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Path dependence in the official use of Cameroon Pidgincreole in the Anglophone Crisis: from Diasporic usage to home consciousness

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ABSTRACT

Since languages are like humans in that they are born, they grow and they die, the fight for survival and recognition is evident. The path to this survival and recognition determines the whole process. This paper profiles the gradation in the use of CPc by top government officials in Cameroon and how subordinates follow the same path in official dialogue with the populations of the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon during the anglophone crisis. This research simply presents a pattern of acceptance as one speech in CPc during the anglophone crisis led to more speeches in CPc in similar situations by people who otherwise would not have been comfortable using the language. This study is not interested in the linguistics elements of the speeches used; it will not analyse them. Brief excerpts of the speeches of an Anglophone activist from the Diaspora and some four top ranking officials of the government are



drawn from the media for this purpose. With recourse to the path dependent theory, this study holds that this positive attitude towards CPc created an envious path, which other personalities followed and many more will continue to follow, consequently setting a stage for a possible official recognition of CPc.

Key words: *Path depending, government officials, attitude, CPc, anglophone crisis*

Introduction

Whether society affects language (sociolinguistics) or language affects society (sociology of language), attitudes change and statuses change. When attitudes change towards language, that language either gains or loses linguistic space as the status of that language changes overtly or covertly. The anglophone crisis that has lingered for close to five years now has and is still causing a lot of changes in the linguistic platform of Cameroon. Cameroon Pidgincreole (henceforth CPc) is the de facto language of social communication, not only in the private space, but also in most public places in the anglophone regions.

Since the term CPc is still new to the context of Cameroon, I will briefly throw light on that before examining changes in attitude towards the language over the years, culminating to major moves during the period of the anglophone crisis in Cameroon. The term CPc used in this paper is a term coined by Fonka (2011) and used in Fonka (2014a, 2014b and 2019) to refer to a pidgin that has assumed other functions and surviving capabilities and is enjoying an expanded stage of its development as illustrated in Bakker's (2008) pidgin life cycle. Fonka (2019) holds that different scholars over the years have recognised the change in the status of Cameroon Pidgin by giving it different appellations such as Kamtok (Todd and Jumbam, 1992, p. 3; Ayafor, 1996, p. 54 and Ngome, 1986), Cameron Pidgin (CamP) (Todd 1981), Cameroon Creole (Schneider, 1960 quoted by Echu 2003, p. 4; Todd and Jumbam, 1992, p. 3 and Neba et al., 2006, p. 47) amongst others. It should be noted that while some of these names, Kamtok and CamP



have to do with issues of identity; Cameroon creole and Cameroon Pidgincreole have to do with change in status. Following the life cycle of a Pidgin that begins with a jargon (pre-pidgin) and moves to a pidgin (a makeshift language) then to a Pidgincreole (expanded pidgin) and finally to a creole (a mother tongue) as argued by (Bakker 2008), the pidgin in the context of Cameroon is now on the third lap (Fonka 2019).

This paper purposes to show how Cameroonians anglophone Diasporas' use of CPc at the beginning of the Anglophone crisis caused a change in attitude back at home. This change of attitude in Cameroon started with the high ranking political leaders and like a contagious disease, contaminated other officials. The new urge to use CPc been embraced even by officials in domains of education where CPc is often despised and rejected with threatening posters. This paper is therefore an attempt to profile the gradation in the use of CPc by top government officials in Cameroon and how subordinates have adopted the same path in official dialogue in their attempt to solve the anglophone problem. The paper simply presents a pattern of acceptance as one speech in CPc by a political figure leads to the next by another political figure and the effect this has had on the language. Excerpts of speeches of five top ranking officials have been sampled. As a theoretical study, this paper examines these speeches from the lens of path dependence theory without any in-depth analysis of the semantic or syntactic structure of the speeches. The important thing is to show how a rejected stone (CPc) in the official landscape, becomes the capstone as it gains prominence. The speeches presented here are extracted from the social media platforms such as Youtube and WhatsApp. Short excerpts of five speeches of different stakeholders are presented.

Background to the study

At the end of World War II, Cameroon became a Trusteeship of the United Nations, but remained under the British and French. From the outset Britain had decided against an independent administration for



British Cameroon. It divided the territory into the Southern and Northern Cameroons, which it respectively administered as integral parts of Northern and Eastern Nigeria (Ardener 1962; Kale 1967; Nyamndi 2007). The perception that Southern Cameroons was not viable enough economically to attract direct British investment is seen to have worked against its autonomy being offered as an option during the plebiscite. Under the auspices of the United Nations, a plebiscite was conducted in the territory in February 1961. the Southern Cameroons opted for a federation with La République du Cameroun, despite the voices which advocated a union with Nigeria (Percival 2008, p. 4).

