

The First World War and the Institutionalization of English-French Bilingualism in Cameroon, 1914 - 1961

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Abstract

This paper revisits the history of the First World War that escalated in 1914, and ended with the defeat and expulsion of the Germans from Cameroon in 1916. It explores the different colonial language policies that militated against the survival of local vernaculars in favour of English-French bilingualism. Both the British and the French like their German predecessors intentionally suppressed the emergence and use of local vernaculars - one or two of which would have ultimately emerged as national language(s) after independence. The paper argues that, the failure of the nation to replace these languages at independence demonstrates a failure in obtaining linguistic independence failure in our search for uniqueness. It further discusses factors that worked in favour of English-French bilingualism in Cameroon. These factors include the Anglo-French Condominium, the defeat of the Germans, the subsequent establishment of the League of Nations Mandate and the United Nations Trusteeship in 1922 and 1945 respectively, constitutional developments in British and French Cameroons and the institutionalization of English-French official bilingualism at reunification on 1 October 1961. Using evidence on a variety of primary and secondary sources, the paper concludes that, despite glaring disparities and clashing views between the English and French languages, the differences have rather enriched and elevated Cameroon in the international spheres.

Key Words: First World War, Language, English-French Bilingualism, Cameroon

Introduction

Several years after the outbreak of the First World War, the subject has become a controversial issue especially as it has not been properly documented or given its rightful place in Cameroon History. For the first time, there is a genuine debate among Cameroonian historians as to whether the Anglo-French accord reached on 4 March 1916 and effected on 6 March 1916 to establish a condominium was the first step towards the institutionalization of bilingualism by Britain and France in Cameroon (Fanso, 1989, p. 56). The First World War which broke out in Europe on 4 August 1914 (Cornwell, 1978, p. 12), only reached Cameroon after the signal for the war against Cameroon was given in Nigeria on 5 August 1914. Despite separate intervention from the British and French from Nigeria and French Equatorial Africa respectively, France and Britain, after arranging for a joint Anglo-French expedition, jointly attacked Cameroon on 27 September 1914 (Chem-Langhee, 1990, p. 6). This was the first indication that Cameroon might eventually be administered by both nations.

From this date, the administration of German Cameroon was disrupted and confused: the areas of the territory still under German control were barely administered; the areas under Allied occupation were said to be under an Anglo-French condominium (Elango, 1985, pp. 657-673). In addition to the German language, the inhabitants of the territory were introduced to the English and French languages which were used in neighboring Nigeria and French Equatorial Africa respectively. The Germans were defeated and ousted from Cameroon in January 1916 and General Dobell proclaimed the division of the territory into British and French spheres in March 1916. On 20 July 1922, the British and French spheres became League of Nations Mandates, and after the Second World War, they were transformed into United Nations Trust Territories. The role played by the United Nations in the independence of French Cameroon, and later British Southern Cameroons and the reunification of both territories on 1 October 1961, led to the institutionalization of English and French as official languages in Cameroon.

This article, presents the result of an investigation of the following questions: what factors favoured the extension of the First World War to Cameroon, and what were the language policies adopted by the Germans and subsequently by the British and French? What factors militated in favour of the institutionalization of British-French bilingualism in Cameroon? For better understanding, the study starts with a brief historical background of the First World War in Cameroon.

Historical Background: Issues and Stakes

The diplomatic manoeuvres following the British, French and German attempts to annex the region which later became the protectorate of Cameroon finally saw the territory ceded to Germany following the signing of the Germano-Duala Treaty on 12 July 1884 (Chem-Langhee, 1990, p. 6). Between 1884 and early 1914, the Germans colonized and more or less effectively administered the region as a single polity. Shortly after the First World War began in Europe on 4 August 1914 (Ngoh, 2002b, p.121), the British, the French, and the Belgian forces based in neighbouring West and Equatorial African colonies, launched an attack on German Cameroon.

The fundamental reasons for the extension of the war into Cameroon were more strategic for the Allied Powers. The British took the lead in spreading the war to Cameroon and, as such, were determined to use their naval supremacy to cut the German colonies off from sources of military supplies. They wanted to defeat the Germans and make territorial gains in order to readjust their Nigerian frontier and revenge the German coup which led to the German annexation of 12 July

1884. The French for their part, wanted to gain territories in Cameroon, expand their Equatorial African possessions and regain territories of French Equatorial Africa ceded to the Germans in 1911(Ibid., 120). Both powers wanted to extend the war to the German colonies to force the Germans to fight the war on many fronts in order to weaken her militarily, as well as to increase their bargaining powers in post-war settlements. The Belgians for their part, wanted revenge for the German violation of their neutrality in 1914. The immediate cause in Europe was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Bosnian Serb student, Gavillo Princip on 28 June 1914.

