Strategies to Foster the Implementation of Language Policy in Cameroon Economic Spheres

Ojong Marie-Clare Ndip
Department of Linguistics and African Languages, The University of Bamenda

Ayonghe Lum Suzanne
Department of Translation, The University of Buea

Comfort Numfor Nchang
Department of English Modern Letters
HTTC Bambili,, The University of Bamenda

ABSTRACT: *Language policy and practice emphasises the development of the creative potential of individuals. This study examines the implementation of language policy in Cameroon economic spheres. A descriptive survey was used to portray the characteristics of behaviour, opinions, abilities, beliefs, and knowledge of individuals. The Triangulation method was employed with the objective to increase confidence in the findings. The target population comprised 100 workers from taxation, commerce and council. The stratified random sampling technique was used with focus group interview, observation and questionnaire. Results revealed that language policies in Cameroon are inefficient, resulting to a negative attitude on its users. The study recommends that stakeholders, policy planners and other actors should put an appropriate language policy in place to foster social cohesion and the growth of language use.*

KEYWORDS: language policy, practices, economic sectors, social cohesion

INTRODUCTION

The aim of education has not just been for the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realisation and liberation of the self in order to make huge contributions to world knowledge in diverse fields such as mathematics, astronomy, writing of books, medical science, civil engineering, architecture, fine arts, and more which remain a guiding light for policy planning and practices. These rich legacies to world heritage must not only be nurtured and preserved for posterity but must also be researched, enhanced, and put to new uses through the educational system and policy designers. The policies of language put in place, ought to

23

help re-establish citizens at all levels as respected and essential members of the society since everyone truly shapes the nature of the country in their own ways. Often times, it is believed that one ought to do everything to empower their country in order to help them do their job effectively and ensure adequate livelihood, respect, dignity, and autonomy, while also instilling in the system basic methods of quality control and accountability.

Language is crucial for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, as well as promoting national development and unity. Providing universal access to quality policies could be the key to multilingualism in Cameroon's continuous way up and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, linguistic, social impartiality and equality, scientific advancement, national integration and cultural preservation. Planning is a great leveller, as such it remains the best tool for achieving economic and social mobility, political stability, inclusion, equality and social cohesion. Initiatives are often put in place in this regard to ensure that all users of languages from all groups, despite inherent obstacles, are provided various targeted opportunities to excel wherever members find themselves and even the world at large. These elements are often incorporated taking into account the local and global needs of the country, and with respect for and reference to its rich diversity and culture especially in languages. Every country equally has its policies which guide its everyday activities especial those of language in a bilingual or multilingual setting. The implementation of these policies becomes taxing and cumbersome, if the government does not take upon itself to lay and implement adequate rules of communication and behaviour.

There is need for a global policy development agenda reflected in the Sustainable Development, adapted to "ensure inclusive linguistic practices and equitable quality education to promote lifelong opportunities for all" by 2035. Such a lofty goal as the growth of a nation requires the entire political and social systems being reconfigured to support and foster progress of the citizens and their wellbeing so that, all of the critical targets and goals can be achieved with an intention of bringing peace and sustainability. Chumbow (1996), states "Ignorance is a disease which only knowledge can cure" and by so doing, adds that "if we fail to plan, then we plan to fail".Language policy practices which are conceived as integral and necessary aspects of the government's strategy of building a non-segregation Cameroon have posed major worries in recent times. The inability to facilitate communication across the barriers of language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged, has led to linguistic discrimination which has become a major call for concern.

This work examines the gap that exists in the ineffectiveness of the use of the two official languages following the policies put in place.Particular interest is focused on the Anglophones (following the two English speaking regions in Cameroon) their challenges in adhering to the said policy in order to promote social cohesion.This will enable the study to assess the national option for linguistic fairness by examining the strategies put in place

by government to implement the language policythat guides the economic sectors namely-commerce, taxation and Douala IV council.

