



Language Use and Language Choice in the Mosques in the Multilingual Northern Regions of Cameroon: A Structural-Functional Approach to Language Selection

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Abstract

This article outlines the structural-functional theory for language selection in multilingual communities, together with the frame of analysis that goes with the theory. The theory and the frame are applied to the study of language use and language choice in multilingual religious settings, with the focus on the mosques of the three northern regions of Cameroon. The study was guided by four research questions: 1) What is the structure of the Jumu'ah salat (Friday Prayer) in the mosques of the three northern regions of Cameroon, specifically the towns of Ngaoundere (Adamawa Region), Garoua (North Region) and Maroua (Far North Region)? 2) What languages are used during the Friday Prayer in the mosques of Ngaoundere, Garoua, and Maroua? 3) What factors motivate the choice of these languages in contexts where several other languages co-exist? 4) If Government decide to promote indigenous languages in northern Cameroon, which language could they start with at the local, divisional and regional level? The data were collected in six mosques and their analysis revealed four relevant facts. First, a Friday Prayer session in northern Cameroon comprises roughly 16 parts. Second, the languages used in the mosques in these three regions include: Arabic, Fulfulde, Hausa, Kanuri, Wandala, and Shuwa Arabic. Third, these languages were chosen for various reasons including the fact that they were the language of the Islamic religion (Arabic), and they were languages for wider communication in various localities (Fulfulde, Hausa). Fourth, regarding the promotion of these languages by Government, Fulfulde and Hausa were selected for the Adamawa Region (Ngaoundere), Fulfulde, Kanuri and Wandala for the North Region (Garoua), and Ful-

fulde, Shuwa Arabic and Hausa for the Far North Region (Maroua). By extension, as Fulfulde is dominant in the three regions, it could serve as a national language if these three regions were an autonomous state.

Subject Areas

Language Policy and Planning

Keywords

Structure, Function, Language Selection, Language Choice, Multilingualism, Language Planning, Language Policy, Language Management, Linguistic Diversity

1. Introduction

This study falls into the field of language policy and planning, with a focus on status planning and the selection of languages in multilingual communities. It is anchored in the sociolinguistic domain of religion in general, and the Muslim faith in particular. The study is motivated by the observation that in multilingual countries, various governments adopted foreign languages for administration, on grounds that it was difficult for these governments to choose one or more languages out of a multitude of languages in their countries. The problem underlying this research is that governments claim that their nations already have many languages and they bring in one or two foreign languages to add to the existing local ones. The following four questions were set to guide the investigation: 1) What was the structure of the Jumu'ah salat (Friday Prayer) in the mosques of the three northern regions of Cameroon, specifically the towns of Ngaoundere (Adamawa Region), Garoua (North Region) and Maroua (Far North Region)? 2) What languages were used during the Friday Prayer in the mosques of Ngaoundere, Garoua, and Maroua? 3) What factors motivated the choice of these languages in contexts where several other languages co-exist? 4) If Government decided to promote indigenous languages in northern Cameroon, which language could they start with at the local, divisional and regional level? The work is divided into four sections, beginning with the background to the study (1). This is followed by theoretical considerations and review of related literature (2), methodology (3), analysis of the data and discussion of the findings (4). These are considered in turn.

2. Background to the Study

The language situation of Cameroon is outlined (2.1) and the development of the Islamic faith in the country is taken up (2.2).

2.1. The Language Situation in Cameroon

Comprehensive research works on the language situation in Cameroon include:

Chia [1], Kouega [2] and Lewis [3]. Cameroon is a central African country which shares borders with Nigeria in the northwest, Chad on the northeast, Equatorial Guinea on the southeast, Gabon on the south, Congo on the southeast and the Central African Republic on the east. Administratively, the country is divided into ten regions *i.e.*, the Centre Region (Yaounde), the South Region (Ebolowa), the Littoral Region (Douala), the West region (Bafoussam), the two Anglophone regions, *i.e.*, the Northwest (Bamenda) and Southwest (Buea) and the three northern regions *i.e.*, the Adamawa Region (Ngaoundere), the North Region (Garoua) and the Far North Region (Maroua). These regions are inhabited by some 30 million people who speak close to 300 different languages. These languages can be grouped into four categories. These are two official languages, *i.e.*, French and English, three major minority languages, which are: Pidgin English spoken mainly in the anglophone regions, Fulfulde spoken mainly in the three major regions of the country, and Beti spoken mainly in the Centre and the South region.