While arrangements for the joint Anglo-French expedition to Cameroon were still being worked out, Nigerian troops were moved to the frontier with Cameroon. On 29 August 1914, they launched an attack on Garoua and succeeded in capturing one of its German forts. Two other Nigerian columns marched to capture Mora and Nsanakang. The Germans quickly counter-attacked recapturing these forts(Fanso, 1989, p. 52). Meanwhile, French troops from Equatorial Africa had launched operations against Cameroon before the joint expedition was reached. The Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa had ordered a general mobilization as early as 1 August 1914 and French troops had started moving into the areas which France had ceded to Germany in 1911 (Ibid.).The German administration had decided on having a well-trained and well-equipped colonial army, *Schutztruppe*, and a police force, *Polizeitruppe*, formed since 1891. In fact, the strength of the German force before it was increased at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 was 1650 troops and 1550 police (Ngoh, 2002b, p.123), officered by 200 Germans. Facing the Allied troops following the outbreak of the war in 1914 were 2000 German troops and 2200 policemen with para-military training under the command of the German force, Lt. Colonel Zimmermann.

As mentioned earlier, it was at the end of August 1914 that the British and French, due to constant defeat from German forces, reached agreement on a joint Anglo-French military expedition against German Cameroon. The joint expeditionary force was commanded by Brigadier-General Charles McPherson Dobell. Initially, General Dobell commanded a joint force of 7000 men made up of 3000 from the French West African colonies and 4000 from four British West African colonies. These forces were increased to 9700 men(Fanso, 1989, p. 51).

In addition, there were two other Allied forces not under General Dobell's command. There was a French force of 3000 men under General Joseph Georges Aymerich, outside the joint expedition. This force was increased from October 1914 by three companies of Belgian troops commanded by three Belgian captains from the Belgian Congo. Another French force of 1000 was organized under General Largeau and colonel Brisset in Chad. This force was eventually incorporated into the British Nigerian force under General Frederick Cunliffe in 1915 (Ibid., pp. 51-52). In the face of these adjustments, the German troops were well organized and the commander, Lt-Colonel Karl Zimmermann, was determined to make the best of a bad situation. This explains why, despite the efforts of the joint expeditionary force, the defeat of the Germans was slow but steady. The global level, the Central Powers consisted of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria, while the Allied Powers consisted of France, Britain, Italy, United States, Belgium, Serbia, Romania and Greece, the Germans almost single-heartedly fought the joint Anglo-French and Belgians forces in Cameroon(Cornwell, 1978, pp. 12-13).

Colonial Language Policies

Before the advent of colonialism, indigenous languages were used naturally and quite conveniently within each linguistic group for official communication and education. By the time the Germans

annexed Cameroon in 1884, *Duala* and to a limited extent *Isubu* were widespread and acceptable amongst the coastal villages and people who had made contact with the London Baptist Missionary Society (LBMS)(Ndille,2016, pp. 17 – 34). The Germans, British and French colonial administrators implemented different colonial language policies that served as bases for the institutionalisation of English-French bilingualism in Cameroon.

Language policy in German *Kamerun*, following the Germans' annexation of the territory in 1884, was influenced by the Master Race Theory (*Herensvolk*) and the Culture War (*Kulturkampf*). These German policies did not give any room for the public utilization of any of the indigenous languages for which the missionaries had developed and obliged all colonial people to see their German masters as superior human beings (Gwanfogbe, 1995, p. 15). The 1907 educational conference banned the educational and public use of the Duala language which had so far become ubiquitous amongst the coastal and forest people. This was re-echoed in 1910 when the authorities made German the official language in use in the colony(Ihims, 2003, p. 25&Ndille,2016, p. 6).

