviously the case forty to fifty years ago. However, nowadays, thousands of children in Cameroon are fluent in English and/or French without any formal education because the Cameroonian society is an ever-changing one. There is an increasing prevalence of homes in which the parents speak different national languages. In such cases where they do not understand each other’s national language, they revert to the use of either English, French, or Cameroonian Creole English as the main language of communication in the home. An urgent need exists for research studies to be done that focus on such homes to obtain statistics that would be helpful to policy makers, educationalists, and language planning in Cameroon.

Another very important issue that Ngefac evokes is the serious lack of scholarly interest in Cameroonian Creole English on the part of local researchers. He decries the fact that so far, the greatest part of the research work on Cameroonian Creole English has been carried out by foreigners, such as: Schneider 1960, 1966, 1967; Dwyer 1966; Todd 1969, 197, 1979, 1986, 1991; Féral 1978, 1980, 1989; Bellama *et al.* 1983; and Schröder 2003a, 2003b. He was only able to find three studies by Cameroonian scholars (Menang 1979, Ngome 1986 and Mbangwana 1983) on Cameroonian Pidgin, published before 1990.

According to him, much more should be expected from Cameroonian scholars as far as research studies relating to CPE are concerned, especially, as it is a language that has been in existence for far more than five hundred years. He wonders what would happen if CPE were standardized and introduced into the school system as besides material produced for evangelical activities, “there is only one textbook on this language produced by a local scholar” (Kouega 2008a). In his opinion, both foreign and local scholars need to tell the scholarly ‘story’ of Cameroonian Creole English” (Ngefac 2016, 28). If things were to change and this language were to gain a higher status in Cameroonian society, it would not be ideal for Cameroonians to have to rely solely on material written by foreigners.

It is encouraging to see that some Cameroonian scholars are stepping up to fill the gap, even though they are still so few. It is worth noting that this situation, very obviously, does not preoccupy Ngefac alone. It is of great concern to other Cameroonian linguists as well who have produced some recent publications on Cameroonian Creole English. For example, Nkemngong Nkengasong John recently published *A Grammar of Cameroonian Pidgin* (2016), a comprehensive description of the structure of Cameroonian Pidgin. Peter Wuteh (2014) also lists a number of scholarly works on Cameroon Pidgin or CamTok (Kamtok) published in the past two decades. He highlights the fact that “Pidgin English is no longer just a language of the streets as it has evolved into a medium of literary expression. Cameroonians are now producing works of literature in Pidgin English” (Peter Wuteh 2014). Some examples are:

- *Majunga Tok: Poems in Pidgin English* (2008),
- *CamTok and Other Poems from the Cradle* (2010),
- *African Time and Pidgin Verses* (2001),
- *Stories from Abakwa* (2008),
- *Je parle camerounais* (2001),

- *Moi taximan* (2001) and
- *Temps de chien* (2001).

### 1.5.2 CamFranglais or Francanglais

As mentioned above, two different cultures (supposedly Anglophone and Francophone) came into contact with each other after independence in Cameroon with the unification of the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroons. In this new setting, Cameroon Pidgin English which was already spoken widely in the Anglophone coastal regions evolved even more and quickly picked up more structures and features from French and from the indigenous languages spoken in the Francophone regions of Cameroon. One of the effects of this mixture was the creation of sub-varieties of the language such as Camfranglais. Kouega (2003, 512) explains that when English became a subject in all classes in Francophone schools, students who had learned a few English words at school began to mix them up with French in the neighbourhoods, to form a new code. For this reason, Thomason (2013, 5) defines Camfranglais as a mixed language, that is, one that “did not arise primarily through descent from a single earlier language” (Thomason 2001, 271 cited in Sutton 2013, 5).

It is very difficult to pin down the exact structural contributions that the different languages bring to Camfranglais. Professor Etienne Zé Amvela, a professor of English Language and Linguistics, and co-editor of the 2001 Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning used the appellation ‘Camfranglais’ for the first time in 1989. He coined the term in a bid to distinguish this new mixed language that was developing in Cameroon from Franglais, which initially referred to the overuse of English words by Francophones, and subsequently to the macaronic mixture of the French and English languages. Franglais is sometimes referred to as ‘Fringlish’<sup>5</sup> as well. It is important to note that Franglais is not specific to Cameroon.

The distinction between Camfranglais and Franglais or Fringlish is necessary because unlike Franglais or Fringlish, Camfranglais does not limit itself to the use of English and French words, but also borrows heavily from Cameroon Creole English and many African languages spoken in Cameroon. Kouega’s findings demonstrate that about 27% of Camfranglais borrowings are from French, 29% from English, 26% from Cameroon Pidgin English, 17% from Cameroonian indigenous

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5. The Urban Dictionary online (n.d.) defines Fringlish as “A term to describe a bilingual Canadian who uses both English and French in the same sentence, usually due to poor knowledge of the second language, so they have to resort to their first-learned language to “fill in the holes.”

languages, and about 1% from other languages such as Spanish and Latin (Kouega 2003, 518).

Research studies on Camfranglais do not yet provide complete evidence of how exactly each language contributes to its structural components. So far, Ngefac (2010, 153) claims that the structure of Camfranglais is predominantly that of French. Biloa (1999, 172) points out that some forms of Camfranglais borrow more heavily from the CPE lexicon and syntax than from French, and that Pidgin time and aspect markers abound in Camfranglais. According to Tanda and Chia (2006, 39), CPE provides the predominant grammatical structure of Camfranglais.

It is worth noting that one of the reasons why it is so difficult to pinpoint the exact contribution of each language to Camfranglais is the fact that there is no set standard for the grammatical structure or the choice of words in Camfranglais. A speaker may either choose to say: 'Je go au skul', 'I di go école', or even, 'je vais au skul' to transmit the same message. Sometimes, they could also add words from a Cameroonian language wherever they see fit. The proportion or percentage of the linguistic make-up tends to mostly depend on the speaker's linguistic background, i.e., whether they are Anglophone or Francophone. Sometimes it can also simply depend on the purpose of the communication. One of the main reasons for this mixtures is that Camfranglais was mainly used by youths to hide what they were trying to say to each other from people in their environment, who (mostly) understood all of the different languages that they (the speakers) were fluent in. Sutton (2013, 9) aptly describes it as "an in-group language, valued for its ability to hide messages from unwanted hearers".

# Chapter Two:

## BILINGUALISM: KEY CONCEPTS

This chapter throws light on the state of official language bilingualism in Cameroon. It starts out with a review of the literature on key concepts like bilingualism, bilingual acquisition, societal bilingualism, individual bilingualism, bilingualism and translation and, bilingualism and translator training. This is the backdrop against which evidence is provided for the discussion on the current state of official language bilingualism in Cameroon. In the spotlight are early simultaneous official language bilinguals whose potential is currently being left to go to waste. A close look at the educational system also provides an understanding of the promotion of, or the failure to promote, official language bilingualism through two sub-systems, namely the Anglophone and Francophone sub-systems.

At the end of the Second World War, as mentioned earlier, the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations replaced the League of Nations' mandate. Even with that change, Cameroon remained under the administration of the British and the French, but, this time, as a Trust territory. Eventually, in January 1960 and October 1961 respectively, French Cameroon and British Cameroon declared their independence from both the French and the British, the former becoming La République du Cameroun and the latter, West Cameroon. Ten years later, on May 20, 1972, the two became unified under the United Republic of Cameroon. After unification, English and French were declared the two official languages of the United Republic of Cameroon, the only other nation, besides Canada, to have just English and French as official languages. Article 1.3 of the Federal Constitution of 1961 clearly stated that:

(1.3) The official languages of the Federal Republic of Cameroon shall be French and English<sup>6</sup>.

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6. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, <http://archivesoftyranny.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Constitution-of-Federal-Rep-of-Cameroon-1971.pdf>

Further to this, when it came time to set up an educational system, both the English and French systems of education were adopted. The Cameroon education system is now legislated by Article 17 of the Education Orientation Law No. 98/004 of April 1998. Section 15, paragraphs 1 and 2 stipulate:

- (1) The educational system shall be organized into two subsystems. The English-speaking sub-system and the French-speaking sub-system, thereby reaffirming our national option for bi-culturalism.
- (2) The above-mentioned educational subsystems shall co-exist, each preserving its specific methods of evaluation and award of certificates.

English was declared the language of instruction in Anglophone schools, while French was declared the language of instruction in the Francophone ones. The Anglophone region was comprised of two provinces: the North West and the South West provinces, while the Francophone region was made up of eight provinces namely: the South Province, the East Province, the West Province, the Central Province, the North Province, the Far North Province, the Adamawa Province, and the Littoral Province. The appellation has now been changed from provinces to regions. Most of the schools opened in the Anglophone regions were Anglophone, so they used English as language of instruction, while most of the schools opened in the Francophone regions were Francophone schools with French as the language of instruction. A few 'bilingual' schools were opened in some towns like Buea and Yaoundé for example, with 'bilingual' meaning that an Anglophone school and a Francophone school shared the same campus, but functioned as two separate schools, each with its own principal, administrative staff, teachers and pupils, as well as with separate programs and curricula.

## **2.1 The Education system and the use of English and French**

There are various levels of education in Cameroon: nursery school, primary school, secondary school, high school and higher education. Schools run under two subsystems: the Anglophone subsystem and the Francophone subsystem. The Ministry of Basic Education oversees nursery and primary school education. The academic year is divided into three terms and runs from September to June with short breaks between terms.

In the Anglophone subsystem, children are admitted into nursery school at 4 years old and spend 2 years at this level before moving on to primary school. Unlike

primary school education, nursery school education is not mandatory in Cameroon. Primary school is made up of six levels, which are referred to as 'classes': (Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, etc.). Pupils must take a national exam at the end of Class 6 – The First School Leaving Certificate. Once they have passed it, they can be admitted into Secondary school.

Secondary school, modelled on the British school system, is made up of five classes, referred to as 'forms'; (Form 1, Form 2, Form 3, Form 4, and Form 5). Students have three options at this level as they can either attend a grammar school, a technical school or a vocational school. A national exam is taken at the end of secondary school (grammar school), in Form 5: The Ordinary 'O' Level Certificate Exam. After that is high school with two classes, referred to as Sixths: Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. At the end of high school, students can take the Advanced Level Certificate Exam (A' Levels) , which could lead to them being admitted into institutions of higher education universities and professional training schools.

The Francophone sub-system is divided in a similar way, with the exception that the national exam at the end of secondary school is taken in the 4th year, unlike the 5th year in the Anglophone system. Thus, high school in the Francophone system is made up of three years of schooling. The admission age for students in the Francophone system is the same – 4 years for nursery school and 6 years for primary school. The certificates to be obtained at the end of each cycle are the Certificat d'Études Primaires et Élémentaires (CEPE) at the end of primary school, the Brevet d'études du premier cycle Brevet D'études Études du Premier Cycle (BEPC) at the end of secondary school, and the Baccalauréat (Bac) at the end of high school. The Francophone sub-system also has an exam that students take in Première, the second year of high school, in between the BEPC and Bac, and referred to as Probatoire de L'Enseignement Secondaire Général (Probatoire).

Doh (2008, 76) asserts that, like most African countries, Cameroon's educational structure is very solid from nursery school to the high school level. In primary school, students study at least five subjects daily, but the strength of this educational system mostly "lies in the fact that the pupils must pass three exams every year in order to move from one class to the next, and at the end of each major phase in the academic ladder, they have to take a national exam which they must pass in order to move on" (76). He also firmly asserts that " [...] the student body in Cameroon, like in the rest of Africa, is one of the best one can find anytime and anywhere on earth, and for obvious reasons: they are willing to learn, so much so that they treat school as the only chance they have in life" (87). In his opinion, African students are very humble and have great respect for authority.

Furthermore, they are subjected to the most gruelling conditions, with systems that are intentionally or otherwise designed to frustrate them. It is quite impressive how they navigate them, “even if these conditions were simply inherited, as they are, from the colonial days, all the more reason why they should have been restructured, just like the curriculum which required African children to sing about ‘Baa, baa, black sheep’ and ‘wool’” (Doh 2008, 87). Even though a lot has changed in the Cameroonian society, very few changes have been made to the Cameroon educational system in the past decades.

The most recent statistics (2015) published by the Ministry of Basic Education<sup>7</sup> indicate that 522,429 children are enrolled in nursery schools and 4,369,988 in primary schools in Cameroon. This is a total of 4,892,417 or approximately one quarter of Cameroon’s population. There are 25,432 nursery school teachers and 105,388 primary school teachers. Out of these 130,820 teachers, 67,878 are public servants, 38,870 are hired by the private sector and 640 are paid by parent associations and school councils. The Ministry of Basic Education also reports that there are 9,175 nursery schools and 19,136 primary schools in Cameroon. School fees parents pay for nursery school are not very high as nursery school is not mandatory. Enrolment rates into nursery schools stand at 37.5%. However, the fees parents pay for primary schools are high since schooling is mandatory between the ages of 6 and 14. Enrolment rates at primary school are also very high, 134%, so completion rates stand at 76.3 per cent. Success rates in the final year exams for primary school, that is, Certificat d’Études Primaires (CEP) for Francophones and First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) for Anglophones, for 2016 were at 78.10% (CEP: 73,55%; FSLC: 90.89%). Even though school is mandatory between the ages of 6 and 14, some students are not able to complete by age 14 because pupils cannot move on to the next class unless they obtain a pass mark. The huge difference between the success rates listed above is interesting. It might be worthwhile to carry out some studies that could reveal some of the reasons why the difference is so radical.

At the time when the educational sub-systems in Cameroon were established, there were obviously very few, if any, people who could be identified as both Anglophone and Francophone. Among other issues, decision makers saw, and, evidently based themselves on a clear Official Language divide between the two former Cameroons because they established an educational system that was meant to meet the needs of each society at that time. The Anglophone schools would serve the Anglophones, while the Francophone schools would serve Francophones. However, all societies change over time, and as Barkan (2016, 705) asserts, “gradual

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7. [www.minedub.cm/index.php?id=98&L=1](http://www.minedub.cm/index.php?id=98&L=1)

change [...] typically stems from such things as population growth, technological advances, and interaction with other societies that bring new ways of thinking and acting.”

In the same vein, though the various factors that trigger change may manifest in different ways from one society to another all societies do change over time. Factors such as the amount of time over which change occurs, the causes of change, the ways in which change occurs etc. may differ. Every society should acknowledge that it will change. Also, it is crucial for every society to be able to acknowledge that it has changed, and, it is even more essential for every society to be able to take concrete measures to prepare itself to embrace change. Before unification, Southern Cameroons was a trustee under the British, so it differed from Francophone Cameroon in many ways. Unification itself was a major change, one that provoked many other changes.

One of the main ways in which the Cameroonian society continuously changed over time, and even now continues to change, is in the demographic distribution of Anglophones and Francophones across the national territory. Many Cameroonians moved to different parts of Cameroon for different reasons. Along with this changing distribution, also came new forms of relations between Anglophones and Francophones - some resulting in intermarriages. Such a major factor today as intermarriage necessitated that the strict divide between Anglophones and Francophones cease to be the only one taken into account and to be the main focus of debates regarding Cameroonian society, as many as four decades later. We now clearly have Cameroonians who can rightfully be described as ‘Anglo-francophones’ or ‘Franco-anglophones’, depending on how one chooses to refer to them. This set of Anglo- francophones or Franco-anglophones find themselves trapped in the middle of the current situation of unrest in Cameroon. In this respect, the Cameroonian society failed to acknowledge, many years ago, that it would change. Nowadays, it still continues to fail to acknowledge that it has changed. As a result, no concrete measures have been taken to show that the Cameroonian society is prepared/preparing to embrace this change.

Njei (2000) describes the Anglophone/Francophone dichotomy with pertinent details in the article he wrote about his personal experience of this dichotomy that had been cemented in Cameroon just after independence. The continuous polarization of the Cameroonian society into ‘Anglophone’ and ‘Francophone’ is vividly depicted in his story. He recounts how he happened to be one of those who lived the situation firsthand, when Southern Cameroons was united to Cameroun. According to him, he and other Anglophones were used as ‘guinea pigs’ in Ahidjo’s, (Cameroon’s first president) experiment on national integration. Njei and

his Anglophone companions were admitted into what supposedly served as the nation's 'bilingual' school (two schools shared the same location, even though they were run separately). In the sixties and seventies, one of the first of such schools was run in Buea, the capital of the Southern Cameroons (1949 – 1961) and of West Cameroon (1961-1972). Buea ceased to be the capital of West Cameroon in 1972 when the Federation of Cameroon was abolished, and replaced by the United Republic of Cameroon. The bilingual schools were meant to foster national integration, with the goal of building a united bilingual Cameroon. Njei (2000) explains that:

Typically, students were admitted based on merit between the ages of 12 and 14 and Anglophones and Francophones were equally represented numerically. [...] Elaborate measures were taken so that while you were in the dormitory, refectory, classroom or playground the 'Frogs' and the 'Anglos' were always mixed so as to promote fellowship and acceptability of each other.

In his opinion, after the five years he spent at the bilingual school, he did not necessarily feel any closer to the Francophone students he casually interacted with. In his own words,

[he] doubt(s) whether we have achieved the desired result [...] especially as "today, 23 years later, [his] relationship with [his] former Anglophone classmates is as strong as it was in school, but that with the Francophones, which was casual then, is still casual now" (Njei 2000).

In fact, Njei strongly believes that if anything, the bilingual schools further defined the dichotomy between Anglophones and Francophones who functioned separately, even though they were right next to each other. He does not hesitate when he points out that "with hindsight I can say with confidence that the educational system is the main cause of the differences between us" (Njei 2000). Apparently, instead of fostering national integration, having the two educational subsystems running side by side on the same campus actually accentuated the clear differences that exist between the French system of education and the Anglo-Saxon system of education, after which both subsystems had respectively been modelled. Njei's disappointment in national integration can be felt strongly when he does not in the least shy away from stating that:

[...] all the arguments/disagreements between the Anglophones and Francophones in this triangle called Cameroon will never end because

the educational systems have produced very different people regardless of whether they originated from the same father [...]. We can go on and on, but we must know that it is the educational system and not the individuals that are responsible for the differences we have with them. (Njei 2000).

In no way am I suggesting that bilingual education is the 'fix it all' solution to all the problems of inequality, discrimination and lack of development in Cameroon. However, the fact is that many fellow Cameroonians, who fall between the two groups are currently given no place in a supposedly bilingual nation. In addition, it is a deplorable fact that more than four decades later, African languages are still not taken into account in any way, shape or form in the Cameroonian educational system.

If the abilities of simultaneous bilinguals were recognized for their true worth in Cameroon, there would be clear measures taken, especially within the educational system - particularly at the nursery and primary school levels - to protect and enhance these special abilities. If we even momentarily agreed with the monolingual "... position taken especially by many educational researchers that the norm for human beings is to know a single language," (Cook 1999, 280) then we would also see, in the same vein that "a person who has two languages is strange in some sense, obviously different from the normal person" (280).

In terms of academic research, Valdés (2003, 174) explains:

[...] as Woolard (1999) pointed out, until recently, multiplicity and simultaneity were not part of sociolinguistic theory and notions of unitary language, bounded, and discrete codes were never problematized. The tendency among many researchers, therefore, was to study bilingual individuals in comparison with monolinguals, rather than to study bilingual individuals of different types on their own terms.