Ahidjo became the Federal President but soon began to think the idea of a federation was expensive and wasteful. He started scheming for a single unified party. In 1962 he suppressed East Cameroonian multipartism and in 1966 merged his party, the UC, with West Cameroonian parties to form the Cameroon National Union (CNU). By 1972 reunification had been achieved through a combination of political intrigue and manipulation (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, 2003 cited in Percival 2008, p. 4). In May of that year, the federation was replaced by a united republic which was to last until two years after Ahidjo's resignation in November 1982.

In November 1982, Ahidjo resigned and was constitutionally succeeded as President by Paul Biya, who promised to build a more democratic society. In 1984 President Biya carried out a series of constitutional changes, which included the change of name from the 'United Republic of Cameroon' to the 'Republic of Cameroon'. This move attracted criticism from certain Anglophone academics who saw it as an attempt to influence historical traditions in favour of the French heritage (Percival 2008, p. 5)

Historical minorities like the Anglophones were denied minority status in the 1996 Constitution. Instead, Paul Biya remains adamant that it would be a betrayal of the founding fathers of nation-building to make any concessions to forces seeking secession or the fragmentation of Cameroon. Yet the systematic marginalization of Anglophones and



their institutions only seems to further radicalize this community through groups such as the Southern Cameroon National Congress (SCNC) (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). Also, while President Biya is hesitant to make concessions to Anglophones seeking better recognition and representation, he does not hesitate to tinker with the Constitution (1996 and 2008) in ways that further undermine this community and the democratic tenets of a common civic citizenship in Cameroon (Percival, 2008)

The unholy alliance as Nkwain (2022) terms it, attained climax in September 2016 following the government's cavalier approach to a peaceful protest by Anglophone lawyers following what they termed continuous marginalization of the practice of Common Law in the two Anglophone regions of the country. The crackdown on lawyers ignited a solidarity mobilization of Anglophone Teachers Trade Union on similar grounds- wanton and increasing discrimination with regard to policy implementation, total disregard and disregard for core values of the Anglophone sub-system of education. This resulted to more merciless crackdown and arrest from the forces of law and order. In December 2016 as Nkwain (2022, p. 235) reports, attempts towards legitimizing the struggle led to the formation of the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) to champion impending negotiations with the government. Failure to reconcile differences amidst increasing acts of civil disobedience including the destruction of public and private property, grounding of economic activities, desecration of national symbols, repression and torture, etc., the government outlawed CACSC, detained most of its leaders, as others fled the country, and branded them extremists and terrorists.

According to a political analyst, George Ngwane on a televised programme in 2017 on MoRISC TV-BSC/AMB, the anglophone crisis emanated from the problems of the Anglophone, which was caused by the Anglophone Problem. He stressed that there is a difference between the Anglophone Problem and the Problems of the Anglophone. According to this source, the Anglophone Problem is situated between



1960 and 1972 and was triggered by the violation of Article 47 of the Federal Constitution of 1961. The 1961 Federal Constitution, as he pointed out, stated that the Federal States of West and East Cameroon would remain as federations and there will be nothing to do to dismantle West Cameroon and East Cameroon. He further claimed that Ahmadou Ahidjo, the then President of Cameroon, decided to contravene article 47, the provision of which states that, "Any proposal for the revision of the present Constitution which impairs the unity and integrity of the Federation shall be inadmissible" (Federal Constitution of Cameroon, 1961). This Article 47 of the Federal Constitution has been quoted repeatedly during the climax of the Anglophone crisis in 2016. The violation of this constitution resulted to the Anglophone problem which gave rise to the problems of the Anglophones; problems which have nursed so much anger that the government has kept nipping at the bud whenever an individual or a group attempted expressing them.

Violent crackdowns, arrest and imprisonment of activists and Ambazonian fighters by the government on the one hand and kidnap, torture and extortion of heavy amounts from the population by Ambazonian fighters on the other hand have become the order of the day. Some concessions made by the government to seek ways of ending the crisis include the release of some activists, introduction of some educational, sociocultural and legal reforms. All these efforts have yielded very little or no fruits because as the activists claim, the root causes of the crisis have not yet been arrested. The deployment of a special military battalion and visible transportation of heavy weaponry to the northwest and the southwest regions only comes to indicate that the government is not finding it easy to crush the resistance as earlier thought. Ghost towns are still very much respected; not necessarily as support to the struggle as it was originally the case, but generally for fear of the unknown.

Literature and theoretical consideration



In this section, this paper will examine attitude towards language, pidgin in general and CPc in particular, especially in the wake of the deepening Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. It will end with the presentation of the Path Depending Theory, which is used to show how history can be a forerunner to subsequent actions.

Attitudes towards language use

It is important look at the concept of attitude, especially attitude toward language use. Attitude is defined differently by scholars across different fields of study. Attitudes have a subject matter (referred to as the object or target), which can be an object, a person or an abstract idea (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018). Attitude as Albarracin and Shavitt posit are relevant to many disciplines, including marketing (attitudes towards products), Advertising (attitudes towards advertisements), political behaviour (attitudes towards political candidates, parties, or voting), and health (attitudes towards protective behaviour, new medication or health system). Attitude can thus be defined as “a person’s evaluation of an object on a favourable or unfavourable continuum” (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, p.229).

