

# Language Use in the Catholic Church in Cameroon: The Case of the French Service and the Bulu Service in a Parish of Sangmelima

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines language practices in two services offered in the main Catholic Church in the town of Sangmelima in the South region of Cameroon. The research is motivated by the need to find out what languages are used in this church and what the terms “French service” and “Bulu service” imply in the multilingual city of Sangmelima. The informants were the priests, catechists, choir leaders, and some parishioners of this church. Three main instruments were used to collect data in these two church services, i.e., interview, questionnaire and participant observation. The frame adopted for the analysis was Kouega’s structural-functional approach (2008). The findings revealed that the services in this church include 28 parts. In the French service, the languages used to realise these parts were found to be French, Bulu (Sangmelima), Ewondo (Yaounde), Fang (south of Cameroon and north of Equatorial Guinea), Fe’efe’e (Bafang), Ghomala’ (Bafoussam), and Medumba (Bangangte). In the Bulu service, on the other hand, the languages used were: Bulu (Sangmelima), Ewondo (Yaounde), and French. These languages were chosen for a variety of reasons. First, a language like Bulu was chosen because it is understood by the parishioners as it is the main language of the locality. Second, French is the official language of the territory; third, some languages like Fe’efe’e, Ghomala, and Medumba were chosen on the basis of the involvement of the speakers of these ethnic languages in the activities of the church. Fourth, the availability of printed religious materials in a language was an important factor.

**Keywords:** Cameroon, Catholic Church, Language Practices, Language Choice, Sangmelima.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This study describes two church services - the French and the Bulu services - offered in the main Catholic Church in the town of Sangmelima, with a view to identifying the languages used and the factors determining the choice of these languages in a multilingual locality. Four questions were set to guide the study: 1) what is the structure of the French service? 2) what are the languages used in the French service and the factors motivating the choice of these languages in the parish? 3) What is the structure of the Bulu service? 4) what are the languages used in the Bulu service and the factors motivating the choice of these languages in the parish? The paper comprises four sections, besides the introduction (1) and the conclusion (6). These sections are entitled: background to the study (2), literature review and theoretical framework (3), methodology (4), and data analysis and discussion (5). These are considered in turn below.

## II. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The language situation in Cameroon, and the development of the Catholic Church in the country are taken up in turn. Cameroon is a multilingual country where close to 300 minority languages cohabit (Dieu and Renaud, 1983; Chia, 1984; Bitjaa, 2001; Kouega, 2007; Eberhard et al, 2022). According to Kouega (2007), these languages can be grouped into five categories namely: official languages (French and English), major lingua francas (like Pidgin English and Fulfulde), minor lingua francas (like Arab Shuwa and Duala), lesser minority languages (like Ghomala’ and Lamnso’), and religious languages (like Arabic).

Regarding the development of the Catholic Church in Cameroon, it can be pointed out that this church was planted in 1890 by a team of missionaries led by the German Father Heinrich Vieter, who celebrated

his first mass in October 1890 (Messina and Slageren, 2005). The evangelization process went on well and a greater number of priests were needed. In 1912, the German Sacred Heart Fathers arrived in the Grassfield areas (Trudell, 2002); unfortunately, their religious activities were halted when the World War 1 broke out. As Germany was defeated, its possessions in Africa were seized by the victors, and Cameroon was shared between France and Britain. In the French part of Cameroon, French priests came in to continue the evangelization activities that The German Fathers had started up. In 1922, Monseigneur Francois-Xavier Vogt became the first Catholic bishop of the country, and he ordained many local priests. Today, the country includes five archbishoprics with headquarters in the following towns: Bamenda, Bertoua, Douala, Garoua, and Yaoundé. These archbishoprics are made up of three or more bishoprics. These are:

- Bamenda (Buea, Kumbo, Mamfe).
- Bertoua (Batouri, Doume-Abong Mbang, Yokadouma).
- Douala (Bafoussam, Edea, Eseka, Nkongsamba).
- Garoua (Maroua-Mokolo, Ngaoundéré, Yagoua).
- Yaoundé (Bafia, Ebolowa-Kribi, Mbalmayo, Obala, Sangmelima).