Statement of the Problem

The implementation and practice of language policies in Cameroon economic sector as well as other areas is timid and ineffective. This affects communication practices and hampers social cohesion. Language policy practices which are conceived as integral and necessary aspects of the government's strategy of building a non-segregation Cameroon have posed major problems in recent times. Citizens term the country's policies towards the official languages as unnecessary routine which only exist on papers and users can barely distinguish the necessary rubrics for such policies which cannot be defended in government structures. To meet the exigencies of the 21st century life challenges as far as language policies and practices are concerned in texts and discourses, appropriate strategies must be put in place by projecting its implementation in Cameroon economic structures. Having this particular concern in mind, this study was embarked with the following objectives:

Objectives of the Study

The study sought:

1.To assess the twist between formulated and disseminated government policies towards the official language policies in Cameroon government economic structures.

2. To examine the strategies put in place to foster the implementation of language policies in Cameroon economic/public spheres.

The above objectives led to the following research questions.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the formulated and disseminated government policies towards the official languages in Cameroon government economic structures?

2. What strategies have been put in place to foster the implementation of language policies in theseeconomic spheres?

Research Hypotheses

To answer these questions, this study upholds the main hypothesis that:

1. There is neither a clearly formulated nor disseminated government policy towards the official languages in government economic structures.

2. The strategies put in place to foster the implementation of language policies in Cameroon economic spheres are ineffective.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Review of literature covers three domains: the conceptual, theoretical and empirical framework. The conceptual frame examined concepts related to the study.The theoretical framework focused on two key theories: the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) purported by Van Dijk (2019) and Critical Pragmatic Approach (CPA) of Dewey (2015). Empirical perspective highlights gap in language policies and practices in the country with emphasis on assessing its strategies of implementation.

Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework examined concepts such as language policy, language practice and social cohesion and how these affect the economic spheres.

Language Policy
Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) define language policy as "a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system". This means that language policy is set by a governing body or what a government does either officially through legislation or policy to determine how languages are used, cultivated and monitored. They are based on commitment to the promotion of language equity and language rights as required by a democratic dispensation; the language policy takes cognisance of the constitutional provisions on bilingualism and is in concert with government's goals for economic, socio-political and educational growth. McCarty (2011), defines language policy as "a complex sociocultural process and as modes of human interaction, negotiation, and production mediated by relations of power. The 'policy' in these processes resides in their language-regulating power. Its aims are to promote the equitable use of official languages, facilitate access to government services, knowledge and information, initiate and sustain a vibrant discourse on bilingualism with both language communities, promote national unity, linguistic and good language management for efficient public service administration to meet client expectations and needs.

Language Practice
According to Spolsky (2014), language practice refers to the practice of working with and using languages in communication void of any form of marginalisation and stigma. Language is inherently one's identity and in a multilingual or bilingual setting, it is important to know that languages of the minority group might push the users to be considered inferior. However, a fair practice will eradicate any form of bias and give the users an adequate sense of belonging. Language practice therefore relates to the inherent nature of man, an expression of thoughts and feelings as one's own identity and the improvement in developing a feeling of belonging as a part of that culture and personality. Therefore, since language is one's identity and pride, this study wraps up the definition of language practice as 'living the language'.

Social Cohesion

Social cohesion has been defined by Friedkin, (2004) as 'a set of characteristics that keep a group able to function as a unit'. It alludes mainly to the nature and quality of relationships across people and groups in society, including the state. Social cohesion exists when a society ensures the wellbeing of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity to focus on the reduction of disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion within or between societal groups. This view asserts that at its essence social cohesion implies a convergence across groups in society, which provide a framework within which groups can at a minimum coexist peacefully. Social cohesion is thus about the predictability of interactions across people and groups, which in turn provide incentives for collective action. This definition suggests that social cohesion is a valuable goal in itself that contributes to maintaining long-term national growth, and that language is a vital part of any social cohesion agenda, strengthened when policies ensure that users have equal opportunities to build both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of society as characterised by a set of attitudes and norms that include trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness in participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy as well as their behavioural manifestations.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts two key theories: The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) purported by Van Dijk (2019) and Critical Pragmatic Approach (CPA) of Dewey (2015). The overall aim of the two theories is to make research findings more meaningful, acceptable to the theoretical constructs in the research field and ensure oversimplification. They assist in stimulating research while ensuring the extension of knowledge by providing both direction and impetus to the research inquiry. Fairclough (2003), provides a three-dimensional framework for the analysis of text and discourse: (a) the linguistic description of the formal properties of the text; (b) the interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes/interaction and the text, and finally, (c) the explanation of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality. Accordingly, there are some underlying assumptions behind certain selections of discourse. These assumptions are never value-free and innocent; rather they are ideologically driven and motivated. Van Dijk (2019) posits that, CDA should not limit itself to a study of the relationship between discourse and social structure, but that language use and discourse always presuppose the intervening mental models, goals and general social representations (knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms, values) of the language users. The constant unity of language and other social matters ensures that language is entwined in social power in a number of ways: language indexes and expresses power, and is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not necessarily spring from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and the long term. Language provides a finely articulated vehicle for differences in power in hierarchical social structures. In other words, CDA can be defined as being fundamentally

