

EFFECTIVE BILINGUALISM IN CAMEROONIAN PUBLIC SPACE, IMPLICATIONS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Sustainable Development (SD) is gaining grounds in developmental discourses, given that it is the 2030 universal agenda of the UN. Harlem Brundtland, pioneer Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development, defines SD as “development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs” (Mensah, 2019, p. 7). In this global seventeen-agenda that advocates prosperity in countries, goals #4 (Quality education), #10 (Reduced inequalities), #13 (Climate action), #14 (Life below water), #15 (Life on land), #16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and #17 (Partnership for the goal) hinge on the importance of language in enhancing national development. This paper studies the current practice of official bilingualism in the Cameroonian bilingual university and local councils, notably the effective and equitable use of English with French, and their impact on SD in the country. To verify the developmental potentials which the current English Language practice offers Cameroonians, the mixed method was used. This included questionnaires and observations that were respectively administered to 250 students of the University of Yaounde 1 and 04 municipal councils in Yaounde. In addition to the manual method, the questionnaires were complemented by Google Forms. The Capability Approach, also referred to as the Human Development Approach, was the language policy framework used to analyse the effectiveness and adequacy of current English Language governance tools and practices in Cameroon, and the role they play in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Findings have it that current language governance tools are inadequate and unproductive, and the current English Language practice in all official domains is ineffective. Bearing in mind that English is the lingua franca of international cooperation and communication (in the domains of education, politics, trade, and the media) and above all, the default language of modern science and technology, it was observed that the timid practice of English in Cameroon hampers national development; Cameroonians are being shaded from international development opportunities (like scholarships, training, employment, and partnership and funding programs, and scientific and technological knowledge and opportunities) in English. English being a tool of international peace, education, adaptation and cooperation, it is recommended that authorities should put in place effective and efficient English Language policy instruments that would attend to the developmental needs of Cameroonians.

Keywords: Bilingualism, English Language, language practice, Sustainable Development Goals, international language.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language and the ability to communicate in more than one language have proven to be powerful tools of civilization in the human environment. The link between language and

society (culture) is inextricable. It is found that Languages accommodate and express the cultures, values and visions of the societies in which they are spoken (Obiegbu, 2015). In the communication of these societal aspects, speakers have as intent the innovation, transformation or advancement of given societal conditions. This makes language a vehicle of human development ideas.

The contemporary world is getting increasingly interconnected and rife with global challenges that transcend national borders. In this dispensation, language plays a profound role in facilitating sustainable development (SD) in countries. Though pivotal, language is an uncatered SD component in the policy and academic discussions of nations. In spite of the fact that SD discourses lay strong emphases on environmental, economic, and technological solutions, the communication channels through which these solutions are transmitted, especially language, continue to receive negligible scholarly attention (Suchitra, 2023). The importance of language in societal communications cannot be over-emphasised, given that the human society is built on communication. With recourse to language, communication continues to advance the direction of every human development. Albeit this fundamental reality, Ezech et al. (2020) are concerned with the conspicuous absence of language skills important deliberations regarding SD.

Ukaga and Reichenbach (2011) posit that the concept of SD has become a conference theme and buzzword for development agencies. According to the Brundtland Commission, otherwise known as the World Commission on Environment and Development, SD refers to the capability of making development sustainable, ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising those of future generations (Kates, Parris & Leiserowitz, 2005). The addition of 'goals' to the concept of SD, thus Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was the resolution of the September 2015 UN General Assembly. Also referred to as global goals, SDGs is the 2030 agenda of the UN to end poverty, protect the environment and make it habitable, and, above all, guarantee peace and prosperity for all peoples in the world (Morton, Pencheon & Squires, 2017). Amongst the seventeen goals aimed at transforming our world, goals #4 (Quality education), #10 (Reduced inequalities), #13 (Climate action), #14 (Life below water), #15 (Life on land), #16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and #17 (Partnership for the goal) have language(s) (communication) as their conduit. Cognizant of this, this paper seeks to find out the bearings of effective official bilingualism on the enhancement of SD in Cameroon. The premise here is that a strategic and well-structured French-English bilingual practice in public institutional spaces could expedite the realization of the SDGs.

2. HISTORY AND DEPTH OF OFFICIAL BILINGUALISM IN CAMEROON

Cameroon's official bilingualism is the immediate consequence of its distinctive colonial past vis-à-vis the political decisions made after independence (Fon, 2019). Cameroon was initially a German colony, later, it was partitioned between the French and British after Germany's defeat in World War I. The British governed their territory as part of their Nigerian colony, using English as the official language (OL), while the French administered theirs as a complete colony, with French as the OL. Kouega (2018) articulates that this colonial project culminated to the two distinct systems of administration, education, law, and governance that are existent and continue to significantly influence the linguistic course of Cameroon.

When French Cameroon got independence in 1960, she designated French as the OL of the country (Ayafor, 2005). Later in 1961, British Southern Cameroons also gained independence by reuniting with the Republic of Cameroon, adopting English as her own OL. It is this reunification that wove the architecture of official bilingualism in Cameroon. The

raison d'être of this policy was to ensure equity and promotion of French and English cultures in Cameroon (Fon, *ibid*). In the pursuance of this unifying policy, President Ahmadou Ahidjo asserted that bilingualism would mean to Cameroonians, 'the practical usage of our two OLs, English and French, throughout the national territory' (p. 55). By this, bilingualism was designed to be implemented officially and nationally across all sectors of the nation.

Achiri-Taboh et al. (2024) opine that the establishment of bilingualism as a state policy was primarily driven by political necessity rather than linguistic principles. The goal of official bilingualism was to accommodate the British Southern Cameroon, which had English as its OL, when it gained independence by joining the already independent, French-speaking and demographically larger Republic of Cameroon (Ayafor, *ibid*). Political pronouncements during the early years of the reunification point to the fact that bilingualism was envisioned mainly as a political mission, rather than a linguistic strategy. President Ahidjo's accent on 'practical usage' and 'throughout the national territory' is simply suggestive of educational implications only. It ran short of a practical linguistic definition, effective planning or implementation strategy.

Furthermore, Ayafor (*ibid*, p. 136) categorises the development of Cameroon's bilingual policy into specific phases, each marked by changing priorities between political integration and linguistic advancement. The period 1961-1972 witnessed a government bilingual policy approach that was under the weight of political considerations rather than the development and re-orientation of the OLs policy. Diverse pragmatic factors, nonetheless, played central roles in shaping official bilingualism during this period, the political stance on language usage in official business revealed bad faith stalled the planning and implementation of effective bilingualism in Cameroon. A crucial moment in Cameroon's bilingual history occurred with the creation of the unitary state in 1972. Critics considered this a political manoeuvre to unify the distinct cultural heritages of the former French and British Cameroons (Alobwede, 2021). This change from a federal to a unitary framework left a heavy toll on the practice of official bilingualism in Cameroon. The same official bilingualism policy that sought to unify and integrate English and French-speaking Cameroonians, on the contrary, has led to counter-productive dynamics that continue to rupture the unity dream inherent in 1961 reunification agenda. It has failed to fulfill the intended goal of national unity and integration, rather, the trend is a stagnant and neglected bilingual policy that alienates English-speaking Cameroonians. (Viban, 2026).

Since reunification, the government has deployed diverse institutional strategies to foster bilingualism in the country (Sosso, 2020). At the educational level, the creation of the Bilingual Grammar School Yaounde in 1965 and other similar institutions was a remarkable start of a concrete program to train bilingual Cameroonians. The 1972 'French by Radio' program launched on Radio Cameroon was another productive strategy put in place by the government to assist Anglophone civil servants in acquiring bilingual skills in French Language. Despite the enactment of different policies to boost bilingualism in Cameroon, it has been found that the execution of these initiatives continues to face inertia in official circles. In documents, 'the preferred choice of French as a *de facto* superior (first) language does not reflect the constitutional provision for the equality of both languages' (Chiatoh, 2012, p. 64).

