

Jean-Paul Kouega

Bilingualism at tertiary level education in Cameroon: the case of the University of Yaounde II (Soa)

Abstract

When francophone and anglophone Cameroon united in 1961, the new state adopted French and English as its joint official languages, and the country's first government pledged to promote bilingualism in the whole nation. Since then, French and English have been used in all aspects of public life, including education. Throughout primary and secondary education, pupils in French-medium schools are taught English as a subject and those in English-medium schools are taught French as a subject. It has been the expectation of government that, by the time these pupils reach tertiary education, they would have acquired enough language skills to be able to follow lectures in either official language.

A sociolinguistic investigation into the use of language at this level of education in the country shows that French and English are used in all six State universities. Self-reports, interviews and participant observation show that eighty to one hundred per cent of courses are taught in French and the remainder in English. For each course, examinations are set in the language in which it is taught, students write them in the language of their choice, and the scripts are graded by the lecturers who teach it. Students who fail tend to blame their failure on their lecturers' poor linguistic performance. Anglophone students, who usually write in English, feel that their "officially monolingual" francophone lecturers cannot follow with ease the argumentation they make in their scripts.

The present researcher recommends that bilingual lecture notes be made available to both teachers and students, that old teachers be drilled on bilingual teaching and that bilingual proficiency be a determining criterion in future teacher recruitment interviews.

Introduction

This study examines one type of bilingual education (see Garcia 1997 for an overview of types of bilingual education) involving the use of French and English at tertiary level in Cameroon. The study is broken into six sections, entitled overview of official bilingualism in Cameroon (1), practice of bilingualism in tertiary education in Cameroon (2), research design (3), practice of bilingualism at the University of Yaounde II (4), discussion and recommendations (5). These are considered in turn.

1. Overview of official bilingualism in Cameroon

After the First World War, Cameroon, a German colony, was divided into two separate territories which were placed under the administration of the war victors i.e. France and Britain. In 1960, French Cameroon obtained its independence and called itself the Republic of Cameroon. As the territory included hundreds of tribes speaking different languages, the first legislators of independent Cameroon decided to adopt French, the ex-colonial master's language, as its official language. In 1961, part of British Cameroon, which had adopted English as its official language, obtained its independence by reuniting with the Republic of Cameroon. The country was renamed the Federal Republic of Cameroon with French and English as its joint official languages. In 1972, the country's name was changed to the United Republic of Cameroon, still with French and English being its official languages. Besides, it was pledged that bilingualism in these two languages will be promoted.

Since then, several decisions – couched in the form of ordinances, decrees, circulars, service notes – have been taken by the State to ensure the spread of official bilingualism in the country. A selection of these decisions are listed below:

- linguistic centres 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 a school for the training of translators and interpreters (Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters: ASTI) was opened in Buea;
- bilingual secondary schools were created in various localities in the country;
- the bilingual degree programme was set up in the University of Yaounde and the Higher Teacher Training College (*Ecole Normale Supérieure* – ENS); today this programme is available in all State universities of the country;
- English became a subject in all French-medium secondary schools and French the same 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 so was the official daily newspaper i.e. *Cameroon Tribune* published;
- the national radio and TV network (CRTV) alternated programmes in French and English at regular intervals

Since the year 1996, another battery of measures have been added to these older ones. These measures 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 subject was issued (Order No 21/E/59 of May 15, 1996 organising 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 (MINEDUC 2001, Kouega 2003a)
- an order introducing the second official language subject in both the written and oral parts of the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) examinations and its French equivalent, the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires* (CEP) examinations (Order No 66/C/13 of February 16, 2001);
- a National Day of Bilingualism in public and private schools in Cameroon was instituted (Decision no 1141/B1/1464/ MINEDUC/IGE/IGP/BIL of October 28, 2002); on this day, 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 is effective in all nursery and primary schools (circular letter No 033/B1/1464/MINEDUC/IE/ IGPBIL of October 14, 2002);
- a circular letter instructing secondary education state officials to see that the National Bilingualism Day is 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, 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 is 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) ...

It was envisaged that, after these decisions and measures are implemented fully, every Cameroonian citizen would be bilingual in French and English and every pupil who leaves secondary education would have learned enough French and English to be capable of following courses taught in either official language at tertiary education level.

