

INTELLIGIBILITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE LANGUAGE OF AGRICULTURAL INPUTS IN CAMEROON

Dr Camilla Arundie Tabe

Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Maroua, Cameroon.

Njofie Isaac Fieze

Government Bilingual High School Doukoula and Ecole Normale Supérieure, University of Maroua, Cameroon.

ABSTRACT: *This research set out to investigate the extent to which the language of agricultural inputs (chemicals) sold in Cameroon markets is intelligible and reliable to farmers, most especially the rural farmers. The South West, North West, West and Far North Regions were taken as case studies. Data was collected from inscriptions on inputs, farmers' questionnaires, interviews with input sellers, agricultural experts and farmers, as well as personal observation of the researchers. The data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively following Swales (1990) and Bhatia's (1993) approaches to genre analysis. The findings from questionnaires and interviews revealed that the language of agricultural input products use in Cameroon is less intelligible to rural farmers. This is because of the scientific nature, the formulae and abbreviations used which are difficult for a non- agricultural expert to understand and the fact that most rural farmers have low educational levels. Moreover, some chemicals sold in Cameroon markets do not have labeling and the language of withdrawal period. In addition, the result from questionnaires, interviews and personal experiences revealed that the language of most inputs like fungicide and herbicide are unreliable. Those who respect the application as prescribed on the chemicals fail in their farms and those who violate succeed. This unreliability and absence of instructional language have negative impacts on agricultural output and human health.*

KEYWORDS: *Intelligibility, Reliability, Language, Agricultural Inputs, Cameroon*

INTRODUCTION

Language is dynamic depending on the context and purpose it is used to serve. Therefore, language is never used in abstract; the kind of language used may reflect a particular age group, economic, political social class, profession or walk of life in society. When a particular kind of language is used by a particular group of people belonging to a common discipline, it is called a register. Register in broader sense may be known as a genre; which means the linguistic peculiarities of a particular discipline in a community, highly recognized by that same community and strange to the outsiders of the discipline (Swales, 1990: 58). This may be to preserve the internal integrity of the discipline or to create its own job description. Some of the common societal disciplines with peculiar registers include: agriculture, medicine, business, politics, religion, traditional rites, command in the military, law and sports.

Agriculture is one of the professional disciplines in Cameroon where the language of inputs is highly coded. Many rural farmers, who happen to be the greater proportion of inputs users, face difficulties in understanding the labelling and consequently, mismanage the contents of the

chemicals they apply in their farms. The language of agricultural inputs contains some formulae and abbreviations such as NPK, WP, WG, EC, MGO and CAO (see Fieze & Djoumba 2016). Many rural farmers complain that these formulae and abbreviations are above their level of understanding. One of the researchers, having practised farming for over 13 years alongside education, encountered a lot of linguistic difficulties, along with other rural farmers in his locality (M'muock Fosimondi).

Cameroonian farmers do not only complain about the coding of the labelling of agricultural input products, a good number of them who can read equally pointed out that the labelling of the inputs in most cases appear unreliable, when they have to follow the prescribed labelling (G. Nkemze, Personal Communication, September 04, 2015; I. Manu, Personal Communication, 23rd July, 2015). Furthermore, there are always some inputs in Cameroon markets and stores packaged in transparent papers without any labelling on them to guide at least farmers who are able to read.

The above intricacy faced by Cameroonian farmers is in keeping with the major constraint outlined by Tantisantisom (2011) in Thailand agriculture as information dissemination barrier. He holds that leaflets and newsletters as message carriers are of limited use in reaching illiterate farmers. He further argued that the technical language used in communicating information to most Thailand farmers is incomprehensible. In Cameroon, limited interest is shown on the language used on agricultural input products; the way it should be handled and disseminated down to rural farmers in the field is inadequate. The aim of this research is to evaluate the level of intelligibility and reliability of the language of agricultural inputs to Cameroonian farmers, especially the rural farmers. The researchers came up with the following research question to guide the study.

1. To what extent is the language of agricultural inputs intelligible and reliable to rural farmers in Cameroon?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much interest has not been shown on language and agriculture especially within Cameroon. This study will, therefore be a milestone in the domain. Just one scientific work was found on agro-linguistics; all the other research works found were based on agricultural science with no relationship to agro-linguistics. Since agro-linguistic works fall under English for specific purposes (ESP), it was deemed necessary to review some works on ESP.

