The Power of the Local:
Education Choices and Language Maintenance among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' Communities of Northwest Cameroon

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Table of contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. i

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. ii

Chapter 1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  1.1. Conceptual context for the study ................................................................................ 2
  1.2. The language communities under study ................................................................. 5
  1.3. The phenomena under study ..................................................................................... 7
  1.4. The limits of the subject ............................................................................................. 8
    1.4.1. The demographic environment .................................................................... 8
    1.4.2. The educational environment .................................................................. 10
  1.5. Personal motivations for the investigation ............................................................... 11

Chapter 2. Discourse and Design ...................................................................................... 13
  2.1. Language, community and identity .......................................................................... 14
    2.1.1. Minority languages in the 'Global Village'.................................................. 14
    2.1.2. Language development ............................................................................. 19
    2.1.3. The language community .......................................................................... 20
    2.1.4. Language and culture: shared knowledge, shared meanings ...................... 22
    2.1.5. Summary: Language, community and identity .......................................... 24
  2.2. Language and literacy .............................................................................................. 25
    2.2.1. Literacy and orality .................................................................................... 25
    2.2.2. Literacy: individual skills vs. social meaning ............................................. 27
    2.2.3. The language of literacy ............................................................................ 30
    2.2.4. Summary: Language and literacy .............................................................. 31
  2.3. Language and education .......................................................................................... 32
    2.3.1. Education as enculturation ........................................................................ 32
    2.3.2. The politics of education in Africa .............................................................. 34
    2.3.3. Educational alternatives for minority African communities ..................... 36
    2.3.4. Local language use in education ............................................................... 37
    2.3.5. The challenges of mother-tongue education in Africa ................................ 43
    2.3.6. Summary: Language and education ......................................................... 48
  2.4. Summary: Discourse framework on language, literacy and education .................... 48
  2.5. Research design ...................................................................................................... 48
    2.5.1. Research objectives .................................................................................. 49
    2.5.2. The subject ................................................................................................. 50
    2.5.3. Methodological orientation ....................................................................... 50
    2.5.4. Data gathering and interpretation ............................................................... 61
  2.6. Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 65
Chapter 3. Setting the historical context: Language and education in anglophone Cameroon

3.1. History of language and education in Northwest Cameroon: 1844-the present
   3.1.1. Cameroon, the Grassfields and European contact before 1884
   3.1.2. The German protectorate: 1884-1914
   3.1.3. The British Cameroons: 1914 - 1939
   3.1.4. The British Cameroons: 1939-1960
   3.1.5. Independence: 1960 to the present
   3.1.6. Reflections on local agency

3.2. Language development activity in Nso', Kom and Bafut
   3.2.1. History and description of PROPELCA
   3.2.2. Institutional framework of PROPELCA
   3.2.3. Language development in Nso'
   3.2.4. Language development in Kom
   3.2.5. Language development in Bafut
   3.2.6. Similarities between the three language development programmes
   3.2.7. Differences between the three language development programmes

3.3. Conclusion

Chapter 4. The status of the mother tongue in the homeland: authority, institutions and interests

4.1. Traditional authorities
   4.1.1. Structure of traditional authority by the 18th century
   4.1.2. The Bafut, Kom and Nso' kingdoms
   4.1.3. Current evidence of the role of traditional authority

4.2. Government authorities

4.3. Education authorities: government and denominational

4.4. The role of the homeland in language use and attitudes
   4.4.1. Geographic and demographic context
   4.4.2. Who lives in the homeland
   4.4.3. Language choices in the homeland

4.5. The elite
   4.5.1. Attitudes towards the mother tongue
   4.5.2. Maintaining contact with the homeland

4.6. The language committee
   4.6.1. History and structure of the language committees
   4.6.2. Activities and characteristics of the language committee
   4.6.3. Relationship to the national political hierarchy
   4.6.4. Position within the language community

4.7. Summary: Leadership and its relation to language use and attitudes
   4.7.1. Authorities
   4.7.2. The homeland
   4.7.3. The elite
   4.7.4. The language committee
   4.7.5. Conclusion
Chapter 5. Roles and uses of the written mother tongue ............................................. 154

5.1. Social domains for English and mother tongue in the language community: an overview ....................................................................................................................... 155

5.2. Acquiring literacy in the mother tongue .................................................................. 156
   5.2.1. PROPELCA classes and adult literacy classes....................................... 157
   5.2.2. Cooperating institutions ............................................................................. 161
   5.2.3. Summary: acquiring literacy in the mother tongue .................................. 164

5.3. Mother-tongue literacy and language maintenance ............................................... 164
   5.3.1. Improved language competence .................................................................... 165
   5.3.2. Corpus planning ............................................................................................ 167
   5.3.3. Increased linguistic understanding ............................................................... 168
   5.3.4. Summary: mother-tongue literacy and language maintenance ............. 169

5.4. Use of the written mother tongue ........................................................................... 169
   5.4.1. Written texts available ............................................................................... 169
   5.4.2. What is read in the mother tongue .............................................................. 172
   5.4.3. Writing and the mother tongue .................................................................. 178

5.5. Social uses of written text ...................................................................................... 181
   5.5.1. The 'oral society' and the 'literate society': blurring the line? .................... 181
   5.5.2. A silo model of social literacy use ............................................................... 183
   5.5.3. Other social uses of written text ................................................................. 186
   5.5.4. The symbolic value of literacy ................................................................... 187
   5.5.5. Summary: social uses of written text ......................................................... 188

5.6. The future of written mother tongue ....................................................................... 188
   5.6.1. Increasing the role of written mother tongue in school and church .......... 189
   5.6.2. Establishing new contexts for written mother tongue use ....................... 190
   5.6.3. Modifying the oral/literate balance in social choices for communication and learning .............................................................................................................. 192

5.7. Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 193

Chapter 6. The primary school classroom: stakeholders and language choices ...... 195

6.1. Language choice in the primary classroom: individual stakeholders ............... 197
   6.1.1. Primary school children .......................................................................... 198
   6.1.2. Parents ....................................................................................................... 205
   6.1.3. Local primary school teaching staff ........................................................... 213
   6.1.4. Summary: individual stakeholders ............................................................ 224

6.2. Language choice in the primary classroom: local institutional stakeholders .... 225
   6.2.1. The local church sponsor ........................................................................... 225
   6.2.2. The Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs) .............................................. 228

6.3. Language choice in the primary classroom: national stakeholders ............... 230
   6.3.1. The Ministry of National Education ............................................................ 230
   6.3.2. Denominational education authorities ....................................................... 236
   6.3.3. NACALCO and SIL International ............................................................. 237

6.4. Stakeholder interests in English-language and mother-tongue education ... 239
   6.4.1. Whose interests are served by the 'norm'? .............................................. 240
   6.4.2. Whose interests are NOT served by the 'norm'? ................................... 241
   6.4.3. Reflection: interests and outcomes of the 'norm' ................................... 242
Chapter 7. Conclusion

7.1. Contribution of the research position

7.2. Clues to sustainability

7.2.1. Common features

7.2.2. Features that contribute to sustainability of language development

7.2.3. Keys to the continuity of language development initiatives

7.3. Local agency, education choices and minority language maintenance

7.3.1. Educational choices and education effectiveness

7.3.2. Education choices and language maintenance

7.4. Education choices and language maintenance in the future

7.4.1. Economic aspects of language maintenance and education

7.4.2. Language policy: An ideological shift?

7.4.3. Local languages and international education goals

7.4.4. The future of minority languages

7.4.5. Literacy, language and social uses of written text

7.5. Areas of further study

7.6. Conclusion

References

Appendices

Appendix 1. PROPELCA Alumni Survey (PAS) questions

Appendix 2. PROPELCA Alumni Surveys (PAS) respondents

Appendix 3. Responses to PROPELCA Alumni Survey questions 6-10

Appendix 4. Primary classroom observations (CO)

Appendix 5. Other observations

Appendix 6. Parent interview series (PI) questions

Appendix 7. Parent Interview series respondents

Appendix 8. Responses to parent interview questions A-D

Appendix 9. Semi-structured group interviews

Appendix 10. Other group interviews (open-ended)

Appendix 11. Individual interviews

Appendix 12. Correspondence (email)

Appendix 13. Distribution of PROPELCA schools in Cameroon by province, 2001

Appendix 14. List of linguistic works on the Bafut, Kom and Lamnso’ languages

Appendix 15. Political structure of the Republic of Cameroon

Appendix 16. Text sample pages

Appendix 17. Maps
Abstract

This study is an exploration of the relationship between the education choices made by the members of three minority language communities of the Northwest Province of Cameroon, and maintenance of the mother tongues of those communities. In each of these three language communities, mother-tongue development initiatives - including a mother-tongue primary education programme - have been operating for more than ten years. Response to these initiatives has had ramifications for uses of the mother tongue in those communities, in both written and oral form.

The research which informs this study was carried out from September 2002-August 2003 in the Northwest Province of Cameroon. The study utilises document analysis, observational data and data from an array of interviews to investigate the nature of the relationship between language and education among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities of Northwest Province. That relationship is elucidated in multiple strands of investigation: an examination of the history of language and education among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities; an analysis of the ways in which the local language is currently used among language community members, in both its oral and written forms; and an examination of the individual and institutional stakeholders that influence use of the local language in the communities and in the primary school classrooms.

The investigation results in several observations regarding the elements of an African minority language environment which contribute to sustainable language development, particularly through language-related choices in the primary school. The research findings also argue for the pivotal importance of local choice in shaping both educational trends and language use patterns.
Acknowledgements

It is impossible for an endeavour such as this to be done entirely on one's own. I therefore want to acknowledge the community of colleagues and friends on three continents without whose interest and encouragement this study would not have been completed. I especially want to thank the Bafut, Kom and Nso' community members who shared their time and their perspectives with me so freely, and in particular my friends and research colleagues Ta Ambe, Kain Godfrey and Nicoline Barah.

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The Power of the Local: Education Choices and Language Maintenance among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' Communities of Northwest Cameroon

Chapter 1. Introduction

At the bottom of everything, you find, is the mother tongue.

Justin Suuyren, Banso'

This morning, a teacher in a remote Kom village picks up his lesson plans for the day and turns to his class of 55 bright eyed and energetic grade one pupils. Holding up a drawing of a chicken, he speaks in Kom language: "What is this?" A dozen voices answer, volunteering that this chicken is in fact a speckled hen and that their mother or neighbour has one just like it. The lively discussion that ensues includes writing the Kom word for 'chicken' on the blackboard, and talking about the uses and care of fowl.

A few miles away, another teacher in a similarly remote Kom village turns to his similarly bright eyed, if bemused, grade one pupils. "Class, stand up!" he says in English, and the class stragglers to their feet. "Sit down!" he then orders. The children look around, unsure what to do, and finally begin returning to their seats. "Pay attention!" he says, in English, as the small children go to look out the window, tease their neighbours or simply stare at him in incomprehension. He draws a picture of a chicken on the blackboard, and says to the children in English: "This is a fowl. Repeat with me. This - is - a - fowl." The children obediently respond to his gestures: "This - is - a - fowl", they all intone.

In minority language communities across Cameroon, primary school programmes which use the local language as a formal medium of instruction are being implemented by local educators. Three language communities in which these programmes are well established are the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities of the Northwest Province. Parents in these communities now have a choice as to which kind of education their children will receive: one
which uses only English, or one which incorporates use of the mother tongue as well as English as languages of instruction. Most continue to choose the traditional English-language schooling. Increasing numbers of parents, however, are choosing local-language medium classes for their primary-grade children. The implications of these educational choices for learning and for community use of the local language are beginning to be seen. This study is an investigation of these phenomena among the Bafut, Kom and Nso’ language communities.

1.1. Conceptual context for the study

The future of Africa's indigenous languages is a concern among Africanists and linguists alike. Many of these languages, whose speakers range from a few thousand to millions, face the prospect of dying out in the next few generations unless intentional efforts are made to develop and stabilise them (Crystal 2000). It is understood that the cultures of which the languages are a significant part will be seriously weakened as well, and could disappear altogether.

A key issue underlying this study is whether indigenous minority languages are worth maintaining, both for their role in the embodiment of cultural identity and for their role in formal and non-formal learning. The belief that these languages are indeed worth maintaining is shared by a wide array of African scholars and educators (including Bamgbose, Adegbiya, Prah, Ngugi and Fafunwa) and non-African researchers (including Fishman, May, Stroud, Serpell, Skutnabb-Kangas, Williams and Hornberger), as well as external agencies such as the United Nations agencies, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Save the Children, the Ford Foundation, SIL International¹ and others. These diverse parties support the crucial place of Africa's local languages in development, community identity and learning.

This position on African languages is not new; indeed, it was espoused by certain nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial and mission personnel (sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.3.2). Upon gaining independence from colonial rule, African leaders also demonstrated concern for maintaining the continent's indigenous languages and cultures. In 1961, ministers of the many newly-independent African states affirmed the importance of including African language and culture in the formulation of a truly African education (Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa 1961:3-7). This resolve was largely lost in the subsequent continent-wide emphasis on tying education to economic outcomes, as well as a post-independence concern for national unity rather than local development; however, the

¹ Also known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics. See <http://www.sil.org>.
crucial role of African languages in African development has not been forgotten. The Cultural Charter for Africa (Organization of African Unity [OAU]1976) affirmed the inseparable connection between African languages and cultures, and recommended a number of measures to ensure the survival and expansion of both. The OAU's Language Plan of Action for Africa (OAU 1986) expanded on the importance of policy formation and implementation in assuring a central place for African languages in national life. The 1997 Harare Declaration of the Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policy in Africa clearly affirmed "the necessity and urgency for African States to adopt clear policies for the use and development of mother tongues as well as community languages, national languages, inter-African and international languages" (all of which except the last category being African languages). The Declaration calls for linguistic study to be undertaken of all African languages, and for the formation of language policies which promote the preservation of African identity, pluralism and "cognitive preparation for facing the challenges of the next millennium" (Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policy in Africa 1997). Following on from that conference, the creation of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) in 2001 demonstrated the continuing relevance of this discussion to African leaders.  

Thus, concern for the future of African minority languages clearly exists. What is less clear is whose responsibility it is to rescue or maintain these languages (Musau 2003:156; Moyo 2003:27). National government, international bodies, external aid agencies, academic bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are all seen as key actors. The crucial role of the minority language-speaking communities themselves is also recognised, although largely as recipients of language reform. The fact that these communities are not typically influential, socially or politically, causes them to be seen as largely incapable of effecting the rescue of their own languages (Makoni and Meinhof 2003:6).

Meanwhile, a related discussion is occurring among Africanist educators regarding the need for incorporating local languages into the formal education systems of African states as languages of instruction. Advocates of the use of local languages for learning employ both pedagogical and cultural arguments to make the case that, particularly for the rural and semi-rural areas in which a large proportion of Africa's populations live, education needs to include the local language in order to be effective (section 2.3.4).

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This is the second issue underlying this study: the value of using indigenous African languages as languages of instruction in formal schooling. Research indicates that the inclusion of mother tongues in the classroom has a significant impact on the quality of content learning (Williams 1996; Komarek 1997; Stroud 2002). Indeed, experimental programmes of mother tongue use in primary classrooms have been carried out in various countries across the continent, some by the state and some by non-governmental agencies (sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.5). Although these programmes have not consistently led to more general implementation of mother-tongue education, they at least indicate ongoing concern about the role of local languages in formal education.

The legacy of formal education in sub-Saharan Africa itself speaks to the need for change. Formal education faces continued challenges to meeting the goals of economic and social progress that are its raison d’être (UNESCO 2001:27). The rural populations in particular - the speakers of the hundreds of indigenous minority languages of the continent - are not benefiting from the promises of 'education for all' (World Bank 2003). Furthermore, the connection between language policy and educational effectiveness has been clearly elucidated by scholars such as Adegbija (1994:97) and Bamgbose (2001). Thus, even where larger sociopolitical considerations limit official support of language-in-education policy reform, the implications of language choice for educational effectiveness remain a point of discussion.

Once again, however, the question arises: who should be responsible for this change in the way education is framed and delivered? Policy reform is of course the proper domain of national governments, but the conceptualisation, trial and implementation aspects of that policy could arguably be the province of national government institutions, external agencies, academic bodies and/or NGOs. Once again, local communities are recognised as important to the process, but are not considered likely to provide leadership in this task.

This present study is positioned in the overlap of these two issues as they affect sub-Saharan Africa: the critical need for indigenous language maintenance and the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The educational domain is a key site for minority language maintenance efforts, and this study explores the significance of educational choices to the maintenance or demise of such languages.

In addition, this study shows that language community members themselves are acting as the agents of change in the arenas of language use and education. As a result of the choices being made in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities, these three indigenous minority languages are gaining stability, particularly as written languages, and are
being increasingly used as languages of instruction in local primary schools. Both of these phenomena have their roots in the same combination of institutional and individual choices about language and education.

Thus the language choices being made in these communities can be interpreted as part of a larger dynamic of community-level agency. Sen (1999) describes agency as the human capacity to act and bring about change, the results of which may be judged in terms of the agent's own values and objectives regardless of their assessment in terms of external criteria. Human rights, argues Sen, include not only those which enhance one's well being, but also those which facilitate free agency. The education choices and language promotion activities being implemented in Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities appear to fit very well into Sen's notion of agency. The role of community-level agency is evident in the predominantly local base of these activities - itself surprising, given the low expectations of minority language communities described above.

However, this is not to say that local actors are the only agents of language maintenance and use. The initiatives being taken in Bafut, Kom and Nso' in favour of local language maintenance and education also reflect the influence of interests beyond the local level, as do the communities' responses to those initiatives (section 6.3). The environment in which these initiatives are being implemented has been conditioned by historical forces, current social values and a complex set of language attitudes (section 1.3).

This study is intended to examine the processes of indigenous language maintenance and the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities of Northwest Province, Cameroon, and to explore the role of local actors in these phenomena.

1.2. The language communities under study

This study is based on fieldwork done in 2002-2003 among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities3 of the Northwest Province of Cameroon. Sub-Saharan Africa, and Cameroon in particular, is linguistically very rich; up to 248 African languages have been identified in Cameroon (Breton and Fohtung 1991). The Bafut, Kom, and Nso' are the three largest language communities of the Northwest Province, at approximately 80,000, 150,000

3 The term language community will be used throughout this study as an alternative term to speech community. It incorporates the attributes of the speech community, but also includes geographical and cultural components. See sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.3.
and 150,000 native speakers respectively in the homelands. The three languages, Bafut, Kom and Lamnso’, belong to the Grassfields Bantu language family (Grimes 2003) although they are mutually unintelligible.

Within the language communities' home regions, Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' are the languages of choice for oral communication. The demographic concentration of speakers, added to the sense of identity which the language embodies for those speakers, continue to facilitate what Fishman (1991:374) calls "intergenerational mother-tongue transmission" in which these languages continue to be passed on from parent to child as mother tongues. Bilingualism in English (or Pidgin) is common, particularly among adult men; however monolingualism is the norm among children. Speaking the mother tongue is a practice which all identify positively with their cultural heritage and identity.

As a former British colony (along with the current Southwest Province, from 1916-1960), the Northwest Province's cultural and educational history was heavily influenced by the British colonial policy of 'indirect rule'. This policy largely allowed traditional social and authority structures to remain in place, and expressed tolerance of the use of local languages. The formal education system, for the most part the province of mission agencies, introduced the English language to the local populations but also made space for local languages in instruction. In fact, the eventual banishment of local languages from the school system in the late 1950s was largely the result of local demand for English-language schooling, not pressure from education authorities (section 3.1.4).

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4 The term 'homeland' is used throughout this study to refer to the geographical area that each language community considers uniquely theirs. Members of the language community may live in various parts of the country, but the homeland is that geographical region where the community's home culture is practised and the mother tongue is spoken. Homelands do not coincide with Cameroonian political boundaries; however homeland boundaries are well known to the communities themselves, identified principally by the language spoken from one village to the next. For the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities, the existence of the homeland is crucial to maintenance of the local language and culture.

Thus, the concept of 'homeland' is a locally defined one, though this particular term for it is mine rather than theirs (though Baker [1996:44] also uses the term in referring to the cultural centre of a minority language community). Of the three language communities studied, only Nso' has a name for their homeland: Banso'. The other two refer to the homelands by the same name as the people themselves: Kom and Bafut. I attempted to elicit a generic name for the 'homeland' concept from various language community members, but they were unable to provide one. This surprised me, given the crucial importance of the homelands to the cultural identity and language maintenance of numerous language communities in the Northwest Province.

5 Lamnso' is the language spoken by the Nso' people. As noted above, their homeland is called Banso'. For Kom and Bafut, the people, language and homeland have the same name.

6 The Grassfields is the name given by early colonial explorers to the territory now comprising Northwest Province, who encountered there large expanses of land covered with high grass.

7 This is the norm for majority languages, but for indigenous minority languages of sub-Saharan Africa the continued learning of the language as a mother tongue by new generations cannot be assumed.
Their colonial history, coupled with the cultural traits which have characterised the Bafut, Kom and Nso' people over the centuries of their life in the Grassfields of Northwest Cameroon, have resulted in a cultural profile that includes a complex system of traditional social structures, influential traditional leadership, and a positive and assertive self-image. The rural demographics of these language communities have allowed the continuity of this profile over many generations. Use of the mother tongue, at least in the home regions of these language communities, is a key component of this cultural profile.

1.3. The phenomena under study

The Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities have been the sites of mother tongue literacy and education programmes for the last 10 to 20 years, programmes which are currently increasing in popularity among the population. In a related phenomenon, the written mother tongue, little seen in societies where literacy has been associated exclusively with English for the last 90 years, is slowly gaining users; this is a significant step in maintenance of the minority languages involved. The research question addressed in this study is, what is the impact of local education choices on maintenance of the mother tongue?

Both of these phenomena are embedded in the structures and choices of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities. Such choices express local priorities and agency, yet they are also rooted in a wider historical, social and political context. For example, the mechanisms for supporting use of the indigenous languages and for using those languages in school receive crucial institutional support from outside the community. Cameroonian academic, governmental and NGO institutions have played an important role in the development of language maintenance and mother tongue education initiatives in Bafut, Kom and Nso' over the years. Also of significance has been the support from international institutions such as external aid agencies and SIL International. So the fact that local agency plays a crucial role in making particular educational and linguistic choices does not deny the influence of non-local agents and structures on the character of those choices.

Thus the goal of this study is to examine four components of the primary research question:

- the historical context of language use in formal education, both for its influence on the educational environment today and for what it reveals about local values and priorities as demonstrated over time;
• the local individual and institutional interests involved in maintenance of the mother
tongue, and particularly promotion of its written form;
• the current roles and uses of the written mother tongue in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities;
• the language choices being made in the local primary school classrooms, and the interests of the various primary school stakeholders in those choices.

Chapters three through six of this study examine my findings on these four aspects. To provide a framework for the study, a discussion of the theoretical discourse and research design followed is presented in chapter two. Finally, chapter seven consists of conclusions which arise from the study.

1.4. The limits of the subject

It must be recognised from the start that the phenomena studied here are occurring within a fairly circumscribed demographic context, in which both the breadth and the sustainability of the mother tongue promotion initiatives depend on a fairly fragile geographical and social environment. Not only so, but the overall educational context in which these phenomena are taking place puts limitations on their impact as well.

1.4.1. The demographic environment

Even though they are the largest minority language communities in the Province, the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities are largely semi-rural or rural in nature. Owing to economic limitations and the difficulties of attaining social mobility outside the homeland, the communities are characterised by a striking degree of social and linguistic continuity. In a sense, this continuity is a fragile one; any significant change in the economic conditions of the region - such as mass industrialisation or even an increased ability to market produce on a large scale - could affect the stability of the population, destabilising the social, demographic and economic conditions which have up until now been so conducive to the development of the local language.

It must be said however that little likelihood of such economic change is on the horizon at this time. Indeed, if anything the economic prospects and educational opportunities which draw young people away from the homeland community are weaker now than they have been in decades past. Even though the sociocultural ground on which these mother tongue initiatives rest is not invulnerable to change, it appears fairly stable for the foreseeable future.
To what extent are the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities - and more specifically, their languages - threatened by urbanisation? And to what extent might this crucial demographic environment, so characteristic of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities, be common across Africa? Urbanisation figures available permit two ways to answer those questions.

First, urbanisation figures for Cameroon and for the African continent indicate the prevalence of what are termed "semi-rural" and "rural" environments, which are so crucial to the maintenance of the minority language communities studied here. The urbanisation figures for Cameroon and other selected countries in Africa as of 2003, according to the Population Reference Bureau, are listed in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1. Urbanisation of selected African countries, 2003
(from Population Reference Bureau, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/region</th>
<th>Percent of population that is urban</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR Congo</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d'Ivoire</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
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This data shows that rural and semi-rural environments are still home to more than half of the Cameroonian population, and to two-thirds of Africans in general. Such environments are not at all atypical of African nations; indeed, urbanisation appears to be generally even less prevalent across Africa as a whole than it is in Cameroon. Furthermore, Amin's study of urbanisation in the various provinces of Cameroon (1999:45) reports that Northwest Cameroon's urbanisation rate is close to the African continent average given by Population Reference Bureau. Urbanisation in Northwest Province is lower than the national average; 31.1% of the population in Northwest Province was classified as "urban" as of 1998, compared to Amin's figure of 48.5% for the entire country.

Second, the definition of "urban" used in this data calls into question the purported negative impact of urbanisation on the use of local languages. "Urban" is defined by the Population Reference Bureau as "having a population of 2,000 people or more". Definitions used by other sources of census statistics give similar figures for the term "urban". Thus, 'urbanisation' as measured by national statistics-gathering bodies by implies neither large urban centres nor the concomitant linguistic heterogeneity which is assumed. Indeed, several of the towns located in the linguistically homogeneous Bafut, Kom and Nso' regions have populations larger than 2,000. So it seems that what is considered urbanisation in African (or other) national contexts does not always indicate linguistic heterogeneity. Certainly the larger provincial centres of Cameroon feature multi-ethnic populations, with the consequent prevalence of trade languages (e.g. Pidgin) and official languages (English and French; see Jikong and Koenig 1983). But urbanisation figures themselves do not reliably indicate this phenomenon. Thus, urbanisation as defined by national statistics is not necessarily co-occurrent with linguistic heterogeneity.

1.4.2. The educational environment

In this study, the local-language promotion initiatives targeting formal education are limited almost entirely to the primary school; indeed, the principal focus is the lower primary grades. At this level, curriculum is still open to local interpretation and language medium is

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9 Quote from PRB website: "Urban: Percentage of the total population living in areas termed 'urban' by that country. Typically, the population living in towns of 2,000 or more or in national and provincial capitals is classified 'urban.' " The Population Reference Bureau derives its figures from sources including United Nation statistics, the Council of Europe, the U.S. Census Bureau, demographic and health surveys, the World Bank and research findings. See <http://www.prb.org>.

10 The 1990 U.S. Census Bureau considers "urban" to mean a population of 2,500 people or more. See <http://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urdef.txt>. The 2001 Census Dictionary of the government of Canada (Statistics Canada 2003:262) defines "urban" as having a population of at least 1,000.
still negotiable. Higher education, however, is much less open to such negotiations of curriculum and medium of instruction. The language of higher education in Northwest Province is incontrovertibly English, and the curriculum followed is aligned closely with English-language national examinations.

It is important to understand this limitation on mother-tongue promotion through the formal school system. Languages with populations of a few hundred thousand, such as Bafut, Kom and Nso', stand very little chance of insertion into the Cameroonian national higher education system; the commitment to English- or French-language curriculum at that level is too strong.

Given this limitation, is it still worthwhile to develop these smaller languages for use in primary schools? This study will show that those groups of community members who promote local language use believe strongly that it is indeed worthwhile, regardless of the dominance of international languages in secondary and higher education.

1.5. Personal motivations for the investigation

My own interest in minority-language literacy dates back to a clumsy and ineffectual attempt in 1980 to teach a Hmong refugee to read in English, a language she did not speak. Naïve as only an idealistic 20-year-old can be, I had no idea what I was doing wrong; but when a few years later I became involved in local language literacy work among the Huanca Quechua people of the central Peruvian Andes, I began to understand the intimate connection between language, learning and identity.

Around this time I also became aware of the impact of official-language education systems - both formal and nonformal - on minority peoples’ sense of identity and their relationship with national society. It seemed that there must be something wrong with a language policy that led people to conclude that their mother tongue was not actually a human language.¹¹ Not only so, but I also witnessed the impact of introducing the written mother tongue to a people who had been repeatedly told that their culture and language were worthless. Though these people's language had been denigrated for 400 years by national

¹¹ A middle-aged Quechua man made this statement in my hearing in the town of Andamarca, Peru in the early 1980s.
political and educational authorities, their own attachment to it quickly emerged as they learned that it could after all be represented and used in written form just as Spanish is.\textsuperscript{12} 

The true impact of sociocultural and political pressure on minority languages was further clarified to me when, upon moving from Peru to Kenya in the early 1990s, I was stunned by the difference in language attitudes between minority language communities of the Peruvian Andes and those of sub-Saharan Africa. The stances of the formal education system were similar, with little or no space permitted for valuing or using local languages and local knowledge in school. Still, a far greater sense of the value of the mother tongue and local culture seemed to be the norm in the minority communities I visited across the African continent between 1993 and 2000.

The Nso’, Kom and Bafut language communities of Northwest Cameroon seem to embody this phenomenon. I was struck by their positive attitude towards their languages, and the determination of certain community members that the written mother tongue should become part of the life of the community - including the primary school. Of course the obstacles to such an increase in use of the local languages are great, given the hegemonic position of English in the formal education system and its general prestige in the wider national society. Yet even so, it appears that there is still space for the advocate of mother tongue to advance his or her cause in the local community.

This is how I was brought to the central questions of this study: What are the chances of establishing the written mother tongue as a viable alternative for learning and communication? Does the environment really exist in the Bafut, Kom and Nso’ language communities for this to happen? If there is no such chance in these minority language communities, where so many factors seem to favour it, then the outlook for sustained mother tongue use in less propitious circumstances around the world is indeed bleak. If however the written mother tongue has a future in these Cameroonian communities, perhaps something may be learned there about sustaining local language use in other minority language communities elsewhere in the world.

\textsuperscript{12} Paulston (2000:29) recognises the impact of the newly-written mother tongue on minority language communities, noting that "for any linguistic minority . . . to have its own written language is a source of pride and prestige".
Chapter 2. Discourse and Design

The theoretical context of this study can be described in terms of two principal aspects: the methodological approach which framed the data collection, and the discursive framework which guided interpretation of the data. This chapter consists of a discussion of these two important pieces of background.

Both the discourse and the design of this study arise out of a research orientation characterised by four priorities:

A critical approach to investigation. A critical approach to social research pays special attention to the role of ideology and power differentials in sustaining and perpetuating cultural and social relations. Particularly in such a politically infused field as education research, this approach is highly appropriate as it interrogates the reasons for the status quo and the interests being served.

Plurality of perspectives. Both the conceptual discourse and the research design draw on a breadth of perspectives and sources, in the belief that the most accurate description of any given social phenomenon is the one that is constructed from a plurality of perspectives.

A culturalist interpretation. In this context, culturalism refers to an intentional focus on the effects of social and cultural context on events or institutions. For example, Fuller and Clarke (1994:120) note the value of classroom culturalism to the understanding of school outcomes. In the present study, the attempt to understand the sociocultural milieu of those being studied (Stephens 1994:26), particularly as it is played out in the local primary school classroom, is a high priority.

A developing world orientation. The developing world offers a plethora of opportunities for social research. At the same time, the power differential between Northern researcher and Southern research subjects, with all that implies, and the cultural and linguistic

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13 The critical approach to social inquiry is described by Pennycook as one which "views social relations as problematic" (Pennycook 2001:6). The critical approach is currently applied across a range of disciplines, including linguistics (e.g. Fairclough's critical language study [Fairclough 2001]), literacy (Baker's critical literacy approach [Baker 1996:306]), language pedagogy (Wallace 1994), and cultural studies (May's critical ethnography [May 1997]).

14 The terms 'North' and 'Northern' are used in this study to refer to the industrialised nations of Europe, America and Asia. 'North' is roughly equivalent to the older term 'West', and represents yet another attempt at appropriately distinguishing between the haves and the have-nots. 'South' or 'Southern' refers to the so-called developing nations.
chasm between researcher and researched, pose challenges as well. The developing-world orientation of this study refers to its resistance to the application of pre-formed hypotheses of Northern origin to the research context (Stephens 1994). It attempts not to feed racial or national stereotypes, nor is it satisfied with deficit-model interpretations of the research data. As far as is possible for a Northern researcher, this study seeks to highlight African perspectives, through both literature and the presentation of field data.

These four priorities are reflected in the formulation of the research question, the theoretical constructs used to analyse the data, the choice of research methods and the ways they were implemented, and the interpretation of the data gathered.

The environment in which this study took place was exceedingly rich in terms of the cultural and linguistic context within which educational choices are made in rural Northwest Cameroon (section 1.2.). As was stated in chapter one, the complex local environment in which decisions are made about language and education is best understood in terms of current discourse about language, community, local knowledge, literacy and formal education in Africa. In this chapter, sections 2.1 - 2.4 address various features of that discourse, with an emphasis on the relevance of particular features to the context - and content - of this study. Section 2.5 addresses the research design and implementation issues that characterise the study.

2.1. Language, community and identity

The relationship between language, community and community identity is highly relevant to the present study of language and education in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language-speaking communities of Cameroon, for whom the local language is closely tied to community identity. Indeed, community members have been engaging extensively in language development initiatives, based on their desire to strengthen the community's indigenous cultural base (section 3.2.). It is important to understand the wider linguistic and cultural context in which these activities are being carried out, since the impact of indigenous minority language development depends a great deal on the way the language - and the culture - are perceived by its members and by the wider society.

2.1.1. Minority languages in the 'Global Village'

Of the thousands of languages spoken in the world today, all but a handful are classified as minority languages. This ironic truth - that most people in the world speak a minority language - demonstrates the fact that political and social influence, not numbers of
speakers, are most likely to determine categorisation as a 'majority' or 'minority' language (UNESCO 2003b:13).

A minority language can be distinguished from a majority language by its lesser numerical or political importance in the country. A language with high political prestige at national level is often made an official language. This language may be numerically important in the country as well, but is not necessarily so. For example, in former African colonies European languages which were established by the colonial power are legally recognised as official languages, and are used in government and education. These languages may in fact be spoken by relatively few people in the country; their status generally reflects their international usage and historical prestige. However, African governments have also allocated official status to various widely spoken African languages: examples include Fulfuldé in Mali, Mooré in Burkina Faso, Xhosa in South Africa, and KiSwahili in Kenya and Tanzania. In Nigeria, arguably the most multilingual country in Africa, major African languages are distinguished from minor languages by being specifically mentioned in an official language policy (Ufomata 1999:315).

Alternative descriptive terms for minority languages tend to reflect historical, political or geographic perspectives. The term indigenous language is sometimes used (e.g. Adegbija 1994; Spolsky 2002), referring to the language spoken by indigenous peoples. In a similar vein, Webb (1994:198) uses the term autochthonous to refer to "the original languages of sub-Saharan Africa". In some African contexts (as in Cameroon; Tabi-Manga 2000), the term national language is used to refer to a minority, African language; in other cases, however, the term is used to refer to the official language of a country (Bamgbose 1991). These terms also highlight the fact that the position of indigenous languages in Africa has changed over time. Before the advent of European colonial intervention, the relative prestige of an African language was associated with the prestige and power of its associated

15 Ridge (2000:151) uses the word dominant to describe such languages, in his case English in South Africa. He argues that English is not predominant, in the sense of being spoke by the most people; nor is it dominating, i.e. it does not force other languages out of use. However its status as the language of choice for high-prestige functions, Ridge contends, makes it the dominant language of South Africa.

16 All the names and information on African languages in this section are referenced in The Ethnologue 2003 (Grimes 2003), <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

17 'Indigenous' as used here refers both to its historical definition (as original peoples) and its political definition (that of an ethnic minority group; see Nettle and Romaine 2000).

18 Echu (2003) notes that the Cameroonian National Council for Cultural Affairs of 1974 adopted the term 'national language' for all Cameroonian indigenous languages in an effort to "give the impression of equality in status and thus comfort their speakers".
culture, or with its utility as a trade language. In pre-colonial Cameroon, the Duala language was regionally important enough to be spoken (as a second language) by various language communities, while the English-based Pidgin had developed as a language of trade all along the West African coastline (Tabi-Manga 2000:17). The value of Pidgin was, and still is, due not to its prestige¹⁹ but its status as a trade language known to a large number of diverse language communities. With colonial conquest, however, the languages of the European colonisers almost immediately gained ascendancy for official government, education and communicative functions. This prestige of English, French and other European languages compared to African languages remains undiminished in the former colonies today, and is reflected in their status as 'majority' official languages.

In sub-Saharan African communities, local terminology for languages tends to reflect local patterns of language use. The term local language is frequently used to describe the languages spoken in rural homes. In Anglophone Africa, mother tongue is also widely used to refer to such languages, though the term also implies a language of minority status. In this sense it is often used synonymously with native language (Prah 1995:24-5). Mother tongue is generally preferred to the alternative term vernacular, however, as the latter carries an even stronger implication of inferiority to the dominant European language (Awoniyi 1976:27).

Fine distinctions notwithstanding, all these terms are related by their reference to the less prestigious, more locally spoken languages of the world. The fact that the terms bear both functional and sociopolitical connotations is extremely important to understanding the political and social place of minority language speakers in the Cameroonian communities under study here. With that in mind, the term minority language is used in this study to refer to those languages which a) are indigenous to Africa and b) are not recognised as official languages of the nation in which they are spoken.

However, even by this definition not all minority languages are the same. A language can be a minority language on a national scale (i.e. not an official language) and yet serve as an important language of wider communication in a region. Examples of this kind of minority language are Fulfuldé in Togo, Luganda in Uganda, and Nyanja in Mozambique. On the

¹⁹ However Wolf (2001:230) claims that among rural people of Anglophone Cameroon, Pidgin's status as a language of wider communication has given it a degree of prestige as a means of socioeconomic advancement. Elsewhere in Anglophone Cameroon, Wolf notes, the fact that Pidgin is used informally among people of diverse language communities has given it a degree of the affective importance usually reserved for the mother tongue. However, Pidgin is not now accorded much formal prestige, and its use in schools is discouraged.
other hand, languages which are very local in usage and have a relatively small number of speakers are the least likely of all to be recognised as viable or politically significant. The three languages in focus in the present study, Kom, Bafut and Lamnso', fall into this category. Their usage is primarily local, and though they are among the largest minority language populations of the Northwest Province of Cameroon, with 80,000 to 150,000 speakers each they are still small in comparison to the national population of over 14 million.

The status of the language or languages spoken by an individual or a community has significant implications for social inclusion, attainment of civil rights, and access to goods and knowledge. Language is one of the primary ways in which dominant social groups maintain control, particularly in education systems (Lankshear 1997:29). Certainly language fluency is a door that opens - or bars - the way to a multitude of opportunities and life choices. In the current study, language ability in mother tongue and in the official language prove to be key factors in the question of access to education.

If minority languages offer so few advantages in terms of access and inclusion at a national level, how is it that they continue to be spoken? Certainly not all do; UNESCO sources state that 3,000 of the roughly 6,000 world languages still spoken "are now endangered, seriously endangered or dying, with many other still viable languages already showing signs of being potentially endangered" (Wurm 1996:1). A language becomes endangered when enough people stop speaking it, adapting to an environment where use of that language is no longer advantageous (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:22). Wurm (1996:2) describes language loss as an outcome of social interactions between different speech communities:

the speech community comes face-to-face into contact with carriers of a more aggressive culture who speak another, usually metropolitan, language, and their own culture is overwhelmed and threatened by disintegration, with the mastery of the intrusive language offering economic advantages to the speakers of the language of the weaker culture.

The communities which are the focus of the current study have in fact come face-to-face with what Wurm calls the "more aggressive" global or European culture, and the threat to their languages is largely from this source. Indeed, Spolsky (2002:139) cites numerous

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20 Defining "speech community" is problematic (Hudson 1996). As used here, the term refers to a community which shares both a language and a set of cultural knowledge However, the preferred term used in this present study is language community, which is defined as sharing certain geographical and identity-related characteristics as well as cultural and linguistic ones. See section 2.1.3.

21 It is important to distinguish here between indigenous and immigrant language communities. Endangered languages are typically spoken by indigenous populations who are under the pressure described by Wurm from
arguments that language maintenance within a minority language community can only be assured by social and cultural isolation of that community - hardly a realistic future for any minority cultures in the world.

However, thousands of minority languages worldwide and hundreds of indigenous African languages continue to be vital means of communication for their speakers. They are the preferred languages in the home and the local community, and their status as mother tongues continues from generation to generation. Such language maintenance is influenced by attitudes of ownership and identity.22 As is discussed below, for many minority language speakers of Africa culture and language are closely tied, so that giving up the mother tongue is tantamount to rejection of their cultural and community identity.

Explaining this phenomenon, Edwards (1994) notes the human desire to maintain one's own language and interpretation of the world in the face of contact with other, more aggressive cultures. Linking minority language maintenance efforts to the more general reaction against globalisation, Edwards states that

at the broadest level it is a tension between a globalisation of culture which in the realm of language, manifests itself in the dominance of a small number of 'large languages', and a desire, which has always existed but which is also fuelled by this globalisation, to maintain and defend one's own culture and language (p.53).

In the present study, the minority language-speaking communities appear to be living that tension described by Edwards: interested in gaining the knowledge and access offered by technology and international languages, yet also concerned about the potential for diminishment of language and culture knowledge within the community. Paulston (1994:15) also speaks to this point, distinguishing economic incorporation into the national system from cultural assimilation; minority groups may be highly interested in the former, but not at all in the latter. Such is the case with the communities under study here.

This concern for maintaining one's own language may be manifested in various ways. One way is to engage in explicit promotional efforts in the language community. Another is to attempt to influence national policies on language. Advocates of language rights engage in both of these strategies. Equating language maintenance with human rights, they claim that surrounding language communities. Most of the minority languages in Africa are in this category. Immigrant populations may also find themselves under pressure from the surrounding majority language community, but their language - particularly when it has majority language status elsewhere in the world - is not under threat. Such pressure on a specific immigrant group does not imply pressure on the language as a whole.

22 In an analysis of language beliefs among minority communities of Thailand and Malaysia, Miller (2000) observes that a minority people's high regard for their own language enhances its likelihood of being maintained.
"the denial of a people's development and use of its native tongue is . . . a denial of its participation in society and its very peoplehood (Hernandez-Chavez 1988:45, emphasis added). In this view, language loss is actually an issue of disempowerment, as May (2000:368) contends:

[1]Language loss is not only, perhaps not even primarily, a linguistic issue - it has much more to do with power, prejudice, (unequal) competition and, in many cases, overt discrimination and subordination. . . . [L]anguage death seldom occurs in communities of wealth and privilege, but rather to the dispossessed and disempowered.

Thus, efforts to promote and strengthen the status of a minority language may go far beyond interest in the language itself. The issue becomes one of self-preservation and resistance to prevailing social and cultural forces. This issue is highly relevant to the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities of the current study, in which institutions have been established whose sole aim is preservation and promotion of the mother tongue.

More broadly, however, the survival strategy for minority language speakers in the 'Global Village' is bilingualism or multilingualism. Bilingualism is a natural response to the need for inter-ethnic communication in any case, regardless of the groups' relative prestige levels. In the bilingual community, domains of language use develop for each language, in contexts defined by specific times, settings and role relationships (Romaine 1995:30; Cooper 1989:67). Since they are constructed to meet the communication needs of the society, these language domains tend to be consistent across a bilingual or multilingual population.

Bilingualism is not always a stable linguistic situation, however (Rannut and Rannut 1995:183; Paulston 1994:12). Patterns of language use are tested over and over in each new instance of contact between two cultures. When one of these cultures (and the language in which it is embedded) is associated with greater prestige, economic gain and/or social mobility, the pressure to assimilate to that culture and language is strong. This is the case in the communities of the present study, where media, economic realities and the education system promote more dominant languages and cultures.

2.1.2. Language development

One of the consequences - as well as one of the causes - of a language's minority status is the limited domains in which it is used in society. The term language development as used in this study describes the extent to which a given language can be used, and also the processes by which the uses of that language are broadened. Specific language development activities include development of an orthography, a body of literature, and vocabulary for
specialised social or technical contexts. In addition, language development involves a range of efforts to influence the attitudes and use of the language by its speakers.

A more specifically linguistic term for this process is *language planning*, a series of deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or functional allocation of their language codes (Cooper 1989:45). Das Gupta (1973:157) describes it as "a set of deliberate activities systematically designed to organise and develop the language resources of the community in an ordered schedule of time". For Das Gupta, deliberate action and a focus on development of resources are key characteristics of language planning.

Language planning involves both *status planning* (allocating given functions to a language) and *corpus planning* (standardising or reforming language use). Cooper (1989:33) adds a third aspect of language planning, namely *acquisition planning*: increasing the number of users of a language. Both language teaching and broadening the range of uses to which a language may be put can have a positive impact on the number of its users.

For the communities under study, language development has been crucial to the increased use of the written Bafut, Kom and Nso' languages for learning and communication. The language development process at work in these three languages has particularly enabled their use in local primary schools, as the existence of a standardised alphabet and written materials is essential to the use of any language in formal education (Bamgbose 1991:72). The *language committees*\(^\text{23}\) which are the primary agents of language development in Bafut, Kom and Nso' have set ambitious goals for the use of the written mother tongue, and their corpus planning and acquisition planning activities will be detailed in this study.

2.1.3. **The language community**

The *language community* is a key unit in the present study. The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1998:23) defines a language community as

\[
\text{any human society established historically in a particular territorial space . . . which identifies itself as a people and has developed a common language as a natural means of communication and cultural cohesion among its members.}
\]

The term is distinguished from that of *speech community* (Cooper 1989; Kramsch 1998) in that it includes not only shared knowledge of a linguistic code, but also a culturally and geographically defined self-identification. In the present study, the term language committee is key institutions in Bafut, Kom and Nso' for development of local languages. Their composition and role are extensively discussed in sections 3.2 and 4.6.

\(^{23}\) Language committees are key institutions in Bafut, Kom and Nso' for development of local languages. Their composition and role are extensively discussed in sections 3.2 and 4.6.
community refers to a self-identified group of people who share a particular indigenous Cameroonian language and its associated culture, and who identify a particular geographical region as their 'homeland'. The Bafut, Kom and Nso' homeland regions are linguistically and culturally homogeneous, physically located in the villages and towns of a particular geographically defined space.

Another important constituent group of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities are those who live outside the homeland regions. These people identify themselves as members of the language community by continued participation in Bafut, Kom or Nso' cultural activities, frequent visits to the homeland region, and support of the numerous 'development associations' organised on behalf of the homeland towns, whose members meet in cities all over Cameroon (section 4.5). Maintaining fluency in the local language is key to continued participation and influence in the language community (section 4.5.1).

The notion of community itself, originally referring to geographically located groups of people, has broadened to include other kinds of groupings. Crow and Allan (1994:3-4) describe three meanings of 'community': community of place, community of interest and community of attachment. Although overlap of the three types of community is possible, a grouping need not be characterised by more than one to be properly called a community. So, for example, a language community might not be an actual community of place, if its members live in dispersed locations.

However, the language communities described in this study could accurately be characterised by all three of Crow and Allan's categories of community: place, interest and attachment. Language communities in sub-Saharan Africa are often characterised by their geographical location, as when a region or a town is linguistically homogeneous. Indeed, many distinct language communities have developed over time due to their geographical isolation from others. The Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities also share the less

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24 The linguistic homogeneity of these communities was attested to by the fact that local language-medium primary education was considered feasible by the inhabitants. Cultural homogeneity was both observed and inferred, the latter by the degree of respect given by each community to its traditional authorities. This assessment is supported by a recent study of basic education in Cameroon (ERNWACA 2002) which describes the rural communities in Cameroon as being homogeneous in terms of their cultural values. In addition, Nsamenang and Lamb's study of parental values among the Nso' (1995) found "a common and deep-seated set of beliefs" (p. 620) which informed parental responses to the study.

25 Interestingly, an isolated language community's awareness of its unique linguistic character can also be raised by contact with other communities. Annett (interview, 7 Oct 2002) described the Mundani people of Northwest Cameroon being galvanised to become literate in their language by reports from their own community members who had travelled to more populous areas on the coast. The travellers were impressed by the number of different
tangible aspects of community as described by Crow and Allan: common interests, livelihoods, knowledge, beliefs, and practices, some of which are unique and endemic to those communities. In each case, the language of the community allows unique expression of these intangible aspects of the community.

Membership in a community typically entails support from and identity with others in the community, and also a certain responsibility to others in the community. This latter characteristic can be either attractive or objectionable. In his insightful study of modern community, Bauman (2001) observes that community is sometimes seen as the refuge of those who cannot fend for themselves in society. The successful, it seems, do not need the support that comes from community; furthermore, their material success is likely to increase the expectations put on them by less successful community members.

Bauman's observations describe very well the tensions and rewards of community in the South, where deeply held commonalities and expectations are both grounding and frustrating for today's citizens. In Bafut, Kom and Banso', the security and cultural/linguistic identity which the language community provides are valued strongly enough that the community as a whole is maintained. However for the those who have ventured out of its geographical centre, the frustration of continuing to meet community expectations while negotiating the values of urban culture can be significant.

2.1.4. Language and culture: shared knowledge, shared meanings

The relationship between language and culture is undeniably profound, whether language actually predisposes its speakers to see the world a certain way (Sapir 1929:207), or whether language is itself a reflection of culture. The role of language in mediating and defining social relations is crucial, as Kramsch (1998:77) notes:

Language is the most sensitive indicator of the relationship between an individual and a given social group. Any harmony between the two is registered on this most sensitive of the Richter scales.

The nature of the language-culture connection is not unchanging, however. In examining the relationship between language, ethnicity and national identity, May (Stephen May 2001) points out that the correspondence between language and ethnicity is not inevitable. Nevertheless, language is a significant feature of ethnic identity:

languages being spoken in the metropolitan area, and on their return convinced the Mundani at home that their language was unique and merited attention and study.
To say that language is not an inevitable feature of identity is not the same as saying it is unimportant . . . . Language cannot be relegated, as some commentators would have it, to a mere secondary or surface characteristic of ethnicity (S. May 2001:129).

Language marks not only ethnic cultures, but any community culture that distinguishes itself from those that surround it. This language-based self-identification goes deeper than simply sharing particular speech patterns. In Gee's construction of Discourse as an association of ways of thinking and behaving which identify a person as belonging to a particular group (Gee 1996:131), language is one of the pillars of a society's Discourse and serves as its fundamental means for identifying and distinguishing itself from others. A language community thus identifies itself primarily in terms of shared language and shared cultural meanings.

In sub-Saharan Africa, language functions as one of the most obvious markers of culture. Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:122) note that in Africa, “people are often identified culturally primarily (and even solely) on the basis of the language they speak”. Describing the role of language in traditional Zambian societies particularly, Serpell (1993:97) notes that the indigenous languages are

intimately bound up with many of the society's traditional practices, and enshrine in multiplex and subtle ways the epistemological foundations of indigenous moral values.

In Cameroon, language community members tend to see local language use fairly consistently as a marker of identity, whether their own or others'. Not only so, but the status of local knowledge and values is identified with use of the local language, as that is the language of their fullest expression. The language choices of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities in political, social and educational contexts are thus not simply a matter of pragmatic decision, but are reflective of the community's sense of identity.

This connection between local language and local knowledge implies that the loss of sociolinguistic domains for the local language tends to be mirrored in diminished expression of local knowledge. Not only so, but the refusal to use local languages in educational and

26 'Ethnic' as used in this study refers to a community which is differentiated from others by its racial origins and cultural background.

27 By this definition Gee distinguishes 'Discourse' from 'discourse', the latter being defined as "connected stretches of language that make sense" (Gee 1996:127).

28 One case where this tendency appears to be less pronounced is Tanzania, where the principles of national development put in place in the 1960s have promoted a national identity - and language, namely Kiswahili - over local ethnic identity. See Buchert 1994.
development contexts results in the dismissal of the value of local knowledge. As Prah (1995:55) notes,

> [t]he devaluation of African languages in educational and developmental endeavours has tended in effect to dismiss all knowledge which had grown with the African historical experience prior to the establishment of western rule in Africa.

This trend towards the rejection of traditional knowledge is of serious concern to those who consider themselves the guardians of traditional knowledge in the three language communities studied here, and figures largely in their support for broadened use of the mother tongue in educational settings (section 4.1.3).

However, this is not to say that local knowledge - and language - are not capable of changing and expanding. The role of local choices in the acquisition of new cultural knowledge is significant. For example, observing the Kabré people of Togo, Piot (1999:174) notes that they refuse to recognise boundaries between traditional Kabré culture and the 'modern' urban culture. In Kabré society, what Piot terms the "cannibalisation of the cultural inventory of the West" has a long and creative history; material items originating outside the Kabré culture have been incorporated into the culture and the language, acquiring local meanings and terminology.²⁹

2.1.5. Summary: Language, community and identity

This discussion of language, community and identity highlights the fact that language use and attitudes are situated in social and political contexts. Relations between language communities can be characterised in terms of linguistic distinctions and processes; yet those same relations are politically situated, as the languages and cultures of less politically influential groups tend to be marginalised by those with greater influence. On the other hand, the vitality of many minority language-speaking cultures resists such marginalisation; particularly in the home areas, speakers of the languages in question may indeed be in the majority in terms of both numbers and status.

In addition, it is important to remember that language attitudes in the Cameroonian communities under study are not static. Shifts in social expectations, power relations and economic prospects continue to modify local perceptions about the role and relevance of the home language and culture.

²⁹ This agency is similarly observed by Serpell (1974:594), who notes that African leaders "tend to be eclectic about Western values; they aim for computers and motor-cars but not for Old People's Homes."
2.2. Language and literacy

One of the principal arenas in which the relationship between language and education is played out in the present study is that of literacy and the use of written text. The communities under study have come to use written text in particular ways, and their choices of oral or written means of communication appear to coincide with other social choices. Language is also an essential aspect of this picture, particularly given the historical dominance of English for written text and the recent emergence of the written mother tongue as an alternative.

Three aspects of current thinking about literacy and language are particularly relevant to this study. One is the debate over whether a culture's characteristic uses of oral and literate means of communication are grounds for constructing a broader cognitive profile of that culture. A second has to do with whether literacy practice is better defined in terms of its technical components or its social applications. A third is the exploration of the impact of language medium on literacy practices.

2.2.1. Literacy and orality

Much has been made of the historical impact of literacy on individual cognition and social behaviours. Goody's (1968) notion that the historical development of a culture mirrors a child's developmental processes led him to argue that the acquisition of literacy by a culture triggers - or at least accompanies - increased cognitive capacity. Ong (1985) later posited numerous distinctions between "oral" and "literate" cultures, including word-orientation vs. object-orientation, redundancy vs. linearity of expression, sound-orientation vs. sight-orientation and conservative vs. innovative patterns of thought. More recently, Olson (1996) plays down the cultural and cognitive dichotomy between oral and literate behaviours, but nevertheless contends that writing has played a key role in the evolution of what is currently termed "scientific thought" by opening new ways of thinking about one's language.

Other researchers have attempted to account for the cultural characteristics that appear to accompany oral and written communication behaviours. Tannen (1985) focuses on the degree of interpersonal involvement as a measure for differentiating between oral and written language. Chafe (1985) similarly describes the detached quality of written language compared to the personal involvement of spoken language. Denny (1991) asserts that the essential difference between the use of oral and literate language is decontextualisation: the disconnection of information from its context. According to these arguments, oral cultures tend to prioritise interpersonal and contextualised interaction, while literate cultures tend to
have more tolerance for communicative modes that feature detachment and decontextualised thought.

These arguments, though criticised today by current literacy theorists (specifically those of the New Literacy Studies school; see Gee 1996), do resonate to some extent with the observed behaviours of rural developing world cultures. However, the challenge is to interpret those behaviours in a way that does not dismiss the communication behaviours of certain cultures as 'merely oral' or categorise those cultures as underdeveloped based on their particular uses of written text. There is also the danger of polarising these behaviours in such a way that communities are labelled as only oral or only literate in nature (Heath 1983:230).

In fact, the New Literacy Studies (NLS) school of situated literacy rejects entirely the notion that literacy has any cognitive effects independent of the social context in which it is practised. They argue that the categories of 'orality' and 'literacy' are insufficient to describe the social practices, values and world views which influence the use of written text (Gee 1996). In refusing to recognise such categories, NLS proponents also reject the relegation of certain cultures to potentially demeaning categories of 'primitiveness' based on the nature of their use of written text.

Still, it is difficult to deny that some individuals and cultures prioritise oral strategies of communication over written ones. Such preferences imply choices about the influence which written text - and extra-local knowledge - are permitted to have. The social characteristics associated with literacy could be described in terms of the extent to which a given society exploits the capacity of written text to encompass large amounts of knowledge and distribute that knowledge among individuals who have no face-to-face contact with each other. An individual or society that chooses to utilise written text gains the capacity for extra-local, disembodied communication, but that individual or society also opens itself to the influence of non-local ideas and values. Not every society values that capacity of written text, or is disposed to use literacy that way.

Finally, the communities under study showed that patterns of oral or literate communication are closely related to the languages identified with those two modes of communication. As will be seen in section 5.6.1, the identification of mother tongue with oral communication and English with written communication is highly influential in shaping people's communication choices.
2.2.2. Literacy: individual skills vs. social meaning

The term 'literacy' itself is in some ways a moving target, as its definition is always evolving (Powell 1999:10). Current disagreement over the precise nature of literacy is related to the fact that literacy involves both a psycholinguistic, technical-skills component and a sociocultural component. Understanding the role of literacy in society requires accounting for both components, as well as the theoretical perspectives that emphasise each one.

The oral/literate debate, discussed above, is one area of disagreement between the technical/individual perspective and the sociocultural perspective. A related debate concerns the cognitive vs. the social aspects of literacy. The psycholinguistic approach to literacy focuses on the cognitive aspects of how an individual learns to read and write (e.g. Chall 1996; Wray and Medwell 1991). Psychological and linguistic differences between oral and writing competencies are scrutinised, as are the effects of language fluency on the ability to read. Societal influences on reading and writing are seen to be important, but primarily for their impact on the individual.

The psycholinguistic approach's focus on skill acquisition by the individual learner is helpful in this study because it highlights the need for intentional instruction in reading. In communities such as those studied here, where the print environment is limited and children are not exposed to much meaningful print outside of a formal instructional context, intentional reading instruction becomes particularly important. The essential tools of decoding, sound/symbol correspondence and text comprehension skills are not normally acquired without intentional effort. Not only so, but the context in which these skills are acquired, including the language in which this acquisition takes place, influences people's perceptions and uses of written text. A reader's ability to extract meaning from written text depends on his or her fluency in the language of the text. This aspect of reading is highly relevant to understanding the choices people make between oral and written communication, and to their success in gathering meaning from written text.

An extension of the notion of literacy as primarily an individual, cognitive skill is what is called the functional approach to literacy. Promoted by institutions such as UNESCO\(^30\), international donors and progressive-minded governments, this approach asks, "What is literacy good for?" and answers the question primarily in economic terms. Literacy

\(^30\) UNESCO's best-known endeavour in this area was the Experimental World Literacy Program of 1965-1975 (Prah 1995). Since that time, UNESCO's discourse about literacy has turned more in the direction of social engagement: see the current UNESCO website on "literacy as freedom." Still, even this new perspective maintains a significant emphasis on the economic aspects of "freedom."
becomes a tool for helping the individual to face the economic challenges of daily life, and as such it becomes an aid to economic and social development and even nation building (Papen 2001:45).

This functional perspective of literacy is quite prevalent in the communities under study, primarily insofar as literacy is associated with schooling. Schooled literacy, along with other knowledge and skills acquired in school, is expected by parents and pupils to lead to the economic advancement of the individual.

In contrast to these psycholinguistic and functional views of literacy, the NLS' sociocultural view sees literacy primarily as a set of social practices (Barton and Hamilton 2000). One NLS theorist, Gee (1996), notes that, like the functional view, the sociocultural view also asks the question, "What is literacy good for?" However it answers the question in terms of the social settings and social knowledge which provide the context for literacy use in any given instance.

Texts and the various ways of reading them do not flow full-blown out of the individual soul (or biology); they are the social and historical inventions of various groups of people. One always and only learns to interpret texts of a certain type in certain ways through having access to, and ample experience in, social settings where texts of that type are read in those ways (Gee 1996:44-45).

In its insistence that the meanings and uses of literacy are socially situated, the sociocultural view of literacy implies that, far from being a set of value-free, autonomous skills which shape society, literacy practices are themselves shaped by social and political realities. This leads Street (1984) to argue that literacy is actually ideological, not autonomous, in nature. The use of text, whatever its language or content, has social and ideological implications.

It is here that the political aspect of literacy emerges. An important tenet of the NLS perspective is that literacy is closely related to power distribution. Social inequalities structure people's participation in literacy events, as access to literacy resources is unequally distributed in society (Barton and Hamilton 1998:17). This perspective on the political aspect of literacy is shared by other advocates of social change. Paolo Freire's notion of literacy-as-conscientização (Freire 1970) is built on a similar argument, specifically that the sociopolitical exclusion of the poor includes their inability to generate or use written text in their own interests. ActionAid's more recent Reflect approach to adult learning and social change (International Reflect Network 2001) follows a very similar argument, if slightly less politicised and controversial. These two approaches to literacy consider it as a tool for the engagement of people in wider processes of development and sociopolitical change.
Along with its political implications, another key aspect of the sociocultural view of literacy has to do with the role of written text in constructing social meaning. Kress (2000:9), also a NLS proponent, defines literacy as

the fundamental fact of meaning making: the constant transformation of resources in line with the interested action of those who use the resources to give shape to their meanings.

For Kress, text literacy is simply one way of attaining the goal of all communicative acts, i.e. the conveyance of meaning.

However as the literacy theories of the NLS evolve, the notion that literacy may only be defined with reference to local context is being contested from within. Brandt and Clinton (2002) argue that even though literacy is ascribed certain local meanings in society, literacy's presence in that society is marked by particular objects and technologies the origin of which may not be local: letters, textbooks, advertising and so on. Thus the presence of text in a society may indicate meanings originating outside that society (p.344). Literacy is still seen as deriving its meaning from a social context, but not only from the local social context. This recognition of the capacity of literacy technologies to communicate meanings independent of their local social uses introduces the notion of agents outside local society who are able to influence the shape and uses of literacy in a social context: "literacy sponsors", as Brandt and Clinton term them (p.349). In that way, the objects and technologies through which literacy is mediated can serve as the agents of external as well as internal interests; for as Street (2003) notes, these "distant" literacies are also ideologically based. Thus the meanings given shape by written text in one social context may be transposed into another.

In an interesting demonstration of the evolution of their own thinking on the relation between literacy and society, Olson and Torrance (2001) - not themselves identified with the NLS school - have distinguished between the causality of literacy ("what possessing literacy skills does to people") and the instrumentality of literacy ("what people do with literacy skills") in a society. This position, along with Brandt and Clinton's (and Street's) recent work, signals a shift of current literacy theory towards the recognition of the influences brought to bear by local social context, the objects and technologies of literacy, and the source of those objects and technologies on the meanings and uses of written text.

This shift is important to this study because it provides a theoretical framework of literacy which recognises the key roles of individual linguistic and cognitive skills development, and the role of written texts in various forms, and yet places the entire phenomenon of literacy in a context of social meaning and negotiation. It is essential to
understand that literacy practice is shaped by linguistic and reading skills and the availability of written text, as well as by local expectations regarding text use.

2.2.3. The language of literacy

The relation of literacy to language is also crucial to this study. As has been mentioned above, fluency in the language of instruction strongly influenced the degree to which people in this study acquired and used literacy skills. Language choice in the instructional setting was thus pivotal in determining what was learned. This was true in both the formal and nonformal settings for learning literacy.

The importance of this interplay between language and literacy is evident in the postulated relationship of literacy to the construction of postcolonial identity in Northwest Cameroon, as a former British colony whose education system is still very much modelled on the British curriculum - and language - of colonial days. Collins and Blot (2003:122) describe the "hybrid identity" which has come to typify the post-colonial societies of Africa and elsewhere, and the place of literacy in forging that identity:

From the colonial to the postcolonial world the struggle for identity is a struggle to write the lives of subject peoples, such writing being in the language of the victors (or in the language of the conquered transformed by the colonizer…) The languages used and the literate means employed, the texts produced and read, tell us much of the construction and transformation of selves through literate practices. Such selves are not formed by literacy; but the forging, both social and personal, of a "new" hybrid identity occurs in the cauldron of culture clash where literacy is both weapon and shield. Literacy is neither cause nor consequence; the process of self-fashioning is, rather, mediated by literacy (emphasis in the original).

In the communities studied here, literacy acquisition is predominantly in English, as are most of the texts that are read. The forging of the hybrid identity described by Collins and Blot is thus finding its expression in English. Yet, given the profound connection between culture and language (both indigenous and European), the availability of local language means of expressing identity through literate practices ought to enhance formation of a more locally situated identity. The creation of written text in local languages is advocated by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:28); he argues that the use of colonial languages in African education and literature has heightened personal and social alienation among the educated African population, and he advocates a renaissance of African-language literature to help restore

31 In a much stronger view of the relation of language to postcolonial experience, Robinson (1997:24) argues that "cultural experience is born out of the intersections of language, place and self; postcolonial experience is born out of disruptions or destabilisations of those intersections". For Robinson, the very need to form a postcolonial identity implies serious damage having been done to the indigenous culture.

Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) also address the issue of language and literacy, but from a more empirical perspective. Their model of biliteracy maps the complex relationships between bilingualism and literacy as a series of continua, focusing particularly on the power relations that characterise the interaction between language and literacy. The model demonstrates the ways in which less powerful expressions of literacy (e.g. local, minority-language, vernacular, contextualised) are less privileged than the more powerful ones (e.g. official language, non-local, decontextualised). Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester argue for the need to contest this power weighting in the institutions and structures that deliver literacy.

This focus on language and literacy is relevant here because the present study is concerned with the contexts and materials which facilitate local-language literacy practices, upon which the potential for identity formation (as described above) rests. It is also concerned with the ways in which mother-tongue literacy is situated in the landscape of literacy learning and literacy practices, and whether the efforts being made to promote mother-tongue literacy are causing any discernible change in literacy practices.

2.2.4. Summary: Language and literacy

This discussion of language and literacy highlights the complexity of written text use in the minority-language communities under study. Their uses of written text reflect their own values for literacy as well as their proficiency in reading skills and in the language of literacy. In this environment, the new alternatives for literacy practice made available by the emergence of mother-tongue literacy highlight these questions of language fluency, social uses of literacy and the interests served by current literacy practices.

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32 The question may be asked whether English should still be considered a colonial language in anglophone Africa today, given its widespread use as an official language in African nations over the last four decades of independence from Great Britain. The answer is yes: not for the association of English with a specific former colonial power, but for the more global-level, Northern-based cultural and political power it embodies. It is true that African dialects of English and English-based pidgins have developed over the years; however, the language that Cameroonian schoolchildren call “grammat” English is still perceived as a foreign language in rural and semi-rural Cameroon, and represents the powerful, prestigious knowledge practices and values of the North. Acquisition of this language continues to be a challenge for semi-rural and rural Cameroonians, and English fluency serves a gatekeeping function for social, educational and employment opportunities.
2.3. Language and education

The formal English-language education system has a highly influential role in the language and education choices being made in the communities under study. Analysis of those choices must thus be grounded in an understanding of the cultural and political implications of formal school in post-colonial Africa, as well as the historical and sociopolitical context of language choices for the classroom. The fact that literacy is usually acquired in a formal school context has caused literacy and schooling to be perceived as virtually the same by the communities under study. However, the political and cultural implications of education stretch far beyond the scope of literacy alone. The following sections describe those cultural and political implications, as well as the environment in which policies for mother-tongue education are played out in Africa.

2.3.1. Education as enculturation

Education by its very nature carries a cultural agenda: the choice of skills and knowledge to be transmitted is accompanied by a more tacit set of values and expectations to be inculcated into the learner as well. This is true of all educational endeavours, whether informal or formal. The social role of education, no matter where or how it is carried out, is the inculcation of the values and beliefs of those in power as legitimate and natural (Bourdieu 1991:167). In societies which practise solely informal education, decisions about who should learn what evolve over time to reinforce the stability and functioning of the society. In societies characterised by a formal education system also, schools serve not only as instructional sites but as sites of cultural reinforcement of the values of the sponsoring society or institution (Giroux 2001:75).

Formal education as it has been introduced to the communities of Northwest Cameroon is largely based on the British curriculum of the early- to mid-20th century. Formal school was originally intended not only to teach young Cameroonians skills such as reading and writing, but also to inculcate in them a set of understandings and values more congenial to the goals and intentions of the colonial powers (Kale and Yembe 1980:314). The physical departure of the colonial powers at independence did not signal the demise of the curriculum of European-valued knowledge, however (Bangbose 1991:5; Bude 1985:34). Indeed, European curriculum values have continued to influence post-independence African curriculum choices, highlighting what Marsden (1990:267) calls "western scientific rationality" and the capitalistic values of individualism, competition, and self-interest largely
unregulated by authority structures. Such curriculum has high prestige in Cameroon, as it has in much of post-colonial Africa.