2. Practice of bilingualism in tertiary education in Cameroon

The first university of Cameroon, the Federal University of Cameroon, was created in 1962. It started off with a small intake of 600 students. This figure rose to 7,000 in 1970, 18,000 in 1984, 32,000 in 1990, 45,000 in 1991 and over 50,000 in 1992. Because of infrastructure problems, the state created six universities in 1993 i.e. the University of Yaounde I, the University of Yaounde II at Soa, the University of Douala, the University of Dschang, the University of Buea and the University of Ngaoundere (MINESUP 1993: 9)

The present intake of these six universities is not readily available. In the absence of recently published figures, those of the year 1999 are cited (MINEFI 2000):

Table 1: Intake of Cameroon State Universities

Universities	1992/1993	1998/1999
Buea	790	5595
Douala	1666	11838
Dschang	1899	8776
Ngaoundere	776	3472
Yaounde I	25157	23246
Yaounde II	13189	9064
Total	43477	61991

In the former University of Yaounde, which succeeded to the Federal University of Cameroon, there existed two courses whose objectives were to promote bilingualism. These were the bilingual degree programme and the bilingual training course. The bilingual degree programme was intended for gifted students who were capable of reading both French and English at the undergraduate level (see Echu 2004 for an evaluation). The requirements were very difficult to meet and as a result only about 50 students were selected each year. With the creation of new universities in 1993, the requirements were waived. Today, at the University of Yaounde I for example, as many as 200 students register for the programme each year. The other State universities have set up their own bilingual degree programmes. These programmes have been going on for over a decade today but unfortunately, they have not yet been evaluated. It should however be noted that every year, most graduates of these programmes write the competitive entrance examination into two schools, namely the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) located in Buea, and the Advanced Teacher Training College (*Ecole Normale Supérieure* – ENS) located in Yaounde. Apparently, successful candidates originate from all six universities.

The second course aiming to develop official bilingualism is the bilingual training course. This course is offered mainly in the University of Yaounde I, where it is a compulsory subject taught to all students irrespective of their fields of specialization. Its objective is to ensure that every university student be capable of expressing himself/herself in the other official language. The course has been taught with limited success and, since 1995, its situation has been depreciating considerably. In an investigation carried out in 1999, Biloa describes the problems facing this course in the University of Yaounde I, where it is taught 56 hours a year for three years. The first problem he observed is the absence of qualified teachers; usually the course is taught by postgraduate students. When these teaching assistants eventually defend their theses, they are recruited to teach specific university courses when

there is an opening. In other words, there is no specialist recruited purposely to handle the Bilingual Training course. Other problems include the size of classes (which are generally too large for a teaching assistant to handle), inadequate classrooms (e.g. any vacant room including a physics laboratory may be used for language teaching), absence of teaching equipment (e.g. language laboratory) and of books (teachers read out lecture notes as no book is recommended for the course; actually very few students would be willing to buy a recommended book), lack of practice (students only listen to the teacher). In short, as Njeck (1992) observed, students attend the bilingual training class simply because they want marks and because of its weight in their overall evaluation (p. 73); they look down upon the course and yet, they must have a mark in it (p. 79). What Biloa and Njeck observed then is even more topical today since some lecturers pretend to teach the bilingual training course when in fact they use the language period to teach their main subjects. The university authorities are aware of these problems and yet they tend to turn a blind eye to them. As the teaching assistants are not often paid for the job they do, some unscrupulous ones use their position to extort money from lazy students in exchange for high marks. As a result, high-achieving students in this course are usually unable to carry out a conversation in the other official language.

3. Research design

This section first describes the University of Yaounde II at Soa, the setting where the data for this study were collected, and then it outlines the method adopted for the collection of these data. The University of Yaounde II is at Soa, a small locality situated some 12 km from the Yaounde city centre. Structurally, this university comprises two faculties and three higher education institutions. The faculties are known as the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences (*Faculté des Sciences Juridiques et Politiques – FSJP*) and the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (*Faculté des Sciences Economiques et de Gestion – FSEG*). The FSJP offers courses in French private law, English private law, public law and political sciences and its graduates end up in law-related jobs such as bailiffs, lawyers, magistrates, insurance officers. The FSEG offers various courses in economy. The three higher education institutions are the School of Mass Communication (*Ecole Supérieure des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information et de la Communication – ESSTIC*), the School of International Relations of Cameroon (*Institut des Relations Internationales – IRIC*) and the Institute for Training and Research in Demography (*Institut de Formation et de Recherches Démographiques – IFORD*) (MINESUP 1993: 286). These institutions have in common the fact that they train very small numbers of students, who are selected by way of competitive entrance examinations. As the bulk of the students of this university are in the two faculties cited above, the informant pool for this study is drawn from these faculties.

