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The Language of Evangelisation in 'Foreign' Territories: The Case of Maroua, Cameroon

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Abstract

This paper is based on the postulate that mainstream Protestant churches in Cameroon have specific ethnic strongholds (Kamusella, 2012; Ndzotom Mbakop, 2016), and should therefore evolve novel communication strategies outside those settings. The data were collected through elicitation and participant observation in Maroua, Far North Region, Cameroon, following the structural-functional approach. The results revealed that, although Fulfulde is the main lingua franca in the whole Region, French remains the main liturgical language, whereas a few local languages were used at EEC Maroua-Hardé, namely Ngambay and Mundang. This shows that language used by these churches in foreign settings aims more at catering for the ideationally integrated members of the religious group while compensating the normatively integrated ones when possible. This confirms earlier claims that religious language varieties are more stable than their secular counterparts (Omoniyi and Fishman, 2006). The role of the historical factor also emerges as the fundamental variable that determines language choice in mainstream Protestant Churches in Cameroon.

1. Introduction

Regarding language choice in multilingual settings, Herman (1972) states,

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> *One of the problems which thus far has not received systematic attention relates to the choice by a bilingual speaker of one language rather than the other in situations where either language could serve as the medium of conversation.*

This decision the multilingual/bilingual speaker makes in situations where either language of his or her linguistic repertoire can operate (language choice) can be observed in both interpersonal and institutional communication. In interpersonal communication, it has resulted in interesting theoretical tenets in sociolinguistics, such as code-switching, code-mixing, code-alternation, etc.; it has also featured such rationales as linguistic competence, context, demands, personality, preference, constraint, frustration, etc. (Herman, 1972; Berthold, M. F, Mangubhai and K. Batorowicz, 1997; Buda, 2001).

In the case of language choice in institutional communication, the problem is slightly different, since the available languages are not those of individual members of the group but those of the group as a whole. Therefore, the languages of a group are usually more numerous than those of individual members who compose it. Institution brings in the notion of official decision-making by an authority whose reasons for choosing a language may go beyond the direct needs of the populations. In fact, the decision a government, for example, makes in linguistic terms depends on various factors, both linguistic and non-linguistic.

The choice of official/national languages in different countries in the world clearly illustrates this complexity. Fishman's (1971) investigation of the social circumstances that affect language planning – through a comparative study of the impact of early European nationalism on language planning and nationalism and language planning in South and Southeast Asia – wonderfully underscores this complexity. This difficulty is not restricted to government choice of languages, but extends to all institutional settings, of which the church is a pertinent example. The choice of Latin as the liturgical language of the Roman Catholic Church highlights the fact that language choice in religious settings may be based on irrational, non-linguistic beliefs rather than on 'rational', objective, measurable linguistic ones.

It is believed that the choice of Latin was based on political and religious grounds, as church leaders believed that a united church required a unique language (Safra and Yeshua, 2003). On the other hand, political leaders thought that by using the language of the dominant country of the time other people who adhered to the Christian faith would have easily accepted the hegemony of the Romans. Studying language choice in institutional communication may also present bigger challenges than originally expected, as policy-makers may not be willing to disclose the 'true' reasons for their language policy. This may be more so in mainstream Protestant Churches in Cameroon whose sociolinguistic profile is very complex. In fact, the various variables that have been found to influence language use in these church groups include the historical factor that seems to play a crucial role (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2016); the number of ethnic groups found in a parish (Kouega and Ndzotom Mbakop, 2011a&b, 2012); the commitment of an ethnic group, availability of religious material and religious leaders competent in specific languages (Kouega, 2008); as well as questions of identity (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2020a). However, these works did not check the question of language use in a religious setting that is located out of its historical stronghold.

The present perusal aims at scrutinising language choice in Maroua where the selected church groups can be viewed as 'foreign'. By foreign here is meant the fact that the church group does not belong historically to the area in question. This historical influence on the geographical distribution is described in Ndzotom Mbakop (2016) as the result of the German colonial policy in Cameroon, whereby Protestant missionary societies were assigned specific evangelization areas in the country. Eventually, each area evolved an independent religious group based on its language. This created a strong ethnic relation with the religious group thus created. The town of Maroua, Far North Region,

Cameroon, is an area where Islam has always been believed to be the main religion, just as it is the case in the whole northern part of Cameroon (Adamawa, North and Far North). In addition, the zone is a stronghold to Fulfulde. The language outpaces the two official languages of the country in the town. Christian churches that have developed in the area also intensely make use of Fulfulde as a liturgical language. However, church groups that developed in the southern part of the country and whose languages are different from Fulfulde have been establishing in the town over the past three decades. This obviously creates some linguistic challenges.

Colonialism made Cameroon a real linguistic complexity, like many other former colonies around the world. Linguists list between 236 and 300 indigenous languages in the country (Dieu and Renaud, 1983; Grimes, 2000). Although religion in Cameroon is anterior to the two official languages and posterior to the indigenous ones, it has suffered their influenced so sharply that the two components (religion and language) can hardly be dissociated. Generally speaking, Cameroonian church groups owe their existence to western missionary societies.