Thus the values and goals embedded in colonial formal education were not those of the Cameroonian cultures to which it first came. The continued discrepancy between the two today is evident in the cultural dislocation experienced by children moving from the community to the school compound and back again. The discrepancy between the language of school and the language of home is one of the primary effects of formal schooling, as the education system promotes English as the 'legitimate' language in which the knowledge that matters is encoded (Goke-Pariola 1993:97).

What then is the impact of formal schooling on local cultural knowledge? Stephens' investigation of schools in Ghana (1998) reveals tension between the culture of Western-style schooling and aspects of the traditional culture of the Ghanaian village community such as farming, respect for traditional authority structures, and even traditional foods. However, in Northwest Cameroon the extent of this kind of tension appears to depend on the extent to which the school is perceived as rooted in the local community. In the rural and semi-rural communities of Northwest Cameroon, the primary classroom has become to some extent a hybrid of local and outside values. As is the case elsewhere in Africa, 'school knowledge' is perceived as specialised and prestigious knowledge, though other kinds of knowledge are actually perceived as more practically valuable - a phenomenon also found in rural Zambia by Serpell (1993:28). This coexistence of alternative knowledge systems is described by Egan as a common cultural phenomenon (1997:72): one system is taught in the community and the other is taught in school, and each is dominant in its own environment. Similarly, Stephens (1998:1) notes that in Ghana "the world of the school is one where for many children little is achieved in terms of doing anything or learning much that is of value".

The impact of formal schooling on the learners themselves - whether it leads them to turn away from the knowledge and values of their home culture or not - depends partly on the strength of the home-school connection and partly on the extent to which the school presses the child to acquire a new identity. Serpell (1993:17) notes that in rural Zambia, success in formal schooling implies extraction of the community's young people from the community into a "superior and external realm" which is utterly foreign to the community. The boarding school, which still exists as an educational option for secondary and even primary schooling in Northwest Cameroon, would represent the extreme end of this continuum. However, the children attending the local primary schools examined in this current study did not exhibit such extremes of cultural dislocation.
Is integration of the two kinds of knowledge in one school system possible? A body of literature on education and indigenous minority peoples in Europe and the Americas (e.g. Giroux 1989; Corson 1990, 1999a) depicts the "Western" knowledge system as a threat to indigenous ways of knowing. Determined to open a space for culturally appropriate education for indigenous peoples, these authors call for concerted action by teachers, parents and school administrators to turn schools into "sites of possibility" (p.115) where alternative worldviews and values can be taught alongside those of the formal curriculum.

In the Bafut, Kom and Nso' primary schools studied, however, there is some question as to how dichotomous the educational environment actually is. The local culture in these communities is the majority culture, and as a result a certain cultural accommodation appears to have been reached between the community and the national educational institution. This will be explored further in chapter six.

2.3.2. The politics of education in Africa

It has long been recognised that there is no such thing as a politically neutral education system (Bray et al 1986:27). The values and agenda of an educational system are evident both in its official curriculum and in its hidden curriculum, the latter described by Giroux (2001:47) as

> those unstated norms, values and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life.

Schooling is a political practice as well as a cultural practice, the curriculum of which embodies the norms and values of the dominant literate or schooled culture (Leseman 1994:164).

However, education is sometimes portrayed as a value-free, technical system the function of which is simply to transmit the appropriate skills to a given population. In Anglophone Africa, this functionalist approach is used to justify English-medium education as the logical, natural choice "because of its global status, because of its wealth of publications, because of its 'affinity' with the inherited school system" (Mazrui 1997:35).

Yet the so-called 'naturalness' of a curriculum which originated in colonial Europe for African society is questionable. Post-colonial analysts argue that in fact, European culture and colonialist values are thoroughly intertwined (Young 1990:119); both culture and values are evident in the curricula currently in use in much of sub-Saharan Africa, not least in their use of European languages for instruction (Ngugi 1993:35). For former European colonies in
Africa, Northern knowledge is packaged in historical and institutional structures that continue to privilege particular voices and forms of knowledge to the exclusion of others (Giroux 1992: 27). Given this privileging of European languages and Northern knowledge practices, the value-free, functionalist view of colonial-language education in Africa is simply not defensible.

In fact, the values and agendas of the institutions responsible for formal education in colonial Africa have been evident throughout their history. Early providers of education in Africa intended, in the case of the missions, primarily to make the population more amenable to religious conversion, or, in the case of the government, to "mould the population into a shape useful to the authorities" (Van Rinsum 2001:131; see also Afolayan 1995:240). Post-independence governments' education choices have mirrored their own agendas of national unity and stability, including the maintained use of the European colonial language.

Today, the national education agenda in Cameroon is heavily influenced by the drive towards economic progress and the belief in further education as the indisputable means to obtain maximum economic and social advantage. This view of education is not unique to Cameroon: Levinson and Holland (1996:16) argue that, though many newly-independent post-colonial states initially pursued socialist forms of political economy, most have now "accommodated themselves to the hegemony of a capitalist world system", fashioning their educational systems on the English model. Schools are ranked based on their success as preparatory sites for national examinations (Hawes and Stephens 1990:132), the purpose of which is to select candidates for further education and eventual employment (preferably in the formal sector, although in reality any employment which earns cash is acceptable). Secondary curricula emphasise preparation for tertiary training, regardless of the likelihood that students will have the resources for further education (Tedla 1995:204).

This orientation to education is evident in parents' view of formal education also. Well aware that power and education are closely related (Heyman et al 1972:93), both urban and rural parents make it a priority to maximise the educational opportunities available to their children. Access to formal education is particularly important to members of culturally marginalised communities, who must master dominant forms of cultural practice - including the language - if they are to gain access to mainstream political and economic institutions (Luke 2003:133). Language is a major component of such access, and so fluency in the colonial language is highly valued (Rubagumya 1994:156). This urban-oriented, economically driven agenda thus influences both the clients and the providers of formal education in Cameroon. Whether the economically oriented promise of education can
actually deliver on those promises is questionable, as is discussed in later chapters; but for parents in Cameroon, the promise remains.

The output of this education system is a cultural and economic elite,\textsuperscript{33} intended to lead the country towards its economic and political goals. This too has a long historical tradition, dating from the colonial governments' use of education to produce a small cadre of people who could carry out the colonial government agenda (Muna 1993:180). Then, as now, this meant fluency in the colonial language. As the colonial system in Africa grew, the education system served to strengthen the colonial-language-speaking African elite (Prah 1995:166). In post-independence Africa the elite continue to hold national leadership roles, with a vested interest in maintaining the educational conditions which brought about their leadership.

2.3.3. Educational alternatives for minority African communities

Still, formal education as it exists in Africa today continues to carry a high price for minority cultural communities. If rural Africans continue to value formal education for its instrumental potential in the economic sphere, they are also highly aware of its cultural cost to themselves and their children. Much of that cultural cost lies in the divide in language and culture that grows between educated children and their communities of origin. The source of this gap lies to a great extent in the language choices made in the school, as Collins and Blot note:

schools have the power to set standard uses of language in the classrooms, which, once the standard is set, creates the disjunction between home and school (2003:66).

By setting the colonial language and the knowledge which it mediates as the standard, the formal education system in Africa can cause a type of "cultural recession" in minority communities (Prah 1995:65) in which local culture, values and language are rendered insignificant.

Given that these cultural and linguistic costs of formal education do not go unnoticed, the existence of what Sunal (1998:223) calls "cultural reservations about modern, often Westernised, curriculum and instructional strategies" on the part of the local community is not surprising. In some communities, these reservations have led to interest in alternative forms of schooling which may mitigate the cultural cost of formal education. Such alternatives appear in countries of both the North and the South, in the form of community

\textsuperscript{33} See section 4.5 for a more detailed discussion of the elite.
education (Clark 1987), community-based education (Corson 1999b) and indigenous education (McGovern 2000; May 1999a; Stairs 1988). These programmes all revolve around the perceived need to foreground local community culture and concerns in curriculum decisions.

Nevertheless, actually setting aside the knowledge practices promoted by formal education systems is a risky business. Such radical curriculum adaptation runs the risk of rendering the primary school useless as a preparation for post-primary education. Thus the promotion of nonmodern ideas, concepts, and knowledge practices by advocates of indigenous community education (McGovern 2000:524) may be rightly viewed with caution by community members. Yet for at least some communities the risk is worth the benefits. For example, Muskin (1999:37) describes the objections of minority Malian communities to the negative impact of certain forms of formal education on family cohesion, and those communities' acceptance of alternative community schools which more appropriately expressed their own values regarding the family.

These alternatives to the formal education system do not however represent simply a return to the knowledge practices of the past. Rather, they constitute a dynamic process of "cultural negotiation" in which community-centred values and knowledge are combined with a wider focus on intellectual and political development to result in an educational alternative that can better serve local communities today (May and Aikman 2003:142).

2.3.4. Local language use in education

One of the clearest ways in which formal education in Africa is moving away from the 'normal' Northern-oriented curriculum is via the adoption of African languages as officially sanctioned means of instruction. The formal introduction of local languages for instructional use is being actively promoted by UNESCO as a means of providing quality education in multilingual societies (UNESCO 2003b), and is the subject of serious consideration in a number of African ministries of education (see below).34 This interest in incorporating local languages more systematically into formal education systems is described

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34 Another UN agency which has spoken in support of local-language education is the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In 1991 the ILO introduced the Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention (C169), calling upon governments to ensure that "children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language" (article 28, point 1). The convention has so far been signed by 13 Latin American countries, 3 European countries and Fiji. The framing of the issue as an aspect of indigenous rights (as opposed to merely minority rights) has no doubt led to the lop-sided response.
by Moulton (2003:25) as the most visible and controversial innovation in African curricula today.

As was mentioned above, this move towards using local languages grows not out of the desire to revert to 'a simpler past', but rather the desire to be better able to engage with the world. Stroud (2001:339) notes that throughout the African continent, discussion of 'the proper place' of African languages sees them moving from the realm of tradition into the modern world:

>a powerful reframing of discourses on national [minority] languages is taking place. . . that dislodges these languages from associations to tradition and repositions them in discourses of modernity.

Stroud further notes that this new discourse is found most clearly in the field of education.

Examples of this changing approach to languages of education may be found across the world, in cultures as diverse as those of Papua New Guinea (Klaus 2003), the Philippines (Young 2002), Peru (López 2001), New Zealand (Durie 1999), and Norway (Todal 1999). Current examples of the formal use of local languages in primary schools can be found across the African continent as well:

- Mozambique (Benson 2002), where an experimental bilingual education programme was run in two local-language areas by the Ministry of Education's research department from 1993-1997.
- Ethiopia (Dutcher 2004), where for the past decade the national government has been implementing an ambitious programme of mother-tongue education in up to 18 language communities across the country.
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo (Robinson and Gfeller 1997), where a highly successful adult literacy programme in the Ngbaka language community of northwest Congo has in the last few years branched out into community primary schooling in the Ngbaka language as well.
- Zambia (Sampa 2003), where the Ministry of Education has prepared a five-year strategic plan meant to improve the quality of education in Zambia in part through the use of seven Zambian languages in the classroom.
- Niger (Hovens 2002), where experimental bilingual schools have been running since 1973, and as of 1998 included instruction in the five main languages of the country.
- Cameroon, where, as is discussed in section 3.2.1 of this study, a national level mother-tongue education programme has been operating since 1981, and continues to grow in terms of both the number of students and the number of language communities involved.
In addition to these, the use of local languages in education has featured over the last decade in African countries such as Malawi (Williams 1996), Mali (Muskin 1999), Eritrea (Hailemariam 2000), South Africa (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir 2004; Arthur 2001) and Burkina Faso (Trudell 2001). In fact, UNESCO currently lists 211 "African community languages" in 45 countries which are reportedly used in some form in education (UNESCO 2004). Clearly, the debate on language choice for education in Africa is an open and active one.

However the wide variety of programmes which these initiatives represent testifies to an equally wide variety of perspectives regarding the use of language in education. The local language may be used formally or informally in the classroom; it may be a medium of instruction or taught as a subject. Where the local language has no standard orthography, its use in any other than informal oral contexts is difficult to implement. In addition, language choices in education systems are based on cognitive, financial and sociopolitical considerations, which take on even greater import when one of the languages 'on offer' is a minority language.35

Predictably, the terms used to refer to plurilingual education contexts are many. In 'bilingual education', two languages are used somehow in the classroom; the term says nothing however about how or why those two languages are used. 'Multilingual education' is perhaps more of a cover term, as it allows for the use of any number of languages. Generally, however, multilingual education implies the use of at least three languages in the primary curriculum (UNESCO 2003b:17). The degree to which all the languages actually serve as formal media of instruction is debatable; still, in sub-Saharan Africa it is not uncommon to find three languages in the primary school curriculum: the mother tongue, one or two international languages, and perhaps another African language. The expectation is that, by the end of primary school, children will have learned these languages and/or used them as a medium of instruction. This is the case in some areas of Ethiopia (mother tongue, English and Amharic; Dutcher 2004:66), Kenya (mother tongue, Kiswahili and English; Mule 1999:228), and Cameroon (mother tongue, English and French).36

35 This issue is especially volatile when one local language appears to be elevated above neighbouring languages. Moyo (2003:32) describes the political repercussions in Malawi of "exalting one language [Chichewa]and ethnic group above all others". This was also one reason for Cameroonians' dissatisfaction with the Basel Mission's Duala and Bali policies in the early-mid 20th century.

36 The cultural correlates to the plurilingual education theme are multicultural education and intercultural education. Both of these aim at reshaping the students' understandings of the cultures around them. Multicultural education emphasises tolerance and understanding of the various cultures manifested in the community (Rizvi
The term *mother-tongue education* may refer to a programme in which only the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction (still another term for this is 'vernacular education'). However as it is used in Cameroon, the term refers to a programme in which the mother tongue, a minority language, has been assigned a role in formal instruction. Technically, what is taking place in those Cameroonian schools is bilingual education; but its emphasis on use of the local language is reflected in the local term for it - *mother-tongue education*. Various African authors follow this same convention, using the term to refer to "the use of an indigenous language in education for any purpose and at any level" (Bamgbose 1991:63). In this study, the term *mother-tongue education* will be used the same way, referring to the formally recognised inclusion of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the classroom, alongside the European language.

Language choice in the classroom is fraught with implications for pedagogical method, community identity, prospects for success in the national arena, national unity and more. Bilingual education may be used not only for the purposes of minority language maintenance (Corson 1999b:11), but as a vehicle for assimilation to the national culture (Baker 1996:173). Use of the mother tongue in school education has even been used to reinforce marginalisation, as is detailed in Harlech-Jones' description of African language-only schooling in Namibia (Harlech-Jones 1990). However, mother-tongue education is for the most part perceived to be to the advantage of minority-language communities, in terms of both technological development (Komarek 1997:22) and the fostering of national citizenship (Mba and Chiatoh 2000:5). It is furthermore seen as an expression of local community control over education (Robinson and Gfeller 1997; Muskin 1999). Language choice is far more than simply a technical curriculum decision. Whether or not the language chosen for use in the classroom adequately communicates curriculum content to the learner, it certainly communicates very effectively the values and priorities of that curriculum.

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1985). Intercultural education is more aimed at raising the consciousness of minority-culture citizens of the social and political realities which shape their relations with the majority culture (Aikman 1999). Neither of these varieties necessarily includes a language component, however.

37 The fact that the term *mother-tongue education* is used in such a broad, non-technical sense seems to highlight the sociopolitical significance of the decision to allow local languages any official recognition in the classroom. This challenge to the dominance of the colonial language in education constitutes the 'marked' case, as against the default, unmarked case of colonial-language education.

38 The argument here is that, in a multilingual and multicultural country, recognition of local identities can help integrate the population into a larger, multifaceted national whole. Attempting to ignore such deeply-seated local identities in order to achieve national unity is counterproductive.
For the current study, three aspects of mother-tongue education are particularly relevant: its cognitive impact, its impact on cultural identity, and its implications for national citizenship.

The cognitive effects of using a child's mother tongue for learning are well established. As early as 1953, the report of a UNESCO committee on *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* asserted that the mother tongue is psychologically, sociologically and educationally the best choice for a child's instruction:

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium (UNESCO 1953:11).

In the same year, the Nuffield Foundation's report on African education (Nuffield Foundation 1953) recommended that

the symbols of literacy must first be related to the mother-tongue. If this is done when the child has reached the stage of reading-readiness and not before, . . . reading and writing are learnt with great swiftness, not as an imposed discipline but as part of natural development (p.80).

These recommendations have been confirmed by numerous studies of the cognitive effects of using a child's first language as a medium of instruction (Cummins 2000). In one landmark longitudinal study of the impact of language choice in education on language minority students in the United States, Thomas and Collier (2002:334) concluded that "the strongest predictor of L2 [second language] student achievement is the amount of formal L1 [first language, mother-tongue] schooling": that is, the more schooling a child receives in L1, the higher his or her achievement in the L2 environment as well. Studying five school districts across the nation, Thomas and Collier found that bilingual education programmes which gave children the longest periods of cognitive and academic development in their mother tongue yielded the most successful students.39

An additional area of cognitive impact is what Dutcher calls "the emotional factor" (2004:11), the level of confidence and comfort the child feels in the learning environment. Such affective aspects as increased motivation and self-esteem are evident in mother-tongue

39 The fact that the children studied by Thomas and Collier were from immigrant, not indigenous, minority populations distinguishes them socially and linguistically from children from indigenous minority language communities; however, the cognitive learning tasks before the two sets of children are essentially the same. It could in fact be argued that indigenous children are even more likely than immigrant children to require instruction in L1, as their opportunities to learn the L2 in informal environments are far fewer.
education programmes (Benson 2002:309), and have significant impact on cognitive achievement.

Not only so, but in sub-Saharan Africa the cognitive and affective consequences of language choice for individual learners extend to entire populations of learners. Where the language community is linguistically homogenous, and the children largely monolingual, it is not a question of a few minority-language children catching up to the rest in school; rather, the entire classroom is on the same footing where language of instruction is concerned.

The impact of language choice on cultural identity is clear, given the above discussion of the connection between language and culture. Each language is grounded in a particular knowledge base, and the prioritisation of that language implies similar privileging of the knowledge and culture with which it is associated. As Bude (1993:249) observes, learning opportunities that are provided only in an unfamiliar language are likely to result in alienation of the students from their own local culture. Local community leaders' awareness of this danger of "producing a generation of children cut off from their cultural roots" through English-medium schooling (Tiffen 1975:321), and their response to it, is addressed in the present study.

The impact of language choice on citizenship has been grounds for vigorous debate over the effects of local-language education. On one hand, it has been argued that possessing a common language is crucial to the development of national citizenship. This position opposes the use of multiple languages for education on grounds of national unity (May 1999b:45). Describing the same argument, Bamgbose (1991:13) refers to the "tribe-to-nation approach". In this argument the tribe is characterised by ethnic loyalty and a reluctance to accept national authority, while the nation is cohesive and fosters national identity and development.

However, Bamgbose contends that pre-colonial African history itself denies the legitimacy of this paradigm. He contends that the real causes of divisiveness in African countries, both before and after independence, generally have had more to do with political and economic factors than language factors (p.15). If education is seen by modern African nations as a means for achieving national identity and national development (Egbo 2000:66), then linguistic and cultural pluralism in education can actually favour that process rather than hinder it. Recognition of local identities can help integrate the population into a larger, multifaceted national whole, whereas the attempt to suppress such identities may breed resentment. In the Cameroonian context, proponents of minority language development
centre their position squarely in the notion that such development is good for national unity and social progress (Mbuagbaw 2001).

Beyond national borders, grounds exist for a continent-wide vision of citizenship in which linguistic pluralism, respect for minority ethnic groups and active use of African languages in education feature strongly. As mentioned above (section 1.1), the 1997 Harare Declaration of the Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policy in Africa provided the blueprint for that vision (Thondhlana 2002:31). The African Academy of Languages (ACALAN, Bamgbose 2001) established by the African Union prioritises goals such as the adoption of African languages for use in basic education. It is evident that increased engagement with African languages in education is a continent-wide phenomenon.

2.3.5. *The challenges of mother-tongue education in Africa*

However, if mother-tongue education programmes are currently enjoying greater attention, they remain notoriously difficult to maintain over the long term. National policy promoting use of African languages in education can be difficult to implement (Obanya 2003:223). Many programmes of local language use in African schools are plagued by problems such as curricula that are ill adapted to the use of local languages, insufficient teacher training and poor provision of materials in the local languages. The obstacle of insufficient resources underlies many of these problems; even the most pro-local language education policy proves ineffective if not supported by adequate finances and personnel (Prah 1995:67). Another very practical obstacle to local language use in schools is the presence of more than one mother tongue represented in a classroom; this occurs in urban and other settings where the ethnic mix is heterogeneous. The presence of more than one mother tongue is not an insurmountable problem, but it does require that careful thought and additional resources be given to programme implementation.41

Thus, even when African states express agreement with the goals of local language education, they do not always provide the necessary material or institutional support for successful implementation of such programmes (Ndoye 2003). This lack of practical support for mother-tongue education occurs despite the existence of positive experimental evidence

40 The Harare Declaration expresses African leaders' commitments to ethnonlinguistic pluralism as a norm, the respect of linguistic right as human rights, and language policies which promote effective participation in local and national societies. See Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policy in Africa 1997.

41 It is recognised that at some point the number of languages represented in an urban classroom (for example) is too great for mother-tongue education to function. However, this argument against the use of local languages in schools tends to be advanced hypothetically, without reference to any specific multilingual context where it might be tried.
for the use of local languages for learning. One well known example of the gap between experimental results and institutional implementation is the Ife primary education programme carried out in Nigeria in 1970-1978. This experimental programme was considered by its evaluators to have provided highly convincing evidence of the effectiveness of using the Yoruba language for primary school instruction in the Ife area (Fafunwa et al 1989:143). Nevertheless, the programme was not generalised to the wider population, or even continued in its experimental form (Benson 2002:308). Furthermore, national language policy for primary schools in Nigeria remained unaffected by the programme findings (Yoloye 2004).

Thus experimental programmes of mother-tongue education - no matter how positive their results - do not necessarily evolve into wider-scale implementation of a pro-local language education policy. When necessary structural and material support is not forthcoming, mother-tongue education initiatives are crippled and may easily be abandoned as ineffective or inappropriate. As a result, as Stroud (2001:339) comments, "mother-tongue programmes and policies seldom deliver what they promise". Despite the interest detailed in section 2.3.4 above, thorough and long-term implementation of local language education programmes in sub-Saharan Africa is much less frequent than official policies would seem to indicate.

In a key study of mother-tongue education programmes in Africa, Komarek (1997:14-15) documents the fluctuation in implementation of mother-tongue primary education in 47 African countries between 1982 and 1995 (see Figure 2.1). Ten of these countries remained without mother-tongue education initiatives for the entire period. Three countries added a mother-tongue education component to some segment of the national education system in the time period; five more had dropped their mother-tongue education programmes by 1995. These numbers support Obondo's statement (1997:26) that, although in 1985 UNESCO reported 22 out of 34 African nations using African languages in schooling, the current trend has been towards the increased use of colonial languages as media of instruction. Evidently the debate over language of instruction in African nations, while lively enough, is not leading inevitably to the promotion of the local languages in the education system.

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42 Benson also notes similar difficulties of transitioning between experimentation and implementation in current bilingual education programmes in Guinea-Bissau and Niger. This transition was not easy for PROPELCA (section 3.2) either; a seven-year "extension" phase stretched between the end of its official experimental phase in 1988 and its generalisation by the government in 1995.
Why this less than enthusiastic adoption of mother-tongue education programmes across the continent, particularly given the evidence of their cognitive impact on learning? As Moulton points out (2003:8), it is not the pedagogical side of mother-tongue education that impedes its wide-scale adoption; rather, political and social factors come powerfully into play when language and education issues are under consideration. Stroud argues that the root cause of the obstacles to mother-tongue education is political:

> Problems of economic and technical resourcing are consequences of marginality and failure rather than causes of them. The problems . . . centre on the distribution of power and economy in society, and ultimately turn on issues of democracy, equity and access to political voice for speakers of indigenous languages (2001:343).

Musau (2003:162) concurs, noting that negative attitudes towards indigenous African languages are rationalised by members of the African elite in terms of the supposed lack of neutrality, lack of international acceptance and non-scientific character of those languages. For those in power, the capacity of mother-tongue education to facilitate equity and access for minority language communities is not necessarily a point in its favour.

In the case of African countries, the governing national elite who play a crucial role in questions of language and education policy typically come from minority language communities themselves and are well aware of the complex cultural and linguistic environment of their countries. However, having themselves successfully navigated the established systems of education and advancement, mediated through the colonial language (Rubagumya 1994:156), members of the elite now draw their own position and power from the status quo. Prah (1995:71), himself a member of the African elite, states that this tension between the two realities is evident in the stance of the elite on the question of language and education.

> Although in many instances it can be said that the élite recognises the need to use indigenous languages in education, the conditions of their formation and the

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**Figure 2.1. Changes in the implementation of mother-tongue education (MTE) programmes in African countries, 1982-1995 (from Komarek 1997)**

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interests tied to their cultural base in society makes it existentially difficult for them to negate the basis of their position in society.

This tension between community interest and individual interest explains, at least in part, what Prah calls "a crisis of the will" to implement national policy supporting the use of local languages in education.

Komarek describes the situation more starkly, arguing that any innovation that threatens the status quo is likely to be screened out by the elite. In his view, retaining the colonial language in African education is simply a matter of power politics.

In [retaining the colonial language], the elite ensures its exclusive access to information, prevents self-determination and thus sharing of power by others. … Incumbent African governments have absolutely no willingness - beyond the strict minimum demanded by domestic politics - to support national [local] language as the official, media or instructional languages (1997:30).

In Komarek's opinion, members of the African elite oppose pro-local language education policy out of sheer self-interest.

However, this view seems to ignore the fact that most of the African elite do in fact straddle two worlds: the modernised, Westernised urban centre and the rural village or town of their extended family, with issues of identity and loyalty on both sides of the divide. It is important to understand the ambivalence that springs from this situation when analysing elite attitudes towards mother-tongue education. Power analysis alone does not do justice to the complexity of identities involved in the values and agenda of a member of the African elite.43

Myers-Scotton's study of elite closure in Africa (1993) supports this view. Describing elite closure as a strategy by which people in power maintain their position through linguistic choices, Myers-Scotton observes that members of the African elite often do maintain the language of their ethnic communities, recognising and participating in the important social identity functions of those languages.44 She argues:

it is not that the elite do not show positive attitudes towards the languages of the nonelite; rather, it is a matter of allocation. Language becomes a boundary marker" (1993:159, emphasis added).

43 Johnson (1970:81) offers an alternative perspective on the attitude of the African elite towards local languages. He describes African intellectuals as both desiring to modernise African society and make it relevant to the "universal" mainstream culture, and desiring to affirm and develop the dignity of their indigenous African traditions including their languages. Johnson considers that this dilemma has inspired a great deal of debate among African intellectuals, but little action.

44 Alexandre (1985:260) observed this phenomenon in Cameroon, where French-speaking members of the Cameroonian elite were "making conscious efforts to address their children in the vernacular to prevent them from forgetting it".
The elite, contends Myers-Scotton, identify themselves with an additional language, an additional world to that of the minority language community. The European-oriented education system through which the elite have come is part of that 'outside' world, its boundaries clearly marked by the colonial language used there. The elite's hard-earned ability to navigate that education system and operate in the 'outside' world is the source of their economic power and social prestige in the home community, and the desire to maintain this privileged position can hardly be wondered at.

Thus an interpretation of policy that focuses only on overt power politics between the elite and the marginalised, played out at personal levels, is not an especially useful means for understanding why local languages are not broadly used in African schools. The complex of motivations driving the key decision makers is grounded in their multiple identities and loyalties. It is also influenced by the current educational discourse that has grown out of the colonial and post-colonial experience in Africa. According to Stroud (2001:341), this educational discourse not only privileges the colonial language-speaking elite, but it also leads to the interpretation of problems encountered in mother-tongue education in terms of deprivation, marginality and poverty of minority language speakers. Even well-meaning forays into mother-tongue education, if founded in this perspective of deficiency, do not result in any fundamental empowerment of minority language communities. Local suspicion of such discourse may also explain why attaining community ownership of mother-tongue education programmes can pose a significant challenge.

The case can thus be made that mother-tongue education has the potential for improving school performance and supporting cultural cohesion in minority language communities of sub-Saharan Africa. However, it is equally evident that realising this potential requires a serious commitment of resources on the part of national and local stakeholders. Education policy that includes the use of African languages in schools can be found in much national-level legislation around the continent, and experimental language education programmes are not difficult to find. However, the long-term support necessary for successful implementation of local language education is much less common, as it requires: i) a fundamental commitment by educational authorities to equality of access and social inclusion for minority language communities; ii) an equally strong commitment on the part of the language communities, and preferably members of their elite as well, to the use of local languages for schooling; and iii) a national environment of what Mazrui and Mazrui (1998:5)
call "linguistic nationalism"\footnote{Mazrui and Mazrui (1998:5) describe linguistic nationalism as "that version of nationalism which is concerned about the value of its own language, seeks to defend it against other languages, and encourages its use and enrichment". See also Mazrui 2004:20.} - or at least linguistic pluralism - that will provide broader policy support to local language education.

2.3.6. Summary: Language and education

This discussion of language and education is intended to highlight the array of cultural, pedagogical and political issues involved in the use of African languages in formal education. As an educational strategy, it has both advantages and obstacles, advocates as well as critics. Understanding language and education policy in African nations as a product of dynamic social and political engagement at national and local levels allows for the examination of the roles of institutional discourse and individual agency, in both setting the educational status quo and in changing it. These all form a context within which the current study can be analysed.

2.4. Summary: Discourse framework on language, literacy and education

In the conceptual framework outlined above I have attempted to draw together the technical and the sociopolitical aspects of minority language, literacy and mother-tongue education. Discussion of the technical and the sociopolitical perspectives on language and learning often leads to an unbalanced emphasis of one at the expense of the other, when in fact both perspectives are critical to understanding the present study.

2.5. Research design

The design of this study has been shaped by both the nature of the research question and the research values I bring to the study.

The question driving this study is: what is the nature of the impact of the educational choices being made by the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities on maintenance of the minority language in each of those communities? Such a question assumes that cultural, historical and social aspects of the research environment will be highly relevant. The question also recognises the placement of the study in a semirural African context, with all the issues of culture and logistics attendant on developing-world research.

The research values which have shaped my approach to the research question are discussed at the beginning of this chapter: a critical approach, plurality of perspective, a
culturalist interpretation of data, and a developing world orientation. These priorities speak to the importance of understanding as much as possible of the cultural, historical and social context of the research question.

This question, the context within which it is framed and my own research priorities all came together in formulating the design of the study. It is important to note that this approach was not shaped merely by the constraints of the research environment, but rather by a combination of my own research values and the contextual choices that surrounded the study.

The design components of this study include its objectives, its methodological orientation, and specific processes of data gathering and interpretation. These are discussed in this section.

2.5.1. Research objectives

The objectives of the field research were to gain an understanding of the following:

- the historical trends which have framed current language choices for education in the three language communities.
- the dynamics of the current language community environment relative to the use of the mother tongue in both oral and written form.
- the goals and values of the various stakeholders in the primary school - pupils, parents, teachers, educational administrators, community, and national education authorities - where language choice in the classroom is concerned.
- what actually takes place in primary classrooms in terms of language behaviour; to be able to compare the mother-tongue classroom with the English-language classroom in terms of the behaviours and attitudes of pupils and teachers.
- the long-term effects of the PROPELCA46 mother-tongue education programme on pupils.
- what has been written in each of the three languages, and some idea of its use among the language communities.
- how language committees function, who participates in them, and what their current position is in the language community.

These objectives, along with the methodological choices described below, informed my choice of research techniques.

46 Operational Research Project for Teaching in African Languages, the mother-tongue education programme operating in Bafut, Kom and Nso'. See section 3.2.1 for a more detailed explanation of PROPELCA.
2.5.2. The subject

The decision to target the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities in this study was based principally on the desire to gain a broader understanding of the research question than one language community alone would have provided, and to avoid results which may have been dependent on some phenomenon unique to just one group.\(^{47}\) The Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities have enough in common in the areas of interest to this study that it was both possible and productive to examine them together. In addition, the differences found among the three communities were helpful in highlighting issues such as the impact of longevity on a mother-tongue promotion programme, the impact of proximity of the language community to an urban centre on language attitudes and use, and the influence of varying institutional support for mother-tongue initiatives. A more detailed comparison and contrast of the three language communities is found in section 3.2.6 and 3.2.7 of this study.

Given so many similarities among the three language communities, this research was done with the expectation that the data on programmatic and attitudinal aspects of language promotion might be similar across the three as well. This was frequently found to be so, and the data interpretation found in chapters 4-6 reflects that fact. At the same time, however, nuances of difference in the data from the three language communities were something I was always looking out for, in both the collection and the interpretation of the data.

2.5.3. Methodological orientation

As has been discussed above, the central question, context and priorities of this study were key to the formulation of its methodological orientation. This study is based in the qualitative research tradition as described by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Vulliamy (1990). Its goal is to understand what Yin (1993:3) refers to as a phenomenon that is not readily distinguishable from its context: the educational choices being made by Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities and the relationship of those choices to the maintenance of the mother tongue in those communities. This method choice is situated in a series of debates about the nature and utility of various approaches to research. Those debates most relevant to my method choice are the debates on objectivity, the role of the researcher, generalisability, validity and reliability of methods and data. These will be examined below, followed by some

\(^{47}\) This approach was suggested by Cameroonian colleagues at the National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees (NACALCO) in my early discussions with them, who saw it as broadening their own understanding of the influence of educational choices on minority language maintenance beyond just one language community.
thoughts on the impact of the environment in which the research took place, and the nature and implications of my own personal position as a researcher.

The feasibility and desirability of objectivity in research. In any discussion of objectivity it must first be clear that the term itself has various meanings and shades of meaning. In one sense, all research should strive for objectivity, meaning that one's study is open to criticism and one's evidence withstands scrutiny (Phillips 1990:35). However, for the quantitative researcher objectivity carries additional meanings as both a methodological approach and a research characteristic. Bernstein (1983:8) defines objectivity as the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness.

This conviction about the existence of an objective framework to which one can refer in doing research leads the quantitative researcher to attempt to minimise contextual, historical and subjective influences on the research so as to rightly determine the nature of truth. In the research process itself, objectivity is considered a fundamental characteristic (T. May 2001:9); it is essential that research outcomes not be influenced by the opinions of the researcher.

In keeping with this perspective, truth is sought via objective measures insofar as possible. The essence of quantitative social science research is to formulate a hypothesis and then attempt to refute it; as Maxim (1999:vii) states, "the method of science is the method of elimination" - and that by objective measure, not personal intuition. Mathematical tools, i.e. inferential statistics, indicate whether the hypothesis being tested can reasonably be refuted or not. In this way personal judgement is thought to be minimised, as trust is placed in statistical formulae to determine the truth. Understandably, the kinds of research that can be done in this way are limited to those in which extraneous contextual variables can be controlled or eliminated, and in which the question to be researched is clearly isolable from its surroundings.

In marked contrast, the qualitative researcher assumes that context is an integral part of the question to be studied, and that it is indeed desirable for illuminating the research. For the qualitative social researcher, reality is inextricably situated in (some would say constructed by) social context. For that reason, attempts to isolate one aspect of social reality for study are not only pointless but actually unhelpful. Qualitative social research is carried
out in a naturalistic environment rather than a contrived one; contextual variables are not eliminated, but rather integrated into the study.

Furthermore, qualitative social inquiry is based on the recognition that the subjects' interpretation of context is a crucial aspect of the inquiry. Qualitative research focuses on the meanings which people give to their surroundings, rather than on the surroundings themselves (T. May 2001:13). Vulliamy (1990:11) suggests that in this sense qualitative research is holistic, attempting to provide a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect how people interpret their world. Certainly the sociology of language is one area that benefits from a holistic approach to understanding people's interpretations of language use and function. As Adegbija (1994:80) notes, "changes in language attitudes often connote fundamental and multi-pronged changes in societal structures".

However, rejecting objectivity as a goal does not consign all qualitative research to an epistemological wasteland where truth is unknowable and the only reality available is locally constructed. Phillips (1990:24) argues that "neither subjectivity nor objectivity has an exclusive stranglehold on truth". Though he discounts the modernist notion that knowledge is built on - or justified by - some "solid and unchallengeable foundation", Phillips nevertheless argues that this does not mean that the "traditional notion of truth" has been abandoned. The present study is based on the notion that an understanding of the truth of a situation can be attained, or at least approximated, by weaving together the threads of many perspectives and discourses. Although as Geertz (1973:29) says, "cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete", a picture may be generated this way which adds to our understanding of the world.

*The interpretive paradigm and the role of the researcher.* The interpretive paradigm of qualitative research is based on the notion that the study of natural objects and that of human beings are fundamentally different (Vulliamy 1990:8). An interpretive framework sees human actions and institutions as socially constructed, rather than as the product of external forces which mould people in predictable ways. Thus, Vulliamy contends that researchers have to interact with the subjects of the research, attempting to see the world from their standpoint.

The interpretive framework is particularly well suited to research into educational processes (Putney et al 1999:374). It provides insights into the insider knowledge that members of a group need to participate appropriately in that group. It highlights the existence of different voices and the need to consider whose voice is represented in any one context. It
focuses on everyday activities of people within certain contexts, in order to draw out understandings of the phenomena under study.

However, such an approach to research defines the researcher's role in terms of his or her interaction with the researched. The role of 'detached observer' is not an option in interpretive research where one's goal is to "grasp the subjective meanings used by the social actors" being studied (Blaikie 2000:52). Researcher subjectivity is thus understood to be characteristic of interpretive research. On the other hand the researcher also needs to be aware that subjectivity can easily slide into advocacy, as the line is blurred between understanding and identifying with the subjects. While advocacy as "research on and for subjects" (Cameron et al. 1994:20, emphasis in the original) is a legitimate research position, it is distinct from the interpretive research described above and should be embarked on as an intentional choice. Otherwise one runs the danger of believing that one is conducting ideologically balanced research but ending up with data more characteristic of an advocacy position. One way to forestall this tendency is to intentionally seek out a variety of perspectives on the issues being studied, striving for as balanced a picture as possible.

Generalisability. The concept of generalisability of results is another cornerstone of quantitative research (Kvale 2002:300). This concept is related to the term 'external validity', and refers to whether the results of sample testing can be assumed to be valid across an entire population (Schofield 1993:91). In statistical research, one of the perennial difficulties is determining how large the sample has to be in order to make reliable generalisations about the population as a whole (Verma and Mallick 1999:160).

For many qualitative researchers, however, generalisability is a non-issue. Ethnographer James Spradley accurately expresses this position: "the concern for the general is incidental to an understanding of the particular" (Spradley 1980:162). This is not to say that qualitative research has nothing to do with the generalisation of research results, but rather that this is not the primary goal of such research. In this vein, Stake (1995:8) argues that "the real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation." The potential for generalisability is thus not a high priority; the priority is rather on understanding the details and the context of the case under study. In fact, prioritising generalisability may even endanger qualitative research; referring to education research in particular, Putney et al (1999:375) comment that "individual students do not live large-scale, replicable lives. They live local and situated ones. Large-scale research studies mask differences that shape student lives".
Nevertheless, generalisability is in some sense the goal of all social research, inasmuch as one desires to add to the body of understanding about human beings. The case study, of which the present study is one, reflects this paradox between uniqueness and generalisability.

The case study is characterised by its attempt to answer the question, "What can be learned from the single case?" This focus on the single case does result in certain limitations. One is that the generalisability of findings from a single case to an entire population is difficult to demonstrate. Stake (1995:4) points out that, by its very nature, the case study is unlikely to be a strong representation of a larger population:

> Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case.

Yet case study research does try to present evidence upon which readers may make their own generalisations; as one or a few cases are studied at length, "certain activities or problems or responses will come up again and again" (Stake 1995:7). Generalisations are drawn within the bounds of the case study regarding those repeated events or responses. Further observation within the case study modifies these generalisations. This process is not unique to case study, says Stake, but is common in research: "seldom is an entirely new understanding reached, but refinement of understanding is".

*Validity and reliability*. Along with generalisability, the concepts of validity and reliability have their roots in quantitative research. Validity refers to whether the research method assesses what it is intended to assess (Kvale 2002:302). Reliability, or replicability, is the extent to which a research procedure produces the same results each time it is employed.

Wolcott (1990) observes that in the history of research, validity and reliability were associated almost exclusively with testing. In recent decades, however, these terms - particularly validity - have become criteria for all research, whether quantitative or not. There are those (e.g. Goetz and LeCompte 1984:221) who argue that validity is actually a major strength of qualitative inquiry. In the present study, the iterative nature of the research process, multiple methods used and the length of time given to data collection helped ensure that the research methods did indeed assess what they were meant to assess. To that end, eleven months were spent in an iterative process of on-site data gathering and reflection. If upon reflection a particular method or event appeared to be flawed in its validity, another was tried.
Reliability is a much more difficult criterion for qualitative inquiry to meet, situated as it is in the context of controlled testing.\textsuperscript{48} Still, trustworthiness of data is an issue in any honest research effort, as Lincoln points out (2002:329). Instead of reliability, a criterion which is really only relevant to the quantitative paradigm, Lincoln proposes qualitative criteria such as the stability of data when obtained from several sources as being more appropriate to the research method.

The qualitative researcher is as accountable for trustworthy and accurate data as the quantitative researcher is. However, the means by which the criteria of good research are met are not the same.\textsuperscript{49} Johnstone, a sociolinguist, argues that for qualitative research both validity and reliability are achieved by "having enough good evidence and examining it repeatedly and thoroughly, with a critical eye to one's own assumptions." (Johnstone 2000:64). In the present study, such examination of the evidence is done via triangulating findings that have been gathered in several different ways (Stake 1995; see section 2.5.4).

\textit{Constraints and influences of the research environment.} The environment in which this study took place was first of all a social environment. It was also a developing world environment, with all the attendant potential for either empowering or taking advantage of the subjects of the study (Cameron et al. 1994). For me as a Northern researcher in a Southern cultural setting, attempting to conduct responsible research led inevitably to issues of capital,\textsuperscript{50} respect, empowerment and ethics.

As has been noted, an interpretive research framework sees human actions and institutions as created by people rather than the product of external forces. This assumption about the power of people's actions and values in creating their surroundings calls for a certain level of respect for the subjects of interpretive inquiry. As Cameron et al (1994:24) note, "social researchers' knowledge is and must be constructed out of subjects' own knowledge". Given this dependent relationship of the researcher on the researched, it is highly appropriate that interpretive research be characterised by careful and perseverant attempts to understand the motivations, beliefs and values of those being studied. For

\textsuperscript{48} In fact, specific statistical procedures exist which calculate the reliability of tests themselves (Verma and Mallick 1999:202).

\textsuperscript{49} Indeed, the hegemony of the quantitative paradigm in research is demonstrated by the fact that legitimising qualitative research requires reference to so many terms and criteria developed specifically for quantitative research methods.

\textsuperscript{50} That is, the differences in educational, linguistic, financial and social capital (resources) between myself and the subjects of the research. See Bourdieu and Passeron 1990.
example, Stephens (1990) describes a process of fieldwork in Nigeria in which issues of
relationship, local views of time, language competencies and a willingness to be guided by
insiders' understandings figured prominently in his research.

The location of this study in an 'underdeveloped' part of Africa also had its own
constraints. Despite host government requirements for foreigners seeking to carry out
research, there is really very little to prevent the Northern researcher from unilaterally
choosing the research topic, abstracting the data and leaving the subjects of the research no
better off for the research that has been done. Doing so, however, seems unethical. The
substantial social, cultural, financial, academic and linguistic capital (Bourdieu and Passeron
1990) which most Northern researchers bring to research in the developing world context
needs to be recognised and used responsibly. The question is even raised as to whether
Northern research in the South is ethical at all. Tuhiwai Smith (1999:100-101) speaks
searingly about the extractive nature of what she terms "imperialist" research in the South,
while Nkinyangi (1983:200) points out that the preponderance of research by expatriates in
Kenya has meant that "Kenyan reality is being interpreted by . . . developed country
scholars".

On the other hand, the argument is also made that researchers from outside the
research environment have an important contribution to make. Discussing the ethics of
outsider research, Bridges (2002) responds to the argument that it is wrong to attempt to
speak for another:

If we become persuaded that we cannot understand the experience of others and
that 'we have no right to speak for anyone but ourselves', then we will all too easily
find ourselves epistemologically and morally isolated, furnished with a
comfortable legitimation for ignoring the condition of anyone but ourselves (p.83).

Rather, Bridges argues that research by outsiders can in fact enhance the understanding of the
community itself as well as the wider public of the phenomenon under study. Addressing the
same issue of outsider research, Pendlebury and Enslin (2002:68) identify the pitfalls of
paternalism, misrepresentation and even betrayal of those being researched. Pendlebury and
Enslin conclude that:

*Your research must promote those human capabilities, including agency and
choice, that are necessary for the quality of life of those who have participated in
the research. This is especially important if your research is intended to inform
public policy* (italics in the original).

The argument here is that ethical, empowering research by outside researchers is in fact
possible.
At the very least, therefore, it is important that research by Northerners in the developing world take into account the relevance - or potential relevance - of the research topic to those being studied. Is the topic one which concerns people, locally or at national or continent level? Will the topic enlarge their understanding of their world and their ability to affect it? In formulating the present study, it was clear that questions of language choice in education are highly relevant to African scholars and educators. Namuddu (1991) lists an extensive series of research priorities for education in Africa, based on input from African researchers; included are questions on the role of languages in instruction, the impact of curriculum on educational effectiveness, and the school as a community institution. Similarly, Adegbija's call for language attitude research in Africa (Adegbija 1994) includes the study of the use of and attitudes towards indigenous languages.

In addition, research in the developing world should challenge what Namuddu (1991:42) calls "the ideology of poverty". This perspective assumes a lack of competencies among those who are disadvantaged; it encourages deficit-model thinking, and ignores local interpretations of reality. There is no question that the developing world faces serious issues of economic and educational disadvantage compared with the industrialised world. But without denying the serious problems facing citizens of the developing world, responsible researchers should avoid perpetuating the destructive myth of universal poverty of thought, competency and capacity on the part of developing-world citizens. 51

Influence of participatory approaches. Discussions of participatory research describe it in one of two ways: research in which the researcher participates in the context as well as observing it; and research in which the subjects of the research participate in formulating the study's design and implementation. The former is characteristic of ethnographic methodology, focusing as it does on participatory observation of sociocultural phenomena (Spradley 1980). The latter is characteristic of development-oriented and action research, in which social change of some kind is the primary expected research outcome (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Cornwall and Pratt 2003). Some research initiatives combine the two in their drive for strongly collaborative investigation and implementation. 52

51 See Bridges' comments (2002:76ff) on the use of "damaging frameworks of understanding" to interpret the phenomena or people being researched.

52 For example, see the International Institute for Sustainable Development's guide for field projects on adaptive strategies at <http://www.iisd.org/casl/CASLGuide/ParticipatoryApproach.htm>.
Although this study was not designed specifically as participatory research, it was influenced both by my own predilection for collaboration and also by the perception that the researcher has certain ethical responsibilities to the subjects of the research - particularly in the Southern context, as discussed above. The impact of these ethical responsibilities on research is described in Lincoln's (2002:330) description of inquiry that commits itself to a) "new and emergent relations with respondents"; b) a professional and personal stance that sees inquiry in terms of its use in fostering action; and c) a vision of research that promotes community, social justice and civic discourse.

The present study reflected these commitments in several ways. Attempts were made to gather information that reflected the voices of the respondents. Data analysis was carried out cooperatively with local interested parties, and led to new understandings of the topic both on my part and on the part of my Cameroonian colleagues. Commonalities and comparisons among the three language communities were drawn out and studied with my Cameroonian colleagues, thus facilitating their wider understanding of the issues as well as my own. This collaboration was not at all difficult; interest among the language committees studied was high in 'what I might find out', and in fact all three of invited me to give reports on my findings even before leaving the area. Further written analysis of my findings will be similarly shared with language committees, the National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees (NACALCO) and SIL as well as the government Ministry responsible for research.

However, this informal (if frequent) practice of including interested colleagues was not systematic enough to call this study 'participatory research'. It was simply a sharing of the process with the people most likely to understand it, and to benefit themselves by the knowledge. The notion of social change through participatory research was not part of my research design.

Personal position and constraints of the researcher. My own position as researcher in this study has been shaped by a number of factors. As a member of SIL International, a faith-based language development NGO,53 since 1980, I hold certain views about the inherent value of indigenous languages and the rights of minority language speakers to use their own languages for education. My sympathetic view of the struggle of linguistic minorities for social and political inclusion and access stems from this perspective. I also tend towards a

sympathetic view of the religious applications of language development in Northwest Cameroon, from the history of mission schooling to current initiatives by Christian churches to promote use of the Scriptures in the mother tongue. Although I do not agree with the assumptions underlying much expatriate involvement in education and language development in Africa (which seem to me characterised by the conviction that the knowledge being imported by the expatriate is the only knowledge worth knowing), my own professional career has focused on these very activities. I believe it is possible to participate in development which empowers local and national actors rather than denying them a voice in the processes involved.

This personal position brought both constraints and advantages to the current study. My identification with SIL and its support for minority language development led to my being perceived by NACALCO and language committee personnel as sympathetic to their own goals and challenges. As a result, I received a great deal of cooperation in my research from these people, without which the depth of investigation achieved would not have been possible. My position outside the formal education system also allowed me to avoid the position of 'evaluator' of teachers, parents or language committee personnel, thereby increasing their willingness to be open in helping me to understand the 'subjective meanings' they ascribed to the phenomena under study.

The constraints of this position have lain principally in my analysis and interpretation of the data. On many occasions I have had to examine the balance of my own interpretations, in an effort to prevent my own beliefs about the rightness of local agency and minority empowerment from impinging unduly on the data gathered. Whether that is ultimately possible I am not certain, but the effort to emphasise observation over advocacy has been ongoing.

Another inevitable aspect of my position as researcher was my status as a foreigner from the North. My perceptions of the responsibilities of a Northerner doing research in the South are discussed above; my awareness of those responsibilities accompanied me throughout the study. The other major aspect of my foreign-ness was my lack of fluency in any of the three languages of the communities under study: Bafut, Kom or Lamnso'. My strategies for dealing with this fact are described in section 2.5.4 below; at this point let it just be said that this obstacle led me into a far more collaborative model of data collection and analysis than I had planned, and significantly improved the quality of the data collected over what I would otherwise have been able to obtain.
Finally, the research question and methods of this study led me to exploit both 'insider' and 'outsider' researcher positions. As an outsider to the culture, I was able to approach the unfamiliar environment with few pre-existing assumptions about what I was seeing. However, the position of outsider also carries the significant challenge of understanding insider motivations, terminology and points of view. In an effort to minimise this disadvantage, I sought the input of insider colleagues as frequently as possible to help me interpret the data and the environment in which it was collected.

*Opportunism and inquiry.* Although the general area of research - educational impact on minority language maintenance - remained the same throughout the field research phase, the direction of the study was guided by the local environment and opportunities which presented themselves. From the beginning of the study, minority language communities in the Northwest Province of Cameroon were in focus: however, the existence of mother-tongue education programmes in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities, and of the three language committees carrying out extensive language promotion activities in the communities, made them an especially attractive locus of the study. The direction of the study was also influenced by issues of access. Relationships and shared interests gave me free access to community primary schools, homes, offices and language committee meetings. People were very ready to talk to me about the topic of language and primary education, partly because of their own investment in it and partly because they trusted my motives for being interested. Being identified with the Cameroon branch of SIL International conferred a significant level of trust based on the organisation's reputation in that part of the country.

Where my access was limited, it was usually due either to physical constraints (my inability to travel to very remote community schools), time constraints (e.g. the primary schools' yearly schedule, the timing of meetings, and so on), or the linguistic and cultural gaps between the researcher and the researched. The effects of these constraints may be seen in Figure 2.2, where not every data-gathering technique could be applied in each of the three language communities under study. The variety of data-gathering tools helped to compensate for this drawback, at the same time allowing me a multi-faceted view of the phenomena under study.

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54 Holliday (2002:27) describes the qualitative researcher's task as being to make the familiar strange; in my case this was relatively easy, as most of what I encountered in the research environment was unfamiliar.
2.5.4. Data gathering and interpretation

The data-gathering process in this study was highly iterative over 11 months, with questions prompting data gathering, data analysis guiding reflection, and reflection framing a new round of data gathering. The study sought to effectively engage the various local parties who are stakeholders in the processes of language development and expanded use of the mother tongue, in line with Lincoln's (2002:330) argument that "seeking out multiple constructions of the world by multiple stakeholders has to be marked by serious, sustained searches for, and prolonged engagement with, those stakeholders and their constructions." Data was gathered on physical contexts, stakeholder behaviours, and stakeholders' self-reported perspectives on various topics. This section describes the data gathering process, including language issues, specific data gathering tools and data interpretation issues.

**Data gathering techniques.** The data for this study was gathered in three ways: direct observation, interview and document study. The direct observation data was gathered while in attendance at particular events; this activity should be distinguished from participant observation, which assumes a more long-term participatory role for the observer. Events observed included primary school classrooms, PROPELCA teacher training events and language committee meetings.

The interviews included open-ended individual and group interviews, as well as two semi-structured questionnaires which were implemented orally on an individual basis. One of the latter, the PROPELCA alumni survey, was applied with 36 adult Kom and Nso' people who had been in PROPELCA as children.55 These 36 respondents chosen were actually all those whom my colleagues in Kom and Banso' could track down in two months. Most but not all still lived in the homelands. Appendices 1-3 contain the survey form, descriptions of the respondents, and a compilation of their answers to the semi-structured survey questions.56

The second semi-structured questionnaire, a parent interview series, was applied to 48 parents of school-aged children in Bafut, Kom and Nso'. The respondents were chosen by my research assistants (see below section on language) according to criteria they and I outlined together, in an effort to maximise the diversity of respondents' education, age, gender and

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55 Bafut was not included because the PROPELCA programme had not been going long enough in Bafut to have adult alumni.

56 The respondents' answers to the PROPELCA alumni survey and parent interview series were broad ranging, as the survey itself had no pre-set answers from which they were to choose. Thus, the categories of responses listed in Appendix 3 represent my attempt to collate and organise the answers accurately.
location. Appendices 6-8 contain the survey form, descriptions of the respondents, and a compilation of their answers to the semi-structured questions.

The responses obtained in both the PROPELCA alumni survey series and the parent interview series were not structured in terms of pre-determined response categories. These surveys and interviews were carried out orally, and careful notes were taken as each individual respondent gave his or her perspective on the various questions. Responses were then analysed for thematic content after the fact, as described in the data interpretation section below.

Five group interviews and 43 individual interviews were also carried out; interviewees included local teachers, education authorities, parents, school children, PROPELCA trainers, language committee members, NACALCO personnel and others. Appendices 9 and 10 list all of these. Figure 2.2 lists the observations and interviews which took place in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities. Not included in this particular chart are the interviews of education authorities, NACALCO personnel, and others who were not specific to one of the three languages communities.

**Figure 2.2. Data collection techniques used in the present study, by language community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection tool</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Appendix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROPELCA alumni survey Jan-Mar 03</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school classroom observations Feb-Mar 03</td>
<td>13 classes, 5 schools</td>
<td>8 classes, 5 schools</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>21 classes, 10 schools</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPELCA teacher training observations Jan-July 03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 events</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language committee meeting observations Mar-July 03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 events</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent interview series July 2003</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interviews of children, July 2003</td>
<td>5 children</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>9 children</td>
<td>2 groups, 14 children</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group interviews of teachers/supervisors Feb-July 03</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 groups</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews of local personnel: teachers, headmasters, language committee personnel, etc. Jan-July 2003</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, the document study activities took place in the Rhodes House library and the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the NACALCO archive and SIL Cameroon library in Yaoundé; and language committee archives in Banso' and Bamenda.

The use of these three data gathering techniques - direct observation, open and semi-structured interview, and document study - made possible triangulation of the techniques themselves and of the data sources as well.

Language. Language choice was an important facet of the data-gathering process. The three language communities studied spoke three very different languages as mother tongues, and it was impossible to gain more than a "greetings-level" fluency in them in the 11 months available for research. However, although some of the stakeholders were fluent speakers of English many others were not, which meant that using only English for the entire data gathering process would have seriously compromised the quality of the information gathered.57 It became clear that the cultural and linguistic chasm between myself and the rural community inhabitants meant that my attempts to engage them would end in either confusion or unrealistic monetary expectations on their part58.

For these reasons, I chose two means of gathering interview information. All interviews of school staff, education authorities, university contacts, language committee personnel and other bilingual information sources were carried out by myself in English. For the community-level surveys and interviews, I worked with three research assistants, one from each language community: Mr. Ambe John Che of Manji, Bafut; Mr. Kain Godfrey of Fundong, Kom; and Ms. Nicole Barah Yinyuy of Bamenda (an ethnic Nso'). These three people carried out the community-level interviews of parents and PROPELCA alumni, using the mother tongue and/or English as desired by the respondents.

I worked closely with each of the three research assistants, orienting them carefully to the issues and questions I was addressing at each step, and discussing the results they

57 Jansen (2004:6) criticises researchers' assumptions about the feasibility of using European languages for data collection in research on Africa: "too little attention is paid to the ways in which instrumentation . . . is framed within English, and much is lost in the richness of expression that is possible in and through indigenous languages, especially when the research respondents are not formally educated or articulate in the language of the researcher and her 'instruments' " (emphasis added).

58 Indeed, this did happen with the two group interviews of school-aged children I carried out near the end of my research time. The experience confirmed that respondents' limited English fluency and their awe of the "white man lady" affected the data gathered. The experience taught me a great deal, and not only about the topics I had hoped to investigate!
gathered. We also talked about how to modify the interview and survey questions for presentation in the mother tongue, and debriefed together after each data-gathering event. Two of the three assistants were concurrently working as literacy programme coordinators in their home areas, which gave them very good insights into the information being gathered; they also acted as my guides and hosts as I did observations of primary classrooms in the homelands. The third assistant was a young university graduate in communications whose parents still lived in the home area; she gave data entry help as well as data gathering assistance, and provided me with her own interesting interpretations of the data collected. In fact, her scepticism regarding the need for mother-tongue education in her home area provided a helpful counterpoint to the pro-mother tongue perspectives of the other two research assistants.

Based on the quality and consistency of the data collected this way, it is fair to say that this research method was much more than simply an attempt to compensate for my lack of language fluency. It actually strengthened the data analysis, improved the quality and quantity of data gathered, and enriched the research process. Admittedly it added a certain bias other than my own to the data; on the other hand, the assistants themselves were closely identified with the language communities, and their interpretations of local perspectives were almost certainly more accurate than my own.

Data interpretation. As was mentioned earlier in this section, the iterative nature of the data gathering process meant that data analysis occurred throughout the field research phase. In addition, periodic (once a month or more often) reflection on the content and direction of the data gathering process helped to shape the research process as it went. Once the field research was completed, more in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data took place, as presented in chapters four through six.

Since the responses gathered in the PROPELCA alumni survey and the parent interview series were not confined to pre-determined categories, interpretation of that data involved discovering the most common themes in the responses given. A respondent might mention more than one theme in his or her response to a particular survey question; thus the

59 The environment in which the research assistants carried out the surveys optimised the quality of the information gathered, although it was a lengthy process. Respondents were interviewed in their homes, and in the mother tongue or English as desired by the respondent. The research assistants reported spending up to two hours obtaining the answers to each questionnaire, not because there were so many questions but because people took their time to consider and answer them.
number of 'answers' to a question is often greater than the total number of respondents. The data tables in Appendices 3 and 8, and in various places throughout chapters 4-6, show this characteristic of the data: the number of answers to any one question might be greater than the total number of respondents. This protocol was followed in preference to a more structured survey, for two reasons: the emphasis on oral data collection, in whichever language the respondent chose; and the reluctance to impose my own categories on the respondents' perspectives. I believe that the result of this protocol choice was that local voices and views were more clearly heard, which was indeed a priority throughout this study.

2.6. Conclusion

This then is the conceptual and design framework within which this study has taken place. Based in a research orientation which has prioritised a critical approach to investigation, a plurality of perspective, a culturalist interpretation and a developing world orientation, this study brings together appropriate theoretical constructs and research activities in an effort to elucidate the relationship between local educational choices and local language maintenance.

This study is not an attempt to provide what might be termed 'objective proof' of the efficacy of mother-tongue education in improving academic output or economic outcomes. Studies of this sort already exist, both within and outside of sub-Saharan Africa; but positive statistical findings regarding mother-tongue education do not seem to greatly influence either national level policy or local level decisions regarding language choice in school. The objective of this study is thus to examine how decisions are made and played out locally with regard to language choice in school, and how such decisions inter-relate with use and maintenance of the local language. With that objective in mind, research methods were chosen which focused on discovering the beliefs, perspectives and behaviours of the stakeholders in local primary education.

60 A notable example is the extensive longitudinal study by Thomas and Collier (2002), which provides clear evidence of the value of extended periods of mother-tongue instruction for students across the United States. This study's results have been widely disseminated since the late 1990s, and yet in that time the bilingual education policy in the United States has grown less conducive to the use of a child's first language in school, not more so (Escamilla 2004; Hornberger 2004).
Chapter 3. Setting the historical context: 
Language and education in anglophone Cameroon

Language choices, educational philosophies and political interests are closely intertwined throughout the history of language and education in anglophone Cameroon. The first part of this chapter provides an outline of the history of language and education in Northwest Cameroon, from the advent of formal schooling to the present day. In the second part, the course of language development in Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' languages is explored. Maps of these areas may be found in Appendix 17.

3.1. History of language and education in Northwest Cameroon: 1844-the present

Three major segments of Cameroonian society have been involved in language choice and education over the past 170 years: Christian missions of various denominations; the government, whether colonial or independent; and the Cameroonian people themselves. The first two institutions have brought substantial material resources and political influence to the accomplishment of their goals. However it is important to realise that Cameroonian communities, despite their relative lack of resources in the overall scheme of things, have not merely been acted on in the area of education. Unwilling simply to receive education policy and programmes in a passive manner, Cameroonians have again and again demonstrated active interest in shaping their children's education according to their own priorities. The interaction of these three broad interest groups - government, mission and Cameroonian citizens - has formed the basis of the language and education environment of today.

3.1.1. Cameroon, the Grassfields and European contact before 1884

The language situation in pre-colonial Cameroon was diverse. Even today, up to 279 indigenous languages are spoken throughout the country (SIL 2003). Migratory movements over the centuries resulted in continual language change, among both the new arrivals and the people already settled (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:34). No single lingua franca was used in the region (Vernon-Jackson 1967:4), although the Fulfuldé, Duala and Hausa languages were

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61 For a map of Cameroon, see Map 1, Appendix 17.
among those used more widely than just among native speakers. The languages spoken in the Grassfields region (now the Northwest Province) belong to the Grassfields Southern Bantu language family (Chilver and Kaberry 1968:9); Kom and Lamnso' belong to the Ring sub-family, while Bafut is in the Mbam-Nkam sub-family (SIL 2003).

According to historians Nkwi and Warnier (1982:19), the Grassfields area was continuously populated for several millennia before it became a colonial possession of Germany in 1884. The Bafut, Kom and Nso' people trace their origins to the Tikar kingdom, a region to the east of the Grassfields (see section 4.1.2). Nkwi and Warnier believe that the Tikar migrated into the Grassfields 300-400 years ago.

The cultures of the Grassfields were well developed, with sedentary agricultural communities permitting the development of knowledge of architecture, crafts, music, pottery and iron working. Extensive trade in palm oil, kola nuts and craft work was established in the region; this, along with migration and other interactions between various groups living in the area, fostered a diverse linguistic milieu (Chilver and Kaberry 1968). As Mzeka (1990: 9-10) notes,


the Western Grassfields states, at the time in question, were neither isolated nor hostile . . . . People of one state were fairly aware of the important happenings in neighbouring or friendly states.

Trade had also been established by then between the Grassfields and European merchants in Calabar (a town in present-day Nigeria), which was held by the British.

During the 19th century, Calabar-Grassfields trade became increasingly based on the trans-Atlantic slave trade.62 The Bafut and Kom in particular engaged in systematic slave raiding on neighbouring peoples. (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:96). By the end of the 19th century, Nkwi and Warnier note, the trade in slaves and European imports through Calabar had displaced trade in iron and palm oil as more profitable (p.112). The chiefdoms along the main trade routes, including Bafut, Kom and Nso', had also expanded during this time. In fact, this trade was so profitable that the first German exploratory expeditions to the Grassfields in 1889 were intended to divert this Grassfields trade from British-held Calabar to German-owned Douala (p.97).

62 Although slave trading had been abolished by Great Britain in 1807, and over the next 20 years was abolished in the United States and much of Europe (Rodney 1967:23), its lucrative nature meant that the trans-Atlantic trade actually continued until 1860 (Thomas 1997). Miers points out that large-scale slave raiding by African and Arab slavers was finally suppressed for the most part in areas under European control (including northern Nigeria) around the turn of the twentieth century, while as late as 1936 slavers occupied the border between Nigeria and Cameroon (Miers 1975:296).
With such trade having long been established between the Grassfields and the coast, an English-based Pidgin had developed (Vernon-Jackson 1967:3) for use among the traders. This language eventually became so widespread that it would later be accepted and used to some extent in the German and British colonial eras. Even today, Pidgin is a *lingua franca* of marketplace and neighbourhoods in urban centres of Cameroon's anglophone Northwest and Southwest provinces (Jikong and Koenig 1983).63

The first expatriate missionary to settle on the Cameroonian coast was Rev. Joseph Merrick, a Jamaican clergyman with the London-based Baptist Missionary Society who established a school in Bimbia in 1844. This mission had already established itself on the nearby island of Fernando Po, and Rev. Merrick's work was an extension of that larger mission system (Vernon-Jackson 1967:5). The next year, an English missionary from the same mission, Rev. Albert Saker, established a school in the Douala64 area (Vischer 1915:131).

Merrick and Saker both immediately began learning the local languages, Isubu and Duala respectively. They developed written forms of the two languages and began translating the Bible into them. Saker also founded the town of Victoria in 1858, which grew as an essentially Baptist settlement populated by the freed slaves Saker had brought with him from Fernando Po (Booth 1995:1).

In the 1870s, American Presbyterian missionaries began work in Batanga, on the southeastern coast of Cameroon. They developed a written form of the local language Bulu, and also taught English (Vernon-Jackson 1967:6).

English and Pidgin remained the languages of trade and business on the coast. The use of English spread, as Vernon-Jackson (1967:6) notes:

> for the first time, the local people were provided with continuing experience with written and spoken English through daily contact with English-speaking people and through formal language training.

Jobs became available for English-speaking Cameroonians, not only in the missions but also in the commercial houses, offices, and private homes. Though no colonial power had officially established itself in the area at this point, by 1856 the British commercial interests

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63 Pidgin is not a commonly used language in francophone Cameroon, however, nor is any comparable French-based pidgin used there to the extent that Pidgin is used in anglophone Cameroon.

64 The words Duala and Douala refer to a language and a town respectively. Duala is the language spoken in the area surrounding Douala.
had established a "court of equity" (Wolf 2001:51), and the local coastal chiefs came to accept this system of British arbitration.

In the Grassfields, meanwhile, contact with Europeans was limited to the traders who did business on the coast. The influence of European missions, languages, writing and education systems was still largely unfelt in this relatively remote part of inland Cameroon.

To summarise this pre-colonial period: early Christian mission policy and activity in southern Cameroon served to encourage the initial development of local languages, and also to increase the number of Cameroonians who could speak English. European government policy did not yet exist for this region, as the area was still under local independent chiefs. However, with the British beginning to take a role in legal matters, English began to be important in this sphere. The response of Cameroonians to this situation was what might be expected in an environment of multilingualism. By adding English to their linguistic repertoire, Cameroonians living on the coast were able to access more economic opportunities, and so that is what they did.

In the Grassfields region, however, little contact with Europeans or their language had yet occurred; thus the changes taking place in the linguistic environment of the South were not mirrored by any similar changes in what is today Northwest Cameroon.

### 3.1.2. The German protectorate: 1884-1914

*The conquest of Kamerun.* In 1884, a treaty was signed between representatives of German companies and the local rulers on the Cameroonian coast, and Germany declared Kamerun a German protectorate (Wolf 2001:52). Although this move was protested by British and French interests, German warships reinforced its claim and in 1884 and 1885 Germany signed treaties with France and Britain recognising Germany's authority over the territory of Kamerun.