This quote succinctly captures one aspect of the strong preoccupations that instigated my choice of a research topic. I have always been captivated by the different types of bilingual individuals in their own right — not in comparison to monolinguals. I had the privilege to live and interact closely with multilinguals (bilinguals) from a very tender age. To start with, from as early as I can remember, three languages were spoken regularly in our home. In my preschool years, I spoke English at home and French on the playground and almost everywhere else. However, my friends who spoke French with me, spoke Ewondo amongst themselves because we lived in Yaoundé at the time. I then noticed that each time

our family moved to another town, which we did quite often, my new friends would speak to me in either English or French, depending on the part of Cameroon that we were in, but then they would speak to each other fluently in another language. In all the Anglophone regions, as in Bengwi for example, one of the other languages my friends communicated to each other in was Cameroonian Creole.

Alongside my friends, I experienced firsthand Malakoff and Hakuta's (1991) standpoint that bilinguals differ from monolinguals in a major way, in that bilingual children experience the world through two languages — used alternately. As their linguistic experience is clearly spread over two languages, for them, "experience is encoded in either of two languages and can be expressed in both languages, and information representation can be switched between the languages" (Valdés 2003, 142). Hopefully, this study is one of several more to come, about which one could say: "[...] our research raises many questions about the study of bilingual children [in Cameroon], their abilities, and their academic achievement" (175). good starting point would be to consider a pertinent question: how does the educational system in Cameroon help 'early age simultaneous bilingual' Anglo-Francophone / Franco-Anglophone children use their full potential in English and French? However, before we look closely at the official language bilingualism within the educational system in Cameroon, it is necessary to ask some preliminary questions such as: What is bilingualism? And, what are the various types and levels of bilingualism? Answers to these questions will be key for later discussion.

## **2.2 What is bilingualism?**

### **2.2.1 Some aspects of bilingualism**

A closer look at the body of knowledge on bilingualism reveals that there is no 'one size fits all' definition that satisfactorily covers all facets of bilingualism. Instead, depending on their goals, different researchers have approached bilingualism and the myriad of issues related to it from different angles. In other words, researchers have different interests in their studies. "Linguists study how the vocabulary of bilingual groups changes across time. Geographers plot the density of bilinguals and minority language speakers in a country. Educationalists examine bilingual educational policy and provision for minority language groups" (Baker and Wright 2017, 2).

As I was doing the literature review on bilingualism, the main topics that seemed to prevail included: types of bilingualism, the degree of bilingualism, the age of bilingual acquisition, the context of bilingual language acquisition, the social

orientation of bilinguals, individual and societal bilingualism, etc. In the next few paragraphs, some aspects of bilingualism will be discussed with the aim of providing a working definition of or a vivid description, of bilingualism, to be used in this dissertation.

The main focus here is the place given to translation as a tool to achieve national bilingualism in a specific development context: Cameroon. Thus, a detailed discussion of the myriad of issues related to bilingualism is critical for an appropriate understanding of the Cameroonian context. The use of English and French in Cameroon has many different effects that are unique to Cameroon because of the diverse ways in which people interact with each other. Language is never used in a vacuum and every change in every prop, scenery, audience or actor involved, provokes change in language usage. In addition, as the theatre and stage on which we act changes, the way we use two or more languages also changes. Of course, communication goes way beyond the structure of language (grammar and vocabulary for example) to include “who is saying what, to whom, in which circumstances” (Baker and Wright 2017, 5) and I would like to add and ‘where’? In my opinion, the ‘where’ is equally important since the social environment in which one, two or more languages are used is extremely critical to the understanding of anything surrounding the use of the said languages.

Baker and Wright (2017, 2) maintain that bilinguals are generally found in groups either as a majority or as a minority, located in a particular region or spread across communities. However, in the case of Cameroon, it is safe to say that the whole nation is multilingual (bilingual), for there is hardly anywhere there where everyone speaks only the ‘one’ language, as in the case of monolingual communities (See Figure 1 that shows the geographic distribution of the different language groups in Cameroon). English or French are always an additional language in each part of Cameroon. English and French were simply added to the mix of languages that already existed in each place. Given the officially bilingual status of the nation, most people speak either English or French and a national language. However, even in those parts of Cameroon where the presence of the official languages might not be strongly felt, people still speak more than one language. As such, whether it is in the rural or urban areas, it would be more difficult to find a monolingual town in Cameroon than it would be to find a multilingual or bilingual town. Multilinguals (bilinguals) in Cameroon are therefore spread across the whole nation.

Specifically, this implies that Cameroon a community that practices societal bilingualism and is also a community in which individual bilingualism thrives.

## 2.2.2 Societal and individual bilingualism

### 2.2.2.1 Societal bilingualism

Cameroon is officially bilingual and practically multilingual, and its citizens mostly fall into the multilingual basket. Unlike many other African States that have chosen two official languages - usually an African language and a widely used European language for a highly multilingual population, Cameroon has two European languages established as official languages for a highly heterogeneous and multilingual population. Even though it has chosen the same two languages as official languages as Canada (English and French), the linguistic landscapes in the two countries are far from the same. The situation in Canada hardly “resembles the linguistically rich, varied, and—above all—interpenetrating settings common to Africa” (Bhatia and Ritchie 2012, 6). Cameroon is the perfect example of what Edwards refers to.

Bhatia and Ritchie (2012, 6) note that:

[...] competence in more than one language can be approached from social as well as individual perspectives, and these need not be as neatly connected as might first be thought. While it is true that a country (or any other recognizably bordered region) full of multilingual people is itself multilingual in a broad sense, it may nevertheless officially sanction only one or two varieties and thus, in another sense, be something less than multilingual.

With over 240 languages, Cameroon is a multilingual endogenous country where most people use more than one language daily (See Table 1.2 that shows the language zones and language families in Cameroon). Researchers have held lengthy debates about the bilingual and/or multilingual nature of Cameroon, but they all agree that the country is full of multilingual people who speak many languages. Borrowing Edwards’ words from the above quote, it is clearly possible to make a very ‘neat connection’ between competence in more than one language from both the individual and the social perspectives in Cameroon. Cameroon is full of multilingual people and it also officially sanctions more than one official language.

In addition, the number of language combinations that one can find in Cameroon is extremely broad. Even though, the government has established only English and French as the nation’s official languages, the vibrant presence of all the other African languages is outstanding. In fact, in many rural towns, English and/or French are mainly used for education and official communications, while

the dominant regional languages are used for all other communicative needs. Unfortunately, though, African language bilingualism has been completely neglected as most works on bilingualism focus on English/French official language bilingualism. It was, therefore, quasi-impossible to find any scholarly works on African language bilingualism in Cameroon.

The facets of multilingualism are very tangible in the Cameroonian context. Therefore, it is rather unfortunate that the government solely focuses on Official Language Bilingualism. The Government of Cameroon's most recent action to further promote Official Language Bilingualism is contained in *Decree no. 2017/013* laid out in January 2017. It concerns the establishment, organization and functioning of a National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM). The Commission was established under the authority of the President of the Republic with headquarters in Yaoundé, the national capital. The Decree states that:

*3. (1) [...] "the Commission shall be responsible for promoting bilingualism and multiculturalism in Cameroon with a view to maintaining peace, consolidating the country's national unity and strengthening its people's willingness and day-to-day experience with respect to living together.*

(2) In this capacity, it shall be responsible notably for:

- submitting reports and recommendations on issues relating to the protection and promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism to the President of the Republic and the Government;
- monitoring the implementation of constitutional provisions establishing English and French as two official languages of equal status, and especially ensuring their use in all government services, semi-public bodies as well as any State-subsidized body;
- conducting any study or survey and proposing measures likely to strengthen Cameroon's bilingual and multicultural character;
- preparing and submitting to the President of the Republic draft instruments on bilingualism, multiculturalism and togetherness;
- popularizing legal instruments on bilingualism, multiculturalism and togetherness;
- receiving petitions against discriminations arising from non-compliance with the constitutional provisions on bilingualism and multiculturalism, and reporting thereon to the President of the Republic;

- performing any other task assigned to it by the President of the Republic, including mediation<sup>8</sup>.

Decree no. 2017/013 laid out in January 2017

The National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism is made up of fifteen members appointed by the President of the Republic. Members must be of “Cameroonian nationality with recognized competence, moral rectitude, intellectual honesty and patriotism” (Chapter III 4 [2]). The Commission is headed by a Chairperson, a Vice- Chairperson and a Secretary General, who all have a 5-year tenure.

This is the most recent constitutional action taken by the government to promote official language bilingualism in Cameroon. It is, however, sad to see once more that national languages have been shoved to the side. This was not only a great opportunity to think about national language bilingualism, but also to rethink the implementation of official language bilingualism in Cameroon.

In addition, right from its creation, Cameroonians complained that the institution of the NCPBM seemed to be more of a political move than anything else. Most of the members of the commission are politicians and have nothing to do with language planning as language professionals were not nominated to the commission. Six out of the 15 members are Anglophones and the 9 others are Francophones. Members of the commission are not necessarily bilingual. Local newspapers (Journal du Cameroun 2017)<sup>9</sup> report that the vice president does not speak English at all. He got stuck in the middle of his very first sentence when a journalist asked him for his reaction to the fact that he had been nominated as one of the leaders of the commission. One of the Anglophone members of the commission was previously President of the National Executive Bureau of the Cameroon National Youth Council, and is currently president of Conseil Régional des Jeunes Francophones de l’Afrique Centrale (CRJFAC). Another member was minister of Arts and Culture from 2011 – 2015, and yet another had been Secretary General in the Ministry of Planning and Regional Development, Secretary General in the Ministry of the Economy and Planning, Governor of the North West and South West regions, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Secretary General in the Prime Minister’s Office, Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic, and Main Technical Adviser in a good governance programme of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), before his retirement. Other

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8. <https://www.prc.cm/files/b1/00/4d/1f4edab0eb8fab5df54955177eff43d3.pdf> (accessed September 9, 2017).

9. <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/bilingualism-commission-executive-slammed-not-bilingual/>

members were former parliamentarians, lawyers and high school teachers. It can rightfully be expected that members of such a high level national entity would have the relevant interest, background, experience and expertise in handling issues pertaining to bilingualism. Instead, the membership of many on the commission raise questions as to the criteria used for the different nominations. In my mind, the long list of roles listed above points more to political nominations to help put up a kind of facade than to a genuine desire to begin to do something concrete.

According to reports on the NCPBM's website (The Republic of Cameroon 2019) so far (i.e. in the past two years) the NCPBM has accomplished the following:

- **Tasks accomplished so far (1):** Elaboration and adoption of:
  - The organizational chart;
  - The standing orders;
  - The plan of action for the period running from June 2017 to December 2018.

These documents in full implementation of the section 12 sub (f) of decree No. 2017/013 of 23rd January 2017 were approved by the President of the Republic on the 6th of September 2017.

- **Tasks accomplished so far (2):** Courtesy visits with working sessions to the following Higher State Institutions:
  - Senate: 25th September 2017;
  - National Assembly: 25th September 2017;
  - Prime Minister's Office: 26th September 2017;
  - Supreme Court: 27th September 2017.

The NCPBM currently plans to accomplish the following:

**Future Actions:** Implementation of:

- The organizational chart;
- The plan of action;
- The benchmarking mission plan;
- A "listen to the people's tour" to all the 10 regions;
- Going down to the ministries to ascertain conformity with constitutional provisions on the use of the two official languages English and French. (The Republic of Cameroon 2019)

There was not much that could be found in terms of practical work accomplished by the commission two years after its creation<sup>10</sup>. The above anecdotes and critical assessment of bureaucratic practices or political spinings in Cameroon aim to paint a succinct picture of 'real life' or of the actual state of things regarding one of the key institutions that Cameroon has put in place to 'regulate' official language bilingualism. As descriptive case studies in societal bilingualism are meant to provide the opportunity to delve deep into the realities of a particular community or State of the researcher's choice, in the next few sections, I continue to focus on this contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, Cameroon (Yin, 1981, 59; Yin, 2003, 2; 5-10). Such close attention to the day-to-day realities in Cameroonian society should enable me to present the specific nature of its societal bilingualism.

### **2.2.2.2 Individual bilingualism**

Among researchers, at present, the definition of a bilingual individual is a topic of debate. If anything, there seems to be a clear consensus that it is very difficult to decide who is bilingual and who is not. It would be arbitrary to adopt a simple categorization, as that would require a value judgment concerning the minimum requirements needed to earn the label 'bilingual'. The most minimalist definition of bilingualism was proposed by Diebold (1961) in his discussion of incipient bilingualism. The Oxford dictionary online defines 'incipient' as: "Beginning to happen or develop" (The Oxford Dictionary n.d.). Incipient bilingualism, therefore, includes individuals who have a very minimal competence in a second language. Those who qualified as incipient bilinguals in Diebold's study "could not sustain even limited conversation with a Spanish-speaker" (110). They only knew items of vocabulary, but were unable to "combine words into larger phrase constructions" (110). Diebold further explained that everyone who knows some words in a second language, like a greeting for example, can be considered an incipient bilingual. In other words, incipient bilingualism reflects the initial stages of bilingualism where bilingual skills can be measured with the use of lexicostatistics – basic vocabulary lists, a method that can be applied across languages, which lends itself well to testing large numbers of speakers (111).

Madrid and Hughes (2011, 27) refer to the same phenomenon, when they discuss bilingual skill from the perspective of second language acquisition. They discuss the five stages (Table 2.6) that learners go through both in natural communication

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10. The information provided in this study was the latest update available at the time of the study in July 2019.

settings and in situations where learners use their second language as a vehicle of instruction (Krashen and Terrell 1983).

As shown in Table 2.6, at stage 1, also referred to as a 'silent' or a 'preproduction' period, learners are barely able to produce structured phrases. At this stage, there is minimal comprehension and learners rely on 'yes', 'no' and on gestures to communicate. What is interesting in this table is the section that provides the 'duration' of each stage. This column suggests how much time second language learners are generally expected to spend at each stage of learning. It is expected that second language learners will be at Stage one for 0 to 6 months. What happens, though, if an individual remains at this stage for many years or for life? Can they still be considered bilingual? Can they be labelled 'incipient bilingual' if they remained at stage one for much longer than the suggested timeframe? This might be one of the reasons why researchers in Bilingual Studies have now chosen to no longer consider such individuals as bilinguals.

The following statements open Edwards' article in the 2004 version of *The Handbook of Bilingualism*:

Everyone is bilingual. That is, there is no one in the world (no adult, anyway) who does not know at least a few words in languages other than the maternal variety. If, as an English speaker, you can say *c'est la vie* or *gracias* or *guten tag* or *tovarish* – or even if you only understand them – you clearly have some "command" of a foreign tongue. Such competence, of course, does not lead many to think of bilingualism. (Edwards 2004, 7)

This implies that the amount of time spent at stage one does not matter. If an individual could say one or two expressions in another language, they were considered bilingual. However, in the updated Edition published in 2013, a decade later, the above statements no longer opened the said article, but had been replaced with a short paragraph on the importance of *lingua francas* and of translation in a world where "bilingualism and multilingualism have both the *de facto* existences and important places in the psychological, political, and social debates that define ethnic groups, communities, and regions" (Bhatia and Ritchie 2012, 5). This time, when talking about individual bilingualism in the second paragraph, he affirms that:

While almost everyone knows at least a few words in other languages, we generally require a little more competence than that before we are willing to acknowledge bilingual or multilingual ability. Where, however, to draw the line? Where does bilingualism 'start'? And how

**Table 2.6:** Krashen’s Five Stages in Second Language Acquisition(Krashen and Terrell 1983)

Stage	Characteristics	Duration
Silent period or preproduction - Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal comprehension</li> <li>• No verbalization</li> <li>• Nod “yes” and “no”</li> <li>• Unable to communicate</li> </ul>	0 to 6 months
Early production BICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited comprehension</li> <li>• Participates using key words and familiar phrases</li> <li>• Uses present tense verbs</li> <li>• Reads environmental labels, chart and easy stories</li> </ul>	6 months to 1 year
Speech emergence BICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good comprehension with pictures and props</li> <li>• Produces simple sentences and texts</li> <li>• Makes grammar and pronunciation errors</li> </ul>	1 to 3 years
Intermediate fluency BICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good comprehension</li> <li>• Makes some occasional errors</li> <li>• Limited, though acceptable, academic writing skills</li> </ul>	3 to 5 years
Advanced fluency - Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Near native level of speech</li> <li>• Initiates and sustains conversations</li> <li>• Responds with elaborate language</li> <li>• Reads quality children’s literature</li> <li>• Edits own writing</li> </ul>	5 to 7 years

are we to accommodate different levels of fluency? Still there are those who we confidently put in the monolingual category. And, at the other end of the spectrum, there are those who have virtually maternal multilingual capabilities (Bhatia and Ritchie 2012, 5).

The shift from everyone is bilingual, to, an individual needs to have a certain level of competence to be considered bilingual, brought along the many current debates on the degree of competence that is sufficient for one to rightfully earn the label 'bilingual'. The above quote is very compelling because of the last phrase, which affirms that, even though there are all many debates about where bilingualism starts, one thing is certain: there are those who have virtually maternal multilingual capabilities. This statement perfectly describes the category of individuals who are the subject of interest in this study. A group of individuals in Cameroon who have virtually maternal multilingual capabilities in English and French, from a very early age. These are individuals, whose competence in Cameroon's official languages is clearly at the higher end. This group will be described in greater detail, in the discussion on 'balanced bilinguals' in the next section of this chapter.

Hamers and Michel (2000, 6) also define the concept of bilingualism as "the state of a linguistic community in which two languages are in contact, with the result that two codes can be used in the same interaction and that a number of individuals are bilingual (societal bilingualism); but it also includes the concept of *bilinguality* (or individual bilingualism)". They chose the term '*bilinguality*' to denote 'individual' bilingualism and to clearly distinguish societal bilingualism from individual bilingualism. They define *bilinguality* or individual bilingualism as "the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication" (Hamers 1981, quoted in Hamers and Michel (2000, 6). Regarding the degree of *bilinguality* or 'the degree of access' as they put it, these authors hold that it "will vary along a number of dimensions which are psychological, cognitive, psycholinguistic, social psychological, social, sociological, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and linguistic" (6).

### **2.2.3 The Measurement of bilingualism**

Even though it is well known that no two individuals (or communities) are the same when it comes to bilingualism, it is customary in many societies to assess bilinguals or to measure bilingualism. Bilingualism is usually measured to help estimate the number and distribution of bilinguals in a particular town or community, to form a 'separate' group for selection purposes for bilingual jobs for

example, and to help properly design bilingual educational programs or school programs, for research, etc. (Baker and Wright 2017).

Measurement of individual bilingualism is not as straightforward as it might seem. Bhatia and Ritchie (2012, 15) believe that it does not take much for someone to expand their linguistic repertoire. If people have the right opportunity and motivation, they can easily improve some of their language abilities and become functional in at least another variety of a language they already know. This suggests that bilingual ability in an individual is not necessarily static. It also means that if individual bilingualism were to be defined in terms of degree of bilingualism, the ability to use both languages or in terms of the level of the individual’s mastery of the two languages involved, it would be imperative to establish some sort of standard concerning the particular skills or abilities to be measured, in order to determine an individual’s level of bilingualism.

Baker and Wright (2017, 7) present the four basic language abilities or skills that might show a measurement of an individual’s level of bilingualism. (Table 2.7) These are the same skills and abilities that could be used to measure mastery of just one language.

