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Can Language Standardization be Promoted on the Local Level in Cameroon?

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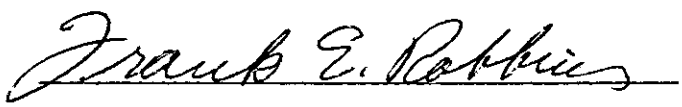

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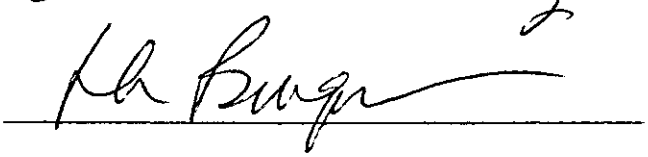

"That is why it was called Babel--because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth."

Genesis 11:9

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands."

Revelation 7:9

CAN LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION BE PROMOTED ON THE LOCAL LEVEL IN CAMEROON?

by

ANN ELIZABETH JOHNSON

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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for the Degree of

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PREFACE

From January 1987 until May 1989 I had the privilege of carrying out research in Cameroon, Africa, under the auspices of the Société Internationale de Linguistique (known in English-speaking countries as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, or S.I.L.). I participated in eight language assessment surveys, including three related to the Mpo language situation which I describe in the last chapter of this thesis. During my time in Cameroon I became interested in the subject of language standardization. I only regret that while there I did not have a more definite grasp on what I would want to cover in this thesis. If I had I would have taken advantage of the resources available there which have been more difficult or impossible to find here. I have tried to accurately represent the situation in Cameroon, and I do not believe I have misrepresented it. This study should be viewed as preliminary, however.

Dr. Frank E. Robbins, my supervising professor, has been a tremendous source of inspiration, help, and encouragement. I literally could not have done this without him. I also want to thank Drs. Carol McKinney and Donald A. Burquest for their input and assistance. In addition I would like to thank Ted Bergman, S.I.L.'s Task Assessment Coordinator for Africa, for encouraging me while I was still in Cameroon to consider language standardization as a subject for this thesis.

My heartfelt thanks are due to the many others who gave assistance in various ways and who prayed for and encouraged me. Above all I thank

my Lord Jesus Christ for His presence and enablement, and I dedicate this thesis to Him.

November 21, 1990

ABSTRACT

CAN LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION BE PROMOTED ON THE LOCAL LEVEL IN CAMEROON?

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Cameroon is a country of considerable linguistic diversity. Linguists have identified more than 236 languages. The government favors the idea of developing all local languages, but realizes the practical limitations of doing so. I suggest promoting language standardization on the local level as one possible solution to Cameroon's problem of language development. By this I mean promoting a process by which one form of a language, or of what some may have deemed "closely related languages," becomes accepted in the whole community as the norm for writing the language. Variation in the spoken forms remains, but people share a single written form. I review language planners' suggestions and look at case studies to identify positive factors in the acceptance of a standard form. I also consider specifically what it means to promote language standardization locally in Cameroon. I conclude with a proposal for the "Mpo" language situation of eastern Cameroon.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

People often refer to the country of Cameroon as "Africa in Miniature." This is because a sample of the geographic, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the whole continent represents itself within the borders. Three of the four major language families of Africa (Afro-Asiatic, Niger-Kordofanian, and Nilo-Saharan) converge in this one relatively small country, located just west of the Central African Republic and north of Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea on the west coast. The government of Cameroon officially recognizes at least 236 distinct, indigenous languages spoken in this country of about 11.1 million (1990 Population Reference Bureau Data Sheet), a situation which presents a major problem for language planners. French and English are declared official languages, reflecting the forty-one years that the country was a colony under both French and British control prior to independence in 1961. (Previously, the country was under German colonialism for over thirty years.) Governmental policy also encourages the recognition and development of the indigenous languages.

There are both moral and political motivations to see indigenous languages developed, so that all people have access to ways of expressing themselves and their cultures in their own languages, and also of understanding what others have expressed in written form in their own languages.

While Cameroonian government officials recognize the value of developing their languages, they also realize that practical limitations will most likely prohibit the development of all 236+ languages. They have thus tentatively suggested that about one hundred languages can be developed or "standardized" in the country (Biya 1986:104). This leads to the question, What about the other approximately 136 languages in Cameroon? What can and should be done for the speakers of these languages, and especially for those lacking competence in either French or English?

A statement made by Dr. Maurice Tadadjeu (1983:118), Maître de Conférences at the University of Yaounde, summarizes the problem in another way and points toward a solution:

> It is impossible to preserve and develop the cultural inheritance while ignoring the languages which convey it. It is necessary to develop these local languages, but such development is a complex process which gives rise to a number of technical and sociolinguistic problems. Language planning studies must deal with problems of standardization in a multilingual situation such as Cameroon (italics mine).

I suggest that the concept of standardization is key to the solution to this problem. I will need to clarify my use of the term standardization since it is used in different ways by different writers. Basically, the solution I propose involves the careful and strategic selection of the hundred or so languages to be developed, and then promotion of standardization processes in which closely related dialects, and even what some have called "languages," are encouraged to adopt one form of written expression. My assumption, based on numerous examples of standardized languages, is that a person does not lose the advantage of written expression in his mother tongue just because the literary form of

his language differs from his spoken form. For example, native English speakers throughout the world employ a wide variety of spoken forms, yet they are able to share one standard literary form that all accept as their own.

The question, Can language standardization be promoted on the local level in Cameroon? implies three related questions: (1) Can language standardization be promoted? (2) Can standardization be promoted on the local level? and (3) Can standardization be promoted in Cameroon? The first question, Can language standardization be promoted? is the most crucial, for it is upon this question that the other two depend. Therefore, I devote the next three chapters to answering this question. In chapter two I define terms and consider what it means to promote language standardization. In chapters three and four I look more closely at the process of standardization, considering what language planners say about it and observing historical and recent examples of the process at work. In these chapters I identify factors which I believe are valuable for the determination of a plan to promote language standardization on the local level.

In chapter five I address the question of whether standardization can be promoted on the local level as opposed to the national or regional level. In chapter six I consider specifically the situation in Cameroon, by identifying both positive factors and areas of challenge with regard to the promotion of language standardization. Finally, in chapter seven I present a proposal for promoting standardization in one local level language situation in Cameroon.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROMOTION OF LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION: DEFINITIONS

In this chapter I define my use of several terms. First, I consider various uses of the term standardization, including those by Cameroonian linguists, and I clarify my own use of the word. Secondly, I define my use of the term language, distinguishing language from dialect and denoting the various types of languages. Thirdly, I describe some of the methods for determining language boundaries, including measures of mutual intelligibility and sociolinguistic factors. Finally, I discuss the concept of promoting language standardization.

2.1 Definition of standardization

The term standardization is defined in various ways in the literature by language planners and sociolinguists. Ferguson (1968) uses the term to refer to one dimension of language development. The other dimensions are graphization, or the reduction of the language to writing, and modernization, the expansion of the language's lexicon and the development of its ability to express the range of topics characteristic of the modern, industrialized world. He says,

> Language standardization is the process of one variety of a language becoming widely accepted throughout the speech community as a supradialectal norm--the 'best' form of the language--rated above regional and social dialects, although these may be felt appropriate in some domains (Ferguson 1968:31).

Fishman (1974:1639) agrees with the last part of this definition when he says that the standard variety does not need to displace non-standard varieties "for functions that are distinct from but complementary to those of the standard variety." He asserts that societies standardize their languages when there is sufficient "societal diversity" combined with a need for "symbolic elaboration" (1974:1639).

Ansre (1971:369) defines language standardization as "the process by which a specific variety of a language emerges as the preferred variety of a speech community." He believes that an unwritten language can achieve a standard form just as well as can a written one. Stewart (1968) handles this by making a distinction between formal standardization, which has so far occurred in very few of the world's languages, and informal standardization, which has occurred in many more languages. The difference between the two types of standardization is basically that formal standardization includes the notion of codification, or the establishment of codified rules usually presented in grammars, dictionaries, exemplary texts, and so on. Stewart (1968:534) defines formal standardization as "the codification and acceptance, within a community of users, of a formal set of norms defining 'correct' usage." Informal standardization, he says, is more automatic and involves simply "some kind of normalization of language behavior in the direction of some linguistic usage with high social prestige" (1968:534).

My definition of standardization is a combination of Ferguson's and Ansre's definitions and of Stewart's definition of formal standardization. When I speak about promoting language standardization in Cameroon, I am referring to promoting a process by which one form of a language

becomes accepted in the whole community as the norm for writing their language. Variation in the spoken form of the language will likely remain, but the written form would be formally codified. This may be true even to the point that varieties of the spoken form are not immediately intelligible with each other. Unlike Ansre, I restrict my use of the term to refer only to languages which either have been or are in the process of being written. This is not to discount what both he and Stewart say about a similar process occurring in spoken language. In fact, formal written standardization attempts should never oppose the natural, informal processes.

As I noted earlier, in Cameroon governmental language policy allows for the eventual standardization of approximately one hundred of the 236+ identified languages. This is based on the recommendations of language researchers and planners, such as Tadadjeu and Sadembouo. Sadembouo (1980:10) seems to assume, as I do, that the goal of standardization is to see a norm accepted and used by the community for purposes of writing:

> Le concept de standardisation a pu être appliqué au langage en tant qu'instrument de communication, et par conséquent un moyen, un outil au service et à l'usage des membres d'une communauté pour l'expression de leurs sentiments, de leurs idées etc. . . .
>
> Le dialecte standard sera la variante de la langue retenue pour parer à toutes les autres formes concurentes [sic]. Il sera la forme officielle de la langue, celle que l'on peut enseigner et écrire (italics mine).

> (Translation: The concept of standardization could be applied to language as an instrument of communication, and consequently, as a means or tool in the service and for the use of the members of a community for the expression of their feelings, their ideas, etc. . . .
>
> The standard dialect will be the variant of the language selected to 'ward off' all the other rival forms. It will be the official form of the language, that which can be taught and written.)

Tadadjeu (Wiesemann and Tadadjeu 1979:4) cites Ferguson'a definition of standardization, considering it to be one stage in the language development process. However, in his later works he tends to use the term standardize interchangeably with develop to include the goal of seeing a written norm accepted. For example, in regard to language planning in Cameroon, he says:

> The exact number of languages which can be standardized will only be determined when on-going studies enable us to identify the language-units for which a single writing system could be devised (Tadadjeu 1983:121, italics mine).

What Tadadjeu also seems to imply in this statement, although it is not completely clear, is that he intends for all 236+ identified languages in Cameroon to be incorporated into the languages which are standardized. This may be what he means when he refers to identifying "language-units." In any case, this is what I mean in auggesting that standardization be promoted in Cameroon. I mean that linguists and language planners should work to identify caaes where it might be possible to group some of these identififed languages together and encourage them to use a single written standard. I want to see all Cameroonians have access, if possible, to a means of reading and writing in languages they consider their own. Hopefully, standardizing only about one hundred languages and encouraging the other 136+ groups to use these standardizations will make this possible. If this is not possible, I hope that more can be standardized.

2.2 Definition of language

Pei and Gaynor (1954:56,119) define language as "a system of communication by sound" and dialect as "a specific form of a given language." Another common definition is that a language is "a collection of mutually intelligible dialects" and dialects are "subdivisions of a particular language" (Chambers and Trudgill 1980:3). Both of these sets of definitions rather simplistically imply that a language is a whole unit which is made up of subparts called dialects.

The second set of definitions suggests that the standard of measurement for determining whether dialects belong to a single or more than one language is mutual intelligibility. Chambers and Trudgill (1980:4) use the term intelligibility to mean understanding. Thus, mutual intelligibility would refer to understanding in both directions. As these authors point out, however, there are difficulties with using the criterion of mutual intelligibility alone to determine language boundaries. For one thing, intelligibility often is not equal in both directions. In other words, true mutual intelligibility is rare. Also, there are other factors, such as linguistic similarity and sociolinguistic factors, which must be considered in defining a language for standardization purposes. I will discuss all this in greater depth in section 2.3. For standardization purposes, I define language as **a collection of dialects which: (1) are determined, by a reliable testing method and according to an agreed upon threshold, to be mutually intelligible, (2) share at least 60% lexical similarity based on a comparison of apparent cognates, and (3) are viewed by a group of speakers as all belonging to**

their system of communication. A dialect is simply any subdivision of a language.

In my definition of language as it relates to standardization, a group of dialects must meet all three of the criteria I have listed. I want to qualify my definition as it relates to standardization, however. I have said that standardization is a process by which one form of a language becomes accepted in the whole community as the norm for writing their language. I have also stated that varieties of the spoken form will likely remain, even to the point that these varieties are not immediately intelligible with each other. I apparently contradict myself with my first criterion that, to be called a language, a group of dialects must be determined to be mutually intelligible.

I have two points to make here. One is that intelligibility may increase with exposure. In the next section I will discuss methods for measuring intelligibility, but what I want to emphasize now is that these methods evaluate immediate intelligibility. Intelligibility is a matter of degree. The degree to which a variety of speech is intelligible to the speaker of another variety will generally increase as the speaker is exposed to that other variety. The more closely related the two varieties are, the faster this is likely to occur. In other words, two varieties of speech with higher than 60% lexical similarity may nevertheless not be immediately intelligible with one another. By my own definition, I would have to call these varieties separate languages. If these speech forms, however, are closely enough related (with say 85-90% lexical similarity) that the speaker of one variety could acquire a good understanding of the other just by being exposed to it for a reasonable

length of time, I believe it would be possible for these forms to share a common written standard.

This leads me to my second point, which is that what one considers a language may change in the process of standardization. For example, a person could apply my definition and determine that two varieties of speech with more than 60% lexical similarity are two separate languages. This could be because the two varieties are not immediately intelligible, or because the speakers of these do not feel that they speak the same language. If standardization were to somehow occur, however, and these two groups of speakers were to begin to share a common written form and think of themselves as sharing a common language, then a person could again apply my definition and this time deduce that the two varieties belong to one language.

Finally, I also want to stress the extreme importance that socio-linguistic factors have in the determination of language boundaries for standardization decisions. Linguistically, one may determine language boundaries, combining or separating dialects into a single or multiple languages. However, factors such as political boundaries, history, culture, or attitudes may contradict the linguistic assessment. For example, one could linguistically class Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish as one language. But because these speech varieties are spoken in three separate countries, have distinct written forms, and are considered by their speakers to be different languages, most of the world considers them to be separate languages (Chambers and Trudgill 1980:5).

In chapter one I have made reference to the 236+ <u>indigenous languages</u> spoken in Cameroon. I use the term <u>local languages</u> in the same

way--to refer to languages spoken traditionally by those native to the country. Cameroonian linguists and government officials use the term national languages to refer to indigenous or local languages. Except in quoting them, however, I try to avoid this term, since elsewhere the term national language is often used interchangeably with official language. Official languages are those chosen by a government to be used for administrative or other official purposes. In some countries the official language may also be an indigenous language, but in Cameroon the official languages are French and English which were imported by the former colonial powers. I use mother tongue to refer to the language which a person acquired as a child and which became "his natural instrument of thought and communication" (Unesco 1951:689). A lingua franca or language of wider communication is a language "used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them" (Unesco 1951:689). Some also use the term trade language to refer to this type of language.

