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## The Bilingual Competence of Local Council Staffers in the Centre and Littoral Regions of Cameroon

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### ABSTRACT

This work sets out to appraise the state of individual bilingualism in francophone local councils in Cameroon. The work checks the use of English by francophone local council workers and of French by their anglophone mates with the focus on the four communicative language skills, i.e., speaking, reading, writing and listening. The ethnographic approach to data collection was adopted, and self-rating through a questionnaire was the major tool used. The eight-item questionnaire was administered to 192 local council staffers. They were 177 (91.14% of 192) francophone workers selected out of a pool of over 500 workers in six local councils situated in two big francophone towns i.e., Douala and Yaounde on the one hand, and 15 (8.85% of 192) out of a total of 16 anglophone workers in these same localities. The analysis of the data collected revealed that very low percentages of francophone workers could perform the following tasks using English: discuss office issues with their bosses (10.16% of 177 subjects), read out a speech (8.47%), write a letter to their collaborators (4.51%), and listen to someone with understanding (20.33%). Conversely, a high proportion of anglophone workers were able to perform these same tasks using French i.e., discuss office issues with their bosses (73.33% of 15 subjects), read out a speech (20%), write a letter to a collaborator (33.33%), and listen to someone with understanding (80%). In short, 63.28% of 177 francophone workers reported having a low performance in receptive skills in English as opposed to 20% of 15 anglophone workers who said the same for French; similarly, 7.34% of 177 francophones claimed to have a good command of productive skills in English as opposed to 53.33% of 15 anglophones who claimed to have a command of French. The implications for the study are that official French-English bilingualism in Cameroon is a mere political wish which is not a reality on the field.

### 1. Introduction

When a country opts for two official languages, there is always a problem with the size of the users. Should one of these languages be given

preferential treatment? Or, should both languages be used on equal basis so as to curb down linguistic assimilation, and facilitate social peace and harmony in the country? Since the independence of French Cameroon in 1960 and

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its Reunification with British Cameroon in 1961 to form a Federal Republic, a decision was taken by Government to establish English and French as the two official languages of the newly born Federal Republic of Cameroon. It was pledged that the two languages were to function on equal basis and that Government was to take appropriate measures to promote bilingualism in these two languages. These measures have been applied for over half a century and it is expected that they are bearing fruit today. The purpose of this work is to check whether local council workers are capable of rendering services at their places of work using both official languages. The following central question was set to guide the exercise: How bilingual are anglophone and francophone Cameroon local council workers? This is supplemented by four specific questions, i.e.: can Cameroonian local council workers discuss office issues with their bosses in French and English, the two official languages? Can they perform tasks like reading out a speech, writing letters and listening with understanding in these two official languages? The work is divided into four sections labelled background to the study (1), literature review (2), methodology (3), and data analysis and discussion (4). These are considered in turn.

### **Background to the Study**

This section first defines the term bilingualism and examines a number of attributes that tend to go with it (1.1); then it considers the language situation in Cameroon (1.2), and the structure of Central and local Governments in the country (1.3).

### **1.1 Bilingualism and its Attributes**

Several researchers like Bloomfield (1933)<sup>[5]</sup>, Mackey (1970)<sup>[19]</sup>, Haugen (1953)<sup>[11]</sup>, Ayafor (2005)<sup>[1]</sup>, and Baker (2006)<sup>[2]</sup>, to name only these, have worked extensively on the issue of bilingualism. To all of them, it can be regarded as the alternate use of two languages. To Bloomfield (1933)<sup>[5]</sup> cited in Baker (2006)<sup>[2]</sup>, it refers to the native-like control of two or more languages. To Haugen (1953)<sup>[11]</sup>, individual bilingualism is attested when a speaker of one language is able to produce complete meaningful utterances in another language. According to Ayafor (2005)<sup>[1]</sup> bilingualism is the ability to speak more than one language with proficiency; it is also a side by side co-existence of two languages in a country or in a community. It can therefore be concluded that a bilingual person is someone who is capable of using two languages with varying degrees of competence. This issue of degree of competence has pushed Baker (2006)<sup>[2]</sup> and other researchers like Wei (2000)<sup>[22]</sup> to assign some attributes to bilingualism: active, passive, balanced, minimal, maximal. Active bilingualism refers to someone who speaks and writes in two languages well

