

Linguistic Contribution to Nation Building and Development in Cameroon, 1916-2016

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the contribution of English language (a colonial cultural heritage) to nation building and development in Cameroon. After the defeat of the Germans in 1916, the British and the French established a condominium over the territory which eventually led to its partition. The British and French transported their political, social, cultural and linguistic potentials to the different parts of Cameroon under their rule. This formed the foundation of the English and French languages in the territory. Since then, English has served as a vector of cultural identity in Cameroon. It has also been an obstacle to the consolidation of the nation's national unity and integration given that the stigmatisation, discrimination and injustice meted on those who practice the language do not speak well of the nation. These vices have not helped to consolidate nation building nor enhance its socio-cultural and political development. Local governance is impeded on the grounds that understanding the functionality of such structures is based on the cultural traits of communication that permits the people to understand the political system put in place. Through books, memoirs, thesis and interviews, we concluded that the English language and culture is a useful and inevitable bazooka for the socio-cultural, political and economic development of Cameroon. It is a symbol and source of strength for national unity and integration. It incarnates a people and a culture in Cameroon. It is also the first amongst a multilingual and cultural polity expected to harness its diversities and ethnic endowments to construct and enhance development in the nation. English is a potential cord capable of pulling other ethnic identities and affiliations into a single political think tank for a better Cameroon.

Keywords: Linguistic Contributions, Nation Building, Development, Cameroons.

INTRODUCTION

Background

At the end of the First World War in 1916, the Germans were defeated in Cameroon by the French and the British. They decided to establish a Condominium (joint administration) over this defunct German colonial territory. The condominium eventually led to the division of German Kamerun between the British and the French (Eyongetah & Brain, 1974). The British took one-fifth of the territory while the French took four-fifths. They both administered their portions of Cameroon as mandated territories under the tutelage of the League of Nations (LON). The British administered their portion of Cameroon through Indirect Rule while the French used the policy of Assimilation in various forms to govern its own part. What became conspicuous in both rule is that the British and French colonial powers transported their political, social, cultural and linguistic potentials to the different parts of Cameroon under their rule thus forming the base of the French and English languages in the polity.

The languages acted as vectors that conveyed the economic, social, political, cultural and linguistic ambitions and interest of the colonialists in the territory. To succeed in such ambitions, they were compelled to teach the indigenes French and English so that a potential human resource could develop to enhance

colonial rule and exploitation (ibid.). In British Southern Cameroons, the instrument of communication that fostered indirect rule and enabled it to succeed was the English language. The linguistic potentials of the territory were henceforth incarnated in the system of education put in place by the colonialists. The British did all in their power to train the local people in English thus transforming them into interpreters, translators, teachers, secretaries, typists, and preachers (of the word of God) who could facilitate communication, development and above all success in indirect rule. This constituted the foundation for the emergence of an English culture and language-prone local elite in Cameroon. The educated elite had the duty to accompany indirect rule and ensure its success. Out of this venture, hindsight developments occurred in the territory such as the construction of schools, hospitals, churches and roads that could facilitate indirect rule and colonial exploitation.

Talking about education, according to the government of British Southern Cameroons, education was the best instrument of social transformation. It was a unique forum for creating a new awareness and political consciousness amongst the people. The objective of the government was to allow the ‘able child’ to go on from primary school to secondary, and thence to a training institution or university. It was also the government’s intention to extend literacy amongst the adult population (Southern Cameroons Gazette, 1956). The first fruits of these efforts led to the emergence of the indigenous elite. As mentioned above, this elite class was composed of interpreters, Pastors, messengers, clerks, soldiers, road foremen, teachers and domestics on whom the administration depended. Thenceforth, education spanned at all levels – primary to secondary and then to university away from home. Professional training and adult educational courses as well as those for children with disabilities were intensified.

For the fact that education played a decisive role in the political, economic and social advancement of the people, education at the base had to be taken seriously. In this light therefore, seven new schools were created in 1949 (United Nation’s [UN] Report, 1949). From 1950, there was a steady growth in education throughout the Southern Cameroons. By 1953, quite several boys and girls were attending primary schools. By 1958, there were 56,000 children in primary school in Southern Cameroons and in 1959, the number increased to 64 000 (Southern Cameroons Press Release No.1397, 1961; UK Trusteeship Report on the Cameroons, 1953). This was a clear sign of the expansion or change that had taken place in terms of schools and pupils in the area.

From 1960, government intended to improve the results of the school leaving certificate examination. To achieve this, government had to increase grants-in- aid for primary schools. The Commissioner of the Cameroons, J.O Field, told Southern Cameroons government Ministers to continue (even after the British) with the policy of educational expansion at all levels. In this way, the future of the young Cameroonian within the context of an independent state would be assured. Eventually independence was proclaimed on 1 October 1961. A new process of building a new nation for the people within the context of a post independent state had just begun. Special consideration had to be given to education and the language of communication. A school program had to be set-up so that during the next two decades, all children from 6 to 14 years of age would receive some basic education and language skills that would reinforce the individual’s capacity to adapt to on-going developments. It was a question of ensuring that the knowledge acquired in school should prepare citizens to participate responsibly in all development activities. Thus in setting up the Federal Constitution, the government designed reforms for the primary level while the federated state’s authorities administered the reforms. In West Cameroon, the Mission schools continued to dominate the educational sector.