However, while Protestant missions were stuck to specific areas, Catholic ones were free to work wherever they pleased. Protestant missions were spread all over the territory, and eventually three main mission zones were formed, namely the western and coastal zone (southern Cameroon in the work cited), the central, southern and eastern zone, and the northern zone (Messina and Slageren, 2005). This owes very much to the evangelisation zones each mission society was assigned after the German annexation of the land. In the western and coastal zone, the *Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris* continued during the Mandate in the French part of the country the mission works initiated by the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society and the London Baptist Missionary Society.

Four mission societies proselytized in the central southern and eastern zone, namely the West African Mission, the Basel Mission Society, the Norwegian American Lutheran Missionary Society, and finally the *Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris* which took over when the previous quitted the territory after World War 1. The northern zone was evangelized late in the 1920s by a good number of mission societies of which the most important were the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, the American Lutheran Church Mission society, the Gunderson Mission, and the Lutheran Brethren World Mission. Each mission society led to the creation of local churches in the area they had evangelized. In that respect, local churches bore a deep local and ethnic flavour, especially in the case of Protestant churches which constitute the main subject of this endeavour. Several local churches were born to these missions, each local church being associated with a mission society and with a given ethnic/language group. Table 1 below recapitulates this interconnection between western mission societies, local Protestant churches, ethnic groups and indigenous languages in Cameroon.

Table 1
Language and religion interconnection in Cameroon

Western mission society	**Local church**	**Ethnic/geographic stronghold**	**Indigenous language**
Basel Missionary Society and Berlin Missionary Society	Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)	North West	Indigenous languages of the North West and South West Regions
Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society	*Église Baptiste Camerounaise (EBC)*	Littoral	Duala

Jamaican Missionary Society and *Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris*	*Église Évangélique du Cameroun (EEC)*	Littoral and West	Bamileke cluster and Duala
Gunderson Mission, Norwegian Lutheran Mission and American Lutheran Church Mission Society	*Église Évangélique Luthérienne Camerounaise (EELC)*	Adamawa	Fulfulde, Gbaya and a few minor indigenous languages of the Adamawa Region
Lutheran Brethren World Mission	*Église Fraternelle Luthérienne Camerounaise (EFLC)*	North	Fulfulde, and many minor indigenous languages of the North Region
West African Mission	*Église Protestante Africaine (EPA)*	South	Ngumba
West African Mission	*Église Presbytérienne Camerounaise (EPC)*	South and Centre	Bulu and Basaa
Basel Missionary society	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)		South West and North West
London Baptist Mission Society, *Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris*, European Baptist Mission	*Union des Églises Baptistes au Cameroun (UEBC)*	Littoral and Far North	Fulfulde, Duala and many minor indigenous languages of the Far North Region
Gunderson Mission	*Union des Églises Évangéliques au Cameroun (UEEC)*	FÉglisear North	Fulfulde and many minor indigenous languages of the Far North Region

Table 1 above depicts a situation which has been stable for some time, until national integration became imperative to the newly established state of Cameroon after its independence. People moved from their villages to bigger towns in search for a job as functionaries or to further their education. In so doing, they carried along their religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds to

towns. Upon their settlement, they naturally began to gather for various social purposes, of which religion. The development of 'ethnic' neighbourhoods is a frequent situation in the country. This has led to the creation of such neighbourhoods as 'Quartier Bamileke' (literally meaning the Bamileke neighbourhood, Bamileke being a cluster of ethnic groups in the West Region of Cameroon), 'Quartier Haoussa' (meaning the Haoussa neighbourhood, with Haoussa being an umbrella term to refer to all Moslems, and especially all those who hailed from the northern part of the country), etc.

However, church groups may be hard put to have a parish in every single neighbourhood in a town. In such a context, faithful have to make a crucial choice between taking part in a church service in a nearby parish which is not their original parish, and traveling long distances in search for their traditional parish. Whatever decision is made, the parish falls within a complex linguistic situation. In fact, the parish may be founded in a linguistically inappropriate setting for two main reasons: the immediate linguistic setting may not match the historical or tradition language of the church or the faithful may not match the historical or traditional language of the parish.

While Christianity is by far the most widespread religion in the country, Islam has been consistently limited to the northern part in the minds of the people. However, people movements induce a high degree of culture movements that have led to a cultural melting-pot in Cameroon. In fact, there is no single town in the country which can be systematically assigned to one religious group; even the most remote villages usually have two or more religious groups. In major towns like Yaoundé and Douala, this is even more felt. Bitjaa Kody (2001) provided one of the first accounts of the interaction between multilingualism and religion. The researcher carried out a study of the management of urban multilingualism by religious communities in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The study was based on the postulate that the maintenance of the cultural identity of urban populations through the teaching of local languages can draw from the in-vivo management of urban multilingualism by religious communities. He investigated the languages used in 9 Catholic chapels, 6 Presbyterian parishes, 8 other Protestant parishes, and 2 mosques through semi-directed interviews to curates, pastors, imams, and church elders. From the analysis of the number of weekly masses/church services and the languages used during each one, the author found that in the churches observed, language diversity is reacted to through different Sunday services/masses. In mosques, the various languages used include classical Arabic, Fulfulde and English/French. From these observations, four broad groups emerged, namely 1- French/English monolingual parishes (parishes where either French or English is used as liturgical language); 2- French and English bilingual parishes (parishes where both languages are used as liturgical languages.

