

Evaluating the Degree of Individual Bilingualism in Yaounde

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Abstract

This paper seeks to determine the degree of individual bilingualism in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon. It builds on findings got from the answers of 240 informants selected randomly from both sections of three bilingual High Schools in this town. The data were collected by means of two instruments: a questionnaire and a language achievement test. The findings reveal that learners of English and French in both school sections are from the two speech communities of the country. Besides, the study population is deemed representative of the whole Cameroonian population, for it was found that participants were from all ten regions of the country (however with an imbalance in number). The questionnaire revealed that speakers made alternate use of English and French at varying degrees, and possessed each at least one language skill in these languages. Results of the language test revealed that most participants had a fair mastery of the grammars of both languages (allowing them to qualify as intermediate or upper intermediate users). In addition, a significantly high number of participants came out with sensible translations from each language into the other. The above results provide sufficient evidence for one to validly discard the general statement that it is Cameroon which is bilingual and not Cameroonians; they hint at the point that Cameroonians from both linguistic groups living in Yaounde can unequivocally be termed bilingual individuals.

Keywords: Individual bilingualism, Yaounde, Anglophone, Francophone

Introduction

In a modern world governed, in part, by technology and trade, languages are bound to get in contact with one another. In many cases, this contact gives rise to a situation where one language tends to take precedence over the other(s). Yet in a world linked by the internet, global exchanges and mostly advances in technology, owning more than just one language seems to be more of an asset than a liability for a country and, more importantly, its citizens. This might be because one of the multiple languages that a country owns could prove more apt to contribute to its development or may give more opportunities to the country to open to the world. Besides, a language may benefit from a strong and prestigious political, economic and even financial position which weighs on other nations, pushing them to choose and give it a national and/or an official stance in their day-to-day life.

Given that some European languages complied with these traits, they were, soon after the independence of many former African colonies, chosen and given an official status. This is for instance the case with French, English, Portuguese and Spanish. They were adopted to offer the newly created states the opportunity to have and maintain external partnerships guaranteeing exchanges, dialogue and co-operation, and communication between and among countries.

The situation was peculiar in some settings like Cameroon wherein two of the colonizers' languages had to be adopted after independence namely, English and French. The present paper attempts to determine or evaluate the degree of individual bilingualism in Yaounde, the political capital of Cameroon. But we would not pretend to have any say over bilingualism in Cameroon before considering some background information to the phenomenon of English-French bilingualism in the country.

Cameroon's bilingualism has often been described as a historical (and even a linguistic) accident (Esambe 2008). This view suggests that Cameroon's bilingualism came about in a rather unexpected manner. The sociopolitical construct which today is known as Cameroon is in fact a territory of less than 500, 000 sq. km which has undergone several colonial influences starting from Germany to finally France and Britain. After being a German protectorate from 1884 to 1919 when it was placed under the Franco-British trusteeship, Cameroon became, after World War II, a Franco-British territory, with 1/5 of the land under British rule and the remaining 4/5 under French administration. At independence, the founding fathers of the unitary state expressed the wish to build a strong nation proud of its unique and rich linguistic heritage and cultural diversity. They, thus, opted for the policy of official bilingualism laid down in the then drafted constitution. The constitution made it clear that English and French should be the official languages of the country, and should be given equal status in all domains of national life. The ultimate aim of this official bilingualism was to bring about national unity and integration, besides making Cameroonians perfect users of both English and French.

Since it was instituted some 50 years back, the policy of official bilingualism has attracted the attention of an array of linguists and researchers. Many papers dealing with bilingualism in Cameroon have found much interest in questioning the policy of official bilingualism with a view to show its short comings. Some linguists (Kouega 1999; Fonlon 1963; Echu 2004; Esambe 2008; Ayafor 2005) have investigated the teaching and use of both official languages in the school system, while others like Ebot (1999), Tamba (1999) are concerned with language attitudes. Many others again have attempted to investigate, not only the linguistic inclination of

speakers, but also the extent to which bilingualism has evolved since its adoption by the successive governments representing the state of Cameroon (Kouega 1999; Fonlon 1963; Echu 2004; Esambe 1999, 2008; Ze Amvela 1999; Ayafor 2005; Simo Bobda & Tiomajou 1995), to cite just a few.

