
DOI:<https://doi.org/10.53555/eijhss.v4i2.85>

AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE IN CAMEROON.

Emmanuel NFORBI (PHD)^{1*}

¹Associate Professor of linguistics, University of Dschang, Cameroon. Head of Department, African Studies and Globalization, Head of African Studies and Globalization laboratory, Vice-Chair, Society for Cameroonian Languages and Cultures.

***Corresponding Author:-**
nforbiemma@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract:-

This article examines the efforts involved in Applied Linguistics in the domain of African Languages in Cameroon. With current focus on multilingualism and multiculturalism, proposals on curriculum and didactic material are made. The input of Maurice Tadadjeu, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and the University of Dschang are highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

After independence, Cameroon emerged as a Bilingual Nation with English and French as official languages. The advantages from such a policy have been evident. Cameroonians have interpreted the global community with ease through these two renowned world languages. Many Cameroonians have accepted each other by dint of bilingualism that facilitates social integration. For over fifty years of independence, we have worked and improved on our bilingual policies. In recent years, linguistic sentiments have proven that we need to add a multicultural component to our cherished bilingual policy, when the National commission on bilingualism and multiculturalism was created, other realities emerged.

How do we incorporate the multilingual and multicultural component in the educational system? This question is a curriculum problem. How do we organise, programme and implement a bilingual and multicultural programmes?

The huge research that had gone on over the decades in mother-tongue education has laid a good foundation for mother-tongue education in Cameroon. The creation of a series on the training of teachers for Cameroonian languages and cultures in ENS Yaoundé, the enforcement of mother-tongue education in Basic education teacher training colleges and the recent creation of the national commission on bilingualism and multiculturalism, have reinforced the need to take the component of mother-tongue and cultures education and research in Cameroon serious.

Background issues

Cameroon counts 280 National language, (Nforbi 2012). These languages carry cultures which the various communities have flourished in for centuries many of these languages and cultures are very similar with a high level of mutual intelligibility. Cameroon like most of Africa is made of rural and urban areas. Most rural communities have homogeneous languages and cultures while virtually all urban areas are heterogeneous to some degree. These background realities need to be taken into consideration.

While multilingual and multicultural education in favor of African languages and cultures is evidently a means of understanding and acceptance of each other, applied linguistics research is needed to fulfilling this objective. African oral tradition and folklore has a lot in the study of these aspects. Different languages and cultures reveal the similarities and closeness and hence sharing of a common heritage. This heritage is a deep structure which is highly cherished. While these cultural genres exist in all African languages, globalization has brought several challenges; the first is that of performances. Oral traditional genres were meant to be performed. As new forms of entertainment rushed in by information and communication technologies (TV, phones, internet and a strong westernized system of education), the context of collecting these genres is more and more a challenge. This is coupled with security challenges in some of the rural areas where the genres are supposed to be performed. The older generation is generally the custodians of these genres.

The challenges of teaching and testing mother-tongue at the Basic level in Cameroon.

Cameroon, Africa is miniature has social components common to that of the rest of Africa. There are urban and rural areas with a lot in common. There is a high level of homogeneity in the rural areas than in all urban areas. While it is possible to have people speaking a mother tongue in a large scale in Accra, Ghana (because it is regional language) it is not the case in Yaoundé Cameroon where homogeneity is high. In fact Bitjaa 2000, has already identified that a majority of children in the city of Yaoundé speak French and not a mother-tongue. We are pointing to the fact that oral testing in mother-tongue will be a real issue especially at the basic level in urban areas I Cameroon.

The teaching of mother-tongue in the urban areas will focus on the oral since a majority of these in the urban areas have nor or weak mastery of the mother-tongue emphasis will be laid on spoken proficiency before written competence. This means that teachers of the MI in the towns should not just master phonetics sounds and orthographic principles but as well master the oral linguistic and traditional components of the languages they are teaching. Oral testing in mother-tongue will hence be an issue. A learning outcome to be tested at the basic level will be for pupils to adequately express themselves in the mother-tongue s taught in class.

While oral testing in the first mother-tongue of the pupils in the villages might not be crucial since that is their language of expression, it might be necessary to introduce a second mother-tongue of the neighbouring village for purposed of opening up the pupils to the values of multiculturalism. If this way, they will be taught to express themselves in a language which is not theirs. At the time, they are being taught literacy skills in their mother-tongue which they already speak. The introduction of oral expression in the official languages is supposed to be done at the same time.

Linguistic realities of rural areas in Cameroon.

It should be noted that linguistic realities in rural area are more or less the same. The language of expression is essentially a mother-tongue and hardly French or English. It is important that basic education is a veritable foundation for the policy of bilingualism and multiculturalism.

This means the presence of over in class as proposed by Tadjadjeu. The child's mothertongue is the language through which the child acquires literacy skills. Oral skills in the two official languages as well as one mother-tongue which is not that of the children. In otherwords, we have four languages in English: the mother-tongue of the locality, English and French, and an opening language to another culture which is not that of that locality.

The child learns sounds of languages phonetic, orthography, spelling principles through the mother-tongue he/she already speaks. Oral expression in English and French is going on in the first year. In the second year, we introduce sounds and spellings for the official languages alongside the oral expressions. The child reinforces reading and writing skills in the mothertongue.

In the third year, oral, reading and writing skills in English and French continue will perfection of reading and writing in mother-tongue. In class four, we have a balanced situation where mother-tongue and English and French are present comfortably.