Language attitudes is defined as beliefs or judgments people have about certain social styles of language, features of a language, or varieties of a language (Peterson 2020, p. 8). She further points out that the language attitude is a related concept to language ideology. In relating language attitude to attitude towards English, Perterson (2020, p. 13) claims that:

Within outer-circle settings, local varieties of English very seldom hold overt prestige, especially among social elites. For this reason, even among those who speak local varieties as their mother tongue, such varieties are rarely regarded as fully-fledged languages in their own right. They are routinely given names such as *dialect*, *pidgin*, *Creole*, *patois/patwa*, *bad English*, *slang*, or some kind of localized name such as *Singlish*. In addition, attitudes toward these varieties can be very strong, even among mother-tongue speakers who use the varieties on a regular basis.



Language attitudes permeate our daily lives (Garret 2010, p. 1). Attitudes are not always publicly articulated and we are not always conscious of them. It is also generally accepted that attitudes can function as both input into and output from social action (Garret 2010, p. 21). What this means is that a favourable attitude draws more attention to the use and learning of a language and high achievement, especially in an educational context. Relating attitude to foreign language, Al-Nofaie (2016) citing Edwards (1995) associates it to positive or negative feelings towards the foreign language culture and its speakers. Attitudes towards a particular language, whether positive or negative, are motivated. Some people have a positive attitude towards a language based on its widespread use in the community in which they find themselves, others, for what they stand to gain by using the language in and out of their community, while others are actually forced to go for the language, their opinions notwithstanding. As a community, Cameroon seems to portray all the learning -related attributes referred to here. It is alleged that many francophone Cameroonians prefer the official learning of English over French because of the global prestige the former enjoys in the world today (Atechi, 2015; Atechi & Angwah, 2016). When Atechi & Angwah (2016, p. 109) say the interest Cameroonians have for English language is born out of instrumental than integrative reasons, the statement holds more for francophone Cameroonians than anglophone Cameroonians. Anglophone Cameroonians, especially those given birth to in the two anglophone regions where English is both a subject in school and the language of instruction, are forced to learn English. It is therefore clear that attitudes are not necessarily voluntary; conditions surrounding the use of a particular language may build up an attitude that was not there at the beginning.

Since attitudes are also generated through government policy like in the way right and privileges are ascribed to given languages, government policy can give rise to negative and positive attitudes. This is the case with the use of English and French in Cameroon as Chiatoh



(2006a) points out. According to Chiatoh (2006a, p. 148), the language policy which makes use of English and French as official languages has:

instead of consolidating national unity and enhancing development, Cameroon's language policy has rather produced a boomerang effect by dispersing the population into two camps of strong and weak citizens and encouraging the domination of the weak by the strong.

This means that English and French have on the contrary produced antagonistic camps which are operating on different linguistic lines. This explains why Chiatoh (2006b) thinks that the hardline attitudes built around the two official languages can be mitigated with the use of national languages.

Since this paper is about path dependence towards the official use of CPc, understanding attitudes towards Pidgins in general and towards CPc in particular, which is the focus of the next section, would be of great importance.

Attitudes towards CPc

Examining attitudes towards CPc without a reference to Pidgins and Creoles as a whole may not give a clear picture of the hereditary attitude, generally negative, most contact languages, CPc inclusive, have had from observers and their speakers. Despite calls through proven research that Pidgins and Creoles are fully fledged languages with native speakers in some cases and capable of carrying out all the functions of a language, attitudes towards some of these pidgins are not changing as fast as expected (Holm, 2000). Negative attitudes towards pidgins are mostly from the belief that they are hybrid languages. Referring to Haitian Creole, Lefebvre (2004, p. 11) cites Sylvain (1936, p. 178) who observes that, "Nous sommes en presence d'un francais coule dans le moule de la syntaxe africaine, ou (...) d'une langue ewe a vocabulaire francais." [We are in the presence of a French that has been cast in the mould of African syntax or ... of an Ewe language with a French vocabulary.] Even Pidgins and Creoles that are used officially as



mediums of instruction in schools also suffer from negative attitude by both their users and non-users. This is the case with the persistent stigmatization of Seselwa in Seychelles (Fleischmann & Nick, 2017), although it is an official medium of instruction in that country. Fleischmann & Nick, (2017, p. 3) citing the works of Adone & Plag, (1994), Arends, (1995), Bollée (1977, 1993), Choppy (2002), Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985) and Webb (2013) heave a sigh relief as the various research and documentation of the linguistic complexity and psychosocial value of Creoles have caused the once predominant scholarly condescension for Creole languages to gradually disappear.

