

Language choice in education: a politics of persuasion

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ABSTRACT

The choice of indigenous versus European languages in education should be a hotly contested issue. Surprisingly, in much of Africa it is not. African states have dramatically increased their use of local languages in education over the last decade. This increase, however, has not proceeded from vocal demands on government by various language groups. Instead, it is the result of two more subtle factors: the changed attitude of a former coloniser and the work of language NGOs on the ground. These two forces have altered governments' perceptions about the utility of African languages in their education strategies. Because this political process works through persuasion, rather than bargaining, it allows choices about language in education to be less contentious than popularly assumed, separating this process from the violent ethnolinguistic conflict that is so often associated with Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The choice of indigenous versus European languages in education should be a hotly contested issue. Surprisingly, in much of Africa it is not. African states have dramatically increased their use of local languages in education over the last decade: at the time of independence, only 20 out of 47 African states (43%) were using local languages in primary education, whereas 38 states (81%) are doing so currently.¹ This increase, however, has not proceeded from vocal demands on government by language groups. Instead, it is the result of two more subtle factors: the changed attitude of a former coloniser and the work of language NGOs on the

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ground. These two forces have altered governments' perceptions about the utility of African languages in their education strategies. Because this political process works through persuasion, rather than bargaining, it allows choices about language in education to be less contentious than popularly assumed, separating this process from the violent ethnolinguistic conflict that is so often associated with Africa.

My research challenges two existing explanations for the rise of multilingual education. One credits the influence of international human rights activists and entities such as UNESCO, who have finally shamed governments into acknowledging the rights of minority language groups within their borders (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Tollefson & Tsui 2004; de Varennes 1996).² Widespread multilingual education reflects current international norms that favour protecting minority languages. Another prevalent explanation is a rationalist one. It assumes that governments try to avoid potential conflict by granting concessions to groups that demand special or equal treatment. Multilingual education is the outcome of a bargain: governments concede language rights in education in order to gain the support or quiescence of language groups, led by elites (Brass 1991; Laitin 1992; Weinstein 1982).

Neither of these explanations is satisfactory. Instead, I argue that African governments enacting mother tongue education policies are responding to two different forces – one a 'push' and the other a 'pull'. The push comes not from language groups demanding rights to use their languages in education – indeed, many speakers explicitly do not want this 'right' – but from an alliance of indigenous linguists and NGOs (often missionary), who use a recent accumulation of written languages and evidence of the success of using them in education to offer an alternative to African governments facing failing education systems. I call this persuasive alliance an 'evidentiary community'. Their pressure, however, has been building for a long time, and it might not have been accepted officially if another factor had not provided a moment of opportunity.

This opportunity, the pull, is provided by the new discourse of a former coloniser, France. Rather than a vague call by the entire international community to promote languages in support of diversity, a specific, changed message began to emanate from France in the 1990s. Reversing its long-standing preference for French-only as the medium of instruction in African primary schools, France began to communicate its support for initial schooling in local languages. This was not because France had suddenly decided to care about local languages, but because its leadership had been persuaded by a francophone group of scholars – an 'epistemic

community' – that learning initially in a local language helps a child to learn French (see Albaugh 2005: ch. 4).

This article will focus on the push from below, challenging the bargaining explanation by tracing changed education policies through three countries in Africa: Cameroon, Senegal and Ghana. I chose these countries on the basis of their varied demographics and colonial history. Cameroon, at one extreme linguistically, boasts nearly 300 spoken languages, none of them dominant. Senegal, at the other extreme, has 36 languages, but one of them, Wolof, is spoken as a first or second language by 90% of the population. Ghana falls between the two, with nearly 80 languages, five of them relatively major. Senegal and Ghana were model French and British colonies, respectively, and Cameroon experienced the rule of both powers in two different regions, though the dominant force was clearly francophone.

It is customary to point out the differences in ruling practices between France and Britain in Africa. While scholars have challenged the neat dichotomy in recent years, a stark distinction does hold true in the two countries' approaches to education. British colonial educational policy favoured initial teaching in the medium of the vernacular, and then a switch to English-only in the later primary grades. French administrators insisted on the French language as medium from the outset of schooling.

As one would expect, this practice carried over to independence, with anglophone countries continuing their inherited method of mother tongue education and francophone countries preferring French-medium education. The distinction continued until about 1990, after which a striking change occurred. Francophone states began experimenting with local language policies *en masse*, while anglophone states either stagnated or reversed, but rarely increased their use of local languages in education. Currently three-quarters of former French colonies are using local languages in education, compared with only one country doing so at independence. Six anglophone countries have reduced their use of local languages over the last decade.³

The three cases reflect these broader trends. Francophone Cameroon, which maintained a policy of European-language only after independence, included in its 1998 Education Orientation Law a call for public school use of national languages.⁴ 'PROPELCA', its mother tongue programme, began as a private initiative in religious schools and has expanded to more than 300 schools, including public establishments, with government endorsement. Senegal, previously an exemplar of French education policy, in 2001 introduced several of its national languages as media of instruction in primary schools.⁵ The mother tongue programme

is a six-year experiment, currently using six languages in 300 schools, with plans eventually to generalise the programme across the public school system. In contrast to these examples of increased local language use, Ghana, which has long been lauded for its vigorous mother tongue medium in education, announced a dramatic reversal in 2002, introducing a policy of English-only from the first year of primary school.

In none of these cases – nor, I would argue, in many others in Africa – were recent language decisions the result of agitation by minorities demanding rights to their language. This is striking. Fardon and Furniss (1994: 17) begin their edited volume on African languages and development with the observation that language is ‘politically charged in Africa’. Crawford Young (1998: 23) anticipates that ‘with levels of ethnic consciousness and mobilization much higher than they were a century ago, policies of linguistic homogenization which could be effective in the past are more likely to foment strong opposition today’. Ethnolinguistic identity is perceived as highly emotional, potentially explosive. ‘Language is the quintessential entitlement issue’, notes Donald Horowitz (1985: 220). Official policies regarding the use of language in public settings grant or withhold recognition to its speakers. Despite these predictions, and unlike militant language groups in other parts of the world, language demands in Africa are surprisingly muted. The language activism of Berbers in Algeria or Tigrayans in Ethiopia is an exception, rather than the rule.

In this article, I present evidence based on observation, interviews, and surveys collected during fieldwork in the three countries. The following sections outline a bargaining theory and its limitations, substantiate my claims that relevant actors hold different preferences than this theory assumes, and present an alternative explanation, based on persuasion.

A THEORY OF BARGAINING

One of many authors to explore the language landscape in Africa, David Laitin (1992), models the bargaining between government and various language groups as he provides a general theory to explain the multilingualism he observes. Because it so clearly lays out a causal framework that implicitly underlies much subsequent analysis, I focus on it here in detail. Laitin describes the multilingual situation in Africa with his well-known 3 ± 1 language repertoire. Generally, a person in Africa is proficient in a European language, a language of wider communication, and his or her own regional language (three languages). If this regional language happens to be the language of wider communication, the number is reduced to two, and if the regional language is not an official state

language, the individual will know a fourth language. This produces a 3 ± 1 repertoire for each individual, which is reflected and reinforced by the language policies of the central government. To arrive at this stable multilingual outcome, Laitin carefully describes the interests of the various 'players': nationalist leaders, bureaucrats, parents of school children, and regional elites.

Nationalist leaders, in his analysis, are torn. They want unity for the country, which is easiest to achieve by continuing to advance the colonial language, but they also gain political rewards for espousing rhetoric that favours African languages. Laitin observes that, at independence, 'nationalist leaders and their parties were ... committed to the development of indigenous African languages and were opposed to the continued use of the language of colonial administration', and asserts that the promotion of African languages is 'quite a popular political stance' (*ibid.*: 112). But they are also rational leaders who want efficient administration. Their preferences over language policy, then, are mixed.