It is here that the child is introduced to multiculturalism. The linguistic and cultural scenery of the country is introduced orally. The child reaches class six with a good foundation on his mother-tongue, French and English, and awareness of the multicultural nature of the country with entry through one of the languages.

The first school leaving examination will hence test pupils on literacy skills in mothertongue, English and French. They should be a test on multiculturalism.

Urban areas

Understanding that most children in urban areas today find difficulties in mastering their mother-tongue and that then are already living in a multicultural setting in the city, a pragmatic approach is necessary for them. Quite often their exposure to languages is evident.

Emphasis should hence be on the oral mastery of the main mother-tongue in the context in class once. The teacher might need to do a placement test to handle the complex situation. This is because you will have children in class whose mother-tongues are English and/or French. You will have some who are pidgin speakers. A rapid sociolinguistic survey will help the teacher to manage in complex multilingual and multicultural situation. What is evident in that mother-tongue suffer in expressions is the early classes of basic education in urban areas. The teachers here should hence be such that can handle this situation so that by the time the pupils both in rural and urban areas are sitting for the first school, they should have common grades for a common examination.

Rural areas

In the homogeneous rural areas where mother-tongue is the main language of communication, the following curriculum could be useful from basic to high school.

1. Nursery school.

Since the children already speak the language, oral activities could be introduced such as oral baler, stories, songs, days of the week, counting, different weal's etc introduction of basics of oral French and English.

2. Primary school (class 1, 2)

Since a good number by pass the nursery school in rural areas, a revision of all that was done in the nursery is necessary. In order to open them up to literacy in mother-tongue, we introduce the general Alphabet of Cameroonian languages with examples, drawn from class. We continue with cultural elements like proverbs and indigenous knowledge of the community. We equally introduce the Alphabet of English and French.

3. Class three and four

They are lead to read and write cultural texts in English, French and their mother-tongues. They should be introduced to the linguistic scene.

4. Class three and four

They are lead to read and write cultural texts in English, French and their mother-tongues. They should be introduced to the linguistic scene.

Secondary education and tertiary levels.

When a good foundation for bilingualism is built at the basic level, it will be easier to continue at the secondary school levels. Considering that bilingualism and multiculturalism have come to be major tenets of one education philosophy. It is normal for teachers to be trained at the higher teacher training college to the areas and equipped in these principles.

While we will expect a reform in the series on Cameroonian languages and cultures that take into consideration this orientation, it is equally necessary to broaden the scope. It is necessary that all series have a cause on bilingualism and multiculturalism. This should be a common course for all teachers in teacher training collages. Each series will adapt a pedagogy that will help to reinforce these national principle which are very crucial for national Unity. This course which will naturally be based in the department of Cameroonian languages and cultural or departments Africa languages in the Universities will be taught in the other series. It should be noted that it is the educational system that produces the type of citizens we want. In form one, all over the country, compulsory courses in bilingualism and multiculturalism run through to upper-sixth.

University education should provide grounds for specialization in various aspects of bilingualism and multiculturalism. It should be a research base to provide knowledge for the nation's bilingual and multiculturalism policy. The related departments will hence carry out research such as this one to reinforce the policies.

Teacher training

A major reform in bilingualism and multiculturalism, will start in the teacher-training collages for basic education. The profile of a primary school teacher in Cameroon will hence be admission into the teacher training collage should hence involve these competences. The teacher should show mastery of French, English and mother-tongue literacy skills. The training programme should hence be prepared to equip the teachers to be efficient in these skills. Their teaching practice should focus on testing these skills. It is when these skills are well mastered that they can be transferred to the basic level. It is equally through this solid policy at the training collages that the mission of handling literacy assigned to the ministry of basic education can be attained.

The linguistic policy and didactic materials

An examination of linguistic policies in the educational systems in the continent shows that policies favorable to teaching African languages exist. They are however stifled by the domination of official languages which are in most cases not African languages.

Even where they exist, the implementation is problematic. Generally the challenges are varied. One of them is that of didactic materials. Oral tradition is a means par excellence to foster the culture of a people. The myths, legends, oral tales, dirges, etc., carry with them the aspirations, norms and shared values of the society. Quite often the same message is shared cross-culturally. The metaphors, images, symbols may be interpreted differently but the meaning ends up being the same. The deep structures reveals who the African is, his thoughts, idiosyncrasies and ambitions

THE CHALLENGE OF THE PRODUCTION OF MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL MANUALS IN AFRICAN LANGUAGES

A multilingual/multicultural manual is a didactic material that enables the reader to gain access through several languages and cultures. If African children will understand, accept and share cross culturally, nationally and cross continentally, they will need to understand each other. For this to happen, the school system will be instrumental. The linguistic policy of a nation and its implementation influences the allocation of resources.

Stages in preparing a multilingual/ multicultural manual

The data for such a manual needs to come from several languages and cultural communities. This implies information from these communities and performance opportunities. The oral challenge is that more and more the younger generation does not master the oral genres. We therefore need the older generation which is generally in the villages. More of those who possess this knowledge are generally not very literate. They are equally not very accessible since these genres are used occasionally. Having the performance context is generally a challenge. Security challenges in some parts of the country have come to complicate fieldwork in these places.

Data collection

It is easier for native speakers with the knowledge of phonetics and methods of collection and transcription of texts in African languages. They need to be trained in phonetics and the alphabet for Cameroonian languages. That is why linguistic students who master their languages can be good collectors. They are trained and motivated for the collection. They need it for their academic progress. This increases performance, motivation and credibility. Access is easier since they are natives.