With regard to attitudes towards CPc, there is no difference from what has happened and is happening to other pidgins around the world. Tanda (2015, p. 17) observes that there is widely held misconceived belief in elite circles in Cameroon that CPE is 'bad English' and incapable of contributing to 'civilized discourse'. What feeds this belief, as (Tanda, 2015) puts it, is the assumption that this language is badly learned and that since it is the derivative of English, it hinders learning of standard English. It should be noted that this notion of Standard English is an issue as the question of **which standard** and **whose standard** is prevalent in standardisation discourse. Standardised language according to Garvin and Mathiot (1960, p. 783) cited in Mesthrie et al. (2009, p. 20) is a 'codified form of a language, accepted by, and serving as a model to, a larger speech community'. CPc therefore, does not influence Standard English in Cameroon because the Standard English spoken in Cameroon is Cameroon English and no research has proven that CPc has a bad influence on it.

Although Ekanjume-Ilongo (2016, p. 157) agrees with the observation made by other scholars (Mbangwana, 1983 & Fonka, 2014a) that Pidgins are languages that are often despised and looked down upon in social policy settings, she however, notes that CPc has the following peculiar advantages amongst others: CPE is considered by many Cameroonians as a language for national unity; it can be used as a tool to empower childhood education in Cameroon since many



children have it as their mother tongue. It will not be abstract to think that it is from the point of view of its uniting power that politicians home and abroad, favoured it over official language of communication during the anglophone crisis. The fact that neither of the two official languages is capable of creating a feeling of national identity, culture or unity (Schröder, 2003) accords credibility to CPc that is generally agreed to have such qualities. This review ends with the words of Todd & Jumbam (1992) that, Kamtok, as referred to in their work, is taking its place as a recognised medium of interaction for many Cameroonians. This is an indication that attitudes have changed or are changing. The positive change in attitude makes CPc create new niches for itself in several domains (Tanda, 2015) and has become the language of both the elite and the masses (Ojong, 2021).

Theoretical consideration

The theory that underpins this study is Path Dependence Theory.

Path dependent theory

The theory of Path Dependence was originally put forward by David (1985, 1986) and Arthur (1989, 1994) in their economic investigation of the diffusion of technologies, the QWERTY keyboard layout being their most prominent example (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010, p. 3). Path dependence has become, within a relatively short space of time, a widely used concept in social science (Alexander, 2001; Arrow, 2000; Berman, 1998; Bruggeman, 2002; Garud and Karnoe, 2001; Greener, 2002a and 2002b; Hansen, 2002 and Hedlund, 2000 cited in Greener, 2005, p. 62-63). It is no longer a domain based theory as it has progressively lost a specific meaning (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010). From the computer science origin, the theory has been used in some institutional and evolutionary economics (North, 1990; Witt, 1997) and in historical institutionalism and comparative politics (Pierson, 2000).



The basic argument of Path Dependence stresses on the importance of past events for future actions or, more precisely, of foregoing decisions for current and future decision making (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010, p. 4). This statement is so important in its application to the use of CPc in an attempt to resolve the anglophone crisis. To put it differently, path dependence suggests that the roots of institutionalization can put an organization on a trajectory from which deviation becomes increasingly difficult over time (Kuipers and Boin, 2010, p. 50).

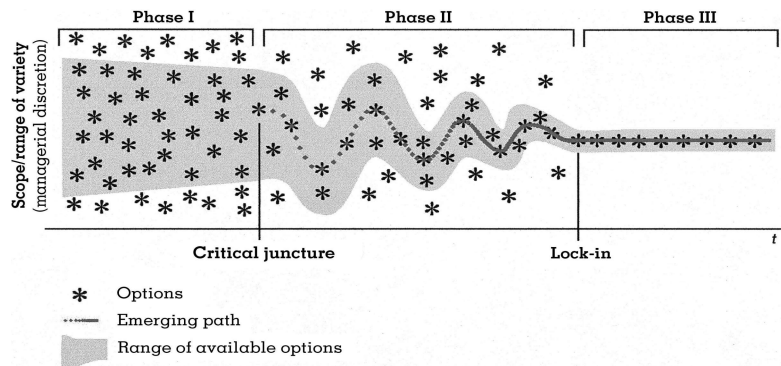


Figure 1: Constitution of a path (Source: Sydow et al., 2009, p. 692)

Figure 1 illustrates the root of institutionalization and how it develops into a trajectory that gets replicated. Phase one, which is the search for alternatives, is where history matters. Here, decision making is faced with a range of alternatives from which to choose. To apply it to language use by politicians in the case of the anglophone crisis, they were faced with a myriad of local languages; two official languages, English and French; a contact language, CPc and camfranglais, a language out of multilingual contacts. In phase two, an organisational path emerges, that is, a decision about the path to take is made and in the case of the anglophone crisis, CPc. This started with the restorationist leaders in the Diaspora and then the Prime minister of Cameroon who used CPc in his mobilisation and meet the people tour



of the two anglophone regions respectively. In phase three, the focal action pattern is replicated even more, leading into a lock-in. once the organizational pattern emerges, everyone uses only that action and this narrows to a lock-in. Every other political actor who visited the two anglophone regions after the Prime Minister's tour saw the need to address the population in CPc. This is exactly in line with Arestis and Sawyer (2010), who in their illustration of path dependence in macroeconomic analysis say that, decisions made in the present and the resulting actions and interactions must have an impact on what happens tomorrow and the decisions made tomorrow and the actions that result.