Bureaucrats, on the other hand, have a clear, singular preference to maintain a European language. This assures their comparative advantage, since they are among the elite that speak a European language fluently. Bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education are an exception, however, because they have absorbed intellectual reasoning about the pedagogic benefits of mother tongue education. The third player, parents of school children, want their children to succeed economically, and so normally prefer European to local languages. But they are also interested in preserving their own particular language and will prefer it to an indigenous language that is not theirs.⁶

Finally, regional elites, though they do not figure explicitly in his game (*ibid.*: 111), turn out to be a large part of the story about why local languages are preserved in education and regional administration. Laitin admits that their preferences are normally assumed, rather than established: 'The assumption that minority elites mobilise their followers is accepted wisdom in African studies. Yet, in regard to the issue of national language choice, we know very little about the role of leaders from minority language groups. ... [the] parochial preferences of regional groups in regard to language have been widely assumed in African political linguistics but not adequately demonstrated' (*ibid.*: 96–7). Despite this admission, he follows the conventional wisdom, and confers upon regional elites a strong preference for preserving their own language and mobilising their followers to press for the same privilege. With this foundation of preferences, Laitin predicts a stable multilingual outcome in most African states.

TABLE 1
Bargaining theory expectations

	Player preferences					Outcome
	Nationalist Leaders	Bureaucrats	Ministry of Education	Parents	Regional Elites	
Bargaining expectations	Mixed	European language	Local languages	Mixed	Local languages	Multilingual

LIMITS OF THE BARGAINING MODEL

Though this bargaining analysis is elegant and intuitively pleasing, it is confounded by diverse preferences and additional contributing factors that are revealed upon closer examination of politics on the ground. I highlight these complications and suggest my alternative explanation in the remainder of the paper.

First, the preferences ascribed to nationalist leaders and regional elites are not accurate. While in the heady, post-independence years, many ruling parties did strongly advocate a return to African roots, including the revival of African languages in all spheres of life, there are few parties today that hold language rights up as a central goal. ‘Natural support’ for indigenous national languages in populist opposition programmes (Laitin 1994: 631) is not evident. More important is the misplaced role of regional language elites. Though carefully equivocal, Laitin assigns these regional elites preferences that implicitly (and necessarily) make them active advocates for language rights for their groups. He says that even where there is no obvious national language, regional elites will have an incentive to press for cultural autonomy.⁷ ‘The cost for the central bureaucracy of avoiding regional secession could well be agreement on language autonomy in the region’ (Laitin 1992: 116). In my three cases, such language elites did not exist.⁸

A second complicating factor is that this analysis of language politics, like many others, conflates two classes of language policies. One type of policy deals with the administrative use of languages – in the civil service, courts, government – and directly affects politicians and bureaucrats. Naturally, these elites educated in European languages would oppose an indigenising policy. But the second type of policy deals with use of languages in education. These policies do *not* affect civil servants. Bureaucrats may have a personal preference for European-language-only schools, but at most, they will be passive critics of local language policies.

If they wish, they can remove their own children from the public school system and enroll them in private schools. The bargaining model assumes that a monolingual or multilingual policy will envelop all spheres. It is possible, however, to promote local languages in one sphere and not in the others.

Third, and related, this bargaining model follows mainstream literature as it presents a stark choice between language rationalisation (having a single official language)⁹ and promotion of African culture. The tipping game presented in Laitin's (1994) study of Ghana's political linguistics is a 'binary choice' between English-medium or vernacular-medium schools. In the more general study, he cites a government official worried that it would be impossible to adopt one or another vernacular language as medium of instruction in primary schools without 'exciting tribal passions and creating serious discontent and unrest' (Laitin 1992: 112). But this is a scenario in which one indigenous language is imposed on everyone, and is likely to be a foreign language for the majority of students. When a policy includes the use of many languages in different schools, presumably those already spoken by the children at home or at least on the playground, it may inspire much less resistance. The divisible property of language choice in education offers the potential for rationalisation and cultural preservation at the same time.

PREFERENCES OBSERVED

My research introduced me to the subtle distinctions in preferences of these actors, which led me to appreciate the unique properties of language in education. I drew insights from more than 150 personal interviews conducted over 14 months, supplemented by a survey administered with the help of local assistants to nearly 700 people in the three countries.¹⁰

So, what do these actors want? I found that few nationalist leaders were interested in promoting African languages. Bureaucrats' preferences, even strictly within the Ministry of Education, were mixed. Parents' opinion turned out to be fairly malleable in the francophone cases. And, most importantly, there was little evidence of regional language elites placing language demands on their governments.

Preferences of nationalist leaders

In none of the three cases did leaders appear torn between African and European languages as a language of national unity. They have settled, for the most part, on the pragmatism of a European language.

Searching the main Cameroonian newspapers for content in the month before the 2002 legislative election revealed that no candidates mentioned language rights in their campaign speeches (*Cameroon Tribune* April–May 2002). Language rights (except for English) did not appear in the main opposition party (SDF) platform, and though the ruling party made vague references to pride in Cameroon's culture, President Biya did not use the issue of language to incite Cameroonian nationalism. It would not make sense for him to advocate a unifying language; none of Cameroon's languages would qualify for such a role.

In Ghana, politicians do use Ghanaian languages in their campaigns, but this is to aid comprehension, rather than for nationalist inspiration (Kropp-Dakubu 2003 int.). My interviews revealed that language was not an important bread-and-butter issue (*ibid.*), language policy was not an issue on the political platform (Professor 2003 int.), and there was no real discussion of language in the political campaigns (Manuh 2003 int.). A journalist surmised: 'People don't really consider it an issue. We've come to consider English as our national language' (Newton 2003 int.).

In Senegal, current President Abdoulaye Wade defeated long-time Socialist Party leader Abdou Diouf in 2000. In candidate discourse, language was a marginal issue. Wade (who speaks Wolof as a mother tongue) has consciously reached out to other language groups to ensure that he is not perceived as only a representative of the largest one. Unlike Diouf, Wade often gives his speeches in Wolof to help citizen comprehension (Daff 2003 int.). But he is also careful to speak favourably about other languages (Dione 2003 int.).

None of the leaders publicly advocates the use of a unifying African language for political gain, and if languages are mentioned at all, it is only a passing reference to the intrinsic value of all of them.

Preferences of bureaucrats

There is no question that the average civil servant is happy with his comparative advantage knowing a European language, and wants to keep it as the language of administration. But these bureaucrats' preferences can be dismissed as irrelevant because of the *type* of policy and their exit options. It is the civil servants in the Ministry of Education who matter in this instance, and Laitin rightly ascribes to them more positive attitudes toward local languages for instruction, though even these opinions are much more varied than he acknowledges.

At the highest level, Cameroon's minister of education at the time of the policy change, Joseph Owona, was a long-time proponent of cultural

diversity and use of local languages in education (Tadadjeu 2002 int.). But bureaucrats beneath him were divided. The first technical advisor to the minister (2003 int.) said he favoured the policy, but seemed more ambivalent than he admitted. He worried about parents' attitudes and a potential political backlash, and made sure to emphasise in our interview that the mother tongue programme was still experimental and would not be applied generally in the near future, although this is not what I had heard from the minister.

A divisional delegate for education (2002 int.) repeated the technical advisor's assumption that the mother tongue programme was experimental, and added the descriptors 'extra-curricular' and 'voluntary'. This civil servant supported the programme, but only because it was national law. In contrast, a statistician (2003 int.) in the provincial Ministry of Education (Bafoussam), saw no future whatever in the use of mother tongues. He spoke French to his children and thought French should naturally be the language of instruction.

Many Cameroonian school administrators were also suspicious of the policy. The headmaster of a government school in the capital had not heard of the mother tongue programme, and did not think it would work in his school (Headmaster 1 2002 int.). A school inspector was not convinced that using mother tongue as medium was a good idea, and thought it should be a subject instead (Inspector 2003 int.). At another school in a relatively urban area (Kumbo), the headmaster was not personally convinced. He had decided to introduce the area language as a subject, rather than a medium of instruction, because only 60% of the students spoke it at home (Headmaster 2 2002 int.). These opinions confirm the reports of advocates of the local language policy, who frequently cite the resistance of teachers and headmasters as part of the challenge of enacting the policy (Akenmo 2001; Kamga 1999; William Banboye, letter dated 16.12.2001).

