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► **To cite this version:**

Fokou Mukum Sandy Fomundam. Cameroonian Languages And The Trio Force Of Colonialism :The Case Of Borrowing In The Bantu Phylum. 2021. hal-03104827

HAL Id: hal-03104827

<https://hal.science/hal-03104827>

Preprint submitted on 9 Jan 2021

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Cameroonian Languages And The Trio Force Of Colonialism :The Case Of Borrowing In The Bantu Phylum

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ABSTRACT :

Cameroon is that one country with a diversified linguistic background owing to the fact that it has two official languages which are English and French and several dialects which are classified as national languages or dialects which cut across the four linguistic phyla of African languages and encompasses loan words from all of the languages spoken by its colonial masters namely ;English, French and German.The importance of diachronic explanations of universal patterns has been repeatedly emphasized in the typological linguistics. A diachronic perspective not only provides explanations of various typological quirks in terms of historical accidents rooted in a given grammaticalization source and path, but it also challenges in many ways a number of universal patterns established on the basis of synchronic data which unfolds in Cameroonian languages as time passes. This research gives a clear picture of the impacts of colonialism on Cameroonian languages.

KEY WORDS: Cameroon, Colonialism, language, Diachronic, Synchronic Dialects

INTRODUCTION :

Between 200-100 BC the first Bantu-tribes emigrated to the North of Cameroon from Nigeria. Traditionally, these tribes were made up of farmers and they needed a lot of space for their agriculture. The original inhabitants, the so-called "Pygmies", were gradually forced deeper into the forests by the new comers. Later, Sao Culture developed in the South of Lake Chad and more than 150 different ethnic groups leaved in Cameroon (Today there are about 250 different ethnic groups spread across the four linguistic phyla of Africa)

In 1472 Portuguese explorers led by Fernando Pô were the first Europeans to arrive the coast of Cameroon. They reached Douala through the Wouri River. They named it "Rio dos Camarões (the River of Prawns), which later resulted to the name of

the country. With the arrival of Europeans, business and slave trade shifted from the Centre to the Coastal areas. Local Chiefs developed more powers by signing agreements with the Portuguese. Business was also negotiated with traders from England, Holland, France and Germany. The Chiefs served as middlemen between the Europeans and local tribesmen that had something to sell. Mostly slaves and ivory were exported from Cameroon. In 1845, Trade between Cameroon and Europe gradually changed and developed. The first European business complex was founded by Alfred Saker, an English navy engineer. He started building schools and churches in Douala at the bank of River Wouri. When slave trade finally ended, some changes were noticed at the level of trade, because focus was now on natural resources like palm oil, ivory and gold. The Europeans started moving further into the interior of the country. The Douala chiefs started losing their influence little by little. After being informed about the opening of a British Representation in Lagos, King Manga Bell of Douala wrote to Queen Victoria of England, requesting that an official relationship be established with Douala. The British were present in Nigeria, East Africa and other places in the world. The British were reluctant in making Cameroon a British protectorate. As a result of their hesitation, the Germans were forced to take over the territory.

On July 14, 1884 Gustav Nachtigal signed a treaty with the Chiefs of Doula on behalf of the German Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm. In return for trade advantages the chiefs accepted a German protectorate. The names of the chiefs were Bell, Akwa and Deïdo. During the periods of German colonisation (1884-1916), great strides were made by the Germans. A few years after the signing of the Germano-Douala treaty, the Germans set up an educational system to achieve various objectives. In this line, some of the objectives amongst others were the extension of colonial authority by missions, the spread of the German language, the search for translators, and exclusion of the Pidgin English language (Eyongetah and Brain 1974: 23). In April 1910, a law on education was promulgated and Article II stipulated that, with the exception of German, no other language should be taught or used as a medium of instruction. For a good broadcasting of the German language, they will create school curricula for missionary schools. These curricula will have one objective: to get the mainstream of the population to speak German. The German government went as far as subsidizing the missions to

spread the German language and culture. The initial subsidy amounted to 20,000 marks (Ngoh 1987: 446). On the other hand, the propagation of German language was difficult to apply because of Article III of the 1910 Act. This article stipulated that the region or Duala language could be used as a means of instruction in Rio Del Rey, Victoria, Edéa, Buea, and Yabassi. This article III then greatly affected the spread of the German language. In order to fight against the Duala language, the German administration decided to limit the teaching of the Duala dialect since this has become a major problem for spread of German language in the area. The implementation of the use of German wasn't an easy task as there were different schools of thought which believe that for communication to be effective, one needs to learn the language of the audience . After the first world war, Britain and France took over from where the Germans ended in 1916 and partition the country into East and West Cameroon. The French controlled the east while the British controlled the west. Each of these nations introduce new language policies in their area of Command until the 21st of July 1961 when both east and west Cameroon former colonies of France and Britain respectively met to finalised the terms of reunification which both parties had agreed by universal suffrage to unite on the 11th of February 1961 .The most important clause of the fouban 1961 constitution was it's part 1 section (3) which stated that The official languages of the Federal Republic of Cameroon shall be French and English.