Discontents emanating from lapses in the implementation of Cameroon's OLs has triggered the rise of what has become known as the 'Anglophone problem', which is a complex socio-political crisis stemming from the linguistic marginalization of English-speaking Cameroonians by the Francophone-dominated administration (Kouega, 2018). This is caused by the persistent discrimination confronting the minority OL, English Language, thus affecting the minority English-speaking demographic. The limitations of the current bilingual policy

provoked lawyers and later teachers in the two Anglophone regions took to the streets to protest against the worsening francophonisation of Common Law and the English educational systems. Glaring evidence was in the significant deployment of French monolingual magistrates and teachers to English-speaking regions, resulting in the francophonisation of schools, court proceedings, and administrative documentation (Fon, 2019).

3. LANGUAGE, PLURALISM AND SD

The ability to communicate effectively in one or more languages is a resourceful skill for success in the contemporary professional ecosystem. This makes language an indispensable soft skill for the attainment of the seventeen SDGs, given that communication plays a pivotal role. Communication originates from the Latin word 'share' (Rajput, A. et al., 2020, p. 1), and so, a professional who speaks two or more languages has the edge of reaching out and sharing vital information to a much wider audience, and this is a factor of developmental. Language, be it a mother tongue (MT), a global or foreign language and/or a merger of them plays an instrumental role in the advancement of SD in the communities where they are spoken (Obiegbu, 2015; Neha Toppo, 2020; Mweri, 2020).

The MT (or indigenous language), one of the core languages spoken in multilingual communities, is the language(s) human beings acquire, interact and grow up with, and eventually, think in. As a language the indexes the identity of a people, Mweri (2020) considers the MTs and/or indigenous languages as vectors of SD. In a multilingual setting like Kenya where the majority speaks three languages, their MT, Kiswahili and English Language, it is observed that in contexts wherein the citizens are not literate in Kiswahili and/or English which are the OLs, translation and transmission of information in the MTs of the respective communities appeals to their emotions and captures their thoughts, thus effectively realizing the SDGs. MTs are markers of ethnicity, and so, it is a medium of engaging their respective communities in developmental initiatives (Mweri, 2014). The mere fact that development assembles stakeholders and logs them in a dialogue, it should be considered that their MT is a great potential for the attainment of the SDGs in their community (Manyozo, 2006). This study drifts from the previous one in that it does not focus on the developmental impact of the use of National Languages (MTs), but rather on two international language that serve as Cameroon's OLs.

Examining the significance of the multilingual situation of India, Neha Toppo (2020) reveals that the 780 languages spoken in India (Singh, 2013) are potentials and factor of sustainable development. As powerful vehicles of communication in their respective speech communities, these languages serve as media through which the peoples express themselves and share ideas on social development. Information that is mutually shared, with recourse to the different languages, facilitates discourse and negotiation on diverse socio-cultural subjects. Different from the past research that dwells on development quotient of national languages pluralism, the present study focalizes on the possible importance of official bilingualism in Cameroon should it be practiced effectively. The languages under study are English and French; which are the dominant (international) languages in the ecosystem.

In Demir and Özenici's (2026) study on the place of language on societal development, they find out that language is not simply a developmental gem, but a preservation of its diversity (plurality) is essential in sustainability drives in national entities. Multilingualism, according to this study, plays the salient role of not only creating awareness about environmental protection and reshaping human interaction with nature, but equally realizes social and economic sustainability. Language policy actions that work towards the preservation of language pluralism, in effect, enacts inclusion; thus, justice and the rights of all communities

and active forces represented by the linguistic ecology therein. Unlike the latter, the current study examines the outcome of Cameroon's current English-French bilingualism practice on SD in the country.

Existing literature on the tangible contributions of effective bilingualism to the advancement of SD in Cameroon is still largely unexplored. Cameroon's OL situation is an interesting case study for studying between language pluralism and SD. Owing to its multilingual component characterized by two OLs and about 250 indigenous languages, Cameroon encounters unique sociolinguistic conditions that generate significant perspectives on SD in the country (Alobwede, 2021). In spite of their dangers on indigenous cultures, existing cultural hybridity and bilingual dynamics have left profound political, socio-cultural, economic and historical impacts on the country. Though the implementation of official bilingualism is still flawed in Cameroon, the present English-French OL policy has developmental potentials; given that it is a 'gateway for bilateral and multilateral relationships with international organizations, which is a booster to the country's developmental initiatives' (p. 519). Bilingualism in Cameroon is, thus, global integration and partnership with related international organizations.

In addition, Moumbeket (2023) reveals that the inequitable use of the English Language with French has left a fissure on the success of Cameroon's bilingualism vision. English is an international language, and so, the persistent lording of French over it in official spaces translates into the exclusion of English-speaking Cameroonians from diverse development opportunities. As the default language for science and technology, diplomacy, international cooperation, education, media and trade, publishing information predominantly in French, as in the latter study, implies limiting and/or depriving Anglophone Cameroonians of global development opportunities and, worse still, denying them access to scientific and technological knowledge. The current study fills the gap in the latter in that it studies the effectiveness of official bilingualism in Cameroon's higher education and local administration and the effect of this practice of the attainment of the SDGs.

4. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Analyses in this paper are informed by the Capability Approach, otherwise known the Human Development Approach, propounded by Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000). According to this approach, capability refers to concrete freedoms at the disposal of citizens, availing them with the opportunities to live the life and make the choices that are valuable to them (Nussbaum, 2011). Preference is given to the plural form 'capabilities' to lay emphasis on the fact that quality life for citizens is embedded in the pluralistic variables of health, bodily integrity and education, inter alia (p. 18), that cannot be reduced and expressed monolingually. The freedom of choices evoked herein brings about functioning or actions that create diverse opportunities for SD. It is this variety in opportunities that inspire Nussbaum (ibid) to encourage combined opportunities as they necessitate the combination of personal abilities that enable citizens to do and become what they desire, thus galvanizing SD.

This approach debunks the age-old appraisal of economic growth and/or human development based on economic factors like GDP. In tandem with this, Nussbaum (2011, p. 1) is opposed to the fact that:

Leaders of countries often focus on national economic growth alone, but their people, meanwhile, are striving for something different: meaningful lives for themselves. Increased GDP has not always made a difference to the quality of people's lives, and reports of national prosperity are not likely to console those whose existence is marked by inequality and deprivation.

This approach advocates human development and dignity by prescribing justice, diversity and freedom to use available resources (Moraes Barros and Ribeiro Diniz, 2025), English and French, as is the context of this work.

Dignity is reckoned the very essence of human existence, and should be full of (i) life, (ii) bodily health, (iii) bodily integrity, (iv) senses, imagination, and thought, (v) emotions, (vi) practical reason, (vii) affiliation, (viii) relation with other species, (ix) leisure, and (x) control over the environment (Nussbaum, 2011). These ten capabilities ‘are goals that fulfil or correspond to people’s prepolitical entitlements’ (p. 169). Citizens are deserving of values that if they are effectively communicated in English and French, would advance SD in Cameroon.

German to this work, the Capability Approach, thus, is used to gauge underdevelopment accruing from opportunities that availed Cameroonians via the effective practice of official bilingualism (English and French) in Cameroon. In all, this approach is framed to consolidate social justice by promoting the diversity of social values and opportunities that advance the human society. This plurality and/or diversity of values and opportunities is expected to recognizes and protect minority groups.