There is in Cameroon, however, a certain group of teachers who strongly favour the policy – those who have been specifically trained to teach in the PROPELCA mother tongue programme. Samuel Aghambang (2002 int.) was representative of them. A public school teacher in the Bafut language area, he had attended six local training sessions, and enthusiastically praised the programme. Mr Aghambang receives about 5,000 CFA per term (about \$10) as an incentive,¹¹ as well as money for transport and expenses at the training sessions – all provided by the local Bafut Language Association. Another teacher at a Catholic school in Nkambe has been to five training sessions to teach in the Limbum language. She does not receive compensation for her extra work in the

classroom, only payment for travel and training expenses, but she says she is committed to it for pedagogic reasons (Kimbi 2002 int.). A fellow teacher at the same school was so enthusiastic about the programme that he was willing to receive training in Limbum, even though his first language is Lamnso (Teacher 2002 int.).¹²

Senegal demonstrates more uniform support for its policy among civil servants. Of the survey respondents who self-identified as civil servants, 67% favoured the local language medium policy. All those I interviewed in the Ministry of Education voiced support. Teachers in Senegal also comprise a much more cohesive body of opinion than in Cameroon. Senegal's Teachers' Union (SUDES/UNES) has been at the forefront of the mother tongue effort since the *Etats Généraux*, the National Conference on Education Reform of 1981–84 (République du Sénégal 1984), and has regularly sought the application of the mother tongue policy outlined in its recommendations (Fal 2003 int.). Whenever the Teachers' Union was mentioned in my interviews, it was always in the context of strong support for the mother tongue policy (Diouf 2003 int.; Fal 2003 int.; Faye 2003 int.). I attended the national colloquium for the teaching of French in February 2003, and teachers consistently complained about the poor state of French teaching in Senegal, advocating the use of Wolof and other local languages to improve student comprehension.¹³ Since *teacher* performance is commonly cited as a major reason for student failure, the language of instruction gave teachers a way to shift the blame to another problem.¹⁴

In Ghana, there is a split between top-level and mid-level bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education, though in the opposite direction from Cameroon. At the top is outright resistance to the use of local languages, with a strong preference for an English-only medium of education. Education Minister Christopher Ameyaw-Akumfi and his deputy minister for basic education and MP for Cape Coast, Christine Churcher, repeated their public pronouncements against mother tongue education forcefully in my interviews. Mid-level bureaucrats, however, quietly disapprove of the change to English-only education. The director of basic education voiced disappointment in the decision: 'You don't need to change the policy, just the implementation. Just post teachers to where they can speak the language. You need textbooks, manpower, training, but kids can pick up anything' (Director 2003 int.). Particularly difficult for him was explaining the change to donors, such as GTZ, who had recently given a large amount of money to support teaching materials in local languages.

The ambivalence within the Ministry of Education is reflected in Ghana's irregular application of the local-language-medium policy over

the years. The Director of Basic Education told me that the manpower simply does not exist to oversee implementation of the policy. A coordinator of an education assessment project concurred that there is no documentation about how the policy is to be implemented at the Ministry, district officers do not have copies of the policy on file, and they are certainly not to be found in schools (Dzinyela 2003 int.). According to one academic observer, implementation has failed for two reasons: economics and equity. First, during an economic crunch, cultural priorities get 'left in the lurch', and implementation becomes 'too complicated'. Second, and perhaps more important, there is a perception that the mother tongue policy disadvantages the rural areas because it 'dumbs down' their education (Dzinyela 2003 int.; Sutherland-Addy 2003 int.). Politicians can claim to promote equity by advocating English for all schools. In parliamentary debates (after the policy was announced), Churcher argued: 'the old policy of teaching children in the first three years in the local language is beautiful, but on the ground it is nauseating, because it is not yielding the results which would bridge the gap of inequities that we are facing as a people in this country ... It will be suicidal for us to continue with a policy which demarcates and deepens the gap between rich and poor' (Parliament 2002a: col.1660).

I found much evidence to support teachers' displeasure with and even subversion of the previous policy that required Ghanaian language medium in the primary years. A professor, who is now head of the political science department at the University of Legon, taught primary school at the beginning of his career. In his words, he 'did not waste time with local languages'. Even though he was Fanti, and was posted in an all-Fanti area (the correspondence of teacher and milieu is not always so convenient), he never used Fanti to teach other subjects. He recalled that when his school was evaluated, the inspector did not ask about the medium of instruction, but simply assumed the mother tongue policy was being followed. He justified his flouting of the policy with his own belief that introducing English from the beginning would give students a head start (Professor 2003 int.). The mirror image of Senegal, Ghanaian teachers supported a change in policy *away* from local languages that would give them temporary reprieve from the scrutiny of parents and administrators in the face of poor student test results.

In the Ministry of Education in Cameroon, then, we observe a division in ranks and quite a lot of ambivalence about the issue of languages in education. Senegal demonstrates strong support, particularly from the important constituency of teachers. In Ghana, there is outright displeasure

with local language education. Though intellectuals support it, teachers and upper-level bureaucrats are strongly opposed.

Preferences of parents

And what of parents? In many ways, my findings reflect those of Laitin's careful research in Ghana (1994). The bargaining model expects that parents will have a slight preference for their children to be educated in European languages, but if a local language is used, they will prefer their own language to the languages of other groups. My cases show parents in Cameroon and Senegal have surprisingly malleable preferences, affirming the importance of *framing* hinted at but not developed in Laitin's account (1994: 627).

A leader of the mother tongue education effort in Cameroon, explaining the obstacles to language teaching, writes: 'one must sensitise the masses to the necessity of revalorising our cultures through the teaching of our languages' (Tadadjeu 1990: 26).¹⁵ He bemoans one of the gravest consequences of colonisation being at the mental, and even subconscious, level: that of despising African culture, especially languages, by Africans (*ibid.*: 160–1). Numerous interviews with linguists, missionaries, and academics confirmed that it was an uphill battle to convince parents of the utility of teaching their children in mother tongues. A member of the Limbum Language Committee said that the church was always interested in people learning to read and write Limbum, so that they can read Scripture and other religious material. The barrier they face is the parents, who cannot see how learning Limbum will help their children get a job. They want their children to learn things at school that they cannot learn at home (Tanto 2002 int.). The president of the Lamnso Language Organisation cited a common parental response: 'You can't write the GCE in Lamnso' (Banboye 2002 int.).¹⁶ A Bafut Language Association leader recounted that parents saw learning Bafut in school as a deterrent to their children's learning of English (Mfonyang 2002 int.). Parental attitudes vary with age and education. Younger parents, and those with a secondary education, were almost twice as resistant to the idea of their children learning in the mother tongue medium as older, less-educated parents.

Interestingly, teachers demonstrated little concern about parental attitudes. They believed that if teachers advocate a certain pedagogy, then parents' support would follow. Regardless of their own views of the PROPELCA programme, the headmasters I interviewed were not worried about parental response if they implemented it. They explained

that, 'they have to accept it because it is nationwide' (Headmaster 2 2002 int.), and 'they accept that it is our job to make decisions about teaching' (Headmistress 2002 int.). Thus, parental attitudes in Cameroon vary, and appear to be somewhat malleable, if teacher perceptions are taken as an indication.