A close look at the above-mentioned works would reveal one thing: these papers seem to be unanimous on the point that the policy of official language bilingualism adopted in Cameroon since 1961 has failed to meet the expectations of policy makers. Instead of favouring national cohesion and integration and making Cameroonians perfect users of English and French, the policy has rather brought about frustration, prejudice and the marginalization of English-speaking Cameroonians (usually referred to as Anglophones). Also, these papers seem to point out that official language bilingualism has remained more on paper than in practice, with the argument that it is Cameroon which is bilingual not Cameroonians. This claim, therefore, prompts fundamental questions as follows: what is bilingualism? How do we decide that one is bilingual? Or better, what language skills does one need to qualify as bilingual? What is the state of individual bilingualism in Yaounde? Otherwise, to what extent would it be possible to argue that there are individuals with the ability to process both English and French in Yaounde?

This paper attempts to answer the above questions, paying particular attention to the concept of individual bilingualism which is its main focus. This, though, is done by closely considering how much or little the language policy instituted fifty years ago, together with other factors, has helped trigger individual bilingualism in Yaounde. Selection of informants is limited to students of bilingual High Schools of Yaounde. It is hoped that this paper will contribute its own quota to settling the dust that has so far been raised by the abundant literature on Cameroon bilingualism, although it does not pretend to capture the full depth of such an intricate sociolinguistic phenomenon.

What is Bilingualism?

The bilingual phenomenon has been given several definitions all depending upon the facet studied and the perception of it that linguists have. Such linguists as Bloomfield (1933), Gumperz (1982), Hamers and Blanc (1989), Grosjean (1999), Hakuta (1990), Hakuta and Garcia (1989), Bialystok (2001) have all paid peculiar attention to this linguistic phenomenon with a view to gain better insights into it. The earliest definition of bilingualism known to most linguists is that proposed by Bloomfield (1933) which conceived bilingualism as the native-like control of two languages. According to this view, bilingualism can be looked upon as the fact for an individual to have equal proficiency in two languages. This view on bilingualism is shared by Titone and Weinrich who define a bilingual as he who speaks two languages without interfering. Titone (1972) clearly defines a bilingual as a person who speaks a (second) language without interfering with his mother tongue. That is, the bilingual must speak a second language, while following the structures and concepts of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue. This perfectionist view on bilingualism has received a lot of criticism on the grounds that it is too idealistic, for the situation where one possesses effective equal control of different languages is, if not impossible, tremendously rare.

The permanent question has been to decide who is bilingual. Bialystok (2001) observes that we all know shreds of other languages, albeit knowledge of these imperfect systems would hesitantly be adduced as evidence of our bilingualism. In an attempt to answer this question, and settle the dust raised by Bloomfield's view on bilingualism, Grosjean (1999) as well as Mcnamara (1966) propose other definitions of the bilingual individual, and by implication bilingualism. To Grosjean, "if one were to count as bilingual only those people who pass as monolinguals in each of their languages, one would be left with no label for the majority of people who use two (or more) languages regularly¹, but who do not have native-like proficiency" (1999:1). In a similar vein, Mcnamara (1966) proposes that a bilingual be regarded as a person who possesses a minimal competence in only one of the four language skills. This definition makes it clear that bilingualism is far from being the long-entertained and nurtured ideal scenario of perfect mastery of the codes which make one's linguistic repertoire. Thus, if the minimum linguistic competence of the individual allows for the production of coherent stretches and consequently warranties communication, the individual is considered bilingual. This view will be shared throughout this paper.

Bilingualism numbers several facets, prominent amongst which are compound and coordinate bilingualism, early and late bilingualism and individual and social bilingualism. The last two are most significant in this paper, and deserve to be defined in clear terms.