Although the main method of data collection adopted for this study is the questionnaire, a good deal of insight, which will occasionally be indicated in the analysis section below, has come from participant observation and informal discussions. The questionnaire is a 24-item document devised to check the use of French and English in this university. To qualify as a respondent, one had to meet two requirements: be schooling in this institution and residing at Soa. These requirements excluded two categories of students: those who reside in Yaounde and travel to Soa for their classes and those who have their classes in the few classrooms of the University of Yaounde II which are on a small campus adjacent to the University of Yaounde I campus. The questionnaire was administered by graduate students as part of a lecture on the administration of questionnaires. After the exercise, they were to make a presentation on the following four issues: the difficulties they encountered in identifying the right informants and in collecting the filled questionnaire, the comments the informants made and these graduates' appreciation of the questionnaire as a method of data

collection. Their findings made the class that followed the exercise very lively: they shared various experiences including, among others, their having been chatted up by respondents of the opposite sex, asked for a gratification, mistaken for agents of Pentecostal churches and therefore insulted and mocked at, and last but not least, some respondents not having turned up with the filled questionnaire. All in all, of the 200 questionnaires given out to 89 graduate students, 170 filled ones were returned.

Structurally, the questionnaire (see Appendix) is divided into five sections, with section 1 addressing the respondents' background and their occupation in Soa. Questions seeking information about effective language use make up the substance of section 2, which focuses on lectures and lecturers. Section 3 takes up classroom activities and the evaluation principles in this university, section 4 concentrates on students' life on campus and section 5 deals with their life off-campus. This same structure is adopted for the analysis of the data. The ideas underlying the design of this questionnaire are drawn from the works of Fishman (1970), Huallachain (1970), Baker (2001) and other researchers on bilingual education. The need to adapt existing frameworks arises from the fact that the bilingual education programme in place in Cameroon is not planned; it operates through decrees and ordinances, with no legal institution overseeing its conception and implementation throughout the national territory. It is difficult to meaningfully relate this programme to others outlined in the literature. For example, Baker's typology of bilingual education (submersion, transitional, mainstream bilingual, etc.) is of little help toward describing the case at issue.

4. Practice of bilingualism at the University of Yaounde II

This section analyses the returns, paying attention to how language is used in each of the settings outlined above.

4.1. Respondents' background

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were holders of the *Baccalauréat*, GCE A Level or *Capacité en droit* (Q1), which are the three certificates required for admission into the University of Yaounde II. They were also asked to indicate their faculties (Q2) and their levels of study (Q3).

Table 2. Respondents' diplomas, faculties and levels of study

Certificates (N=170)			Faculties (N=170)			Levels (N=170)			
Baccalauréat	Capacité en droit	GCE A Level	Law	Economics	Blanks	1	2	3	Blanks
95	30	45	100	50	20	65	40	35	30
55.88%	17.65%	26.47%	58.82%	29.41%	11.76%	38.24%	23.53%	20.59%	17.65%

It turned out that 95 people had the *Baccalauréat*, 30 the *Capacité en droit*, a French equivalent and 45 had the GCE A Level. From the findings, the number of francophones (125) and anglophones (45) in the pool could be worked out: very often, the GCE A Level is associated with the anglophone sub-system of education while the other two certificates are associated with the francophone sub-system. Incidentally, 100 informants (60%) were in the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, 50 (29.41%) in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, and 20 (11.76%) skipped the question. As for their level of education, 65 were Year One students (38.24%), 40 were Year Two students (23.53%), 35 were graduating students (20.59%), and 30 skipped the question (17.65%).

Q4 asked the respondents to indicate how prepared they were to follow lectures in their second official languages. Contrary to the expectations of policy makers who thought that by the time students leave secondary level education, they would have become competent in the two official languages of the country (see section 1), a very high proportion of respondents (80% of 170) claimed to be ill-prepared to follow lectures in their second official language. This observation was already made by Njeck (1992: 84) who observed that 88% of her pool of informants made up of 208 university students reported that they had problems understanding their teachers when lectures were given in their second official language; specifically, 82.7% of these informants disclosed that their competence in writing, speaking and understanding the second official language was average (50.5%) or poor (32.2%).