The parish of *Notre Dame du Rosaire d'Akon* is located in the Sangmelima bishopric, which in turn falls under the Yaounde archbishopric.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several researchers have examined language use and language choice in multilingual religious settings in Cameroon. These include: Baimada (2011, 2020), Kouega and Baimada (2012), Ndzotom (2011, 2016, 2020), Kouega and Ndzotom (2011a, 2011b), Emaleu (2013), Kouega and Emaleu (2013), and Afutendem (2015). They considered various faiths including the Catholic Church, the mainstream Protestant Churches, Pentecostal Churches, and Islamic mosques. In each of these faiths, several languages were found to be used and for various purposes. In the Catholic Church, many languages were reported to be used and for various reasons. They were said to be chosen because there was at least one priest who spoke these languages, because there were chaplains or catechists who spoke these languages, because of the involvement of some ethnic groups in the activities of a parish, and because printed religious materials were available in those languages. In the Protestant Churches studied, the languages were found to be chosen on the basis of the historical background of a church in the country, the involvement of a given ethnic group in the running of the church, the numerical weight of a given ethnic group in a parish, and the availability of religious materials in a given language. Regarding the Pentecostal churches studied, they systematically used the two official languages of the country, i.e., French and English. As for the Islamic faith, Arabic was found to be the de facto liturgical language, and the Imam and the Muezzin used only vehicular languages during services.

The frame adopted for the works reviewed above and the present study is Kouega's structural-functional model (2008). This model first describes the overall structure of a church service and counts the elements or parts of this structure (the structural component); then using the questionnaire and participant observation, it identifies the various languages used in each element or part of the structure of the church service and the reasons underlying the choice of each language used (the functional component).

### IV. METHODOLOGY

The setting of the study, the informants contacted, the instruments used, and the methods of data collection and of analysis are taken up in turn. The setting of this study was the town of Sangmelima, in the South region of Cameroon. The parish targeted was the *Notre Dame du Rosaire d'Akon*, which is the oldest in the city. The specific church services chosen were the French service which starts at 7 a.m. (*pro populo*: mass for the people) and the Bulu service which comes up at 10 a.m. The informants included: the priests, the catechists, the mass boys, the choir leaders, and a few parishioners, giving 7 informants per church, and a total of 14 informants for the two services. The instruments used were the interview, questionnaire, and participant observation. The data were collected by the researchers themselves, who visited the site three times.

During the first visit (see Appendix), the researchers went round the church, and snapped notices and pieces of information on billboards intended to be read by the faithful. In the process, the researchers got information about the church, i.e., when it was built, its size, the number of worshippers it can hold, the number of church services offered in a week, and the day of the main service. This church was found to be built in 1936. It could house over 2500 worshipers. The parish was the oldest among the 39 other parishes in the Diocese. Finally, the researchers took an appointment with the priest and told him that the services of the catechists, mass boys, choir leaders and a few parishioners would be sought. With the information gathered, the researchers built a questionnaire.

During the second visit, the researchers discussed each questionnaire item (see Appendix) with the priest, who filled in the answers. Then, they did the same with the catechists, the mass boys, the choir leaders, and

a few parishioners. The questions focused on the parts of a church service, the number of choirs, the languages used in church services, the reasons why these languages were chosen out of a multitude of languages in the locality. During the third visit, the researchers sat through a church service together with the faithful and checked the answers to the questionnaire items given by the informants. This third visit is useful as it enables the researchers to verify the claims made by the informants (see Q19 of the questionnaire).