**Table 2.7:** The Four Basic Language Skills (Baker and Wright 2017, 7)

	<b>Oracy</b>	<b>Literacy</b>
<b>Receptive Skills</b>	Listening	Reading
<b>Productive Skills</b>	Speaking	Writing

These authors suggest, as well, that it may be better to avoid a simple classification of individuals as bilingual or not bilingual as some people may be able to speak a language, but not be able to read or write in the language. Some others may actually be able to listen and read in a language with understanding (passive bilingualism), but not speak or write the said language. Others might be able to understand a spoken language, but not be able to speak it themselves. With all these possible variances, it might be too simplistic to try to classify people as either bilinguals or monolinguals. In addition, each of these skills can be even further dissected. The reading ability can have different fluency levels. The listening ability can be very sharp in conversational contexts, but not in academic ones. Skills such as pronunciation, a mastery of grammar, the extent of vocabulary, and the ability to convey exact meaning in different circumstances, etc. are all sub-skills that can be measured. Current debates among researchers focus on topics such as how to determine the set of skills to measure and how to actually measure them. This demonstrates that an individual’s ability to use two languages is multidimensional so will not lend itself easily to simple categorization (7).



and find products and items in stores. In other business settings, some participants had assisted parents at the bank, ordered meals at restaurants and helped to interpret for their parents and their lawyers (Valdés 2003, 86-87).

There have been many debates on the definition of the notion of giftedness from as far back as the early 1920s. For some researchers, who choose to be conservative and straightforward, gifted individuals are those in the top 1% of the normal curve on IQ tests such as the Stanford-Binet. For other researchers like Renzulli (1986) and Tannenbaum (1986) (cited in Valdés (2003, 7), though, giftedness is much more complex as it depends on subjective and ephemeral views of what is valued at particular moments and as such, it becomes very difficult to determine why certain capacities are considered as resulting from giftedness whereas others are not. Valdés (2003, 8) explains that this group of researchers disagree strongly with the tendency to equate giftedness to a high IQ, and instead hold that intelligence is very elusive so there are no ideal ways to measure it because of its multifaceted nature. Tannenbaum (1986, 33) argued that “a proposed definition of giftedness in children is that it denotes their potential for becoming critically acclaimed performers or exemplary producers of ideas in spheres of activity that enhance the moral, physical, emotional, social, intellectual or aesthetic life of humanity”.

In my opinion, it is time to begin to attempt to provide a response to Valdès’ call to researchers, who study the gifted and talented child and their education, to face the challenges that arise from needing to develop the gifts and talents of bilingual minority youngsters. I can see some relevance of this in the case of Cameroon. Relating this to Cameroon, I find that it is urgent to attempt to discover and understand ‘the gold mine’ that simultaneous bilinguals represent. When looked in terms of the possession of the relevant raw material, bilingualism (multilingualism) in some very young children could denote their potential to become outstanding translators, editors, and language professionals. More of such activities could greatly enhance the physical and social lives of thousands of Cameroonians.

For this to happen, educators and policy makers need to embrace a profound shift in perspective. It is imperative that multilingualism (bilingualism) begins to be treasured for what it really is. It is rather unfortunate that the Cameroonian society has so far not done its best to show that it believes that the maintenance of all of one’s native languages or the maintenance of all languages that one can master can actually be intrinsically valuable. In some other parts of the world, clear actions have been taken to protect and enhance the abilities of children who have been identified as gifted. Obvious administrative arrangements and curricular options have been set up to provide particular services to such children within school systems. Kitano and Kirby (1986) mention three options that are usually adapted for such students:

enrichment within the regular classroom, grouping of gifted students and the use of acceleration to allow such students to move through the curriculum more quickly.

Enrichment methods include allowing students to work independently, allowing students to test out of units, requiring students to apply higher order thinking processes to regular assignments using guest speakers and mentors as well as giving students higher level materials than used at the level of elementary schools. At the higher levels, that is, at the secondary and college levels, enrichment methods such as giving students access to college- level courses, offering career education, and promoting exchange programs are used to tap into and solidify students' special abilities. In general, enrichment includes all experiences that are above and beyond the regular curriculum and take into account students' content interests, their learning styles, as well as allow them to pursue topic areas where they have superior potential for performance. (Renzulli 1977, cited in Valdés (2003, 13))

Referring to the U.S. context, Valdés points out that some students need to be identified as 'gifted' based on their bilingual abilities. He would like to see an expansion of the definition of 'gifted' and 'talented' education to one that would identify strong bilingual abilities in young children as 'gifts'. Only then will specialists within the field of gifted education begin to see the need to start to focus on, or to invest in designing programs that will meet the needs of the increasingly multilingual student population. Unfortunately, this is not the case in most communities in the U.S. so the special capabilities of young bilinguals are currently ignored by existing assessment procedures and "there is little understanding of the way in which the unique talents of such youngsters might be nurtured and developed in academic settings" (5).

In addition, the field of gifted and talented education must side with Maker and Schriever who concluded that bilingualism is a strength. The development of bilingualism needs to be established as the focus of educational programs designed to meet the needs of the ever increasingly multilingual student population of the U.S. In Valdes' opinion (5),

"[...] as long as definitions of giftedness do not incorporate bilingual performance such as that manifested by the young professionals that we (they) studied, the special kinds of potential giftedness exhibited by such youngsters will not be valued, fostered in instruction or positively evaluated in formal education".

There is room to think that the measurement of bilingualism in young children in Cameroon might provide interesting results that can be used in the same vein.

At some point in time, the need to research the distribution of (official language) bilingual preschool age children in Cameroon might become imperative. The same thing goes for bilingual preschool age children who are bilingual in Cameroonian national languages. For now, no such studies have been carried out in Cameroon.

#### **2.2.4 True, balanced or equal bilingualism**

Even though it is very difficult to agree on a definition of bilingualism, researchers agree that individuals who have a solid mastery of two languages are undoubtedly 'bilingual'. In discussions on bilingualism, mention is constantly made of the category of bilinguals whose abilities in both languages are very well developed. These are individuals who are approximately equally fluent in two languages across various contexts, that is, whether they are at school, the marketplace, at home, at work, or elsewhere. Baker and Wright (2017, 9) describe them as individuals whose "competences in both languages are well developed" and who are on the AB or BA levels of Valdés' continuum (Figure 1.1). Such individuals have been referred to as equilinguals or ambilinguals or balanced bilinguals. Some researchers such as Fishman (1972) argued that it is very rare to find someone who is competent to the same extent in both languages across all situations, especially, as bilinguals usually use their two languages in different places, for different reasons and with different people. In Cameroon, however, balanced bilinguals have the ability to use either language wherever they are, depending on who they are speaking to. The language that they choose for each interaction depends on the person they are addressing and not on their competence in one language or the other. As some of the people they interact with on a daily basis are not balanced bilinguals in the two official languages, they generally choose to use the language that the person they are talking to is the most comfortable with.

Surprisingly, researchers like Fishman considered it rare to find balanced bilinguals in the 1970s. However, even more surprising was Baker and Wright (2017, 9) recent statement that:

balanced bilingualism is mostly used as an idealized concept. Rarely is anyone equally competent in two or more languages across all their domains. As the complementarity principle asserts, most bilinguals will use their languages for different purposes and with different people.

It is quite obvious that a monolingual disposition is embedded in these statements. It is difficult to reach such conclusions when one is accustomed to a

naturally multilingual setting. For certain types of families (tribal intermarriages) in Cameroon for example, one might need to talk to one's mother in English one minute and then a few minutes later turn around and talk to one's paternal grandmother in French. In this case, the individual still needs to use their languages for different purposes with different people, however, they very often must use their two languages alternately, across many domains, at the same level, with the same frequency everyday.

In the same way, it is very normal to walk into a church and speak one language to one person, and then turn around and have to speak to the next person in another language. It gets even better when it comes to a public space such as the marketplace. For example, in places like Yaounde or Douala, one might need to speak in English to buy fish from one woman, then need to talk French to be able to buy plantains from the next one, and need to speak Pidgin English (or Duala or Ewondo) to be able to buy crayfish from the next small scale merchant. This, not because languages are associated with the sale of particular types of produce but simply because each seller comes from a different part of Cameroon and speaks a different language.

Is it that the monolingual culture that prevails in the Anglo-Saxon world makes it such that balanced bilingualism is considered a rare find? Unfortunately, Eugen Gergely (2010) is of the same opinion as well as he posits that the term 'bilingual' is very much abused: "the number of people who are truly bilingual is very small" he claims. For this reason, alternative terms have had to be coined to describe situations where boundaries and distinctions are hard to establish. For example, "language of habitual use" Samuelsson-Brown (2004) refers to a situation where an individual has learned one language as a child and then moved to a different country and learned a new language that they use more often in their new environment. The term 'main language' is also used to describe the same phenomenon within the context of the European Community.

In general, the case is different in the African context, and in Cameroon in particular, as it is common to find people with a very strong and very balanced mastery of two (and often more) national languages. These are usually languages acquired from infancy and used daily at home and in the community at large. This leads me to think that, the fact that it is common to find balanced bilinguals in Cameroonian African languages is one of the main reasons why very little or no attention has been paid to, or is being paid to, the relatively new manifestation of the same phenomenon: balanced bilinguals in the official languages, French and English. The logic here is that, if a community is accustomed to acting in certain ways regarding the languages present within its boundaries, it is likely that it will

follow the same trend for any additional languages that come its way. Very clearly, research on bilingualism will stand to benefit greatly from any such studies that are based on naturally multilingual societies that have been multilingual for the longest time. Many studies have been based on monolingual societies that have become or that are becoming bilingual for one reason or another (for example, the increased presence of immigrants who bring with them many foreign languages). Unfortunately, though, even when Cameroonian academicians write about bilingualism, they still seem to strictly use the western paradigms and molds that fill the literature.

The next question that arises is how well do those who master two languages at the same level actually master each of the languages? Baker and Wright (2017, 9) explain that balanced bilingualism “is also a problematic concept” because “the balance may exist at a low level of competence in the two languages” as the balanced bilingual may actually have “two relatively underdeveloped languages that are nevertheless approximately equal in proficiency”. However, Baker and Wright make it clear that this is not taken into consideration in bilingual studies and that there is always the implicit idea of an ‘appropriate’ level of competence in both languages, when it comes to academic discussions on balanced bilingual individuals. They insist that “the implicit idea of balanced bilingualism has often been of ‘appropriate’ competence in the standard variety of both languages, typically in academic contexts. Thus, a student who can fully understand the delivery of the curriculum in school in either language, and effectively participate in classroom activities in either language would be an example of a balanced bilingual” (9). In the same vein, when referring to balanced bilinguals, this study will refer to people with an almost equal native-like mastery of both English and French and not people with a little knowledge of each of them, with their competence in both languages being almost equal.

Anderson and Boyer. (1978, 13) add yet another dimension to the definition of bilingualism by emphasizing the regular use of both languages. They assert that bilingualism “refers to the knowledge and use of two languages by the same person” or “the practice of alternately using two languages” (Weinreich 1953). As such, instead of simply asking the question whether someone is bilingual, we should ask how bilingual he or she is. In their opinion, this approach would lead to classifications that would include: the number of languages involved, the type of languages used, the influence of one language over another, the degree of proficiency, as well as the vacillation and social function (Anderson and Boyer. 1978, 15).

## 2.3 Approaches to individual bilingualism

There exist two contrasting approaches usually taken towards individual bilingualism: the monolingual view and the holistic view (Baker and Wright 2017, 9). With the monolingual lens, bilinguals tend to be seen as the 'oddity' or as 'inferior' because they are compared to monolinguals. The bilingual's two languages are treated as separate distinct systems, as though a bilingual student were two monolinguals in one. This is based on the overly simplified notions that languages are just added or subtracted from the mind of the bilingual individual. The result is that whenever one language is to be tested in bilinguals, it is tested against a "monolingual mother tongue" benchmark, as if the bilingual individual were merely a combination of two monolingual individuals with different levels of competence in each of the languages. This is critical to this thesis because there is, unfortunately, a strong link between this line of thought and the dominant mindset in Cameroon, where simultaneous official language bilinguals are invariably considered as either mere Anglophones with advanced competence in French or mere Francophones with a great knowledge of English. They are incorrectly considered as the sum total of both a monolingual Anglophone and a monolingual Francophone, in one person. This is why it does not seem to bother anybody that they are put in a situation where they must somehow choose one of their 'persons' for schooling.

The holistic view is the one in which bilingualism is seen as a single unit, as a single linguistic system (Ofelia and Li. 2014). According to Hopewell and Escamilla (2015, 39), the holistic view is based on the idea that what the bilingual individual knows and understands in one language contributes to what he or she knows and understands in the other language, so that all languages contribute to a single and universally accessible linguistic and cognitive system.

Ofelia and Li. (2014, 13-14) describe the holistic view of bilingualism very succinctly, when they explain the basis on which they make a case for 'translanguaging':

Unlike the view of two separate systems that are added (or even interdependent), a dynamic conceptualization of bilingualism goes beyond the notion of two autonomous languages, of a first language (L1) and a second language (L2), and of additive or subtractive bilingualism. Instead, dynamic bilingualism suggests that the language practices of bilinguals are complex and interrelated; they do not emerge in a linear way or function separately since there is only one linguistic system. Dynamic bilingualism goes beyond the idea that there are two

languages that are interdependent as in Cummins (1979); instead, it connotes one linguistic system that has features that are most often practiced according to societally constructed and controlled 'languages', but other times producing new practices (Ofelia and Li. 2014, 13-14).

They distance bilingualism from the mere addition of language 1 to language 2 and see it as a non-linear whole from which the bilingual individual draws and then dishes out practices which sometimes fall within accepted traditional constructs of language and at other times, fall within new practices (that differ from societally constructed and controlled language practices).

Furthermore, in describing the holistic view of bilingualism, also referred to as the 'bilingual view' of bilingualism, Grosjean (1989, 3) holds that the bilingual is not the sum total of two complete or incomplete monolinguals, but rather has a unique and specific linguistic configuration. Grosjean also explains how a whole different, but complete linguistic entity is formed by the coexistence and constant interaction of the two languages in the bilingual. He provides us with a very vivid analogy from the domain of track and field:

The high hurdler blends two types of competencies, that of high jumping and that of sprinting. When compared individually with the sprinter or the high jumper, the hurdler meets neither level of competence, and yet when taken as a whole, the hurdler is an athlete in his or her own right. No expert in track and field would ever compare a high hurdler to a sprinter or to a high jumper, even though, the former blends certain characteristics of the other two. A high hurdler is an integrated whole, a unique and specific athlete; he or she can attain the highest levels of world competition in the same way that the sprinter and the high jumper can. In many ways, the bilingual is like the high hurdler: an integrated whole, a unique and specific speaker-hearer, and not the sum of two monolinguals. He or she has developed competencies (in the two languages and possibly in a third system that is a combination of the first two) to the extent required by his or her needs and those of the environment. [...] Because the bilingual is a human communicator, he or she has developed a communicative competence that is sufficient for everyday life. This competence will make use of one language, or the other language, or of the two together (in the form of mixed speech) depending on the situation, the topic, the interlocutor, etc. The bilingual's communicative competence cannot be evaluated through only one language; it must be studied instead

through the bilingual's total language repertoire as it is used in his or her everyday life (Grosjean 1989, 6).

This holistic view of bilingualism makes it possible to evaluate monolinguals and bilinguals in a fairer and more precise way. In such evaluations, emphasis will be placed more on the many specificities of the bilingual, for example on the structure and organization of the bilingual's language competencies, the structure and organization of their mixed language competence (the language systems that get activated when the bilingual is in a mixed speech mode and is borrowing and code-switching with other bilinguals) and their language processing systems when the language input and output are monolingual, that is, when the bilingual is speaking to a monolingual. The bilingual's other language is never totally deactivated in such instances of communication though. With the holistic view in perspective, it is also possible to stress the many similarities that exist between monolinguals and bilinguals at the level of communicative competence. Even though the outward manifestations of the communicative competence that the bilingual has developed may seem abnormal to the monolingual researcher, who tends to see this competence as a reflection of semilingualism, ailingualism or even language disorder, the bilingual's communicative competence is specific to bilinguals and should not be seen in comparison to the monolingual's communicative competence. Grosjean (1989, 7) suggests that we develop "new testing procedures; traditional language tests that put more stress on the *form* of the language than on the speaker's ability to communicate in context are not appropriate". To confirm this hypothesis, "we will also need to study in more detail how monolinguals and bilinguals implement their communicative competence: the former with just one language, and the latter with two (or more) languages, used separately or together, depending on the speech mode they are in" (7).

It might, therefore, be necessary to look at official language bilinguals in Cameroon in their own right and not in comparison to, or, in equation to Anglophones or Francophones. Such a view could expose the acute need for a concrete bilingual education program in the educational system that would protect and reinforce simultaneous bilingualism.

Judith F. Kroll, a Penn State cognitive scientist and professor of psychology, linguistics, and women's studies, also underlines the differences between monolinguals and bilinguals, this time from a neuroscientific point of view. She found a clear difference in brain structures between monolinguals and bilinguals. Kroll associates this difference, to a major extent, with the fact that bilinguals are constantly switching between the two languages in their mind. This "changes the brain networks that enable skilled cognition, support fluent language performance

and facilitate new learning” (Bye 2011). There is, thus, a unique ability that results from the fact that in the bilingual individual, “both languages are constantly active in the mind, and in competition with each other” (Bye 2011).

As far as timing is concerned, Groot and F.Kroll (1997, 19) posit that it has been shown (scientifically) that it is much easier for young children to acquire a second language than older children or adults. One does not have to be a simultaneous bilingual or an early bilingual, however, to enjoy the benefits of bilingualism for cognition. Some scientists even argue that there are actually some unique benefits that late bilinguals (i.e. individuals who acquired the second language after early childhood) enjoy because they learned a second language later in life. This idea stems from the fact that the hurdles that one must overcome to learn a second language at a later age constitute a ‘difficulty’; the type of difficulty that Elizabeth and Robert Bjork perceive as ‘desirable difficulties’ (McDaniel and Butler 2011). The challenges involved in learning a second language later on in life can make demands on cognitive resources that, if the learner succeeds to meet will confer specific benefits. It is true that “the earlier a person begins, the more time he or she has to become proficient. In the end, though, it is proficiency that may matter more than age of learning”(Bye 2011). Recent studies also clearly confirm that it is never too late to become bilingual.

Even though the focus here is on simultaneous bilinguals in Cameroon, this does not undermine the advantages of having other types of bilinguals as well in the country. All efforts need to be made, at all levels possible, to promote and enhance bilingualism for all those who value bilingualism and/or who desire to be bilingual, no matter their age. The goal in this work is to emphasize the fact that it is possible to stop losing the critical resources that Cameroon already has. Early simultaneous official language bilingualism can very well be preserved at the nursery and primary school levels, so that we can avoid scrambling to produce bilinguals at the tertiary level with crash programs like *‘formation bilingue’*. Apart from the students at the University of Buea, which is an English-speaking university, all university students in Cameroon are expected to be bilingual. All other state universities are bilingual universities where the professor teaches in the language of their choice and all students write their papers in the language of their choice. In this scenario, to ‘help’ students cope with having to suddenly become ‘bilingual, the universities came up with a mandatory course called *‘formation bilingue’*, in which Anglophones are supposedly taught French in an intensive manner and vice versa.