Hamers and Blanc (1989) draw a clear-cut line between individual and societal (state) bilingualism. The difference lies in the distinction they make between bilingualism and bilinguality. Bilinguality is "the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one language or code as means of social communication" (1989:6). It is this state which the authors refer to as individual bilingualism. Hamers (1981)

¹ It should be noted that the term bilingualism used to refer, like in Bloomfield's meaning, to the alternate use of two languages. Yet, in present-day linguistic, the term refers to the use of two or more languages by the same individual: it, therefore, looks much like multilingualism.

points out that the degree to which the individual will access the languages making his bilingual repertoire varies along a number of dimensions which could be psychological, cognitive, social/societal, cultural and linguistic. About bilingualism, they hold that it refers to the state of a linguistic community experiencing language contact. The result of this contact is the concomitant use of two or more codes in the same interaction and considerable amount of people being individually bilingual. This definition, to say the least, seems to be suggesting that social/societal bilingualism leads to or results in bilinguality, that is, individual bilingualism. Interestingly enough, they insist that bilingualism univocally includes the concept of bilinguality. Admittedly, Hamers and Blanc suggest that the term bilingualism be used when referring to language contact at the societal level, and bilinguality when it manifests in individuals of which the society is composed. Though one could argue that the dichotomy bilinguality/bilingualism adds to the existing confusion and inability to give a conclusive definition of bilingualism, it seems in our opinion that it sets a basis for an acceptable definition. It is, therefore, in this regard acceptable as it helps secure a better idea of the social and individual dimensions of the concept of bilingualism. Though Hamers and Blanc's approach includes bilinguality in bilingualism, it all the same has the merit of comprehensibly telling one from another. This definition is all the more acceptable for it works in tandem with the purpose of this paper which is to find out how much bilinguality has been brought about in Yaounde as a result of the institution of by official state bilingualism in Cameroon.

Previous statements on Cameroon's bilingualism

The general impression that one has after reading the literature on Cameroon bilingualism is that it has, since its adoption, met with stiff resistance and consequently failed to meet the expectations of its makers. Among the reasons of this failure is the complex multilingual landscape of the country, lack of efficient and appropriate language policy and language attitudes in the country, to name just a few.

Cameroon is one of those sub-Saharan countries numbering the highest amount of African languages, and a far-reaching fragmentation (Rosendal 2008). Stating the number of African languages in Cameroon conclusively has posed more than one problem to scholars. In fact, contradicting results have been arrived at. Ethnologue (2005) counts 279 African languages in Cameroon, Echu (2003) reports 247. In doing this, he claims that some of the so-called languages in Ethnologue's findings are mere varieties of the same languages. Onguene Essono on his part numbers up to 250 local languages, and argues that the number of 300 local languages advanced by the SIL is too high (pers. comm.21 February 2004, from Rosendal 2008). However, Rosendal, echoing Jean-Marie Essono's account given in an interview in February 2004, rejects the above findings by claiming that there are just 20 different local languages in Cameroon. He reports Essono's argument that the other languages are comprehensible variants of these twenty. In any case, that Cameroon is a complex multilingual set up remains doubtless. The languages found here belong to three of the four language phyla that exist in Africa, namely the Afro-Asiatic phylum, the Nilo-Saharan and the Niger-Congo. The only missing phylum is the Khoisan family.

It is a well-known fact that language embodies the culture of a people. It is also known that culture is the soul of the people, and that the culture and the identity of the people are more often than not identified with regard to the language it owns. When two or more linguistic groups are in contact, there is bound to be conflict. Thus, colonization, which obviously brought together different sociolinguistic and cultural groups created a somewhat complicated situation in Cameroon. After colonization, the two parts of Cameroon reunited, but the resulting linguistic community was very heterogeneous. There was the great issue of integration, and to ensure national unity official bilingualism was adopted. There was therefore great need of a language policy for the situation to be easy to handle. Language policy has to do with decisions about the status and use of one or more languages in society (Rosendal 2008). The policy may be stated overtly in legal documents giving the language(s) rights, or covertly and have no official status though the language (may) still have a relatively significant role and position in society.