In Senegal, as in Cameroon, parents are viewed as acquiescent, rather than influential in government decisions. When asked whether he feared parental disapproval of the government policy, a professor responded, 'Just tell them what to do; they'll buy in' (Daff 2003 int.). Even if parents resist, school administration in Senegal has reinforced the government's campaign. The director of an experimental elementary school told me that parents were reluctant at first, but he met with them regularly to change their minds. Parental complaints fall into two categories, he explained. First, parents point out the director's background and choices for his children: 'You are doing fine and you learned French in school. You must want my children to fail.' Second, they appeal to economic realities: 'What future does a Senegalese language give my kid? Even kids who learn French have trouble getting a job. My kids won't be able to work here, much less go anywhere else.' The director's response is two-fold: first, he points out that in countries like Japan, kids are learning in their mother tongues; second, he assures them that the Senegalese language is only a base. French is introduced as a subject in the second year, and kids are better able to master it then (Camara 2003 int.).¹⁷ This seems to satisfy a good portion of parents. Two-thirds of Senegalese respondents aged 40–70 support mother tongue education (again, younger respondents bring down the average).

We can contrast Senegal and Cameroon with Ghana, where the incidence of support for mother tongue instruction is about half as high. In 1925 Ghana (then the Gold Coast), when Governor Guggisberg proposed the introduction of mother tongues as a medium of instruction for the first years of schooling, intellectuals and the general public raised an immediate outcry (see Newell 2002: 65). Nonetheless, the dictate prevailed, and remained the general policy until 2001, except for a few years immediately after independence. Since then, scholars have become convinced of the utility of learning in mother tongues, but parental attitudes have not followed. The academics to whom I spoke cited the suspicion of parents when academics tell them that children learn best in their mother tongues. Parents complain, 'Your kids are in English schools. You must want ours to be behind' (Andoh-Kumi 2003 int.). Ghana's director of basic education perceived strong parental feeling against the teaching of mother tongues, explaining that the new policy is 'responding to parents,

not to experts' (Director 2003 int.). Unlike in Senegal and Cameroon, the government has fanned parental apprehensions. If there was any support before, it has dissipated now (Fembeti 2003 int.).

Thus, we have initially suspicious parents in Cameroon, who are warming to the idea of mother tongue education, and even more parents in Senegal currently seem to favour the policy. Both cases show the malleability of parental opinion. In Ghana, however, parents almost universally distrust mother tongue education, echoing Laitin's findings (1994: 630), and their views are reinforced by the new government policy.

Preferences of language elites

The most important critique of this bargaining model rests on revised assumptions about regional language elites. These are the least-well-defined constituency in Laitin's analysis. 'Regional language elites' implies that there are regions based on language, with elites who try to obtain benefits for their language over others. In none of my cases did I find both to be true. There were certainly individuals who spoke out in favour of privileges for their languages, and often these were intellectual elites. There were also language associations, and proud speakers of particular languages, but rarely did these people hold politically influential positions.

In Cameroon, for example, the most tireless advocate for his own language I met was a man named William Banboye, a Lamnso speaker. Nearly 75 years old, and suffering from hearing loss (our interview was conducted at a high decibel), he had dedicated much of his life to promoting literacy in his language. The son of an advisor to the Fon,¹⁸ and the product of a Catholic education, at a young age Banboye had met Phyllis Kaberry, one of the best-known anthropologists to study the culture of the Cameroonian Grassfields. When Banboye founded the Nso History Society in his home in 1958, Kaberry attended periodic meetings, and in the course of their relationship, encouraged him to take on the writing of the Lamnso language script. This occupied his private time, while his career led him to teaching, and then to high position within the Catholic education bureaucracy; he became Catholic education secretary for Bamenda. This was fortunate for the promoters of PROPELCA, as Banboye (2002 int.) 'gave' them one of the schools under his jurisdiction in 1981 as the first to participate in the experiment. He continued with his devotion to Lamnso literacy, conducting adult literacy classes and serving as president for the Nso Language Organisation from its inception. He has been active politically at a regional level – sending letters to

division delegates for education and rural council members – to request their support of the mother tongue policy.

In Senegal, the oldest language association is the Association for Pulaar Renaissance. Cultural associations also exist for Wolof, Serer, and other languages. Senegal's first president, Leopold Senghor, an intellectual with interests in language, appointed commissions not long after independence to codify six national languages. This had the effect of creating a cadre of university linguists, many of whom remain committed to the preservation of their languages. One story is representative. Souleymane Faye (2003 int.), professor of linguistics at the University of Dakar, is a native Serer speaker. He described his own efforts to rescue the first mother tongue experiment in the early 1980s. Realising the lack of preparation that had gone into the experiment, and anticipating its failure, he wrote to the minister of education, asking for authorisation to go to the Serer experimental class (a good distance from Dakar) to support the teacher personally. Upon obtaining permission, he went several times, staying for varying periods, observing classroom interaction and giving the teacher feedback in the evenings. He wrote the first lessons for the transition from Serer to French himself. In 1983, he wrote and paid for the printing of a reading book (which I saw), drawing or pasting in his own illustrations.¹⁹ As it turned out, only the Serer classroom lasted the entire five years of the experiment. Obviously, this was a man with internal motivation.

In Ghana, associations of language speakers exist, such as the Nzima Literature Society or the Ga Cultural Society. They are made up of university professors, religious leaders, and language specialists. When the English-only policy was announced, a few of them wrote private letters to the Ministry of Education to complain. However, these committees are relatively intellectual affairs, rather than groups aimed at inspiring the average citizen. It seems they had been lulled into complacency by Ghana's long-time policy of favouring its national languages, and lacked the fervour of the associations in the other cases. Except for the 'unrecognised languages', the future of Ghana's major languages was assured without much private effort. Paradoxically, it may have been this satisfied attitude that sowed the seeds of change. Kingsley Andoh-Kumi (2003 int.), director of the Language Centre at the University of Ghana, admitted that it was only after the policy reversal that linguists at the university began to speak publicly in favour of mother tongue education.

But in none of the cases are these political actors or ethnic entrepreneurs, who whip up identity sentiment for personal gain (e.g. Brass 1991). Rather than self-interested political elites, the important actors are linguists and missionaries. The crux of the difference is the absence

of competition. Unlike political elites, the educated linguistic elites in these cases are not competing to privilege their own language. They are not inciting ethnic sentiment in order for their own language to gain advantage over others, but rather working to persuade parents and politicians that local language education has practical benefits, as will be described shortly.

And, importantly, political representatives of groups do not demand that the government concede language rights for their followers. In Cameroon, a National Assembly member I interviewed told me that to suggest that he would bring local language education to his constituents would probably be a liability in his campaign. He would never even consider offering them such a prospect (Tasi 2002 int.). Rather than political leaders spontaneously demanding language rights for their group, a few proud language speakers, such as Banboye in Cameroon, are trying to motivate political leaders to take pride in their language. This is a far cry from the assumption that elite representatives of language groups wrest language concessions from governments.

If we compare the initial bargaining model with the case evidence, we see that the multilingual outcome is underdetermined. Language elites are supposed to bargain with the central government, offering support or quiescence in return for language rights for the groups they represent. *Without the regional language elites, there are no strong advocates for local languages in education.* The cases reveal that the bargaining model actually lacks a stimulus because these elites are not present. Thus we must turn to other forces to provide the motor for the rise in multilingual education.

TABLE 2
Bargaining theory expectations compared with case evidence

	Player preferences					Outcome (education)
	Nationalist Leaders	Bureaucrats	Ministry of Education	Parents	Regional Elites	
Bargaining expectations	Mixed	European language	Local languages	Mixed	Local languages	Multilingual
	Case evidence					
Cameroon	Foreign language	Irrelevant	Mixed	Mixed	None	Multilingual
Senegal	Foreign language	Irrelevant	Local languages	Mixed	None	Multilingual
Ghana	Foreign language	Irrelevant	Mixed	Foreign language	None	Monolingual

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION: PERSUASION

My alternative explanation reveals more persuasion than bargaining. The persuasion directed at governments comes from external actors – particularly former colonial powers – and from internal sources – language NGOs and the indigenous linguists allied with them.