Note that the author does not differentiate between bilingual parishes and bilingual services); 3- French/English and local language bilingual parishes (parishes where French or English plus an indigenous language are used as liturgical languages. Note here too that there is no difference between bilingual parishes and bilingual services or masses); and 4- Multilingual parishes (parishes where more than two languages are used during the service or mass). Many other studies were subsequently carried out in the city, including Kouega (2008), Kouega and Ndzotom Mbakop (2011a, 2011b), Kouega and Baimada Gigla (2012). Kouega (2008) eventually proposed the structural-functional framework that has been used in many subsequent works.

The framework involves dissecting a church service into its constituent parts and checking what language is used for each part. The framework was used to investigate language use in Catholic parishes located in semi-urban areas of the Anglophone part of the country by Kouega and Emaleu (2013). The authors scrutinized language use in Kumba and Mundemba on the postulate that churches located in semi-urban areas of English-speaking Cameroon may display different linguistic behaviours as compared with their Francophone urban counterparts, the cities of Kumba and Mundemba being in the Anglophone Bishopric of Buea. The data were collected in two phases, as outlined in the structural-functional approach. The authors found that two main languages usually occurred monolingually in reading the Missal. They were, in descending order English and Pidgin-

English. These languages also occurred in association with other languages on few occasions. English and Pidgin-English co-occurred quite often, while the co-occurrence of English, Pidgin-English, Latin and French was less significant. To the authors, the co-occurrence of English and Pidgin-English can be accounted for by the fact that the two languages are in competition in the areas under scrutiny. They even found that Pidgin-English was used more frequently in Mundemba than was English. The priests read the Gospel more frequently in Pidgin-English than in English, and the frequency of occurrence of Pidgin-English was higher in Mundemba than in Kumba.

Similarly, Pidgin-English was more frequently used in the two towns for preaching than was English. In addition, the frequency of occurrence of Pidgin-English was higher in Mundemba than in Kumba. The congregation was usually involved in the recitation of ritual prayers, namely "Kyrie", "Gloria", "I believe", "Prayer of the faithful", "Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)", "Sanctus", "Mystery of faith" and "Our Father". Interestingly, only in Mundemba was an ancestral language used for these ritual prayers, namely Oroko. English remained the major language used for these ritual prayers. Surprisingly, Latin (an old liturgical language in the Catholic Church), French (one of the two official languages of the country) and Lingala (a Congolese language) also occurred in performing these practices. The third group of informants was choir leaders.

The languages used for singing included English, Pidgin-English, Latin, French, Lingala, Lamnso', Bamileke, Oroko, and other unlabeled languages. No local language was used for singing in Kumba, while local languages occurred in Mundemba. It is interesting to note that while Bamileke occurred in Kumba, it did not occur in Mundemba. This may be explained by the fact that Kumba is more urbanized than Mundemba. This means that rural areas may hardly use an ancestral language which is not spoken in other areas of the country, although foreign languages can be used. First Reading, Second Reading and Announcements were considered next by the researchers. It appeared that in the two localities, Pidgin English was the dominant for the First Reading. It was followed by a combination of English and Pidgin English.

Actually, the reader sometimes read a passage in English and explained or paraphrased it in Pidgin English, to ensure that everybody understood well. Similarly, Pidgin-English was dominant for the Second Reading, although the monolingual use of English and the bilingual use of English and Pidgin-English had the same frequency of occurrence. Announcements were also mainly performed in Pidgin-English. Five main reasons were found to account for the choice of these languages. A language was used when 1) The priests were proficient in it; 2) The parishioners understood it; 3) There were religious materials available in it; 4) There were choirs singing in it; and lastly 5) There existed a collection of captivating lyrics in it. These rationales confirmed most of the claims made in Kouega (2008). Commitment for example can be referred to as the presence of choirs singing in a given language. This can account for the occurrence of Bamileke in Kumba.

Although these works underscore the pioneer role of religious groups in language management, as well as the complexity of language management in multilingual religious settings, they may not provide pertinent information on the challenge faced by church groups in 'foreign' environments. Actually, they either focus solely on the policy (and care little about the rationales of the language policies observed (Bitjaa Kody, 2001), or investigate the situation in the southern part of the country, where Christianity is more planted. Moreover, their setting is linguistically neutral and gives room to a more neutral appraisal of language choice. The recent attempt to address the issue of Christian language management in the northern part of the country (Baimada Gigla, 2020) cannot fill this gap, since the Seventh-Day Adventist Church is not part of the mainstream Protestant Churches in Cameroon, both historically and conceptually (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2014). Actually, in this church group, the neutral language policy can be linked to the historical background, whereby there is no ethnic group that has established the kind of relationship that exists between mainstream Protestant Churches and ethnic groups of southern Cameroon (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2016).

2. Materials and Methods

Setting

The study is based on two parishes of two church groups, namely the Maroua-Hardé Parish of the *Église Évangélique du Cameroun* and the Maroua Péniel Parish of the *Église Presbytérienne Camerounaise*. These two church groups were selected in the town of Maroua, for they pertinently met the criteria for 'foreignness' in the setting chosen.