Fieze and Djoumba (2016) investigated the language of agricultural inputs in some regions of Cameroon like Dschang in the West region, Santa in the North West region and M'muock Fosimondi in the South West region. The aim of the study was to examine the linguistic peculiarities of the language used on agricultural input chemicals. The result of the research revealed features such as codes, abbreviations and formulae. This led the researchers to conclude that the language of agricultural inputs is a genre in its own right that is understood more by the inner community members and alien to non community members.

Looking at other critical works on ESP, Pop (2008) explored the linguistic attractiveness of Barcelona tourism in Spain. The objective of the study was to discover the linguistic peculiarities used in advertising tourism and how the use of this language shapes people's minds to always wanting to visit the touristic site in Spain. The results of the research revealed that,

the advertiser blends old and new Englishes, embedded with succinct descriptive adjectives like beautiful and nice to describe the campus, the beach and the free facilities for the tourists to create tremendous pictures about the touristic site. This description lures customers to visit Barcelon at every moment. The advertiser equally used declarative mood of clauses to guarantee confidence in the quality of services and products. Above all, she uses material-verbal processes in passive clauses to paint a good picture about the touristic site and change the minds of the population to have positive thoughts about it (p 3-7). The language of tourism is a genre of language just like that of agricultural inputs that people use to achieve specific objectives or purposes. Therefore the tourist advertising language should be a hybrid one and luring in order to always attract visitors.

Moreover, in the domain of English language and law, Ashipu and Umokoro (2014) carried out a study on the uniqueness of the language of law (legalese) in some selected Nigerian court cases and the semantic implication of the legalese to a layman, judges and judgements that are delivered. The result of their findings shows that, the legal documents are in nature lengthy and complex with abstract language that makes comprehension difficult for a layman without a legal background (p 622). Moreover, the language of law is a melange of Latin, French and English, with a lot of vague abstractions. According to Ashipu and Umukoro, this linguistic abstraction makes the law language to be obscured because of the ambiguity and inaccuracy of its jargon. This hinders understanding to lay people in courts and even lawyers with low competence in the field. They however, concluded that because of obscurity and abstractness of legalese, it probably stands as the least communicative linguistic register in the field of English for Specific Purposes (p 623) and lawyers always employ this language to articulate their views in order to suppress their opponents in court cases.

Furthermore, Collins (2015) investigated the register used in some South African schools and how the register spelled out racial inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. He brought to light 11 official languages which were adopted in post-apartheid South Africa including English language, Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa and many other local languages to be nationally used. His investigation was based on two schools, one in Cape Town City and the other in the South City. After a series of evaluations of the use of various languages in different schools, Collins came out with the following results: English language in South Africa is a hegemonic language used in urban centers resided mostly by whites and “Model C” students (Black South African students who attend previously all-white, English-medium schools). Collins (2015) reiterated that local languages suffered from political domination after 1994, and the domination was termed by some critics as, “racialized language”. English language was given special attention in classes in Cape Town schools, having over 70% of hours over other local languages. Even in schools in south city where Afrikaans dominated linguistically, English language was still given a super scale treatment over native languages (p 14-28). Using language for specific purposes, English language is used in South Africa to communicate dominance, civilize race, social fitness and pride while the local languages stand as the languages of the poor, underprivileged and the uncivilized.

In addition, Hyland (2006) explored linguistic hedges used by medical practitioners in medical reports. He aimed at discovering some of the reasons why these hedges are used and their importance in medical report communication. The result of the research revealed that medical practitioners, in their reports, turn to use words that show probability like “may be caused by...”, “would likely be...”, might have been...”, X may cause Y, rather than X causes Y”. Hyland

(2006) however, advanced that medical practitioners hedge language because of doubtful evidence, uncertain predictions, imperfect measuring techniques and other uncertainties in the experimental process (p. 696). Moreover, Hyland concluded that the academic medical language is extensively hedged, possibly to achieve their professional integrity like avoiding personal responsibility of statements, protecting themselves from negative consequences of their experiments and to hide some shocking information from their patients. Medical hedges, like any other register in ESP are used to achieve professional goal that is beneficiary to the practitioners because they understand the language of their colleagues with little or no difficulty.