## 2.4 Bilingualism and translation

There is a very strong link between translation and bilingualism. Translation involves the use of more than one language. Bilingualism involves the knowledge, mastery and use of more than one language. Every translator/interpreter uses at least two languages. Thus, bilingualism is a basic competence that every translator must possess. While we all agree that all translators are bilingual, there have been long debates about whether all bilinguals can translate.

Harris (1977, 5) stated that “all translators have to be bilingual and that all bilinguals can translate” as he explained that bilingualism was a ‘triple’ and not a ‘double’ competence. The first competence in bilinguals is the knowledge of a first language, the second competence the knowledge of a second language and the third competence “that of translating from  $L_i$  to  $L_j$  and vice versa”. He also draws attention to the “well-known model of compound vs. coordinate bilingualism according to which many bilinguals do nothing but translate!” (5) Harris then takes examples from other domains such as linguistics to say that translation studies must include the study of all translation.

Linguistics now involves the study of all speech acts including even the earliest babbles of the youngest ones. Howard points out that “The long history of seeing bilingualism as a much more flexible category commencing with the production of the first meaningful utterance in an additional language (Haugen 1953, 7), or perhaps, even earlier with Diebold (1961) notion of incipient bilingualism – comprehension without requiring production” (Nicholas 2015, 175) in infants helps to distinguish between bilingualism and various levels of second language acquisition that eventually lead to individual bilingualism. Scientists have shown that native-like mastery of two languages is possible in early bilinguals because they are able to process two languages “independently, yet in parallel” (Grosjean 2001, cited in Kovelman, Baker and Petitto - 2008).

This makes it very challenging for researchers who seek to identify the various instances of a bilingual’s language production that are instances of ‘amalgamation’, ‘dominance’ or ‘parallel’ processing of two ‘differentiated’ language systems”. Research on bilingualism, therefore, is also not limited to the study of professional bilingualism only, but it is interested in ‘social bilingualism’. So, translation studies should involve the study of all translation. This opens up translation studies to the study of bilinguals who according to Harris are ‘natural translators’, which he defines as “translation done by bilinguals in everyday circumstances and without training for it”(Harris 1977). He goes further to stress that translation schools do not teach students to translate, but rather teach them to translate ‘better’, given that

students accepted into translation programs are usually already bilingual. In addition, the fact that the entrance exams into some translation schools usually include a translation component means that they might expect those taking these tests to know how to already translate to a certain extent. In this light, translation can be seen as a 'natural skill' and like other life skills, it is possible that performance of the skill can be improved with training and guidance. Harris's discussion of age is an interesting one. He writes that:

The question of age is of particular interest to the theory of NT because, if it is true that NT is coextensive with bilingualism, then the former should be detectable by investigators at as early a stage of human ontogeny as the latter. Furthermore, in educated communities it is only by catching translation at a very early age that we can be sure of observing it in its 'natural' state. It would logically, therefore, follow that "as teachers, [we] guide its development wherever we find it and at whatever age (Harris 1977, 5).

Cases involving bilinguals who translate in everyday life, without any formal training, do abound in Cameroon, but that is a topic for a later discussion. Marais dwells on this lengthily when he challenges African translation scholars to turn their attention to the 'informal sector' to showcase a different paradigm for translation studies that has unfortunately not received the attention it deserves. In the light of the above discussions, the main aim in this thesis is to underline the fact that if bilingualism plays such a major role in Translation, it is very important to be able to identify bilinguals at a very early age so that this bilingualism can be protected and enhanced and so that the greatest number of these individuals can be provided with the guidance they need to blossom into their full potential. This is especially important in a country like Cameroon, which is officially bilingual. What better way can there be to accomplish this, if not through the lower levels of the educational system, that is, at the nursery and primary school level?

## **2.5 Bilingualism and translator training**

Harris' statement regarding the fact that the natural translation competence in bilinguals is bi-directional has hardly been given much attention. Instead, statements about the rarity of true bilingualism have clearly been at the root of many beliefs and attitudes towards translation into one's 'mother tongue'. In most countries in the West, including Canada, translation schools train their students to translate mainly (and sometimes even only) into their 'mother tongue'. The

translation market also upholds this in its hiring practices. This, apparently, seems to be mainly because most students' competence in their second language is nowhere close to their competence in their first language. However, this again may also be simply due to the general assumption that prevails in the monolingual mindset, that students do not have an acceptable command of the source language to be able to interchange it with the target language. That is to say that students are not able to use their source language as a target language and vice versa, whenever they want to.

The situation is different in Cameroon. At the ASTI of the University of Buea, which for decades continued to proudly stand as the only translation school in all West and Central Africa, translators have been successfully trained to translate into both English and French for years now. This has been possible because students at ASTI come into the program with a very strong command of both French and English. The entrance exam is designed so that one needs to have a native-like mastery of both English and French in order to get a pass mark. Some European translation schools too train students to be able to work into multiple languages (e.g. Geneva).

Two main reasons might account for this pedagogical approach used at ASTI. First, Cameroon's declared official bilingual status creates a high demand for translation both in government and private institutions, and in the formal and informal sectors in all ten regions. Translators at ASTI are, therefore, trained to be able to meet the needs for translation from and into English and French in order to be able to provide their services at anytime and anywhere within the national territory. Secondly, the lack of adequate resources plays a great role in tertiary education. For many decades, ASTI admitted only ten to fifteen students per year, so the number of translators being trained yearly was hardly enough to meet the translation needs even just within the different government services. Training students to translate in only one direction would have been very wasteful of the very limited human resources available. These students clearly fall within Achimbe's third group in terms of identity creation. They are "Anglophones who grew up and studied in Francophone areas and vice versa, as well as others who majored in bilingual studies at the university" and who are "an important arm of success in certain domains" as "they have the unique chance of benefiting from Francophone and Anglophone opportunities, if the regional criterion<sup>11</sup> is kept out" (Anchimbe 2011, 39). The key issue here is that they grew up using both English

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11. In principle, consideration is given to the region of origin when candidates are selected for government positions. This is to ensure some sort of regional equality by making sure that all regions are represented in government.

and French, which might not be the same for many translation students in many other regions of the world.

There is thus within translation studies the need for a clear, distinctive and consistent demarcation between bilingualism and second language acquisition such as the one that Nicholas (2015, 165) underlines. While most students make it into translation schools as individuals with a strong command of at least two languages, not all students are necessarily bilingual (especially in the West) because bilingualism cannot simply be equated with an advanced level proficiency in second language acquisition or an advanced capacity to understand a second language, which serves uniquely as a 'source language'.

The resulting debate focuses on whether adult bilinguals can effectively differentiate between their linguistic systems and can ever achieve monolingual-like language competence in the two systems. Again, this very same debate might underly the dominant trend in certain Western institutions that train and encourage translators to translate solely or mainly into their mother tongue. Could it be that the time has come for Translation Studies to rethink its positions as far as this aspect of translator training is concerned, with the advent of globalization, increased migration and societal changes that are altering the number of simultaneous or/and balanced bilinguals in many Western countries? It will be interesting to note whether the statistics about the number of balanced bilinguals getting enrolled in translation schools around the world has stayed the same over the years or not. As well, should these translation schools continue to cling to the tradition of training their students to translate solely into their 'first' language'?

So far, we have seen that while most students admitted into ASTI in Buea are balanced or true bilinguals, as not only did most of them acquire both English and French in infancy but they also have an equally strong mastery of both languages, the same cannot necessarily be said for most translation schools in the Anglo-Saxon world. Many students are admitted into translation schools as bilinguals at different levels of bilingualism. Some of them start off as second-language learners and then became bilingual, as the transition from second-language learner to bilingual is not static but continuous. As most researchers agree, "some description of the relative level of language proficiency is important in interpreting potential effects of bilingualism" (Bialystok *et al.* 2005, 581). In the same way, a description of the relative level of language proficiency in all of one's working languages is very important in evaluating potential effects on translation.

In addition, the fact that the transition from second-language learner to bilingual is continuous could make a difference in Translation Studies since the definition of the translator's language knowledge base can change with time. A translator trainee

who was a second language learner could become a balanced bilingual many years down the road. Is there any room, in many parts of the world, to accommodate such a movement in the translation profession? How would such a change or progression affect the status of a professional translator? As mentioned above, with this in mind, discussions around translation into one's mother tongue would also unfold differently.

These points are very relevant to the discussion that follows. In a later section, it will be emphasized that it is of utmost importance to protect the bilingual status that many Cameroonian children can now lay claim to at a very early age. It is deplorable that balanced bilingualism, unfortunately gets stifled in an educational system made up of Anglophone and Francophone sub-educational systems that have some traces of second language acquisition programs.

Another important issue to mention here is that many ASTI graduates end up working for the United Nations, for the African Union, and for many other international organizations and their agencies. It would be interesting to find out what languages these translators translate from and into, (how often, when etc.) in these positions. Amongst other things, this would tell us whether the bi-directional translator training efforts at ASTI do pay off in the real world, and whether there are some things, in this regard, that other translation schools can copy from ASTI.

The practice of bidirectionality in translation is often possible for those translators who do not lay claim to either language as a mother-tongue. In fact, they relate to both languages in very similar ways. In the case of Cameroon, English and French are both adopted languages with similar historical circumstances. Cameroonian translators may display native competence in either language, although they usually have an African language as mother tongue.

# Chapter Three:

## TRANSLATION IN CAMEROON

As mentioned earlier, there are two main categories under which societal bilingualism can be studied: the 'state' and the 'community' (Sebba 2011). Researchers who study societal bilingualism at the level of the 'state' focus mainly on the institutions and legal frameworks established by the state to produce, promote and maintain a precise nature of bilingualism. In this chapter, I examine the institutions and legal frameworks established in Cameroon to produce, promote and maintain official language bilingualism. And, because official language bilingualism is heavily predicated on translation in Cameroon, this chapter commences with a discussion of the different approaches to translation policy and language policy, and then moves on to the institutions and legal frameworks (amongst which are translation policies) that exist to promote, protect and maintain official language bilingualism in Cameroon. Seemingly translation policies in Cameroon are mostly geared towards equality between Anglophones as Francophones and the nation's official bilingualism policy, whose main aim is equality, is heavily predicated on translation.

### 3.1 Translation policy defined

Unlike in past decades, a good deal of attention is currently being paid to "translation policy" in TS. Many articles on translation policy were published in journals in 2016. At the last conference of the European Society for Translation Studies held in 2016, Panel 13 comprised specialists dedicated to the subject, Translation Policy: Connecting Concepts and Writing History as translation scholars thought that the "time has also come for Translation Studies to come to terms with this domain of interest by focusing more in detail on the theoretical and historical specifics of translation policies" (D'hulst and Meylaerts 2018). In the same light, a number of publications have also been produced recently.

Translation and Public Policy (Núñez and Meylaerts 2017) contains articles such as “Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Translation Policy : New Directions and Challenges” by Núñez and Meylaerts (2017, 1); “Comparative Language Policy and Evaluation: Criteria, Indicators and Implications for Translation Policy” by Gazzola and Grin (2017, 83); “Law and Translation at the U.S.-Mexico border: Translation Policy in a Diglossic Setting” by Gabriel Núñez and Meylaerts (2017, 152); “From Language Planning to Translation Policy: Looking for a Conceptual Framework” by Oscar Diaz Fouces (2017, 58), just to name a few. Even though there is increasing interest in translation policy as can be seen by all the publications listed here, these publications are still too few when compared to the amount of work done on language policy.

One would have thought that translation policy and language policy are so closely related that the multiple debates (and publications) on language policy would naturally include discussions on translation policy so that works on this subject would not be so few when compared to the number of publications on language policy. Núñez (2016) points out that even though

[...] language policy has rightly been explored from a number of angles including economics(e.g., Ginsburgh & Weber, 2011), law (e.g., Dunbar 2001), and political philosophy (e.g., De Schutter, 2007), (...) in most of these studies, the key role that translation plays in the implementation of language policies is often ignored or mentioned only in passing.”

Even though Núñez is referring to the role that translation plays - that is, translation as a whole, and not necessarily translation policy, in particular - in the implementation of language policies, one has to agree with him that this situation is rather striking given that “issues of translation are intractably bound up with language policy” (Núñez 2016). It should therefore be quite natural to find issues of language policy present in discussions on translation policy and vice versa. As such, even though the principal focus in this section is on translation policy in Cameroon, we must also dwell briefly on some aspects of language policy in Cameroon, aspects which are pertinent to this work.

It is necessary, at this point, to present some brief definitions of language policy and of translation policy, in order to better understand the discussions on translation policy that follow in later sections. Translation policy has so seldom been discussed in academia that many language specialists tend to confuse language policy and translation policy.

## 3.2 Policy defined

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines policy as “a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions” and also as “a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a government body”<sup>12</sup>. The Collins Dictionary online<sup>13</sup> defines policy as “a set of ideas or plans that is used as a basis for making decisions, especially in politics, economics, or business”. Then too, the Cambridge Dictionary defines policy as “a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organisation, a government or a political party.”<sup>14</sup> Even though “like translation, policy can be hard to define at times” (Meylaerts and Núñez 2017), there are a number of elements compiled by Jenkins (2006) that help to adequately define policy. Jenkins posits that:

- Policy is an attempt to define, shape and steer orderly courses of action, not least in situations of complexity and uncertainty.
- Policy is best regarded as a process, and as such, it is ongoing and open-ended.
- The policy process is, by definition, an organisational practice.
- The policy process is embedded in and is not distinct from other aspects of organisational life.
- Policy appeals to, and is intended to foster, organisational trust – that is, external trust of organisations, and trust within organisations – based upon knowledge claims and expertise as well as on legitimate authority.
- Policy is about absences as well as presences, about what is not said as much as what is said.
- Policy may be implicit as well as explicit.

Further, policy formulation and policy implementation cannot really be disentangled, since one informs the other and vice versa. With all the above in mind, simply put, a translation policy is a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and which, in light of given conditions, guides and determines present and future decisions on translation. It would include the set of ideas or plans used as a basis for making decisions about translation, in other

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12. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/policy>

13. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/policy>

14. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/policy>

words, the official plan of what to do in a given situation that calls for translation or no translation.

Translation policy can also be defined as:

A series of intentionally coherent decisions on translation or translation activities made by public and sometimes private actions to resolve collective linguistic and translation problems. Even so, sometimes translation policy may be the result of decisions that are not meant to be coherent, or at least that are not intentionally so (Meylaerts and Núñez 2017, 2).

While language policy pertains to the management of all the languages in a given space, translation policy speaks specifically of the management of all that relates to translation in a given space. Often, translation policies are designed as a means to help transform certain language policies from theory into reality. Whether such goals are usually successfully achieved is a subject for another debate.

### **3.3 Language policy**

Debates on language policy can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages when the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church, strongly advocated the use of Latin (Bingjun and Rui 2016, 8). One of the very first definitions of language policy proposed by Haugen in 1959 described language planning (which in his opinion clearly included language policy) as the standardization of orthography, grammar and dictionaries to ensure control over language practices in communities where people used different languages or different variants of a language. Bingjun and Rui (2016, 10) explain that Haugen later refurbished his definition to include all activities undertaken to judge languages or language variants by choice. They underline the fact that, in Haugen's understanding, "language planning is an activity which provides orthography, grammar and other guiding principles for orators and writers in a multilingual society" (Bingjun and Rui 2016). They make a link between this definition and Spolsky's more recent and very brief definition of language policy as "choice," Baldauf (2004) definition of language policy as "conscious changes made to the language system," and some other scholars' definitions of language policy as:

[...] management aimed at language by the state or various social groups which includes choice of language, standardization of language, script reform and other specific issues (Xu 1999);

[...]organized and systematic interventions in language with the purpose of solving its problems in social communication (Zhangtai 2005).

In summary, Yang and Rui see language policy as “a discipline that studies language choice on various levels of human society” (Bingjun and Rui 2016). They align their work with Spolsky’s (2004) approach to the explanation of language policy from two perspectives, with the justification that this view on language policy, that is, one that treats language policy as a science about choice, is quite broad.

Language policy may be the choice of a specific sound, an expression or a specific variety of language; it may also be the choice regularly made by an individual, or a socially defined group of individuals or a body with authority over a defined group of individuals (9).

They also agree that “language policy happens at various levels of language as well as at various levels of human society” (Bingjun and Rui 2016). As such, they make room in their analysis for Cooper’s definition of language policy as “active efforts to influence human behaviors which are based on inherent language features like acquisition, structures and functions” (Cooper 1990) because this definition takes into account the internal factors of language and stretches language policy to involve various levels of society (Cooper 1990).

Bingjun and Rui’s work offers one of the most recent (Bingjun and Rui 2016) and most comprehensive overviews of the pertinent debates in the field of language policy. Citing Ruiz, they highlight the three main approaches that can be seen in the literature: language as a problem, language as a right and language as a resource (Ruíz 1984).

The language as a problem approach gained a lot of ground during the second half of the 20th century when many nations became independent and so were faced with the tough practical language choices between using colonial and native languages. Corpus and status planning introduced by Canadian linguist Heinz Kloss is the main theory in this approach in which he proposes that language should be seen at two levels - as a linguistic system and as a social institution. Seen in this light, language planning also covers two parts, corpus planning, which focuses on the planning of language itself (for example, its internal structures); and status planning, which refers to continuous efforts made by governments and social institutions to alter the function and use of a particular language or language variant (Kloss 1967).

The language as a right approach is a more recent one, which came up in the 1990s, inspired by the American Civil Rights Movement in which minority groups fought, not only for civil rights but also language rights. This movement instigated the political forum for discussions of language as a right. Bingjun and Rui (Bingjun and Rui 2016, 14) underline the fact that many international documents have recognized the language right. For years now, many minority groups have also vigorously advocated for their rights to language, thus causing the idea to be even more strongly endorsed. Some scholars pushed the idea even further to combine language with human rights, forming the idea of linguistic human rights (Phillipson et al. 1999), (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000) which is increasingly becoming a very strong weapon for the safeguard of justice when it comes to languages.

The language as a resource approach stems from this same point of view of language as a right. This approach has the potential to create a great deal of tension between people as humans always tend to 'fight' for their rights. To avoid this, it may be better to view language more as a resource than as a right.

Besides circumventing unnecessary tensions between people, viewing language as a resource falls neatly along the same lines as resource development plans that see resources in distinct categories such as human resources (under which languages can very well be classified), or natural resources, etc. Seen in this light, languages are the human resources that have triggered great concern regarding endangered languages (just like endangered species), which has led to the new idea on language policy: the ecological view. The eco-linguistic idea advocates for language planning that seeks to maintain language diversity in order not to reduce the number of languages (Bingjun and Rui 2016, 14).

### **3.4 Translation policy**

Researchers agree that language policy cannot be limited to a single definition as no single definition can gain universal approval (O'Rourke and Castillo Ortiz 2009, 34). As Núñez (2016, 89) points out, the term language policy "competes with other terms such as 'language planning,' 'language management,' 'language engineering,' and 'language governance' (Walsh 2012, 324). Each of these terms have their own recognizable specificities, yet "they overlap a great deal and are quite fuzzy around the edges" (Phillipson 2003, 17-18).