while passive bilingualism refers to someone who has receptive abilities of understanding and reading in their second language. A balanced bilingual, also referred to as equilingual, symmetrical or ambilingual, is said to use two languages with equal proficiency, even though Fishman (1971)<sup>[9]</sup> argues that rarely are there bilinguals or multilinguals with equal ability in their use of two or more languages. Maximal competence is when a bilingual has native-like control of two or more languages (Bloomfield 1933)<sup>[5]</sup> while minimal competence is when a bilingual has some control of his or her two languages. Other attributes, which are based on such factors as the age of the bilingual, the ability of the bilingual, the process of development of bilingualism, and the context of acquisition of bilingualism, to name only these, include the following: simultaneous, sequential, late, incipient, receptive, productive, ascendant, recessive, circumstantial, and elective. Simultaneous bilingualism is the acquisition of two languages at the same time and age; in sequential bilingualism, the individual acquires one language first, and then learn the other language later. As for late bilingualism, it occurs when an individual has learned and used a language from childhood and, later in life, he/she decides to learn another language. Incipient bilinguals can utter a few utterances in their other language, like a tourist who can successfully ask for the way to a given destination like a museum. Ascendant and recessive bilingualism are two extremes of a continuum; it occurs when someone is developing a second language at the expense of a language he or she had acquired previously. Elective bilingualism has to do with freely choosing to learn a language, usually in the school context while circumstantial bilingualism is the learning of a new language in order to survive, as it is usually the case with immigrants.

### **1.2 Language Situation in Cameroon**

Cameroon is a multilingual country where several languages of various statuses co-exist peacefully. First close to 300 indigenous languages are spoken natively by the various tribes that constitute the country's 22 million inhabitants. These languages are listed in a number of works including the following: Dieu and Renaud (1983)<sup>[6]</sup>, Kouega (2007)<sup>[16]</sup> and Lewis et al (2016)<sup>[18]</sup>. Next above these are some major lingua francas whose speakers span three or more of the ten regions of the country. These are: Pidgin English, Fulfulde, and Beti. Pidgin is actively used in the Southwest and Northwest region and the neighbouring Littoral and West regions, especially for business transactions. Fulfulde is spoken in the three northern regions of the country i.e., the Adamawa, Far-North and North regions. Beti is the name of a language

group that includes major dialects like Bulu, Eton, Ewondo, and Fang, which are spoken from the Centre region through the South region of Cameroon up to the northern provinces of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Speakers of these dialects share many cultural and linguistic features, though intelligibility decreases to some extent as one moves across this vast territory. Reigning above these languages are French and English, which are the joint official languages of Cameroon. French came into the country when Germany lost the First World War and its colonies in Africa had to be shared between the victors i.e. France and Britain. France took 4/5 of German Kamerun as it was called then, and Britain took 1/5. French Cameroon evolved as a League of Nations Trust Territory, then as a United Nations Mandated Territory, before becoming independent in 1960, with French being adopted as its official language. British Cameroons were two discontinuous strips of land, one strip being in the north and the other in the south. The two strips were attached to Nigeria, a large British colony. These two strips of land became League of Nations Trust Territories and then United Nations Mandated Territories. Under the pretext that these two strips of land could not evolve on their own, their citizens were asked to choose between joining the Nigerian Federation or joining Cameroon that became independent in 1960. A referendum was organised and Northern British Cameroons decided to join Nigeria while Southern British Cameroon whose official language was English, joined French Cameroon. In 1961, British Cameroon and French Cameroon formed a federation with French and English being the joint official languages of the new state. Today, the country is divided into 10 regions of which eight fall in the francophone zone and two in the former Anglophone territory.

In short, three classes of languages coexist in Cameroon i.e., close to 300 indigenous languages which are used for in-group communication, some three major lingua francas which are used for out-group communication, and two official languages i.e., English and French, which are used for Government transactions and as languages of instruction in all schools.