The Cameroon government also began to open up government schools (G.S) and by 1972, there were many G.S in the English speaking part of Cameroon. The creation of these schools increased the number of educational institutions as well as the number of pupils enrolled to learn the English system of education. From 1981 henceforth, the government’s objective was to increase the level of literacy in rural (local)

communities by setting up more schools run and managed by the state (Law No. 81-12, 1981).

At the level of adult literacy and professional training, in 1953, an Adult Education Officer was posted to the Bamenda Province to take care of the 120 classes and 2000 men and women who were enrolled in Adult Schools or Centres (UK Trusteeship Report on the Cameroons, 1953). In 1954, more educational centres were established to teach adults how to read and write and how to improve their lives and environment as well as cope with the common difficulties and challenges in daily life. In 1955, adult and community education in the Bamenda Province was reorganised and by the close of the year, 95 adult education centres were functioning in 106 villages (UK Administration Report on the Cameroons, 1955). These schools were remarkable for the efforts made to ensure that many adults become literate. Domestic centres were also created. Through these centres, the local women were educated on the ills of malnutrition and how to improve on general hygienic conditions of their environment.

As far as professional training was concerned, the government organised home craft classes in the local communities. The training of professional teachers was also an essential element of professionalism. In 1950, the UN Trusteeship Council asked the Administering Authority in Southern Cameroons to improve the facilities for training indigenous teachers, including vocational and technical educations (UN Resolution, 1950). The Bamenda and Cameroons Provinces trained professionals in training centres such as the Roman Catholic Educational Training Centre at Bambui and the Basel Mission Training Centre at Batibo. We also had the Roman Catholic Girl's Elementary Training Centre at Fiango, Kumba and the Government Teachers' Training Centre at Kumba. In the field of agronomy, the Government Rural Education Centre at Bambui opened its doors in 1953. Here teachers were trained on how to teach and run school farms with advanced knowledge in rural science. They also acquired basic principles, techniques and methods of improving farm yields. By 1960, a good number of youths were trained in these centres which prepared them for the teaching profession. From 1960, the government intended to improve the school leaving certificate examination results. To achieve this objective, the Education Department had to make every effort not only to increase the number of teachers but also to improve the standard of training.

Thus, after independence, more strides were made in the field of technical and professional training. The Cameroon government took up the responsibility of constructing a girls' teacher training college at the same time encouraging the girl child to pursue technical education and other related training courses. The technical schools contributed to providing intermediate technicians for rural development. Here primary school leavers obtained training as carpenters, tile producers, electricians, mechanics, welders, plumbers and builders. In all these, unemployment and massive rural exodus were being reduced and local technology in specialised services boosted.

Concerning secondary education, its purpose, according to the state government was to train people in institutions of higher learning and to produce the intermediate and executive staff required for the development of the nation. From 1948, children who completed primary school and had the intention of furthering their education had to go abroad or attend Bali College, St Joseph's Secondary School Sasse or the Queen of the Rosary Secondary School for girls at Okoyong Mamfe. In fact the number of girls leaving primary school during this period had compelled the Southern Cameroons government to adopt a policy towards their educational welfare. Strides made in this domain resulted in the creation of the Girls' Secondary School Okoyong in 1956 (UN Report, 1950).

In 1954, a Southern Cameroons Scholarship Board was set-up to co-ordinate the activities of all scholarships in the territory. It was under this government scholarship fund that hardworking children received financial assistance that enabled them to further their education in secondary schools and other higher institutions of learning. Statistics in 1960 show that government scholarship provision (Grant-in-Aid) made to foster the education of Southern Cameroons youths stood at £50,000. To the Commissioner of

the Cameroons J.O. Field, this was to foster the training of Cameroonians as they prepared to take positions of responsibility in all spheres of activity in the territory (Southern Cameroons Press Release No. 710, 1960a).

To the Secretary of State for Social Welfare and Education, A.N. Jua, government scholarships to school children were practical gestures that show proof of what share of the burden of educating the youths government was shouldering (Press Release No 733, 1960b). What the children represented in the form of social change in recent times can be attributed to the efforts of some of the students who went to school under government scholarship. For instance, the contribution of Sasse students to the general growth, development and welfare of Cameroon is justified by what Sasse College represented in the eyes of Southern Cameroonians and the state. The vision which the Southern Cameroons government had for Sasse boys upon their entry and graduation from school was clearly stated by the Minister of Social Services, A.N. Jua. On March 1960, the Minister is quoted to have declared:

Sasse [...] is an oasis of learning that summons the individual pupil not only to acquire academic knowledge and qualification but also citizenship which is so essential in the moulding of the life of modern society. It is gratifying to say that the ex-students of Sasse today form the bulwark of Government Departments. The Cameroonisation policy of the government would not have been possible if not impracticable but for Sasse. Today, this territory boasts of Cameroonian priests, doctors, engineers, educationists, surveyors, agriculturalists, administrators, and a host of others in firms and private life. In their various fields of activities they are making valuable contributions towards the building up of a to-be self-contained Southern Cameroons. My two words of advice to the students are these [...] remember always that you have a burden duty to this country and your local community of origin. You all are expected to play your part in this concert of nation building (ibid.).

From the above, it is clear that Sasse boys were monuments in nation building. Their influence and contribution to social change and development could not be minimised.