Rahimi (2015) exploited the linguistic genre of religious language and how this genre of language impacts the transmission of religious ideologies through services like during prayers, processions, sermons, rosary and performing burial and funeral rites. Exploring Halliday's (1994) notion of linguistic functionalism and Bloor's (2007) notion of performative speech act and linking them to religion genre, Rahimi came out with the following results: religious leaders use metaphorical language, ironical language, sympathetic language and fiction to evoke worshippers' feelings and emotions; be it Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other traditional worships. He reiterated that fiction and other discursive instruments and strategies are used in difficult language and religious context to produce facts and truth. These fiction, stories, parables preach about the existence of evil, judgement day to come and the power of prayer; the claims were justified using a biblical scripture from Mathew 13: 3-8 (p. 9). He concluded by assuming the fact that religious language is difficult and philosophical, designed to block the reasoning of believers, and that in every religion, there is a saviour to save people who follow the doctrine.

Even though, language and agriculture has suffered limited attention from socio- linguists, the limitation of direct literature review nevertheless, did not stop the researchers from pursuing the research because the research work could be a starting point in the field of applied agrolinguistics, based on the intelligibility and reliability of the language of agricultural input products.

Theoretical framework

Genre analysis is a sociolinguistic theory that is used in analysing language and societal happenings. Genre is communicative and professionally designed to serve a purpose. Looking at genre and register, some sociolinguists hold that register deals mostly with the superficial linguistic differences that exist among professions, age groups, sex and gender, and social status (Swales 1990). Genre on the other hand is said to deal with issues above register or semantic structure such as the form and structure of language and the various pragmatic constraints placed at the boundary of a profession by experts of that discipline for professional distinction (Bhatia 2004). Genre analysis to other linguists is an approach to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which its high relevance can be recognised through the use of highly coded grammatical features (Dudley-Evans 1997).

The coding that placed linguistic boundaries among professions in genre is intentional and purposeful. The language of agricultural input products is highly structured with formulae, abbreviations and acronyms. These codings are geared towards the science of agriculture. However, they colour the linguistic peculiarities of agriculture. The codes can be interpreted or manipulated easily by agricultural technicians and experts but might be a barrier to outside

community members in understanding linguistic issues related to agriculture. Swales (1990) calls these experts “members of discourse community” because they have the power to decide on their genre, shape it the way they want and may forward it to other communities or send it out for use.

The notion of genre is not uniform. Jensen (2015) argues that genre always needs evaluation and development to suit various possible areas of application (see also Swales 1990). Genre as a guiding principle has been used in analysing language in many societal practices such as agriculture, advertisement, political rhetoric, medicine, sexuality, journalism, gambling and various specific disciplines in academic writing. This variation in application of genre analysis gives credibility to its flexibility.

The analysis under genre may fall within three aspects. Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) refer to the first and second aspects as, “close linguistic studies” of a text and “dynamic complexity of discourse practices”. These two aspects mostly focus on lexico-grammar, morpho-syntax and morpho-semantics of a linguistic situation of a particular profession. The third approach which is the broader aspect proposed by Bazerman (1988) and supported by Devitt (1991), Bhatia (2004) and Swales (2004) is that of “socio-cultural and critical practices”. This aspect is the highest level of analysis in genre because more complex (abstract) elements could be brought into textual analysis such as the cultural background of a text and the characteristics of a discipline embedded into analysis to come out with wonderful results. Recently, Bhatia (2017) brought into genre a new approach to analysing issues called “critical genre analysis”. Critical genre analysis aims at analysing “socio-pragmatic” concerns, which entails bringing issues of other texts or situations (inter-textuality) into genre to better understand diverse linguistic situations of a text and bring out some hidden meaning beyond words used in a text. The summary of some concepts of genre analysis will be vital in analysing data in this scientific work.

