

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL TEACHING OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES AND CULTURES AND THE PERPETUATION OF LIVING TOGETHER

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Abstract:

Living together, the watchword for the Cameroon of tomorrow, is linked to none other than the national languages. This article, therefore deals with this theme. Since the introduction of national languages and cultures into school curricula under Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998, the new policy advocated by the Cameroonian government has encouraged harmonious cohabitation between the national languages present throughout the national territory. As language is the primary foundation of an individual's personality and cultural identity, it is therefore considered an indispensable instrument and medium for expressing the thoughts, traditions, beliefs, arts, habits, and customs of people. In short, it is all that remains when everything has been lost. As long as a society accepts, without discrimination, the languages (mother tongues) that are an integral part of its development, it will deal in a concerted manner with the problems that undermine its existence and hinder its development. Members of society are increasingly neglecting their linguistic and cultural heritage in favour of modernism and foreign languages, which are not as conducive to their development as we would have wished. Faced with this situation, we urgently need to set up a teaching method that will act as a bridge between languages, cultures, and living together. To do this, we plan to equip learners, teachers, and community members sufficiently for their prestigious development and general integration without barriers. This is why, in a context marked by linguistic diversity, we are exploring the feasibility of preserving a firm peace through practical methods of linguistic knowledge in institutions. In this vein, we will take the opportunity, after clearing up the key concepts, to identify the impacts and start from the limits in order to make our contribution to the presentation of a productive way of living together.

Keywords: *didactics, theoretical-practical, language, culture, living together*

1. INTRODUCTION

National integration and living together are fundamental elements of sustainable development. Defined as the set of informal norms that structure the community life of borderless solidarity (integration), it conveys values that include language and living. The development of a united and integrated people depends on respect for the general interest, solidarity among all citizens, and the principles and values that include love not only for one's own language and culture but also for those of one's fellow citizens. Men and women are tired of being seen and considered as objects of history; they now want to be seen as actors in history, hence the strengthening and entrenchment of their values through their languages and cultures. This is why culture needs to be lived on a theoretical level but also, above all, emancipated on a practical level by relying on the socio-cultural level. This will ensure that humanity is not seen solely as an object of history but also, above all, as an actor in history. It is for this reason that we are seeking, if not teaching practices, at least linguistic pedagogy capable of promoting and maintaining unity between the peoples of the myriad languages that make up the nation of Cameroon. In order to carry out this work, we are going to analyze the contours of the teaching of national languages. This will be an opportunity to go beyond the contributions of the latter, to note its impacts and its limits, in order to make our contribution to the perpetuation of a better way of living together.

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2. The benefits of teaching national languages and cultures today

In the academic context, a number of languages are used in the various disciplines and constitute one of the roadmaps for the teaching to be conveyed. These include, if not mother tongues, at least national cultures. It is with this in mind that we now turn to the merits of teaching these languages in today's world.

2.1. The benefits of language teaching

As well as being a system of oral or written expression used by a group of people (a linguistic community) to communicate, language is both the main cultural object and the condition for the expression of culture. It is considered the vehicle of identity values that are indicators of practices or reveal the habits and customs of a people or a community. In short, it is the liveliest expression of a people's autonomy and heritage. However, Cameroon has a multitude of languages—about 250 in all. This rich heritage, which is quite conducive to joint and individual development, requires teaching practices that take account of this linguistic diversity. To speak of linguistic diversity is to refer to the existence of several or diverse languages in one and the same territory, or in one and the same nation. Faced with this situation, authors and researchers have come together to develop an alphabet capable of writing all the country's languages, the “Alphabet Général des Langues Camerounaises” (AGLC). In the same vein, Tadadjeu and Sadembouo (1979) drew up a number of general principles to facilitate and harmonize the transcription of Cameroon's national languages, namely: to facilitate the reading and writing of national languages; the representation of phonemes; to distinguish between the alphabet and orthography, followed by suprasegmental representation; to unify graphemes, and to draw up conventional perspectives and practical usefulness. DJIAFEUA (2010) also proposes a program of national language teaching in ENIEGs. This program is based on three main components: the teaching of reading and writing in national languages; the teaching of mathematics, science, and technology in national languages; the teaching of oral mother tongues, vehicles for cultural and artistic practices; and a specific sub-component for learning oral communication in a national reference language. In his view, the development of learners' skills requires them to work under the guidance of the teacher, in or out of the classroom, in the interests of opening up the school to society, on the learning activities proposed by the pedagogy of integrating learning outcomes. In the same vein, the teaching of national cultures has also had its advantages, which are worth mentioning