Minor lingua francas include Arab Shuwa (spoken in the Far North Region of Cameroon and the South of Chad), Basaa (spoken in part of the Centre and Littoral regions), Duala (spoken in the Littoral Region and used by talented musicians in the country), Hausa (spoken in part of northern Cameroon and northern Nigeria), Kanuri (spoken in the Far North Region), Mungaka (spoken in the Northwest Region), and Wandala (spoken on the Cameroon-Chad borders). Finally there is a minor form of language known as Camfranglais (Kouega [4]) which is used by Francophone youths to communicate among themselves. The last category of languages includes lesser minority languages, which are listed in the studies cited above.

2.2. Development of the Islamic Faith in Cameroon

Before colonization, Cameroon was a land divided geographically into two parts, the northern part, and the southern part. The latter stretches from the south of the Adamawa Region to the north of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. The northern part which is of interest to this study, stretches from the Adamawa Region to the Far North Region. This area was first inhabited by the Sudanese. From the 15th Century, some migrants called Fulbe or Fulani came from Senegal, passed through Nigeria and Cameroon, and went as far as Chad and Sudan. These migrants were Muslim believers on a crusade to evangelise the pagan people they encountered. These pagans were persecuted and forcefully converted to Islam and their fertile lands were seized, which compelled them to either seek refuge in high mountains or join the new religion. As the number of faithful increased, many mosques were built to worship Allah (God). This explains why Islam is widespread in the three northern regions of Cameroon.

3. Theoretical Considerations and Review of Literature

The theory underlying this study *i.e.*, the structural-functional theory, and the framework which goes with this theory are outlined (3.1). This is followed by a review of relevant works that have studied language use in this setting (3.2).

3.1. The Structural-Functional Theory

This sub-section introduces the structural-functional theory, highlighting its place within the language policy and planning theory (3.1.1). Next, it describes the structural-functional theory of language use in religion (3.1.2) and the frame that goes with it (3.1.3). These are followed by a projection into the strengths of this theory and the challenges that it is likely to face (3.1.4). Finally, the key concepts of the theory and the studies that have made use of these concepts are outlined (3.1.5). These are considered in turn.

3.1.1. The Place of the Structural-Functional Theory within the Language Policy and Planning Theory

The structural-functional theory of language use in religion developed within the language policy and planning theory. In sociolinguistics, language policy and planning as outlined by many researchers including Fishman [5], Haugen [6] [7], Kaplan and Baldaugh [8], Spolsky [9] refers to the decisions and actions taken by government officials or people in authority—like parents, priests and pastors, school principals, judges, to name only these few—to influence language use by the people under their care. These decisions and actions may include the choice of a language, the change of the status of a language, its orthography, grammar, lexicon, to name only these.

Depending on the focus of the changes envisaged, researchers identified four major levels of language planning which were referred to as: corpus planning, status planning, acquisition planning, and prestige planning. Corpus planning takes up the structure of languages including spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. Status planning, on the other hand, refers to the various actions and decisions that people in authority take in order to change or reinforce the function of languages in a community, like deciding which languages to use in education, government or the media. Concerning acquisition planning, it is an effort to increase the number of learners and users of a language in a formal context like the school. This involves the development of curricula, teacher training, textbook writing, and others. As for prestige planning, it is intended to promote the acceptance of a language by connecting this language to high income, power, and white-collar jobs, to name only these desirable attributes.