Dialectal variations

Since oral genres are performed, people use the dialectal variants of their languages to speak. Having to explain to an old person that you will not write what he/she is saying because it is not the standard variant always brings hostilities. That is why it is good to collect the data faithfully in the dialect of the informant. That might be the only source to preserve that cultural element since the meaning behind is crucial. Dialectal issues should come in when the language committee is harmonizing the publications of the language. It is crucial that at the level of the language community that the issue of standard be handled and the whole community informed. As such the acceptance of the standard reference dialect will not be a problem. It is equally the language committee and specifically the trained native literacy personnel that do the editing and necessary correction.

Transcription and translation

A transcription in the source language enables easy analysis of the data. It equally facilitates transcription in to the official language or any other language.

Application lessons and exercises

Application lessons and exercises are generally guiding questions. These questions orientate discussions and sharing's in to the texts. It is here that the origins of the genres are shared to understand the relations between the cultures and languages.

Production of the Manual

The production requires adapted computer programs and editing. That is where we require knowledge of the source language and the target language. A trained native speaker, preferably a linguist is required to verify the mother tongue version. The challenge is that in most communities you do not easily access trained mother tongue literary personnel. That is why the existing of literary centers in the various language communities will be a means par excellence to facilitate this process.

Distribution and teaching/learning

The existence of literacy classes and the presence of languages and cultures in the educational system will create a forum for distribution, teaching/learning. It is preferable to start with the communities whose languages are found in the manual. We experimented this process in the two main government secondary and high schools of manual. In the government bilingual high school, we introduced the weaving manual in form one. We discovered that all the students wanted to copy. This one in the francophone section contrary to the worry of the multilingual nature of classes in the cities, over 90% of

these students were Yemba, the main language of the division. The weaving manual in the language was highly accepted without challenges. The few non-Yemba speakers wished they had theirs in their own languages.

From local to national manual

At the local level, we can produce handbooks on weaving, carving, hunting, farming, etc. in the language. The idea is to document an indigenous knowledge production process in the languages. It could be the oral tradition as well, myths, legends, tales, proverbs songs etc. when the young children can already read these texts in their own mother-tongues, it will be easier to read those from other languages and cultures. They can understand each other better and share in their aspirations.

THE HERITAGE OF PROFESSOR MAURICE TADADJEU IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS RESEARCH IN CAMEROON

After obtaining a PhD in applied linguistics in the U.S focused on language education in Africa, he returned with a clear vision to develop African languages and use them in the educational system in Cameroon and Africa. His guiding principles were projects, associations, team work, supervision and coordination. He believed that the enterprise of developing African languages needed to be properly done by research teams. He was the brain behind Research in African languages which contributed enormously to mother-tongue literacy in Cameroon. The Department of African Languages and Linguistics of the University of Yaounde was his bedrock. His major innovation in this domain was 'The Operational of Research Program for Language Education in Cameroon' PROPELCA. (Projet Opérationnel Pour L'enseignement Des Langues Au Cameroun). This is one of the prominent projects in the continent that led research in African languages, trained researchers and teachers who developed languages, materials and taught these languages. This project trained directly or indirectly, thousands of African language students in Cameroon, Africa, and beyond the continent. The PROPELCA publication series has produced over 100 scientific publications and provoked thousands to read and write their mother-tongues. It has served as an advisory and scientific team to enable other organizations like SIL; CABTAL and NACALCO amongst others.

The technical team of NACALCO with its scientific coordinators, publication team, center for Applied Linguistics and its students became a force to reckon with in the domain of mother-tongue literacy. This team was directed by Tadadjeu. The scientific atmosphere created by PROPELCA and NACALCO has been crucial for mother tongue literacy In Cameroon.

At the University level, the research of PROPELCA has been consulted, taught and applied by thousands of researchers and students. It has been the basis for most mother-tongue education thesis in applied linguistics. The team has produced teaching staff both for the department of linguistics and the department of Cameroonian languages and cultures at the higher teacher training college in Yaounde. At the University of Dschang, many of the courses have been influenced by PROPELCA research. Most of the staff are members of this team. They have produced several post graduate students who are carrying on the flame. It is hence evidently clear that NACALCO team is a determining force for mother-tongue in Cameroon. The technical team consists of researchers and practitioners in this domain. They and their students are readymade solutions to the problems of mother-tongue literacy in Cameroon today.

In Cameroon, the national association of Cameroonian languages committees (NACALCO) has been very instrumental in the development and teaching of African languages both in the formal and informal sectors. This organization was created in 1989 by delegates from several languages committees. Between 1989 and 1991, it was involved with institutional development such as legalizing the constitution and internal regulations of language committees. This period was concerned with the law of 1990 which favoured the freedom of associations. This period was equally marked by isolated activities of languages committees. Between 1994 and 1999, there was the commitment of the technical team of PROPELCA (an acronym in French for *project operational pour l'enseignement des langues au Cameroun*). It should be noted that after a successful research and experimental period, this project became a programme, applicable to the educational system. During this period, a project (Cameroon mother tongue literacy, education and development project, CLED) was adopted in the NACALCO general assembly of 1994.