4.2. Reports on language use in the classroom

Q5-6 asked students to indicate the number of courses they were taught in a school year and in which language(s) these courses were taught.

Table 3. Number of courses taught in each language

Faculty of Law and Political Sciences					Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences		
Levels	1	2	3 (Franco-phones)	3 (Anglo-phones)	1	2	3
French	8	8	12	-	12	12	12
	66.67%	66.67%	100%	-	100%	100%	100%
English	4	4	-	12	-	-	-
	33.33%	33.33%	-	100%	-	-	-

While the two faculties teach the same number of courses in levels 1 to 3 (12 courses at each level), they differ markedly in the languages used. In the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Levels 1 and 2 have 66.67 % of courses taught in French and 33.33% in English, which means that some degree of bilingualism is implemented at these two levels. In Level 3, francophones have all their courses in French (100%) and anglophones have all of theirs in English (100%). In the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, on the contrary, all courses from Level 1 through 3 are taught in French (100%). This means that anglophones reading Economics have to be perfectly bilingual to succeed. Unfortunately, ethnic considerations are ignored in the publication of results, which makes it difficult for a researcher to assess the performance of anglophones in this faculty.

Q7-8 inquired about the number of different teachers the informants had and about the number who taught in French and in English. They were asked whether these teachers provided summaries of their lectures in one language when they taught in the other (Q9-10). It was found that the eight lecturers who taught in French never summarised their lectures in English. Conversely, the four teachers who taught in English usually summarised their lectures in French; besides they occasionally got carried away while delivering some lectures and as a result, found themselves teaching a good chunk of these lectures in French.

4.3. Reports on classroom activities

Q11-12 focused on one aspect of classroom activities, namely note-taking; they enquired about the language(s) in which the respondents took down notes when a course was taught in English and when it was taught in French (Q12). It turned out that, when a course was taught in French, both anglophone and francophone students took down notes in French (94.12% of 170 respondents). When, on the contrary, a course was taught in English, two patterns of behaviour were reported. Some students said that they followed the lectures and took down

the notes in English – these are mainly Anglophones (32.35%). Others said that they played truant or followed the lectures without taking down any notes (26.47%) – these are mainly levels 1 and 2 students of the Faculty of Law. A third group said that they had no course in English – these are Level 3 francophone students of the Faculty of Law and all Economics students (41.18%).

Table 4. Language of note taking

Lectures in French, notes taken in French (N= 170)	160	94.12%
Lectures in English, notes taken in English (N= 170)	55	32.35%
Lectures in English, notes not taken or respondents played truant (N= 170)	45	26.47%
No lectures in English (N= 170)	70	41.18%

This finding seems to replicate what Njeck (1992: 132) had observed; in fact, her informants reported that they stayed behind the classroom and chatted or even played music when a teacher lectured in the students' second official language.

4.4. Evaluation principles in the respondents' school

Q13-14 focused on the languages in which examination questions were set by lecturers and answered by students. It was reported that all lecturers teaching in English set their examination questions in English and all lecturers teaching in French set their questions in French.

As for answering examination questions (Q15-16), the respondents reported that (Table 5) they answered them in French (57.65% of 170), in English (24.12%), or in either language (10%).

Table 5. Languages for answering examination questions

French	English	Either language	Blanks	Total
98	41	17	14	170
57.65%	24.12%	10%	8.24	100%

Q17 asked respondents to indicate whether they were generally satisfied with the grading of their scripts by lecturers whose first official language was the students' second official language. It turned out that 80% of the 170 respondents were dissatisfied with their marks when their scripts were graded by lecturers whose first official language was different from the students'. Impressionistically, francophone lecturers' level of competence in English may not be high enough for them to be capable of grading scripts in English effectively. Neither is that of Anglophone lecturers in French. As this competence is never tested when lecturers are recruited, it is difficult for a researcher to make a comment.

This finding replicates Njeck's (1992: 88), whose informants reported that they were satisfied (7.2% of 208), unsatisfied (89%) and indifferent (3.8%) when a francophone teacher marked their scripts written in English or when an Anglophone teacher marked their scripts written in French.