One major difficulty encountered during the data collection process was the necessity to visit a locality three consecutive times and to spend one night there each time. Another was the fact of sitting through two church services of over two hours each.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The structure of the church service is described first (A). This is followed by the identification of the languages used in each part of the service and the reasons motivating the choice of these languages (B). These are taken up in turn.

### A. Structure of the Church Service

The informants were asked (Q8) to explain how the main church service in the parish was usually structured, how many parts or elements of service there were in all. They were also asked to indicate what each part was called (sermon, Gospel reading, announcement, etc.). Lastly, they were asked to indicate what the first element they begin the service with was called, what the second element was called, and how many elements there were in all. The 14 informants came up with different numbers, with the smallest being 9 and the biggest being 28. Those who said 9 ignored certain short prayers and songs and those who found 28 counted every detail of a church service. Here are the 28 parts they listed, together with their French names:

1. Introduction (ouverture).
2. Procession (procession).
3. Entry (entrée).
4. Nicene Creed (confession de foi).
5. Kyrie (Kyrie).
6. Gloria (Gloire a Dieu).
7. Opening prayer (prière d'ouverture).
8. First reading (Première lecture).
9. Psalm (Psaume).
10. Second reading (Deuxième lecture).
11. Acclamation (Acclamation).
12. Gospel reading (Evangile).
13. Homily (homélie).
14. Credo (Je crois en dieu).
15. Universal prayer (Prière universelle).
16. Offerings (offertoire).
17. Eucharistic prayer (Eucharistie).
18. Sanctus (Sanctus).
19. Prayer (Prière).
20. Anamnesis (Anamnèse).
21. Our Father (/Notre Père).
22. Agnus dei (Agneau de Dieu).
23. Communion (Communion).
24. Prayer (Prière).
25. Announcements (Annonces).
26. Blessing (Bénédiction).
27. Magnificat (Magnificat).
28. Closing song (Chant de sortie).

Below is outlined what went on in each of the 28 elements of the church service the informants listed.

#### 1) Introduction

One member of the team of readers read a passage from the Scriptures as well as some intentions presented by the parishioners. Then, this reader asked the congregation to stand up and welcome the priest and the mass boys. In the French service, the readers used French throughout the service. In the Bulu service, the Bulu language was used.

## 2) *Procession*

As the choir was singing and the congregation standing, the priest and the mass boys emerged and moved to the altar. In the French service, the song was executed in Medumba, and, in the Bulu service, it was in Ewondo.

## 3) *Entry*

While the congregation was still standing and the priest was blessing the altar, the choir intoned another song. In the French service, the song was in Fe'efe'e and in the Bulu service it was still in Ewondo.

## 4) *Nicene Creed*

The priest intoned this prayer, and the worshippers recited it along with him. The prayer was recited in French in the French service. In the Bulu service, the priest read the prayer from the Bulu Lectionary (Zambe, n.d.) while the faithful recited it off the head.

## 5) *Kyrie*

This prayer was sung by the choir, with the congregation standing. It was sung in Bulu in the French service and in Ewondo in the Bulu service.

## 6) *Gloria*

This prayer was sung by the choir while the congregation was standing. It was sung in Fang during the French service and in Ewondo in the Bulu service.

## 7) *Opening prayer*

It was recited by the priest while the congregation was standing. French was used in the French service and Bulu in the Bulu service.

## 8) *First reading*

A passage from the Old Testament was read by a member of the team of readers. The passage of the day was taken from Genesis 18: 20-32. The passage was read in French in the French service and in Bulu in the Bulu service.

## 9) *Psalm*

This prayer was sung by the choir, with the congregation sitting down. It was sung in Medumba in the French service and in Ewondo in the Bulu service. This part could have been regarded as a mere transition from one part to the next. Some informants ignored this transition and many others in the church service, hence the difference between the numbers of church service parts identified by each informant.

## 10) *Second reading*

This part was announced by a reader and a passage drawn from the New Testament was read by another reader. It was culled from the Missal in the letter of Paul to the Colossians (verses 12-14). The reading was in French in the French service and in Bulu in the Bulu service.

