

## IMPACT OF STANDARDISATION AND VEHICULARIZATION: THE CASE OF *Tɔŋúgbe* IN SOUTH-EASTERN GHANA AND *FULA (ADAMAWA)* IN NORTHERN CAMEROON\*

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### Résumé

La présente contribution examine les impacts de la standardisation et de la véhicularisation sur la diversité linguistique. Nous démontrons à la lumière du *tɔŋúgbe*, parlé dans le sud-est du Ghana, et du peul véhiculaire dans le nord du Cameroun que les langues sont des objets sociaux dynamiques pouvant être institutionnellement et / ou socialement soumis à une promotion ou à une rétrogradation. Sur une base de données empirique et authentique, nous montrons par exemple que le *tɔŋúgbe*, l'un des dialectes de la langue *éwé*, comporte des propriétés linguistiques exceptionnelles qui ont échappé à la documentation de l'*éwé* standard. Pourtant ces propriétés, à l'instar de celle de la détermination du syntagme nominal par l'article défini, sont essentielles à la compréhension et à l'étude non seulement de l'*éwé*, mais également de l'ensemble du groupe Gbe. Dans la deuxième partie, nous soutenons que la véhicularisation, comme pour le cas du peul Adamawa, se révèle être une arme à double tranchant qui, d'une part, promeut une variété de peul vis à vis d'autres et, d'autre part, implique le recul d'autres langues et variétés minoritaires.

### Mots-clés

standardisation, véhicularisation, langue en danger, *éwé*, *tɔŋúgbe*, peul Adamawa

### Abstract

This paper investigates the impacts of standardisation and vehicularization on linguistic diversity. We demonstrate in the light of *Tɔŋúgbe* in south-eastern Ghana and vehicular Fula in Northern Cameroon that natural languages are social objects in motion, which can be institutionally and/or socially subjected to promotion or demotion. In the first part, we show that *Tɔŋúgbe*, one of the dialects of the Ewe language, brings to the fore data that is not captured by standard Ewe even though such data is critical to the understanding and study of not just the Ewe language, but also, the whole Gbelanguage cluster. We concentrate on the definite article in the dialect and demonstrate that, contrary to what pertains in standard Ewe, NP determination with the definite article in *Tɔŋúgbe* is an intersection between syntax and phonology. In the second part we argue that vehicularization as in the case of Fula Adamawa, appears to be a double-edged sword which on one hand promotes a language or a variety among others and, on the other hand, causes the demotion of minority languages or varieties.

### Keywords

standardisation, vehicularisation, language endangerment, Ewe, *Tɔŋúgbe*, Fula Adamawa

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## INTRODUCTION

The description of endangered languages has come to occupy a very important place in linguistics. Due to the fast rate of the ‘death’ of many endangered languages, many linguists have been preoccupied with describing those distinct languages classified as ‘endangered’. This preoccupation, even though entirely reasonable, has led to less focus, on the description of other equally endangered speech forms such as language varieties and dialects. In this article, we discuss the notion of language endangerment from a sociolinguistic perspective, a discussion that goes beyond a purely ecolinguistic<sup>1</sup> focus. On the basis of novel empirical data from the field, we interrogate and investigate the impacts of standardisation and vehicularization on linguistic diversity and identity. Adopting an evolutionary approach, we demonstrate in the light of *Tɔ̃ɔ́ɔ́gbɛ* spoken in south-eastern Ghana and *vehicular Fula Adamawa* spoken in Northern Cameroon that natural languages are mobile social objects, which can be externally and/or internally subjected to promotion or demotion under the influence of socio-cultural mutations; and as such, such mutations should equally be accounted for by the linguist.

