

# Official Bilingualism in Cameroon: Instrumental or Integrative Policy?

Isaiah Munang Ayafor  
University of Freiburg, Germany

## 1. Introduction and background considerations

Among the countries of the world, where the phenomenon of bilingualism is experienced, Cameroon may be described as one of the most fascinating. Irrespective of the perspective from which one may look at bilingualism in this country, it is a complicated issue to discuss. There is widespread individual bilingualism, i.e., from a basic stance, the alternate use of two or more languages, (Mackey 1970) involving the use of more indigenous languages.<sup>1</sup> This may be within one language family as in the example of the Bantu and grassfield Bantu languages of the Congo-Kordofanian family. It may even stretch across two language families as in the example of bilingualism or trilingualism involving languages from the Congo-Kordofanian (e.g. Fulfuldé, Fulani, Bororo) and the Afroasiatic families (e.g. Arabechoa or Arabic). But the only problem with this kind of bilingualism is that it is not officially recognised owing to the fact that none of these indigenous languages have official status nor national recognition.

However, bilingual competence involving one or more indigenous languages and one official language is equally widespread, and this type is quite popular and exploited even by authorities within official domains for mass and civic education. Still, what may be considered “acceptable bilingualism” from the stand point of official recognition, i.e., functional competence in English and French remains controversial as bilinguals who speak French and pidgin English suffer stigmatisation and disparagement in many official domains whereas pidgin is not only the most widespread variety of English but it is the only language in Cameroon with the pragmatic ability to function as a contact language for all linguistic groups. Still, those who accept government’s view of bilingualism as the perfect mastery of the two official languages, English and French, find that a very small percentage of the population is able to speak the two languages with functional fluency. Hence, pidgin English and some indigenous languages creep into official domains to fill such communication gaps (Ayafor, 2002a: 2). While some views blame the complexity on the sociolinguistic situation, others believe that the sociolinguistic situation is a potential solution to its own problems if consistent language management or systematic language planning was practised. The political and sociolinguistic situation of the country has dictated a line of action aimed at managing the ever-present problem of the nation: national (political) unity in terms of territorial union, integration, and linguistic communication. One aspect of the entire linguistic situation, which illustrates the complexity of the entire scene, is the concept of official language policy, so-called official bilingualism. It exists parallel to approximately 300 indigenous languages, pidgin English, and *Français* (a stigmatised metropolitan code popular among the youth group).

The approach to the management of these problems may be discussed in terms of the instrumental and integrative motivational orientations.<sup>2</sup> The application of these terms here is essentially ordinary

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, cf. Chia’s (1983:21) representation of indigenous interlingual contact among the Bamileke languages of West Cameroon in the French-speaking region.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner and Lambert (1972:3) have defined and established the complementary relation between the integrative and instrumental orientations to the task of second language learning, which add to the learner’s attitude towards the second language speaking group to determine his motivation to learn. When applied here, the process aptly describes the circumstances of the approach to the management of language policy and planning in Cameroon.

than technical. It is not new to say that instrumental and integrative orientations lead to the achievement of different categories of language competence, and that they are complementary in their relationship. Indeed, in Cameroon, there is one approach to national integration, and another to linguistic integration, both intended to be complementary to each other to achieve and sustain national unity in terms of territorial fusion and social cohesion through linguistic communication. However, while the former takes an instrumental orientation, the latter takes an integrative orientation. They are used to highlight approaches and actions used as instruments for achieving some of the political objectives envisaged during the acclamation of bilingualism as the language policy. However, the rift in the two orientations, which are usually understood to be complementary to each other, and the impact of the one on the other have engendered the problems that will be examined in this paper. The nature of the Cameroon nation fundamentally needs an integrative policy for its survival owing to its fragmentation and delicate political unity. Although multiculturalism in terms of ethnic diversity is unexpectedly not yet a problem for national unity, ethnicity along the Francophone-Anglophone dichotomy is, and has whisked away attention such that it threatens national unity in terms of territorial integrity more than anything else in the country.

This dichotomy has imposed a foreign biculturalism upon an indigenous multiculturalism and has affected language choice, maintenance, and management through out postcolonial language policy. Thus, the choice of English and French based on this biculturalism creates an inalienable two-way link between language and nation or language and culture in the sustenance of national unity. In other words, official bilingualism has to be defined and described to incorporate its linguistic, cultural, and political components. Its implementation, in turn, necessitates a political orientation consisting of a plan of action to achieve and promote national unity in terms of territorial unity and cultural cohesion, and a linguistic orientation consisting of a language planning policy to manage languages, social linguistic communication, and language education. However, it appears unfortunate that the fact that bilingualism as a concept escapes delimitation as evidenced by debate in the wider research context, has encouraged local oddities in the experience and practice of the phenomenon.

## **2. State of the art**

The phenomenon of bilingualism has witnessed unprecedented extensive research, and has drawn wide interdisciplinary attention. It has been the object of closer study by researchers in many places; of intense discussions among linguists in many forums for many years; of complex controversy among language teachers, and varying degrees of legislation and management in many political milieus around the world. The ongoing debate inadvertently encourages and condones unorthodox or arbitrary practices in the implementation of language policy in many sub-Saharan African countries. In spite of decades of research on bilingualism, such attention does not appear to shift; rather, with time, the study of bilingualism has attained its widest dimensions with a high proliferation of views.

The ongoing research attention is accompanied by a flood of publications on the subject, which address different aspects of the phenomenon. Many of these publications have adopted an interdisciplinary approach to the discussion of the subject. Besides, one cannot lose sight of the fact that several of these publications are a result of many conferences around the world, some holding simultaneously, while others have become established annual international forums with different countries taking turns to host them. This is evidence for the all-time importance of the subject, its complexity, its increasing incidence but also an indication of the need to find answers to questions regarding the conceptualisation and practical realisations of bilingualism. Such forums have brought together linguists and researchers from all nooks and crannies, each of them discussing one or more aspects of bilingualism with new perspectives. In fact, with time, it appears as if bilingualism has become an issue in every community of the world and Hoffmann (1991: 13) believes that over half the population of the world is bilingual. In addition, if one considers the practical implications of Appel and Muysken's (1987) views on language contact, it becomes even more evident that the passing of each day witnesses, at least, one language user getting bilingual at some degree, whether at home or abroad.

This reality brings practical managerial implications for individual and societal language usage, but most importantly, the short- and long-term implications for language legislation at the national or macro levels. It also has direct implications for scholarship in the field as many researchers want to

investigate the languages, users and their uses as well as the psycho-social issues involved. All of this exacerbates the already complex nature, categories, definition, description, types, dimensions, approaches, etc., confronting linguists in their unrelenting efforts to find out what bilingualism is, what it is not, its manifestations, and how it can be managed at the micro and macro levels. These issues have brought research in the field to a predicament where, in spite of findings so far, one is frequently constrained to return to the fundamental or basic questions especially when discussing underdeveloped language policies or sociolinguistic situations like the example of Cameroon. Thus, what are we referring to as bilingualism in both its conceptual and practical dimensions, its manifestation in various local and wider contexts? Has research in the field reached or traversed the cross-roads in addressing these questions and to what extent do the answers relevant to or provide solutions to local experiences with bilingualism?

It is established in the field and no longer new to try to pin down the phenomenon of bilingualism. Still, literature in the study of language contact and bilingualism is replete with defining and descriptive views designating efforts aimed to settle the dust and find a consensus on the nature of the phenomenon. Thus, from Bloomfield's (1933) founding views through Weinreich's (1968), Mackey's (1970), Cummins's (1976), Hamer and Blanc's (1983), Romaine's (1989) to Hoffmann's (1991) views, one appears to be witnessing a race where these ground-breaking studies have generated unprecedented interest and commitment to pinning down bilingualism rather than localising, describing, characterising, and exemplifying the phenomenon in its different contexts and societies as global research on the subject has tended to evolve in that direction for a long time now. It is evidence for the fact that it may yet, be both necessary and desirable for research in the field to find a conceptual and methodological consensus whether at the wider or the local contexts. Still, the difficulties known in achieving a common stance even make the ongoing orientation of views appear to be gasping for breath, and without seemingly getting any close to its destination as the phenomenon may, yet, be best measured by Hoffmann's (1991: 14) position that "The most salient feature of bilingualism is that it is a multi-faceted phenomenon. Whether one is considering it at a societal or an individual level, one has to accept that there can be no clear cut-off points. As bilingualism defies delimitation, it is open to a variety of descriptions, interpretations and definitions." In the literature, Hoffmann's view is illustrated in the study of various aspects of bilingualism leading to a divergence rather than a convergence of efforts in delimiting the subject.