2.3 Determination of language boundaries

As I have already stated, there are various factors to be considered in the determination of what constitutes a language for standardization purposes. In this section I briefly describe some of the methods linguists use to determine language boundaries. I also discuss some of the difficulties in using these methods.

2.3.1 Methodology for measuring intelligibility

A method used widely to try to measure intelligibility is the dialect intelligibility testing method described by Eugene Casad (1974). Some also refer to this as recorded text testing, or RTT (see Blair 1987 or Stahl 1988). This method involves the recording of short autobiographical and biographical stories told by native speakers in the dialects to be tested. With the help of dialect speakers, a linguist/researcher converts each text, which is usually three to four minutes long, into a "comprehension test." The "tests" can take various forms. The researchers can insert simple comprehension questions into a story at appropriate intervals or ask them at the end of the story. Another alternative is to have the person being tested retell the story in his native dialect after hearing the test story. Questions and instructions are always in the test subject's native dialect to be sure that he understands what he is being asked. Researchers score responses as to whether they are "right", "wrong", or sometimes, "half-right"; and an individual score is earned by each test subjects. Casad (1974:29) recommends that at least ten people per dialect area be tested and their scores averaged. Some may feel that a larger sample is necessary, but ten is the minimum. Casad (1974:85) believes that any average below 75% means that comprehension is "difficult", and above 90% means that comprehension is "easy." B. Grimes (1988:4.1.20) states that between 75% and 90%, intelligibility is marginal and further testing should be done. J. Grimes (1988:21) says, "Intelligibility seems to have to be above 85%, as measured on narrative, before much complex and personally revealing communication is likely to take place."

In addition to averaging the scores, the researcher also needs to figure the standard deviation of the test results. B. Grimes (1988:4.1.19) explains what this means and gives the reason for it:

> The standard deviation is the basis for showing statistically whether two groups can reasonably be treated as distinct on the basis of samples taken from each. The standard deviation can be an important clue to a bilingual overlay, especially if individuals have not been adequately screened for bilingualism. A standard deviation of 15% or more indicates the probable presence of a bilingual overlay on intelligibility. This does not mean, however, that a smaller standard deviation indicates that no bilingualism is involved.

Researchers have devised other methods for measuring intelligibility, most of them variations on the RTT method just described. The above method is designed for testing preliterate individuals who respond in their own dialect. Other methods use a common language or test groups rather than individuals. Some depend on the test subjects being literate. None of the methods is perfect. All have their peculiar difficulties, either in preparation, administration or evaluation of the results. Simons (1979:1) believes that no one method is inherently better than another, but that the method should be chosen according to the situation.

Returning to my definition of language for standardization purposes, my first criterion is that a collection of dialects be determined to be mutually intelligible. As I stated above, true mutual intelligibility is rare. Also, as I have shown in this section, measuring intelligibility is complicated. I use the term mutual intelligibility in a general sense to define a language. By it I mean simply that, by some reliable standard of measurement, the dialects are determined to be adequately (but not necessarily equally, as implied by the term "mutual") intelligible with each other. Using the RTT method, scores of two

dialect groups would probably need to average no lower than between 75% and 85% intelligibility to say initially, by my definition, that they share a common language. One should bear in mind, however, my earlier comment that inteliigibility may increase with exposure (see section 2.2). Therefore, even though a group may average below 75% intelligibility in another speech variety, if other factors are positive (e.g., the varieties are closely related lexically and attitudes are positive), one should still consider the possibility of standardization. If eventually the speakers of these two varieties are able to share a written standard, then one could say that they share a common language. In thinking about promoting language standardization, the question of how easily intelligible the standard written form will be to those who use it is more important than debating whether dialects or languages are being encouraged to share a written form. This is something one can evaluate only after trying standardization.

2.3.2 Methodology for measuring linguistic similarity

Lexicostatistics, or the statistical comparison of word lists, is "the most widespread and readily available means for quantifying linguistic similarity" (Simons 1979:68). In this method, a researcher collects words from two or more dialects using a standard wordlist. In general, the longer the list the more reliable it is (Simons 1977:3.3.4). The researcher compares and analyzes the lists to obtain shared percentages based on apparent cognates.

There are various opinions as to what the percentages mean. Swadesh, who developed the method, "suggested that the dividing line between

dialects of one language and aeparate languages was 81% lexical similarity" (B. Grimes 1988:4.1.7). Swadesh, however, was primarily interested in finding the time aince languages diverged rather than in predicting intelligibility. B. Grimes (1988:4.1.9) and J. Grimes (1988:29) both believe that 60% lexical similarity is the dividing line between those languagea which need intelligibility testing and those which do not because they can be assumed to be separate languages (above 60% need testing and below 60% do not). Bergman (1989:8.1.5) recommends that 70% "upper confidence limit" be substituted for 60% as the suggested line of division. By "upper confidence limit," he refers to the highest percentage in the range which, after taking into account the accuracy and reliability of the data, as well aa the length of the wordlist, might actually be the true percentage (Johnson 1989:488). In other words, setting the line at 70% "upper confidence limit" compensates for possible errors.

Researchers sometimes use lexicostatistical analysis alone to determine language boundaries, but I do not believe this is an adequate measure. One can use this method to predict intelligibility or to separate languages with very low similarity, but it does not show much beyond this. Also, I believe that in addition to lexical similarity, researchers should consider phonological and grammatical similarities (see Greenberg 1966). I have only included lexical similarity in my definition of language, however, because of the fact that linguists have not yet devised any widely used or accepted methods for quantifying phonological or grammatical similarity (Simons 1979:67).

2.3.3 Methodology for measuring sociolinguistic factors

Sociolinguistic questionnaires are a popular tool for gathering data about language attitudes (Agheysi and Fishman 1970:144). These questionnaires can take various forms. Two types, described by Agheysi and Fishman (1970), contain either open-ended questions or closed questions. Open-ended questions give the respondent the opportunity to freely express views and attitudes, including some the researcher may not have anticipated. But these types of questions are difficult to score, and the respondent may focus on a different part of the question than the researcher intended. Therefore, closed questions are preferred for collecting final data (Agheysi and Fishman 1970:148). These are questions which require a yes/no, multiple choice, or ranking response. In general, the aim of the sociolinguistic questionnaire is to elicit, as indirectly as possible, true attitudes of a representative sample of a speech community.

Another tool sometimes used to measure attitudes is called the Matched Gulae Test, first developed by Wallace Lambert and his colleagues in 1960 to test attitudes in Quebec towards French and English (see Lambert 1960). In this method, the researcher elicits speech samples in two languages or dialects by the same perfectly bilingual speaker. The researcher then records and subsequently plays the speech samples to people in such a manner that they may have no idea that the one person is speaking two different dialects. The researcher asks the test subjects to evaluate personality characteristics based on the voice cues of the speaker whom they assume to be two different speakers. Their attitudes toward the dialects being spoken come out in the evaluations they make of

the speaker when he is speaking each dialect. A difficulty with this technique is that it oversimplifies the bilingual situation and does not allow for the fact that dialect and language switching often occur (Agheysi and Fishman 1970:146).

Measuring language attitudes is of particular importance in determining language boundaries for standardization purposes. Sometimes, despite linguistic evidence that two speech forms are or are not of the same language, the speakers of one or both of those speech forms may insist that the opposite is true. Usually this has to do with positive or negative feelings toward the other speech community. When one speech community has strong negative feelings toward another group, this is usually expressed in negative feelings toward that group's dialect or language, and often there is a refusal to accept the other language as their own or even as being closely related to their own. The groups may actually believe that they speak separate languages, even though a linguist's assessment might be different, and it may be difficult or even impossible to get them to accept literature written in the other dialect. Thus, measuring language attitudes is important not only for determining language boundaries, but perhaps more importantly for choosing the dialect within a language which would be the most acceptable one to use as a basis for the standard written form.

2.4 Promotion of language standardization

The American Heritage dictionary gives the following three definitions for the verb to promote: (1) "to contribute to the progress or growth of; to further," (2) "to urge the adoption of; to advocate," and

(3) "to attempt to sell or popularize by advertising or by securing financial support" (Morris 1975:1047). In addition, the Random House dictionary defines it: "to aid in organizing" (Stein 1967:1151). All of these definitions capture to some extent the meaning I wish to convey in suggesting the promotion of language standardization in Cameroon. What I propose is **an organized effort to contribute to the progress of a language standardization process and to urge the adoption of a written standard for a language.**

For the most part, language standardization is the result of human effort. A language does not decide to standardize itself. The process is prompted by a human desire to communicate, and human decisions are involved all along the way. Yet, historically, because of the lack of a specific and organized effort, it has taken a hundred or more years for many languages to become standardized. As I will show in the next two chapters, one of the factors likely to contribute to the success of efforts to promote standardization is that these efforts support a natural tendency of the speakers. In other words, the idea is <u>not</u> to try to force language standardization. Rather it is to identify situations where the process is already taking place, or, given time, might naturally take place, and to contribute to the progress of this process. I am suggesting that it might even be possible to speed the process along by **urging the adoption of a standardized written form**, so that speakers of preliterate languages do not have to wait hundreds of years before being able to read and write in their own languages.

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

In the past thirty years or so, language standardization has been studied closely within the discipline of language planning. Much more, in fact, has been written on the subject than I am able to cover here. Therefore, in this chapter I present a very brief overview of what language planning is and what language planners have written about the standardization process. I include a summary of a proposal by a Cameroonian linguist for choosing the dialect upon which to base the standard. I conclude by summarizing the ideas proposed by language planners which relate to the effective promotion of a written standard.

3.1 Definition of language planning

The discipline called language planning is relatively new, having come into existence only in the 1960s with the pioneering works of such linguists as Haugen (1959 and 1966b), Ray (1961 and 1963), and Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta (1968). It has been defined in various ways. One of the simplest definitions is that "language planning is deliberate language change" (Rubin and Jernudd 1971:xvi). Haugen (1969) refers to the "normative work of language academies and committees" (in Karam 1974:105). Many definitions, such as those of Rubin (1971), Fishman (1971) and Karam (1974), focus on the activity of finding solutions to language problems. In the 1970s a popular definition of language

planning was the "organized pursuit of solutions to language problems, typically at the national level" (Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971, in Eastman 1983:121, bolding mine). Language planners are those who are actively involved in either the development of the theory of language planning or in promoting language change by finding solutions to language problems.

3.2 Overview of language planning perspective

Although language planners have focussed on the handling of language problems at the national level, some of their ideas are also applicable to the concept of promoting standardization on the local level. In this section I present an overview of language planners' ideas which I have found useful in thinking about how language standardization, as I have defined it (i.e., promoting a norm for writing a language), might be promoted on the local level.

3.2.1 The standard as a model

A number of language planners talk about a standard language in terms of a model. Garvin (1974:70) defines standard language as "a codified form of a language, accepted by and serving as a model to, [sic] a larger speech community." Similarly, Rubin (1977:158-9), in her six-step description of the process of standardization, talks about the isolation of a norm and the subsequent value judgment made of it by a group of people. Concerning the process of standardization, Ray (1963:760) says, "The operation of standardization consists basically of two steps, first, the creation of a model for imitation, and second, promotion of this model over rival models." He defines this "model for imitation" as

"a body of discourse capable of attracting the interest and the loyalty of its intended listeners or readers" (Ray 1963:780-1). This body of discourse, he says, can be in the form either of people who habitually use certain spoken forms or of literature in prose. In other words, the production of literature using one form of the language promotes the standardization process by creating a model which others might imitate and develop a loyalty towards.

Ferguson (1968:32) backs this up in stating that one of the recurring features of language standardization in Europe since the Renaissance is that "one writer or a small number of writers served as acknowledged **models for literary use** of the standardizing language" (bolding mine). Eastman (1983:70) also advocates that simply providing a language with a writing system, grammar, and dictionary gives people something which they can point to as <u>the</u> language.

Ray suggests some planned "techniques" for encouraging the production of literature in the dialect being promoted as the standard. These include developing "approved terminologies," giving merit awards and having prize contests for "good" writing, and subsidizing "self-help" in literacy (Ray 1963:761).

3.2.2 Involvement of elite or prestige groups

Another theme addressed by some language planners is the important role of **elite and prestige groups** in language standardization. Basically, in order for a form to be accepted as a standard, a prestigious group must use it, or such a group must be involved in its development and promotion.

Haugen (1966a:632) suggests that "If a recognized elite already exists with a characteristic vernacular, its norm will almost inevitably prevail." Thus, he makes the point that elitist and influential groups are usually the ones followed, rather than being the followers, so a standard should be based on the form used by such a group. It is interesting to note that another feature identified by Ferguson (1968:32) in the standardization of European languages is the fact that "the basis of the standard was the speech of an educated middle class in an important urban center."

Haugen (1966a:933) emphasizes, in addition, that at least a small, influental group of users must accept the norm. Garvin (1974:71) says the elite group must not only accept the standard, but must be involved in promoting it as well: "The development of a standard language, and to a lesser extent of a written language, requires the active cooperation, if not of the entire speech community, then at least of its intellectual elite." Tauli (1974:62) assumes that in the standardization process, "an official or **authoritative private institution**" determines what the norm is to be (boiding mine).

The concept of influential prestige groups and institutions may be typically European or western, but these also exist in many non-western societies. In Cameroon various ethnic groups ascribe prestige and authority to traditional leaders, such as chiefs, fons, lamidos, village presidents, and elders. In addition, Cameroonians tend to have great respect for those in government-appointed jobs or positions of responsibility. Some language groups call the members of their group who have

well-paying jobs in the city "the elite," and they give these people the authority to make decisions which will affect the whole group.

3.2.3 Expression of identity

Haugen (1971) and some others have related the concept of **language as an expression of identity** to language standardization. Ferguson (1968:32) notes that one of the characteristics of the standardization process in Europe's history is that "the standardizing language served as a symbol of either religious or national identity." In response to Tauli (1968) and Ray (1963), who spoke of language in terms of an "instrument" or "tool," Haugen (1971:288) says, "Language is much more than an instrument: among other things, it is also an expression of personality and a sign of identity." In the same article, he goes on to quote Hjelmslev (1953), who calls language "the ultimate, indispensable sustainer of the human individual, his refuge in hours of loneliness, when the mind wrestles with existence and the conflict is resolved in the monologue of the poet and the thinker" (in Haugen 1971:288). He then issues a warning to those thinking of engaging in language planning or standardization that these words should first "be pondered well." His point is, basically, that language is connected to people; therefore, anything one does with language, such as standardizing it, has an effect on people.

Eastman (1983) advocates that anthropologists should be involved particularly in the codification aspect of standardization, because of a need for sensitivity to the culture in which the standard will operate. She summarizes Garvin and Mathiot's (1956) third set of criteria for evaluating a standard language:

> Within a culture, a standard language may be judged with respect to how well it contributes to uniting speakers of different dialects into a single speech community while simultaneously symbolizing the speech community's identity as distinct from other communities (Eastman 1983:72, bolding mine).