Thus, in the first part, dedicated to standardization, we seek to demonstrate that the process of standardization, among other things, fails to explain the different mutations that have occurred (and still are occurring) within a language by failing to present an account of some of the crucial properties of the various dialects of a language. Using the example of *Tɔ̃ɔ́ɔ́gbɛ*, a dialect of the Ewe language, we argue that this phenomenon leads to the linguist being prevented from obtaining crucial data that should otherwise contribute to a better appreciation of language in general. The second part tackles the question from the point of view of vehicularization. We argue that a lingua franca is like a double-edged sword which triggers many consequences. Among such consequences, it could be argued that vehicularization does not only promote a common variety, but demotes minority languages. Such consequences are not however without effects for the languages involved. Thus, we account for the different internal and external transformations that should occur in such a process in vehicular Fula.

1. DIALECTS AND LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION:  
THE CASE OF Tɔ̃ɔ́ɔ́GBE IN SOUTH-EASTERN GHANA

*1.1. Preliminaries*

Standardization refers to the act of imposing uniformity on a particular class of objects (Milroy 2007, p. 133). Applied to languages, standardization concerns

1 The term is used in the metaphorical sense as in Mühlhäuler (2010) who analogizes languages with species.

adopting a variety of a language referred to as the standard variety (Trudgil 2003, p. 128) in the midst of other varieties of the same language. Thus, the adopted standard language may be the written form of the language or its unwritten form. Consequently, choosing a standard language presupposes one of two choices: choosing one dialect of the language over other dialects or creating a new overriding version of the language with or without equally taking into account the diversity within the language (Ansre 1974, p. 369). However, whatever be the theoretical choice, adopting a standardized language comes with many sociological consequences (Milroy 2002, p. 2-3).

### 1.1.1. *The Ewe language and its standardized form*

The Ewe language is part of the larger unit of closely related languages called Gbe (Capo 1983, p. 47). It is spoken in an area that stretches from the Atlantic coast to 8°N, and from the Volta River in southeastern Ghana across into southern Togo and just across the Togo-Benin border (Ameka 2015, p. 5-6). Concentrating on the language as it is spoken in Ghana, Ewe is spoken in many different dialects that are grouped into two major dialects: *futa* (coastal) dialects and *evedome* (northern) dialects (Ansre 2000, p. 22). Apart from these various dialects, there exists a standard version of the language which was developed by the North German Missionary Society of Bremen in the mid nineteenth century.

Standard Ewe, as it is used here, refers to the written form of the language, adopted over other language varieties. It was developed in the early periods of German contact with the Ewe people and was meant for instruction in the schools and churches (Dorvlo 2015, p. 148). Even after the end of colonialism and the subsequent integration of Ewe territory into both the republic of Ghana and the republic of Togo respectively, standard Ewe has continued to be taught in schools. Standard Ewe draws heavily on the *Aɲlɔ́* dialect and – to a lesser extent – on the *Peki* and *Amedzɔ́fɛ́* dialects (cf. Essegbey 1999, p. 27).

### 1.1.2. *Tɔɲú*

‘Tɔɲú’ literally meaning ‘by the river’ refers to the areas along the lower basin of the Volta River. The people, *tɔɲúwɔ́* ‘the Tɔɲús’ share the same ancestry as the larger Ewe group, even though a few (some *mefe*’s and *vume*’s for example) have Akan and Ga-Adangbe ancestry. They occupy three administrative districts of Ghana: North Tongu, Central Tongu and South Tongu and speak the Tɔɲúgbe (‘language of the river side’) variety of the Ewe language. As a member of the larger Gbe language cluster, Tɔɲúgbe represents the south-western-most variety of the cluster. Spoken by approximately forty thousand Tɔɲús, Tɔɲúgbe is bordered by other Ewe varieties as well as other languages. Just as in territories of speakers

of other dialects of Ewe, standard Ewe is taught in schools in Tɔ̀ɔ́jú. It is also used in church activities (Meyer 2002, p. 178) and in art and music.



