

MULTILINGUAL BACKGROUNDS AND THE IDENTITY ISSUE IN CAMEROON

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Abstract

This paper seeks to establish at what point the language issue is relevant to the establishment of a Cameroonian identity which is devoid of complications (difficult though it may be) and which reflects the ideal citizen in this multilingual setting. It traces some of the historically linked sociolinguistic problems encountered in Cameroon to the quest for an adequately recognised identity vehiculated in a given language. This brings to light the divergent attachment to the official languages and the native Cameroonian languages and the various strata of identity they engender.

1. Overview

The multilingual nature of Cameroon (although officially termed and treated as bilingual in French and English) and its corresponding multiethnic complexity (with over two hundred identified ethnic groups) fuel the constant confusion that the ideal Cameroonian goes through as to where to lay the pledge of his identity. Of course in the building of a given identity, the linguistic component is of vital importance because as Giles and Coupland (1991: 107) postulate culture, for instance, “can be viewed as derived from, if not constituted in, communication and language practices”. On such a platform, therefore, where should the Cameroonian identify himself/herself? With the foreign English or French languages? With his/her native language (which number up to about 285) or with both? These questions are of great importance to the understanding of the linguistic behaviour and the subtle linguistic discords witnessed in the country since its independence.

2. Ethno-linguistic Atmosphere of Cameroon

From a purely historical perspective, and for more empirically based results to be achieved, studies of the linguistic complexity of Cameroon (or of any African state)

must be founded on the long and diverse itineraries of her history. Makoni and Meinhof (2003: 1) sum this up thus,

Pre-colonial migration, trade down the colonies, the radical displacements of slavery, the growth of print literacy and the decline of oral culture, arbitrary territorial changes under colonialism, industrial exploitation of natural resources, and the unprecedented rapidity of migration and urbanisation in the postcolonial period have brought language groups into contact and conflict, changing social and economic life and with it the shape, function and status of the languages within specific communities.

Cameroon is generally referred to as *Africa in miniature*, given that three of the four language families in Africa are represented within her boundaries (Greenberg 1966). These are the Congo-Kordofanian, Nilo-Saharan and Afro-Asiatic. The structures of the fourth, that is, the Khoisian have not been found in Cameroon. Besides just the resettlement of African peoples on Cameroonian soil, further outcomes of the historical admixture include the spread of non-African languages, the ramification of identity and the sowing of several discontentment seeds which today flourish in most parts of the continent. A complex foundation of multilingualism was therefore laid over a longer historical period than can be simply accounted for by colonialism and post-colonialism. It is not the intention to probe into this here (see Mufwene 2001, Makoni and Meinhof 2003, etc.) but to situate at what point the multilingual background contributes tremendously to the quest for a befitting identity.

2.1. Pre-colonial Period

Although the exploitation colonialism mechanism was built on the false premise that Africa, the black continent, was like a blank sheet of paper on which European civilisation had to be written, it is far from believing that pre-colonial Africa lacked a system of its own. This system, if not spread out on the margins of European-styled nation state, was in itself complete at the borders of tribal and cultural similarities bound together especially by shared languages. The French *mission civilisatrice* which “aimed at assimilating or absorbing France’s colonial subjects to the point where they would actually be Frenchmen linguistically, culturally, politically and legally” (Fanso 1989: 65) was based exclusively on this rather diminutive and prejudiced judgement of Africa.

Most studies of language evolution in Africa centre on the colonial and post-colonial periods. The multiplicity of languages, tribes and cultures is evaluated generally from the clash of the west and the south confounded by colonialism. However, other aspects like inter-tribal marriages, wars and struggle for supremacy, trade, quest for land and less hostile territories created inevitable contexts for multilingualism. As explained by Nurse and Spear (1985), Nurse (1997), Mazrui and Mazrui (1998), Mufwene (2001) and a handful of others, pre-colonial factors provide a more comfortable account for the origin of, for instance, coastal Swahili as being neither Arabic-based nor a Creole. Having been used over a long period of time as a vernacular or lingua franca by non-Semitic Africans, Mazrui and Mazrui (1998)

conclude that Arabic can as well be considered an indigenous language. Again Mufwene (2001: 169) makes it clear of North Africa that “Arabic ethnicity has depended more on assimilation to Islam and usage of Arabic as a vernacular than on race”. What stands out in these examples is that language is central to the delimitation of boundaries. It further indicates the fluctuations in identity that existed even before colonialism.