27

interested in analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language.

On the other hand,critical pragmatists, as post-formal thinkers, begin to build meaning of their leadership approach through an understanding of the "historicity of its formation" (Dewey,2015).Pragmatism, in particular, has the potential to elucidate the intellectual coherency of interaction design that is born out of practice, experience, and human interaction.Nforbi (2013), states that 'the aim of critical pragmatic approach is to create meaning from the relationship between language learning, language users and the contexts in which the actual speaking takes place. Critical pragmatism operates from the viewpoint of language as a social science. It argues that different language use is not just a matter of linguistic variation, to be described as classified in purely theoretical terms, or to be analysed with the aid of sociological variables denoting class or other societal parameters. The main impact is in the ways it helps us to recognise social discrimination and motivates strategies towards ending it. He argues further that from a critically pragmatic perspective, what conversation analysts should primarily worry about is how the mechanisms of linguistic deployments are related to the powers of society that operate in this discourse. Creswell & Plano (2011), stipulate that such multiple realities that exist in the society should be open to enquiry through an investigation of human experiences.

Empirical Review
The empirical research in this work reviews literature related to the topic on language policy and practice in a bit to lay bare the gap for the present topic. Researchers have worked insome areas of this study. Multilingual matters since are crucial to the wellbeing of a society and touch the hearts of most researchers such as Atindogbe (2019) in the work being multilingual in a bilingual environment: Implications for quality education and research management. He demonstrates the incongruity of promoting exclusion bilingualism in a multilingual setting as detrimental to quality education in Cameroon, thereby advocating for the inclusive use of mother tongue in schools.

Asanga Fon (2019), in *Official Bilingualism in Cameroon: An Endangered Policy,* examines the potential for the survival of bilingualism in Cameroon. More so, Anchimbe (2005) *on multilingual backgrounds and the identity issue in Cameroon,* projects the relevance to the establishment of a Cameroonian identity which is devoid of complications. However, Anchimbe (ibid) looks at Linguistic Identity in Postcolonial Multilingual Spaceswith English as lingua franca*:* here, he questions whether multilingualism is a threat to official bilingualism in Cameroon and on what ground it is used; as an instrumental or integrative policy. Ayafor (ibid) adds his voice in multilingual backgrounds and the identity issue in Cameroon, with what may be considered "acceptable bilingualism" from the stand point of official recognition, that is, functional competence in English and French and says it 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 the only language in Cameroon with the pragmatic ability to function as a contact language for all linguistic groups.

Echu (2003), in coping with multilingualism trends in the evolution of language policy in Cameroon and The language question in Cameroon critiques the mother tongue language policy in Cameroon revealing that mother tongue education in the early years of primary education remains a distant cry, as the possible language whereby learners can pick up very fast in understanding lessons. As a matter of fact, Chumbow (2009), the master of language policy and practices in linguistic diversity, pluralism and national development in Africapresents two major challenges; the practical problems such as inadequacy of resources (trained teachers, textbooks and language materials), language teaching methodology, class size and numbers etc., and the ideological issues of ethnicity. Other researchers whose works have been reviewed in this study argue that language policy in a multilingual setting is crucial and must not be left unattended from different perspectives.