This project involved adult literacy formal education literacy production and communication in national languages. At the start of the 21st century, this association was quite active in the African languages enterprise in Cameroon. For instance the PROPELCA programme went into its generalization phase. One of the prominent projects of this period was called *basic standardization of all African languages* (BASAL). The brain behind this project and the association was Professor Maurice Tadadjeu. It focused on the following:

- The empowerment of language committees to be self-reliance in the long-run,
- Collaboration with language committees in bilingual L-OLI (mother-tongue and official languages),
- Partnership with national and international organizations,
- Training of trainers (40 languages with trainers to run their activities out of 62 language committee members).

In the ALCA 1999 conference in Tokyo, Japan, Tadadjeu, presented a vision called BASAL-*basic standardization of all African languages*.

With some 2000 languages spoken in Africa, less than a quarter of these languages are written. This project aimed at basic standardization of all African languages by 2015. It seemed to have been an unrecognized millennium goal. It should be noted that the U.N at the start of the millennium identified millennium development goals. Unfortunately, none saw the need for the development and use of African languages. The BASAL project saw this need.

The objective was to assign to each unwritten language at least one volunteer linguist, who, after two year, will have brought that language to a minimal level of standardization and trained a group of educated native speakers to carry on the work. The following activities summarize the vision.

- The choice of reference standard dialect for any unwritten language.
- The production of a brief theoretical analysis of the language.
- The production of an alphabet and the basic orthography of the language.
- The publication of a small bilingual dictionary of at least 2000 words in the language concerned and the official language.
- The publication of an initial literacy Manual for non-literates in the language.
- The publication of a transitional Manual for native speakers already literate in the official language.
- The training and putting in place of the local training team to pursue the task of developing the languages and the local literate environment.
- Contribution to given work on national languages in the educational system in law No98/004 of 14th April 1998 on the orientation of education in Cameroon. This was through presentation of results of successful field research carried out by the University of Yaoundé I.
- Centre for applied Linguistics with a journal (African journal of applied linguistics (AJAL)).

Some achievements of NACALCO

It may be very difficult to give an impartial evaluation of an association in which I was an active participant in its scientific team. In order to avoid this temptation, I have had to get into some of the existing published documents to bring out some facts. One of them is the report of the general assembly of NACALCO held from the 27th- 28th November 1998. The following points are from that report:

- Existence of a centre for applied linguistics (CAL)
- 42 languages committees in existence
- 1.420.000frs paid in since 1991 by language committees Resolution
- Strengthen the administration of NACALCO
- Increase the efficiency of library activities in the field
- Create room for other project.

Neighboring countries have been taping from the PROPELCA experience.

Madagascar sent a team of specialists to visit the PROPELCA programme. In 1993, it was the turn of the Ethiopians. The Chadian delegation visited the bilingual (mother-tongue official languages programme in 1995. The general forum on education recommended the teaching of its languages. This visit sponsored by SIL (Cameroon/Chad/ was intended for the implementation of this policy.

In this same edition, it was reported that on July 28, 1994, the national secretary for catholic education sponsored a meeting with catholic education secretaries from a number of dioceses. This meeting agreed on including national languages in the catholic educational schools.

In the course of 1997/98 a total of more than 16.000 people were trained in mother tongue literacy and more than 19.000 children effectively underwent their basic education in the mother tongue as the main medium of instruction in 150 schools amongst which 40 were public schools. The report at the start of the general assembly in February 1996 showed 28.00 people liberate in M.T literacy and 30000 children following up their formal education in their respective mother tongue as the main medium of instruction with the official language gradually introduced. The 2nd summit of OAU in July 1996 in Yaounde made 1997 -2007 the African decade of education, 62 members of NACALCO in 1998. Adamawa 6, East 5, Far North with 11, littoral 1, North West (12) West (5), South West.

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATION

The activities of scientific coordinators included the following:

1. Following up activities of languages committees in,

Production and publication

- Training of trainer
- Following up and statistics
- Technical assistance in development of the language
- Mobilization of local resources
- Structural organization of language committees

2. Evaluate and develop knowledge in the following domains

- Adult education
- Formal education
- The used of written local language.

3. Regional coordination

1. Assist the language groups under his supervision to develop adult literacy programmes in a way appropriate to their needs and suitable to their situation.
2. Facilitate activities of literacy committees and project workers in the region
3. Guides the committee in the planning, budgeting, execution, monitoring and evaluation of the project
4. Train project coordinator in the up-to-date record keeping management principles and financial practice

5. Produce timely reprints on all areas of involvement as required by literacy department.
6. Assist to develop self-management and self-financing of their literacy programmes and help them assess best strategies to do this.
7. Serve as the communication link between the programme and local literacy committees in matters such as reports, language, consideration or other areas when they might need assistance
8. Assist literacy committees in exploring financing and implementing various means of income generation while taking primary role in monitoring income generating grants and loans.

The effective training of animators and running of literacy centres are necessary for the production and distributions of material. The supervisor will only be affective if the programmes are running effectively. Where people have not been trained to teach others how to read and write in mother-tongue, no one can teach. Once no mother tongue literacy is going on, translating and material production has no consumers.

Local ownership and external collaboration

Most of the programmes in mother tongue in Cameroon have had the intervention of SIL training series called discover your language (DYL), as well as NACALCO/ PROPELCA and CABTAL activities. All these have had to practice literacy in one way or the other.