Tools

The data for this work were collected mainly through participant observation. In addition, elicitation was used to check sociologically pertinent facts about the settings. During the observation, an observation checklist containing all the acknowledged parts of the church service was used to take down the languages used for each religious practice. Unlike participant observation that took place on Sundays exclusively, elicitation was carried out on ordinary days. Church elders and pastors were mainly contacted.

Procedure

The process of data collection started with a series of visits to the two parishes for a sociolinguistic fact-finding. The major information required included the following:

1. The creation of the parish (historical background),
2. The ethnic distribution in the parish, and
3. The ethnic background of church officials.

Appointments were made with church leaders, especially the two pastors of the parishes under investigation. The two pastors were mainly requested to grant the researcher access to the parish books. This is a book which records all registered members of the parish on a yearly basis. Although this book does not feature non communicant members, it is a very important element of data collection. In fact, the book underscores the following elements:

1. The name of the parishioner
2. The date of baptism
3. The place of origin

These pieces of information are very useful especially as they enable one sort out the ethnic background of the parishioners from their place of origin. On the occasion, the church leaders were also asked about their ethnic origin.

After this first phase, the participant observation phase could start. The researcher took part in 05 church services in each parish. In the process of this observation, the researcher devised a tally sheet comprising the 15 main parts of a Protestant church service as established by previous works by Kouega and Ndzotom Mbakop (2011a and b). The tally sheet was used to jot down the languages used for each part of the church service, as well as the various pertinent variations of language use.

Measure

Language use analysis in the settings mainly consists in establishing the correspondence between the sociolinguistic profile of the parish and the language statuses observed. It is generally agreed in the literature in language and religion studies that language statuses in religious settings are usually of two kinds, namely liturgical and non-liturgical languages. Liturgical languages are either so from a historical perspective or from a practical one. Historically, mainstream Protestant Churches in Cameroon can be related to specific ethnic languages according to its historical background (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2016). On the other hand, a liturgical language is one that is used for the main parts of a church service (Sermon, Scriptures Reading, Pastoral Acts, etc.). Also, the choice of a language as liturgical depends on a varied number of parameters that are generally collapsed in the sociolinguistic profile of the setting, and include the lingua franca of the setting (the town where the parish is located), the majority ethnic groups, the involvement of specific groups (especially minority ones), the language policy of the country as a whole, and the historical background of the church group in question. Our job is therefore to establish the factors that best explain the choices made in the setting observed.

3. Results

The method of data presentation and analysis is a two-step process. First, the sociolinguistic setting of the 'setting' is described. Next, the languages used for individual religious practices are highlighted.

3.1. The Sociolinguistic Structure of the Setting

The town of Maroua, Cameroon, is at the crossroads of three African countries, namely Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria. This mixture of influences has a strong impact on language use in the town. Basically, Fulfulde emerges as an important language; Nigerian and Chadian products are among the most affordable. For decades now, the entire northern part of Cameroon has been considered as a Moslem stronghold. This is certainly due to both historical and political reasons that go beyond the scope of this article. However, it appears that, although Christianity was introduced late in the 1970s in the area, it has developed some Christian churches, including the *Union des Églises Baptistes au Cameroun, Union des Églises Évangéliques au Cameroun, Église Fraternelle Luthérienne Camerounaise, and Aglise Évangélique Luthérienne Camerounaise*. These churches are quite systematically distributed over the area. The Far North Region, the locale of this study has mainly developed the *Union des Églises Baptistes au Cameroun* and the *Union des Églises Évangéliques au Cameroun*. Previous research carried out in the city of Yaoundé, in the Centre Region of the country, revealed that even when these 'Northerners' churches were established in bigger multilingual cities, they were quite easily recognizable through the physical traits of their members which is 'characteristic' to the northern part of Cameroon (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2014). How this complexity reshapes the use of languages in religious settings is the subject of this section. The religious groups are described in turn below.

3.1.1. The Maroua-Hardé Parish of the Église Évangélique du Cameroun

The *Église Évangélique du Cameroun*, shortened as EEC, is the offshoot of the Jamaican Baptist Missionary Society that Joseph Merrick and Alfred Saker set up on the coast of Cameroon from 1843 to 1884 and whose mission stations were handed over to the Basel Missionary Society and the Berlin Missionary Society when the German authority was established in the country. Their mission stations were shared back between the Basel Missionary Society and the *Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris* when Germany lost WWI in 1918 and Cameroon was mandated to Britain and France. While the Basel Missionary Society continued to expand in southern British Cameroon

(present-day South West and North West Regions), the *Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris* took over the mission stations located in French Cameroon (8 of the current 10 Regions) where French Baptist ministers were posted. The latter expanded throughout the territory and founded a number of local churches, of which the *Église Évangélique du Cameroun,* founded in 1957 with its headquarters in Duala, is the most important.