Hence, one usually reads of "individual vs societal", "early vs late", "school vs. institutional", "partial vs. perfect", "co-ordinate vs. compound", etc., aspects of bilingualism without necessarily desiring anymore to know what is referred to as bilingualism – in fact, in such situations, one's attention is hardly drawn to anything beyond the "alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual" (Mackey 1970: 555). Owing to the fact that "as a concept, it has open-ended semantics" (Baetens Beardsmore, 1982:1), and its "study is hampered by a host of methodological problems and theoretical short-comings" (Hoffmann, 1991:17), bilingualism appears to have been taken for granted in many societies with the excuse that divergence rather than unanimity characterises the state of the art regarding the description and delimitation of bilingualism.

## **2.1. Conceptualising bilingualism in the Cameroon context**

In the face of such ongoing research, communities and nations, which experience bilingualism at the societal level, foster legislation, sometimes based on, and in consideration of established findings within wider research, but also the theoretical controversies therein. Other societies, depending on their circumstances, may prefer to take a position similar to what Platt and Platt (1975:118) have called a "wait and see" attitude towards language legislation and management, thus, leaving the situation open to a variety of descriptions, interpretations, and definition. In other words, such societies prefer to hide behind the views of linguists as Hoffmann's (1991:13) "Ultimately, all definitions are arbitrary to a greater or lesser extent. It is not necessarily a problem, therefore, that there are so many of them, since in this way the researcher is able to choose the one that best suits her or his purpose."

### 3. Official bilingualism in Cameroon examined

As in the literature on bilingualism, it can be quite complicated to define, describe, and delimit what is referred to as official bilingualism in Cameroon. It also proves difficult to integrate the interpretation of the general concept of bilingualism within the local Cameroon context although the simple fact of having official status for the two languages, French and English, qualifies to be the basic linguistic component in defining bilingualism in general. But stopping at such a criterion would be stating the situation in over-simplified terms thereby misleading attention regarding the host of variables which render it complex and unique. The glaring evidence for the complexity is the absence of an official government position on the subject in spite of ongoing action and declared efforts to encourage the use of French and English at the individual, institutional and government levels. The fascinating linguistic situation, neglect of linguists' views, predominance of political ideologies and objectives, and the lack of genuine political commitment to evolving language planning are variables which exacerbate the task of finding a useful defining and action framework for a consistent language policy. This leaves one with the room for speculation and interpretative assessments especially out of the sphere of government influence.

It may be up to everyone (or community), at least, taking from Hoffmann (1991:13), to choose the definition of bilingualism that best suits his or her purpose. This position appears to validate, or give chance to situations like the one experienced with Cameroon's official language policy, to find easy answers for large-scale unorthodox language management. From government's point of view, language policy is limited to the use of English and French within government domains and formal transactions within private sector domains. This exclusive language management strategy has been summarily named official bilingualism. Yet, it may not be viewed in linguistic principles as a linguistic policy in the real sense of the term as it lacks basic clear-cut linguistic definition, description (Chumbow, 1980: 288), nor a systematic framework for its implementation (Tadadjeu, 1983: 117). Linguists try to establish that such lack of adequate linguistic description and frame of action leaves the policy no chance to develop as a language policy and that it would not function in a sociolinguistic approach.

But government's insistence that what is currently being pursued, i.e. the creation of bilingual schools and non-school language teaching centres<sup>3</sup> is a policy of bilingualism warrants the following question: to what extent may bilingualism be arbitrary and remain acceptable as a language policy?<sup>4</sup> To what extent should language maintenance be considered a good index of consistent planning? If it should be represented in terms of a continuum, at what point would bilingual yet, multilingual African countries be said to operate a bilingual policy? If the policies were considered as they are, at what point may they become (successful?) language policies?

Finding answers to these questions may be rendered difficult by views which assert that evolving a language policy within the African context without essential linguistic description as well as socio-economic planning may be considered an instance of bad policy (Bamgbose 2000). Yet, the lack of vibrant and strong economic situations in many African countries makes their imperfect language policies acceptable within the broader sociolinguistic context because they face material conditions which cannot put them on the same measuring scale as Western and other developed societies. In other words, what else would be expected of such non-industrialised countries if these policies were not considered qualified to be language policies within their local circumstances?(Wolf, 2001:169) This is especially true if it is considered that the lack of consistent language planning or "lack of implementation of a national language policy at a particular time need not be considered as non-action" (Platt and Platt, 1975:118). However, the example of 'non-action' in Cameroon's language policy is neither limited to a 'particular time' nor is there 'a national language policy' which is not being implemented (Ayafor, 2001b: 18)." In this light, one may rely on Simo Bobda and Tiomajou's (1995:

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. what Bamgbose (2000:102) calls the restriction of the focus of language planning mainly to education.

<sup>4</sup> The arbitrary creation of "bilingual" schools, i.e., two separate systems, one Francophone and one Anglophone coexisting side-by-side in one premises without real integrative measures. Simo Bobda and Tiomajou (1995) have studied the integration of ESL and EFL in Cameroon schools and have shown the arbitrary practices involved in the current teaching of English in monolingual and bilingual schools, especially against the background of the non-existence of a standardised variety of Cameroon English.

73) position that “In Cameroon, there is no government position on language policy and planning apart from the statement that French and English shall be the official languages of the Republic.” Thus, in attempting to describe, define or finding the significance of official bilingualism in the light of the ongoing views it may be best suitable to consider Spolsky’s (forthcoming) view that “The language policy of a speech community may be revealed in its practices, its beliefs, or in explicit language management.” This claim may help one to examine some practices, beliefs, and statements within the political and government circles as well as the civil society.

## **4. Official bilingualism as national language policy**

### *4.1. Political statements*

While opening the Bilingual Grammar School in Buea in 1962, the first secondary education institution in the country located in the English-speaking region, Ahmadou Ahidjo, Cameroon’s first president stated that “By bilingualism we mean the practical usage of our two official languages, English and French, through out the national territory.” This statement is quite clear in stating what is believed within political circles to be the manifestation, objective, and the scope of the official language policy: “practical usage” and “throughout the national territory.” Still, this view is quite restrictive and vague as it provides clues only for educational implications but does not provide room for the development of the conceptual, linguistic, and cultural aspects of the bilingual policy. Besides, its vagueness is further understood if it is considered that the lack of clarity regarding domains of language use as well as target users is unsuitable for a country where the language policy must grapple with these factors in the search for national integration. Furthermore, from an educational stand point, it is not clear what language level must be attained by a user to demonstrate “practical usage” of the two languages. However, this view appears to define the school dimension of the bilingual policy especially taking note of the situation, context, and purpose which warranted the statement.

Furthermore, in 1977, while inaugurating the creation of Government Bilingual High School in Yaounde in the French-speaking region similar to the one opened in the English-speaking region, the same president emphasised that “The progressive acquisition of bilingualism should be as perfect as possible; the standard of the language taught should not be as low as to be understood only by Cameroonians.” This later view, as the earlier one, attempts to settle the dust raised regarding the basic definition and description of both the wider concept of bilingualism, and the beliefs concerning the phenomenon in the country: the simultaneous (alternate) mastery of two languages. While the earlier view appears to characterise bilingualism in the country as societal or institutional, the later appears to ascribe it to school, yet, individual bilingualism. Again, the statements may be interpreted only within the scope of the circumstance or the event during which they were made although their significance may overflow into the connotation frame of the national language policy. This later view also re-echoes the problem in global research on bilingualism regarding the level of language competence which should make the speaker bilingual, at least, following trends in linguistic views.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, during the same occasion, the president added that “The ideal goal to be attained in our schools will be to produce citizens capable of using the two languages to perfection, even to produce in French or in English, according to their choice, literary and scientific works of quality.” It seems established that, rather than define or describe a comprehensive framework for language policy and bilingualism, one is presented with an inconsistent picture of “bits” of beliefs among which may be found several conceptual categories of policy objectives. In other words, within political circles, little importance or willingness is given to the development of policy beginning with a fundamental stage of policy definition, and moving to fact-finding, design, implementation, and evaluation.