Spolsky (2004, 5) proposed that language policy encompasses language practices, language beliefs and language management. Language beliefs consisting of "the values assigned by members of a speech community to each variety and variant and their beliefs about the importance of these values" (Spolsky 2012, 5),

language practices consisting of “the actual language practices of the members of a speech community” (Spolsky 2012, 5) and language management consisting of “efforts by some members of a speech community who have or believe they have authority over other members to modify their language practices” (5). This last element of his definition is what some prefer to call, perhaps confusingly, ‘language planning’ (Núñez 2016, 90).

Núñez (2016, 90) proposes that Spolsky’s definition be employed as a key element in conceptualizing translation policy. He explains that to be able to do that, “we must recognize that in multilingual societies there is a relationship between translation policy and language policy” (90) and as discussed in a previous section, that “language policy, in the end, is about language choices” (Spolsky 2004, 217) and that “in multilingual societies, these choices result in communication networks which imply “una pràctica continuada de traducció” (a continuous practice of translation) (Diaz Fouces 2002, 85).

What that means most of all is that :

(...) translation policy is linked to language policy, both being types of cultural policy aimed at goals which include managing the flow of communications among the masses, establishing certain types of relationships between groups and their surroundings, or attributing a particular symbolic value to specific kinds of cultural products (86). This implies that translation policy works in conjunction with language policy in different settings and at different levels (Núñez 2016, 91).

I lean heavily on this conceptualization in this study and approach translation policy from the ‘management’ aspect of it. Translation management deals with the “decisions regarding translation made by people who have the authority to decide the use or non-use of translation within a domain” (92). These decisions are generally made by legislators, managers etc, and can include both explicit and overt policy. (...) when decisions are explicit, they are to be found as codified or written in various documents, ranging from national legislation to a local branch’s in-house guidelines” (92). I therefore approach translation policy in Cameroon as intimately linked to language policy, both of them having identifiable aims which include management of the flow of communication among the masses and the establishment of certain types of relations between Anglophones and Francophones.

Below are some examples of official texts relating to translation policies in Cameroon. These pertain to explicit policies written in different kinds of documents. Only the French version was available electronically for some of them.

**Law N°2005 of 27 July 2005 on the CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE**

**Section 183: (1)**

- (a) Where a witness does not speak one of the official languages which the registrar and Examining Magistrate understand, the latter shall call on the services of an interpreter.
- (b) The interpreter shall not be less than twenty-one (21) years of age.
- (c) The registrar, witnesses and the parties shall not perform the functions of an interpreter.
- (d) The interpreter shall take oath to give a true interpretation of the statement of any person who speaks in a different language or dialect. The facts of his having taken oath shall be mentioned in the record of the proceedings.

**Section 354:**

1. Where an accused speaks a language other than one of the official languages understood by the members of the court, or where it is necessary to translate any document produced in court, the Presiding Magistrate shall of his own motion appoint an interpreter of not less than twenty-one (21) years of age, who shall take oath to interpret faithfully the testimonies of persons speaking in different languages or faithfully translate the document in question.
2. The parties may recuse the interpreter. In this case, the court shall rule immediately on the recusal and such ruling shall not be subject to appeal.

**Section 355:**

1. When an interpreter does not give a true and faithful interpretation, any party to the proceedings may point this out and move the court to have the interpreter replaced.
2. The court may also of its own motion, point out an interpretation which is not true and faithful and shall proceed to replace the interpreter after having heard the parties.

**Ordonnance N° 72-11 du 26 août 1972 relative à la publication des lois, ordonnances, décrets et actes réglementaires (1972)**

**Article 2**

La publication des actes législatifs ou réglementaires a lieu au Journal officiel de la République. Elle est effectuée en anglais et en français. Il pourra être stipulé dans toute loi ou acte réglementaire quel est le texte, français ou anglais, qui fera foi.

El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo

This article does not use the word translation. However, the last statement that allows for each law or Act to have a part that identifies the authoritative text between the English and French texts implies a translation either from English to French or from French to English.

**Instruction n° 03/CAB/PR/ du 30 mai relative à la préparation, à la signature et à la publication en version bilingue des actes officiels (1996)**

À compter de la date de publication de la présente instruction, les lois, décrets, décisions, instructions, circulaires et notes de service seront préparés, signés et publiés en français et en anglais.

À cet effet, la Direction des services linguistiques de la Présidence de la République prendra toutes dispositions utiles en vue d'assurer par son personnel propre, ou de faire assurer par les services assistants dans les ministères la traduction et la révision des textes au fur et à mesure de l'évolution de la procédure réglementaire.

Au terme de cette procédure, les textes définitifs ne devront être transmis pour diffusion en procédure d'urgence à la radiodiffusion, à la télévision et à la presse écrite quotidienne, et pour la publication au *Journal officiel* que conjointement dans leurs deux versions bilingues.

Le premier ministre, chef du gouvernement, et le secrétaire général de la Présidence de la République sont chargés chacun en ce qui le concerne, de la stricte application de la présente Instruction qui sera diffusée en tant que de besoin<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.5 Language and ethnic identity in Cameroon

It is very important to mention here that for a very long time, being 'Anglophone' or 'Francophone' has always been used as the 'second' identity

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15. cited as is

category for every Cameroonian. One is first of all Mankon, Bamileke, Duala, Beti, etc., and then Anglophone or Francophone.

However, in his study of language use in the city of Yaoundé, Bitja'a Kody (2001) reports that 32% of young people between 10 and 17 years old do not speak any Cameroonian indigenous language. French is their only language of communication" (cited in Anchimbe 2006, 136). If no clear measures are taken, this population is bound to increase in an exponential manner by the next generation, given that such Cameroonians will not be able to transmit the indigenous languages to their children. This situation means death for the indigenous languages, and unless something drastic is done, these languages are bound to continue dying progressively (Ndille 2016, 25).

### 3.6 Ensuring language equality

Immediately after reunification, on the basis of the fact that the Cameroon Constitution stated that English and French were the two official languages of the new nation, and that the two languages had equal status, the Cameroon government declared that it was going to take measures to promote bilingualism and implement the clause that established the equal status of the two official languages. One of the very first things that the Cameroon government did in line with instituting bilingualism was to create the Direction des Services Linguistiques (DSL). This service was created in 1980 by Presidential Decree No. 80/281 of 23-07-1980. The main goal of this body was to translate all official documents in Cameroon to make them available in English and French. This task involved the translation (from and into French and English) of all texts meant for publication in the official newspaper, of all official speeches and correspondences, and of other documents sent from other ministries and from public and private services (Ndeffo 2009, 60).

Ndeffo (2009, 60) reports that not too long after this office had been created, the government discovered there were not enough translators and interpreters in Cameroon to meet the massive translation needs that the *Direction des services linguistiques* DSL was faced with. Therefore, in a bid to add to the number of qualified translators and interpreters who could work in this office, the government decided to send some students abroad, to European and North American universities, to study translation and interpretation. Even with that, there was still an acute shortage of personnel considering the needs that the DSL continued to be swamped with. The government then decided to open a school of translation and interpretation of its own.

ASTI in Buea was then opened in 1985<sup>16</sup> with the primary task of training translators and interpreters for the public service. In addition to training translators and interpreters, ASTI was also assigned the task of carrying out research in the domain of translation and interpretation, as well as the responsibility of providing refresher courses for translators and interpreters in the nation.

Ndeffo (2009, 60) reports that things improved considerably when ASTI opened its doors. Its graduates were recruited directly into the public service as translators and interpreters and served mostly at the Presidency of the Republic, in the National Assembly and in the various ministries. Unfortunately, this era did not really last, for, before long, everything changed. This is the period between 1986 to 1994. From 1986 to 1987, Cameroon went through a serious economic crisis, at the same time with the application of several measures taken within the context of the economic and financial reform programme when the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank imposed drastic measures on some developing countries in order to reclaim financial loans and debts. ('politique de rigueur') This period had a profound impact on the living conditions of Cameroonians and up to 1994, it was characterized by negative growth rates of 3 to 4 percent. Government was forced to apply stringent budgetary policies, which resulted in drastic cuts in public spending in the social sectors. Many lost their jobs due to the closure of restructured public, semi public and private enterprises and there was also a general freeze on all public service recruitment (Tambi 2015, 7).

With these cuts, translators who had been hired in Category A2, that is, a category amongst the highest employment categories in Cameroon, found themselves left with about one third of their salaries. This provoked a massive exodus of translators and interpreters, who found it easy to get jobs in other African countries, in Europe, as well as in North America. The few who remained in Cameroon could also very easily pick up jobs in international agencies based in Cameroon (Ndeffo 2009, 61).

Government actions point to the fact that, from the very beginning, bilingualism in Cameroon was and has been heavily predicated on translation. The creation of the Linguistic service and of ASTI as one of the very first measures to promote bilingualism are indicative of this. The appellation *Direction des services linguistiques* has now been changed to *Division linguistique et du bilinguisme*.

However, its functions have not been remarkably altered. Biloa (2012, 124) posits that «L'actuelle division linguistique et du bilinguisme de la Présidence de la République est chargée de promouvoir le bilinguisme d'État », and lists among its functions :

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16. Decree No. 551/CABPR of 07-08-1985) 1, Article 1, al. 2.

- Les travaux de traduction et d'interprétation qui lui sont confiés par la Présidence de la République et les administrations rattachées;
- Les travaux de révision des traductions des en-têtes et documents officiels effectués dans les administrations publiques;
- Les travaux d'interprétation lors des conférences à caractère national ou international organisées par les administrations publiques;
- Le contrôle de la qualité linguistique de tous les textes législatifs et réglementaires devant être insérés au Journal Officiel;
- L'authentification des traductions à caractère officiel;
- L'expansion du bilinguisme;
- Le suivi des activités du Programme de formation bilingue.

When Biloa (2012, 125) discusses Cameroon's official bilingualism, he mentions that Cameroon is predominantly French even though a presidential decree demands that all laws, decrees, decisions, service notes, speeches, notices, press releases, forms, etc. be published in English and French. This is not always the case.

Le français reste très souvent la langue de communication par excellence. On est en droit de se demander à quoi servent les services de traduction que l'état camerounais a mis à la disposition des administrations publiques et parapubliques. Si les traducteurs sont en chômage déguisé, cela ne devrait surprendre personne que le bilinguisme camerounais soit un monolinguisme de facto (125).

The above statement is a reflection of how much bilingualism is predicated on translation. Biloa highlights the importance of translators and translation for official language bilingualism in Cameroon.

Mbena (2012) also lengthily discusses the different problems that the Cameroon government has been facing in its attempts to implement official language bilingualism. He acknowledges that this is a very complex matter as he shows how the State has been striving to develop and implement a national bilingualism policy. There are highly complex social, individual and even political realities that surround these issues of bilingualism, which expose "dysfunctioning at the institutional, sociolinguistic and intercommunity levels" (181).

Kouega (2008a, 2), in his discussion on tertiary level education in Cameroon, presents a detailed list of the various measures taken by the state to foster official

language bilingualism. Included in this list are decisions, designed in the form of ordinances, decrees, circulars, service notes, etc., all meant to help spread bilingualism across Cameroon. Below is his list of measures taken by the government to promote bilingualism (Kouega 2008a, 2):

- Linguistic centers were created to enable citizens to learn English and French, an activity which was originally restricted to the British Council, the American Cultural Center and the French Cultural Centre;
- Translation services were offered in all State institutions and the ASTI was opened in Buea;
- Bilingual secondary schools were created in various localities in the country;
- The bilingual degree program was set up in the University of Yaoundé and the Higher Teacher Training College ( École Normale Supérieure (ENS)); today this program is available in all State universities of the country;
- English became a subject taught in all French-medium secondary schools and French became a subject taught in all English-medium schools;
- The second official language became a subject in all public examinations, with Francophone candidates writing an English language paper and Anglophone candidates writing a French language paper;
- The Official Gazette, which records the country's daily activities, was printed in the two languages and became the official daily newspaper i.e. Cameroon Tribune published;
- The national radio and TV network Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) alternated programs in French and English at regular intervals.

Since 1996, another battery of measures was added to these older ones which include the following:

- An order stipulating that every primary school teacher would, henceforth, teach every subject on the school syllabus including the second official language was issued (Order No 21/E/59 of May 15, 1996 organizing the Grade One teacher certificate examination);
- A primary school syllabus outlining how each subject including the second official language subject would be taught was designed by the Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Éducation (MINEDUC) 2001, Kouega 2003)

- An order introducing the second official language subject in both the written and oral parts of the FSLC examinations and its French equivalent, the CEP examinations (Order No 66/C/13 of February 16, 2001);
- A National Bilingualism Day in public and private schools was instituted (Decision no 1141/B1/1464/ MINEDUC/IGE/IGP/BIL of October 28, 2002); when Anglophone pupils are expected to communicate in French and Francophone pupils in English;
- A circular letter instructing primary and nursery education state officials to see that bilingualism was effective in all nursery and primary schools (circular letter No 033/B1/1464/MINEDUC/IE/IGP/BIL of October 14, 2002);
- A circular letter instructing secondary education state officials to see that the National Bilingualism Day was observed in all schools and that, in addition, Language Clubs (LC), to be called “Club Français” for Anglophone pupils and “English Club” for Francophone pupils, be set up in all schools, and that the National Anthem be sung in English and French on alternate days and that a prize be awarded to the best bilingual pupils in each class (Circular letter No B1/1464/MINEDUC/IGE/IGE/GP/BIL of December 2, 2002);
- A circular letter instructing teacher training college principals to provide adequate training so that student-teachers be sufficiently equipped to teach the second official language (Circular letter No 009/B1/1464/MINEDUC/IGE/IGP/BIL of April 9, 2003); (see Abang 2006 for an evaluation);
- A decision creating ‘a bilingualism watchdog committee’ in the Ministry of Education, which would be responsible for the observation, verification and supervision of the practice of bilingualism in central and external services of the Ministry of Education. (Decision No 1230/B1/1464/MINEDUC/CAB of June 12, 2003) (Kouega 2008b, 2)

Even though there has been some effort at practically instituting official language bilingualism in Cameroon, it is very difficult to ignore the fact that, most of the time, this ‘bilingualism’ has been one-sided. Even though, many official documents, for example, are designed in English and French, it is obvious that “the preferred choice of French as a de facto superior (first) language does not reflect the constitutional provision for the equality of both languages” (Chiatoh 2012, 64). Table 3.9 below (Ibid. 64, 65, 66) shows a compilation of various national official documents and highlights the fact that, for each one, French is unfailingly the de facto first language.

**Table 3.9: Official Document Bilingualism**

<b>Official Document</b>	<b>First Language</b>	<b>Second Language</b>
Traveler's Passport	French	English
Birth Certificate	French	English
Marriage Certificate	French	English
Certificate of non-Conviction	French	English
Certificate of Nationality	French	English
Taxpayer's Card	French	English
Death Certificate	French	English
Certificate of Loss	French	English
Medical Certificate	French	English
First School Leaving Certificate	French	English
Driving License	French	English

The irony lies in the fact that no national official document has English in the first position. Even in the Anglophone regions where one would think that the same documents would be designed with English as the first language and French second; documents with French as the first language are freely circulated. In fact, there are even some official documents that are monolingual (available in French only), as can be seen in Table 3.10:

**Table 3.10: Monolingual Documents**

<b>Official Document</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>English Equivalent</b>
Vignette	French	Windscreen License
Notice individuelle	French	Individual Information Sheet
Carte rose	French	Not available

These documents used all over the national territory have no English equivalents on the various sections of the documents. As well, no English only versions of these documents exist. To make things worse, these documents are referred to by their French appellations even in the English-speaking North West and South West provinces.

The adoption of French abbreviations (Table 3.11) for use in both English and French also demonstrate the same idea, the absence of any equality between English and French that was supposed to result from translation. In that regard, official language bilingualism has clearly failed to be what the Cameroon government declared it would be. Instead, it is more of a bilingualism where French is the dominant language.

**Table 3.11: Abbreviations of Ministry Names**

<b>English Appellation</b>	<b>French Appellation</b>	<b>Recognized</b>
Ministry of Basic Education	Ministère de l'éducation de base	MINEDUB
Ministry of Higher Education	Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur	MINESUP
Ministry of Youth Affairs	Ministère de la jeunesse	MINJEUN
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministère de relations extérieures	MINREX
Ministry of Secondary Education	Ministère de l'éducation secondaire	MINSEC
Local Government Training Centre	Centre de formation d'administration municipale	CEFAM
National School of Administration and Magistracy	École nationale d'administration et la magistrature	ENAM
National School of Penitentiary Administration	École nationale d'administration pénitentiaire	ENAP

The French abbreviations are clearly virtually imposed on the English-speaking population, as they are used 'as is' even in English documents and in the English-speaking North West and South West provinces. This is critical as the choice of English-French official language bilingualism by those in power after the reunification of the two Cameroons – the French with the English - was meant to symbolize a quest for equality and for national unity. Biloa (2012, 122) succinctly described the situation :

en optant ainsi pour une politique bilingue officielle (anglais/français), la République Fédérale voudrait promouvoir la quiétude et la cohésion sociales, assurer la paix sociale, l'unité politique, l'intégration nationale et le développement socio-économique sans toutefois aliéner les différentes composantes de la fédération.

# Chapter Four:

## ENGLISH-FRENCH BILINGUALISM IN CAMEROON AND CANADA

This chapter explores the context in which French-English official language bilingualism is carried out in Cameroon and Canada to highlight the fact that the notions of “majority” and “minority” both only have meaning in relation to linguistic and geopolitical environments. In the world of globalized communication, this is an important factor for the English-speaking minority in Cameroon as well as for the Francophone minority in Canada (Quebec). The different attitudes towards the institution of English and French bilingual education to foster societal bilingualism is one of the main points of focus here. These attitudes stem from the differences between the two societies as highlighted in this section. The idea of doing this brief comparison was born after I came across an article in *Cameroon Tribune*<sup>17</sup> that described a visit to Cameroon by some Canadian personalities who held that Cameroon can imitate Canada and learn from Canada’s experience in its efforts to implement official language bilingualism.

I started off with a search for any works that compared Cameroon and Canada in terms of official languages and only came across one paper (written by Alain Flaubert Takam, from the University of Lethbridge, and Innocent Fassé Mbouya from the University of Douala), *Language Policy in Education: Second Official Language in (Technical) Education in Canada and Cameroon* (May 2018). They observed that both in Cameroon and Canada, students from technical training programs generally underperform or lack interest in their Second Official Language (SOL) as they compared the current policies of SOL in education to show how both countries’ experiences can be mutually informing (Takam and Fassé 2018, 20). In this paper, mention is made of an MA thesis (1999) by Esambe that involved a comparison of some aspects of language policy in Cameroon and Canada as well.

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17. Cameroon Tribune, 11 December, 2018. By <https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/22925/en.html/bilingualism-practice-cameroon-learns-canadas-experience>

A call was made for more of such comparisons on issues that pertain to English-French bilingualism in both countries. In this light therefore, in the next few sections, I will look at bilingual education and attitudes towards bilingual education in Canada and Cameroon especially as bilingual education falls neatly within the scope of societal bilingualism. The goal here is to shine the light on any possible similarities, but most of all, on differences that reveal the uniqueness of the Cameroonian context. It is important for Translation research scholars who work in the African context to adopt contextual, grounded research methodologies “that will be able to take cognisance of the features of these particular contexts. These methodologies should render knowledge that is particular to their context and designed to be able to perceive the uniqueness (Marais 2011, 377). These brief comparisons will therefore be designed such that the particular features of societal bilingualism in Cameroonian society can be perceived.