The EEC is organised in Regions, Districts, and parishes. In 2009, the church had a total number of 18 Synod Regions, nine of which were found in the West Region of the country and five in the Littoral Region. The remaining 4 Synod Regions were shared among the eight other Regions of the country. This clearly establishes the domination of the West and Littoral Regions in this church group. The Bamileke-Bamun and the Duala are usually considered to be the dominant ethnic groups in the church. The ethnic structure of most parishes of the church ascertains the overwhelming predominance of these two ethnic groups in the EEC.

The Maroua-Hardé Parish of is one of the numerous parishes of the *Église Évangélique du Cameroun*, and the only parish of the church in the town of Maroua. The Meskine and Pallar parishes are located in satellite villages around the town. The Maroua-Hardé Parish of the EEC started on October 10, 1987, when 5 Chadian migrants left the *Union des Églises Évangéliques au Cameroun* (UEEC) to set up an EEC local church. In fact, these Chadians, led by Zachée Maoundombaye, were members of the *Église Évangélique au Tchad* and had fled their country in the early 1980s due to political unrests. On their arrival, they immediately sought for a worship place and could find none that was close in worship style to their original church except the UEEC. When they were solicited to create a local EEC church, they readily started a church service in Maoundombaye's house at the Hardé neighbourhood. Immediately after the beginning of services, they invited the neighbouring Moundang families, two of which left the UEEC and joined them.

The Bamun group only joined them later on to form a much stronger local church. Upon the start of this local church, the EEC board assigned a Ngambay assistant pastor. He was followed by another Ngambay assistant pastor with much extended powers. However, the first pastor assigned to the local church was to be a Duala; and from 2000, all pastors have been Medumba-speaking (Bamileke). It follows that, from a Ngambay-Mundang bilingual service, the parish moved to a French-Ngambay-Mundang trilingual parish with Ngambay and Mundang being assigned limited functions during the service. Today, the local church has developed into a Parish. Four hundred and thirty-six parishioners were faithful to the parish in 2014. The parish falls within the North and Far North Synod Region, Maroua District. There were 16 church elders and 25 church councilors at the time of the investigation. The ethnolinguistic distribution in the parish was as follows:

Table 2
Ethnolinguistic distribution in the Maroua-Hardé parish of the EEC

Medumba	**Ngiemboon**	**Bamun**	**Ghomala'**	**Ngemba**
35%	14%	11%	10%	9%
Fulfulde	**Duala**	**Fe'fe'**	**Ngambay**	**Mundang**
7%	5%	4%	3%	2%

This distribution shows that there is no major ethnic group in the parish, although the Medumba group is quite predominant (35%).

In general, the Bamileke, a cluster of ethnic groups speaking some 6 main indigenous languages from the West Region (Medumba, Ngiemboon, Ghomala', Ngemba, Fe'fe', Yemba), make up 72% of the parish population. Although the Bamun ethnic group is found in the West Region, it is

not usually considered as part of the Bamileke group in the EEC. A more or less tacit agreement in the national bureau of the church group shares the presidency of the group between the Bamun, Bamileke, and Duala in a cyclical manner. The Fulfulde cluster (7%) comprises some 7 to 8 different ethnic groups from the Far North, North and Adamawa Regions, the Fulfulde strongholds in the country. Despite the fact that Mundang speakers are competent in Fulfulde, as well as Ngambay speakers, the study sets them aside since they have a much more pertinent status in the parish as the founding members. As said earlier, the parish was founded by 5 Ngambay families, in association with some 2 Mundang ones. However, the increase of members of other ethnic groups in the course of time has shrunk the importance of the Mundang and Ngambay, whose languages used to be the main liturgical languages in the parish at its creation. This evolution can also be seen in the metamorphosis of the various choirs in the parish. The 10 choirs of the parish are *Espérance, Groupe d'Hommes Chrétiens (GHC), Sion, Union Chrétienne des Jeunes Gens (UCJG), Les Messagers du Christ, Groupe d'Animation Liturgique (GAL), Union de Femmes Chrétiennes (UFC), TKRN, Les Chœurs Joyeux*, and *Echo.* Apart from UCJG, UFC, GAL and GHC, the 6 other groups were or are still ethnic-based. In fact, *Espérance* and *Sion* were born as Mundang choirs, the former being a youth group and the latter an adult group. Today, *Espérance* has turned from a Mundang youth group to a multicultural/multiethnic youth group, while *Sion* has remained ethnic. The situation is similar for the Ngambay-speaking community whose two choirs, namely TKRN and *Les Choeurs Joyeux* have developed asymmetrically. The adults' group (TKRN) has remained unchanged while the youth one has changed into a multicultural/multiethnic group. *Echo*, the only Bamun group, is a youth choir and seems to have remained unchanged, at least as far as its members are concerned; yet its members sing mainly in French, with Bamun being one of the minor languages used for singing. *Les Messagers du Christ* was created to be a Medumba-based choir. Although they sing mainly in French and occasionally in Medumba, their members are mostly from the West Region and are proficient in Medumba.

3.1.2. The Maroua-Peniel Parish of the Église Presbytérienne Camerounaise

The EPC was founded by the West African Mission. From 1850 until their departure, its missionaries worked intensively towards the evangelisation of the Bulu, Basaa, and Bafia for the most part. The Bulu in this context is a generic term for such ethnics as the Ewondo, Beti, Eton, and Fang. The Sanaga Maritime, a Basaa area, only became a mission field to the West African Mission later in 1920. Although some indigenous pastors seem to have opposed the leadership of the mission, the Basaa zone became an important evangelisation field to that mission society.