From about 1990, France altered the education strategy it pursued in its former colonies (see Albaugh 2005: ch. 4). The opportunity was ripe because of the confluence of several environmental factors – world conferences that revealed the poverty of education in francophone Africa, along with an ever more urgent fear of a growing English threat. Seizing on this moment of perceived linguistic weakness on the part of French leaders, a group of francophone intellectuals presented the argument, in a simple, compelling way, that African pupils would learn French better if they began school in their mother tongues. Though not a new theory, its reach to highly placed officials in France and *la Francophonie* was unique.

Meanwhile, because French-occupied Africa had not used local languages in its colonial education systems, and most francophone independent states had continued this policy, demand for materials in local languages for educational purposes in these areas had been muted. Development of orthographies for languages in former French colonies came much later than in former British colonies. Not until the late 1980s did the same percentage of citizens in francophone Africa have their languages in written form as did citizens of anglophone Africa as early as 1930.²⁰ In the last 15 years, language transcription activity has soared in francophone Africa, making available materials in several local languages for the first time. The groups working on transcription, or other NGOs involved in education, used these materials for basic education, demonstrating that children succeed in French when they begin in their mother tongues.

These orthographies and accompanying education materials provided the language infrastructure, but agency was still needed. The proximate cause of each increase in the use of local languages was a determined local individual, who allied himself with NGOs and strategically presented governments with language materials and proof of their success as media of instruction. This ‘evidentiary community’ of individuals and NGOs also worked to sensitise parents, stemming public resistance to potential policy changes that favoured local languages. Where the use of local languages decreased, an individual was also necessary, but, importantly, he was not allied with a language-oriented NGO. My argument therefore explains variation in both directions.

I describe the evidentiary community or its absence in three cases. Cameroon and Senegal demonstrate a strong alliance and a corresponding increase in their use of local languages as media of instruction. Ghana reveals the reverse.

Cameroon

After suppressing its indigenous languages before and after independence, the Cameroonian government applauded them in the 1996 Constitution,²¹ and advocated their use in the 1998 Education Orientation law.²² What caused this change? It was the steady development of a language infrastructure combined with the vision of an individual.

Active recent transcription activity is particularly pronounced in Cameroon, where 28 new languages have been written since 1980. Before that time, the languages of only 59% of the population were written. These new transcriptions bring the possibility of mother tongue literacy to an additional 18% of Cameroon's people.²³ These transcriptions were facilitated largely by foreign missionaries, with the help of local language speakers, and particularly the American missionary organisation SIL, Société Internationale Linguistique.²⁴ Nearly 100 SIL linguists work in Cameroon.

Part of the mandate of SIL translating teams is to produce – apart from the Bible – primers and basic reading materials, in order to promote literacy in the groups within which they work.²⁵ These foundational materials have provided the textbooks and teaching tools used in Cameroon's PROPELCA schools. Most are printed at the SIL headquarters, and distributed gratis or sold for nominal fees. The SIL bibliography lists 541 titles in 54 Cameroonian languages that are intended for literacy training in adult or primary classrooms (MSTR 2001).

The vision for the PROPELCA programme came from Maurice Tadadjeu, a native Yemba speaker whose early interest in his language and encouragement from the Fathers at his Catholic high school led him to study linguistics in the United States. He wrote a dissertation in 1977 proposing a multilingual education programme for Cameroon. In this early writing, however, he emphasised the *cultural* value of all Cameroonian languages, rather than the potential reinforcing relationship between first- and second-language acquisition.²⁶ Returning from the US to teach at the University of Yaounde, he immediately recognised the potential benefits of collaboration with SIL. Together they initiated the PROPELCA programme.²⁷ Like Tadadjeu, SIL was interested in transcribing and using as many languages as possible for literacy. SIL funded

PROPELCA at a cost of about \$150,000 per year and continues to do so (Geiger 2002 int.).²⁸

Their first request for collaboration with Cameroon's Ministry of Education rejected, Tadadjeu and SIL turned instead to the Catholic Church. William Banboye (then Catholic education secretary for Bamenda), gave them the Catholic school Melim to use for their first experiment in 1981. In 1984, Tadadjeu's team made a new request to the Ministry of Education, this time framed in terms of the programme's potential to aid the learning of French or English. They had designed a specific template for the transition from mother tongue to French or English that could be adapted quickly for any language by a teacher who was a native speaker, with only minimal training (Shell & Sadembouo 1983). This practical rationale was much more enticing than the cultural argument, and the government's response was positive. The Ministry released public schools and teachers to participate. Tadadjeu had recognised the strategic potential of packaging the message in a way that was attractive to policy-makers influenced by French ideology. But it was still a private experiment.

The evidentiary community of Tadadjeu and SIL knew that they faced an uphill battle to convince both the public and the government of the usefulness of local languages for education. Missionary linguists explain that one of the foundational elements of linguistic research in a community is to motivate the group to value its language (Robinson 1987: 69). They do this by establishing language committees to aid with Bible translation *and* influence the opinion of fellow language speakers. Reports from language committee supervisors cite 'sensitisation' as a major element of their work.²⁹ The positive opinion of parents in Cameroon derives in large part from the efforts of local language committees. In 1989, Tadadjeu transformed a loose network of about 30 language committees into the more institutionalised organisation NACALCO (the National Association of Committees of African Languages in Cameroon).

The evidentiary community focused on more than only the public; they targeted the government directly. Tadadjeu's team circulated a three-page memo at the ruling CPDM (Cameroon People's Democratic Movement) party congress in Bamenda, as early as March 1985. As they had hoped, the resulting party resolution included a commitment to encourage the development of indigenous languages (Tadadjeu 1990: 224). Anticipating a significant revision to the education law, NACALCO began lobbying in 1994 for the 'national language paragraph' that would ultimately appear in the 1998 law. Leaders identified a dozen National Assembly deputies who represented areas in which there was a school experimenting

with mother tongue education. NACALCO members spent significant time explaining to deputies that learning in mother tongues reinforced the learning of English and French. They followed the draft of the law through its various stages, finding out who was on each committee and writing, visiting or calling them. They would ask, 'Is the national languages paragraph still in there?' And the answer was, 'When it left my desk, it was still there' (Tadadjeu 27.11.2002 int.). Just before deputies voted on the new law in the National Assembly, Étienne Sadembouo (2002 int.), as a representative of NACALCO, went to the rooms of 25 deputies at the Hôtel des Députés the day before the vote to try to defuse any potential problems. The next day, there were no objections in the discussion on the floor. It was a case of successful lobbying.

To bolster their arguments, the alliance needed *evidence*. Official preparations for the 1998 law had begun with Cameroon's Education Conference (the *Etats Généraux*) in 1995. The Minister of Education, Robert Mbella Mbappe, knew Tadadjeu well and gave him the opportunity to present PROPELCA activities to the general conference. By 1995, the PROPELCA programme had been in operation for nearly 15 years, and the results of its experimental efforts were ripe for demonstration. Tadadjeu was one of nine presenters at the opening ceremony of the *Etats Généraux*, and debates about teaching in national languages comprised a significant part of the proceedings (MEN 1995: 20). He described the mother tongue projects that had already been put in place in the field with SIL assistance, and carefully rebutted potential arguments. His ideas were adopted by the conference, and the Plenary Session's eighth recommendation was the 'Introduction of national languages and cultures in the education system'.³⁰

The evidentiary community was strategic. They knew they had to convince a public that had endured a 'colonisation of the mind', which had long degraded local languages in favour of European ones. Tadadjeu, with SIL's financial and infrastructural support, was a systematic advocate – working with language committees where they existed, creating them where they did not, appointing committee representatives to talk to parents, teachers, and divisional education representatives. He convinced the government with a message that *all* languages could be used (avoiding the conflict of choosing among them), and that local languages would help with French or English acquisition. And he used experimental classes to show results. Though PROPELCA is still experimental, support from the government is now official, and there is every reason to believe it will expand as the evidentiary community continues its efforts.