Furthermore, the “African confusion of tongues” (Fonlon 1969: 9) extensively represented in Cameroon was certainly realised if not initiated during this period. Today Cameroon counts over 200 identified ethnic groups who use a yet to be officially decreed number of native languages. However, *Ethnologue* purports a total of 285 languages of which 4 are extinct, 11 are threatened by extinction and 270 are living. This is a notoriously complicated infrastructure first to building a nation and secondly to achieving a binding identity for all, particularly because “it has become absolutely impossible to achieve, through an African language, that oneness of thought and feeling and will that is the heart’s core and the soul of a nation” (Fonlon 1969: 9).

2.2. Colonialism and the advent of Independence

The Berlin conference of 1884 confirmed the quest for territories and expansion of European boundaries beyond Europe. Cameroon was then authenticated as a German colony (1884-1916) until the defeat of Germany in the First World War. Evidence of the impact of the German language in Cameroon is less, given that the Germans were more interested in exploitation schemes than educational projects, which became a central focus in the later colonial expeditions of the British and the French; they were confronted by a pidgin that was in extensive use —bequeathed by the Portuguese trade colonial period along the West African coastline; and lastly they had just thirty years (1884-1916) to set up a German language policy which entailed a complete breakdown of the pidgin established over several centuries of trade (1495-1884). The subsequent colonial patterns of Britain and France, aided by the work of missionary churches and made more decisive by reconstruction efforts and consolidation of territories following the war, had a stronger focus on expanding not only the empire but expanding a feel of it through the colonial languages (see Wardhaugh 1987, Echu 2003). So the one-fifth of Cameroon administered by British colonial authority from Lagos, Nigeria now had English as its official language and the other four-fifth administered by resident French governors, used French in all activities, including education, for as Fonlon (1969: 20) advances “it was considered essential that instruction in the other subjects should be in French almost from the first day in school”.

English and French were able to gain considerable strength since Cameroon was first administered by Britain and France under the League of Nations Mandate (1919-1945) and later under the United Nations Trusteeship (1945-1960). They were the official languages in each of these regions. Even after January 1st, 1960 when French Cameroon became independent, followed a year later by the independence of British Cameroon these languages maintained the status of official languages. Although the British tried to give the native languages a chance in edu-

cation, this was met with strong resistance from the indigenes. In the South West area, the Bakweri people rejected the Duala language on grounds that “it is quite against the reason that our children should be educated in a barbarous tongue instead of a civilised one like German or English” (see Mbassi-Manga 1973: 39). When British Cameroon voted in the February 11th, 1961 referendum to unite with French Cameroon under a Federal Republic that was later transformed by Presidential Decree No. 27-270 into a unitary state on May 20th, 1972, French and English continued to serve as official languages over the complex number of native languages.

Of course, the language policy adopted at independence was the obligatory outcome of colonial presence, since Cameroon “inherited ... French and English; and has therefore been obliged to become, constitutionally, a bilingual State” (Fonlon 1969: 9). The adoption of state bilingualism in English and French was meant to create a unique national identity for Cameroon. As the then president Ahmadou Ahidjo (1964) explained,

[W]e must in fact refrain from any blind and narrow nationalism and avoid any complex when absorbing the learning of other countries. When we consider the English language and culture and the French language and culture, we must regard them not as the property of such and such a race, but as an acquirement of the universal civilisation to which we belong. This is in fact why we have followed the path of bilingualism since ... it offers us the means to develop this new culture ... and which could transform our country into the catalyst of African unity.

The adoption of bilingualism implied the creation of a completely new belonging and identity, one that would transform the country into the centrepiece of Africa and her entire existence. For Fonlon (1969: 35) “the target to aim at, for us, should be, not merely State bilingualism, but *individual bilingualism*: that every child that passes through our education system shall be able to speak and write both English and French”. The bilingualism project, though highly criticised for its lack of decisiveness (Tchoungui 1983, Kouega 1999, Anchimbe 2003), and its general failure since “*de jure*, Cameroon has become a bilingual state; but, *de facto*, it is a highly diversified multilingual, multi-cultural country” (Fonlon 1969: 28), succeeded in adding another dimension to the multilingual nature of Cameroonians and their quest for a befitting identity.