Basaa, therefore became the second language of the Mission after Bulu (Messina and Slageren, 2005). The message of the Mission in the Bafia was easily and happily received, and their language (Bafia, code 229) became the third liturgical language of the Mission. The EPC became independent in 1957 and the three indigenous languages inherited from the West African Mission became the liturgical languages of the EPC, each in its area. The EPC has a Presbyterian system, that is, Christian congregations have a certain degree of autonomy and have a certain degree of freedom in the handling of local affairs. The main jurisdictions of the EPC are the General Assembly, the Synod, the Consistory, and the parish Assembly. The 6 Synods were

- The *Synode Centre New Look* (Centre New Look Synod) (6 Consistories)
- The *Synode Est-Cameroun* (East-Cameroon Synod) (5 Consistories)
- The *Synode Metet* (Metet Synod) (4 Consistories)
- The *Synode Municam* (Municam Synod) (4 Consistories)
- The *Synode Basaa-Cameroun* (Basaa-Cameroon Synod) (5 Consistories)
- The *Synode Sud* (South Synod) (2 Consistories)

Maroua-Peniel is a parish of the Nkol-Mvolan Consistory, *Est-Cameroun* Synod. It was created in 1990 when a handful of Basaa, Bulu and Bafia people who had been initially worshipping in local churches of Maroua (*Union des Églises Évangéliques au Cameroun* and *Union des Églises Baptistes au Cameroun*) decided to create a branch of their church in the town. In 1992, the local church became a Parish and a Bulu pastor was assigned.

One hundred and twelve people from three main ethnic groups are faithful to the parish. These ethnic groups are Bulu, Basaa and Bafia. Discussions with church leaders revealed that, although these groups were unevenly represented in the parish there was no real hegemony from any of the three. This distribution is summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Ethnolinguistic distribution at the Maroua-Peniel Parish of the EPC

Bulu	Basaa	Bafia
48%	30%	22%

Contrary to major cities, this parish very appropriately portrays the ethnic distribution of the EPC. In fact, most EPC parishes in major cities of Cameroon are ethnic-based. The distribution at the Maroua-Peniel highlights one of the characteristics of evangelising in 'foreign' territories, namely the shrinking of the ethnic factor to the benefit of the church as a whole. Besides, the 6 choirs in the parish were shared among the three ethnic groups. '*Gloria singers*' is a youth group singing mainly in Bulu, '*Les Voix Unies*' sings in Bafia, while '*Echo New Look*' sings in Basaa. The Sunday School Choir, *Jeunesse d'Action Protestestante et Évangélique* (JAPE) and *Association Chrétienne des Femmes (ACF)* were mixed groups where the three ethnics could be found. The pastor is Bulu speaking, while all three ethnic groups are represented among Church Elders and Deacons. Surprisingly, 2 Fulfulde speakers were found among the Church Elders. These were northerners who had become Christians while serving in the southern part of the country. Once back home, they continued to serve in their original church.

3.2. Languages Used

The protestant church service in the EEC and EPC has been found to comprise some 15 main parts (Kouega and Ndzotom Mbakop, 2011a & b). They are 1) Salutation; 2) Adoration; 3) Invitation; 4) Prayer of Confession of Sins; 5) Act of Praise; 6) Announcements; 7) Illumination Prayer; 8) Scripture Reading; 9) Sermon; 10) Confession of Faith; 11) Pastoral Acts; 12) Offerings; 13) Intercession Prayer; 14) Exhortation; 15) Blessing.

Although Invitation was not systematically performed in the EEC, the 15 religious practices above were usually common to the two church groups. The languages used for these practices are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Languages used at EEC Maroua-Hardé and EPC Maroua-Peniel

Religious practice	EEC Maroua-Hardé	EPC Maroua-Peniel
Salutation	French	French
Adoration	French	French

Invitation	French	French
Confession	French	French
Act of Praise	French	French
Announcements	French	French
Illumination Prayer	French	French
Scripture Reading	French/Ngambay/Mundang	French
Sermon	French	French
Confession of Faith	French	French
Pastoral Acts	French	French
Offerings	French	French
Intercession Prayer	French	French
Exhortation	French	French
Blessing	French	French

In addition to these established practices, Songs appear as one key element of the church service as they are pervasive and occur after almost each religious practice. Songs were usually found to be performed in a large variety of languages.

At EPC Maroua-Peniel three main indigenous languages were used for singing by choirs, namely Bulu, Basaa, and Bafia. These languages were used by specific choirs: Gloria Singers and *JAPE* sang in Bulu, *Echo New Look* in Basaa, and *Les Voix Unies* in Bafia. Other languages included French, English, and Fulfulde. At EEC Maroua-Hardé, two groups sang in indigenous languages: *Sion* (Mundang), and TKRN (Ngambay). However, other indigenous languages were used, mainly Fulfulde, Medumba and Bamun. One ritual prayer does not appear on Table 4 above, namely the Lord's Prayer. This usually occurs as a conclusion to the intercession prayer. It is similar to the Confession of Faith; both are usually considered as ritual prayers and may be treated similarly. In a nutshell, the two parishes appear as French monolingual, with Ngambay and Mundang being two major indigenous languages at EEC Maroua-Hardé, as they occur for Scripture Reading.