British Southern Cameroons eventually gained independence, which marked the beginning of a new era of social and cultural change. The Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Missions multiplied the creation of secondary schools in West Cameroon. For instance, in 1961, a new Catholic Boys' Secondary School was opened in Bamenda. Government assistance to the project stood at £87,000 (Southern Cameroons Press Release No. 1397, 1961). This was later followed by a girls' secondary school in big Mankon – Our Lady of Lourdes College. Saint Bede's College Ashing Kom and St. Augustine's College Kumbo also came into existence. On the part of the Presbyterian Mission, P. S. S.Kumba, Besongabang, Batibo and Mankon were created during this period (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon [PCC], 2010). The Cameroon government created the Cameroon College of Arts and Science (CCAS) Kumba and the Cameroon College of Arts, Science and Technology (CCAST) Bambili.

Another social innovation introduced after independence in the English speaking part of the country concerned the teaching of the French language. In fact, the KNDP had voted in favour of the reunification of Southern Cameroons with *la Republique*. This was synonymous with saying that they were consciously or unconsciously seeking to study a second language or transform Cameroon into a bilingual one in the near future. Eventually, in setting up the Federal Constitution, both French and English were adopted as the official languages of the new republic. They were introduced and made compulsory in secondary schools in 1963 (Fanso, 1989). From 1963 therefore, students had to engage in the study of a new language in their community. The challenge of modernism was to start from there, given that the least display of any knowledge of spoken French was seen by others as an added advantage or a great novelty acquired by the individual in question. Such a person became an icon or point of admiration in Cameroon.

With regards to higher training and university studies, before independence, Southern Cameroons students

were studying in American and English colleges and universities. They were spotted in various fields such as medicine, administration, government, engineering, social science and domestic science. After independence, a Federal university was created in Yaounde in 1962. About 7 per cent of the student population came from West Cameroon. University students at the time were eager to promote and propagate development that would build the nation within the context of modernism.

In the 1980s, President Biya opened more university centres in Douala, Ngaoundere, Dschang and Buea. The Buea University Centre opened its doors to students in the early 80s (Ngoh, 1987). Some English speaking students were admitted in this centre, which began with the school of Translation (ASTI). In later years, the University Centres were up-graded to fully fledged universities. This saw an increase in the number of English speaking students seeking admission into various fields of study. It can therefore be said that from 1962 onwards a good number of English speaking students pursued university studies up to the post-graduate level. Although not all have shown interest in the development of their home land, some have constituted elitist groups and have proven their worth as powerful potentials in the service of the nation.

On a positive note, it could be said that the English speaking part of Cameroon produced part of the modern staff of the independent state. English speaking schools produced new political leaders whose influence orientated the destiny of the state. The dignity of the university elite caused them to hold positions of importance in the civil service and society. In this, the English and French languages were useful prerequisites for an appointment. The teaching profession in the 1950s and 60s offered a preparatory ground for some teachers who later on embraced politics as a career. Being the most influential of the Westernised educated elite, they gained positions of importance in Native Authority administration, local government business and politics.

Besides, the Western educated elite championed the emergence of modern or enlightened self- help development associations for their local communities in the 1970s. These associations were formed by reputable students and elites who seemed to possess special talents and qualities. They were imbued with the spirit of unity. The flame of socio- economic development burnt in them as they sought various ways to improve on the life conditions of Cameroonians and the nation.

EFFORTS TOWARDS LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Nation building in Cameroon required a blend of linguistic and cultural diversity from the very foundation of the state. One of the banners of the Founban Conference read: “How nice it is to meet our brothers (Ngoh, 1996).” This was an expression of the euphoria and desire of brothers who have been separated for long to come back and be together despite their linguistic and cultural differences. In opening the Conference at 11 a.m. on July 17, 1961, president Ahidjo remarked that linguistic, administrative and economic differences do not permit us to envisage seriously and reasonably a state of the unitary and centralised type. A con-federal system on the other hand, being too loose would not favour the close coming together and the intimate connection which we desire (Ngoh, 1987; File Vc /1961/2, 1961). Foncha on his part said: “In our desire to rebuild the Kamerun nation we must not however, forget the existence of the two cultures. We have therefore, proposed a form of government which will keep the two cultures in the areas where they now operate and blend them in the centre.” From the speeches of the two leaders, it was clear that Cameroonians of the two linguistic expression (English and French) yearned for national integration. This desire was finally crowned by the adoption of a federal constitution that was to reflect the bicultural nature of Cameroon. In article 1.3 of the Federal Constitution, it was stated: ‘The official languages of the Federal Republic of Cameroon shall be French and English (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, 1961).’ This act laid to rest the ambitions of other languages that would have loved to be edified as official languages in Cameroon.

However, at the time we celebrated the reunion in Fouban in 1961, President Ahidjo was not happy for one thing. The loss of the English speaking Northern part of the Cameroons to Nigeria following the results of the 1961 plebiscite was a sad event. Ahidjo declared a national day of mourning to commemorate and immortalise the deprivation of Cameroon of a great linguistic potential in the north. The loss was synonymous with retarding the socio-cultural and linguistic development of the nation. In the south, the federal state to Ahidjo was more or less a Berlin wall that descended on the cultural and linguistic harmony of the state. It kept the French and English speaking Cameroonians distant from each other at a time when they needed close links, unity and harmony. Besides, national integration was a necessity if the nation must forge ahead in its socio-cultural, political and economic development. French and English were to harness all other local diversities into one embodiment.