The new colonial power was the first to penetrate more than a few miles inland, building bridges and forts and establishing cocoa and rubber plantations in southern Cameroon (Vernon-Jackson 1967:8). The German conquest of Kamerun proceeded by means of explorers, political alliances and military action. German expeditions reached the Grassfields area of what is now Northwest Cameroon in 1889 (Nkwi 1989:13). An important alliance was soon formed between the Germans and the Bali people\(^{65}\), imbuing the Bali

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\(^{65}\) The Bali were just one of the many kingdoms in the Grassfields at the time, but unlike other peoples of the area they received the early German expeditions hospitably. This led the German commander, Zintgraff to form
kingdom with new political importance (Chilver 1967:484). Together they made war on rival groups in the area, including the Bafut.

In 1902 a German military station was built overlooking what is now the town of Bamenda in Northwest Cameroon (Nkwi 1989:41). German presence in the area was strengthened and the region gradually occupied. The interior of the country, although not so conducive to plantations as was the coast, was seen as a rich source of manpower for the plantations; the German officer in charge, Zintgraff, believed that "the region could replace Monrovia, Ghana and Togo in terms of labour supply" (Nkwi 1989:14). Slave raiding was still common among the Grassfield kingdoms, and although the German colonial authority issued a decree in 1902 forbidding any form of slavery, the Germans themselves practised "labour recruitment" (O'Neil 1996:89) for their coastal plantations. Some of this recruitment was voluntary, some was contracted for with local chiefs, and some was the result of military conquest of villages and chiefdoms (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:214). Gardinier (1967:519) notes that the loss of thousands of men from the Grassfields at this time, and the methods used to recruit those men, caused serious economic and social disruption in the area.

**Education and language policies.** The new colonial power found itself with a well-established, English-medium mission education system along the coast of the new colony. The English Baptists had founded 24 mission stations with vernacular schools, and five additional English-medium schools. The American Presbyterians were using English and Bulu in their educational activities (Todd 1983:161). The new colonial power was not congenial to the English Baptists, however, and in 1885 the English Baptist Missionary Society turned over its work in Kamerun to the Swiss-German Mission Gesellschaft, of Basel (hereafter referred to as the Basel Mission; Vischer 1915:130).

Other German missions followed. The Pallotine Catholic missionaries from Limburg arrived in Kamerun Kolonie in 1890, and German Baptists in 1891. Meanwhile, in 1887 the first German government school was opened in Douala (Calvert 1917:57).

In the Grassfields, the Basel Mission opened its first Grassfields mission station in Bali in 1903 and from there expanded into neighbouring areas including Bafut. Catholic mission stations were set up first in Nso' in 1912, and in Kom in 1913 (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:218). These missions all opened schools for the local populations, principally for the
purpose of teaching literacy and religious instruction. Indeed, until 1922, missions provided the only formal schooling in the Grassfields.

By 1914, the numbers of primary schools and students in the entire Kamerun Kolonie were as follows (Todd 1983:162):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>319</td>
<td>17,833</td>
<td>Basel Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>12,532</td>
<td>Roman Catholic Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>6,545</td>
<td>American Presbyterian Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>3,151</td>
<td>German Baptist Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Approx. 800</td>
<td>Colonial government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The various institutional sponsors followed different language and education policies. The Basel Mission's policy was strongly pro-local language, as the mission's leaders were influenced by the theories of Johann Gottfried Herder and Gustav Warneck (Stumpf 1979:28-30). Warneck, a 19th-century German missiologist, believed in the value and uniqueness of each culture; he felt that the most noble creation of a people, their language, should be found in school and in the church. Herder, an 18th-century German philosopher and theologian, had advocated the same perspective on culture, and asserted that a people's language reflected the beauty of their culture. He also considered it to be "foolish to think that white people were more developed" than other races (Stumpf 1979:30, my translation). Under these philosophical influences, the Basel Mission was strongly pro-vernacular when it came to the language of church and school.

The Basel Mission thus focused on developing local languages for use in church and school, principally the Duala language (in the south) and Mungaka, the language of the Bali people, in the Grassfields. This latter was basically a follow-on of the political alliance

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66 Westermann (1937:150) describes the connection between Christian mission and literacy this way: "When the missionary comes to primitive peoples he has to teach them to read and write. Christianity is a religion with a Holy Book; the future members of the church must be able to read and understand the Book." This is why the original commitment of missionaries in Cameroon to education centred around literacy and religion.

67 The Basel Mission's strategy of developing only two of the many local languages for use in school belies to some extent their avowed commitment to the value of each individual culture and language. In fact, for decades this language policy formed the basis of Basel Mission education despite opposition from both Cameroonians.
foraged between the Bali and the German colonial power. The American Presbyterians on the southeastern coast were using the Bulu and Benga languages.

Meanwhile, the Catholic mission was principally concerned to cooperate closely with the German government on the matter of language (Wolf 2001:58). Having no fixed language policy of their own, they were able to use the language or languages appropriate in each context, whether English, Pidgin, or a local language. The German Baptist schools for their part used German and some Duala.

The first German colonial education officer, Theodor Christaller, had arrived in 1887. Over the next several years he established the first government schools in such diverse towns as Douala, Victoria, Buea, Garoua and Yaoundé (Vernon-Jackson 1967:11). The German language was central to the curriculum of these schools (Wolf 2001:59). During this time, government policy was also set in motion to replace English with German throughout the colony, as well as to limit the use of dominant vernacular languages.

With this aim of eliminating English use in Kamerun, the colonial government set their first official policy of language and education in 1910. They decreed that the government would support mission schools on two conditions: acceptance of the government curriculum and examinations; and a commitment to teach "the language of the village or German in the village school, and German as the language of instruction from the beginning of the third year of school" (Wolf 2001:61). This decree legitimised the mission schools already established in the Grassfields, and the language requirements were no hardship for either the Swiss-German Basel Mission or the German Catholic order who worked in the Grassfields.

The responses of the Cameroonian people to these various language policies and educational opportunities were guided by pragmatic interest in the economic possibilities offered, as well as interest in Christianity and a growing respect for the power of the German colonisers. In the south of Kamerun the popularity of the German language grew, as colonial administration, military activity, commerce, and social services increased. Vernon-Jackson notes that German became "the social language among educated Cameroonian of different tribal backgrounds by the turn of the century" (Vernon-Jackson 1967:12). Wolf (2001:59) describes a "growing demand for German among the indigenous population" at this time.

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68 Note, however, that no German government schools were established in the Grassfields.
Familiarity with the English-based Pidgin also spread upcountry from the coast, as inland Cameroonians learned it while working on the plantations.

Hanns Vischer, Director of Education for the Northern Provinces of Nigeria at this time,\(^6^9\) observes that in *Kamerun Kolonie*, "children generally were anxious to go to school where they could obtain knowledge necessary for the service with Europeans" (1915:136). Education was perceived, and valued, in terms of its ability to impart non-local knowledge to the children. Vischer further points out that schooled children did not typically return to their villages and farms, but rather found employment with Europeans or the government. Thus, the dichotomous relationship between home and school began to be felt very early in Cameroon's colonial history.

Meanwhile, the vernacular schools sponsored by the Basel Mission were evidently very popular, particularly in the more rural areas. These schools offered instruction primarily in reading and religion, and were very numerous. Even so, from the beginning the Duala/Mungaka language policy of the Basel Mission met with some resistance from Cameroonians who were not native speakers of those languages (Wolf 2001:59).

**Summary.** The German colonial period of 1884-1914 saw the establishment of hundreds of schools, including many vernacular-medium schools. The mission language policies varied between pro-vernacular and pro-German, reflecting the missions' own institutional priorities. The German government promoted use of the German language for education, replacing the use of English, which had been established before 1884. The government did not forbid the use of local languages, but it clearly intended that German be the dominant language of the colony. On the other hand, the English-based Pidgin had become the *lingua franca* among plantation workers on the coast, and the German colonial administration used it readily for communication with non-German-speaking Africans.

In this political context the Cameroonian response was to recognise German as the language of power and prestige, and to find ways to take advantage of knowing that language. The impact of German would have been most strongly felt in the regions where regular contact occurred with the German colonial administration, particularly the coastal region. On the other hand, by 1913 both the Basel Mission and the Catholic missions had brought German to the Grassfields as well.

\(^6^9\) Vischer was later a member of both the Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa and the Phelps-Stokes Commission on Education in East Africa (Graham 1966).
The institution of formal education, while at first received with suspicion, rapidly came to be understood as a means to employment by the Europeans. Cameroonians also began to experience the loss of their children to European schooling and European ways, as noted by Vischer above. The popularity of local vernacular schools indicates that, for some, local schooling in an African language was considered an acceptable educational alternative. On the other hand, the Basel Mission's Mungaka and Duala language policy was less than satisfactory to people who were neither Bali nor Duala, as this meant that children in those schools were compelled to use a rival indigenous language for education rather than gaining access to the German language and the economic opportunities it could afford.70

3.1.3. The British Cameroons: 1914 - 1939

Armed hostilities in Kamerun broke out in 1914, when British and French troops attacked German soldiers deployed there (Wolf 2001:62). The Germans were defeated and departed the country in 1916. With them went the many German and Swiss missionaries, educators and other civilians who had been operating various institutions in Kamerun. Many of the schools closed, not to open again for several years. Abruptly German ceased to be the language of trade, administration and education (Vernon-Jackson 1967:13).

Upon the beginning of World War I, the French and British governments established a condominium, in which they were supposed to administer the former German colony together. When the condominium ended in March 1916 the territory was partitioned between them. France received the eastern 80% of Kamerun along with the important towns of Douala, Kribi, Yaoundé and Garoua (Wolf 2001:64). Britain received the western 20% of the land, including the towns of Victoria (now Limbe) and Bamenda. The new British holdings were divided for administrative purposes into Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons (also called Cameroons Province). (See Map 1, Appendix 17.)

Much of this British territory was eventually incorporated into the Nigerian colonial administration; in fact, Gardinier (1967:526) contends that the British had acquired these sections of land simply in order to even out the Nigerian border, and had never intended to erect a new and separate administrative unit there. Cameroons Province was the area which would later become the anglophone Northwest and Southwest Provinces of modern Cameroon, and included the four divisions of Bamenda, Mamfe, Kumbo and Victoria (Tambi

70 This dissatisfaction with promoting one local African language over another continues to be an issue in language development today. Moyo (2003:32) criticises the practice in Malawi under Banda's rule, when, Moyo argues, Chewa was promoted in such a way as to cause ill will among other ethnic groups of the country.
and Brain 1974:97). This division of the German Kamerun territory into French and British sectors had a profound and lasting impact on language and education policy, an impact that is still evident today.

Education in the British Cameroons between 1916 and 1921 was the responsibility of political officers, the missionaries having departed. Given the lack of British interest in developing the Cameroons at this point, it is not surprising that the education officers followed a laissez-faire policy there. This allowed for diversity and autonomy in the schools which remained (Wolf 2001:82); however Vernon-Jackson (1967:18) notes that the school systems virtually collapsed at this time, and the only language policy that remained was the use of English by government officials arriving from colonial Nigeria. Shu (1982:29) refers to this period as "the dark years" for education in anglophone Cameroon.

In 1922 it was agreed that the two parts of Cameroon would be administered by Britain and France respectively under a mandate by the League of Nations. The international body would receive regular reports on progress made and issues arising in the mandated territories.

**Schooling in Cameroons Province.** By 1922, four types of schools existed in Cameroons Province: the colonial government-administrated schools; Native Administration schools, which were run primarily by local Cameroonian authorities; mission schools, run by Catholic and Protestant missions; and "'hedge' or unofficial native schools", also called vernacular schools or bush schools (British Government 1922:42). As mentioned above, these latter schools had been established by the Basel Mission before World War I. They were large in number compared to the other three types of schools, but the level of instruction offered was low. In 1925, the British colonial government permitted the Basel Mission's Swiss and German missionaries to return to Cameroons Province. By 1926, the schools in Cameroons Province numbered as follows (British Government 1926:75):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(at least one in each of the four divisions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Administration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(throughout the province)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(4 in Victoria Division, 2 in Bamenda Division)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basel Mission</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>(throughout the province)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over the next decades, the mission education systems, both Catholic and Protestant, would continue to be the backbone of education in the Cameroons Province. The missions were seen by the government as a relatively inexpensive way to implement British policy, and they were also believed to be better equipped than the government to mould the character of indigenous youth (Wolf 2001:84). However the language and education policies of the missions continued to differ from one another, and frequently they differed from colonial government policies as well.

The Basel Mission maintained its focus on vernacular languages, particularly developing education efforts in Duala and Mungaka. Other languages which were studied included Kenyang (or Bayang), Bakossi and Bakweri (Stumpf 1979:122). In fact, altogether as many as 13 vernacular languages were studied and developed to some extent by the missions (Vernon-Jackson 1967:23), but Mungaka and Duala remained the primary languages used by the Basel Mission in school and church. Nearly all of the 130 Basel Mission schools reported in 1926 were vernacular schools.

The Mill Hill Fathers, a British Roman Catholic order which had replaced the German order in the British Cameroons in 1922, took a different approach. They concentrated their efforts on a handful of schools, in which English or Pidgin was the language of instruction (Wolf 2001:85; British Government 1926:74), while also developing separate institutions for religious instruction (called catechumenates) in which Pidgin or vernacular languages were used. The Mill Hill missionaries were not philosophically opposed to indigenous languages at all, and in fact their lack of a stated language policy allowed them to work flexibly in this regard. However, they did not support the dominance of the Duala and Mungaka languages which the Basel Mission was promoting in its education system.

One other education-oriented mission, the German Baptist mission, returned to Cameroons Province in 1926. Its numbers were augmented by American missionaries as well, and its general educational policy was to use English, Pidgin or Duala in its schools and churches.

The Phelps-Stokes Commission, adapted education and the language question. The laissez-faire education policy of the colonial government of Cameroons Province was however influenced by the findings of the Phelps-Stokes Educational Commission; this was an education advisory body originating in the early 20th century out of the Phelps-Stokes

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71 See Map 2, Appendix 17 for the languages of the British Cameroons.
Fund, an American charity with interests in the education of black Americans and Africans (Jones 1920; King 1971:56). The commission visited eight countries of sub-Saharan Africa (including Cameroon) in 1920 and six more in 1924 (Sinclair 1976:66), with the goal of providing recommendations as to the best means of educating Africans. The Commission's perspective was sympathetic to education systems which were adapted to the particular context and needs of the people. The Commission recommended that curriculum content should emphasise locally applicable knowledge over European academic knowledge, thus 'adapting' the formal school curriculum to the African context. For the same reason, the Commission also favoured the use of local languages throughout primary school rather than the colonial language (Wolf 2001:83).

Bude (1985:63) observes that the significance of the Phelps-Stokes Commission's recommendations was not so much that they contained new, previously unknown ideas. Indeed, Bude notes, controversy over adapted education vs. European education in the colonies had been alive since before World War I (1985:44). The impact of the commission was more in the 'scientific' methods it used to support its conclusions.

However, for all its popularity among reform-minded European and American educators of the time, adapted education showed no promise of fulfilling the expressed desires of the African people that their children receive the same education being given to the children of their colonial masters (what Ball [1983] calls "the academic curriculum"). The Commission's belief in the appropriateness of adapted education for Africa was not shared by African parents; as Gifford and Weiskel (1971:664) note, "African parents thought otherwise, and they still do". 72

Indeed, a number of scholars argue that African parents had reason to be concerned. Heyman et al (1972:97ff) and Sinclair (1976:68) contend that the argument in favour of adapted education for Africans was supported by racist views on the comparative intellectual capacities of black people and white people. Politically, Ball's (1983:248) analysis indicates that the goal of such curriculum adaptation in colonial Africa was to avoid creation of an educated African elite who might cause trouble for the colonial masters. Wilson (1963) agrees, noting that public hostility to the adapted education scheme in Ghana arose because

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72 As Sinclair (1976) notes, local resistance to the concept of adapted education was widespread. Sinclair describes negative community reaction in India, Sri Lanka, the UK, Kenya, Turkey, the United States, and Ghana to the philosophy of adapted education as introduced in the early to mid 20th century. In Nigeria, Westermann (1937:18) reports, a proposed "African" school-leaving certificate was opposed by Nigerians on the grounds that "they desire a certificate which cannot be despised".
politically aware Africans suspected that this sort of education was designed to hold the community back. Bude also sees this move as an attempt to deny Africans the knowledge they needed for eventual self-government, which could only come about with fluency in the language and culture of power (Bude 1985:74).

Thus, whether intentionally discriminatory or not, the outcomes of adapted education as recommended by the Phelps-Stokes Commission were not attractive to a population which saw formal education as a route to social mobility and economic progress (Ball 1983:254). This resistance to what was seen as 'watered down' education would be evident once again in Cameroonian communities' response to a 1965 government initiative to 'ruralise' the curriculum (section 3.1.5.2).

However, it is perhaps too easy in hindsight to condemn the Phelps-Stokes Commission and other advocates of adapted education of the early 1900s as racist and unsympathetic to African desires for European education. Many missionaries and educationists involved in this debate at the time expressed both respect for African cultures and regret for the negative impact of European colonialism on those cultures. At the 1926 Le Zoute Conference, a gathering of the leaders of Christian missions to Africa, the value of "the African as a man [sic]" was affirmed and doubt was expressed as to "the desirability of imposing European institutions on Africans instead of developing their own" (Smith 1926:13014). Although the mission leaders still saw their role in Africa as one of "improving" and "developing" the local citizens, they were far from unsympathetic towards the people and cultures of the continent. Contemporary educator Victor Murray expressed similar sentiments about African culture, noting that

> in these days a much greater regard than formerly is paid to native cultures, and we feel that every culture which is an honest expression of a people's life has a right to respect and preservation (1967:134).

The debate about language of instruction was lively among these missionaries and educators, with some, like Murray, contending that the language of instruction must be in the child's language rather than the teacher's (167:135). Others argued on behalf of the demonstrated desire of African parents for education in the language of the colonial power:

> The African wants to learn English - indeed this is chiefly why he clamours for education. . . . Any attempt to adopt the vernacular as the medium of instruction would meet with the strong opposition of certain classes of literate Africans who would feel that the door of opportunity was slammed in the face of their children (Smith 1926:68).
These two sides of the debate did not differ very much from current debates about the same question.

In any case, the Phelps-Stokes report did influence the formulation of colonial education policy in Cameroons Province, though implementation of the policy was largely unsuccessful. A committee was set up to advise the secretary of state for the colonies on native education in the British colonies. This advisory committee published a White Paper on Education Policy in British Tropical Africa in 1925 (Sivonen 1995:121; Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa 1925). The paper stated that

education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations, and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution (quoted in Nuffield Foundation 1953:3)

The paper further stated that adapted education and local language use must go together, and it recommended research on the African languages in order to be able to use them in education. All subjects should be adapted to African realities, with specially prepared textbooks where possible. English teaching should begin only with secondary education.

This last recommendation was not only unwelcome to the Cameroonians, but it was condemned by many colonial officials and mission representatives as well. The Cameroonians' desire for English education, and the need for a common language in a territory where dozens of language were spoken, were reasons given for this opposition. As a result, the Committee's memorandum of 1927, while still emphasising the value of African languages and the importance of using them for primary school instruction, relented in its recommendation on English: "its inculcation must commence in the higher standards of the elementary schools" (Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa 1927:11). Somewhat prophetically, the memorandum concluded: "we must be content with practical expedients".

On the ground, the Cameroons Province colonial education office attempted to match policy with those "practical expedients". In 1927, its report to the League of Nations noted that
a considerable amount of the teaching in four out of six government schools is
given in Duala and nearly-related languages73, but as yet Government has no
teachers capable of teaching in vernaculars suitable for the pupils of the
government schools at Mamfe and Bamenda (British Government 1927:62).

In the 1928 report it was remarked that "it has been found impossible to use only the
vernacular and it has been necessary to introduce English at the very beginning" (British
Government 1928:77). This frustration reflected the lack of teaching materials in local
languages and teachers trained to use those languages in the classroom.

Thus, despite the intentions of the Phelps-Stokes Committee74 and the Advisory
Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa, the six government elementary schools in
Cameroons Province continued to rely on English instruction and curriculum. (No secondary
school even existed in Cameroons Province until 1939.) The 12-14 Native Administration
schools, however, were in better position to use local languages due their linguistic
homogeneity:

the Native Administration schools have one definite advantage in that each is
established to serve one particular tribe, so that their pupils have a homogeneity
generally lacking in the central schools. . . . In six of the schools men are teaching
pupils of their own race (British Government 1927:61).

This advantage was offset, however, by a lack of resources and well trained teachers,
especially compared with the government and Catholic schools (Booth 1995:74).

Vernacular schools and the Nigerian Education Ordinance of 1926. For the colonial
government, the vernacular schools were the cause of endless conflict and frustration.
Unauthorised by the government and consisting largely of religious instruction and
indigenous-language literacy, these schools had been dismissed out of hand by the early
colonial education officers. Yet these same schools, of which it was confidently said in 1923
that they would soon disappear (British Government 1923:52), kept growing in number. By
1929 more than 198 such schools were serving over 5,000 students, supported primarily by
the Basel Mission, compared with roughly 2,250 students attending officially recognised

73 It is not clear which languages were meant here. However, the languages spoken around the Duala area would
not have been comprehensible in Mamfe or Bamenda, as those towns are several hundred kilometres away from
the Duala area.

74 The kind of active promotion of Phelps-Stokes recommendations and principles which existed, for example,
in colonial Kenya at this time (King 1971) was not evident in the colonial administration of Cameroons
Province, probably because the province simply did not rank highly enough in the British colonial system to
attract the sort of attention given to Kenya or even Nigeria. As a result, the genuinely well intentioned aspects of
the Commission's work were given little space in Cameroons Province to be implemented.
schools (British Government 1929:77-79). For the government, the primary problem with the vernacular schools was not their use of local languages for instruction, since this was being encouraged by the Advisory Committee on Native Education. The problem was rather that the schools were unregistered and uncontrolled; the teachers were subject to no requirements regarding training, standards of English or curriculum content.

The issue came to a head with the introduction of the 1926 Nigerian Education Ordinance for the regulation of schools in the colony. The ordinance prescribed "the methods to be employed in all branches of Education and particularly the qualifications necessary for teachers" (British Government 1927:55); it also regulated the opening and closing of schools, as well as the administration of grants-in-aid to non-government schools (Booth 1995:72). Under the new ordinance, the vernacular schools of the Basel Mission were considered below standard and were threatened with closure.

With the intervention of the provincial authority on behalf of the mission, a compromise was reached: the mission could continue its schools as "religious schools" in which reading, writing and religious instruction in the local language were allowed (Keller 1969:65). However Stumpf (1979:116) argues that this re-labelling of the vernacular schools damaged their status in the eyes of the Cameroonians. None of the teachers could apply for official recognition, since they did not speak the language of the examination, English.

Continuing in a spirit of cooperation, the Education Ordinance was further modified to allow vernacular schoolteachers to be registered solely on the recommendation of the mission and the endorsement of the Superintendent of Education. In 1928 and 1929, 393 teachers applied for registration on this basis. They were required to promise to "only teach in schools where the instruction given is solely in the vernacular" (British Government 1929:75). The reason given for this restriction was "to safeguard the purity and accuracy of the English taught".

Vernacular schools continued to be a thorn in the side of the colonial education administration, as their numbers continued to grow. Attempts were made to improve their quality; the 1937 report to the League of Nations notes that the schools were receiving supervisory help from a visiting teacher appointed by the government.75

Frequently he spends days at one little school helping the teachers to improve their method by giving demonstration lessons, lecturing on school management and

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75 Although this programme of supervisory visits to vernacular schools in Cameroons Province took place during roughly the same period as the Jeanes school initiative in Kenya (which took place from 1926-1940; see King 1971:150), the provincial report to the League of Nations for 1937 mentions no connection.
teaching them how to improve buildings and sanitation. The class of teacher with
which he has to deal has not had the opportunity to study new methods for himself,
and is very often totally dependent on the help given him during these visits
(British Government 1937:78).

The report continues: "The vernacular schools in the Province are consequently improving in
efficiency from year to year and are becoming increasingly popular" (1937:79).

*Competition and language policy*. The 1930s brought increased competition among
the mission schools for funding and students. This was partly due to the world economic
crisis, but other factors were also involved.

One major factor, not surprisingly, was language. The Mill Hill Mission had generally
concentrated its education efforts into relatively few schools, compared to the Basel Mission.
The quality of teaching in the Mill Hill schools was higher, and classes were taught in
English or Pidgin. This made these schools increasingly popular among the local populations.
Wolf (2001:88) explains the success of these schools: "[the mission] sensed the desire of the
youth to learn English, the language that seemed to provide the best opportunities for
employment and personal advancement, and increasingly taught this language in their
schools". The Baptist schools were also using Pidgin successfully in their work.

The government, for its part, was still trying to improve standards of English as
opposed to Pidgin. The 1936 League of Nations report states that "the policy is gradually to
replace 'pidgin' through the influence of schools by simple English, phonetically taught and
based on a limited vocabulary of the most common words" (British Government 1936:93).
Pidgin was still used orally for commercial and even government affairs, but anything written
in these contexts must be in English.

Meanwhile the Basel Mission clung to the use of Duala and Mungaka as their
standard vernacular languages, despite the fact that those were not always the mother tongues
of the students. In the Grassfields, opposition to this policy from non-Bali people continued
over the years (Trudell 2004); the Fon76 of Nso' even banned the use of Mungaka by the
mission in Banso' in 1938 and 1941 (Thomas 2001:167).77 However, the Basel Mission
evidently had too much invested in infrastructure and materials to drop their use of the two

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76 The rulers of the chiefdoms or kingdoms of the Northwest Province of Cameroon are called *Fons*. See section
4.1.1 for a detailed description of the Fon and his powers.

77 Interestingly, it was about this time that the Catholic Mill Hill mission established ten vernacular schools in
Banso' which used Lamnso' as the medium of instruction (Trudell 2004). These schools lasted until World War
II, when the Mill Hill personnel responsible for them were forced to leave British Cameroons.
African languages altogether. Still, seeing the popularity of English instruction, Basel opened three primary schools in which English was taught as a subject. Even this measure was enough to draw students, who were much more keen to buy English books and materials than Duala books (Wolf 2001:88).

Colonial policy and educational structure. By 1934, the education system in Cameroons Province had settled into the following government-organised structure:

- Elementary school, which lasted 4-6 years. Of these schools the government reported:
  
  The medium of instruction is an African language where there is one of sufficient importance to become a lingua franca.\(^{78}\) Elsewhere English is taught in the elementary schools and becomes the language of instruction by the end of the course (British Government 1934:77).

- Middle school, lasting 6 years; this corresponded to the English secondary school. However the 1934 League of Nations report notes that there were no complete middle schools in the Province. Some elementary schools had a few middle school classes tacked on; the idea was that "from these, some of the more promising pupils can attend the full middle schools in adjacent provinces of Nigeria" (1934:78). English was the language of these schools.

- The Higher College at Yaba, near Lagos, which by 1934 was developing into an institution of University College status.

  The lack of any middle school in Cameroons Province was explained by the Nigerian colonial administration's designation of the province as a "rural area", which by definition was not to have secondary education facilities (Wolf 2001:87). The colonial government thus was not required to open a middle school until the designation of the province changed. This stance reflected the British government's general policy across its African colonies to limit access to secondary education (Gifford and Weiskel 1971:690). Indeed, Wolf (2001:87) argues that the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Commission were used by the colonial government of Cameroons Province as an excuse for their failure to build secondary schools there. In any case, the first secondary school in the Province was established by the Mill Hill Mission in 1939; it was the only one in existence for nearly ten years afterwards, until the Basel Mission established another in 1949.

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\(^{78}\) Presumably this meant Duala, Mungaka and Pidgin; no other language would have been even close to being called a "lingua franca" in the British Cameroons at this time.
This position on advanced education was just one more indication that the British colonial government was not interested in the long-term educational development of Cameroons Province. Booth (1995:73) notes that by the end of the 1930s it was clear that Government was not viewing educational development in terms of African [Cameroonian] political development, since education was designed merely to serve the needs of the administration while helping to improve rural living conditions.

In fact, where education was concerned, the British colonial philosophy of indirect rule79 was neglectful. Indirect rule may have implied respect for local language and culture, but it did little for the development of those cultures to thrive in the modern world. As Wolf describes it, "the colonial scheme [in Cameroons Province]. . . first uprooted the traditional societies and then left them in limbo" (2001:82).

In its 1938 report to the League of Nations, the colonial education office was pessimistic about education in the Cameroons Province:

[T]he Province contains at least 100,000 children of school age, of whom less than 11 percent are receiving literary education in any form, whether 'English' or 'Vernacular'. The main difficulties in the way of more rapid expansion of elementary education are the lack of public communications in sparsely populated rural districts and the reluctance of farmers to dispense with the assistance of their children in the numerous minor tasks which normally fall on the latter. To bring education within easy walking distance of every home would require a greatly increased number of small schools and a corresponding expansion of teaching staff and inspectorate (British Government 1938:81).

The reluctance to improve the access to, and quality of, education in the British Cameroons was clear. For rural Cameroonians, the appeal of the vernacular schools was almost certainly their accessibility and local character; reproducing those qualities on a province-wide basis, with good-quality schools, was more than the colonial government was ready to do.

*Cameroonian attitudes.* However, the involvement of even 11% of the population's children in school was helping to shape Cameroonians' perceptions of education. In a report of the colonial Commission on Higher Education in East Africa (Commission on Higher Education in East Africa 1937), several observations were made about how the Commission believed Africans saw education in the 1930s. These observations were almost certainly relevant to the citizens of Cameroons Province at the time.

79 The earlier laissez-faire policy of the British in Cameroon was officialised in 1922 as "indirect rule", under which local Cameroonian authorities were used by the colonial government to implement its laws. See section 4.1.2 for a more detailed discussion of indirect rule.
The Commission first stated its belief that Africans had been taught that European ways of life were superior to traditional African ways (1937:7). Africans were therefore unimpressed with those Europeans who tried to disparage Western ways and promote traditional African culture. This fact had been driven home to the proponents of adapted education well before World War I (Bude 1985:40). The Commission also noted the unshakeable belief of Africans "that learning is the panacea for all ills" (1937:7), and their demands for European education as a right.

The Commission also observed that, contrary to European assumptions, African civilisations were in a constant process of change. The "infiltration of European culture" (1937:10) into African societies had resulted in irreversible changes to those societies; it was therefore neither possible nor desirable to attempt using education to "prevent the Europeanization of the African". The task of colonial education, judged the Commission, was to "interpret to the youth of Africa the higher values of the present world".

However, valuing European education for its economic and political outcomes is not the same as devaluing one's traditional culture. To what extent did Cameroonian people really accept the superiority of European culture and values? Two examples are of interest here.

Lockhart's observations of the Bangwa people, a northern Cameroonian ethnic group, support some of the observations described above (Lockhart 1994:32). He notes that since the 1930s the 'coast' had a special significance to people living upcountry such as the Bangwa. The 'coast' represented not just economic opportunity, but "a new economic order, a new world and a new power structure. These were epitomised in the white man; in his knowledge, his technology and his values". Lockhart speculates that it was around this time that the notion of their own "rural backwardness" began to take hold among the Bangwa. This reverence for coastal and Europeanised ways is significant, but the desire for the "white man's" knowledge has a distinctly economic and political cast.

A very different response to European influence in Cameroonian communities is documented in De Vries' study of colonialism and missions in Kom (1998). De Vries describes a divide in the Kom community's reception of Catholic mission schooling during this period. While mission schools were warmly welcomed by the Catholic population, the non-Christian population was far more sceptical about surrendering their children to the "white man" in this way. They saw mission schooling as an attempt to destroy traditional Kom culture, and refused to cooperate. Nor were the Kom evidently the only Grassfields people to be sceptical of mission education at the time, since by 1935 only four chiefs in the Bamenda Division had had any mission school education (De Vries 1998:75).
These examples illustrate the complexity of Cameroonian attitudes towards colonial culture, language and education. Unquestionably, Cameroonians desired the outcomes they associated with European knowledge: employment, political status, and acceptance by European institutions (i.e. the missions, the government, the commercial companies) in the country. This attitude was behind parents' keen interest in English-language education and their rejection of the colonial government's attempts to adapt the European curriculum so that it was more 'Africanised'. On the other hand, the cultural losses involved in surrendering one's children to European schooling were recognised early in the colonial experience. Formal education was seen as a means of socialisation into a different set of values and knowledge practices than the local ones. Furthermore, not all Cameroonians were happy with the explicit connection between formal education and the Christian faith. Particularly where local leadership was strong, these phenomena - the loss of the community's children and the power of the Christian missions - posed a potential threat to the status quo.

In these circumstances, it is possible to interpret the popularity of vernacular schools at this time in Cameroon's history in terms of their being a means by which Cameroonian community leaders could access some level of European knowledge for their children without endangering the integrity and power base of the community itself. Vernacular schools were taught by local people, not Europeans; even if the teachers had been trained as catechists by the mission, they were nevertheless integrated into the local community. Children were not sent away from their families to learn, but learned whatever was to be taught on site. Local work patterns requiring the help of children would probably have been honoured. Vernacular schools did not offer access to English, it is true, but their popularity into the mid-1940s (see Figure 3.1) reveals the appeal of the locally-based education they offered.

Summary. In this period, mission policy and activity varied from mission to mission. The Catholic Mill Hill Mission, by keeping free of any stated language policy, maintained flexibility in how languages were used in its schools. It did tend to use primarily Pidgin and English for education, although the use of local languages in religious contexts was encouraged. The German Baptist schools did the same, with some use of Duala as well. The Basel Mission, however, maintained its focus on vernacular languages, primarily Duala and Mungaka. The mission invested substantially in these two languages, using them in developing materials and training church leaders (Stumpf 1979:122). This stance brought the mission into repeated conflict with the colonial education officers over issues of quality control and English instruction.
Government activity during this time included setting standards and regulations for Cameroonian schools, then attempting to enforce them. The colonial government also saw itself as providing high quality education, delivered in English, in a few schools around the province. The Native Administration was to focus more on general education of 'the masses'. Interestingly, these latter schools appear to have been able to incorporate local teachers, local culture and local language more effectively than the other schools (with the exception of the unregistered vernacular schools).

The Cameroonian's attitudes in these circumstances were largely characterised by an increased interest in formal education, particularly in English or Pidgin, over the two decades between the World Wars. This education was seen as imparting non-local knowledge and a non-local world view. Use of the local language in schools was an acceptable first step, but the overall educational experience needed to include at least some exposure to English in order to be considered worthwhile. Increased contact with school, combined with the contact of thousands of plantation workers with European ways and language, boosted the awareness of Cameroonians of the outside world and what it might hold for them.

The notion of adapted education was of little interest to the Cameroonians. It neither provided the traditional European education, nor taught the children anything which the communities valued (Bude 1985:40). The Cameroonians' attitudes towards such education was similar to that which prompted J.W.C. Dougall, an education reformer in colonial-era Kenya, to observe that "the fact remains that the African in many cases does not want what we think is best for him" (in King 1971:185).

The popularity of vernacular schools, meanwhile, held steady. Even with the towards more English language education, the number of vernacular schools also grew. Geographical accessibility may have been one reason: rural Cameroonians may have considered the local school to be better than nothing and continued to send their children there. These schools may also have been used as a first step in the education process, to be followed by English-language schooling. Another possibility is that the local character of the schools, not just their location, made them popular. In addition, as discussed above, the very non-European nature of the school leadership may have increased their acceptability in some areas.

3.1.4. The British Cameroons: 1939-1960

The advent of World War II caused particular concern for the British in the Cameroons Province, since German influence in the province still outweighed that of its colonial administrators. More German nationals than British nationals lived in the province
(Ndi 1986:207), and much of the province's commercial economy was German-owned. The coastal plantations, which German businessmen had recovered in 1925 (Ndi 1986:204), employed 25,000 people and were crucial to the economy of the province.

Nevertheless, in June 1940 the British interned all the Germans on the plantations. Less than a year later, the plantations were closed due to lack of markets and shipping facilities; some 20,000 Cameroonian workers lost their jobs. In the ensuing period of high prices and high crime, the years of German rule before 1914 came to be viewed with nostalgia as the "good old days" (Ndi 1986:213).

What to do about the 'enemy alien missionaries' was also a thorny problem for the colonial administration. There were about 50 German and Italian missionaries in the province, of generally reliable character and backed by powerful international mission organisations. Nevertheless, fears (in some cases justified) of collaboration with the Axis powers led to the internment of all male enemy alien missionaries (Ndi 1986:221). All but four of the Swiss and German Basel missionaries had to leave, and all but three of the German-American Baptist mission. The Mill Hill Mission, however, being composed primarily of English, Irish and Dutch personnel, only lost seven of its roughly 30 missionaries; this logistical advantage over the other missions allowed the Catholic mission to significantly improve its standing with the government during the war years.

Interestingly, Stumpf (1979:124) considers the war years as "the most dynamic period" for the establishment of primary schools in Cameroons Province. The government's dependence on the missions for education actually increased during this time. Ndi states that the services which the remaining missionaries provided, in health care and education and social services, "revealed the missions as viable agencies of development, at a time when all that people wanted was 'development' " (Ndi 1986:222).

The Colonial Welfare and Development Act of 1940 also stepped up the British government's commitment to education in the colonies. This included religious instruction in every school, a reflection of the government's concern over the influences of the 'Nazi peril' and communism.

Meanwhile, English was gaining dominance in the educational sphere. English-speaking primary schools became very popular with Cameroonians in the war years, and as a result grew dramatically (Wolf 2001:90). In 1942 the Mill Hill mission decided - in its first language policy decision ever - to replace all its vernacular schools with English-medium schools. By 1943, all the Catholic schools in the province were in English. The German-
American Baptists were also using English at that point, and in fact were opposed to the use of Mungaka in 'their' region.

Still, the Basel Mission's fight continued for the use of Duala and Mungaka in schools. It was a losing battle, however, particularly in view of events taking place in the Duala and Bali homelands. In the city of Douala, which was French-controlled during the war, a group of Duala speakers declared their sympathy for Germany and sent Duala-language propaganda to this effect into Cameroons Province. Some of this seditious literature was found in the possession of Basel Mission pastors and catechists, after which the British government eyed Duala with great suspicion (Stumpf 1979:126). Meanwhile in the Bali area, tensions were rising as the king of the Bali tried to expand his political influence over neighbouring tribes. The popularity of the Mungaka language in the region thus declined even further.

In this atmosphere, the Basel Mission fought on. They gained government permission to continue using the two languages until the end of the war; however, with the end of the war the colonial education office reported to the League of Nations that the use of Duala and Mungaka did not really meet the language needs of the Cameroonian people, and advocated the use of English instead (Wolf 2001:91). In 1954, the provincial education officer prohibited the Basel Mission from using and teaching Mungaka outside the Bali tribal area. A year later, opposition to both vernacular languages rose once again, and in 1956 the provincial Board of Education decreed that the vernacular could be used as a medium of instruction only in places where at least 2/3 of the children spoke it as a first language. Finally, in 1958 the new African Cameroonian government ruled that although the mother tongue of children may be used to assist in introduction, English is to be the medium of instruction in Primary Schools and all the text books are to be in English (Keller 1969:73).

Although Mungaka and Duala could be used in religious instruction, these languages were no longer to be given precedence over other vernacular languages.

That was the death knell for Basel's vernacular schooling policy. This time, as Stumpf (1979:135) notes, the mission had no choice but to comply. Whereas in the past it had regularly opposed and flouted colonial authorities, it now faced an African government to which it had to submit. Still, the mission had also invested in English-medium primary

80 The British authorities handed over power of internal self-government to a Cameroonian government in the last few years leading up to independence (1960).
schools in the 1940s and 1950s which were being received enthusiastically by Cameroonian youth. In addition, in 1949 the Basel Mission had opened a secondary ('middle') school, just the second one in the province (Ndi 1986:223). Thus from 1958, the Basel Mission turned its attention more fully to English-medium education options.

Figure 3.1 lists the numbers of children attending the Basel Mission's English-medium and vernacular-medium primary schools from 1935 to 1959. It shows the sharp increase in enrolment in English-language schools from 1940 to 1951, and the attendant decrease in vernacular school enrolment particularly from 1944 to 1951. It can be seen that by 1959, vernacular schools were all but finished.

**Figure 3.1. Numbers of children attending English-medium and vernacular-medium primary schools of the Basel Mission (from Keller 1969:66)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Children attending Basel Mission's English-medium primary schools</th>
<th>Children attending Basel Mission's vernacular schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>4,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,262</td>
<td>5,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>4,035</td>
<td>6,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>8,223</td>
<td>1,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>10,426</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>14,032</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>19,880</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the British government's Colonial Welfare and Development Act and subsequent 1944 Education Act, education became identified as the key to progress of all kinds (Ndi 1986:223). The Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC), a parastatal which had bought up the German plantations, began supporting education among its workers' families and granting scholarships for further studies to qualified students. By 1960 there were 543 primary schools in the Cameroons Province, 75 of which were run by government or the Native Administration and the rest by missions (Eben forthcoming: 102). Only three secondary schools existed in the region at this point, as well as one trade school run by the government.

The British government also became more and more interested in developing adult education in British Africa (Sivonen 1995:17; Davidson 1944:3), and the CDC began programmes of adult literacy and basic education in its work camps (O'Kelly 1950; Wise 1959). English was the medium of instruction, even though the students were not often fluent.
in that language; Wise admits that attempts to teach literacy were frequently complicated by the need for second language instruction (Wise 1959:83).

In summary, during this period the Cameroonians' demand for English in mission schooling was recognised and responded to, via the Catholic mission's decision to use only English in its schools and the increase in English-language schools run by the Basel Mission. The Basel Mission lost its battle to maintain the use of Duala and Mungaka in schools, and the number of vernacular schools declined sharply after 1950.

Government policy against the use of local languages also took shape in this period, from the colonial government's discomfort with promotion of Duala and Mungaka to the new Cameroonian government's decree that these two languages could no longer be given a dominant place in primary education. This decree also declared English as the medium of instruction in primary schools.

From 1940 onwards, the colonial government showed increased interest in schooling in general. The notion of adult education grew popular, with literacy and education classes provided by the government and commercial companies. This adult education was generally carried out in English.

In these circumstances the Cameroonians showed continued enthusiasm for education, and for English. As demands for independence grew in British Cameroon, the prospect of independence increased Cameroonians' determination to enter the international arena as a truly anglophone country

3.1.5. Independence: 1960 to the present

Reunification and official bilingualism. In 1960 both French Cameroon and Nigeria gained their independence from France and Britain respectively. In a plebiscite of 1960, the citizens of Cameroons Province chose reunification with the new and much larger francophone Cameroon Republic over unification with Nigeria to the west (Wolf 2001:112). Thus began the era of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, which in 1972 became the United Republic of Cameroon.

The reunification of these two former colonies, one French and the other British, was not without its challenges. Among them was the conflict of the colonial ideologies that had been pursued - 'indirect rule' in the case of the British and assimilation in the case of the French (Tchoungui 2000:115). As elsewhere in West Africa, French colonial policy in

81 In terms of both land mass and population.
Cameroon had actively promoted use of the French language for all administrative and educational purposes. African languages were viewed as an obstacle to the objectives of cultural assimilation to French, and their use was proscribed (Bokamba 1991). This was the heritage left to francophone Cameroon. The former British colony, on the other hand, had been largely allowed to follow local and regional language use preferences. Those local preferences had focused on English as medium of instruction, and interest in learning English was high on the part of the Cameroonians in Cameroons Province. Thus the educational policies favouring English were to a great extent a response to local desires for European-type education, not an expression of the opinion of the government regarding local languages. So not only were the official languages of the two former colonies distinct, but their attitudes towards African and colonial languages were also vastly different (Johnson 1970:78).

Clearly any kind of political unity between the English-speaking and French-speaking Cameroons had to deal with the question of official languages. It was decided to accept both English and French as official languages of the new country. This added new requirements for language fluency, but Cameroonians were equal to the challenge. Vernon-Jackson (1967:19) observes that most Cameroonians, whether literate or not, know not only their mother tongue but also one or more additional Cameroonian vernaculars. Thus the present language policy really means trilingualism for many, and for the majority multilingualism.

With the aid of UNESCO, special classes in French and English were set up to help adult professionals become bilingual. However this plan did not make much headway, as the target group of learners generally found themselves too busy to take advantage of the programme.

Involving the primary and secondary schools in bilingual French-English education was also part of the plan for extending the two languages to the whole population. In 1963 French and English became compulsory in all secondary schools. Also that year, the first experimental Federal Bilingual Grammar School was founded in anglophone Cameroon. Nevertheless, English and the British education system continued to be used in anglophone Cameroon, and the French language and school system continued in the east (Wolf 2001:135).

For anglophone Cameroon, pressure to become bilingual in French and English has been greater than for francophone Cameroon. As the seat of national government, the latter is more powerful politically, and at reunification it was anglophone Cameroon's government and public service systems which were the more modified (Fonge 1997:12). Since
reunification, anglophone Cameroon has generally been necessarily the more bilingual of the two entities.

However it is also the case that in Cameroon, European languages are generally perceived in primarily utilitarian terms. Vernon-Jackson notes that vernaculars, rather than European languages, evoke strong feelings among Cameroonians. These [vernacular languages] are languages of vitality, and within each group that uses a particular vernacular there is often the feeling that the use of its own language gives strength and unity to the groups (1967:24).

Bude (1993:248) agrees:

The language of instruction in primary school [in anglophone Cameroon] is still English. English, however, is not the language of communication at local level. Within the provinces either African languages are used or Pidgin serves as a language of communication because it is understood beyond the boundaries of cultural groups.

The use of English is firmly established in the education systems of anglophone Cameroon, yet its role in in-group communication is very limited.

The status of vernacular languages. Legally the use of vernacular languages after independence stayed fairly marginalized; their use in education fell by the wayside with the increased focus on both French and English in primary schools (Eben forthcoming: 133). The transfer of responsibility for mission schools in anglophone Cameroon, from expatriate Christian organisations to Cameroonian ones, helped to ensure that English was still of highest priority in education in the Northwest and Southwest Provinces. Meanwhile, the deeply entrenched status of French in the education system of the former French Cameroun remained unchallenged. The independent government itself did not take a strong stance on the use of Cameroonian languages, nor address the legislation of its predecessors which had forbidden use of such languages in school in 1958 (Gfeller 2000:18).

However, by no means did the use of local languages pass from the cultural milieu of Cameroon. In fact, local languages have continued to be so central to indigenous culture that their non-use in the rural primary classroom has negative consequences for the integration of the school into the community as well as the quality of learning that takes place there.

82 In 1966 The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon took over the Basel Mission schools (Ekiti 1982:77); in 1970 the Cameroon Baptist Convention's newly created Education Authority took over the running of schools established by the Cameroon Baptist Mission (Ngarka n.d.:1). The Catholic mission's institutional structure is such that administration of Catholic mission schools came under Cameroonian control gradually, as Cameroonian priests replaced expatriate priests in the educational system.
Speaking of education in anglophone Cameroon, Bude observes that teaching in non-African languages widens the gap between school children and their often illiterate parents (Bude 1993:248).

Essono (1981:106) goes even further, asserting that "the disappearance of our languages will lead inevitably to the annihilation of our [Cameroon's] national personality" (my translation).83

As for the political argument that Cameroonian national unity requires that a minimum number of languages be learned and used, both Essono (1981:112) and Tadadjeu (1990:19) reply that the multicultural Cameroonian reality is such that national unity must be based in linguistic diversity. Essono points to other nations such as Switzerland, which manage to maintain unity as multilingual nations.

Thus the new environment of national independence prompted some private education authorities in both anglophone and francophone Cameroon to revive the notion of inserting Cameroonian languages into school. A few private secondary schools began using local languages in their curricula: Collège Libermann in Douala began using five Cameroonian languages in 1967, though from 1975 it focused on only Bissa and Duala (PROPELCA 1995:1; Ministère de l'Education Nationale 1982:45). Sometime later Collège de la Rétraite began teaching and using the Ewondo language (Essono 1981:112) and Collège Mazenod in Ngaoundéré began teaching Fulfuldé. These schools serve multilingual populations, and each has chosen to use an African language as a medium of instruction.

Another interesting development occurred around this time, not itself to do with language but certainly relevant to the developing national identity. In 1965, the Cameroonian government initiated an educational reform project intended to better serve the rural populations of the country. The primary goal of this reform project, which was funded and staffed heavily by UNESCO personnel, was to facilitate "ruralisation" of the curriculum in order that the primary school leaver might stay in the rural areas of the country and not seek urban employment and education (Kale and Yembe 1980:313). The project was named IPAR, after the research institute which ran it, the Institut de Pedagogie Appliquée a vocation Rurale.84

83 Note that this concern echoes the concerns of Kom leadership of the 1930s to mission education, described above.

84 This interest in tying curriculum more closely to village realities was widespread in anglophone Africa at this time. A conference on education and community held at the University of Edinburgh in 1976 included descriptions of current community education initiatives in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rhodesia, Nigeria, Kenya and Cameroon (King 1976).
The reform met with heavy resistance from rural parents, who were not at all interested in seeing their children's futures limited to village life. Rural teachers rejected it as well, claiming themselves to be classroom professionals and not agricultural extension workers. Significantly, this resistance to adapted education was unrelated to language questions, as IPAR did not have an overt language component. Yet again, the adapted education strategy advocated by the Phelps-Stokes Commission in the 1920s reappeared in the 1960s and '70s; and once more, the attempt to adapt European-oriented education to the realities of rural Cameroon was brought down by the same people it was meant to serve.

The 1970s were characterised by international interest in the development of African languages, with UNESCO playing a pioneering role in this discussion (Tadadjeu 1990:11-12). In the late 1970s, interest in research on Cameroonian languages increased, led by the University of Yaoundé's *Departement de Langues Africaines et Linguistique* (Department of African Languages and Linguistics, DLAL). DLAL's institutional partners in this project included the Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC), the National Education Centre (CNE), the Centre for Anthropological Research and Studies (CREA), and the *Société Internationale de Linguistique* (SIL International, an international NGO dedicated to minority language development). SIL had signed an agreement of cooperation with the University of Yaoundé in 1969 and subsequently with the Ministry of Research and Higher Education (MINREST) (Robinson 1996:18), focusing on the areas of Cameroonian language development and literacy.

One result of these discussions on language development in Cameroon was PROPELCA (*Projet de Recherche Operationelle Pour L'Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun*, Operational Research Project for the Teaching of Cameroonian Languages), a national-level project whose goal was the development of local Cameroonian languages for education (Tadadjeu 1997:19). PROPELCA was begun by the DLAL in 1981 as a national experimental programme in bilingual/trilingual education, in which the local language was a principal medium of instruction for grades 1-4 of primary school and continued to play an essential part of the education process through secondary school (PROPELCA 1995).

It is important to note that PROPELCA differed significantly from the vernacular schooling of the Basel Mission: instead of designating just a few Cameroonian languages for

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85 The Yoruba-language Ife Primary Education Research Project in Nigeria also took place during this time (1970-78), heavily backed by the Ford Foundation.

86 Later known as the University of Yaoundé I. The Roman numeral 'I' was added in 1993, when another 'University of Yaoundé' was established.
use across a region, it proposed development and use of the local language of the community, whatever that language might be. The PROPELCA programme was meant to be made available in as many Cameroonian languages as possible. Furthermore, the PROPELCA programme proposed to include the entire content of the national curriculum, not just certain subjects. Thus, in no sense did PROPELCA's proponents see the programme as a follow-on from the Basel Mission's vernacular schools.

From its experimental beginnings in four Cameroonian languages (one of which was Lamnso'), PROPELCA passed to an extension phase in 1988; at the end of this extension phase in 1995, 55 primary schools and 10 secondary schools in 13 Cameroonian languages were using the PROPELCA programme (described in section 3.2.1), serving a total of approximately 28,000 Cameroonian children (Tadadjeu 1997:20, 21). The project is now in a generalisation phase, with the goal of being officially adopted throughout the Cameroonian public school system. Funding for PROPELCA has come from a number of sources, including the University of Yaoundé, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNICEF, the Ministry of National Education and SIL International; at the local level, parents and school systems pay for PROPELCA learning materials and teachers' salaries.

The denominational school authorities were the most open to early implementation of PROPELCA. The first experimental schools in PROPELCA were Catholic, followed by Baptist and Presbyterian institutions. Given the sympathetic view towards use of local languages which characterised the original missions, this perspective of the parochial education systems is not surprising. Mission school support for PROPELCA continues to be strong in some regions, but has faded in others due partly to issues of financial hardship.

The government education authorities, on the other hand, have not until recently been overtly supportive of language committees' efforts to promote formal learning in the mother tongue. However, official response to the use of local languages has gradually grown. In 1982, the Cameroonian government endorsed both official language bilingualism (French and English) and the promotion of minority languages as well (Tadadjeu 1990:20). However, as Albaugh (2003:15) notes, local language education was considered to be a "private project" of civil society until 1985. In that year, the DLAL team lobbied a regional political congress in Bamenda, Northwest Province; as a result, the ruling party committed itself to encouraging the development of local languages. In 1986, President Paul Biya wrote in his monograph entitled Communal Liberalism:
I rather regard our linguistic diversity as a cultural privilege. In the face of this linguistic multiplicity, we should operate at two levels - the ethnic and the national. At the ethnic level we should encourage the development of the national languages which are the privileged mediums of ethnic cultures. . . . It is therefore necessary to allow all our linguistic values to flourish as an indispensable prelude to the enhancement of a national cultural heritage (Biya 1986:104).

In the early 1990s, the Private Secretariats of Education (both Catholic and Protestant) approved the PROPELCA model for use throughout their school systems (Tadadjeu 1997:22). The National Forum on Education endorsed the PROPELCA model in May 1995; this endorsement is now part of the Law of the Orientation of Cameroonian Education, passed in 1998. In a further step, the new constitution of January 1996 "committed the Cameroonian nation to protecting and promoting national languages" (Tadadjeu 1997:23).

Summary. The post-independence period has seen a strong focus by government on resolving the significant difficulties inherent in uniting two nations of different official languages. In this context, it is understandable that official acceptance of a local language development programme like PROPELCA would be slow in coming. However, it appears that the results of the programme so far have gradually given vernacular education a positive image in the eyes of the government.

Mission policy and practice in Northwest Cameroon have come to focus on English-language schooling, in conformity with government requirements. However, interest in local language schooling is still found among educators and school authorities. Catholic and Protestant private schools were the first to adopt the PROPELCA model of mother-tongue education, and they continue to utilise it.

The Cameroonian perspective on these circumstances has various aspects. Regarding English and French, anglophone Cameroonians tend to feel themselves at a disadvantage relative to francophone Cameroonian society. The national government and the national commercial interests are predominantly francophone, and it is clear to English-speaking Cameroonians that fluency in French is necessary for national-level advancement in academics, commerce or government (Chumbow and Bobda 1996). Discontent over this perceived inequity continues to contributes to a separatist sentiment on the part of some (Wolf 1997:424; Toh 2001). In fact, as Awasom (2004) has observed, the francophone-anglophone relationship in Cameroon is primarily geographical and sociopolitical, not linguistic, in nature.
Regarding the Cameroonian languages, the attitudes of communities in the Northwest Province are still heavily influenced by the substantial prestige and influence of English (and French), particularly in the educational sphere. On the other hand, this study shows that a growing numbers of rural parents believe that their local language and culture can also play a role in effective education (section 6.21.2). Language attitudes are incredibly complex, as are the motivations of Cameroonian supporters (and detractors) of PROPELCA. However, this study indicates that vernacular language use in education is slowly gaining popularity in anglophone Cameroon.

3.1.6. Reflections on local agency

Of the three parties engaged in the educational arena - missions, government and Cameroonian citizens - the impact and influence of the first two on language use in education are clearly marked. Published policies, statements of philosophy and recorded action make it easy to trace the influence of government and mission actors. What is perhaps less obvious is the impact of the choices of the Cameroonian 'clientele'. Less defined by structures and public statements, the historical role of Cameroonians in shaping language policy in education is more discernible in retrospect. Yet the actions and priorities of Cameroonian parents and community leaders can nevertheless be seen throughout this historical sketch, in their support and desire for certain kinds of schooling and their rejection of others. That role has been highly influential on the current status of language in education in the Northwest Province of Cameroon.

For at least the last 70 years, the preferences of Cameroonian communities in the Northwest Province regarding language choice in education have been consistent. From the beginning of the colonial era, Cameroonian citizens have shown strong interest in knowing and using the language of the colonisers - whether German or English. Given the multilingual sociolinguistic history of the region, this was an entirely sensible stance. The ability to communicate, especially with those in authority, represents power. Parental insistence on English-language schooling until 1960 - and afterwards - reflects their awareness of this fact.

Equally clear to Cameroonian communities was the fact that education could give a young person a mysterious body of knowledge, totally different from what he or she learned in the community, that allowed him or her to enter into the economic and social world of the European authorities (De Vries 1998:107). In many cases, education actually seemed to transform a Cameroonian village child into a sophisticated member of the ruling culture. This is power indeed, and if Cameroonians did not care to have that culture replace their own,
nevertheless they liked the idea of having children who could traverse the foreign cultural
terrain without difficulty.

Hence came the responses of the Cameroonian communities, described in the above
historical sketch, in which they repeatedly rejected attempts to substitute African languages
for English, or to adapt European education and institute a more African-based curriculum in
the formal education system. For the Cameroonian community, African realities were not
what school was meant to be about. The entire point of formal school was to provide entry to
the world, including the language, of the colonial powers (Ball 1983:254).

Ball's (1983) description of curriculum in colonial Africa highlights this discontinuity
between government, mission and African priorities for educational content. Ball argues that
the missions promoted an *evangelical* (or catechistic) curriculum in order to convert the
students; the colonial government promoted an *adapted* curriculum for the purposes of social
control and creation of a population with limited employment skills; and the African
population wanted an *academic* curriculum that would facilitate their own social mobility and
economic progress. This analysis is not entirely accurate in the case of Cameroon, since it
was the colonial government which set the standards for English language and academic
content in schools, thus enhancing the prestige of the academic curriculum. In addition,
adapted curriculum and the academic curriculum were promoted at different times by mission
educators as well as government education authorities.

Nevertheless, Ball's notion that African resistance to non-academic curricula was
related to their belief in the ability of European formal education to provide access to the
material and political superiority of the European colonisers (Ball 1983:258) seems to have
been true in the British Cameroons. Not only so, but judging by the current popularity of the
academic curriculum in Northwest Province, it appears that the clients have won their battle
for the right to an education which teaches 'European' rather than local or non-academic
knowledge.

However, it can hardly be said that this curriculum has led to generalised economic or
social progress. Rather, it has resulted in the establishment of a small, educated elite who
have successfully negotiated the language and content of formal education (which was in fact
the original intention of early colonial education initiatives), and whose resulting economic
and social successes stand in stark contrast to those of the majority of the population. Not
only so, but the results of decades of such a curriculum, including the prioritisation of English
as the language of prestige and progress, have been so detrimental to local cultural values and
knowledge practices that Ball terms the triumph of the academic curriculum a "pyrrhic victory" (Ball 1983:260) for African communities.

Speaking to this negative effect on local culture, a report by the Nuffield Foundation in 1953 states:

African education was effective in breaking-up the old African life, but not in adapting its pupils to the conditions of the new. It was bookish, divorced from reality, and gave its pupils a distaste for manual work and for rural life (Nuffield Foundation 1953:4).

Although this excerpt shows clear evidence of the colonial predilection for education which is 'adapted' to African realities, it also demonstrates the sense of frustration on the part of expatriate educators with the local enthusiasm for academic curriculum.

However, this educational choice by Cameroonians did not, and does not, represent abandonment of their own language or culture. By 1938 only 11% of school-aged children in Cameroons Province were attending school (section 3.1.3.5) - hardly a wholesale move to an English-medium culture. Indeed, the dominant place of local language is clear in rural communities even today, where the school is effectively an 'island of English' in the mother-tongue-speaking community. Young people begin to learn English in village primary schools, but conversational fluency is not gained there; it is those who attend secondary school or move to a linguistically heterogeneous town environment who become fluent in English and/or Pidgin. If this is the case today, it is likely to have been the case in decades past as well.

So the consistent desire of the communities of Northwest Cameroon to obtain European-style education for their children can be seen as a desire to acquire the skills of the colonisers and access to the culture of power. They saw early on that this would quite likely result in the cultural alienation of those children who were sent to higher or boarding schools; this was perceived as the necessary price, and did not seem to deter parents from doing all they could to facilitate as many years of education for their children as possible. This is still the case. However the greater availability of schools and the increase in the numbers of people who attend them has meant that the cultural impact of this English-medium schooling on language communities has increased significantly.

Given the earlier association of local languages with both the Basel Mission's vernacular schools and the proposals for adapted curricula, then, how are the current mother-tongue education programmes being perceived by the language communities? Surprisingly, perhaps, the use of local language in school is proving to be acceptable to growing numbers
of parents. Parent interviews (conducted as part of this study and described in chapter six) indicate a certain interest in use of the mother tongue in early primary school, primarily because of its ability to facilitate learning. The maintenance of local language and culture through the education system is not a strong concern for these parents, but school performance is. They continue to be concerned that their children gain some level of access to the tools of the 'modern world' - i.e. English fluency and literacy. And although local language education still has its opponents among parents and community members, it is gaining acceptance among them as well.

The history of language and education in the Northwest Province has not been simply a matter of action by the authorities and acceptance by the local population. Far from being the hapless objects of education policy, Cameroonian communities have acted for their own best interests as they saw them - often flying in the face of the authorities' 'best judgement' to do so. The Cameroonian people bear a significant part of the responsibility for the current education system, including the languages used there; and if the system's defects in terms of effective learning are now becoming obvious to users and to the national leadership, it should be expected that those same communities will necessarily take an active part in any change that comes about.

3.2. Language development activity in Nso', Kom and Bafut

The history of language and education in northern Cameroons Province, later named the Northwest Province of Cameroon, provides a global context for the current attitudes and policies regarding use of local languages in education. To provide further context for this study, the following section explores the course of local language development in the Nso', Kom and Bafut language communities specifically

3.2.1. History and description of PROPELCA

As noted above (section 3.1.5.2), the PROPELCA mother-tongue education programme originated in 1981, jointly supported by the University of Yaoundé's Departement de Langues Africaines et Linguistique (DLAL), the Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC), the National Education Centre (CNE), the Centre for Anthropological Research and Studies (CREA), and the Societé Internationale de

87 Map 3, Appendix 17 is a political map of Northwest Cameroon. Map 4, Appendix 17 shows the chiefdoms of the Province.
Linguistique (Summer Institute of Linguistics, SIL). PROPELCA's goal was the development of local Cameroonian languages for education. SIL was the only international NGO involved in PROPELCA at this point; SIL personnel had been active in local language development and literacy in Cameroon since 1969 (Trudell 2001:19) and readily supported this ambitious initiative. However Prof. Maurice Tadadjeu, PROPELCA's principal architect in the DLAL, has pointed out that from first to last PROPELCA has been a Cameroonian-led programme:

PROPELCA has never been an SIL programme. From the beginning it was our conception at the University, and we took advantage of the fact that SIL was there with a lot of experience. But when they came [to the discussion] we were already discussing PROPELCA (OI: Tadadjeu 4 Oct 2002).

Tadadjeu's proposed programme for mother-tongue education was received with interest by SIL personnel involved at the University, and the resulting cooperation between Tadadjeu, SIL education experts and funders such as CIDA set PROPELCA on its way.

The PROPELCA programme initiative began in 1979 with a nationwide move to harmonise the writing systems for Cameroonian languages, resulting in a standard Cameroonian language alphabet (Tadadjeu and Sadembuo 1979; Tadadjeu, Gfeller and Mba 1991:29). This was a positive step in the development of writing in the local Cameroonian languages (Tabi-Manga 2000:88), in very few of which writing had been yet attempted. For languages in which people were already writing, such as Lamnso', the effects of standardising the orthography were significant. As Christopher Mengjo, Nso' author and editor, has pointed out:

There was early writing and publishing in Lamnso', but the problem was nonstandard writing. The English orthography was used as a basis, but people couldn't read others' writing. A standardised orthography was agreed on, so that now if I write you will still read it, and if you write I will still read it (OI: Mengjo 27 March 2003).

88 This quote by Prof. Tadadjeu, and other individual quotes in this chapter, come from interview data collected in the course of this study. The reference "OI" here refers to an oral interview. An index of interviewees quoted in this chapter may be found in Appendix 11.

89 Although SIL is an international NGO, its various country offices operate with a great deal of autonomy. The decision of SIL's Cameroon branch to support PROPELCA was taken locally, and supported by the international headquarters as well. It is significant that, at the time Tadadjeu proposed PROPELCA, the SIL Cameroon branch included at least one education consultant with experience in the large bilingual education programme which SIL and the Peruvian Ministry of Education were running in Peruvian Amazon region (Trudell 1993:19). This connection had an impact on the choice of reading method and materials used in PROPELCA up until today.

90 Where oral quotations from interviews are used in this study, they are transcribed in as faithful a manner as is possible without being incomprehensible to a native speaker of British or American English. Many of the interviews quoted took place in a Cameroonian variety of English, influenced to varying extents by Pidgin. In the recognition that Cameroonian English is a legitimate language variety, but more important, in the effort to
As the PROPELCA programme expands across Cameroon, one of its highest priorities continues to be the development of alphabets in previously unwritten languages (Wiesemann, Sadembuo and Tadadjeu 1988).91

The next step in implementing PROPELCA was preparation of pedagogical materials in the Cameroonian languages to be used for instruction. This was one area in which SIL was well prepared to assist. Sarah Gudschinsky, an SIL linguist, had developed a reading method which has for several decades been the standard for SIL-related literacy programmes around the world.92 The method prioritises development of the psycholinguistic reading skills, such as analysis of words into syllables and letters, morpheme recognition, the recognition of each letter value in every syllable position where it is found, and so on (Lee 1984). Using this reading method, University of Yaoundé and SIL personnel collaborated with native speakers of the various languages to prepare pre-reading material, primers, advanced readers, transition materials to reading in the official language and mathematics texts in each language where PROPELCA was to be implemented (Tadadjeu, Gfeller and Mba 1986:5).

Teacher training was also a key element in PROPELCA, as it is today (section 6.1.3, Figure 6.10). Teachers had to be taught to read and write the mother tongue themselves. In addition, the methods used for reading instruction in PROPELCA differed from those of the traditional literacy instruction; thus correct teaching of the series of pre-primer, primers, post-primers and mathematics books required special instruction.93

PROPELCA classes began in experimental form in 1981, in the Lamnso’ and Ewondo languages, and in 1982 expanded to the Duala and Fe'efe'e languages (Tadadjeu, Gfeller and Mba 1991:29).94 By 1986, eleven Protestant and Catholic schools were using the PROPELCA programme (Tabi-Manga 2000:90). The PROPELCA programme has since convey as much of the original context as possible, I have not 'regularised' the quotations to a more standard English variety.

91 Seventy seven Cameroonian languages have language committees registered with NACALCO; it is probable that the approximately 200 language communities without committees speak unwritten languages.

92 In the last 10-15 years, however, reading methodology in SIL - and in PROPELCA - has evolved beyond the purely psycholinguistic approach to reading. Current primers and literacy programmes are likely to include more attention to global aspects of reading, as well as aspects of ActionAid's Reflect method (Trudell 2001:57).

93 This element of sustained, programmed teacher training distinguishes PROPELCA from many mother-tongue initiatives in Africa. As Musau notes (2003:159), teacher training is often not a part of programmes to introduce the mother tongue into the primary classrooms, including the programmes Musau describes in Kenya. This aspect of PROPELCA has, I believe, a great deal to do with its ongoing implementation.

94 PROPELCA programmes have been implemented in both francophone and anglophone Cameroon ever since PROPELCA's inception; three of the four pilot languages - Ewondo, Duala and Fe'efe'e - are in French-speaking Cameroon.
grown to be implemented in at least 29 Cameroonian languages, including Bafut and Kom in addition to Lamnso’. As of 2001, nearly 25,000 students were participating (Appendix 13). The programme includes mother-tongue materials for use in the classroom, teacher training and supervision, and advocacy work in the local community on behalf of the use of the mother tongue in schools.

Two types of classroom-level implementation have been established. These are called the formal PROPELCA programme, implemented in grades 1-4, in which the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction alongside English or French; and the informal PROPELCA programme, used for grades 5-7, in which reading and writing the mother tongue are taught as a subject among other subjects in the curriculum.\(^95\)

The formal PROPELCA programme is based on the national curriculum and syllabus, but the local language is included as a medium of instruction alongside English or French. Reading and writing are taught in the mother tongue, using PROPELCA mother-tongue primers and readers. Arithmetic is also taught primarily in the mother tongue, and arithmetic books for grades one and two are part of the PROPELCA text series. The one major modification to the national syllabus is that English (or French) is programmatically taught as a second language, beginning orally in grade one. From grades one to four, the relative amount of time spent teaching in the mother tongue decreases, and that in spent teaching in the official language (English in Northwest Province) increases. The proportion of time which PROPELCA teachers are supposed to be teaching in the two languages year by year is shown in Figure 3.2.