5. METHOD AND MATERIAL

This study was conducted using the mixed method. This implicates the deployment of qualitative and quantitative procedures in the analysis of data. The data comprised 200 questionnaires and 16 interview forms that were respectively administered to students of the University of Yaounde 1 and staff from four (04) municipal councils in Yaounde. In addition to the manual method, the questionnaires were complemented by Google Forms. The University of Yaounde 1 and municipal councils in Yaounde were chosen because they nurture and carryout diverse SD activities; and are located in the nation’s political capital that hosts significant quotas of Anglophone and Francophone population. The population interviewed was drawn from the following councils:

Table 1: Municipal Councils Interviewed

Municipal Council	Council Area	No. of Personnel Interviewed
Yaounde I Council	Nlongkak	04
Yaounde II Council	Tsinga	04
Yaounde III Council	Efoulan	04
Yaounde VI Council	Biyem-Assi	04
Total	04	16

It is expected that the two OL communities in the country should be reflected and recognized in the language practices of these institutions.

The questionnaires were administered using the judgmental sampling method; as respondents were chosen based on the researcher’s judgement that they were available, ready and able to provide the responses needed. As for the council interviewees, each was selected on the reasoning that, in addition to those stated above, they held an administrative post that warranted them to communicate regularly with subordinates, developmental partners and the general public. The respective data were presented in tables and graphs, and consonance with the prescriptions of the Human Development Approach, discussed vis-à-vis the officers’ free choices of the official languages used and the SD opportunities they created to Cameroonians.

6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on its communicative component, no human community could attain socio-economic development without language (Mkwinda-Nyasulu, 2014, p. 213). Analysis and discussions dwell on the possibility in which current practices of official bilingualism could leave a positive impact on the attainment of the SDGs in Cameroon. The enactment of English-French bilingualism in Cameroon was intended to unify, recognize and represent their respective demographic and cultural constituents in the country, and above all, connect them to developmental partners in the global community. The effective implementation of English-French bilingualism in Cameroon, in essence, aligns with thoughts that language(s) is a powerful device used by individuals and corporate bodies to realize diverse developmental objectives or aspirations (Aristotle et al., 1954). As stated hitherto, the data constitutes two hundred (200) Students' Questionnaire and four (04) observation forms. Data analysis, in fact, bilingual practices in the two sectors and their impact of SD. In succinct terms, the breadth and depth of analysis are desirous of the researcher to show whether the current practice of English and French in Cameroon makes the global language a tool of SD in the country.

6.1 Analysis of Students' Questionnaires

The questionnaires were administered to university students of the University of Yaounde 1, to enquire about current bilingual practices in the institution, and to get their impressions on how this status quo impacts SD. In pursuance of these views, two hundred copies of the questionnaire are being analyzed. The researcher was interested in getting information about the regularity and contexts of the use of English and French in the nation's mother (bilingual) university; supposedly the cradle and/or an epitome of bilingualism in the domain of education in the country. It is normative that English ought to have the same status as French in formal operations in this institute of higher learning. The different levels of analyses are presented in the segments that follow.

6.1.1 Opinion about Government effective implementation of bilingualism

Bilingualism and the bilingual culture have been enshrined in Cameroon's constitution, and so, it is expected the English and French languages are supposed to be used equitably in all contexts in the country. In the domain of tertiary education, which is the concern of the researcher at this level, it is legislated that all official matters should be equitably conducted in French and English. In this questionnaire item, the researcher sought to verify from the students whether bilingualism is effectively implemented in their institution. In this, the main purpose was to enquire whether the contexts (situations) in which the majority OL, French, is used are the same for the minority OL that English is in Cameroon. The two hundred (200) university students' responses to this enquiry are quantified in Figure 1 below.

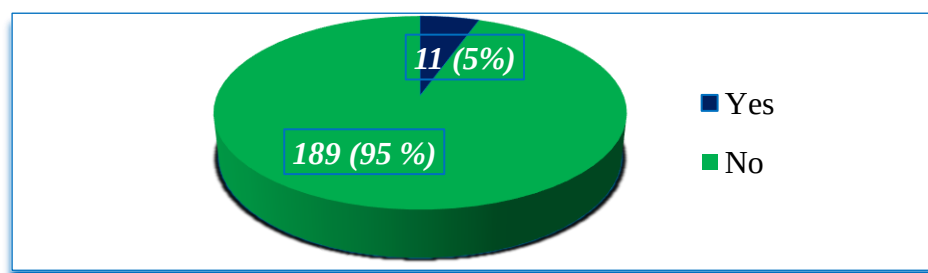


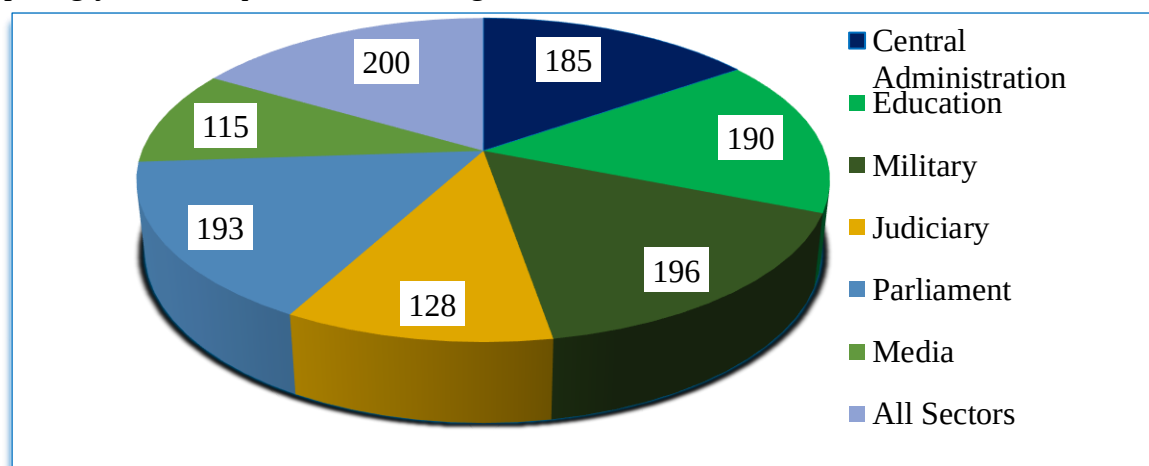
Figure 1: Views about Government Effective Implementation of Bilingualism

Statistics from the figure above indicate that out of the two hundred students who reacted to this item, one hundred and eighty-nine (189), equivalent to 95%, revealed that official

bilingualism is not effectively implemented by Cameroonian government authorities. On the other hand, another insignificant group of eleven (11), thus 5%, opines that the government's current implementation of English is effective. In the researcher's further enquiries about the reasons bilingualism is considered ineffective, their responses are that the English Language is not equitably practiced with its French counterpart.

6.1.2 Sectors in Which Official Bilingualism is Ineffective

This item is the follow-up item to the latter. After having indicated that English is used inequitably with French, the research made this supplementary to know the sectors (institutions) in which this global language is marginalized. The respondents were given seven options (national sectors) from which to choose, and they could select as many institutions as they thought them relevant to the question. These entities represent the different areas of national life; which are areas in which the use of the English Language is not optimal, or worse still, sparing. These areas are representative of the national domains that should champion the implementation of national policies that initiate and galvanize development throughout the national territory. The responses identifying the domains in which the English Language is sparingly used are quantified in the figure that follows.



a) **Figure 2:** Statistics on Institutions in Which Official Bilingualism is Ineffective

Entries in Figure 2 above point to the fact that out of the seven (07) options identified as English Language marginalized areas, responses that the global language is sparingly used in all sectors are the most recurrent with two hundred (200). This category of responses gives the impression that all the respondents are unsatisfied with the current implementation of the English LP in all areas of national life. The next category of responses that has the second dominance is the one hundred and ninety-six (196) that considers the military as the national domain in which the relegation of the English Language is alarming. Moreover, one hundred and ninety-three (193) responses consider the parliament as the third national domain in which the implementation of this global language is skimpy. In addition, responses that considered education as a national institution in which the English Language is poorly implemented rank fourth with one hundred and ninety (190) occurrences. A significant number of responses equally identify the central administration, the judiciary and the media, respectively having 185, 128 and 115 instances, as areas in which authorities have a bias against the use of the English Language; in favor of French.