Cameroon's bilingualism has reportedly failed owing to inadequate language policy in Cameroon. Linguists' views on language policy in Cameroon are divergent. To one extreme are those linguists such as Ayafor (2002; 2005), Simo Bobda and Tiomajou (1995) who clearly negate the existence of language policy in Cameroon, grounding their point in the view that the language policy of a community should be revealed in its practices, its beliefs and its language management (to a certain extent). The merit of this view is its pragmatic aspect. Yet, it seemingly overlooks the theoretical aspect which gives priority to decision-making. Concerning Cameroon's official bilingualism, it is evident that the policy suffers from many plights. However, this should, and must not, justify the total cancellation of a policy which does exist and just necessitates effective implementation, subsequent updates and readjustments following the day-to-day realities faced in the country. We thus, agree with the linguists on the other extreme of the continuum such as Nkwain (2010), Esambe (2008) and Echu (2004) who rightly admit that there is a language policy which all the same is inappropriate and lacks implementation.

As pointed out above, language policy has to do with decision making about languages in society. Cameroon bilingualism was initiated by the constitution of the Federal State of 1961, which clearly spelt out that English and French be the country's two official languages. The 1996 constitution in its law 96/06 of 18 January re-edited this official recognition. It was not only limited to giving the two languages an official status, but also

insisted upon their equal status on the one hand, and their equal promotion in the national territory on the other. From what precedes, it can, perhaps, safely be argued that there is a language policy in Cameroon. Yet, it should be borne in mind that language policy is not just about decision making about the languages but has a bearing on the overall economic situation of a country. It is presumably this economic and, possibly, a good and essential linguistic description pioneered by Bamgbose (2000) which justifies the failure observed in African countries.

Despite the many measures adopted by government aiming to reinforce and render this policy and its practice effective, the outcome has reportedly been none than blatant failure. Article 3 part 1 of the 1972 constitution sounded very ambitious and promising, though. So was the battery of measures that were taken along the line to help make bilingualism a reality in Cameroon. Kouega says that it was envisaged that after all these decisions and measures were implemented fully, every Cameroonian citizen would be perfectly bilingual in English and French. Yet as the general sentiment points to, this is still not the case. There is reportedly wanton lack of (political) will and half-heartedness and bias [on the part of citizens] (Nkwain 2010). In fact, a look at the distribution of official documents in English and French shows gross imbalance (Simo Bobda & Tiomajou 1995; Echu 2004). These linguists decry the absence of efficient policies that could help stabilize the situation as has been the case elsewhere. In fact, it is reported that most administrative communication in Cameroon is in French. Such documents as decrees and laws are drafted in French (and even when the English versions exist they carry along horrible spelling errors, appear in very small letters as compared to the French versions). So are the writing scripts used in the University of Yaoundé I, texts on the academic organization of the same university, texts related to the accreditation of elections observers, bank notes and coins, to cite just a few, which display the undeniable ascendancy of French over English in Cameroon. Echu (2004) even points out that in that university, 80% of lectures are delivered in French, while only 20% are in English.

This state of affairs, as he adds, has contributed to the peeved attitude of Anglophones towards the policy of official bilingualism. It is often construed that most teachers in that university have very poor command of English, and given that students are free to write in the language they master most, they, therefore, more often than not attribute their failure to the marker's poor mastery of the language in which they wrote (in this case, English).

In addition to what precedes, one would mention the negative attitudes bilingualism has sparked in speakers from the two linguistic groups of Cameroon. In effect, Esambe (2008) observes that it is not surprising that the concept of official language bilingualism as adopted in Cameroon has met with stiff resistance owing to fear of loss of one's culture, hence one's identity. For given the gross ascendancy of French over English at all social levels, most Anglophones have turned away from it and clung to English which they view as a means of identity preservation. French-speaking Cameroonians on their part have long been said to regard English and all that goes with it with despise. Such negative attitudes were crystallized in the scornful use of the terms Anglofool or Francofool to refer to users of either English or French, respectively.