Her point is that a standard language symbolizes a community's identity as a single group, and it leads the group to attitudes of language loyalty and pride. She suggests that language planners codifying a language should "conceive of the language as a system of speech elements reflecting cultural heritage" (Eastman 1983:72). She proposes that the procedure for standardizing a language is similar to the procedure for reintroducing a lost language. The first two steps are to develop a practical orthography and to train people to use it, so as to be literate in the language. In standardization, however, rather than being reoriented to the language, the people are being oriented to the dialect chosen as the standard and are introduced to a "new vehicle of common cultural communication available in written and usable form" (Eastman 1983:73). The third step in both cases is to develop cultural and historical literature in the standard or reintroduced language; and the fourth step is to reproduce in the standard any materials already existing in other dialects and to make them available to the public. This final step, she says, aids in building up linguistic loyalty and pride.

Fasold (1984:259-80) also discusses the concept of identity in relation to language planning and standardization. He refers to studies in "identity planning" done by Lamy (1979) and Pool (1979), who showed that there was a definite relationship between language use and the willingness to claim a particular identity. Fasold cautions against the

idea that speakers of a particular language variety can be influenced to identify themselves with any particular group, however. He says:

> The usual language planning methods are not particularly likely to influence speakers' linguistic practices in unmonitored language use--unless they are designed to support the direction in which natural social forces are moving anyway (Fasold 1984:260, bolding mine).

3.2.4 Group unity through a common language

Related to the concept that a standard language is an expression of identity is the idea that a standard symbolizes group unity. Eastman (1983:72) believes that "standardization leads to language loyalty by unifying dialects yet allowing diversity in creative spheres." Garvin and Mathiot (1968) say that one of the functions of a standard language is to unify speakers of different dialects into a single speech community. A second, related function is that a standard separates a language from other languages. They refer to these functions as "unifying" and "separatist" functions (Garvin and Mathiot 1968:369).

For multilingual nations, such as Cameroon, that are interested in the standardization of several of their languages, emphasizing this concept can be delicate. Neustupny (1968:292) warns that the standardization of many dialects may be undesirable in terms of unity within a nation. Fasold (1984:8), however, states:

> In many ways multilingualism can be seen as a resource. . . . In education, the conflict between using ethnic group languages as media of instruction for nationist reasons of efficiency versus using the national language for nationalist reasons of unity can sometimes be resolved by using the ethnic languages for <u>initial</u> education, and later switching to the national language for more advanced education.

Fasold uses the term national language to refer to what I call an official language. He also refers to the "nationist-nationalist" conflict discussed by Fishman (1968). Basically, this concerns the conflicting ideals of building a unified nation (nationism) and supporting and building up of nationalities of which there may be many within one nation (nationalism). He says that the "ideal situation" is a multiethnic nation where the separate ethnic groups are aware of their cultural and linguistic identity, but still consider themselves as part of the nation as a whole (Fasold 1984:9).

Maurice Tadadjeu (1981:275-6), a Cameroonian linguist and language planner, addresses this issue of developing indigenous languages and maintaining national unity by referring to "horizontal" and "vertical" dimensions of language. The horizontal dimension concerns the possibility that two Cameroonians who speak different mother tongues have of communicating in a common language from their first encounter. This common language is an official language or a language of wider communication which they have learned, perhaps in school. The vertical dimension concerns the possibility that every Cameroonian has of fully enjoying his droits linguistiques (linguistic rights) to use his mother tongue and thus to participate efficiently in the socio-cultural development of his mother tongue community. These two dimensions, he says, adequately respond to the double besoin (double need) of Cameroonians to maintain their cultural identity, while still being able to communicate with one another regardless of their mother tongue or village of origin (Tadadjeu 1981:276).

3.2.5 Recognition of benefits

Some planners stress the importance and benefit to speakers of the standardization of their language. Rubin (1977:168) observes the following:

> Demands for language standardization often are preceded by rapid socio-political changes which lead to a recognition of language diversity. When such diversity is seen as adverse, or uniformation is seen as beneficial, only then may language standardization efforts be demanded.

In other words, it is advisable, according to Rubin, to pursue standardization only when speakers recognize the advantages of having a standard form.

Eastman (1983:70) says that standardization results from a need of speakers of a language to express the "commonality" of their language. Similarly, Haugen (1966a:932) believes that a group that feels "intense solidarity" will be willing to pursue linguistic uniformity, whereas a group that does not feel this solidarity will be willing to let small differences alienate themselves from each other. He also suggests that if a norm requires any learning in order for it to be accepted, "it must somehow contribute to the well-being of the learners" (Haugen 1966a:933).

3.2.6 Consideration of historical forms

Eastman (1983:70) suggests that language planners who seek to encourage standardization consider the "historical formation of the dialects" and the origin of their diversity (bolding mine). She also recommends that planners look at earlier attempts at standardization (i.e., anything written down in one form rather than another).

Haugen (1966a:933) proposes that in a dialect chain situation, where it is impossible to find a central dialect acceptable as a norm for the whole group, it may be possible to apply principles of linguistic reconstruction or consult traditional writings to come up with a more acceptable form.

3.2.7 Use in mass communications

Finally, some language planners suggest that mass communications may play an important role in standardization. Eastman (1983:71) proposes that "the preferred standard model may be best promoted through the use of mass communications." Karam (1974:115), referring to Schramm (1964), says this is so because it is through mass communications that the "standard as a model" is made available to all sectors of the population. Garvin (1974) points out that developing countries which have experienced exploitation through European colonization may automatically reject European ideas about communication. He cites a suggestion that some in these former colonies might bypass a process of literacy and language standardization to go directly into a period "where oral mass communication in the local traditional style would be made possible by the electronic media" (Garvin 1974:78).

3.3 Sadembouo's proposal

Dr. Etienne Sadembouo (1980 and 1988), a Cameroonian linguist, has done an extensive study based on a review of several language programs carried out in his country. He presents a list of fundamental, secondary, and marginal criteria for choosing a standard dialect, or what he

calls a "reference dialect." Sadembouo's (1988:15-7) fundamental criteria consist of the following:

-High degree of declared understanding of the dialect
-High degree of predicted understanding of the dialect
-Numerical importance of the dialect speakers
-Advantageous geographical position of the dialect
-The location of the dialect at the center of activity
-Dialect prestige
-Pureness of the dialect
-Vehicularity of the dialect

His marginal and secondary criteria are concerned with such factors as government and local attitudes, religious influence of the dialect, and socioeconomic and social status (Sadembouo 1988:17-18). He proposes that each of the dialects of a language be submitted to these criteria, beginning with the fundamental ones and stopping there if a standard dialect is identified. He suggests that each category of criteria be given a weight or score and that all the fundamental criteria be applied, with the marginal and secondary criteria being applied as necessary. He proposes that this process be carried out by a language committee made up of as complete a representation as possible of the whole language group (i.e., representing all dialects, no discrimination of age or sex, all religious groups, differing social classes, illiterate as well as literate, and so on). The "practicability of the reference dialect as the basis for standardization of a written form," he says, will be "guaranteed" (Sadembouo 1988:19).

Sadembouo's proposal has definite possibilities, but he or someone else needs to work out a way of weighting his criteria. Then one should test this weighting system to see how accurately one can actually predict the acceptance of a standard form.

3.4 Acceptance of a proposed standard

Language planners address the issue of whether it is possible to ensure the acceptance of a proposed standard by making various comments. Most of these center around the idea that a standard should **meet a need of the speakers**. As I pointed out above, Haugen (1966a) says that a norm is more likely to be accepted if it contributes to the speakers' well-being. Eastman (1983:71), summarizing several writers, also suggests that a proposed standard is likely to be accepted more quickly if world events, as well as other matters of "immediate importance to the local population" are made available in it. Ray (1963:762) states: "Now there is no quick way of making the horse drink the water, if it does not want to. Only the **satisfaction of genuinely felt needs** can enable a literature to win the allegiance needed" (bolding mine).

As I have also mentioned above, Haugen (1966a) believes that if the norm is **based on the speech of a recognized elite**, it is very likely to be accepted; and Fasold (1984) holds that efforts to influence speakers' linguistic practices will be successful only if they **support the direction of natural social forces**.

Garvin has translated a work by the Prague School (1932:102) called "Principles for the Cultivation of Good Language," in which they say that "the cultivation of good language" or "the conscious fostering of the standard language" can be done by **theoretical linguistic work, language education in the schools, and literary practice**. They suggest, in regard to orthography, that it be theoretically sound as well as practical. In

generai, they place atrong emphasis on a theoretical understandlng of the norm as a contributor to "the stabilization of the standard language."

Rubin (1977:188) urges that the function of the standard be clarified in planning a standardization program, but she concludes:

> We have found no principles by which to judge how stable a norm should be in order to enable the several styles to serve the communication needs of a society, nor do we think this will be easy to discover. The question of stability may relate in part to the rate of acceptance of other changes within a society, to the way in which changes are made and disseminated, and to the cost of learning a particular new change.
>
> We have only touched on what we feel is a field which needs to be greatly elaborated if effective standardization is to be a function of language planning.

3.5 Summary

Language planning is basically a discipline devoted to the organized attempt to solve language problems. Standardization is a language problem. The specific aspect of the problem I am considering in this thesis is how standardization can be promoted. Language planners suggest producing literature to serve as a model of the standard. They also recommend the involvement of prestige groups in promoting the standard and suggest relating the standard to the concepts of identity and group unity, being careful to equally emphasize national identity and unity. Some language plannera advise not pursuing standardization unless speakers of a language recognize the benefits a standardized form will have for them. Others suggest considering historical forms of dialects in order to come up with the most acceptable standard form. Finally, some language planners also suggest using mass communications to promote a standard.

Sadembouo proposes a list of criteria, including many of the factors identified in this and the next chapter, for choosing the "reference dialect" on which to base the standard. He recommends that a language committee use these criteria to choose the reference dialect. His proposal has possibilities, but needs further work to make it more practical.

As to the question of whether it is possible to ensure the acceptance of a proposed standard, language planners make a number of comments. I have highlighted these in the previous section. Rubin's conclusion, however, is that the discipline of language planning has not yet advanced to the point that language planners can ensure effective standardization.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROCESS OF STANDARDIZATION: CASE STUDIES

More than 6,000 languages are currently spoken in the world, and over 2,000 of these have at least something written in them (B. Grimes (ed.) 1988:ix). Some degree of standardization has taken place with the writing down of each language. A significant number of the world's languages are considered "standardized." In a sense, however, the process is one which is never completely finished. Standardization continues as languages change over time. One can say, though, that some languages are more standardized than others. This means that all or the majority of speakers have accepted one form as the norm for writing their language, as opposed to maintaining several forms reflecting different dialects or writing conventions.

Before the 1960s, when the discipline of language planning began to develop, researchers gave very little, if any, attention to the study of either how languages became standardized or whether and how a standardization process could be promoted. Yet, with and without a consciously planned and organized effort by a particular government or linguistic agent, many of the world's languages have become widely standardized in the course of time. In this chapter I present several examples of language standardization from both an historical and a recent perspective. My intent in presenting these cases is to show how the process has

worked, and to identify positive factors in the acceptance of a standard which might be implemented in local level projects in Cameroon.

4.1 An historical perspective

In this section I describe the process by which English, German, French, and Spanish became standardized. In each of these cases the process spanned a couple hundred years or more and did not necessariiy result from a consciously planned effort.

4.1.1 English

The standardization of the English language took place over a period of several hundred years. In England, during the Middle English period from approximateiy 1150-1500 A.D., there was much variety in spoken English, just as there is today. In time, the dialect spoken in London emerged as the standard for purposes of writing. In the East Midlands speech area the triangle of Oxford, Cambridge, and London was a "nucleus of power, trade and learning" (McCrum, et al. 1986:79). Geoffrey Chaucer, known as a great poet even in his lifetime, wrote in the London English dialect. In the year 1476 William Caxton introduced the printing press to England, and he and his successors "gave a special currency to London English" (McCrum, et al. 1986:85).

> Caxton's decision was not as simple as it would seem in retrospect. There were several standards with rival claims. It was not easy for a writer and printer in the fifteenth century to choose a version of English that would find favour with all readers (McCrum, et al. 1986:85).

Jespersen (1946:68) believes Caxton made vocabulary choices based on "tendencies to unity" which he had detected and based on his premonition of the direction he thought these tendencies were going.

The standard written form of English which arose was actually not pure London English, but was a form based on the dialect used in the East Midland district of England and particularly in the metropolis of London (Baugh 1957:231). Reasons that the language of this area emerged include: (1) it occupied an intermediate position between the divergences of the north and south (i.e., there were similarities to both northern and southern dialects), (2) it was spoken in the largest and most populous of the dialect areas, and (3) Cambridge University was located in the region and influenced the support of this dialect (Baugh 1957:231-2). Probably the most influential factor in the acceptance of this dialect was the "importance of London as the capital of England" (Baugh 1957:234). However, being a cosmopolitan city London was highly influenced linguistically by those who came to it from other areas:

> To it were drawn in a constant stream those whose affairs took them beyond the limits of their provincial homes. They brought to it traits of their local speech, there to mingle with the London idiom and to survive or die as the silent forces of amalgamation and standardization determined. They took back with them the forms and usages of the great city by which their own speech had been modified. The influence was reciprocal. London English took as well as gave. It began as a Southern and ended as a Midland dialect. By the fifteenth century there had come to prevail in the East Midlands a fairly uniform dialect and the language of London agrees in all important respects with it (Baugh 1957:234).

As Jespersen (1946:55) states it, "social intercourse contributed to the disappearance of dialect."

The Authorized Version of the Bible, otherwise known as the King James Bible published in 1611 A.D., definitely left its mark on the

language. It was the work of six groups of translators who worked from five earlier English versions of the Bible as well as from Greek and Hebrew. The end result was a Bible translation employing only 8000 different words, "God's teaching in homely English for everyman" (McCrum, et al. 1986:113). The English of this translation was basically a composite form which gained widespread popularity and is revered to this day as a model for literary English.

Another very significant work in the standardization of English is the Dictionary of Dr. Samuel Johnson, published in 1755. The result of nine years of work, it is called "a masterpiece and a landmark, . . . 'setting the orthography, displaying the analogy, regulating the structures, and ascertaining the significations of English words'" (McCrum, et al. 1986:135). Some said that the dictionary gave stability to English, but Johnson himself, in the preface to the work, rejected the idea that language would ever stop changing. It is evidently true, however, that it gave further prestige to the London dialect emerging as the standard and helped to assure its acceptance as the norm for writing.

No one person or group, therefore, consciously planned or promoted the standardization process in English. With the introduction of printing and the production of literature, writers, printers, and an influential university (Cambridge) gave preference to the dialect of London, the capital. A Bible translation and a dictionary based on this dialect lent further support and helped establish it as the norm. In time, however, the literary norm which was accepted was not identical to pure London English, but rather was based on the London dialect and contained elements from other speech areas as well.

4.1.2 German

It took several hundred years for German speakers to adopt a common or standardized written form for their language. This is due, at least in part, to the fact that for centuries Germany was politically divided and had no capital. Even today the language is officially spoken in three different countries (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland), and there is considerable dialectal variation in the spoken language.

Jespersen (1946) points out that tendencies toward linguistic unity began long ago. He says, "Even before Luther's time there was the Saxon 'Chancery-language' which was imitated by other Chanceries, including those of Austria, and which became a sort of common official written-language" (Jespersen 1946:52).