The stages in language planning or the standardisation of a language include selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance. Language selection, an aspect of status planning, refers to the choice of a given language out of a multitude of languages to be promoted to the status of local, regional or national language; this stage is the key element of the structural-functional theory. Language codification, an aspect of corpus planning, refers to the documentation of rules and norms for grammar, spelling, vocabulary and other linguistic features of the selected language. Elaboration, another aspect of corpus planning, deals with the extension of the use of the selected language to other domains of use like education, media, government, technology, to name only these. Lastly, acceptance, an aspect of prestige planning, is the prestige that the selected language gains and its acceptance in

the given community.

3.1.2. The Structural-Functional Theory of Language Use in Religion

The structural-functional model is a theoretical frame which is used to describe the central element in the theory of language policy and planning, *i.e.*, status planning, which focuses on the selection of one or more languages in a given state or community. It is an empirical approach that examines language use in religion, with the focus on the factors which determine language choice in multilingual post-colonial communities. It is an analytical frame that attempts to look into the first pillar of language policy, that is, language selection, the other pillars being codification, elaboration and acceptance as was outlined above. The main language use domain in this frame is religion. In postcolonial contexts, religion is one domain in which people from different tribes—young and old—meet to intensely take part in the same activity under the authority of the same leader. It is one domain where a group of people is exposed to multilingualism when these people are under the authority of the same leader. It is a domain where people from various tribes have to begin to tolerate the languages spoken by people from different linguistic backgrounds. It is a domain where people having little in common begin to accept the use of languages other than their own tribal languages. It is one domain where linguistic diversity may be pronounced in a post-colonial locality or territory. When a language is used in this domain, that language is likely to gain generalized acceptance in the linguistically diverse community or locality in which it is used. It can therefore be projected that when government embarks on an indigenous language promotion project, the starting point should be those languages which have already gained acceptance in the religious domain, other language selection factors such as demographics, economic utility, vitality, historicity having already contributed to their acceptance in religious circles.

3.1.3. The Structural-Functional Frame

The structural-functional theory co-exists with the structural-functional frame. This analytical frame is based on a two-step process: first, it dissects a given religious service in order to identify its constituent parts (structure); then it checks what language is used in each of these constituent parts and for what purpose (function). The analytical tools used include participant observation, informal discussion, interview and a questionnaire, which are used simultaneously during a series of three visits to the sites of research, which may be a church, a temple, a mosque, to name only these places of worship.

As the frame is ethnographic in nature, it requires that the researcher visits the setting of the study at least three times. During the first visit (Visit 1), the researcher explores the setting chosen. He goes round the church or mosque and snaps pieces of information on billboards intended to be read by the faithful. In the process, he gathers information about the church, *i.e.*, when it was built, its size, the number of worshippers it can hold and other relevant details. Then he takes an appointment with the religious leader (priest, pastor, Iman) and tells him

that he will also meet choir leaders, mass boys, elders, and a few parishioners. Drawing from his interaction with the church leader (informal discussions, interview, question and answer session), the researcher designs a questionnaire.

During the second visit (Visit 2), the researcher discusses each item on the questionnaire with the religious leader. These items focus on the parts of a religious service, the number of choirs, the activities that go on in church, the languages that are used in each part of the church service, and most importantly, the reasons why these languages are chosen out of a multitude of languages in the locality where the church is planted. This questionnaire is primarily filled in by the religious leader. Next come the catechists, mass boys, choir leaders, elders, and a few parishioners.

During the third visit (Visit 3), the researcher sits through a church service together with the congregants (participant observation) and checks the answers to the questionnaire items given by the informants. This third visit is useful as it enables the researcher to check the claims made by the informants.