Senegal

In 2001, Senegal introduced a six-year experiment using several of its national languages as media of instruction in primary schools, with plans to generalise the programme across the public school system. This contrasts sharply with its previous policy of French-only throughout the entire school cycle. Why did this bastion of French *assimilation* begin to use African languages? As in Cameroon, it was a confluence of infrastructure and individuals, another evidentiary community.

With a manageable number of languages, Senegal's first president, Léopold Senghor, had authorised the academic study of the major six languages from the beginning of independence.³¹ By 1980, 60% of the population had a written language. Since 1980, however, two other major languages have received written form, adding nearly 30% more of the population who could anticipate mother tongue literacy.³² Unlike in Cameroon, SIL has maintained a low profile, concentrating on smaller languages, but using the same strategy of establishing language committees to increase parental support.

Another NGO has been more public in its activities: ADEF (The Association for the Development of Education and Training in Africa).³³ Senegalese educators formed this association in 1992 to tackle the dire problem of illiteracy.³⁴ They understood the limits of government activities for primary education, and proposed to make their own contribution. Since such a large percentage of Senegal's school-aged children languished outside the formal education system, the field was ripe for private initiative. One of ADEF's lasting, notable achievements was the creation of *Écoles Communautaires de Base* (ECBs). These schools used the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, with French as the second language, until the third year, when French was phased in as the language of instruction.

ADEF received financial support from several bilateral donors and other NGOs. Importantly, in the mid to late 1990s, a flush of money (particularly from Canada) appeared on the scene to finance the development of educational materials in local languages that would be used in the non-formal sector. All codified languages could qualify for this support, and more than 100 titles were printed in the six official languages under the PAPA programme between 1998 and 1999.³⁵ With the contributions of SIL translators and other language NGOs, the office charged with promoting local languages in the Ministry of Education now lists a total of more than 1,930 titles written in 24 Senegalese languages.³⁶

The visionary individual allied with ADEF was Mamadou Ndoeye, who began his public career as head of the Teachers' Union. At Senegal's *Etats*

Généraux held between 1981 and 1984, he led a lobbying effort by teachers to press for the inclusion of national languages in the primary curriculum. Another individual associated with the mother tongue effort is Mamadou Lamine Gassama, a linguist formerly of the University of Dakar and later a member of government.³⁷ I asked whether he thought it contradictory for an advocate of African languages to espouse their use in the service of French. Benefiting French was not *his* primary objective, he insisted. But using that argument is instrumental for getting support (Gassama 2003 int.). ‘Even if the government says it is adopting policy to help with performance in French, intellectuals should seize the opportunity. We should use all the instruments available’, echoed his mentor, Arame Fal (2003 int.).³⁸

Ndoye and Gassama used this rhetoric in their advocacy efforts both toward the public and toward the government. Ndoye and other founders of ADEF met with President Diouf early on to seek his endorsement. Diouf immediately wrote them a letter of support in October 1992, agreeing to be their first sponsor.³⁹ But persuasion at all levels was made easier because, unlike Tadjadjeu, Ndoye and Gassama personally infiltrated government. In 1993, Ndoye (2003 int.) was named Minister for Literacy and National Languages, an office that had been created in 1991 as a marginal post for a member of the opposition. When Ndoye arrived, the post was still concerned only with non-formal education. However, because of the success of ADEF’s ECBs under his direction, the government added Basic Education to Ndoye’s portfolio in 1995. Thus, he was in charge of all primary education – non-formal and formal – and could transfer his expertise in one to the other.

‘Ndoye was the Minister we needed’, explained an education consultant to the World Bank who had worked under Ndoye’s education administration. ‘He pushed difficult ideas and had a positive impact’ (Diagne 2003 int.). Ndoye left in 1998 to become Executive Secretary of ADEA – the Association for the Development of Education in Africa – a consortium of donors to education based in Paris. But the initiatives begun under Ndoye continue to reverberate because of the continuity provided by Gassama.⁴⁰

Under Ndoye’s leadership, between 1993 and 1996, Gassama coordinated the effort to create an office within the education ministry that would implement the mother tongue programme in public schools. His job was to elaborate the organisational structure of the soon-to-be-created Department for National Languages (DPLN) within the Ministry, to sensitise authorities and native language speakers to the benefits of the programme, and continue to cultivate the support of teachers.⁴¹ In 1996,

Gassama became Ndoye's technical advisor, and in 1998 became his top 'technical advisor in linguistic policy and basic education'. After Ndoye left for ADEA, Gassama assumed the directorship of the newly created DPLN, under Minister of Education Becaye Diop.⁴² In this capacity, he was asked to submit a proposition regarding the use of national languages to the minister, who then transmitted the proposal for inclusion in the constitution.⁴³ In 2001, Gassama became Director of Diop's Cabinet, continuing his support of the national language programme all the while.⁴⁴

Public sentiment in Senegal, particularly among civil servants, was more positive toward local languages than in the other cases. In the open-ended responses to the survey question that asked people to justify their preference of language medium, a surprising number of those who favoured mother tongue education in Senegal cited the relationship between early mother tongue education and later French acquisition.⁴⁵ This is not a self-evident connection and reveals the effects of the sensitisation campaign. A prior experiment with local languages in Senegal (1979–82) was a failure on many levels, but particularly because it did not consider the importance of gaining public approval (Ka 2003 int.; Thiam 2003 int.). One professor, who had witnessed the earlier experiment, described an event in the city of St Louis where teachers trying to teach in the mother tongue were threatened by parents, and left before the end of the second year (Faye 2003 int.). In the new department for national languages in Senegal's Ministry of Education, there is an office of communication, whose sole responsibility is to shape public opinion in favour of the new education policy: 'showing people that the national languages aren't a substitute for French, but a complement' (Thiam 2003 int.). The office has used a children's TV programme, transmitted during school vacations,⁴⁶ to talk about the importance of mother tongue education, and the director of the Department for the Promotion of National Languages appeared on national television at least 15 times in 2002 to talk about the benefits of the new programme (*ibid.*).

The persuasion efforts in Senegal have also been aided by demonstration of the effectiveness of the mother tongue programme. Education conferences at Kolda (1993) and St. Louis (1995) heralded ECBs as model schools for Senegal's failing primary education. Though the evaluations were not systematic, and consisted primarily of teachers' accounts of student performance, the powerful message came through clearly: that, in three years, pupils in the ECBs performed equal to or better in French than did their counterparts who had had six years of

French (Ndoye 2005 int.). Donors began to take notice, particularly Canada and the World Bank, and local languages became elements of the PAIS and PAPA⁴⁷ education programmes that they funded.⁴⁸

Like Tadamjeu, Ndoye and Gassama engaged in strategic packaging. Using mother tongues in schools benefitted French. Ndoye also used positive results to convince the government and the public. From the platform of government, he could also target the public more easily. An entire office is dedicated to ‘sensitising’ the public about the benefits of mother tongue education. Certainly, these actors also benefited from changed discourse in France in the 1990s.

Ghana

In contrast to both of these examples, Ghana’s reversal of policy in 2002 did *not* take any sustained effort at persuasion. It simply required persons in high positions. Dismantling a programme is much easier than building one. The evidentiary community in favour of local languages was lacking in this context.

Though one would expect the language infrastructure to be strong in a country that had a policy privileging local languages since independence, in fact the official policy ‘crowded out’ private initiative. Ghana’s languages have had explicit government institutional support from before independence. The Bureau of Ghanaian Languages was established in 1951, with a mandate to produce materials for adults and school-children in the nine (later 11) officially recognised languages. In comparison with Cameroon and Senegal, Ghana began independence with a higher proportion of its languages written and, by 1980, three-quarters of the population had their language in written form.

For the smaller languages, of which there are about 50, there was GILLBT – the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation, which began as SIL in 1962. Since then, there has been a ‘Ghanaianisation’ of the staff, and currently GILLBT is independent from SIL. The administration is almost entirely Ghanaian, and though there is still some Western support for translation, GILLBT now has to raise local income to support its Bible translations. Importantly, the 12 languages that have been transcribed since 1980 only benefit an additional 6% of the population.