### **1.3 Structure of Central government and local councils in Cameroon**

This section defines “central government” and “local councils” in Cameroon, outlines the types of councils in the country, and the duties of council officials and workers. Central government in Cameroon is headed by the President of the Republic who is assisted by ministers in charge of various departments. The country is divided into ten administrative units called “Regions”. Each region is run by a Governor appointed by the President

of the Republic. The administrative unit next below the region is known as “Division” (in French “Département”) and is headed by a “Divisional Officer” in short D.O. (in French “Prefet”). The lowest administrative unit is the “Sub-division” (in French “arrondissement”) which is headed by a “Sub-divisional officer”, in short S.D.O (in French “Sous-prefet”) (see Kouega 2006<sup>[15]</sup> for details).

Local councils, also known as local governments, are legal entities elected by the people to cater for their services. As Article 1 of Law No. 74/23 of December 5, 1974 stipulates a council is “a decentralized public community having public rights as well as administrative and financial autonomy. It manages local affairs under the protection of the State”. Though local councils are run by officials elected by the people, they work under the supervisory authority of the Governors and the Divisional officers appointed by the President of the Republic.

In Cameroon, there are two main types of councils, i.e., city councils and sub-divisional councils. City councils are found in Regional headquarters and in large towns; they are headed by “government delegates” (in French “Délégués du Gouvernement”) appointed by a decree of the President of the Republic. Sub-divisional councils are run by a team of elected councillors whose number depends on the population size of the councils’ jurisdiction. When these councillors take up duty, they elect one of them as mayor of the council. The main legislative texts pertaining to local government in Cameroon are: Law No. 2004/017 on decentralization; Law No. 2004/018 on local councils; Law No. 2004/019 on regions (see <http://www.clgf.org.uk> for details)

What is relevant to this study is that some of the duties of the mayors and other council officials require that they are in contact with their population. These duties include: solemnising marriages, certifying birth and death certificates, assigning work to council staff, and leading the councils on public occasions such as official ceremonies, to name only these. The problem at issue is: Are these mayors and other council clerks capable of performing these duties in their other official language, which is French for Anglophones and English for francophones? In other words, how bilingual are the local councils and their staffers?

## **2. Literature Review**

There are a number of works that focus on the assessment of bilingualism, including the following: Macnamara (1967)<sup>[20]</sup>, Hamers and Blanc (1989)<sup>[10]</sup>, and Stokes and Duncan (1989)<sup>[21]</sup>. These researchers have proposed various formal and informal ways of measuring bilingualism, but these proposals tend to compare bilinguals with monolinguals. To Hideyuki Taura

(1996)<sup>[12]</sup>, ideal bilingual measurements “should take into consideration such variables as affective variables, bilingual types (sequential, simultaneous, etc.), the age of exposure to languages, socio-economic and educational background, and level of intelligence.” (p. 8). Examining these variables falls outside the scope of the present paper, which is limited to how the informants rate their performance in specific bilingual tasks.

In Cameroon, researchers who have attempted to evaluate individual bilingualism include: Biloa (1999)<sup>[4]</sup>, Echu (2004)<sup>[7]</sup>, Essomba (2013)<sup>[8]</sup>, and Kouega (2005)<sup>[14]</sup>. These studies have in common the fact that they focus on the acquisition of English by francophones. Works on the acquisition of French by Anglophones are rare. Biloa (1999)<sup>[4]</sup> examined the teaching of French to anglophone students in the University of Yaounde I. His main objective was to assess the effectiveness of the daily French language taught to anglophone students of this institution. He collected data using participant observation and a questionnaire administered to anglophone students in this institution. The analysis revealed that “... the programme on the teaching of French to Anglophone students in this institution is pedagogically inadequate and not adapted”. He concluded that the administration of the University of Yaounde I was unable and unwilling to effectively apply the policy of bilingualism as stipulated by the Constitution. The present work is related to that of Biloa in that both works focus on bilingualism in Cameroon. However, they differ in that Biloa’s focus is pedagogy whereas the focus of this study is individual bilingual competence.

Echu (2004)<sup>[7]</sup> worked on the implementation of bilingualism in the educational system of Cameroon from the primary through the secondary to the tertiary level, his major objectives being to evaluate the immersion of francophone pupils in anglophone primary schools and to check the experience of bilingual training in the Government Bilingual High School in Buea. He collected data using a questionnaire and participant observation and the analysis revealed that on the whole, the policy of bilingualism in the domain of education needs special care from legislators of this country; there should be a well organised text of orientation which clearly defines the goals to be achieved.