2.3. Language contact and contact varieties

The languages in Cameroon came into contact not only with English and French but also with one another. Although it cannot be claimed that the regional lingua francas are the outcome of contact, it can at least be partially upheld that the major lingua franca, that is, Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) received more contextualisation through its contact with Portuguese (1495-1800), Educated English, Cameroonian languages and French. From a word count reported by Mbassi-Manga (1976) and Mbangwana (1983) the total lexicon of CPE is 80% English, 14% Indigenous languages, 5% French and 0.07% from other sources (among which are

Portuguese, creations and innovations, etc.). The regional lingua francas which Breton and Fohitung (1991: 20) identify to be Fulfulde, Ewondo, Basa'a, Duala, Hausa, Wandala, Kanuri, and Arab Choa, cut across several native language boundaries. They can be located within given regions and therefore limitable to a given group of speakers with shared characteristics or identities. CPE on the other hand is a non-man's code that is predominantly attached to the uneducated and the less privileged of the society. This negative appraisal stems from the fact that CPE is a non-literate code; it is not taught in school like English and French. It has therefore become the target for accusations of fallen and falling standards in English and education in general. Although no one wants to identify with it, everyone seems to use it. It is an important dimension in identity concealment given that its users cannot be traced to given regions, like English for Anglophone provinces, French for francophone regions, the native languages for their respective tribes and so forth.

3. Multilingual Backgrounds and the Identity Issue

With the current sociolinguistic and political state of the country set up at the close of colonialism which makes a primary distinction to anglophone and francophone parts, the attachment to these languages as icons of linguistic identity was made prominent. It became so close to another ethnicity as observed by Wolf (2001: 223); "the feeling of unity is so strong that 'being Anglophone' denotes a new ethnicity, transcending older ethnic ties". This rather linguistically motivated and sometimes derogatory distinction as in such slang as *anglofoul* *anglofool* for anglophone and *frogs/francofoul/francofool* for francophone, which is "tantamount to group definition and membership is too strong that it excludes non-group members, and transcends ethnic contours" (Anchimbe 2003: 3). But because the role of native or tribal communion and cultural integrity is still strongly linked to language, the native languages are far from completely subsuming themselves to the hegemony of the official languages which are understood to be icons of political identification, minority-majority classification and which remind the Anglophone of marginalisation.

The Anglophone-Francophone divide fashioned on the commonality of English and French is far more profound than just the use of these languages. Although grossly multi-cultural and having internal differences and discontents, this divide has hatched new identity icons which Anchimbe (2003) refers to as Anglophonism and Francophonism. At a higher level, that is beyond the communality of the tribe and the village, these icons "constitute superior sociolinguistic groupings above the individual ethnic groupings, whose languages are less represented in education and less useful in cross-ethnic communication" (Anchimbe (2004: 3). On the other hand, the native languages honourably referred to as national languages, carry the special attribute of one's roots and origin. No one can claim in this case not to have a native language. Such a person would be treated as a vagabond, one who has nowhere to retreat to or to identify with when the higher icons, anglophonism and francophonism become less representative. This is basically the case with those referred to as the 11th province (we return to it later). Here bilinguals in French and

English belong yet to another class. One that is more flexible, given that its members can switch, on basis of performance, from English to French, as contexts require. However, the multilingual backgrounds have created identity confusion and forged a reshape of belonging and attachment at various levels, some of which are examined below.

3.1. Where do I belong?

The claim to an identity is incomplete if it has no language through which it is vehiculated. Jaffe (1996: 818) commenting on what he calls the “European political ideology of language” upholds that “linguistic identity is a prerequisite for cultural identity and political stability”. Moreover, culture, if it has to be vocal and immediately comprehensive, must “be viewed as derived from, if not constituted in, communication and language practices” (Giles and Coupland 1991: 107). The discontent calls issued so far in Cameroon are attached to a shared cultural background that has a strong linguistic icon. It must be remembered that the Soweto Massacre of 1976, a historical landmark in South African history, was a response to the refusal of black school children to use Afrikaans as medium of instruction. The imposition of Afrikaans by the apartheid regime was interpreted as a systematic attempt to erase their rights and belonging to a more prestigious language, English and limiting them to a secluded range of activities.

If language is thus central to identity, it is then clear that many identities can be traced in Cameroon. These may not be easily traced to groups of individuals that can be pinned down by such sociological factors as regions of origin, gender, profession, age, level of education and so forth. Rather the same individual may incorporate various identities depending on the context in which he/she is. Four of such identities can be easily encountered. They include the official language identity, the ethnic identity, the bilingual identity and the individual identity.