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**Figure 3.2. Recommended percentages of time of use of mother tongue and official language in formal PROPELCA, grades 1-4**

(taken from PROPELCA 1995:7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Official language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^95\) These uses of formal and informal to describe the two types of PROPELCA programme follow the terminology coined by PROPELCA’s founders in the University of Yaoundé.
This proportion is rough at best; other than the subjects of reading and writing and arithmetic (in the mother tongue), I could find no consistent allocation of subjects to a particular language medium of instruction.\textsuperscript{96} Rather, PROPELCA teachers are trained to estimate how much time is being spent using the two languages respectively and to aim for the percentages above - not by subject, but in terms of total teaching time. This programmed, intentional coexistence of the two languages in the classrooms in grades 1-4 is one of the most significant learning advantages of PROPELCA.

The informal PROPELCA programme is implemented in grades 5-7, and involves inserting an extra time period one to three times a week into the timetable, in order to teach mother-tongue reading and writing. It is not expected that the informal programme necessarily follows the formal programme; rather, the former is intended simply to teach children in grade 5-7 to read and write in their mother tongue. The informal programme uses the same primers as formal PROPELCA does for mother-tongue literacy. Informal PROPELCA is easier to staff and run than formal PROPELCA, and it is used in some cases (e.g. Bafut, see below) to build interest and support for the formal PROPELCA programme. A total of nearly 16,000 primary students in the Northwest Province participated in formal or informal PROPELCA classes in 2001, and a total of 33,000 students in the entire country. Appendix 13 lists the national distribution of PROPELCA schools and students in 2001.

The decision to implement PROPELCA in any given school is that of the school headmaster, who may be influenced in this decision by the interests of his teachers or the school manager. The PROPELCA class is not usually the only educational option open to a given child, as primary schools are more and more numerous, even in the rural areas of the Province. A parent's decision about where to send his or her child to school depends on factors such as the school's proximity, religious affiliation, reputation and expense, and so the parent's interest or lack thereof in PROPELCA is often one additional factor in making that decision. Parents' perspectives on PROPELCA are described in more detail in Section 6.1.2.

3.2.2. Institutional framework of PROPELCA

The goal which its DLAL founders set for the PROPELCA programme is to "develop a complete educational structure for the teaching and maintenance of [minority] languages in the school system … and to ensure that this system is completely state and/or community

\textsuperscript{96} In the early grades, even English is taught with the help of the mother tongue.
This goal statement highlights the awareness that ownership by the language community is essential to the success of any programme of mother tongue use in schools. Therefore responsibility for the local PROPELCA programmes actually belongs to local language committees, locally organised and locally led institutions dedicated to the promotion of the written mother tongue (BALA 2001; KLDC 1991). In the Bafut, Kom and Nso’ areas, the PROPELCA programme is sponsored and implemented by the Bafut Language Association (BALA), the Kom Language Development Committee (KLDC) and the Nso’ Language Organisation (NLO) respectively.

At national level, the language committees' work with PROPELCA is supported by the National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees, NACALCO. Founded in 1987, NACALCO (in French, l’Association Nationale de Comités de Langues au Cameroun, ANACLAC) exists to support and represent national language committees in their efforts to promote the development of national languages. NACALCO provides consultant help in PROPELCA programme development, as well as a limited level of funding for teacher training and materials publication. The association also serves as a representative body for Cameroonian language interests at national level (Gfeller 2000:23). As of 2001, NACALCO had a membership of 74 language committees, resident in nine of the ten provinces of Cameroon (NACALCO 2001:26).

3.2.3. Language development in Nso’

Lamnso’ has been a written language since at least 1974, with locally authored booklets and basic linguistic descriptions of the language among the earliest Lamnso’ texts. The Catholic Cathedral at Kumbo published a service book in Lamnso’ in 1976, as well as a hymnbook and the prayer book for Mass. However, as mentioned above, it was not until the formulation of a standard Cameroonian language alphabet in 1979 that Lamnso’ became easily readable by Lamnso’ speakers. In the following 24 years over 70 titles were

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97 Up to 77 language committees exist in Cameroon, according to the membership of NACALCO. Some are well organised and active, with years of experience. Others are much more recently formed, and operate under less active leadership. BALA, the KLDC and the NLO are among the most active and experienced of the Cameroonian language committees.

98 Justin Suuyren, NLO secretary general, states that missions in Banso’ were attempting to write in Lamnso’ as early as the 1960s, but that the nonstandard writing systems used made it very difficult (Suuyren 2 March 2003).

99 Kumbo is the largest town in Banso’, with a population of approximately 52,000 (1992 figures, taken from <http://www.citypopulation.de>).

100 My Nso’ research assistant, Nicole Barah Yinyuy, learned to read Lamnso’ fairly fluently while working with me. However, on being asked to read and translate Lamnso’ publications from 1976 (before the standardisation
published in Lamnso': PROPELCA school texts, adult literacy materials, histories of the Nso' people, church materials (primarily but not solely for the Catholic Church), portions of the Bible including the entire New Testament (published in 1990), folk tales, descriptions of Lamnso' and a few titles on health and development topics. Not all 70 of these titles are available today, many being out of print.

Today the Nso' Language Organisation (NLO) continues to produce titles they see as relevant to the Nso' audience, including the highly popular Nso' calendar and agenda book. In addition to the literature production of the language committee, an independent author and publisher of Lamnso' materials operates in Kumbo. The sale of Lamnso' literature is rarely a profit-making venture, however; most of the religious literature is sold at a subsidised price, while titles produced by the NLO are priced to recover the costs of production.

The NLO dates from 1982, when those interested in the Lamnso' PROPELCA programme formed it. This language committee consists of primary school teachers, local leaders and representatives of the Catholic mission education system. Its executive committee (roughly 13 members) includes teachers, writers and traditional Nso' leaders. From the beginning, the NLO's task was to promote and direct the PROPELCA programme in Banso' and to write books in Lamnso' using the new orthography. These tasks, along with mother-tongue literacy programmes for adults, continue to be the raison d'être of the NLO (OI: Suuyren 2 March 03).

Lamnso' was one of the first languages in which PROPELCA began, largely due to the Catholic mission schools in Banso'. The first four languages to have PROPELCA - Lamnso', Ewondo, Fe'e'fe'e and Duala - did so because of the interest of members of the Catholic education system hierarchy (OI: Mba 18 Oct 2002). According to Tadadjeu (OI: 4 Oct 2002), the legality of using local languages in school was questionable at that time, since the colonial-era laws against this practice had not been formally modified. PROPELCA was accepted by MINEDUC as an experimental programme of the University of Yaoundé, yet the national government school hierarchy were not quick to try it. However, mission school authorities, particularly in the Catholic denomination, were very interested. This positive stance towards PROPELCA reflects the fact that the missions' earlier English language education policies had been formulated in response to pressure from the government and their

\[ \text{of the alphabet), Nicole found it extremely difficult to read and understand them; she said the alphabet was "too hard".} \]

\[ ^{101} \text{Christopher Mengjo runs the Good News publishing house and bookshop in Kumbo, Banso'}. \]
Cameroonian clientele, and were not the result of their own beliefs about the inappropriateness of local languages in school. The Catholic mission offered the first pilot schools for PROPELCA, and so the programme began in Lamnso’ and the other three languages mentioned.

Patrick Meliim, one of the first PROPELCA teachers in Banso’, noted in an interview that at the beginning, it was a struggle to gain acceptance from parents and community due to attitudes about the inferiority of the language compared to English, and the belief that Lamnso’ was an inappropriate language for school. However, according to Meliim, "after the first 3-4 years of the experiment the parents around those schools where the experiments were done, they saw the changes in the children's attainment" (OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03). After seven years, the children taught in the experimental PROPELCA schools went on to secondary school, and as Meliim puts it, "they set records" for achievement.102 This was a significant turning point in the acceptance of PROPELCA in Nso'. PROPELCA was then begun in nine other schools, all Catholic. Over the next decade, Presbyterian and Baptist mission schools joined the programme as well, although government schools were still not taking part (OI: Banboyee 4 Jan 03).

However, in the early to mid-1990s the Catholic hierarchy in the Banso’ area began to withdraw its support for PROPELCA; citing economic hardship, the authorities in this diocese no longer sponsored PROPELCA teacher training, nor did they press individual school headmasters or school managers to support the programme. As a result, the PROPELCA programme in Nso’ began to decline. PROPELCA-trained teachers were moved indiscriminately to classes or schools where they could not apply the programme. Teachers were not encouraged by their headmasters to take the PROPELCA training (for which there is no financial advantage in any case), and the numbers of trainees dropped103.

This situation began to turn around in the late 1990s, when the national government began expressing more interest in mother-tongue education. The national debate about using Cameroonian languages in schools had evolved, with NACALCO expending substantial time and effort pleading the case for using local languages as media of instruction. The National Forum on Education of 1995 identified recurrent themes of "the need to develop a curriculum that is adapted to the social and cultural environment of the learner" and the "need to

102 See section 6.1.1. for further discussion of this phenomenon.

103 Speaking of this dropoff in mission school teachers, Lamnso’ PROPELCA supervisor Sylvester Kanjo remarked, "Lukewarmness comes from above!" (OI: Kanjo 8 July 03)
introduce national languages in school" (Ministry of National Education 1995:11-12). One of the strongest voices raised on behalf of national languages at the Forum was Prof. Tadadjeu's PROPELCA team at DLAL, which produced a proposal for presentation entitled National Languages Education Programme in Cameroon (PROPELCA 1995). The persistent lobbying had an impact: in 1996 the new Constitution of the nation made reference to the importance of national languages (Tadadjeu 1997:23). Accordingly, in 1998 the new Law of Education in Cameroon listed "promote national languages" as one of its nine objectives of education (Ministry of National Education 1998).

As a result, an increasing number of government primary school headmasters in Banso' are now sending their teachers to be trained for PROPELCA. This move is not yet legally required; the accompanying text of application for the law is yet to be formulated and disseminated by the central government. However, seeing the handwriting on the wall, some divisional delegates (mid-level government administrators) in Banso' have already begun cooperating with the language committee to promote the PROPELCA programme, pressing the school inspectors and headmasters to identify and send teachers for PROPELCA training. The PROPELCA supervisors and the NLO are thus optimistic about the future of PROPELCA in Banso'.

3.2.4. Language development in Kom

The Kom language has been used informally in local schools for many years; indeed, as early as 1935 at least one Catholic school in the Kom town of Njinikom was teaching in Kom language (OI: Kain 20 Jan 03). Written Kom was used extensively by an expatriate named Mueller in the 1970s, who produced at least 30 short titles on religious and cultural topics using a Kom alphabet which he had developed himself. With the standardisation of

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104 Albaugh (2003) outlines the role which Maurice Tadadjeu and his colleagues at DLAL played in helping to shape national language policy from as early as 1985. Tadadjeu's paper at a conference on Cameroonian cultural identity is said to have influenced the views of President Paul Biya, as described in his 1986 book Communal Liberalism. There is no doubt that the lobbying of Tadadjeu and his colleagues influenced the formative National Forum on Education of 1995 (Ministry of National Education 1995), and the subsequent 1998 Law on Education (Ministry of National Education 1998).

105 Of the teachers taking PROPELCA training in the south of Banso' in the summer of 2003, 90% were from government schools (OI: Kanjo 8 July 03).

106 The text of application is the document which mandates and describes the implementation of a law. It is written by administrative personnel in the national government after a law is passed.

107 One divisional education delegate is reported to have told a PROPELCA teacher training class that now "there is no turning back" from mother-tongue education in Nso' (OI: Banboyee 4 Jan 2003).
writing systems in 1979, however, these publications became outdated; Mueller himself was never reconciled to using the new orthography.

Kom now has about 55 published titles other than what Mueller produced, including PROPELCA texts, calendars, news sheets, collections of Kom proverbs, portions of the Bible, linguistic descriptions of the Kom language, and health and development topics. The Kom New Testament is within a few years of being published. As is the case in Nso’, however, not all of these publications are readily available or even still in print. The Kom Language Development Committee (KLDC) is the primary author and publisher of Kom language works. As is the case with Lamnso’ literature, the sale of Kom literature usually depends on it being priced either at or below the production cost.

The KLDC was formed in 1989, led by Hon. Albert Waingeh, MP and other members of the Kom elite (Shultz 23 Dec 2003). The KLDC constitution of 1991 describes its goals, and is a fair representation of the goals of many Cameroonian language committees:

- To formulate an alphabet and elaborate orthographic rules of the Kom language.
- To promote and popularise the standard writing of the Kom language and its use in the largest possible context.
- To express modern concepts in the Kom language.
- To produce and translate various books and other materials in the Kom language.
- To promote literacy among all the Kom people.
- To encourage and train literacy workers, translators and authors to accomplish the above mentioned goals. (Kom Language Development Committee 1991:3-4)

The organisational structure of the KLDC includes a general assembly, an executive committee, and three technical subcommittees of the executive committee for literacy, translation and finance. Members of the KLDC include local authorities, teachers, the PROPELCA supervisors, authors and translators.

The PROPELCA programme was established in Kom in 1985, with one teacher in Njinikom (Loh et al 1989). The programme was authorised by the Catholic bishop of the diocese, and by 1989, 24 Kom teachers had been trained as PROPELCA teachers and were teaching in Catholic primary schools in nine Kom villages (Loh et al 1989). In the early stage of the PROPELCA programme, teachers were trained for PROPELCA in the provincial capital of Bamenda. As the programme grew in the Kom area, teacher training was offered locally instead; the first such training was held in 1991, signalling an acceleration in the programme's growth. By 1993, PROPELCA was operating in about 20 Kom primary schools. Currently there are over 200 Kom teachers trained to use the PROPELCA teaching method, and the programme operates in 60 primary schools - government schools as well as
Baptist and Catholic mission schools\textsuperscript{108}. Teacher training is now offered in all three subdivisions of Kom.

Nineteen years after the inception of PROPELCA in Kom, community attitudes towards the programme seem generally positive. The inspectors and school managers are generally cooperative about sending teachers for training and then keeping those teachers in the class they have been trained for. Parents also demonstrate willingness to send their children to PROPELCA classes. The loss of support by Catholic diocesan authorities which so devastated the Nso' PROPELCA programme in the 1990s did not occur in Kom. The mission schools, particularly the Catholic schools, continue to be highly supportive of PROPELCA, and there is evidence that, as in Nso', the government schools are becoming increasingly involved in the programme (OI: Kain 16 July 03). Hon. Albert Waingeh, the KLDC chairman, has stated that "the future is bright!" (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03)

3.2.5. Language development in Bafut

Bafut is the smallest of the three language communities in this study, and the closest to the provincial capital of Bamenda\textsuperscript{109}. The earliest titles in Bafut were published in the late 1970s, consisting of elementary linguistic descriptions of the language, word lists, stories and a collection of proverbs. Currently there are roughly 20 titles in Bafut language; these include PROPELCA texts, diaries and the entire New Testament, most of them priced to cover production costs. The Bafut New Testament, published in 2000, was primarily the work of Dr. Joseph Mfonyam, a Bafut linguist and author who is a member of SIL.

The Bafut Language Committee (BLC) was created in the late 1970s to promote written Bafut language (Fon Abumbi II 2001:3). In 2001 this committee was reorganised to form the Bafut Language Association (BALA), of which H.M. Fon Abumbi II of Bafut is the honorary president. The 15-member BLC became the executive committee of BALA, which itself has perhaps 80 members. BALA membership includes traditional authorities, school teachers, PROPELCA supervisors, and others interested in promoting the Bafut language in written form.

\textsuperscript{108} There are few Presbyterian mission schools in Kom, because during colonial times the Basel Mission and the Baptist Mission had agreed to divide the area between them so as to reduce competition and overlap of the missions' efforts. The Basel Mission, later the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, concentrated their efforts in the Bafut area; the Baptists concentrated theirs in the Kom area. The Catholic mission was notably absent from this Protestant 'dividing up' of the territory.

\textsuperscript{109} Bamenda is the largest city in Northwest Province, with a population of approximately 298,000 (2004 figures, taken from <http://world-gazetteer.com/c/c_cm.htm>).
The PROPELCA programme began in Bafut schools in the early 1990s (OI: Mfonyam 27 Nov 03); the first PROPELCA training seminar in the Bafut area was held in 1993 (OI: Ambe 4 March 03). At first only mission teachers from Catholic and Presbyterian schools were interested, but around 1996 interest in the programme began to accelerate. Now there are 39 PROPELCA teachers posted to primary schools, ten of them in government schools. Twenty seven primary schools currently use PROPELCA, although in 24 of them it is the *informal* version whereby Bafut literacy is taught as a subject in grades 5-7 (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03); as noted above, this use of informal PROPELCA is intended to gain community acceptance and support for the use of Bafut language in the primary schools.

Community attitudes towards PROPELCA have been a challenge for BALA, reflecting in part a wavering interest in Bafut language in the language community. Children are still monolingual in Bafut when they begin school, but the community's attitude about their language has been affected by the proximity of English-speaking Bamenda town and national culture. A certain amount of mixing of Bafut with English and French takes place among adults. Still, John Ambe, the Bafut literacy supervisor, has noted that "by and large, people are pleased with the results they see in their children" who attend PROPELCA classes (OI: Ambe 12 March 03), such results including improved school examination performance and stronger Bafut language skills. Though the Bafut language is encountering pressure as described above from English, Pidgin and French, the language is still vital and widely spoken in the Bafut area. There is however a certain sense of urgency about BALA's efforts to promote written use of the language; as Samuel Mfonyam, BALA chairman, stated: "if Bafut is not written now, it will die" (OI: Mfonyam 26 March 03).

### 3.2.6. Similarities between the three language development programmes

This study examines language and education choices among three language communities, not those of just one. As has been mentioned in section 2.5.2, it is expected that a broader understanding of the research question may be attained in this way, as well as avoiding results which may be dependent on some characteristic unique to one group alone. At the same time, the linguistic and cultural similarity among the three facilitates comparison across the groups. Therefore the three language communities described in the study - Nso', Kom and Bafut - were chosen because they share some important characteristics.

Culturally, geographically and historically these three groups are very similar (Chilver and Kaberry 1968). The majority of the language communities' populations live in rural or semi-rural areas, and in each the homeland is key to their identity. The traditional social
structure of each is highly developed and is maintained to this day, and the traditional authority structure remains strong. Language use patterns among the three are also comparable: nearly all the children in the homelands of these three communities are monolingual when they begin primary school, and community members of all ages readily use the local language both within and outside the homeland area. The history of education is also similar; the influence of Christian missions and the British government on the development of formal education in the three areas was comparable, as were the local interpretations of and responses to such education. In all three language communities the language of schooling and government is English. Religious traditions among the three are also similar, consisting principally of the African traditional and Christian religions.\textsuperscript{110}

In terms of language development, the three are also in comparable positions. Unlike the less developed languages of Cameroon, Bafut, Kom and Lamnso’ have been written languages for at least two decades. Linguistic study has been done in each of the three languages, and writing systems standardised\textsuperscript{111}. The PROPELCA programme has been active for at least 13 years in each, and the series of PROPELCA mother-tongue textbooks is either complete or in process. Other written materials, both religious and cultural, are also available in these languages.

The three language communities also feature a high degree of cultural and linguistic homogeneity, at least within the homeland regions. This homogeneity has meant that the community culture continues to be mediated primarily through the mother tongue, and also that local language promotion is relevant in towns and villages across the entire homeland. These two phenomena have been very important to the effectiveness of language development work.

Most immediately salient to this present study is the fact that the language committees in all three language communities are actively engaged in initiatives to promote use of the written mother tongue: mother education programmes, adult literacy programmes and publications in the local language. These committees are made up of experienced teachers and trainers in the mother-tongue education programme, linguists, authors and local traditional and church leaders. All are based in the language community and operate under the leadership of community leaders.

\textsuperscript{110} Nso’ is the only language community of the three which has a notable number of Muslims among the homeland population, The Nso’ Muslims are ethnically Nso’, not immigrants from elsewhere. However they are a small group in proportion to the entire Nso’ population.

\textsuperscript{111} See Appendix 14 for a list of the linguistic studies done of Bafut, Kom and Nso’.
The literacy and education initiatives in each language community are structurally very similar, having been set up with similar consultant input from linguistics and education specialists in NACALCO and SIL International (sections 3.2.1-2; section 4.6.1). The mother-tongue literacy and education programmes in these language communities share implementation characteristics such as regular teacher training and supervision, use of the same primer methods, and support from NACALCO. These three programmes also share similar financial challenges, as they face similar community responses and attitudes towards local ownership.

The language communities of Bafut, Kom and Nso' have had the particular support of SIL personnel for language development over the last 15-30 years\textsuperscript{112}. SIL’s involvement with these three language communities has been based on the following activities:

- facilitation of the initial formation of the language committees;
- provision of expatriate field linguists who worked on the early analysis of the languages;
- provision of translation personnel and consultants for the life of the New Testament translation process (a process that takes at least 5-10 years);
- initial training of teachers and materials writers for adult and children's MT literacy and education;
- funding for training events and the publication of texts related to the above initiatives.

There can be no doubt that the involvement of SIL personnel in these language communities has had significant impact on how the mother tongue is viewed and used. However it is also important to recognise that the scope of a language development project is so broad that it is impossible to implement without a team of people. In the cases of these three language communities, language development has been implemented by committees of native speakers who focus on the promotion of the written mother tongue and/or Scripture translation. In each language community, one or two expatriates have played an important but necessarily limited role. The expatriates' energy has typically been focused on initial linguistic analysis, Scripture exegesis and translation with some involvement in the early

\textsuperscript{112} From the early 1970's, Nso' has had a team of two SIL workers (Karl and Winnie Grebe and family). Bafut has had expatriate (David Crozier) and Bafut (Joseph and Becky Mfonym) SIL personnel involved in language development there, beginning in the 1970's. In Kom, two SIL teams (George and Valerie Shultz and family from 1989 until the mid-1990s, and Randy and Cheri Jones and family since 1991) have been involved. Grebes, Mfonyms and Jones continue involvement in the Nso', Bafut and Kom language communities respectively.

At the national level, SIL personnel were involved in teaching applied linguistics at the University of Yaoundé in the early 1980s, and SIL education specialists helped to frame PROPELCA instructional materials and methods through the 1980s.
aspects of mother-tongue literacy work. This is generally the extent of SIL personnel involvement, none of which is done by the expatriate alone.

3.2.7. Differences between the three language development programmes

Notwithstanding the similarities noted above, the three language communities and language development programmes are unquestionably distinct. The cultural profile of the Nso' people is more cosmopolitan than the other two; the Nso' kingdom was historically quite powerful, and is regarded today (particularly by themselves) as the premiere community of the Northwest Province. The capital of the Banso' area, Kumbo, boasts a Catholic cathedral, two large mission hospitals and many secondary schools. At the same time, much of the Nso' population still resides in villages or rural areas. The average education levels of Nso' people appear to be high compared to other language groups of the area, with many Nso' young people in universities around the country. The population of Nso' has been estimated at about 150,000 in the homeland, with perhaps as many more living elsewhere in the country (Grebe 12 July 2003).

The Kom people, though also a strong people historically, today tend to be more rurally located than the Nso'. The Kom homeland has three principal towns, Fundong, Njinikom and Belo, of which Fundong\(^{113}\) is the largest, and many rural villages. The population is estimated at about 150,000 in the homeland area (Jones 12 July 2003) with an unknown number living elsewhere in Cameroon. Kom people are proud of their cultural and linguistic heritage, and a certain rivalry exists between them and the Nso' as to which is the most populous and important language community of Northwest Province. Education levels tend not to be so high in Kom as those of the Nso'.

The Bafut community has roughly half the population of either the Kom or Nso' communities, estimated at about 80,000 people in the homeland and perhaps the same number elsewhere in the country (Mfónyam 13 July 2003). The Bafut homeland consists of a string of small towns and villages, which begin just 30 km. from the current provincial capital city of Bamenda. Historically the Bafut were known as a powerful people in the Grassfields\(^{114}\); however, their proximity to the growing city of Bamenda in recent decades

\(^{113}\) The population of Fundong in 1992 was estimated at 20,000 (taken from http://www.citypopulation.de>).

\(^{114}\) The Bafut are mentioned as one of the groups which successfully attacked German expeditionary forces into the Grassfields around the turn of the 20th century (Chilver 1967; Nkwi 1989).
has meant more pressure\textsuperscript{115} on the Bafut language from English and French than the other
two language communities have experienced.

In terms of the history of written language among the three communities, Nso' has
probably the longest tradition of using the written mother tongue, beginning around the mid-
1970s. This was mainly due to the influence of Catholic Church leaders in Banso'. In Kom,
Mueller was using written Kom in the early 1970s, though there is little evidence that Kom
people were actively reading or writing Kom until the advent of the KLDC in the late 1980s.
In Bafut, the use of written Bafut is a more recent phenomenon, and its acceptance is still in
process.

In terms of the PROPELCA education programme, more differences are evident. The
Bafut PROPELCA programme began in the early 1990s, but experienced more active growth
beginning in 1996 (Ambe 3 Feb 2003). The programme exhibits a number of characteristics
one might expect to find in a relatively early implementation phase of mother-tongue
education:

\begin{itemize}
\item gradual sensitisation of parents and teachers to the value of Bafut language teaching;
\item a growing number of schools which have PROPELCA classes (27 schools)
\item a large number of informal PROPELCA classes compared to formal PROPELCA classes
(24 to 3), with the teachers in the informal programme being managed and paid (where at
all) by BALA
\item a limited number of titles in the Bafut language
\item a certain degree of struggle against negative language attitudes that exist within the Bafut
community, primarily because of the proximity of Bafut to the English-speaking
provincial capital, Bamenda
\item a limited number of literacy supervisors (one full time, plus two part time), and limited
financial support for those supervisors.
\end{itemize}

The Kom programme exhibits characteristics of a PROPELCA programme in full
flow; having begun in 1985 but picking up momentum in the early 1990s (Kain 20 Jan 2003),
the programme now shows indications of significant strength. For example:

\begin{itemize}
\item a general willingness of parents and teachers to see their children taught in the mother
tongue in primary school
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{115} As mentioned above, this pressure is in terms of both increased code mixing and language prestige.
• 60 primary schools (roughly half of the primary schools in Kom area) with mother-tongue classes, of which 48 are formal and 12 are informal
• active production of Kom publications by the KLDC, and regular purchase of periodic publications such as diaries and news sheets
• expanding infrastructure, with five training teacher training centres, five part-time supervisors and a coordinator of literacy and mother-tongue education.

The Lamnso’ PROPELCA programme exhibits characteristics of a more mature programme. As one of the first languages in Cameroon to take up the PROPELCA programme, Lamnso’ has been taught in local primary schools since 1981. The programme was operating at its height in the early 1990s, after which it fell upon hard times when the primary mission school sponsors of PROPELCA in Lamnso’ decreased their support. However, with recent government policy decisions regarding using national languages in schools, the Lamnso’ programme is once again on the increase. Some characteristics of this programme include the following:
• PROPELCA alumni who are now in their mid-20s and older, and who report a positive impact of early mother-tongue education on their lives (PROPELCA alumni survey 2003) 116
• classes in 39 primary schools (NACALCO 2001), about half of which operate informal PROPELCA and half operate formal PROPELCA
• extensive publications in Lamnso’, of various genres
• five part-time supervisors of PROPELCA teachers and literacy facilitators.

3.3. Conclusion

Current attitudes and policy in Northwest Cameroon regarding language use in education can be traced to their roots in mission policies, government priorities, and the goals of Cameroonian citizens. Each of these segments of society historically had their own characteristic stances regarding language and education, and they also acted on each other over the years. The influence of all three can be seen in the educational institutions, laws and practices of today.

The current use of local languages in education among the Bafut, Kom and Nso’ communities grows out of that history - and in particular, the 23-year history of PROPELCA

116 Conducted as part of this study and described in chapter six.
and its sponsoring language committees. These language development institutions, and the committed individuals who comprise them, have worked within their social and historical context to promote the development of written mother tongue and its use in primary classrooms.

This then is an outline of the historical and programmatic context of local language use in education among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities. The following chapters turn to an examination of the data gathered in these language communities, in terms of the connections between educational choices and maintenance of the local language.
Chapter 4. The status of the mother tongue in the homeland: authority, institutions and interests

Sustainability of a given language is based on its use by individual speakers in specific social domains (Baker 1996:43). Institutional support (e.g. school, religion or political systems) for a language's use in particular social domains enhances the chances that it will be maintained over a sustained period of time. For minority languages, however, the institutional support which is so crucial to language maintenance is often lacking. In an effort to understand the degree of support which exists for Bafut, Kom and Lamsno' languages, this chapter examines the position of relevant authorities, institutions and influential groups in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands regarding use of the mother tongue.117

4.1. Traditional authorities

The three language communities under study, along with others in the Grassfields region, are known for their political organisation into chiefdoms (also called kingdoms or *Fondoms*, as they are ruled by a *Fon*; see below). Nkwi and Warnier (1980:38) note that "these chiefdoms have many features of economic, social and political organisation in common". The current role and influence of this traditional authority structure in the Grassfields communities under study is best understood when put into the historical perspective of roughly the last 200 years.

The information described below on the Grassfields chiefdoms of the 17th-19th centuries has been largely obtained from the two most comprehensive sources on the topic: Chilver and Kaberry (1968) and Nkwi and Warnier (1982). Their own sources include oral tradition, written history and physical evidence gathered over several decades. Together, these four researchers provide a detailed picture of the social and political structures of the

117 The unpublished data used in this chapter has several sources: the PROPELCA alumni survey (PAS), described in section 2.5.4 and detailed in Appendices 1-3; oral interviews (OI), listed in Appendix 11; group interviews of teachers (GIT) and supervisors (GIS), described in Appendix 10; observations of language committee meetings (LCO), listed in Appendix 5; and personal email correspondence as listed in Appendix 12. In addition, the three language committees are referred to frequently: BALA (the Bafut Language Association), the KLDC (Kom Language and Development Committee), and the NLO (Nso' Language Organisation).
major Grassfields chiefdoms, many of which - including those of Kom, Bafut and Nso' - are still in place today.

Although aware that the Grassfields cultures have existed for hundreds of years, Nkwi and Warnier describe the Grassfields societies as they existed around the end of the 18th century. By that time, the Grassfields formed a community of trading partners, neighbours and rivals, a sociopolitical environment in which "it would be fallacious to treat the history of each chiefdom as a separate entity" (1982:38). Thus, even 200 years ago these societies had links with other communities and were familiar with goods and people from beyond the Grassfields region.

4.1.1. Structure of traditional authority by the 18th century

Sedentary agricultural life characterised the Grassfields cultures by the 18th century, a fact which is interpreted by Nkwi and Warnier as leading easily to social stratification: "the development of unequal statuses between title holders and low ranking people . . . and the emergence of chiefs" (1982:39). Bafut, Kom and Nso' and other Grassfields cultures became known for a tripartite political structure consisting of the Fon, the king or chief; the regulatory society; and the council of the chiefdom.

The primary role of the Fon was to be "a father of all", unifying the village around himself (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:60). The Fon had few judicial powers in the 18th century, but he had a great deal of prestige and was regarded as being different from other humans. The Fon was "the symbol of the unity of his people" (p.61). He was the only one who was initiated into all the secret societies and rituals of the chiefdom. The Fon protected the village, warding off outside threats by making sure the appropriate rituals were performed. Nkwi and Warnier note that in those days, no one could speak to the Fon unless they bowed down, cupped heir hands over their mouths and spoke in a low voice (p.61). The Fon was - and still is - a hereditary role, passed from father to sons.

The second facet of the traditional political structure was the regulatory societies. These societies wielded significant power in the chiefdoms (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:56-7). They had ritual powers, along with the Fon, to protect the village and ensure fertility of animals and soil. They could punish citizens of the realm who transgressed the laws of the village, fining, banishing or even killing the transgressors. They were also symbols of the sovereignty of the realm; every independent and sovereign chiefdom had its regulatory society. Nkwi and Warnier note that the Bafut, Kom and Nso' regulatory societies in
particular had a large measure of power and were even able to discipline the Fon "if he went against the established traditions of the realm" (p.180).118

The third side of the political structure were the chiefdom councils (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:59). Unlike the regulatory societies, the councils were more secular in focus. The council consisted of the eldest and most important citizens, who gathered around the Fon. "Together they took decisions regarding the affairs of the country" (p.59), organising communal labour and deciding which land would be used for livestock and which for farming.

Thus, the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities were part of a larger Grassfields society, and they were also internally structured according to a highly differentiated hierarchy. As will be seen below, characteristics of this hierarchical leadership structure continue to be visible today.

4.1.2. The Bafut, Kom and Nso' kingdoms

The three language communities studied here trace their origins to the Tikar kingdom, a region to the east of the Grassfields. Nkwi and Warnier believe that the Tikar migrated into the Grassfields 300-400 years ago. The Kom, Bafut and Nso' claim Tikar origin particularly for their 'royal' lineages (1982:16).119

The Bafut chiefdom was by the mid-19th century the primary chiefdom in what is now the Bamenda area. The present Bafut dynasty is believed to have had at least five Fons before 1887 (Chilver and Kaberry 1968:19). In the late 19th century Bafut, along with another chiefdom called Mankon, offered the strongest military resistance that German expeditions encountered in the area.

The lineage of the Kom chiefdom is traceable as far back as 1730 (Kom Language Development Committee 2003). The Kom migrated into the area of the current Kom capital of Laikom in the middle of the 18th century. Kom's present boundaries were established in the 19th century, and its rise to power in the region was associated with the Fon Yu, who reigned from 1860 to 1912 (Chilver and Kaberry 1968:33). He revived the military societies of the realm, and gave military protection to nearby small chiefdoms (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:175).

118 Davidson (1996:87) describes a similar system of political 'checks and balances' between powerful chiefs and their councils among the Yoruba of pre-colonial Nigeria.

119 The general population might not have all come from this same lineage, however, but may rather have been incorporated into the chiefdom through migration, alliances or conquest.
The Nso' have a long documented history in the Grassfields subsequent to their migration from Tikar. Eighteen gravestones of Fons are found in the first Nso' capital of Kovifem, and five more in the current capital of Kumbo. The Nso' capital at Kovifem was probably established in the late 17th century (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:33) and was moved from Kovifem to Kumbo in the early 19th century after Kovifem was sacked twice by enemies. After that Nso' developed a well equipped army. Other, smaller chiefdoms in the region were assimilated into the Nso' kingdom over time either by means of conquest or protective alliances (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:136).

During the 19th century the Bafut, Kom and Nso' chiefdoms expanded rapidly in size and importance. However the power balance began to shift with the establishment of the Germans' hold over the Grassfields beginning in 1889 (Nkwi 1989:13; Nkwi and Warnier 1982:213). The Germans sent exploratory and - when resisted - punitive expeditions into the Grassfields, set up a well staffed military station in Bamenda and permitted the establishment of the first mission schools in the Grassfields (as described in section 3.1.2).

However the acquisition of the Grassfields by the British in 1915 ushered in a markedly different colonial strategy from that of the Germans. Seriously understaffed in the Cameroons Province, the British relied on the traditional authorities to govern for them. Official adoption of the indirect rule policy in 1922 meant that "the divisional officer governed the area through the chiefs, most of whom received stipends, especially the paramount rulers of Nso', Kom, Bali and Bafut" (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:217). Chiefs were informed that "native law and customs if not repugnant, were to be revived". 120

By 1938, the British were still using the chiefs to control the chiefdoms. British colonial staff remained meagre, and the "native authorities" which had been created as an administrative unit were barely functional. Eventually, in 1954 the native authorities were reformed into agencies which would be capable of administering local services development initiatives (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:222). These administrative bodies did not threaten the Fons' domain of influence in the region.

By the 1950s, chiefs were meeting together in regional conferences. These groups were courted for their influence by the new, regionally formed political parties. Nkwi and Warnier report that the chiefs "worked hand in hand with the new [educated political] elite in the promotion of the political and socio-economic development of the territory" (1982:224). In 1959 the House of Chiefs was created; it consisted of 13 seats, four of which were reserved

120 This policy of indirect rule was already being used in colonial Nigeria by 1922.
for the paramount chiefs, the Fons of Kom, Nso, Bafut and Bali (p.225). Its role was to give advice to the government, and also to protect the chiefs' proper domains of influence from government interference.

Even in the early years of Cameroon's independence, the House of Chiefs was seen as an important political force. A law prepared and approved by the House of Chiefs in 1962 "specified the role of government in the choice, installation and approval of natural rulers" (Nkwi and Warnier 1982:227). In 1972, the replacement of the federal state (the Federal Republic of Cameroon) by a unitary state (the United Republic of Cameroon) brought an end to the legislative role of the House of Chiefs, but its influence is still part of the political environment in Northwest Province.

In recent years the traditional authority system has lost much of its regional power, but it remains locally quite important. Nkwi and Warnier suggest that "most chiefs have a dual role, one in the nation-state structure and the other in the traditional setting" (1982:227). Some chiefs have careers as teachers, parliamentarians, and so on; but for the Kom, Bafut and Nso' people the Fon and his council remain very important in homeland communities today. Evidence of this will be described below.

This brief history of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' chiefdoms over the past 200 years demonstrates several important facts which are crucial for understanding the current role of the traditional authorities in the language communities under study. One is that the traditional hierarchy of authority was well established as long as 200 years ago, and has been maintained even into the early 21st century. Another is that these three chiefdoms were recognised as being among the most important in the Grassfields region: independent, self-determining and even dominant over other peoples. These facts have implications for the way the Bafut, Kom and Nso' people today perceive themselves and their culture (including their language). Lewis (1982:18) and Bourhis et al (1981) argue that the degree of vitality of a society is related to particular political and cultural characteristics, as well as to the society's self-perception compared with other groups with whom it has contact. I have also noted elsewhere (Trudell 1993:69) that a strong sense of group identity and self-determination among a people favour both maintenance of the mother tongue and successful interaction with other cultures. Such appears to the case among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities.

4.1.3. Current evidence of the role of traditional authority

Two questions arise at this point. To what extent has the traditional authority structure maintained its relevance in the social and political life of these communities? And what is the
evidence regarding the role of the mother tongue in the exercise of traditional authority today?

It seems clear that even today the traditional authorities are accorded outward signs of respect by the people. In a meeting I observed of the Nso' Language Organisation (NLO) executive committee (LCO: NLO 29 March 03), one of the committee members who is also a Fai (traditional leader) arrived late. When the other committee members greeted him, they bowed slightly, covered their mouths with their hands and spoke in a muffled voice. I was told that, in speaking with a Fon, one is not even supposed to look at him or talk to him, but rather speak to him through a third party.

Only traditional authorities have the right to wear certain types of hats, clothing and beads; they can confer particular honours on regular citizens for services rendered, signified in Nso' by, for example, a red feather worn in the hat. A recent publication by the NLO (Nso' Language Organisation 2002) lists more than 75 separate Lamnso' terms for lords, royal family members and councillors.

The Fon himself lives in a palace with his (usually large) family; the palace is guarded and is accessible by invitation only. Men's secret societies meet there, as do other organisations which he sponsors. The 2003 general assembly of the Bafut Language Association (BALA) convened in the palace of the Fon of Bafut, as he is their patron and honorary president (LCO: BALA 21 March 03).

The Fon is considered to have a unique relationship with the people, and the language is an integral element of that relationship. Justin Suuyren, the NLO general secretary, observed that

In Lamnso' we say, "The Nso' people are the Fon and the Fon is the Nso' people. But the Fon and the Nso' people are the language." (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03)

The Fon is considered the guardian of the traditional culture. Indeed, this aspect of his role has caused the Fon of Bafut to take a keen interest in written Bafut language. John Ambe, a BALA literacy supervisor, noted the Fon's concern that traditional ritual prayers may be lost as the elders who know them are dying:

For the Fon in particular, what has motivated him a lot - he has in the palace, as far as tradition is concerned, every year they send people to certain places – either small lakes, where they believe the gods are hidden there, under trees, and other strategic places where they believe the Bafut gods are hidden – to appease them. I tell you that when they want to go and appease these gods, there are certain recitations that are carried out. And I bet you, if these recitations are not written and kept, when once these people die, those who know it die, you’ll find people
coming up to go, and then, when you don’t recite well, the gods don’t listen! That is their belief (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03).

According to Ambe, the Fon has seen the written mother tongue as a solution to his dilemma, and indeed as a way to consolidate and maintain this aspect of Bafut culture:

So the Fon started saying, “Weh! One day we will have no people knowing how to recite this, so that if this is written and kept in a book, if you don’t know I will say, 'but this is how they say it when they want to go to this place'. That will help us.” You see the impact now. That is why the Fon, he even called me to the palace. He has been struggling to write Bafut himself, even before this programme became so popular in the schools (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03).

At the same time, this Fon has a very modern outlook. In his mid-50s, possessing a law degree, the Fon of Bafut holds a leadership position among other Fons of the Northwest Province. In Bafut he oversees questions regarding land use, roads and other aspects of development (OI: S. Mfonyam 27 Nov 02). If his authority is grounded in tradition, it is also an authority that looks to the future of the Bafut people.

So traditional authority does not imply out-of-date authority. Indeed, young people continue to take interest in what the Fon represents. Explaining the involvement of youth in traditional activities, Patrick Meliim, an Nso' literacy supervisor, noted:

The palace jujus [ceremonial dancers] are youths - they want to find themselves fitting into the culture (Patrick Meliim, LCO: NLO 29 March 03).

Traditional ways are being modified as well as maintained, and this is also the purview of the leadership. Mrs. Amina Tumenta, the Mezam Division inspector of primary schools and herself the daughter of a Fon, contended that it is the leaders, not the people, who are responsible for modernising traditional ways:

The modern Fons try to eliminate traditions that violate human rights, for example the [poor] treatment of widows. Traditions are being modified rather than eradicating them. If I act against the culture of my village, I will be punished. Rather, the Fon, Kwifon121 and others will take a decision on change (OI: Tumenta 17 Feb 03).

Such reliance on the Fon's leadership is accompanied by compliance with that leadership. On matters pertaining to the functioning of the local community, the Fon and his advisors expect, and receive, obedience from the people.122 For example, whenever word

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121 The Kwifon, alternatively spelled Kwifoyn in Kom, are the regulatory societies that rule under the Fon; see Nkwi and Warnier 1982:180.

122 Asked what happens if one does not obey the Fon, people's responses indicated that this just doesn't occur very often. They said that fines and punishments of various kinds exist, but the sense I got was that disobedience of the Fon is rare.
goes out from the Fon’s palace that people are needed on a particular day to work on road maintenance, upkeep of the community water supply or other public services, it is understood that one goes.

Part of this submission to the traditional leadership involves observing a set of dates and rules set each year by the palace. Here the KLDC in Kom has found a niche for the written mother tongue, similar to that described above with the Fon of Bafut. The KLDC has agreed with the Kwi’foyn to print the set of laws which the Kwi’foyn have established for the year in the back of a yearly Kom-language pocket calendar produced by the KLDC123. (See Figure 6, Appendix 16.) The KLDC literacy supervisors explained to me how this works both to promote written Kom and to ensure that people abide by the Kwi’foyn’s rules:

Supervisor: I have the diary [pocket calendar] here, and the use of this diary in Kom now is very high. Because there is a programme here [in the back], from the Kwi’foyn of Kom, and here you see if you cannot read mother tongue you cannot use it. So, many people are now forced to learn. There are some laws there which if you go against these then you forfeit something.

BT: So you can only know the law if you can read?

Supervisor: Yes, it is written. Because in Kom most of the people do not keep things in their head. Up here there is a programme for the Kwi’foyn, for the whole year, and the months and the dates. Even if you are planning [to observe] birthdays of the Fons of Kom, the late ones and the recent ones are here.

BT: From 1730!

Supervisor: Yes.

BT: So this is very much used?

Supervisor: Yes. So this has forced the people to learn how to read and write, because if you cannot read you cannot utilise this. When you are [planning] let’s say a death celebration in January, you look for the date of which you want to celebrate the death celebration. Now you have to prepare this programme; let it not crash with that of the Kwi’foyn. In January here it is written, Sunday, 12/1/03. You cannot put your own things to do on this date. There are certain, there are periods in which you are not supposed to celebrate any. . . .

BT: But you can only know them from here?

123 This small diary is far and away the best-selling piece of literature in Kom language; the same is true for the Lamnso’ diary and calendar, two versions of which are published yearly by the NLO and by Christopher Mengjo (an Nso’ author, editor and owner of the Good News Bookshop in Kumbo).
Supervisor: Yes. Here . . . is for a week. Within that week nobody’s going to, no drum should be played here in Kom. So these are the dates, and in this book you are listing every day to find out the programme (GIS: 8 Feb 03).

The Kom pocket calendar for 2003 lists several dates which are described as "days and periods of law in Kom". These include the following:

- the day for clearing the Fon's farm (12 January);
- the day that the Kw'i'foyn acknowledge that it is mid-dry season (and on which sacrifices are required, 13 January);
- period of hunting for the Kw'i'foyn (11-19 April);
- the day of "eating the heads of animals" (when the nobles are invited to the palace to feast on the animals which have been brought, 19 April);
- a period when people aren't supposed to go to the farm (27 May and the 7 days following);
- a period in which every male goes to clear his father's farm ("this one is very important. You also take wood, or clothes, or salt to give to your father" [GIS: 8 Feb 03]).

The pocket calendar notes that during the above mentioned days, certain restrictions of the Kw'i'foyn apply to the behaviour of the Kom community:

- No drumming
- No firing guns (done ceremonially at celebrations)
- No death celebrations
- No building
- On the day of clearing father's farm, all men MUST go.

So in this pocket calendar, information of local political importance is being made available in the written mother tongue. Such a use of written Kom language is bound to significantly increase its perceived relevance to the language community.

These two examples, that of the Fon of Bafut who wants to record ritual prayers in written Bafut and that of the Kw'i'foyn of Kom using written Kom to disseminate their local edicts, demonstrate that the mother tongue bears a significant load in the transmission of

traditional knowledge and the maintenance of the authority of traditional leaders. Furthermore, in each example the benefits of using the written mother tongue have become clear to these leaders.

The dual roles which traditional leaders play in society indicate the local limits of their authority. For example, two of the language committee officers I met had honorific traditional titles; yet neither of them holds a position of authority outside the traditional realm: one of them is a teacher by profession, and the other a carpenter. This ability to reconcile these two social domains - the traditional domain and the wider domain of national society - is mirrored in the compliance of Bafut, Kom and Nso' community members with the rule of traditional authorities as well as the laws of the nation. The two domains together thus form the unique sociopolitical environment of these language communities.

So it is evident that the traditional leadership of today have a significant role in the social and political life of the language communities of Bafut, Kom and Nso', and that these leaders rely on the mother tongue for the execution of their roles and duties. As has been mentioned above, the rules and rites so essential to the role of the traditional authorities are articulated and performed in the local language. While many (though not all) of these leaders are well able to speak English, by preference and by custom they use the mother tongue for matters pertaining to the language community. The mother tongue embodies their identity as traditional leaders.

These traditional leaders also demonstrate their awareness of the potential benefits of mother-tongue literacy for reinforcing their authority and supporting the effective enactment of their roles. It is no surprise then that the Fon of Bafut is the honorary president of BALA, that the Fon of Kom is one of the KLDC's patrons, nor that the NLO's organisational chart places the Fon at the top as its "supreme leader" (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03).

4.2. Government authorities

The role and interests of the traditional authorities where local languages are concerned may be contrasted with those of the government that represents the nation-state. The jurisdictions of the government entities of the region are geographically, not ethnically defined: province, divisions and sub-divisions do not correspond to homeland boundaries (see

125 However this is not just a matter of using the mother tongue for traditional ritual functions and English for more 'modern' functions. The use of the mother tongue is far more broad than that. Indeed, the low levels of fluency in English which I observed in the homelands demonstrated that it would be impossible for most who live there to function in English on a daily basis. See section 5.5.
the political and language maps of Northwest Province, section 3.2). This political structuring along geographical lines makes it difficult to estimate the populations of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' peoples, since the national census data available is by political entity, not by language community.

The political structure of Cameroon is a centralised one. The Constitution of 1972, modified by 1996 reforms, provides for a strongly centralised government in which the President is empowered to name and dismiss most government officials. All local government officials are in fact employees of the central government, whence they obtain their budgets.126 The highest provincial authority - the provincial governor - is described as "the guardian of the authority of the State within the province", and is accountable to the President of the Republic.127 The divisional authorities are also named by the President, though they operate under the authority of the provincial governor.128 The administrative structure of the government of Cameroon may be seen in Appendix 15.

This generally centralised structure means that national-level decisions about language use in education (such as the Constitution of 1996 and the Law on Education of 1998) are mandated for local implementation. However it is also the case that the authority structures of province, division and sub-division express their own perspectives on national directives by means of the extent to which they facilitate or obstruct their implementation of those directives. Examples of this are seen in chapter six.

4.3. Education authorities: government and denominational

As the arm of the national government which controls local education, the divisional and local education authorities have a significant impact on use of the local language in schools. They interpret and mediate national law and curriculum to schools in the local community. In the government school system, the national policies are locally implemented by divisional delegates, inspectors, headmasters and classroom teachers. A similar structure is used in the mission schools129, with the primary difference being found at the top; each

128 Ibid.
129 The term 'mission schools', though widely used in Cameroon, is actually an anachronism as foreign missionary influence in these school systems is now slight. The principal mission schools in Northwest Province
denominational education system is run by an Education Secretary, approved by the Ministry of National Education. School managers function as the mission school equivalent of inspectors, maintaining regional administrative authority over the denomination's schools while the divisional inspector has the responsibility of seeing that national pedagogical objectives are carried out (OI: Eben 10 Feb 03; OI: Tumenta 17 Feb 03).

As has been described in chapter three of this study, mission schools have played a significant role in the history of education in the Northwest Province of Cameroon. Even today they constitute a substantial proportion of the primary and secondary education facilities available, although the proliferation of government schools with lower tuition fees in the last ten years has made the government option much more popular in the homelands. Amin (1999:122-123) traces the demand for public vs. private (largely mission) schooling in Northwest Province as shown in Figure 4.1 below. Amin's figures show that at least up until 1994, private education remained the choice of roughly 40% of the population of the Northwest Province; this is twice the demand shown in Cameroon as a whole. This high degree of trust in the mission school to provide the desired education for one's children is also evident from the parent interview surveys, discussed in section 6.1.2. Thus the perspectives and priorities of mission education authorities continue to have an impact on language use practices in the education system of Northwest Province.

**Figure 4.1. Relative rates of enrolment for public and private education in Northwest Province and in Cameroon as a whole, by percentage (taken from Amin 1999)**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Province: Public</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Province: Private</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon: Public</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon: Private</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
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</table>

are those run by the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Catholic Church.

130 The private (i.e. not government-run) schools in the Northwest Province are usually mission schools, although in recent years a number of for-profit private schools have opened. These latter schools are usually secondary or technical training schools.

131 However, the trend is likely to be for an increased proportion of government schools. Both Banboyee and Eben, Education Secretaries for the Catholic and Baptist denominations respectively, spoke to me of the government's recent attempts to gain the upper hand in primary education by building more school buildings and offering reduced or free tuition.
National policy on language and education, whether formulated by government or denomination, depends on the local education authorities for its interpretation and implementation. In Kom, the current support of government divisional inspectors and school managers is cited by Godfrey Kain, the KLDC literacy coordinator, as one reason for the popularity of the PROPELCA programme:

Inspectors and school managers place teachers in Kom, and they are now more willing to keep PROPELCA teachers in the class they are trained for (OI: Kain 20 Jan 03).

The implication here is that this has not always been the case. Indeed, one primary school headmaster contends that official approval of PROPELCA is still not universal in Kom:

The delegates and inspectors still don't understand the programme. It needs legal action, to say 'what we have to do'. The local application of the national law [the so-called text of application\textsuperscript{132}] is missing: it depends on the inspector or manager, who decides on PROPELCA or not (OI: Lawyer 19 March 03).

So the sympathy - or lack thereof - of division-level authorities has significant impact on the effectiveness of the PROPELCA programme in these areas. This is the case for mission education authorities as well as those of the government. Speaking of the late 1990s, when local mission education authorities withdrew their support from PROPELCA in Nso', literacy supervisor Patrick Meliim describes the impact of the policy swings of first the denominations and then the government:

During the years of collapse . . . interested teachers were transferred, and those [schools] carrying the programme dropped it. It is possible to lobby the school managers not to transfer PROPELCA teachers, but it depends on their inclination. . . . But at the end of 1999, the government stepped in - the programme is now reawakening. The delegate of education sent a paper around to inspectors to give authority to headmasters [of government schools] to accept PROPELCA. (OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03).

Bafut has had the same experience, in which a particular divisional inspector of education is currently having great impact on the degree of acceptance of mother-tongue education in local primary schools. John Ambe, a BALA literacy supervisor, describes the change:

\textsuperscript{132} The text of application is a document written by the national government to specify how a given law will be implemented. Until this text of application is disseminated, the law is not technically in force. See section 6.3.1.
The other inspectors of education of the government schools who used to be in Bafut, they didn't take a lot of interest in [mother-tongue education]. They were not Bafut. The current inspector is a Bafut man, and has been in his post for about 3 years. Inspectors are not generally assigned to their home areas, but in this case he was. So we had these difficulties, but there is a big change now. So I have a document like this [a list of postings of PROPELCA teachers to local schools], endorsed by the inspector himself, for headmasters to implement; before, we could not have this (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03).

Thus, the impact of the education authorities, both government and denominational, on formal use and instruction of the written mother tongue is significant. These authorities may not wield much influence on local use of the oral mother tongue; but when it comes to the written mother tongue and mother-tongue education, they are highly influential. In the words of Nso' PROPELCA teacher Doris Wirngo, "when the authorities make a remark on it [PROPELCA], you find teachers going to the training" (OI: Wirngo 27 July 03).

4.4. The role of the homeland in language use and attitudes

Although the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands are not institutions in the way traditional authorities and government are, they nevertheless constitute an environment that powerfully shapes attitudes and use of the Bafut, Kom and Lamsno' languages respectively. It is therefore important to examine the composition and character of the homelands, and the impact they have on local language use and attitudes.

4.4.1. Geographic and demographic context

The population density of the Northwest Province is among the highest in Cameroon, as a large proportion of the province is arable land. Amin (1999; see Figure 4.2) indicates that urbanisation is affecting the province, with the urban areas experiencing 5-6% growth per year over the last ten years; nevertheless, rural areas are also growing in population. Even with the steady growth in urban population over the past decade, the rural inhabitants in the province today outnumber the urban inhabitants by roughly two to one.

**Figure 4.2. Population growth rates in Northwest Province by rural and urban areas**

*(figures taken from Amin 1999: 38-39, 41, 195)*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban growth rate</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>272,810</td>
<td>327,809</td>
<td>433,951</td>
<td>569,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural growth rate</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural population</td>
<td>972,326</td>
<td>1,018,428</td>
<td>1,090,823</td>
<td>1,157,587</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is significant because, although several towns in Bafut, Kom and Banso' would likely have contributed to the above statistics on "urban population" (see section 1.4.1), the homelands are predominantly rural. The homelands of the various language communities in the province, including Bafut, Kom and Banso', thus encompass the rural populations given above, and a certain proportion of the urban figures as well. Growth in the "rural population" figures certainly indicates growth in the homeland population; at the same time, growth in the "urban population" could indicate growth in the homeland towns rather than a diminution of the homeland population as its citizens move to cities outside its orders.

Not only so, but the homelands remain the primary home of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' people. Although many of these people have made their homes elsewhere in the country or in the world, at least half the total population of Nso' and Bafut are estimated to live in the homelands. Speaking of Nso', Karl Grebe, an SIL linguist, observed that

This is very controversial; there are no government figures. I presently use 150,000 for the Lamnso' speaking population inside Bui Division. There may be just as many outside of the region but I would not dare to put a figure on that.

(Grebe 12 July 03)

Joseph Mfonyam, a Bafut SIL linguist, expressed much the same perspective:

I would say between 40 and 50% of the people are outside [the village], in other towns and nations of the world (Mfonyam 13 July 03).

However, it should also be recognised that the homelands are after all fragile sociopolitical entities (section 1.4.1). As urbanisation in Northwest Cameroon continues to grow, it is possible that eventually the homelands will lose their demographic predominance. On the other hand, it is also conceivable that the difficulty of finding employment in the larger cities could slow this population shift to urban areas outside the homeland.

Nevertheless, the extent to which the homelands maintain their social significance to the Bafut, Kom and Nso' people depends partly on the ability of the traditional authorities and culture to maintain their relevance to people who no longer reside in the homeland.

4.4.2. Who lives in the homeland

There is a significant range in the size and complexity of population centres in the three homelands, from the largest urban centre, the Nso' town of Kumbo, to the small villages accessible only by footpath. However, the three homeland areas do have characteristics in

133 No comparable estimate for Kom was available.
common. Each has facilities available such as primary and (fewer) secondary schools, a very few tertiary institutions like seminaries and teacher training schools, clinics and a few hospitals. The industries most evident include small businesses, restaurants, trading, transport, and cottage industries for such things as furniture, bricks, clothing, shoe repair, hairdressing and so on.

The inhabitants of these homelands tend to fall into three categories: professionals, i.e. teachers, clergy and medical personnel; tradespeople and small business owners; and farmers. In fact, however, farming constitutes an additional occupation of many adults in the homelands.\textsuperscript{134}

An additional category of inhabitant, small perhaps in number but a source of frustration to community leaders, are the young people who have left the homeland for further education or to find work, but failing to find employment have returned to the home community. The divisional delegate for the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Boyo Division (Kom area) noted this problem as one that he himself has to deal with:

There are too many secondary schools open now, too many graduates to absorb, and quality is not good enough. So kids go to the city for their education and then can't find work. They come back to the community because they have no jobs, and because living in the city is too expensive. But once they get home, they often turn to crime - juvenile delinquency is a big and growing problem here. They are not trained to do anything, and have no skills that are useful in the community (OI: Mbaswa 30 July 2003).

The problem surfaces in Bafut as well, as Joseph Mfonyam, a BALA executive committee member, observes:

People who go to secondary school, they think they will have a job in an office. Then they don't get one, and they come back and are roaming the streets. They don't know how to handle a hoe! They live in Bafut, but they start stealing (OI: J. Mfonyam 28 Nov 02).

However it should not be inferred that this cultural dislocation characterises young people in the homeland. As part of the current study, an oral survey of 36 young adults (aged 19-30) living in or near the Kom and Banso' homelands\textsuperscript{135} asked them about traditional customs and whether they continue to abide by those customs. (See Appendix 3 for complete responses.) After naming a variety of customs characteristic of their communities, all the

\textsuperscript{134} Nineteen of the 36 adults aged 19-30 questioned in the PROPELCA alumni survey (53%) gave farming as a primary occupation. Seventeen of the 48 adults aged 30-87 questioned in a parent interview series (35%) reported farming as a primary occupation. See Appendix 2.

\textsuperscript{135} The PROPELCA Alumni Survey. See appendices 1-3 for more information.
respondents claimed to share in some or all of those customs. One respondent who claimed to maintain all the traditional customs explained:

They are a sign of respect for the elders and the norms of society (PAS: Nso' 01).

Another, less enthusiastic about the traditional ways, implied that the Cameroonian national governance system is preferable:

I have given up some of them [traditional customs] like many other people. This is because the political system in Cameroon has made people to follow up with governmental rights more than their traditional rights (PAS: Nso' 15).

Those who reported having given up some of the traditional ways mentioned most often the customs of traditional religion, marriage and inheritance. Forsaking traditional religious ways was not uncommon, as for example this young Christian woman reported:

I have given up the belief in the [traditional] gods because as a Christian I am made to understand that there is only one Almighty Father (PAS: Kom 04).

The data also show that fewer of the Nso' young people interviewed have maintained the traditional ways entirely; this corresponds with my own observations that the Nso' are generally more cosmopolitan than the Kom. Still, the responses of these young homeland-dwelling Kom and Nso' people show significant adherence to the traditional skills and customs of their culture.

4.4.3. Language choices in the homeland

The prevalence of the mother tongue as the predominant language of the homeland was demonstrated in several ways in the course of this study. One of the strongest indicators was the monolingualism observed among nonschooled children and village women. Another indicator arose when it became clear that interviews of parents and PROPELCA alumni in the homeland would have to be carried out by local-language speakers. This indicated, if not complete monolingualism among those populations, at least a greater facility and preference on their part for speaking the local language. This issue of language preference rather than competence was repeatedly evident to me, as homeland residents who were able to communicate fairly well with me in English consistently chose to interact in local language when not speaking to me directly.

On the other hand the print environment, where it existed, was observed to be almost entirely in English. Road signs, the names of shops and offices, advertising posters and warning signs all used written English. An exception observed was a set of three AIDS awareness posters written in Pidgin, which I saw in the Kom towns of Belo and Njinikom.
interacting with highly literate Bafut, Kom and Banso' residents, it was evident that mixing oral mother tongue with written English is not considered at all unusual; for example, group meetings held in the mother tongue are generally minuted and documented in English. In working with the three local-language speaking research assistants on procedures for collecting interview data, it became clear to me that they were also accustomed to recording in written English the content of oral interaction they had in the local language. Specific details of print use, in English and in local language, are discussed in chapter five.

Wherever a group is not linguistically homogeneous, even in the homeland, members tend to switch to a language understood by all. This happens, for example, when non-speakers of the local language come to the homeland for development project visits, government meetings or church services. Peter Yuh, a member of the KLDC executive committee, observed:

> Almost every development meeting has an argument at the beginning about what language to use. "If there are outsiders, let's use Pidgin or English." The language policy is decided at the start of every meeting! We say, "What will work in a given context?" (OI: Yuh 26 Nov 02).

Thus, the homelands function as supportive environments for the oral use of the local language. Written mother tongue appears in few environments - the church and the PROPELCA classroom, in particular - and it is less certain that the homelands serve today as a supportive environment for written mother tongue. Certainly that is the goal of the language committees; but as Martin Yunteh, a member of the NLO executive committee observes, writing the mother tongue is not something people are accustomed to:

> It is actually a process, because for long we have not been very used to reading and writing Lamnso'. All along we have been educated in English or French, and we have not been used to reading and writing the local languages and the mother tongue. So it is a development that many people who are educated are also getting used to. And sometimes they find it very difficult to get used to (OI: Yunteh 11 March 03).

4.5. The elite

The term *elite* as used by analysts of African's sociopolitical environment has several identifying characteristics. Originally created as a class to serve the colonial powers in

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136 One Nso' friend told of a meeting in Banso', held as usual in Lamnso', in which he substituted for the secretary; as he is a fluent Lamnso' writer, he took meeting notes in Lamnso' though they were normally kept in English. Upon attempting to use the notes he had made, however, the rest of the group were nonplussed, unable to read them as easily as they did the English notes.
Africa, the elite were provided with an unusual degree of education relative to the rest of the population and learned to speak the colonial language as well. Prah (1995:27) characterises the elite as becoming linguistically and culturally alienated from their roots by this process. Chumbow and Bobda (1996:408) tie the term in anglophone Cameroon to English fluency and political power. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) refer to linguistic, political, employment-related and educational components of the elite identity in Africa.

In the Northwest Province of Cameroon, the term has different facets of meaning as well. The most commonly accepted local definition of the elite identifies them as those who live outside the homeland, have paid employment there, and usually participate in development associations for their communities in the homeland (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03). However the term is also used to refer to intellectuals (OI: S. Mfonyam 26 March 03); or to those who live in the homeland but have a broader view of how their people should advance (OI: Ambe 12 March 03). Through all these definitions of *elite* run the themes of prestige, leadership and control of resources.

**4.5.1. Attitudes towards the mother tongue**

The attitude of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' elite towards the homeland seems to hold some tension. Those who have left the homeland sense their loss of cultural currency. One male Nso' teacher at a PROPELCA teacher training course explained:

> In past years I was out of Banso'. When I returned people laughed at my Lamnso' and called me a foreigner. So I am learning more about my language here, so that I will not be called a foreigner in my own place (GIT: Nso' 8 July 03).

A small segment of the highly educated elite have thrown themselves into support for use of the written mother tongue, seeing in it the maintenance of the cultural identity and vitality of their people. These mother-tongue advocates are incensed by what they consider an unthinking rejection of home culture and language on the part of many members of the elite, and they are certain that Cameroonians who do so are losing something extremely important. BALA chairman Samuel Mfonyam derides those Cameroonians who he says identify with "the foreign" in their lifestyle:

> People who are ignorant think that the foreign is better. In colonial times, especially on the francophone side [of present-day Cameroon], people would talk about "going home", meaning Paris! They wouldn't eat Cameroonian food, and insisted on a fork and spoon. Yet these people are not French. But if they have lost their culture, then they are not that either. Homes where the parents don’t speak their own languages are pitiful (OI: S. Mfonyam 27 Nov 02).
The organisation NACALCO\textsuperscript{137} was shaped by this passion for valuing one's own local culture rather than deserting it for the culture of a European nation. Dr. Gabriel Mba, the PROPELCA programme director for NACALCO, articulates NACALCO's perspective on the relationship between local and global cultures:

We who have been supposed to be the elite of our areas, who have all the outside education, we think that what we have got from the outside is the best way of producing knowledge. But how much are we sacrificing? Now, with globalisation, what can we Africans bring to the global communion? We aren't bringing anything, because we have been brainwashed to think that we have nothing to give. . . . Those who say we should not teach mother tongue are the parents who do not speak mother tongue themselves. They are building a world for themselves, using English or French for daily communication. They say we are in a new era - but they are neglecting what is in their own communities. . . . When the school and community worlds are separate, returning to the community means going "back" to a foreign world. I would like to have the school be within the community culture instead (OI: Mba 11 Oct 02).

The KLDC was formed by similarly motivated members of the Kom elite (including author Dr. Paul Nkwi), who launched the language committee in 1989 (Shultz 23 Dec 03). However, not all members of the elite see promotion of the mother tongue as being in their own interests. Patrick Meliim, NLO executive committee member and literacy supervisor, explains the reluctance of the local elite to identify any longer with the language they grew up with:

[The elite] are very shy over use of the mother tongue; they live in cities and don’t fit back into the culture. They don't use the mother tongue in the house with the kids, they send their kids to the USA and elsewhere. In order for them and their kids to fit in in the homeland, they play down the role of the mother tongue (Patrick Meliim, LCO: NLO 29 March 03).

For these people, increased attention to the mother tongue only emphasises their own failure to maintain the language and lifestyle of the homeland.

The ambivalence of the elite towards the mother tongue is clearly evident among primary school teachers. These professionally trained and salaried school personnel certainly qualify as elite; the fact that they live in the homeland does not detract from their elite status, but rather increases their influence in the local community.

A few of the teachers observed in this study demonstrated a degree of aversion to the use of the mother tongue in the educational context, pointedly ignoring the informal PROPELCA classes in which their students were engaged. Others expressed to me their

\textsuperscript{137} National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees (in French, l'Association Nationale des Comités de Langues au Cameroun, ANACLAC). See section 3.2.2.
belief that the local language is simply not appropriate for classroom instruction. A major goal of primary school, as they see it, is that children learn to use English properly (OI: Lawyer 19 March 03; OI: Mbi 19 March 03); this is not best done by prioritising use of the local language. Other teachers believe that use of the mother tongue is crucial to good learning in the classroom; these are the teachers who volunteer to become PROPELCA teachers. Section 6.1.3 of this study discusses the language-related interests and motivations of the classroom teacher in greater detail.

4.5.2. Maintaining contact with the homeland

One important way in which the elite living elsewhere support and influence the homeland is through development associations. Development associations (also called development unions) are groups of people in a particular town or city who come from the same village or town in the homeland. They gather regularly, often once a month, to socialise and discuss the news of their village or town; significantly, the meetings are held in the mother tongue of the association's members. In addition, these associations promote infrastructure development in their home area and raise funds for such projects: roadwork, schools, and other development initiatives. They see this kind of development as being in the best interests of their homeland communities, and they tend to be impatient of homeland-dwellers who resist their efforts. One member of the Kom elite in the capital city of Yaoundé spoke disparagingly of those who resist innovations which the development associations bring into the homelands:

Those people who never leave the village, they just stay and don’t go to school and dance juju, then they speak against bringing roads or pipeborne water into the village. This makes no sense! (OI: Chia 22 April 03)

Their ability to marshal financial resources on behalf of the homeland gives the development associations certain status and influence. However, they do not carry more authority in the homeland than the traditional leaders do. One member of the Nso' elite described it this way:

For the Nso', there are two centres of influence. One is among the Fon and the traditional authorities out in Banso', and then the successful Nso' businessmen and such in the cities like Bamenda, Yaoundé and elsewhere. So the influence flows both ways between city Nso' people and Banso' people (OI: Nga' 15 Nov 03).

138 Bray et al (1976) describe a similar type of entity in Nigeria, the development "union". They describe these unions as wielding significant influence over the development of education in the rural areas. By my observations, the development associations in Northwest Province have not played such a dominant role in education in the region.
This two-way flow of influence is one reason that elite who live outside the homelands are very enthusiastic about the local-language pocket calendars produced by the KLDC, BALA and the NLO (described in 4.6.3). The pocket calendar serves as a kind of bridge between the world of city offices and schedules and that of ceremonial holidays and market days. The ceremonial designation of certain days each year by the Fon's palace has already been mentioned in 4.1.3 above; added to that is the fact that the Grassfields societies continue to function on an 8-day market week. These two factors make it difficult to keep track of important dates when one is outside the homeland, and the pocket calendar helps the Bafut, Kom and Nso' people living elsewhere to stay in touch. The Kom literacy supervisors explained how the pocket calendars meet a need for the elites who are struggling to keep up with homeland social expectations while living elsewhere.