Towards a Regional Collaboration of Literacy

There are languages that have a geographical closeness and at times cultural and historical affinity. The Bamileke languages, the Ring languages, Lower Ngemba, Upper Ngemba, the languages of the Tikari plain, the coastal, Northern, Central, South and Far North are examples. It is in this perspective that NACALCO has regional coordinators for the administrative regions.

Besides the administrative regions, languages that are closed in or inter-regions can cooperate. Collaboration between the NGOs and structures involved in MTL is crucial. SIL, NACALCO, and CABTAL have to strengthen their links and convince the communities that they mean their good by being united.

The Christian, Muslim, and Pagan need to come to a consensus on who does what in the community. I think spiritual and cultural literature can be handled by each group, depending on their affiliation without hurting each other. Some of CABTAL projects are also NACALCO projects; for example, Yemba, Bassa, Bakossi, Denya, Koonzime, Namaande, and Mundani.

Decentralization

The Oku delegation that used to go to Kumbo for training sessions complained of distance. They believed that if the training sessions took place in the village, there would be more participants and the cost will be cheaper.

A better way to hand over the management of literacy to the communities is to run the activities from the village. The main activities should operate in a locale in the village with the villagers themselves directly involved.

The Model

This model should serve as a guide for any individual, community or organisation who is interested in ameliorating the problem of illiteracy plaguing various regions and who wants to establish a programme for adult literacy education. For this to be done, the animators, and instructors who are directly involved with the actual literacy process have to undergo special initial training. This training cannot be carried out without having a programme of its own, concentrating on the needs of the instructors. A model thus also needs to exist at the level of the programmes designed for the training of adult literacy instructors.

The following points thus serve as components that characterize and make up a MT adult literacy-training programme:

1. The target language for literacy instruction
2. Organisational planning and institutional network
3. Programme outline, schedule, of activities and syllabus design,
4. Training and trainee qualification level and selection
5. Materials and methods
6. Finance, management and Equipment.
7. Assessment evaluation, graduation and recruitment measures.

The Target Language

Before any course on literacy is established, or organized, the language which shall be used during instruction, and which shall be skilled should be identified. Since Cameroon is a multilingual nation which is recognized officially, it may be advisable that the adult literacy training courses should be carried out in the official language used by that language committee. For example, a programme being carried out in the Yemba zone of Dschang should be administered in French. Then when teaching the instructors on purely MT courses, the mother tongue should be used, since the standard reference dialect of the Yemba language is the Bafou variant, it is advisable for it to be used during MT instruction and MT training classes. If the language in question has not undergone any linguistic research, or achieved any level of development, then something has to be done before any literacy centre or programme is opened up in the region. The reason for maintaining the training courses of pedagogy in the official language (OL) is because some of the technical terms, theories, and approaches used when giving training to educated persons are quite difficult to interpret in the MT, and would require that

the trainers should undergo special research and training. The trainees on the other hand must have mastered the MT well in order to understand.

Organization, planning, institutional network

Before any programme is organized, there has to be an organization body which is well known, experienced and skilled in the area of adult literacy instruction, programme planning, and development. Such body should therefore comprise language experts, literacy specialists, linguistic researchers, MT educators and adult literacy educators, possible animators and researchers. The combination of the idea of these professionals would thus produce a plan, which would be convenient and practical in the training of mother tongue adult literacy instructors.

It is also advisable that the principal organizers should be made up of not only recognized professional committees who already know and are aware of the problems and needs of the adult learners. Such collaboration between intellectuals, professionals in the area of Andragogy teacher training, programme designing management, sociology, psychology, natives already literate in the mother tongue, and local experts, is necessary for the organizational process of such a programme.

It is thus advisable, that the organization and planning phase of an adult literacy training programme should be done through institutional network. Non-governmental organizations are collaborating or working in partnership with the government organ responsible for adult literacy education in Cameroon and vice-versa.

Literacy in Nso'

Literacy in Nso' started in 1972, when Karl Grebe a linguist was sent to develop the language. He did so with the help of the native speakers and interpreters helped in the translation from Lamnso' to English. He ended up mastering, the phonological and lexical structure with much help from the members of Nso' language Organization which started with him.

In the 1940s, the vernacular was taught in schools in the late 1940s (Banboeye: 2001). English missionaries started these classes but it ended up collapsing after 3 years. During this period some of the Nso' elites benefited from the teaching; some of them were Professor Lantum and Banboeye who was acting as the president of Lamnso' organization. When this stopped, it was only after a meeting held at the University of Yaounde 1, aimed at establishing a general writing system for Cameroon Languages in 1979, that the Nso' Language Organization developed an orthography.

So many books and literatures were developed during that period through the help of Karl Grebe, the Bible was translated into Lamnso'. It was introduced in schools, followed by the PROPELCA's model in the informal phase in some primary schools of the area. The adult literacy that existed in the area, was mostly organized by churches. This kept on moving forward though with lots of difficulties (Sunjoh: 2005).

The national language organization that runs literacy activities in Nso' along other NGOs contributed for the development and promotion of Lamnso' in the educational project through curriculum design and course content, production of the scheme of work, teachers training course, production of didactic materials, those who attended these classes received their first school Leaving Certificate. Certificate in Literacy, was received by the Taatum zone supervisor, Teacher Grade II and III received G. C. E, O level certificate after his 35 years of experience as a classroom teacher and as a teacher of mother tongue in 5 years.