From the statistic above, it is clear that a global language that has the potentials to attract and stimulate development in Cameroon is not effectively practiced in the official milieu. This is a factor that retards SD in the country.

6.1.3 Opinion about the Importance of Implementing Effective Bilingualism

In a country where the country's bilingual policy is disproportionately implemented, as confirmed by the statistics in Figure 1, it was equally important for the researcher to enquire if the respondents (students) are aware of the importance of implementing effective English-French bilingualism in all domains of national life. It should be emphasized here that this item is intended to find out students' awareness about the benefits of matching the implementation of the English Language to that of its French counterpart. To verify this consciousness, students were asked if they considered it important for the government to effectively practice English-French bilingualism in all domains and all the two hundred (200) respondents gave a unanimous affirmation. In a supplementary question to get their respective reasons for this affirmation, different responses were given; which were classified into four (04) and given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Justifications for the Implementing of an Effective English LP

Justification	Frequency	%
English can open many diplomatic relations for Cameroon	65	32
English can open development opportunities for Cameroon	32	16
Development of a balanced bilingual culture	83	42
National unity, integration and peace	20	10
Total	200	100

Following that information in Table 2 above, it can be seen that eighty-three (83) majority of the students think that it is important for the government to effectively implement English-French bilingualism because it would advance the development of the country's bilingual culture. The second dominant category of responses, with sixty-five (65) incidents, is that which holds that the effective practice of bilingualism would initiate and foster diplomatic relations between Cameroon and international development partners, most especially her OLS national entities and cultural groupings: Commonwealth countries most especially. The third recurrent category of justifications falls within the thirty-two (32) responses to the effect that effective implementation of English and French would open many development opportunities for Cameroon. Such opportunities are cooperation's and developmental funds in the domains of education, science and technology, commerce, construction, national security, and so on.

These responses, in effect, shed light on the importance of fully implementing English equitably with French, considering that English is even more resourceful than French. The respondents' knowledge about the resourcefulness of the English Language would be verified in subsequent discussions.

6.1.4 Opinion on whether Effective Use of English and French Could Galvanise SD

In addition to verifying the essence of the effective practice of English-French bilingualism in Cameroon, the researcher also deemed it necessary to get university students' views about the developmental potentials of effectively practicing both languages in every domain of the national fabric. Like in the case above, all the two hundred (200) respondents were in unanimous approval of the fact that the effective implementation of bilingualism would enhance development in the national territory. The different respondents advanced diverse reasons for this agreement, and they were classified and quantified in Table 3.

Table 3: Justifications that Effective Use of English and French Could Galvanise SD

Justification	Frequency	%
More developmental cooperation with the English world	62	31
More business opportunities for Cameroon	81	40
Opens Cameroonians to educational and job opportunities	19	10
Promotes national harmony and peace	38	19
Total	200	100

It was found that the majority, made up of eighty-one (81) which is 40 % percent of the population, justified that the effective implementation of official bilingualism in Cameroon would promote SD in the sense that it would open more business opportunities for Cameroonians. This explanation is possibly backed by the consideration that English and French are global language of international business, communication, education, politics and technology, etcetera. The second dominant explanation given by sixty-two (31 %) respondents is that the effective implementation of bilingualism would foster national development given that it could create more developmental cooperation between Cameroonians and the English and French worlds. Cooperation here could mean academic, professional, cultural exchange programs, and even funding opportunities. The third recurrent reason is that the effective use of English would go a long way to guarantee national unity and peace, with a frequency of thirty-eight (19 %).

In essence, from the responses in Table 3 above, it could be seen that the students are very conversant with the developmental potentials of English and French in all domains of national life. From the responses above, it is clear that the judgements and/or impressions the students make about the current use of English and French in the country are informed and focused.

2) *5.1.5 Opinions if Effective Bilingualism Can Instrumentalise Peace and National Unity*
Even though coincidental with the explanations advanced by the respondents themselves (in Table 3 above), the researcher was still interested, and so made a conscious effort to find out from the students whether the committed use of English and French in Cameroon could be a tool that promotes peace, national integration and unity in the country. This falls in line with Gabsa et al.'s (2020) impression that 'In multilingual States like Cameroon, language can act as a unifying factor depending on how the linguistic communities perceive and behave toward linguistic differences.'

By peace, national integration and unity, the researcher refers to the peace, harmony and tolerance that reign between members of the two linguistic and cultural groups, which is a powerful developmental factor in Cameroon, like in every other country in the world. An item on the impartial use of English and French as a tool to foster peace and national unity featured in the questionnaire, and all the two hundred (200) respondents gave affirmative responses to it. Furthermore, when justifications were requested, each of the two hundred students advanced a response(s) that is classified and their occurrences were summed up in Figure 3 below.

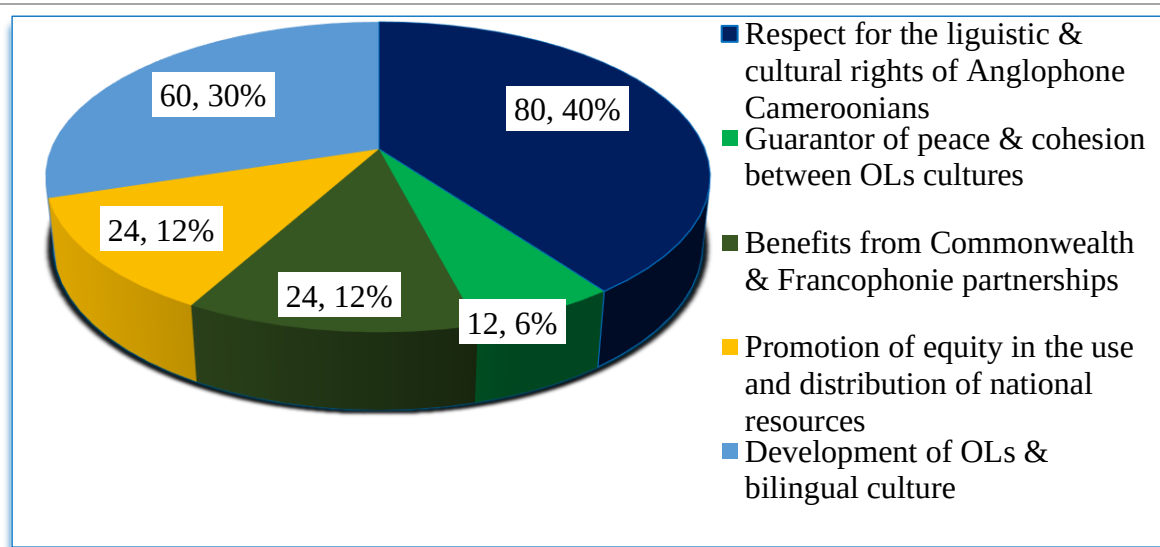


Figure 3: Views that Effective Bilingualism Instrumentalises Peace and National Unity

Bearing in mind that all the two hundred respondents agreed that an effective bilingualism instrumentalist's peace and national unity in Cameroon, a majority of eighty (80), constituting 40 % of the responses explained that this is so because it would mark respect for the linguistic and cultural rights of English and French-speaking Cameroonians. When these values are mutually respected, as stated in the country's constitution, peace and national unity is guaranteed between both OL groups. The second dominant response, with sixty (60) instances of 30 %, is that the effective implementation of the country's English-French bilingualism would go the extra mile to galvanize the development of the OLs and bilingual culture in Cameroon, which is very beneficial to Cameroonians (becoming bilingual teachers, translators and interpreters, and many other related professions). The third in recurrence is the justification that the effective practice of both languages would enable all Cameroonians to benefit from Commonwealth and Francophonie partnerships and/or development projects, and that it would promote equity in the use and distribution of the country's national resources, with an occurrence rate of 12 %, in twenty-four instances each.