3.1.1. *Official Language Identity*

Being more expansive levels of identification, and given that the Anglophone provinces are sometimes treated as one region, the official languages serve as basis for the procurement of a national feeling. This is significantly because Cameroon is known as a bilingual country. A national identity can only therefore be reached through one of its official languages. It is construed on the English-French or Anglophone-Francophone categorisation. It is less attached to education and other education-related activities because geophysical regionalism applies very strongly. An Anglophone in this case is one born in either the North West Province or the South West province. With the political tension that erupted over a decade ago as to the equality of anglophones and francophones in the country, the official language identity has had a strong political dimension. Political ideas are spread in these languages because they transcend the borders of the native languages.

Unfortunately, the gross differences that exist between tribes render the official language identity rather weak and overgeneralised. It is too general and less decisive,

it provokes suspicion since ethnic groups are often caught up in subtle competition. Competition and the desire to maintain a worthwhile esteem make ethnic ties far stronger. The ethnic group, contrary to the official language classification, provides a closer set-up made more comfortable by the native language, which very often is not understood by non-tribe members. English and French on the other hand are too widespread and lack the reserve of secrecy and exclusion enjoyed by the native languages.

3.1.2. *Ethnic Identity*

As mentioned earlier, it is often identified as the roots. It is closed to others who do not belong to it. Ethnic groups are generally in a subtle competition either for social esteem or for political achievement. This breeds insecurity and victimisation of less politically backed groups by those that wield power. The 1992 post-presidential election violence (fuelled by accusations of rigging) shifted from political to ethnic violence and victimisation. Settlers from the anglophone and Western provinces in especially the Southern province (home of the incumbent president) were earmarked to be chased and their property, especially businesses, was looted and destroyed. This therefore indicates that ethnic ties often drown political ideologies since the ethnic language carries far more than a simple message.

3.1.3. *Bilingual Identity*

Fonlon's (1969) notion of state bilingualism required that all educated Cameroonians must be fluent in both English and French. President Ahidjo (1964) certainly had this in mind when he declared that bilingualism "could transform our country into the catalyst of African unity". Unfortunately as it is often said, it is Cameroon that is bilingual and not Cameroonians. Nevertheless, a few people are. These include graduates of the Advanced School of Translation and Interpretation (ASTI) Buea, Anglophones who grew up and studied in francophone areas and vice versa, as well as others who majored in bilingual studies at the university. Although this group may be too complicated to accurately circumscribe following the path of bilingualism, it is an important arm of success in certain domains. However, in terms of identity creation, it is often opportunistic and determined by contexts and situations. They have the unique chance of benefiting from francophone and Anglophone opportunities, if the regional criterion is kept out.

3.1.4. *Individual identity*

This is less significant and less uniform given that individuals try to give themselves befitting esteems. These are usually socially well-ranked people in the society; those exposed to foreign-influence; and those trying to live above the limit of their class, that is, "apes of their betters" (Passé 1947: 33, about Sri Lanka). As a result of this, they are often treated as showing off. As shown on the following figure, it is the smallest identity group. It has less political strength but does often enjoy political favours given that these are generally wealthy people.