Contribution of this paper

The merit of this paper is that it questions the conclusions arrived at by the works cited above which claim that bilingualism in Cameroon has remained only on paper and that individuals are not bilingual. That all what has come along the policy is disparagement of one linguistic community resulting in grudges and crystallisation of negative attitudes against the other. These works apparently seem to lose sight of the fact that social bilingualism is interwoven with individual bilingualism, for it is an aspect of language contact, which language contact takes place in the society and inevitably has repercussions on individuals of which the society is made. It would therefore not sound reasonable to believe that languages that are found in people's every day's interactions and which have been institutionalised and measures taken for their reinforcement could have remained the preserve of only those speakers originating in those places traditionally known as owning them (Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons in this case). It might be tentatively hypothesized that the tendency reported in the literature is changing. Various studies carried out recently point to the fact that more and more Francophones are enrolling in Anglophone schools today (Simo Bobda & Fasse Mbouya 2005; Nkwain 2010; Essomba 2012; Atechi 2006; Atechi forthcoming) to cite just a few. This, of course, suggests one thing; English is gradually regaining its *lettres de noblesse* in Cameroon, and that given the numerical ascendancy of Francophones in the country if this pace is kept for some time, English will soon become the country's dominant language.

Furthermore, with globalization becoming every day a more weighing reality, the choice for English as the favoured language becomes more plausible. In view of the fact that in the literature the main worry about bilingualism is the relegation of English to second place by government, we assume that French on its part needs no revalorization as it reportedly benefits from a vintage position in the country. The objective of this paper is twofold: it first seeks to settle the dust raised in the literature by the apparent confusion of scholars as to what bilingualism (individual) really is. Then it proceeds to attempt to examine or determine the degree to which individuals in Yaounde can be said to process both English and French and thus be described as bilingual individuals.

Methodology

This paper works on data collected by means of a questionnaire and a language achievement test. The questionnaire sought to gain insights into the informants' background and find out about their daily English and French language use as well as their performance in both English and French at school.

The language achievement was meant to assess informants' proficiency in both English and French in order to see if the results of the test corroborate the information provided by informants when asked to estimate their proficiency in the two languages. The idea here was that since individual bilingualism has to do with the ability to manipulate or process two languages, we should see how well informants could do this, at least in writing (and reading, for to do the test one needed to read it first). The language achievement test consisted of two components; a grammar component and a translation component. All two sections of the test were designed for intermediate or upper intermediate learners of English. The grammar component of the test had two different parts: a grammar exercise in French and a grammar exercise in English. These were sentences with slots or gaps to be filled by choosing an item out of a list suggested in the brackets. Each exercise numbered up to five sentences, and only one of the items suggested in the brackets could fit the context; these were, therefore, accuracy-targeting activities. The translation component comprised two parts too. One required of informants to translate sentences from French into English, and another required translation from English into French. The same principle of balance was borne in mind and thus, each of the two subsections comprised five sentences. These were not activities which sought to make or find out if our informants were expert translators; their rationale was to figure out if the informants had a double or dual mental representation of the same linguistic concepts to qualify as bilingual individuals in D'Acerno (1990) terms.

The informants constituting the population of this study were randomly selected amongst students of three bilingual High Schools of Yaounde: Lycée Bilingue d'Application, Lycée Bilingue de Yaoundé and Government Bilingual High School Etoug Ebe. The total sample size amounted up to two hundred and forty subjects. Eighty informants were selected in each one of the three above-mentioned High Schools. Forty informants were selected in each subsection (Anglophone and Francophone). It was believed that this sample size would, with generalization, be representative of the current trend in Yaounde.

Data Analysis

To calculate the scores, informants' answers to one and the same question were grouped and a trend (positive or negative) was arrived at, and was thus expressed in terms of percentage. That is, forty answers out of two hundred and forty (240) to **question 9** of the questionnaire could be 'French', which would represent 16.66%. That is, 40 divided by 240 times 100 = 16.66%. For reasons of convenience and space, the analysis done in this section is conducted all three schools being considered at once.