The general debate centres on the issue of the inappropriate status of various languages spoken in multilingual communities and the policies that guide such languages. This study sets in to fill a vacuum, on the challenges that exist in the ineffective use of the two official languages following the policies put in place in order to promote the implementation of language policies in Cameroon economic sectors. The interest of this research fits in here and corroborates with Chumbow (2009) in ideological issues which do not just take their bearing in ethnicity but equally with beliefs and attitudes towards multilingualism, pluralism and power in relation to social cohesion in public spheres. In accordance with the 2022 national theme of bilingualism day, which focuses on 'bilingualism, a catalyst for social cohesion…'one cannot help but seek to analyse government's role in the strategies to implement language policies in recent years for efficient practice in a bilingual country like Cameroon.

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION

For the purpose of this study, the triangulation approach is suitable as it entails both the quantitative and qualitative designs of questionnaire, observation and interview as methods of collecting significant data. The term triangulation is one to which many meanings are attributed, the major limitation to this classification system is the division of mixed methods into partially suitable sections which are most appropriate to meet the aims and objectives of the research. This study makes use of the Creswell & Plano, (2007) model of triangulation which suggests that there is growing acceptance that the design provides an appropriate methodology to address the complex language problems frequently faced by language users. By building on the strengths, acknowledging and limiting the weaknesses of triangulation research methods, this work addresses these complex linguistic problems in a creative and imaginative way. A discussion of the sample size and instruments under use paves the way for a better understanding of the topic under study.

Thus the research parameters here include; the sample size which targets 100 participants through the administration of questionnaire with all the research designs put in place to ensure validity and reliability: 40 questionnaire administered to the taxation policy implementers and workers and 30 to each of the other two sectors, commerce and council respectively. The number of participants is limited to100 as a number that represents the entire study. The population targets speakers from the Littoral Region where business merges people particularly Douala because such boundaries place natural delimitations upon the research to afford the researcher the proper focus so as not to present a one-size-fits-all set of results. The sampling techniques for selecting workers in the economic sector is the stratified random sampling. The data collected is presented below:

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	SD	D	Mean	SD EV
1.	There is an ego playing in the speakers of the two languages making communication difficult.	16 (53.3)	7 (23.3%)	4 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	3 (10.0%)	3.0	1.4
2.	As a Cameroonian, it is your obligation to practice the use of the two official languages for communication both in and out of your job site	19 (63.3%)	7 (23.3%)	0 (0%)	4 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	3.4	1.0
3.	The government has no interest in setting policies towards the use of the official language planning and practices in Cameroon	2 (6.7%)	8 (26.7%)	3 (10%)	7 (23.3%)	10 (33.3%)	1.9	1.1
4.	Most people are not aware and do not understand the ideology behind the language policy implementation	10 (33.3%)	13 (43.4%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10%)	2.9	1.1

5.	There is no clear cut language policy which affects the quality of communication in the course of practice	14 (46.7)	11 (36.7%)	4 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	3.0	1.3
6.	The forces behind the formulation of the language policy for the economic sector in Cameroon do not do their work appropriately	13 (43.3%)	12 (40%)	2 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	3 (10%)	3.1	1.1
7.	There are no clear cut rules nor policy indicators, which make communication in the economic sector a major challenge	12 (40%)	12 (40%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3.0	1.1
8.	Bilingualism in Cameroon is more of propaganda and no policies nor strategies have been put in place to foster the implementation of language policy	9 (30%)	14 (46.7)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10%)	2.8	1.1

Table 1. Strategies and Implementation of Language Policy

FINDINGS

The following were realised from the triangulation method of data analysis:

Research question 1. *What are the formulated and disseminated government policies towards the official languages in Cameroon government economic structures?*
Out of the 100 questionnaire respondents, 70 (70%) said there were no formulated policies while 30% were either neutral or agreed that the policy existed. There were neither formulated nor disseminated language policy towards government economic structures. Workers know of the fact that they are supposed to use English and French but are not guided by any policy document. Even if policy existed on paper, it was not clear to affect the quality of communication.

Research question 2. *What strategies have been put in place to foster the implementation of language policies in these economic spheres?*

The sum total of 65% of the respondents said there were no implementations while 35% either agreed or remained neutral. No strategies were found in the economic sector unlike educational milieu where respondents could recall the implementation of English and French obligatorily in the basic and secondary schools.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings deals with the presentation and analysis of data gathered on the field using the triangulation approach.