When Cameroonians realize that the more both languages are used in the country, the more opportunities they get from English and French Language organizations and communities, better still, the more equitable allocations of natural resources are done in Cameroon, there would be no room for any agitation, thus peace and national unity between Cameroonians from both OL and cultural extractions.

6.1.6 Dominant language(s) in Official Business

By language(s) in official business, the researcher intended to find out the language choice or the dominant OL used in formal contexts like lectures, meetings, seminars, public notices and/or information in their departments, and so on. The language that is routine is the one that affects the socio-academic and professional lives of the respondents. In effect, all the two hundred (200) respondents stated that French is the language that is dominant in formal business (activities and information) in the different departments under study. The fact that lectures, meetings, seminars, public notices and/or information in the respective departments are conducted dominantly in the majority OL, French, implies that exposure to the minority OL, English, is quite minimal and/or insignificant. The dominance or recurrent choice of French in official business in the University of Yaounde 1, thus, leaves the researcher with the impression that there is inadequate communication and development-driven partnerships

between this university and international English-speaking communities (countries, universities and organizations).

6.1.7 Benefits of Effective Cameroon's OLs

This item constituted a follow-up question meant to confirm students' awareness about the importance of effectively using English and French Languages in all departments of the University especially and the national territory at large. In other words, in this item, the researcher sought to know students' impressions about the effective implementation of the country's bilingual policy; that is what students (the youth), the government and the entire country stand to benefit if English and French were equitably used more frequently. In response to the enquiry on this aspect, all the two hundred (200) respondents were positive on the fact that students, the government and the country would benefit a lot from any effort geared at effectively practicing English and French in their respective departments and the entire country. When asked to justify their opinions, the respondents advanced diverse explanations that were grouped into six (06) and their frequencies are given, as in the following table.

Table 4: Students' Views about Benefits of an Effective English Practice

Justification	Frequency	(%)
Promotion of a balanced bilingual cultural development	11	05
Promotion of national integration and unity	13	06
Benefit of Commonwealth development programs	60	30
Adaption and use of modern science and technology	41	21
Promotion of international communication and cooperation	41	21
Promotion of global citizenship and opportunities	34	17
Total	200	100

Out of the six (06) reasons given by the respondents for the importance of effectively practicing the English Language in their respective departments and the whole country, the explanation that students, the government and other Cameroonians would benefit much from Commonwealth development programs ranked first with a frequency of sixty (60), at the rate of 30 %. Moreover, responses that the effective practice of both languages is important because it would facilitate the adaption and use of modern science and technology, and the promotion of international communication and cooperation between Cameroonian Universities and OLs communities ranked second with forty-one (41) instances, which is 21 % each. The third frequent justification is that the effective use of English and French is important to Cameroonians because it would open Cameroonians to global citizenship and many international opportunities (in education, professionalization, funding, and partnership, etcetera).

From the preponderance of explanations pertaining to benefits from English and French cultural developmental programs in the Commonwealth and Francophonie respectively implies the students were very conscious about the profound globalizing and/or international cooperation potentials of these international Language.

6.1.8 Verifying whether Ineffective Bilingualism Hinders SD

In this item, the intention was to verify from the respondents, the dangers of the ineffective or marginal implementation of the country's bilingual policy in formal contexts in the country. In response to the question pertaining to this item, all the two hundred (200) students gave a homogeneous affirmative that administrative apathy towards the effective implementation and/or empowerment of the English Language in Cameroon hinders socio-political development in the country. Like in the latter analyses, the respondents advanced diverse explanations; that were categorized into five and rated in the ensuing table.

Table 5: Views that Ineffective Bilingualism Hinders SD

Justification	Frequency	%
Communication breach with foreign partners	48	24
Basis of socio-political strife between both OLs groups	35	17
Difficulties establishing trade partnerships	25	13
Hindrance to international diplomacy and cooperation	44	22
Inability to learn, understand and operate new technologies	48	24
Total	200	100

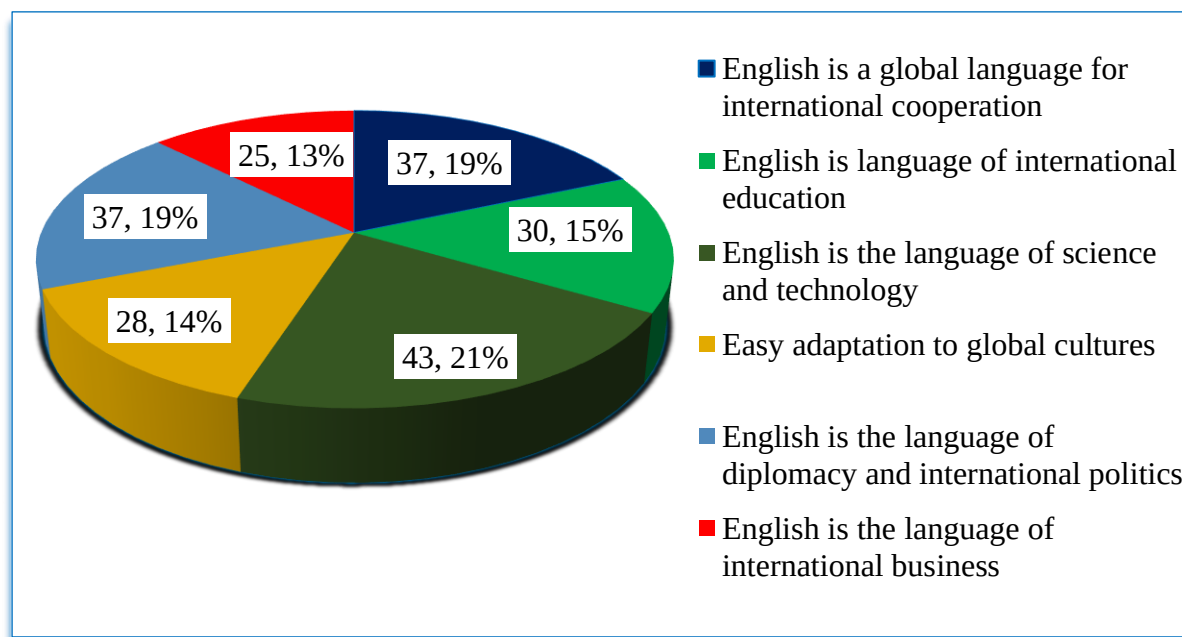
Among the five kinds of explanations given in Table 5 to support the view that ineffective implementation of Cameroon's official bilingual policy undermines SD, opinions related to breach of communication with foreign partners, and limitation in the learning, understanding and operation of new technologies are the most popular with forty-eight (48) occurrences, at the rate of 24 % each. Furthermore, responses highlighting that the ineffective practice of English hinders international diplomacy and cooperation between Cameroon and development partners in the English-speaking world rank second with forty-four (22 %) instances. The third preponderant justification is related to the category that ineffective English use in the country hinders national development as it is the basis for socio-political strife between members of the two language and cultural groups.

In all, the dominance of responses connected to challenging communication with foreign (English) development partners and hindrance in the learning, mastery and adaptation to emerging and evolving science and technology point to the fact that the respondents were aware of the national and global worth of the English Language.