Map 1: Geographical distribution of Gbe lects

Studies on Tɔ̀ɔ́júgbe have appeared in studies on the general Ewe language, albeit only infrequently (Duthie 1996, Rongier 1988, Ameka 1991, etc.). Westermann (1930) and Capo (1991) make specific references to Tɔ̀ɔ́júgbe in their studies while Clements (1974, p. 288) notes it as an ‘unidentified western dialect’. These studies are however very restricted in nature and are mostly not detailed enough to reveal the rather substantial difference between Tɔ̀ɔ́júgbe and, especially, standard Ewe. With data collected from *Mefe*, a Tɔ̀ɔ́jú speaking town in the North Tongu district of Ghana, we confront the definite article in Tɔ̀ɔ́júgbe with that of standard Ewe (as it is described in especially in Westermann (1930), Duthie (1996) and Rongier (2004)) so as to illustrate the variation that exists between the two varieties of the language.

### 1.2. *The definite article in standard Ewe*

The definite article in Ewe is the morpheme **la** or its diminutive form **-a**. They both carry high tones and follow the noun that they determine. The morph **-a** is attached to the head while **la** stands as a free morpheme.

- (1)
- |       |           |
|-------|-----------|
| avu   | avulá     |
|       | avu-á     |
| ‘dog’ | ‘the dog’ |

In instances where the noun phrase is expanded, the definite article follows other modifying elements within the phrase. Example (2) demonstrates the definite article occurring in an expanded noun phrase.

- (2)            atí            kəkó            lá            /            atí            kəkó-á  
                  tree            tall            DEF            tree            tall-DEF  
                  ‘The tall tree’

The definite article precedes only the plural marker and intensifiers within the noun phrase (all other modifying elements – adjectives and numerals – precede the definite article in the noun phrase)<sup>2</sup>. Concretely, the plural marker in the language is *wó*; and it is attached to the noun to mark plurality. Consequently, where plurality co-occurs with the definite article, the definite article precedes the plural marker as demonstrated below.

- (3)            kokló            kokló-á-wó  
                  chick            chick-DEF-PL  
                  ‘chick’            ‘The chicken’

In such instances where the definite marker precedes the plural marker within the noun phrase, the morph **a** occurs. It is thus not possible to have a noun phrase such as the example below.

- (4)            \*kokló            lá            wó  
                  chick            DEF            PL

The tone on the definite marker, on the other hand, can change if followed by morphemes such as *é*, *wó*, *dzí*, *gbó* and *tó*. The definite article assimilates to the tone<sup>3</sup> of the syllable that immediately precedes it (Schadeberg 1985, p. 34).

- (5)            é            nɔ            xɔ-a            dzí  
                  3SG            be.at:PST            house-DEF            top  
                  ‘He was on the roof top’

- (6)            é            nɔ            aló-á            dzí  
                  3sg            be.at:PST            sheep-DEF            top  
                  ‘He sat on the sheep’

2 Ameka (1991, p. 45) studies exhaustively the structure of the noun phrase in Ewe.

3 In the conventional graphical representation, the absence of tone represents a mid tone. We thus follow this convention; and represent only high and low tones.

Neat and coherent as it may seem, the definite article does not assume the same form and distribution in Tɔ̀nùgbe.

### 1.3. *The definite article in Tɔ̀nùgbe*

The definite article has only one morph in Tɔ̀nùgbe. The definite article in the dialect is **-a**. The article however has allomorphs that are dependent on phonological environment. Accordingly, the definite article may be realized as **-ɛ** or **-ɔ**. The variant **-ɛ** occurs where the preceding vowel is a front close or mid close vowel, while **-ɔ** surfaces where the preceding vowel is a back close or mid-close vowel. Example (8.a) illustrates instances where the definite article surfaces as **-ɛ** while the set of examples under (8.b) illustrates the case for the definite article surfacing as **-ɔ** (since it is preceded by back vowels).