The situation of language policy regarding bilingualism in Cameroon aptly illustrates Bamgbose’s (2000:104) third factor for explaining the fact that language planning in Africa is mainly concerned with policy formulation: “...the fact that the main agents of language planning are functionaries of the government, authority tends to be equated with decision-making, which, in turn, means language policy formulation.” As such, within political circles, there is no need to move beyond the bequeathed and

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mackey (1968:557); Skutnabb-Kangas (1984); Romaine (1989:12).

acclaimed decision to maintain English and French as official languages as this amounts to language policy formulation.

The vague use of the prescriptive measuring and wishful terms such as “as perfect as possible” or “not so low”, rather raises the problem of performance standard in the two languages or level of language required, which has been extensively debated with the field. As a result of the unsettled debate, political statements on bilingualism between 1980 and the present have largely been evasive and vague. This tendency also explains government hesitant attitude to reviewing language policy and planning in the country in general. Again, the practical measures for the management of the official language policy so far give the impression that bilingualism in Cameroon is restricted to education, i.e., the teaching of English and French in schools and in specially designed language teaching programs for non-schooling persons. Judging from political variables, the situation of language policy suffers the following factors stated in Bamgbose (2000:104): “There are a number of strategies that have come to be associated with language policies in the African context. A language policy may be left in such vague and general terms as to make non-compliance easy. It may be presented as a mere statement of intent, without any provision for implementation. It may be well-articulated in pronouncements and policy documents, but remain on paper as a manifesto or its implementation may be aborted by elite self-interest.”

#### *4.2. Linguists and researcher's views*

Fonlon (1969:20), arguing from a perspective of nationalist purposes, identifies that the purpose of bilingualism in Cameroon should determine its definition, description as well as its implementation. Since the policy symbolises the promotion of national unity and integration, according to him, “The objective which we should envisage should instead be individual bilingualism whereby every child who follows the cycle of our educational system will be able to speak English and French.” Famous for his argument for, and position on early bilingualism, Fonlon has established the type of bilingualism to be pursued in school. Evidently, there seems to be unanimity on the pursuance of school or individual bilingualism through the school medium. However, this category of bilingualism appears not only hard to achieve in the country in the short-term but also has the risk of creating a communication vacuum in the sense that, before the policy's first generation successfully learns the languages in school, linguistic communication may be dysfunctional, leading to frustrations of an immeasurably conflicting nature owing to the immediacy of the need for such communication. This is illustrated by the overpowering role of pidgin English as a linguistic bridge between the two linguistic communities both in official and private domains. In addition, the majority of Cameroonians hardly afford to go beyond the primary education level, a stage at which only an elementary competence may be attained in the two official languages. Besides, the older generation, who did not have the opportunity to learn the two languages prior to the inception of the policy, would be certainly excluded or alienated. This explains irrational excuses by some older Francophones and Anglophones who say respectively that “Je suis né avant le bilinguisme, alors, cela ne me concerne pas particulièrement (I do not care about bilingualism because I was born before the policy was instituted)”, and “I will not return to school anymore and will soon go on retirement thus, for what do I need French?” These remarks illuminate the need for, and absence of language planning. But most importantly, they are evidence for the inappropriateness of the bilingual policy without a clear-cut description, and to serve as an integrative policy for the political, cultural, and social fusion of the two linguistic communities hence, pushing Simo Bobda and Tiomajou (1995:73) to ask the following fundamental question: “In the absence of a language policy, what is the state of official-language bilingualism in Cameroon?”

This question may find some of its responses in individual research efforts by local academics. Mbassi-Manga (1973:1-4) has made the following observation regarding the entire language situation: “Its present day language situation as far as French and English are concerned, could be described as French and English in a multilingual setting...The immediate consequences of this situation are the development of varying types and degrees of bilingualism and trends towards the development of different functions for each of the language types.” This view both captures the current predicament after two decades and may well determine the plight of language policy for the next decades to come. Other views on aspects of language policy and planning may be found in research efforts including

Koenig et al's (1983) sociolinguistic survey of language use in urban centres in Cameroon, Tadjadjeu's (1985) and Chumbow's (1980) suggested trilingual language policy involving the use as official languages of one local language and French and English, Tchoungui (1977), Soh (1985), Mosongo (1986), Penn Tamba (1990), Tiomajou (1991), Chumbw and Simo Bobda (1995), Echu and Grundstrom (1999), Wolf (2001), Ayafor (2001a, b; 2002a). In varying ways, one thing seems to run through all these studies: in spite of the current practices in language management efforts "bilingualism in Cameroon still needs careful and systematic planning with clear-cut short- and long-term goals." (Simo and Tiomajou, 1995:74) Even pertinent to the fundamental elements such planning, i.e. defining and describing bilingualism, is Zé Amvela's (1999:133) observation that "Owing to the importance of bilingualism in the very survival of the Cameroon nation, it is highly desirable, in our opinion, to investigate as many of its aspects as possible. The findings of such investigations are likely to give the promotion of bilingualism the best chances of success in Cameroon, and to bring additional insight to our understanding of the phenomenon of bilingualism in general." Moreover, there is evidence showing that the problem of finding a suitable orientation for official bilingualism in the country lie in the lack of its elaborate description and characterisation in linguistic principles and the integration of the non-linguistic factors.

### *4.3. Civil society and grassroots views*

Language policy and bilingualism are intensely debated even among ordinary Cameroonians. One factor which makes it possible for persons of all classes to feel the problem is the French-styled administrative system and territorial integration measures resulting from gross political centralisation engendered by the choice of the unitary state since 1972. The geographic and demographic division of the country makes the English-speaking region a minority. The territorial representation of English and French automatically follows this division, hence giving French a numeric ascendancy over English. This ascendancy is the factor which also makes the English-speaking region a linguistic minority in the view of Francophones. Besides, due to the fact that Anglophones have to make both a linguistic adjustment from English to French, and a geographic movement from the English- to the French-speaking region to perform most of their civic duties, it has become one negative impact of the lack of language planning. Thus, it pushes them to feel assimilated, hence, language policy has become one major factor among the socio-political grievances of Anglophones so-called "The Anglophone Problem" since the 1980s. On the other hand, the absence of a similar adjustment and movement on the part of Francophones makes them not see the usefulness of bilingualism as they have little to gain in Cameroon learning English. Thus, they almost certainly do not see a need for developing an integrative language policy as the minority would always follow the majority.<sup>6</sup> This attitude is glaringly observable within government circles leading to a tendency to disparage English in varying subtle ways. Still, the ordinary Francophone favours the development of language policy and bilingualism involving equal functions for English and French in official domains.

In an attitude survey in early 2002 on the significance of official bilingualism and the status of English in official domains, Ayafor (forthcoming) finds a wider scope of definitions and connotations of bilingualism than the restrictive defining view promoted within government and political circles. Both rank-and-file government workers and high-ranking government officials have expressed elaborate views in describing bilingualism contrary to beliefs within the government and political circles they serve and represent. Still, the fact that these respondents emphasise the significance and usefulness of grassroots description of language policy and bilingualism, which may be considered negligible for their apparent few numbers when judged from quantitative presentations rather than viewing them as emerging trends, is revealing. Consider the following defining views on bilingualism in Cameroon by Francophones and Anglophones:

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<sup>6</sup> The conceptualisation of the language minority here defies Appel and Muysken's (1987:3) classification which is based on sociological than statistic or numeric factors.