6.1.9 Opinion about the Language that Can Boost SD in Cameroon

This item is an implicit comparison between the national and global developmental potentials of English and French. Cognizant of the fact that French has been identified by the respondent as the choicest language in diverse official milieux in Cameroon, discussions here literally echo the questionnaire item in which the researcher sought to verify the students' opinion about the language they think could expedite SD in the country. It was borne in mind that from the duration of dominance of French over English in all national domains in the country, the respondents could make a fair judgement about the depth of development the majority OL, French, has and would continue to initiate in Cameroon, as compared to that of English. To start with, all the two hundred (200) respondents recognized the English Language as a better development factor or medium to Cameroon than French. The answers given by the respective

respondents to substantiate their views are equally classified into six (06) and quantified as follows.



a) **Figure 4:** Opinions about the Language that Can Boost SD in Cameroon

The inputs from Figure 4 above point out that out of the diverse responses supporting the view that the English Language has better chances and/or potentials of patronizing SD in Cameroon, the most popular category of answers is that related to the thought that the English Language is a language of modern science and technology, with forty-three (21 %) responses. Justifications in which English is considered a global language and, therefore, the language of international cooperation, and the language of diplomacy and international politics rank second with thirty-seven (37) incidents, thus 19 % each. The third popular responses are those that fall under the category that considers the English Language as a powerful developmental factor because it eases adaptation to global cultures that interact with English, and they had twenty-eight (28) occurrences which is 14 %.

The dominance of responses explaining that the English Language is a developmental factor, therefore, considers the English Language as being capable of promoting scientific and technological development, and so its relegation is deleterious to SD in Cameroonians. With the consistent use of English, Cameroonians would easily use and adapt to different forms of modern technology, and above all, exploit feasible opportunities attached to its use.

6.1.10 Whether Ineffective English Language Use Hampers Technological Advancement

This item is complementary to Table 5 above: it verifies the toll of the discriminatory use of English on technological development in Cameroon. This item considers the fact that the English Language is the lingua franca of modern science and technology; and the latter is a great booster of SD in countries around the globe. Knowledge and skills in technology are communicated in the English Language, and so, a nation that envisions technological growth has to adopt the default language of technology, which is English. In response to the question on this item, the entire population under study concurred to the fact that technological development would be delayed if Cameroonian authorities are persistently indifferent to the effective implementation of the English Language in all spheres of national life. The

explanations advanced by each of the respondents to support their view were grouped into three (03), and their frequencies are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Justifications that Unfair English Use Undermines Technological Development

Justification	Frequency	%
English is language of modern science and technology	90	45
Inability to adapt to, install and operate modern technology	58	29
Scientific and technological knowledge is in English	52	26
Total	200	100

Among the three groups of responses in Table 6 above, it was realised that explanations related to the thought that the inequitable of the English Language would delay technological development because English is the language of modern science and technology ranked first with ninety (45 %) occurrences. This is succeeded by responses justifying that marginal practice of the English would hinder the advancement of modern science and technology on grounds that Francophone Cameroonians would be unable to adapt to, install and operate modern technology, having fifty-eight (58) instances of rate 29 %. The third preponderant category of responses, with fifty-two (52) occurrences at the rate of 26 %, are those that justify that scientific and technological knowledge is in English, thus, ineffective use of this technology-driven language would deprive Cameroonians of scientific and technological knowledge and skills.

It is worth stating that the three categories of responses give evidence of the respondents' awareness of the importance of the English Language in modern scientific and technological development in Cameroon. On the contrary, persistent refusal to effectively implement this technological lingua franca, as indicated by the two hundred (200) respondents, would go a long way to creating an obstacle to the evolution of modern science and technology in the country.

6.2 Analysis of Council Staff Interview Forms

Before delving into analyzing this data, it is worth stating that sixteen (16) personnel were interviewed in the four (04) local councils under study. By this, four (04) persons were interviewed in each local council. From the aggregate of responses obtained, it was found that most of the workers interviewed have served as senior staff (deputy mayors and unit heads) in the respective councils for up to ten (10) years. As a senior staff with this remarkable longevity, they have amassed enriching experiences convening and cheering staff meetings and council sessions, seminars/ capacity-building workshops, agro-pastoral shows and health campaigns, among others. Their responses are reckoned credible because these senior staff members have a good mastery of administrative proceedings in the economic, social and political activities of the local council, and the language(s) used.

Among the sixteen senior council personnel interviewed, twelve (12) responded that they are not minimally bilingual in English and French, with only four (04) confirming average bilingualism in the two official languages. By implication, the ratio of French-monolingual is to English-French bilingual senior staff in these councils is 75 % to 25 %. In addition, the performance of the four (04) bilingual senior workers is between average and good. From these statistics, there are clear indications that the dominance of French-monolingual officials will greatly affect the practice of official bilingualism in these councils.

5.2.1 Language(s) Used in Meetings, Seminars or Public Information

This item was meant to verify whether the council authorities make any conscious effort to use the English and French in official activities at their respective councils. Adequacy relates to the frequency of the equitable use of English and French in government institutions, while effectiveness concerns its use in all official domains and activities. Out of the sixteen (16) personnel interviewed, the majority, twelve (75 %) indicated that most council proceedings, notably, meetings, seminars and public campaigns are mostly carried out, and above all, public information is published in French.

On the other hand, only four (04 interviewees, constituting 25 % affirmed that public activities like meetings, seminars and public campaigns are conducted in both official languages (OLs), English and French, and public notices are equally posted in both languages. This figure could be considered insignificant because these four officials revealed that the use of both English and French in one activity or information is very rare. These statistics are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Language(s) of Meetings, Seminars or Public Information

Language(s)	Frequency	%
English Language	00	00
French Language	12	75
Both Languages	04	25
Total	16	100

What is peculiar in the presentation above is the fact that no respondent revealed or stated that English is the only language used in the above-mentioned activities. This, in essence, is indicative of the reservation or bias that council officials exhibit against the use of the global language in different activities in their respective local councils. Going by this situation, English is marginalized in local councils.

6.2.2 Regulation of the Use of English and French in the Local Council

This interview item sought to verify the existence of an instrument or rule dictating the effective use of English and French in every council activity. This item is an extension of the latter, and sought to investigate the availability and effectiveness of a policy instrument(s) compelling council authorities to open their populations to diverse opportunities from the English and French worlds. The purpose was to verify whether it was lawful (obligatory) to use both languages, thus, English most especially; it was the discretion of each authority to use English or not; or the use of English depended on the sociolinguistic composition of the audience (population) addressed. The responses and statistics pertaining to this are tabulated below.

Table 8: Rule Governing Use of Both Languages in the Local Council

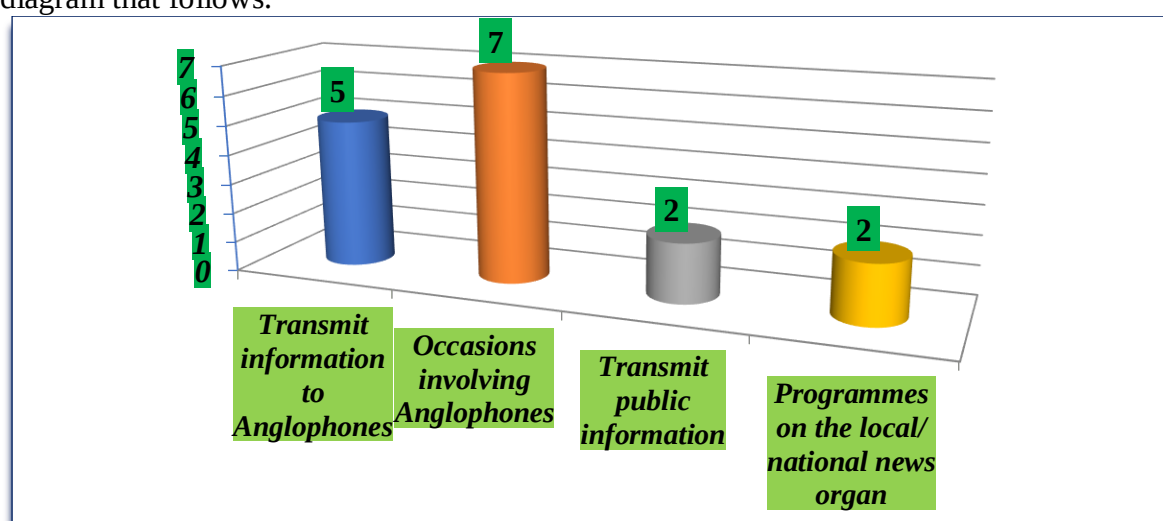
Language(s)	Frequency	%
Lawful/ Obligatory	00	00
Choice of Official	14	87.5
Sociolinguistic Composition of Audience	02	12.5