In the course of partitioning German Kamerun, the Picot Line had divided villages, quarters, lineages and even families. Eyongetah and Brain commented on this and expressed regret that the division of the country between Britain and France (in which the people were not consulted) created problems that were to remain the pivotal point in Cameroon politics for more than forty years. The division was not based on any linguistic or ethnic facts but on merely geographical lines – ranges of rivers being arbitrarily considered as natural boundaries. Some ethnic groups such as the Mbo and Bamileke, were divided, and customs and immigration formalities which were introduced at the frontier made the mobility of persons and goods difficult and irritating (Eyongetah & Brain, 1974). The Mbo people at the coast were divided into Mbo-bakossi (found in English-speaking Cameroon) and Mbo-mungo (in French-speaking Cameroon). The Bamileke in the western region were split around Dschang. Part constituted Bangwa which fell under the British sphere and Dschang remained under French control. In the face of partition, it was possible for first class relatives or relations to be separated with part in French Cameroon and the other in British Cameroons. The division brought strains in family relations and community integration. Thus the 1961 reunification came to enkindle joy and hope in people who had for decades been separated from each other by the Picot line. The affirmation in Fouban of how nice it was for brothers to meet, was a testimony of the rebirth of national integration in Cameroon. From 1961, divided families regained their family ties thus ratifying a blend of the English and French languages and cultures. This they used to develop the families and Cameroon as a whole.

Consequently, president Ahidjo decided to abolish the federal state in its first decade of existence in favour of a more integrating unitary state (Fanso, 1989). He intended to permit English and French speaking Cameroonians to enjoy greater love, ties, unity and harmony as well as enjoy the beauty of their multicultural environment and linguistic diversity. It was purported that within the context of a multicultural state dominated by English and French expressions, the people would enjoy privileges void of injustice, inequality and discrimination. Never was witch hunting, blackmail, backstabbing, or hate speech going to be part of this nation.

The National Assembly in Yaounde was to serve as an epitome of unity and integration with the mandate to assemble Cameroonians (through their representatives) of different background, cultures and linguistic diversity. English and French were adopted as official vectors of communication in the house as far as government business was concerned. Through this Assembly, English speaking Cameroonians participated in the political life of the nation and expressed themselves freely in the language they mastered best. Some rose to the rank of Speaker of the House. Such was the case of S.T. Muna and F. Shang Lawrence.

With the rebirth of multiparty politics in the 1990s, the Social Democratic Front (SDF) emerged as a political bulwark to the virtues of liberty and freedom and thus impacted the political life of the nation. The SDF in its political objective stated that any government formed by the SDF shall strive to promote national unity, solidarity and a sense of belonging in all the peoples of Cameroon without distinction. The government shall ensure that there is no discrimination due to circumstances or place of birth, sex, religion,

language, status or ethnic ties. The SDF has in essence re-echoed emphatically on the linguistic potentials of Cameroon and the desire to exploit them (without discrimination) to build and develop the nation. The SDF further declared that the government shall create an enabling environment for the free-flow of people and shall protect the right of every Cameroonian to settle anywhere in the country and enjoy equal rights in fostering his education, security, employment and in doing any kind of business (Social Democratic Front [SDF], 1994). The SDF eventually pulled the English speaking part of Cameroon into partisan politics in a new era thus reinforcing the virtues of national integration and unity. The SDF militants and leadership were not limited to English speaking Cameroonians; they came from all the nooks and crannies of the nation amongst which were people from the French speaking part. The SDF became a rallying point par excellence for the promotion of national integration and unity.

At independence, Ahidjo opted for an integrated system of education as a panacea to the bilingual society created and imposed by colonisation. The question was how to educate Cameroonians in the two languages and cultures. Ahidjo finally settled on an integrated system where children had to acquire both the English and French systems of education simultaneously. In the English speaking part of Cameroon, a school was set up in Manowa Bay. It was later transferred to Molyko Buea in 1963. According to Gilbert Betangbah Sinju, the school was made to operate in such a way that English and French-speaking students were taught in one (bilingual) class. They all learned their subjects in English and French on equal strength. For instance a student who studied history was taught in English and equally taught the same lesson in French. Students in the Bilingual class sat for both French and English examinations. A student could sit for English Ordinary Level certificate exams and the BEPC equivalence of the French subsystem (Betangbah-Sinju, Personal Communication, June 28, 2020).

Neville Tiapo happened to have attended the integrated section of the Bilingual Grammar School (BGS) Molyko and he states that in their days, Forms Three and Four were a mixed class. He did similar subjects in both English and French. They sat two on a bench: one English-speaking (Anglophone) and one French-speaking (Francophone). It was pure bilingualism and one could fail to be promoted to Form Three (even with an average of 15) because he did not know or pass in the French version of the subjects. Most English-speaking students passed the BEPC (French version of the Ordinary Level Certificate) in form four. Though BGS has now become a two stream school, the bilingual classes (forms 3 and 4 *bilingue*) have continued to exist. As a product of the system, Tiapo writes and speak French well (Tiapo, Personal Communication, July 28, 2020). Since its creation, the school trained a strong breed of perfect bilingual Cameroonians and elite for the state functionary. Examples include: Professors V.J. Ngoh, Dorothy L. Njeuma , Therese Elad, Moses Anyi, P. Agbor Tabi (late); Prime Minister J. Dion Ngute, Nassako Gerald, Neville Tiapo and Susan Elinge. These students later on constituted an elite that piloted the politics and government business of Cameroon thereby testifying to the contributions of English in national integration and nation building in Cameroon.