When people leave here, especially those Kom people who are in Yaoundé, downside, they will very much like to have the diaries, because it helps them to know those things that are happening in Kom and the periods in which they take place. So they... like to take the diaries. You can plan to celebrate a death celebration in Kom here while you are in Yaoundé and it will be no problem. And it has country Sundays [market days occurring every four days], where they will always know, even one who has to live outside the compound will always know "I can arrive on a market day" (GIS: 8 Feb 03).

Samuel Mfonyam, the BALA chairman, further illustrates the felt need by elite members not to be out of touch with the homeland:

If Bafut people in the city want to programme something in the village, the diary is very helpful. So some of the intellectuals are now being interested because of the diary. When in Yaoundé, they don't know the days of the week in the village (OI: S. Mfonyam 26 March 03).

Thus, it appears that for members of the elite living outside the homelands, the ever-present tension of maintaining their links and social responsibilities to home while living a "westernised" life elsewhere appears to result in a degree of ambivalence regarding promotion of the mother tongue. The elite appear to have little or no influence on homeland residents' use of the mother tongue; at the same time, their financial resources and prestige could be a great help to programmes that promote the mother tongue in the homeland. The language committees are very keen about gaining the support, particularly financial support, of the development associations (OI: Ngwa 21 March 03; OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03; OI: Waingeh 14 March 03). So far, however, it appears that a greater role for the local language in the homeland is not what the elite would unequivocally consider "development" - or in their own best interests.
4.6. The language committee

In Bafut, Kom and Nso’, the language committee functions as a community-based organisation built around promotion of the written mother tongue. In each case the language committee has committed itself to programme implementation (PROPELCA and adult literacy classes), production of mother-tongue publications that meet a certain standard of quality, and local advocacy on behalf of mother tongue use.

Their top leaders state the three language committees' goals in these ways:

[The KLDC] … that every Kom person be able to read and write Kom using the standard alphabet (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03).

[BALA] … getting the Bafut language written so that the Bafut man can read and write his own language; to be able to record the way of life of the Bafut people, Bafut civilisation, culture, philosophy, and history (OI: S. Mfonyam 26 March 03).

[NLO] At the bottom of everything, you find, is the mother tongue. . . . So the idea of holding the language intact, as a vehicle of communication, as a store of the treasure of the Nso’ people, has been the primordial aim of the NLO because all these cultural values, the written language, the various norms, can only be stored in the Nso’ language (OI: Suuyren 2 March 03).

Central to all three is the promotion of the written mother tongue, but not just for its own sake. Rather, written mother tongue is to be used in the service of the culture. Interestingly, improved school performance of local children is not mentioned as a foundational goal in any of the three statements above, although certainly this is an important aspect of the language committees' commitment to PROPELCA.

4.6.1. History and structure of the language committees

The language committees in Bafut, Nso’ and Kom are quite similar in their structure and the role they perceive for themselves in the language community.

The beginnings of each of the three language committees accompanied the advent of PROPELCA in the language community. In the case of Nso’, Justin Suuyren, NLO general secretary, notes that expatriate missionaries and Nso' people as well were trying to write in Lamnso’ since at least the 1960s; so the interest in writing the mother tongue was there, but it was not at that point owned by members of the Nso' community. This changed when PROPELCA began, and soon local leadership in the NLO became the norm:

In 1982 [actually 1981], with the launch of the experimental PROPELCA course, they [the originators of PROPELCA] were now obliged to work in various communities, they needed persons to guide and direct those things. That was what we could call the genesis of the whole thing. And you find that from that time
now, people were in charge. There was a language committee - it was called a language committee by that time. They were working on it, giving guidelines to those people who wanted to do research at that time. That is when they started being forced to begin meeting regularly, and since then nothing has ever stopped. But the administration has changed hands, from one president to another and various executives, but the aim has been one: to see to it that there is didactic material in the mother tongue ready to help any learner. So that has been in place until this present date (OI: Suyyren 29 March 03).

Current BALA chairman Samuel Mfonyam describes a similar beginning for BALA, but notes that this language committee has yet to be well integrated into the Bafut community:

BALA began as the Bafut Language Committee in the late 1970s with the help of Dr. David Crozier of SIL. It became BALA three years ago. . . . I don't know if the community knows enough for BALA to have a place in it yet. It is BALA that promotes its work. . . . The struggle is that BALA's goals originated not within the Bafut community, but from abroad. Getting the community to own it has been a challenge (OI: S. Mfonyam 26 March 03).

The KLDC was launched in 1989 when George Shultz of SIL invited a number of Kom elite to come to the Kom town of Njinikom to discuss the development of the Kom language. Shultz describes the process:

It was agreed that a committee would be formed to direct the work and an interim executive was chosen, led by Hon. Albert Waingeh, MP. Dr. Paul Nkwi and other Kom elite came from Yaoundé and Dr. Nkwi handed the baton to Hon. Waingeh. I [later] helped the new KLDC to write a constitution (Shultz 23 Dec 03).

The origins of these three language committees clearly show the hand of outsiders, whether NACALCO, or (before NACALCO's formation in 1987) the PROPELCA team from the University of Yaoundé, or SIL personnel. Today, this connection with SIL and NACALCO takes the form of financial support (see below) and pedagogical and linguistic consultant help from NACALCO experts. The language committees were - and continue to be - seen by these extra-community institutions as local structures which have the capacity to lead and build community support for local language development initiatives. It is in the interests of both NACALCO and SIL that the language committees succeed in gaining that community support.139 Ironically, however, these connections pose challenges to the language committee's desire to be identified with and owned by the language community.

139 The practice of facilitating the formation of local language committees is a common, if informal, strategy of SIL in its work in minority language communities across sub-Saharan Africa. However, the language committees by no means the invention of SIL; such committees exist in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa, Benin and Senegal. Sometimes, as in the case of BALA, the KLDC and the NLO, these committees prove to be strong and effective leaders in local language development; this is not always the case, however. Much depends on the vision and drive of the language committee members themselves.
Hon. Albert Waingeh, the KLDC chairman, described Kom people's misunderstanding about KLDC ownership:

The KLDC is known but misunderstood. There are an abundance of NGOs, and people see the KLDC as the same as them. But it isn't - it is there for the interests of every Kom person. … There is the belief that somehow the KLDC is making money (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03).

Currently, these language committees are run by language community members who live in or near the homeland. An executive committee of roughly 15 people forms the active core of each language committee; in the case of the KLDC, sub-committees for literacy, translation and finance have the responsibility for activity in their domains. Executive committee members draw no salary for their participation; some staff members, such as literacy supervisors and coordinators, receive the equivalent of part-time salaries or honoraria. Hon. Waingeh emphasised the degree of volunteerism evident among KLDC members:

KLDC members feel responsibility for the committee; they pay their own transport every two months to the meetings, and feed themselves while there (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03).

According to its leadership, the wider membership of the language committee includes everyone in the homeland (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03; OI: Waingeh 14 March 03). Meetings of the general assembly of the language committee are held yearly (BALA), every two years (KLDC), or every four years (NLO), while the executive committees meet 4-12 times per year. Clearly, the expectation of the general assembly's role has much more to so with awareness raising, while the executive committees are charged with planning and implementation of language committee programmes.

4.6.2. Activities and characteristics of the language committee

The language committee sees itself as the focal point for maintaining use of the mother tongue, and expanding use of its written form. BALA chairman Samuel Mfonyam articulated BALA's vision of itself this way:

BALA is the highest body of the Bafut language. … BALA is the central point of the Bafut language for now. (OI: S. Mfonyam 26 March 03)

The notion of authority over language questions and responsibility for quality control is also part of the language committee's self-identification. William Banboyee, who was formerly the Catholic Education Secretary for Cameroon and is now the chairman of the NLO, stated that
The NLO is the highest authority of Lamnso' writing. Anyone who writes in Lamnso' is supposed to send his manuscript to the NLO, and for free they give help (Banboyee, LCO: NLO 29 March 03).

Similarly, John Ambe, a BALA literacy supervisor, referred to an academic council of BALA which vets publications in Bafut language:

BALA requires that all Bafut publications pass through its academic council. This is quality control. … The Bafut people respect BALA as 'the association that can solve language problems' (OI: Ambe 25 Feb 03).

The language committees also see their remit extending into the arena of education, at least insofar as local language use is concerned. As Patrick Meliim, an NLO literacy supervisor, stated:

Our fight is against the dropouts and bad learning that is happening here in Banso' (Meliim LCO: NLO 29 March 03).

It is interesting to speculate where this sense of authority comes from; no doubt it is reinforced by the language committees' association with their Fons, described in section 4.1.3 above.

The range of activities in which the language committees involve themselves include running adult mother-tongue literacy programmes, supervising and supporting PROPELCA, producing mother-tongue publications, language standardisation activities (section 5.4) and engaging in general promotion of the local language within the homeland.

The marks of a good language committee include active participation by the leaders in its various programmes, as Hon. Waingeh noted:

A good language committee has the ability to give continuous training, the ability to put out regular publications, and to follow up work on the field in adult literacy and PROPELCA classes. (OI: Waingeh 12 March 03)

It is also important to have influential people on the language committee, as BALA literacy supervisor Ambe observes:

When you have people who matter in society, then the language committee makes policies and sees that they are well implemented (OI: Ambe 25 Feb 03).

Financial strength and the ability to manage funds well are also mentioned as traits of the effective language committee. Yet the financial aspect appears to be where all three committees struggle the most. I did not find evidence of major mismanagement of funds; indeed, in some cases, leaders tended to provide their own funds for publications, transport
and meeting costs when finances were tight. But as far as being able to budget realistically, counting on certain income, none of the three language committees are able to do it. The NLO does not even prepare an annual budget; they did so for a few years, but when the income (in the form of promised donations from local councils or benevolent groups) did not materialise they decided it was a pointless exercise (LCO: NLO 29 March 03).

The lack of funds restricts the efficiency and reach of the programmes. For example, literacy supervisors are regularly forced to walk up to four hours between PROPELCA schools, and general meetings periodically have to be cancelled or postponed. PROPELCA classroom teachers not only receive little or no financial incentive to teach in the mother-tongue programme, but they even pay their own expenses at annual training and updating events. This has an impact on the willingness of teachers to be involved in PROPELCA, as there is no financial incentive to do so.

What funding is received by the language committees comes principally in the form of an annual subsidy from NACALCO, designated for printing of publications, partial funding of teacher training events, and partial funding of literacy supervisors. Institutionally, SIL does not underwrite the ongoing expenses of individual language committees, but rather channels any such support through NACALCO. In the case of BALA, there are also limited funds from expatriate contacts of Joseph Mfonyam. It is hard to know how much the language committees will be able to grow or even continue at their current level of production and programme maintenance. The economic situation in rural Northwest Province has been deteriorating since the early 1990s, and even those staff who are well intentioned cannot afford to give their services for free. The Kom literacy supervisors struggle with keeping the teachers committed to such volunteer work:

Particularly with the adult literacy facilitators, because they just help for nothing and sometimes when one finds an opportunity, they will just run off and leave the class there. It is a question of motivation, because most of them just volunteer to teach. If there comes an opportunity when he has to go to the farm, he says, "If I continue the rest of my time here, what will I eat?" (GIS 8 Feb 03).

\[140\] For example, the BALA budget reported 875,000 francs cfa received from NACALCO for 2003, approximately £1000.

\[141\] The local economies were hit during this time by a fall in coffee prices and France's devaluation of the Central African cfa franc to 50% of its former value.

\[142\] The term 'motivation' as used in Cameroonian English carries more the sense of external incentive rather than inherent, personal drive.
Language committee members regard this funding shortage as a serious obstacle, and are making active attempts to canvass traditional leaders, local councils, development associations, and other potential sponsors for financial help.

Nevertheless, a spirit of optimism pervades the language committee leadership, as they look to the future. The recent statement in the 1998 Law on Education regarding using national languages in school is prompting more official support for PROPELCA. In Kom, development associations have recently been demonstrating increased interest in the KLDC (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03). These events are cause for optimism, as expressed below:

The future of the KLDC is bright! I don’t see any turning back (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03).

The future of PROPELCA in Nso’ is bright, it just needs to take time (OI: Yongka 7 Jan 03).

### 4.6.3. Relationship to the national political hierarchy

The role and interests of the local and national government in influencing local language use are limited, except where education is concerned (discussed above). This does not mean, however, that there are no links between the government and community organisations that promote mother tongue. As the primary local institutions concerned with promotion of mother-tongue use, the language committees cultivate cooperative relationships with local government entities. So for instance, the KLDC's headquarters in Fundong (Kom) are located in the office of the Divisional Delegate of the Ministry of Youth and Sports; the PROPELCA teacher training course held in Jakiri (Banso') in July 2003 took place in the office of the sub-divisional inspectorate for nursery and primary education of the Ministry of National Education. Further links exist with other government ministries, such as the Ministry of Health.

The language committees make it clear that they are not themselves part of the local political apparatus, though they are affected by local politicians' decisions about budget allocation. Godfrey Kain, the KLDC literacy coordinator, was very definite about this fact:

The language committee does not do politics. It is not a political organisation. But when one particular party is strong, it makes sense to run after that party's representatives to get them on board with the KLDC (OI: Kain 14 March 03).

The language committees actively seek budget allocations for their programmes from the local urban and rural councils. The language committees consider it the natural responsibility of the urban and rural councils of the homelands to support mother-tongue
literacy programmes out of their fiscal budgets, and they complain about the inadequacy and inconsistency of that financial support they receive from these civil authorities. Justin Suuyren, the NLO general secretary, observed:

As for the local government, we are talking of the councils - those we [the NLO] are trying to ask for money. The mother tongue is supposed to be promoted by all councils. Every council is supposed to see to it that its inhabitants are literate. Literacy is part of the council programme. And as such, in their budget head, it is supposed to fall there (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03).

Individually, members of local or national government do become personally involved in promotion of the mother tongue, but not as a direct result of their government positions. The founding and current chairman of the KLDC, Hon. Albert Waingeh, was at one time a Member of Parliament; he is highly respected for this fact, and his prestige in the Kom community helps to make him an effective leader of the language committee. However his role in the KLDC does not hinge on his political experience. Hon. Waingeh has his own perspective on the relationship of the language committee to the political leadership.

The KLDC is the trial or demonstration arm of these authorities. . . . The government speaks a lot about development of national languages, but it has no established way to do that. The hope is that the KLDC will be the forerunners in this area (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03).

Waingeh sees the language committee as offering a local service which can help the national government to fulfil the obligations it has set for itself.

4.6.4. Position within the language community

The language committee is in a curious position in the language community. Endorsed by the Fon (section 4.1.3), yet without financial security or any real means of coercion, the language committee appears to thrive by creating and maintaining a network of connections to other people and institutions in the community.

NLO general secretary Justin Suuyren described how the NLO seeks partners in the Nso' language community for its efforts to promote the written mother tongue. He noted that traditional leadership is a primary focus for the language committee, as has been described above:

We have the traditional setup, the traditional assembly [of Nso' leaders], and we try to integrate with them and see how they can chip in. Sometimes we go there for research . . . you go to consult them at their various meetings and they enlighten you what to write so that what you will produce should not be rejected (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03).
However, other institutional connections are also important, including the Christian church denominations. The Christian church is a strong potential supporter of written mother tongue for two reasons: church services include significant amounts of written material, including the Bible\textsuperscript{143}; and use of the oral mother tongue is prevalent in those contexts. For these reasons the language committees make a priority of gaining support from the churches in the homelands.

There are church groups, that is church groups or other organisations like NGOs who are a bit inclined to what we are doing. Because we are trying to make sure that the written language makes it into the church, because the church in this our land here is more honoured (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03).

It is interesting to note here that the language committee is forging partnerships with two very different local institutions: the traditional authority with its attachment to traditional religion, and the Christian church, whose leaders are often vocal against those same aspects of homeland tradition. The potential tension of this partnership is resolved pragmatically; each institution sees itself as using the other towards its own ends (OI: J. Mfonyam 24 March 03). So the traditional authorities are pleased that the mother tongue is being promoted in the church, because they believe that increased mother tongue use increases their own legitimacy. On the other hand, the church leaders who advocate use of the written mother tongue (especially the Bible), are pleased with the support for mother tongue demonstrated by the traditional authorities.

Suuyren's description further emphasises the inclusive nature of the NLO:

Anyone who shows interest, we go to that person and interact with the person and see how far they could help in the spread of the language, because our target has always been to reach every person (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03).

Language committee workers are very aware of the need for winning over the community particularly where mother-tongue education is concerned, as John Ambe of BALA makes plain:

It is very important to educate the parents, to sensitisate them, because otherwise they can make it [implementing PROPELCA] very difficult. . . . If we teach the mother tongue badly, then the people will say. "Get out with that your Bafut teaching!" (OI: Ambe 12 March 03).

\textsuperscript{143} The Lamnso’ New Testament was published in 1990, and the Old Testament is currently being translated by a committee of Nso’ church leaders. The Bafut New Testament was published in 1990, by Joseph Mfonyam, a Bafut linguist and SIL member and also a member of the BALA executive committee. The Kom New Testament is in its final stages of translation, by the Translation Sub-Committee of the KLDC. It is likely to be published in the next few years. All of these Scripture texts are currently used to varying extents in local-language church services.
Language committees' attempts to address the strained financial conditions involve reminding local leaders of their obligations where the community is concerned. The KLDC literacy committee discussed this strategy for gaining support:

This organisation has no money at all, so it is good to contact the councils for financial aid. We are not telling them what to give us, but just informing them and seeing how they can help us (LCO: KLDC 30 July 03).

Happily, the recent show of government support for PROPELCA allows language committees to appeal to the local educational leadership for support as well as the community - and to use the authority of the educational hierarchy to forward their own agenda. Nso' literacy supervisor Sylvester Kanjo comments on a new strategy for increasing the number of teachers coming for PROPELCA training:

The NLO has brainstormed a new strategy to boost teacher attendance for next year. Early on in the year, we will approach the hierarchy - first the delegate of education. We will talk to him and show him the benefits [of PROPELCA]. Then he could forward the list of teachers to the inspectors and then to the headmaster, because invitations for training are sent through the headmaster (OI: Kanjo 8 July 03).

In the same vein, Nso' literacy supervisor Patrick Meliim reports an interaction he had with a headmaster reluctant to allow PROPELCA to be taught in his primary school:

I said, "If you want to drop the programme, tell me that you want to drop the programme. Then the battle can be between you and the delegate and the inspector. I am merely coming to supervise the section we are concerned with. I am not the government agency supervisor, I am just the local supervisor for the NLO and that is charity work, voluntary work" (OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03).

One segment of the community which has not been successfully networked is the Muslim community. Muslims in Banso' are a cautious religious minority\(^{144}\) in a largely Christian population, who keep to themselves for the most part. Suuyren describes his failure to start a literacy class for a group of Muslim women who lived nearby, concluding that even though there is a high degree of illiteracy in the community, "they lack trust in any person who is outside" (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03). In neither Bafut nor Kom has a significant Muslim community been identified for possible networking (OI: J. Mfonyam 24 March 03).

The only real source of active opposition to the self-assigned role of the language committees appears to be among those who are attempting their own orthographic presentation of the language. It has been mentioned in chapter three that an expatriate named

\(^{144}\) The Muslim community in Banso' is ethnically Nso', even though the areas where they live are often called "the Hausa quarter". This contrasts with the few Muslims in Bafut, for example, who are ethnically Fulani.
Mueller was for three decades producing Kom publications in competition with the KLDC and in a different orthography, although the scope of distribution and influence of those materials seems to be quite limited. In Banso', mention was made of a well educated man who has developed a mathematics book in Lamnso' which uses the traditional Lamnso' right-to-left convention for reading numbers. Despite the objections of the NLO, this unnamed person has continued to promote his unique approach to the written representation of Lamnso'. However such opposition is not well supported institutionally, and the language committees do not seem overly worried about it threatening their authority and community-based support. As Suuyren concludes:

Those are some of the few problems we have been having; it only comes from the few who are claiming to be quite literate. But when you get to the real Nso' man who is here at home, he welcomes it [the NLO's programme] with absolute satisfaction (OI: Suuyren 29 March 03).

4.7. Summary: Leadership and its relation to language use and attitudes

Examination of the authorities and institutions which have influence in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands yields some helpful insights into the extent to which the mother tongue is institutionally supported in these language communities.

4.7.1. Authorities

The traditional authorities maintain a strong degree of influence on people in the homelands. The legitimacy of traditional authority and that of the mother tongue appear to be mutually reinforcing, as the language frames and expresses the authority of the traditional leaders. Interest by traditional leaders in the written mother tongue, not just its oral form, is also evident; perhaps written mother tongue represents the stabilising and sustaining of traditional ways in the face of modernisation. The language committees recognise and are cultivating this interest. Financial support from this sector of the community has not yet, however, matched the level of interest expressed.

The government authorities, both local leaders and representatives of the national government, represent mainly the ability to provide needed financing for mother-tongue promotion activities. Though not antagonistic towards it, neither has this group been particularly vocal about supporting local language development.

145 The interviewees giving this information were very reluctant to name this person to me, and so I did not press the point. I find this a further indication that language committees are bent on forming alliances, not antagonists.
Education authorities wield a great deal of influence over the local programmes which promote use of mother tongue for learning. The influence of national policy on language use in schools is significant. As is shown in the history of PROPELCA described in chapter three, both denominational and government authorities have the power to either foster or destroy the PROPELCA programme. At the current time, the government position on local languages in primary school is having a significant positive effect on PROPELCA; the position of denominational education authorities, which appears to be formulated more locally than is the government's national position, seems to vary from neutral to supportive.

Those charged with local implementation of education policy - inspectors, school managers, headmasters, teachers - are also capable of stalling or facilitating PROPELCA. Their cooperation is actively sought by the language committees, either through persuasion or by force of appeal to those above them in the educational hierarchy.

4.7.2. The homeland

The role of the homeland itself is a significant factor in support for Bafut, Kom and Lamnso’ languages. The cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the homeland provides a context in which mother-tongue education is feasible, and where the power of the traditional authority structure (and its institutional support of the local language) may be sustained. The homelands thus constitute a shelter for ongoing use of the oral mother tongue.

Support for written mother tongue is less evident in the homeland, possibly because of the strong influence of the English-language formal education system which has defined "literacy" and "reading" as being English-language activities. This will be discussed further in chapter five.

4.7.3. The elite

The place of the elite of each language community is a crucial one. Of all the language community, the elites most directly bear the strain of the meeting of tradition and modernisation. Their earning power and knowledge of the world outside the homeland make them both influential in, and indebted to, their homeland community: influential because of their potential financial resources and connections, and indebted because of the social obligations which the well-off bear to their family and community. At the same time, the fact that the elite have left the homeland and made a life elsewhere works against their ability to fit comfortably into that community again. Members of the elite face an uncomfortable set of choices about identity and obligation.
In this environment, members of the elite have several options regarding the mother tongue. In each case, the interests being played out have to do with individual identity and power. A small but active group of elite (those in the language committees) have chosen solidarity with the homeland community. They champion use of the mother tongue in school and society, believing that it can result in both better education for their home communities and increased cultural stability for the homelands. Other members of the elite, having found their identity in the outside world, look at the issue more pragmatically. Accepting the mother tongue 'in its place', they know that English (and French) are the languages that count in any economic context outside the homeland. Still others of the elite embrace urban and global culture, discarding the mother tongue altogether as no longer relevant.

4.7.4. The language committee

The language committee has institutionalised its solidarity with the mother tongue and those who speak it. Its members, primarily elite and educators with some local representation thrown in, demonstrate a strong commitment to promotion of the mother tongue which goes beyond the possibility of financial gain. This volunteerism appears to be driven equally by two convictions: that Bafut, Kom and Nso' people should not have to give up their language and cultural heritage in order to move into the 21st century; and that school success in the homelands is attainable by using the PROPELCA mother-tongue education programme. At a meeting of the NLO, the following remark was made:

Look outside. You see those two women and the child? They are talking in the mother tongue, and the child is participating in the discussion. If you bring him in here [English environment], he will act like he doesn't know his right from his left. . . . There is no way out for better education other than to use the mother tongue in school. Very bright children get to school and they look like they are dull, like they don't know anything (LCO: NLO 29 March 03).

This indignation over the frustration of homeland children's potential in school fuels the commitment of those educators involved in the language committees.

The language committee is anxious to make alliances among each of the power groups described in sections 4.1-4.3 and 4.5. The language committees want to gain the full support of the language community, both in the homeland and outside of it - partly in order to legitimise their goals and partly to strengthen their resources and reach. They have concluded, similarly to Stroud (2003:18), that

indigenous language programmes require the support of the community, and ideally should be designed and managed by the community in order to succeed (emphasis in the original).
This represents an ongoing struggle of the language committee: to be seen as a community-based organisation despite its genesis in the extra-community institutions of the University of Yaoundé I, NACALCO and SIL.

4.7.5. Conclusion

If, in the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "people without their languages are but slaves" (quoted in Mazrui 1986:65), then the three language communities under study here have little to worry about in terms of their linguistic freedom. The combination of a linguistically supportive homeland, strong traditional authority and sense of cultural pride have shaped the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities for over 200 years. In this environment, use of the oral mother tongue has flourished. This cultural environment has also facilitated the formation of active language committees. In addition, a positive national language policy environment gives further support from beyond the homeland.

However, sociocultural environment is not the only, or perhaps even the primary, determinant of minority language use. As the homeland communities move into the 21st century, they face economic pressures and social change. Values and goods from outside the homelands exert their own influence on language choices. In the realm of education, contact with the values and worldview borne by the powerful English-based formal education system has affected the Grassfields homelands for more than 100 years. Its influence in fact seems to have increased over time.

At the same time, development of the local languages has meant the emergence of mother-tongue alternatives for written language use. This new option for written communication highlights the possibility that orality and literacy as cultural characteristics among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' people have up until now been language-linked, and that the mother tongue moving into the domain of written language may offer competition to the English-language hegemony promoted by the school system. These issues of language and literacy will be considered in chapter five.
Chapter 5. Roles and uses of the written mother tongue

Having examined in chapter four the authorities and institutions most relevant in shaping the way the mother tongue is used for learning and communication, this study now turns to an examination of the actual uses of the written mother tongue in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities. What do patterns of use indicate regarding the viability of a sustainable role for the written mother tongue in these language communities? In order to answer this question, the domains of use of the written mother tongue will be explored, as well as the means of literacy acquisition and the implications of becoming literate in the mother tongue. Social uses of written language will also be discussed, with particular reference to the written mother tongue.146

It is important to recognise that the broader linguistic environment in which this phenomenon is situated is one in which minority languages are under serious threat of extinction147. The growth of sociolinguistic domains where majority languages are used, fuelled by the influence of global culture and the economic disparities between the world's different peoples, spells the end for thousands of smaller languages over the coming years.148 Nettle (1999:113) argues that many of these languages are so endangered that even efforts at revitalisation will make no difference:

Many languages, particularly in the Third world, are either so small, or spoken by communities whose economies are so disadvantaged, that shift is likely to be rapid and total in the rush for development.

For these languages, the process of language shift has gone so far as to be irreversible. Crystal (2000:129) notes that attempts to provide support to threatened languages often fail just because they come too late in the life of the threatened language.

146 The unpublished data used in this chapter has several sources: the PROPELCA alumni survey (PAS), described in section 2.5.4 and detailed in Appendices 1-3; oral interviews (OI), listed in Appendix 11; group interviews of teachers (GIT) and supervisors (GIS), described in Appendix 10; observations of language committee meetings (LCO) and teacher training events (TTO), listed in Appendix 5; and classroom observations (CO) as listed in Appendix 4.

147 The Foundation for Endangered Languages notes in its manifesto that "the majority of the world's languages are vulnerable not just to decline but to extinction". See <http://www.ogmios.org/manifesto.htm>. Accessed 4 August 2004.

148 Crystal (2000:19) estimates that 50% of the world's languages will be lost in the next 100 years.
Given the small size of minority languages in the Northwest Province of Cameroon, the influence of English-language schooling and the pull of urbanised life for the region's young people, it would be reasonable to expect that these languages would be on the decline. For Bafut, Kom and Lamnso', however, that does not seem to be the case. Instead, use of the mother tongue, particularly the written mother tongue, appears to be increasing in these language communities. The details of, and reasons for, this unexpected sociolinguistic phenomenon are explored in this chapter.

5.1. Social domains for English and mother tongue in the language community: an overview

A general background understanding of the social domains of English and the mother tongue in the language communities was gained in this study, from informal observation and inquiry rather than from any specific data-gathering tool. The pattern observed in these communities was that the spoken mother tongue was used for oral communication in home and local community. This was true for bilingual as well as monolingual people. The choice to speak English or Pidgin was associated with the presence of a non-speaker of the mother tongue. Particular topics, such as technology or development-related concepts, called for the use of specific words or phrases borrowed from English (OI: Yuh 26 Nov 02). Additionally, it was observed that certain local institutions, primarily school, mandate spoken English regardless of the language proficiency of the participants. In others, such as local government and commercial institutions, language choice once again depended on the presence or absence of a non-speaker of the mother tongue. Thus, informal observation and reported behaviours indicated that the default mode of communication in daily life is the spoken mother tongue.

For written text, English was observed to be the default language. English was the medium for all the signs, advertisements, and other instances of non-book written text observed (except for one series of two AIDS posters observed in the Kom homeland, written in Pidgin). This was also the case in the primary schools observed, where all posters, blackboard writing and exercise books which were observed featured English writing. The exceptions to this rule were the PROPELCA classrooms, in which written mother tongue occupied a portion of the blackboard (that portion used for the subject of mother-tongue literacy), a corresponding portion of the teachers' notes and the students' exercise books, and -
in the case of Kom - sometimes a large Kom alphabet chart mounted on the wall (CO: CS Balikumato class 1, 6 Feb 03).

This divide between oral mother tongue and written English - particularly with the dominance of English in the educational setting - is well known in post-colonial Africa. As Korang and Slemon (1997) note, African nations today comprise peoples speaking many languages, and the question of which group will control the means for representing a people to itself has been settled largely with the "uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing" (p.252). In Northwest Cameroon, the use of English as written medium has been uncritically accepted in this way. Korang and Slemon observe that "the question of 'writing' is already positioned within larger debates about the politics of language use" (p.250; emphasis in the original). Indeed, the fact that most African languages have remained unwritten for so long (itself the result of a series of political decisions) has meant that the alternative of written mother tongue often does not exist. In the case of Bafut, Kom and Lamnso', viable written forms of the language were not available until after 1979 (section 3.2.1); written English, meanwhile, has been part of the formal school curriculum since at least 1922.

Not only is the identification of English (and French) with writing evident in national-level education policy and implementation (Ministry of National Education 1998, 2000), but the place given to written English in the language communities themselves is evidence of what Griffiths calls the "impact of concepts of the modern" (Griffiths 1997:140). English writing is identified with the modern world, and so is privileged over other kinds of inscription, including written mother tongue.

Thus, the uses of written mother tongue in the language communities of Bafut, Kom and Nso' take place in a context in which the mother tongue dominates oral communication and English dominates written text. Instances of written mother tongue use are therefore significant in that they run counter to the norms of language choice. The uses of written mother tongue are discussed in detail in section 5.4.

5.2. Acquiring literacy in the mother tongue

For a Bafut, Kom or Lamnso' speaker, literacy in the mother tongue can be acquired through formal or nonformal classes or, if one is already literate in another language,
Several institutions are involved in implementation of programmes of mother-tongue literacy acquisition, lending their own character and priorities to those programmes.

5.2.1. PROPELCA classes and adult literacy classes

In the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities, literacy in the mother tongue is most often acquired either through the PROPELCA mother-tongue education programme or through an adult literacy programme.

The PROPELCA programme, as described in section 3.2, offers both the formal programme, in which the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction alongside English in grades 1-4; and the informal programme in which instruction in mother-tongue literacy is offered in the three higher primary grades (and occasionally in secondary school). Both programmes are intended to result in mother-tongue literacy after three years of study, although the efficacy with which they do so depends partly on the continuity of the instruction from year to year.

It is worth emphasising here that the two programmes build upon two different approaches to the use of local language in formal instruction, one being as medium and one as subject. As discussed in section 3.2.1, the formal PROPELCA programme is considered by PROPELCA advocates to be the ideal way to implement mother-tongue instruction, but it is also more demanding of teachers and schools. The informal PROPELCA programme is less demanding of staff, and is used in some cases to build interest and support for programmed mother tongue use in school.

The adult mother-tongue literacy programmes are serving both illiterate (i.e. nonschooled) and semiliterate (those who have been to school and are familiar with English reading and writing, yet who cannot actually read) adult populations. Noë Ngueffo, NACALCO's adult literacy programme director, puts the proportion of semiliterate to illiterate class attendees at 60:40 (OI: Ngueffo 13 Jan 03). The adult literacy programme takes between one and three years to complete (OI: Suuyren 2 March 03; OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03).

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149 However, reading in these languages is easier to learn informally than is writing, as is discussed in section 5.4.3.

150 NACALCO’s adult literacy programme director Noë Ngueffo believes that many of those who have finished primary school are nevertheless unable to read; he counts these people as “semiliterate” (OI: Ngueffo 13 Jan 03).
However, attempts to track the numbers of people actually learning to read in Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' are seriously hampered by irregular reporting and uncertain estimates. A few very tentative conclusions may be drawn from the data available.

The estimates available for mother-tongue literacy learners in Bafut, Kom and Lamnso', from both adult literacy classes and the PROPELCA programme, are listed in Figures 5.1 - 5.3.

**Figure 5.1. Estimated numbers of mother-tongue literacy learners in Bafut, 1998-2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Formal PROPELCA students</th>
<th>Informal PROPELCA students</th>
<th>Total PROPELCA students</th>
<th>Adult literacy classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>22 classes, 518 learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>(3 schools)</td>
<td>(24 schools)</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.2. Estimated numbers of mother-tongue literacy learners in Kom, 1989-2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Formal PROPELCA students</th>
<th>Informal PROPELCA students</th>
<th>Total PROPELCA students</th>
<th>Adult literacy classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(9 schools)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(20 schools)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,592</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>2,260</td>
<td>2,261</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>48 schools</td>
<td>12 schools</td>
<td>5000+</td>
<td>50+ classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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152 Source of Kom data in this table: NACALCO records 1998-2001; GIS 8 Feb 03; OI: Jones 16 Jan 03.
Even though the categories being measured are not uniform for all the years, the trends shown in the tables are noteworthy. Figure 5.1 shows a marked acceleration in participation in PROPELCA in Bafut from 1998-2003, as well as the relatively large proportion of PROPELCA students who are in the informal programme. Figure 5.2 demonstrates likewise the recent acceleration in participation in PROPELCA in Kom. Figure 5.3, on the other hand, provides evidence to support the NLO staff's account of a serious disruption in the PROPELCA programme in Nso’ the early-mid 1990s (section 3.2.3).

Given that the formal and informal PROPELCA programmes are structured to produce literates in a maximum of three years, it can be estimated that one-third of the number of PROPELCA students listed in Figures 5.1 - 5.3 for a given year are completing literacy instruction that year. Thus, 1,800 PROPELCA students in Bafut, 1,600-1,700 students in Kom, and possibly 700 students in Nso' (extrapolating from the 2001 number) could be estimated to have become literate in the mother tongue in 2003. For Kom and Bafut at least, these numbers might be expected to stay the same or increase each year in the near future.\(^{154}\) (This also, of course, assumes that every PROPELCA participant successfully learns to read and write in the mother tongue, which may or may not be accurate.)

Figures for adult literacy classes are even more difficult to track. The adult classes listed in Figures 5.1-5.3 are meant to produce literates in 1-3 years' time, depending on how much prior schooling the adult learners have had. In addition, new literacy classes are beginning, held in churches and based on reading the New Testament in the mother tongue. No reliable figures were available for how many of these classes exist, although SIL literacy

\(^{153}\) Source of Nso' data in this table: NACALCO records 1998-2001; Grebe 17 Aug 04.

\(^{154}\) In the case of Lamnso', the number appears to be holding steady between 2000-2001. Given the numbers of new Nso' teachers currently being trained, it is reasonable to expect that the Nso' PROPELCA programme increased in numbers by 2003.
consultant Truus Babila (OL: 3 April 2003) estimated that 20-25 such classes are operating in Kom area. Some church-based classes may in fact overlap with the adult literacy classes reported in Figures 5.1-5.3. From this data, therefore, it is impossible to tell how many adults are becoming literate annually in the mother tongue through the literacy classes. On the other hand, the increasing identification by the Christian churches (Baptist, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and Catholic) with mother-tongue literacy acquisition is significant.

A further complication to tallying the numbers of mother-tongue literates stems from the fact that, for English-literate mother-tongue speakers, it is possible to learn to read the mother tongue without attending classes, with written materials called transition primers (see Appendix 16, Figure 1). These primers outline the differences between the orthographies of English and mother tongue, focusing particularly on tone and other linguistic features not used in the English alphabet. They also provide controlled reading practice of the mother tongue. Transition primers have been available in Bafut and Lamnso' since 1980, and in Kom since 1984. However their use is so informal that it is impossible to track their impact on mother-tongue literacy levels.

Given all these irregularities and uncertainties in tallying literates, perhaps a more global view is in order. Looking back on his thirty years of involvement with Lamnso', SIL linguist Karl Grebe (personal communication) estimates that at this point, after at least 20 years of literacy classes and mother-tongue education, perhaps 10-15% of the Nso' population can read Lamnso'. If the numbers for Kom and Bafut literates listed in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 are trustworthy, an estimate of 10% mother-tongue literates in those languages could be reasonable in perhaps five to ten more years. These estimates are of course hampered by the lack of accurate population counts and historical records of mother-tongue literacy programmes.

The PROPELCA and adult literacy programmes each tend to reinforce interest in the other. Noë Ngueffo, the NACALCO adult literacy programme director, described the attitude of mother-tongue literate parents towards the PROPELCA programme:

> Where literacy classes\textsuperscript{155} are, there is an impact on whether children go to PROPELCA schools. . . [Where adult literacy classes had been held,] parents who in fact knew the importance of mother-tongue learning were encouraging children to do well at school. Even sometimes they were talking to the headmasters and

\textsuperscript{155} It is significant that Ngueffo did not distinguish between English-language and mother-tongue literacy classes; possibly this was due to the context, but it also highlights the lack of such classes in English. To teach literacy in English is a fruitless task in the homelands; those who are illiterate tend to have low English skills as well, since both skills have traditionally been acquired in formal education.
saying, "We know this [PROPELCA] is a good programme" (OI: Ngueffo 13 Jan 03).

The benefits of parental literacy for a child's success in school are also evident where literacy is in the mother tongue. NACALCO PROPELCA director Gabriel Mba has noted that

when you have a family where the mother and the father are attending mother-tongue literacy classes, there is more success from the child. The parents can now help their children with homework (OI: Mba 11 Oct 02).

Conversely, Mary Annett, an SIL literacy consultant, has noted that the results of PROPELCA classes may convince a parent to attend mother-tongue literacy classes. Visiting a Lamnso' literacy class, Annett found that this was the case:

One woman in the class said she was there because her child was attending a PROPELCA school. When that child came home there was an old piece of [English-language] newspaper lying in the house and he picked it up and read "dy-na-mo." He had learned to decode syllables. She was amazed, as even much older children [not in PROPELCA classes] could not have done this. That convinced her to come to literacy class (OI: Annett 7 Oct 02).

Thus, the data available on numbers of mother-tongue literacy learners, limited though it is, nevertheless suggests that the numbers of people in both PROPELCA programmes and adult mother-tongue literacy programmes are increasing.

5.2.2. Cooperating institutions

The institutions involved in delivery of mother-tongue literacy programmes operate in a collaborative network in which each institution contributes according to its priorities and competencies. In this context, Brandt and Clinton's notion of the "literacy sponsor " - agents who enable or induce literacy, and gain advantage by it in some way (2002:349) - helps to clarify the role of institutional agency in defining and promoting literacy in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities.

The language committee. The language committee for each community (BALA, the KLDC and the NLO) is the lead agency for mother-tongue literacy classes, by both self-definition and the language community's recognition of their role. For language committees, literacy acquisition programmes are tightly focused on promoting the written mother tongue. One might expect such literacy classes to have developed as a component of development projects in health, conservation or animal husbandry,156 similarly, one might have expected

156 NGOs and churches in Northwest Province have carried out development initiatives of different kinds in these areas.
mother-tongue education to grow out of community concerns for relevant education. But such is not the case here. The primary goal of the language committees is quite specifically that of language development. The role of the language committee in promoting written mother tongue has been described in section 4.6; it includes training and supervision of teachers and facilitators, production of learning materials, teaching of classes and general local-level advocacy.

Denominational and government education authorities. These institutions, when supportive of the mother-tongue education programme, demonstrate that support by permitting or even requiring their headmasters and teachers to take the PROPELCA teacher training and participate in the PROPELCA programme. Christian mission philosophy in Northwest Cameroon was historically pro-local language, as is discussed in sections 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.3.1; this was primarily due to the conviction that conversion and religious instruction of a people are most effectively done in their first language. Had their Cameroonian clients been so inclined, local languages would have been developed and used even more in the mission schools than they were. The English-medium education system that developed among the colonial-era missions was more in response to the wishes of government and citizens than an expression of mission philosophy of language (sections 3.1.3.7 and 3.1.4).

The colonial government education system was not so supportive of local language use in schools (sections 3.1.3.3-5; 3.1.4), and since independence the government likewise has not demonstrated much enthusiasm for it (section 3.1.5.2). However, over the last decade the national and international climate have grown increasingly sympathetic to use of local languages in education (Bamgbose 2001; UNESCO 2003b; Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers of Language Policy in Africa 1997; section 3.1.5.2), and the government education officers in Northwest Cameroon are beginning to implement the pro-local language stance of the new Law on Education of 1998 (Ministry of National Education 1998).

NACALCO. The National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees, NACALCO, facilitates the efforts of BALA, the KLDC and the NLO by means of financial, consulting and advocacy support. NACALCO's African language-promotion agenda is geographically fairly broad. The organisation has been heavily involved in national-level lobbying in the last several years, with the goal of seeing national languages accepted as a normal means of school instruction in Cameroonian public education. NACALCO is currently promoting the assessment and development of all Cameroonian languages, and is
also pursuing ties with the African Union as a civil society organisation with expertise in African language development.

_SIL_. SIL is the only expatriate institution which has had ongoing involvement over the past 40 years in the development of Cameroonian languages. SIL Cameroon had an influential hand in the formation of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language committees as well, as discussed in section 4.6.1. Currently SIL provides limited financial support to NACALCO, and its personnel may participate in training language committee personnel and producing learning materials. Personnel of SIL Cameroon continue activity in Bafut, Kom and Lmnso' languages, primarily as translators, exegetes and consultants to the Bible translation programmes in those languages (section 3.2.6). SIL's stated goal is the facilitation of language-based development through research, translation and literacy in minority languages.\textsuperscript{157} SIL's interest in promoting mother-tongue literacy acquisition is thus multifaceted, encompassing goals of sustainable language use in both religious and secular spheres.

_The Cameroonian Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL)._\textsuperscript{158} CABTAL is interested primarily in church-based applications of mother-tongue literacy acquisition. CABTAL has programmes in Kom and Nso', where it not only carries out Bible translation but also sponsors church-based classes in literacy and use of the mother-tongue Scriptures.

_Christian churches._ The individual Christian churches in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands are increasingly sites of mother-tongue literacy acquisition and use. This is a reflection of the willingness of local church authorities to collaborate with CABTAL and the language committees, allowing their premises to be used and their congregations to be encouraged to learn to read the mother tongue in order that Scriptures and other religious materials written in the mother tongue may be freely used in the churches. All four of the


\textsuperscript{158} CABTAL is the Cameroonian counterpart to SIL in the area of Bible translation. CABTAL was formed in 1987, and is registered with the Cameroonian government as a non-profit association. See <http://www.cabtal.org>.
local denominations, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist and Church of Christ churches were observed in this study to be interested in development of the written mother tongue.\textsuperscript{159}

The complementary interests of these institutions allow them to collaborate in the various mother-tongue literacy initiatives available in the homelands. Together they have created an environment for local language development that is based in linguistic research and focused on sustained use of the mother tongue in oral and written forms. The overtly Christian character of some of the partner institutions also gives a Christian 'flavour' to the programme aspects they are responsible for; on the other hand, it does not inhibit partnership between secular and religious institutions. Indeed, as was described in chapter three, such secular-religious partnerships are common in the educational history of Northwest Cameroon.

5.2.3. \textit{Summary: acquiring literacy in the mother tongue}

As Figures 5.1-5.3 indicate, approximately 5,000 Bafut, 5,000 Kom and 2,500 Nso' children and adults are now participating in mother-tongue literacy acquisition activities, with an estimated one-third of those numbers becoming literate in the mother tongue each year. These literacy acquisition programmes are regularly offered, and, according to the data available in Figures 5.1-5.3, the number of people who participate in them is increasing. The mother-tongue literacy programmes are supported by a range of institutions, although in each community the language committee is the lead agency for programme implementation.

5.3. Mother-tongue literacy and language maintenance

In the language communities under study, the process of learning to read and write the mother tongue has had multiple effects on use and understanding of the language itself. Olson (1994:139) has noted the impact of literacy on language understanding, observing that it is knowledge of the alphabet that makes the speaker aware of phonemes and that a consciousness of the structures of a language is enhanced by learning its writing system. For the Bafut, Kom and Nso' learners, literacy in the mother tongue is accompanied by improved linguistic competence and an increased understanding of the linguistic features of the language. Mother-tongue literacy programmes also provide the platform where language standardisation efforts are taking place. All these activities promote the maintenance of these languages.

\textsuperscript{159} Islam, the other major religion in the area, has very slight representation in the Kom or Bafut language communities. In Nso’, the Muslim population is larger but there has been little interaction between the language committee and members of that community. See section 4.6.4.
5.3.1. Improved language competence

In several instances in this study it became clear that, at least for children, learning to read and write in the mother tongue was also a means of learning to speak the language better - that is, with the pronunciation and discourse patterns typical of a fluent adult speaker of the language. This phenomenon was directly observed in classrooms, reported in the survey of PROPELCA alumni and reported in individual interviews.

In the survey of PROPELCA alumni, many of the 36 adult respondents, when asked what advantages they saw to the PROPELCA mother-tongue education programme they had attended, responded in terms of both written and oral competence in the mother tongue (see responses in Appendix 3). Nineteen of the 36 mentioned specifically that the programme taught them to speak the mother tongue better. For example:

Attending PROPELCA classes helped mould my tongue [researcher's note: i.e. pronunciation] to suit a typical Banso' indigene (PAS: Nso' 01).

It has made me to be able to express myself in public (PAS: Kom 12).

It has made me to love the mother tongue and to speak it well (PAS: Kom 20).

It has helped me to express myself in communities and in our tribe as a Nso' man [researcher's note: i.e. Nso' person] (PAS: Nso' 02).

PROPELCA teachers corroborated this phenomenon. Bafut PROPELCA teacher Raphael Ngwa described the effect on people's use of proper traditional greetings and grammar:

Learning to read and write helps people to understand and know Bafut grammar. If a person speaks you can tell right away if he can read and write Bafut. Mainly it is that they apply tenses correctly, and they know the greetings that are appropriate to the context (OI: Ngwa 21 March 03).

Along with tenses and appropriate discourse, the PROPELCA classes teach phonemic awareness. One observation of a Bafut literacy lesson demonstrated the latter:

The teacher asks students to say the learned sentences from memory; she says one of the content words and the student has to say the whole sentence. At one point the student are mispronouncing the word tswe ("has"), saying [tsee]. She drills them on the correct pronunciation, saying [tswe], [tswe] over and over (CO: PS Manji class 5, 25 Feb 03).

\[160\] This respondent was in fact a young woman (see Appendix 2). The use of "man" here is the result of influence of Lamnso'.
As the children learn, their parents also learn - or are reminded of - aspects of the mother tongue which they had not been speaking correctly. In the current study, this phenomenon was encountered most often in Bafut, where the proximity to the provincial capital of Bamenda causes the mother tongue to be more mixed with English and French than is the case in the Kom and Lamnso' homelands. Raphael Ngwa, a Bafut PROPELCA teacher, has observed:

Classes teach students the correct way to speak Bafut, not just read and write it. Pupils will then go back and challenge their parents on how Bafut should be spoken. The parents will come back to the teachers and say, "Is Bafut really this way?" (OI: Ngwa 21 March 03).

Another Bafut PROPELCA teacher, Rosa Alangeh, reported similar occurrences in her classes:

Students in class 5 are now correcting their parents' grammar and pronunciation [of Bafut language]. They correct parents when they mix English in their Bafut.

Alangeh noted that, far from being displeased about being corrected, the Bafut parents approve of what their children are learning:

The parents are happy when that happens; it makes them support the language teaching. Parents may not know all the days of the week in Bafut, or the months of the year. Now they are ashamed to ask their child; after all, [they think.] "Who was born first?" (OI: Alangeh 25 Feb 03).

The language standardisation taking place here among children and adults of the community is significant. The language committees are working against both language shift and language change, which they see as leading to loss of the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the language community. Language shift is not in this case seen as a natural stage in the evolution of a language (Crystal 2000:108); rather, it is seen as a threat to the survival of the local language. Language change, though natural enough wherever language communities come into contact (Nettle 1999), is similarly seen by the language committees as posing a threat to the local language. Thus, although the language committees demonstrate awareness of the need for modernising the language, particularly for its use in

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161 Language shift occurs when bilingual speakers of a language increasingly choose to speak another language instead. Language change is a characteristic of the language itself - the addition, loss or modification of particular linguistic features (Crystal 2000:23). Language shift and language change occurring together result in what Crystal terms "language decline" or - at the extreme - extinction.

162 Indeed, May (2001: 146) notes that language shift is often not a neutral process at all, but rather accompanies sociopolitical inequalities.
formal education, their efforts to promote language maintenance are more oriented towards rescuing - or resurrecting - vocabulary and speech patterns which are going out of use.

The 'standard' language which the language committees are trying to reinforce in this way is the variety spoken in traditional contexts: public discussions, traditional greetings, and so on. Hudson (1996:240) notes that the term "standard language" is often given to the language variety spoken by speakers of high social status and power. In the homelands, this would most likely be the traditional leaders who are seen as having maintained 'correct' Bafut, Kom or Lamnso'.

The data also highlights the role that writing, or *codification* (Cooper 1989:144), plays in standardising the language, due to its ability to promote stability of a particular set of linguistic norms. As Crystal (2000:138) notes, an endangered language's chances for survival are increased if it is written.

5.3.2. Corpus planning

The *corpus planning* (Cooper 1989; section 2.1.2) activities of the language committees promote language maintenance in three ways: extending the language for new functions and topics (also called *language modernisation*; see Cooper 1989:149); the re-establishment or 'rescue' of vocabulary which is in danger of being forgotten; and the regularisation of spellings.

For the language committees, modernisation and awareness building of mother-tongue vocabulary is a priority particularly in primary school science and mathematics. In one PROPELCA teacher training course observed in Banso', a mid-course exam had two questions:

1. Write in Lamnso' the words for a) ÷; b) - ; c) [division sign]; d) [multiplication sign].

2. List six words in Lamnso' that describe quantity. (TTO: Nso' 4 Jan 03)

Knowledge of such specialised vocabulary is necessary for any mathematics teacher who hopes to teach the subject in the mother tongue. However it is not standard vocabulary for most Lamnso' speakers, who would have learned mathematics in English.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Actually, this problem of technical terminology confronts the English-language teacher as well. PROPELCA advocates maintain that one significant advantage of using the mother tongue for maths and science is that the children can be helped to understand a concept rather than to just memorise an English word for that concept. One English-language grade 1 teacher told me: "for arithmetic, I hardly use Bafut at all." This prompted a later comment from John Ambe, the BALA PROPELCA supervisor: "He is [now] in class 1, second term. But he
An instance of 'vocabulary rescue' was observed in one teacher refresher course in Bafut, where the class of 14 teachers compiled a comprehensive list of animal names in the mother tongue:

A male teacher (not a trainer) is leading the class in an exercise of writing the names of animals - wild and domestic - in Bafut. [BALA literacy supervisor] Ambe tells me that the purpose of this is that people normally learn the names in English, and they don't always remember them in Bafut: "if you ask someone, maybe they can only name five [animals] in Bafut. So we are working together here to remember them and write them down correctly in Bafut language. We did [the same process for] plants yesterday." (TTO: Bafut 4 July 03)

More than 40 wild animals were named during the session. At one point, there was some uncertainty about the precise spelling of the Bafut word for pangolin:

Is it mbaranga'a or ambaranga'a? They say it over and over to each other and finally decide on the first spelling. Then they talk about what the animal looks like…. It occurs to me that I am watching the standardisation of the Bafut language in progress (TTO: Bafut 4 July 03).

Regularisation of spellings is considered by the language committees to be part of their ongoing responsibility. At one meeting of the literacy sub-committee of the KLDC the chairman noted that the current Kom-English dictionary has spelling errors in it, and he asked committee members to "bring in words that you feel are not spelled right and see how to resolve [the spellings]" (LCO: KLDC 30 July 03).

5.3.3. Increased linguistic understanding

Participating in formal mother-tongue literacy instruction in Bafut, Kom and Banso' also involves gaining an understanding of the linguistic structures of the language. This can be seen in the PROPELCA teacher training, the content of PROPELCA lessons themselves, and the structure of the literacy primers.

The PROPELCA teacher training syllabus focuses heavily on topics such as rules for writing mother tongue, features of the phonology and grammar of the language, and tone awareness (TTO: Kom 3 July 03; OI: Ambe 9 July 03). These aspects of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language have been investigated by linguists in the University of Yaoundé and SIL, and their analyses form the basis of the PROPELCA training on these topics. Indeed, some hasn't come to the four operations [addition, subtraction, multiplication and division], and [when he does] he will forced to use the mother tongue" (OI: Mbolifor 25 Feb 03).

164 Teacher training event observation. See Appendix 5.

165 See Appendix 14 for a list of linguistic publications and manuscripts on Bafut, Kom and Lamnso'.
people attend the PROPELCA teacher training courses primarily in order to learn more about
the language (LCO: KLDC 30 July 03).

In PROPELCA classes themselves, significant time is spent on mastery of the
grammar and alphabet of the mother tongue. The PROPELCA primers include a page
devoted to grammatical features in each lesson (see Appendix 16, Figure 2). For the higher
grades, grammar teaching is even more explicit. In one grade 7 class observed, BALA
literacy supervisor John Ambe taught the 12 verb tenses in Bafut first by eliciting them from
the students, then asking for the English names of those which correspond to English verb
tenses. It became clear that Bafut has more verb tenses than English does. Ambe pointed this
out at the end of the class:

"Bafut does have grammar, just as English has. In fact, it has a more complex
system of tenses" (CO: GS Manji class 7, 12 March 03).

5.3.4. Summary: mother-tongue literacy and language maintenance

In the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities, mother-tongue literacy acquisition
entails more than simply learning a code for written expression of the language. For the
individual learner, a process of language learning accompanies mother-tongue literacy
acquisition as well. On a broader scale, the processes of language standardisation which form
part of the mother-tongue literacy programmes have implications for the stability and
maintenance of the language across the community. Learning to read and write in the mother
tongue thus facilitates language maintenance at individual and community levels.

5.4. Use of the written mother tongue

How is the written mother tongue actually used in the Bafut, Kom and Nso'
communities? This question will be addressed with data on existing mother-tongue
publications, the patterns of use of those publications, and reading and writing behaviours in
mother tongue and in English.

5.4.1. Written texts available

One indicator of what could be read in the mother tongue is the number and type of
written texts available in that language. Unlike most European languages, most of the
minority languages of Cameroon have a written tradition of only a few decades at most.
Indeed, extensive publication and use of local-language materials was not feasible before the establishment of a unified alphabet for Cameroonian languages in 1979.\textsuperscript{166}

Figure 5.4 lists the number of titles that have been published in the Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' languages, by literature type.\textsuperscript{167} It should be noted that the existence of the publications listed does not imply that these titles are readily available today to the mother-tongue reader, as is also noted in Figure 5.4. In fact, titles produced before 1985 are difficult to find outside of institutional archives.

An examination of sales points for mother-tongue titles in Kom and Banso' showed that they carried primarily the calendar and diary, current editions of PROPELCA texts, some of the more recently published collections of folk tales or riddles, Scripture, and a few other religious titles. Bafut does not yet have a dedicated sales point for mother-tongue literature.

Literature production in all three languages continues today, primarily through the language committees. In the last year, BALA published a post-primer reading book of Bafut folk stories and the 2004 diary. The KLDC has several titles in process: a book on verb tenses in Kom, another on the dynasty of the Fons of Kom, a revision of the guide to the Kom alphabet (a transition primer), a mathematics text for grade 3 and a book of Kom myths and legends. The NLO also has several titles in process: a book on Nso' history, another on Nso' marriage customs, a "cultural etymology" (LCO: NLO 29 March 03) and translations of three English novels by a well-known Nso' author.

\textsuperscript{166} The earliest publications in Bafut were linguistic studies done in the late 1970s. In Lamnso', the Catholic diocese of Kumbo was printing lectionaries and materials for use in Nso' churches as early as 1976. In Kom, the earliest publications consisted of a series of 30 hand-printed booklets on religious and cultural topics, done by Mueller in 1968-1979. However, due to the minuscule circulation of these Kom booklets, their use of a non-standard orthography and their low-technology printing format (probably silkscreen press), these publications in Kom are not included in the count listed in Figure 5.4.

\textsuperscript{167} As there is no single central archive for these titles, they were found through library and archive searches, as well as personal inquiry of language committee members, SIL personnel and others.
As was discussed in section 5.2.2, other institutions cooperate with the language committee in literature production. NACALCO provides consultant and financial support for the PROPELCA-related school texts. SIL helps to produce development titles and descriptive works such as grammars and dictionaries. SIL and CABTAL are involved in the production of Scriptures; and local church denominations, along with the language committees, produce most of the religious titles other than Scriptures. The types of publications produced by each partner institution reflect their own priorities for development of the mother tongue, but all are produced in cooperation with the language committee.

The origins of these publications, whether translations or original works, depend on the type of publication. Literature on religious topics is translated material, as are the development titles on AIDS, hygiene, malaria, pesticides and so on. PROPELCA school

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168 These consist of pre-readers, primers, post-primer reading material and mathematics books. Also included are guides to reading the mother tongue, intended for audiences already literate in English.

169 These include books of folk stories, proverbs, riddles, fables, and descriptions of local cultural characteristics.

170 These include books on malaria, personal hygiene, AIDS, the treatment of diarrhoea, and the proper use of pesticides. There is also a book in Lamnso' on "how human rights are violated in Nso" as well as a book in Kom on the environment, described in section 5.6.2.

171 These include the New Testament in Bafut and Lamnso', individual sections of the New Testament such as the story of Easter, and recently translated Old Testament books of Jonah and Ruth.

172 These include retellings of the parables of Jesus, song books, evangelistic tracts, catechisms and particular Catholic rites.

173 Most of these publications are by the Kumbo Diocese of the Catholic Church, which has been printing and reprinting various titles since 1976.
texts, cultural and language-related topics and all periodical works such as newsletters and diaries are original works.

The presence of both translated and original works in the local language is indicative of a shift in the identification of written text with a particular cultural context. Robinson (1997:31) notes that translation is often identified with the influence of a hegemonic culture and with colonial education; indeed, agents of development and Christian missions have for decades used translated materials to facilitate social and spiritual change among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' populations (Sanneh 1990:70). The dominant position of European culture in the sphere of written language is being challenged, however, as the publication activities of the language committees are establishing the Bafut, Kom and Nso' cultures as viable bases for a body of written literature. As the original works are produced, they are introduced into the written environment of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities principally via the PROPELCA programme and the adult literacy programmes.174

Still, on the whole the amount of written mother-tongue text in each of these language communities is limited. This insufficiency of relevant reading material hampers efforts to promote the written mother tongue, but production of such material is a challenge. NACALCO adult literacy director Noë Ngueffo explained the problem of obtaining material that is culturally based:

Publications are our weak point now. It is difficult because a publication starts with the manuscript and it is not easy to get a manuscript. Most people in the literacy programme are at the village level; they are volunteers, not paid for what they do (OI Ngueffo: 13 Jan 03).

Recently NACALCO has begun offering a small honorarium to authors, which has improved the situation somewhat.

5.4.2. What is read in the mother tongue

Given that this is the mother-tongue literature available, how and how much is it used? This question was examined three ways in this study: patterns of purchase of mother-tongue titles, the presence of mother-tongue publications in the home and school environments, and self-reported reading behaviours of adult mother-tongue literates.

174 Non-translated, local-language publications also play a key role in the highly successful Pulaar (Senegal) literacy movement (Fagerberg-Diallo 2001). More than 60 books have been published in Pulaar, and 1500-2000 copies are sold per month.
**Patterns of book purchases.** Based on sales figures, the pocket diary and calendar are by far the most popular pieces of mother-tongue literature. In Bafut, 459 copies of the 2002 diary were sold. In Nso', Christopher Mengjo's publishing firm, Good News Bookshop, prints 2,000 calendars and 1,000 diaries per year, though not all of them are sold (OI: Mengjo 27 March 2003); this may be due to competition with Nso' materials which the NLO has produced since 1998, printing 2,000 calendars and 500 diaries in 2002 (the latter sold out). In Kom, approximately 1,000 diaries are printed and sold each year.

At the other end of the spectrum, the least-sold titles tend to be those on development topics. Most of these have been translated without a clear programme in mind in which to utilise them (OI: Suuyren 2 March 03); nor have they been written in a way that allows them to fit into the school curriculum. Editor Christopher Mengjo termed books such as these "supplementary books", that is, books which are not necessary to the institutional purpose of either school or church. Mengjo noted that people's current economic situation does not permit the purchase of such materials:

> You only buy [a book] when you need it. People will say, "I like the book, but the money is not there." (OI: Mengjo 27 March 03).

**The presence of books in home and school environments.**175 The presence of written text in the home and school environments is also revealing. Based on the proportion of mother-tongue publications which focus on the school audience, and the fact that the school environment is one of the most frequent sites for reading and writing (below; and section 5.5.2), it is noteworthy that very few books were in fact found there. The primary schools in the homelands are notoriously short of textbooks, in either English or mother tongue.176 Students have only exercise books into which they copy the teacher's blackboard writing; the teacher may have a copy of the textbook to be taught from, but not always. The blackboard takes the place of textbooks, although with all the different subjects to be taught this way blackboard space becomes quite limited. Excerpts from my classroom observation log give evidence of the dearth of textbooks:

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175 The presence of books in the church environment was not investigated in this study. It was reported to me that those books found in church are usually in the hands of the service leaders, not the congregation. However that report is not verifiable by my data.

176 It was reported to me that secondary school students tend to have more books than primary students, but I have no hard evidence of this. It was also reported to me that primary schools in the urban areas have the same problem as rural primary schools do, with parents not furnishing their children with school textbooks.
Classes 1 and 2, maths and mother-tongue reading:

58 children in the room: about 36 in class 1 and 22 in class 2. . . . Maybe half of class 1 have slates [lap-sized chalkboards]; others have exercise books and pencils. Class 2 does not have slates. No books.

(CO: CS Nsoh, classes 1/2, 4 March 03).

Class 6, Maths

33 kids in this class. . . . The topic is Roman numerals. The children have between 1 and 3 exercise books in front of each of them. No textbooks are in evidence. . . . Then the teacher gives exercises on the board, converting Roman to Arabic and vice versa.

On the blackboard (there are two, one covering the front wall and one the back):

- English: conjugations: explanations, examples, exercises
- The Reformation (paragraphs)
- The Empire of Mali
- Continents of the world, oceans of the world

Chalked on a window shutter: prime numbers 2, 3, 5, . . .

(CO: CS Nsoh class 6, 4 March 2003)

Class 6, informal PROPELCA (Mother-tongue reading)

34 kids in class, ages 10-15. On the blackboard: Rural Science class: the main kinds of roots (paragraphs). Kids get exercise books out. No textbooks. Teacher begins to write on the board [in the mother tongue]; kids are saying word by word as he writes. . . . The teacher can't write fast enough to stay ahead of the kids reading. He writes content questions on the board.

(CO: GS Manji class 6, 12 March 03)

In observations of 21 primary classrooms (see Appendix 2), only one class was observed to have any student books other than exercise books. It was religious instruction class in grade 2 of a Catholic school:

Class 2, Religion class:

33 pupils. Begins with an English song: "Galilee, sweet Galilee/Master Jesus Christ changed water into wine."

Then a lecture and questions/answers about the miracle at Cana. There is a paperback book for religion [the Catholic denomination's religious instruction text, Our Way to God], with about 7 copies in the room. This is the only book visible at all, except for the exercise books later handed out for writing practice. . . . [After the class is over] the teacher then collects the seven books.

(CO: CS Balikumato class 2, 20 Feb 03)

The dearth of school texts was widely decried by PROPELCA and non-PROPELCA teachers alike. Yafi Alfred Ndi, a headmaster in Kom, described the problem:
The parents only complain about money. But when they [the children] come to us, now you take a book, had it been that all have a copy, you have only to open the book and read. But now you are forced to take what is in the book and write it on the board so the children should read. And that is the problem we have. In class [grade] seven, some of the children have a few copies of the required books, especially English and the religious books we emphasise here (Yafi 14 March 03).

The reason most often given for the lack of textbooks was that parents could not afford them, and indeed the problem has been aggravated since the economic downturn of the early 1990s (OI: Yafi 14 March 03; OI: Lawyer 19 March 03). It is true that the cost of the primary school textbooks recommended by the Ministry of National Education is prohibitively high, considering that multiple textbooks are required for each child. Yet even PROPELCA books, which cost much less than the English-curriculum textbooks, are still a low priority purchase item for parents.

Some teachers believe that the reluctance to buy textbooks is more than simply economic. PROPELCA teacher Doris Wirngo noted that

[Parents] don't know the necessity of the child using the book. They don't value the mother-tongue books either; even though they are less expensive they won't buy them. (OI: Wirngo 27 July 03).

So when a parent in the homeland does buy a textbook for school, it is considered unusual. A Kom headmaster observed:

When you come to a school like this, and you see a child with a copy of an English book, you know at least it is a parent who wants that the child should learn something (OI: Yafi 14 March 03).

As a result, the reading and writing which are done in primary school classrooms rarely involve books. Rather, text is written by the teacher on the blackboard, and copied by students into their individual exercise books. An entire generation of primary school students in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands has thus engaged in what is essentially bookless learning. The significance of this is amplified by the fact that it is taking place in one of the two principal contexts of literacy practice in society (section 5.5.2).

In the home, the presence or absence of books appears to be at least partly related to parents' occupations. In two group interviews of Bafut and Nso' primary school children (Appendix 9), children whose parents were teachers or members of the traditional leadership

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177 A grade 1 English textbook, produced by Evans Publishers for Cameroonian schools, cost 2,500 fr. cfa. This is equivalent to 10% or more of a typical primary teacher's monthly salary. The grade 1 English workbook costs extra.

178 PROPELCA primers and maths books cost between 500 and 750 francs cfa, less than £1 each.
reported more books in their houses than did children whose parents were bricklayers or palm wine tappers. The books mentioned most often as being in the children's houses were the New Testament in Bafut or Lamnso' or the English Bible.

However, economic distress combined with social expectations about reading have led to a dearth of reading material in any language, either at home or at school. Lawyer Ephraim, headmaster of a rural government school in Kom, described the situation for many:

**BT: What about books in class?**

Lawyer: This the greatest handicap we have. Parents cannot afford even course books, let alone the additional reading materials recommended or needed. . . . Every child is supposed to have them, but the means are not there.

**BT: Do children have books in their homes?**

Lawyer: (laughs) No, there are no books at home. There are not even tables and chairs to study at in many of their homes. Even in the town, we don't buy much reading material. There is no money anymore to buy journals for news - I used to, but since 1993 we cannot afford it. People might just buy the cheap sensationalist newspapers. The children are far from a notion of reading for information, reading to be informed (OI: Lawyer 19 March 03).

The limited presence of books in the home and school, whatever the language, indicates limited use of mother-tongue literature in these contexts. Even the reported presence of Lamnso' or Bafut New Testaments in homes does not necessarily indicate their use, as these religious texts could considered symbolic artefacts rather than actual reading material. Gabriel Mba, the NACALCO PROPELCA director, gave his view of the status of local-language Bibles in many local homes:

You may go to a house and say, "Show me your Bible." You will see that either the Bible is as a very new book, very well packed, because nobody is using it. Or the book may be very dirty because the people place it somewhere and say, "Okay, one day when my children grow up they will read it. It is for my children, not for me" (OI: Mba 21 April 03).

**Self-reported reading and writing behaviours.** The survey of PROPELCA alumni (PAS, Appendices 1-3), carried out among 36 Kom and Nso' adults, included questions on what the respondents read and wrote regularly. These alumni of the PROPELCA programme had all finished primary school; 75% finished secondary school, and six of the 36 have some
tertiary training. They now have occupations that range from farming to teaching school\textsuperscript{179}. This group surveyed all reported themselves to be literate in both English and the mother tongue; they are thus among the people in the language communities most likely to engage in regular reading and writing in the mother tongue.

