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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Code-mixing: A Linguistic Form of Bilingualism in Anglophone Cameroon Literature

BINWE EMMANUEL
The University of Maroua, Cameroon
Corresponding Author: BINWE EMMANUEL, **E-mail**: binweemmanuel606@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

Cameroon is known as an official bilingual nation as the country adopted English and French as its two official languages during the 1961 Foumban Conference. That conference laid the foundations of the Federal State of Cameroon with an English-speaking and a French-speaking part; one of the resolutions was the adoption of English and French as the two official languages of the country. This study attempts to ascertain the viability of code-mixing as a strategy that can mark the effectiveness of official bilingualism in Cameroon. This study was based on the framework of Muysken (2000). The data for this work was collected from John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* (2004), an Anglophone author in the field of creative writing, whose work showed the effective use of English and French that can give the reliability and validity to this study under investigation of official bilingualism in Anglophone Cameroon literature. The findings of the study reveal that code-mixing has progressive and positive effects in the field of creative writing, whereby French lexical insertion was used in order to promote official bilingualism in Cameroon since the country got its access to independence in 1960.

| KEYWORDS

Cameroon, Bilingualism, Anglophone, Literature, Code-mixing.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to assess the code-mixing of English-French marking official bilingualism in Anglophone Cameroon literature. Among the countries of the world where the phenomenon of bilingualism is experienced, Cameroon may be described as one of the most fascinating. 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, throughout the national territory." This statement is quite clear in stating what is believed within political circles to be the manifestation, objective, and 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 that warranted the statement. Furthermore, in 1977, while inaugurating the creation of a 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 mastery of two languages. While the earlier view appears to characterise bilingualism in the country as societal or institutional, the latter 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. Moreover, during the same occasion, the president added, "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."

1.1. Official Bilingualism in Cameroon

First of all, the concept of official bilingualism in Cameroon has motivated scholars to look at it from different perspectives.

Fonlon (1969, p.20) states that the purpose of bilingualism in Cameroon should determine its definition, description, and 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 can 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 certainly be 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. 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,p.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 efforts by local academics.

Mbassi-Manga (1973, p.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 captures the current predicament after two decades and may well determine the plight of language policy for the decades to come.

In short, it can be said that official bilingualism is remarkable when all Cameroonian institutions can use both English and French as the official languages in all domains of life, such as military, economic, education, communication, and transport.

2. Theoretical Considerations and Literature Review

This work will be based on the theory and the previous studies related to code-mixing in this work.

2.1. Muysken's Framework (2000)

Muysken (2000) suggests that there are three main code-mixing patterns that may be found in bilingual speech communities: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. This means that one pattern will usually dominate, though not necessarily to the exclusion of other patterns. In the first type of code-mixing (the insertion pattern), one language determines the overall structure into which constituents from the other language are inserted. In the second type of code-mixing (alternation pattern), both languages occur alternately, each with their own structure and in the third type of code-mixing (congruent lexicalization), the grammatical structure is shared by languages.

2.2. Literature Review

This section will shortly review the perception of code-mixing used as a linguistic form of official bilingualism in Anglophone Cameroon literature. Many studies have been carried out on code switching and mixing, mostly in secondary education and in administration.

Fokou (1999) examined the speech of 3rd year bilingual students of the University of Yaounde I in 1997/1998. He analysed the different types of code switching and interference identified in their speech. He found that students use interference because they have not mastered the two official codes. That explained why some stuck to one language while they were being addressed in the other official language.

Ayeomoni (2006) investigated code switching and code mixing as a style of language use in childhood in the Yoruba speech community. He concluded by saying that code switching and code-mixing correlate positively with the educational attainment of individuals. As shown also, both phenomena have their merits as well as demerits in the speech repertoire of their users. One only hopes that English language lecturers would now devise the means of preventing the demerits from adversely affecting the child's language acquisition process.

Tanyi (2008) discussed code switching as a communicative strategy in a multilingual society, a case study of Kenyang-English speakers in Yaounde. The investigation was conducted at the level of communicative intents, causes, consequences and types. His findings revealed that 75% of Kenyang's speakers switch codes when communicating in Kenyang. Some of the causes include the inability of speakers to use a particular term in Kenyang or to quote another speaker in his exact words. This results in a linguistic dynamism in communication among speakers and the non-mastery of Kenyang language.