The Union des Populations du Cameroon (UPC) was founded in 1948 by Felix Moumié, Um Nyobe, Ernest Ouandié and Abel Kingue. The UPC impacted immensely on British Southern Cameroons politics at the time. It emphasised on unification and did all to establish ties with organisations in the Southern Cameroons. In 1951 the UPC was part of the meeting that submitted demands for reunification to the UN visiting mission. The UPC found most of its supporters among groups which were related to people in Southern Cameroons and they used this relationship to support their plan for unification (Eyongetah & Brain, 1974). The UPC had in essence intensified the desire for national integration and did all in its power to pull the entire English-speaking part on board for prosperous nation building and development. The action was further motivated by the fact that the Bamileke and Douala/Bassa peoples were bastions of the UPC in French Cameroons and they had close ties with the Bangwa and Bakweri in British Southern Cameroons. The UPC found the split between these peoples unacceptable and thus advocated for integration amongst them. Um Nyobe had appeared before the United Nations and declared that the division

of the Cameroons was an artificial and arbitrary one, benefiting no one but the French and British governments. He emphasised that the Cameroon people had common traditions and interest and cannot be separated for ever. Um Nyobe made it clear that reunification must be a prerequisite for independence and eventually integration.

In the wake of the UPC uprising in 1955, UPC leaders and militants fled to British Southern Cameroons for shelter. At the end of the revolt in 1960, it was noticed that a large number of refugees and some terrorists had sought asylum in Southern Cameroons (ibid). Some (especially the Bamilekes) eventually settled permanently and setup businesses which flourished until date. Some got married to English-speaking women and established families with mixed affinity (French and English). Some of the businesses became pivots for the growth of towns and quarters in Southern Cameroons. Still, some served as avenues for social amenities and entertainment and consequently became hubs for economic development in the area.

In fact Bobga Francis Dinga. tells the story of the first Bamileke settler-businessman who rose to prominence in Bamenda town. According to Bobga, Jonas Powo, popularly known as ‘pa Guarantee’ was a born and bred Bamileke man who in the 1950s moved to the Bamenda Province at the height of the UPC *maquisar* disruption (Bamileke revolt) in their land. He settled in Abakwa town and ran small businesses. He later acquired a plot and raised a business building which he programmed to inaugurate in 1957. Coincidentally, the day of inauguration fell on the same day Dr. Nkwame Nkruma proclaimed the independence of the Gold Coast with a new name Ghana. It was a big historical event cherished by most African nationalists. The euphoria across Africa seemed to have influenced Jonas Powo to name his new bar as ‘Ghana (Bobga, Personal Communication, June 8, 2020).’ This story in other words demonstrates the activities of the Bamileke in English-speaking Cameroon and the extent to which their popularity grew owing to the businesses they operated. National integration was in effect advancing with little or no pricks on its way.

Hence, from 1960, many more Bamilekes setup businesses in the English-speaking towns and before long they created a large colony of French-speaking Cameroonians in those towns. They were fully integrated amongst the people and were free to showcase their culture and languages. Some of the business men grew to prominence and got married to English-speaking indigenes. Their popularity reached its peak when streets and commercial centres were named after them. A case in point is Ghana Street in Bamenda town named after the Ghana bar operated by Jonas Powo. In the 1990s, J. Powo became the owner of the guarantee transport agency in Bamenda and the owner of many soap producing factories, super markets and hotels. Due to the popularity of the transport agency, Bamenda people henceforth nicknamed and called Jonas Powo ‘Pa Guarantee.’

The Amour Mezam transport agency is another glaring example. The first classic hotel in Bamenda called Le Bien was owned by a Bamileke man. Today, the Fokou, Quiferou and Congelcam enterprises are dotted all over the place. It is a clear evidence that the English-speaking Cameroonians accepted their French speaking Bamileke brothers to settle and dwell amongst them peacefully. It was also an opportunity for them to buy plots and extensive farm lands on which they invested. Love and unity (cemented by marital bunds) reigned amongst them and national integration became a reality in the area.

As mentioned above, the Bakweri people of the South West Region of Cameroon have similar cultural, linguistic, customs and traditions to the Douala people of the Littoral Region. The Bakweri and Doualas claim the same origin and cultural affinity. This is justified by their effective presence in the same cultural association – the Ngondo. Here, the people show case their culture on a yearly basis. Many coastal communities from the English-speaking part of Cameroon and those in the French-speaking part are members of the Ngondo. Given that Ngondo is a socio-cultural and development association for the emancipation and enhancement of the coastal people, the English language is a useful contribution to the

development of the people. English language has influenced even the sawa dialects and languages. Many Douala elite speak and articulate English well. That in itself is a testimony of national integration.

