

Language Policy and Identity Construction

The dynamics of Cameroon's
multilingualism

Eric A. Anchimbe

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Language Policy and Identity Construction

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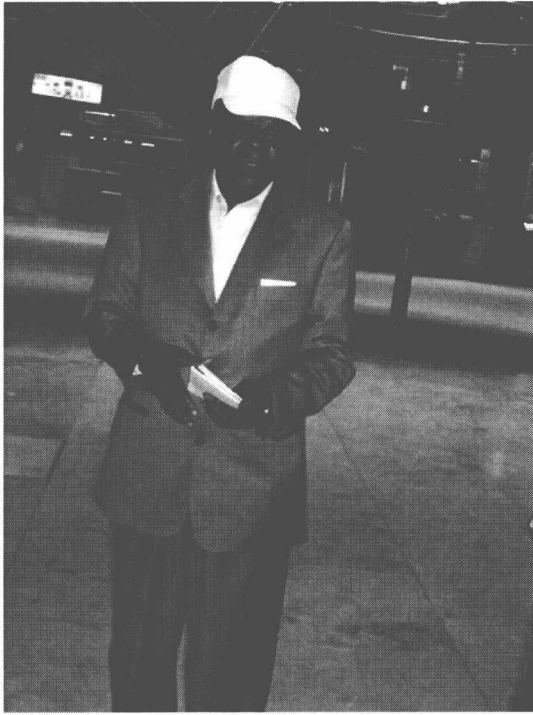
Victor Webb
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Volume 32

Language Policy and Identity Construction.
The dynamics of Cameroon's multilingualism
by Eric A. Anchimbe

*for my dad, Moses Abia Anchimbe,
who did not wait long enough to see this book published*

(† February 27, 2009)



*There is no politically neutral theory of language planning,
in spite of the fact that the power elites tend to only
examine language policy under conditions of crisis.*

(Neville Alexander 2004: 113)

List of abbreviations

CABTAL	Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy
CamE	Cameroon English
CamF	Cameroon French
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CPDM	Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement
CPE	Cameroon Pidgin English
CRTV	Cameroon Radio and Television Corporation
ENS	Ecole Normale Supérieure (Higher Teachers' Training College)
NACALCO	National Association of Cameroon Language Committees
PROPELCA	Projet de Recherche Opérationnelle pour l'Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SIL	Société Internationale de Linguistique
UPC	Union des Populations du Cameroun

Preface

This book brings together parts of my research on attempts at putting in place a suitable language policy in Cameroon and the impacts on the relationship between languages, their speakers and the construction of both social and linguistic identities. Some of the chapters are revised and updated versions of journal articles and book chapters written between 2004 and 2008. The overall objective is to explain how choices in the state's language policy, i.e. empowering or disempowering languages, determine speakers' identification with these languages, their attitude towards other languages in the multilingual community, and their choices in interpersonal and inter-group communication. In this light, the book investigates trends in attachment to the two official languages (French and English), the place of official as well as indigenous languages in education, the construction and adoption of multiple identities within specific contexts and across languages, the expansion or spread of Cameroon Pidgin English and the indigenous languages into certain formal institutional domains initially dominated by the official languages, and linguistic patterns of social interaction for politeness, respect and in-group bonding.

This book is one of the first consistent book length studies of sociolinguistic and pragmatic phenomena in Cameroon. Focusing on the dynamics of Cameroon's multilingualism, it contributes to current debates on the impact of politic language policy on daily language use in sociocultural and interpersonal interactions. There have been some monographs and edited volumes in the past but these have been on more than just sociolinguistic issues. Some of the major ones include Mbassi-Manga (1976a), Todd (1982a), Koenig et al. (1983), Tadadjeu (1990), Mendo Ze (1999), Echu and Grundstrom (2001), Mutaka and Chumbow (2001), Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003), Mbangwana et al. (2006), Harrow and Mpoche (2008), Kouega (2007a), Mulo Farenkia (2008a), and Anchimbe (2012). It is my wish that more in depth studies are carried out that document the ongoing changes in the sociolinguistic structure of the country.

I incurred personal and professional debts in the preparation of this volume. My sincere thanks go, first of all, to Loreto Todd, Augustin Simo Bobda and two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments on the manuscript. My colleagues in Bayreuth, Dayter Daria and Ernesta Kelen Fonyuy assisted in the early stages while Anne Schröder, Gratien Atindogbé, Robert Mailhammer, and Yves Talla

Sando Ouafeu(†) commented on parts of the manuscript for which I am grateful. I wish to thank Frank Fessler (University of Bayreuth) for drawing Map 1.

Ana Deumert, the series editor, and Kees Vaes and Patricia Leplae at John Benjamins saw the manuscript from its proposal stage to its current form. I thank Ana for her contribution to this volume in its present form.

Finally, my love goes to my wife, Joyce Abla and our kids Thalia and Ryan, for tolerating my irregular schedules.

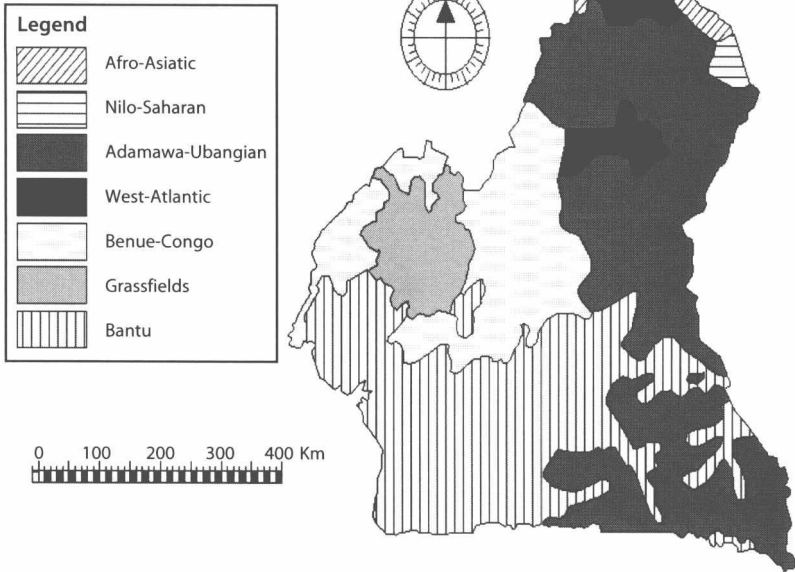
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Map 1. Political map of Cameroon: Ten administrative regions and the anglophone and francophone zones

Cameroon Language Map



Map 2. Linguistic map of Cameroon: Indigenous language families
Source: Bird (2001: 4) after Dieu & Renauld (1983).

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