From precolonisation to post colonisation, the phenomenon of acculturation and multilingualism has been plaguing all languages in Cameroon due to language and cultural contacts that existed and has continue to exist amongst Cameroonians and foreigners thereby leading to a lot of borrowing of terms in different languages in other to simplify the communication process. This will be illustrated in the proceeding paragraphs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was done using primary and secondary data results and positive conclusions were drawn after investigation.

Current Linguistic Situation Of Cameroon

Cameroon has two official languages which are English and French what are colonial legacies from Britain and France , 55 afro-Asiatic languages, two nilo-saharan

languages, four ubangian languages and 169 Niger- Congo languages which is further divided into one Senegambian language (Fulfulde), 28 Adamawa languages, and 142 Benue–Congo languages (130 of which are Bantu languages).

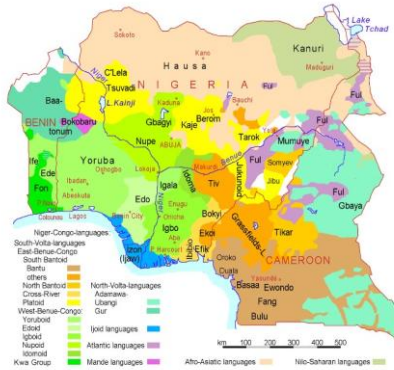


Figure 1.1 Map of the region's indigenous languages.



figure 1.2

Illustration Of Loan Words In Cameroonian Languages

From 1472 when the Portuguese began communicating with the natives and even after the independence of Cameroon there was always the loaning of words by the early speakers of Cameroonian indigenous languages which are yet to be standardized from the standardized European languages. Linguistic loaning or borrowing was usually done in cases where there was no word existing in the local languages that could be used described a particular context or object which in most cases where scientific in nature for example an aeroplane has continually remain aeroplane in most Cameroonian languages. It is for this reason why most African languages could be described as pidgins of colonial languages . A majority of Cameroonian languages contain words which sprank out from the ashes of European exploration and colonialism. Much of the literature on borrowing in African languages focuses on contact involving European languages or regionally dominant languages such as Swahili, Amharic, Hausa and Arabic (see Baldi 2008 for a survey of Arabic loans). In many cases, European loanwords did not enter languages directly, but were borrowed from an intermediary language Much of the literature on borrowing in African languages focuses on contact involving European languages or regionally dominant languages such as Hausa and Arabic (see Baldi 2008 for a survey of Arabic loans). In many cases, European

loanwords did not enter languages directly, but were borrowed from an intermediary language. The diglossic nature of Cameroonian languages cannot be under look as about 90% of Cameroonian languages are varieties of each other thereby having impeccable similarities.

Niger-Congo phylum

Niger-Congo is the largest language phylum in the world covering a greater area than any other phylum (Williamson & Blench 2000). Not surprisingly, then, many of the most widely spoken languages in Africa belong to Niger-Congo. One of its salient features is an elaborated noun class system with grammatical concord. A large majority of languages of this family are tonal such Yoruba, Igbo, Aghem, Ghomala, Fe'fe', Ewondo, Duala, Basaa, Fang-beti. A major branch of Niger-Congo languages is the Bantu. The Bantu Languages are believed to number at present between 400 and 600. They are spoken in almost half of all Sub-saharan countries:

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Comoros, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South-Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

The table below shows loan words in some Cameroonian Bantu languages and their origin

	Cameroonian Language	Word in Cameroonian language	English Translation	Etymology
	Mungaka	petro	peter	Portuguese
	Mungaka	yohanne	john	Portuguese
	Mungaka	wasipita	Hospital	english
	Mungaka	gomna	Government	english
	Mungaka	posimasta	Post Master	english

	Mungaka	lampud	Lamp	english
	Bakoko	singì	Cat	french (singe)
	Kenyang	mòto	motor	english
	Kenyang	ti	Tea	english

	Kenyang	windo	window	english
	Shupamem	lehrer	teacher	german
	Shupamem	mbréd	bread	english
	shupamem	tàáfit	teacher	german
	shupamem	wasinet	witness	english

	Douala	dokita	doctor	english
	Douala	Johannes	john	german
	Douala	drqs	drawer	english
	Douala	drucken	print	german
	Douala	elángiti be	blanket	english
	Douala	fam	farm	english
	Douala	fibel	alphabet book	german
	Douala	flawa	flour	english
	Douala	fraipan	fry pan	english
	Douala	gobina	governor	english
	Douala	greta	grater	english
	Douala	grifel	pencil slate	german (griffel)
	Douala	gummi	eraser	german

	Douala	ham	hamburger	english
	Douala	heft	book	german
	Douala	jalasi	jealousy	english
	Douala	kaba	cover	english
	English	nchinda	private secretary	Cameroon grassfields
	English	acoucheur	midwife	French
	Ngomba	ballon	ball	french