3.1.4. Strengths, Benefits and Challenges of the Structural-Functional Theory

The main strength of this theory is that it helps to identify in a multilingual community those languages which can be shortlisted for selection at the local, provincial, and national levels. These shortlisted languages already have a higher acceptability rate than other languages in a given locality or province. High acceptability rate limits tribal competitiveness or ethnic conflicts on the one hand, and promotes a sense of togetherness and unity on the other hand. In short, the use of a language in religion can potentially impact the future selection of that language for use at the local, provincial or national level. Needless to say, successful language selection in a multilingual community is likely to yield socio-economic and political development of that community. It can be hypothesized that the use of a language in religion has an impact on the acceptability of that language in the community in which it is spoken. When a language is used in religion it is likely to be accepted as a local, provincial, or national language. Conversely, a language that does not feature among those used in religion in a community is unlikely to be accepted without pressure and force as a local, provincial or national language.

The challenges are numerous. When a government lacks resources for health, education, road construction to name only these budget-consuming domains, it is difficult for this government to finance the conduct of surveys in religious institutions in a locality, a province or a nation. This explains why the first pillar of language policy and planning, *i.e.*, selection of a national language among a multitude of languages, has been dragging in many states. In many multilingual countries in Africa, international languages like French, English, Arabic, and Portuguese have been selected as their official and national languages. These countries have one thing in common, *i.e.*, they have not funded research on national language selection. Exceptions include countries like Burundi (Kurundi), Mozambique (Swahili), Comoros (Shikomoro), Central African Republic (Sango), Rwanda (Kinyarwanda), and Ethiopia (Amharic). The bulk of African countries need to carry

out research on language selection in order to choose local, provincial, and national languages to be used in their territories.

3.1.5. Key Concepts in the Structural-Functional Theory and Studies That Have Used These Concepts

The key concepts in the structural-functional theory include: structure, function, language selection, language choice, multilingualism, language planning, language policy, language management, linguistic diversity and a few others. These concepts have been used in several studies, which can be grouped into various categories including types of faith, localities, and types of study. A categorisation according to faith includes: Catholic (Kouega [10] [11], Kouega and Emaleu [12], Kouega and Alo'o [13], Ntedondjeu and Kouega [14], and Baimada [15]; Main Stream Protestant (Kouega and Ndzotom [16]-[18]), Meutem and Alo'o [19], Ndzotom [20]-[24], and Baimada and Mgaibai [25]), Pentecostal (Kouega [26]-[28], Afutendem [29]), Baimada [30], Alo'o [31] and Islam (Baimada [32]-[34], Kouega and Baimada [35]). The localities studied include the South region of Cameroon (Kouega and Alo'o [13]), the Centre region (Kouega [10], Ndzotom Mbakop [20]), the Southwest region (Emaleu [36]), the three northern regions of Cameroon (Baimada [37], Kalaza [38]), the two anglophone regions of Cameroon (Emaleu [36]), and the Northwest region (Afutendem [29], Emaleu [39]). Regarding the level of the studies, a few of them are defended Ph.D. theses (Baimada [40], Ndzotom Mbakop [20], Emaleu [41]), while others are articles published in journals (Kouega and Emaleu [12]) and edited books (Baimada 15, Ntedondjeu and Kouega [42]).

3.2. Review of Literature

Several researchers have examined language use in religion and the reviews of these works are available in the literature. The focus here is on works on the Islam faith in the three northern regions of Cameroon. A seminal work was conducted by Baimada [32], who studied language practices in multilingual Islamic northern Cameroon. The study was guided by six research questions, which are reproduced here: 1) What are the constituent parts of a Friday Prayer and what languages are used for each part? 2) what factors motivate the choice of these languages in the mosque? 3) What is the structure of the Friday Prayer? Is it the same structure in the mosques of the three northern regions of Cameroon? 4) Fulfulde is said to be a vehicular language in northern Cameroon. Is it used in all settings including the mosques? 5) Arabic is said to be taught in Madrassas. Are worshippers proficient in it? What is the worshippers' attitude to its use in the mosque? 6) Arabic is said to be associated with Islam; if any other language is to be used in the mosque, would it be a language of wider communication or a mere tribal language?