*Table (1): Grassroots definition of bilingualism in Cameroon (Francophone and Anglophone government workers resident and working in both French- and English-speaking regions).*

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Coexistence of English & French as official languages	125	82.2	82.2	82.2
Cohabitation of two cultures: Francophone & Anglophone	13	8.6	8.6	90.8
Perfect mastery of French & English by all Cameroonians	07	4.6	4.6	95.4
Unification of the two Cameroons: Former French & British	05	3.3	3.3	98.7
No response	02	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	152	100.0	100.0	100.0

It is worth noting that only 4.6 % of the government workers interviewed included in their defining framework the exclusive aspect of bilingualism widely promoted within government circles as the definition of language policy. This percentage of workers, although including this aspect, rank it only third. Still, what is more revealing is the expansion of the range of defining variables to include the simple side-by-side coexistence of the two languages in the two linguistic communities corresponding to the former autonomous states; the cohabitation of two otherwise distinctive cultures in two separate regions of the same country, the unification (but not the necessary unitised form) of two separate states – factors implying the impossibility of integrating them in the Cameroon context. It is therefore to be observed from these responses that the significance of bilingualism in Cameroon is not limited to the perfect mastery of English and French, the view acclaimed and imposed by government. In fact, this inclusive approach reflects the common adage among Francophones that “C’est le Cameroun qui est bilingue, mais les Camerounais ne le sont pas!” In other words, outside of political and government circles, the so-called “official bilingualism” in its current definition appears meaningless, unpopular, and misleading. The political, cultural, linguistic, social, educational, etc., aspects of the language policy form the elements delimiting official bilingualism.

This integrative description may be useful to calibrate and determine the quality of the current policy as well as the success or failure of its implementation. Besides, the above-mentioned aspects of bilingualism form the core domains where nothing short of successful integration may determine the long-term unity of the nation. Intense ethnicity in the country, which is generated along the lines of linguistic difference, increases the feeling that language policy safeguards political objectives than responds to grassroots linguistic needs. Biculturalism is therefore an inalienable component of bilingualism in Cameroon and depending on the nature of each of the said aspects, bilingualism, i.e., the use of English and French closely overlaps with biculturalism, i.e., the coexistence of Franco-Anglo-Saxon-type traditions in one country.

The foregoing discussion leads one to the identification of three categories of bilingualism which may be associated with the experience of the phenomenon in the Cameroon context. These are political, cultural, and linguistic categories of bilingualism.

The political category involves an indelible consciousness that looms over the phenomenon of bilingualism as a strategy to hold political integration intact. From a capitalist perspective and in terms of function, official bilingualism is primarily a political glue to the unitised Cameroon. It is only secondarily concerned with languages. It is common knowledge that bilingualism in Cameroon is equated with and tied to territorial integrity especially with reference to the union between the English- and French-speaking regions. A visitor would easily notice this as people almost always immediately talk of the coexistence of two cultures, etc., the political variables, before lately referring to English and French, the linguistic variable. Thus, political slogans are conceived in such political terms as “bilingualism: the pride and symbol of our national unity and cultural diversity.” Besides, it was

dictated by political pragmatism involving political pressure to make reunification work. This explains why bilingualism was not based on any elaborate linguistic or paralinguistic considerations but rather by extralinguistic considerations (Chumbow, *ibid.*). Even though the circumstances of that period should be given due consideration, it also remains true that most, if not all, such circumstances have evolved yet, political attitude to language has remained the same as in 1961.

In brief, the political category of bilingualism is covert but overriding. It is concerned with issues of territorial unity while creating measures to check factors which may spark off territorial disintegration. Within grassroots it is reified by the belief that bilingualism is the unification of French- and English-speaking Cameroons, the mere cohabitation of the two cultures in one country. Any form of threat to this category of bilingualism is interpreted and treated as a direct threat to national unity in terms of territorial integrity, whereas any threat to the status and functions of English or French is not necessarily treated as such. The political significance of this category also explains why institutions, infrastructure and personnel holding positions which relate to policy issues and decision-making about the bilingual policy are obligatorily located within the premises of the Presidency of the Republic, the most political institution of the country. Besides, such persons have to condone the political ideologies of the ruling elite to hold such positions.

The cultural category involves the promotion in terms of recognition and maintenance, of cultural differences as in institutional traditions, and other symbols along the Francophone-Anglophone dichotomy. The most glaring examples are the recognition and maintenance of a Francophone-type educational system in the French-speaking region, and an Anglo-Saxon-type system of education in the English-speaking region; two separate judicial systems, etc. The creation of national symbols and songs to represent the identities of the two cultural groups.

The linguistic category of official bilingualism refers to the maintenance and promotion of the two official languages in government domains and formal domains of the private sector. Thus, linguistic bilingualism may be subdivided into operational, school, and personal bilingualism. Operational bilingualism involves the practical equal use of English and French in official written communication such as official documents, personal legal documents, decrees, Ministerial circulars, notices, signposts, road signs, national gazette, etc. Regarding official oral communication, Anglophones and Francophones who have a working competence in both English and French may speak any of them to anyone in any government office or formal business premises anywhere as the circumstances may dictate the need. Those Francophones and Anglophones who have just a smattering of the second official language may resort to the use of either a lingua franca such as pidgin English, if their use of their first official language would not solve their immediate communication problems in official domains. Personal linguistic bilingualism involves an individual efforts to achieve a working competence in English and French-- through reading books, peer-teaching, audio-visual material, newspapers, etc. Lastly, school bilingualism involves the learning of the official languages in school from primary to secondary education, and the University where French and English bilingualism is required. This sub-category also includes the learning of the languages in one of the government's language teaching centres known as "Pilot Linguistic Centres." The bottom-line is that one category may boost the others but the neglect of one category would be counterproductive for the rest.

#### **4. Instrumental and integrative orientations of official bilingualism**

##### *4.1. Need and essence of an integrative policy*

In spite of the shortcomings of the bilingual policy to develop in linguistic principles, there has been quite much action in search of an integrative policy. But how needful is a policy of integration? Whether it is a language-based policy, politically motivated or culled from elements of the two types, an integrative policy seems indispensable for the very survival of the Cameroon polity. The nature of the Cameroon nation, current political and sociolinguistic situation necessitate a distinction between an approach to national unity and an integrative policy. Even though the two are normally supposed to be one and the same thing, the political string which "unites" Cameroon, and the cultural fibre which marks a distinction between the French- and English-speaking regions introduce a differentiation of an integrative policy and an approach to achieving national unity.

As strange as this may appear to be, it may be said to reflect the country's history, current socio-political predicament, and may well be a negative indicator for its future especially if the current sociolinguistic conflicts are considered. The point has been made in the section above regarding the relationship between bilingualism and nation. To underscore the need for an integrative policy, it is important to emphasise that "The integration of the national territory remains one of the components of national unity." (Forje, 1981) Still, the maintenance of bilingualism as national language policy remains central to boosting and sustaining national unity. This interrelation is indicative of the strong link between language and nation; it also shows how language change may affect national integrity and identity. It is common knowledge in Cameroon that the advent of the unitary state in 1972 was a political strategy to harmonise the distinctive cultural traditions of the former French and British Cameroons. Thus, the specific political objectives have been expressed in the slogan "Our pride is national unity and integration." This historical event sparked the so-called *Anglophone Problem* and the no-turning-back sociopolitical movements to protest the impacts of the measures for implementing the national integration through the progressive removal of regional autonomy, which turned out to be attempts to *frenchify* and assimilate the English-speaking region by the majority French-speaking political elite. First and foremost, the nature of the Francophone-Anglophone demographic divide suggests that any integration measures would turn out to be interpreted as assimilation strategies owing to the reality that the minority Anglophone community often ends up making too many concessions which read like a list of cultural losses. Apart from that, institutional centralisation and a French-styled administrative system are the two most glaring aspects which reinforce the feeling of loss and negate genuine integration.

From the point of view of political sociology, the nature of the task of national unity through territorial integration appears to negate the task of boosting national unity through the development of bilingualism as an integrative language policy following linguistic principles. In other words, the two may not go hand in glove as some territorial integration measures such as the removal of regional autonomy may contradict such language planning issues such as language status change. Worse, greater consequences lie in "the interplay between political integration, system change/social change, political stability, and the impact of multifarious mal-integrative forces." (Forje, 1981: vii) Thus, the only way forward seems to be to advance the one aspect at the expense of the other or to advance the two with focus shifted to the emergent or pragmatic aspects.