Language policy in British Cameroons had no effective control mechanism to ensure the effective application of the vernacular policy. The British colonial mind-set was for the effective entrenchment of the English language. As early as 1916, when they arrived Cameroon, British colonial officials had begun showing that the indigenous language policy was just unnecessary. In 1923 they reported that “the first end in view is the formation of character; the second, the acquisition of the English language(Cameroons, 1923, p. 51). This was a regeneration of the 1847 intention of the British Privy Council Education Committee which emphasized amongst other points the diffusion of a grammatical knowledge of the English language as the most important agent of civilization. To the colonial authorities, English was becoming the commercial language of most parts of the world and given all this, they believed that a break had to be made with ‘languages barren of useful knowledge’(Hall, 2008, pp. 773-787). That is why when the first Memorandum on the educational use of the vernacular was passed in 1927, conservative opinion in the British Colonial Office reacted immediately. They warned strongly that ‘to displace English from its present position in elementary schools will be a very serious political mistake to make as well as an educational blunder’. Although the 1948 Nigerian Education Ordinance stated that “the vernacular should be the medium of instruction in the first three years of schooling,” Britain in 1954 declared that “it is not possible to use anyone vernacular as medium of instruction in the Southern Cameroons.... All agencies [must] use English as the medium of instruction and in all schools, English [must be] taught as a subject(United Kingdom, 1954, p. 113). One is therefore bound to believe that it was never an intentional British colonial policy to harness the local languages into becoming the languages of instruction or official languages in their colonies(Ndille,2016, p. 21).

Language policy in French Cameroun was already designed before French presence in Cameroon. As early as 1903, her plan had been to create an African elite through an educational system identical with that of France while the masses were to be given basic instruction in spoken French, reading and writing French, arithmetic and vocational skills(Ibid.). Based on these, an educational programme for Cameroon was drawn up and addressed to all Divisional Officers in a circular of 29 August 1916. On 2 November 1916 another order implemented a pass in French as the basis for the recruitment of indigenous teachers while a more developed educational programme which was to be used by pupil teachers (moniteurs) was issued in February 1917 with emphasis on the mastery and use of French as the language of instruction(Gwei, 1975, p. 206). The French administration

saw in them a good means to promote the French language and civilization by closing schools that were not promoting the French Language. In a decision rendered public on 1 October 1920 and 28 December 1920, 47 schools opened by King Njoya in the Bamoum region (where Bamoum was the language of education) were all closed down (MacOjong, 2008, p. 140). By 1934, except for the American Presbyterian Mission, this policy seemed to have registered significant success as it was reported that “everywhere teaching and learning was going on in French” (Wilbois, 1934, pp. 213). In addition to retaining the loyal cooperation of the Missions, the French colonial administration also found additional methods to promote the superiority of the French language throughout the Mandate. On 1 October 1936, it prohibited the production, sale, collection or distribution of publications written in indigenous languages dealing with magic, sorcery, or divination. It went further to impose a tax of 12.8% on books written in foreign languages as opposed to a tax of 4% on books written in French (DeKorne, 2012, 47).

Throughout the 1950s, French continued to be the only language of instruction and official business in French Cameroon despite the 1952 UN Visiting Mission’s plea for instruction in the vernaculars. In 1960, shortly after independence, the Ahidjo government signed the Franco-Cameroun Treaty (Nghoh, 1987a, p. 281). Amongst which was a cultural convention that gave French the privileged position as the language of education and government business; an indication that French would remain the official language of the independent state of Cameroun (Ndille, 2016, p. 21).

Factors that Favoured the Institutionalization of English-French Bilingualism in Cameroon

The First World War in Cameroon lasted for eighteen months and ended with the defeat and expulsion of the Germans from the territory in 1916. Consequently, the German language was gradually replaced as language of instructions in schools by the English and French languages. In 1961, bilingualism was officially instituted in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The following factors triggered the Institutionalization of English-French Bilingualism in Cameroon.

a) The Outbreak of the First World War and the Anglo-French Condominium

The outbreak of the First World War in Cameroon signalled the end of German language in Cameroon. By 1914 when the First World War broke out, the Germans had succeeded in imposing their national language on Cameroonians (Echu, 2005, pp. 643-655). Cameroonians who supported and fought on the German side continued speaking the German language, while those who supported the British and French as fighters, spies, carriers, suppliers, interpreters, translators were obliged to learn either of the languages or both before the end of the war in 1916 (Amaazee, 2000, p. 7). With Cameroon officially handed to Britain and France, these two colonial powers then sought to impose the English and French languages, respectively, in their newly acquired territories. This led to the solid implantation of the two languages during the colonial era, a situation that was later reinforced after Cameroon became independent (Eyongetah & Brain, 1974, p. 95).