## 11) *Acclamation*

The choir sang a song while the congregation was sitting. The song was executed in Medumba in the French service and in Ewondo in the Bulu service. Like Psalm above, this part can be regarded as a mere transition from one part to the next.

## 12) *Gospel reading*

The priest read the Gospel of the day, drawn from Lucas 11:1-13. It was read in French in the French service and in Bulu in the Bulu service.

## 13) *Homily*

Here the priest interpreted the message of the day, which was that the faithful should learn to be patient. To illustrate his explanation, he made use of proverbs and stories drawn from the Bulu culture. Occasionally, he switched from French to Bulu and vice versa. In the French service, French was the dominant language but instances of French-Bulu code-switching were heard. Conversely, in the Bulu service, Bulu was the dominant language, and instances of Bulu-French code-switching were heard.

## 14) *Credo*

The choir sang and the congregation listened. The song was executed in Ewondo in both the French and the Bulu services. This song can be regarded as a transition.

## 15) *Universal prayer*

That prayer was launched by the priest, and the choirs and the entire congregation joined in. A number of readers took turns at praying for the Catholic Church, the State of Cameroon, the worshippers, the faithful of the parish, and so on. In the French service, the prayers were made in French and the choirs sang in Ewondo. In the Bulu service, the prayers were made in Bulu, and the choir sang in this same language.

### 16) Offerings

The offerings were made in two phases: the financial and the material. In the financial phase, the congregants made offerings in cash; they lined up and threw coins and notes of various values in a basket. In the material phase, the congregants made offerings in kind: oil, plantain, corn, yam, and the like. The choirs took turns singing till the end of the offerings. In the French service, they sang in Ghomala' and Ewondo whereas in the Bulu service they sang in Bulu.

### 17) Eucharistic prayer

The priest recited a number of verses while blessing the bread and wine representing the body and the blood of Jesus. The recitations were in French in the French service and in Bulu in the Bulu service.

### 18) Sanctus

The prayer was sung by the choir. The song was executed in French in the French service and in Bulu in the Bulu service.

### 19) Prayer

While the congregants were standing, the priest prayed over the gifts in cash and in kind and then he prayed for the worshippers' personal intentions. French was used in the French service and Bulu in the Bulu service.

### 20) Anamnesis

It is a series of prayers executed by the priest, with the choirs responding with songs, together with the congregants. In the French service, the priest spoke in French and the choirs responded in Bulu. In the Bulu service, the priest spoke in Bulu, and the choirs responded in Ewondo.

### 21) Our Father

It is a recitation intoned by the priest and executed by the congregants. In the French service, it was recited in French whereas in the Bulu service, it was recited in Ewondo.

### 22) Agnus Dei

This prayer was sung by the choir, with the congregation listening. In the French service the choir sang in Ewondo whereas in the Bulu service, Bulu was used.

### 23) Communion

The priest gave communion to the faithful who qualified to receive it while the choirs took turns at singing. The songs were sung in Ghomala' in the French service and in Bulu in the Bulu service.

### 24) Prayer

The priest prayed while the congregants were standing. French was used in the French service and Bulu in the Bulu service.

### 25) Announcements

The priest made a number of announcements while the congregation was listening carefully. These announcements were about: the Saints of the following week, the church activities programme for the week, information about the parish, the cleaning of the parish, the amount of the offering collected in the previous mass service, and the publication of marriages. There was also a health campaign for eye patients, and a holiday classes programme. The announcements were made in French in the French service and in both French and Bulu in the Bulu service.

### 26) Blessing

To close the service, the priest said, in French: "*Allez dans la paix du Christ*". In the Bulu service, the priest said it in Bulu.