Results of scoring Instrument I (Questionnaire)

The background information got in the questionnaire revealed that informants came from several regions of Cameroon, albeit a gross imbalance in the representation of the said regions was noticed. The general observation made was, however, that both linguistic groups making up the Cameroonian population were represented, that is, Anglophones and Francophones. The regional representation got in all three schools was as follows:

Table 1: Regional distributions in all three schools (all two sections included)

| Region | Centre | South | North | East | West | N. West | S. West | Littoral | Adamawa | Far North | Total |
|------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|---------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|-------|
| N° of informants | 64 | 15 | 5 | 8 | 62 | 45 | 34 | 13 | 3 | 1 | 240 |
| Percentage | 26.66% | 6.25% | 2.08% | 3.33% | 25.83% | 18.75% | 14.16% | 5.41% | 1.25% | 0.41% | 100% |

This table provides indications about the point that cross-sectional interest in the schooling patterns is well advanced in Yaounde. This being the case, it is but normal for the learners to be users of both languages to meet various communication needs in different communicational situations.

So far as their daily language use estimation and language with the best performance at school were concerned, informants in the Anglophone section of all three schools provided the following data. Fifty three claimed to speak English at home, the same number claimed to speak use it at school with peers, eleven said they used both languages at home and twelve reported that they did the same at school. About the language with the best performance at school seventy-seven informants claimed theirs was English. Concerning the use of French at home fifty-six students reported it as the language used there, fifty-two said they used it at school with peers and twenty-eight claimed to perform best in it, fifteen claimed to have equal performance in both languages. The table below summarises this:

Table 2: Informants' Daily language use in the Anglophone section of all 3 schools

| Aspect of language use Answers | Language mostly Spoken at home | Language mostly spoken at school with peers | Language with best performance at school |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| English | 53 | 53 | 77 |
| French | 56 | 52 | 28 |
| Both | 11 | 12 | 15 |

In the Francophone section of all three schools the scenario was significantly different. In fact, the language use pattern as well as performance in this section seemed to be more French inclined. English was time and again used, though. The following results were got. Six informants said they used English at home, three said they used both languages in the same context, while one hundred eleven reported that used French at home and one hundred eighteen claimed to use it at school with peers. So far as performance at school was concerned, eighty-three students claimed to perform best in French, while thirteen reported to have equal performance in both languages and twenty-four pointed out that they had better performance in English. The above information is tabulated here below:

Table 3: Informants' Daily language use in the Francophone sections of all 3 schools

| Aspect of language use Answers | Language mostly Spoken at home | Language mostly spoken at school with peers | Language with best performance at school |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| English | 6 | 0 | 24 |
| French | 111 | 118 | 83 |
| Both | 3 | 12 | 13 |

Still in connection with language use and skill was the point requiring of informants to specify which of the four basic language skills they were good at in English and French. The latter point yielded the following data: in the Anglophone sections of all three schools, twenty-three subjects claimed to be best at writing English, thirty-two indicated speaking as their best language skill in English, twenty-three indicated reading, fourteen listening, while twelve claimed to have more than one skill and sixteen declared to possess all four skills. French offered a different scenario, as eighteen informants indicated writing as their best skill, thirty-six speaking, twenty-three reading, twenty-seven listening, while ten claimed to have more than one skill and eight all four skills. The table below summarises this data:

Table 4: Language Skills Estimations in the Anglophone section of all 3 schools

| Language/ % | Listening | Speaking | Reading | Writing | More than one skill | All four skills | Total |
|-------------|-----------|----------|---------|---------|---------------------|-----------------|-------|
| English | 14 | 32 | 23 | 23 | 12 | 16 | 120 |
| French | 27 | 36 | 23 | 18 | 10 | 8 | 120 |
| % English | 11.66% | 26.66% | 19.16% | 19.16% | 10% | 13.33% | 100% |
| % French | 22.5% | 30% | 19.63% | 15% | 8.33% | 6.66% | 100% |

The following results were got in the francophone sections of all three schools. Thirty-six informants indicated writing as their best skill in English, eleven indicated speaking, eighteen reading, fifty-two listening, while two only claimed to possess more than one skill and none laid claim on all four skills. In French sixteen subjects claimed to be best at writing, thirty-four at speaking, fifteen at reading, twenty-three at listening, while none claimed to possess more than one skill but up to thirty-two indicated to possess all four skills. The following table summarises these data:

Table 5: Language Skills Estimations in the Francophone section of all 3 schools

| Language/ % | Listening | Speaking | Reading | Writing | More than one skill | All four skills | Total |
|-------------|-----------|----------|---------|---------|---------------------|-----------------|-------|
| English | 52 | 11 | 18 | 36 | 3 | 0 | 120 |
| French | 23 | 34 | 15 | 16 | 0 | 32 | 120 |
| % English | 43.33% | 9.16% | 15% | 30% | 2.5% | 0% | 100% |
| % French | 19.16% | 28.33% | 12.5% | 13.33% | 0% | 26.66% | 100% |

The to be said from the above tables is that despite the imbalance in the language skills presented here, informants' estimates run through all four skills. More importantly, some speakers even claimed to possess all four skills in the same language. In any case, whether they possessed one or more skills in English and French, this automatically made them qualify as bilinguals according to Grosjean (1999) and Mcnamara (1966). However, these were mere estimates very likely to lack objectivity. For a better appreciation of the degree to which informants of this endeavour could be regarded as bilingual individuals, an analysis of the results of the language achievement test is needed.

Results of Scoring Instrument II (the language test)

The grammar component of the language achievement test comprised two sub-parts; English grammar and French grammar. They are presented according to sections as above.

In the Anglophone sections of all three schools, the following grades were got in English grammar. Eight subjects got 0/5, twenty obtained 1/5, twenty-six scored 2/5, fifty scored 3/5, while ten scored 4/5 and six 5/5. Fifteen candidates scored 0/5 in French grammar, twenty-two got 1/5, twenty-six scored 2/5, thirty-eight 3/5, while fourteen obtained 4/5 and five scored 5/5. The table below summarises these data.

Table 6: Grades in English and French grammar in the Anglophone sections of all 3 schools

| Grades | 0/5 | 1/5 | 2/5 | 3/5 | 4/5 | 5/5 | Total |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| English | 8 | 20 | 26 | 50 | 10 | 6 | 120 |
| French | 15 | 22 | 26 | 38 | 14 | 5 | 120 |

This was the scenario in the Francophone sections of all three schools. Eighteen subjects scored 0/5 in English grammar, eighteen got 1/5, twenty-eight obtained 2/5, forty-six scored 3/5, while seven got 4/5 and three 5/5. Eight informants scored 0/5 in French grammar, twenty-four got 1/5, twenty-two scored 2/5, fifty-three obtained 3/5, while nine got 4/5 and six 5/5. This is summarised in the table below:

Table 7: Grades in English and French grammar in the Francophone sections of all 3 schools

| Grades | 0/5 | 1/5 | 2/5 | 3/5 | 4/5 | 5/5 | Total |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| English | 18 | 18 | 28 | 46 | 7 | 3 | 120 |
| French | 8 | 24 | 22 | 53 | 9 | 6 | 120 |

The translation component of the language test yielded the following results. In the Anglophone sections of all three schools, ten subjects had *nil* in translating from English into French, eighteen got a *very weak* appreciation, twenty-three got a *weak*, thirty-two obtained an *acceptable*, while twenty-five got a *good* and twelve a *very good*. In translating from French into English, fifteen subjects got a *nil*, nineteen a *very weak*, thirteen a *weak*, fifty an *acceptable*, while seventeen had a *good* and six got a *very good*. This is summarised in the table below:

Table 8: Informants' performances in translation in the Anglophone section of all three schools

| Performance (Engl.-Fren.) | Nil | V. weak | Weak | Acceptable | Good | V.good | Total |
|---------------------------|-------|---------|--------|------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Number of informants | 10 | 18 | 23 | 32 | 25 | 12 | 120 |
| Performance(Fren.-Eng) | Nil | V. weak | Weak | Acceptable | Good | V.good | Total |
| Number of informants | 15 | 19 | 13 | 50 | 17 | 6 | 120 |
| % (English into French) | 8.33% | 15% | 19.16% | 26.66% | 20.83% | 10% | 100% |
| % (French into English) | 12.5% | 24.16% | 10.83% | 41.66% | 14.16% | 5.83% | 100% |