This group's responses to the questions about what they are reading and writing may be found in Appendix 3, and are reproduced in Figure 5.5 below as well. It is evident that for each category except the religious one, the reported incidence of mother-tongue reading and writing was significantly below that of English. This was especially evident in the education context: once the PROPELCA classes were finished in lower primary school, the formal learning environment for these respondents has been wholly in English.

*Figure 5.5. Summary of responses to questions 9 and 10: "What do you read and what do you write these days?" (multiple answers allowed)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of written text use</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal learning</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work (not school-related)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News periodicals</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal (e.g. novels, poems)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However it is noteworthy that the religious reading category has a higher proportion of the total reading in mother tongue than that category does in English: five instances out of 16 total instances reading in the mother tongue, or 31%, compared to five instances out of a total of 65 in English, or 8%. All five reports of religious reading in the mother tongue were specified as being the Lamnso' New Testament. Given the limited amount of mother-tongue reading that is being done at all by these 36 respondents, the fact that 31% of it is being done in one religious text is significant\textsuperscript{180}.

\textsuperscript{179} See Appendix 2 for the education levels and occupations of the survey respondents.

\textsuperscript{180} There is as yet no New Testament published in Kom; had there been, one wonders how these numbers might have been different.
In addition, the reported instances of reading news periodicals in the mother tongue highlight the potential interest of regular newsletters in the Bafut, Kom and Lamnso’ languages. Each of the three language committees has produced such periodicals (Figure 5.4; see Appendix 16, Figure 3 for an example), although each committee finds it a financial challenge. The Lamnso’ newspaper, for example, has an uneven publishing history:

The newsletter only went 13 issues, about three or four years. The last one was in mid-2002. It was four pages long and cost 200 francs [cfa, approximately 25 pence]. But people would take it, not buy it, saying, ”You are supposed to be serving the Nso’ people!” (LCO: NLO 29 March 03)

The difficulty of recovering production costs has proven to be a significant obstacle to this otherwise potentially popular mother-tongue publication.

5.4.3. Writing and the mother tongue

As a regular use of the written mother tongue, writing was found to be much less common than reading. Even for mother-tongue speakers, writing Bafut, Kom or Lamnso’ is more difficult than reading those languages. It is more difficult than English writing as well, particularly for those who have gained their writing skills in an English-medium school. For English literates, writing these languages requires additional skill in representing tone, the glottal stop, and vowel sounds that are not marked in English orthography (Banyee 1998). The Kom literacy supervisors described the challenge of writing the mother tongue:

Is it difficult to learn to write [Kom]? Except you are well versed with the mother tongue, it is not easy. You can't just pick it up; except you have gone through a course it will not be easy for you to write. You may be thinking that you can write, but when you take that pen now, you will find that you are writing just a different thing [i.e. not writing correctly] (GIS: 8 Feb 03).

Informal uses of mother-tongue writing are uncommon, English being the preferred medium for note-taking, letter writing or personal expression (see Figure 5.5). One of the most significant writing behaviours reported by the PROPELCA alumni was letter writing, which accounted for more than half of the writing events reported. However this activity was reported to take place far more often in English than in the mother tongue. The fact that the audience for these letters was more likely to be literate in English than in the mother tongue underscores the dominance of English literacy even within the language communities.

In addition, the writing experience is largely connected with English-language school. In that context, student writing takes the form of dictation, with much classroom time spent copying notes from the blackboard into an exercise book or completing written examinations. In the 21 primary school classrooms observed in this study, the closest instance to explicitly
practised creative writing observed was in a grade 5 informal PROPELCA class - in the mother tongue, not English.

Class 7 informal PROPELCA:

…Next the teacher writes a [Bafut] word on the board and asks for sentences that have that word in it. When a student will propose a sentence, that student is invited to write the sentence on the board. Everyone but EVERYONE wants to do this! Their blackboard writing is a bit cramped and wobbly, but it is legible. Everyone reads what they have written. Tone marks provide the most consistent challenge, but some kids also mess up on spelling.

(CO: PS Manji class 7, 25 Feb 03)

Along with this lack of curricular emphasis on personal, creative writing in English, the language barrier which English presents for primary school children in Bafut, Kom and Banso' discourages writing activities other than those which take the form of copying text.

In addition, the social context in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities works against the proliferation of writing activity in general. Literature on the relationship between literacy and society points out that writing involves processes which suit the cultural values and proclivities of some societies better than they do others (section 2.2.1-2). Kress describes the difference between speaking as an orientation primarily directed towards others, and writing as primarily inward-directed reflection:

In speech the needs of the interlocutor are of primary concern; this is not the case in writing to the same extent. There those needs are replaced by the development of what the writer thinks is the appropriate conceptual or other structure of the text (Kress 1997:17).

Observational evidence and their own reported behaviours indicate that the proclivities of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities - including the literates - lead them to prefer speaking to writing. Far from indicating that the Bafut, Kom and Nso' are 'oral societies', this evidence bears out Kulick's and Stroud's argument (Kulick and Stroud 1993) that literacy uses in a community are subject to that community's own unique social identity. Noë Ngueffo, the NACALCO adult literacy director, described people's preference for obtaining information in oral rather than written form:

Even those who have been to school, they don't read. For example, you have a [written] invitation and you give it to a person. He takes it [Ngueffo holds it to his chest] and says, "Oh, what are you talking about? Tell me. Oh, when is it? Where is it?" When he has it in his hands! (OI: Ngueffo 13 Jan 03)
This association of writing with ineffective communication is not surprising, given that their experience of writing has been primarily in an English-language classroom where their language skills in the medium of instruction were weak.

Thus, the difficulty of writing the mother tongue correctly, the association of writing with English and a cultural preference for oral communication all help to explain the infrequency of writing in the mother tongue.

Nevertheless, signs of enthusiasm for writing the mother tongue can be found. The PROPELCA teachers find that being able to write in the mother tongue gives them a certain prestige with students and parents. One teacher trainee noted the reaction to her new ability to write Lamnso':

Although I teach both French and English, I discovered I could not even write my own name in Lamnso'. So now I am learning. The other day my first daughter saw me writing a story in Lamnso' and she said to her friends, "Clap for mother, she is writing in Lamnso'!" The parents where I teach like it quite well; they say, "Our Madame teaches French, English and Lamnso'.'" (TTO: Nso' 8 July 03)

The one who can write in mother tongue is seen as having 'extra knowledge'. The Kom literacy supervisors explained this perception:

I can write a thing now, in Kom. You can read English, I can also read [English]. And I can write [Kom] still the same as English; but without knowing the letter of the language, you cannot read. . . . [As] a teacher, you write things like that [in Kom] and people read [them]; then when they write in Kom they ask [another] teacher now to read, and he cannot (GIS: 8 Feb 03).

Teachers and headmasters who work alongside PROPELCA teachers notice their own inability to write the mother tongue or read what the PROPELCA teacher has written. One headmaster of a Kom school which offers PROPELCA classes noted:

It is good for headmasters, when they usually mark teachers' [lesson plans], to know Kom, so they can revise and correct the mother-tongue teacher's lecture notes as well as others [non-PROPELCA teachers] (TTO: Kom 3 July 03).

This headmaster said that he had himself decided to take this PROPELCA teacher training course for that reason.

Students themselves enjoy attempting to write in their own language. For the most part this takes the form of writing dictation, as illustrated in these classroom observations:

Class 5 informal PROPELCA:
The teacher erases the board [which had the day's lesson on it], then asks "Who can write Taà ["father", a vocabulary word for the day]?") Many volunteers to write on the board. Then Ndè ["mother"]. Then nsòò ["field"]. Then mbi ["goat"]. One boy writes it wrong, writing mdî. The class says, "Ooooooh," and finally another boy volunteers to write it correctly. (CO: PS Manji class 5, 25 Feb 03)

Class 6, informal PROPELCA:

[Following the presentation of lesson content on the blackboard,] the teacher writes content questions on the board. There are many volunteers to answer. Those chosen stand, read the question, give the answer, and then write the answer on the board. They write the answers by looking at the appropriate sentence in the blackboard text, then copying it out word for word; they don't for the most part write out of their heads. The class gives help: "Put an accent there! No, that isn't right!" etc. (CO: GS Manji class 6, 12 March 03)

As mentioned above, only once did I observe any activity resembling creative writing in a primary classroom; my conjecture is that the fact that this exercise was in the mother tongue was what provided the linguistic and social environment for such creative writing to take place.

Is this interest in writing the mother tongue, catalysed and framed by the mother-tongue literacy programmes, strong enough and pervasive enough to change the attitude of the language communities towards written communication? The data above show that cultural perceptions of writing, enforced by years of English-language schooling, have not as yet been altered by the presence of mother-tongue writing. However, if the PROPELCA and the adult literacy programmes are able to continue as they are currently operating, the possibility exists for increasingly positive attitudes about writing in the language communities.

5.5. Social uses of written text

5.5.1. The 'oral society' and the 'literate society': blurring the line?

Arguments about the legitimacy of the oral society/literate society distinction, referred to in section 2.2.1, have relevance for the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities. It would be easy to postulate a connection between their highly contextual, relational social orientation and the consistency with which they choose oral strategies for communication (Tannen 1985). Nevertheless, Heath's warning (1983:230) against the tendency to classify
societies as strictly oral or literate is particularly relevant when the "oral/literate"
classification forms the basis for judgements regarding a people's cognitive or technological
capacity.

For the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities, the debate may be clarified by examining
the roles of English and the mother tongue in their learning systems. Egan (1997:67) argues
that literate discourses are not actually pervasive throughout any society, but are formed in
relation to particular activities and circumstances. In circumstances where those conditions no
longer hold, the literate discourses "relax their hold on the mind". Therefore, even the
member of a highly literate culture does not consistently use 'literate' (e.g. logical,
dectextualised, analytical) strategies in daily life.

In the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities, literate discourses have been
primarily formed in the English-language environment of formal schooling. The activities
and context of literacy have thus been filtered through a language barrier which forms a total
comprehension block for most grade 1 students; as English is acquired, this barrier slowly
lowers until by grade 4 or 5 (if the child stays in school that long) content learning is possible
(GIS: 8 Feb 03; OI: Lawyer 19 March 03). Increased fluency in the English language in later
grades allows the formation of literate discourses which are less hampered by a language
barrier. Still, the community-wide association of literacy with uncertain comprehension
(stemming from their experience in school) reinforces the preference for nonliterate strategies
for thinking and communication.181

This language divide highlights the distinction between literate and nonliterate
discourse patterns among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities, and leads to their
identification as 'oral societies' despite the fact that a large proportion of the populations are
at least nominally literate in English. Indeed, as has been shown in section 5.4.3 above, even
well educated and highly literate members of these communities prioritise oral behaviours
over literate ones in daily communication tasks. Assumptions about the supposedly
underdeveloped cognitive capacities of oral societies (logical reasoning, historical
consciousness, scepticism, and complex organisation; see Brandt and Clinton 2002:341) are

181 Slater (2002), in his study of theological education in Uganda, suggests a model of literacy in which literacy
is infused into an oral society, contrasting this model with a linear oral-to-literate model of literacy acquisition
by a society. That there is interplay between oral and literate strategies for communication, there is no doubt.
However, at least in the communities studied here, literacy cannot be isolated from the rest of the package of
English-language formal education. Bafut, Kom and Nso' society is not interacting with just a literacy skill-set,
but with the ideologies and values that accompany knowledge practices which tend to be mediated by the
English language. Thus, it is not simply literacy that "invades the realm of orality" (Slater 2002:93), but an
entire set of value and beliefs and skills which their societies must grapple with.
thus applied inaccurately and unfairly to these language communities. In fact, they
demonstrate many of the characteristics of 'literate' societies as listed by Brandt and Clinton,
but they use reading and writing in specific and restricted ways (see section 5.5.2).

The advantage of mother-tongue education for these language communities is that it
offers the possibility of acquiring literate discourses in a language the student understands.
This discourse is still formed around the structures and knowledge practices of formal
education, but at least it permits literate behaviour to be associated with complete linguistic
comprehension.

Can the development of written mother tongue cause the uses of literacy to broaden in
these language communities, thus causing the line between 'oral' and 'literate society' to blur
(Heath 1983:230)? There is reason to think so, if literate discourses can develop in
circumstances that are free of any language barrier. However, the question of whether the
dominance of English-mediated schooling would allow such a wide use of the mother tongue
for formal education is less easy to answer.

5.5.2. A silo model of social literacy use

Over the past 80+ years of contact with English-language literacy, the Bafut, Kom
and Nso' communities have established roles for reading and writing in their own society.
The new possibilities presented by the written mother tongue have the potential to alter
somewhat the place of literacy in these language communities, but at present the majority of
instances of written text use centre around two particular social contexts: the school and the
church. These two contexts might be called *silos of literacy practice* (in analogy to the
unitary, self-contained structures called 'silos' which are used in various parts of the world for
the storage of grain). The term 'literacy practice' refers to "the socially regulated, recurrent,
and patterned things that people do with literacy as well as the cultural significance they
ascribe to those doings" (Brandt and Clinton 2002:342).

In the language communities under study, church and school are the focal contexts for
the majority of text-related activities in society - so much so that they form fairly self-
contained silos of literacy behaviours. Such literacy behaviours may or may not entail what

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182 In this model, the silo of literacy contrasts with the concept of the sociolinguistic domain in that it takes place
in a specific type of physical location. The concept of 'domain' is not physically bounded. A silo of literacy
practice is also in some ways similar to Gee's Discourse (Gee 1996), but again it is more narrowly situated.
Discourses can be defined by physical location, but are not always so.

In addition, the term 'silo' is used in the field of knowledge management, referring to systems in which data and
information are shared within the entity but not outside it (Riley 2000). A "silo mentality" is one which does not
prioritise sharing of knowledge across entities or structural boundaries.
would traditionally be called reading or writing, but they are activities and behaviours which occur specifically in relation to written text. Heath's concept of the literacy event is helpful here, defined as a situation or activity in which "writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath 1982:93).

The church and school silos of literacy practice share a number of characteristics. In each case, the literacy events revolve around a set of written texts which have been produced uniquely for use in these contexts: Scripture and liturgical helps in church (see Appendix 16, Figure 4), textbooks in school. The literacy events taking place in the church and school silos are multidimensional, involving the presence of written text, oral reading of written text, talk about text, choral recitation of written text and written reproduction of text. These two institutions also require educated people as their leaders; by vocational category, church leaders and teachers have more education - and possess more books - than community members in other vocations. Both silos are also designated sites for teaching mother-tongue literacy: the PROPELCA programme in schools and the adult literacy programmes in church. Indeed, several data sources in this study indicated that church-based literacy classes are increasing in number and popularity (OI: J. Mfonyam 24 March 03; OI: Babila 3 April 03; OI: Suuyren 2 March 03; LCO: KLDC 30 July 03).

In each silo of literacy practice language choice is negotiated, based primarily on the judgement of the person in charge. In the church literacy events, English and mother tongue (and often Pidgin) are used as deemed appropriate for reading and speaking. In school classrooms, whether PROPELCA or non-PROPELCA, English and the mother tongue each have their role as determined by the teacher. In the non-PROPELCA classroom, even though the official expectation is that only English will be used and use of the mother tongue is officially discouraged, in fact even capable teachers use oral mother tongue when they consider it necessary for pupil understanding (OI: Mbolifor 25 Feb 03; OI: Mbi 19 March

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183 These behaviours may include listening to text read aloud, reciting written text which has been memorised, or using written text - such a Bible or a Koran - for symbolic purposes.

184 My data source on church use of literacy is Trudell (forthcoming), who conducted ethnographic research on the use of literacy in church settings in a Nso' village. His findings indicate that English, Lamnso' and Pidgin may all be used in church services, but that each has a particular role.

185 The 1958 law mandating English as the language of instruction in primary school (Keller 1969:73; section 3.1.4) was not officially repealed, even as PROPELCA was given approval as an experimental programme. This ambiguity regarding official language policy has led to a general sense that use of the mother tongue in primary school is to be discouraged.
In the PROPELCA classrooms, the use of written mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the early grades is accompanied by oral instruction in English as a subject; in later grades, English comes to dominate the syllabus as time given to mother-tongue medium instruction is slowly phased out. Figure 5.6 shows the relative amounts of time which mother tongue and official language are meant to be used in each grade of the formal PROPELCA programme.

The normal way to use written text in these two silos is public reading or recitation. However, private or individual uses of text also form part of the church and school literacy silos, although not necessarily inside the physical grounds themselves. In church, reading of the Scriptures at home is encouraged, particularly when Scriptures are available in the mother tongue. Correspondence-type study programmes are also offered (OI: Suuyren 2 March 03). In school, the instances of individual - though not private - reading and writing observed consisted of writing practice done at the child's desk and then submitted for inspection to the teacher; and silent reading of written questions on the blackboard. Homework is the primary use of reading and writing meant to take place outside of school.

In a few instances, it seemed that written language itself was seen to possess a degree of autonomy unrelated to its actual decoded meaning (as described in Noordman and Vonk 1994:77). This phenomenon is well known where sacred writings or other texts have been imbued with authority, and is particularly evident when the reader does not speak the language of the text. In this study, a few cases were observed of blackboard writing in English, in which teachers seemed reluctant to change English text once it had been written down. An observation made in a PROPELCA teacher training session illustrated the priority that is given to 'reading what is there' as opposed to making meaning from the text:

> The lesson is on noun-adjective agreement in Kom language. The teacher writes on the board the following statement, and then reads it out loud verbatim: "Each nouns form adjectives in its own way." He then hesitates, uncertain about the statement's correctness, but does not correct it. (TTO: Kom 3 July 03)

This mismatch between official language policy and language choices in the classroom is not uncommon in sub-Saharan Africa. In some cases, the pro-local language policy is never enforced; for example, Mule (1999) decries the continued privileging of English in Kenyan schools, despite legislation about the role of Kiswahili and other indigenous languages in education. In other cases, policy which favours use of a European language is inconsistently applied in the classroom because of the students' lack of fluency in that language; Arthur (2001) notes this behaviour in both Botswana and Tanzanian schools where English is the official medium of instruction. Ferguson (2003) describes such code switching (in this case, using the child's mother tongue as well as the official language of instruction) as a common strategy of classroom teachers in societies where the former colonial language is the official language of instruction but is not spoken by the students. Ferguson argues that such code switching not only aids cognitive impact, but also helps to create a social and affective environment more conducive to learning.

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This teacher trainer knew English well enough to know that this statement was grammatically incorrect; however, having once been written the text seemed not to be subject to change. In another example, a teacher was observed actually training the children to ignore syntactic clues in oral reading of a written text:

[In a PROPELCA English writing class:] In the lines written on the board, the teacher laboriously writes: "Ben and Paddy wen to lake." The missing *t* is later added, but *the* is not. When the children mistakenly read a *the* there, the teacher corrects them and says, "I have my reasons" for leaving the word out. It is true that there is no room left on the board to have added the missing *the*.

(CO: CS Balikumato class 2, 20 Feb 03) 187

These cases were both of English writing, however. Similar kinds of mistakes made in writing the mother tongue were subject to correction. In the same teacher training session referred to above, a trainee was observed to correct the teacher's Kom writing:

The teacher goes to the board and the blank in each [Kom language] exercise is filled in with help from the class. The talk is all in Kom. The exercises are in Kom, although the instructions on the board are in English. *At one point a young student corrects a tone mark [in Kom] which the teacher has written wrong on the blackboard.*

(TTO: Kom 3 July 03)

This apparent difference in the way written English and written mother tongue were treated bears out Noordman and Vonk's observation that the language of a text may make it less subject to change; that is, text in a language less familiar to the reader is less likely to be seen as easily manipulated and corrected than is text in a familiar language. Much of the respect for English text and English literacy observed in this study highlights this difference between knowledge of the mother tongue (whether spoken or written) and the lack of fluency in written English.

5.5.3. Other social uses of written text

Outside these two silos of literacy practice, regular occasions of written text use are few. As has been mentioned above, the print environment observed in towns centred around businesses and offices, although in many cases it consisted only of signs, advertisements or price lists; the more rural the settlement, the less of this print was visible. The act of leisure reading was not observed or reported in the language communities studied. People sharing public transportation were not observed to read, nor were people observed carrying books or newspapers (other than school texts) - with the exception of the mother-tongue pocket diary.

187 It is also quite possible that this teacher was flustered by having made such a mistake while I was observing him.
Christopher Mengjo, an Nso' editor and publisher, when asked about this phenomenon, described it in terms of cultural values:

The European sits and reads. The African sits and talks. Even I, who write and sell books, when I am sitting in my house, I want to go find my friends and talk to them. I do not pick up a book and read (OI: Mengjo 27 March 03).

Mengjo's observations point once more to the communicative preferences being acted out by literate members of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language community. This choice - between private reading and oral social interaction - is primarily a matter of preference, not competence.

5.5.4. The symbolic value of literacy

Alongside the uses of literacy described above, there exists a certain level of respect for reading and written text as symbols of modernity. The ability to decode print is itself seen as mastering a desirable, foreign skill. Mary Annett, an SIL consultant, observed the response of an illiterate father to the demonstrated ability of his eight-year-old son (a PROPELCA student) to read a small book in the mother tongue:

The father said, "Where did he learn to do that, going from one cover to the other without losing his way?" To the father the language was not relevant; the fact that this young child could manage a book was itself impressive (OI: Annett 7 Oct 02).

Similarly, instances of children sounding out a scrap of English newspaper or even the logo on their father's shoe (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03) impress their parents. There is something about unlocking the mystery of print which makes fluent reading a highly respected skill. Joseph Mfonyam, a Bafut linguist and translator, expressed the belief that this respect for reading can be used to promote the use of written mother tongue:

People are tending to see the book culture as ideal; so when they see posters and other things in the mother tongue, writing about the use of soybeans, etc., people get ideas: "I read about soybeans, and now I am using [what I learned]." (OI: J. Mfonyam 28 Nov 02).

Respect for books themselves is also evident. They are considered too important to entrust to primary school children, as Kom headmaster Yafi Alfred indicated:

In this school all the children are supposed to have [the Catholic religion text]. . . [In reality, the grade 2 class I observed had seven copies for 33 children.] I have told the teachers to collect them and keep them, with the children's names written in them, and when the time comes they give them [to the children] to be reading. Because if the children are allowed to take them home and bring them [back], then very soon the books will be torn (OI: Yafi 14 March 03).
Such an attitude towards books is understandable given their cost; at the same time, allowing the children only limited access to them elevates their symbolic value at the expense of their practical value for learning.

The Scriptures are also the object of great respect, and owning a New Testament in English or the mother tongue is considered important in these largely Christian communities (GIC: Nso' 28 July 03; GIC: Bafut 19 July 03). Yet the symbolic value of those books may outweigh their use as reading material, as argued by Mba in section 5.4.2 above. According to Mba, the problem behind this 'non-use' of Scriptures is the lack of sufficient reading material in the mother tongue which could change people's perceptions about using text in more practical ways. The language committees and their church partners, however, see this problem of non-use as a result of insufficient literacy skills; thus the church-based literacy classes aim at increasing the numbers of church people who can read the mother tongue. However both Mba and the language committees consider that the symbolic valuing of Scriptures is insufficient for effective written text use, and they hope to see it overcome by promoting use of the written mother tongue.

5.5.5. Summary: social uses of written text

The choices which the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities make about uses of literacy have been strongly influenced by two factors: the assignment of written text use to particular social contexts, and the connection drawn between literacy and the English language. Literacy is seen not as a resource to be used freely in any social context whatsoever, but as a specific set of behaviours and artefacts which are limited primarily to particular silos of use: the church and the school. Literate strategies for learning and communication, marked by their connection to English, are associated with limited comprehension in a way that oral strategies are not. These factors have helped to shape the social uses of written text, both English and mother tongue, among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities studied here.

5.6. The future of written mother tongue

The roles and uses of written mother tongue in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities are framed by the availability of written text in those languages, the means available for acquiring literacy in the mother tongue, and the institutional support in existence for written mother tongue. Social uses of literacy are centred on two silos of literacy practice: the school and the church. Within those silos, there is evidence that the written mother tongue
is gaining acceptance. However these silos of literacy practice are set in a broader social environment in which English dominates the practice of written language, and in which oral language (the mother tongue) is the strongly preferred means of communication. What are the implications of all this for the future of the written mother tongue?

Use and acceptance of the written mother tongue could increase in these communities if the written mother tongue were to move further into the existing silos of literacy practice, or if contexts outside the existing silos were established for which the written mother tongue is essential. The institutions which promote written mother tongue in these three language communities, particularly the language committees, are taking steps in both of these directions.

5.6.1. Increasing the role of written mother tongue in school and church

Increasing the role of written mother tongue in the school context is a primary goal of BALA, the KLDC and the NLO. One way in which this is being done is to increase the sites where PROPELCA is offered. Not only are new primary schools and teachers being sought for the PROPELCA programme, but grades other than primary are being targeted as well. John Ambe, a BALA literacy supervisor, is developing a timetable that can be used in the two-year nursery schools (CO: GNS Mambu, 4 March 03). KLDC and NLO personnel offer the informal PROPELCA course (in which mother-tongue literacy is taught as a subject) in a few secondary schools where the headmaster permits it (OI: Ma'wo 8 July 03; OI: Waingeh 14 March 03). Another means of increasing the role of written mother tongue in schools is to offer an expanding range of school texts and materials for use by teachers. The NLO, looking to the day when the new law on using local language in schools is officially applied and included in examinations, is preparing Lamnso' materials for use in all seven primary grades and even into secondary school: geography, descriptive publications about Nso' culture, and novels (LCO: NLO 29 March 03).188

Increasing the role of written mother tongue in the church context is another focus of the language committees, particularly in cooperation with CABTAL. Initiatives which incorporate newly-translated portions of the Lamnso' Old Testament into Lamnso' literacy classes are being promoted by the NLO and the Lamnso' CABTAL translation committee (LCO: NLO 29 March 03). The KLDC actively cooperates with CABTAL personnel in

188 Well known Nso' author Kengjo Jumbam has written novels in English which are required reading in the nation secondary school curriculum; he recently gave the NLO permission to translate those novels into Lamnso' for use in the Nso' schools.
charge of organising literacy/Scripture use courses in Kom. In BALA, one literacy supervisor has been assigned to focus solely on raising awareness of the possibilities for using the Bafut New Testament in local churches (LCO: BALA 21 March 03). Shey Ma'wo, an NLO literacy supervisor, has developed a series of Lamnso' Bible study materials and songs which are used by the Lamnso' Choir Association of the Presbyterian churches in Banso'. In all these ways, the language committees are working to integrate written mother tongue into the literacy practices of the churches.

5.6.2. Establishing new contexts for written mother tongue use

As for the establishment of environments outside the existing silos of literacy practice in which the written mother tongue might play a key role, the language committees are making attempts in that direction also. This is a much more difficult task, however, as it involves modifying social expectations about the proper contexts for the mother tongue and for written text of any kind.

Development initiatives are one area in which the language committees believe written mother tongue use could be expanded. At present, adult literacy classes in the mother tongue informally incorporate some of the existing development literature into their learning (GIS: 8 Feb 03; OI: Suuyren 29 March 03). However, development NGOs operating in the homelands areas use English-language materials and training, relying on bilingual promoters to convey information to their target audiences orally in the mother tongue (OI: Yuh 26 Nov 02; OI: Yunteh 28 Nov 02). Language committee members believe that the NGOs are aware that this approach is not very effective, and the language committees are poised to exploit this potential niche for mother-tongue publications. Noë Ngueffo, NACALCO's adult literacy programme director, noted:

NGOs feel that on the field they have a communication problem. We are going to tell them that if they tackle it only orally, it won't be good. Let them tackle it in written form. . . . Usually they have a booklet they use, either in French or English. So we can say, "Let us come together and the language committee will put that booklet in the mother tongue and you help print it, and then we try to put that in literacy classes" (OI: Ngueffo 13 Jan 03).

In fact, in a few instances cooperation has already taken place between development organisations and language committees to produce mother-tongue publications. An AIDS brochure prepared by the Ministry of Public Health was submitted to several Cameroonian language committees (including the KLDC) in mid-2003 for translation into the mother tongue (LCO: KLDC 30 July 03); the plan is to then print it and use it in Ministry
programmes. Another development initiative, sponsored by the environmental NGO, Living Earth, involved translation of an environmental education text into the Kom language for use in upper primary school classes. The book, called *The Environmental Cry of Afo-a-Kom: A Geo-cultural Perspective for the Kom Language Sphere* (KLDC 2000) was translated by KLDC personnel and published in 2000. However, administrative obstacles blocked the book's use in Kom schools, and its conceptual difficulty makes it unlikely to be used in other contexts. This experience indicates that effective expansion of written mother tongue into the development arena will require materials that are carefully targeted and utilised as part of a larger programme initiative, in order to interest people in purchasing and reading them.

Another potential domain for building new contexts for written mother tongue is that of the existing traditional societies and associations, using the Fon's existing support to increase interest and use of the written local language. John Ambe, a BALA literacy supervisor, described his vision for exploiting this niche:

> We have to go to various meetings. In Bafut we have many meeting-groups: the farmers' meeting-group, a group for dancers, a group for any other thing. We shall have to approach those groups, do literacy work with them, write and have some written materials concerning what they are doing. So that if they are able to take that written material to help them in what they are doing, then our objective will be achieved (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03).

The interest of traditional leaders in using written mother tongue to preserve and disseminate information within the culture has already been mentioned in chapter four. The only apparent obstacle to this extension of written mother tongue is the availability of resources - financial and personnel - to write, publish and distribute such materials.

A third potential new context for use of written mother tongue is the more general context of leisure and family time. Noë Ngueffo, NACALCO's adult literacy programme director, described his own vision for this kind of mother-tongue reading:

> If the father can stay like this, on a Friday evening he sits down and the five-year-old boy is here, and the eight-year-old girl is here, and they are reading the story of the tortoise in the language and laughing and feeling okay. Is that not a nice family picture? (OI: Ngueffo 13 Jan 03).

It is indeed an attractive goal for broadening the environment for mother-tongue reading. On the other hand, little evidence was found in this study that would indicate any social move in this direction. More study would be needed to assess accurately the potential role of the written mother tongue in family reading; but given the societal patterns of communication described above, it is probable that 'family story time' these days is more likely to involve oral story telling in the mother tongue than reading in it. On the other hand,
if the parents have forgotten the stories of the community, reading them from a book in the mother tongue might be an attractive option.

As for other leisure reading and writing in the mother tongue, the evidence of this study is mixed. As Figure 5.5 shows, 80 of the 134 instances of reading or writing reported by the PROPELCA alumni survey respondents could be described as private uses of literacy: letters, news reading and personal reading or writing. However 67 of those 80 instances involved English rather than mother tongue. Not only so, but observation evidence indicated that, if leisure reading is taking place, it is not being done in public places such as restaurants or on public transportation.

5.6.3. Modifying the oral/literate balance in social choices for communication and learning

A final question to be considered is whether expanded use of the written mother tongue is likely to modify the oral/literate balance that exists in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' societies' modes of communication and learning. If it were to do so, it would be by altering either the balance of oral/written mother tongue or that of written English/written mother tongue. The data examined in this chapter does not answer this question, but it does allow for some speculation.

Changing the balance between oral and literate mother tongue use is likely to involve more complementarity than competition between these two strategies. As discussed in section 5.3, oral use of the mother tongue is enriched and enhanced by the use of written mother tongue. In turn, the vitality of the oral mother tongue creates the linguistic context necessary to the emergence of the written mother tongue as a viable alternative for communication. An increase in written mother-tongue use for communication and learning is not likely to pose a threat to the use of oral mother tongue; local cultural values support orality too strongly for that.

Written mother-tongue text use and written English text use, on the other hand, have the potential for both competition and coexistence. If mother-tongue text use expands by displacing current uses of written English, the influence and hegemony of written English within the school silo of literacy practice is diminished. This de-linking of written text from the English language could also could tip the oral/literate balance towards increased use of literacy, if written mother tongue text were perceived as more easily used and understood than written English text. Indeed, it is the dysfunctional nature of learning and
communication via English text use that is currently providing a space for the use of written mother tongue in PROPELCA classrooms.

However, the more likely possibility is that of sustained biliteracy, once written mother tongue is sufficiently established as a viable alternative for written communication. The position of English in the larger education system is unassailable; in fact, the language committees' argument for mother-tongue literacy in primary schools is that it enhances English text use by helping primary school children to be better prepared for their eventual move into English schooling.

At the same time, The differences between the church and school environments are relevant here as well. Institutional authority and language-related expectations are different between the two. Trudell (forthcoming) observes that, at least among the Nso’, English, mother tongue and Pidgin have complementary roles in the church. Competition among the three languages is not evident. In contrast the school, as a site of reproduction of the values of the national education system, tends to be a site of language-based power differentials. Thus, attempts to modify the English/mother tongue balance in written text use - particularly in school - could be expected to encounter resistance from those whose interests lie in maintaining the dominant position of English in a given domain. This resistance was seen in the attitudes of some elites towards promotion of the mother tongue, discussed in chapter four. It is also to be found within the formal education system, which is in fact built around the primacy of English language and English-mediated knowledge (cf. Mazrui 1997).

5.7. Conclusion

The use of the mother tongue, particularly the written mother tongue, is increasing in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities under study. The growing presence of the mother tongue in primary schools, and the language committees' efforts to increase the number of mother-tongue readers and texts, are means by which the local languages are being strengthened (Crystal 2000:136-8). Furthermore, unlike other cases of attempted language recovery (Crystal 2000:129), these initiatives are taking place while the local language still enjoys popular use and support.

Still, it is important to remember that, for all these positive gains on the part of local language advocacy, maintenance of the local languages also depends on wider influences beyond the control of the language committees and their partners. Among these influences are the economic and demographic environment, the degree of exposure of the language
community to the influence of global society, and national education policies (both
government and denominational) regarding language.

The influence of primary schools stakeholders on language use in schools is also a
significant influence on language maintenance. Questions about the roles of written mother
tongue and written English in the school system of Cameroon's Northwest Province form part
of what Allan Luke calls "ongoing debates about the extent to which mainstream schooling
systems are and should be agents of cultural assimilation or pluralism" (Luke 2003:132). The
debate is framed by a variety of stakeholders, both local and national. The way in which this
debate is played out in Bafut, Kom and Nso' primary schools, and the identity and interests of
the stakeholders in the debate, are the subject of chapter six.
Chapter 6. The primary school classroom: stakeholders and language choices

The argument developed in chapter five is that for the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities, the written mother tongue is slowly becoming increasingly viable as an alternative for learning and communication. Yet assessing the real potential for increased use of the written mother tongue in these communities must be done in the context of the agendas being negotiated in the communities, particularly in the two identified silos of literacy practice, church and school. Of these two, it is the primary school classroom which is in focus in this study as the principal nexus of stakeholder agendas regarding language and education.

Stakeholder influence in education is by no means limited to those with an obvious decision-making role in a particular school. The literature on language choice in African education gives abundant evidence of the roles of individual and institutional stakeholders at all levels. The influence of national policy makers is of course frequently cited; for example, Afolayan (1995:241) in Nigeria and Bunyi (1999: 342) in Kenya note the way national authorities' failure to carry out national education policy and language policy impedes attempts to develop the effective use of local languages as media of instruction. Sampa (2003) also notes the negative impact of English-only language policy in Zambia on the educational achievement of children - probably the most deeply affected and yet the most silent stakeholders in the entire process.

More locally, Lopes (1998:454) discusses the impact of parental attitudes towards Portuguese on the implementation of local-language education in Mozambique. Bunyi (1999:343) notes the agenda of local teachers, whose concern to help their students learn English well leads them to denigrate Kenya's indigenous languages (p.343). Similarly, Thondhlana (2002:33) describes the concern of Zimbabwean parents, teachers and local school authorities that children who begin school in their mother tongue may not acquire English sufficiently well. The benefits of mother-tongue education to the community, the local school and the individual teachers are described in studies on Guinea-Bissau and Niger (Benson 2002) and South Africa (Webb 1999). Finally, in a study of Mooré-language
schooling in Burkina Faso, Easton (1999) describes the collaboration between the local community and linguists from the University of Ouagadougou in programme design. These experiences of wide-ranging stakeholder influence in educational language choice across Africa demonstrate the appropriateness of examining the values and concerns of the stakeholders in the primary classroom of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities.

Not only so, but examination of stakeholder positions on language use in school may also elucidate deeper choices having to do with the formal curriculum. If, as Giroux (2001:66) claims, the cultural dominance of the European education system is "partly accepted and partly rejected" by the minority community, how is this dynamic played out in the primary schools of Bafut, Kom and Nso'? Whose interests are met in the ongoing acceptance of the English-only education system, and whose in the 'part rejection' of English that mother tongue use represents? How is the PROPELCA programme, as a primary site for use of written mother tongue, situated in this dynamic? These questions are the concern of this chapter.

These questions are addressed first by an examination of the roles and perspectives of the various stakeholders in the community primary school classroom. These stakeholders are comprised of both individuals and institutions based in the local community, or whose interests are played out in the local community context. Understanding the range of stakeholders then permits an examination of how various interests are served in the English-only classroom and in the PROPELCA mother-tongue classroom.

Figure 6.1 is a diagram of the local and national stakeholders in language choice in the primary classrooms of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities. The stakeholders shown in each level - individual, local institution and national institution - interact with the other stakeholders within that level. Furthermore, the boundaries separating the three levels are permeable, as indicated by the dotted lines, indicating that stakeholders in each level interact regularly with those in the other levels. For example, NACALCO interacts with the language committees, the denominational education authorities interact with the local church, the local school and the individual teacher, and so on.
The data examined in this chapter are drawn equally from the Bafut, Kom and Nso’ language communities. The perspectives on language and education, gathered from a variety of sources across these three language communities, show a high degree of convergence; this strengthens the analysis and conclusions that may be drawn from them.\textsuperscript{189}

6.1. Language choice in the primary classroom: individual stakeholders

The principal individual stakeholders in the local primary school are the primary school children, the parents, and local school staff. Along with institutional stakeholders such

\textsuperscript{189} The unpublished data used in this chapter has several sources: the PROPELCA alumni survey (PAS), described in section 2.5.4 and detailed in Appendices 1-3; the parent interview series (PI), described in section 2.5.4 and detailed in Appendices 6-8; oral interviews (OI), listed in Appendix 11; group interviews of school children (GIC), listed in Appendix 9; group interviews of teachers (GIT) and supervisors (GIS), described in Appendix 10; observations of classrooms (CO), listed in Appendix 4; observations of teacher training events (TTO), listed in Appendix 5; and email correspondence, listed in Appendix 12.
as traditional authorities, the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and the language committees (discussed in section 6.2), these individuals comprise the segment of the local community most interested in how primary education is locally implemented.

6.1.1. Primary school children

The school child is at the centre of the primary school's goals and activities. As the principal stakeholders in the primary classroom, children are often simply acted on by parents and teachers. Even so, they demonstrate their own concerns and goals, including those related to language.

Some of the aspirations and concerns of these children were described in two small group interviews of grade 6 and grade 7 Nso' and Bafut children (see Appendix 9 for their tabulated responses). These children were chosen by their teachers for the interviews, and thus could be expected to be among the more successful and articulate among their peers. The attitudes of these children towards the English language were demonstrably positive, with eight of the 14 describing it as their favourite school subject. Their competence in English (as assessed informally in the course of the interviews) was not commensurate with these positive attitudes towards the language, however.\(^{190}\)

Asked about the purposes of primary school, the children listed learning English, literacy, and "good habits" (Nsochild 03). The preparatory aspect of primary school for further training was recognised although further schooling was not considered a given, as two Nso' children noted:

I go to primary school to learn good habits, and it leads me to secondary school so I can behave in secondary school and do more better in all the subjects. (Nsochild 03).

I go to primary school because if I go out from primary school and there is no money for me to go to secondary school I can still work and do jobs with the first school-leaving certificate\(^{191}\). (Nsochild 04)

The desire to continue on to secondary school was common, as expressed both directly and in some of the occupations the children hoped to follow (e.g. medicine, teaching,  

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\(^{190}\) As this assessment was done on so informal and limited a basis, it is difficult to know whether their difficulty in English was due to their shyness in interacting with a white person, their difficulty with my own American accent, or limited competence in English. However other interview data indicate that fluency in English is actually gained in secondary school, not primary school, so this mismatch between language attitudes and language competency by these children is not surprising.

\(^{191}\) The standardised national examination given upon completion of grade 7.
journalism). They were aware of the financial obstacles to doing so, however. One grade 7 graduate explained,

I would like to go but there is no more money (Bafchild 01).

These children were correct in doubting the likelihood of their attending secondary school. With a national transition rate from primary to secondary school of approximately 23% (UNESCO 2003a:67), the chances of a primary school graduate in Northwest Province continuing on to secondary school are not high.\textsuperscript{192} Nationwide enrolment statistics also indicate that, as of 1998, less than 20\% of the total secondary school-aged population were actually attending secondary school.\textsuperscript{193}

That financial considerations are part of the reason is a given; Figure 6.2 shows the relative costs of primary and secondary education in the rural area, town, and city. While primary schools can cost as little as 500-1500 cfa yearly for a rural government school, the least expensive secondary day school option available is at least five times that amount. Meanwhile, children attending denominational primary schools pay roughly 5,000-11,000 cfa per year; that amount increases to 65,000-250,000 per year for denominational secondary schools.

Attending secondary school, when it can be achieved, was seen as an investment for the family, as one Nso' student expressed:

People go to secondary school to help their future so that when they finish, if you have your merit, you can go to university and you can help your family and yourself (Nsochild 03).

Asked about their preferred future occupations the children mentioned a variety of jobs, listed in Figure 6.3 below. Most of these jobs require post-secondary education. However it is noteworthy that all the occupations the children aspire to - with the possible exception of journalism - could be locally practised; none would require the young person to stay permanently outside the local community.

\textsuperscript{192} Interestingly, however, there is a gender disparity of only about 2\%. It would appear that girls and boys in Cameroon face the same sorts of obstacles and opportunities for post-primary education.

\textsuperscript{193} According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002 (UNESCO 2002), the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for secondary school in Cameroon for 1998 was 19.6\%. The GER varies widely by provinces (UNDP 2002:5), but schooling figures for Northwest Cameroon tend to fall close to the average (Amin 1999:55); thus 20\% may be taken as a reliable approximation. (Net secondary enrolment figures were unavailable from the sources investigated, including the World Bank Development Index, UN Human Development Reports and the EFA Global Monitoring Reports. Evidently the government of Cameroon does not provide these figures.)
Figure 6.2. Estimates of school fees in Northwest Province\textsuperscript{194} (1,000 cfa francs is equivalent to £1)\textsuperscript{195}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuition fees, per year</th>
<th>Rural area</th>
<th>Town in the homeland (Kumbo)</th>
<th>City outside the homeland (Bamenda)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursery school</td>
<td>4,000 cfa (Catholic, Bafut) - 12,000 cfa (government; Kom; includes feeding)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government primary school</td>
<td>500-1,500 cfa</td>
<td>1,500-2,000 cfa</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denominational primary school</td>
<td>5,250 cfa (Catholic, Banso') 3,800-5,800 cfa (Presbyterian, Bafut) 5,500 cfa (Catholic, Kom)</td>
<td>9,250 cfa (Catholic)</td>
<td>11,250 cfa (Catholic) 8,500+ cfa (Baptist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private (non-religious) primary school</td>
<td>45,000 cfa</td>
<td></td>
<td>101,000 cfa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government secondary school</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,500-10,000 cfa (day school)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denominational secondary school</td>
<td>86,000 cfa (day) 191,000 cfa (boarding) (Presbyterian) - 240,000 cfa (boarding) (Catholic)</td>
<td>65,000 cfa (day), 95,000 cfa (boarding) - 250,000 cfa (boarding) (Catholic)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.3. Desired occupations of 14 primary school children (Group interviews, Appendix 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journalist</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Medical</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 doctor 2 nurse</td>
<td>1 priest 1 sister</td>
<td>1 tailor 2 carpenter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{194} Information collected by Frederick Nga' Bami and Francis Barah, Bamenda. Additional information from Matthew Mbolfor, Bafut; Yafi Alfred, Kom; and Lawyer Ajoff, Kom.

\textsuperscript{195} To put these figures into context: an experienced denominational school teacher in Bafut earns around 25,000 cfa per month; a primary headmaster in a government school in the homelands earns approximately 88,000 cfa, his counterpart in a denominational primary school earns approximately 35,000 cfa per month. In Bamenda, an office administrator with experience or tertiary education earns approximately 60,000 cfa per month. (This information comes from various informal interviews and is for comparison purposes only.)
In the area of reading and writing, the limited scope of social literacy practices was evident in the children's responses. This is not to say that these children lived in a non-literate environment: all 14 had at least one literate parent, and in nine cases both parents were literate. Several of the parents were professionals, and most of the children said that their parents had at least a few books in the house. Thus the broader possible uses of literacy were not unfamiliar to these children. It is therefore significant that questions about their own literacy practices were met with even greater hesitation than other interview questions were.

_BT:_ What does it mean to be able to read and write? What else can you do if you can read and write?

[Long pause]

Ns'c'child 08: You can write. You can just write a letter to somebody and other things.

Ns'c'child 03: If you can read therefore you can write. [BT: And then what?] If you hear any vocabulary word you can write.

(GIC: Nso' 28 July 03)

_BT:_ Since you can all read and write, what things do you read?

[Pause]

Bafchild 04: I can read a letter.

[Pause]

_BT:_ What else is there to read?

[Pause]

Bafchild 03: I can read my notes.

Bafchild 05: I can read what anybody who writes and give me.

(GIC: Bafut 19 July 03)

These almost hypothetical answers to the question of 'what one does with literacy' demonstrated the children's unfamiliarity with uses of literacy outside of school.

These children had also experienced mother-tongue literacy. All but one of the 14 children had learned to read and write their mother tongue, either through PROPELCA classes or in out-of-school contexts such as churches or parents might provide. They professed to enjoy mother-tongue classes, several of them mentioning specifically that the material was understandable and easy to learn. Nine of the 14 children had at least one parent literate in the mother tongue. Still, in describing their experience with PROPELCA none of them mentioned any connection between mother-tongue literacy and school performance.

This contrasts sharply with the view of PROPELCA teachers and supervisors that language choice is very definitely connected with learning success. They repeatedly spoke of the detrimental effects to the child of learning in English, and the learning benefits of using
the mother tongue. One KLDC literacy supervisor described his own experience of delayed learning in English-medium classes, comparing it to the speed at which students in mother-tongue classes are able to learn:

[Under English-medium schooling] we only came to learn something when we were - for myself I was in class 5. Until then I was struggling to learn English - especially when you come from a very remote area. In mother tongue they learn quite fast, and they start very well (GIS 8 Feb 03).

English-language schooling is seen to make Nso' children look unintelligent, as this literacy supervisor noted:

There is no way out for better education other than to use the mother tongue in school. Very bright children get to [English-medium] school and they look like they are dull, like they don't know anything (LCO: NLO, 29 March 03).

Corroborating these observations, William Banboyee, a former Catholic Education Secretary, described the negative cognitive impact of English-medium schooling for the minority-language child:

The child has to learn English for two or three years before he can communicate with the teacher. Until then the child cannot ask the teacher anything, or answer anything either. . . We have not been taught to think, to produce; the children are not taught to think in French or English (OI: Banboyee 4 Jan 03).

Indeed, the belief that mother-tongue learning results in better learning is common among parents and educators with experience of PROPELCA. Forty of the 48 parents interviewed (Appendices 6-8) believed that the mother tongue ought to be used in junior primary school (question B.1, Appendix 8; Figure 6.8); among the reasons given for this belief, 24 parents mentioned its role in better learning for the child. Adult PROPELCA alumni surveyed (Appendices 1-3) also noted that using their own language in junior primary school facilitated their own learning - both in the mother tongue and in English.196 Figure 6.4 lists the learning-related benefits described by the 36 alumni surveyed. In contrast, nine of the 36 respondents listed learning-related disadvantages of the PROPELCA programme for them (see question 7, Appendix 3).

Some of the educators interviewed were convinced that the PROPELCA programme actually yields better results on standardised national examinations than does the English-only curriculum. One primary school headmaster, Lawyer Ephraim, observed:

PROPELCA does indeed prepare children well for English, better than the current strategy of using pure English. That has been my personal observation, and I think

196 All of the PROPELCA alumni surveyed had attended between 2 and 4 years of PROPELCA classes.
others have seen it too; the upper primary children who have had PROPELCA perform better than their peers in English (OI: Lawyer 19 March 03).

Figure 6.4. Selection of PROPELCA alumni responses to the question: What were the advantages for you in attending PROPELCA classes? (How has it helped you?) (Taken from question 6, Appendix 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am now able to speak, read and write it</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me to learn English and/or French</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned to read and write the mother tongue</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitated classroom learning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chah Linus Chituh, the government inspector of nursery and primary schools in Njinikom subdivision (Kom), described the difference he has seen in exam results:

As I've seen - PROPELCA began in 1991, and I was appointed in 1994, and then in fact if you see the results, produced before and then after, you see that in some cases in fact it has really proven that the mother tongue has been achieving very much, because results have changed from bad to good and from good to better of course in some schools. I mean first school leaving certificates. Children who started from 1991, in 1998 their results were proving good; it is because in fact they really undertook the lessons well and did well (OI: Chah 14 March 03).

In fact, to test this observation two government schools in the Njinikom subdivision were designated "pilot schools" two years ago, for a longitudinal study of PROPELCA effectiveness. Chah explained:

We wanted to find out a thing: if those schools that are undertaking the mother tongue, if they can still do the same or better than those who have not tried out the mother tongue. . . . So when we see their performance we can use them as examples to make other people join [PROPELCA] (OI: Chah 14 March 03).198

197 Multiple answers from one respondent were typical, so that more than 36 responses are listed here.

198 I was unable to find out more specifics on this government-initiated longitudinal study in Kom. The process and the results will certainly be worth investigating; however, the most important contributions of this information to this study are a) that PROPELCA classes are popularly believed in Kom to be more effective than English-only primary classes in facilitating high test scores, and b) that the government is interested enough in the whole area of mother-tongue education to undertake such a study.
Thus, the view is common among those experienced with PROPELCA that this programme yields improved performance in primary school, including performance on the English-language national examinations.

However, this perception that mother tongue use greatly facilitates classroom learning is not shared by the children in this study. The data also indicate that these schoolchildren value English much more highly than the mother tongue, at least in the educational realm. This no doubt arises from the fact that school examinations require English language fluency. One PROPELCA teacher trainee explained this:

"Year-end exams are only in English, not mother tongue. So the pupils are less interested in mother-tongue learning, as it is not the language of the final exams" (GIT: Nso', 8 July 03)

In their final three years in primary school, these children will be taking ten required subjects including mathematics, English, science, history, geography and citizenship (Ministry of National Education 2000); their knowledge in all these subjects is both gained and examined in English. Thus there is good reason for the child who wishes to do well in his or her final examinations to be very concerned about English fluency.199

This esteem for English increases with further education, as Kain Godfrey, the KLDC literacy coordinator, observed:

"Around secondary school or high school200 you see the child loving to speak French or English; they would like to be called a white man! In university they become a different person [i.e. have even more esteem for English or French]. It starts around Form 4 and above (OI: Kain 30 July 03).

Even more strongly than in primary school, the post-primary school curriculum reinforces the student's belief in the value of the English (or French) language.

**Primary school children: summary.** The responses of the children in this study indicate that, as central stakeholders in the primary classroom, schoolchildren are well aware of the importance of their academic performance. They make a clear connection between English proficiency and school performance (including success on examinations), but they do

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199 The monopoly of the English language in national school examinations is a huge factor in its desirability and prestige. This is true in many places besides the Northwest Province of Cameroon; for example, Breidlid and Stephens (2002) point out that English-language exams put Xhosa children at a disadvantage compared to native English speaking children in Cape Town, South Africa. In Cameroon, a change in the language policy for national examinations could pave the way for linguistic equity; however, it does not yet appear to be on the way.

200 "High school" refers to the final two years of secondary school, which are the preparatory years for A-level examinations.
not appear to think of mother-tongue learning as a reasonable alternative to English-medium learning; they characterised learning in the mother tongue as enjoyable and easy, but it was not seen by them as a means of improving school performance. Even so, the low level of English fluency they demonstrated supports the contentions of PROPELCA advocates that in fact, the children do not speak English well enough to learn well in it.

One possible reason for these children's failure to see a link between mother-tongue instruction and exam success is the fact that their experience with mother-tongue learning did not necessarily include using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction (the formal PROPELCA programme), but may have consisted of mother-tongue literacy classes within the framework of English-language schooling (informal PROPELCA).\(^{201}\) The 36 adult alumni of formal PROPELCA programmes surveyed (Appendices 1-3) showed a much more positive view of the role mother-tongue education had played in their own schooling (questions 6 and 7, Appendix 3). Nevertheless, these adults also showed a marked preference for English in their own current school-related tasks (see Figure 5.5).

Regarding uses of literacy, the children interviewed demonstrated a very limited range of encounters with reading and writing in any language. The widespread lack of textbooks in schools such as theirs, and the resulting practice of bookless learning in which they must have participated, is likely to influence their perspective on the uses of literacy. For these young people, reading and writing are primarily tools for succeeding in school - as signified by examination results.

6.1.2. Parents

Parents of school children are also central stakeholders in the primary school, and they hold an array of goals and concerns regarding primary education. In a series of 48 interviews of such parents in Bafut, Kom and Nso' (Appendices 6-8) the respondents gave their views on what a primary education is for, how they choose a school for their children, how they participate in the functioning of the school and the appropriateness of using various languages for instruction.\(^{202}\)

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\(^{201}\) As the chart of responses in Appendix 9 shows, 13 of the 14 children said they could read and write in the mother tongue. However not all of them necessarily took part in either formal or informal PROPELCA classes. Given that 13 of the 28 parents represented by the 14 children were mother-tongue literates, the home or church could have been additional sites for the children to become literate in the mother tongue as well. In any case, the small number of children interviewed does not lend the data to an analysis of attitudes towards the mother tongue based on length of exposure to PROPELCA.

\(^{202}\) As is noted in Section 2.5.4, the responses obtained in both the PROPELCA alumni survey series and the parent interview series were not structured in terms of pre-determined response categories. These surveys and
Expectations of a primary school education. For these parents, the most important characteristics of a primary school have to do with the quality of its teachers, its record of results on national examinations, and the quality of the buildings and grounds of the school. Figure 6.5 presents a more complete list of these parents' opinions on what matters most in a primary school.

Figure 6.5. Responses of 48 parents to the question, "What are the most important characteristics of a primary school?" (Question D.1 Appendix 8; multiple answers allowed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good quality teachers and staff</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good quality (well-kept) buildings and campus</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputation and examination results</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious formation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good hygiene (clean water, latrines) and neatness of the campus</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and extracurricular activities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient school equipment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline and moral formation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good quality teachers were described as those who do not mistreat the children and cooperate well within the school and with the community. Academic results, religious formation and discipline are all delivered by the teacher, so the parent's priority on good quality teachers is understandable. On the other hand, the quality of the facilities (buildings, equipment, neatness) is partly the responsibility of the parents themselves as they participate in the PTA (see section 6.2.2). The most important characteristics for the primary school are thus principally determined by the teaching staff and the parents themselves.

Interviews were carried out orally, and careful notes were taken as each individual respondent freely gave his or her perspective on the various questions. Later analysis of the data involved discovering the most common themes in the responses given. A respondent might mention more than one theme in his or her response to a particular survey question; thus the number of 'answers' to a question is often greater than the total number of respondents.

203 Teachers' mistreatment of children can include unduly harsh physical punishment or forcing the children to work in the teachers' own fields during school hours.
Asked about their own school choices for their children, the parents gave a variety of motivations for selecting the schools they did. Figure 6.6 lists their responses to this question.

Denominational schools are specially chosen by many parents because they believe that those schools provide a more caring and morally upright environment for their children than government schools do (a perception confirmed by other school staff, e.g. OI: Yafi 14 March 03; OI: Mbolifor 25 Feb 03). A parent might thus choose a denominational school education for his or her child not for specifically religious training, but because he or she believes it will provide the good character and morals so highly valued (see Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.6. Top six response categories of 48 parents to the question, "How did you choose the school your child goes to?" (Question A.3, Appendix 8; multiple answers allowed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliation (i.e. Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian schools)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to the home</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the teachers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its moral reputation and atmosphere</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputation of the school</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial reasons</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about their expected outcomes of a primary education for their own children, the parents again indicated this priority on good conduct and character. Figure 6.7 presents the list of their expectations of primary school.

Analysis of these responses indicates several important themes. One is the key role which primary school is considered by these parents to play in the moral formation and socialisation of the child.204 This expectation is paralleled by the parents' frequent choice of religiously affiliated schools described in Figure 6.5 above.

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204 In a study of the impact of Nso' parental values on children's character formation, Nsamenang and Lamb (1995:619) note that the character expectations of more "modern" parents were very similar to those of the more traditional parents. The authors interpret this broad agreement as reflecting a "common and deep-seated set of beliefs" among the Nso' about community and culture.
Figure 6.7. Responses of 48 parents to the question, "What should the primary school child know and be able to do when he or she finishes primary school?" (Question D.2, Appendix 8; multiple answers allowed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic outcomes</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to read and write</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue on to secondary school</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic skills</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moral and social outcomes</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good morals, conduct, character, discipline</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills, citizenship</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General life skills</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General skills (including housework, handwork)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent, able to reason well</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be personally neat and clean</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment-related skills</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue on to a trade or apprenticeship</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to buy and sell/do a specific job</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to speak English or French</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another theme is the role primary school is expected to play in preparing the child for his or her adult life. Given the primary-to-secondary school transition rate of approximately 23% (UNESCO 2003a:67) mentioned in 6.1.1 above, it is clear that these parents must expect primary school to provide the essential formation for their child. Indeed, the total of academic outcomes listed here (56 responses) is half that of the social, moral, life-skills and employment-related outcomes combined (110 responses). For these parents, the primary purposes of primary school appear to be less related to academic outcomes and more related to the ability to function well in the community.

A third theme has to do with parental expectations of the economic outcomes of school. Adding the responses to do with academic skills (whose purpose, arguably, is to lead to eventual employment) and those to do with employment skills results in 80 responses, or slightly less than half the total of 166 responses. If literacy were not considered an employment skill (as could be argued, given that it is primarily used in church and school; section 5.2.2), then the employment-related outcomes of primary school expected by these parents become even less predominant.
This expectation is significant because educational theorists such as Philip Foster have predicted that, as the economic returns of education decline, popular demand for education could fall (Foster 1980:24). This prediction has been corroborated in Malekela's (1994) analysis of Tanzanian school attendance. However in the case of these Bafut, Kom and Nso' parents, the primary school has a range of roles that make it crucial to the functioning of the local community; its role in facilitating employment is by no means the most important.

A fourth theme has to do specifically with expectations concerning secondary school. The role of primary school in preparing a child for secondary school was not considered highly significant by these parents, probably because other factors were considered more influential than the quality of primary schooling in determining whether a child attends post-primary education. This interpretation of their responses is corroborated by their response to another question: why primary school graduates might not continue on to secondary school. As Figure 6.8 indicates, financial reasons were by far the most common reason given.

**Figure 6.8. Responses of 48 parents to the question, "When a child finishes primary school but does not continue to secondary school, what is the main reason?"**

(Question D.3, Appendix 8; multiple answers allowed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial reasons</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intelligence</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child doesn't want to (is stubborn, lazy, has other interests)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor health</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents (careless, uninformed)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This evidence also implies a degree of choice on the part of the child as to whether he or she will attend further schooling. This is not surprising, given these parents' indications that a primary school education should prepare the young person to pursue his or her own educational and vocational future.\(^{205}\)

\(^{205}\) The system of standardised examinations in anglophone Cameroon also reflects the recognition that primary school is as far as many students will go. Passing the first school-leaving certificate examination indicates successful completion of the seven grades of primary school; however entry into secondary school requires an additional examination, the government common entrance exam. The latter requires payment of a fee as well.
Use of the mother tongue in primary school. The expectation of primary school as a site of socialisation into the community is particularly relevant to the parents' views on language for instruction. The 48 parents interviewed were asked what language(s) they considered the best for primary class instruction. These parents indicated significant support for using the mother tongue in school, although their beliefs in the relative importance of using mother tongue, English and French distinguished quite significantly between lower primary (grades 1-4) and upper primary (grades 5-7). Figure 6.9 gives their responses to this question.

Figure 6.9. Responses of 48 parents to the question, "What language or languages do you think are the best for the teacher to use in the lower/upper classes of primary schools in Bafut/Kom/Banso?" (Questions B.1&2, Appendix 8; multiple answers allowed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Mentions for lower primary</th>
<th>Mentions for upper primary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons given for using the mother tongue in primary school centred around ease of learning and the role of mother-tongue instruction in maintaining fluency in the language. However, English - and to a lesser extent, French - was seen as critical to the child's primary education, as is evident in the nearly-unanimous belief that English is crucial for upper primary school (Figure 6.9). The principal reason expressed was that English and French are the official languages of Cameroon, and interaction outside the homeland requires the ability to speak them. In addition, the role of English in national examinations was recognised. It is difficult to imagine parents such as these consenting to any mother-tongue curriculum which did not prioritise English as well.

The positive showing of mother tongue in these responses is further evidence that these parents see the role of primary school as integrating children into local community life.

206 This perception is supported by the PROPELCA alumni survey analysis in section 5.3, which indicated that PROPELCA aids both oral and written fluency in the local language.

207 See the discussion of the modest curriculum objectives set for PROPELCA, section 6.3.1.
as least as much as it prepares the child for life outside the community. However, the high degree of respect they showed for the place of English in the primary classroom mirrors the pro-English language attitudes seen in the children interviewed (6.1.1 above).

 Asked whether their children learn well in English, 32 of the 48 parents responded in the affirmative (question B.3, Appendix 8). Five said they do not. Seven more distinguished between lower and upper primary classes, saying that in the former their children do not learn well in English but in the latter they do. Finally, three admitted that they do not know how well their child learns in English, as the parents themselves cannot speak English. This common perception that children do in fact learn well in English may be reflecting parental satisfaction with the high-priority outcomes of primary school listed in Figure 6.6, many of which are not academic in nature. In this case, parents might well be satisfied with a modest standard of academic outcomes.

 Their attitudes towards the PROPELCA programme were for most part positive (question B.4, Appendix 8). Most (40 of the 48) had heard of it, and 44 said that they either already have a child in a PROPELCA class or that they would be willing to enter their child in one if it were feasible. Those in favour of PROPELCA saw both pedagogical and cultural advantages to mother-tongue learning, as these two parents stated:

 It is important as most children around or in villages always start learning when they can only speak Lamnso' (Nso'par 02).

 I am happy that our language is being taught so that children should know how to read and write in it (Bafpar 06).

 These responses matched those of the adult PROPELCA alumni surveyed; 22 of the 26 who had children said they would (or did) also send them to a PROPELCA school (question 8, Appendix 3).

 There is also evidence that when parents see their young children able to read as a result of being taught literacy in their mother tongue, they are impressed with this skill acquisition (section 5.5.4). The young child who can read a small book with fluency, or who can sound out the print on a scrap of newspaper or the logo on his or her father's shoe (OI: Annett 7 Oct 02; OI: Waingeh 14 March 03), is viewed with great approval. Christopher Nkwain, a grade 1 PROPELCA teacher, has observed that this results in increased parental support for the children's education:

 Once the parent has seen the child reading, the parent wants to buy the [school text] book [for the child] (OI: Nkwain 6 Feb 03).
By the same token, parents expressed exasperation when their children, on finishing primary school, had not learned to read well enough even to read or write a letter (Kompar 12; Bafpar 09). However, despite the difference which mother-tongue instruction makes in a child's learning to read, these parents tended not to attribute their children's success or failure in reading to language issues, nor to distinguish mother-tongue literacy from English-language literacy in the school setting (question D.2, Appendix 8).

On the other hand, there is also evidence of parents who see little point in using the mother tongue in school at all (question B.4, Appendix 8). Their expressed view was that the mother tongue belongs at home, not in school, as these two parents stated:

I don't like the idea at all. Children can learn Lamnso' at home (Nso'par 12).

I do not know why children should study Kom which is not an official language such as English and French (Kompar 15).

This evidence ties in with other data showing that parents are often highly risk-averse when it comes to language choices in the classroom. From the beginning of the PROPELCA programme in Northwest Cameroon, some parents have been unwilling to allow their children to attend mother-tongue classes, as Gabriel Mba, NACALCO's PROPELCA programme director, noted:

Some [parents] said, "I don't want you to experiment on my kids" (OI: Mba 18 Oct 03).

Mba notes that this caution continues today, as parents fear that mother-tongue education will impair their children's ability to learn in English:

At the beginning of each school year, the new parents are concerned [about the effects of mother-tongue use in the classroom], and don't accept things easily (OI: Mba 18 Oct 03).

This parental caution is a common feature of local-language education programmes, and even influences the extent to which such programmes can be successfully implemented. Skutnabb-Kangas notes (2003:83):

In many if not most of the projects all over the world where indigenous languages function as the main media of education, many parents are, despite in principle supporting their languages, still initially somewhat ambivalent, sceptical or scared at the prospect of continuing the [mother-tongue medium] education after the first initial grades. They are afraid that the children will not learn the dominant power language well enough.
Parents: Summary. The evidence indicates that these parents consider primary school to be the basic level of education necessary for moulding children into good community citizens. The role of primary school in moral formation and socialisation of the child is considered as important as its role in academic formation. Post-primary education is considered to be desirable but often unattainable, for reasons of finance (see Figure 6.2) or the academic competence of the young person.

Regarding language choices in the classroom, many of these parents recognised the difficulty their children have learning in English, particularly in the first few years. For that reason the use of the mother tongue was considered by most to be an acceptable strategy for teaching children up to grade 4. However, the belief was common that children should - and could - be operating in English by the higher grades of primary school - partly in order to successfully enter secondary school, and partly because English and French are seen to be the languages of the country and the wider world. The central role of English in the primary school is largely unquestioned by these parents, although the mother tongue is accepted by most of them as a means to start monolingual children off well in the early grades.

6.1.3. Local primary school teaching staff

The teachers and headmasters\textsuperscript{208} of primary schools in the language communities have pivotal roles in determining whether the PROPELCA programme will be offered in those schools. Their own sympathies - or lack thereof - with mother-tongue education have a great deal of influence on whether the classes under their charge will include the mother tongue, either as medium of instruction (\textit{formal} PROPELCA) or subject (\textit{informal} PROPELCA). An understanding of their roles and agenda in primary school is thus crucial to this study.

Teacher authority and responsibilities. The role of the primary classroom teacher is shaped by the fact that he or she has been invested with a significant degree of power, originating in several sources. Institutionally, the teacher is invested with the authority to discipline the children as he or she sees fit, including the use of corporal punishment. Parents rely on the teacher even more profoundly, to transmit the values of home and community during the time the children are in his or her care each day. One grade 4 teacher described

\textsuperscript{208} The headmasters and headmistresses in these schools usually have teaching responsibilities in addition to their administrative tasks. Thus the discussion of teachers below includes school heads.
the parents' expectations as based in their belief in the teacher's superior ability to mould the child's character:

**BT: Why do the parents expect the school to teach discipline and character?**

Wirngo: The belief that what a teacher says is supreme, next to what God can say. They think, "When I struggle to mould a child, there is the teacher who can do it better". Also, many parents in mission schools are more concerned about moral education. You cannot help a child's IQ that much, but you can assist the parent in developing the moral aspect of the child (OI: Wirngo 27 July 03).

This delegation of moral authority to the teacher brings with it substantial power in the classroom. The child is given to believe that the teacher holds all the knowledge that counts, whether factual or behavioural. A grade 3 teacher described this position of power in the eyes of the child:

The children only know that the teacher is the sole supplier of knowledge - they don't know that there is any other person that can supply it. So you as a teacher, you have to hold the child and bring the child up that way (OI: Wisahla 28 July 03).

The teachers interviewed in this study did not hold this responsibility lightly, but felt that it was an appropriate expectation. One teacher observed:

The parents really need our help to mould the child . . . the parents really depend on us (OI: Wiyfofe 28 July 03).

It is also significant that the great majority of primary teachers in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands are themselves from the same language community in which they work (though not necessarily from the same village or town). Their insider status allows the parents to trust them with the inculcation of proper conduct and values, which parents prioritise so highly (discussed in 6.1.2 above).

However, the status accorded to such teachers has little relation to their remuneration. Denominational school teachers, whose pay scales are lower than government school teachers in comparable positions, are identified by the community as being more committed to - and qualified for - the task of bringing up that community's children well. The very fact that mission school teachers are paid less commends their motivations for teaching. The teachers

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209 Of the approximately 30 teachers observed or interviewed over the course of this study, only one was identified to me as a non-native of the language community. The rest, whether teaching in English or mother tongue, were originally from those communities and had the ability to speak the mother tongue with the children if they chose.
themselves confirm this assessment. One Presbyterian school teacher spoke of his own motivation for staying in the teaching profession, even as salaries plunged in the 1990s:

When you are working as a Christian and you see what God is doing to you, you don't care so much about the money (OI: Mbolifor 25 Feb 03).