Emoh (2009) investigated what effects John Nkemngong and Alobwed'epie' use code switching and codemixing to convey their message and depict the society on which their respective works are based. The findings reveal that the characters in both novels switch and mix codes for various reasons. Some of the reasons include the author's attempt to paint or to depict the multilingual landscape in which their novels are set and to parody some of the vices and tendencies that characterize the Kamagola and the Ewawa societies, such as racism, mockery and anger.

Koban (2013) discussed the intra-sentential and inter-sentential code switching in Turkish English bilinguals in New York City, U.S. He found that a positive but non-significant correlation exists between intra-sentential code switching and language competency in both Turkish and English. This means that the more the speakers report their language skills to be good, the more intra-sentential CS they use in their utterances.

Bensen and Çavusoglu (2013) investigated the acts of code switching by lecturers in EFL classrooms in the English preparatory school of a private university in North Cyprus. The results of the analysis suggest that regardless of the lecturers' linguistic backgrounds, all of the participants in the study code switch in their classrooms despite the general principles of the English Preparatory School banning this act. Although the recent literature on English language teaching discourages the use of L1 in language classrooms, it appears that lecturers do, in fact, make use of code switching in language learning classrooms for purposes such as clarifying meaning, saving time in their teaching and motivating students. The participants also strongly believed that it is for the benefit of the students in

this specific context where the aim of the students was to pass a specific language proficiency exam focusing on grammatical points within a limited period of time.

Magid and Mugaddam (2013) addressed the role of code switching to students' L1 (Arabic) in their ESL classrooms and whether it expanded interaction in these classrooms found in Sudan and Saudi Arabia. They found that lecturers had an acceptable belief in the various pedagogical uses of Arabic (L1) to ameliorate interactions among students in ESL classrooms, that is, explaining meaning and new vocabulary, guiding interpretation, transmitting lesson content, illustrating grammatical rules, organizing classrooms and praising and encouraging students. Code switching, then, is a teaching strategy in EFL classrooms for the different functions it serves in teaching a foreign language. Consequently, students' L1 (Arabic) should not be devalued or underestimated in second language learning classrooms.

3. Methodology

This study will be based on the qualitative approach, which is concerned with research that does not include numerical data (Creswell, 1994, p. 183). As a corpus study of code-mixing in Anglophone Cameroon literature, data was collected from John Nkemngong Nkengasong (2004)'s *Across the Mongolo* in which there are aspects of code-mixing used as a linguistic form of official bilingualism in Cameroon.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section focuses more on the findings and discussion as far as this study is concerned.

4.1. Types of code-mixing of English and French in Anglophone Cameroon literature

The choice of code-mixing of English and French as a prestige language reflects the aspects of official bilingualism in Cameroon in general and in Anglophone Cameroon literature in particular. For this study, **insertion** is the most common type of code-mixing of **English** and **French** in John Nkemngong Nkengasong (2004)'s *Across the Mongolo* as follows:

*(01)The vice-dean told me that he was not in a position to solve my problem and that I should instead see the people of the **services des oeuvres** because it was they who took charge of such matters (Nkengasong, p. 124)*

In this sentence, the inserted expression is "***services des oeuvres***" which means the people in charge of student's affairs in English.

*(02) His **mandat** in the faculty of science was almost about to burn, but he fought hard to defend it (Nkengasong, p. 125)*

Also, the word "***mandat***", that is used by the author, means mandate in English in order to show the duration of somebody in power in his book. The author used this term because French is used as the dominant language at work in Cameroon.

*(03) What made him most was the ministerial order requesting all those who had done Ph D programme abroad to enrol for and defend the **Doctorat d'Etat** before they were considered for promotion(Nkengasong, p. 126)*

Besides, the expression "***Doctorat d'Etat***" signifies Doctor of Philosophy (Ph D) in English, and the language user was conscious of using it so that he could prove his bilingual competence in the field of creative writing.

*(04) I had been told that it was customary for new appointees to **arousée** as they say in French (Nkengasong, p. 127)*

In the same vein, the word "***Arousée***" refers to spray in English, but in this context, it is concerned with celebration or feast because there was one Anglophone who was appointed to the post of minister in charge of special duties at the presidency of the Republic. That is why the writer used that term, which is related to the feast of the appointment.

*(05) That is, they made a feast, popped **champagne**, drank, ate, danced and sent motions of support to their Excellency (Nkengasong, p. 127)*

Here, the term "***Champagne***" is a French expression meaning a sparkling white wine produced in Champagne in France.