Henceforth, based on the divergence and disagreement<sup>7</sup> on the integrative quality and significance of the policy of national unity and integration between the two communities, the arguments engender a differentiation in terms of the discrepancies involved especially at the level of practical implementation. Thus, a twin orientation, involving language management measures and political unitising strategies motivated by political ideologies of the ruling elite, has been adopted since the 1980s, and promoted as the national language policy. Hence, all issues -- political, cultural, linguistic, etc.-- which may have some implications for national unity are subsumed under this double policy and treated as such. In the context of Cameroon, this twin orientation corresponds to an approach to achieving national unity i.e., having two different states with separate political, administrative, social, legal, economic, cultural, linguistic traditions within one territory. It also corresponds to a strategy for achieving national integration i.e., the breaking down of, and neutralisation or harmonisation of the above-mentioned opposing traditions in the two regions, English- and French-speaking, within the frame of the political objective of implementing a unitary state and a political centralised system.

There appears to be no other policy of equal need and pressure at the national level than a strategy which achieves national unity and integration, promotes national identity and harmony. But the

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<sup>7</sup> Within political leadership, while "national unity" (i.e., the coexistence of two separate states in one nation within the Cameroon experience) directly implies "national integration" (i.e., the harmonisation/neutralisation of distinctive cultural traditions in the two states), within grassroots, especially the Anglophone community "national unity is limited to the cohabitation of the two states in one territory as in a federation or confederation. In other words, political ideology favours the link between national unity and national integration because there is a capitalist objective involving the creation of a strong centralised unitary state and this wouldn't work in a federation or a confederation. On their part, among grassroots, the cultural distinctive aspects must be preserved to illustrate the bilingual-bicultural nature of the entity called Cameroon. The growing incidence of this conflict is illustrated by the recent declaration of the secession of the Anglophone territory by extremist movements therein.

question preoccupying the minds of many a Cameroonian is whether official bilingualism in its current form is appropriate for the context? Does it address this need as well as the aspirations of the nation and its people? Does it make or mar? These questions find their answers in the instrumental objective and orientation which the government has chosen for the current policy of language management: using official language policy to foster the national unity, the unitary state, and a centralised system of government without evolving language planning. However, national unity appears to be a myth as the conceptual significance of the term only holds in the country at the present in terms of the non-separation of physical territorial boundaries. In other words, Cameroon may be described as a highly fragmented nation currently threatened by political disintegration much along the Francophone-Anglophone bicultural dichotomy than along ethnic lines as Forje (1981) predicts.

From a pragmatic point of view, the one thing indicative of national unity in terms of language function as understood within political circles, is the constitutional status of official language accorded French and English, and their usage in formal transactions in public and private domains. In other words, although threatened by political disintegration Cameroon represents a typical case where its politics of language maintenance allows it to define national unity using language policy. Thus, bilingualism earns its status as symbol of national unity from this pragmatic function, and in that sense, passes muster in the local context as an integrative policy.

Simo Bobda and Tiomajou (ibid.) have indicated, "...due to the absence of clearly defined objectives, the policy regarding bilingualism in Cameroon has remained, over the years, vague, with a political rather than a linguistic goal." This position introduces the argument that bilingualism in Cameroon is not a language policy thus, putting its role as an integrative policy to question. It is a political instrument used to coerce and hold two separate political entities together for the political purpose of creating a unitised nation. In other words, English and French are only an instrumental medium of reaching and making reunification and the unitary state work at any price (Chumbow. 1980: 288). This position explains why government insists on not evolving language planning in the linguistic sense for fear of ethnic or regional conflicts which may eventually spark national disintegration. It also explains why government holds the monopoly of language management and regulation in official domains and resents appointing career linguists to such positions.

It is worthy to recall that the two languages became official languages as a bequeathed colonial policy acclaimed by decision makers at the time of the reunification in 1961. They were thought to be neutral, thus, suitable for the typical political objective of holding the two states together. It was thought by the decision makers that such a policy would save them the fascinating task of planning the multiplicity of local languages, ethnic groups, thereby jeopardising the very political objective of creating a successful polity from the culturally heterogeneous entity. Echu (1999:7) confirms this view when he says that "En préférant ainsi le français et l'anglais, les autorités camerounaises ont été sûrement influencées par les mêmes critères ayant motivé le choix des deux langues au lendemain des indépendances : résoudre le problème de plurilinguisme existant dans le pays, préserver l'unité nationale dans une nouvelle fédération encore fragile, continuer la politique coloniale en matière de politique linguistique." This view illustrates that the need for the integration of the bicultural nation through bilingualism was not intended to be a language policy to be defined, and pursued in linguistic principles. In other words, official bilingualism at the conceptual level does not qualify as a language policy. Although it possesses the basic principle in the conceptualisation of bilingualism, it has little to do with language policy in linguistic terms. As such, it may as well be difficult to define it in linguistic principles given that it is neither language-based nor language-objective-oriented. Nowadays, the management of linguistic communication involving the official languages in official domains illustrates that the bilingual policy is rather a reflection of its political essence than being a language policy per se.<sup>8</sup>(see Ayafor 2001b for typical illustrations of this stance)

In spite of this position, some action has been demonstrated in terms of language regulation in official milieus. However, such efforts appear to be largely sporadic, inconsistent, not widespread hence, failing to reflect a policy of language management in terms of its scope, implementation

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<sup>8</sup> The impact of this stagnation is felt more in terms of oppression as well as a loss among the English-speaking community as Anglophones already concede more efforts in bilingualism in terms of a linguistic adjustment from English to French owing to the one-way geographic movement alluded to earlier.

methodology, and results. Language measures within official domains are services provided by translators and interpreters much in the same fashion as in the days of the federation from 1961-1972 when linguistic communication between the two states was not integrated. These services stretch from the simple translation of government documents to the publication of official terminology. However, the need for, and essence of an integrative policy of bilingualism, have moved hand in glove with the instrumental orientation of the official language policy. In other words, the same policy, i.e., “official bilingualism” (integrating English and French), a genuine integrative linguistic strategy, has coupled with “official bilingualism” (integrating two separate states), a typical political objective, to produce a tandem, which has rather been counterproductive since the inception of the policy in 1961. Rather than achieve the objective of national unity and integration through the tandem policy as envisaged, one has come to the experience where the preference for typical political integration measures has overtaken linguistic integration strategies. The outcome of this preference is the neglect and stagnation of language policy. It has resulted in the alienation of the Anglophone community and also some Francophone communities which feel estranged by the current issues in language management. It is important to examine the politico-linguistic tandem alluded to earlier to show how its essence as an integrative approach to national unity ends up at a cross-roads owing to the divergently opposing structure of the political and linguistic orientations inherent in the tandem itself.

#### *4.2. Implementing the instrumental and integrative tandem policy.*

As early as five years into the unitary state in 1977, it became clear to political leadership, linguists, and proponents of the linguistic orientation of official bilingualism that the policy was illusive. This observation pushed the government to take an unprecedented action to commission a linguist to investigate the official language policy with the aim to prepare groundwork for policy formulation. At the term of her investigation, Tchoungui (1977:5) expressed doubts that “Never before in nearly twenty years has a single word - bilingualism – been so brandished and brought to disrepute in both national and international meetings in Cameroon. But which bilingualism are we referring to? Is it a reality or a collective illusion?” Evidently, the problem of delimiting the bilingual policy, establishing its linguistic and non-linguistic significance, components, objectives, etc., remains a key and determinant issue in developing and implementing a useful language policy in Cameroon. Still, evidence that this need has been persistently ignored is found in the views of Echu (1999: xix), and Zé Amvela (1999:134) who have returned to this basic indispensable stage of language policy. “The consistent political choice of all Cameroonian governments since independence has been to promote the use of English and French as official languages. Thus, official bilingualism refers here to the promotion of both English and French in education, business, government, and other social institutions. It does not refer to the everyday bilingualism of most Cameroonians who speak one or more indigenous languages learned at home (e.g., Bamileké, Duala, Ewondo) and one of the official languages usually learned at school.” (Echu, 1999: xix) It is important to note the role and impact which the consistent political choice exerts on language management in general.