2.2. The benefits of teaching cultures

Culture is the set of customs, habits, artistic, religious and intellectual expressions that define and distinguish a group or a society; it is in fact the soul of a people, so that it can be seen as a source of inspiration, a source of inspiration and a source of inspiration.

2.3. The benefits of teaching about cultures

Culture is the set of practices, customs, artistic, religious, and intellectual manifestations that define and distinguish a group or a society; in fact, it is the soul of a people, so if it is lost, it dies. It is a phenomenon necessary to social life, enabling each person to express their perception and vision of the world through the magic of art. It should therefore be integrated into people's daily lives. By integration, we mean that which is part of a whole and blends into it without losing its identity or specificity. Several conceptions of the notion of integration have taken account of ethnic, tribal, and other issues. This is why we speak of the integration of an individual or a sub-group into a larger whole or community. For an individual to become part of a group or community, he or she must be able to adapt to change, assimilate the group's culture and language, and adhere to its value system.

This is reflected in the teaching plan for the observation sub-cycle, which takes into account all of Cameroon's cultural diversity. Thus, the school remains the first place par excellence for the promotion of national cultures, which should be preserved and rooted in the various local spheres.

3. The impact of theoretical and practical teaching of national languages and cultures on living together

The aim here will be to highlight a pedagogical rationality on the didactic relevance of the action and a unanimous ethic of integration. This is a task for parents and teachers alike.

3.1. Teaching practices and their impact on living together: teachers' roles and parents' responsibilities

The effectiveness of teaching practices depends on the attitudes and behaviors of both teachers and learners. Effective teaching links theory and practice in a coherent way, so that knowledge is better assimilated. Teachers must be able to instill confidence, enthusiasm, and, above all, citizenship in their learners. Learning to be a good citizen requires freedom from educators and instruments that guarantee the common good, such as class and management councils, teaching councils and seminars, the correspondence book, and disciplinary and relational requirements. Each individual will have to play his part without resignation or demagoguery. As the school is an educational unit, preparing children for their future lives, they are trained to assimilate the axioms that will form the basis of their future responsibilities. So, if children are to flourish and enjoy true freedom, they need to adapt to the rapid changes of their time in a thoughtful way and use their critical faculties to adopt modern gestures and habits.

However, Roegiers (2008) points out that a skills-based program would aim to ensure that knowledge can be used as a tool for both action and thought. From this perspective, didactics is seen as a process in which the learner is the primary artisan. The APC (competency-based approach), which is the most widely used teaching method today, aims to develop global thinking in pupils and learners. As a result, the knowledge presented is no longer isolated from the technical gestures (know-how), nor are these isolated from the attitudes (interpersonal skills) required to perform them adequately in a given context. For the training and retraining of primary and secondary school teachers, Tadadjeu, Sadembouo and Mba (2004) have produced a teaching guide entitled *Pédagogie des Langues Nationales Camerounaises*. This manual stipulates that mother-tongue teaching must be able to give learners a greater curiosity about their natural environment, as this teaching method has immeasurable effects on living together.