This researcher used Kouega's structural-functional frame [10], and his 180 informants were the Imams, the Muezzins and the faithful of nine mosques in three regions of northern Cameroon. A questionnaire was devised and the informants filled them in. The returns were subjected to careful analysis. The results revealed

a number of interesting facts about language use in the mosques of northern Cameroon. First, the Friday Prayer includes a total of 16 parts, each of which is realised with specific languages, as shown below:

- 1) First Call: Arabic;
- 2) Second Call: Arabic;
- 3) Iman's greeting: Arabic;
- 4) First Sermon: Fulfulde, Kanuri Wandala, Hausa, Shuwa Arabic, French;
- 5) Second Sermon: Fulfulde, Kanuri Wandala, Hausa, Shuwa Arabic, French;
- 6) Takirat Al-Ihram: Arabic;
- 7) Allahu Akbar: Arabic;
- 8) Sami'a-l-ahou: Arabic;
- 9) Takbir 1 (first prostration): Arabic;
- 10) Takbir 2 (second prostration): Arabic;
- 11) Fatiha: Arabic;
- 12) Al-tachahhod: Arabic;
- 13) Attahtyyatou lilo-lahi: Arabic;
- 14) Ashadu: Arabic;
- 15) As-salamu alaykum (final salutation): Arabic;
- 16) Announcements: Fulfulde, Kanuri Wandala, Hausa, Shuwa Arabic, French.

Secondly, the factors motivating language choice were uncovered: Arabic was chosen because the Islamic dogma imposes it. Fulfulde and French were regarded as mega vehicular languages, while Hausa, Wandala, Kanuri, and Shuwa Arabic came up because many worshipers were proficient in those languages. Third, the Friday Prayer was found to have the same structure in the mosques of the three northern regions of Cameroon. Fourth, Fulfulde was found to be used in the mosques of the three northern regions of Cameroon and this confirms its vehicular status. It was used in the first sermon, the second sermon, and announcements. Five, out of the 180 respondents, 48.88% claimed to be proficient in Arabic, 49.45% declared that they were not proficient, while 1.67% said they could understand it partially. Finally, it was found that besides Arabic, other languages of wider communication could be used in the mosque, as the case of French, Fulfulde, Wandala, Kanuri, Hausa, and Shuwa Arabic shows.

The present study falls in line with Baimada's [32]; it takes up different mosques in these same regions of northern Cameroon. It is expected that Baimada's findings will be replicated. What is to be added is the identification of the languages which can be selected for promotion at the local, divisional, regional level and even at the national level if the locality was a state.

4. Methodology

The setting of the study (4.1), the instruments used (4.2), the informants (4.3), the selection of research assistants and their training (4.4), and the difficulties encountered during the data collection process (4.5) are considered in turn below.

4.1. Setting of the Study and Sampling Strategy

The settings chosen were mosques in the three northern parts of Cameroon, specifically in the towns of Ngaoundere, Garoua and Maroua. As Baimada (2018) had already worked on the mosques in these towns, an effort was made to exclude from this study any mosque that he visited. The following six mosques were therefore chosen (**Table 1**).

Table 1. The six mosques visited for this study.

Regions	Towns	Mosques (Baimada 2018)	Mosques (Present study)
Adamawa	Ngaoundere	- Dang mosque - Iman Malik Mosque - Ngaoundere Lamidat Mosque	- Bini mosque - Alhadji Abbo mosque
North	Garoua	- Poumpoure mosque - Dada Ahijo mosque - Garoua Lamidat mosque	- Al Hadj Moussa mosque - Issa mosque
Far North	Maroua	- Harde mosque - Dugoy Friday mosque - Maroua Lamidat mosque	- Doulaire mosque - Koza mosque

In all, six mosques were visited during this study while Baimada [32] visited a total of nine mosques.

The choice of these six mosques was determined by geographical position and accessibility on the one hand, and the attitude of mosque leader on the other. First, each town was arbitrarily divided into two geographical parts and one mosque was chosen in each part. There is no document indicating the number of mosques in a town. Besides not only information about the size of the mosques, and their linguistic composition is not available, but also any attempt to check such details may be misinterpreted by the town dwellers. The choice of a mosque in each part of a town was determined primarily by accessibility to the mosque, which excluded mosques located in the outskirts of a town. The next major selection criterion was the attitude of the Iman to research in the mosque: leadership approval was mandatory, as he was the first respondent to be contacted in each mosque.