But slightly contrary to this view, and illustrative of the inherent controversy, Zé Amvela (1999:134) in the same forum asserts that “In principle, our definition of bilingualism applies to the use of not only two but any number of languages. However, the present discussion is limited to French and English, Cameroon official languages, to the exclusion of pidgin English and national languages.” At least, in principle, there is persistence of disagreement over the frame or scope of definition; yet, one thing is recognised: there is at least trilingualism within the frame of official bilingualism in the Cameroon context involving more than two languages whose functional values impose them in official domains to fill communication gaps. (Ayafor, 2002a: 2) But it is not evident that this controversy, which hangs over language policy in the country will be resolved in the near future.

##### *4.2.1. Linguistic orientation of the integrative policy*

From an assessment of the historical perspective of bilingualism in conjunction with the tandem purpose of the language policy mentioned earlier, Tchoungui (1977: 8), in a report to the government observes that “current bilingualism is based on the following principles: 1) encouraging fluency in the

two official languages in each Cameroonian citizen from the officially two language groups; 2) making it possible for the state to reach citizens of the officially two language groups in both official languages.” Based on these principles, Tchoungui (ibid.) culled and recommended the following description of bilingualism, which has become government’s position since the 1980s, and widely considered within government circles as the official definition of the English-French bilingual policy. “1) Bilingualism at the level of the educational system or school bilingualism. By school bilingualism, we mean the kind of bilingualism developed in all educational institutions from primary schools to University or any course organised with a view to encouraging the use of one of the official languages among citizens from both language groups who do not speak it. 2) Bilingualism at the level of political institutions, government, and public as well as semi-public bodies. With the later type of bilingualism, all official documents, are - or ought to be – published in both languages. These include political speeches, presidential decrees, ministerial orders, circulars, etc. To this group must be added the Cameroon mass News Agency Bulletin (ACAF), now renamed SOPECAM – and the media in general – e.g., Radio Cameroon – almost all of which are under state control” (p. 8).

It is worthy to note that this effort at describing the official language policy had, and still has the potential to include both the linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions of the policy, i.e. the teaching and use of English and French within government circles, and the recognition, respect and promotion of the aspects of the political, cultural, etc. identities of the two language groups. Although it needs further expansion, it provides the groundwork for investigating the most useful and comprehensive framework for developing a policy which safeguards aspects of the linguistic and cultural identities of the two linguistic groups without the risk of territorial disintegration. Such a potential is further observed in the views of Ngong (1993:2-3), National Pedagogic Inspector of Education in the Ministry of National Education, who has culled the following objectives of school bilingualism based on Tchoungui’s (ibid.) description of the bilingual policy to be pursued. To him, major objectives should be to 1) “contribute to the development of a bilingual culture in which a majority of its citizens are able to express themselves well in both English and French and can truly share a common heritage; 2) consolidate national unity and national integration through mutual self-respect for, and understanding of each other’s cultural background.” Still, to these, Ngong (ibid.) adds the following specific objectives: “providing a realistic forum for Cameroonian children, irrespective of their provenance, to evolve educationally in the cultural system which best fosters their integrative aspirations; to provide a forum for mutual appreciation and understanding of the two linguistic and cultural identities; to recreate as it were, a microcosm of the society, Cameroon, in which the students live together and interact harmoniously in a bilingual/bicultural setting without any mutual suspicion, prejudice or ignorance.” From Ngong’s (ibid.) conclusion that “ It is important to emphasise the above points because the mere acquisition of the two languages does not at all guarantee mutual understanding and cohesion” one understands the need for a comprehensive policy description – one that takes into consideration the linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of a language policy for the country.

#### *4.2.2. Measures within the politico-instrumental orientation.*

First and foremost, from the 1960 Foumban political Conference at which reunification of the two Cameroons was negotiated and the first constitution adopted, it was understood that reunification should begin with a loose federation in which each state would maintain considerable autonomy in certain government domains during the first five years (Chumbow, 1980:288). This understanding implied that some governmental aspects had already witnessed power-sharing between the two states within the framework of a federation with the exception of those areas where there was going to be regional autonomy. But the political imperatives at this time appeared to have been more urgent and also determined the way forward for the bilingual policy, which was only justifiable as a temporary measure. Within the frame of these actions, some institutional, cultural, territorial, etc., aspects of national bicultural difference have experienced modifications in a bid to harmonise such “symbols” which could be considered icons of difference between the two communities.

#### 4.2.2.1. *The period from 1961-1972*

As mentioned earlier, government's attitude to the bilingual policy during this period was largely determined by its political concerns rather than by the development and elaboration of its language policy. Although many pragmatic factors also determined the nature of action regarding language policy during this decade, political attitude to language use in official domains and languages in general after 1972, and current language management measures provide evidence that a lack of genuine intent has, all along, constituted impediments to systematic language planning. These factors now push many a critic to argue that there was, after all, lack of political courage from 1961 to effect comprehensive language planning. Chumbow (1980: 289) confirms that "Just as the policy was born out of political speculations so did its fate depend on the government's political concern of consolidation of unification via progressive centralisation and elimination of state or regional autonomy. Several measures were taken primarily in the interest of the integration which also had significant repercussions on the implementation of English-French bilingualism." This view highlights the overriding nature of the political significance of the policy, but also the dilemma involved in trying to implement the political and linguistic orientations as one dictates the neglect of the other. It also explains the intended divergence in the Cameroon context, between an integrative policy through political and territorial fusion, and an approach to national unity through the maintenance of English and French for the objective of coercing the two linguistic groups into a bicultural unitary state.

Therefore, the pertinent questions following in this line of reasoning need to be asked whether language maintenance amounts to language policy in the linguistic sense of the term? What are the implications for language policy and planning in the wider context? Can it be considered a bad index of language policy and planning if it must be used to replace language policy and planning as a whole? Still, how, with what criteria, and to what extent may language policy and planning be implemented in the African context? However, some of these questions may find parts of their responses in the actions taken in language regulation during the political periods corresponding to the federation (1961-72), unification/unitary state (1972-1984), consolidation of the unitary state (1984 to the present).

Soon after reunification in 1961, government trained and employed translators and interpreters to cope with inter-state communication. Many secondary schools became bilingual in the sense that French and English became recognised as official languages and have been compulsory in schools although the teaching of the second official language i.e. French in English-speaking and English in French-speaking regions, only started much later and extended progressively. "Linguistic centres" or language teaching centres, which also functioned as cultural centres, were created for the teaching of French and English to government workers, and later on admitted ordinary citizens who desired to learn one or both languages. Still, the cultural aspects have been dormant in these centres leaving the language component to play the role of a cultural gateway for learners from the two linguistic groups. One centre was created in major urban centres of the different regions of the country. Such official language recognition also became a reality with the creation of the federal University of Cameroon in 1962.<sup>9</sup>

In the media, two radio language programmes were developed and used in the two states from 1967: "Le français par la radio" in the English-speaking regions, and "L'anglais chez vous" in the French-speaking region (see Chumbow, 1980; Echu and Grundstrom, 1999 for details of these measures, and Ayafor, 2001b: 20-27 for other language regulatory measures in government domains). Still, one must note that, although such measures had good intentions, they also portrayed evidence of

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<sup>9</sup> In 1993, sociopolitical pressure from Anglophone students led to the decentralisation of this University, accounting for the six full-scale state Universities in the country today. One, the University of Buea located in the English-speaking region, operates on an Anglo-Saxon-type model. Another, the University of Ngaoundere located in the French-speaking region, operates on a Francophone-type model. The four others, the Universities of Yaounde 1 & 2, Dschang, and Douala, all located in the French-speaking region, operate on a harmonised model called "bilingual" Universities. The bottom-line here is that instruction is officially allowed in English and /or French as the language abilities of the academic staff permit. The implication being that students are expected to be bilingual in English and French—reason for the compulsory intensive French course for Anglophones, and English for Francophones locally called "Bilingual Training" which has become an equal requirement for obtaining a degree. (cf. Echu and Grundstrom, 1999 for details of this course)

some inadvertent negligence which, nowadays, is often interpreted as a deliberate disparagement of the integrity and status of Anglophones. For instance, while the radio French teaching programme in the English-speaking region was named in French i.e. “Le français par la radio” given that it is meant to introduce French and as such should be in French, the English teaching programme in the French-speaking region was not equally named in English as it is intended to introduce English; rather, it was named in French. These apparently minor issues constitute indelible scars on the image of the Anglophone community and end up forming language-related grievances which justify the nature of language policy as a significant component of the Anglophone sociopolitical grievances known nowadays as The Anglophone Problem. This partly accounts for the fact that the positive side of these language measures has, for most of the time, been overshadowed by the negative interpretations of their political connotations.