STRIDES TOWARDS ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

From the inception of the mandate in 1922, the French system worked efficiently in French Cameroons. Progress was made in various non-political fields, particularly in Education and health. Economic developments were relatively modest up till the Second World War, when France undertook measures to promote economic and social advancement on a much larger scale, financing its plans in larger part by grants and loans from the French treasury. Compared with the British Cameroons, the French territory seemed a paradise of progress to young English-speaking Cameroonians. They saw the building of ports and railways, fine hard-surfaced roads, large European-staffed shops, hotels, water supplies and electricity. They saw that French settlers ran plantations and had farms, cooked in restaurants, butchered and carried on petty trading. Mineral resources were being exploited by French companies. The territory became rapidly urbanised in towns like Edea, Yaounde, Ebolowa, Nkongsamba, Dschang and Foumban. Douala tripled in population in twelve years. As a result of this progress, large numbers of Cameroonians left the rural areas and moved to the towns (Eyongetah & Brain, 1974).

British Southern Cameroons on the one hand was more or less a rudimentary backwater, with poor communications, no railways or main roads. In the provision of other amenities such as hospitals, schools, hotels, electricity, the British Cameroons certainly lacked behind the French. This situation was earlier justified in 1939 when it was reported that the financial arrangements in British Southern Cameroons always depended on the Nigerian Central Treasury. The fact that the territory was not viable (economically at the time) was often used by the British and Nigerian governments to rationalise or justify the integration of the British Cameroons with Nigeria. Southern Cameroons budget was subsidised to almost the same amount of revenue received from the territory. It has been so since 1922 and by 1939, the government of Nigeria had spent approximately three quarter of a million pounds more in the Cameroons than it received in revenue. By 1949, when greater revenue began to trickle into state coffers, any excess revenue was credited to a special fund to be used for the benefit of the territory (ibid).

Besides, British Southern Cameroons isolated geographic position from its French Cameroon neighbour was the greatest hindrance to economic progress. Large areas throughout Southern Cameroons were isolated from administrators and commercial centres. Local and even interprovincial trading was carried out by head-loading over long distances. This isolation according to Edwin Ardener remained central to the socio, political and economic development of the country (1967). President Ahidjo re-echoed this problem in 1963 during his tour of the Bamenda Province. At each stop of the visit, the President lamented on the enclave nature of the area as a big hindrance to socio-political and economic development of the country. Thus there was the need for greater unity and integration amongst the people.

Consequently, at independence, colonial relics revealed that the French-speaking part of Cameroon was more industrialised and economically stronger than the English-speaking part. More evidence was accorded by the dissolution of the Nigerian pound sterling in favour of the franc CFA in the West Cameroon economy (Ngoh, 1987). Henceforth, the economy was manned by French Cameroon and all other important economic decisions were taken in Yaounde. Thus from 1961, all roads from West Cameroon led to the industrialised and commercial towns of French-speaking Cameroon in search of jobs and livelihood. English-speaking Cameroonians who had jobs in the French-speaking area acquired land and built houses for their families. Some acquired farmlands and set up plantations for economic purposes. The tendency was for the English speaking Cameroonians to go back home and bring their relatives and friends to live with them and work in East Cameroon. Such was the case with the Nanga construction companies.

English-speaking Cameroonians who moved to the Northern part of the country, precisely the Adamawa region, considered that they were going back home. This area is seen as the ancestral origin of many peoples or kingdoms of the Bamenda Grassfields in the English-speaking part of Cameroon. For instance, people who left Bafut, Bali, Kom and Nso and travelled to work or fend for livelihood in the North, did so happily because they were going to live amongst their brothers and sisters. Their ancestors left Tikari in the Adamawa and thus they share similar cultural traits with the people there. As time went on, the number of English-speaking Cameroonians moving into the French zone increased tremendously. Great colonies commonly called *quartier Anglophone* (Anglophone quarters) cropped up in almost all the important cities and towns of East Cameroon.

Social relations between English-speaking and French-speaking Cameroonians intensified. The immediate outcome was the number of marriages that occurred between them. Integrated families emerged rapidly and social relations broadened given that one marriage contracted between a French and English-speaking Cameroonian brought together two large families and a cream of friends with diverse linguistic and cultural background. Children delivered from such mixed marriages could not claim to be completely Anglophone or Francophone. Matters were further complicated by the education of children from such marriages. For the most part, the French-speaking Cameroonians in the union will prefer the children to pursue the English subsystem of education. Today we have an alarming number of children from Francophone origin pursuing studies in English. This is a clear justification of the extent to which English language has contributed to intellectual development and national integration in Cameroon.

At the level of trade, two ethnic groups in Cameroon were noted for their professionalism and expertise in trade and business. They were the Hausas from the North and the Bamileke of the Western Region. The Fulani breed commonly called mbororo are professional nomads and cattle rearers who have established activities and settlements in both English and French speaking parts of Cameroon. For reasons of trade, the Hausas from the northern part of Cameroon moved into English-speaking Cameroon and wherever they settled, business was alive. Hot spots and social gatherings were visible in arrears where Hausa traders settled for business. One salient point to note was the growth of prominent towns and cities in English-speaking Cameroon that started as conglomerates around Hausa traders' settlements or business centres. Such is the case of Abakwa (Bamenda town) which has its tentacles from an old town, a Hausa colony (quarter) in the area.

In the present day, almost all significant modern towns and villages in the Anglophone regions have Hausa quarters. Once the Hausas settled in a place, they showcased their culture and religion. They built mosques and expanded their Muslim religion through a systematic conversion (islamisation) of the indigenes to Islam. Before long a community of Muslim faithful had emerged to strengthen the Hausa colony in their activities and operations in the area. The Bali, Kom, Ndong, Nso and Nkambe people in the North West were greatly impacted by the Hausa traders and Islam. Many English-speaking communities adopted the Muslim culture and without mincing words, it can be said that French and English served as strings that pulled all other cultures and languages together to constitute a united and integrated nation Cameroon.