Martin Luther's translation of the Bible in German was first published in 1534 A.D. and had a great influence towards linguistic unity.

> Luther's German was freely accepted throughout the East Middle German area, for in all essential features it was native to those parts. Its general adoption in western Germany (except in the Rhineland) was also soon accomplished, certainly in those regions favorable to the Reformation, such as Hesse (Waterman 1966:133).

There were other areas, however, such as North Germany, South Germany, and Switzerland, where acceptance was much slower due to both dialectal and religious differences. In 1600 A.D. there were still three major literary dialects of High German, but toward the end of the eighteenth century,

> a more of less standardized Schriftsprache was adopted throughout the German-speaking lands. It was also a spoken language, but limited in currency to the educated classes. The speech of the average person continued, then as now, to be marked by features of local and regional dialects (Waterman 1966:145-6).

By 1700 German speakers in Switzerland had accepted the new literary standard which was being promoted by grammarians and rhetoricians, but Bavaria, Austria, and the Catholic Rhineland were slower to accept it. This was partly for religious reasons, "but primarily because the East Middle German variant differed in so many ways from their own dialects as well as from the literary model to which they were accustomed, namely, das Gemeine Deutch" (Waterman 1966:146). Resistance was finally overcome in all these regions and by the end of the eighteenth century a standard literary language common to all German speakers was a reality. Exactly how this resistance was overcome is not clear, but again, as in the case of English, it seems that the standard which arose was not equal to any one spoken dialect. Although it had its roots in the language of Luther, this new standard was "a compromise made up of many elements and modified by many forces" (Waterman 1966:147). Jespersen (1946:54) says that the system of military conscription and a rule made by the Prussian government to move its employees around frequently contributed to the evolution and diffusion of standard German, because it encouraged people from various dialect areas to speak with one another and eventually discard some "local peculiarities."

There remains much variety in spoken German today, so much so that some dialects are actually unintelligible, at least when first heard, to speakers of some other dialects. Even the written standard, based on the so-called High German dialect, could technically be called a foreign language for speakers of the Low German dialects in places like Bavaria and particularly in Switzerland. Some Swiss Christians are expressing a

need or desire for Scripture in their own dialects. B. Grimes (1986:28) states:

> Although earlier translations of Scripture into several Swiss German dialects were generally ignored, several recent translations are being used and appreciated by more people, and even used in some church services.

Other Swiss German speakers, however, including some Christians, have told me that they are satisfied with the High German Bible and with using standard High German as their written and literary language. If this standard, to which they are introduced in school, truly is adequate for their needs, what might this situation have to suggest about the degree of mutual intelligibility necessary between dialects which will share a common written form? Has the threshhold (of 85% RTT score) been too high in the recent past?

4.1.3 French

The process by which the French language became standardized was one which took place over at least a couple hundred years. Speakers began to produce literature in French around or after the year 1000 A.D., and as they did publishers felt a need for a standard dialect "as a common medium for this new literature" (Holmes and Schutz 1967:42). During the tweifth and thirteenth centuries most of what was written was in the Parisian and Norman dialects, which were fairly similar at the time, or in the Picard dialect. There was considerable variety in spoken French, especially in northern France. At the beginning of the Middle French period, in about 1350 A.D., some complained that "the language was so corrupted that people could hardly understand each other, one man talking and writing in one fashion, and another in another" (Jespersen 1946:68).

It was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, that "the language of Ile-de-France in general, and of Paris in particular, came to be accepted as the desirable norm of speech, and consequently as at least the basis for the desirable norm in writing" (Rickard 1974:47). There are several reasons why the language of this area was so prestigious. Paris was the seat of the Royal Court (i.e., it was the capital), as well as of law courts and a university. Geographically and linguistically it was also central with regard to northern France and Anglo-Norman England. St. Denis, which was nearby, was also an important spiritual center.

The printing press was first set up in France in 1470 A.D., and all French texts printed were in the Parisian dialect (Rickard 1974:68). During the sixteenth century several published works helped lend stability to written French. These include John Palsgrave's grammatical description of the language for English speakers, L'Esclarcissement de la langue françoyse, published in 1532, and Robert Estienne's Dictionaire françois-latin, published in 1540 with a second edition in 1549. Although the Parisian dialect as represented in these works was the accepted norm, in the early part of the seventeenth century this norm, according to Rickard (1974:104), "still allowed very considerable latitude, for an almost infinite range of structural and stylistic possibilities were available and the vocabulary was as ill-defined as it was vast." In 1835 the French officially founded the Académie Française to formulate rules for their language and its orthography; and in 1647 Claude Favre Vaugelas produced his Remarques sur la langue françiose, which was another important contribution to the standardization of French.

Holmes and Schutz (1967) remark that dialects still exist in France, but communication is easy. Haugen (1966a:930) says that today "French is probably the most highly standardized of European languages." By this he refers mainly to its very developed concept of "correctness" and its "intellectual elaboration", but all this implies that a certain specified form has become the preferred norm, especially for literary purposes. The standardization of French occurred as literature began to be produced in the language and publishers felt a need for uniformity in these writings so that all could understand them. French citizens also began to desire a means of common expression to demonstrate their unity as a nation. Haugen (1966a:930) sums this up well:

> In France, as in other countries, the process of standardization was intimately tied to the history of the nation itself. As the people developed a sense of cohesion around a common government, their language became a vehicle and a symbol of their unity.

4.1.4 Spanish

It was in the second half of the eleventh century, during the reign of Alfonso VI, that influences toward the standardization of the Spanish language began to operate (Entwistle 1936:151). A major factor was the capture of Toledo in 1085 A.D. by the Castilian nation. At that time three major dialects of Spanish rivaled each other. These were Castilian, Leonese, and Argonese. Alfonso, though a Castilian king, preferred the Leonese dialect, and in promoting it as the standard "took steps to give coherence to his dominions and to attach them to European traditions" (Entwistle 1936:151). In other words, he sought to establish a more unified nation through a more unified language.

During the twelfth century the Spanish made much progress towards establishing a uniform spelling system for their language. The Toledan chancery functioned as an authority whenever a decision as to how to spell a word was made, and they produced official documents to validate their decisions. Towards the end of the thirteenth century their practices began to influence the literary language. A "correct Spanish" came into existence, which was basically "Castilian with certain concessions to Leonese and many more to Latin" (Entwistle 1936:172). By the sixteenth century this Spanish standard was well established.

Similar to the previous three examples, the standardization of Spanish took place over a few hundred years and resulted in a literary norm based on one dialect but influenced also by others. A desire to communicate across dialect boundaries and to unify their nation motivated the Spanish people. Literature production was another motivating factor for standardization, and an authoritative institution, the Toledan chancery, was highly influential in shaping the written standard.

4.2 A Recent Perspective

In this section I give a more recent perspective on the standardization process by presenting five cases in which standardization has either recently occurred or is still occurring to a significant degree. In these examples linguistic or government agents have made a conscious and organized effort at language standardization.

4.2.1 Malay/Indonesian

The language called Malay is spoken all over Malaysia and Indonesia, and in southern Thailand. At least three separate standards have been developed due mainly to the political boundaries. Standard Malay, also called Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Malayu, is the official language of Malaysia. Indonesian, which is the official language of Indonesia, is based on Riau Malay spoken in Sumatra. Pattani Malay is spoken in southern Thailand and in West Malaysia. It is considered "very different" from Standard Malay; thus the New Testament has been translated into it and an Old Testament translation is in progress (Grimes 1986:21-2).

The Malay language dates back at least as far as the seventh century. From that point of time, when it was spoken in Eastern Sumatra, until the twentieth century it has served "as the official language of kingdoms and colonies" and has been widely used as a lingua franca (Ferguson 1977:20). Speakers began to produce literature in Malay in the sixteenth century, and they used a fairly consistent form. Muslim and Christian missionaries used Malay for proselytizing. The Muslims used it as far back as the twelfth century, while the Christians did not begin using it until later. The first translation of the Bible into Malay was in the eighteenth century (Ferguson 1977:21).

Apparently, the standardization of the Malay language (Indonesian) in Indonesia went very smoothly. Indonesia was originally under Dutch rule, and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Dutch scholars wrote various grammars of the Malay language which impacted the standardization process. Spraakkunst van het Maleisch, by Ch. A. van Ophuysen

(1910) who also standardized the spelling of Malay in 1896, was the most influential of these grammars (Alisjahbana 1974:410). The Teachers Training College in Bukit Tinggi spread the rules of grammar over the whole of Indonesia.

Another important factor in the acceptance of the Indonesian standard was the strong desire of the Indonesian people to maintain their identity as a nation independent of Dutch rule. Their ideal, as expressed in the Oath of the Indonesian Youth of October 28, 1928, was "one fatherland, one nation, and one language" (Alisjahbana 1971:180-1). A literary and linguistic magazine called Padjangga Baru ("The New Writer") was founded in 1933 and served as a means for those committed to this ideal to express their ideas. The Japanese, during their World War II occupation of Indonesia, helped considerably the goals of the nationalistic movement. Even though the goal of the Japanese forces was actually to make Japanese the official language of the country, the demands of the war forced them to carry out the Indonesian national goals for their language (Alisjahbana 1971:181). They declared Indonesian the language of the schools (from the primary to the University level) and administration and forbade the use of Dutch. The Japanese authorities set up an Indonesian Language Committee for the purpose of creating modern terminology for science and technology, writing a modern grammar, and selecting words to be incorporated into the standard language (Alisjahbana 1971:182).

According to Rubin (1977), the standardization process is not yet complete in Indonesian. At one time the Indonesian of the Riau Islands was considered the "best," but during the pre-Independence period

the Menangkabau dialect gained considerable prestige. Since World War II the Javanese, Sundanese, and Jakartanese dialects have influenced the development of the language. Recent efforts to standardize Indonesian have included publications by the Indonesian Language Planning Agency (L.P.A.), including grammars, dictionaries and works concerned specifically with spelling (Rubin 1977:174-5).

There has also been concern with standardizing Indonesian and the Malay of Malaysia into one large language (Alisjahbana 1974:411). Participants at the third Language Congress in Singapore and Johore Baru expressed the need for this in 1956. In 1960 a Joint Indonesian and Malayan Language Committee decided on a common spelling, but political controversies between the two countries prevented any implementation. In 1967 a second Joint Committee decided on a new common spelling. Alisjahbana (1974:411) suggests that there are not many differences in the grammar of the two languages, so what differences do exist might be remedied with an increase in communication and exchange of literature. He also suggests that a more liberal attitude toward the acceptance of internationally used terms would be of benefit to both languages. Hassan (1971) suggests cooperation between the two countries (in Rubin 1977).

4.2.2 Mandarin Chinese

For about four thousand years, the Chinese people employed a character writing system which in non-phonetic. With this system, even though there has been considerable variety in spoken language, they have shared a common form of writing. This literary idiom, referred to as wenli or wenyan, is, according to Chao (1976:25), "neither a dialect nor

a language in the usual sense. It is only an idiom with its vocabulary and grammar, but no pronunciation of its own." The main problem with this system, however, is that the number of characters involved makes it difficult for most individuals to acquire. For this reason, for a long time there has been a move toward both the simplification and phoneticization of the Chinese characters.

In the 1950s, the communist government unfolded a three-fold plan for language reform in China: "simplification of the traditional script, unification of the spoken language by promoting the use of a standard vernacular (putonghua) throughout the country, and popularization of a phonetic spelling plan" (Seybolt and Chiang 1979:1). The Chinese felt a strong need for a "common language that can be understood everywhere, that is acceptable to everyone, and that is also standardized" (Xiruo 1955:65). Participants at the National Writing Reform Conference held in Peking in 1955 expressed this need. That same year, at the Conference on Standardization of Modern Chinese, the Chinese officially recognized PTH (putonghua or p'u-t'ung-hua) as the national standard language. The conference defined PTH as a speech form to be composed of "Peking phonology and North Chinese grammar and lexicon" (Barnes 1974:462). This standard, in other words, did not yet actually exist, but the fact that "some form of North Chinese is spoken natively by 70 per cent of all ethnic Chinese living throughout two-thirds of China's land mass" justified the composition of it (Barnes 1974:462). Even though planners recognized that the country was too linguistically diverse to expect that all in the current generation would use the standardized form, they hoped that

succeeding generations would be brought linguistically closer together by the availability of a national norm (Barnes 1974:463).

Language policy in China includes, therefore, introducing PTH into the southern speech areas where the dialects spoken are unintelligible with the northern forms. A central part of the policy also includes a goal to normalize spoken as well as written usage of the language. This, however, goes beyond what I propose for standardization in Cameroon. I do not suggest trying to normalize speech. If as the result of a standardized written form this should occur naturally, this is fine, but it should never be forced. It is perfectly possible for different spoken varieties to share a common written form.

Actually, attempts at the standardization of Chinese began long before the 1950s. In 601 A.D., Luh Tsyr produced Chiehyunn, a dictionary with suggested pronunciations (Chao 1976:73). This dictionary formed a basis for two others published in 1007 and 1716 A.D. In the late nineteenth century, the Ch'ing Dynasty Interpreters College in Peking produced materials prescribing the normative usage of technical terms in various disciplines. A government translation office established in 1898 filled the same type of role (Barnes 1974:458). In the 1910s what has been referred to as the "National Language Unification" movement began in China. Language planners promoted a National Phonetic Alphabet in 1919, and schools taught Standard Mandarin in some parts of the country (Chao 1976:97). In the 1930s, a branch of the Ministry of Education (M.O.E.) established the Institute for Compilation and Translation, which published word lists in various disciplines (Barnes 1974:458).

Since the 1950s, the communist government in China has taken the standardization effort very seriously. Policy has been to favor the standard vernacular form over the classical, as well as to avoid obscure dialect forms (Barnes 1974:466). The government has sought ways to "single out and encourage those who have been outstandingly effective in the promotion of the standard vernacular or who have manifested excellence in its study" (Xiruo 1955:76). It distributes propaganda everywhere advocating the harm done to the country by dialectal differences and the benefits of promoting the standard. It also strongly encourages teachers at all levels of the education system to master the standard, including its pronunciation (Xiruo 1955:71-3). The government has organized some bureaus specifically to regulate terminology and has made recommendations that some nationally better known vocabulary items be used in place of Peking words. It discourages writers and motion picture studios from using too many local dialect forms. In addition, Peking radio, which plays a very valuable role in the standardization effort, broadcasts in PTH rather than the typical Peking dialect.

The standardization of Mandarin Chinese, therefore, is a recent example of an explicit effort to plan and promote the standardization process. Just how successful this effort has been up to this point is difficult to determine. It may be that, in attempting to promote the standard too far across language boundaries and to regulate spoken as well as written language, the effort has been hurt. Kratochvil (1968:20) says:

> Instead of a concrete norm there is a range of variants both in the written style and the standard language together with an abstract

> idea of unity based on past traditions and stimulated by modern needs.

In addition, Dun (1978:382) writes:

> in areas where different dialects are spoken, children learn the standard vernacular in elementary schools, but if they work in their own dialect area after graduating, they gradually lose the standard vernacular through lack of use because the workers around them all speak the local dialect. The final goal of spreading the standard vernacular, then, is to have all Han people speak it. At present, we are still a long way from realizing that goal.