Furthermore, promoting national integration and living together through teaching practices requires us to be open to the values of other cultures in order to collaborate with them because, as Saint Exupery said, "if you differ from me, far from harming me, you enrich me". To this end, the TECHNO2LAP laboratory has developed a range of strategies: teaching and working methods, teaching tools, training for trainers, and course materials (physical, audio, video, and digital), in a variety of Cameroonian languages. Within this laboratory, the emphasis is on benevolent acceptance of others and generosity in the service of a shared, sincere, and optimistic search for truth. These are the tools needed to develop the skills required for dialogue, consensus, and, above all, teamwork. In this way, every promoter of national integration and of living together must be a man of dialogue, tolerance, and openness.

Furthermore, with a view to promoting the diversity of linguistic and cultural heritage within society, parents are responsible for instilling in their children the values likely to shape their behavior wisely. Teachers and parents, who are responsible for the education of the younger generation, must help them to develop a critical mind, solidarity, a sense of service and gratuity, make them attentive to the rights of every human being, and forge attitudes of tolerance and understanding in order to awaken the creative powers of man. Defending the general interest, not personal interests. This protocol requires the integration of a multitude of approaches.

3.2. Approaches that integrate linguistic and cultural diversity

Several means are highlighted to facilitate the integration of the plurality of languages and cultures. One of these is the error-based approach. This is a practice that highlights the obstacle to learning and puts in place a strategy to remedy it. The participatory approach involves interaction between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves. The learner learns that in the society in which he lives with adults, he must be interactive, as it is a crossroads of giving and receiving. In addition, the large group approach suggests a teaching practice that takes into account the characteristics of the linguistic and cultural knowledge being taught, on the one hand, and those of the learners, on the other. To achieve this, pupils need to be put into groups of different languages and cultures, forming pairs and more, for collaborative teaching and sharing of distinct knowledge that can enable them to gain confidence, discover the sense and pride of belonging, and play a complementary role with others. Everyone has something extra to give and something lacking to fill. Group work must be preceded by individual work to identify the difficulties encountered and compare results. The next stage is a consolidation phase, where those who are doing better can take on the role of teacher and help those who are still lagging behind. However, the teaching aid must be worked on in several stages, with instructions presenting increasing degrees of difficulty. This material, produced in different languages, will enable learners to smoothly experience multiculturalism, a catalyst for the efficient preservation of languages and cultures.

4. Pitfalls and suggestions for sustaining languages and cultures as part of living together

In view of the flaws that hinder the stability and even the durability of national languages in everyday life, a number of avenues are envisaged to overcome these obstacles. This is why, notwithstanding these obstacles, a roadmap has been drawn up in order to get out of this mess.

4.1. Obstacles to the perpetuation of languages and cultures as part of living together

The barriers to linguistic perpetuity no longer need to be demonstrated. These include the crucial lack of textbooks, the archaic nature of teaching and technological tools, the low level of digitisation, the low rate of recruitment of teachers in this field, software that is not very conducive (Keyman and Galician: two pieces of software used by specialist linguists that require letters to be synchronized during text input, something that is not easy for everyone), and bad propaganda about our languages that needs to be killed off in the minds of parents and children alike, starting with the pejorative word "patois", to name but a few.

On the other hand, a number of neologisms have recently been developed, such as sardinards, sardinavie, and tontinards. The latter refers to the Bamiléké people because their savings system used to be tontines and associations, which shows a kind of discrimination and stigmatisation. As a result, tribal, gender, and class antagonisms are sometimes encountered, leading to exclusion and even rejection. As a result, Gabriel Mounoul¹ raises the problem of identity withdrawal in the localities of Ndikinimeki and Makénéné, since the populations who occupy these places, namely the Bamiléké, Nyokon, or Banen, are both perfect actors and victims of this problem, which leads to inter-ethnic clashes and the loss of human life.

It is in the light of these limitations, which are no less negligible, that we envisage ways of contributing to the improvement of national integration and the perpetuation of living together.

4.2. Suggestions for sustaining languages and cultures as part of living together

It is appropriate that the perpetuation of languages and cultures and living together involve the construction of a pedagogical architecture. It provides a valid response to crucial needs. In this regard, Assoumou (2007) states:

"If African languages and cultures are not taught in schools, it is partly because there are very few textbooks setting out the guidelines and defining the didactics. A pedagogy of the spoken word through integrated language/culture teaching would fill this gap, not only by legitimising language and culture as objects of education, but also and above all by bringing together two fields that are similar in several respects, by approaching them in such a way as to develop the skills of the teacher, for whom the fruits of this enterprise are primarily intended".