4.2. Tools Used and Data Collection Process

Three tools were used simultaneously: participant observation, informal discussion and interview, and a questionnaire. As the framework requires, the researcher and his assistants visited each setting three times. These research assistants were selected among Muslim students residing in these towns. Once authorization was formally obtained, the researcher or his assistant discussed the purpose of the visit with the Iman or Muezzin. In the process, the researcher gathered relevant information posted on walls and notice boards to inform the worshippers. Then he inquired about the conduct of the Friday Prayer, the parts of the prayer and the languages each part was generally realised with. Most importantly, he informed

the Iman that similar discussions were to be made with the Muezzin and a few congregants. This discussion and interview marked the end of the first visit to a mosque, which generally took place on a Thursday.

With the information gathered, the researcher designed a questionnaire (see Appendix) to be used for data collection during the second visit, which took place on a Friday, right after the Friday Prayer. The researcher met the Iman again, this time with a questionnaire to be filled. As the questionnaire items were the very questions he discussed the previous day, he answered them very fast. Next after the Iman came the Muezzin and a few congregants, especially those who were not in haste to leave the premise of the mosque after the prayer.

The third visit took place the following Friday, that is one week later. The researcher and his Muslim assistant sat through this Friday Prayer together with the congregants in order to check the answers to the questionnaire items that the informants provided. It should be pointed out here that the researcher had to simulate the worshipers in their postures. Needless to say, prostration requires some intensive practice prior to the visit.

4.3. Informants

The first person to contact for the study was the Iman, followed by the Muezzin. Other informants were picked out at random on the premise of each mosque. Care was taken to check that these informants could speak French or English. Those who could not were included only when there was someone around who could help with translation or interpretation. In all, 10 informants were contacted in each mosque, 20 in each town, that is, a total of 60 informants for the whole study, as **Table 2** shows.

Table 2. Informants of the study.

Informants	Towns			Total
	Ngaoundere	Garoua	Maroua	
Imans/Muezzins	4	4	4	12
Worshipers	16	16	16	48
Total	20	20	20	60

4.4. Selection and Training of Research Assistants

Before traveling to a research site, the researcher had the contacts of a few students living in that town. These students served as guides in the respective towns. They sat through a video-taped Friday Prayer session with the researcher and visualized the process of segmentation of a prayer session into its constituent parts. Effective work on the field started after the training.

4.5. Difficulties Encountered

Three major problems had to be solved; these are: training of the research assis-

tants, transportation, lodging and absence from work. First, each research assistant had to be trained before going to the field. Each mosque was visited by two different research assistants on two different Friday prayer sessions. The idea was to ensure replicability; if major differences in the languages used in a given mosque were observed, the researcher would go back to that mosque for further discussion sessions with the Iman. The fact of waiting for the second researcher to submit his report contributed to prolonging the duration of the data collection process. Other problems included the cost of transportation to the sites, lodging in each town, and prolonged absence from work.

5. Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

The structure of the Friday Prayer session (5.1) and the languages used in each part of the service (5.2) are considered.

5.1. Structure of the Friday Prayer Session in the Three Regions

The Friday Prayer session was found to contain some 14 parts for some informants and 16 parts for others, even in the same mosque. A close look showed that some informants left out Greetings while others ignored Announcements. Below are listed these 16 parts.

- 1) First Call of the Muezzin or Adhan;
- 2) Second call;
- 3) Greetings;
- 4) First Khutbah (sermon);
- 5) Second Khutbah (sermon);
- 6) Takirat al-ihram (invocation);
- 7) Allahu Akbar (proclamation of God's greatness);
- 8) Sami' a-l-ahou (recitation of prayers);
- 9) Takbir 1 (first prostration);
- 10) Takbir 2 (second prostration);
- 11) Recitation of the Fatiha;
- 12) Al-tachahhod;
- 13) Attahiyyatou lilo-lahi;
- 14) Ashadu (Abraham's prayer);
- 15) Announcements;
- 16) As-salamu alaykum (final salutation).