4.2.3 Ewe

One finds another more recent example of the process of standardization in the language called Ewe, spoken in Togo, Ghana, and Benin, West Africa. Two missionary bodies, the Norddeutsche Missions-Gesellschaft (Bremen) and the Roman Catholics, along with the German colonial authorities in Togo, were the main agencies involved in the standardization process (Ansre 1971:374). They decided to elevate one variety of the language, either the Anglo or Anexo (also called Mina or Gen) dialect, as the standard rather than create a composite variety. These agencies engaged in much written discussion about which dialect "deserved" to be the standard. All of them emphasized the importance that the selected dialect "benefit the indigenous users," but each side argued for the dialect in which they had vested interests (Ansre 1971:375-6). The Bremen mission supported the choice of the Anglo dialect, because they had worked in the area where this dialect was spoken since 1847. From the beginning their strategy in spreading the gospel had been to make the people literate in their own language and enable them to read Christian literature, so they produced a fair amount of literature in the Anglo dialect. They produced Scriptures, school

textbooks, grammars, and dictionaries in this dialect. Meanwhile, the Roman Catholics worked in an area where Anexo was spoken, and they had done some work in this dialect. The earliest work known in Ewe is a Catholic catechism produced in 1658 in the Anexo dialect. The Catholics also produced some teaching books and collected texts, but these works were never as well-known or widely circulated as the works done in the Anglo dialect.

There were no clear linguistic reasons to choose one dialect over the other for the standard, but there were strong sociolinguistic arguments for both sides (Ansre 1971:376). Anexo was spoken along the coast, an important trading area, whereas Anglo was spoken in an obscure corner of the language group and country. The German colonial government had decided, however, to move the capital of Togo from Little Popo, which was Anexo-speaking, to Lome, which was mainly Anglo-speaking. This town would become the headquarters for education and a terminal for the proposed railroad, which would give Anglo-speaking Ewes more trading advantages (Ansre 1971:377). The strong support of the Bremen mission and the German colonial government for Anglo, as well as the fact that so many educational materials had been produced in the dialect, led to Anglo becoming the accepted standard. The standard was actually only based on Anglo and incorporated features from other dialects.

For a period of time Togo's public schools taught Standard Ewe, but today only mission schools teach it. The national newspaper is in Ewe and two other languages. There are also various literacy materials available in the language. There are 630,667 speakers of Ewe in Togo (1981 census) and approximately 1,350,000 in Ghana. 153,970 people speak

the Anexo dialect (more commonly called Gen or Mina now) as a first language, but it is used as a lingua franca throughout southern Togo and has from 500,000 to 1,000,000 second language speakers (B. Grimes (ed.) 1988:330). Most people think of Gen as a separate language, although one Gen speaker told me that his dialect was mutually intelligible with Ewe and that most Gen speakers had no trouble learning to read Standard Ewe. He said that in general, however, Gen speakers see Standard Ewe as the "language of the church" and a separate language, rather than their means for expressing themselves in writing (Lawson, personal communication, 1990).

The standardization of Ewe is another example of a consciously planned attempt to promote the standardization process. Missionaries made a deliberate decision to elevate one dialect as the basis for the standard. They chose the Anglo dialect, partly because educational materials and a fair amount of literature were already available in it. The use of Standard Ewe in Togo's national newspaper and in the schools helped further promote it. The effort to promote its acceptance among Gen speakers has apparently not yet been fully successful.

4.2.4 Swahili

The Swahili language is spoken in East Africa, particularly in the countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. There are a number of hypotheses as to its origin, but it seems to have been a coastal Bantu language which was moved inland by Arab traders. It thus adopted many Arabic words and became a lingua franca, or trade language. It was an important language of missionary activity for both Christians and Muslims, and

became a prestige language for the Muslim community. At the time that the Germans established their colonial rule, Swahili became a vehicle for political communication and further spread throughout the country. The government employed many Swahili speakers for teaching and administrative posts and for civil service jobs. Many tribal authorities also learned Swahili in order to cooperate with the administration. At the beginning of this century, the German administration began to produce some educational materials in the language, and they began a Swahili newspaper called Kongozi.

Although Swahili had already been used a considerable amount for writing purposes, it was not until the 1920s that any serious movement toward standardizing the language began.

> An important milestone in standardisation and development was reached when controversy arose between Pastor Roehl and Canon Broomfield in the late 1920s. Pastor Roehl, a German, had completed a translation of the Bible in a variety of Swahili that he claimed was 'purified' (i.e. of Arabic and therefore allegedly of Muslim influence). Canon Broomfield, a Britisher, considered this work to be 'impoverished'. Many felt that if any Swahili speakers used that kind of language the work would have been justified. But this was not the case. In fact, it was said that native Swahili speakers who heard Roehl's variety always asked 'Where is this Swahili spoken?' Two points became clearly relevant from the discussions: first, only an existent dialect could be decided on as standard form; second, the African speaker had to be taken into serious consideration in deciding on matters involving the language (Ansre 1971:384).

The first official move toward the standardization of Swahili began when a Committee for the Standardisation of the Swahili Language met in Dar es Salaam in 1925 (Ansre 1971:384). The committee considered two dialects, Mombasa and Zanzibari, for elevation as standard but settled on the Zanzibari dialect. They probably chose this form for a number of reasons, including its already established use in some settlements, the

good reputation with the British administration of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (U.M.C.A.) on Zanzibar, and the widespread use of the Handbook of the Swahili Language as Spoken at Zanzibar, published by Bishop Steere of the U.M.C.A. in 1870 (Russell 1981:45,53).

In 1930, the Interterritorial Language (Swahili) Committee formed to promote the standardization and development of the language. This committee defined the Swahili standard as "the Zanzibar dialect represented by the works of Steere and Madan" (Ansre 1971:385). (In addition to his Handbook, Steere had also printed Christian teaching materials, Swahili tales, a Book of Common Prayer and a translation of the New Testament. Madan, who was also with the U.M.C.A., compiled a dictionary.) The committee also recommended that Bantu words be employed if possible, but that Arabic and other foreign words which had already been established in the language should not be disregarded. The main work in developing this standard involved the production of school textbooks, readers, and other literature. In 1948 the name of the committee changed to the East African Inter-Territorial Language (Swahili) Committee. Also in that year the East African Literature Bureau formed to complement the work of the committee with more literature in Swahili. In 1964 the Language Committee incorporated into the Institute of Swahili Research, University College, Dar es Salaam (currently called the University of Dar es Salaam). Frequently called the "Swahili Committee," this group continues to work toward the standardization and modernization of the language, producing technical dictionaries and giving "imprimatur" only to works which in no way deviate from the standard form (Ansre 1971:386).

Around 1950 political developments began to create problems for the standardization effort. Language policies of the three territories involved, Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda, differed quite a lot, and educational policies had to be more independently planned. In Uganda, Swahili is used as a language of wider communication, but mostly only as a second language. The spoken form apparently varies considerably from the standard form, but the standard is used for literary purposes. In Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika and Zanzibar), where Swahili is spoken as a first language along the coast and on Zanzibar, Standard Swahili has become the official language. In 1974 Kenya also announced that Swahili was to become its official language, but the standard form has not been as well accepted. Since the 1930s, the Arabs around Mombasa in particular have resented the imposition of the official use of Standard Swahili, arguing that this form has been "ruined by the Europeans" because it does not contain the Arabic element (Russell 1981:57). They continue to argue for a separate standard, based on the Mombasan dialect in Kenya.

Standard Swahili is the result of a consciously planned standardization effort. As in other examples, major factors in promoting its acceptance have been the production of literature and its use in education. This effort seems to have been successful, thus far, everywhere except among the Mombasan Arabs in Kenya.

4.2.5 Kaingang

Kaingang is a language spoken by about 7,000 people living in southern Brazil in the states of Sao Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. When the Summer Institute of Linguistics (S.I.L.)

surveyed the Kaingang area for the first time in 1958, the Indians lived on twenty-one reservations which were becoming increasingly isolated from one another by the encroachment of settlers on the land all around them. Repressed, they lost hope in life and welcomed death for themselves and for their children (Wiesemann 1989:2-3).

Kaingang belongs to the Jê language family. There are five dialects of the language, four of which (the Paraná, central, southwest, and southeast dialects) are mutually intelligible and share a common orthography and literature (Kindell 1982:10). The Sao Paulo dialect is mutually unintelligible with the rest. When linguistic work first began in the Paraná dialect, however, it was questionable as to whether any of the other dialects would be able to use the written materials being produced in it. This was in spite of the fact that speakers recognized Paraná as the most conservative and purest of the dialects. Wiesemann (1989:5) notes that after ten years of working in the Paraná dialect she could make herself understood in all five dialect regions, although less effectively in Sao Paulo; however, the Indians had more difficulty understanding each other. On one occasion she observed two Paraná speakers using Portuguese with speakers of the Southeast dialect, because they claimed they could not understand each other (Wiesemann 1989:6).

Originally, S.I.L. produced a series of nine primer booklets in the Paraná dialect. In about 1968, after the National Indian Foundation chose the Kaingang as a test case to demonstrate the validity of bilingual education in Brazil, Wiesemann began a revision of the materials.

> Wiesemann's revision consisted of a series of four books, each about forty pages in length, designed to begin in the native dialect of the student and gradually introduce the spelling changes

> necessary for reading literature written in the prestige dialect. There is a complete series of four books in the prestige Paraná dialect. For the other dialects there are three separate versions of the first book, one each for the Central, Southeast, and Southwest dialects. These books include transition pages to introduce the spelling changes encountered in book two. The second and third books are both written in a compromise orthography with just one version for the three dialects in question. Then, in the fourth book there is a gradual introduction of common alternative spellings found in the prestige dialect, initiation into the orthographic and syntactic means which are used throughout the literature to include alternative vocabulary items, and eventual transition to the basic Paraná dialect (Kindell 1982:38).

A difficulty was encountered, however, in the carrying out of this program. Non-Kaingang-speaking Braizilians misdistributed the primers, with the result that teachers often had to use primers from the wrong dialect. Consequently, when they wanted to revise the primers again in 1975, the teachers requested that one set of primers be made for the whole area (Wiesemann 1989:7).

At this time, a translation of the New Testament into the Paraná dialect was nearing completion. Wiesemann was supervising the translation at this point and she decided to adapt it in an attempt to make it more understandable in all the dialect regions. She was opposed by some who were afraid it would not work, but she decided to try it anyway. To overcome orthography probiems, she indicated all necessary phonemic distinctions, and when there were variant spellings, she freely alternated them within the same text. To overcome lexical differences, she paraphrased information using more than one lexical item. She was never able to resolve some morphology problems. The translation is now in use in all the dialects except Sao Paulo, and Wiesemann has observed increased understanding between the groups. She concludes that the written material, including both the primer and the translation, has motivated

the people to learn their language "more correctly," thus eliminating dialect differences caused by influence from Portuguese. The test of whether this standardized translation will become fully usable, she says, is still to come. A literature committee with members from each dialect group formed in 1988. Their goal was to provide textbooks for the schools. Up to that point the Kaingang had not produced any literature of their own (Wiesemann 1989:8).

The Kaingang case differs from the others in this section, in that it represents a smaller scale and local (rather than national or regional) level project. This case is similar, however, in that the standardization process was and is being consciously planned and promoted. The production of literature and the use of the standard in the schools have been important factors in promoting the standard. As in other examples, the standard form is based on a prestige dialect but incorporates elements from all the dialects, and standardization appears to be unifying the language group.

4.3 Summary

In the examples presented in this chapter I find at least ten recurring factors working for the acceptance of a proposed standard.

(1) In many cases, **the dialect which forms the basis for the standard is the dialect spoken by the most prestigious, educated, and influential people.** In England, for example, the standard comes out of London, the capital, and the East Midlands area, a center for power, trade, and education. In China the standard is based, at least in part,

on the dialect spoken in Peking, the capital. The French standard also comes out of the capital and the seat of the law courts and a university.

(2) On the other hand, although the standard is often based on a prestige dialect, in most cases it actually contains elements from more than one speech area. I find this in almost every example.

(3) I also see in every example that the production of literature in the standard is an important, if not essential, factor in promoting its acceptance. This usually includes dictionaries and grammars, and has often included the Bible. I should also note here that Jespersen (1946) cites the influence of literature, both oral and written, as an important factor in the rise of standard languages historically throughout the world.

(4) The use of the standard in the schools seems to be an important factor in acceptance. Standard German is used in schools in all of the German-speaking countries, so children are exposed to it from the first years of their education. The same is true, of course, of Standard English, French, and Spanish. Standard Malay (Indonesian), Mandarin Chinese (PTH), and Swahili have all been declared languages of education in their respective countries; and Ewe and Kaingang have also been used in the schools.

(5) In several of my examples, an authoritative institution helps form and promote the standard. The prime model for this is the Académie Française, which since 1635 has functioned to formulate grammatical and orthographic rules for the French language. The Indonesian Language Committee, which came into existence around the time of the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, was created after the French example. In

earlier days, the Toledan Chancery was the authority on the Spanish standard, and today, the Institute for Swahili Research (the "Swahili Committee") continues to function in this role for Swahili.

(6) A similar position has been filled by **conferences and committees formed specifically for language standardization.** There have been a number of these, particularly in more recent years for Malay, Chinese, and Swahili.

(7) **The use of the standard in the mass media** has also been an important factor in language standardization in recent years. Standard Ewe and Swahili are used in newspapers, for example. In China printed propaganda, the radio, and motion pictures are used extensively to promote PTH.

(8) In several cases, **an increase in social intercourse** helps the acceptance of the standard. Jespersen (1946) maintains this especially in his discussions of the history of English and German, but says it is true of all languages which have become standardized. He says that as people, whether by choice or by force, have cause to communicate, dialectal peculiarities tend to disappear. Towns, for instance, draw people together with a need to communicate. Marriage patterns may have an influence on standardization also. If people from different dialect groups intermarry, this may encourage the cultivation of a common language. Finally, religion may play an important role, as it may draw people together from various groups with a need to communicate, where they would not otherwise have occasion to come together. A modern example of standardization being helped by an increase in intercommunication is found in Kaingang, where, as the dialects have come together with a

need to communicate, they have actually begun to standardize their spoken language.

(9) Wherever countries or language groups have seen their language as a symbol of unity, this has worked positively for the acceptance of the standard. Historians maintain that the French and Spanish standards grew out of a need to establish a more unified nation through a unified language. Currently, people see Indonesian, Chinese, and Swahili as symbolic of national unity in countries where these languages are spoken. A Kaingang standard also seems to be unifying the Kaingang people.