Most of them spoke well and wrote English language as well as lamnso'. Crusades were organized by the Campus Crusade for Christ to coordinate the translation of Jesus film into lamnso'. Other literacy programs such as Limbum programs, were being promoted by PROPELCA. For the Wimbun Literacy Association in 1998, reading and writing programs were held in Taku Baptist church, G.S.Nkembe. The schools involved and classes were C.B.C Nshi-o-Doh, Catholic school Binshua, C.B.C School Wowo. Classes involved were; class 3, 1 and 2. Other literacy Centres like; Chup adult literacy Centre, Mbot adult Literacy Centre, Ngarum adult Literacy Centre, Wat Reading and writing Centre. Other literacy groups were Noni, Bafut and Yamba.

In August 2012, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) convened a meeting of its Community of Practice for Early Grade Reading. SIL is one of the development partners participating in this effort to improve education for children in developing countries. Among those who shared research and led discussion at the meeting was Dr. Steve, one of SIL's senior literacy and education consultants and Associate Professor of Language Development at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics. Walter presented the results of a study evaluating the effectiveness of mother-tongue-first multilingual education in the Central African nation of Cameroon (SIL: 2012).

In areas where research was carried out Kom was the primary language spoken, but English is the language of instruction in local schools. In 2007, SIL introduced an experimental program in which twelve schools were designated to provide classroom instruction in Kom (the students' first language) through Grade 3. Research gathered during the past five years of the program indicates that students in the Kom mother-tongue program scored better in almost every measure of student progress.

The Summer Institutes of Linguistics approach.

From an outside perspective, I have talked and shared with its researchers in the field. I discovered that Keith Beavon had lived in the Konzime language area in Somalomo for over twenty years. Same with the Nancy in the Yemba locality in the Menoua division of the West region. They lived the experience, understood the people and the language. They share their experiences, norms, traditions, ideologies and their expectations. They have done that in several communities in Cameroon. The outcome is publications, translations, seminars, trainings etc. The international, financial, materials and

logistics facilities they possess have been beneficial to Cameroonians including me. SIL presence in Cameroon has facilitated research in African languages and applied linguistics.

When I started work on the grammar of the Oku language in the early nineties, I was co-supervised by James Roberts of SIL. Joseph Maya gave significant input. When I started DEA research in mother-tongue literacy, I got full support from Yanneke Vandekoo, the SIL literacy coordinator who gave me books and carried me in her Suzuki Jeep to my first field trip in Dschang. This was in view of a meeting convened for the setting up of an adult literacy model for Cameroon. After that meeting in 1996 which brought together stake holders of literacy in Cameroon and six language communities: Yemba, fe'fe', konzime, lamso, kom and mofur-lindur, I was given the responsibility to work with these languages in view of building the model. My field experience was facilitated by SIL teams in the field. I met the holingwooths in Mukong, maroua, on my first trip to the mofurs. Keith Beavon, the SIL worker for konzime took me to somalomo on my first trip.

In my position as scientific coordinator for the North-West, SIL teams facilitated my going to Mesaje, Aghem, and in Adamawa with the Tikari plane: Tikari, kwanja and Mambila. Outside Cameroon, the Ghana institute for linguistics, literacy and translation welcomed and facilitated my stay in Ghana. This is an SIL sponsored organization. My stay in Ghana was sponsored by SIL. This enabled me to have a comparative view of mother tongue literacy in Cameroon and Ghana. The *Discover your language* series of seminars DYL, especially in literacy were instrumental for my training.

The SIL library was the most equipped during this time of research and cooperation. A cooperation agreement with the University of Dschang, through the department of African studies and globalization which I now head is continuing this legacy. The department has benefited from SIL support through its experts and financially, especially in the organization of the second symposium on Cameroonian languages. SIL is offering motivational scholarship to best students of the department.

As a ripple effect, I have been teaching literacy related courses at the department for over twenty years with over twenty post graduates (maitrise, masters) supervised and two PHDs in literacy. Several conferences and publications have been done in the domain. In the domain of service, this experience has built my capacity to serve in several administrative positions in the university and now as vice-chair of the society of languages and cultures of Cameroon. This kind of influence is concrete and more examples exist. These facts hence indicate the role of SIL which cannot be undermined.

NATIONALS

While SIL which essentially a foreign based organization is able to do this, home based organizations like NACALCO and CABTAL can do more. They know the field better, it is theirs and they do not need to study it before knowing it. One of the significant tools for Maurice Tadjadjeu was to create cooperation with SIL. This cooperation actually facilitated my contact with them to face my achievements realistic.

The field

Different types of mother tongue didactic materials require specific field realities. It should be noted that the present socio-political scenery of most African countries require field research adaptations. While I was in Ivory Coast in 2017, Boake was not conducive for field research. Similarly, in 1997, I started field work in Balikumbat in the Northwest region and could not complete it because of intertribal conflicts. In recent years, several African nations have experienced conflicts which require a reflection not only on the way research should be carried out on African languages but the type of research as well.

Linguistic knowledge

It is easier for the researcher who has linguistic training especially in the domain of phonetics to collect this kind of data. When this researcher is a native speaker, it renders the task easier. BEBAN Sammy Chumbow, in his key note address in NASCAL2, emphasized on the role of decentralized structures like councils in guarantee literacy in the languages of the municipality. The proposed to a language and communication department should exist in the councils.