4.4. Respondents' life on campus

Respondents were asked to indicate what language they spoke when discussing a lecture taught in French with an Anglophone classmate (Q18) and when discussing a lecture taught in English with an Anglophone classmate (Q19).

Table 6. Language of discussion of a lecture taught in French (Q18)

French	English	French and English	Blank	Total
57	52	15	46	170
33.53%	30.59%	8.82%	27.06%	100%

Table 7. Language of discussion of a lecture taught in English (Q19)

French	English	French and English	Blank	Total
57	57	15	41	170
33.53%	33.53%	8.82%	24.12%	100

Participant observation does not seem to confirm the percentages displayed in Tables 6 and 7. In fact, Anglophone students tend to speak French in these contexts while francophone students stick to French.

Q20 asked respondents to look at the notices put up in their department, faculty or university and to indicate the languages in which these notices were generally written. It was found that these notices were generally written in French and occasionally in both French and English.

Table 8. Languages in which notices were generally written (Q20)

French	English	French and English	Blank	Total
105	17	41	7	170
61.76%	10%	24.12%	4.12%	100%

As Table 8 shows, French reigns supreme on billboards. An interesting fact to which our attention was drawn by Sokeng Piewo (2006), who carried out her investigation a couple of years after the current one, is that when notices are posted in both French and English, they usually deal with students' school fees i.e. deadline for payment, advantages one derives from paying one's fees in time, risk of expulsion from examination halls etc.

Q21-22 asked the respondents to indicate the languages with which they usually interacted with their faculty staff and the language with which their university officials generally communicated with students at meetings. It was found that French was the only language used in these contexts, even when these officials were English-speaking. Q23 asked the respondents whether they had ever been discriminated upon solely because they spoke a different official language. It turned out that they had never been discriminated upon, but occasionally, they were pitied by their classmates, who felt that they suffer a lot, since *les enseignants ne tiennent pas compte des difficultés linguistiques que rencontrent leurs étudiants* (lecturers do not take into account the linguistic problems that their students face). This finding seems to be a pointer to a major change of attitude among francophone and anglophone student and worker population. In the past, as Njeck (1992: 150) reported, some workers used to compel students to speak in the workers' first official language, failing what they would refuse to attend to them. Occasionally, utterances such as *je ne comprends pas votre anglais-là* (I do not understand that English of yours), *Parlez en français* (Say that in French), *je ne vous comprends pas* (I do not understand you), "I don't speak French" were heard.

4.5. Respondents' life off-campus

Q24 focused on respondents' life off-campus. These respondents were asked to consider their closest neighbours in their residences and to indicate whether these neighbours were mainly Anglophone, mainly francophone or mainly a mixture of both. It was found that the vast majority of francophones had francophone neighbours and Anglophones had Anglophone

neighbours. In fact, there exist many linguistic enclaves in and around this university campus. In these enclaves, one can communicate freely in one single language, which is French for francophones and Pidgin – and occasionally English – for Anglophones (Kouega 2002), with French-English bilingualism being totally non-existent.

5. Discussion and recommendations

From this description of the practice of bilingualism in the University of Yaounde II, it can be concluded that this type of bilingual education is not planned, as the five points below show. First and foremost, students claim that they cannot follow courses in their second official languages; this is due to the fact that, at the secondary school level, very little linguistic competence is acquired during the seven years of schooling. The common reasons put forward to account for the students' poor performance at this level include: shortage of qualified teachers, large classrooms, poor teaching methods, low student and teacher motivation, absence of a clear language policy for the country, to cite only these. Secondly, within the same university, one faculty – the FSJP – offers courses in the two official languages while the other – the FSEG – does not, which is strange. Even in the faculty where the two official languages are used for teaching, there is a huge imbalance between the number of teachers, with eight teaching in French and only four in English. This imbalance affects Anglophone students more seriously than it affects francophone students. Monolingual teachers do not take into account the language problems that their students face; they do not summarise their lectures in the other official language, which makes it difficult for part of their classes to understand what the lectures are all about. As a result, some students stay away from classes and when they happen to be in class, they rather play music or make noise, therefore distracting their classmates. The teachers cannot be blamed because they have never been taught how to teach bilingually, which is not a requirement for recruitment. They do what they can to impart knowledge to students and, as a result, these students acquire only part of what they are supposed to assimilate. In short, official bilingualism seems to negatively affect the assimilation of content knowledge by learners.