(10) Finally, the promotion of a proposed standard supports the natural tendency of the speakers. In other words, nothing is forced on people, but speakers accept a standard when they are inclined to do so. For example, French and Spanish speakers standardized their languages as literature was produced and they desired uniformity in the writings. Also, it was when the Kaingang, themselves, requested one set of primers for their language that the translator decided to try adapting the New Testament translation. On the other hand, efforts to promote PTH, Ewe, and Swahili have not yet been entirely successful, because people have not been ready to accept them.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROMOTION OF STANDARDIZATION ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Having looked at the process of language standardization and having identified a number of positive factors in the successful promotion of a standard, I now consider more specifically the question of how to promote standardization on the local level. By the term local level, I refer basically to the village level, or to the location where a language is spoken natively and to the authorities and structures in that location. I use national level to refer to the authorities and structures governing a nation and regional level for the authorities and/or structures concerned with a general area, either within one nation or involving more than one nation, where a language is used both as mother tongue and as second language. In chapter four, the case of Mandarin Chinese represents an example of standardization promoted on the national level. The Swahili case represents an example of standardization on the regional level, and Kaingang represents standardization on the local level.

To better understand how language standardization can be promoted on the local level, it is necessary to clearly understand the differences between the local and higher (i.e., regional and national) levels. In this chapter I discuss major differences, along with possible advantages and difficulties these differences present for promoting local level standardization. I conclude with a few suggestions for overcoming the difficulties. I should point out that in discussing the promotion of

standardization on the local level as opposed to the national level, I do not mean to imply that the local and national levels are completely independent from one another. Decisions are often made at the national level which directly affect local level standardization. For example, in Cameroon the national government officially endorses the standardization of its indigenous languages. This creates an atmosphere of freedom for local level projects. Conversely, in many countries the development of indigenous languages is restricted or forbidden, because the governments want to promote one or two official languages.

5.1 Major differences between the local and higher levels

In this section I identify and discuss six major differences between the local and higher levels with regard to promoting language standardization.

5.1.1 Mother tongue vs. second language

Language standardization on the local level is always concerned with standardizing and developing a written form for the mother tongue of a group of people. In other words, the goal is to come up with a single written form to be used by the speakers of all the dialects of one single language, or of what some may consider to be closely related languages, which for standardization purposes are actually dialects of the same language. For example, the goal of the Kaingang project, which I described in chapter four, was to produce a written form of Kaingang which the speakers of all the dialects of Kaingang could share.

A standardization project on the national or regional level, however, usually aims to standardize and develop an official language, lingua franca, or language of wider communication for a whole country or region. Even though this may be an indigenous language and thus the mother tongue of a portion of the population, there will often end up being more people for whom it is a second language than people for whom it is a first language. A good example of this is Swahili, which has only 1,300,000 total first language speakers but 30,000,000 first and second language speakers throughout East Africa (B. Grimes (ed.) 1988:336).

5.1.2 Different people and infrastructures

On the local level, the people involved in a standardization program are generally mother tongue speakers making decisions and implementing changes for their own language. Thus, their interest in the language is very personal. On the national or regional level, however, the people involved in language standardization may be making decisions about a language they do not necessarily speak, at least as a first language. Because of this, their interest may be more objective; or it may also be subjective, in the sense that they may have certain prejudices about the people's rights with regard to language use.

The infrastructures at the local level may include traditional authorities, language committees, local schools, cooperatives, clubs and societies, missions, churches, and other religious organizations. At the national and regional levels, infrastructures will likely include national governments and government-appointed committees, universities and colleges, corporations, and other large organizations. As I pointed out

earlier, however, the national and local levels are not independent of each other. Therefore, local level programs may have to work through some of the national level infrastructures, especially governments and government committees, as well as local level ones.

5.1.3 Small scale vs. large scale

A local level standardization project is generally of a smaller scale than a national or regional level project. This is because fewer people and a smaller area are involved. Usually, this also means that fewer resources are both required and available.

5.1.4 Difference in goals

Kloss (1968) distinguishes between six levels of standardization, of which Fasold (1984:70) puts five into somewhat of a continuum:

> 1 **Mature standard language**. All modern knowledge can be taught through a mature standard language at college level.
> 2 **Small-group standard language**. Norms have been in place for some time, but the speech community is so small that broad domains of modern civilization will never be pursued through it.
> 3 **Young standard language**. The language has been codified, with dictionaries, grammars, and similar devices, very recently in time. The language may be adequate for primary education, but not yet for more advanced study.
> 4 **Unstandardized alphabetized language**. There are no dictionaries and grammar books for the language, but it has been reduced to writing.
> 5 **Preliterate language**. The language is rarely or never used in writing. (bolding mine)

The goal of a language standardization program on the national or regional level is usually to achieve a mature standard language, but in a local level program this goal would be unrealistic. Most local level standardizations, particularly in Cameroon, will not go beyond the level of either young or small-group standard. The reason for this is that the

languages in Cameroon are all spoken by what would have to be called, according to the world's standards, small groups. For a language to reach the level of mature standard language, standardizing agents must modernize its vocabulary, and possibly also its grammar. In other words, agents must either borrow or coin vocabulary items and find ways to express modern technological ideas and concepts in the language. In addition, someone must produce massive amounts of literature covering all types of subjects. Most groups of a few thousand, or even a few hundred thousand, will never have the resources and may never be motivated to support such a program of modernization and literature production. The precise goal of the standardization program should be clearly spelled out from the beginning to avoid disappointment later on.

5.1.5 Difference in benefits

The benefits of a having a standard written form and of being literate may be less clear for the local language than for national and regional languages. The advantages of learning to read and write an official language or language of wider communication are obvious: access to education (especially higher education) and well-paying jobs, facility in travel, possibility of political influence, and so on.

There are also at least two significant benefits to becoming literate in one's mother tongue, however. Firstly, reports have shown that both children and adults are better equipped to learn to read and write a second language after <u>first</u> becoming literate in their own mother tongue (Bamgbose 1976:12,20). This same view, with regard to children, is expressed in "The Report of the Unesco Meeting of Specialists, 1951":

> Some people claim that it is impossible for children to acquire a good use of the second language unless the schooi adopts the second language as a medium of instruction from the very beginning. In fact, it is on the basis of this action that some schools in the past have actually forbidden any use whatsoever of the vernacular anywhere in the school. However, recent experience in many places proves that an equal or better command of the second language can be imparted if the school begins with the mother tongue as the medlum of instruction, subsequently introducing the second language as a subject of instruction (Unesco 1951:692).

Secondly, many people believe that the mother tongue is superior for the personal benefit of understanding written materials and expressing oneseif in writing. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (S.I.L.), an organization currently with more than 6,000 members, was founded on the premise that people need the Bible in their own language (Cowan 1979:14). Also, during the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries in West Africa believed that the most effective way to spread the gospel was to teach people to read the scriptures in their own languages (Spencer 1971:537). Again, the Unesco report states:

> It is through his mother tongue that every human being first learns to formulate and express his ideas about himself and about the world in which he iives. . . . Ideas which have been formulated in one language are so difficult to express through the modes of another, that a person habitually faced with this task can readily iose his facility to express himself (Unesco 1951:690).

5.1.6 Difference in focus

Language standardization has a different focus on the local level, in terms of how the standard is promoted, than it has on the national level. On the national level, particularly where one language is being promoted as an officiai language, the language is very much a symboi of national identity, of identification with a nation (which may be composed of many different ethnic and linguistic groups). The focus, in terms of promoting a standard form of this official language, is on the unity of

the nation through a common language. The standardization programs for Chinese (PTH) and Indonesian (see chapter four) are good examples of attempts to unify a nation through a common standard language. In a standardization program on the local level, however, the focus is necessarily more on identification with the local language group than on national identity and unity based on a common language. Actually, there needs to be a "dual focus" of identification with the local ethnic/linguistic group and identification with the nation as a whole, but I will elaborate on this idea further in section 5.2.5.

5.1.7 Summary of differences on local level

Standardization programs on the local level work towards a standard form for the mother tongue of a group of people. The people involved in the program (i.e., those who are making decisions and implementing changes or programs) are themselves speakers of that language. A local level standardization project, as compared with a national or regional level one, is a smaller scale project, and the main infrastructures to be dealt with are also smaller scale and more localized. The goal of local level standardization is the development of a young or small group standard rather than a mature standard language (in Kloss' categories). While the advantages to becoming literate in a mature standard language may be more apparent, there are at least two significant benefits to literacy in one's mother tongue: (1) literacy in one's own language facilitates literacy in a second language, and (2) the mother tongue is superior for personal understanding and expression. Finally, the focus in a local level standardization program is less on unifying the nation

through a common language and more on identification with the local ethnic and linguistic group combined with identification with the nation as a whole.

5.2 Advantages and difficulties

The differences just described present both some advantages and some difficulties for promoting standardization on the local level. In this section I discuss these and suggest ways some of the difficulties might be resolved.

5.2.1 The motivation of "personal interest"

Because local level standardization is concerned with the mother tongue, there is an element of personal interest not found in national or regional level programs. People care about their language. This fact can be both advantageous and disadvantageous for promoting standardization. It is advantageous when, because of personal interest, individuals, as well as whole villages and dialect groups, are motivated to become involved in and committed to the program. On the other hand, more is at stake for those with a personal interest. Also, personal interest can easily become tied to political and economic issues. Thus, there is a greater risk that decisions needing to be made will become emotional issues. If competition already exists between villages or dialect groups, these feelings will undoubtedly surface and make cooperation difficult. Those promoting standardization need to work at convincing individuals and groups of the value of standardization for them. If promoters can make people understand the value of having a written form

of their language and make them realize that this is dependent on their cooperation with one another, perhaps the people will be more motivated to lay differences aside for awhile. One method which promoters could try for convincing people of this is to point to some examples, including positive and negative cases. Even if they know of no examples, they can create scenarios and use these to illustrate a point. Of course, promoters should try to use teaching principles which are utilized in the culture.

5.2.2 "Grass roots" involvement

The people involved in promoting local level standardization are closer to the situation and know it better than those involved in national or regional level standardization. They know what works and what does not work. They know the language group because they are the language group. In other words, a local level program is a "grass roots" program. Even if promoters are not able to make decisions as easily because of lack of objectivity, once made people will probably accept these decisions better because they come from within the group. No one is imposing anything on them from the outside.

Local level infrastructures are, likewise, closer to the situation than the infrastructures at the higher levels. However, this does not mean that they will be either more or less influential. Much will depend on interrelationships locally, as well as between local groups and institutions at the higher level. If there is competition or conflict among local groups and local authorities, then local authorities may not have as much influence as higher level infrastructures. If there is a

good relationship between the government and the local people, as seems to be the case, for the most part, in Cameroon, then the government can play a key role in promoting standardization by simply endorsing the concept of standardization and officially approving of efforts in this direction. On the other hand, if local groups feel that the national government or large corporations are exploiting them or ignoring their needs, they are unlikely to accept ideas endorsed by these organizations. In order to most effectively promote standardization on the local level, those involved should draw heavily upon all possible support and influence from infrastructures at either level.

5.2.3 Fewer resources required and available

Theoretically, a local level standardization program should be easier to carry out than a national or regional level program. It is a smaller scale project involving fewer people, covering a smaller area, and requiring fewer resources. Unfortunately, however, in developing countries there are frequently too few resources available on the local level. At higher levels there may be funds and means available to produce large amounts of literature and conduct literacy and promotion campaigns, while at the local level there may be little or nothing available. Local people seeking to promote standardization, therefore, need to be flexible and creative to work with the resources that are available. In her book, Bootstrap Literature: Preliterate Societies Do It Themselves, Margaret M. Wendell (1982) presents a number of creative ideas on how minority language groups with few resources can produce their own "locally authored" literature. It might also be possible for

some local groups to obtain funding from outside agencies interested in promoting literacy. In order to come up with ideas for promoting the standard form, local standardization promoters can observe how prestige is accorded to people, ideas, and things in their own societies and consider how the prestige of the standard can be elevated.

I would like to point out that, although there may be relatively few resources available for local level standardization projects, there will be more resources available if one includes marginal dialect groups in the project than if they do not. At least there will be more people to support a literacy effort.

5.2.4 Goal of young or small group standard

The goal of the local level standardization program, a young or small group standard as opposed to a mature standard (in Kloss' categories), theoretically should also be easier to achieve. It is a shorter term goal requiring less of an investment in time and resources. The difficulty which promoters of standardization may encounter, however, is that people are less motivated to get involved in the project when they cannot clearly see what advantages there will be for them. In other words, they may see only the obvious benefits of reading and writing a mature standard language and not recognize the value of being literate in their own mother tongue. Again, promoters may need to convince them of the benefits of reading and writing their own language, as well as an official language or language of wider communication. Promoters should emphasize, and even demonstrate, the fact that literacy in the mother tongue is the best stepping stone to literacy in another language. They

should also encourage the production of indigenous literature as a means of expressing culture. It may take actually producing something in the language, such as a book of traditional proverbs or folktales, and placing it in peoples' hands to convince them of the value of this. Wendell (1982:21) illustrates with an example from Cameroon:

> The Ejagam people (largely literate in English) were skeptical of the value of books in their language, since they could see no immediate relationship to their goal of "passing school examinations in English." But once they caught sight of a book of Ejagam folktales which one of their number had been persuaded to write, they eagerly bought out the edition and demanded more.

5.2.5 Focus on local group identification

The advantage to focusing on identification with a local ethnic/linguistic group is that this tends to come naturally to people. Generally speaking, people easily identify themselves with those who share a common language and ancestors with them. Thus, for the purpose of promoting language standardization, it is natural to suggest that people with common ethnic origins unite together. The difficulty comes in trying to unify people of <u>different</u> ethnic or language groups, which is the problem facing the governments of most developing nations today. There is a danger, therefore, in putting emphasis on local group identification. The danger is that one will promote division in the country by encouraging strong feelings of nationalism or hostility towards other groups. In promoting local level standardization, the goal is <u>not</u> to promote division in the country or hinder national goals in any way. This is why I have suggested that a <u>dual focus</u> is needed. By this I mean that at the same time as promoters put emphasis on identification with the local language group, they should also promote the ideal that to

belong to this particular group, and to speak, read, and write its language, is to belong to the whole nation and contribute to its cultural richness.

The needs for national identity and for a smaller sense of local identity are not in conflict. Each is a legitimate need and has its appropriate domain. Individuals have the need to express their individuality and also to belong to a group and be identified with others. In the same way, individual ethnic/linguistic groups, especially small ones, have a need to express their individual cultures and, at the same time, to belong to a larger nation.

As I discussed in chapter three, a number of linguists and anthropologists have shown that identity and language are closely linked. Language, in fact, is a means for expressing identity. Thus, individuals express their individual personalities through the idiolects (personal varieties of the language) they speak, and they express their identification with others in their village or local area through the dialects they speak. In the same way, dialect groups express their individuality as groups through their dialects. For the purpose of literary expression, why could dialect groups not express their identification with the larger ethnic/linguistic group through a common written standard, which would also serve as the means for the groups to express their own unique cultures? One could still encourage a knowledge of the official language as the means for identification with and participation in the nation as a whole.

The government of Cameroon, faced with the difficult task of holding together a nation of over two hundred different ethnic and linguistic

groups, recognizes the need for individual expression and as a nation has a motto of "Unity in Diversity." The government sees individual expression as a means to "better integration" into the larger nation. In his book, Communal Liberalism, President Paul Biya (1986:104) advocates:

> the integration of each Cameroonian into his ethnic community through his mother tongue, while bearing in mind that this ethnic integration is only a strategic step to a better integration within the national community.