### 27) Magnificat

It is a recitation intoned by the priest and executed by the assembly. The entire congregation stood up to recite it. In the French service it was recited in French whereas in the Bulu service it was done in Bulu. Some informants, it should be noted, considered Blessing and Magnificat as one part.

### 28) Closing song

This song was executed by the choirs and the entire congregation. They sang in Medumba in the French service and in Ewondo in the Bulu service.

In short, several languages were used to realize the various parts of the church services.

## B. Languages Used and Language Choice

The parts of the church service are listed, the languages used in realizing them are indicated, and the reasons underlying their choice are outlined.

In Q9 the informants were asked to list the parts of a church service again and to indicate the languages used to realise each of these parts. All the informants knew that the parish offered two services known as:

the French service and the Bulu service. In the French service, five languages were said to be used: French, Bulu, Ewondo, Fang, and Bamileke. In the Bulu service, two main languages were used, i.e., Bulu and Ewondo; occasionally, French was heard. In other words, a total of five languages were said to be used in the two services, namely: French, Bulu, Ewondo, Fang, and Bamileke. Participant observation revealed that the term “Bamileke” is misused and the appellation “Bamileke choir” mentioned earlier is a misnomer. Actually, Bamileke is not a language; it is rather the name of a language group which includes five distinct languages, i.e., Fe’efe’e (Bafang), Ghomala’ (Bafoussam), Medumba (Bangangte), Yemba (Dschang), and Ngiembong (Mbouda). In Sangmelima, the first three are used in the French church service.

Concerning the Bulu service, the Bulu language was dominant, Ewondo was used in songs and French was used occasionally, especially in situations where the Bulu language lacked the appropriate terms to refer to some concepts. Expressions like “*n’improvisiez rien, ordinateur*” and the like were heard. The church service parts, and the languages used to realize them are presented in Table I.

TABLE I: LANGUAGES USED IN EACH PART OF THE RELIGIOUS SERVICE

Q9. Draw a list of the parts/elements again and ask the pastor/priest/elder to tell you what language is used in the first part, in the second part, in the third part, etc. If two languages are used, explain how they are used.		
Parts	French services	Bulu services
Introduction	French	Bulu
Procession	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo
Entry	Bamileke (Fe’efe’e)	Ewondo
Nicene creed	French	Bulu
Kyrie	Bulu	Ewondo
Gloria	Fang	Ewondo
Opening prayer	French	Bulu
First reading	French	Bulu
Psalms/Song	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo
Second reading	French	Bulu
Acclamation	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo
Gospel reading	French	Bulu
Homily	French and Bulu	Bulu
Credo	Ewondo	Ewondo
Universal prayer	French and Bulu	Bulu
Offerings	Bamileke (Ghomala’), Ewondo	Bulu
Eucharistic prayer	French	Bulu
Sanctus/Song	French	Ewondo
Prayer	French	Bulu
Anamnesis	French	Bulu
Our father	French	Bulu
Agnus Dei	Ewondo	Ewondo
Communion	Bamileke (Ghomala’)	Ewondo
Prayer	French	Bulu
Announcements	French	Bulu and French
Blessing	French	Bulu
Magnificat	French	Bulu
Closing song	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo

As Table I shows, French is used in the key parts of the French service. Other languages are used only in songs. These are: Bulu (2 times), Ewondo (3 times), Fang (1 time), Bamileke 7 times (of which Fe’efe’e: 1 time, Medumba: 4 times, and Ghomala’: 2 times). In the Bulu service, Bulu is used in all the major parts of the church service while Ewondo is used for various prayers. Needless to say, both languages are used in songs. Instances of code alternations were observed in the two church services. In the French service, the priest made the homily in French, but brought in proverbs in Bulu to further explain the point he was trying to put across. The same practice was observed during the recitation of the Universal Prayer. Similarly, in the Bulu service, one instance of Bulu-French alternation was recorded during Announcements, probably because of the vocabulary of the Bulu language did not have accurate lexemes to express the substance of the announcement in question, which was a health campaign for eye patients.