The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) was founded by the Germans and during the division in 1916, it fell under the British Southern Cameroons. An important aspect of the CDC plantations was the number of foreign workers it attracted from Nigeria and French Cameroon to the area. Large numbers came from the highlands of French Cameroon and in due course remained permanent settlers in Southern Cameroons. They eventually influenced the political, economic and social life of the territory in various dimensions. Some established permanent businesses and homes in the Victoria Division. Many got married to English-speaking women from all over the Cameroons Province. Their children attended exclusively Anglo-Saxon schools where they imbibed the English Culture. Today there is the question of the 'eleventh province' in the English-speaking part of Cameroon purported to have been caused by the French speaking

Cameroonians who migrated in numbers and settled permanently in the territory (Ngwa, 2011). This problem is not a point for discussion here but we highlighted it to show how English language impacted Cameroonians of different works of life, backgrounds, origins and cultures. It is also a justification that linguistic integration in Cameroon is an undisputable fact and through it the country has experienced development in many aspects of its national life.

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION AND NATIONHOOD IN CAMEROON

The expression: ‘How nice it is to meet our brothers’ was a genuine declaration from the hearts of hearts between brothers who for several decades have been separated. It also signalled a new dawn in the relations of Cameroonians which had to be pursued to full realisation. But what happened thereafter? Can we say that integration is a reality in Cameroon? Whatever the answer, one fact remains and that is the disparity in the French and British ways of life (from colonial setting to post independence) which has never found a comfortable convergence or meeting point. Cameroonians had remained loyal to their colonial relics and this has been the bone of contention in national integration and nationhood.

To begin with, the French came to Cameroon on a civilising mission. The colonies were regarded as France Overseas (*La France d’outre-mer*). The objective was to make Cameroon part of France and to persuade the indigenes to learn the French language and adopt French ways of thinking and living and, in short, to turn them into Frenchmen. Those Cameroonians whom the French did succeed in turning into Frenchmen became, on the whole, more loyal to France than British-educated Cameroonians of the same class were to Britain. These assimilated French-speaking Cameroonians continued to be teleguided and brainwashed by France even in post-independence era thus impeding useful arrangements that could enhance integration and sense of nationhood amongst Cameroonians (Eyongetah & Brain, 1974).

The policy of France towards independence for her African colonies was a yoke that frustrated the spirit of self-determination, love for nationhood and integration among the people. France never prepared her colonies for self-government. The arrangement was for them to be part of France and it was not envisaged that someday they would not be ruled from Paris. Hence the demand for independence (after World War II) surprised the French and unable to reverse the hand of the clock, France decided to hold the Cameroonians hostage at the level of their economy. Assimilated Cameroon leaders to whom France handed the destiny of the nation at independence, were tied to the apron strings of the French. After independence, bugging economic accords with France burdened the nation and installed anti-French feelings among those who spoke the Queen’s language (English). This colonial enigma has impeded greater unity and integration amongst the French and English-speaking Cameroonians.

Indigenous administration in French Cameroon never received the importance it deserved in local governance. Indigenous leaders were subjected to regulation from a centralised system of administration. Hence, the traditional institutions were never developed. The aim was to substitute them with institutions based on French modelled structures and policies. This was a direct contrast to West Cameroon (English speaking Cameroon) where indigenous institutions such as Chiefs or native authorities, were held at high esteem. Thus after independence there was systematic machinery put in place to completely submerge indigenous administrative institutions under French modelled ones. Reunification has in essence brought confrontation between two very different policies and cultures (ibid). Their meeting point till date had not been determined within the Cameroon nationhood.

The French divided Cameroon into administrative areas which often cut across boundaries of local communities. These were *départements* (divisions), *arrondissement* (district) and *communes*. Neither practically nor in theory did the French envisage any policy to enhance unity amongst these communities nor encouraged them to showcase their cultures within the context of nationhood. Even the chiefs as agents

of the central government were often obliged to ignore their culture, traditions and customs. In this way nationhood (even after independence) could not advance amongst people expected to rally such cultures towards nation building and integration (ibid).

On the one hand, the British had encouraged the participation of indigenes in local governance, politics and administration. This permitted the local people to be nurtured in the spirit of nationalism. The process for independence or self-government portrayed that the English speaking Cameroonians were quite advanced in matters of nationhood, unity and self-determination. At independence, the attempt by the central government from Yaounde to impose dictatorship and other vices of oppression modelled on French regimes, were synonymous with pulling their legs backward. In fact the British system of indirect rule had been humane to English speaking Cameroonians as opposed to the French *indégénat* which virtually deprived French Cameroonians of their liberty of criticism, association and movement. The pursuit of the relics of *indégénat* in a post independent Cameroon ushered stains in nationhood and integration.

British indirect rule built an indelible way of life, a culture of liberty and freedom and a strong spirit of nationhood in the English speaking Cameroonians. This culture has never departed from them and thus explains the reason why over the years they continue to yearn for a nation of theirs amidst oppression from centralised French modelled regimes in Cameroon. This spirit estranged to French speaking Cameroonians has created a cultural dichotomy in the nation and it impedes fruitful development, integration, or nationhood. Eyongetah and Brian clearly states:

The English-speaking Cameroonian, certainly less sophisticated than his French-speaking compatriot, became imbued with a particularly British way of life: a way of life which most educated Cameroonians, even those most appreciative of economic progress in East Cameroon and bitterly opposed to British administration, have continued to appreciate (1974).