I believe that, in overcoming the fear that individual expression threatens national unity and then officially endorsing this viewpoint, the Cameroonian government has taken an important and courageous step toward proving that local level standardization can be achieved and integrated with national goals. Standardization promoters need to reinforce this viewpoint on the local level as well. Locally, promoters could use the same theme of "Unity in Diversity." Rather than focussing on the unity of a particular group, however, they could focus upon the unity of the nation and emphasize the commonality of the group. In other words, in order to help promote the standard's acceptance by the whole group, they could emphasize what the members of the group have in common with each other, while, at the same time, keeping the theme of national unity in focus. Promoters should communicate that Cameroon (or whichever nation) is a nation rich in cultures and that each culture is valuable and should have room to express itself. As to how best to communicate these ideas, it is again a question of using culturally appropriate means to teach these concepts.

5.3 Summary

On the local level, those involved in promoting language standardization are generally mother tongue speakers from the immediate area. Therefore, they have a personal interest in the language and know the situation where it is spoken. This can be advantageous, in that it can mean greater and more strategic involvement. On the other hand, there is a greater potential for conflict. If standardization promoters can convince people of the value of standardization for them, people will perhaps cooperate better. Also, promoters of local projects should draw upon support and influence from the infrastructures at both levels.

Theoretically, a local level standardization program should be easier to carry out than a higher level program, because it is on a smaller scale and has a shorter term goal. Local projects, however, may encounter difficulties with too few resources or low motivation. Promoters will need flexibility and creativity to overcome these obstacles. They may be able to obtain outside funding, and they should encourage the production of indigenous literature, in order to increase local motivation.

Finally, although it may be advantageous to emphasize identification with a local group, promoters will need to keep a dual focus on both local and national identity, so as not to promote national division.

There are very few documented cases of language standardization being consciously planned and promoted on the local level. It remains to be seen, therefore, just how successful attempts will be, but the better one understands what standardization on the local level will entail, the more effectively one can plan.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PROMOTION OF STANDARDIZATION IN CAMEROON

The linguistic and political situation in Cameroon makes the country a prime candidate for the promotion of local level standardization projects. I have alluded to a few of the reasons for this already, but in this chapter, I summarize both some positive factors and areas of challenge for standardization which are specific to Cameroon.

6.1 Positive factors for standardization

In this section I identify and discuss six reasons why Cameroon, in general, is a good location for local level standardization projects.

6.1.1 Government support for national languages

Cameroon is exceptional among developing nations, in that the highest levels of the government recognize the value and encourage the development of the national (indigenous) languages. The following is a statement written by President Paul Biya (1986:104):

> At the ethnic level, we should encourage the development of the national languages which are the privileged mediums of ethnic cultures. It is important for each language to express the culture it embodies. Thus produced at the ethnic level, this cultural heritage will be translated into reality at the national level to the great benefit of the national community.

One of the slogans for Biya's "le Nouveau Liberalisme" ("The New Liberalism") campaign in 1986 was "Unity in Diversity," to which I referred in chapter five. The government recognizes ethnic and linguistic diversity

as good, and sees the "integration" of each Cameroonian into his own ethnic community through his mother tongue as a necessary step towards integration into the national community (Biya 1986:104).

One can also see the government's support for local language development in the positive endorsement they give to the Société Internationale de Linguistique (known in English-speaking countries as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, or S.I.L.). S.I.L. is directly involved in linguistic research and the development of, at present, approximately twenty-six of Cameroon's national languages, with plans to begin work in several others in the next few years. The organization is also indirectly involved in the development of many more languages through training and consultant help given to other agencies and to nationals. In 1989 S.I.L.'s Cameroon branch celebrated twenty years of cooperation with the government, as a new contract with the Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de l'Informatique, et de la Recherche Scientifique (Ministry of Higher Education, Computer Services, and Scientific Research, or M.E.S.I.R.E.S.) was signed.

6.1.2 Awareness of practical limitations

Although the Cameroonian government supports the ideal of developing indigenous languages, they also realize that, practically speaking, this will probably be an impossibility for all 236+ of the country's languages. To develop a language requires an investment of time, money, and people. It also means that people must be trained in linguistics, and, ideally, at least at the primary level, the school system needs to incorporate mother tongue instruction. Multiply all this times 236 and

one can see that this is a very heavy burden for any developing country. Therefore, Cameroonian language planners have estimated that it may be feasible to develop only about one hundred of their languages. One cannot know at this point whether it will be possible to incorporate all 236+ languages into one hundred standardization programs. However, the ideal of seeing each language written, combined with the realization of practical limitations, creates not only a favorable climate for the promotion of standardization, but even makes standardization an imperative.

6.1.3 Presence of dialect continua

The fact that most of Cameroon's languages belong to dialect continua (or dialect clusters) also makes the country an appropriate place for standardization projects, because in such linguistic situations some degree of standardization is a must. Chambers and Trudgill (1980:6) describe a dialect continuum as **dialects "linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility."** In other words, in a continuum dialects adjacent to one another are mutually intelligible, but intelligibility decreases with geographical separation. Similarly, a dialect cluster is **a group of dialects with varying degrees of mutual intelligibility and not necessarily occurring in a continuum.** In fact, a dialect cluster may contain dialect chains (Hansford, et al. 1976:12). There are many of both of these in Cameroon.

The goal of standardization, such as I have defined it, is for a single written form to be used by as wide a number of dialect groups as possible as their written form. I do not suggest trying to force unrelated languages to share a written form, but I do suggest encouraging

dialects, and even what one may have previously determined to be closely related languages, of the same continuum or cluster to share a single written standard. I believe one can be too quick to draw language boundaries and decide that people need separate written forms when, in fact, this is not the best solution for them in the long run.

6.1.4 Presence of linguistic researchers

There are in Cameroon a number of linguistic researchers, both national and expatriate, who could contribute much to carrying out local level standardization projects. The Linguistics Department at the University of Yaounde has some very qualified linguists on the faculty and is in the process of training more. There are also accomplished linguists working for the Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Anthropologiques (Centre for Anthropological Research and Studies, or C.R.E.A.), which is under M.E.S.I.R.E.S. There are approximately fifty well-trained researchers working with S.I.L., Lutheran Bible Translators (L.B.T.), and Regions Beyond Missionary Union (R.B.M.U.). In addition, each summer S.I.L., in cooperation with the Institute of Human Sciences and the University of Yaounde, offers a course called "Découvre ta langue" (Discover Your Language, or D.T.L.). This is a course in basic linguistic principles for African nationals interested in working on their own languages.

6.1.5 Interest in Bible translation

In Cameroon there is considerable interest among Christians in seeing the Bible translated into local languages. This is a positive factor for local level language standardization. The Alliance Biblique

du Cameroon (Bible Society of Cameroon) has been involved in translation for several years, along with the International Bible Society (I.B.S) and an organization called Living Bibles. In 1988 l'Association Camerounaise pour la Traduction de la Bible (Cameroonian Bible Translation Association, or C.A.B.T.A.) received official recognition. S.I.L. is also involved in Bible translation, both directly and indirectly through training and consultant help. The organization regularly offers a course for African nationals entitled "Méthodes et principes de traduction" (Translation Principles and Methods Course, or C.I.P.T.).

There are at least three reasons why a strong motivation for Bible translation into indigenous languages is a positive factor for standardization. First, Bible translation necessitates standardization. It is not feasible to translate into every idiolect or even dialect of speech. As I pointed out above, language development, including translation and literacy, requires a significant investment in time, money, and people. In most developing nations, many local level translation and literacy projects will never be supported adequately unless churches and dialect groups combine their resources and cooperate with one another. Secondly, interest in Bible translation usually coincides with a strong motivation for literacy in the language, and the motivation for both of these encourages a greater willingness to cooperate in order to make it possible to meet goals. Thirdly, historical precedent has shown Bible translation to be an important factor in standardization (cf., German, English, Malay, and Ewe), probably because the Bible is such a highly revered and widely read book.

6.1.6 Relevant programs and infrastructures in place

In addition to the government, the university, S.I.L., the two missions, and the Bible translation organizations, there are several other programs and infrastructures in place in Cameroon which could play an important role in a local level standardization project. One of these is the mother tongue literacy program entitled Projet de Recherche Opérationelle Pour l'Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun (Project of Operational Research for the Teaching of Languages in Cameroon, or P.R.O.P.E.L.C.A.). The project's goal is to do experimental research in language instruction in formal education. Part of carrying this out includes using indigenous languages for instruction in the primary schools. The program began with one language and one school in 1981, and has gradually increased in scope over the years. During the 1988-89 school year, twenty-five schools and seven local languages were involved (S.I.L. Cameroon Annual Report 1989:41). The success of this program will be measured by how well the students who are taught in their mother tongues at the primary level perform at higher levels of their schooling. If the program is a success, it could be implemented all over the country as national languages are developed. In efforts to promote standardization on the local level, it would be of primary value to expose children in the early years of their education to the standard dialect, representing it as <u>the</u> written form of their language. The primary schools would also be an excellent place to evaluate which dialect groups will be able to use the standard.

Another program which is very relevant to standardization is called Développement des Langues Camerounaises (Development of Cameroonian

Languages, or D.E.L.C.A.M.). This program falls under C.R.E.A. and has two goals. One is "to provide Cameroonian languages with standard writing systems based on phonological studies," and the second is "to develop the structures and the materials necessary to set up adult literacy programmes using national languages" (S.I.L. Cameroon Annual Report 1989:39). Both of these goals coincide with necessary steps in standardization projects. One must agree on a standard orthography based on the phonology of the language before one can say that there is a standard written form. Then, in order to promote the standard, someone must produce primers, dictionaries, and various kinds of literature and teach people to read and write in the standard.

Local markets are an important infrastructure from which promoters can benefit in attempts to promote standardization. At markets people of various dialect groups come together with a need to communicate. People usually resort to trade languages when languages differ or dialects are too divergent. Markets, however, could be a good place to distribute literature to expose people to the written standard. One could also hold literacy classes to teach the standard on market days near the market place.

There are several religious denominations represented in Cameroon. About 43% of the population claim to be Christian and are affiliated with a denomination (Johnstone 1987:126). A little more than half belong to the Roman Catholic Church, and the rest belong to twenty-eight Protestant denominations. About 23% of the population are Muslim. Worship services and other activities of these groups bring together people from related dialects and encourage intercommunication. These activities also provide

an excellent setting for exposing people to a standard form by the reading aloud of written materials. In addition, there are women's groups and various other types of sociétés (societies, clubs) which bring people together from different dialect groups, and encourage intercommunication.

Finally, in some locations in Cameroon, people have already formed language committees in anticipation of the development of their languages. Such committees, hopefully representing, as suggested by Sadembouo (1988), all the dialect groups and the whole spectrum of society, are indispensable in a local level standardization project. These committees should ultimately decide on the standard forms and act as the authorities to promote them.

6.2 Areas of challenge

Following are three areas of challenge in Cameroon to the task of promoting language standardization on the local level.

6.2.1 Assessing the real task

Linguists have identified only approximately 236+ languages in Cameroon, and in many cases they have made language boundary decisions solely on the basis of word lists, some as short as less than twenty-five words! In other words, no one really knows the actual number of languages spoken in the country. The figure could go higher or lower as linguists refine methods for measuring language boundaries and do further research. Also, there is much to learn linguistically and sociolinguistically about many of the languages before anyone can make intelligent decisions regarding specific standardization programs. Linguists in

Cameroon are aware of this. Since 1987 S.I.L., C.R.E.A., and the other organizations involved in Bible translation have been cooperating in a special effort to more fully assess the task for language development. They are getting a clearer picture, and they have identified a number of language situations for which they recommend attempting standardization.

At this point, I would like to reiterate again that I, too, am recommending a careful approach. I am not suggesting that linguists single out one hundred of the largest and most prestigious languages in Cameroon for development and that they force speakers of all the other dialects to adopt the closest standard. My concern is that all people in Cameroon (and elsewhere, for that matter) have access to literature and a means of expressing themselves in writing in a language they truly understand. For some language situations I think the solution will be standardization, but linguists will need to approach each situation carefully and continually evaluate it. In other words, assessing the real task may not be completed until all persons are literate in languages they call their own.

6.2.2 Division of language groups by political borders

All over Africa, the political boundaries originally drawn by colonialists divide language groups. Cameroon, which borders with six other countries (Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea), is no exception to this. These borders have potential to complicate, if not outright hinder, standardization efforts in the languages which span them. One reason for this is that the speakers are separated from one another, or the contact between

them is more limited. Another problem is that some of the governments in these other countries are less supportive than Cameroon of local language development. And even where the other country allows it, linguists, literacy workers, and other agents in the standardization effort may be hampered by the legal regulations of crossing back and forth between two countries. Finally, there are likely cases where agents on both sides of the border have already begun some move towards language development, such as Bible translation, in the same language. In such cases, it may be difficult to convince both sides to begin a combined effort in the direction of standardization.

Linguists should make the initial assessment for standardization planning of language groups which span borders as if the borders were not there. In other words, they should make decisions, such as which dialect is to serve as the reference standard, based on the needs and considerations of the language group itself. Then, they should make every effort to overcome any barriers imposed by political borders, in order to achieve standardization and meet the needs of all the speakers of the language. If this is impossible, it may be necessary to standardize the language based on how it is spoken in Cameroon, ignoring the fact for now that it is spoken across the border.

6.2.3 Geographic separation within language groups

Even within Cameroon's borders, geographic barriers separate dialects of some language groups from one another. In the south there is dense rainforest, and in the west and north there are mountain ranges. Encouraging cooperation and intercommunication between groups which are

geographically separated will take special and creative effort, but it is important that standardizing agents include all the dialects, especially in a language committee. It may be necessary for language committee members in such groups to convene less frequently, but for longer periods of time at a single stretch. For example, rather than meeting once a month for one or two days, the committee could meet for a few weeks or a month at a time, quarterly or once or twice a year. More localized subcommittees could convene more frequently.

6.3 Summary

In Cameroon there are several positive factors for language standardization. The government supports the development of indigenous languages, but it is also aware of the practical implications in a country of 236+ languages. Therefore, they see **standardization as an imperative**. In the country there are also many dialect continua, for which **standardization is a must** if the languages are to be written down. There are a number of **linguistic researchers** in the country, as well as several **relevant programs and infrastructures** already in place. In addition, there is a **strong interest in Bible translation**.

One particular area of challenge for language standardization in Cameroon is assessing the real task. Linguists still have much to learn about each language situation before they can say whether standardization will be possible. I suggest a **careful approach and continual evaluation**.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A PROPOSAL

The title of this thesis is a question, Can language standardization be promoted on the local level in Cameroon? Throughout the thesis I have explored this question by examining the process of language standardization and considering what it would mean to promote it both "on the local level" and "in Cameroon." I have identified a number of positive factors in the process which I have highlighted in each chapter. I would like to summarize these factors now, putting them in three categories: (1) The Standardizers snd Promoters, (2) The Form of the Standard, and (3) The Means of Promoting the Standard.

7.1 Summary of factors

My first category, The Standardizers and Promoters, comprises the individuals and institutions who decide on the form of the standard and help promote its acceptance. As I have shown these include committees (such as a language committee), conferences, governments, academic institutions, religious institutions, and other institutions of authority (e.g., language academies such as the Académie Française).