This section can be sum up with some wide concepts proposed by Bhatia (1993 & 2004) and Swales (1990 & 2004). They hold that, genres are communicative and easily manipulated by inner community members of a profession. Furthermore, genre is highly structured and conventionalized to make a professional distinction. Moreover, members of a profession have internal pride and integrity because they can easily manipulate their linguistic genre with little or no constraint. In addition, genres are linguistic identities that create professional boundaries in such a way that outside members will find difficulties in understanding it, and lastly genres are highly coded by professionals to place disciplinary limitations or distinctions. These codings are intentional and purposeful to achieve professional objectives.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this research work was collected from farmers’ questionnaires, interviews granted to some farmers, input sellers and some agricultural technicians, coupled with the critical observation of one of the researchers for over 13 years.

A total number of 60 questionnaires were administered to sample rural farmers in M’muock Fosimondi, Bafoussam, Dschang and Santa. Questionnaires that were administered to some rural farmers had elementary and main questions. The elementary section consisted of identification of the respondent and the main section was further divided into two parts

consisting of open-ended and closed-ended questions to allow respondents express their personal views about the intelligibility and reliability of the language of agricultural input products. There was 100% return of questionnaires because the researchers administered the questionnaires to farmers themselves and followed them up so as to have the same number returned.

Interviews were granted to three sets of people, 20 interviews were granted to farmers, 20 interviews were also granted to agricultural input sellers, including the ones in Maroua, and 10 interviews were granted to agricultural experts in the Faculty of Agronomy in the University of Dschang and some agricultural technicians in the field. Questions on farmers' interview protocol and agricultural experts' protocol were differently framed following the objectives of the research. It should be noted that the farmers' interviews were granted to rural farmers with low educational background. However, interviews and observation only came in to support the main instrument, which are the questionnaires.

Data analysis

The data for this research was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively following Swales (1981, 1990, 2000, 2000, 2004 & 2009) and Bhatia's (1993 & 2008) approaches to genre analysis. Therefore, data was first of all presented on tables and qualitative analysis followed. The first part of this analysis will handle the intelligibility aspect of the language of agricultural inputs, while the second part will examine reliability.

Intelligibility of agricultural language

The table below presents the result got from farmers' questionnaires relating to the evaluation of intelligibility of the language of agricultural inputs.

Table 1: Intelligibility of the language of agricultural inputs to farmers

Sample No. of farmers	No of farmers who read the labelling	No of farmers who do not read the labelling	No of farmers who read and understand labelling	No of farmers who read but do not understand labelling
60	43 (71.66%)	17 (28.34%)	08 (18.6%)	35 (81.4%)

Considering the statistics from the questionnaires presented on table 1 above, a total number of 60 farmers were respondents. 43 respondents read the labelling giving a percentage of 71.66 and 17 (28.34%) respondents said they do not read the labelling. Out of 43 respondents who read the labelling before application, 8 (18.6%) respondents said they read the labelling and understand some of the language and 35 (81.4%) respondents said that they read the labelling but do not understand them.

Statistics from the questionnaires show that there is a problem of intelligibility of agro-linguistic inputs to a majority of Cameroonian farmers, most especially the rural farmers who dropped out of school in their primary and early secondary school levels. When farmers do not understand the language, it is difficult for them to use the products appropriately, and this turns

to affect output negatively. It is rather unfortunate that the register of agricultural input products in Cameroon is not parallel to the educational level of most users. The majority of users are less educated rural farmers who can scarcely read a scientific agricultural language. They communicate most often in local languages and Pidgin English. It should be noted that 28% of the respondents said they do not read labellings at all, advancing reasons that they do not know how to read, assuming needless reading what they will not understand or they are used to their own local way of applying the products that is quite different from the labelling.

Moreover, 18.6 % of the sample farmers who said they can read and understand the labelling went further to the proceeding questions in the questionnaire and pointed out that, at times they do not understand the labelling fully because of the “too scientific” nature of the language used to label some elements; making it difficult for them to get the complete message. 81.4 % of sample farmers who said they read the labelling but cannot understand, advanced reasons such as; the language is more than their level of understanding because they can read other things like newspapers, novels and press releases and understand but cannot understand the language on agricultural input products. Statistics from the questionnaires reveal that the labelling of agricultural inputs sold in Cameroon markets is a hard nut to crack to a majority of rural farmers who use the products in their farm every day.