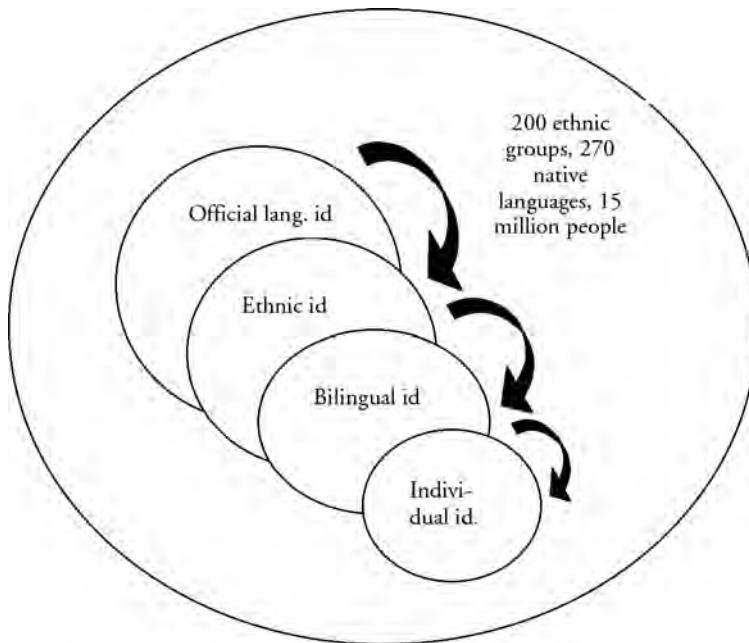


FIG. 1. Identity belonging and overlapping in Cameroon

These identities, following the diagram, open into each other. They are not limited to identifiable and exclusive groups of people. Individuals portray a cross-section of these identities. As mentioned earlier, this simply means that these identities can be accumulated. Everyone presumably belongs to an ethnic group (ethnic identity), is either an Anglophone or francophone with the exemption of those referred to as “11th province” (official language identity), may or may not be bilingual (bilingual identity) and may want to be regarded as socially superior (individual identity). However, this is not as smooth as it seems to be. These identities have turned out to be makeshift responses to several social discontent calls. Shifting from one to the other is a means of coping with the challenges presented by the reunion of people of diverse origins and races within the same country.

4. Sociolinguistic Calls for Identity

Cameroonians seem to be caught in an identity web from which various kinds of calls based on social discontentment have been issued, for example: the reference to the 11th province (since they are neither Anglophone nor francophone), the Anglophone problem (since they are marginalised by the populous francophones) and the Southern Cameroons secession issue (since the political union at independence has failed to guarantee equity for Anglophones). The only significant similarity between these sociolinguistic disputes is the search for a better recognised identity.

4.1. Bases of Discontentment

In the face of the forceful national boundaries created by colonialism and protected today by United Nations Charters; the seemingly heavy distant-presence of the (ex)colonial powers in certain nations and with the continuous expansion of (ex)colonial languages, many cries of discontentment have been issued in post-independence Cameroon. The discontentment has forged a general torrent of insecurity that has led to the construction of identity borders based predominantly on the commonality of language. Although mobility in these identities is common, they serve given purposes each time they are adopted.

The lack of equal opportunities in political appointments and marginalisation in other aspects of national life are projected by the Anglophones as a major source of their dissatisfaction. This state-of-affairs has launched them into the defence of a culture presumed to be their own, that is, the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and into the call for the creation of an independent state along the boundaries set up by British trusteeship up to 1961.

The quest for lasting alliances and the search for security in the face of the divide-and-rule system adopted by the regime in power, as well as the robust pride and political strength of the francophones and the tribes that wield political power and enjoy political favours, have been central to what people say they are. This heightened attachment to the official languages and with it feelings of anglophonism and francophonism; strengthened tribal ties and tremendously fuelled efforts for the secession of the former British colony, Southern Cameroons. Discontentment therefore varies from region to region and from one group or tribe to the other. We will look at three of them.

4.2. The Anglophone Movement

It is interesting to note how tremendous the impact of British colonialism (1919-1961) is still psychologically present in Cameroon. The part of the country colonised by Britain is generally said to have an Anglo-Saxon tradition. This was crowned in 1991 by the creation of an Anglo-Saxon styled state university in Buea. Constituting basically two out of the ten provinces and using English instead of French as in the rest of the country, the Anglophones have issued many reprimands in what is generally referred to as "the Anglophone Problem". Over the years much blame has been directed at the Anglophone elite who sat in the Fumban Conference (1961) and signed for union with East (francophone) Cameroon. Although several reasons have been advanced for the return to federation, for instance the treatment of the Anglophone in unequal standing with the francophone, the major source of these calls is that the Anglophones are united under the umbrella of the English language, (inherited from British colonialism) which to them is their identity-marker (see The Buea Declaration 1993). Several movements and associations cropped up during the 80s and 90s to fight for the rights of the Anglophones among them: the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) now called Southern Cameroon's Restoration Movement (SCARM), the Ambazonia Republic, the Free West Cameroon Movement (FWCM) and the Southern Cameroon's National Congress (SCNC).

In 1993 the First All Anglophones Conference (AACI) was convened in Buea under the banner of CAM to give a real look into their problems and decide on their future. It came up with the Buea Declaration (1993), which summed up the grievances and proposed some urgent remedial. Prominent among these grievances was the inequality in the use of the official languages in national life. The national television was singled out as a case in point. As the Declaration upholds,

Television films and programmes originally made in English are shown in Cameroon only after they have been translated into French, and only in their French version. Broadcast time on Radio and television is very unevenly divided between English and French programmes, even though it does not take longer to inform, educate or entertain in French than it does in English.