Research question 1. *What are the formulated and disseminated government policy towards the official languages in Cameroon government economic structures?*

The findings of this research shows that out of the 100 respondents that took this task from the economic sectors, 70 respondents (70%) did not know of any language policy guiding the economic policy while the remainder of 30 respondents constituting 30% were either neutral, agreed or strongly agreed that there were actually formulated policy to guide language users of the economic sector. To ascertain the total results, a combination of the stems agreed (50%) were summed together with responses under strongly agreed (30%), giving a total of 70% against 30%.the language policy formulation and dissemination in Cameroon economic spheres remains timidand unknown to its citizens and stakeholders thereby making dissemination an impossible task.

Research question 2. *What strategies have been put in place to foster the implementation of language policy in these economic spheres?*

The findings of the study in relation to this question show that 65 of the respondents constituting 65% did not know of any strategies of policy implementation which actually made cohesion difficult as citizens went about their businesses addressing people the way they felt was satisfactorily to them. With no strategies of language policy to bride communication gaps in the economic spheres in a bilingual country like Cameron, there was a display of negative attitude and segregation in language, leading to linguistic bias and unfairness.

From the questions set forth and the responses gathered through the triangulation approach, it is very clear that the implementation strategies are not successful due to lack of existing language policy guiding the use of the official languages that boost language usage especially, in the economic domain of the council, commerce and taxation.

CONCLUSION

The English and French languages have taken over key roles in national and international trade, marketing, tourism, legislation and policy-making. They have achieved the enhanced status as the dominant world languages with English spearheading more which has led to an increased demand for the training of competent specialists able to mediate in these languages. Therefore, elements of a group language are inherent, but it can rather be described as a mixture of a group and special language due to their official status, particularly when the two main features melt together, namely its exclusiveness and its reference to a special use, be it in government offices, private companies or the market. If the government can devise appropriate strategies and implement them in the country following the 21st century business and language world, the country will be strenghtened.

Recommendation

The ability of employees to work in their preferred official language is subject to the government's duty to offer and provide services in the official languages chosen in Cameroon by putting down concrete strategies that could guide the implementation of policy practices. This can be realised by setting up translation mediums in major offices, communicating official information in both languages and giving the minority speakers constant practice sessions. The organisation of regular seminars to educate and sensitize members of a community could encourage cohesion and rid away all forms of bias while awaiting concrete documented policy.

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Biographies

Ojong Marie-Clare Ndip is a holder of a Bachelor of Arts Degree (B.A.) in English Modern Letters, Higher Teachers Diplomas (DIPES 1 and 11) in English Language and Literature teaching. Master Degree (M.A.) in Applied linguistics and currently a PhD student in Applied Linguistics of the Faculty of Arts, the University of Bamenda. Presently, she is a secondary school teacher, a GCE Literature in English examiner and student awaiting her PhD defense.Her areas of interest deal with language policy, practice, testing and assessment that help enhance validity and reliability in examinations and national growth. She moderates an online platform of over a thousand GCE examiners following the new syllabus literature texts put in place by the government and is interested in building these texts for effective results. She is a language consultant and a researcher in using policy and assessment matters to solve real world problems.

Prof. Ayonghe Lum Suzanne graduated from the University of Buea with a B.Sc. (Hons) in Economics in 2001 and obtained an MA in Translation in 2003 from the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI), University of Buea. In 2010, she graduated from the North West University in South Africa with a Ph.D. in Language Practice (Audiovisual Translation). She holds a Professional Certificate in Specialised Translation – Subtitling, and SDL Trados which she obtained from the North West University, South Africa in 2008. She teaches Audiovisual Translation, Computer Assisted Translation, Computer Literacy, Language Technology, and Research Methodology at ASTI, and at the Pan African University (UB), in the Faculty of Education (UB) she teaches Subtitling for the hearing impaired. She also teaches Audiovisual Translation and Computer Assisted

Translation at the University of Douala, Cameroon. She has published over 20 articles in peer-reviewed periodicals. She is currently the Head, of the Translation Division at ASTI.

Dr. Comfort Numfor holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in English Language; a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Applied Linguistics, and a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in Applied Linguistics from the University of Buea in Cameroon. She is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English Modern Letters; Higher Teacher Training College Bambili, in the University of Bamenda. She teaches applied linguistics courses. She has published articles and books in national and international journals.