The government language infrastructure has simply stagnated. The Bureau of Ghanaian Languages, intended to be the sole supplier of educational materials in indigenous languages, has not printed anything for primary schools for over 30 years. It supplied some materials for

Ghanaian languages taught as subjects in secondary school, but there is literally no government-produced material available for primary schools except for the *Way to Knowledge* booklet, published in 1971 in all nine official languages (Awedoba 2003 int.). For the last six or seven years, the Bureau of Ghanaian Languages has been poorly funded, and has printed few materials in local languages *at all* (Abbey 2003 int.). The only source of new mother tongue education materials in the major languages appears to be from the German funding agency, GTZ. In 1997, this agency began the ASTEP programme 'in cooperation within government's sound education policy', in which it produced schoolbooks in the major Ghanaian local languages (Komarek 2003 int.).

The vision for the English-only policy can be traced to Christopher Ameyaw-Akumfi and Christine Churcher. Trained as a zoologist in the US, Ameyaw-Akumfi served as director-general of Ghana's Education Service under President Rawlings, and became minister of education under President Kufuor. His collaborator, Christine Churcher, minister for primary, secondary and girls' education, received a degree in English and History at the University of Ghana and later taught English at secondary school. These two ministers personally believed there was a crisis in the education system that could only be cured by the elimination of local languages as media of instruction. They anticipated little objection except for that of a few intellectuals and GTZ. And they were right. Ghana's major donors did not react. And the public supported the policy change. This was because there had been little sustained effort in favour of local languages by an evidentiary community, as in the other two cases.

GTZ had been working to provide materials in the large languages in partnership with the government, but it did not see a need to ensure an infrastructure for their diffusion. No private networks of language committees had been established to cultivate or sustain public interest in such a programme. GTZ had worked directly with the Ghanaian government, and had little contact with the populations using the materials it produced. GILLBT was constrained from exercising its potential impact because of the policy that allowed only 'official languages' to be used in schools. Though its missionaries produced education materials in the smaller languages in their domain, GILLBT was not allowed to use them in schools (see Hansford 1994).

The combination of Ameyaw-Akumfi and Churcher in the highest positions of education authority enabled the policy to be changed with a signature. Ameyaw-Akumfi announced the cabinet decision to Parliament on 28 February 2002 (Parliament 2002a). There would be no debate

until five months later (Parliament 2002b). Though the president had earlier appointed a commission to make recommendations regarding the future of Ghana's education policies, these were not scheduled to be released until the summer of 2002, well after he announced the change of policy.

We see three routes towards changed language policy for education. All point to the importance of persuasion. Cameroon's programme took the longest to emerge publicly. Since Tadjadjeu was not himself in government, he had to rely on grassroots mobilisation and personal influence on policy-makers, until the government finally endorsed publicly what was already well established in a private capacity. In Senegal, the major advocate for the programme assumed a position of authority, and, thus, not surprisingly, it has been a more publicly generated effort. With Ndoye's demonstration of success in non-formal experiments through ADEF, the government became convinced of the benefits of such an approach. His own position, and the continued pressure of Gassama after he left, brought the experiment to fruition. Ghana's case shows the relative freedom of a high-level bureaucrat to change policy when there is no evidentiary community to oppose him.

These cases show the tremendous importance of framing by the individual for both government and public consumption. In the cases of Cameroon and Senegal, the government became persuaded that the use of local languages would help in the acquisition of the unifying, international language. In Ghana, such an argument was superseded by a more commonsense appeal to the masses: children will learn English better if they begin it earlier in school.



The bargaining explanation, and contentious politics in general, depends on agitation by regional language elites for promotion of their languages. Because there were no such actors pressing for local language use in education in Cameroon and Senegal, the adoption of such a policy demands an alternative explanation. In both cases, determined individuals – Tadjadjeu and Ndoye – worked to persuade government leaders that such a policy would improve student performance. Importantly, they and the NGOs that supported and reinforced their efforts also worked to cultivate a public willing to accept such a policy change. Because Ndoye and his successor Gassama assumed leadership positions in the Senegalese government, they were able to continue their sensitisation campaign from a public platform and with government resources. A malleable public and

tireless persuasion were the keys to dampening potential opposition. The use of local languages was not presented in Cameroon and Senegal as a tool of cultural preservation, but as a means of learning another language. This way, it became acceptable to parents who wanted their children to have access to a European language.

The new policies that favoured local languages in Senegal and Cameroon, however, were only possible because of a supportive attitude on the part of this most important donor, France. The new ideology in the metropole offered a way to meld rhetoric in support of African languages with the continued goal of eventual French language acquisition, and both pragmatic African politicians and French donors could be satisfied.

Although one case cannot provide enough evidence for conclusive claims, Ghana points convincingly toward important contrasts with Cameroon and Senegal. The general public appears much less malleable, and it does enter the bargaining equation in opposition to local language use in education. This situation arises from the absence of several factors that were present in the other two cases. First, there was no individual working tirelessly to prove that a mother tongue programme could be successful. This was because of an understandable lack of urgency that resulted from a policy that had existed on paper for so long. Second, the government maintained the larger languages as its own territory, off-limits to missionary transcription work, and those missionaries working on the remaining smaller languages were not actively engaged in altering public opinion. In fact, there is evidence that they were themselves suspicious of the mother tongue language policy.⁴⁹ The one organisation actively promoting local language use in schools (GTZ) was involved at the top level, interacting with the government, rather than concerning itself with public opinion on the ground. Third, the message received from the UK and the US, Ghana's two largest donors, was ambivalent: lip service to the cultural value of mother tongues, but bottom-line interest in the teaching of English.⁵⁰ The astute politician Ameyaw-Akumfi and the ministers he appointed in the education sector would not fear a backlash from donors, and could anticipate increased public support by reverting to an English-only policy. In this situation as well, there were no regional language elites pushing for local language use in schools, but they were not replaced by other actors as was the case in Senegal and Cameroon. Absent were a tireless local advocate, a facilitating non-governmental infrastructure, and a strong message from the metropole that favoured local languages.

These cases also indicate a broader point of significance. They show that demand for language rights is not a natural sentiment; it must be

cultivated. Parents, like government officials, are extremely pragmatic about language. They shift opinion when presented with persuasive arguments about the relationship of local languages to European languages. Successful advocates have promoted the use of local languages as an aid to learning a unifying one. Language of education, unlike language of administration, can be transformed from an issue of identity to one of pedagogy. This alters a zero-sum game, and language rationalisation need not mean the choice of one language over the other. Whether a language policy is zero-sum or not depends on how it is perceived. That there is no contentious bargaining does not mean that politics is not happening, but simply that it is happening differently, through the persuasive use of ideas.