The Buea Declaration was a subtle fact-giving manifesto. It was followed a year later by the Bamenda Declaration (1994) which resolved that if after a “reasonable time” there was no reaction from the government, then Southern Cameroons would proceed to declare her independence from La République du Cameroun (see 4.4).

Again, the reference to a linguistic identity is central. No one seems to call for the inclusion of native language programmes on the national television. No one seems to bother no native language programme exists on the national television although these languages are officially called national languages. This further confirms Wolf’s (2001) position that being an Anglophone or francophone (official language identity) constitutes higher ethnic entities. The Buea Declaration further says, “in the end, Anglophones who share equally in the burden of financing Cameroon Radio and Television get far less than 1/4 of the service provided by this public utility”. To be able to judge this stance, let us have a look at some excerpts of the national television (Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation, CRTV) programme. Table 1 below indicates the sluts and the languages used.

The above table reports the vital parts of the national television programme for three days (Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays: see Appendix I for the rest of the week) for the period August-September 2002. It is not altogether complete because it is often drawn in advance and impromptu features are inserted as need arises. However this is the basic skeleton found on the CRTV website (www.crtv.cm).

Within these three days, a total of 1.046 minutes of airtime is spent on the diverse programmes. French programmes occupy 541 minutes (51.7%), English 300 minutes (28.7%), bilingual (English-French) 70 minutes (6.7%) and neutral (images or music) occupy the remaining 135 minutes (12.9%) (see Appendix II below). More than 50% of the airtime goes to French language programmes and only 28.7% to English programmes. Although a bilingual country only 6.7% of the 1.046 minutes is dedicated to bilingual programmes. The Anglophones consider the paucity of English language programmes as a neglect not only of that part of the diversity but also predominantly of them. Their tastes are not taken into account. The attachment to English makes it possible for them to consider its prominence as representative of their own existence.

TABLE 1. Programme schedule of CRTV television

Day	Time	Duration	Programme	Language
Monday	13:55-14:00	5mn	Overture d'antenne	Image/sound
	14:00-14:10	10mn	Flash Bilingue	Bilingual
	15:10-15:40	30mn	Clip Box	Music
	17:02-18:00	58mn	Fou Fou Foot	French
	19:30-20:00	30mn	The 7:30 News	English
	20:00-20:30	30mn	Terra Nostra	French
	20:30-21:00	30mn	Le Journal	French
	21:18-21:44	26mn	Déviations	French
	22:00-00:00	120mn	The Monday Show	English
Tuesday	13:55-14:00	5mn	Overture d'antenne	Image/sound
	14:00-14:30	30mn	Au Coeur de la société: Nkongsamba	French
	15:10-15:40	30mn	Clip Box	Music
	17:00-17:57	57mn	Sports Parade	French
	18:30-19:00	30mn	You and the Law	English
	19:30-20:00	30mn	The 7:30 News	English
	20:00-20:30	30mn	Terra Nostra	French
	20:30-21:00	30mn	Le Journal	French
	23:00-23:30	30mn	CRTV Late night News	Bilingual
	23:35-00:05	30mn	Méli-Mélo	French
Wednesday	13:55-14:00	5mn	Overture d'antenne	Image/sound
	14:00-14:30	30mn	Groove	French
	14:30-15:00	30mn	Clip Box	Music
	16:05-16:32	27mn	Déviations	French
	16:32-17:32	60mn	Women and Development	English
	18:00-18:30	30mn	Le quotidien des provinces	Bilingual
	18:30-19:00	30mn	Santé magazine	French
	19:30-20:00	30mn	The 7:30 News	English
	20:00-20:30	30mn	Terra Nostra	French
	20:30-21:00	30mn	Le Journal	French
	21:17-21:30	13mn	Q.D.O	French
	21:30-22:30	60mn	Un Siècle d'histoire	French
	23:00-23:30	30mn	CRTV Late Night News	Bilingual
Total		1046mn		

4.3. The Eleventh Province

The search for a source of living prompted many displacements in Cameroon during and after colonialism. Among these is the migration of North Westerners to the South West as labour force for the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), the settlement of people from the Western province around Kumba for business reasons given that Kumba is a major business spot on the border with Nigeria, among others. These migrations were initially meant to be temporary but have ended up being permanent. These patterns of settlement have resulted in a

number of conflicts. Prominent among them is the politically induced “come-no-go” issue of 1998 and the 11th province reference. The “come-no-go” refers to North Westerners who moved to the South West either voluntarily or forcefully (under the German colonial rule) to work in the CDC but have ever since replaced one generation with another. Having lived so long in the area the immigrants who wanted to join politics were rejected on grounds that they were foreigners.