	Ngomba	matúwa	motor car	english
	Ngomba	tóoshi	thousand	english
	Ngomba	shû	cabbage	french (le chou)
	Ngomba	mâtetu	potatoes	english
	Ngomba	matánáàshi	matrass	german(Matratze)
	Ngomba	mbeliŋgelón	burial ground	english
	Ngomba	sekùt	school	english
	Ngomba	ládió	radio	english
	Ngomba	lente	rent	english
	Ngomba	waashi	wrist watch	english
	Ngomba	macéshi	matches	english
	Ngomba	keliŋemet	christmas	english
	Ngomba	ápta	after	english
	Ngomba	mbelik	bread	english
	Mankon	kabiñda	carpenter	english

Mankon	basinja	passenger	english
Mankon	masinja	messenger	english
Mankon	lédyo	radio	english
Mankon	kóna	corner	english
Mankon	lebira	labourer	english
Mankon	monde	monday	english
Mankon	tuside	tuesday	english
Mankon	wenside	wednesday	english
Mankon	tɔside	thursday	english
Mankon	firade	friday	english
Mankon	saside	saturday	english
Mankon	sonde	sunday	english
Mankon	gwafa	guaver	english
Mankon	basito	pastor	english
Mankon	takisi	taxi	english
Mankon	mitiŋə	meeting	english
Mankon	yerusarem	jerusalem	english
Mankon	yesosi	jesus	english
Mankon	yakobə	jacob	english
Mankon	yerimyâ	jerimiah	english

New words came into African language through various members of the community in different forms. In the cases of Mungaka, Bakoko, Shupamem, Kenyang Ngomba and Mankon languages, most loan-words appear in various forms with more or less phonemic substitution; but some of the substitutions are so widespread that they can hardly have been borrowed recently.

The foreign usage borrowed words in African languages have been accepted for so long that it is difficult to think of them as borrowed. A lot of borrowed words in Cameroonian languages originated from English language because they were the first to bring Christianity to Cameroon which fast track contact between the indigenous people and the British. It is for this reason why the Germans found it very difficult to implement a solid policy after annexation since English pidgin had sprang out from the contact between Cameroonian languages and English language in the business World. To understand this we need to look at linguistic change from the colonial era.

The colonial period began with growing European trading along the West African coast in the late 1700s and into the 1800s. By 1800, Britain dominated the Nigerian and Cameroonian coast, and English Pidgin was the primary language of commerce (Fonlon, 1969: 10f). The English Baptist Mission was established in Cameroon by Alfred Saker in 1845, and it was responsible for the first orthography for the Douala language. Germany narrowly beat Britain and France in the race to annex "Kamerun" (1884), and began its conquest of the hinterland. The German explorers distributed flags, adopted traditional leaders into the colonial administration, and informed the locals that their land and people were now German. The English missionaries, who were responsible for the majority of the schools, were expelled by the German administration and replaced by German-speaking missionaries (the Basel Mission). The American Presbyterian missionaries, established in SE Cameroon since the 1870s, were allowed to stay on condition that they replaced English with German (Fonlon, 1969: 15f). During this period, Douala and other languages were given German-based orthographies. With the outbreak of World War I, Britain invaded Cameroon from the west and France invaded from the south. The territory was partitioned in 1916. By giving up its claims to German East Africa, France won over 80% of Cameroon, thereby gaining control of an uninterrupted stretch of territory from Algiers on the Mediterranean to Brazzaville in the Congo (Fanson, 1989: 55). The German missions and their vernacular educational programs were now transferred to French missionaries.

Lexical items found in both Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan languages which cannot be explained by relatively recent contact (<1000 years BP) have been noted by a

number of researchers (cf. Gregersen 1972, Blench 2007, Boyd 1978, 1996). These researchers (and Dimmendaal 2001b: 108) support the idea of a genetic connection between Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan. Since these language phyla have likely been in close proximity for a number of millennia, it is unclear to me how the effects of language contact and convergence may be distinguished from similarities due to inheritance from a putative ancestor in the distant Past.

Emergence Of Borrowing And Technology Innovations

As time goes by, there are new scientific and technological innovations which never existed during the precolonial period, ipso facto it will be difficult for these innovations to have an independent benchmark meaning in Cameroonian languages. This ideology is observable in all Bantu languages as new development in the areas of information communication technologies such as the social media (facebook, whatsapp, tweeter, snap chat and others) have no replacement and hence have remained the way they are in all Bantu languages.

Conclusion:

This research paper gives a pictorial view of the linguistic evolution and differences of Cameroonian languages. It has gone a long way to show the relationship between language and distance and its impact on culture. In Cameroon a vast majority of borrowing is very evident. In Camfranglais: a combination of Cameroonian languages and its colonial inherited languages since it has no grammar rules.

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