4. Discussion

All Religions being nations that have no territory, they usually proselytise to increase their population. This is certainly one of the causes of the translation of the Bible and many other religious books into several languages. The need to make the message of religion comprehensible by all leads to the development of linguistic strategies aiming at solving language problems caused by the main difficulty religious groups face: diversity, linguistic homogeneity being usually the exception rather than the rule. In Cameroon, just like in many African and Southeast Asian countries, the creation of the nation was the result of colonisation.

In fact, contrary to older and more established European states, where centuries of 'common political-operational institutions' had created the sentiment of common nationality, the lack of such sentiment of common nationality exacerbates multiculturalism/multilingualism in Cameroon, and especially in churches. From the data presented above one can highlight a number of important features, namely the use of French as liturgical language in place of Fulfulde, which reinforces the historical factor (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2016); and the occurrence of ideationally non-integrated languages like Ngambay and Mundang for Scripture Reading at EEC Maroua-Hardé, which underscores compensation (Kouega, 2008).

4.1. The importance of ideational integration in mainstream Protestant Churches

Two main findings highlight the importance of ideational integration in language use in mainstream Protestant Churches in Cameroon, namely the use of Fulfulde only for marginal religious practices, while French was the main liturgical language. An ideationally integrated individual being usually culturally related to the group, this is a very important aspect in language use in mainstream Protestant Churches in Cameroon. This is due to the fact that colonialism and the structure of the missionary activities created particular ethnic association with the ensuing churches.

4.1.1. Fulfulde: A Major Language with Minor Uses

Fulfulde is a lingua franca in the Far North Region of Cameroon, and especially in the town of Maroua. Its use outpaces the use of French and English, the two official languages in the country. It is used in all domains, including the administration, churches (local churches and mosques), schools and homes. It is surprising therefore that the language was not liturgical in the two settings investigated. The sociolinguistics of the two settings provides interesting rationales to the situation. First of all, EEC and EPC are church groups that were founded in the southern part of the country, where the main liturgical languages are either English or French. The place of birth of church groups being strongly associated with their languages (Kamusella, 2012; Ndzotom Mbakop, 2014), it can be predicted that the languages used in the parishes under scrutiny are likely to be French or any of their historical indigenous liturgical languages: Medumba, Bamun and Duala for EEC; and Bulu, Basaa and Bafia for EPC. However, outside their stronghold one would have expected a change of language, in an attempt to adapt to their new environment. As a reminder the creation of a local parish outside its natural stronghold usually follows a predictable pattern. In fact, members of the same church group who have migrated to a different area for one reason or another decide to meet in order to recreate their original worshipping environment. After some time, they invite a number of fellow church members in the same town who might have been worshipping elsewhere to join them. Finally, they call on the church officials to assign a pastor to their worship place and it gets affiliated to the mother church. In that respect, the main aim of these churches is to gather all the members of their church group who may find themselves in the town, as well as new migrants from their religious 'nation'. The evangelization of new faithful (local population) being therefore a secondary objective, the use of Fulfulde is therefore not very pertinent and describes this main evangelisation objective for EEC and EPC to settle in areas where they are considered as 'foreign' church groups. Nonetheless, the language was used for singing in all these settings. This is certainly due to the fact that very lively songs have been written in the language, and perhaps most importantly, songs do not suffer from linguistic barriers. Actually, the languages of songs depend very little on the communication variable in church groups.

4.1.2. French: The Consensual 'Minor' Language

Although French is one of the two official languages of the country, its use in the northern part of Cameroon is quite peripheral. It is mostly limited to education and the administration, especially in official circumstances. However, Fulfulde is usually spoken at a large scale in public offices, on the playground and in public transportation. Fulfulde is the main liturgical language in local churches such as the *Union des Églises Baptistes au Cameroun*, *Union des Églises Évangéliques au Cameroun*, *Église Fraternelle Luthérienne Camerounaise*, and *Églises Évangélique Luthérienne Camerounaise* that were founded in the three Regions of the area, namely Adamawa, North and Far North (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2014). In addition, Fulfulde is used in mosques as one main liturgical language (Kouega and Baimada Gigla, 2012). The predominance of French in a Fulfulde dominated setting sheds new lights on the two settings under scrutiny. A number of factors seem to guide the use of French as liturgical language at EEC Maroua-Hardé and EPC Maroua-Peniel.