On the other hand, the 11th province refers to those from the Western province who by virtue of their origin are considered francophones but who have lived, worked all their lives and have been delivered children in the South West province, an Anglophone zone. So they are francophones by origin but Anglophone by upbringing and linguistic expression. That is why they are referred to as an 11th province having its own qualities different from the other ten. Cameroon has ten provinces that are generally categorised on English (anglophone) and French (francophone)-speaking basis. This group is extensively bilingual and does not squarely fit into any of these linguistic categorisations. They are therefore considered to belong to a different province—the 11th. Some people have even gone as far as asking for the creation of a province for them. Again, the linguistic background is used here as the basis for determining belonging. Children born into this situation have had difficulties returning to the francophone area, where they are treated as outsiders and integrating in the Anglophone region in which they were born, where they are also considered outsiders. Although they may own property in the South West province, they are not treated as part of the tribal heritage and so have no claim to it. Most of them do not even speak French, but since their parents or grand parents came from a French-speaking zone, they are considered francophones.

4.4. The Southern Cameroons Secession Attempt

After several years of verbal requests for the respect of the rights of the Anglophone, issued at the First All Anglophones Conference in Buea, re-echoed at the Second All Anglophones Conference (AACII, 1994) in Bamenda, the SCNC and other group favouring the secession of former British Southern Cameroons, on October 1st, 1999 declared the autonomy of the Republic of Southern Cameroon (also referred to as Ambazonia) and followed this declaration with the hoisting of her flag. The flag is modelled on the defunct Federal Republic of Cameroon flag with two stars. For the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) whose aim is to “fight and end this bitter episode as a conquered people and restore our sovereignty and independence” (Party Manifesto 2004), secession is the only solution given that the case made at the United Nations is not forthcoming and the Cameroonian government is far from accepting any such secession. The major claim is once more related to the linguistic colonial inheritance. According to ALIP,

For the powerful of Cameroon and the government of Cameroon, to come from Ambazonia or to look Ambazonian, is reason for discrimination, scorn, shame, suspicion and hatred.

Preamble of the Manifesto of Ambazonia Liberation Party
(ALIP)

Again, Ambazonians (as they are called) cannot be identified by any other parameter than the use of English. The official language identity therefore adopts a political and a regional dimension that makes it to spread over several other identities. The Anglophones, it should be mentioned, are very culturally diversified and would not have any claims to similarity if English had to be taken away from them. This confirms the initial claim in this paper that linguistic background or expression is very essential to the creation of an identity.

5. Ways Out

This paper has attempted to situate at what point linguistic background moulds identity(ies). It also traced historically the place and vitality of the linguistic component in some of the social and political discontentment common in Cameroon. From the subtle complaints of the Anglophones to the declaration of independence of the Federal Republic of Southern Cameroon, one thing is made quite clear. That is, the quest for a modest and worthy identity is intricately linked to one's language and the strong attachment to it. This is because all of the other characteristics that make the group a common entity must be transmitted through a language. And since many languages exist side-by-side one another, it becomes possible for individuals to expose many different identities.

The situation as presented above is not a dead-end as such, nor has it deteriorated into the quagmire of violence either. This indicates that if the sovereign nation has to continue intact several concessions and reforms have to be made. The first of them is levelling political mounds that have been raised by ethnicity and regionalism and thereafter giving regional representation a real attention. This can certainly make sense if a national identity built preferably on Fonlon's (1969) vision of official bilingualism is sought and implemented. This would mean promoting bilingualism beyond the threshold of instrumental necessity and creating an integrative dimension for it. In the past bilingualism was the goal of Anglophones wanting to integrate francophone zones, francophones seeking to go abroad, francophones seeking the Commonwealth scholarship, Anglophones seeking jobs in francophone zones and so forth. The encouragement of an integrative attachment to bilingualism in English and French would reduce if not erase the geophysical and psychological boundaries of francophonism and anglophonism. In this vein, the minority-majority, oppressor-oppressed gap hitherto created by this divide would definitely disappear.