The notion language committee was meant to meet these realities. The base of the language committee should be the council. It should be sponsored by the council. Applied linguistics in African languages will hence have as major partners the councils. Seminars and training programmes will take place in the councils. Students of applied linguistics will carry out field work and internships in the councils. These will be the center that control the quality of language, the references dialects, orthographies etc. It is here that the didactic materials are edited. The literacy carries the didactic materials the training of literacy instructors in run there. It is hence there that we move from the theory of applied linguistics to its practice.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DSCHANG TO THE PROMOTION OF CAMEROONIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

The University reform of 1993 that opened the University of Dschang had in mind the promotion of Cameroonian languages and cultures. The initial department was called *History and African Civilization*. That was the name I met in 1996 when I joined the staff of the department. Students of this batch learned the phonetics of Cameroonian languages and some literature courses that gave them a balance on the Cameroonian languages and cultures. The separation took place eventually to allow African studies as a department. History joined Geography to become history-Geography. The two

eventually separated to become autonomous departments. The department of African Studies and Globalization as we now know focuses on three series;

- African Languages and Linguistics;
- African Literatures and Cultures;
- Africa and Globalization.

The first two series have been fused in order to attain sustainability. We can hence examine the contribution of the University of Dschang to Cameroonian languages through this department.

Research, teaching, and support to development

Within the past 20 years, the department has trained over 200 post graduates in maitrise, DEA, masters and PhD. This presentation exploited data from 150 post graduates research works from the department: 80 on literature and cultures topics and 70 on linguistics and applied linguistics works.

In the domain of linguistics and applied linguistics, the following domains have been exploited in research: Cohabitation of languages; sociolinguistics; morphology; communication; education; TIC; training of teachers; material production, inter-language pragmatics; grammar; language endangerment and vitality; terminology; teaching, learning; discourses; testing; language planning; literacy; language and development; phonology, standardization; translation; bilingualism; multiculturalism amongst others.

Out of the 25 domains identified in the research works, 5 are on grammar and general linguistics. The 20 others are on applied linguistics. The strength of the department is hence in applied linguistics. In this light, we have trained students on Cameroonian languages and cultures who are actively working in the field now.

Kain Godfrey is a field worker with SIL. He got his first degree and masters from the department. He is now a PhD student in the department and president of the National Association of the Cameroonian Languages and Cultures for the North-West. He has been at the fore-front of literacy in his language Kom.

In the Menoua division, Feudjo Francois who wrote a master's thesis in the department on the application of indigenous and cultural knowledge to the teaching of Yemba is teaching Yemba in two government high schools: Fokoue and Batsingla. He teaches 5 classes in these two schools with the total of over 250 learners of the Yemba language and culture. He is equally running two literacy centres in several localities such as Mindem and Mbouo with the total of 50 learners of between 20 and 60 years. Former students of the department like, Agueguia Ivan and Bomel have equally taught the Yemba language and culture in Government Bilingual High School Dschang and Government High School Dschang.

In the diaspora, we have a Lecturers in the University of Botswana, the US, in Canada all obtained a master's degree in African Languages and Cultures before Travelling out.

In the area of outreach the department has constantly organised seminars, trainings and conferences where people have been trained in mother-tongue and cultural activities. These activities have involved students of various Cameroonian languages and neighbouring countries like Chad.

In the African literatures and cultures domain, 20 out of the 80 works consulted handled cultural aspects drawing data from over 20 Cameroonian languages essentially from the grassfields. Authors studied include; Tchicaya U Tamsi; Chinua Achebe Mongo Beti; Patrice Nganang; Gaston Kelman; Boya Bouga Achile Mbembe; Alain Mabankou; Amadou Kouroma etc

Perspectives

As perspective, African literature in English need to be exploited for purposes of expanding cultural knowledge and stiring our cultural heritage. These students have not been exposed to the African Literature in English. The consequences is that they do not master the Anglophone ideology and thought. Teaching and acceptance of the culture for living together.

The areas of application are health, race, gender, widowhood oral tales, rituals, proverbs, songs etc. As perspectives, we will expect a broader application to other languages. More areas of application like the sustainable development goals, agriculture, environment etc. The topics for research should be pertinent in presenting and vulgarising Cameroonian languages and cultures. The topics should contribute to promoting multiculturalism and our living together. The following proposals can be encouraged.

- a. Acceptation de l'autre, la gestion du multiculturalisme.
- b. Study more literature from all the background especially the Anglophone culture. It should be taught in schools and Universities.
- c. Vulgarisation de la culture Camerounaise au niveau des écoles ET Universités.
- d. Enseignement des langues ET cultures Camerounaises. The same like F.B in all the Universities.

The link between the literature research and the languages is vague, that link needs to be strengthened with the research spreading to the Anglophone Authors as well. At a moment when our cultural heritage is threatened, there is need to delve into the existing cultures. Bring out the useful cultural aspects and teach them in the school system. The indigenous knowledge linked to the cultures should be traced and taught. Comparative cultural studies should be done to show the similarity between these cultures so as to strengthen intercultural knowledge and acceptance.

Three languages imposed themselves in the research works: Yemba with 10, Ngembon with 5 and Ghomala with 5. Out of 70 works studied in linguistics, about 20 languages are evident with three covering 20 research works. The general impression is hence that more focus is on the languages of the west region. The languages mostly studied are not endangered languages. There is therefore fear of over concentration on some languages ignoring others. Very few languages of the west are studied, one in the South-West, five in North-West, One in the centre and four in the North. The languages studied are essentially from the West with very little focus on other regions. The about 20 languages studied out 280 are grossly insufficient.