5.2. Languages Used in Each Part of the Service

These 16 parts were realized with different languages depending on the localities. In Ngaoundere, four different languages were used. These are: Arabic, Fulfulde, French, and Hausa. Arabic was used in all 16 parts, while the other languages were limited to specific parts, as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3 brings together the first 17 items of the questionnaire. As this table clearly shows, Arabic occurred as the main language in all 16 parts. Other lan-

languages were used to translate messages already expressed in Arabic. These languages in Ngaoundere were: Fulfulde, French, Hausa. In Garoua, they were: French, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Wandala and in Maroua, they were: French, Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, Hausa. Translation occurred in three specific parts of the Friday Prayers. These were: First Khutba, Greetings and Announcements.

Table 3. Languages used in the 16 parts in Ngaoundere.

Languages	Localities	Ngaoundere	Garoua	Maroua
1) First Call of the Muezzin or Adhan		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
2) Second call		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
3) First Khutbah (sermon)		Arabic, Fulfulde, French, Hausa	Arabic, French, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Wandala	Arabic, French, Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, Hausa
4) Greetings		Arabic Fulfulde, French, Hausa	Arabic, French, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Wandala	Arabic French, Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, Hausa
5) Second Khutbah (sermon)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
6) Takirat al-ihram (invocation)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
7) Allahu Akbar (proclamation of God's greatness)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
8) Sami' a-l-ahou (recitation of prayers)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
9) Takbir 1 (first prostration)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
10) Takbir 2 (second prostration)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
11) Recitation of the Fatiha		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
12) Al-tachahhod		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
13) Attahiyyatou lilo-lahi		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
14) Ashadu (Abraham's prayer)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
15) Announcements		Arabic, Fulfulde, French, Hausa	Arabic, French, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Wandala	Arabic, French, Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, Hausa
16) As-salamu alaykum (final salutation)		Arabic	Arabic	Arabic

Question 18 asked the informants to indicate what specific activities were going on when a given language was used in the Friday prayer session. As was pointed out above, the following languages were used:

Arabic

It was used in all the 16 parts of the Friday Prayer session in the six mosques visited even though only a small proportion of the worshipers reported being competent in it.

Fulfulde

It was heard in the translation of the First Sermon in the six mosques visited. It also appeared in Greetings and in Announcements. In all mosques, it occupied second position after Arabic.

French

French was used in the first Sermon, Greetings and Announcements. It was used on specific occasions: when there was an urgent message from Government to pass on, and when there were visitors from neighbouring francophone countries like Niger and Chad. In one mosque it was used when the first research assistant collected his data but was not used when the second research assistant visited that same mosque the following week.

Hausa

It was heard in Ngaoundere during the translations of the First Sermon, Greetings and Announcements.

Kanuri

It was used in Garoua in the translation of Announcements.

Shuwa Arabic

It was used in Maroua in the translation of Announcements.

Wandala

It was used in Garoua in the translation of Announcements.

Question 19 focused on the factors that motivated the choice of the various languages that were used in the Mosque. It was reported that:

Arabic

It was the language of the Islamic religion and no other language could replace it.

Fulfulde

It was the most popular language in each mosque.

French

It was the official language of the country and the default language to use when there were strangers or visitors around.

Hausa

It was the dominant language in the Ngaoundere region.

Kanuri

It was a popular language in the North region.

Shuwa Arabic

It was a popular language in the North region.

Wandala

It was a popular language in the North region.

Question 20 asked the informants to consider the languages used in their mosques and in their communities and to indicate those languages Government could start the promotion of indigenous languages with. A total of four languages surfaced from the answers: Fulfulde, Hausa, Kanuri and Shuwa Arabic, as shown in **Table 4**. Needless to say, statistics were left out.