It should be noted that this paper is examining the use of CPc in a political situation. Pierson (2000) identifies four elements of political systems that contribute to path dependency: the dominance of collective action in politics, the institutional density of politics, power asymmetries, and the complexity and opaqueness of political processes. What is common to this paper is the dominance of collective action. In a very succinct manner, Breznitz (2010, p. 16) explains this in the following manner:

the first choice in a sequence creates loops of positive feedback. For example, if Group 1 found that making a specific choice X in decision time point T1 beneficial, Group 1 will tend to keep choosing X for as long as it views X as helping and as long as it possesses the power to do so.

It is clear from this presentation that history, informs the next set of actions in path dependence. The next section of this paper will be specific in exploring the perspective of history as seen from the data presentation. The last thing to note here is that the path chosen is not bound to produce the same results as previous, but once it gets to the lock-in phase, users keep using the path in expectation of good results, even if at the moment, the outcome is not what was expected.



METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was drawn from the many speeches in Cameroon Pidgin Creole by Cameroonians at home and in the Diaspora. From the Diaspora, only one speech in CPc which was viral at the onset of the crisis in 2016 was chosen. Four other speeches in CPc by government official in Cameroon made during the crisis were chosen. In all, five speeches were sampled for this research. All the speeches chosen for this paper were not directly dealing with the crises; some came as a result of the existence of the crisis but were considered good for this research because they all followed a pattern of the path dependent theory. A purposive sampling technique was therefore used to select speeches made during the crisis following an order in which they were made in different occasions. Nothing actually informed the choice of personalities other than the fact that they are public figures and their speeches targeted the Anglophone populations in Cameroon. Although not all the speeches made by personalities in the Diaspora and at home were considered, if the scope of this research has to be extended, they can fit in because they can all be viewed through the lenses of path dependent theory. The speeches were not analysed as the intention was not to do a discourse, but to present a simple pattern that has freed CPc of the stigma and has instilled courage to those in power to use the language that meets the aspirations of the population.

DATA PRESENTATION

This section presents the extracts of speeches selected for this paper. To show how the theory of path dependence is applicable to the anglophone crisis, this paper begins with a catalyzing speech from an anglophone activist before moving to those of state personalities.

First Speech: Tapang Ivo December 23, 2016 addressing Anglophones on Social Media

It should be noted that the social media, notably Facebook and YouTube, were so much used at the peak of the anglophone crisis. Anglophones



who had android phones could not resist the temptation of constantly checking to get the news of the day and the next action plan imposed from the Diaspora. The following speech was one of such breaking news:

Ma mam idem, ma papa dem; ma bro, ma sista dem. Eni man wei de listen to mi nau, wuna teik chie wuna shidon fo kona faya wuna lisen fo mi. A de tok fo pigin bikos wuna go undastan mi. wi ol na anglofon dem, wi ol na English pipol fo kamerun. Dat min sei fo sins 1960, da min sei fo moh dan 50 yies wi don de sofa insaid som mared wei wi bi kam join French pipo dem an den meyo bi kam fo kam meik sho sei meik wi join. Meyo foget fo sain dat big buk. So mayo bi nau komot run yi. Meyo na United Nations; dei bi komot run dem wi da wa buk wei dei no bi sain am. So da min sei wi dei na insaid fo kam wi stei fo mared. Da min French pipo dem don kam mitop wi sins 1961 wi dei fo insaid kam wi stei an dei don dinai fo sain de mareij an sins da taim, wi don de sofa, wi don de sofa, dei de bit wi as dei de bit wi dei tok sei meik wuna no tok; dei de bit wi sei meik wuna no tok (2x), itj taim wi wan tok, dei de onli bit bit wi ... wi bi na mami, na wi de kari, wi bi na mami wei i bi veri frotful, wi bi bles. Na wi de kari ol petro, na wi de kari ol wata fol dem ... fo de veri fost taim, wi don disaid sei wi don sofa plenti an i korekt; wi don disaid sei i don korekt. Mami wuna don sofa fo long; papa, wuna don sofa fo long... dei don bit wa pikin dem, dei don reip, dei don kil some wan dem wei wi don si am fo Buea and fo Bamenda. Dei don kil am (2X)...