But, before the reinforcement of these languages, certain circumstances during and after the First World War led to the emergence of these languages. In the first place, the establishment of a joint Anglo-French military expedition against German Cameroon at the end of August 1914 paved the way for the introduction of English and French languages in Cameroon (Fanso, 1989, p. 51). As earlier emphasized, this military expedition comprised 7000 men made up of 3000 from the French

West African colonies speaking the French language and 4000 men from the four British West African colonies speaking the English language. Cameroonians who resisted German rule in Cameroon supported the British and French. Some joined the army while others served as carriers, interpreters, suppliers and spies. In this regard, they were obliged through their interactions to learn the English and French languages, thus setting the pace for a bilingual Cameroon.

Scholars have argued that bilingualism was instituted in Cameroon even before 1961 (Mpoche, 2013, pp. 346-356). In order to successfully oust the Germans from Cameroon and replace the German language, the French proposed in the month of December 1914 that Britain and France should establish a condominium or joint Anglo-French administration over all the territories captured from the Germans (Ngoh, 1987, p. 129). This meant that the German language would be terminated in these areas and English and French languages would be introduced in the captured areas. Even though Cameroonians in the occupied territories were obliged to speak three languages, this was just temporary as English and French languages were spoken in both spheres after the partition of Cameroon in 1916. An attempt to institute bilingualism in Cameroon in the captured territories never worked because a condominium never took place between 1914 and 1916 due to the fact that the conditions laid down for the condominium by Britain were rejected by France.

b) The Defeat and Expulsion of the Germans

The defeat of the Germans in Cameroon was slow but steady, and as such, paved the way for the imposition of English-French Bilingualism. Before the collapse of Mora under the control of the German commander, Captain Von Raben on 20 February 1916, a strong German raiding unit had earlier broken through the Nigerian defence and reached the emirates of Muri and Yola inside Nigeria. Even though Mora was the last stronghold of the Germans in Cameroon under Governor Ebermaier, the Germans surrendered to the Allied forces and evacuated the territory on 17 February 1916 (Chem-Langhee, 1990, p. 6).

However, before the surrender of Mora on 20 February 1916, the Germans enjoyed a number of advantages in Cameroon. These permitted them to resist the combined Allied forces for eighteen months. These reasons have been outlined by Verkijika G. Fanson (Fanson, 1989, p. 51). The first place, the German forces, in addition to their establishments had one- or two-years' military training under the German system of universal military service. Secondly, the German troops had excellent knowledge of the terrain. Thirdly, their command, unlike the Allies, was unified. Also, their African troops were superior to the Allied troops because of better and longer battle training. Many African groups like Ewondo under their chief, Charles Atangana and some Fulbe Ardo and Lamidos supported the Germans militarily. The Germans had available local levies and prepared positions for the war. Finally, German troops received support from the Spanish in Rio Muni and Fernando Po in the form of ammunition which they smuggled into Cameroon from Spain (Ibid., pp. 51-52).

Despite these advantages, the Germans were finally defeated and ousted from Cameroon in 1916. Several reasons were responsible for the defeat of the Germans. In the first place, the Germans lacked what the Allies had in abundance namely, troops and ammunition. Secondly, they were cut off by the Allied navy and by land from Germany and from other German colonies in Africa. Thirdly, demoralized and tired, short of food and reinforcements, the Germans surrendered to the Allied forces and evacuated Cameroon on 17 February 1916, although Mora in the north was still held by troops commanded by Captain Von Raben (Ndobegang, 2010, p. 97). The Germans were

attacked by the Allied Powers on four fronts, including the north, south, east and west. They were fighting other battles outside Cameroon, especially in Togoland, Tanganyika and Europe which weakened their military power, exhausted their finances and demoralized the troops. The heart of the matter, then, is the extent to which the German language was easily replaced by English and French languages in British and French spheres of Cameroon.