Essomba (2013)<sup>[8]</sup> considered the level of individual bilingualism in Yaounde. His major objective was to check the bilingualism competence of some individuals living in Yaounde, the political capital of Cameroon. The materials he used were a questionnaire and a language test and his informants were some 240 pupils. These pupils were randomly chosen from three bilingual high schools

in Yaounde, with the researcher making sure that each of the ten regions of the country was represented in his pool. The questionnaire revealed that these subjects made alternate use of English and French at varying degrees, and possessed each at least one language skill in these two languages. The language achievement test revealed that the subjects had a fair mastery of the grammar of both languages. Moreover, a significantly high number of participants came up with sensible translations from one language into the other. On the basis of these results, he concluded that both francophone and anglophone pupils living in Yaounde can be termed bilingual individuals. An inspection of this work shows that it does not follow the basic canons of research. For example, the informants came from three bilingual high schools in Yaounde. This gives the impression that in Yaounde, all high schools are bilingual, which is wrong. Actually bilingual high schools are rare in the city of Yaounde and usually the pupils admitted into these schools are screened. The bulk of secondary pupils attend French-medium schools where English is taught as a subject (see Kouega 2007<sup>[16]</sup> for details). In other words, the subjects chosen for this research do not represent high school goers in Yaounde, let alone in the rest of the country. Second, previous publications on this same issue were not reviewed. This work is however related to the present one as it attempts to assess individual bilingualism.

Kouega (2005)<sup>[14]</sup> examined the official syllabus for the teaching of English in francophone elementary grades in Cameroon and concluded that it is practically impossible for pupils to learn even the basics of English in a context where teachers are not trained when they are available. He suggested that English should start not at the primary level as is the case today, but at the secondary level instead. It should start with a clear objective: to teach English to francophone secondary pupils so that by the time they graduate, they are capable of sitting for the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC for short), which is the exit certificate for primary school pupils in English-medium schools in Cameroon. In other words, the syllabus for primary education in English-medium schools should be used for the teaching of the English subject in French-medium secondary schools. If this suggestion is taken into account, then before leaving secondary education, all pupils would have sat for the First School Leaving Certificate and many of them would surely have passed this examination. Presently, no francophone secondary pupils that have gone through French-medium schools can make it. The subjects of the present study i.e., local council workers, have all learnt English as a subject or French as a subject in secondary education in Cameroon.

### 3. Methodology

The informants and the material of this study are outlined here. The informants were 192 local council workers of whom 177 were francophones and 15 anglophones. They were drawn from local councils located in the cities of Yaounde in the Centre region and of Douala in the Littoral region of Cameroon. In Douala, three local councils out of the six in the city were visited. These are: Douala I Council, Douala II Council and Douala III Council. In these three councils, a total of 90 subjects were contacted, of whom 48 returned their filled copies of the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 53.33%. In Yaounde, three local councils out of seven were visited, i.e., the Yaounde City Council, the Yaounde III Council, and the Yaounde IV Council. Some 200 subjects were contacted and 144 returned their copies, giving a return rate of 72%. The information provided in the questionnaire was used to work out the relevant sociolinguistic details on these informants, i.e., their gender, their level of education, and their second official language which is English for francophones and French for anglophones. Regarding gender, there were 100 males (52.08 of 192 informants) and 92 females (47.91%).

Concerning their level of education, they had all completed primary education; 126 had had secondary level education (65.62% of 192 informants) while 66 had done tertiary level education (34.38%). As for their second official language, they were asked an indirect question: what was your language of instruction in primary school? It is known that in Cameroon, francophone people generally attend French-medium primary schools while Anglophones attend English-medium primary schools. On the basis of the answer to this question which confirms information gathered during the administration of the questionnaire, it was found that of the 192 informants, 15 (i.e., 7.81%) were Anglophones while 177 (i.e., 92.18%) were francophones.

These informants were contacted at their place of work and were encouraged to fill in an eight-item questionnaire which was designed to elicit their ratings of their performance in a number of bilingual tasks.