Information from interviews granted to some farmers added strength to this statistics from the questionnaires. 18 (90%) of farmers interviewed supported the fact that the language of agricultural input chemicals is not well understood by rural farmers and could be said to be the cause of low quantity and quality of agricultural output. A farmer (G. Nkemze, Personal Communication, September 4, 2015) who was interviewed in M’muock Fosimondi village said he was thirty-five years old and he had been practising agriculture for more than fifteen years since he dropped out of school. He mentioned some of the crops he cultivates like vegetables, potatoes, carrots, cabbages and leeks. The farmer said he is never satisfied with the language on agricultural input products because it is a kind of “difficult language”, he does not understand linguistic aspects like NPK, CAO, MGO, WP. To this farmer, the language is always his problem. He believed that he had failed several times in his farms because he applies chemicals using his own common sense than the normal prescription on the products. He however, assumed that if he had understood the labelling on the products; his failures could be limited to natural factors like flood or drought.

Other reasons that account for Cameroonian farmers’ inability to understand the language on agricultural input products include the monolingual labelling of some of the products in the markets. Products like Parastar (fungicide), *Quick Clear* (herbicide) and *EagrowCare* (fungicide) carry only the name of the products in English, but the entire prescription is in the French language. This creates understanding barrier to most English speaking Cameroonians who can only express themselves in English language, pidgin and local languages. Out of 81.4% of Cameroonian farmers who read the language of the products but do not understand, a few of them from the South West Region of the country pointed out that they can neither speak nor read French, making it difficult and impossible for them to understand scientific labelling in French.

The farmers’ literacy level as earlier mentioned is another reason for comprehensive barrier of the language of agricultural input chemicals. The opinions of some agricultural input chemical sellers got through some interviews administered to them equally support this claim. Out of 20

product sellers interviewed, 14 (70%) of sellers acknowledged the fact that the language of agricultural input products is not easily understood by farmers who in most cases always ask assistance from them for the explanation of certain labelling. Agricultural product sellers equally affirmed to the researchers that they equally face difficulties at times in understanding the language on the chemicals. Consequently, the explanation given to farmers is always limited. The first interviewee met was in the west region (D. Cangue, Personal Communication, July 23, 2015). He sells in sector two of Dschang central market (Marché B). This product seller has been selling for over 12 years. The chemical seller said he had a certificate from the government that permitted him to sell these products. He, however, acknowledged the fact that the language on agricultural input products is “too scientific”, above the level of understanding of a rural farmer. He sincerely said that there are certain labellings that he never understood and could only advise illiterate farmers to apply those chemicals in their farms through common sense and past measurements.

In addition, V. Menda (Personal Communication, July 24, 2015) said she has been selling agricultural input products for over 13 years and she has been doing it just like any other business. Like many sellers in M’muock Fosimondi, the seller dropped out of school after obtaining first school leaving certificate in class 7. Her level of education makes her owe no guidance to give to rural farmers on the language of agricultural inputs. Though she could read newspapers and understood almost everything, Victorine like many other agricultural product sellers who were interviewed in Maroua, Bafoussam and Santa, had very little knowledge on the labelling of agricultural input products to share with the suffering rural farmers. Most of the guidance they give to inquisitive farmers is based on commonsense and former estimated measurements.

Moreover, there are some agricultural input products in Cameroon markets without labelling on them. This is the case of some soluble fertilizers sold in plastic bags without anything written on them. It becomes very difficult for farmers who are not agro-chemically trained to master the content of the chemicals they use on crops, the right application of the chemicals and withdrawal period. Due to the neglect or poor management of this language, farmers do not adequately estimate the withdrawal period of fertilizer and consequently harvest crops at times and take to markets with active chemical on them. These chemicals like soluble fertilizers are applied on crops like vegetable, tomatoes, lettuce, leeks, carrot and Irish potatoes. 80% of respondents in the questionnaires said that they believed that the consumption of active chemical in these crops as a result of absence of language causes serious human health diseases and damages like cancer, miscarriage, stomach problems, mental disorder and nausea. A United States scientific research by Ecobichon (1996) confirmed this assumption by Cameroonian farmers and added fatal death to it. Interviews with I. Manu (Personal communication, July 22, 2015), T. Christopher (Personal communication, July 21, 2015) and P. Yerima (Personal communication, July 21, 2015) (a doctor and professors from the Faculty of Agronomy in the university of Dschang) confirmed the disastrous effects of the consumption of active chemicals on crops sold in Cameroon markets partly due to the absence of communication date of withdrawal period, which is one of the main causes of cancer and many related body diseases. P. Yerima (personal communication, July 21, 2015) reiterated that the language on agricultural inputs in Cameroon is mostly imported by input production companies found in countries like Canadian, American and some European countries where production is based. Agricultural technicians face little or no difficulty in understanding the language on inputs because they have undergone training on its science.