(My mothers, my fathers, my brothers, my sisters, anyone listening to me now, take a chair and sit by the fire and listen to me. I am talking in pidgin because you will understand me. We are all anglophones; we are all English-speaking people in Cameroon. Since 1960, that means for more than 50 years, we have been suffering in a marriage we contracted with French-speaking people and the mayor came to ensure that it was joined. The mayor forgot to sign the important book. The mayor ran away. The mayor is the United Nation; they ran away with marriage certificate which they did not sign. That means we are in an uncertified marriage. This means that French-speaking people came and met us in 1960 and we have been in an uncertified marriage and they have, since then, refused to sign the marriage certificate. We have been suffering, we have been suffering; they are beating us, as they beat us, they warn us not to speak out, they beat us and warn us not to



... speak. Whenever we want to speak, they keep beating us... we are the mother; we are the ones carrying everything; we are the mother who is very fruitful, we are blessed. We are the ones carrying all the petrol; we are the ones carrying all the water falls... for the first time, we have decided that we have suffered so much that it is enough; we have decided that it is enough. Mothers, you people have suffered for long; fathers, you people have suffered for long... they have beaten our children; they have raped, they have killed some as we saw in Buea and in Bamenda. They have killed; they have killed...) (*My loose translation*)

This speech can be considered an outstanding address by an activist to anglophones in CPc at the very beginning of the crisis. It could also be considered a catalyst given its emotional drive as the anglophone population, right down to the grass road, was able to listen and understand the reason they all needed to stand up and fight for their independence. This must have given most anglophones who listened to it a rallying force behind the restoration movement. This speech, in this work, is also considered the historical point where further decisions on language, especially the use of CPc during the period of this conflict were dependent on.

Fonka (2022) reports about informants who said the top administration of Cameroon, after failing to subdue the movement with repression, thought that dissuading the people from supporting the fight against the nation would be much cherished; if they speak to the people in the language they understand best, the language that must have radicalized them in the first place. A new movement of pidgin use started with the Prime Minister, Joseph Dion Ngute's meet-the-people tour of the Northwest and the Southwest regions in 2019. Fonka (2022) sees CPc in this usage as a fire extinguisher, which is needed for a moment to be abandoned when the job is done. The good thing in this case is that if the personalities concerned decide to stop using it, they would have established a usage path for many other hitherto shay users to use with freedom.



Second Speech: Prime Minister, Chief Dr Joseph Dion Ngute May 9, 2019 in Bamenda, May 11, 2019 in Buea and May 12, 2019 in Limbe during his meet the people tours

PM: *Na wi papa Paul Biya sen mi meik a kom tok fo ol pipo miek dem teil di yong pipol sei, plis, dem na Cameroonian dem, dem na wi pikin dem, wi no get eni risin fo kari arm bikos ol de ting wei dem wan tok, meik dem kam tok, papa go listen, wuna hie mi?*

Population: *Yesssooooooh!*

PM: *No nid fo go fo bush, na so papa teil mi mek a kam teil dem. I sei weda na miting dem want getam ohh, i bi prepared fo hol da miting, wuna di hie mi soo?*

Population: *Yesssssoooooh!*

PM: It's our father Paul Biya who has sent me to come and speak to everybody, to tell these young people that, please, they are Cameroonians, they are our children, they don't have any reason to carry arms because all what they have to say, they should come out and say it. The father is going to listen to them, do you understand me?

Population: Yes!

PM: There is no need to go to the bush, that is what the father has told me to come and tell them. He says even if it is a meeting they want him to convene, he is ready to do so, do you people understand me well?

Population: Yes!

It should be noted that in 2016 that the first major rallying speech in CPc was made, several other speeches in the same language were made by restorationist leaders thereafter. It was only in 2019 that the first major speech from the government bench was made in CPc. Between 2016 and 2019, the government's language of communication in these two regions was either English or French and the mode of action was intimidation and arrest, while the restorationists language of communication was CPc and English and their mode of action was coaxing and conscientization. When government's method became unyielding, she resorted to the restorationists methods as seen from the Prime Minister's speech that was more of a dialogue, drawing him closer to the people. Path independent theory can be applicable to this action of drawing from the strategy of the winning team. This strategy



of coaxing and conscientization is even more evident in the next two speeches where the personalities besides using CPc as a means of communication, also with bended knees, shed tears before their audience.

Third Speech: Senator Tabe Tando – (Manyu 2019 in a meet the people tour of his constituency)

Meik wuna teik de meseij, fo ol wi chudren wei de dei fo bush. Meik dei no meik dei de insult Manyu pipo (he weeps). A don beg dem sei Manyu neim don bad. Dei di tok na about Manyu sei na bad pleis. Mek dei komot, a de beg dem, so that meik pis i bi, i stat from Manyu an i spred de hol of Kamerun..... Meik wuna no put wi fo shem- dei sei “papa sen de moni”, a sei a go giv moni fo bishop, de dei wei dem kam bishop go risiv dem...

(You should all take this message to our children who are in the bush. They should not cause Manyu people to be insulted (He weeps). I have pleaded on them that the name of Manyu has been destroyed. Everyone considers Manyu a bad place. They should come out, I plead on them, so that there may be peace, beginning from Manyu and spreading to the whole of Cameroon...Do not disgrace us. They said “father the money to us”, I told them I will give the money to the bishop, whenever they come, the bishop will receive them). (*My translation*)

The senator for Manyu, Senator Tabe Tando, copies the Prime Minister’s example and does same in his speech. This is the development of the lock-in process in the Path Dependent Theory. Every major interaction in the two restive regions by politicians adopts the language of the people, CPc. As Schreyogg & Koch (2009, p. 692) put it, “the dominant decision pattern becomes fixed and gains a deterministic character; eventually, the actions are fully bound to a path”. The argument here is that since this is a lock-in stage that pulls all action to a given path, the actions taken may not necessarily lead to the desired result, but even new users will continue on the same path because the system has lost its capability to adopt better alternatives (Schreyogg & Koch, 2009). The next excerpt also took place in 2019 and this time in Bamenda Town.