At the same time, tuition fees at denominational schools are higher than those at government schools\(^{210}\), so parents who send their children to the former demonstrate a willingness to spend more for what they believe is a better all-around education. The headmaster of one Catholic primary school explained it this way:

The main reason that parents send their children here is that they want to see them brought up in the religious way. . . . That is why you see them, they pay the amount of money they pay here. Meanwhile in a government school they pay nothing, but when you come here you see that parents want that children should know God, and then they send their children here.

This headmaster argued that moral formation is in fact the principal priority of some parents.

Education is secondary to why they send their children here. If the government school scored 100% [on standardised examinations] and then we scored even 50%, they would still send their children here, because they believe that despite whether the child has not passed, the child has some morals in him. Also they believe that where they pay money, their children are well cared for (OI: Yafi 14 March 03).

However, despite the commonly-expressed myth that government school teachers are less interested in the moral formation of their students than denominational school teachers, not a great deal of difference between them was found in this study. I believe this is due to the cultural homogeneity of the teacher population, regardless of whether they are working in government or Christian schools. One government school teacher indignantly pointed out:

Some people think government teachers are pagans. None of us is pagan! All the teachers here go to church somewhere (OI: Bobong 6 March 03).

Bobong further pointed out that the government does not forbid prayers in school, and indeed the students at this government school (G.S. Baingeh) lined up for Christian prayers, led by one of the teachers on a rota basis, as they began each school day.

Along with delegated institutional authority from the headmaster and moral authority from parents, the teacher is also designated by virtue of his or her certification by the national educational system as the sole purveyor of the 'knowledge that counts', i.e. the curriculum

\(^{210}\) This 'Catch-22' of low salaries and high tuition fees is due to government restrictions on the amount of state subsidy allotted to denominational schools for their operating expenses. Matching the government teachers' salary scales would force these schools to charge prohibitively high tuition rates.
content. Fuller (1991:126) notes that across Africa, this institutionalised control over access to school knowledge brings the teacher "enormous status". In the language communities under study here, that knowledge is largely embodied in, and represented by, the English language. In the English-language classroom, the only knowledge considered to be of value belongs to the teacher; he or she is the gatekeeper of this knowledge, in large measure because he or she is the only one in the classroom who actually speaks English.211 Nothing that the child brings to the classroom - mother tongue language fluency, competency in home-related skills, informal knowledge of customs and appropriate behaviour - is ultimately of value in the classroom except his or her readiness to acquire the knowledge and language sanctioned in the national curriculum.212 Teaching that language to the students is one of the teacher's most important duties.

The teacher uses and guards the status which English gives in the classroom by, among other behaviours, the ways he or she uses the language with the students. My classroom observations were that English was consistently used to command the obedience and submission of the students. For example:

Class 2, MT reading, English, religious instruction

The teacher's reprimands are all in English. Interjections heard so far:
"Silence please!"
"Is that clear?" (a repeated phrase; answer is always "yes")
"Be very careful!" (a warning to behave, repeated often, with no obvious effect or follow through)
"Sit down!" (obeyed)
"Shut up!" (once, to a child who had evidently said something inappropriate in answer to a question)

(CO: CS Balikumato class 2, 20 Feb 03)

In another classroom observed (P.S. Manji class 5, 25 Feb 03), where a BALA literacy teacher was carrying out a lesson in mother-tongue literacy, the regular classroom teacher (himself a native speaker of Bafut) repeatedly asserted his own authority by interjecting remarks in English. He was the only person in the room who spoke in English during the lesson, and he spoke only to correct and criticise the children. Various other instances were observed in which a PROPELCA teacher, teaching otherwise entirely in

211 Although no formal assessment was done of teachers' English fluency in this study, all of the primary teachers I met or observed in the homelands of Bafut, Kom and Nso' spoke English fluently enough to interact easily and effectively with me.

212 In this environment, the child with any English ability at all has a significant advantage over his or her peers. See section 6.4.1 for a discussion of whose interests are served in the current system.
mother tongue, used English interjections to scold or command the students. One example demonstrated the common practice of issuing a series of English action commands at the beginning of the class:

Class 1, mother-tongue reading

The teacher says in English: "Stand! Sit! Hands up! Clap! Sit!" . . .
English heard in this class: "Eh, she is ashamed." "All right!"
(CO: CS Mambu class 1, 4 March 03)

The evidence is that English is a tool of power and legitimacy in the hands of the teacher, available for his or her use at any time.

Not only so, but the teacher has the responsibility of teaching the children English as well. This is traditionally done via complete submersion in English in the classroom, despite observational evidence that the children understand little of what is being taught.

Class 1, English

The teacher begins: "What is the day?" Class: "Wednesday."
"What is the date?" From the back, a small voice says, "March." The rest say, "the 19th." This has clearly been done already today.
The teacher asks, "Which month?" A child answers: "2003".
(CO: GS Ngwainkuma class 1, 19 March 03)

Class 1, general knowledge

Teacher is a Bafut lady, but the class is all in English. She is gentle, encouraging, a good communicator. The topic today is "wild animals". (Class repeats: "wide animals.")
Teacher: "Have you ever heard of an elephant?"
Class: "Yes, Madame."
Teacher: "Have you ever seen an elephant?"
Class: "Yes, Madame … No, Madame." (Clearly they never have, but they aren't sure what is the correct answer.)
Teacher: "This is a zebra. What is it?"
Class: "Azebra." Teacher corrects them: "Zebra."
(CO: GS Manji class 1, 12 March 03)

Class 1, English

The teacher has drawn a series of English words and pictures on the blackboard. The children repeat the line of pictures after the teacher: "S - sun. S - star." There is some confusion between "sun" and "star"; the children don’t know the meaning of the spoken words, nor do they recognise them written. . .
The teacher says to the class, "When I touch, you read." She points at a picture of a ball and says, "READ, everybody!"
The class responds loudly in unison, "READ!"
Then the teacher attempts to explain English pluralisation: "If there is one ball, you call it…ball. If there are two, you call it . . . ?"
Class: "Ball two!"
Teacher: "No…"
Class: "Two ball!"
Teacher: "No." Then the teacher has to supply the answer: balls.
(CO: GS Baingeh class 1, 6 March 03)

These examples, which sometimes descended into the ludicrous, gave ample evidence of the challenges teachers face in trying to teach English this way. Yet using the mother tongue is not considered an acceptable means of teaching English, and code switching is considered to be the good teacher's very last resort (GIS: 8 Feb 03). 213

One grade 1 teacher in an English-medium class described the challenge of teaching English to monolingual Kom children:

*BT: What is your goal in this class?*

Teacher: To help children express themselves using English. They know only their language, so the teacher tries to help. She uses teaching aids - objects and posters - to help children understand. (OI: Mbi, 19 March 03)

The deficit model implicit in this view is clear: children have only their language - that is, nothing - and so teaching aids must be used to help them learn English. 214

*Teachers' goals.* The teachers' goals for their students reflect their sense of responsibility to the parents for turning out young people of good conduct and character. The socialisation function of primary education is recognised and valued by teachers. Several teachers, asked about what characterises the unschooled child as opposed to the schooled child, expressed in strong terms the social differences between schooled and unschooled children. One teacher described the unschooled child as follows:

Most children who don't go to school, they don't know hygiene - how to keep their bodies clean. Secondly, they are very rude. They don't know how to respect elders, and they talk rudely to elders. And then they are wild. They like fighting, because in school you teach children not to fight. They don't behave morally in society (OI: Wisahla 28 July 03).

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213 See footnote 40, section 5.5.2 for further discussion of code switching in the classroom.

214 Significantly, this teacher was a non-native of Kom, where she was teaching.
Another teacher also described the unschooled child as deficient in terms of community life:

Most of [the nonschooled children] isolate themselves from those that go to school, because they find that they are some sort of a social misfit. . . .They are very unruly; no matter how hard you try to control the crowd, they will always be the ones who are the troubleshooter [troublemaker], really. You really can tell - not just intellectually, but behaviourally (OI: Maimo 28 July 03).

Significantly, none of the negative remarks had to do with academic or cognitive skills. The real problem with unschooled children was perceived to be social.

Regarding the academic potential among their students, several teachers indicated that they would like to see their students continue on to secondary school. One teacher described the primary school teacher's role as advocate for post-primary education:

Most [children and parents] aim at primary school as a base. We teachers encourage class 7 [final year of primary school] parents on the necessity of the child to go to secondary school. But most complain of finances, and some also say their child has a low IQ (OI: Wirngo 27 July 03).

Other teachers bow to the reality of community expectations regarding schooling, as this teacher pointed out:

Since lamentably many of our children here do not go on to secondary school, this kind of skill [handicrafts] can help them to be useful in the community (OI: Bobong 6 March 03).

_PROPELCA teachers._ The voluntary participation of classroom teachers is crucial to the success of the PROPELCA programme. PROPELCA participants range from fully trained, government-certified teachers to untrained, PTA-employed teachers. They may have decades of experience in the classroom or be completely new to the field. What they all have in common is a willingness to bring the mother tongue into the primary classroom in a programmed way.

These teachers are reacting to the English-only teaching environment which, as they see it, provides far from optimal learning conditions for the monolingual child. As one teacher said,

In a school which is not a PROPELCA school, when you go now you see that the teacher will be trying only to be teaching the children in the English language. He will not even care to talk in the mother tongue to the children. Then the children too will not really be feeling happy, because they don't get exactly what the

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215 See section 6.2.2 for a discussion of PTA teachers.
teacher is saying. You will just see a bright child who has been hearing a little about English [from home], who will be throwing up their hand like that to [answer] questions (GIS 8 Feb 03).

Classroom observations gave astonishing evidence of the advanced level of learning possible in the mother-tongue classroom compared to the English-only classroom. All classroom observations took place within the same few months of term 2 of the school year, and so it was possible to compare how far the different classes had progressed. At this time an English-only, grade-1 class, taught by an experienced teacher (CO: PS Manji class 1, 25 Feb 03), was observed; the class had so far learned to recognise the first five letters of the English alphabet, on the blackboard and on flashcards. In contrast, in a PROPELCA grade 1 class observed earlier that month (CO: CS Balikumato 6 Feb 03), the students were reading the entire Kom alphabet chart, along with the key words for each letter, and could perform choral and individual reading of Kom words and sentences written on the blackboard. Not only so, but classroom participation in the PROPELCA class was focused on the content; in the English-only class, the students demonstrated limited ability to answer the teacher's questions, as well as wandering attention and inappropriate behaviours.

In addition, the English-only classes clearly demonstrated the advantage which English-speaking children have over their monolingual counterparts in the classroom. In observing four different English-language classrooms (GS Baingeh class 2, 6 March 03; GS Manji class 1, 12 March 03; GS Ngwainkuma class 1, 19 March 03; PS Manji class 1, 25 Feb 03), it was possible to distinguish within 5-10 minutes the children who had attended English-language nursery school (usually about 5-10% of the children) from those who had not. Their performance was strikingly better than those who had not been to nursery school.216 The PROPELCA classes, however, showed much less differential between the ability of the various children in the class.217

Thus the PROPELCA teachers, by their participation in PROPELCA, are making a statement about the need to teach children in a language they speak and understand. These teachers also give of their personal time and effort to become qualified as PROPELCA teachers. In Bafut, Kom and Banso', teachers who agree to participate in the PROPELCA programme must take a two- to three-week training session once a year for three years, taught

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216 As my observations took place mid-way through term 2, the 'nursery school effect' appears to last for months, not just a few days at the beginning of the year.

217 This is an indication of the different interests being served in PROPELCA and non-PROPELCA classrooms. See sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.4.
by the language committee's literacy supervisors. Interested headmasters are also invited to
take PROPELCA training. The PROPELCA training includes instruction in reading and
writing the mother tongue and using the PROPELCA materials for teaching in the mother
tongue. Figure 6.10 lists the course content of the PROPELCA teacher training held by the
KLDC in 2003.

PROPELCA teachers also receive periodic supervision visits to their classrooms from
the language committee literacy supervisors, in which they are given encouragement and
consultant help as needed. For PTA-employed teachers without formal qualifications,
PROPELCA training may be the only formal training received.

*Figure 6.10. Basic course content of KLDC PROPELCA teacher training courses,
July 2003 (Source: TTO: KLDC 3 July 03)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic course content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Kom language awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules for writing Kom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features of Kom grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features of Kom phonology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How to teach the Kom reading primer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How to teach the other books of the Kom primer series:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-reader, transition to English reading, health materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How to reach arithmetic using Kom-language maths books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creative writing in Kom (short stories, essays, letters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Music (from the Kom culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teaching practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content specific to each year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years 1 and 2:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom alphabet, tone awareness, PROPELCA programme and Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation, handwriting, Kom riddles, potential problems encountered in PROPELCA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROPELCA teachers also become part of a community of educators dedicated to promotion of the local language. In Bafut, the PROPELCA teachers have formed their own professional association, the Bafut Mother Tongue Teachers Association (BAMOTESA). This group holds social events and collects small amounts of money for PROPELCA activities in Bafut. Joseph Mfonyam, a BALA executive committee member, described BAMOTESA this way:

They have a lot of ideas - that's the dynamic there. There is a sense of camaraderie there as well; it's not just the teaching, but that "we are in this together" (OI: J. Mfonyam 24 March 03).

Crucially, however, the PROPELCA programme offers its teachers no financial gain or change in their professional status. Patrick Meliim, an NLO literacy supervisor, describes the problems caused by the lack of financial incentives particularly:

[PROPELCA] teachers have not an incentive. Other subjects and lessons, they get paid because of that, but they aren't given anything extra for being PROPELCA teachers. Nothing is added to their wages. Even the supervisors who go around don't have anything to give the teachers - not even a glass of palm wine (OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03).

This lack of additional remuneration for teaching in the PROPELCA programme is a severe impediment to recruiting new teachers in the schools, and may in fact be the principal obstacle to the programme's expansion in Bafut, Kom and Nso'. John Ambe, BALA literacy supervisor, notes:

To encourage these teachers to be trained [for PROPELCA] is a task. They are reluctant, because they ask, "That is an additional piece of job. I'll be doing it for what? How will I be compensated?" (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03)

Still, the lack of financial incentive means that those teachers who choose to participate in PROPELCA do so from internal motivations, including the conviction that using the mother tongue in a programmed way in the classroom will result in more effective teaching (OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03; OI: Chah 14 March 03). One experienced Nso' teacher, having just begun participating in PROPELCA, reported greater satisfaction in teaching in the mother tongue:

What a shame that I am at the end of my teaching career and I am finally finding out how children learn. I can hardly keep up with these children! (OI: Annett 7 Oct 02).

This teacher's headmaster also remarked on the new vigour of this man's motivation to teach, attributing it to the increased effectiveness of his teaching when carried out in the mother tongue.
In addition, the recognition of being invited by one's headmaster and the language committee to take part in PROPELCA is an attraction, although it is not always sufficient to keep teachers interested in the programme. Shey Ma'wo Maurice, an NLO literacy supervisor, explained this:

**BT: Is there any prestige to being a PROPELCA teacher?**

Shey: Some teachers feel that they have been recognised; after the training, they do the work very well because they feel that they have been specially selected. Other teachers feel that they should have some [financial] incentive, as they have been specially chosen; since the incentive is not there, they are lukewarm about teaching PROPELCA. They are not serious because they feel they should have something to encourage them (OI: Shey Ma'wo 7 Jan 03).

Thus the PROPELCA programme teachers in Bafut, Kom and Nso' are characterised by an interest in mother-tongue teaching that has little to do with financial considerations. They demonstrate a sense of responsibility for the programme's success, lobbying headmasters, other teachers or the local PTA on behalf of PROPELCA (OI: Wirngo 27 July 03; OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03). Halaoui (2003:14) contends that this kind of voluntary commitment is characteristic of the principal staff of successful mother-tongue education programmes around Africa:

The enterprise to use African languages as languages of instruction is oftentimes, not to say always, supported by a motivated staff, a militant staff, that believes so firm that the use of African languages is beneficial not only to the pupils but also to the country [or language community] as a whole.

Halaoui goes on to note that such staff are not usually assigned this work, but take it on voluntarily out of their own convictions.²¹⁸ In PROPELCA, those convictions have to do with both the learning advantage of the mother tongue and the sense of "linguistic nationalism" described by Mazrui and Mazrui (1998:5; see section 2.3.5). The teachers as well as the language committees (section 4.6) demonstrate personal interest and commitment to the programme's success.

**Teachers: Summary.** The position of the teacher in Bafut, Kom and Nso' primary schools is one of both authority and responsibility, delegated to the teacher by parents and by

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²¹⁸ A similar attitude of voluntarism characterises teachers in the mother-tongue literacy programme of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), as described by Aggor and Siabi-Mensah (2003:55). In examining this literacy programme, which serves 31,500 adult learners in 24 languages, the authors note that "a large volunteer force of teachers and supervisors at grassroots level contributes to programme sustainability".
the formal education system. This responsibility includes socialisation of the child and the inculcation of skills such as English fluency and literacy. Although not all teachers may take those responsibilities seriously, the teachers observed and interviewed in this study did. A teacher's ability to carry out these delegated responsibilities depends on two kinds of expertise: an understanding of the community's values for its children, and a facility with the knowledge - and language - sanctioned by the national primary school curriculum. The teaching profession is respected by parents in the homelands, and a teacher's lack of financial resources does not detract from that respect; indeed it may even enhance it. A spirit of commitment and even self-sacrifice infuses the community's understanding of the teaching profession.

In the classroom, knowledge of the English language and English-mediated knowledge is a principal source of the teacher's authority and prestige. Teaching that language forms a major portion of his or her professional responsibility. Thus, even the most experienced teachers of lower primary students, well aware that the children do not understand them, follow the curriculum requirement that primary school subjects be taught in English. Such is the elevated status of English language in the formal education system of the Northwest Province.

In this environment, the PROPELCA teacher stands out as one who is willing to challenge the institution-wide assumptions about the "normal" place of English in school. He or she also recognises and affirms the central place of the local language in the homeland community and culture, and in the mental processes of the primary school child as well. The marginal aspect of this educational mission is not lost on PROPELCA teachers, and they welcome occasions for expressing group solidarity (such as in-service PROPELCA training events, meetings of the language committee and on-site visits from PROPELCA literacy supervisors). The challenges of teaching PROPELCA has meant that teachers are occasionally known to drop out of the programme, particularly when they have been the only ones teaching PROPELCA in a given primary school (OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03).

6.1.4. Summary: individual stakeholders

The principal research tools analysed here (the parent interview series, PAS, Appendices 6-8; group interviews of children, GIC, Appendix 9; group and individual interviews of teachers, Appendices 10 and 11) incorporate the views and concerns of more than 100 parents, children and teachers in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities. The findings from each group complemented and reinforced findings from the other groups,
across stakeholder groups and across language communities as well. Together they provided a detailed picture of the nature and interests of individual community-level stakeholders.

Threaded through each set of stakeholder concerns is the constant presence and influence of the English language. As both the goal and the medium of primary school instruction, English defines the aspiration of students, the measure of success for parents and the power base of the teacher.

Another theme of these stakeholders' concerns is the purpose of primary school. Family hopes notwithstanding, its role in preparing students for further formal education is recognised to be limited, as the national primary-to-secondary school transition ratio of 23% indicates. However, its role in producing good citizens of the local community is valued as highly as any other preparatory function it has.

6.2. Language choice in the primary classroom: local institutional stakeholders

Local institutions as well as individuals are stakeholders in the primary school classroom. Two of these, the traditional community authorities and the language committee, were discussed extensively in chapter four. The authority of traditional leaders is reinforced and expressed through the local language, and their desire to see cultural traditions passed on and legitimised to succeeding generations leads to their support for use of the local language in school. The language committee expresses its own educational agenda very clearly in its implementation of the PROPELCA programme. As is discussed in section 4.6, the language committee's programme for primary classrooms is based on both cultural and pedagogical convictions about the necessity of using the written mother tongue in school.

Two other local institutions have a stake in the content of the primary classroom: the local church sponsor of a school, and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). These are examined below.

6.2.1. The local church sponsor

The principal Christian school systems in Northwest Cameroon - Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist - have their origin in the Christian missions which established both churches and schools across the region from the early 1900s (discussed in chapter three). Upon the replacement of the foreign-based missions by Cameroonian denominational hierarchies, the denominational school system continued to operate as a service offered by the churches to the communities (and a means of gaining church members). With the growth of the government school system, denominational schools dominate the education system less
than they did in the early years of national independence; still, according to Amin (1999:123), as of 1996 more than 41% of schools in Northwest Province were private mission schools\(^{219}\). In the present study, both government and Christian schools were common throughout the homelands.\(^{220}\) Parents and teachers alike considered the two kinds of school to be comparable in terms of the academic education they offer.

The principal structural difference between the denominational school and the government school is that the former is financially and administratively linked to a local church congregation. This linkage takes such forms as annual church budgets to maintain the school and pay the teachers, and participation by the church leadership in the religious education offered in the school. Mathew Mbolifor, assistant headmaster at P.S. Manji, Bafut, described the church-mission school relationship as familial:

> The congregation is the mother of the school (OI: Mbolifor 25 Feb 03).

This same sentiment was echoed in other denominational schools as well.

The language policy of denominational schools has been somewhat influenced by the early missions' conviction that religious conversion and instruction take place most effectively in the local language, not the colonial language (sections 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.3.1). Current interest in local languages on the part of Baptist, Presbyterian and Catholic churches is related to the oral use of local languages in the church services and the availability of the Scriptures and other written materials in Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' (OI: Suuyren 2 March 03). This sympathetic orientation towards local languages led Catholic education authorities to adopt the experimental PROPELCA in Lamnso' and Ewondo in 1981 (section 3.2.1).

At the local level, denominational school authorities vary in their support for PROPELCA. While in Kom the denominational leaders have maintained support for PROPELCA programmes in their schools, in Nso' the mother-tongue programme was nearly destroyed in the mid-1990s by the sudden withdrawal of financial support of the Catholic diocesan authorities. In Bafut the language committee is actively cultivating church leaders for their support of BALA's mother-tongue initiatives.

The highest priorities of churches who sponsor schools revolve around religious formation and maintenance of church membership. Language choice is thus viewed more

\(^{219}\) As has been mentioned above, very few private non-mission schools operate in the Northwest Province (OI: Eben 10 Feb 03).

\(^{220}\) However, not all denominations were equally represented in the three language communities. The Catholics had stronger representation in Banso' and Kom, the Presbyterians in Bafut, and the Baptists in Kom.
pragmatically than ideologically: where the local language is necessary for religious formation, it is employed (OI: Mbolifor 25 Feb 03). One PROPELCA teacher demonstrated the utility of using the children's mother tongue in teaching difficult concepts in the religion curriculum:

Class 2, religious instruction

The class begins with an English song sung in unison: "Galilee, sweet Galilee, Master Jesus Christ changed water into wine". Then follows a lecture about the miracle at Cana, and then a series of questions from the teacher.

Teacher (in English): Who begged Jesus to change the water into wine?
Class: Maria.
Teacher: Where did it take place?
(No answers.)
Teacher (in Kom mixed with English): What did Jesus say?
Many volunteers, and the answers are in Kom.
Several times the teacher asks questions in English and is answered in Kom by students. The teacher does not reprimand them for this, but moves easily between Kom and English. The students know 'miracle' in Kom but not in English.

Teacher (in English): Who do you take your problems to?
(Blank faces, no answers.)
Teacher repeats the question in Kom, and ten hands go up.
Teacher often interjects (in English), "Is that clear?" The answer from the class is always "Yeeesss."
(CO: CS Balikumato grade 2, 20 Feb 03)

In this Catholic doctrine class, only the easiest questions could be responded to in English. It is probably safe to say that any actual content learning that took place in this class was in the Kom language.221

The local sponsoring church: summary. For the local church sponsoring a primary school, the principal attraction of using the local language is its ability to communicate the frequently abstract content of religious formation classes. Similarly, the interest of the PROPELCA programme for these church sponsors lies principally in its potential to produce readers of local-language Scripture, doctrinal materials and other church literature.

221 Slater's study of Ugandan seminary students (2002) notes that adult students who were taught in English classrooms during the day would gather in the evenings and, in the vernacular, discuss "what the students thought they had heard or not heard during the classroom lectures" (p.271). This informal learning activity figured prominently in the students' overall understanding of the material, and use of the local language was a crucial to the activity.
6.2.2. The Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs)

The PTA is the institutionalised avenue for community involvement in the local school. Every school, whether denominational or government, has its PTA. All school parents and teachers are expected to participate in this association, interacting primarily with the headmaster on issues related to the school's functioning. In the case of a mission school, the leader of the parent church may also be on the PTA, representing the denominational 'owners' of the school; this church leader may serve the PTA at times as a "technical advisor" or mediator between parents and school staff (OI: Mbolifor 25 Feb 03).

The tasks of the PTA cover both the physical and the operational aspects of the school. In the parent interview series (Appendices 6-8), respondents were asked about the responsibilities of the PTA in their children's schools (question C.1, Appendix 8). Their responses indicate that the PTA plays an important role in maintaining the school buildings and furnishings, and in advising and monitoring school staff. Furthermore, many of these parents felt that the PTA was a place where their voices could be heard by the school personnel (questions C.2&3, Appendix 8). One parent described the collaborative nature of the PTA:

We assist the staff morally and financially. The PTA is very important as the parents assist the staff and vice versa in bringing up the children (Nso'par 03).

The PTA does not have a strong decision-making function where the school is concerned, but its advisory capacity is significant.

The PTA also sets the school's yearly PTA levy on parents, which is separate from the tuition fee and is used by the PTA for maintaining the school and paying PTA teachers (see below). The PTA is responsible for collecting the levy, and may be called upon to mediate financial interactions between the school and the parent as well. Alfred Yafi, a Kom headmaster, described how this works:

Those parents who don't want to pay the fee in time, the PTA now can intervene and convince the parent. And they answer [explain], "why I do not pay the school fee for the child". . . If a parent does not pay, the PTA president may go and see that parent and ask him what is wrong that he has not paid. If there is something serious wrong that has made him not to pay, then they may decide to keep the child in school so that next year the child may be paid for. (OI: Yafi 14 March 03).

222 Of the 48 parents interviewed on the subject (question C.4, Appendix 8), all but three stated that they take part in the PTA regularly.

223 However parents indicated that the extent to which they feel heard depends on the extent of the school authorities' willingness to engage in an inclusive management style (question C.2).
Another important function of the PTA is to recruit and hire PTA teachers. When the sponsoring agency (government or denominational) lacks the resources to provide a teacher for each of the seven primary grades, the PTA hires additional teachers on a yearly contract basis and pays them out of PTA levies. In describing this function of the PTA, Linus Chah, the government inspector for primary schools in Njinikom sub-division (Kom), explained that "the PTA is in a sort of partnership with the government" (OI: Chah 14 March 03).

The PTA teacher is selected by the PTA executive committee and the headmaster. PTA salaries are much lower than those of teachers hired by the denomination or the government, and so newly-hired PTA teachers typically are inexperienced or possibly not even trained as teachers. However, the headmaster often mentors such new teachers until they know what to do in the classroom, as the Kom headmaster explained:

PTA teachers are not trained and sometimes the problem may be that he or she does not know what to do. It is not actually a problem; when I take a PTA teacher and then he teaches one year, then I don't just leave him to take another [PTA teacher]. Because what the PTA teacher has already acquired in the field now can help him to do better next year. And if he is not stubborn I will still continue to show him how to teach, sometimes a year or two. Then sometimes you see that some PTA teachers are even better than the trained teachers, because of their experience (OI: Yafi 14 March 03).

Several PTA teachers were found in this study who had been working on that basis for 20 years or more; their long experience made them valued members of the staff.

Regarding the use of the mother tongue in school, the perspective of the PTAs depends on the extent of their knowledge of the PROPELCA programme. The BALA, KLDC and NLO literacy supervisors make it a priority to gain PTA support for the programme, since such support can influence headmasters to send teachers for PROPELCA training (OI: Yafi 14 March 03; OI: Suuyren 2 March 03). In some areas that support has been gained, as Alfred Yafi, headmaster of a Kom primary school, noted:

The PTA [of C.S. Balikumato] is actually encouraging PROPELCA, because they are seeing that teaching children to understand things in their dialect [language], when they have not known English, they understand better (OI: Yafi 14 March 03).

By the same token, PTA opinion may swayed by teachers who oppose PROPELCA. This happened on one occasion in Bafut, in which significant negotiation with the headmaster and the school manager was required to override the PTA's objections and implement the programme after all (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03).
The PTA: Summary. In the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands, the PTA is a means of structuring and mobilising parental interest in the child's education. The PTA's role in the school is seen as supportive, collaborative and advisory. The PTA reflects the concerns and priorities of the parents involved; to the extent that these include matters of language, the PTA will be influential on the position taken by local school authorities. PTA support for PROPELCA is not a given, but may be gained if parents can be convinced of the value of mother-tongue education for their children.

6.3. Language choice in the primary classroom: national stakeholders

In addition to its interest for local individual and institutional stakeholders, the primary classroom is a focus of interest for a handful of institutions which operate locally but whose agenda and identity are set outside the local community. The most important of these for this study is the Ministry of National Education; others include denominational education authorities, NACALCO and SIL International.

6.3.1. The Ministry of National Education

The interests of the African state in its national educational system encompass a wide variety of social, economic and political agendas. Formal education is the state's vehicle for modernisation, for building national identity and for building a work force able to participate in the economic and social development of the country. The government of Cameroon has built just such goals into the crafting of its national education system (Dioh 1991:22).

Official curriculum and actual curriculum. In his study of the modern state and schooling in the developing world, Bruce Fuller (1991) argues that the fragility of the modern Third World state compels it to advance its own legitimacy through the education system. Fuller notes that, while overly aggressive pursuit of liberal ideals and mass schooling can strain a state's credibility with the conservative political forces within it, the modern state that wishes to survive still must be seen to advocate Western-style education:

In order to look modern and to signal mass opportunity the Third World state must express faith in, and materially expand, schooling. Thus most fragile states pursue a rather rocky romance with the school (Fuller 1991:3).

At the same time that it strives to institute mass schooling, the state must also attempt to deepen the impact of the school on its students, that is, to "reshape the consciousness and social rules that children come to abide by" (p.5).
In its struggle to gain legitimacy, the fragile state is forced into interdependency with other institutions, including the local and traditional societies within the borders of the state. Fuller argues that many of these societies in Third World nations are stronger than the state, and so the state cannot afford to alienate them entirely in its drive for modernisation. Thus the state works with local leadership, particularly the local elite, depending on them to legitimise mass schooling and so permit the state to claim its provision of mass opportunity.

As a result, the central state "imposes a structure that appears to be uniform and strictly regulated" (Fuller p.21, emphasis in the original), with a national curriculum and standardised examinations. Yet the tight administrative control that theoretically characterises such a regulated education system is rarely realised, and scope exists for local agency. In such a centralised education system, then, space still remains for the priorities of local institutions and local elites.

The evidence of this study is that the Cameroonian state, faced with an immense diversity of cultures, languages and educational expectations, can be characterised as described above. The Law of Education in Cameroon (Ministry of National Education 1998) drives uncompromisingly towards universal, compulsory primary education; it promises education that is secular and apolitical; it advocates democratic ideals and "loyalty to the nation" as against tribalism and regionalism (Dioh 1991:22). However, even at the level of the national curriculum, the ideal of a unitary national education breaks down: faced with strong regional opposition to a single curriculum, the Ministry of National Education has recently promulgated one syllabus for "English speaking" Cameroon and another for "French-speaking Cameroon" (Ministry of National Education 2000; OI: Tumenta 17 Feb 03).

Curriculum flexibility is further exploited by the denominational education authorities. The Education Secretary for each denomination draws up a scheme of work for application by the schools under his authority, based on the government-formulated syllabus but including other topics which express the interests of the denominational authorities, and altering the timetable to suit the modified syllabus. Given the large percentage of Christian schools in the education system of Northwest Cameroon, it is clear that the 'sanctioned body of knowledge' that many school children acquire has been shaped by denominational education authorities as well as the government.

More locally, the interests of the Ministry of National Education are represented by provincial and divisional delegates for education, whose role is to oversee the implementation of national educational objectives. Inspectors for nursery and primary schools are assigned to
each division and sub-division, with administrative authority over all the government schools in their region and "pedagogical authority" over the mission schools as well (OI: Tumenta 17 Feb 03), including administration of the standardised first school-leaving certificate examination (FSLC) given at the end of primary school. These representatives of the central education authority have significant influence over pedagogical and administrative aspects of schools in their region of responsibility (OI: Chah 14 March 03).

Even so, at the level of the local school further evidence of the flexibility of the national curriculum may be found in the expectation that the national syllabuses are to be individually interpreted by the classroom teacher. Amina Tumenta, inspector of primary education for Mezam Division (Bamenda) explained this expectation:

These syllabuses have gone out to the schools. It is now the school's responsibility to look at the particular content; the teacher will have to write his own lessons. When the new syllabuses came out, the inspector had a seminar for head teachers on drawing up schemes [of work] and supervising teachers to make their lesson plans (OI: Tumenta 17 Feb 03).

Thus, the classroom teacher - with help from the headmaster - is responsible for interpreting and operationalising the national curriculum. Given the wide variation in qualifications among the teaching force in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands, the actual lesson content students receive will inevitably be adapted to the understandings and priorities of the local school staff, and may well not be entirely consonant with the official curriculum.

Hawes (1979) addresses this issue in his discussion of official curriculum and actual curriculum in African schools. The actual curriculum consists of the learning planned by local school staff, and may differ significantly from the official curriculum handed down by the national education authority.

Plans and purposes of schools and teachers may differ from those of ministries and the experts they employ - and may indeed be more realistic (Hawes 1979:110). Hawes notes that actual curriculum typically differs from official curriculum particularly in the areas of time allocation, language of instruction, greater emphasis on basic skills, and preparation for examinations.224

Another especially visible area of curricular modification in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands is the practise of requiring manual labour of primary students during the school day. Not only are the children expected to keep the school grounds clean, but each class also

224 Hawes also distinguishes between actual curriculum and actual practice, the latter being "the intended or unintended" outcomes of schooling (1979:110).
regularly works the fields belonging to school staff. I observed this phenomenon many times in the schools visited. This kind of activity is completely absent from the official syllabus, and in some cases represents an abuse of authority; still, it is extremely common. One Nso' man gave an account of his experience in a rural school in Banso':

From the time we were at primary until now, all the produce from the school farm/garden goes to the headmaster and the teachers. Even the students who work [for] these food items will hardly have any share.... To me, this is child labour in disguise.... Even in secondary school, we worked in the school farm for marks (assessment) and knew not where the food goes to (Barah, 9 May 03).

It is unclear what if any "marks" were given for labour of this sort, since there is no such subject in the curriculum. Another Nso' man living in Bamenda concurred on the exploitative nature of the manual labour of the students in the rural schools:

Nowadays, most of the farms are personally owned by the teachers themselves, though children are sent to work on those farms. There is the pretext that some of them are owned by the school but what is got there is shared between the headmaster or manager and the rest of the teachers. The children don't know what is done with what is got from there (Nga' Bami 5 May 03).

This practice is widespread, and parents are certainly aware of what is happening. However, Nga' Bami notes that it occurs primarily in the village schools:

In most schools in towns like Bamenda, most time is spent now in learning in classrooms rather than working on those farms. This has greatly increased the rate of learning in town schools [compared to] most village schools. ... Most people who pay high fees for their children may not want their children to do any work for people (Nga' Bami 5 May 03).

It is possible that parents in the homeland accept this farm work because they consider that it provides the child with training which is highly relevant to the homeland family and community. In any case, the actual curriculum in the homeland primary schools includes significant allocation of time to this manual work.

**Local language use in the curriculum.** This purposeful modification of the official curriculum is the context in which space may be found for adding mother-tongue literacy to the local school timetable. The new national education policy includes "promotion of national [Cameroonian] languages" in its list of objectives (Ministry of National Education 1998), and yet the current national syllabuses (despite having been formulated after the 1998 law on education) make no mention of languages other than English and French. The new syllabus does include an allotment of 90 minutes per week to the subject of "national cultures",

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233
consisting of music, arts and crafts, drawing and drama. However no language element is mentioned.\textsuperscript{225}

So PROPELCA teachers are trained to modify the syllabus they are given in the areas of language instruction and literacy, deducting so much time from other subjects and creating lesson plans that cover PROPELCA objectives as well as the official curriculum objectives (OI: Wirngo 27 July 03; OI: Ambe 4 July 03; GIS 8 Feb 03). This requires the approval of the school headmaster or headmistress as well, who must be sufficiently convinced of the value of the PROPELCA programme to participate in its implementation. Hon. Waingeh, the KLDC chairman and himself a secondary school headmaster, described the informality of the process of incorporating mother-tongue classes into the local curriculum:

You won't find national [Cameroonian] language mentioned in the national syllabuses for either primary or secondary schools, but they fit the classes in here and there. The timetable can have "national languages" in it at the local school level - it just depends on who is interested when the timetable is made up. If there is no champion for national language, they don't get included (OI: Waingeh 14 March 03).

It is significant that the presence of advocates at the school level (most likely teachers) has such an influence on whether the PROPELCA programme will be run in a given school.

The local PROPELCA programme has over the years been carried out in a vague educational policy environment, allowing the priorities and interests of local actors (teachers, headmasters, inspectors, school managers and even the denominational education secretaries) a strong degree of influence over whether the programme is accepted in schools or not. However with the inclusion of "promotion of national languages" as an educational objective in the Law on Education of 1998,\textsuperscript{226} the language committees see a new window of opportunity opening for the expansion of PROPELCA, particularly into government schools. The central education authority is now understood to be in favour of using local languages in primary school, and all the government education authorities from provincial delegates to sub-divisional inspectors are now counted as potential allies in the struggle to expand the PROPELCA programme. Patrick Meliim, an NLO literacy supervisor, described the

\textsuperscript{225} This ambivalence on the part of national education policy - to promote local languages in school and yet not give them space in the national syllabus - appears to be a cautious response to a changing international and local environment regarding language. Such caution seems to have characterised national language policy ever since independence. See section 7.4.2 for further discussion.

\textsuperscript{226} 1998 This inclusion is itself largely the result of persistent lobbying by NACALCO personnel over the past decade; see Albaugh 2003.

234
difference official approval has made, particularly on the participation of government school personnel:

The delegate of education sent a paper around to inspectors to give authority to headmasters to accept PROPELCA. . . .We now go through inspectors and delegates [to acquire teachers for PROPELCA] since three years ago (OI: Meliim 5 Jan 03).

John Ambe, BALA literacy supervisor, noted the power of the new pro-local language environment to open doors for the PROPELCA programme:

Government teachers know it [the new law on national languages], it is a thing they have to do. The inspectorate has recognised it; the government too has recognised it. They do not anymore try to shut the doors to the schools, saying, "But why do you bring such a thing in here?" (OI: Ambe 3 Feb 03)

Compliance with the new law is not yet compulsory, and so is not universal among the local education authorities, as the text of application which specifies how the law will be applied had not been written as of mid-2003 (OI: Lawyer 19 March 03; OI: Suuyren 2 March 03). However, a number of local education authorities in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands are anticipating application of the law and expressing their support for the PROPELCA programme (OI: Banboyee 4 Jan 03).

Ministry of National Education: summary. Like other nations in the developing world, the Cameroonian state depends on its education system to help achieve national goals. However, the balance of power between the state and its constituents and the realities of local interests necessitate an interdependence in which the Cameroonian government sets a highly structured national syllabus but allows significant flexibility in its local application.

In its policy regarding language in education, the Cameroonian government balances an awareness of the plethora of local languages and cultures with its commitments to official bilingualism in English and French. Committed to a national education policy that prioritises English and French competency "as a factor of national unity and integration" (Ministry of National Education 1998), Cameroonian education authorities have not until recently demonstrated overt support for the use of local languages in primary schools. However PROPELCA has been permitted to operate as an experimental programme since 1979, and has expanded into eight of the ten provinces of the nation 227. The programme and its

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227 The Centre, East, North, Far North, Littoral, West, Northwest and Southwest Provinces (NACALCO 2001). See Appendix 10 for a listing of the locations and attendance figures of PROPELCA classes in the country.
outcomes have also been noted by educational authorities over this time (OI Waingeh 14 March 03; OI: Chah 14 March 03).

The positive light in which mother-tongue education is now seen by the Ministry of National Education is largely the payoff of two key strategies of the PROPELCA programme: to minimise any threat the programme might pose to the local or national education system and to prioritise low-key persuasion and local cooperation. From its beginning, PROPELCA was not set up as an alternative to the national curriculum (OI: Mba 11 Oct 02). Rather, it was intended to increase the success of primary school children in achieving national curriculum objectives. That it does so is increasingly common knowledge in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities (section 6.1.1). At local levels, the cooperation of educators and education authorities in PROPELCA has been sought continuously. These political choices on the part of NACALCO and the language committees have been crucial to the present national climate of official support for mother-tongue primary education.

6.3.2. Denominational education authorities

The Presbyterian, Baptist and Catholic denominations in Northwest Cameroon share a historical and ideological commitment to formal education. As discussed in chapter four, the so-called "mission schools" provided the great majority of educational opportunities in the region until well after 1960.

Today, however, the denominational education systems feel themselves under severe pressure from the government. They believe that the post-independence national government has been using education to increase its community influence at the expense of the church denominations, by opening schools in competition with denominational schools, reducing the grants-in-aid and subsidies allowed to denominational schools and forcing them to charge much higher fees than the government schools (OI: Eben 10 Feb 03).228

Yet the denominational authorities believe that their education systems continue to play a crucial role in the socialisation of Cameroonian children. The Cameroonian Baptist Convention (CBC) considers that "the church is society's conscience" (Ngarka n.d.); its goals for Baptist schools are that they teach good doctrine and good behaviour, set good examples for the children to follow and teach the fear of God. The Catholic Church describes its responsibility in even stronger terms. The provision of education is considered a divine

228 Figure 6.2 clearly shows the difference in fee structures of the denominational and government schools.
mandate: "the church understands her participation in the process of education as forming part of her saving mission" (Tanda 1991:95). The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, taking over the Basel Mission schools in 1966, did so because it was convinced of "the importance of the Church's participation in this aspect of national development" (Ekiti 1982:77). The commitment of these denominations to educational provision is thus not a matter to be taken lightly. Education is not a casual social service to be abandoned when no longer convenient; it is seen as a part of the spiritual service which the church has been rendering to the nation and to its people for over 100 years.

However, the denominational education system as a whole is not deeply concerned with language issues. Heavily engaged with the government over survival issues such as subsidies, local competition and the laws governing private education, Christian education authorities express little interest in debating questions of language choice in the classroom (OI: Eben 10 Feb 03; OI: Banboyee 4 Jan 03). Thus, the question of language choice for the classroom is not debated at this level; rather, it is left for the local churches and schools to deal with.

6.3.3. NACALCO and SIL International

NACALCO and SIL are both language-development NGOs, and as such they share many goals in common. However, as institutions they are differ significantly. NACALCO is a Cameroonian NGO, led by academic personnel of the University of Yaoundé's Department of African Languages and Linguistics, and dedicated to the support and representation of Cameroonian language committees. SIL is an international NGO, staffed largely by non-Cameroonians, whose focus encompasses both translation of the Bible and the more secular aspects of minority language development, linguistic research and local-language literacy.

Yet the two organisations are similar in two important ways: they are closely allied in their desire to see Cameroon's minority languages developed and recognised as viable means of learning and communication; and neither institution is represented directly as an actor in the formal education system. Their positions as stakeholders in the primary school classroom 'once removed' are thus similar, and for that reason these two national-level institutions are treated together here.

The philosophical orientation expressed by NACALCO's leaders is one of strong critique of the post-colonial education system in Africa. Prof. Maurice Tadadjeu, the founder and director of NACALCO and the original architect of PROPELCA (section 3.2.1), described NACALCO's perspective this way:
Basic education in Cameroon has been for all these years a systematic process of alienation. The fact that the child goes to school and has to learn in a different language, including the day-to-day things that he is playing with and using - nobody has measured the psychological damage of this system through which we have come (OI: Tadadjeu 4 Oct 02).

Recognising the government's recent efforts to reduce the degree of cultural alienation in the Cameroonian curriculum, Tadadjeu nevertheless maintains that there is still too much curriculum content from outside:

We are borrowing a world view, a model of what is perceived as the best of the world, and trying to impose it in a society that has been declared primitive and having nothing to offer the world (OI: Tadadjeu 4 Oct 02).

However, Tadadjeu's analysis of the effects of "colonial and neocolonial education systems" is not limited to Cameroon, but encompasses the possibilities for African development which comes from within the continent, not outside of it (Tadadjeu 1997:4). His vision for Africa in the 21st century is built on the principles of panafricanism, democratisation and the "valuing and modernising [of] geopolitical legacies" (Tadadjeu 1997:11) - including African languages.

On this philosophical basis, NACALCO personnel want to see a greater affirmation of local values and knowledge in the local primary classroom, and the establishment of a connection between a child's world at school and his or her place in the local community. This, they believe, may best be achieved through use of the local language - along with the colonial language - as medium of instruction. NACALCO's leaders do not by any means deny the critical importance of English or French to the educational enterprise, but they emphasise the necessity of a pedagogical and cultural grounding in the mother tongue as a prerequisite to successful learning. It is from this perspective that NACALCO facilitates the language development activities of language committees across Cameroon (section 3.2.2)

SIL's philosophical approach is rather different. As an organisation which focuses on the application of linguistics to literacy, education, community development, cultural identity and spiritual formation, SIL's approach tends towards the technical rather than the ideological. This may seem surprising, given the decidedly Christian orientation of SIL personnel, but the organisation's self-identification is that of technical expertise rather than mission-like proselytising or liberationist critique of post-colonial systems.

SIL personnel tend to see any use of the written mother tongue as a positive step towards establishing the viability of local languages. Thus SIL's goal for the local primary classroom consists of the students attaining a high degree of literacy skills in the mother
tongue by the time they leave school. As many SIL personnel are educators by profession, they also exhibit an instinctive rejection of any classroom experience that leaves the child more confused than enlightened. The use of local languages in the classroom is seen as beneficial in that it optimises the learning experience.

NACALCO and SIL are allied principally in their support for the local language committees. Both organisations provide financial support to the language committees, SIL's contributions for this purpose being generally channelled through NACALCO. Both organisations also provide linguistic and pedagogical consultant help, although SIL's role in this area has decreased in recent years. Both operate print shops as well, in which materials prepared by the language committees may be produced.229

As neither of these institutions has direct involvement in the primary school classroom, their educational goals are represented and broadened by the language committee's input into the local school. However direct evidence of NACALCO's influence may be seen in the PROPELCA teacher training content, and in the skills of language committee personnel who have benefited from NACALCO-sponsored training. Evidence of SIL's input may be seen in the linguistic approach taken to formulation of the alphabets and the teaching of reading. Both NACALCO and SIL authors feature in the PROPELCA textbooks and training aids.

6.4. Stakeholder interests in English-language and mother-tongue education

Having identified the principal stakeholders in the primary school classrooms of Bafut, Kom and Banso', this study now turns to an examination of how those stakeholders' interests are served by the two language options for education: English and the mother tongue.230

229 The SIL print shop's more sophisticated printing equipment is considered to produce higher quality materials but at a somewhat higher cost than the NACALCO-related print shop. More local printing options are also sometimes used by the language committees.

230 As has been mentioned, neither Pidgin nor French are considered here. Pidgin, although commonly used between people in the Northwest Province who speak different mother tongues, is not considered a permissible language for school. Rather, a more standard English dialect (called "Grammar") is used. French, though its presence in the national curriculum is increasing, is spoken by very few people in the Bafut, Kom or Nso' homelands and so its presence in these primary schools is quite limited.
6.4.1. Whose interests are served by the 'norm'?

Despite the growth in participation in PROPELCA programmes, English remains the default language of education in Bafut, Kom and Banso.231 The norm of English-only education works particularly to the advantage of certain stakeholders, whether present in the classroom or not.

Most obviously, the English-only classroom advantages those children who, upon arriving to grade one, already speak at least some English (section 6.1.3). A pre-school child in the Bafut, Kom or Nso' homeland has two possible means of learning English: from English-speaking parents, and/or at an English-language nursery school. In the first case, parents who teach English to their children at home tend to be those who are not only English speakers but are also particularly interested in their child's 'upward mobility' and success at school. In the second case, children who attend the two-year nursery school come from homes with financial means. Nursery school is currently optional in the school system, with individual nursery schools run by either government or denominational schools. However its tuition is typically higher than that for the lower primary grades (see Figure 6.2).

Thus, the child most advantaged by the exclusive use of English in the classroom is likely to have parents who prioritise school success, speak and value English, and possess discretionary income.232

Aside from the advantage of two years of exposure to English, the child who has been to nursery school has other advantages in the grade 1 classroom: he or she knows how to act in a classroom, is familiar with the props of formal education (the blackboard, slates, chalk, desks, exercise books and so on), and so spends much less time becoming acclimatised to the classroom culture. Evidence in this study showed this familiarity with classroom culture to be no small advantage to the grade 1 child (section 6.1.3).

The English-only classroom also works to the advantage of the teacher, in one sense; it establishes without question his or her knowledge capital, prestige and authority. It has already been mentioned that English is used by the teacher to discipline and berate the students. Not only so, but the teacher's competence and knowledge of the material goes

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231 NACALCO (2001) lists 11,338 PROPELCA students currently in the entire Northwest Province. Meanwhile, the population of primary school-aged children in the province in 1991 was estimated at 246,485 by Amin (1999:92) and can only have increased since that time. Thus, the PROPELCA programme of mother tongue education is reaching less than 5% of the students in Northwest Province.

232 Fishman, in his study of post-imperial English, (1996:624) claims that "early access to English is . . . related to and supportive of hierarchical social stratification". This claim has interesting sociopolitical implications for the English-language nursery schools of the Northwest Province, whose clientele are the children of the elite.
unquestioned when students are not themselves competent in the language in which that knowledge is mediated. The students in English-only classrooms of all grades were observed to be quieter, less interactive, and more tentative in their interactions than the students in classrooms in which the mother tongue was being used by the teacher.

Of course, the use of only English in class is even more in the interests of the teacher who does not speak the community language. Permitting use of the mother tongue by the students would reveal the teacher's own areas of ignorance, possibly damaging his or her authority in the eyes of the student.

Finally, the English-only classroom works in the interests of the elite who live outside the homeland. As discussed in sections 2.3.5 and 4.5, the elevated status of the elite in the eyes of the language community is due partly to their successful negotiation of English-language education. Any educational alternatives that ease the learning process for others in the language community or lessen disparities in academic performance could challenge the prestige which the elite have gained by succeeding in school.

6.4.2. Whose interests are NOT served by the 'norm'?

The most obvious loss incurred by means of the English-only classroom is that of the monolingual child. Patterns for poor learning must be set early in these classrooms. Basic skills are acquired superficially in a language that is not understood, and children learn not to expect to understand what is going on in the 'learning' environment. Content learning is deferred for years, as the children must focus on learning English before they can understand what is being taught. As a result, in what Komarek (2004:60) terms "the war for education for all or only for an elite", the non-English speaking child loses his or her right to "education for all".

Another group whose interests are not served by the English-only classroom are the parents of monolingual children. Whether or not they themselves speak English, their investment in the child's education often yields a meagre return. Another group whose interests are not served are those families that do not send their children to nursery school. They may not do so because there is no such school close to their home, or because they do not have the necessary disposable income, or even because they do not recognise the significant advantage that nursery school attendance gives to the primary student.
6.4.3. Reflection: interests and outcomes of the 'norm'

In considering the societal groups in Bafut, Kom and Banso' whose interests are and are not being served by the educational status quo, it is important to note that school norms reflect and reproduce the class, gender and ethnic relationships of the society (Giroux 2001:63). The network of power relations within and around the local community encompasses and dominates the local school also. It is therefore not surprising that those who benefit most from the current English-only school system are precisely those with power in the community: the wealthy, the English speakers, the teachers, and the elite. It is also not surprising that the current system is so well entrenched in the community.

However, according to this study the dominance of the English-only classroom has had at least two consequences for community expectations of primary education, as described in sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.4. First, the lack of attainability of academic achievement has caused parents to see the utility of schooling as much in terms of its capacity to teach character, conduct and general life skills, as for the academic knowledge gained - or not gained - by their children. Second, the belief has become widespread that primary education is 'enough' education, in the face of the failure of primary schools to consistently prepare children to succeed in higher education and secure subsequent waged employment outside the community. These fundamental attitudes about primary education are shaping educational outcomes in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands.

6.4.4. Whose interests are served by mother-tongue education?

In clear contrast to English-only education, education in the mother tongue serves the educational interests of monolingual children and their parents. The data indicate that the great majority of children entering school in the homeland are monolingual, and so this interest group is quite significant. Where the parents are themselves monolingual, mother-tongue use in school allows them to participate in the child's education. If the parents are not themselves monolingual, mother-tongue education still provides the means to maximise the cognitive development of their monolingual children, and allows them to become proficient in knowledge and skills of value to the parents (e.g. literacy, numeracy, reasoning abilities and so on).

Mother-tongue education also serves the interests of a certain segment of the teaching staff in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands, who believe that its enhancing effects on learning in the classroom make it a desirable teaching method. Many of the PROPELCA teachers describe their motivations for mother-tongue teaching in this way.
Using the mother tongue for learning is also in the interests of the community primary school due to its role in better examination performances (section 6.1.1). Mother-tongue learning also works to the advantage of classroom teachers who are concerned to improve the effectiveness of classroom learning.

In the language community itself, mother-tongue education can support the viability of traditional leadership. It is to the advantage to the community insofar as it undergirds the cohesion of the community, minimises alienation between parents and children and provides a bridge between the community and the school. For local churches which prioritise the use of written materials such as Scriptures, catechisms and hymnbooks in the local language, mother-tongue education produces readers for those materials.

Given the emphasis on promotion of local languages in the new Law on Education of 1998, mother-tongue education is evidently now in the interests of national and local government authorities concerned to apply this law. And finally, mother-tongue education serves the interests of the language committee, of NACALCO and of SIL, all of whom want to see the written mother tongue used as widely as possible.

6.4.5. Whose interests are NOT served by mother-tongue education?

Clearly, use of the mother tongue for classroom learning is not in the interests of those who have so far benefited from the discrepancy between English-speaking and non-English-speaking students in the community primary schools. Children who gain an advantage from operating in an English environment stand to lose that advantage in a mother-tongue learning environment.

Teachers in the mother-tongue learning environment do risk loss of the authority that attends their superior English ability. On the other hand, it is not likely that the prestige generally accorded to teachers in the homelands would be deeply affected by increased use of the mother tongue, particularly if the teachers themselves are seen to be fluent in written and oral mother tongue as well as English. Non-speakers of the local language would of course be at a serious disadvantage in such an environment. On a more practical level, teachers in the PROPELCA mother-tongue programme are required to take extra training and receive no additional salary for their efforts. It could thus be argued that mother-tongue education is not entirely in the interests of the primary teacher.
6.4.6. Reflection: interests and outcomes of mother-tongue learning

Considering those whose interests are served by mother-tongue learning, this education option works most obviously to the advantage of the relatively less powerful members of the language communities: the monolingual children and their (possibly monolingual) parents. Teachers who favour mother-tongue education risk diminishment of the prestige accorded to them in the English-only learning environment, and do so because they perceive other gains to be had with mother-tongue education. The power dynamics that characterise such beneficiaries as these would not seem to predict the current acceptance of the PROPELCA mother-tongue education programme.

However, a few of the groups which benefit from mother-tongue education are significantly more influential. The traditional leadership stands to gain from increased use of the written mother tongue, as discussed above, and this group provides a significant base of support for PROPELCA. If not for the long-term engagement of language committees with traditional leaders, it would be hard to imagine anything close to the current acceptance of the programme. In addition, the Ministry of National Education has now stated that mother-tongue education is in the best interests of the nation (sections 3.1.5.2 and 3.2.3). Given the support of these two centres of local community power - the Fons and the local government education authorities - for mother-tongue education, the optimism encountered among language committee members regarding its future is understandable.

Still, even given this array of people and institutions that stand to gain somehow from mother-tongue education, the question remains: does mother-tongue learning seem likely to affect the overall school success of students in the homelands? A significant body of anecdotal evidence exists in the homelands that the PROPELCA programme does result in better scores on year-end and national standardised examinations (section 6.1.1). However, increased success at primary school still does not necessarily make attendance at secondary school more likely. As was clear in the study, the principal constraints to attending secondary school are as much financial as academic. Until post-primary education becomes more accessible, it is doubtful that changes in language-related pedagogy at the primary level will have much effect on secondary school enrolments. As for increased success in secondary school, once entered, it is certainly possible that the same grounding in reading and thinking skills which make for improved learning in primary school will have a similar effect on any post-primary learning. However the current study provides no empirical insights into that possibility.
A related question has to do with whether greater primary school success will cause more young people to leave home and join the elite in the urban centres. Will the health and cohesion of the language community be strengthened or weakened by its children's improved achievement in the formal education system? Judging from the data gathered in this study (Appendices 1-3), PROPELCA alumni who join the elite class continue to support the customs of the homeland - including use of the language. Support from such an elite with financial and social resources could be of great benefit to the community. If, on the other hand, successful primary school students do remain in - or return to - the homeland, then the community will gain adult members who both respect their own culture and are able to deal with the technological and social processes of the wider world. In either case, concerns about the negative impact of greater school success on the language community seem unfounded in the case of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities.

6.5. Concluding thoughts on stakeholders, choice and local language maintenance

Two final issues follow on from the above discussion of stakeholders and interests in the primary school classroom. One has to do with how local reconfiguration of European-based formal education is establishing new 'norms' for such education. A related issue has to do with whether the current use of the mother tongue in schools may be legitimately interpreted as an act of resistance against the hegemonic ideologies which underpin the English-only education system.

6.5.1. 'Re-norming' European-based education

Analysis of the choices of African communities regarding formal education usually limits those choices to two. The community may respond by attempting to adopt the package of non-local knowledge and values that is European-originated education; or it may reject that ideological package and remain in a static state which is both economically disadvantageous and socially backward. Pressure towards the former is formidable. Due to its introduction to Africa by colonial powers, as well as its continued support by powerful national and international agents, education based on the acquisition of non-local (generally European) knowledge and values is understood to be the universal, value-free, normal educational package for African young people (Hoppers 1994:43). Local attitudes towards formal education are seen as responding to that universal norm, either in acceptance or rejection.
Analysis of local educational and sociopolitical choices often plays to this same perspective. 'Local' is equated with 'static', and 'global' is equated with 'dynamic' and 'progressive'. Local cultural realities are described in terms such as 'tradition' and 'culture maintenance'.

Historical analysis of local African response to colonial education also tends towards a dualistic interpretation: would Africans choose the traditional or the modern, the "hoe handle" or the "white collar" (cf. Sivonen 1995) options for education? Indeed it is easy to conceptualise educational choices in Africa, either now or in the past, in terms of a paradigm of acceptance of, or resistance to, the powerfully institutionalised set of knowledge and values that is European-based formal education. However, the problem inherent in looking at education choices in Africa as consisting of two distinct alternatives is that it frames the whole question of education in Africa in a way that privileges the normative label that has been allocated to Western education. One chooses the normal or 'something different'.

What is suggested here is an alternative analysis of education choices in local African communities, based on the view that 'normal' (European) formal education is itself the product of a particular historical and sociopolitical moment or series of moments throughout European society. The formal education system that came to Northwest Cameroon in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries was itself a product of British history, power, identity and politics. Thus formal education is not and never has been a context-free institution. The systems and skills that comprised formal education as it was introduced into Northwest Cameroon today were part of the sociocultural history of Britain and the West.

In its turn, the formal education system of Cameroon has been further contextualised by the fact of its implementation in this sociocultural environment. Thus, when local Cameroonian communities today interact with the formal education system it is this product they are interacting with, not some context-free standard for modern education and skills. Local attitudes and actions regarding formal education are not merely a matter of 'progress' via alignment with an educational norm or 'stagnation' in refusing that norm; rather, within the community and the nation, formal education is constantly being framed and re-framed in a larger context of change and interaction.

Of course the nature of formal education today remains politically loaded, as it has been since its earliest introduction to Northwest Cameroon. The shaping of education is still dominated by the powerful in the interests of their own economic and political concerns (Giroux 2001:73). Certain forms of knowledge - and the language in which they are framed - continue to function in the interests of specific, dominant ideologies. But it is important to
understand that everyone with a political stake in educational outcomes, no matter who they are, is also involved in the dynamic process of shaping education at local and national levels. Both resistance and compliance are evident across the entire range of stakeholders.

In this context the Cameroonian nation and community are engaging in the reconfiguration of European-based formal education, replacing it with norms more consonant with their own aims and values. Granted, this process is not clearly evident throughout the entire school system. In local communities of Northwest Cameroon, it is limited to the primary school; secondary and higher education continue to reflect largely non-local values and knowledge, buttressed by the imposing influence of those powerful institutions which first introduced it and continue to support it. In addition, the primary curriculum remains loaded with facts whose meaning is beyond a 12-year-old's ability to grasp - particularly when taught in a second language. Classrooms continue to feature significant amounts of arcane knowledge, and rural grade one students still intone incomprehensible British folk-nursery rhymes. The national curriculum also tends to reflect the knowledge and values most relevant to urban centres, but less helpful to the rural community's children.

Nevertheless this study shows that in Cameroon the European-based curriculum so long sponsored by non-Cameroonian interests is being unpacked at local as well as national levels.

This reconfiguration of formal education to fit national realities is evident in the current Law on Education (1998). The first revision of national education policy since independence, this law was formulated based on the input of the National Forum on Education convened in May 1995 (Ministry of National Education 1995). Those at the forum urged changes to the earlier education policy including: a curriculum adapted to the social, cultural and linguistic environment of the learner; the need to "develop a national culture as well as inculcate a scientific and technological culture" (p.11); and the need to "inculcate moral and civic values within the school system" (p.12). These priorities were built into the new law's top objectives of education in Cameroon. The revised national education policy represented the decision to replace the curriculum expectations inherited from the British colonial government with a Cameroonian national formulation of appropriate curriculum.

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233 At national level, these institutions include national government, denominational authorities, and private commercial interests. Internationally, institutions such as multilateral donor agencies and commercial entities maintain a significant interest in the development of education which prioritises global knowledge and values.

234 Heard in class 1, PS Manji, Bafut, 25 Feb 03: "Poo-see-ca, poo-see-ca, whe ha you bee? I been to Lan-dan to vee-sit da quee." Etc.
In the local communities of Northwest Cameroon a similar process is taking place. Stakeholders in the community are examining the social and cultural expectations of the national curriculum and replacing (some of) those that are inapplicable or inappropriate to the society with others that make sense to the local context, its values and its goals. Examples of the reconfiguring process at local levels include the reinterpretation by local communities of the purpose of primary school, and its perceived sufficiency as a base of education for community members. The purpose of primary education is as much about character and general skills-building as it is about academic formation. The fact that primary school leavers may have low fluency in English and literacy is frustrating to parents, but not of the highest importance.

This process of refashioning expectations of primary schooling is described by Giroux as being the crux of resistance in education. He argues that the school is a "social site where human actors are both constrained and mobilised" (2001:62), where both domination by the more powerful ideology and contestation of that domination are found. Giroux contends that the constraints imposed by the dominant culture in school are never complete, nor are they static. So the process by which local communities in Northwest Cameroon are redefining the purposes and aims of a primary school education represents a low-key, long-term process of contestation of the 'norms' of European-based formal education as handed down by international and national institutions. The hegemony of 'normal' formal education is not completely broken, as the ideologies which underpin its power (such as the prestige and value of English) remain to some extent part of the worldview of community members (Giroux 2001:103). However, the process by which parents are questioning the causes of school failure and reinterpreting the uses of school is itself an expression of contestation against the educational 'norms' formulated by more dominant agents.

The fact that this contestation of the curriculum is being done by the local stakeholders themselves is extremely important. Attempts at curriculum adaptation for rural communities is not a new phenomenon in Cameroon, with the most high profile example

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235 Palme (1994), in his study of the school expectations of rural Mozambican communities, referred to this as the "cultural retranslation of the school institution" (1994:140, emphasis in the original), which in the case he studied resulted in the school being marginalised from the community altogether.

236 Parents in Northwest Cameroon are not unique in their realisation that the European-based education system is inappropriate for their context. Malekela (1994) describes negative parental attitudes towards primary school in Tanzania in the early 1990s, noting that low primary school enrolments in 1992 were due to the fact that "primary education can no longer give one an opportunity in the modern sector" (Malekela 1994:125). As it offered few other desirable outcomes in the areas of moral s or basic skills, it was considered not worth the investment.
being the IPAR-sponsored education reform initiative of the early 1970s (discussed in chapter 3). Kale and Yembe (1980) make it clear that the lively local opposition to this well-resourced initiative lay not in its programmatic aspects, but in the perception on the part of local communities (including the elite) that this innovative new curriculum was decidedly not in the interests of their children. If refashioning of the hegemonic curriculum is to take place successfully, appropriate new content is not sufficient - those involved must be doing so on their own part and in their own time. The failure of the IPAR reforms might in fact have been predicted by the failure 50 years earlier to implement the very similar Phelps-Stokes recommendations.

6.5.2. Mother tongue in the primary classroom

To what extent is the mother-tongue education offered by the PROPELCA programme part of the process of contesting the language norms of the national formal education system? Is mother tongue use in schools gaining acceptance because the community is ready to further modify the language-related norms of education and refashion them to serve local priorities, or because PROPELCA enables students to achieve as dictated by standardised English-language examinations? Giroux's argument above shows that both these reasons could well play a part in acceptance of mother-tongue education, as the communities both contest and accept the cultural and linguistic dominance of formal education (Giroux 2001:66).

If PROPELCA does in fact represent a site of resistance to the dominant educational ideologies of language and culture, then clearly it is the language committee that is the primary agent of this resistance. However, to see the language committees of Bafut, Kom and Nso' as the leaders of some form of politico-linguistic opposition would be a mistake. Their aim - expressed over and over in this study - is simply to mobilise the community around promotion of the written mother tongue, although they are highly aware of the cultural and educational implications of that aim. They are also aware of the community's respect for the current form of formal education, and the prestige with which English and English-mediated knowledge are viewed. Indeed, as members of those same language communities, language committee members share that view to some extent.

Therefore the community mobilisation that language committees hope for can only be achieved as they identify themselves in a positive and non-conflictual fashion with the language community. The language committees are able to accomplish their aim only insofar as they are embedded in and draw their authority from the community. The language
committee's ethos is thus not characterised by the rhetoric of conflict, but of cooperation and networking - extending networking relationships even to national-level authorities and institutions if possible. For the language committee, cooperation and not conflict is overwhelmingly the preferred strategy for mobilisation. In this way collaborators - who wear individual human faces - can be engaged in relationship; 'the enemy' (the hegemonic linguistic and cultural norms of current formal education), on the other hand, has no face and so can be safely opposed.

An additional point to be made here concerns the strength to be found in the homogeneous Bafut, Kom or Nso' community. Giroux (2001:66) argues that "schools represent contested terrains . . . but the terrain is heavily weighted in favor of the dominant culture". However, when the terrain is the village primary school in the homeland, where the locally dominant culture is the indigenous one, the contest may not be so formidable. It is true that the power of the hegemonic norm is significant even in that environment where the school truly is an island of English language, evident in the perception of the teacher as mediator of 'the knowledge that counts'. There is no doubt of the power of English-medium formal education today in Northwest Cameroon. But as community members interact with the formal education system given them, it must be remembered, the sociopolitical contest it represents is carried out on their own ground. The integrity of the homogeneous minority-language community provides an environment in which linguistic and educational norms could be negotiated and transformed. This environment is the one in which language committees are able to gain support for their goal of promoting use of the written mother tongue.

Interestingly, members of all three language committees expressed their view that "the future is bright" for mother-tongue education, even predicting that eventually young people will be able to write their school leaving exams in the mother tongue (OI: Meliim 5 January 03). Giroux identifies this sense of optimism as being characteristic of the mentality of resistance:

inherent in a radical notion of resistance is an expressed hope, an element of transcendence, for radical transformation (Giroux 2001:108).

In this sense mother-tongue education could be seen as a site of resistance to the current dominance of English over the education system, buoyed by the hope that the written mother tongue will someday be fully accepted as a means of formal learning.
Chapter 7. Conclusion

This study contributes in numerous ways to the field of knowledge encompassing language, literacy and education in sub-Saharan Africa. In this chapter the methodological and programmatic character of these contributions is described. The study's contributions to an understanding of the relationship between local agency, educational choices and language maintenance outcomes, both as observed during the research period and as projected into the future, are also described. The chapter concludes with thoughts regarding some areas of further study which are suggested by the findings of this one.

7.1. Contribution of the research position

As described in Chapter 2, the personal research position giving rise to this study prioritises a critical approach, a plurality of perspectives, a culturalist interpretation of data, and a developing-world orientation. This research position has influenced the research methods and interpretation of the data.

A critical analysis of the historical, political and institutional processes involved in establishing the status quo for language and education has highlighted the interests of various parties in either maintaining or changing that status quo. It has also described the ways in which those with social and economic capital seek to conserve and increase that capital through their influence on language choices in education and society.