From the data analysis above, one can say that the language of agricultural input products is to a large extent unintelligible to rural farmers. Agricultural experts or technicians understand the language of agricultural input chemicals without facing any difficulty because the language is recognizable to them. They use and understand the words or inscriptions in general because it is the genre of their profession and they have been trained to use it (Fieze & Djoumba, 2016). On the other hand, rural farmers who use the products have indicated problems of intelligibility. To them, the language is “too difficult”, full of formulae and abbreviations. Swales and Bhatia (2004) support this view when they state that, the language of a particular discipline may be strange to the alien community members. The section below will focus on the reliability of the language of agricultural input chemicals.

Reliability of the language on agricultural input products

The reliability of the language of input chemicals was evaluated from farmers’ questionnaires and interviews granted to farmers and agricultural experts. The data from the questionnaires is presented on table 2 below. Information from interviews will be used in the analysis to support the data got from the questionnaires.

Table 2: Reliability of the language of agricultural inputs to farmers

Total number of Farmers who read inscriptions	No of farmers who say that the language is reliable	No of farmers who say the language is unreliable	Total
43	5 (11.11%)	38 (88.89%)	43 (100%)

Data from table 2 show that 11.11 % of sample farmers confirmed that the language on some agricultural input products is reliable and 88.89 % complained that the language on the input products, especially the fungicide is so unreliable compared to contents of the products. The input products like *Mancozan Super*, *Gardien* and *Eagrow Care* are some of the products that farmers complain about the unreliability of their labelling. They say the language is misleading. *Mancozan super* is one of the most used fungicides by Cameroonian farmers. This *mancozan* like other fungicides such as *cozeb*, *gardien*, *mancosam* and *bluezeb* carry a labelling that seems to be a setback to farmers who rely only on the labelling. The prescription of *mancozan*, under the rate of application states, “the application has to be done every 7 to 14 days” and it is further written that, “Don’t spray more than 3 or 4 applications by season”. The respect of practical usage of these instructions by farmers ends them in a doom. The language does not tie with or reflect the qualities of the products. Based on the language of the product, farmers who respect the instruction to spray at the interval of 7 to 14 days, fail completely and have their crops (for example, potatoes, leeks, carrots, tomatoes and vegetables) destroyed by blight-a black spot disease.

On the contrary, farmers who do not follow the labelling on fungicide products and spray at the interval of 3 to 4 days and have from 7 to 12 applications in a season succeed very well in fighting black pot disease on their crops and consequently have good harvest. This supports the claim by some farmers that the language on the product is misleading. In an interview with Z. Syverine in M’muock Fosimondi (Personal Communication, August 10, 2015) whose crops had been destroyed by blight, he spoke so bitterly and negatively about the language on

agricultural input products. This farmer cultivated potatoes and carrots. He said he had been farming for 6 years and had discovered that the language on these agricultural input products is very “deceptive”. He said he was quite sure that if an investigation was done on the labelling and the contents of those products, most products would have been faked with fake labelling. This farmer sprayed his farm at the interval of 9 days in two applications, upon spraying for the third time after 7 days, black spot disease had destroyed his entire potatoes farm.

Furthermore, a product seller in Dschang (N. Gaston, Personal Communication, September 5, 2015) said the language of agricultural input products at times is not only too scientific with a lot of abbreviations, but equally unreliable in the sense that, at times those who follow the language fail in their farms and those who do not follow the labelling of the input products succeed. He said this is in reference to fungicides, and doubted if the labelling on these products reflects the contents of the products.