Total**16****100**

The figures in Table 8 attest to the fact that the use of the English Language, one of the country's OLS, is discretionary. Fourteen (14), that is 87.5 %, of the interviewees state that there is no rule or law enforcing the use of English in the local council, and so, it is the discretion of each local council official to conduct official (council) business in English or French. Moreover, a meagre two (02) interviewees, 12.5 % of the sixteen disclosed that the choice and use of English Language in the local council greatly depends on the sociolinguistic composition of the audience (target population) of each activity or information. By implication, English is used only when Anglophones constitute a significant proportion of a given population (audience) at an event. This poses a problem as officials may not be able to identify these Anglophones. The preponderance of responses pertaining to the volition of officials to use English, in fact, implies that there is no instrument regulating the practice, thus empowerment, of the English Language in local councils. Inasmuch as the choice of English is not regulated, worse still, remains a choice, the language will continue to suffer from apathy in local councils.

6.2.3 Circumstances of the Use of English Language in the Local council

The essence of this item was to verify the circumstances or contexts in which the English Language is used to communicate in local councils. This was a follow-up question to interviewees who confirm the marginal use of English, thus timid English-French bilingualism in local councils. Interviewees were given options from which they could choose more than one, and so, sixteen (16) responses were got vis-à-vis these contexts, as presented in the diagram that follows.



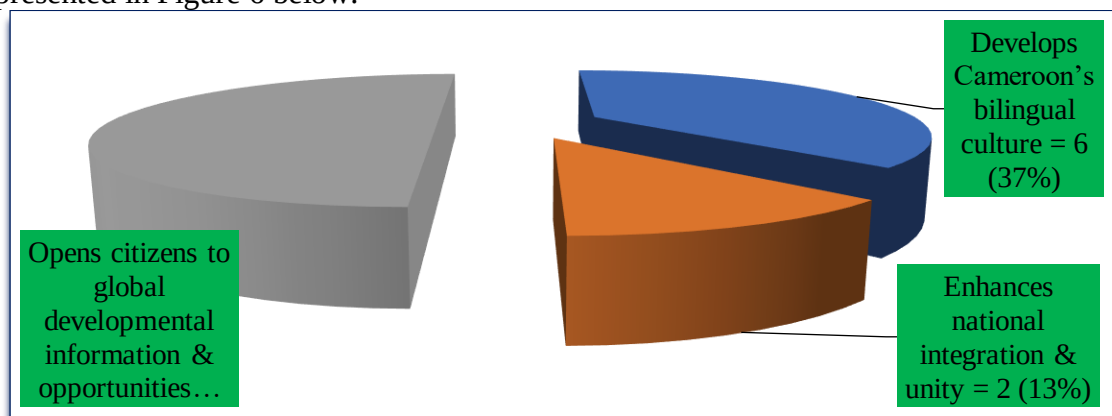
b) **Figure 5:** Contexts of Use of English Language in the Local council

As seen in Figure 5 above, the most dominant context in which English Language is used in local councils is in occasions involving Anglophones, with a frequency of seven (07), equivalent to 43.75 %. The more recurrent situation in which council authorities also confirmed the use of English Language, though timid, is to transmit information to Anglophones. This situation has five (05) occurrences, making up 31.25 %. The use of English to transmit public (general) information and use in programs in the local and national news organs were the least with a frequency of two (02), that is 12.5 % each. Taking cognizance of the inputs above, it is clear that the English Language is used in the local council in events involving Anglophone Cameroon, not to empower this official language that is a global lingua franca. In the absence of a significant number of Anglophones in council activities, English would not be used. The

English Language is marginalized when it gets to transmit general information on the local and national news media. This discrimination, therefore, deprives Anglophones of vital developmental information.

6.2.4 Conviction that Effective Use of English and French Can Empower Development

In this item, the researcher sought to find out from local council authorities whether more and effective use of the English and French in their respective local councils could galvanise sustainable development in their council areas. This verification is an attempt to find out if more and frequent use of the English Language in local council documents (and public notices), procedures and events could impact the lives of citizens in local council areas where the language is effectively used. All the sixteen (16) senior staff interviewed affirmed that more and effective use of the global language, which is one of the OLs of Cameroon, has the prospect of initiating and advancing SD in local councils and their vicinities. The justifications of the local council authorities were grouped into three, and frequencies were assigned to them, as presented in Figure 6 below.



c) **Figure 6:** Justification that Effective Use of English Can Empower Development

Among the reasons advanced by council authorities for having the conviction that the effective use of the English Language in local councils could spark SD, the belief that consistent and equitable use of English and French would open citizens to global developmental information and opportunities is more recurrent with eight (08) responses, thus 50 %. The conviction that could develop and promote the country's English-French bilingual culture ranks second with six (06) responses, making 37 %. The least justification with the frequency of two (13 %) is that effective bilingualism in local councils would enhance the country's project of national unity and integration among English and French-speaking Cameroonians. The fact that most interviewees stated that the English Language opens Cameroonian citizens to developmental information and opportunities in the world, in essence, implies they are conscious about the worth of English, not just between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians, but equally, pertaining to interactions with nationals from and educational and professional opportunities in English-speaking and English-friendly countries on the globe.

6.2.5 More Communication in English Would Attract Development Partners

This interview item is linked to and seeks to confirm the information obtained in the latter. The purpose was to confirm that local council authorities are conscious of the fact that frequent and effective use of English and French in their councils not only opens citizens to international opportunities, but also, opens the doors of international cooperation (partnership) with international English and French partners alike. This takes into cognizance the fact that

international business is conducted in the English Language. On this aspect, all the council authorities interviewed were unanimous on the fact that the effective practice of the English Language in all council communications would attract international developmental (funding) partners (countries, organizations and NGOs) to their local councils. This thought was justified with two categories of responses, as quantified in Table 9 that follows.

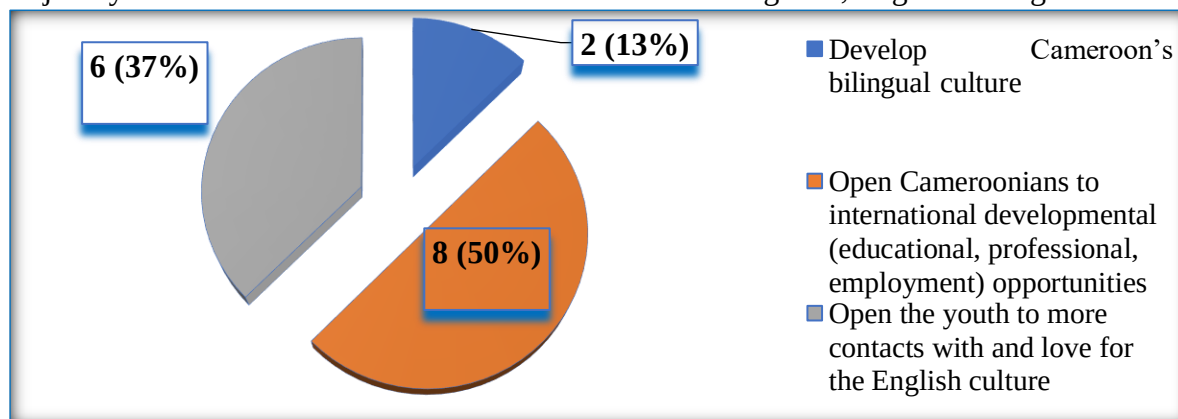
Table 9: Justifications that Bilingualism Would Attract Development Partners

Justification	Frequency	%
English is medium of international educational & technology	07	43.75
English is medium of international business and diplomacy	09	56.25
Total	16	100

The key responses got were in recognition of the fact that English is the medium of international business and diplomacy that was explained by nine (09) senior council staff, and that English is a medium of international education and technology as given by seven (07) interviewees. What is salient in and common to the two responses is the recognition that English is a global language. The global lingua franca that the English Language is means that it is the language that local council authorities should use to lobby for development partners (for projects, training, commerce, internships) and funding. Going by this, English is a language of international interaction and cooperation, thus, the gem of development (construction, trade, professionalization and employment) in Cameroonian localities.