## **4.1 The argument for bilingual education in Cameroon**

Not all societies readily welcome bilingual education and it is often criticized as a means to promote differences instead of similarities – thus, it is seen as a means to separate people rather than integrate them. In the US, for example, there is a deep divide between those who think that bilingual education can be profitable when seen as a communication, intellectual, cultural, economic and citizenship resource versus those who think that it is ‘common sense’ for any rational person trying to advance their interests in the “real world” (Schmidt 2009, 147) to pursue English monolingual education that would guarantee them access to economic and vocational opportunities (Baker and Wright 2017, 384).

Most English-speaking communities enjoy the dominant status of the English language; even more so, now that English is rapidly expanding worldwide. However, "globalization seems to have exerted the greatest impact on languages at mostly the local level, and the impact has been more disastrous to indigenous languages in former settlement colonies than to those in exploitation colonies" (Mufwene 2004, 209). This different evolution of European languages can be explained by the fact that:

In settlement colonies the European colonists sought to create new Europes outside their metropolises (Crosby 1986) from which they inherited the ideology of nation-states ideally unified by one single language. As the European populations became the majority in their new nations, they adopted a dominant or official language for branches

of their government, in the emergent global industry, and in the school system. The chosen language gradually penetrated the private domains of citizens' lives to the point that it became the vernacular spoken by almost everybody (Ibid).

Many consider that English proficiency is the key that opens doors to higher education and to the labor market, both locally and on the international scene. Seen in this light, one might wonder whether the Anglophones in Cameroon would stand to benefit in any way, were the Cameroon government to promote strong forms of bilingual education in Cameroon in general, and in the North West and South West provinces in particular. Should they not fear, like the francophones in Quebec, that openness to bilingual education would lead to their being completely assimilated by the Francophone majority?

One can argue that the way a community sees languages is the key to the roles that the given languages play in that society. Mufwene (2004, 206) holds that "the vitality of languages cannot be dissociated from the socioeconomic interests and activities of their speakers". If a community sees language as a problem, bilingual education is likely to be discouraged. If the community sees languages as a right, then bilingual education may have some form of protection that would allow it to merely exist. However, when a community sees languages as a resource, then bilingual education would be allowed to flourish.

It is key to note that, even though the different language orientations (language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource) have differences, the similarity between them is that they all share certain aims and connect language with politics, economics, society and culture. They all acknowledge that language is not just a means of communication, but it is closely tied to "socialization into the local and wider society" and stands as a "powerful symbol of heritage and identity" (Baker and Wright 2017, 381).

While it is important to acknowledge that in the case of Cameroon, language is central to the ongoing conflict and that also some of the ongoing conflicts are primarily about language (for example, the practical use of French or Pidgin English as a medium of instruction by Francophone teachers posted in Anglophone schools in the North West and South West provinces), it is evident that "because languages and dialects are often potent symbols of class, gender, ethnic and other kinds of differentiation, it is easy to think that language underlies conflict. Yet, disputes involving language are really not about language, but instead about fundamental inequalities between groups who happen to speak different languages" (Suzanne 2000, 14).

Anglophones in Cameroon complain bitterly about inequalities such as the ones Fishman (1989, 622) came across in his internationally comparative study on the causes of civil strife and discord. He compared 130 countries that were suffering civil strife and found that the main causes of strife were deprivation, authoritarian regimes and modernization – not linguistic homogeneity/heterogeneity, socio-cultural, demographic, historical, economic or political measures. As early as the 1970s in Cameroon, Constable (n.d.) reported that:

[...] in all other domains (mass media, civil service, etc.), English and its speakers are marginalized. Many instances have been reported of civil servants not attending to English-speaking customers on grounds that “je ne comprends pas votre anglais là.” (I do not understand that English of yours)

Constable noted very early, that is, only about five years after unification, that it was completely impossible to function without French in Cameroon bilingual institutions, whereas “a poor knowledge of English would not constitute a handicap” (Constable, n.d.). Unfortunately, the same situation still prevails today, more than 50 years later.

## **4.2 Societal bilingualism in Cameroon and Canada: Cameroon to learn from Canada?**

The *Cameroon Tribune*, a daily, bilingual and national newspaper owned by the government of Cameroon featured an article on December 11, 2018 entitled *Cameroon: Bilingual Practice – Cameroon Learns from Canada’s Experience*. The article discussed meetings held by the Chairperson of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in Cameroon, Peter Mafany Musonge, the Director General for West and Central Africa at Global Affairs Canada, Jennifer Goosen, and the Canadian High Commissioner to Cameroon, Nathalie O’Neil.

In the Canadian High Commissioner to Cameroon’s words, future collaboration between Cameroon and Canada could be described in terms of: “how Canada can help Cameroon in building bilingualism and multiculturalism” (Cameroon Tribune, December 11, 2018). As the title of the article stated, Cameroon is/will be learning from Canada’s experience. These statements provoke pertinent and necessary questions. Is it possible for one nation to help another to build bilingualism and multiculturalism? Are there any known practical cases of such

help? Could it be possible that the premise of this interaction is the fact that Canada and Cameroon both have both English and French as official languages? Is it possible to copy bilingualism practices from one society to another simply because the two languages involved are the same? How far do the statements that follow hold true in this situation? “The same language may thrive in one ecology but do poorly in another” for “like biological species, their vitality depends on the ecology of their existence or usage; and like viruses, language features may change several times in their lifetime” (Mufwene 2004, 203).

How important is the ecology of their usage or, in other words, ‘context’ in the practice of bilingualism? In this section, a brief comparison of the context in which bilingualism is practiced in Cameroon and in Canada will highlight the acute differences that affect the practice of English-French bilingualism in these two places. This discussion clearly underlines the primary importance of context to/in societal bilingualism.

### **4.3 Same official languages, different linguistic landscapes**

As mentioned in earlier sections, Cameroon and Canada both list English and French as their official languages. However, according to official documents in Cameroon, English and French have equal status all over the national territory, (that is, all parts of the country are equally officially bilingual), whereas in Canada, English and French have equal status in use only in Parliament, within the government of Canada and in the institutions of the legislature and government of New Brunswick. The Cameroon constitution thus states:

(3) 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 endeavor to protect and promote national languages.

While Section 16 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Canadian Fundamental Freedoms) states:

1. English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada.

2. English and French are the official languages of New Brunswick and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the legislature and government of New Brunswick.
3. Nothing in this Charter limits the authority of Parliament or a legislature to advance the equality of status or use of English and French.

I noticed that the word bilingualism itself is used in the Cameroon Constitution, while it does not figure in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In my mind, equality of status, equal rights and privileges as to their (English and French) use in all institutions of Parliament, in the government of Canada and in the institutions of the legislature and the government of New Brunswick talks of societal bilingualism. In over simplified terms, this means that these institutions would provide information, provide their services and communicate with each citizen either in English or in French, based on their language of choice. Both language communities will co-exist and will be served equally. Even with this oversimplification (that does not certainly reflect the full range of options in Canada) in mind, Canada qualifies as a bilingual society. However, when it comes to individual bilingualism, there are economic incentives, such as a bilingual position in the institutions of Parliament, the government of Canada, the institutions of the legislature and in the government of New Brunswick, which would encourage Canadians to be bilingual, otherwise; an individual can fully function all their lives, without any need to learn the second official language.

Section 16.1. of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms further specifies for New Brunswick that:

1. The English linguistic community and the French linguistic community in New Brunswick have equality of status and equal rights and privileges, including the right to distinct educational institutions and such distinct cultural institutions as are necessary for the preservation and promotion of those communities.
2. The role of the legislature and government of New Brunswick to preserve and promote the status, rights and privileges referred to in subsection (1) is affirmed.

The goal here is to ensure that each community has established systems to help promote and preserve them as distinct communities. It is important to note here that education is only regulated at the provincial level in Canada.

### 4.3.1 Minority official languages in Cameroon and Canada

In Cameroon, about 80% of the population speak French and 20% speak English (Bilola 2012, 123) while in Canada, the reverse is true – the majority speaks English and the minority speaks French. Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, August 21, 2017) reports that of the 34,767,255 people who live in Canada, 27,446,185 (78.9%) speak either English (L1) or French (L1). Precisely, 20,193,335 (58.1%) speak English (L1) and 7,454,075 (21.4%) speak French (L1). The other 21% speak aboriginal languages and other world languages brought to Canada through immigration. French can be considered a minority language in the North West and South West regions in Cameroon, just as English is considered a minority language in the province of Quebec. However, it is worth highlighting here that English is not an official language in Quebec, while French is an official language in the North West and South West regions. It might be interesting, in a later study, to explore how this difference affects attitudes towards the minority languages in these parts of the two countries.

### 4.3.2 Other languages spoken in Cameroon and Canada

Unlike Cameroon, where apart from the official languages, the population mainly speak other African languages (see Chapter 1), the population in Canada speaks aboriginal languages (213,230 representing 0.6% of the total population) and immigrant languages (7,749,120 representing 22.3%). Mufwene (2004, 211) posits that:

(..) unlike in the earlier cases that produced pidgins (such as in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Papua New Guinea), European languages were introduced in the exploitation colonies in the nineteenth century as *lingua francas* on the basis of scholastic inputs rather than as vernaculars naturalistically transmitted outside the school system.

Even though The British had introduced English much earlier in Southern Cameroons, but it was only adopted much later as one of the nation's official languages (See chapter I). It is worth noting that though national Cameroonian languages have not yet found their way to an official status or into the school system, they continue to be acquired by oral interactions with speakers of these languages. The situation is seemingly different for settlement colonies. "More languages have died in North America because changes in its socioeconomic ecology have been more advanced and have affected its populations more pervasively" (211).

**Table 4.12: Most spoken immigrant languages in Canada**

<b>Language</b>	<b>Number of speakers</b>	<b>Percentage of total population</b>
Mandarin	610,835	1.8%
Cantonese	594,030	1.7%
Punjabi (Panjabi)	543,495	1.6%
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	510,425	1.5%
Spanish	495,090	1.4%
Arabic	486,525	1.4%
Italian	407,450	1.2%
German	404,745	1.2%
Urdu	243,090	0.7%
Portuguese	237,000	0.7%

## **4.4 The historical origins of Cameroon and Canada**

The history of the two nations has left them with completely different compositions in terms of populations. Cameroonians are a people who have owned and lived on the land for thousands of years. Canada, on the other hand, often described as the land of immigration, was constituted of people who lived and owned the land for thousands of years, alongside other people who immigrated to Canada mostly from Europe, but now also from all over the world. This is a major difference when it comes to language because the relationship between an immigrant and the official language of the nation they immigrate to is different from the relationship between a native citizen of any given nation and the official language of their country. It is important to note, though, that many people base their choice of immigration location on the official language(s) of the nation they are interested in. Research studies have revealed that one of the main reasons for this is that it is easier for a foreigner to acquire a language if their native language is linguistically closer to the language to be learned (Chiswick and Miller 2005)(Isphording and Otten 2011). “This suggests that the ability to learn and speak a foreign language quickly might be an important factor in the potential migrants’ decision” (Adserà and Pytliková 2015). Also, (Chiswick and Miller 2002, 2007, 2010) have shown that language is a major factor when it comes to choice of immigration location as language plays a key role in a successful transfer of immigrants’ home country education and skills to foreign labor markets.

Adserà and Pytliková (2015, 1) also conducted a study to “examine the importance of language in international migration from multiple angles by studying the role of linguistic proximity, widely spoken languages, linguistic

enclaves and language-based immigration policy requirements". They collected a unique dataset on immigration flows and stocks in 30 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) destinations from all world countries from 1980 to 2010, and constructed a set of linguistic proximity measures. They found that "migration flows to a country with the same first official language as opposed to one with the most distant language are around 20% higher in models that include a large set of socio-economic and genetic distance controls as well as time and country dummies" (Adserà and Pytliková 2015, 2).

Sometimes, the language in question might also be a particular variant, for example, Canadian French, or Parisien French.

English and French are the languages that the British and French brought with them when they settled in Canada. These two are also the foreign languages that were imposed on Southern Cameroons and on La République du Cameroun when the British and French administered the Cameroons as a Trustee of the League of Nations (Portuguese and German had also been brought to Cameroon at some point). It is assumed that in general in the case of Canada, the British and the French settled permanently, while in Cameroon, they left at independence. Referring to exploitation colonies, Mufwene (2004, 211) explains that unlike was the case in settlement colonies,

The European colonizers hardly intended to settle permanently in these continents, although many of them wound up doing so; (b) the European exploitation colony system hardly intended to share its languages with the indigenous populations, preferring to teach the colonial languages only to an elite class of auxiliaries that would serve as intermediaries between the colonizers and the colonized" (see, e.g., Brutt-Griffler 2002a, 2002b).

With this in mind, no doubt remains that even though, English and French are the two official languages in Cameroon and in Canada, it is pretentious to claim that what works in Canada would work in Cameroon, or that what would work in Cameroon would work in Canada. Mufwene (2004, 207) reminds us that, "Globalization has not affected former exploitation colonies in the same way it affected former settlement colonies. This in no way implies that there is absolutely nothing that these two nations might learn from each other. However, given that the contexts in which these two nations acquired and use the same two languages are so different, the societal context must always be taken into consideration seriously when Cameroonian policy makers turn their gaze to see what was done in Canada and vice versa.

It is also critical for decision makers to keep in mind that the Portuguese and the Germans who occupied Cameroon at some point also left Cameroon (an exploitation colony) for their various countries, unlike in South Africa, for example, or in Canada (settlement colony) where Europeans, Asians, Africans, etc. made and continue to make Canada their new home and continue to represent a portion of the population. This points out the fact that the diversity of the immigrant populations (as can be seen in the difference in immigrant languages spoken in Cameroon and Canada) to these two countries are different. With this in mind, the societal conflicts that underlie the fight for equal language rights in Canada are certainly different from those that underlie the fight for equal language rights in Cameroon. When it comes to English and French in Cameroon and in Canada, while those in Canada are fighting to promote and protect their native language, most often their one and only language, those in Cameroon are fighting for a foreign language, unfortunately, with which they must sometimes identify in order to survive.

## 4.5 Minority struggles

### 4.5.1 English as a minority language in Cameroon

English is considered a minority language in Cameroon, even though it is increasingly being used there in recent years. According to Eberhard, Gary, and Fennig (2019b), even though Mandarin Chinese is the most spoken language (L1) in the world (Table 4.13), if only native speakers are counted, when both native and non-native speakers are counted, English is the most spoken language in the world (Table 4.14).

**Table 4.13:** Languages with the most native speakers in the world

Language	Total of native speakers in the world
Mandarin Chinese	917,000,000
Spanish	460,000,000
English	379,000,000
Hindi	341,000,000

In Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, English is an official language and is spoken by a majority of the population. In Burundi, Cameroon, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Saint Helena, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia, English is also listed as an official language, but is not used as a primary language.

**Table 4.14:** Languages with the most speakers in the world

<b>Language</b>	<b>Total of native and non-native speakers in the world</b>
English	753,000,000
Mandarin Chinese	199,000,000
Hindi	274,000,000
Spanish	74,200,000

These overall number of speakers worldwide and specifically in African countries where English is an official language highlight the status that English (which in the case of Cameroon is a minority language) enjoys around the world. This becomes relevant in later discussions on the status of English and French at the global level, languages discussed here as minority languages in Cameroon and Canada respectively.

For Cameroon in particular, even though English might not be used as a primary language all over the national territory, it is widely used in the North West and South West regions (See Chapter 1). This still makes it a minority language in Cameroon, as the North West and South West regions constitute only 20 percent of the nation's population. In spite of this, because it is so widely spoken worldwide, its status as a minority language does not necessarily create the same kind of problems as French does for Francophones in Canada. For example, there is a difference in attitude towards the minority language (English) for those who speak it in Cameroon and those who speak the minority language, French, in Canada. In addition, there is also a difference in attitude, generally speaking, towards the majority language in the two countries. Nowadays in Cameroon, there is an increasing desire to learn English, even though, it is the minority language, simply because of the status of English on the international scene. Francophone Cameroonians have realised that, as a world language, English can open doors at the international level so there is a resulting rush by Francophone parents to put their children in Anglophone schools.

Atechi (2015, 81) paints a picture of the recent trends in the use of English and French in Cameroon, exploring in detail the shift in the learning and use of English in Cameroon. He points out that things are changing in Cameroon, whereas an earlier study by Amvela Etienne (1999) had shown that language use and learning was shifting towards the direction of the majority official language, French. Kuchah (2016, 311) on the other hand, acknowledges that French is "still the language of political power and administration" in Cameroon, but adds that there is a "dramatic rise in the number of children from 'Francophone' homes enrolling in English- medium schools". Also, other researchers (Kouega 2003; Kuchah 2016,

408) (Anchimbe 2007, 66; Fonyuy 2010, 34; and Kouega, 2003, 408; cited in Kuchah 2016, 311) confirm that a recent surge occurred in the number of Francophone parents who are now enrolling their children in Anglophone schools. Global economic opportunities and the status of English on the world scene are the major reasons for this shift. There is no such rush to send children to Francophone schools in Canada. Instead, Quebec<sup>18</sup> (Mc Andrew 2003, 223-253) alone has made it mandatory for all immigrant parents to send their children to Francophone schools.

French being the province's official language, the majority of students in the public education system are required, as prescribed by the Charter of the French language (Gouvernement du Québec, 1977), to attend the French sector until the end of their secondary school. There are only three situations established by law that allow a student (except for aboriginal youth) to study in the English sector: 1. when the student or one of their siblings or parents has received the major part of their education in English in Canada, 2. the presence of a serious learning difficulty or family or humanitarian situation, which renders the use of English helpful, and 3. a temporary stay in the province. As a result, nearly 90% of immigrant-origin students (first and second generations) in Quebec are currently enrolled in the French sector. In some of Montreal's public French-language schools, the number of immigrant-origin students is greater than 70%" (Bakhshaei, Georgiou, and Andrew 2016, 690).

Indeed, it has been observed that francophone families in Québec are encouraging their children to position themselves in English high schools so as to be admitted to English-speaking universities, perhaps for the same reasons evoked above to explain an increase in francophones attending English schools in Cameroon.

Ryan (2016, 34-35) illustrates that during the 2012-2013 school year in the province of Quebec 25,380(3.4%) of Francophones were eligible for English-language instruction but only 7,484(29.5%) of said Francophone

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18. Section 85.1. of the said Charter - Where warranted by a serious family or humanitarian situation, the Minister of Education may, upon a reasoned request and on the recommendation of the examining committee, declare eligible for instruction in English a child who has been declared non-eligible by a person designated by the Minister. The request must be filed within 30 days of notification of the unfavourable decision. The request shall be submitted to an examining committee composed of three members designated by the Minister. (...) The Minister shall specify, in the report referred to in section 4 of the Act respecting the Ministère de l'Éducation (chapter M-15), the number of children declared eligible for instruction in English under this section and the grounds on which they were declared eligible.

“rights-holders” chose to attend French-language schools that year. This tendency has been the same since the early 1980s, fluctuating by a few points one way or the other (l'Éducation 2013, 22). What this seems to suggest is that, “given the choice, Francophones are more likely to choose English schools in Quebec” .