Fourth Speech: Government Delegate – Bamenda 2019, 20th May ceremony

Meik wi rememba weti wei wi bi di du 3 yies ego. Fo northwrest hie, pikin dem be muv sand fo Wum fid dia families; som wan bi de du treading, fid dia families; som wan be de go fam, fid dia families... no wei no dei nau. Yu komot fo hie fo go Ndop, yu no fit ritj, yu no fit go Bambui, yu no fit go Fondong, yu no fit go... a beg wuna (on his knees) taim don rich, taim don rich. Meik we put God fo wi hat.

(Let us remember how we were three years ago. Here in the northwest, children were digging sand from Wum, from which they were feeding their families; some were involved in commercial activities, from which they used in feeding their families; some were involved in farming, from which they were feeding their families... it is not possible now. You cannot leave from here to Ndop; you cannot leave from here to Bambui; you cannot go to Fundong; you cannot go... I plead on you (on his knee), now is the time; now is the time. Let us invite God into our hearts). *My loose translation*

The speech of the government delegate to the Bamenda Urban council was in the same logic of migrating from force to coaxing. This commitment to using CPc and having no results from it as will be seen later with the analysis of the questionnaire, falls under what Ross & Staw (1993) and Staw (1976) cited in Schreyogg & Koch (2009) call the escalating commitment. Escalating commitment, especially in the lock-in stage prevents organizational decision makers to change their course of action, despite continued negative feedback.

Fifth Speech: Prof Pauline Nalova Lyonga- Minister of Secondary Education with Ambassador on Equinox TV (August 2021) after the publication of General Certificate Examinations.

It should be noted that this particular speech is not directly related to the crisis, but the context of the crisis gave her the ease to use pidgin, especially in the field of education. This has never been done in the



educational context in Cameroon, which is considered formal and has always employed English and French.

Ambassador: *Mami Nalova Lyonga, tank yu plenty fo yur taim an wi glad sei yu bi guest insaid Equinox tori haus. (Madam Nalova Lyonga, thank you very much for your time and we are glad to have you as our guest on Equinox Television).*

Prof Nalova Lyonga: *a bi very happy fo tok to ma pipo dem fo de languesh wei dei go undastan. Dei fit tink sei na onli da English, English, English. No, wei ol dei insaid de pidgin. (I am very happy to speak to my people in a language they will understand. They may think that it is English as usual. No, we all are into Pidgin.)*

Ambassador: *...GCE bi komot jos de seim taim wi bi chek sei mami go tel wi sei mek wi weit smol, bot GCE don komot. GCE fo dis yier...hau yu si de resolt fo GCE wei i komot? Meik wi stat fo dat said. A sabi sei plenty pikin dem don alredi sabi dia resolt bai nau. (GCE results have been released just when we thought you were going to ask us to wait a little more, but the GCE results are out. GCE for this year... What is your appraisal of the GCE that is out? Let's begin from there. I know most children already know their results by now.)*

Prof Nalova Lyonga: *pikin dem don sabi dia resolt bai now, a bi very hapi sei, wel de no be de seim level laik last yier, bot dei bi quait gud. Last yier plenty pikin dem komot difren pleisis go bak, komot from bush go bak fo skul wei dei no pripeh dei go insaid skul dei jos sit fo ekzam... (Children know their results by now. I am very happy that, well, they are not of the same level like last year, but they are quite good. Last year, many children left different places and went back, some from bushes and went back to school without any preparation and sat for exams...)*

One of the areas where resistance has been rife in the use of CPc over the years is in the educational domain. Most of the posters resisting the use of CPc are on school campuses as revealed by different scholars (Atechi, 2011a, 2011b; Fonka, 2011; Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2016). For the minister of secondary education, knowing the situation on the ground, after having served as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea



where most of the posters are found, and having visited secondary school campuses with such interdictions to accept interview about education in Pidgin on one of the most widely viewed television channels in Cameroon, can be considered throwing in the towel. It can only be concluded in a sentence that there is no need avoiding the unavoidable. This will certainly also have a duplication effect on the educational sector as many more will feel freer to speak in CPc and would always quote the minister either rightly or wrongly when faced with opposition.