NOTES

1. See Albaugh 2005, Appendix A: <http://www.duke.edu/~eaaz/DissertationAppendixA.pdf>.
2. Ayo Bamgbose (2004: 7) writes, 'The effect of UNESCO's relentless advocacy is that member states of the Organization have been under pressure to re-examine their policies. Those already engaged in the practice of mother tongue education have felt justified, and those that have not had such a policy have made statements supporting it or have actually embarked on experiments and pilot projects. In effect, conducting initial literacy or lower primary education in an imported official language is no longer fashionable.'
3. Ghana, Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda. See Albaugh 2005, Introduction and Appendix A for details of these changes: <http://www.duke.edu/~eaaz/DissertationAppendixA.pdf>.
4. Law 633/PJL/AN (Loi d'Orientation de l'Éducation au Cameroun N. 2108/AN), 1998. 'National language' in Cameroon (as in Senegal) deliberately refers to any indigenous language, not a language spoken by the whole country.
5. The programme officially began with Decree 99-815, of 17 August 1999, completing Decree 86-877 of 19 July 1986, organising the Ministry of Education. *Journal Officiel de la République du Sénégal* (25 décembre 1999), 1420–21. This decree created the Direction for the Promotion of National Languages (DPLN).
6. Laitin (1994) carefully validates his theoretical assumptions with survey evidence from Ghana.
7. An important subject not discussed here is the role of political institutions in channelling behaviour. Laitin (1992: 114) frequently cites Nigeria in his examples of elite activism, and maintains that 'specific interests in vernacular development have emerged in many states as a dialectical response to national policies promoting an indigenous lingua franca'. Though he admits that the 3 ± 1 outcome is more likely in countries where 'clearly bounded regions, each representing a language group, are delineated in the political process' (*ibid.*, my emphasis), he does not follow this thought to its logical conclusion. Where regions are not clearly bounded and delineated in the political process, the mechanism that relies on agitation by local elites is not likely to work. Federal institutional arrangements reinforce the power of regional language elites, while centralised states provide fewer incentives. This is because there is no advantage for regional language elites to claim special privileges for their language group. Thus, non-federal states (and these are the majority in Africa) may be less likely to generate regional language interests.
8. I believe this argument goes beyond the three cases, though this is a topic for future research. David Laitin was gracious when I approached him about my findings at an early stage. He conceded that perhaps his expectations regarding regional elites were overdrawn. Personal discussion, Stanford, CA, 3.11.2004.
9. Language rationalisation is the 'authoritative imposition of a single language for educational and administrative communication' (Laitin 1994: 622).
10. Surveys were drawn from three different regions or provinces in each country between September 2002 and April 2003 for a total of 693 valid responses. Supervised research assistants

translated it into the local language whenever necessary. Assistants went to a public setting – a market or a downtown street – and selected a random sample: every fourth stall, office or dwelling, for example. In Cameroon, surveys were administered in 12 towns, seven Francophone (Bafia, Ombeessa, and Yaounde in the Centre Province; Banjoun, Batcham, Dschang and Mbouda in the West Province) and five Anglophone (Bafut, Bali, Bamenda, Kumbo and Nkambe in the Northwest Province). In Senegal, they were administered in three quarters of Dakar, Nguekoh (Petit Côte region), two quarters of Thiès (Central Region) and Kaolack (Central Region, inland). In Ghana, the surveys were administered in two quarters of Accra, Sogakope (Volta Region), and Tamale (Northern Region). Surveys asked the respondent to indicate (1) the first language he or she spoke at home; (2) whether he or she thought using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction was a good idea at the beginning of school as a transition to a European language; and (3) whether he or she would want his or her own child to begin school in a mother tongue or directly in English/ French. Results are available at: <http://www.duke.edu/~eaa2/Survey.pdf>.

11. Salaries for public school teachers in 2002 were about \$100 per month.
12. Parochial school teachers receive about half the salaries of public school teachers, though their payment is more timely.
13. Colloque National sur l'Enseignement en Français au Senegal. Author notes on verbal comments, Dakar, 4.2.2003.
14. Interpretation of teachers' views by Faye (2003 int.).
15. From a discussion in Work Committee no. 6, 15.6.1978, my translation. See also Tadjadjeu (1990: 32–3).
16. The GCE is the General Certificate of Education, an internationally recognised exam taken at the end of secondary school.
17. This experience was echoed by other school administrators (e.g. Ndiayne 2003 int.).
18. The Fons are royal leaders of cultural groupings in the Grassland areas of Cameroon.
19. *Agatoor a Seereer*, Syllabaire by Suleymaan Fay.
20. Calculated from Grimes 1996, 2000. These numbers are derived from population figures and date of translation for Bible portions, the latter providing a proxy for date the language was written.
21. Section 1, Art 1 (3) reads: 'The Republic of Cameroon adopts English and French as official languages with equal value. It guarantees the promotion of bilingualism throughout the reach of the territory. It works for the protection and the promotion of national languages' (Constitution 1996: 4).
22. The fourth of the nine objectives given for education in Section 4 is to 'promote national languages'. In Section 11, concerning implementation, the law reads that the state shall: 'Ensure the constant adaptation of the educational system to national economic and socio-cultural realities, and also to the international environment, especially through the promotion of bilingualism and the teaching of national languages' (Law 1998: 68).
23. Calculated from Grimes 1996, 2000.
24. Formerly Summer Institute of Linguistics. SIL is affiliated with Wycliffe Bible Translators.
25. Dennis Malone (2003: 332–48) of SIL International describes the inexpensive and relatively short training processes required for a teacher to design and implement the basic curriculum for mother tongue education, a method practised by SIL in most of its projects worldwide.
26. Tadjadjeu (1977: 132) writes, 'many communicative skills acquired in indigenous languages may not be appropriate for a non-indigenous language ...' though 'it is possible that bilingual learners may use their previous language learning experience to approach the non-indigenous language' (135). In this work (1977: 165), he criticises simplistic views of the L1 relationship put forward by Houis & Bole-Richard (1977) and Calvet (1974).
27. Operational Research Project for the Teaching of Cameroonian Languages.
28. Most of the money came initially from a proposal by Wycliff Bible Translators (SIL affiliate) to the Canadian Agency for International Development, supplemented by resources from US Churches. The latter is currently the primary source of funding.
29. For example, Yemba Language Committee Supervisor, Pierre-Marie Akenmo (2001: 3) reports: 'From July 15th to August 11th, I went door to door to congregation members, sensitising them to participate in language courses.' He also paid for radio spots to 'sensitise the public'. Bafut Language Committee Supervisor John Ambe Che (1999) reports the holding of 'sensitisation seminars'.
30. MEN 1995. Proposals of Committee 1 on General Policy includes: 'The learning of national languages and cultures in the education system as a factor of national integration' [c in principles a–y]

(pp. 22–6). The eighth recommendation adopted by the Plenary Session was the ‘Introduction of national languages and cultures in the education system’ (p. 79).

31. CLAD (Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Dakar) at the University of Dakar.
32. Calculated from Grimes (1996, 2000).
33. Association pour le Développement de l’Éducation et de la Formation en Afrique.
34. A multidisciplinary team made up of all levels of teachers, civil administrators, doctors, parents, and lawyers.
35. PAPA stands for Projet d’Appui au Plan d’Action en Matière d’Éducation non Formelle, Ministère de l’Enseignement Technique 2001: 13.
36. More than 700 of these works are in Wolof (DPLN 2002: 6–7).
37. Former Director of DPLN and former Cabinet Advisor to the Minister of Education.
38. She is, however, concerned about the hastiness of the reform.
39. 12.10.1992; Letter No. 5159. Framed on the wall of the ADEF office.
40. Even the materials used for the experiment are handled by INEADE, where Ndoye had served as director before coming to government. Significantly, ADEA is attached to the World Bank. With Ndoye now ADEA’s executive secretary, it is not surprising that the World Bank is one of the major funding sources for the programme.
41. Personal correspondence; letter dated 5.7.2003.
42. Whose new title was ‘Minister of Technical Education, Professional Training, Literacy and National Languages’.
43. Senegal’s new Constitution – Section II, Article 22 – refers to the importance of national languages; the previous constitution mentioned only French as the official language.
44. Personal correspondence; letter dated 5.7.2003.
45. Unlike in Cameroon or Ghana, where virtually none of the respondents linked mother tongue and foreign language acquisition, nearly a quarter of the respondents who thought teaching in the mother tongue was a good idea in Senegal gave reasons such as, ‘It is on the basis of the mother tongue that the child can express himself correctly in French’ and ‘Because later the child will understand French and will be advantaged if he starts with his mother tongue.’
46. Oscar des Vacances.
47. The follow-on, focusing on girls’ and women’s education – PAPP – was funded by the World Bank.
48. The ‘faire-faire’ concept was Ndoye’s (Diome 2003 int.).
49. Personal correspondence with Faye Blackwell, former missionary in Ghana, 15.5.2003.
50. This has since changed somewhat in Ghana (Dolan 2005 int.). There is a new USAID initiative favouring local languages that has the potential to act as an evidentiary community. The question is whether it will be able to overcome the long-term ‘damage’ the government has done to attitudes toward mother tongue education.

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