c) The Anglo-French Accord and the Partition of Cameroon

The Anglo-French accord that was reached on 4 March 1916 and effected on 6 March 1916 to partition Cameroon between Britain and France, paved the way for the replacement of the German language with the English and French languages in Cameroon (Fanso, 1989, p. 56). The French were initially opposed to any partition of Cameroon, preferring an Anglo-French condominium until definite decisions were taken about the territory after the cessation of hostilities in Europe and elsewhere. They finally agreed to a provisional partition in 1916 due to British insistence. The provisional boundary was fixed after conferences between General Dobell and General Aymerich in Douala. The boundary line was traced by the two Generals from Lake Chad to the Mungo River (Eyongetah & Brain, 1974, p. 95; Fanso, 1989, p. 56). On 1 April 1916, officials and troops of each power withdrew to their own side of the frontier (Ibid.), and from this date were obliged by their respective power to learn their colonial language. This in actual fact, led to the demise of the German language in Cameroon. Willibroad Dze-Ngwa states that:

In the partition, Britain got one-fifth while France got the remaining four-fifths of Kamerun. This partition went into effect at mid-night on March 31, 1916. On July 10, 1919, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Alfred Milner and the French Minister for colonies, Henri Simon signed the Milner-Simon Agreement in London, which confirmed the partition. The fate of Kamerun now rested in the hands of the British and the French who introduced new foreign languages, ideologies and systems of administration (Dze-Ngwa, 2015, pp. 79 – 90).

These two opposing systems gave rise to what at independence were "... two distinct and obviously, uncompromising Anglophone and Francophone communities or former states, with the people of each affectionately and arrogantly attached to their acquired culture" (Fanso, 1989).

d) The League of Nations and the Mandate System

Even though the English and the French languages were spoken in Cameroon following the partition, its official usage was only witnessed on 20 July 1922 when the British and French spheres of Cameroon were assigned to their respective administering powers as mandate of the League of Nations (Amaazee, 2000, p. 7). French Cameroon was administered as a single unit, while British Cameroon was made up of British Southern Cameroons and British Northern Cameroons. The League of Nations, through Articles 22 and 23 confirmed the partition (Ngoh, 1987a). British-administered Cameroon and French-administered Cameroon became Mandated Territories of the League of Nations.

e) The United Nations and the Trusteeship System

The Second World War brought into existence the United Nations and the Trusteeship System as replacements for the defunct League of Nations and the Mandate System (Fanso, 1989, p. 103). In contrary, British Northern Cameroons during the period of trusteeship that was continuously tied to

the Northern Nigeria Provinces of Bornu, Adamawa and Benue and administered separately from British Northern Cameroons was never a bilingual territory after independence. As the date for Nigeria's independence, set for 1 October 1960, approached, 7 November 1959 was chosen as the United Nations plebiscite day for Northern Cameroons before Nigeria became independent (Ibid., pp. 154-155). The voters were required to decide whether they wanted to be part of the Northern Region when Nigeria attained her independence or whether they would like to decide their future at a later date. British Northern Cameroons opted for the later, and as such, a final United Nations plebiscite was soon organized for the Trust territory Province on 11 and 12 February 1961, to be conducted separately from that in British Southern Cameroons on 11 February. The two questions put at the plebiscite in both territories meant to qualify both either as a bilingual territory or an English-speaking territory were the same:

1. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?

OR

Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon? (Ngoh, 1987a, pp. 221-223).

For Southern and Northern Cameroons to become bilingual territories speaking the English and French languages, they had to vote in favour of joining the independent Republic of Cameroon. Instead, British Northern Cameroons, which earlier voted against becoming part of Nigeria in 1959, went to the polling booths on 11 February 1961 and voted to be an integral part of Northern Nigeria (Ibid., p. 224). Despite protest from Ahidjo's Government accusing the British Government of election malpractices and rigging, on 1 June 1961, the British trusteeship of Northern Cameroons was terminated as the territory definitively became part of Nigeria. The English language became the official language of the territory.

f) The Role of Constitutional Conferences

For British Southern Cameroons to achieve independence and reunification and gain the status of a bilingual territory, it had to pass through a series of constitutional conferences after the plebiscite of 11 February 1961. The first was the Bamenda All Party Conference from 26 to 28 June 1961. Foncha's objective in calling this conference was to ensure that they went to Fomuban speaking with one voice, which would also strengthen their position in the East Cameroon delegation led by Ahidjo (Ndi, 2013, p. 137). Concerning the official languages, it was proposed that English and French should be the official languages of the Federal Legislature; English was to be the official and working language of West Cameroon (Ngoh, 1987a, p. 229). The second was the Fomuban Constitutional Conference that was attended by delegations from Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon from 17 to 21 July 1961. During the conference, it was proposed that English and French should be the official languages of the Federal Legislature with English as the only official language in Southern Cameroons. This reflected the proposal of the Bamenda Conference of June 1961 (Ibid., p. 231). Finally, the Yaounde Tripartite Conference which opened on 2 August 1961 with delegates from Southern Cameroons, Republic of Cameroon and the United Kingdom also laid emphasis on English and French as official languages and the Nigerian Pound Sterling replacing the *Communaute Financiere Africaine* (CFA) Francs in Southern Cameroons.