A lot of questions are begging for answers as the move towards Pidgin English keeps increasing. Was there a positive action after the Prime Minister's speech in 2019? Have speakers of this variety just found freedom to use their cherished variety they thought was a taboo to speak in public occasions until the head of Government opened the way? These are some of the questions that the analysis of a single item questionnaire under the subheading the path and the goal, will help to extrapolate and draw a conclusion. Before getting to the questionnaire, it should be noted that the five speeches here are just a few from so many speeches made in CPc during the period of the anglophone crisis. Many from other top personalities like divisional officers, top military personnel amongst others were also made.

The path and the goal

The use of CPc, which has become an established path through which most messages of coaxing, by both the restorationists and the government officials pass, was never meant to valorize CPc; the intension was to win the sympathy of the population. To know whether this goal was met, 224 anglophones were picked indiscriminately in Bamenda town and asked how they felt being addressed in CPc by the Prime Minister and other officials during the crisis. Of the 224 respondents, 32 (14.3) said they felt they were important 40 (17.8%) felt that their opinions count 152 (67.9%) felt nothing special (see Fonka forthcoming for more on this)

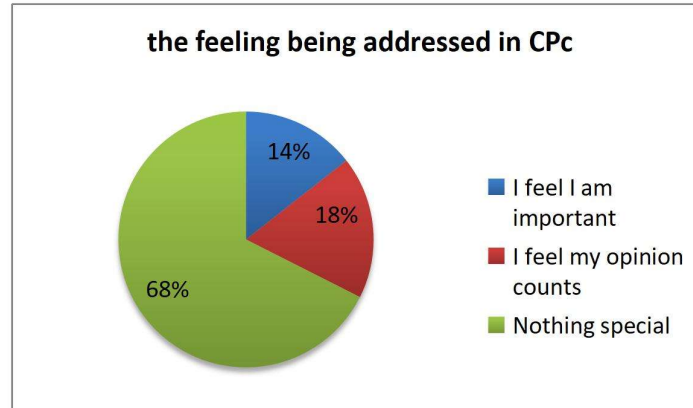


Figure 2: Anglophones' feelings when addressed in CPc

It can be extrapolated from the data that 32 (32%) of the respondent, those who felt important and those who felt their opinion counted, represented the population that could easily sympathize with the officials. The majority who felt nothing special surely had no sympathies and so could not be moved by the use of CPc by official. Feeling nothing special is an indication that the use of CPc failed in achieving the goal of drawing sympathy. The use of CPc did not fail in everything; it gave the language some benefits as outlined in the next section.

The path and the benefit to CPc

One may ask that if the goal for using CPc during the anglophone crisis by government officials was not achieved, what then was achieved. Of course something was gained, the valorization of CPc, which can aptly be expressed in the following ways:

1. **Greater visibility of CPc:** During the Prime Minister's visit, expectations were high as the whole country focused towards the anglophone regions he visited. By using CPc to address the population, even people who knew little about English were aware of it. Government officials after the Prime Minister's visit valorized CPc and consistently used it in their interactions with the populations of the two restive regions.



2. **Off lifting of the stigma:** Pidgin and creoles in general have been stigmatized over the years by both speakers and non-speakers in the different communities where they are spoken. CPc has not been an exception to this show of disgust as many have given it different degrading labels. With an increase in the number of officials using CPc after the Prime Minister, the stigma is being dealt with.
3. **Hypocrisy revealed:** The hypocrisy of state officials is revealed- they have always known how to communicate with this population better, but have chosen not to do so. Choosing CPc as an appropriate medium by several officials during the time of the conflict is an indication that they have always known the right thing to do in terms of what language to use in the two anglophone regions, but have over the years chosen not to, except in a few cases during political campaigns. The use of CPc during a moment of crisis to the population they have always spoken to in English and French, not minding whether they understand or not, instills a crisis of trust.

Recommendation

Linguists reveal the worth of a language and its potentials to carry out desired functions and politicians ensure the language is given a proper place in the official setup to enable it carry those functions. The worth and ability of CPc have been pointed out repeatedly by scholars and calls to make it one of the country's official languages have been made repeatedly as well. Politicians, especially of the two English-speaking regions now know that to keep pretending that only French and English can serve as official languages is no longer true because there are needs it can meet better than those two languages. This paper therefore reiterates the need not only to use the language for official matters, but to make it one of the official languages of the country.

Conclusion

This paper has surveyed and brought to perspective the gradational use of CPc during the anglophone crisis in Cameroon using path independence theory as a framework. Confidence building measures by



the restorationists started with their quick ability to discern amongst others the language to use to the population of the North West and the South West. This paper holds that the path to the use of CPc continued with the Prime Minister and followed by other political personalities as the anglophone crisis stretched on. This path to language usage during the anglophone crisis vividly supports the fact “the basic point of any path dependence argument stresses the relevance of past events for current and future actions” (Sydow, Schreyögg, & Koch, 2020)

The most important thing stressed in this paper is the fact that the path dependence in the use of CPc has reaffirmed the reliability of the language and by so doing given it greater visibility, off lifted the stigma and revealed the hypocrisy of political authorities towards its use. CPc, having shown that it can serve official needs, at least nationally, would only serve better if made an official language that everyone can use without fear.

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