### 4. Data Analysis

The analysis takes up the respondents' self-reported ability to read out a speech (reading), to listen to the radio/TV news with understanding (comprehension/listening), to discuss office matters with their bosses (speaking), and to write letters (writing). These are considered in turn.

The 177 francophone informants were asked if they could read out a speech written in English (Q1a). Reading aloud was targeted as it was not possible to assess all the

sub-skills of reading. These informants were expected to choose one of these proposed answers: "Yes", "A little bit", "No", and "Others". The range of definite answers was limited to three, with a fourth slot provided for these informants to indicate other possible answers. These informants made the choices presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Reading of a Speech Written in English by Francophone Workers**

Q1a. Can you read out a speech written in English?						
Answers / Regions	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	11 (8.2%)	43 (32.08%)	80 (59.7%)	-	-	134 (100%)
Littoral	4 (9.3%)	9 (20.93%)	30 (69.76%)	-	-	43 (100%)
Total	15 (8.47%)	52 (29.37%)	110 (62.14%)	-	-	177 (100%)

In Table 1, 62.14% of 177 francophone local council workers reported that they could not read out a speech written in English; while only 8.47% claimed that they could do so. In-between these two extremes are 29.37% subjects who claimed that they can do so a little bit. It can therefore be concluded that the proportion of bilingual francophone workers who can read out a speech written in English is very low.

The 15 anglophone informants were asked the same question i.e., whether they could read out a speech written in French (Q1b) and they gave the answers in Table 2.

**Table 2. Reading of a Speech Written in French by Anglophone Workers**

Q1b. Can you read out a speech written in French?						
Answers / Regions	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	-	-	10 (100%)
Littoral	-	2 (40.4%)	3 (60%)	-	-	5 (100%)
Total	3 (20%)	6 (40.4%)	6 (40%)	-	-	15 (100%)

Table 2 shows that 40% of 15 anglophone local council workers said that they could not read out a speech written in French, while 20% of them claimed that they could do so. It means that the proportion of bilingual anglophone workers who can actually read out speeches written in both English and French is very low. These are likely those Anglophone workers who make personal efforts to communicate in French.

Q2a asked the francophone informants whether they could understand the radio/TV news broadcast in English, which was assumed to be a good comprehension exercise. Their answers are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Understanding of the Radio/TV News Broadcast in English by Francophone Workers**

Q2a. Can you understand a radio/TV news broadcast in English?						
Answers / Region	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	27 (20.74%)	8 (5.97%)	99 (73.88%)	-	-	134 (100%)
Littoral	9 (20.93%)	19 (44.18%)	15 (34.88%)	-	-	43 (100%)
Total	36 (20.33%)	27 (15.25%)	114 (64.4%)	-	-	177 (100%)

As Table 3 shows, 64.4% of 177 francophone workers reported that they could not listen with understanding to a radio/TV news broadcast in English while 15.25% claimed that they could do so a little bit. Only 20.33% of them disclosed that they could listen to the news with understanding, which is a very low proportion.

The anglophone informants were asked the same question and they made the claims in Table 4.

**Table 4. Understanding of a Radio/TV News Broadcast in French by Anglophone Workers**

Q2b. Can you understand a radio/TV news broadcast in French?						
Answers / Region	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	-	-	-	10 (100%)
Littoral	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	-	-	-	5 (100%)
Total	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	-	-	-	15 (100%)

As shown in Table 4, 80% of 15 anglophone workers in the Centre and Littoral Regions claimed that they could fully understand a radio/TV news broadcast in French. It means that anglophone council workers in francophone Regions are highly bilingual. This may be probably due to the fact that they are living in French-dominated areas.

The 177 francophone informants were asked whether they could discuss office issues with their bosses in English (Q3a). It was assumed that if they were not able to discuss office issues, they would obviously not be able to discuss such issues as sports, costumes, or food. Their responses are reported in Table 5.