Looking at the unreliability of the language on some products like fungicides, I. Manu (Personal Communication, July 23, 2015) suggested the idea of adaptability. He holds that most input products are imported, and so they cannot easily be adapted to Cameroon soils. This is because research on the production might have been done in Canada, America or European countries under their soils and climatic conditions. Thus, it will be very difficult for these products to be adapted easily in Cameroon. T. Christopher and P. Yerima (Personal Communication, July 24, 2015) shared similar views with I. Manu on the reliability of the language on agricultural input products. T. Christopher however, added that there are some fake products in the market bearing fake labelling, and could be terrible if applied on crops in farms.

The discussion above demonstrates that the language on agricultural inputs is to a greater degree unreliable. Some farmers said they do not follow the instructions on agricultural input products especially fungicides because when they follow the interval of prescription, they fail totally. They equally strongly believe that for them to succeed in their farms, they must violate the number of stipulated applications on agricultural input products.

This research will serve as a basis for further studies in the field of agro-linguistics in Cameroon. We suggest that the Cameroon government should look into the linguistic issues in the field of agriculture especially that of agricultural input chemicals. Educational stakeholders could also implement the teaching of the language of agriculture at primary, secondary and higher levels of education so that the population will be familiar with the labelling and the interpretation of the inscriptions on the products. Through this, high quantity and quality agricultural output will be guaranteed. The teaching of this language will equally go a long way to reduce the toxic rate of chemical consumption in crops due to poor interpretation of the labelling on agricultural input products. Agriculture is the backbone of the Cameroon economy and the majority of unemployed Cameroonian youths embrace agriculture as a means for survival. Addressing the agro-linguistic problem by the Cameroon government will pull more youths to fully embrace agriculture as a profession.

DISCUSSION

The linguistic intelligibility and reliability of agricultural input products was the focus of this research. Findings from questionnaires proved that the labelling of agricultural inputs is less intelligible to rural farmers. The results showed that out of 43 sample farmers who could read

labeling, 81.4% could read but would not understand the language. This is as a result of the scientific nature of the language and low farmers' educational background. This claim from farmers through the questionnaires was supported by agricultural experts through interviews (I. Manu, Personal communication, July 22, 2015; T. Christopher, Personal communication, July 21, 2015 & P. Yerima, Personal communication, July 21, 2015). These professionals raised awareness that most often, the language on inputs and the products themselves are imported from production companies found in America, Canada, Australia and other European countries. They have not been adapted to the Cameroonian context (lack of environmental studies). Moreover, statistics from interviews and questionnaires revealed that farmers who rely on the mode of application of fungicides like *MACOZAN super*, *Gardien*, *Kozebe*, *bluezeb* and *manco-sam* fail in their farms, and farmers who violate the mode of application of the input products succeed in their farms. This is equally supported by Fieze and Djoumba (2016). This result may possibly be attributed to the fact that the government might not have taken time to check fake input products in the market or might have not been flexible to thoroughly evaluate the quality of chemicals sold in Cameroon markets, to see if the labellings on them reflect the contents.

Agricultural experts, however, wished that efforts could be made by the Cameroon government to monitor and bring down the language to reflect the educational level of her citizens so that rural farmers would be able to manage the application of the products in their farms well. This will consequently lead to high quantity and quality output by Cameroon rural farmers.

The effects of the language of agricultural input products on output and human health are enormous (see Ecobichon 1996; Fieze & Djoumba 2016). These effects are as a result of the misleading language on the products, absence of inscriptions on some soluble fertilizer in shops, absence of withdrawal period on some chemicals and unintelligibility of the labeling of some inputs to farmers due to the scientific nature of the language.

CONCLUSION

The Cameroon government needs to handle the linguistic aspect of agriculture with more seriousness to be able to reach emergence in the sector by 2035. This will also reduce the risk of acute health damages due to linguistic communication problems on input chemicals. If the Cameroon government implement farmers' literacy programmes, printing of leaflets and distribution alongside selling of the products, the encouragement of the use of local languages in local radio and television programmes to talk about the use of these chemicals and the use of clear photographs on products, it would ameliorate the linguistic difficulties faced by farmers in agricultural inputs in Cameroon.

Further research could compare the linguistic features of agricultural input chemicals to those of other agricultural products. Researchers could also bring out elements that could be the bases of an agro-linguistic theory for further related linguistic issues in agriculture.

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