#### **4.5.2 French as a minority language in Canada**

Francophones in Canada also have a more recent reality to grapple with. They increasingly have to fear becoming a minority within other immigrant communities as well, on their own land. As Heller (1994, 127) succinctly puts it:

As Canada has come to increasingly recognize the place of immigrants in Canadian society, francophones have struggled to retain their privileged position as one of the two founding peoples and as speakers of one of Canada's two official languages. Explaining what is for them the intrinsic difference between francophones and immigrants based on the francophone position as a conquered people has become a pressing concern. As indicated earlier (see Chapter 3), the danger perceived by many francophones is that they will be counted as one of the many ethnic groups in Canada, on an equal basis with each other, but subordinate to the dominant English speakers (Breton 1984; Berthelot 1990) (Heller 1994, 127).

Heller also recounts a story that depicts the situation perfectly:

In late 1986, I walked into my classroom to find some of my students in heated debate. At the centre of the discussion were a teacher in a French-language high school in another public board, and the parent who had just been elected president of that board's French-language advisory committee. There had apparently been something of a coup the previous night. The former advisory committee, which had consisted entirely of Francophones of Canadian extraction (that is, whose families have been in Canada for generations), had been confident of re-election. Instead, they were swept out of office and replaced by a slate consisting entirely of francophones who had recently immigrated to Canada from other parts of the world: Lebanon, Haiti, Morocco and elsewhere. The teacher expressed his surprise and his concern, echoing the sentiments of members of the former committee, he claimed not to understand what was behind the mobilization of this new group, and hence found their tactics inappropriate. He also

wondered where the old guard would fit in now in the schools, which they had so long thought of as theirs. The new president explained that the new office holders had been feeling disenfranchised and frustrated at what appeared to them to be a lack of understanding and awareness on the part of the old committee. They felt they had no choice, but to make sure that they could represent themselves (Heller 1994, 109-110).

This points to a quiet struggle within the Francophone community in Canada, the Francophone 'of Canadian extraction' sees recent Francophone immigrants as 'other' Francophones and vice versa. This makes the linguistic ecology of the Francophone minority in Canada completely different from the linguistic ecology of the Anglophone minority in Cameroon, even though both communities are minority communities. Unlike the minority Francophone community in Canada, the Anglophone minority in Cameroon does not have to deal with such internal issues relating to immigration.

While the Government of Cameroon recognizes refugees as *prima facie* refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2010) reports that there are many key challenges in administering refugee aid in Cameroon. The absence of credible refugee determination procedures makes it extremely difficult to distinguish between refugees from economic migrants. "Cameroon does not have a well-defined repatriation policy, and the local population is often left with the task of integrating both refugees and economic migrants" (Mberu and Pongou 2012, 108) (see also Evina, 2010). Even though some of the migrants to Cameroon speak English, because of the lack of formal integration procedures, they are not a threat to Anglophones<sup>19</sup>.

They are not considered 'Anglophones' in the way the term is used here, as they are not included in the regional representation policy. In Cameroon, the presidency operates a regional representation policy according to which Cameroon is divided into hierarchies of ethnic groups. These ethnic groups are then supposedly allocated specific quotas of senior government posts and posts in the civil service. The objective of this policy is to limit inter-ethnic competition while increasing intra-ethnic competition (Lekunze 2019, 104). Logically, this is cause enough to consider differing approaches, that meet the specific needs of each country, in the implementation of official language bilingualism in Cameroon and Canada.

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19. Being less than 20% of the population, the anglophones consider themselves the minority group and have hence resorted to accentuating those aspects that make them belong together. These aspects include the use of English as a common in-group language, their colonial history, and their geographical origin (North West and South West Regions) (Anchimbe, 2010 132)

## 4.6 Bilingualism in education in Cameroon and in Canada

While the Cameroonian education system can be described as a centralized system, Canada has a totally decentralized system. In Cameroon, education in the whole nation is regulated by a Ministry of Basic Education, a Ministry of Secondary Education and a Ministry of Higher Education. The Ministry of Basic Education is responsible for nursery and primary schools, The Ministry of Secondary Education is in charge of secondary and high schools, and the Ministry of Higher Education caters to higher education.

Cameroonian universities are specifically managed by the central government, with pro-chancellors and rectors appointed by presidential decree. The Minister of Higher Education is the Chancellor of all eight State Universities. The eight state universities are located in Buea, Bamenda, Douala, Yaounde I & II, Dschang, Maroua and Ngaoundere. There are also many thriving private universities as well, but these are a new phenomenon. For a very long time, the University of Buea was the only Anglophone university in Cameroon. A second Anglophone university, the University of Bamenda, was opened in 2011. The other six public universities in Cameroon are run on the Francophone model, even though, in principle, they are considered bilingual institutions.

Each ministry is in charge of the development and implementation of government policies and programs related to education. At the various levels, each ministry must advise the government on possible ways in which to adapt the educational system to national, social and economic realities to help the government guarantee the appropriateness of education with regards to national, social and economic needs. All educational policies established by the relevant ministry are, therefore, established for all schools in all ten provinces.

All this differs from the situation in Canada where each province or territory manages its own education system through district school boards. In Canada, educational decision-making in the broadest sense rests on legislation. Education falls primarily under the jurisdiction of each province. In Ontario, for example, education is regulated according to the 1974 Education Act. Various institutions are involved in decision-making processes (beyond the legislature and the courts): government agencies, i.e., the Ministry of Education (for the pre-school, primary and secondary levels) and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (for post-secondary education). Para-governmental agencies, such as the Conseil de l'éducation franco-ontarienne, an advisory committee, which existed until 1990, or

the Conseil des affaires francophones, a new advisory committee established in 1991, also play a major role.(Heller 1994)

#### **4.6.1 Choice of language of education in Cameroon and Canada**

Both Cameroon and Canada have opted for compulsory and free education for all children between 6 and 14 years old, in line with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s stand on primary education. In 1998, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28 and 29) stipulated that primary education should be "compulsory and available free to all" (UNESCO 1990, 2000). Parents in Cameroon are given the "prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" (United Nations (UN) Declaration of Human Rights, 2015, Article 26) so they can choose to send their children to any school of their choice. There are no selection criteria for admission. Parents, however, have only the two options available to pick from – the Anglophone system or the Francophone system.

In Canada, specific restrictions exist that direct parents' choices of the primary school their children can attend. In Quebec, for example, in the early 1970s, when the government began to realize that the birth rate among Francophones was reducing drastically, it came up with an explicit immigration policy to encourage Francophone immigration. However, this was accompanied by Bill 101, whose provisions "ensured that after 1977, all immigrants from outside Canada would have to send their children to French language schools" (127). In 1980, the Supreme Court of Canada amended the section of the Charter which declared French the language of the legislature and courts in Québec, but did not touch French as the language of instruction. It was only later in 1984 that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (article 23) made changes and "limited the bill's power to regulate the language of instruction (see Bill 101 Case). Thus, parents who had been instructed in English language elementary schools elsewhere in Canada were granted the right to have their children instructed in English in Québec, voiding the Québec clause" (Hudon and Michael, July 21, 2013).

With regards to Ontario, Heller (1994, 108) draws our attention to the major strategies that the Franco-Ontarians or those groups that have identified themselves as Franco-Ontarians tend to use to address the question of who is Franco-Ontarian and who is allowed to attend Franco-Ontarian schools. Since not everyone is allowed to send their children to whatever school they want, there are pre-determined processes of selection that operate at the level of admission criteria. Heller (1994, 108) argues that this "developing Francophone control and

concomitant efforts to specify criteria of inclusion and exclusion have led frequently to conflict among groups with opposing interests.” Heller (1994, 109) recounts another vivid story of what was happening in the early 1980s and that is happening even more nowadays:

In early 1984, the French-language advisory committee of a nearby school board approached our Centre with a request. There was a bitter dispute raging between factions of parents whose children attended the two French-language schools administered by the board. One group claimed that the school had admitted too many students whose command of French was weak, and whose parents spoke no French at all. As a result, they said, all the students were speaking English, and even meetings of the Association parent-instituteurs were conducted entirely or partly in English. They depended on the school to provide their children and themselves with a wholly francophone milieu in order to help them retain their language and their identity, but instead the school was turning into a foyer d’assimilation, and even their children’s academic achievement was suffering. Their opponents argued for the right of non-francophones to be present at the school; they pointed to the central role non-francophones had played in convincing the board to open the school in the first place and they argued that in a truly democratic and bilingual Canada, everyone should have the right to choose their children’s language of instruction. Some added that the presence of both French and English in school affairs was beneficial to the children: the best way to achieve bilingualism was to integrate both languages into the institutions of the community and the daily lives of its members, not separate them out into different domains (Heller 1994, 109).

#### **4.6.2 Use of the term “bilingual education” in Cameroon and Canada**

Takam and Fassé (2018, 20) recently published a brief comparison of language policy in education in Cameroon and Canada, with a focus on the teaching of the second official language in technical education. In their study, they present an analysis of the policies on official languages in education in both countries. Their main aim is to endeavor to “reveal the fundamental causes of the overall poor performance or lack of interest observed in Cameroon and Canada respectively” (Ibid). In this study, they underline the fact that since the adoption of the official

language policy, the Cameroon government has tried to promote and develop English and French among its citizens, but the results so far have been considered by many researchers as underperforming. (Tchoungui 1982, 1983; Tadadjeu 1990; Kouega 1999 & 2007; Tabi-Manga 2000; Mbangwana 2002; Ayafor 2005; Echu 2005; Simo Bobda 2006; Takam 2007, 2012; Fassé 2012; Echu and Ebongue 2012 cited in Takam and Fassé (2018, 21) According to Takam and Fassé,

The sector par excellence of state attempts to promote the MOLs<sup>20</sup> has been education where the government has taken several approaches: creation of bilingual schools nationwide; launching of “Opération bilinguisme”, which entailed the teaching of Main Official Language (MOL) in the last three classes of primary education; extension of the teaching of MOL to the whole primary cycle; increase of the number of hours of MOL in secondary schools; and teaching of MOL made mandatory in all higher education institutions. All these measures, however, have yielded unsatisfying results – poorer ones being recorded in technical education, as Yembe (1989) noticed a few decades ago. Today, 29 years later (2018), the situation remains the same” (21) (Emphasis mine).

These researchers merely follow a common trend in Cameroon, where some schools are referred to as bilingual schools, even though, in reality, they are not. As we have seen earlier, in Cameroon for a very long time now, ‘bilingual school’ has been used to refer to a school that has two sections on the same campus – that is, an Anglophone section and a Francophone section even though both sections are run completely separately, and no form of bilingual education is practiced or promoted in the school curriculum in either of the schools. It is for somewhat similar reasons that researchers (Baker and Wright 2017, 197) acknowledge that the definition of bilingual education is not necessarily as straight forward as it might seem. Baker and Wright decry the fact that the term “bilingual education” has erroneously been used to describe both “(a) a classroom where formal instruction fosters bilingualism and (b) a classroom where bilingual children are present, but bilingualism is not promoted in the curriculum” (197). Sometimes, as in the case of Cameroon, even purely monolingual programs with a second language learning component are called “bilingual schools”. Just because they offer a few hours a week of second official language lessons, they are referred to as bilingual schools. If anything, “bilingual education is a simplistic label for a complex phenomenon” (Baker and Wright 2017). In this light, it is primordial to make a clear distinction between

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20. Minorities Official Languages

education that uses and promotes two languages and monolingual education with a second language learning component or monolingual education in a second language. These authors further attempt to provide an explanation of bilingual education by describing the different types (Baker and Wright 2017, 197-241). Not all practical cases of bilingual education fit into one of the many typologies that they describe, as typologies only help to illustrate the different aims of bilingual education. However, Baker and Wright identify two main typologies of bilingual education that can be considered a basis of bilingual education: *transitional bilingual education and maintenance bilingual education.* “Transitional bilingual education aims to shift a child from the home minority language to the dominant, majority language” (197-241). Assimilation (cultural and social) into the majority language is the main underlying aim of transitional bilingual education. Maintenance bilingual education, sometimes referred to as enrichment bilingual education “attempts to foster the minority language in the child, and the associated culture and identity” (197-241). The underlying aim in maintenance bilingualism is to “extend the individual and group use of minority languages, leading to cultural pluralism and linguistic diversity” (197-241). The divide is not necessarily clear cut and as mentioned above, some programs do not fall under any one typology. Bartlett and Ofelia (2011, ix) case study of Gregorio Luperón High School in New York, for example, shows that the kind of bilingual education practiced in the said program does not fit into any mold. The school implements a unique system that can be considered a hybrid of maintenance bilingual education and transitional bilingual education. What makes it so special is the fact that “it moves away from a focus on individual second language learners of English to a social process involving the identity of an entire speech community of Dominican students. Spanish is given a high status and bilingualism is the norm. At the same time, there is a rigorous academic preparation in English” (Baker and Wright 2017, 198). This program has been considered a true success (Michael *et al.* 2007). Not only did the high school treat student’s Spanish language and literacy proficiency as a resource (Michael *et al.* 2007, 174) but teachers and students developed relationships of “authentic caring” (Valensuela 1999). Also, “students employed key cultural artifact, the discourse of opportunity, to manage their powerful feelings of loss at leaving their families and homes behind and to remind themselves to take advantage of schooling (Michael *et al.* 2007, 174). Michael *et al.* (2007, 171) report that:

(...) even by conventional measures, Luperón has achieved considerable success with its students. Luperón boasts a 92.4% attendance rate. It has a 10.2% dropout (what some call “pushout” rate), which is significantly lower than the 25% dropout rate for newcomer Dominicans throughout

the city" (Michael *et al.* 2007, 171). (...) In 2004, Luperón graduated 45% of its students within four years according to official data (Klein, 2005). More than 80% of the cohort had graduated by the following year (Kovac, 2004) (Michael *et al.* 2007, 171).

C. A. Ferguson *et al.* presented a long list of aims for which bilingual education is generally pursued. Even though these were developed more than forty years ago, many of them are still valid today (Baker and Wright 2017, 197).

### **4.6.3 Aims of bilingual education**

The reasons why bilingual education might be chosen as a viable option is a very important aspect which should be taken into consideration both by Cameroon as well as Canada. Thus, we might ask – are the aims for which bilingual education and bilingualism are chosen the same? Below is Baker and Wright's list of ten examples of the aims of bilingualism drawn from C.A Ferguson *et al.*'s discussion on the varying aims of bilingualism (1977).

#### **4.6.3.1 Varying aims of bilingualism**

- To assimilate individuals or groups into the mainstream of society; to socialize people for full participation in the community.
- To unify a multilingual society; to bring unity to a multi-ethnic, multi-tribal, multi- national linguistically diverse state.
- To enable people to communicate with the outside world.
- To provide language skills which are marketable, aiding employment and status.
- To preserve ethnic and religious identity.
- To reconcile and mediate between different linguistic and political communities.
- To spread the use of a colonial language, socializing an entire population to a colonial existence.
- To strengthen elite groups and preserve their privileged position in society.
- To give equal status in law to language of unequal status in daily life.
- To deepen an understanding of language and culture (197).

Cameroon and Canada both seek equal status for English and French, only to different extents. Given their circumstances, both countries should also seek “to provide language skills which are marketable, aiding employment and status” (Baker and Wright 2017, 197) and “to reconcile and mediate between different linguistic and political communities” (197).

Given that there are always sociocultural, political and economic aspects that are fully part and parcel of debates on the choice for bilingual education, Baker and Kaplan (2012) proposed four approaches to bilingual education that capture the varying aims of bilingual education. It can be approached as part of language planning, as politics, as economics and cost-efficiency, and as pedagogy. The kind of bilingual education adopted will then be strongly attached to the aims for which bilingualism is sought.

#### **4.6.3.2 Types of bilingual education and resulting bilingualism levels**

For purposes of illustration, we have adopted Baker and Wright’s table (Baker and Wright 2017, 199) (Table 14) to portray a typology of bilingual education. It shows eleven types of language education that help explain the different aims of “bilingual education”. These typologies, however, do not capture all the practical cases of bilingual education that exist in the world.

When the forms of bilingual education presented here are taken into consideration, it is evident that the current school programs in Cameroon cannot produce strong forms of bilingualism as an outcome. Both the Anglophone and the Francophone sub-systems of education can clearly be classified under monolingual forms of education that have a limited second language teaching component since Anglophones only study French as a subject, for a few hours a week, and Francophones only study English as a subject, for a few hours a week as well.

## **4.7 Examples of strong bilingual education programs**

Some consider the English/French immersion program in Canada as a successful example of a strong form of bilingual education and therefore, use it as a reference in the institution of similar programs.

Manterola (2014), from the Department of Linguistics and Basque Studies, in the Universidad del Pas Vasco - Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain in discussing the Basque process for the revitalization of the Basque language, starts off by citing the success of the English-French bilingual systems from Canada and

<b>MONOLINGUAL FORMS OF EDUCATION</b>				
<b>Type of Program</b>	<b>Typical Type of Child</b>	<b>Language of the Classroom</b>	<b>Societal and Educational Aim</b>	<b>Aim in Language Outcome</b>
MAINSTREAMING/ SUBMERSION	Language Minority	Majority Language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
MAINSTREAMING/ SUBMERSION WITH PULL-OUT MAJORITY LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION SUPPORT	Language Minority	Majority Language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
SHELTERED (STRUCTURED) IMMERSION	Language Minority	Majority language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
SEGREGATIONIST	Language Minority	Minority language (forced, no choice)	Apartheid	Monolingualism
<b>WEAK FORMS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION</b>				
<b>Type of Program</b>	<b>Typical Type of Child</b>	<b>Language of the Classroom</b>	<b>Societal and Educational Aim</b>	<b>Aim in Language Outcome</b>
TRANSITIONAL	Language Minority	Moves from Minority to Majority Language	Assimilation/ Subtractive	Relative Monolingualism
MAINSTREAMING WITH WORLD (FOREIGN) LANGUAGE TEACHING	Language Majority	Majority Language with L2/FL lessons	Limited Enrichment	Limited Bilingualism
SEPARATIST	Language Minority	Minority Language (out of choice)	Detachment/ Auto nomy	Limited Bilingualism
<b>STRONG FORMS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION</b>				
<b>Type of Program</b>	<b>Typical Type of Child</b>	<b>Language of the Classroom</b>	<b>Societal and Educational Aim</b>	<b>Aim in Language Outcome</b>
IMMERSION	Language Majority	Bilingual with initial emphasis on L2	Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism and Biliterycy
MAINTENANCE HERITAGE LANGUAGE	Language Minority	Bilingual with emphasis on L1	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism and Biliterycy
TWO WAY/ DUAL LANGUAGE	Mixed language minority and majority	Minority and majority	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism and biliterycy
MAINSTREAM BILINGUAL	Language Majority	Two Majority Languages	Maintenance, Biliterycy and Enrichment	Bilingualism

**Figure 4.3:** The Geographic Distribution of Different Language Groups in Cameroon  
Tabi-Manga (2000, 70) and Essono (2001)

Quebec. This was used as an indispensable reference for the Basque-Spanish and Basque-French bilingual schools.

This example of English-French bilingual education confirmed that it was possible to successfully provide schooling in a second language, given some

sociolinguistic, didactic, and psycholinguistic conditions. Research on French immersion showed that children successfully developed the L2 or language of instruction, as well as the L1 or family language. Moreover, the children also obtained positive academic results (Genesee 2006, 45). These findings served as the powerful argument needed to defend the adoption of a similar system for the Basque Country (Idiazabal, 2003 cited in (Manterola 2014, 1).