These were some of the colonial relics inherited at independence. It has been difficult to have a meeting point for these disparities for the sake of national integration. Instead, there has been a systematic dissolution of the institutions of the English-speaking Cameroonians and gradually surmounted with inherited French model structures from French-speaking Cameroon. Foncha in 1961 at the Fouban Conference did not mince words when he said that they had proposed: “A form of government which will keep the two cultures in the areas where they now operate and to blend them in the centre. The centre was ... deliberately given only very limited subjects, while the states are left to continue largely as they are now (Ngoh, 1987).” This was emphasised over and over and the adoption of the Federal constitution was a reflection of this aspiration and gentlemanly agreement. This constituted the basis of any valuable national integration and nationhood in a new and independent Cameroon. Fortunately or unfortunately, it did not work out as desired.

However events after Fouban reveal that some Cameroonians were not sincere nor did they play the role of honest brokers. They pursued unflinchingly the mission and agreement that permitted their colonial master to grant them independence. Some opposition leaders in East Cameroon made it crystal clear that national unity (or integration) as it is defined by certain people is a myth, and this myth borders on utopia (ibid). This came to pass when Ahidjo embarked on the destruction of the Federal state in favour of a unitary system. Ahidjo is quoted to have said:

In truth, the Federal structures were adopted at the time of Reunification... to give our fellow citizens of West Cameroon the assurance that the heritage which they were contributing after more than forty years of separation would not... be ignored but would be taken into consideration within a framework of a bilingual pluricultural state... and time has come to go further than a federal organisation of the state (Ngoh, 1987).

With this, Ahidjo betrayed the confidence and trust bestowed by English-speaking Cameroonians on their

brothers east of the Mungo. First Ahidjo's declaration did not match what was happening with the West Cameroon inheritance. Instead of considering them within the frame of a bicultural or bilingual state, they were mutilated, dissolved or reduced to a cultural group with a specific language. Such was the case of the prestigious West Cameroon House of Chiefs. Thenceforth national unity and integration floated on a sinking boat. During the insurgence of the 'Amba Revolution' in 2016, Anglophone activists demanded the restoration of the authority of their traditional rulers which has been sapped within the context of the French model system of administration in Cameroon. Chiefs who were acolytes of the system and die-heart supporters of the Yaounde regime were chased out of their palaces and forced to seek refuge in French-speaking Cameroon. Thus the 'pluricultural' state prescribed by President Ahidjo presented a frame where the cultural inheritance of the English speaking Cameroonians was being mutilated or dissolved. Nationhood and national integration were therefore affected.

The Chieftaincy decree of 1977 was a typical French modelled instrument of administration. It portrayed an image which shows that there was no difference between an independent Cameroon and a French overseas (*d'outre mere*) territory. The decree did not reflect signs of a state that has undergone the process of self-determination and was ready to forge ahead and develop its diverse population in the spirit of a new Cameroon. Always the Yaounde regimes implemented what they inherited from their colonial master or sought directives from France to steer the machinery of a post-independent Cameroon. This created a disequilibrium in a country purported to have two distinctive bicultural inheritance. The Chieftaincy decree was a glaring example of this imbalance.

As the nation evolved, especially in the 1990s, partisan politics, interest and bigotry brought strains and fissures in the linguistic unity and integration of Cameroonians. There existed a calculated and persistent ploy to stigmatise those who spoke the English language or identified themselves with the English culture in Cameroon. Hate speech and slangs like: '*je ne comprend pas votre anglais la,*' became common place amongst French-speaking Cameroonians and government business services that were expected to serve all Cameroonians equally irrespective of their linguistic background or affiliation. Some even reduced the English language to a '*partua*' (dialect) spoken by a particular tribe in Cameroon called Anglophones. Some went further to declare that it is Cameroon that is bilingual and not the people. Those who spoke English amidst French-speaking Cameroonians were derogatorily referred to as '*le bamenda la*'. All these sowed the seeds of discord in the linguistic unity and integration of Cameroon.

Furthermore, the status of English-speaking Cameroon was ridiculously mocked by some political barons of the Yaounde regime. They referred to the English-speaking parts of Cameroon as: '*deux morceau du sucre dans la mere,*' meaning two cubes of sugar in an ocean. Some were emphatic that they did not call (invite) the English-speaking Cameroonians; they decided to come by themselves into the union. Since 2016, the so-called two cubes of sugar have refused to dissolve thus putting the integration and nationhood of Cameroon at stake.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the linguistic contribution to nation building and development in Cameroon. We found out that the English language and culture are useful and inevitable instruments for the socio-cultural, political and economic development of Cameroon. English language is a symbol and source of strength for national unity and integration. It incarnates a people and a culture in Cameroon. It is also the first amongst a multilingual and cultural polity expected to harness its diversities and ethnic endowments to construct and enhance development in the nation. English is a potential cord capable of pulling other ethnic identities and affiliations into a single political think tank for a better Cameroon. A blend of the French and English languages in an integrated system of education will make Cameroon unique and outstanding. Such potentials can be properly harnessed to build a bright future for a prosperous nation.

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