

Linguistic landscape: A bridge to crisis management in Cameroon

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This research investigates the impact of the linguistic landscape on crisis management within the framework of decentralisation in Cameroon. It examines the local languages used in public spaces and their communicative impact. The study explores the linguistic devices used in the communication landscape of Cameroon with particular reference to the towns of Buea and Bamenda (cosmopolitan cities in the two English-speaking regions). It highlights the importance and influence of the local and regional languages as resource languages. The background of the socio-political and linguistic situation expressed in the Anglophone crisis in these two regions (North West & South West) lays the bedrock for this research. Data from advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shops, etc., were obtained and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively through observation. The research reveals the extent of linguistic diversity in the two cities by comparing both communities. It demonstrates a shift from English/French (official languages) to indigenous languages (Mokpe, Ejagham, etc) and the lingua franca Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) as significant languages of communication on the linguistic landscape in these cities. From a Linguistic perspective, the paper documents the influence of indigenous languages in enhancing the decentralisation process as a catalyst to the socio-political situation. It also demonstrates how the public space serves to preserve some of Cameroon's indigenous languages, not just in vocabulary but also in pronunciation, orthography and syntax. From an Applied perspective, the data highlight questions about the preference of CPE on the linguistic landscape in the city of Bamenda over its local languages. However, it exposes the communicative and informative functions of the local languages in these regions and demonstrates the role of the theory of inclusion of the local communities in decentralisation as a medium for crisis management in Cameroon.