Manterola (2014) specifies that in the Basque case, the key factor that made it possible to copy the French immersion system already successfully implemented in Canada was the fact that, in both cases, one of the two languages is a minority language. This particular example was thus classified as a very interesting one regarding bilingual and immersion education from the minority language education perspective. (Cenoz (2009) and Idiazabal (2003) cited in Manterola (2014))

It is important to note that French immersion programs in Canada, like in Ontario for example, are named 'French immersion' even though the environment in which they exist are Anglo-dominant communities. It is generally known that when it comes to language learning, 'immersion' speaks of being immersed in the natural environment where the said language is dominant. However, schools that run these programs offer classes in French, but are themselves located in predominantly English communities. The students in these schools are in the majority Anglophones and the linguistic environment in which they live is predominantly English-speaking. It is also interesting to note that there are no English immersion schools in Canada (Quebec).

Cenoz (2009, 58) also presents some other examples of strong bilingual programs around the world.

The use of native American languages such as Hawaiian or Navajo in bilingual programs helps develop these languages and their cultures and at the same time, students in these programs also make more progress in English.

The use of Maori as the language of instruction has increased in New Zealand. (May 2004; May and Hill 2005) The development of Intercultural Bilingual Education based on the use of different native languages as the medium of instruction in most Latin American countries, with a longer tradition in Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia and Ecuador, is also based on the use of minority languages. (see Hornberger and López 1998; López and Sichra 2007; Hamel 2007) Other programs using the minority language as the language of instruction

along with English are developmental bilingual programs and two-way immersion programs in the USA. (see Baker 2006, Chapter 11; Genesee and Lindholm-Leary 2007) (Cenoz 2009, 58)

## **4.8 Factors in favor of strong bilingual programs in Cameroon**

Research shows that children learn best in a language they already understand, (UNESCO 2016) meaning that when children already understand more than one language, they will be able to learn best in all of them. By the time the average child in Cameroon attains school age, they already understand and speak the greater percentage of the languages that they will speak in their lifetime. This is because, for most Cameroonians, language acquisition is not necessarily a conscious, structured action that takes place later on, at some point in one's life, but is more of a natural reality that one begins to deal with from birth. A few Francophone students end up taking Spanish, Portuguese or German for some semesters in college or secondary school (see Chapter 1). A few other people register for language classes offered by foreign consulates (Italian, German, English, etc.) when they plan to immigrate to those countries. Unlike in some monolingual settings where some people embrace elective bilingualism and take a few foreign language classes, in multilingual contexts, the population speaks two, three or four African languages without taking any classes. Most Cameroonians have never had any formal training or structured learning for any of the African languages they speak. For the few who speak foreign languages (European, Asian etc.), most often, the foreign language was learned in a formal setting – in school and/or at foreign consulates; whereas the African languages were “picked up” either as they needed them, or because they were fully surrounded by the languages in their young age. This is to say, that generally, the average Cameroonian does not pick up new languages in adulthood. They mostly already speak and understand ‘their array of languages’ when they start school. This is in line with what Cenoz (2009, 191) refers to in his discussion about the important difference between natural language acquisition, language learning and language acquisition in formal contexts. As such, because English and French have also become languages of daily use in many homes built by parents of the present generation (anglophone-francophone intermarriages), children are also “naturally acquiring” along with the relevant African languages, English and French from birth. In other words, in Cameroon today, and, especially, in main cities such as Bamenda, Douala, Yaoundé etc.,

children can effectively learn in English and French as they already understand them. Meaning that, for many in Cameroon today, the question “If you don’t understand, how can you learn?” (UNESCO 2016) might not be the right question to ask for both English and French. Because such children understand English and French, they should be able to learn in English and French right from nursery school.

In this study, my attention has been drawn to the fact that, even though, many children start school bilingual in the official languages, they end high school with very limited official language bilingual skills. Yet, these same students are not only expected to study in both official languages at the higher education level, but they are also expected to fully function, later on in life, as bilingual employees in a bilingual country. Perhaps, the time has come to not only acknowledge the failure of the present system to produce bilingualism in Cameroon, but also to try to find alternative solutions? On the other hand, could it be that the time has come to rethink the national official language bilingualism policy? Should the language policy be re-aligned to suit the present realities? Should we continue to aspire towards an French/English “bilingual” Cameroon? Whatever the case, there is a pressing need to revisit “policy” due to the situation of deep dissatisfaction resulting from a policy that has been slow in translating into reality in the language domain in Cameroon.

# Conclusion

A close look at the historical and sociolinguistic background, the linguistic landscape, as well as the language and translation policies in Cameroon has clearly revealed the bilingual nature of the public space. It is evident that to be able to function properly and also to adequately provide for the needs of this specific society, it is critical that a large percentage of individuals be bilingual in the official languages. For example, in order to be able to successfully complete their studies in the other state universities, apart from at the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda, students might need to take classes in either of the official languages depending on the professor's choice of language. Also, in order to be able to perform their jobs adequately, individuals who occupy certain positions need to be truly bilingual. For example, elementary school teachers, who must teach all subjects, including the second official language, need to be perfect bilinguals to be able to also teach the second official language. However, as we have seen in the present study, the educational system does not provide any possibilities to build even weak levels of official language bilingualism, not to speak of strong forms of bilingualism. Worse still, not only does the educational system not help to build up strong forms of bilingualism in the youth, but it also stifles whatever English-French bilingualism they could have set out with when they entered one of the two strictly divided monolingual Anglophone and Francophone sub-systems running side by side.

Any pertinent steps that must be taken to change this situation must begin at the level of policy. However, it is impossible to approach policy in a nation like Cameroon without taking into consideration both its African and developmental context. Marais (2011, 378) has shown, first of all, that African contexts and the developmental context are particular and secondly, that the specificities of the developmental context and of African contexts need to be taken into consideration in research in Translation Studies. The African context is first of all a development context, secondly it "represents a significant percentage of the economy in the informal sector. (...). As much as 30% of South Africa's economy and much more for the rest of Africa is informal. Factoring in this reality does not mean ignoring

the formal side of the economy” (377). Rather, “there is more to translation than what the eye looking through the lens of formal economic activity perceives” (Marais 2011, 378). Thirdly, the African context “represents forms of society or culture that are different from other contexts” (378). (Orality, aridity, rurality, locality etc.). Fourthly, the African context “represents a different history” (378) and researchers “cannot study African histories with the same conceptual framework as European, nation-state, histories” (378). Fifthly, the African context “represents a unique hybridity of culture. Because Africa has a unique context, a unique history, and because it has with this uniqueness made contact with other cultures, it seems to follow logically that the nature of hybridity of cultures in Africa would be unique (see, for instance, the work of Bandia (2008) and Ricard (2004)(Marais 2011, 378). All these factors were strongly present in my mind as this study was carried out. In terms of research methodology for example, the choice of a case study prevailed because “case studies allow for rich description of data” (Appiah 2006) and allow “voices, other than the traditional scientific ones, to be heard” (Marais 2011, 378).

Dr. Tatangang, former director of the National Employment Fund in Cameroon, (a World Bank initiative to address unemployment in the country within the framework of the Social Dimension of Adjustment (SDA) ) describes development as “an organized, permanent search for well-being by a community for the benefit of its members, by a country or group of countries, for the benefit of its population by the use of quality employment and work that apply know-how provided by quality operational education and training” (Tatangang 2011, 46). He makes a key connection between development and education as he sees development somehow resulting from quality operational education and training. He hypothesizes that general opinion credits the advancements made by developed countries to education in the broadest sense of the word and explains that that is why many African states have invested heavily in education, in a bid to take some strides towards sustainable development.

Tatangang draws our attention here to the fact that even though these African countries have invested such huge sums in education, they do not seem to be reaping the same measure of results that such investments should normally produce. He blames this “*disturbing paradox*”, as he refers to it, on the fact that many African states seem not to have realized that, even though education remains the basis of development, education needs to evolve to adapt to change. He deplores the fact that “Africa has maintained outdated forms that have lost their capacity to play the role of engine to development or catalyst to change, like an engine, in all metabolic processes” (46).

Among the main reasons why it is important to rehabilitate education in most African countries is the fact that education now fails to provide the people with the development propulsion force that is sufficient to make its education the development take-off springboard it should be (Tatangang 2011, 48). In normal circumstances, education in any nation should serve the current needs of the nation. More so, in countries like Cameroon, for example, where education systems were put in place more than fifty years ago, decision makers must be preoccupied with getting rid of any 'outdated systems' that clearly no longer meet the practical needs of the nation. All such systems of necessity need to be supplemented or replaced with systems that can rightfully springboard Cameroonian children into the future.

This same idea is expressed in a recent World Bank publication on Cameroon with regards to its Strategy for Growth and Employment. It states that Cameroon aims to become an emerging economy by 2035, that is, to become a middle-income country and a newly industrialized country through Vision 2035, which will promote growth and development in Cameroon. The vision, officially referred to as the Strategy for Growth and Employment (Document de Strategie pour La Croissance et L'emploi (DSCE)), was established in 2010 after approval by an Inter-Ministerial committee on August 26, 2009. It identifies "unemployment and weak productivity as key challenges for the country's development" (Shobhana and Majgaard 2016, xiii). The main purpose of the World Bank report is to "support Cameroon's efforts to augment the skills of its workforce to increase labor productivity and competitiveness and to create jobs - while recognizing that many factors other than skills can inhibit labor productivity and job creation" (xiii). Shobhana and Majgaard (2016, xiii) specify that in terms of policy, in the areas targeted by their study, a strategic framework exists in Cameroon that is not demand-led. They refer to it as a "latent system," primarily because there is a "centralized preparation of vision and strategy documents and action plans" that make it such that system oversight and service delivery dimensions are also latent. A missing link exists somewhere, as there seems to be limited collective engagement across education and training ministries, and other ministries that provide specialized skills. Harmony needs to be created between education or training and the tangible needs of the nation.

This present study advocates for changes in the approach to bilingual education that would identify existing abilities and potential to make better use of them. This could be one of the ways in which Cameroon could respond to the need, expressed in the World Bank report, to alter "a highly fragmented approach to workforce

skills development oversight and service delivery” and uncover Cameroon’s latent potential (Shobhana and Majgaard 2016, xiii).

The authors of this World Bank publication did an extensive study in Cameroon and reported that the youth groups surveyed said that “knowing languages (English and French) is the most important skill for securing a job, and completion of university is the most useful training” (76). Completion of university pertains to another debate altogether that we will not delve into here. However, knowing English and French is definitely the most important skill to securing a job in Cameroon. These youth groups express these concerns because of their daily realities. They are not adequately being trained to obtain the levels of bilingualism that the government has deemed necessary to fulfil one’s duties satisfactorily. If we take for example the government Circular letter <sup>21</sup>, in which the government instructed teacher training college principals to provide adequate training to enable their student-teachers to be ready to teach the second official language, it is evident that the realities are not at all taken into consideration. Student-teachers in training are products of either the Anglophone or the Francophone subsystem of education so have had minimal lessons in English or French depending on the subsystem they attended. Teacher colleges admit students who have completed high school (Upper Sixth for Anglophones and ‘Terminale’ for Francophones) and obtained an Advanced Level Certificate or a “baccalauréat,” and train them to teach at the primary school level. To expect the principals of teacher training colleges to be able to transform these students (in one, two or three years depending on their qualifications when they enter teacher training), into advanced second language learners or perfect bilinguals who can teach all subjects, including their second language, is not realistic. One would think that it would be more logical to start to equip potential or future teachers with a high level mastery of their second language, (for those who are not bilingual before they go to school), during their primary school years, long before they get to teacher-training colleges.

The time is long overdue when this untenable situation should be dealt with and some changes should be implemented in the educational system that would be very helpful for Cameroonian youth. This is not to undermine the fact that the literature on school innovations in developing countries in the past shows that they often produce unintended effects, and that laid down objectives are often only partially attained.

Various studies have attempted to explain shortcomings in innovation projects implemented thus far in developing countries (e.g., Havelock, Huberman, and Education (1977) ; Hurst (1983) ; Hawes and Stephens (1990)). Critical reviews on

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existing literature on educational and social change reveal that few studies come to grips with the concept of power in either the political and administrative sphere or research and development phases of national reforms and present a largely “technical” assessment of why and how reforms take place. In fact, “external” factors (Paulston 1978) that lead to conflict over reform priorities are avoided, with the result that many reform studies discuss reform policy and goal statements as fact, so that any conflict arising from ideological differences or the clash of vested interest groups are either ignored or treated as technical problems (Tosam 1988, 19).

With this in mind, this study does not take lightly the obvious external factors that have led to and that continue to lead to conflict over the use of languages in schools in Cameroon. These factors that are somewhat external to the education system itself make it even more important to reinforce the bilingualism that Cameroon lays claim to at the primary school level. It might actually be a lot easier to institute efficient bilingual education programs now in Cameroon since many more children are growing up as early official language simultaneous bilinguals. Studies have shown that children are generally ready to begin learning the basic reading skills of a language, for example, once they have a minimal phonological awareness. Azah (2016, 5) reiterates Fitzpatrick’s description of phonological awareness as “the ability to listen inside a word” (Fitzpatrick 1997) and affirms that “children who have well-developed phonological awareness when they come to school have a head start making sense of how sounds and letters operate in print” (Azah 2016, 5). This ability is very important when it comes to using sound-letter knowledge effectively in reading and writing. She insists that “a student’s level of phonological awareness at the end of kindergarten is one of the strongest predictors of future reading success, in grade one and beyond” Azah (2016, 5).

According to Azah, “many children in Cameroon begin kindergarten with well-developed phonological awareness in English or French, some others acquire these skills very quickly when they are put in a stimulating classroom environment, while others need more instruction that consciously and deliberately focuses on phonological awareness”(5). Even though she does not specify that some of these children actually have a well-developed phonological awareness in more than one language, including English and French, the same applies. We can safely say that the phonological awareness in English and French that some preschoolers have is an obvious skill that can only benefit them, if they were to start learning how to read in both English and French from Class 1. When schooling provides a stimulating environment for one of the two languages only, the acquired phonological awareness in the other language goes to waste.

In addition to phonological awareness, research further shows that children are also extremely efficient in acquiring a native-like accent when they learn a language. Of course, there must be sufficient exposure to the language they are learning for this to happen. Talking about L2, Singleton and Ryan (2004, 84), go even further to state that “unless exposure to the L2 begins in the childhood years, an authentic accent will not normally be acquired”.

Even though young children acquire languages almost effortlessly, they do not continue to learn and master the languages automatically. They need exposure and motivation to continue to develop in every language they are exposed to (Halgunseth 2009) . Research has clearly shown that bilingual children’s proficiency and competence in a language is a direct reflection of the amount of time they spend in each of the two language environments (Stefánsson 2013, 11). That is why bilingual preschoolers in Cameroon tend to lose proficiency and competence in one of their languages when they are enrolled in one of the two educational subsystems as each subsystem provides a lot of exposure in the one language and barely any exposure to the other. That is why the early simultaneous bilinguals attending them quickly become second language learners, and with time, some really lose proficiency and competence in one language to the point where they become monolinguals. Baker and Wright (2017) discuss this phenomenon in detail and describe the different types of bilingual education and the type of individuals they produce.

## **Limitations of study**

The forte of this case study is that it made it possible to understand ‘real life’ as concerns societal bilingualism in Cameroon. It provides an in-depth, extensive explanation of official language bilingualism. What this means however is that since Cameroon is only one specific nation amongst the many in the world that practice societal bilingualism, the other possible manifestations of societal bilingualism as can be observed in other nations have not been covered. However, because of my interest in Cameroon, first of all because I am Cameroonian, and secondly because of the fascinating realities of the linguistic landscape in Cameroon, I opted for a case study because it fits best with the nature of the research aims and questions. In addition Marais (2011, 378), posits:

(...) case study as a research methodology should work against the generalising tendencies in Western research. It is precisely the weak points of case study, as methodology, that makes it fit for the purposes of

the research agenda for Africa (...). It does not easily allow for generalisation (Duff, 2008) and, claims Tymoczko (2007), it generally allows for weaker conclusions. This feature, together with its propensity to allow for rich description of data (see also Appiah (2006) ), makes for its suitability as a research methodology. This methodology can also be linked to other forms of localised research, such as action research (Hubscher-Davidson, 2008), community service learning (Marais, 2009), and participatory research. These are all research methods that allow voices, other than the traditional scientific ones, to be heard.

An exploration of the role of translation policy in the implementation of societal bilingualism has revealed a lot about official language bilingualism in Cameroon. For example, there have been no changes in the status of English and French as official languages since independence (almost sixty years now) despite the presence of so many African languages and also despite all the changes that have taken place in Cameroon. Official language bilingualism is heavily predicated on translation and so the effects of non-translation are far reaching—meaning that there is an urgent need to seek equality beyond translation. There are no school programs to produce or support strong forms of official language bilingualism in children in Cameroon, just to name a few.

## **Significance of study**

An increasing number of research studies in the field of Translation are now being carried out in Africa. In the last five years, the Association for Translation Studies in Africa (ATSA), was created, and, as a result of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS) regional workshop and TS summer school for Africa in August 2014. *Translation studies beyond the postcolony* edited by Marais and Feinauer (2017), was published. Also, a special issue on translation and development appeared in a journal. The Translator, as well as a new online journal are planned for 2019 and “there are many reasons to be optimistic about the place of Africa in Translations Studies (TS)” (Chibamba 2018, 222).

However, the number of studies in the field coming from West and Central Africa in particular, are very few. A greater percentage of these works are from South Africa and some other surrounding nations down in the south. My hope is that the present study would make a significant contribution to scholarship in Translation Studies from West and Central Africa more specifically.

I did not find any publications regarding early simultaneous bilinguals in Cameroon, be it for those who are bilingual/multilingual in national languages or for those who are bilingual in English and French, the two official languages of the nation. Yet it is a very common phenomenon in Cameroonian society. One does not have to look far to find it. In fact, it is so common that it is evidently taken for granted and therefore overlooked. My hope is that my work will pique interest in Cameroonian scholars for these children who fall into a category that is so present, and yet has been grossly neglected.

## **Suggestions for further studies**

This study could only go so far to fulfil its *raison d'être*. More research on early simultaneous bilinguals in Cameroon would help throw light on a concrete case of natural language acquisition of multiple languages as opposed to structured, classroom learning of languages. It will also help to define the real linguistic treasure that these children represent. Even though some societies generally hesitate to gather specific information about societal bilingualism for fear of bringing inequalities to light, it would be helpful to acquire research that helps us get clear numbers of the languages that children in Cameroon speak. Moreover, if it were possible to obtain data not just of which languages they speak but more specifically of their proficiency in each when they register to start school as well as concrete and standardized ways to measure their hopefully increasing proficiency throughout their school years, studies of the comparative effectiveness of various educational approaches could be both developed and analyzed. Such analysis could foster the possibility of beginning to adopt the best educational approaches that have been proven to, in the majority of cases, both stimulate increasingly complex language acquisition and solidify a robust bilingualism amongst Cameroonian youth who are the future backbone of the country. One way to achieve this would be to develop enough studies so that multi-layered, creative approaches could be described, approaches that not only stimulate language acquisition when it is most crucial, but just as importantly reinforce and develop the strong likelihood that the bilingualism achieved is retained long-term and thrives throughout one's lifetime. Although such a volume of studies and the detailed nature of such studies is expensive, I suggest that failing to do such studies could be more costly to Cameroonian society than not doing them since a highly qualified, bilingual workforce is one of the best ways to set a country up for lasting success.

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