The plurality of perspectives sought in this study are reflected in the repeated broadening and corroboration of observed phenomena and interview data. The inclusion of three language communities facilitated this process, as did the choice of multiple types of survey and interview processes. Plurality of input was prioritised over examination of a more narrowly defined subject using more refined research instruments.

The culturalist approach to educational phenomena is a well known research characteristic, typified by researchers such as Serpell (1993) and Stephens (1998). It allowed me to interpret classroom events by the social and cultural context in which those events took place, rather than limiting my analysis to the data gathered in the classroom alone. This approach helped to clarify the impact of institutions, history and sociocultural phenomena outside the school on what took place in the classroom.
Finally, a developing-world orientation caused me to seek local interpretations of language and education alternatives. I sought to understand and use local terms, perspectives and patterns of communication as much as possible; these attempts kept reminding me of the need to focus on how the people around me saw the world. The highlighting of the effects of local agency in the study also arose from this determination to find and hear the voices of the language community members in their history and in the present day as well.

The result is a thesis that is textured with multiple voices and explores the confluence of social, historical, political and sociolinguistic influences on the phenomena under study. Further, the thesis highlights the issues of power and agency at play in the language and education choices being made in these communities. The application of such a methodological orientation in the specific research site of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities constitutes an original contribution to the field of language, literacy and education in sub-Saharan Africa.

7.2. Clues to sustainability

An important theme in the findings of this study is sustainability. The theme has two facets. One is the sustainability of minority languages themselves: how can use of minority languages be maintained? The other is sustainability of language development initiatives: how can programmatic efforts at maintaining and revitalising minority languages themselves be sustained long enough to have significant impact? And relevant to both facets, how does community ownership, that elusive goal of sustainable development, come about? What are the limits of community acceptance of language-based development initiatives, particularly when they impinge on formal education? This study provides some clues to answering these questions.

Educational choices and language maintenance have been interwoven in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language communities in unusual ways. The sustained programmes of mother-tongue promotion being implemented by BALA, the KLDC and the NLO are not the norm for African minority language communities, even though many of the contextual features are common to rural communities in Africa. Nor are these language committees themselves the sole source of the sustainability of these mother-tongue promotion programmes. As is mentioned in section 4.6.1, the language committee as a structure exists in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa, Benin and Senegal. Sometimes these committees are able to maintain effective local language development initiatives, but not always. The
sustained nature of the BALA, KLDC and NLO programmes are not solely due to the existence of these languages committees, even though the language committee in each case is a key institution. Other characteristics of the programme and its wider environment are also crucial.

The examination of this environment in this study has elucidated a number of contextual features. In addition to identifying those common to the educational and language use context of much of Africa, this study has discovered several less common features of the BALA, KLDC and NLO initiatives which may serve as clues for solving the broader problem of sustained promotion and vitality of Africa's minority languages.

7.2.1. Common features

The sociopolitical environment in which education is carried out in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities is certainly not unique. The prevalence and outcomes of formal education in the colonial language as described in this study are comparable across the African continent, as are the ambivalent attitudes towards minority languages held by influential institutions and individuals (section 2.3.2).

The cognitive impact of mother-tongue use on learning is also well known. Whatever the sociopolitical environment for such a programme may be, it is accepted that pedagogically sound instruction in the language a child speaks results in stronger learning outcomes than does instruction in a language less well known to the child (section 2.3.2). The connections seen in this study between mother-tongue-medium instruction and increased content understanding, greater classroom participation and improved examination results (sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.3), come as no surprise.

Yet another common feature of the language and education environment in Africa is the current popularity of the discussion regarding using African languages in formal education (section 2.3.4). The inclusion of local languages in formal education, particularly early primary education, has been a topic of interest across the African continent, as the language barrier is now being recognised as a significant obstacle to school success.

Linguistically, the challenges faced by Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' are not unique either (section 2.1.1). Minority languages of Africa are noted for the lack of development of their written form. Many hundreds of these languages have yet to be written at all. Others, such as Bafut, Kom and Nso', do have functional alphabets, but the number and type of publications available in these languages are very limited. Such linguistic underdevelopment, particularly compared with the development of the European language(s) being used in the country,
impedes the viability of these minority languages for use in wider written contexts, as well as the political credibility of incorporating them in an educational environment.

7.2.2. Features that contribute to sustainability of language development

Certain features of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' cases are less common to African minority language communities, and have been identified in this study as contributing particularly to sustainable language development.

**Cultural features.** This study suggests that certain cultural characteristics of a language community predispose it towards mother-tongue education and promotion of the mother tongue in general. The strongly cohesive cultures of Bafut, Kom and Nso' have provided fertile ground for mother-tongue promotion initiatives. The traditional sociopolitical hierarchy, still vital in the culture of the homelands, has favoured the maintenance and development of the mother tongue (section 4.1.3). The positive attitudes of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' people towards their cultures and languages are also a significant factor (section 5.1). These characteristics are not universal among minority culture communities around the continent.

**Homogeneous homelands.** In this study, the rural and semi-rural homeland settings are crucial to the achievement of the language committees' tasks (section 4.4). The cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands provide a protected environment in which the local language is maintained and passed on from generation to generation.237

In much of urbanised sub-Saharan Africa the homogeneity of language and culture no longer exists, and promoting oral and written use of the mother tongue(s) in those contexts would be difficult. However, where a minority language community exists which is culturally and linguistically homogeneous, there are grounds to expect that mother-tongue education could be successful. In the case of larger minority (‘minority’ in this case referring not to group size but to a language not recognised in current national education policy) languages of the continent, the homogeneous language community may easily encompass urban areas.238

237 This feature is also found in current Maori language revitalisation initiatives in New Zealand, which include the creation of sheltered linguistic environments (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Durie 1999) in the recognition that such environments are critical to minority language maintenance.

238 See section 1.4 on the possibility that so-called ‘urban’ areas may be linguistically homogeneous.
**A confluence of cooperating entities.** One important feature of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' cases, which is shared to some extent with other Cameroonian language communities participating in the PROPELCA programme, is that a mother-tongue promotion programme with the scope and vision of PROPELCA has been conceptualised, implemented and consistently supported over more than two decades (section 3.2.1). This speaks to the long-term, synergistic cooperation of key individuals such as the founders of PROPELCA, the local language committee leaders and local church leaders as well as long-term support from institutions such as NACALCO and SIL.\(^{239}\)

**Resources: finances, personnel, time.** Related to the above point, this study shows that effective implementation of mother-tongue development initiatives requires a variety of resources. Resources are needed for linguistic development of the target languages, preparation of appropriate written materials and training of the teaching force. Particularly in the case of mother-tongue education, sustained promotion of the programme among the stakeholders in the educational system is crucial. Parents and teachers are at least as likely to view mother-tongue education with suspicion as to welcome it (sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3). Despite the benefits which mother-tongue education can offer to a community, the community's suspicions are valid and must be addressed (section 4.6.4).

Such resources must come from some institution or network of institutions large enough to be able to contribute them on an ongoing basis. In the case studied here, as described above, several local and non-government institutions have until now been the primary support structures for PROPELCA. However, at some point government commitment to helping provide needed resources is essential to the programme's long-term sustainability. A permissive policy environment is not sufficient. That is why the current increase in government interest in PROPELCA (section 4.3; section 6.3.1) is received as such good news by the language committees and NACALCO.

Still, all of this takes time. It is no accident that the Bafut, Kom and Nso' mother-tongue development programmes, which are currently seeing a certain level of successful

\(^{239}\) This same feature also characterises a 20-year-old community literacy movement among the Pulaar of Senegal, which counts on the cooperative efforts of community leaders, national NGOs, the Senegalese government, and individual volunteers with a high level of commitment to the programme (Fagerberg-Diallo 2001).
community impact, have been operating for many years (sections 3.2.3-3.2.5). Effecting real change in the educational language practices of these communities has required a committed cadre of supportive personnel and institutions, and a willingness to invest resources over the long-term.

**Curriculum goals.** This study has noted two curriculum-related characteristics of the PROPELCA programme: its conformity with the national curriculum, and the self-imposed curricular limitations of the programme. Both of these characteristics have added to the acceptance of the programme at national and local levels.

The strategy of PROPELCA's architects has been to build on the learning goals of the national Cameroonian curriculum, concentrating on facilitating the success of minority-language children in achieving those goals (section 6.3.1). Such a cooperative stance is possible for PROPELCA because the flexibility in local interpretation of the national curriculum allows space for the implementation of the mother-tongue programme (section 3.2.1). Fitting the PROPELCA programme into the established curriculum responds to the predominant community desire that its children succeed in the current educational system. This decision to support rather than to challenge the national curriculum has positioned PROPELCA as an ally to the Ministry of National Education rather than an opponent. It also reassures local parents who are concerned that participation in PROPELCA might impair their children's performance on national examinations.

PROPELCA also demonstrates limited goals in terms of its use of the mother tongue and the official language. In lower primary (*formal* PROPELCA), the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction only through the first four years of school, decreasing in proportion to English as medium of instruction each year (Figure 5.6). Oral English is introduced, as a subject, from grade one. In upper primary school (*informal* PROPELCA), the mother tongue is only a medium of instruction for mother-tongue literacy (section 3.2.1).

Compared to other mother-tongue education models which utilise the mother tongue as medium of instruction throughout primary school or even into post-primary education (Baker 1996:182-3), this model gives a fairly limited role to the mother tongue.240 However,

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240 This somewhat limited approach to the use of local languages in formal education has also been an important aspect of the national education reform in the Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea, where over the past ten years more than 380 languages have been incorporated into the basic education system. Klaus (2003:109) notes that an important strategy of this reform has been to limit the number of grades in which indigenous languages are used. Transition to English in this programme occurs by grade three.
it also demonstrates a fairly pragmatic approach to the insertion of local language into Cameroonian national schooling, and a recognition of the privileged position of English-language education in the national education system. In order for PROPELCA to succeed, the local language must not be seen by either parents or education authorities to be challenging the *status quo* (section 7.3.1). Implementation is the priority goal for PROPELCA’s advocates: many African countries have policies which recommend the use of local languages in early primary school, but few actually have sustained programmes which implement that policy effectively.

*Local ownership and the limits of outside intervention.* External change agents have had crucial roles in the process of language development among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' (section 3.2.1), particularly at the initial stages. The University of Yaoundé I, NACALCO, the national government, SIL, and external funding agencies have all served over the years as extra-community agents of language development in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities. Their roles have been extremely important, and yet the value of such outside intervention has very real limits because the process can only be effective if it takes place via the advocacy and ownership of local actors.

In the cases of Bafut, Kom and Nso', the responsibility and authority for implementation of mother-tongue promotion activities quickly devolved onto the respective language committees (section 4.6.1). As those committees are functioning today, they are autonomous entities comprised solely of language community members. Awareness of the language committees' activities is growing in the local community, and support by community members is slowly increasing. Yet even so, the leadership of at least BALA and the KLDC continue to encounter the local notion that the entire mother-tongue promotion programme is being sustained as an 'outsider' initiative; a perception that impedes the growth of local support for the committees' activities (section 4.6.1). Thus, although intervention by outside agencies and individuals has been key to the establishment of the language committees and their programmes, the involvement of such outsiders also challenges the committees' attempts to build a sense of ownership by the community.

The involvement of these non-local agents has declined over the years (section 4.6.2), however. External consulting and advocacy work has decreased as the language committees

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gain the capacity to take on the technical aspects of curriculum development and preparation of pedagogical materials, and the credibility to speak to local authorities on behalf of mother-tongue education. External funding has also decreased sharply in recent years, forcing the language committees to increase their efforts to find additional financial support locally.242

The language committees recognise that, despite the crucial place of facilitative national-level policy frameworks and external expertise, responsibility for minority language maintenance and development ultimately has to be taken by members of the language community, because the language belongs to them. Outside agents can do much to facilitate language maintenance and development: orthography development, training, and promotional activities both within and outside the language community. But ultimately language development cannot be owned or sustained by any other than the speakers of that language. Minority language advocates from outside the community cannot by themselves bring about the revitalisation or maintenance of a minority language, no matter the level of resources and enthusiasm which they bring. Language maintenance - or loss - is a daily choice, made by the speakers as they live and interact in their society.

7.2.3. Keys to the continuity of language development initiatives

The confluence of these 'uncommon' features in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities constitute the source of sustained language development. Specifically:

- the unusually strong attachment of these language communities to their traditional culture and language, and the existence of homelands to provide support to both;

- the cooperation between stakeholder institutions with interests in seeing use of the mother tongue in formal education, and the variety of resources provided by each;

- the PROPELCA approach to instruction in the primary classroom, which minimises disruption of the national curriculum and maintains a nonthreatening posture towards national education authorities;

- the development of effective local advocacy and implementation, in the form of the language committees.

242 The decline in funding has been a 'good news/bad news' situation for the language committees; they find it very difficult to make ends meet, yet at the same time the shortfall reinforces their ability to show their reliance on the community for support.
The PROPELCA programme, along with the language committees' other initiatives in literacy, publications and advocacy, owe their current existence, and presumably their sustainability in future, to this combination of features.

7.3. Local agency, education choices and minority language maintenance

This study has found that local agency among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities, expressed as community choices about the kind of education its children will receive, has had dual outcomes. On one hand, these education choices have resulted in the prevalence of a curriculum which does not serve the educational needs of the majority of the language community well. On the other hand, the increased willingness of parents to choose the mother-tongue education alternative over English-only education is resulting in strengthened local language use and affirmation of local community culture. Closer examination of these dual outcomes is in order.

7.3.1. Educational choices and education effectiveness

The education choices made by Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities over the years have been shaped by the communities' beliefs and values concerning formal education (section 3.1.6), and have exhibited both compliance with and resistance to the wishes of educational authorities. Most notably, resistance to official attempts to adapt curriculum to what appear to be local needs and capacities has been consistent and ultimately successful (sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5.2).

These choices, made within the national educational environment, have resulted in the current state of education in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' homelands. Primary education is delivering a modicum of academic knowledge and a marginal level of English fluency (section 6.1.1). Secondary school and higher education are available only to a limited number of community children, for both economic and academic reasons (section 6.1.1). The limited level of English literacy acquired in the communities' primary schools, and their association of literacy with English language, has contributed to the limited social uses of literacy (sections 5.4.3 and 5.5.1).

However despite the limitations of this system, the prestige of English and English-language education remain high in these communities (section 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). This esteem for an English-language academic curriculum (to use Ball's term, section 3.1.6), highlights one of the ironies of this expression of local agency: the very education system which is prized by local citizens (and has been for decades) prioritises non-local knowledge and
values, contributes to the development of a small educated elite (sections 4.5 and 6.1.1) rather than opening higher education to the majority of the population, and is highly detrimental to local culture and values (Ball 1983; the Nuffield Foundation 1953; section 3.1.6).

Language community members do appear to have found a way to reconcile their belief in the value of this academic education with the reality that, for most children of the language community, such education does not lead to higher education and hence to salaried employment. This study indicates that parents have reconceptualised the purpose of primary education, so that it is valued not primarily for its role in accessing secondary and higher education, but for its role in socialising children to the community (section 6.4.3). Primary school is supposed to teach a child to behave well and to work well, along with literacy skills and general knowledge (section 6.1.2). If a child does not for some reason continue on to further education, that child is nevertheless considered to have sufficient schooling to become a productive member of the community. Thus, the failure of the academic side of primary school is compensated for by its effectiveness in socialising children to be productive members of the community. This represents a significant change in the Cameroonian's historical expectations of schooling as a place where outside values and non-local knowledge are gained (sections 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.6). Paradoxically, however, local esteem for the English-language education system as a whole does not appear to be declining.

With PROPELCA, the educational choices before these communities are now widening to include the alternative of instruction in the mother tongue, either as subject or as medium. Crucially, this educational alternative uses the same curriculum as its English-only counterpart, and fits into the same schedule of examinations. Furthermore, it is increasingly being seen to enhance the ability of children to succeed in primary school examinations, implying the enhancement of their learning (section 6.1.1). Parents and community members who are familiar with PROPELCA are for the most part satisfied with the education it provides (section 6.1.2).

Even so, the PROPELCA mother-tongue education programme faces opposition to the extent that it is perceived as a threat to the educational aspirations of community members. The legitimacy of local languages in the learning process continues to be questioned by those who are not familiar with the programme, and fear of losing valuable opportunities for English school success inhibits parents' acceptance of PROPELCA. This reluctance to risk the child's educational future provides further evidence of the paradox described above: although the purpose of primary school itself has been reconceptualised as
substantially non-academic, the prestige and desirability of English-language academic success continue to influence parents' aspirations for their children.

7.3.2. Education choices and language maintenance

The key question driving this research is whether, and how, educational choices by Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities is related to maintenance of these languages (sections 1.1 and 1.3). The relationship between the educational choices of language community members and maintenance of the Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' languages is demonstrated in three ways in this study.

The most direct indication of such a relationship has to do with the impact of the PROPELCA programme on both oral and written uses of the mother tongue. Section 5.3 describes various facets of language development which were shown to occur in the context of the PROPELCA programme. The choice of a PROPELCA class over the English-medium alternative for a child thus facilitates maintained oral use and amplifies written use of the mother tongue.

Another aspect has to do with the institutions whose interests were shown to lie in maintained use of the mother tongue and increased use of its written form. Traditional authorities, government education authorities, local churches, the language committees, and NGOs such as NACALCO and SIL, each for their own reasons (sections 5.2.2, 6.4.4 and 6.4.6), are interested in successful mother-tongue development. This institutional support strengthens the viability of PROPELCA as an educational option, with its attendant effects on maintenance of the Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' languages.

Third, this study shows that the majority of uses of literacy (in any language) in the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities are contained within two silos of literacy practice: church and school (section 5.5.2). Both of these silos of literacy practice are also sites where interest in, and the use of, written mother tongue occur (sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). Thus the 'normal' literacy practices in these communities appear to be open to the introduction of written mother tongue through education, which in the case of PROPELCA is shown to contribute to maintenance of the language.

The connection between mother-tongue use in primary schools and maintenance of that mother tongue thus centres around implementation of the PROPELCA programme and its associated initiatives in literacy, publications and advocacy, buttressed by both institutional interests and the social environment for literacy practice.
The PROPELCA mother-tongue education programme, although limited in its impact as yet, shows potential for providing a model of education which values local language and knowledge and at the same time facilitates learning of the academic curriculum. This study has shown that the implementation of PROPELCA, along with mother-tongue literacy classes, the production of written mother-tongue materials, and the local advocacy work of the language committees, has very real linguistic effects on maintenance and development of the local language (section 5.3). The programme also helps to strengthen the community-school connection, helping parents to understand and interact with what their children are learning (section 6.4.4). PROPELCA, along with the language committees' other programmes for the promotion of the written mother tongue, is demonstrating the capacity for establishing biliteracy among the Bafut, Kom and Nso' populations (section 5.6.3). However this study also shows that, as has always been the case, the choice for - or against - such an education alternative resides in the community.

7.4. Education choices and language maintenance in the future

Recognising the risks of attempting to read the future, this study nevertheless provides grounds for some informed predictions regarding the future of the phenomena studied. These predictions touch on international, national and local aspects of the issues.

7.4.1. Economic aspects of language maintenance and education

As has been seen in this study, economic conditions in the language community have a significant impact on minority language development initiatives. This impact extends from text availability (sections 5.4.2 and 5.6.2) and development (sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2) to the training and maintenance of teachers for literacy and mother-tongue education programmes (section 6.1.3) and the likelihood of children attending school (section 6.1.1). It is difficult to see how the production and use of written mother-tongue text may be significantly increased in these communities under their current straitened economic circumstances.

At the same time, it also seems clear that the weak economic environment strengthens the use and relevance of the mother tongue insofar as it encourages the population to remain, or return, to the homelands. Farming in the Northwest Province yields a subsistence living at least, whereas a life in more urban areas without access to farms can be precarious. Young people who leave the homeland seeking schooling or employment, but do not find it, tend to return (section 4.4.2). Thus the poor economic environment is in some ways helping to keep the homeland viable (section 1.4.1).
The dependence of the homeland environment on such economic conditions could lead to the conclusion that it is a fragile and unstable situation. However, as discussed in section 1.4.1, little significant economic change is on the horizon at this time. Indeed, if anything the economic prospects and educational opportunities which draw young people away from the homeland communities of Northwest Cameroon are weaker now than they have been in decades past.

As a result, this dual advantage and disadvantage of the current difficult economic conditions appear likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future. In this case, specific external intervention in the form of financial aid to the language development initiatives will have a significant impact on whether these initiatives can remain financially viable or not.

7.4.2. Language policy: An ideological shift?

Cameroonian national policy on language and education has been influenced by the favourable view of local culture and language that characterises the current international climate,243 as well as by local and national-level advocacy for local language development. The new primary curriculum of 2000 features "national, cultures" as a subject (Ministry of National Education 2000), as rhetoric about validating the distinctives of Cameroonian culture and language (Biya 1986) is finding an outlet in practical action.

However, the repositioning of curriculum content and objectives in Cameroon is taking place in a national and global environment which places very high value on international languages, particularly English. This linguistic environment is supported by the major external aid agencies as well as global commercial concerns, for whom linguistic diversity has little appeal. The dominance of English and French in the arenas of education and employment is thus not at all threatened by the kind of attention which local languages are receiving in Cameroonian schools today.

243 As a predominantly francophone nation and government, Cameroon is particularly susceptible to the influence of French policy. Albaugh (forthcoming) argues that French policy towards African languages has shifted radically in the last 15 years, due to an increasing awareness that African children in French-speaking schools were not in fact learning to speak French sufficiently well. The central place of the French language in these supposedly 'francophone' nations was perceived by French scholars to be under threat; indeed, francophone linguists worried about the domination of French by the English language throughout the world, and believed that steps must be taken to prevent it.

Albaugh marks the publication of Chaudenson's Vers une Revolution Francophone? (1989), and its distribution at the 1989 Francophonie Summit, as the beginning of a move towards a strategy of encouraging the use of local languages in school of francophone Africa in order to ensure better learning of the official language. The positive outcomes of Wambach's pilot programme of la pedagogie convergente (complementarity between mother tongue and second-language learning) in Mali in 1993 caused this programme to be recommended for much of the rest of francophone Africa.
Furthermore, although local perceptions of the role of primary education seem to focus on its utility to the local community, beliefs in the role of education overall in modernisation, social mobility and economic gain seem unchanged (section 7.3.1). Local understanding of the role of English in that process remains unchanged as well (section 6.1.2). As long as national examinations are given in English, not the mother tongue, and as long as students need English in order to succeed in school, English will continue to be seen as both the goal and the means of formal education in the Northwest Province.

Could development and recognition of the written mother tongue ever reach the point where national examinations may be taken in those languages, or where those languages are themselves examined subjects? The language committees seem to think so (section 6.5.2). Such a move could not be originated locally, but would require a mandate from the central government. Certainly the elevation of local languages to this use would be the seal of their having 'arrived' as legitimate languages of education, and would increase the willingness of parents to see their children taught in those languages. However the equalisation of educational opportunity represented by such a move would just as certainly be opposed by members of the local elite who depend on limited educational access to maintain their own and their children's position in society. A national-level decision to move this way would have to arise out of in a profound ideological shift towards legitimising linguistic diversity and establishing Cameroonian languages as equal to English and French.

The current supportive policy environment in Cameroon for local language development initiatives is a positive change for language development advocates, certainly, but only time will tell whether it signals this more profound ideological shift towards linguistic diversity or the reshaping of the goals and objectives of education. The current sympathy towards "national cultures" does provide a space for language development initiatives to operate locally, providing positive cultural and educational outcomes at the local level. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of local language use in primary schools of Northwest Cameroon appears to have less to do with innovative national language policy than with conducive local environments and the drive of local advocacy groups to push the implementation of national policy as far as they can.

244 The influence of French language policy as described by Albaugh (preceding footnote) could have long-lasting effects, but it is by no means certain in my mind that an ideological shift is actually taking place in the Cameroonian policy environment.
7.4.3. Local languages and international education goals

The current expression of the international community's concern for education in the developing world is framed primarily by two statements: the World Education Forum's Dakar Framework of 1990;245 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set and agreed to in 1990 by international agencies, external funding bodies, and national governments around the world (UNDP 2003). In both of these statements, the goal of universal primary education (UPE) figures highly.

For many African countries, the role of language choice will be crucial in meeting these educational goals. This fact has been recognised by various international-level bodies: for example, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report for 2004246 stressed the importance of providing linguistically and culturally appropriate education options for minority peoples. The point was stressed again by NGO and academic representatives at the Parallel Symposium of the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, who argued that education in the mother tongue is key to achieving UPE (15CCEM Parallel Symposium 2004:17). However, such voices have not been widely heard in the international education arena (Robinson 2004: 45).

Were the issue of local language use in formal education to be recognised more widely as a key element of achieving these international education goals, the influence of multilateral and bilateral donor agencies could be brought to bear on national governments to support mother-tongue education initiatives with a far higher degree of resource commitment. As it is, the encouragement of UN agencies alone has so far not been enough to put mother-tongue education squarely onto the international education agenda.

It is also the case that assumptions about the universally advantageous nature of mother-tongue education are disputed. Language of instruction questions continue to be controversial, as different sociolinguistic and political circumstances are seen to require different solutions to the language question (Pennycook 2002; Wagner 1998; Ricento 2000:7). In addition, language is just one of the many factors affecting instructional quality and education effectiveness in African contexts, including Cameroon. The complexity, political implications and financial cost of implementing mother-tongue education (section 2.3.5) can make it one of the less attractive means for carrying out education reform. Thus, as

long as international funding agencies do not supply additional motivation by urging action, this means of improving quality of, and access to, education is not likely to be assiduously attended to by national governments.

7.4.4. The future of minority languages

As advocates of minority language maintenance recognise, the best hope for the future of minority language communities is found in bi- or multilingualism. Not only so, but this study shows that biliteracy is also a key aspect of maintaining minority languages (section 7.3.2). For the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities, maintenance of a bilingual and biliterate (with English)\textsuperscript{247} environment will require ongoing institutional support for the use of the mother tongue. As section 5.6 shows, the introduction of written mother tongue into the church and school silos of literacy practice is already taking place with such institutional support. This activity must continue, and if possible be amplified by the establishment of new silos of mother-tongue literacy practice, and the involvement of institutions that support them.

Survival of any minority language depends, paradoxically, on both its dynamism and its stability. A language whose use is confined to traditional culture is of limited value to the language community of today; the mother tongue needs to be able to express new concepts and incorporate new ideas. However the marginalised nature of many minority languages makes them highly vulnerable to being swept away altogether by changes in language practice. They lack the dynamic capacity of a majority language like English, which can change and flex without risk to its sustained use.

Minority language development efforts must thus concentrate on both developing new uses and vocabulary for the language, and preservation of its unique linguistic and social characteristics. The language development activities of the Bafut, Kom and Nso' language committees aim to do both (sections 4.6.2 and 5.3).

7.4.5. Literacy, language and social uses of written text

This study has demonstrated the key role that the written mother tongue can play in the development and maintenance of minority languages. It has also shown that, for the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities at least, literacy practices in any language are limited to two primary contexts (section 5.5.2), which themselves developed around the use of English-

\textsuperscript{247} More accurately, the ideal will be multilingualism, as Pidgin and French are also part of the linguistic context. However at this point, they do not influence the writing practices of the Bafut, Kom or Nso' communities.
language text. Mother-tongue literacy practices, particularly the writing practices, are thus largely derivative from English-language practices (section 5.5.5).

This study has also shown that literacy skills are highly dependent on fluency in the language being read. This fact is well recognised in research on language and literacy (Yamashita 2002; Cummins 2000:79), and is borne out in the primary classrooms observed in this study (section 6.1.3). However the crucial dependence of skilled reading on language fluency has informed neither the traditional English-medium classroom teaching nor the community's view of literacy (section 5.1).

If literacy in the mother tongue could be de-linked from English-language literacy, however, it is possible that the current social understandings and uses of literacy would broaden. Literacy could be associated with full comprehension rather than with the limited, traditionally English-language contexts in which it has been traditionally taught and practised. If enough readable, relevant mother-tongue literature were available, and if the number of mother-tongue literates continued to grow as it is now, it is conceivable that this dissociation of literacy from the English language could take place in the minds of language community members. The results of this dissociation could conceivably include expansion of the uses of literacy within the existing silos of literacy practice, and an increase in the number of silos of literacy practice as well.

7.5. Areas of further study

The findings of this study bring up a number of questions which merit further investigation. These questions relate to confirming or expanding the findings on the Bafut, Kom and Nso' communities, as well as to comparative investigations with other language communities.

It should first be noted that two important topics related to this current study are in fact concurrently being studied in other research. One topic is the impact of the international language policy environment on Cameroonian national policy, which - as has been mentioned in section 7.4.2 - is being studied by Albaugh (2003; forthcoming). Another area of research which complements this study is that of the social uses of literacy in the church context of the language communities, referred to in section 5.5.2 and being carried out by Joel Trudell (2004; forthcoming). The findings of these two studies should broaden the understanding of the phenomena examined in this current study.
One of the most obvious questions arising from this study is whether the oft-repeated notion that PROPELCA students perform better than their non-PROPELCA peers on national examinations can be statistically confirmed. In the present study, people's belief that PROPELCA facilitates exam success, and how they acted on that belief, was of more relevance than whether their belief was actually true. That belief was in fact found to have a certain evidential basis (section 6.1.1); however, a rigorous investigation of the extent to which PROPELCA actually affects examination performance would be an important next step. Collaborative research with the sub-divisional education officers in Kom (mentioned in section 6.1.1) on their pilot PROPELCA schools might be particularly productive.

Nevertheless, as Skutnabb-Kangas (2004) has pointed out, it should be remembered that experimental evidence regarding the efficacy of mother-tongue instruction for minority children is not lacking. However the behaviours of parents, teachers and other decision makers demonstrate that such evidence is not usually determining policy or preference.

Another area where investigation would be helpful is the relative impact of a differing number of years of participation in PROPELCA on children's performance and language attitudes. Where PROPELCA is not offered in all of the first four primary classes, it would be interesting to know which benefits accrue with varying extents of participation. Additionally, the impact of PROPELCA on students' later vocational choices would also be a useful line of investigation, as would the impact of urbanisation and migration on the relevance of mother-tongue education in the homeland community.

Outside of the three communities studied here, examination of the impact of language committees in other Cameroonian language communities, both within the anglophone zones of Cameroon and in the francophone areas, would provide a broader understanding of the realities of language maintenance in Cameroon. The impact of French influence on language attitudes and use in francophone Cameroun would be particularly interesting, including issues such as Albaugh's as described above. Investigations like these would allow an understanding of the distinctive influences of local and regional culture as well as programmatic influences on local reception of mother-tongue education. In addition, there would be profit in comparative study of other situations in Africa where educational choices and minority language maintenance intertwine: for example, countries such as Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Mali and Eritrea, which have made serious efforts at establishing local languages as media of instruction; and countries such as Ghana, Chad and Nigeria, where the debate on language of instruction continues.
7.6. Conclusion

The findings of this study on educational choices and language maintenance describe the component elements of an environment which can support sustainable language development, particularly by means of language-related choices in the primary school. The findings also argue for the pivotal importance of local choice in shaping both educational trends and language use patterns.

I believe that the findings described and interpreted here will strike a familiar chord with those experienced in language and education questions in minority communities of the developing world. This study also invites comparison studies of how the same issues are played out in other language communities. Both as a stand-alone study and as a basis for further comparative work, it is hoped that this study will promote understanding of the complex relationship between educational choices, language choices and sociopolitical environment in sub-Saharan Africa.
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Appendices

Table of Contents

Appendix 1. PROPELCA Alumni Survey (PAS) questions.................................................. 292
Appendix 2. PROPELCA Alumni Survey respondents.......................................................... 293
Nso' respondents (PAS:N)
Kom respondents (PAS:K)
Appendix 3. Responses to PROPELCA Alumni Survey questions 6-10.................. 294-296
Appendix 4. Primary classroom observations (CO).......................................................... 297
Appendix 5. Other observations: ..................................................................................... 298
Language committee meetings (LCO)
Teacher training events (TTO)
Appendix 6. Parent interview series (PI) questions......................................................... 299
Appendix 7. Parent interview series respondents............................................................... 300-301
Bafut parents (PI:B)
Kom parents (PI:K)
Nso' parents (PI:N)
Appendix 8. Responses to parent interview questions A-D........................................... 302-307
Appendix 9. Semi-structured group interviews: upper primary school children (GIC) 308-309
Bafut children (GIC: Bafut)
Nso' children (GIC: Nso')
Responses
Appendix 10. Other group interviews (open-ended).......................................................... 309
Kom literacy supervisors (GIS)
Kom PROPELCA teacher trainees (GIT: Kom)
Nso' PROPELCA teacher trainees (GIT: Nso')
Appendix 11. Individual interviews: listing .................................................................. 309-311
Appendix 12. Correspondence (email).............................................................................. 312
Appendix 13. Distribution of PROPELCA schools in Cameroon by province, 2001........ 312
Appendix 14. List of linguistic works on the Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' languages............ 313
Appendix 15. Political structure of the Republic of Cameroon ........................................ 315
Appendix 16. Text sample pages ...................................................................................... 316
Figure 1. Bafut transition primer.............................................................................. 316
Figure 2. Kom primer .................................................................................. 317
Figure 3. Bafut newsletter no. 4 ................................................................. 318
Figure 4. Handout of Old Testament readings, Lamnso'.............................................. 319
Figure 5. BALA pocket calendar........................................................................ 320
Figure 6. KLDC pocket calendar ..................................................................... 320
Figures 7 and 8. Nso' calendar......................................................................... 321
Appendix 17. Maps..................................................................................................... 322-325
Map 1. Republic of Cameroon........................................................................... 322
Map 2. Language map, Northwest and Southwest Provinces......................... 323
Map 3. Political map of Northwest Province..................................................... 324
Map 4. The chiefdoms of Northwest Province................................................. 325
Appendix 1. PROPELCA Alumni Survey (PAS) questions

Survey of PROPELCA alumni: Kom

Factual and outcome questions

1. Name  Gender  Age  Mother tongue
   Primary school attended for PROPELCA
   Where have you lived since finishing primary school?
2. How was Kom used in your primary school?
   Teacher spoke Kom
   Learned to read from Kom primers
   Learned from math book in Kom
   Students spoke Kom to each other freely
   Learned about your own culture in Kom

3. What education have you had?
   Highest primary grade  Where ______ language ______
   Highest secondary grade  Where ______ language ______
   Tertiary (how far)  Where ______ language ______
   Teacher training  Where ______ language ______
   Vocational/other  Where ______ language ______

4. What occupations have you had since completing school?
   (Name all previous and current occupations)
5. Do you know what has become of other students who were in the PROPELCA classes with you? What are their names? What are they doing now? Where do they live?

Attitude questions
6. What were the advantages for you in attending PROPELCA classes? How has it helped you?
7. What were the disadvantages for you in attending PROPELCA classes?
8. Do you send your children to a school that has PROPELCA classes? Why or why not?

Literacy questions
9. What do you read these days?
   What you write  Purpose  How often  What language

10. What do you write these days?
    What you write  Purpose  How often  What language

Cultural questions
11. What customs, characteristics or traditions of the Kom people are unique to them? (political, social, family, economic, religious) What makes someone a “Kom person” (as opposed to a French person, or an American, or a Nigerian)?
12. Do you share those customs or characteristics or traditions? Which ones?
13. Have you given up any of these customs or traditions? Why or why not?
Appendix 2. PROPELCA Alumni Surveys (PAS) respondents

**PROPELCA alumni survey respondents: Nso’ (PAS: N)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ed. level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 01</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>A levels</td>
<td>Farming, trading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 02</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 5</td>
<td>Cook, trader, farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 03</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>O levels</td>
<td>Baker, weaving, trading, farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 04</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Prov. Cap.</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Mechanic, farming, trading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 05</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Computer training, teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 06</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Div. cap.</td>
<td>A levels</td>
<td>Farming, typing, clerical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 07</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>U. Buea</td>
<td>Science/computer teacher, student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 08</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Student, U. Yaoundé I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 09</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>U. Buea</td>
<td>Accounting student, teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 5</td>
<td>Driver, farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 11</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher, farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Prov. cap.</td>
<td>Nurse's trng</td>
<td>Nurse, business, computers, farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>A levels</td>
<td>Hair dressing, business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Prov. Cap.</td>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>Housewife, trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>Farmer, trader, politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso’ 16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Div. cap.</td>
<td>Typing school</td>
<td>Typist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROPELCA alumni survey respondents: Kom (PAS: K)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ed. level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kom 01</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 02</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>Housewife, farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 03</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 04</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Div. cap.</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 05</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Div. cap.</td>
<td>Form 6</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 06</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 07</td>
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<td>Prov. Cap.</td>
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<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kom 08</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Prov. Cap.</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>Builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 09</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 6</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Prov. Cap.</td>
<td>Form 6</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Cocoa farmer, farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Prov. cap.</td>
<td>Form 6</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Div. cap.</td>
<td>Form 6</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Housewife, farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>Cocoa farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 5</td>
<td>Cocoa buyer, student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Form 6</td>
<td>Farmer, video club manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom 20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>farmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

248 "Prov.cap." refers to the provincial capital, Bamenda. "Div. cap." refers to divisional capitals of Fundong in Kom and Kumbo in Banso'.
Appendix 3.
Responses to PROPELCA Alumni Survey questions 6-10

Question 6: What were the advantages for you in attending PROPELCA classes? (How has it helped you?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am now able to speak, read and write it</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helped me to learn English and/or French</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned to read and write the mother tongue</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitated classroom learning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It allowed me to express myself freely in the mother tongue</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed access to mother-tongue texts (reading or writing)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned about traditional culture</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed it</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inexpensive textbooks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 7: What were the disadvantages for you in attending PROPELCA classes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough emphasis on learning English</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient mother-tongue texts or reading materials</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridicule from non-PROPELCA students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject matter was not broad enough</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers not well enough trained</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue is unimportant for the future</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 8: Would you, or do you send your child to PROPELCA classes? Why or why not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I have no children yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

249 Multiple answers from one respondent were typical, so that more than 36 responses are listed here.

250 Unlike the previous question, respondents gave only one answer each to this question.
Why? [No negative answers]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Number of responses(^{251})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To understand and learn better</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know the mother tongue well</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to read and write mother tongue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to read other languages</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is close</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The class is interesting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know traditional culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of responses to questions 9 and 10: "What do you read and what do you write these days?"

[Asked what they currently read and write, and in which language, the survey respondents described the following categories of written text which they read or write daily, weekly, monthly or less often. Below are their answers in terms of total reported instances of reading and writing in each language, regardless of frequency.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of written text use</th>
<th>Reading English</th>
<th>Writing English</th>
<th>Reading mother tongue</th>
<th>Writing mother tongue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal learning</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work (not school-related)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News periodicals</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL INSTANCES</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{251}\) Not all respondents who answered in the positive gave reasons for their answer.
Question 11-13: Cultural questions: What customs or traditions are unique to your people? Do you share those customs or traditions? Which ones? Have you given up any of these customs or traditions? Why or why not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you share the traditional customs you have mentioned?</th>
<th>&quot;Yes&quot; or &quot;some of them&quot;</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>&quot;No&quot;</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nso'</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you given up any of these traditional customs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>(62.5)</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>(37.5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(80)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional customs mentioned</th>
<th>Which do you share?</th>
<th>Which have you given up?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional clothing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food typically eaten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial songs and dances</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death celebrations and funeral rites</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional religion, sacrifices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language spoken</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage customs (inc. polygamy)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inheritance customs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret societies and traditional titles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House construction styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional leaders, respect for leaders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional medicine</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All customs mentioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the customs mentioned</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4. Primary classroom observations (CO)

Classes observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School, Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>PROPELCA</th>
<th>Subject(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G.S.252. Baingeh, Kom</td>
<td>6 March 03</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 March 03</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 March 03</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Kom reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.S. Balikumato, Kom</td>
<td>6 Feb 03</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Kom reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 Feb 03</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Religion, Kom reading, general knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.S. Ngwainkuma, Kom</td>
<td>19 March 03</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.N.S. Ngwainkuma, Kom</td>
<td>19 March 03</td>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.S. Njinikijem, Kom</td>
<td>6 Feb 03</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Kom reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.N.S. Mambu, Bafut</td>
<td>4 March 03</td>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.S. Mambu, Bafut</td>
<td>4 March 03</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Bafut reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.S. Manji, Bafut:</td>
<td>12 March 03</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 March 03</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Bafut reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 March 03</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Bafut reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 March 03</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Bafut grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.S. Manji, Bafut</td>
<td>25 Feb 03</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Language/ reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 Feb 03</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Bafut reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 Feb 03</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Bafut reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.S. Nsoh, Bafut</td>
<td>4 March 03</td>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Maths, Bafut reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 March 03</td>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Hygiene, maths, Bafut reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 March 03</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Maths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

252 G.S. stands for government school; C.S. and P.S. stand for Catholic and Presbyterian schools respectively. G.N.S. and C.N.S. stand for nursery schools in government and Catholic systems respectively.
Appendix 5. Other observations:

*language committee meetings (LCO)*

*teacher training events (TTO)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BALA general assembly</td>
<td>21 March 03</td>
<td>Fon's palace, Manji (Bafut)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLDC literacy committee</td>
<td>30 July 03</td>
<td>KLDC office, Fundong (Kom)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLO executive committee</td>
<td>29 March 03</td>
<td>Banboyee property, Kumbo (Banso')</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACALCO general assembly</td>
<td>16 Jan 03</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
<td>100?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafut teacher training event</td>
<td>4 July 03</td>
<td>GPSST\textsuperscript{253} Agyati (Bafut)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom teacher training event</td>
<td>3 July 03</td>
<td>Jua Memorial College, Njinikom (Kom)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso' teacher training event</td>
<td>4 Jan 03</td>
<td>Banboyee property, Kumbo (Banso')</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso teacher training event</td>
<td>8 July 03</td>
<td>Sub-inspectorate office, Jakiri (Banso')</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{253} Girls' Presbyterian Secondary school for Science and Technology.
Appendix 6. Parent interview series (PI) questions

Questions for Nso’ Parents of School-Aged Children
June-July 2003

Introductory information
1. Name of the parent
2. Where the parent lives
3. Occupation of the parent

A. School choices
1. How many children do you have?
2. Which ones are in school, and in what year?
3. How did you choose the school your child goes to? (Ask for each child)
   What influenced your decision?

B. Language in the classroom
1. What language (or languages) do you think is the best for the teacher to use in the junior classes of primary
   schools in Banso’? Why?
2. What language (or languages) is the best for the teacher to use in the upper primary classes in Banso’? Why?
3. Does your child learn well in English?
4. Have you heard about the PROPELCA classes in Banso’, where primary school children are taught using
   Lamnso’? What do you think about this idea? Would you put your child in such a class? Do you already
   have a child in one of these classes?

C. The PTA
1. What is the responsibility of the PTA in your child’s school?
2. How does the PTA make decisions? Are certain people more influential, or is everyone equal in influence?
3. Does the PTA have much impact on how the school is run? In what way does the PTA have an effect on the
   school?
4. Do you participate in the PTA of any school?

D. Education in general
1. What are the most important characteristics of a primary school? (for example: a nice building and grounds,
   good teachers, religious formation, academic excellence, other aspects)
2. What do you expect a primary school education to do for your child? What should he or she be like, what
   should they know, and what should they be able to do when they finish primary school?
3. When a child finishes primary school but does not continue on to secondary school, what is the main
   reason?

E. Final questions
1. How old are you?
2. What is the highest level of schooling that you have had?
Appendix 7. Parent Interview series respondents

**Bafut parents (PI: B)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Primary school kids</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 01</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7 (fail)</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 02</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 03</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 04</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div. cap.</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 05</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Primary 6</td>
<td>Trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 06</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Primary 5</td>
<td>Farming/ Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 07</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7 (fail)</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 08</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 09</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6 (grand.)</td>
<td>Prov cap</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prov cap</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Electrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 2</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Civil servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2 (grand)</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bafpar 15</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kom parents (PI: K)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Primary school kids</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 01</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Coffee farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 02</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Primary 5</td>
<td>Restaurant manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 03</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 04</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Primary 3</td>
<td>Restaurant/ farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 05</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 06</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5 (all completed)</td>
<td>Div. cap</td>
<td>O levels</td>
<td>Civil servant (retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 07</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Diploma of theology</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 08</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Ad. Literacy</td>
<td>Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 09</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>6 (grand?)</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Primary 2</td>
<td>Butcher (ret.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>O levels</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 15</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Ad. Literacy</td>
<td>Saw operator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>div. cap</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompar 18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary leaver</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Nso' parents (PI: N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Primary school kids</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 01</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 02</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Housewife/Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 03</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 04</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 05</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Primary 7/ trng as technician</td>
<td>Electrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 06</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Primary 7/ trng as seamstress</td>
<td>Seamstress/housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 07</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Diploma in Social Studies</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 08</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 09</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher/farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Grazer/farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>Driver/musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2 (completed)</td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher (retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nsopar 15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Div cap</td>
<td>Teacher trng</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8. Responses to parent interview questions A-D

Question A.3. How did you choose the school your child goes to? What influenced your decision?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence (category)</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliation of the school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity of school to home</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputation of the school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morals taught there</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial reasons (low fees)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the only school available</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neatness/atmosphere/buildings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ alma mater</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue taught there</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question B.1. What language or languages do you think is the best for the teacher to use in junior classes of primary schools in Bafut/Kom/Nso’?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Bafut (15)</th>
<th>Kom (18)</th>
<th>Nso’ (15)</th>
<th>Total (48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question B.2. What language or languages do you think is the best for the teacher to use in upper classes of primary schools in Bafut/Kom/Nso’?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Bafut (15)</th>
<th>Kom (18)</th>
<th>Nso’ (15)</th>
<th>Total (48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why? (Responses for questions B.1 junior primary and B.2 upper primary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jr</td>
<td>Up</td>
<td>Jr</td>
<td>Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT: better for learning, understanding</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT: MT maintenance/fluency (including literacy)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT: it helps in learning English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT: identifying with our culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: official/ national language/ bilingual country</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: language of exams/ education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: Interaction/ communicate outside homeland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: international language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: to learn English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: official/ national language/ bilingual country</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: Interaction/ communicate outside homeland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: international language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: language of exams/ education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question B.3. Does your child learn well in English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Bafut (15)</th>
<th>Kom (18)</th>
<th>Nso’ (15)</th>
<th>Total (48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior no, upper yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question B.4. Have you heard about the PROPELCA classes, where primary school children are taught using MT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Bafut (15)</th>
<th>Kom (18)</th>
<th>Nso’ (15)</th>
<th>Total (48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heard of it</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not heard of it</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do you think of it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is a good idea</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not a good idea</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good but only for junior primary school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good idea but not well implemented</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you/do you put your child in such a class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do have a child in PROPELCA</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would put my child in PROPELCA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not put my child in PROPELCA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question C.1. What is the responsibility of the parent-teacher association (PTA) in your child’s school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction/ maintenance of buildings or equipment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitors, advises, evaluates staff or school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial - pays fees</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruits/ employs PTA teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General support of the school</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does community work for the school</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions (about anything)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question C.2. How does the PTA make decisions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion/ deliberation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement/ unanimity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas, opinions are offered</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller committee does preparation work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are certain people more influential, or is everyone of equal influence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All are equal</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Some&quot; have more influence (not specified who)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent/experienced people have more influence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School staff have more influence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The executive committee have more influence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question C. 3. Does the PTA have much impact on how the school is run?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant impact</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some impact</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little impact</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In what way does the PTA have impact on the school?
(Answers were elaborated versions of the responses to question C. 1.)

Question C.4. Do you participate in the PTA of any school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only sometimes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question D.1. What are the most important characteristics of a primary school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso'</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good quality teachers and staff</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodo quality buildings/campus</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputation and exam results</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious formation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hygiene/neatness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports/extracurricular activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniforms and equipment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline/moral formation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question D. 2.** What do you expect a primary school education to do for your child? What should he or she be like, what should they know, what should they be able to do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of response</th>
<th>Bafut</th>
<th>Kom</th>
<th>Nso’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal character: morals, discipline, conduct</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to read and write (language unspecified)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to secondary school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General skills (housework, etc.)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence, ability to reason well</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills/citizenship</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to a trade or apprenticeship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to buy and sell/get a job</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good hygiene/neatness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to express themselves in English/French</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Question D.3.** When a child finishes primary school but does not continue on to secondary school, what is the main reason?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Nso’</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial reasons</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No intelligence</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child doesn't want to (stubborn)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careless parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
Appendix 9. Semi-structured group interviews:
Upper primary school children (GIC)

**Bafut children, 19 July 03, Ambe home, Manji, Bafut (GIC: Bafut)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Class finished</th>
<th>School</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>G.S. Manji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Primary 6</td>
<td>G.S. Manji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>P.S. Manji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>P.S. Manji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Primary 6</td>
<td>G.S. Manji</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nso’ children, 28 July 03, Ma’wo home, Bamkikai, Banso’ (GIC: Nso’)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Class finished</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>G.S. Kitiwum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>G.S. Kitiwum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>G.S. Bamkikai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>G.S. Bamkikai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>C.S. Kikaikelaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>C.S. Kikaikelaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Primary 6</td>
<td>C.S. Kikaikelaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Form 1</td>
<td>G.S.S.²⁵ G.S.S.²⁵ Kitiwum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary 7</td>
<td>G.S. Bamkikai</td>
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</table>

Responses of the two groups to interview questions (narrative answers not all included)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Bafut (5)</th>
<th>Nso’ (9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favourite school subject?</td>
<td>English: 3&lt;br&gt;Arithmetic: 2</td>
<td>English: 5&lt;br&gt;Arithmetic: 1&lt;br&gt;History: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least favourite school subject?</td>
<td>Religious knowledge: 1&lt;br&gt;Arithmetic: 2&lt;br&gt;History: 1&lt;br&gt;General knowledge: 1</td>
<td>Arithmetic: 5&lt;br&gt;Geography: 2&lt;br&gt;None: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you like to be when you grow up?</td>
<td>Journalist&lt;br&gt;Teacher&lt;br&gt;Doctor&lt;br&gt;Nurse&lt;br&gt;Carpenter</td>
<td>Carpenter&lt;br&gt;Tailor&lt;br&gt;Nurse&lt;br&gt;Journalist&lt;br&gt;Teacher (2)&lt;br&gt;Priest/sister (2)&lt;br&gt;Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s occupation</td>
<td>Fon of Bafut&lt;br&gt;Farmer, hunter&lt;br&gt;Bricklayer&lt;br&gt;Builder&lt;br&gt;Teacher</td>
<td>Carpenter&lt;br&gt;Farmer&lt;br&gt;Baker&lt;br&gt;Teacher (4)&lt;br&gt;Bricklayer (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s occupation</td>
<td>Teacher, farmer&lt;br&gt;Farmer (3)&lt;br&gt;Tailor</td>
<td>Farmer (6)&lt;br&gt;Teacher (2)&lt;br&gt;Accountant, farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can your father read and write English?</td>
<td>English: 4 yes&lt;br&gt;MT: 2 yes</td>
<td>English: 8 yes&lt;br&gt;MT: 6 yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue?</td>
<td>Can your mother read and write English?</td>
<td>Can your mother read and write English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue?</td>
<td>English: 4 yes&lt;br&gt;MT: 2 yes</td>
<td>English: 7 yes&lt;br&gt;MT: 3 yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you read and write MT?</td>
<td>Yes: 5</td>
<td>Yes: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have mother tongue classes in your school?</td>
<td>Yes: 5</td>
<td>Yes: 4&lt;br&gt;No: 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| If yes, how are they?                          | "I like it"
"Not difficult"
"I can understand it very well" (2) | _______ |
| Purpose of primary school?                     | "To learn"                        | "To learn good habits"
"Leads me to secondary school" Employment
"To learn" |
| Purpose of secondary school?                   | "To also learn"
"To learn new things" | "To help their future"<br>"To continue to learn" |
| Do you think you will go to secondary school?   | "Would like to": 5<br>"There is no money": 1 | _______ |
| Do you have any school textbooks?              | No: 5                            | Yes: English (6)<br>Yes: mathematics (3)<br>Yes: science (2)<br>No: 1 |
| Books in your house?                           | Bible (4)<br>Books of Royal Council<br>Teacher’s books | Dictionary (6)<br>English Bible (8)<br>Lamnso’ Bible (3) |
Appendix 10. Other group interviews (open-ended):

Kom literacy supervisors (GIS)
Kom PROPELCA teacher trainees (GIT: Kom)
Nso' PROPELCA teacher trainees (GIT: Nso’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kom literacy supervisors</td>
<td>8 Feb 03</td>
<td>KLDC office, Fundong (Kom)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kom PROPELCA teacher trainees</td>
<td>3 July 03</td>
<td>Jua Memorial College, Njinikom (Kom)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nso' PROPELCA teacher trainees</td>
<td>8 July 03</td>
<td>Sub-inspectorate office, Jakiri (Banso')</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 11. Individual interviews

Language committee literacy supervisors and coordinators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambe John (Mr.)</td>
<td>BALA literacy supervisor</td>
<td>Multiple: 3 Feb - 9 July 03</td>
<td>Various places in Bafut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kain Godfrey (Mr.)</td>
<td>KLDC literacy coordinator</td>
<td>Multiple: 20 Jan - 30 July 03</td>
<td>Kom, Bamenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanjo Sylvester (Mr.)</td>
<td>NLO literacy supervisor</td>
<td>8 July 03</td>
<td>Jakiri (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melimim Patrick (Mr.)</td>
<td>NLO literacy supervisor</td>
<td>5 Jan 03</td>
<td>Meliim (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma'wo Maurice (Shey)</td>
<td>NLO literacy supervisor</td>
<td>7 Jan 03, 8 July 03</td>
<td>Bamkikai, Jakiri (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongka He'en (Mr.)</td>
<td>NLO literacy supervisor</td>
<td>7 Jan 03</td>
<td>Bamkikai (Banso')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

255 These were: Ms. Veronica Njong, Belo; Mr. Francis Ngongbi, Aduk; Mr. Augustin Timnge, Abasakom; Mr. Marcel Ndah, Njinikom; Mr. Francis Yong, Anyajua.
### Primary school teachers and headmasters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alangeh Rose (Ms.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher (informal), Bafut</td>
<td>18 Feb 03, 25 Feb 03</td>
<td>Manji (Bafut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asoh Aloysius (Mr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher, Kom</td>
<td>6 March 03</td>
<td>G.S. Baingeh (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gam Beatrice (Mrs.)</td>
<td>Headmistress and PROPELCA teacher, Kom</td>
<td>6 Feb 03</td>
<td>C.S. Njinikijem (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer Ephraim Ajoff</td>
<td>Headmaster, Kom</td>
<td>19 March 03</td>
<td>GS Ngwainkuma, Fundong (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mai Helmina Bobong (Ms.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher, Kom</td>
<td>6 March 03</td>
<td>G.S. Baingeh (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maimo Gilbert M. (Mr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher, Nso'</td>
<td>28 July 03</td>
<td>Bamkikai (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbi nee Arrey (Mme.)</td>
<td>Primary teacher, Kom</td>
<td>19 March 03</td>
<td>G.S. Ngwainkuma, Fundong (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbolifor Matthew (Mr.)</td>
<td>Asst. headmaster and primary teacher, Bafut</td>
<td>25 Feb 03</td>
<td>P.S. Manji (Bafut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngwa Raphael (Mr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher (informal), Bafut</td>
<td>21 March 03</td>
<td>Manji (Bafut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkwain Christopher (Mr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher, Kom</td>
<td>6 Feb 03</td>
<td>C.S. Balikumato (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkweh Jacob Akoni (Mr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher, Kom</td>
<td>20 Feb 03</td>
<td>C.S. Balikumato (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirngo Doris (Mrs.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher, Nso'</td>
<td>27 July 03</td>
<td>Kumbo (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisahla Joan (Mrs.)</td>
<td>Primary teacher, Nso'</td>
<td>28 July 03</td>
<td>Bamkikai (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiyfofe Stephen Njobam (Mr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA teacher, Nso'</td>
<td>28 July 03</td>
<td>Bamkikai (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yafi Alfred Ndi (Mr.)</td>
<td>Headmaster, Kom</td>
<td>14 March 03</td>
<td>C.S. Balikumato (Kom)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Language committee executive committee members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banboyee William (Mr.)</td>
<td>Chairman, NLO</td>
<td>4 Jan 03</td>
<td>Kumbo (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mfonyam Joseph (Dr.)</td>
<td>Member, BALA executive cte.</td>
<td>28 Nov 02, 24 March 03</td>
<td>Bamenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mfonyam Samuel (Mr.)</td>
<td>Chairman, BALA</td>
<td>27 Nov 02, 26 March 03</td>
<td>Bamenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndim Albert Waingeh (Hon.)</td>
<td>Chairman, KLDC</td>
<td>14 March 03</td>
<td>Njinikom (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suuyren Justin (Mr.)</td>
<td>Secretary general, NLO</td>
<td>2 March 03</td>
<td>Kumbo (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuh Peter (Mr.)</td>
<td>Member, KLDC</td>
<td>26 Nov 02</td>
<td>Bamenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yunteh Martin (Rev.)</td>
<td>Member, NLO executive cte.</td>
<td>28 Nov 02, 11 March 03</td>
<td>Bamenda</td>
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</table>
## Education administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chah Linus Chituh (Mr.)</td>
<td>Inspector for primary schools, Njinikom Sub-division, Boyo Division</td>
<td>14 March 03</td>
<td>Njinikom (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eben Simon Njang (Dr.)</td>
<td>CBC\textsuperscript{256} Education Secretary</td>
<td>10 Feb 03</td>
<td>Bamenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbaswa Evaristus Joko (Mr.)</td>
<td>Divisional delegate for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Boyo Division</td>
<td>30 July 03</td>
<td>Fundong (Kom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumenta Amina (Mrs.)</td>
<td>Divisional inspector for nursery and primary education, Mezam Division</td>
<td>17 Feb 03</td>
<td>Bamenda</td>
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</table>

## NACALCO personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mba Gabriel (Dr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA director</td>
<td>11 Oct 02,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 Oct 02,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21 April 03</td>
<td>NACALCO office, Yaoundé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngueffo Noe (Dr.)</td>
<td>Adult literacy program director</td>
<td>13 Jan 03</td>
<td>NACALCO office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadadjeu Maurice (Dr.)</td>
<td>NACALCO general director</td>
<td>4 Oct 02</td>
<td>NACALCO office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernyuy Francis (Mr.)</td>
<td>PROPELCA scientific coordinator for the Northwest Province</td>
<td>21 Oct 02</td>
<td>NACALCO office</td>
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## Others

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annett, Mary (Ms.)</td>
<td>SIL literacy/PROPELCA consultant</td>
<td>7 Oct 02</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barah Nicoline Yinyuy (Ms.)</td>
<td>Nso' research assistant</td>
<td>Multiple:</td>
<td>Kumbo, Bamenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan-July 03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22 April 03</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 Jan 03</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27 March 03</td>
<td>Bamkikai (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chia Emmanuel (Mr.) Jones</td>
<td>Kom taxi driver, Yaoundé</td>
<td>22 April 03</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SIL Kom language personnel</td>
<td>16 Jan 03</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author, editor and publisher in Lamnso'</td>
<td>27 March 03</td>
<td>Bamkikai (Banso')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mengjo Christopher (Mr.)</td>
<td>Office administrator, Bamenda</td>
<td>15 Nov 03</td>
<td>Bamenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nga’ Bami, Frederick (Mr.)</td>
<td>SIL literacy personnel</td>
<td>10 Oct 02</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanden Berg, Nelis (Mr.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{256} Cameroonian Baptist Convention.
Appendix 12. Correspondence (email)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barah, Francis</td>
<td>Office worker, Bamenda</td>
<td>9 May 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grebe, Karl</td>
<td>SIL Lamnso’ project leader</td>
<td>12 July 2003, 17 Aug 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Randy</td>
<td>SIL Kom project personnel</td>
<td>Multiple, July 2003-March 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mfonyam Joseph</td>
<td>SIL Bafut project leader; BALA executive cte. member</td>
<td>13 July 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nga’ Bami, Frederick</td>
<td>Office administrator, Bamenda</td>
<td>5 May 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shultz, George</td>
<td>SIL Kom project personnel</td>
<td>23 December 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 13. Distribution of PROPELCA schools in Cameroon by province, 2001

*(taken from NACALCO 2001: 9-10)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Languages with PROPELCA schools</th>
<th>Schools with PROPELCA classes</th>
<th>PROPELCA students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far North</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littoral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>5,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>9,163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 14. List of linguistic works on the Bafut, Kom and Lamnso' languages: publications and unpublished manuscripts

Bafut

Publications


Manuscripts


Kom

Publications


Manuscripts
Jones, Randy. 1997. Tone in the Kom noun phrase.

Lamnso'

Publications

Manuscripts
Grebe, Karl. 1986. Alphabet and orthography statement for the Nso' language.
-------. 1984. The domain of noun tone rules in Lam Nso'.
-------. 1979. Orthography of the Nso' language.
-------. 1977. Oral literature of Nso'.
------- and Winifred Grebe. 1976. Phonology of the Nso' language.
Appendix 15. Political structure of the Republic of Cameroon
(with special reference to Northwest Province)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of administration, in descending order of authority</th>
<th>Names of the authorities in entity</th>
<th>Number of entities at this level of administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Cameroon</td>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Assembly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Provincial governor</td>
<td>10: Centre, South, Littoral, Northwest, Southwest, Western, Adamaoua, Northern, Far Northern, Eastern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial delegates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division (département)</td>
<td>Prefect</td>
<td>58 in Cameroon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divisional delegates</td>
<td>7 in Northwest Province: Bui, Boyo, Donga-Mantung, Menchum, Mezam, Momo, Ngo-Kentunjia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-division (arrondissement)</td>
<td>Sub-prefect</td>
<td>349 in Cameroon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 total in Northwest Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4-5 in each division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>District head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: website of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon, <http://www.spm.gov.cm>; Fact Rover, <htto://www.factrover.com>
Appendix 16. Text sample pages

Figure 1. Sample page from Bafut transition primer, *Learning to Read the Bafut Language, Vol.1* (Mfonyam 1990); lesson on falling and rising tone marks\(^{257}\) (actual size: A5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nwũ</th>
<th>wã</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mbî</td>
<td>zi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kyâ</td>
<td>kyã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nô</td>
<td>sô</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{257}\) The top picture is of a drum, with its drumsticks in the shape of tone marks. The words on the left contain a vowel with falling tone; the words on the right contain a vowel with rising tone.
Figure 2. Page 19, lesson eight of Kom Primer 2 (Chia, Mbeh and Kimbi 1997); grammar lesson, reading practice and writing practice (actual size: A5)

**English translation of grammar lesson:**

Perhaps I may go to his house.
Perhaps I may go to market with you.
I have a small book.
You have a small house.
Nyah has a sister but I haven’t any.
Nyah is carrying firewood but his sister is not carrying any.

**Reading practice:**

Mbeng usually goes to school with Nyah. But sometimes Nyah takes along his small sister called Mbel. She is ten years old. One day when they were returning from school, they cut Indian bamboo walking sticks to decorate at school. Mbeng bought two nails [for use in decorating the walking sticks] and gave one to Nyah. After they had reached their homes they prepared the nails so that when they went back to school the teachers might not punish them.

**Writing practice:**

Mbeng has his walking stick.
Figure 3. Front page of two-page Bafut newsletter no. 4, November 2001 (Bafut Language Association 2001; actual size A4; no translation available)
Figure 4. Handout of Old Testament readings, March-April, liturgical year "B", in Lamnso'; currently used in Catholic churches in Banso' (actual size: A4)

O.T. SUNDAY READINGS FOR THE MONTHS OF MARCH - APRIL
YEAR "B" (LITURGICAL)

SONDÉ ÀYÔJTÌ ÈKUU À ÁÁÂWÀ’ÂTÈ ÈGI’I YÈESÒ
NEXT SUNDAY BEFORE LENT (IST SUNDAY IN MARCH) EZEK. 34:25-31.

25. Mô aâ wàrâ a kâà yi’i ma aa kwêttâ tê bo tswe nî mbô农作物 bi’i bo. Mô aa bwëna i nàa mitsa’a itsim a diga nsew bo, tê tâ ñbï njârdë ji tiga ntswe nî atu mînta’a nî a mûm i kôtti ni mbô农作物.

26. Mô aâ ni nì mbô农作物 a nu bo . i gïrïa tê bo tswe ñkarïsa a le’è nta’âl wa a mbëè mbëè. tiga gïrïa tê mbô农作物 ka nloo a ni nôd’i yi’i ma à kû’i aa, tê bo ts’i ni mbëè mbô农作物 yi’i ma bo bë aâ.

27. Tê ìti ka ñkono mînta’tâ tê itu mînta’a ka mïfi’isi mïji, tê nû ntsimâ ka ntswe ni mbô农作物 adigë nsew yu. Nôd’i yi’i ma aâ yí kwe ñkïro asâng wa anu bô bë ñkro, i kwëro waa a mbo bô bya ma bë le ntswa waa nlaa ni i bû’u ntsò aâ, tê bo boq zi ma à ni mô mbô Yaawë.

28. Kâa itoo jî dañ ka yî wà’i waa bô ñkôa ntsawò ndî’i’a, kâa tê nàa mitsa’a wà’i waa bû ñkôa nswito ñkurô. Bo ka yî tiga tswe nî ñsiginà, kâa tê yù tsù wà’i waa bû ñkôa mbôse.

29. Mô aâ zi’i ñi di ñgë nsew jì sigina a mbo bo tê bo ka nlgë mïji tê mî ka ñkô’è mbô农作物, tê nji ma a aal’i. Kâa tê itoo too jya ma i si gha zi aa wà’i waa bû ñkôa mbô农作物 ndirisò ni atû yaa bô.


31. Bû mbi njârdë jà, akarê mbô yà mô më je’e aâ, nû laa mbo bô bë, Mô kî mbô Ñwînô农作物 ghuû. Âa âjà n yì ma Yaawë mbû’utô ñbi à swôñ aâ.

(1 Le’e ntàa v.26 - Twôo 20:40, Ñta’a Nwi a ni nta’a wa më ndà mmà’à Nwi i too ghu aâ. Bô bî më bi ko’o ghu aa kwëro mbô农作物.)

Âa nighaab ni Nwî ni nû là?
Mbi’ëke mbo Nwi
Figures 5 and 6. Pages from the BALA and KLDC diaries for 2004 (actual size: A6)

Figure 5. Pages 28-29 from the BALA diary for 2004 (Bafut Language Association 2003), arranged according to the eight-day Bafut week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004</th>
<th>July/Juillet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NJWILA'A</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vendredi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBI'INDOO</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Samedi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUMHTAA</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dimanche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MITANBA'A</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lundi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÊKÔÔFIKUU</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTOOBA'ALÔ</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mercredi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIKA</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jeudi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIJOQ</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Vendredi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NJWILA'A</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Samedi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBI'INDOO</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Dimanche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUMHTAA</td>
<td>Monday</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lundi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MÔÔFÔKUU</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTOOBA'ALÔ</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mercredi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIKA</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jeudi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIJOQ</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Vendredi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIJOQ</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Samedi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28

Figure 6. Back pages of the KLDC diary for 2004 (Kom Language Development Committee 2003); list of Fons of Kom on page 58, and the list of "days and periods of law in Kom" for 2004 on page 59 (see section 4.1.3 for translation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friday, November 17-20, 2001</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, November 16, 2001</td>
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<td>Wednesday, November 15, 2001</td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 14, 2001</td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 7, 2001</td>
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<td>Monday, November 6, 2001</td>
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<td>Sunday, November 5, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, November 4, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, November 3, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, November 2, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, November 1, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 31, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, October 30, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, October 29, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, October 28, 2001</td>
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<td>Friday, October 27, 2001</td>
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<td>Thursday, October 26, 2001</td>
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<td>Wednesday, October 25, 2001</td>
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<td>Friday, October 20, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 19, 2001</td>
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<td>Wednesday, October 18, 2001</td>
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<td>Saturday, September 30, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, September 29, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, September 28, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, September 27, 2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures 7 and 8. Front and back covers from the Nso’ Language Organisation Calendar 2003 (Nso’ Language Organisation 2003; actual size: A5)

Figure 7. Front cover of the NLO Calendar 2003, the theme of which was "post primary institutions in Nso’"; the current Fon of Nso’ in traditional dress

Figure 8. Back cover of the NLO Calendar 2003, showing 2004 arranged according to the eight-day Nso’ week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NSO LANGUAGE ORGANISATION © 2003 - 2004
Appendix 17. Maps

Map 1. The Republic of Cameroon, showing former British and French colonial boundaries (Source: Chumbow and Bobda 1996:406)
Map 2. Language map of the Northwest and Southwest Provinces of Cameroon
(Source: Eyongetah and Brain 1974:7)
Map 3. Political map of the Northwest Province of Cameroon, showing major towns and cities (Source: Ngwa 1985:69)