In all 80 works in literature and cultures and 70 in linguistics making 150 works, about twenty (20) languages feature: Yemba with about 10 works, Ngembon with 5, and Ghomala with 5. These three languages have been the highest focus in the department. Other languages include:

Shupamon; Ngemba; Medumba; Fe'fe; Nda'nda, in the west region and Kom; Bafut; Limbum; Lamso; Noon, in the North-West. The general tendency is that the field of research has been limited and should now expand to other regions and languages.

The department has been involved in over 35 languages out of the 280 in Cameroon. This department is one out of about five active departments involved in African languages and cultures. It comes next after the department of linguistics of Yaoundé in terms of post graduate production. At the level of the department, it is necessary to orientate research on less developed languages where vitality is threatened. It should be the case in the other Universities. The National Symposium on Cameroonian Languages, (NASCAL) could be an opportunity Par excellence of realising this kind of harmonization. Such that research is evenly distributed on the Cameroonian languages and cultures. This could mean having a platform where already done research in the various departments are diffused for consultation and sharing. A national commission that synthesises the needs on Cameroonian languages and cultures could be created.

Priority Areas

1. Standardization of undeveloped languages, phonologies writing systems, grammars.
2. Didactics, materials and training of literacy workers.
3. Literacy activities, formal non-formal from basic to tertiary.
4. Evaluation and testing and accreditation board.
5. Centre for Cameroonian languages and cultures that coordinate its activities.

As perspectives, African literature in mother tongues and indigenous knowledge need to be exploited for purposes of expanding cultural knowledge and sharing our cultural heritage. The areas of application are health, race, gender, widowhood oral tales, rituals, proverbs, songs etc. As perspectives, we will expect a broader application to other languages.

More areas of application like the sustainable development goals, agriculture, environment etc. The topics for research should be pertinent in presenting and vulgarising Cameroonian languages and cultures. The topics should contribute to promoting multiculturalism and our living together. The following proposals can be encouraged.

- a. Acceptation de l'autre, la gestion du multiculturalisme.
- b. Study more literature from all the backgrounds especially the oral cultures. It should be taught in schools and Universities.
- c. The Vulgarisation Cameroonian languages and cultures at all levels of education.

The link between the African literature research and African languages is vague. That link needs to be strengthened with research spreading to the various Cameroonian languages. At a moment when our cultural heritage is threatened, there is need to delve into the existing cultures. Bring out the useful cultural aspects and teach them in the school system. The indigenous knowledge linked to the cultures should be traced and taught. Comparative cultural studies should be done to show the similarity between these cultures so as to strengthen intercultural knowledge and acceptance.

Bibliography

- [1]. Barry McLaughlin, (1987), *Theories of Second Language Learning*, University of California, Santa Cruz, London, New York, Sydney, Auckland, UK.
- [2]. Bitjaa-Kody, Z. D. (2000), Vitalité des Langues à Yaoundé: le choix conscient, in Louis Jean Calvet et Auguste Mussirou Mouyama, (eds), *le Prulinguisme Urbain, Actes du Collège de Libreville les Villes Prulinguisme*, 25-29 September, 2000,
- [3]. Paris, AIF- Institut de la Francophonie, Collection Langue et Développement, pp.163-182.
- [4]. Boshier, and Smalkoski, K (2002). From needs analysis to curriculum development, designing a course in health care communication for immigrant students.
- [5]. Cook, V. and Basseth (2005). An introduction to researching second language writing systems. in V. cook and B. Basseth (eds), *second language writing systems* (pp. 1-67). Buffalo, NY: Multilingual matters.
- [6]. Heath, S. B. and Street B. (2008), *On Ethnography: Approaches to language and Literacy Research*, National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy, Teachers College, Columbia.
- [7]. Hunston, S. (2002). *Corpora in applied linguistics*. Cambridge, Cambridge university press.

- [8]. Kinginger, C) 2007). Research on language education through programmes of study and residence abroad. Recent publications: international of bilingual education and bilingualism 10, 104-12.
- [9]. Mackey, A. and Goo, J. (2007). Interaction research in SLA: A meta-analysis and research synthesis. In A. Mackey (ed) conversational interaction in second language acquisition (pp.407-52) oxford: oxford university press.
- [10]. Mitchell, R and Myles, F. (2004). Second language learning theories London: Hodder Arnold
- [11]. Myles, F. (2004). From data to theory: the over-representation of linguistic knowledge in SLA. Proceedings of the national Academy of sciences, USA 102, 2, 139-68.
- [12]. Nforbi, Emmanuel, (2000), *In Search of an Adult Literacy*, Unpublished Doctorate Degree (Doctorat de 3ème Cycle) Thesis, University of Yaounde 1.
- [13]. Nforbi, Emmanuel, (2006), “Efforts and Challenges Involved in Establishing an Adult Literacy Model for Cameroon”, in *African Linguistics and Development of African Communities*, Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa, Dakar.
- [14]. Nforbi, Emmanuel, (2012), *African Languages Education in the Era of Globalisation*, Harmattan, Paris.
- [15]. Nforbi, Emmanuel, and Akem, Shedmankah, (2009), *Back to Mother Tongue Literacy*, Dschang University Press.
- [16]. Silverman, David, (2001), *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, Second Edition, SAGE Publications Ltd.
- [17]. Tadadjeu, M. et al. (2004), *Pedagogie des Langues Maternelles Africaines*, Les Editions du CLA, Collection PROPELCA N° 144-01