In my second category, The Form of the Standard, I include suggestions, either made by language planners or gleaned from the examples, on how the standard should be formed or chosen. Basically these are that good linguistic research should underlie the formation or choosing

process, and that standardizers should base the standard form on the speech of prestige groups, but incorporate elements from other dialects where possible. They should also consider historical forms of the language.

Finaliy, in my third category, The Means of Promoting the Standard, I include specific factors beiieved or shown to contribute to the successful promotion of a written standard. I believe that all of these are based on the idea that no one can force standardization. If standardization does not support the direction of social forces, it wili not work. Therefore, promoters must work to convince speakers of the value and need of standardization in general, and of accepting a specific standard form. Some of the means of doing this include encouraging an increase in social intercourse and promoting the standard as a symbol of identity and unity. In addition, producing literature and doing Bible translation, as well as using the standard in mass communications, help to both increase the speakers' awareness of the need for standardization and promote acceptance of a standard form.

7.2 A proposal

Using the above summary as a base, I now propose one possible approach to promoting language standardization in one iocai ievel language situation in Cameroon. I refer to this as the "Mpo" language situation. As I pointed out at the beginning of this thesis, peopie often refer to Cameroon as "Africa in Miniature" because of the diversity within its borders. On the other hand, these diverse peoples are united together as a singie nation with one government. Therefore, although I realize that

a suggestion I make for the Mpo situation may not be appropriate for another situation, I believe that most of these ideas will be widely applicable in Cameroon because of what Cameroonians do share in common. (Where I am aware of significant differences in another part of the country I will make alternate suggestions.) Also, because these ideas are based on real examples of language standardization from all over the world, I trust that many of them will be useful in other locations as well.

7.2.1 Description of the "Mpo" language situation

Researchers in a project sponsored by the Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Anthropologiques (C.R.E.A.) list a language called Mpo, including seven dialects, in their 1983 "Inventaire Préliminaire" (Preliminary Inventory) of the Atlas linguistique du Cameroun (Linguistic Atlas of Cameroon, or A.L.C.A.M.) (Dieu and Renaud 1983:49). They note several names for each of the dialects, but for the sake of simplicity, I call each by only one name: Mpompo, Konabembe, Mezime, Bangantou, Bomam, Essel, and Bijuki. Their basis for calling these dialects one "language" is a comparison of word lists and interviews with local people.

In 1988 I participated with the Société Internationale de Linguistique (S.I.L.) in a linguistic and sociolinguistic survey of the Mpo dialects, which are spoken in eastern Cameroon. We concluded that at least five of the dialects, namely Mpompo, Konabembe, Mezime, Bangantou, and Bomam, could probably share a written form if Mpompo was the basis for the standard (see report entitled "Sociolinguistic Survey Among the Mpompo and Related Peoples," by Johnson and Beavon 1989; available upon

request from S.I.L., B.P. 1299, Yaounde, Cameroon). Even though the Essel and Bijuki speakers also exhibited a high comprehension of Mpompo, other factors led us to tentatively conclude that they should share separate written forms with dialects spoken in neighboring countries (see separate reports by Beavon and Johnson 1989, also available from S.I.L., Cameroon). The Essei see themselves as speaking a dialect of Bekwel, spoken mainly in Congo, and the Bijuki consider their speech to be a dialect of Mpyemo, spoken in the Central African Republic (C.A.R.). Since I am aware of efforts in C.A.R. to develop a written form of Mpyemo, I suggest that Bijuki be excluded from consideration in my proposal for now, and that standardizers of Mpyemo make efforts to promote the future standard form among speakers in Cameroon. Until work begins in Congo on Bekwel, however, I suggest that standardizers of Mpo consider Essei to be a marginal dialect and make efforts to promote the standard among speakers of it in Cameroon.

The speakers of the Mpo dialects are scattered throughout the dense forested region of the southern half of Cameroon's Eastern Province. Mpompo, spoken to the south and west of the city of Yokadouma, is the largest dialect with approximately 11,000 speakers. The Konabembe, to the south, number about 5,000 and the Bomam, still further south, number between 2-3,000. Northwest of the Mpompo area, the Mezime number about 6,000 and the Bangantou about 4,500. Approximately 1,000 Essel speakers live in and near the city of Moloundou close to the Congo border.

Apparently, at least 80% in these groups claim adherence to Christianity. Most are either Roman Catholics or Presbyterians. There are Catholic missions in Yokadouma and Moloundou, with foreign missionaries

present, but most of the Presbyterian missionaries left the country when they turned the missions over to Cameroonian nationals beginning in the 1950s. The results of our study indicated a fairly strong interest in Bible transiation, although neither S.I.L. nor any mission group has ever assigned anyone to work in the language. According to church leaders in the area, the churches use the local dialects for announcements and often to summarize sermons which are given in other languages. Someone has translated the Catholic catechism into the Mpompo dialect, and a Konabembe man with no linguistic training was translating a catechism into his dialect.

The results of our survey showed that although there is no clear evidence that the speakers of all the dialects listed above consider that they actually speak the same language, they do see their dialects as very similar. Some people also expressed the belief that the groups, except Essei, had a common origin. The Bomam, Mezime, and Bangantou groups expressed a definite willingness to learn to read and write a standard based on Mpompo, but the Konabembe and the Essei gave no clear pattern of responses, either positive or negative.

7.2.2 Outline of the proposal

(1) Standardizers and Promoters

A language committee such as Sadembouo (1988:19-22) describes should be the main agent responsible for determining and promoting the form of the standard. It should also function as the authority on the standard and approve literature before it is published.

The members of this committee should include speakers of each dialect, both men and women of a wide age range, and Catholics, Protestants, and non-Christians. A committee would also need to include Muslims in some areas of Cameroon. Representatives should include illiterates and literates, as well as people of all social classes. They should include people who are well-respected in the language group, as these will help elevate the prestige of the committee and eventually the standard. Sadembouo (1988:21) recommends the participation of teachers. It is also essential that at least one member of the committee be someone trained in linguistics. At least to begin with, this may have to be someone from outside the language group, such as an S.I.L. or C.A.B.T.A. member; but as soon as possible, the committee should sponsor one or more speakers of the language to attend the D.T.L. and C.I.P.T. courses (see sections 6.1.4 and 6.1.5) offered by S.I.L. in Yaounde and other locations. Another possibility is that a speaker pursue a degree in linguistics from the university.

An "outsider" would very likely also need to act as catalyst to encourage the committee's formation and to start it functioning. Although Mpo speakers responded positively to our survey questions concerning their interest in seeing their language developed, up to that time they had not organized themselves to make it happen. This is probably because they did not know where to begin. Since this group is without the Scriptures, S.I.L., C.A.B.T.A., L.B.T., or R.B.M.U. will probably want to assign translation and literacy personnel to work in the language long-term. If so, this team could act as catalyst to get the

committee going, and it would need to continue working with the committee in the translation effort.

The committee should work through all possible local and national infrastructures and programs. These would include the government, local schools, churches, missions, the P.R.O.P.E.L.C.A. program, and adult literacy programs. I suggest some specific ways the committee could work through these infrastructures and programs under (3), below.

Committee members should form subcommittees within the dialects they represent. If a particular dialect is spoken in several different villages, the subcommittees might want to further subdivide into village subcommittees. These subgroups would function as a means for the larger committee to receive input from the village and dialect levels and, conversely, to keep people at these levels informed of their activities and decisions. They would also be the ones who implement many of the activities to promote the standard.

(2) The Form of the Standard

As I explained above, after a linguistic and sociolinguistic study, we concluded that Mpompo is the best choice for the reference dialect on which to base the standard. Those seeking to develop a standard in another language should also base their choice of a reference dialect on thorough linguistic and sociolinguistic research. To help evaluate the sociolinguistic situation, they should consider all of Sadembouo's criteria (see section 3.3), giving special weight to the criterion of prestige. In other words, if speakers clearly esteem one dialect above the others, which is the case with Mpompo, the committee should choose this dialect as reference dialect unless there are strong linguistic reasons

not to do so. If no one dialect is particularly prestigious, the committee should agree upon some way of weighting Sadembouo's criteria and use this system to choose a dialect.

In the case of the Mpo standard, the committee should base the standard written form heavily on the Mpompo dialect. Where possible without making the standard sound completely unnatural, however, the committee should encourage the incorporation of elements from other dialects. One way to do this might be to list a few alternate words or grammatical forms used in other dialects in the dictionaries and grammars, and then to allow these in the literature. If a term or grammatical structure were used in the majority of dialects but not in Mpompo, the committee could investigate the possibility of recommending the use of the more commonly used form. It might also be beneficial to do a lexical comparison of the dialects in order to come up with an historical reconstruction of "Proto-Mpo." The committee might then want to allow some forms from other dialects to be used in the standard, because they are closer to the apparent historical form.

(3) The Means of Promoting the Standard

Following is my list of suggestions as to how the language committee for the Mpo standard might promote acceptance of the standard form. I do not list these in any particular order. The committee should try to implement most of the suggestions simultaneously. I also say nothing about a time frame for any of these suggestions. This is because I cannot say how long the standardization process will take, and I do not want to attempt to predict this. Language standardization is a process which, as I have said, no one can force. In addition, each language

group and situation are unique, so what occurs in one situation will not necessarily occur in another. My hope is that by implementing these suggestions, the language committee will encourage the standardization process to occur much faster than it would otherwise.

(a) Choose a name for the standard with which the whole group of dialects can identify. In our survey we tried to find an appropriate name. Two possibilities are "Miléenáa" (see our report for phonetic spelling), which means "I say thus," and Mpo, which the editors of A.L.C.A.M. suggest. The committee should explore these and other options thoroughly, however, before making a decision. The ideal would be to find a name which the whole group already uses for their language or for themselves as an ethnic group, and which does not give preference to one dialect over the others.

(b) Expose people to the Mpompo dialect. Make films, videos, and tape recordings in this dialect and play them in the other dialect areas. Invite an important person, such as a chief, pastor, or teacher, from the Mpompo dialect to speak in various villages.

(c) Encourage intercommunication of the dialect groups by sponsoring literacy and ethnic fairs, and book dedications. Hold literacy classes in central locations, such as near the marketplace in Yokadouma or Moloundou, where speakers of various dialects participate together. Open up occasional language committee meetings to the "general public," and rotate the location of the committee meetings. Make it clear at all these occasions that it is perfectly acceptable for each person to use his own dialect.

(d) Educate the people as to why they will benefit from (1) having a written language and (2) sharing one written standard with all the dialects. Committee members could speak to their church congregations, especially if the committee is also involved in Bible translation, or they could address people at village gatherings. They should try to use culturally appropriate methods for getting the message across. I was not in the area long enough to know what these would be, but the committee should be aware of them. Perhaps it would be appropriate to use "successful" and "unsuccessful" language projects as illustrative examples.

(e) Seek to elevate the prestige of the newly formed standard. One way to do this might be to draw upon government support. Since the Cameroonian government strongly favors standardization and has publicly expressed this, the committee could ask a government representative, such as the sous-préfet (subprefect) in Yokadouma or a C.R.E.A. representative from Yaounde, to write a public letter endorsing the standard and urging its acceptance. The committee could make copies of this letter and send it to village chiefs in all the dialect areas.

(f) Emphasize the "Unity in Diversity" motto. Communicate the idea that the nation is enriched when its cultural diversity is expressed. Perhaps in literacy classes or writers' workshops using the new standard, people could write essays on what it means to be Mpo and Cameroonian at the same time. Another idea is for the language committee to produce posters or calendars with the "Unity in Diversity" slogan, translated into the standard, printed on them. Committee members could sell these at a nominal price (to cover expenses) or as a means of raising funds for

future projects, and as they sell them to people they could talk about what the slogan means.

(g) Balance the emphasis on national unity with an emphasis on group unity or commonality. Again, in literacy classes or workshops, or at fairs or open committee meetings encourage people to write and talk about their common ancestry or origins with the other dialect groups.

(h) Produce literature in the standard. If S.I.L. or one of the other translation organizations has assigned a literacy specialist or team to the group, this person or team could oversee most of this task. They could train local writers and encourage them to produce indigenous literature, perhaps by holding writers' workshops as I suggested above. In these workshops they could allow people to begin writing in their own local variety, as this would be easier for them. Eventually it might also help people to see the need for a standard. As the standard form develops and people become more aware of it, the people themselves may decide to adapt some of what they have written into the standard. The literacy team could work with some people to produce booklets and pamphlets which meet felt needs. For example, they could produce booklets addressing medical, agricultural, or religious problems with which the people struggle. Those on the committee with linguistic training should cooperate to produce grammars and dictionaries for the standard.

(i) The language committee should also encourage Bible translation in the standard form. Again, if S.I.L. or one of the other organizations assigns a translator to the group, this person would oversee this work; but he should work with the committee so that the translation conforms as

closely as possible with the standard form. For this same reason, the committee should be willing to cooperate with those who are translating.

(j) Hold literacy classes in all the dialect areas. Again, this should be the primary responsibility of literacy specialists to organize. For some or all of the dialects, especially the Essel, it may be necessary to produce beginning primers in their own dialect, along with bridging materials to help people transfer from reading and writing in their own dialect into using the standard.

(k) It would be ideal if one day the local schools could use the Mpo standard to teach reading and writing at the primary level. I do not recall whether there were any parochial schools in the Mpo area, but if there are, the committee or literacy specialist should approach the director with the idea of the school's implementing a P.R.O.P.E.L.C.A. program.

(l) Assume that all the dialect groups, including the Essel, will be able to use the standard eventually. As I stated above, if necessary, develop initial literacy materials in the local dialects, along with materials to bridge the speakers of these into the standard. Those doing Bible translation might want to do one gospel or some shorter Scripture portions in Essel, since it is the most marginal dialect. This would ensure that the people had something available to them until they could become more familiar with the standard. In any case, the committee, translators, and literacy specialists should evaluate regularly whether efforts to bridge the Essel into using the standard are succeeding, and they should proceed cautiously. Eventually they may decide that the Essel need their own standard; or they may decide that the Essel have

accepted the Mpo standard so well that they should try promoting it among the larger group of Bekwel speakers in Congo. They should also keep in mind the possibility of even further extension of the standard's use someday among speakers of other related languages. Two possibilites are Mpyemo, spoken mainly in C.A.R., or Konzime, a language which our survey showed to share a high percentage of apparent cognates with Mpompo but which was not adequately intelligible to the Mpompo.

7.3 Conclusion

In this thesis I have necessarily left some questions unanswered. For example, I wonder how far one can go in promoting language standardization. At what point is one asking too much of people, expecting them to accept a written form they will never understand or really consider their own? What really constitutes the "mother tongue," and when does a language stop being the one which "speaks to the heart"? How long will the standardization process take? Is there any way to speed it up? And what stages will be involved in the process?

Each of these questions constitutes a research topic all its own. I hope that some of my readers will be inspired to pursue the answers to these questions. They need answering if most of the world's illiterates from minority language groups are to have the privilege of reading and writing in their own language soon.

Returning to the question asked by this thesis, Can language standardization be promoted on the local level in Cameroon? to answer, one must first observe it tried. I believe it is possible and that it is imperative to try.

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