6. Conclusion

The above recommendations cannot be achieved overnight. It requires much more than a single generation to implement a bilingualism scheme that would ensure that everyone who successfully completes secondary school should normally be fluent in French and English. This is however possible. If the generation of bilinguals in nursery and primary schools in urban centres (see for instance Anchimbe's

(2003) study of Yaounde) were to be succeeded by yet two others, then the issue would be near a definitive solution. This is because these children, born into mixed anglo-francophone families or entirely francophone families are considered neither as francophones nor as Anglophones. They are enrolled in an English-medium school; study exclusively in English (with French as a subject) and only speak French at home with their parents and/or neighbours. As indicated in Anchimbe's (2003) survey, 54.6% of the 194 parents would consider their children Anglophones given they will have studied all along in English. But in a follow up question, 75.2% objected to considering these children in the same manner as Anglophones from the English-speaking zones. The children consider themselves as bilinguals and nothing more. They lay no claims, either geophysical (origin) or linguistic, to the origins and linguistic (identity) belonging of their parents, either of whom may be from one of these classifications. If this annihilation of regional and strict official language division is attained, then a stable identity would be achieved, more convenient alliances would be born, and lastly, ethnicity would be an added spice rather than a deadly dessert.

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Appendix I. CRTV programme of the rest of the week

Day	Time	Duration	Programme	Language
Thursday	13:55-14:00	5mn	Overture d'antenne	Image/sound
	15:00-15:10	10mn	Bulletin infos	Bilingual
	15:10-15:45	30mn	Clip Box	Music
	16:35-17:00	30mn	Groove	French
	18:00-18:30	30mn	Le quotidien des provinces	Bilingual
	19:30-20:00	30mn	The 7:30 News	English
	20:00-20:30	30mn	Terra Nostra	French
	20:30-21:00	30mn	Le Journal	French
	21:00-21:30	30mn	Annonces	Adverts
	21:30-22:30	60mn	Espace Francophone	French
	22:30-23:30	30mn	CRTV Late Night News	Bilingual

Day	Time	Duration	Programme	Language
Friday	13:55-14:00	5mn	Overture d'antenne	Image/sound
	15:00-15:10	10mn	Bulletin infos	Bilingual
	15:10-15:45	30mn	Clip Box	Music
	17:00-18:00	60mn	Sports Vision	English
	18:30-19:00	30mn	Youth fights AIDS in rural area	English
	19:00-19:30	30mn	Scapel	French
	19:30-20:30	60mn	Connaissance de l'Islam	French (Arabic)
	20:30-21:30	60mn	Journal Bilingue	Bilingual
	21:30-21:45	15mn	Annonces	Adverts
23:00-23:30	30mn	CRTV Late Night News	Bilingual	
Saturday	11:55-12:00	5mn	Overture d'antenne	Image/sound
	12:00-12:15	15mn	Bulletin infos	Bilingual
	12:30-13:30	60mn	Evasion	French
	13:30-14:00	30mn	Stargate SG I	French
	14:00-15:00	60mn	Délire	French
	15:00-15:30	30mn	Copain copine	French
	18:00-18:56	56mn	Tube Vision	French
	19:00-20:00	60mn	Edito	French
	20:30-21:30	60mn	Journal Bilingue	Bilingual
	22:00-22:30	30mn	Universalis	English
Sunday	08:55-09:00	5mn	Overture d'antenne	Image/sound
	09:00-09:30	30mn	Keep fit	French
	09:30-10:00	30mn	Chorales	Choral singing
	10:00-11:00	60mn	Le culte protestant	Varies: French/English
	12:00-12:30	30mn	Super Book	French
	12:30-13:00	30mn	The World this week	English
	13:00-13:00	120mn	Tam-Tam Weekend	Bilingual
	15:45-16:15	30mn	Youth Rhapsody	French
	17:30-18:30	30mn	Journal d'Afrique	French
	19:00-20:00	60mn	Actualité Hebdo	French
20:30-21:30	60mn	Journal Bilingue	Bilingual	

Source: Compiled from the CRTV website, www.crtv.cm. The programme dates back to 2002 when it was last updated, but not much has changed in the news and major programme slots. However some series and serials like Terra Nostra, Stargate, Super Book have ended but programmes like Actualité Hebdo, Tam-Tam Weekend, Connaissance d'Islam, Evasion, Tube Vision are still broadcast.

Appendix II. Time Allocation per week in minutes

Days	Total	French		English		Bilingual		Neutral	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Monday-Wednesday	1046	541	51.7	300	28.7	70	6.7	135	12.9
Thursday-Sunday	1536	776	50.5	180	11.7	425	27.6	155	10.2
Total	2582	1317	(51.2)	480	(18.5)	495	(19.1)	290	(11.2)