First of all, the historical background of the church groups, as said earlier, then the numerical factor, and the linguistic factor. The numerical factor claims that the use of an indigenous language as a liturgical language in a Protestant parish is the consequence of its users constituting at least 75% of the parish population. As the analysis of the data revealed, none of the parishes investigated showed such an overwhelming predominance of one ethnic group. At EEC Maroua-Hardé, although the Bamileke group was by far the most important, they have no common means of communication. Taken individually, none constituted more than half of the parish population. In addition, the number of indigenous languages was so high that the probability of either being used as liturgical language was quite low. At EPC Maroua-Peniel, the three language groups of the EPC were found with none claiming more than 50% of the entire population. In addition, observations show that these ethnic groups usually tend to create ethnic-based parishes. In that vein, in the absence of a numerically pertinent argument that may lead to the creation of three different parishes in the town, they are almost forced to live together. Under such conditions, none of the indigenous languages could be used without creating resentment.

The numerical factor leads to the linguistic one which stipulates that the more homogeneous a parish, the more likely the use of an indigenous language as a liturgical language (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2014). French being the lingua franca among the ideationally integrated population of the parish, its use was quite obvious. The church group could have decided to use the language of the immediate environment: Fulfulde. However, the rejection of Fulfulde seems to prove that mainstream Protestant Churches cater more for the ideationally integrated members. This can be explained by a historical fact explained earlier. This happened during the German annexation and involved assigning specific territories unto mission societies. A mission society could not operate on another one's territory. Therefore, one can hypothesise that even after the end of this practice, the non-aggression policy kept prevailing. In a nutshell, French was the liturgical language in an area where Fulfulde reigns supreme because of the historical background of the churches, the lack of homogeneity in the church population, and the absence of a super ethnic group whose members formed more than 75% of the parish population.

4.2. Normative integration and Compensation

By normative integration is meant "conformity of the conduct of the group to cultural standards" (Landecker, 1951: 332). In that vein, it may refer to a group that is not naturally part of the main polity (nation) considered, but which chooses to conform to the standards of that nation. At the Hardé parish of the EEC, Ngambay and Mundang faithful can be rightfully considered as the normatively integrated group for the reasons discussed in 4.1.1 above. The use of Ngambay at EEC Maroua-Hardé was one of the breakthroughs in this paper. While Kouega and Ndzotom Mbakop

(2011a) established that the indigenous languages of the EEC were those languages of the West and Littoral Regions of Cameroon, including Medumba, Ghomala, Bamun and Duala the present work brings in a new piece of information. As highlighted in the sociolinguistics of the Maroua-Hardé parish, the church started as a Ngambay-Mundang bilingual service. This was due to the fact that the creation of the parish owed, not to its historical members, but to a small group of Ngambay immigrants from Chad with the help of two Mundang families. Upon the arrival of an important contingent of southerners (natural members of the EEC), the liturgical language steadily shifted from Ngambay and Mundang to a trilingual service using Ngambay, Mundang and French.

Today, the parish has increased significantly to the point that the Ngambay and the Mundang have become numerically unimportant. However, their languages were used for Scriptures Reading. One could convoke the fact that a few old Ngambay-speaking members are not competent in French; however, there were also a few Bamileke who were not really competent in French too. Discussions with some church elders led one to the conclusion that the languages were used as a reward for its speakers' involvement in the creation of the parish. Actually, these groups, whose members sit in the council of elders, have usually requested the use of their languages during the church service. However, due to the numerical factor, this has not been feasible. The church officials instead resorted to duplication in Scriptures Reading. This practice is usually performed in three languages. The three Sunday portions of the Scriptures are first read in French (the Old Testament, the Epistles and the Gospel). Next the Ngambay reader goes to the pulpit and reads only the Gospel in Ngambay. The Mundang reader does the same. This reward appears as a compensation for their pioneer role in the creation of the parish, and may also intend to keep them in the parish in a context of super diversity and competition from the so-called New-born churches.

5. Conclusion

Language use in religious settings in Cameroon is a real challenge at it follows several patterns that need to be keenly scrutinized. Previous works on language use in Protestant Churches in Cameroon have revealed a number of factors that influence the use of a language in a specific church service, especially in urban areas. The present work has focused on an area where the church groups under scrutiny can be said to be 'foreign', and where the main lingua franca (Fulfulde) is not one of the historical indigenous languages of those churches.

Despite the status of this language, it was not liturgical in the two settings investigated. This was found to be due to a number of factors, including the historical background of the churches and its linguistic factor. These church groups were found to give primary importance to the well-being of their ideationally integrated members, while giving room to other languages whose speakers have contributed to their development. This attitude contributes to the stability of religious language varieties observed by Omoniyi and Fishman (2006). It is under this light that two minor languages were found to be used for Scriptures Reading at EEC Maroua-Hardé, namely Ngambay and Mundang. The use of these languages could account for compensation, as their speakers were the pioneers of the parish. This reveals that the use of a language in this area was based on the 'evangelisation' objectives of the church in question.

In fact, they were found to cater more for new immigrant members of their group rather than local population, who, they knew, already had a historical worship place. There seems to be a tacit agreement among church groups that no church group should 'hunt' on another church group's territory. Given that the investigation was carried out in 2014 in the two parishes, and mindful of the dynamic nature of religious groups (Ndzotom Mbakop, 2014), some linguistic practices observed here might be obsolete by now. Still, this does not alter the present results. As an illustration, Fulfulde was introduced for Scriptures Reading and the Summarising of the Sermon at

the Hardé parish of the EEC a few months after our data had been collected. However, its use was later discontinued in 2020.

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