Q10 checked if there was a choir in the parish and the number of choirs that were active during the service. Informants gave different answers, with some of them saying three choirs and others five. Participant observation revealed that there were four choirs in the parish, i.e. *Chorale Bulu* or *Chorale Nkoul Zambe* (Bulu choir), *Chorale Bamileke* or *Chorale Saint André* (Bamileke choir), *la Chorale des Petits Compteurs*, et *la Chorale Saint Jean Paul II*. Actually, these choirs never all performed in the same church service, hence the confusion in the informants’ answers to this question.

Q11 asked the informants to indicate the activities of the priest, the faithful, the speakers and the choirs during the service and the languages used to perform these activities. The answers they provided are presented in Table II.



TABLE II: ACTIVITIES OF THE PRIEST AND THE CONGREGANTS AND THE LANGUAGES THEY USED

Parts	The priest	One member of the team of readers	Choirs	The faithful	French service (Languages)	Bulu service (Languages)
Introduction	Listens	Speaks	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Procession/ Song	Enters the parish	Observes and listens	Sing	Listen and observe	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo
Entry/ Song	Goes to the altar	Observes and listens	Sing	Listen and observe	Bamileke (Fe'efe'e)	Ewondo
Nicene creed	Recites	Recites	Recite	Recite	French	Bulu
Kyrie/Song	Listens	Listens	Sing	Listen	Bulu	Ewondo
Gloria/Song	Listens	Listens	Sing	Listen	Fang	Ewondo
Opening prayer	Prays	Listens	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
First reading	Listens	Reads	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Psalm/Song	Listens	Listens	Sing	Listen	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo
Second reading	Listens	Reads	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Acclamation/Song	Listens	Listens	Sing	Listen	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo
Gospel reading	Reads	Listens	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Homily	Explain the Bible	Listens	Listen	Listen	French and Bulu	Bulu and French
Credo/Song	Listens	Listens	Sing	Listen	Ewondo	Ewondo
Universal prayer	Prays	Prays	Pray	Pray	French and Ewondo	Bulu
Offerings / Songs	Prepare material for the Eucharist	Gives offerings	Sing and give offerings	Give offerings	Bamileke (Ghomala') and Ewondo	Bulu
Eucharistic prayer	Prays	Listens	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Sanctus/Song	Listens	Listens	Sing	Listen	French	Bulu
Prayer	Prays	Listens	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Anamnesis	Prays	Listens	Listen	Listen	French and Bulu	Bulu and Ewondo
Our father	Recites	Recites	Recite	Recite	French	Ewondo
Agnus Dei/song	Listens	Listens	Sing	Listen	Ewondo	Bulu
Communion	Gives the communion	Take the communion	Sing	Take the communion	Bamileke (Ghomala')	Bulu
Prayer	Prays	Listens	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Announcement	Reads	Listens	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu and French
Blessing	Says	Listens	Listen	Listen	French	Bulu
Magnificat	Recites	Recites	Recite	Recite	French	Bulu
Closing song	Listens and goes out	Listens	Sing	Listen	Bamileke (Medumba)	Ewondo

Q12 asked respondents to explain what marks the transition from one part to the next during the service. It was revealed that transitions were filled up with songs, and the choirs took turns at singing.

Q13 inquired about the approximate number of Catholic churches in the town of Sangmelima. They were said to be four in the town of Sangmelima namely: *Paroisse Notre Dame du Rosaire d'Akon*, *Paroisse St Luc d'Akon*, *Paroisse Cathédrale St Joseph* and *Paroisse Anglophone* called *St Blaise*.

In Q14, the informants were asked to indicate the number of churches in Cameroon and none of them was able to answer. Concerning the organisation of annual conferences or fora of any sort (Q15), the informants pointed out that bishops generally hold meetings at the regional and the provincial levels, and the Pope also convenes synods at regular intervals.