This was the scenario in the francophone sections of all three schools. Fifteen subjects obtained a *nil* in translating from English into French, twenty-two got a *very weak* appreciation, thirty-five had *weak*, twenty-seven *acceptable* while eighteen grabbed *good* and only three *very good*. In translating from French into English, twenty-nine participants got *nil*, thirty obtained *very weak*, twenty-three *weak*, thirty-three *acceptable*, while three had *good* and two *very good*. The following is a summary table of these results:

Table 9: Informants' performances in translation in the Francophone section of all three schools

| Performance (Engl.-Fren.) | Nil | V. weak | Weak | Acceptable | Good | V.good | Total |
|---------------------------|--------|---------|--------|------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Number of informants | 15 | 22 | 35 | 27 | 18 | 3 | 120 |
| Performance (Fren.-Engl.) | Nil | V. weak | Weak | Acceptable | Good | V.good | Total |
| Number of informants | 29 | 30 | 23 | 33 | 3 | 2 | 120 |
| % (Eng. - Fren) | 12.5% | 18.33% | 29.16% | 22.5% | 15.5% | 2.5% | 100% |
| % (Fren.- Engl) | 24.16% | 25% | 19.16% | 27.5% | 2.5% | 1.66% | 100% |

Interpretation of results

The results presented above are appealing and revealing in many a respect. In effect, estimates made by participants in the present study clearly indicate that most make alternate use of English and French to varying degrees on a daily basis. Besides, several participants in this endeavour indicated each at least one language skill as their best in both French and English. Some claimed to possess more than just one skill, while others estimated that they possessed all four skills in both English and French.

However subjective and inaccurate these participants' self-made estimates could be, they proved to be the most appropriate way of determining their daily language use pattern and percentage. From what was presented in the above tables, we can see that participants are bilingual individuals, for they could make alternate use of English and French, with a minimum competence in at least one or two language skills in these two languages.

Given that determining the degree to which participants could be regarded as bilingual individuals could not rest solely upon self-made estimates, having recourse to the language test was justified. It also yielded very appealing and informative results. It notably helped to establish that participants had a fair mastery of French and English

grammars (making them qualify as intermediate and/or upper intermediate users). They could in fact use verbs in appropriate tenses in both languages or use the appropriate forms of adjective or even use appropriate adverbs when and where this was required. This was evidence that participants could read and write both languages, making sense of what it is that they were reading or writing, as the case could be. It was therefore a confirmation of the point that they possessed at least one language skill in each one language making their linguistic repertoire. The translation section of the language test was of tremendous importance, for it provided very strong evidence that participants had dual images of linguistic concepts in their mental apparatus. They could in effect render an idea from one language, say English, into French and vice versa, using concepts which referred to the same entity(ies). This test provided ample evidence of the existence of individual bilingualism in Yaounde in D'Acerno's (1990) sense.

Conclusion

This paper was concerned about evaluating the degree of individual bilingualism in Yaounde. The incentive for carrying out this research was the view that bilingualism in Cameroon has remained only on paper, for Cameroonians fail to exhibit perfect mastery of English and French. This misconception long-time harboured by most linguists who have ever made pronouncements on Cameroon's bilingualism has translated into the saying that it is Cameroon which is bilingual not Cameroonians.

This paper, though, has been written with the aim of showcasing the point that Bloomfield's (1933) view of bilingualism as exhibiting perfect mastery or equal competence in two languages that most linguists working on Cameroon's bilingualism have shared is far-fetched, unrealistic and outmoded. It could therefore not be applied to Cameroon as earlier linguists who have had a say on Cameroon's bilingualism have laboriously tried to do. Such an appreciation of bilingualism is more political and unrealistic than linguistic. This paper has shown, sampling a population amongst students in the Anglophone and Francophone sections of three bilingual High schools of Yaounde, that these speakers possess each at least one language skill in both English and French. Besides, they show a fair mastery of the grammars of both languages and, more importantly, can render ideas from one language into another, which makes them qualify as intermediate and upper intermediate bilinguals in a more modern sense of the term as proposed by Grosjean (1999), Mcnamara (1966) and D'Acerno (1990). The saying that it is Cameroon which is bilingual and not Cameroonians therefore appears as erroneous.

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