g) Reunification and the Birth of Federalism

At reunification, it became very necessary to adopt an effective language policy for the country to protect the inherited Anglo-Saxon and French cultures. The English and French languages were adopted at the Foumban Constitutional Conference of July 1961 as the official languages of the new federation (Mbangwana, 2004). The two languages were adopted because English was the official language of the former British-administered Southern Cameroons while French was the official language of the former French-administered Cameroon. English-French official bilingualism was, therefore, a compromising and necessary choice to solve the immediate problem of reunification. Willibroad Dze-Ngware iterates that:

The choice of using English and French in Cameroon was arrived at after considering the expediency of using two languages that were historically relevant to both East and West Cameroon in the early sixties...[the numerous] national languages and the lack of a consensus on which of these could be used as the official language... [Made it logical] to use established European languages. Bilingualism (English/French) was seen as one of the most opportune instruments of unifying hitherto separated parts of Cameroon (Dze-Ngwa, 2015, p. 86).

None of the numerous indigenous national language(s) could be considered for an official language because none of the languages was spoken extensively in the territory. Neither English nor French too could be considered alone for the official language because it would have created the sensation of hurt feelings in one or both of the parties of reunification. Since there was great and urgent need to weld the inherited Anglo-French cultures as embodied in the political, judicial and educational systems. English-French bilingualism was the best bet. Chumbow argues that “the choice of English and French as official languages...was simply dictated by pragmatism... and the leaders were under political pressure to make reunification work” (Chumbow, 1980, p. 644). At reunification, and following the birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961, English-French bilingualism was officially institutionalized in Cameroon’s Constitution. English and French became the two official languages of Cameroon (Ibid., pp. 281 – 311). Articles 3 and 58 of this Constitution made it clear that:

The official languages of the Federal Republic of Cameroon shall be French and English. This Constitution shall replace the Constitution of the Republic approved on 21 February 1960 by the people of Cameroon; shall come into force on 1 October 1961; and shall be public in its new form in French and in English, the French text being authentic (Ndi, 2013, pp. 355-371).

Irrespective of the negative legacies of the First World War, Cameroon has continued to reap enormous benefits, not only because its citizens can better compete at the international level, but also because it joins Canada to be the two bilingual nations speaking English and French languages worldwide.

Conclusion

From the foregone analysis, one can observe that from the German annexation in July 1884 to the beginning of the Cameroon campaign in August 1914, the Germans constituted the axis for the exercise of executive, legislative and judicial powers (Geiss, 1974, 9). However, with the outbreak of the First World War, Cameroon entered a new stage in its history as the Germans fought against

the Allied Powers, and in February 1916 were defeated and ousted from Cameroon by the joint Anglo-French forces. After a failed Anglo-French condominium in Cameroon, the British and the French finally reached an accord to partition Cameroon on 4 March 1916. The different colonial language policies adopted and implemented by the Germans, British and French in Cameroon laid the foundation for the creation of a bilingual Cameroon, with effect from 1 October 1916 when the independent Republic of Cameroon reunified with British Southern Cameroons to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Nghoh, 2004). It is also evident from the foregone analysis that there are strong factors that favoured the institutionalization of English-French bilingualism in Cameroon. These factors included the Anglo-French Condominium, Accord and the Partition, the League of Nations and the Mandate System, the United Nations and the Trusteeship System, as well as the role of constitutional conferences, reunification and the Birth of Federalism. Currently, apart from Cameroon, some twenty-one other African countries have two or more official languages: Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania, and Tunisia.¹ The issue of effective management of the policy of bilingualism therefore resonates deeply among African states. It represents a crucial tool in national unity, national integration and nation-building. The Cameroon example can therefore serve as a cautionary model to other states on how to pursue such a policy and address the challenges that emerge in its implementation. Despite glaring disparities and clashing views between the English and French languages, the differences have rather enriched Cameroon within the international scene.

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