The fact that a nation has several languages is not necessarily a guarantee of its own development or the fulfillment of its citizens if they are not used to good effect. However, it is a marvelous asset for each individual to open up carefully to the world. To achieve this, it is imperative to educate citizens so that they do not overvalue their own culture to the detriment of others, but rather build a harmonious balance that respects the general interest, the common good, ethics, and linguistic and cultural heritages. It is with this in mind that we need to consider, on the one hand, an educational practice that should promote the general interest and the development of all, and on the other hand, banish discrimination and identitarian isolationism.

With regard to the latter, present in several localities in Cameroon, the resolution of this type of problem is a responsibility that falls not only on the administration and the populations concerned, but above all calls upon the conscience of each individual, the sensitisation of the populations (adults, It also requires the conscience of each individual, raising awareness among the population (adults, young people, the elderly, and children), instilling the notions of unanimity, solidarity, and the indivisibility of the nation, and the hope that all will fight for the common interest and overcome tribal differences, with the aim of perpetuating living together for a country of peace. Given that today's young generation is the future of tomorrow's nation, the field of education must emphasise these different strategies for promoting national integration and living together through teaching practices and strategies in order to instill in them these cultural values of unanimity. In the face of identitarian withdrawal, attitudes and habits contrary to national unity (tribalism, regionalism, etc.) observed within the communities of the Cameroonian nation, the present work proposes to contribute to and promote the consolidation of a harmonious dynamic process of particularities into a coherent whole without any discrimination, which puts in common the common values of the Cameroonian peoples while safeguarding their specificities. First and foremost, we need to work on the consciousness of the young citizens who represent the nation of tomorrow, through the teaching methods that are put in place. (Assoumou, 2007) states:

"The colonial education system was a project of deculturation in which the colonised were the objects of education, with the aim of shaping them on the model of the West. This is how it pushed African languages and cultures out of schools in favour of European languages. Today's education system reproduces the foundations of the colonial school, perpetuating colonial glottophagy and cultural genocide. When you want to promote a language or a skill, you put it in school. When you want to kill off a language, a culture, or a body of knowledge, you exclude it from school. To teach the language, civilisation and knowledge of others in our schools and exclude them from our own is to promote the other and die in it; worse, it is simply to disappear and give way to others".

¹ Gabriel Maxime DONG MOUGNOL : « Les bamiléké de Ndikinimeki et Makénéné au Cameroun : acteurs ou victimes des replis identitaires (1946-2002) ? », in *Les grassfields du Cameroun. Des fondements culturels au développement humain*, Yaoundé, éditions du CERDOTOLA, pp. 299-307.

That said, it would not be enough simply to introduce languages and cultures into the education system, but above all to find or develop an appropriate method for transmitting these heritages that takes into account the cultural context of the people concerned.

The contours and perimeters of the country's realities should not be taken lightly when implementing educational strategies. While it is true that attitudes within the family and the style of education are part of the family culture and therefore of the pupil, research shows that the proximity between the individual's family culture and the school culture is a factor in success at school. Our society must remain open to fruitful innovation and peaceful coexistence between peoples, cultures, and languages. As far as software for typing in African languages is concerned, there is an urgent need for computer maintenance to set up an African keyboard with all the special characters of African languages, including software for typing in African languages.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, it is essential that learners in schools and members of all communities in literacy training centers adopt appropriate and judicious teaching practices. Long experience in the field of teaching and the many teaching experiences in all disciplines shared with the learners in the literacy centers are essential.

Teaching practice must be based on knowledge gained from experience or acquired knowledge in the permanent consolidation of living together, made up of diversities and complementarities, solidarity, fairness in justice, and equality for all through theoretical-practical didactics.

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