Thirdly teachers set examination questions in the language in which they teach and students write these examinations in the language of their choice. As these students have an idea of their teachers' competence in their second official language, it is evident that when the students fail, they would blame their failure on the teachers' low linguistic competence. Fourthly students are at a loss when they do not understand a lecture. There exist no bilingual lecture notes: this means that when a course is taught in one official language, each student has to endeavour to understand it in that language. To overcome this difficulty, some students rely on translations – surely of doubtful quality – provided by older students who had faced the same problems in the past. Needless to say, mistakes are reproduced over the years by successive batches of students.

Fifthly, the language of interaction on campus is predominantly French. University officials and staff speak to students in French; notices are generally written in French, except those dealing with school fees. This means that Anglophones in this university live in a strange world where knowledge of French is a matter of life or death: he who does not know French has no choice but to leave the campus. It is this feeling of estrangement that seems to have pushed students to set up linguistic enclaves in their hostels: Anglophones group themselves in the same hostels where they speak Pidgin – and occasionally English (Kouega 2002) – and francophones speak French – and occasionally Camfranglais (Kouega 2003a, b). In short, there is not a single setting where the type of bilingualism envisaged by Cameroon legislators seems to be thriving in this university. This outcome was predicted by Constable (1977: 252) who noted that in Cameroon bilingual institutions such as the University of Yaounde or the *Collège Bilingue d'Application*, it would be completely impossible to

function without French, whereas a poor knowledge of English would not constitute a handicap.

For official bilingualism to take off in Cameroon, a number of measures have to be taken. First and foremost, a language board has to be created. Such a board would be responsible for the development of bilingualism, the promotion of bilingual education and the evaluation of bilingual proficiency in the country. Actually, this board should be responsible for all language issues in the country, including: the designing and implementation of the country's language policy on the one hand, and the development of the national language and the ancestral languages on the other. It is senseless to talk of bilingualism when no provisions for bilingual proficiency evaluation and reward are made. Ideally, all workers should be subjected to an annual proficiency test which would group them into at least four scales, labelled B1, B2, B3, B4 etc.: B1 for beginners still learning the other official language, B2 for elementary learners who can potentially communicate in the other official language though with some difficulty, B3 for intermediate learners who can potentially compete, in what Baker (2001: 31) calls real communicative situations (in a shop, at home, at work, during leisure activity), with a First School Leaving certificate holder in the other official language sub-system of education and B4 for advanced learners who can potentially compete with a Form Two pupil in the other official language sub-system of education etc.

This classification scale should be supported by a corresponding reward scheme, with a specific allowance granted to workers who have unambiguously attained a given level of bilingual competence. To be specific, there should be a compensation for a medical doctor who can consult bilingually or a teacher who can teach bilingually. If Government was serious about its official bilingualism policy, it would have made sure the few Cameroonians who can effectively work bilingually have a special treatment in the public service, especially in matters of appointments and promotions. It would have made sure that those posts where workers are in contact with the public are occupied exclusively by bilinguals. In short, official bilingualism is not a wish, as successive governments of Cameroon had been thinking; it is a huge investment which should be capable of yielding dividends reflected in workers' take home pay.

Conclusion

This study has examined language use at the University of Yaounde II and has shown, among other things, that official bilingualism is practised superficially in this university. There are a greater number of courses taught in French – and of lecturers using French – than there are in English. Teachers' competence in the second official language is not tested and yet, they are called upon to mark students' examination scripts written in either official language. Communication on campus is mainly in French, which makes it very difficult for someone with limited French to operate fully in that environment. For official bilingualism to develop in this university as well as other institutions in the country, there is a need for government to set up a reward scheme and grant an allowance to workers who attain specific levels of bilingual competence.

Appendix: Questionnaire (translated into English)

I am a language student reading in the Faculty of Letters, University of Yaounde I. I am interested in examining the use of French and English in your university. Could you help me by answering the questions below. As my findings are totally dependent on your answers, I will be grateful if you could be as accurate as possible.

Section I.

1. Are you a holder of the *Baccalauréat*, GCE A'Level or *Capacité en droit*?
2. What is your faculty called?
3. What is your present level of study (Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3?)
4. Are you prepared to follow lectures in French and English (or were you prepared when you came in)?

Any comment?

Section II.