As **Table 4** shows, Fulfulde is chosen as a potential language for promotion in

the three regions under consideration. This means that, if these three regions were an autonomous state, Fulfulde could tentatively be chosen as a national language for that state. Possible regional languages could be Hausa in Ngaoundere (Adamawa Region), Kanuri and Wandala (North Region), and Shuwa Arabic and Hausa in Maroua (Far North Region).

Table 4. Preferred languages chosen for promotion by Government.

Localities	Ngaoundere	Garoua	Maroua
	Fulfulde	Fulfulde	Fulfulde
Languages	Hausa	Kanuri	Shuwa Arabic
		Wandala	Hausa

6. Conclusion

This paper has used the study of language use and language choice in multilingual religious settings to illustrate the structural-functional theory for language selection in multilingual contexts and the frame of analysis that goes with this theory. The data for the study were collected in six mosques in the three northern regions of Cameroon. The analysis of these data revealed that the structure of the Friday Prayer in the mosques in the three northern regions of Cameroon includes some 16 parts, with the First Call for Prayer being the first part and the Assalamu Alaykum (final salutation) being the last part in sequence. It was found that a total of seven languages were used in the mosques. These are: Arabic, the liturgical language, and a number of vehicular languages, *i.e.*, Fulfulde, Hausa, Kanuri, Shuwa Arabic, and Wandala. These languages were chosen because they performed various functions. They were the language of the Islamic faith (Arabic); they were widespread lingua francas like Fulfulde. Interestingly, the languages that could be selected for promotion by Government surfaced naturally: Fulfulde and Hausa were unanimously chosen for the town of Ngaoundere (Adamawa Region), Fulfulde, Kanuri and Wandala for the North Region (Garoua), and Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, and Hausa for the Far North Region (Maroua). Needless to say, if these three regions were an autonomous state, Fulfulde could possibly be chosen as a national language. Similar studies can be conducted in countries which, since independence, have adopted foreign languages on ground that it was difficult to choose, in a multilingual nation, one language that can serve as a national language.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix

Questionnaire/interview/observation (to be filled in by the researchers)

Consider the last Friday prayer service you attended and the languages that were used in this service.

1) In what language did the Muezzin do the adhan or the first call to the salat (prayer)?

2) In what language did the Muezzin do the second call to the salat?

3) When the Iman entered the mosque, what did he say and in what language?

4) In what language did the Iman do the first khutbah (sermon)? Was there any translation?

5) In what language did the Iman do the second khutbah (sermon)? Was there any translation?

6) Did you understand the sermon of that day, the preaching of the Iman?

7) In what language did the Iman do the Takirat al-ihram? In what language did you do it?

8) In what language did the Iman do the Allahu Akbar? In what language did you do it?

9) In what language did the Iman do the Sami' a-l-ahou? In what language did you do it?

10) In what language did the Iman do the Takbir 1 (first prostration)? In what language did you do it?

11) In what language did the Iman do the Takbir 2 (second prostration)? In what language did you do it?

12) In what language did the Iman recite the Fatiha? In what language did you recite it?

13) In what language did the Iman recite the Al-tachahhod? In what language did you recite it?

14) In what language did the Iman recite the Attahiyyatou lilo-lahi? In what language did you recite it?

15) In what language did the Iman recite the Ashadu? In what language did you recite it?

16) Who made announcements? In what language were they made? Was there any translation? Do you have any comments to make?

17) In what language did the Iman do the As-salamu alaykum (final salutation)? In what language did you do it?

18) When a given language was used in the Jumu'ah salat (Friday prayer), what specific activities were going on?

Language _____ Activities _____

Language _____ Activities _____

Language _____ Activities _____

Language _____ Activities _____

Language _____ Activities _____

19) What factors motivated the choice of the various languages that were used in the Mosque. (Talk to people, citing these languages)

Language _____ Motivation _____

Language _____ Motivation _____

Language _____ Motivation _____

Language _____ Motivation _____

Language _____ Motivation _____

Language _____ Motivation _____