#### *4.2.2.2. The period from 1972 onwards*

The advent of the unitary state in 1972 may be considered the turning point for the policy of bilingualism. Engendered by the political orientation discussed here, this political event caused the two states, former French Cameroon (or East Cameroon during the federal period) and former British Cameroon (or West Cameroon during the federal period) to lose the political autonomy maintained during federation to become a unitary state with central administration in the French-speaking region. This loss of political autonomy was felt more by the English-speaking region as government and all its institutions would henceforth be located in the French-speaking region thus, imposing a physical and geographic movement of only Anglophones into the French-speaking region. Still, the loss of political autonomy also implied the loss of de facto prestige for English as linguistic communication in official domains in English would be limited to the Anglophone communities owing to the fact that the physical movement referred to earlier is also accompanied by linguistic adjustment from English to French. This is pragmatically imposed by the demographic imbalance whereby Anglophones who move into the French-speaking regions for civic duties are inadvertently eclipsed by the French-speaking majority and obliged to speak French if they would like to be served quickly and effectively.

Even though the political advantage of removing regional autonomy provides the freedom of movement in terms of physical mobility across the former regional territorial boundaries – it boosts political and territorial fusion or integration – it tends to read as a form of political assimilation of the Anglophone community as no equal effective measures have been used to caused a similar Francophone mobility into the English-speaking region. Although government used other territorial fusion strategies such as sending Francophone civil servants to live and work in English-speaking regions and vice versa, this rather hastened the quasi-assimilation of Anglophones who end up being immersed, eclipsed, and turned into minorities in most official domains owing to their linguistic and numeric insignificance in such domains. Besides, consequent on this circumstantial relegation Anglophones tend to concede more efforts in speaking French than Francophones do in speaking English. Again, this only exacerbates the feeling of assimilation.

This further explains why French-English official bilingualism in Cameroon negatively tends to be an Anglophone burden or affair but also positively a functional advantage in an ideal decentralised integrated state. It is important to note that Francophones are quite aware of this effect and exploit it frequently in their daily interpersonal communication with Anglophones no matter if this is in the English-speaking region. The sociopolitical effect of it is that the situation qualifies Anglophones as a minority much in terms of Appel and Muysken’s (1987:3) criterion of majority language dominance. Constable (1974 cit. in Echu, 1999:195) has stated the political measures that became “the last straw which broke the camel’s back: “Le découpage régional au lendemain du référendum du 20 mai 1972 a eu des conséquences néfastes sur l’image de l’anglais au Cameroun et par conséquent a joué au détriment du bilinguisme officiel. Alors que les deux langues étaient considérées comme étant au même pied d’égalité avec la fédération de 1961, le nouvel État unitaire accorda cinq provinces à l’ancien État fédéré du Cameroun Oriental contre deux seulement pour l’ancien État fédéré du Cameroun Occidental.” Echu (1999 :195) elaborates on this political measure considered fatal for the status of English as an equal official language in particular and official bilingualism in general: “Par ailleurs, le découpage Biya du 17 octobre 1984 augmentant le nombre des provinces dans l’anciens Cameroun

Oriental à huit contre deux toujours pour le Cameroun Occidental, a plutôt aggravé la situation. Plus que jamais, le découpage a mis en évidence non seulement l'infériorité numérique des anglophones mais aussi et surtout l'infériorité de la langue anglaise au Cameroun."

The views above illustrate the fact that the effects of political measures have negated the positive aspects and prospects of language planning in postcolonial language policy in Cameroon. English, a language whose overpowering status in the Central and West African sub-region is imposed by a regional super power, Nigeria, becomes a minority language in neighbouring Cameroon owing to such sociopolitical measures. They have largely created alienation than melting the heterogeneous communities into a united and integrated polity. Language policy in these circumstances has not only been a tool for exclusion, alienation, and relegation but also a psychological medium of cultural obligation. The equality of status between English and French is devalued by the inequality of the territorial and population division along the Francophone-Anglophone dichotomy. Hence, the political measures have turned out to be read as strategies to subjugate and *frenchify* the English-speaking region; they also inadvertently relegate English vi-à-vis French. From this reasoning, it follows that official bilingualism as a language policy or an aspect of language planning has not succeeded as an integrative policy intended to boost political integration. One impact of these measures is that language policy is doomed to be implemented in terms of the demographic and territorial ratio between the two linguistic regions. In other words, language measures within official domains essentially and necessarily favour the French-speaking majority and Francophone regions rather than considering the equality of status between English and French. In this light, Zé Amvela (1999: 141) has rightly stated that "the implementation of this provision [constitutional provision regarding the equality of the two languages] in the day-to-day interactions among Cameroonians is determined mainly by the interplay of demographic factors, not by the status of either French or English."

The conclusion that follows from this situation is that within political ideology, the demographic imbalance has been ideologically conceived and exploited for the achievement of political objectives. In this case, language policy and planning suffer a political hijacking in which language measures are monopolised by political authority and are used as a form of blindfolding against the civil society and linguistic principles. In Cameroon, this is reified by the monopoly of government over the decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation of the bilingual policy. If a civil servant did not share the political ideologies of the leadership, he/she may almost certainly never hold a position relating to language management and official bilingualism.

#### 4.2.2.3. *Some legislative inconsistencies*

Some factors, which have made the political measures within the instrumental orientation of the bilingual policy to be interpreted as dubious rather than being complementary to the linguistic measures within the integrative orientation, are some legislative signposts of political bad faith and unwillingness. Such inconsistencies contradict the constitutional clause which states that the two languages which make up the bilingual policy are equal in status. The equality in status goes too far for the cultural, political, and territorial status of the speakers of the languages. But back in 1961, the first federal constitution, which sanctioned reunification and the policy of official bilingualism, already bore the seeds of an eventual rift in the orientations of the policy. In other words, some legislative evidence portrayed imminent preference for political concerns relative to an interest in achieving a centralised unitary state with Francophone ascendancy than giving the bilingual policy a chance to develop in linguistic principles. As indicated earlier, article 1 of the constitution stipulated that French and English shall be the official languages of the nation. But article 39 of the same constitution was detrimental to the implementation of language policy as it indicated that "This constitution shall be registered and published in the official gazette; the French version being valid." Thus, in case of a conflict or dispute over any issues related to the constitution, only the French version would be considered authentic and binding. It implies that the English version is not equally official; it is disparaged and relegated to the sideline of legality.

This relegation directly contradicts, invalidates or devalues the equality of the two languages provided for in article 1. Even though later amendments<sup>10</sup> removed this clause, it gives evidence, at least, from a considerably important source as the constitution, that some overt official attempt had been made to relegate one of the official languages, hence, the aspirations and significance of its speakers. Besides, the removal of the clause has not removed the relegation and disparagement of English in official domains engendered by the clause. This also constitutes evidence that political attitude to language policy attempts to implement official bilingualism along the lines of the demographic and territorial inequality between the two linguistic groups, and which appears to be a core element of political ideology among the political elite in Cameroon. One illustrative example is the fact that the two presidents who have ruled the country so far and many members of their political entourage do not speak English or have just a smattering of it (Chumbow and Simo Bobda, 1995:19). Although the trend seems to be on the decline owing to increasing awareness of the implications of such conducts at the helm of national leadership it leaves stereotypical beliefs detrimental to social harmony and national coercion.