5. How many (different) courses are you supposed to have in both the first and second semester this year?
6. How many of these courses are taught in French? How many are taught in English?
7. How many lecturers are there in your present class?
8. How many of these lecturers teach in English? How many of them teach in French?
9. When a teacher teaches in French, does he summarise what he says in English?
10. When a teacher teaches in English, does he summarise what he says in French?

Any comment?

Section III.

11. When a teacher teaches in English, in what language do you take down your notes?
12. When a teacher teaches in French, in what language do you take down your notes?
13. When a teacher teaches in English, in what language does she/he set examination questions?
14. When a teacher teaches in French, in what language does she/he set examination questions?
15. When examinations are set in English, in what language do you write these examinations?
16. When examinations are set in French, in what language do you write these examinations?
17. Are you generally satisfied with the grading of your scripts by lecturers whose first official language is your second official language – yes or no?
18. When you have to discuss a course taught in French with an Anglophone classmate, in what language do you exchange ideas?
19. When you have to discuss a course taught in English with an Anglophone classmate, in what language do you exchange ideas?

Any comment?

20. Look at the notices put up in your department, faculty or university. In what language are they generally written?

Any comment?

21. In what language do you generally interact with university staff?

22. In what language do university staff usually interact with students?

23. Have you ever been discriminated upon (e.g. poor treatment, abuse, etc) simply because you speak a different first official language?

Any comment?

Section IV.

24. Consider your closest neighbours in your residences. Are they mainly Anglophone, mainly francophone or mainly a mixture of both?

Any comment?

References

- Abang, R. N. (2006). The teaching of English in francophone primary schools: a phonological perspective, Unpublished MA thesis, University of Yaounde I.
- Baker, C. (2001). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 3rd edn., Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Bilola, E. (1999). Bilingual education at the University of Yaounde I: the teaching of French to English-speaking students. In G. Echu & A. W. Grundstrom (Eds.), *Official bilingualism and linguistic communication in Cameroon*. (pp. 53-74). New York: Peter Lang.
- Constable, D. (1977). Bilingualism in the United Republic of Cameroon. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 29(3), 249-253.
- Echu, G. (2004). De l'enseignement bilingue dans les établissements scolaires du Cameroun: bilan et perspectives. *Revue Internationales des Arts, Lettres et Sciences Sociales (RIALSS)*, 1/1, 69-92.
- Fishman, J. A. (1970). The politics of bilingual education. In J. E. Alatis (Eds.), *Bilingualism and language contact*. (pp. 47-58). Washington: Georgetown University Press
- Garcia, O. (1997). Bilingual education. In G. Coulmas (Ed.), *A handbook of sociolinguistics* (pp. 405-420). Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishers.
- Huallachain, C. L. (1970). Bilingual education program in Ireland: recent experiences in home and adult support, teacher training, provision of instructional materials. In J. E. Alatis (Eds.), *Bilingualism and language contact*. (pp. 179-194). Washington: Georgetown University Press
- Jikong, S. Y. (2003). Official bilingualism in Cameroon: a double-edged sword. *Alizés*, 19 (also available at: <http://www2.univ-reunion.fr/~ageof/text/74c21e88-308.html>)
- Kouega, J. P. (2002). Uses of English in Southern British Cameroons. *English World-Wide*, 23(1), 93-113.
- Kouega, J. P. (2003a). English in francophone elementary grades in Cameroon. *Language and Education*, 17(6), 408-420.
- Kouega, J. P. (2003b). Camfranglais: a novel slang in Cameroon schools. *English Today* 19 (2), 23-29.
- Kouega, J. P. (2003c). Word formative processes in Camfranglais. *World Englishes* 22 (4), 511-538.
- MINEDUC (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale). (2001). Programmes officiels de l'enseignement primaire (Niveaux I, II et III) Yaounde : MINEDUC
- MINESUP (Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur). (1993). *La Réforme universitaire au Cameroun*. Yaounde: CEPER

MINEFI (Ministère des Finances). (2000). Le Cameroun en chiffres, Direction de la statistique et de la comptabilité nationale [Cameroon Census Bureau], Yaounde : MINEFI

Njeck, A. F. (1992). Official bilingualism in the University of Yaoundé: some educational and social issues, Unpublished MA thesis, University of Yaoundé

Sokeng Piewo, S. C. (2006). Bilingualism in the University of Yaounde II: the use of English by francophone students, Unpublished MA thesis, University of Yaounde I.