**Table 5. Discussing Office Issues with Bosses in English by Francophone Workers**

Q3a. Can you discuss office issues with your boss in English?						
Answers/ Regions	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	13 (9.7%)	34 (25.37%)	87 (64.92%)	-	-	134 (100%)
Littoral	5 (11.62%)	15 (34.88%)	23 (53.48%)	-	-	43 (100%)
Total	18 (10.16%)	49 (27.68%)	110 (62.14%)	-	-	177 (100%)

As Table 5 shows, some 62.14% of 177 informants said they could not discuss office issues with their bosses in English. Actually even those who said “a little bit”

(27.68%) cannot interact with their bosses in English. In other words, only few workers (10.16% of 177) reported that they could successfully discuss office issues with their bosses in English.

The 15 anglophone informants were asked this same question and their responses are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Discussing Office Issues with Bosses of in French**

Q3b. Can you discuss office issues with your boss in French?						
Answers / Region	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	-	-	-	10 (100%)
Littoral	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	-	-	-	5 (100%)
Total	11 (73.33%)	4 (26.66%)	-	-	-	15 (100%)

Table 6 indicates that 73.33% of 15 Anglophone informants claimed that they could discuss office issues with their bosses in French while only some 26.66% claimed that they could only try a little bit.

Q4a asked the 177 francophone informants whether they could write a letter to their bosses in English. If one can write a formal or informal letter to one’s boss, one can also write a shopping list or a short message on social media. The answers given are displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7. Writing of Letters in English by Francophone Workers**

Q4a. Can you write a letter to your boss in English?						
Answers / Region	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	6 (4.47%)	31 (23.13%)	97 (72.38%)	-	-	134 (100%)
Littoral	2 (4.65%)	4 (9.3%)	37 (86.04%)	-	-	43 (100%)
Total	8 (4.51%)	35 (19.77%)	134 (75.7%)	-	-	177 (100%)

In Table 7, some 75.7% of 177 francophone local council workers declared that they could not write a letter in English whereas a very low proportion i.e., 4.51% of 177 subjects, affirmed that they could do so. Their 15 anglophone counterparts answered this same question as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8. Writing of letters in French by Anglophone workers**

Q4b. Can you write a letter to your boss in French?						
Answers / Region	Yes	A little bit	No	Others		Total
Centre	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	-	-	10 (100%)
Littoral	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	-	-	5 (100%)
Total	5 (33.33%)	5 (33.33%)	5 (33.33%)	-	-	15 (100%)

In Table 8, some 33.33% of 15 anglophone local council workers in the two Regions indicated that they could not write a letter in French. Another 33.33%

claimed that they could do so.

These findings can be brought together under the dichotomy receptive and productive skills. Reading and listening (Tables 1-4) are receptive skills while discussing and writing fall under productive skills (Tables 5-8). The overall performance of the informants in receptive skills is presented in Tables 9-10. It is obtained by adding up the figures for reading and listening and dividing the sum by the figure 2.

**Table 9. Overall Performance of Francophone Informants in Receptive Skills**

Skills of reading and listening					
Answers / Regions	Yes	A little bit	No	Others	Total
Centre	19 14.17%	25.5 19.02%	89.5 66.79%		134 100%
Littoral	6.5 15.12%	14 32.56%	22.5 52.33%		43 100%
Total	25.5 14.41%	39.5 22.32%	112 63.28%		177 100%

**Table 10. Overall Performance of Anglophone Informants in Receptive Skills**

Skills of reading and listening					
Answers / Regions	Yes	A little bit	No	Others	Total
Centre	5.5 55%	3 30%	1.5 15%		10 100%
Littoral	2 40%	1.5 30%	1.5 30%		5 100%
Total	7.5 50%	4.5 30%	3 20%		15 100%

As Tables 9 and 10 show, 63.28% of 177 francophone council workers have a low performance in receptive skills as opposed to 20% for their anglophone counterparts. On the other hand, only 14.41% of 177 francophone workers reported having a high performance in receptive skills as opposed to 50% for their anglophone counterparts. It can therefore be stated that anglophone council staffers in the Centre and Littoral regions are more bilingual than their francophone counterparts. This high performance may be due to the fact that these anglophones reside and work in a francophone environment. If residing in a francophone milieu is actually a facilitating factor, then francophones working in councils in anglophone Cameroon would be bilingual. This hypothesis will be checked in a future study.

Tables 11-12 present the overall performance of the informants in productive skills.