Asked to comment on the similarities and divergences between the Catholic Church and other churches like Protestant and Pentecostal churches (Q16), the informants said that these churches were similar as they all use the Bible and fall under Christianity. However, they were said to differ in their practices. Some of these different practices are listed below:

- Although all of these churches use the Bible, the liturgy is not the same, the Catholic believe in Mary, the mother of Jesus and they worship statues.
- The Catholic Church is organized and follows a regular calendar in the whole world, while in the Protestant and Pentecostal churches it is not the case; it is the preacher who selects the scriptures of the day.
- Pentecostal churches use languages that they do not know during their prayers, which they refer to as "tongue speaking"; in Catholic and Protestant churches, prayers are conducted only by the required person and in a given language.
- The Catholic Church uses candles, whereas other churches do not use such artefacts.

- There is a lot of noise in Pentecostal churches during prayers and animations whereas in other churches, noise is heard only in songs.
- The Catholic Church serves communion in every mass whereas in other churches it is not the case and, in the Pentecostal churches in particular, communion is not offered.
- Pentecostal churches use official languages in their services, therefore neglecting indigenous languages whereas Protestant and Catholic churches take these languages into account.
- Catholic and Protestant churches recite prayers while in Pentecostal churches, prayers are composed by the worshippers, and there is no recitation.
- The Catholic Church uses rosaries for their prayers while other churches do not use them.
- Testimony is a major church part in Pentecostal churches whereas in other churches this part does not exist.
- Catholic and Protestant churches baptized babies whereas in Pentecostal churches only adults are baptized.
- In Pentecostal churches worshippers are kind of forced to pay tithes whereas in other churches it is somewhat optional, not an obligation.

Q17 focused on the factors motivating the use of certain languages in a multilingual parish. These motivations are presented in Tables III and IV.

In Q18 the informants were asked to name the various languages used in the church service they attended and to explain what they were used for. The answers were presented in Tables V and VI.

Table IV shows that French was used in many parts of the service, mostly in the main parts whereas other languages were used mostly to sing.

Tables V and VI indicate that there are two liturgical languages in this church, i.e., French on the one hand and Bulu on the other. The French service seems to bring together people who come from other Cameroonian localities, while the Bulu service is intended for people who hail from Sangmelima and neighbouring places.

TABLE III: FACTORS MOTIVATING LANGUAGE CHOICE IN THE FRENCH SERVICE

Languages	Factors	Percentage
French	It is an official language, the parishioners understand it, and there are available religious materials in it	7 (100%)
Bulu	To attract worshippers' attention by laying emphasis on certain facts. The background language from which the priest extracts proverbs and stories to explain the Scriptures	7 (100%)
Fang	There is a choir member that speaks this language	7 (100%)
Ewondo	There are songs and recitations in this language	7 (100%)
Medumba, Fe'efe'e and Ghomala'	These are Bamileke congregants who are involved in the activities of the parish, they run a choir called Bamileke choir, and their efforts must therefore be acknowledged for them to feel integrated in this community.	7 (100%)

TABLE IV: FACTORS MOTIVATING LANGUAGE CHOICE IN THE BULU SERVICE

Languages	Factors	Percentage
Bulu	The majority of the worshippers are Bulu, and it is the dominant local language in the area. There is available religious material in it. It is the language of the priest, and, in addition, there is a choir singing in it.	7 (100%)
Ewondo	There are captivating songs in it.	
	It is the first local language used in the Catholic Church in Cameroon. The Bulu choir sings in it.	7 (100%)
French	It is the official language of the area, and all the worshippers understand it. It is an additional source of vocabulary when the Bulu language lacks some key words.	7 (100%)

TABLE V: LANGUAGES USED IN THE FRENCH SERVICE AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Languages used	Function
French	This language was used to realise the key parts of the church service, i.e. Bible readings, gospel, and homily.
Bulu	It was used in the homily to explain some notions and there was a choir that sang in it.
Fang	The Bulu choir sang the Gloria prayer in this language
Medumba, Fe'efe'e and Ghomala'	These languages are used by the Bamileke choir. Medumba was heard in Procession, Psalm, Acclamation and the Closing song, whereas Fe'efe'e was used only in Entry. As for Ghomala', it was used in offerings and communion. As can be seen, these languages come up at regular intervals in the church service.