However, three decades of this sociolinguistic predicament led to a Prime Ministerial circular in 1990 to avert the overt disparagement of English in official domains: “Tout traité ou accord conclu entre le Cameroun et des États, personnes ou organismes étrangers doit, à sa signature ou dès que possible, être rendu en anglais et en français, et comportant une disposition stipulant que les deux versions font également foi.” (Echu, 1999:190) It should be noted that this regulatory measure rather raises more dust than it attempts to settle. First, it seeks to avert the relegation of English only in linguistic communication in the domain of foreign or inter-state communication but does not address the widespread situation directly. Thus, English remains an afterthought within official domains. Second, the phrase “...ou dès que possible...” still opens up the chance for excuses when official documents in French are not equally simultaneously written in English, signed and endorsed as their French versions. Hence, in spite of these regulatory measures, attitudes to the equal use of the official languages in official domains encourages French dominance. It is an alarming reality nowadays that official decrees, notices, documents, etc., drafted in French are signed, endorsed with an official seal, and their contents are implemented without equal official versions in English. At best, English versions are only translated from the authentic French versions long after the French versions have been enforced. Worse, the English versions in this circumstance sometimes portray horrifying orthographic and grammatical errors. They may either be registered in the archives without official signatures and seal or they are signed by the subordinate of the competent official who signed the French versions. To say the least, the practice is on the increase in varying categories and subtle ways. For instance, there are instances of inadvertent disparagement of English in official documents without realising its implications, instances of nonchalant disparagement without awareness of its implications, instances of disparagement with awareness of some implications but simply adamant to change due to their refusal to recognise the claims to such disparagement, etc.

Furthermore, the constitutional amendment of 1984, which modified the country's appellation from “United Republic of Cameroon” to simply “Republic of Cameroon” appeared to be a minor legislative modification but it carried serious implication for the political status of the unified communities, territorial unity of the new nation but most importantly, the language policy regarding bilingualism. First, it rendered the political, cultural, and territorial significance of bilingualism null and void because bilingualism is based on these extralinguistic aspects of the two distinctive groups. If the regional autonomy of one region was removed, then, the symbol representing the union – bilingualism – would be considered dysfunctional because the two languages owe their status to the regional autonomy. In other words, the move alienates the political status of the Anglophone community as a state in the union thus, putting to question the essence of bilingualism as a language policy created largely based on the existence of two opposing Franco-Anglo-Saxon-styled states. Existentially speaking, the ordinary Cameroonian, French- or English-speaking, puts the predicament of language policy and political objectives in terms of incompatible marriage partners, i.e. either the choice of a unitary state prevails and the bilingual policy is dropped (a situation which would be read as an annexation of the minority English-speaking state by majority French-speaking state), or visa versa (a situation which allows for

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. The Constitution of 1996.

the recognition of a federation in which French and English represent the two states as in the period from 1961-1972).

But interestingly, government language measures towards the linguistic orientation have continued. In 1999 the Language Services and Bilingualism Division in the Presidency of the Republic, which is charged with government's language management programs, created a sub-section called "The Guidance, Harmonisation, and New Technologies Section." It has, since May 1999, published a quarterly "Terminology Bulletin", which henceforth publishes official terminology - a kind of language regulation which may as well fit into language planning measures if it was developed into a full-scale language plan of action. In its first publication, Marafat HamidouYaya (1999: 1-2) says that: "The Secretariat General of the Presidency of the Republic is pleased to launch this maiden issue of "Terminology Bulletin". This initiative falls in line with the new orientation given to the Guidance, Harmonisation and New Technologies Section...namely, harmonisation and dissemination of official terminology; the guidance of translators in government and other services, and the quality of translations through standardised terminology. This Bulletin is intended to be an indispensable working tool, among others, for professionals of inter-lingual communication especially within official circles. Translators, Interpreters, Journalists, communication experts, executive and the public at large are encouraged to use official terminology so as to communicate efficiently and without ambiguity in their daily activities within the meanders of the administration...In this maiden issue we publish the official appellation of government Ministries and some important Services attached to the Presidency of the Republic. In so doing, we want to avoid the use of unofficial renderings for these all-too-important State structures and services as has been the case for a long time." Such language measures, like many others, have not helped language policy in the country to achieve harmony in linguistic communication, nor boost national unity as an integrative policy. Language measures have thus, come a long way but very little to show.

Considering that among Anglophones language and nation are considered twin factors, language ethnicity has become a weapon for fighting French and Francophone ascendancy. Hence, the current official language policy constitutes one of the major factors in the list of grievances accounting for their subjugation. From this perspective, bilingualism in Cameroon has, since 1972, become an alienating rather than an integrative policy. The rift between official language management and political objectives has been widened by personal political ideologies and ambitions of the ruling elite (Bamgbose, 2000:97-98). Thus, rather than being a language policy for the integration of linguistic communication, social and national cohesion, official bilingualism has become a political strategy for alienation and exclusion owing to its ideological considerations and partisan implementation. Reactions in terms of sociopolitical conflicts<sup>11</sup> are evidence for the alienating effects of the instrumental or political orientation of the language policy. The failure of the linguistic or integrative orientation of the language policy, i.e. bilingualism for linguistic communication and sociocultural cohesion, marks the rift, the stagnation of language policy and planning in general although a few actions in government circles are made to regulate linguistic communication in official domains. Still, it is not wrong to say that generally speaking, the integrative bilingual tandem discussed earlier is a counterproductive policy.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has examined language policy issues in Cameroon during the postcolonial period of 1961-1972 corresponding to the federation, 1972-1984 corresponding to the advent of, and enforcement of the unitary state, and has highlighted the fact that the current sociolinguistic situation is a logical continuation of the language policy practices of these eras. There has been unrelenting efforts and frustration at the fact that language policy has not contributed to national integration through linguistic fusion. Thus, the single question preoccupying many a person is why has bilingualism failed in Cameroon when there is so much research in the wider context and many measures local to sustain it? Therefore there is need for new perspectives on historical evaluation because the history and

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Simo Bobda and Tiomajou (1995: 73-78); Chumbow and Simo Bobda (1995: 21-29) for a detailed assessment of reactions within the Anglophone community.

development of language policy in the country is usually either taken for granted or given undue simplification. This paper hopes to have provided a modest alternative consideration to it.

Official bilingualism as the national language policy grew out of political speculation in 1961 and experienced stagnation in terms of developing a linguistic approach to language planning which should involve all the language resources in the country or the linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of English and French. Many political imperatives contributed to dictate the stagnation but soon became the overriding choices of the ruling elite as the fragmented nature of the nation constituted a persistent warning of political disintegration. One factor may also have been the state of the art where debate and research have yet to agree on the delimitation and methods of investigating bilingualism.

Yet, the advent of the unitary state in 1972 portrayed evidence that language policy and planning in linguistic principles hardly is desired among the political elite of successive leaderships. This is illustrated by the fact that the official bilingual policy has not found a satisfactory technical, and education framework for teaching and using the official languages in official domains. Besides, the political measures from this date have coupled with those of 1984 to spark off sociopolitical strife between the majority Francophone leadership and the minority Anglophone community, as the measures have turned out to read as political assimilation measures, which go hand in glove with the French ascendancy over English, to subjugate Anglophones rather than unite the two linguistic communities.

The contribution of the paper lies in the fact that it has widened the dimensions of the debate over the nature of bilingualism and the implementation of language policy in Cameroon. Specifically, it has shown that there is, first and foremost, a political orientation and a linguistic orientation in the conceptualisation of the policy. Thus, they correspond to the instrumental and integrative orientations to achievement. However, there is a rift between the two orientations engendered by the overriding pressures of the political orientation, which has eclipsed and impacted on the linguistic component, making it difficult to develop as typical language policy. This renders many language regulatory measures by government appear arbitrary, alienating, unilateral hence, losing their grip and objective as an integrative policy through linguistic fusion.

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