(06) At exactly 5 p.m, Nwolefeck and I were at the ***Carrefour carcas,*** *where Dr. Amboh was to pick us up (Nkengasong, p. 127)*

Moreover, the term "***Carrefour carcas***" implies roundabout of carcase, and this entails the place where the bodies of dead animals could be found.

(07) Minister Wankili conducted him into the sitting room, speaking French with him and occasionally answering ***oui Monsieur! Oui Monsieur*** *(Nkengasong, p. 130)*

The mixed word here is *"****oui monsieur! Oui monsieur****!* That signifies yes, Sir in English. Indeed, it is used by the author to show the answers that the minister Wankili conducted Ngwe into the sitting room.

(08) Not long after, the ***MC*** *called the attention of all greeted in a very formal manner, yet declared that it was not a formal occasion but just an opportunity to share a drink (Nkengasong, p. 132)*

*"****MC****"* is an abbreviation of Maitre de Conference in French, and it refers to an associate professor who is a university lecturer in English.

(09) I was going to pay her a visit in her room at the ***cite universitaire*** *(Nkengasong, p. 134)*

In the same way, "**Cité universitaire**" simply deals with the rooms that university students rent or live in. This shows the solidarity and social integration of university learners. That is why Tay (1989,p. 408) said that code-mixing contains placing and mingling linguistic parts or units such as morphemes, words, phrases, and clauses from two various well grammatical structures within the very utterance and sentence. The bilingual speakers of any community all over the world use discourse structures containing the properties of code-mixing and code-switching.

(10) I forced my way through the two men, reached on the bed and, shaking him on the chest, cried out coarsely, ***papa, papa, pa…pa.*** *My father did not answer well. (Nkengasong, p. 150)*

(11) I shook him again calling ***papa, pa…pa, pa…pa*** *(Nkengasong, p. 150)*

The French term is *"papa"*, meaning daddy or father in English in the above sentences. Thus, this term was used by the protagonist Ngwe when he called his father. So, the selection of language shows the capability of bilingualism in his utterances. According to Bloomfield (1933), bilingualism is "the native control of two languages" (p. 56)

(12) On the road to the ***marché des femmes*** *with the complicity of the authorities of the faculties (Nkengasong, p. 151)*

The French term "***Marchés des femmes***" implies women's markets in English. In this case, the writer is just like laying emphasis on markets where the majority of sellers are women.

(13) I heard voices loud and grummy from ***Grenouille*** *Bar (Nkengasong, p. 187)*

In this sentence, the mixing word is "***Grenouille***" which is a French expression meaning frog in English. In fact, the author used it to locate a bar where frogs are sold.

(14) When the scripts were sorted out, I discovered that ***Docteur*** *Atteba, who taught two main courses and in whose courses I had always done better than others (Nkengasong, p. 197)*

Ngwe expressed his dissatisfaction when he failed two main courses lectured by Atteba at the university using the word "***Docteur***" in French, which means doctor in English.

(15) I stood at the balcomy and peered at the ***bizarre*** *world of falsity and viciousness (Nkengasong, p. 197)*

The term "***bizarre***" is a French word which implies not worthless in English, and the author has used it in order to show that his world is meaningless.

Therefore, the results of this study confirm the study carried out by Myers-Scotton (2009), who considered bilingualism as the most important skill, placing emphasis on proficiency towards the lower end of the bilingual continuum by stating that "bilingualism is the ability to use two or more languages sufficiently to carry on a limited casual conversation" (p. 44). Here, the code choice does not only bear significance for the individual; it also indexes societal values and attitudes. The use of French in English utterances delineates social stratification more clearly and divides those with good education, great prestige and high social status from those without. While mixing English is considered an act of snobbery when one uses it with those less educated than oneself (especially those who are close to oneself), not mixing English when talking to educated people will subject oneself to snobbery. Perhaps the most flexible and liberal definition was proposed by Li (2008) when he defined a bilingual as "anyone who can communicate in more than one language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)" (p. 4).

5. Conclusion

This study shed light on aspects of code-mixing used as a linguistic form of official bilingualism in Anglophone Cameroon literature. Indeed, this work was done using the framework of Muysken (2000). As far as the methodology is concerned, this is a corpus-based study in which data was collected from John Nkemngong Nkengasong (2004)'s *Across the Mongolo*. Therefore, the findings show that code-mixing remains a form of French lexical insertion, marking the effectiveness of official bilingualism in Anglophone Cameroon literature.

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