6.2.6 The Creation of English Cultural Centers and Libraries Empowers the Youth

The researcher sought to investigate whether council authorities are aware that the English Language could be valorized and/or taken closer to Francophone youths of rural and semi-urban areas by creating English Language cultural centers and libraries. Creating and equipping English Language cultural centers and libraries would mean that the youth would have access to English Language resources. This would go a long way to booster their learning of English, and thus more contacts with and access to a plethora of development opportunities in the world wherein English is the global lingua franca. As concerns the responses got from the council authorities, statistics attest to the fact that all the interviewees confirmed that the creation of English Language cultural centers and libraries is a potential source of empowerment for youths in their respective local council areas. The explanations advanced by these authorities to justify their answers were classified into three main categories, as given in Figure 7 below.

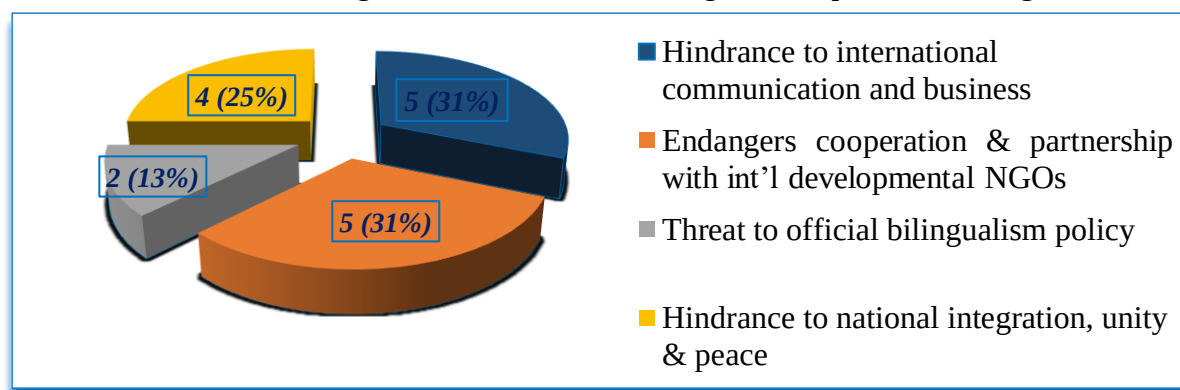


d) **Figure 7: Justification for the Creation of English Cultural Centers and Libraries**

Considering the statistics in Figure 7 above, it could be confirmed that eight (08), that is 50 % of the aggregate interviewees, revealed that the creation of well-equipped English Language centers and libraries in council areas would open rural and semi-urban francophone [Cameroonian] youths to more international opportunities (educational, professional, employment and funding) opportunities. Guaranteed access to English Language resources, in essence, empowers the youth to participate in competitions and even apply for scholarships, training and funding programs that would enhance development in themselves and/or their country, Cameroon. The second dominant response is that the creation of English Language cultural centers in council areas would endow the francophone youth with more contacts with and love for the English culture. It is worth stating that more contact with the English culture would mean more contact with and opportunities for youth empowerment and development schemes, and this category of response was given by six (37 %) of the interviewed population. The least of the responses, advanced by two (13 % of the population) is that creating and equipping English Language cultural centers and libraries in council areas would promote effective bilingualism and, above all, develop the country's English-French bilingual culture.

6.2.7 Conviction that Consistent Refusal to Use English Effectively Hinders SD

This item reverberates with the determination of the researcher to confirm whether council authorities are aware of the fact that consistent refusal to practice bilingualism effectively in their respective councils poses a serious threat to SD. English is a language of international cooperation, communication, business and diplomacy, and so, suppressing the use of this global language in local councils is akin to cutting the local populations of the respective council areas from international [developmental] opportunities that accompany these global languages. All the sixteen (16) local council senior staff interviewed confirmed that the consistent, reserved use of a global language English in local councils endangers different facets of SD in local council areas. As in the latter items, the justifications given by these senior workers to sustain their thoughts were in four main categories, as presented in Figure 8 below.



e) **Figure 8:** Justifications that Ineffectively Use of English Hinders SD

Information on Figure 8 above reveals that out of the sixteen (16) justifications advanced by senior local council personnel, the majority, with a frequency of five (31 %) consider the marginal use of the English Language in local councils as a hindrance to SD because, as it would, firstly, pose enormous undesirable consequences on international communication and business, and secondly, it would endanger cooperation and partnerships with international developmental NGOs. From the tie recorded in the majority justifications above, it is indicative that the halfhearted practice of the English Language in local councils would go a long way to limit the international development opportunities that are open to local councils, with their respective populations (men, women and the youth). The second significant justification

obtained is that the consistently ineffective use of the English Language in local councils would pose a real problem to the achievement of national integration, unity and peace in the country, with four (25 %) occurrences. This response takes into consideration the fact that the reserved use of the English Language in these councils is a concrete marker of Anglophone marginalization, thus a breeding ground for discontent and protests which, in turn, hamper government policy of national integration, harmony and peace between the two cultural groups in the country. The least of the responses, with two (02) occurrences of 13 % are marginal justifications that consistent refusal to use the English Language in local councils handicaps the country's official bilingual policy, and by implication, culture.

7. CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the sixteen (16) interview forms administered to some sixteen senior council staff in Yaounde and the two hundred (200) students' questionnaires collected, it is observed that effective bilingualism is still far-fetched in Cameroon. All the two hundred questionnaire respondents recognized the importance of the global language that English is as a significant factor of national development, but went further to disclose that the current situation of this language of international development in Cameroon is still ineffective or marginalized. Its optional and uncompromising use in official meetings, seminar, documents and communications limit the development opportunities available to Francophone students in English, for they are exposed and limited to French. From a general standpoint, the conduct of analysis on the sixteen (16) Council Staff Interview Forms points to the fact that the English Language is not a frequent code in local council documents (and notices), meetings, seminars and other activities. Even in the few instances where the language is used, it is insignificant because it is not unregulated by an official document. This timid use of this global language fragilises the attainment of the SDGs in the respective local council areas in the country. The absence of a regulatory instrument enforcing English-French bilingualism in all official businesses in the councils leaves this language of international development, English, at the mercy of officials.

In the university and council milieux, it is found that despite the fact that English is an international language (of science and technology, education, diplomacy and communication, etc.), and therefore, a strategic tool that could have been used to catalyse to SD in Cameroon, it continues to suffer from French dominance official meetings, conferences, documents and official communication. As opined by the respondents, the non-implementation of Cameroon's English LP hampers SD in the country in varied patterns and dimensions. The discriminatory use of the English Language in official settings as those studied herein points to the incapability of Cameroon's official bilingual policy to enhance SD in the country. The ascendancy of French, thus, the timid use of English Language implies that Cameroonian citizens are deprived of developmental information and/or opportunities that are driven in and attracted by the use of this global language. Cognizant that most officials could be adamant to the use of English because they are not bilingual, it is, thus, recommended that English-French bilingualism should be the primordial criterion for election or appointment into a public office. In all, Cameroonian officials, especially those who serve the public directly, are exhorted to effectively use both OLs in their institutions, considering that it would open Cameroonians development opportunities affiliated to both English and French cultures and communities.

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