TABLE VI: LANGUAGES USED IN THE BULU SERVICE AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Languages used	Function
Bulu	It was used in the main parts of the service including Bible readings and homily.
Ewondo	It was heard in many prayers and songs executed by the Bulu choir including Kyrie, Gloria, Psalm, and Credo.
French	It is used by the priest during the Homily and Announcements.



## VI. CONCLUSION

This study has examined language use in two different services of the same church. It has shown that the structure of these two services was similar, but they differed markedly in their use of languages. The French service had French as its liturgical language and it made use of as many as six other languages, mainly for singing. On the other hand, the Bulu service had Bulu as its liturgical language and it used one other language, namely Ewondo, for prayers and songs. These languages were chosen for various reasons. French was the official language of the country and Bulu was the dominant language of the locality, and, like French, there are religious materials in it. Ewondo was the first local language that former priests used and there were songs and prayers in it. Fang was used in songs because it was spoken by a choir member. Lastly, Fe'efe'e, Ghomala' and Medumba were used in songs as they were spoken by congregants who were highly involved in church activities in the locality. This language policy implemented by the Catholic Church is not documented anywhere, as far as we are aware.

## APPENDIX

Questionnaire/interview/observation (to be filled in by the researcher) adapted from Kouega (2008).

Parish and residential area.....  
Date and time.....

### Visit I

1. Locate the oldest catholic/protestant/Pentecostal church in the area and briefly describe how to get there from the commercial centre.
2. Go to the church premise at a time when you can meet a few people around. Read all posted information on billboards and get a snapshot of church activity programmes. Then try to get an appointment with a church leader (pastor, choir leader, elder, etc).
3. Try to find out when the church was built, how big it is, how many people it can hold.
4. Is the church a member of a bigger church?
5. How many church services are offered in a week?
6. What is the main day of worship?
7. If there are many services on the main worship day, which is the main service?

### Visit II

8. How is this main church service usually structured? How many parts or elements of service are there in all? What is each part or element of service called? (Sermon, Gospel reading, announcement, etc) What do you call the first element you begin the service with? The second element? The third element? etc. In all, how many elements are there in a service?
9. Draw a list of the parts/elements again and ask the Priest/Pastor /Elder to tell you what language is used in the first part, in the second part, in the third part, etc. If two languages are used, explain how they are used.

Parts	Language(s)
1	
2	

10. Is there a choir? How many choirs are usually active in the main service?
11. Draw a table in which you enter the parts of a main church service and ask the informants to talk about the activities of the priest, the faithful, the readers, and the choirs during this service and the languages used to perform these activities:

Name of parts	Who talks? What does he do or say? In what position?	The faithful what do they do or say? In what position?	What language is used?	Comment 1	Comment 2
1					
2					

12. What marks the transition from, say, Part 1 to Part 2? Do the choirs sing?
13. How many churches like this one are there in the city (approximately)?
14. How many are there in Cameroon (approximately)?
15. Do they organise annual conferences or any kind of fora?
16. (Depending on the mood of the interviewee) ask interviewee to comment on the Catholic Church in Cameroon, Protestant churches, Pentecostal churches, stressing on their similarities and divergences.
17. What factors were said to motivate the choice of the languages that were used in church?

18. Name the various languages that are said to be used in the church services you attended and say what they were used for.

Names of the languages used	Function or indicate the part of the service in which the language was used
1.	
2.	

### Visit III

19. Sit through a church service and check the informants' answers to Q8 through Q18.

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