**Table 11. Overall Performance of Francophone Informants in Productive Skills**

Skills of discussing and reading out a speech					
Answers / Regions	Yes	A little bit	No	Others	Total
Centre	9.5 7.09%	32.5 24.25%	92 68.66%		134 100%
Littoral	3.5 8.14%	9.5 22.09%	30 69.77%		43 100%
Total	13 7.34%	42 23.73%	122 68.93%		177 100%

**Table 12. Overall Performance of Anglophone Informants in Productive Skills**

Skills of discussing and reading out a speech					
Answers / Regions	Yes	A little bit	No	Others	Total
Centre	5 50	3.5 35	1.5 15		10 100%
Littoral	3 60%	1 20%	1 20%		5 100%
Total	8 53.33%	4.5 30%	2.5 16.67%		15 100%

As Tables 11-12 show, only 7.34% of 177 francophone informants claimed to have bilingual competence as opposed to 53.33% of 15 anglophone informants. On the basis of this finding, it can be put forward that bilingualism in Cameroon means that Anglophone workers must learn and use French while francophones may remain officially monolingual if they so wish. This imbalance seems to be one of the root causes of what has become known today as “the Anglophone problem in Cameroon” Konings and Nyamjoh (1997)<sup>[13]</sup>, BAPEC (2017)<sup>[3]</sup>, Kouega (2018)<sup>[17]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

This work examined the self-reported French-English bilinguality of local council staffers in Cameroon, using the ethnographic data collection method. There were 177 francophone workers whose competence in English was checked and 15 anglophone workers whose competence in French was assessed. A questionnaire was devised, with the focus on the communicative skills of reading and listening on the one hand, and speaking and writing on the other. Some 192 copies were returned and the analysis revealed a number of interesting facts. First, some 10.16% of 177 francophone informants could discuss office issues with their bosses in English while 73.33% of 15 anglophone subjects could do the same using French. Second, 8.47% francophones could read out a speech in English as opposed to 20% of 15 anglophones who could do the same in French. Third 4.51% of francophones could write a letter to their collaborators in English as opposed to 33.33% of anglophones who could do the same. Fourth, 20.33% of francophones could listen to the news with understanding as opposed to 80% of 15 anglophones who could do the same. In short, anglophone informants who claimed to have a good control of receptive skills in French (53.33%) and of productive skills in French (53.33%) were found to be proportionately more numerous than francophones who claimed to have control of receptive skills in English (14.41%) and of productive skills in English (7.34%). It may be argued that the imbalance observed in the findings of this study is due to work environment, as the data were collected in a francophone area. If work environment is a major

factor in the performance of anglophones, then a similar study conducted on the English of francophones working in an anglophone setting will show a higher proportion of francophones having a command of English. This will be the subject of a future study. The implications of this study are that successive governments in Cameroon have been overlooking researchers' findings on the implementation of the official French-English bilingualism policy. As a result, anglophones have over the years been pondering over the observation that bilingualism in Cameroon means that anglophones should learn French and francophones should speak French.

### Questionnaire (English Version)

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting a research exercise and would be grateful if you could spare a minute to answer the questions below. I have chosen you because I know that you can provide accurate answers to these questions. In some cases, you will simply tick the correct answer.

You are advised to read through all the questions first before answering them.

#### I. Identification of the informant

1. Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. In what language did you do your primary education?

A) English \_\_\_\_\_ B) French \_\_\_\_\_

C) Others \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you do secondary education?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you do tertiary education (in any university or institution)?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

#### II. Evaluation of individual bilingualism

5. Can you discuss office issues with your boss or colleague using your second official language?

A) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B) A little bit \_\_\_\_\_

C) No \_\_\_\_\_ D) Others \_\_\_\_\_

6. Can you read out a speech using your second official language?

A) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B) A little bit \_\_\_\_\_

C) No \_\_\_\_\_ D) Others \_\_\_\_\_

7. Can you write a letter to someone using your second official language?

A) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B) A little bit \_\_\_\_\_

C) No \_\_\_\_\_ D) Others \_\_\_\_\_

8. Can you listen with understanding a radio/television news in your second official language?

A) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ B) A little bit \_\_\_\_\_

C) No \_\_\_\_\_ D) Others \_\_\_\_\_

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