(8)a.	ɖə̀vì	ɖə̀vì-ɛ́
	‘child’	‘the child’
	ɖòkòé	ɖòkòé-ɛ́
	‘self’	‘the self’
b.	nyanu	nyanu-ɔ́
	‘woman’	‘the woman’
	fofó	fofo-ɔ́
	‘brother’	‘the brother’

The morph **-a** on the other hand occurs where the preceding vowel is the mid-open front vowel; and there is vowel lengthening if the preceding vowel is the mid-open back vowel or the low central vowel /a/. Example (9) demonstrates the definite article being realized as **-a** after the mid-open front vowel whereas examples (10) and (11) illustrate instances in which there is vowel lengthening to mark definiteness.

(9)	naně	naně-á
	‘mother’	‘the mother’
(10)	əsɔ	əsɔ-ɔ́
	‘spouse’	‘the spouse’
(11)	agba	agba-á
	‘load’	‘the load’

When the definite article is preceded by schwa, the definite article is realized in two different ways depending on the immediate phonological environment. The definite article may be realized as **-a** in monosyllabic words that have complex onsets and which have the schwa as a nucleus (12); or it may surface as **-ɛ**, where the syllable does not have a complex onset (13).

(12)      **agblə**          **agblə-á**  
              ‘farm’            ‘the farm’

(13)      **əkǎ**                **əkɪ-ɛ**  
                                  **əkǎ-á**  
              ‘sand’                ‘the sand’

In instances where the noun phrase is expanded, the definite article assimilates some properties of the last vowel of the last element of the noun phrase. In Examples (15) and (16) the definite article assimilates to the tongue positions of the last vowels of the adjectives respectively.

(15)      **ətsi**                **bublu-ɔ**  
              water                dirty-DEF  
              ‘The dirty water’

(16)      **nyanu**                **dzətugbi-ɛ**  
              woman                beautiful-DEF  
              ‘The beautiful woman’

However, similar to the properties of the definite article in standard Ewe, the plural marker **-wó** does not occur before the definite article. In such cases where both the plural marker and the definite marker co-occur, the definite marker precedes the plural marker and assimilates to the last vowel of the noun.

(17)      **dʒəvi-ɛ-ɔ**  
              **dʒəvi-á-wó**  
              child-DEF-PL

On the other hand, contrary to what pertains in standard Ewe, even when followed by words such as *é,wó*, *dzí*, *gbɔ* and *tó*, the tone of the definite article does not change. Thus, even though the word **lā** ‘animal’ and **ati** ‘tree’ have mid tones, the definite article does not assimilate to the mid tone, but keeps its inherent high tone.

- |      |                      |           |            |          |
|------|----------------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| (18) | mə                   | lə        | lā -á      | gbó      |
|      | 1SG                  | be.at:PRS | animal-DEF | vicinity |
|      | ‘I am by the animal’ |           |            |          |
|      |                      |           |            |          |
| (19) | Ama                  | lə        | gbi-é      | dzí      |
|      | Ama                  | lə        | gbə- á     | dzí      |
|      | Ama                  | be.at:PRS | bush-DEF   | top      |
|      | ‘Ama is in the farm’ |           |            |          |

#### 1.4. Losing the variant forms through standardisation

The definite article in Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe compared with the definite article in standard Ewe, it may be argued, obeys the same structural rules: it is placed after the noun phrase (except when the plural marker is involved). However, the definite article, in the two varieties, demonstrates considerable differences. As demonstrated above, in Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe, the definite marker has only one morph **-a** with a high tone. Phonetically however, the morph is not identically realized in all contexts. It surfaces as **-ɛ** and **-ɔ** when preceded by front and back close and mid-close vowels respectively. When preceded by mid-open front and back vowels, it is realized as **-a** and as a lengthened vowel respectively. When preceded by the central open vowel, the vowel is lengthened whereas if it is the schwa that proceeds, the vowel is assimilated with the preceding vowel raised as a form of dissimilation. Thus, in Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe, the definite article, even though a structural category, is not without phonological properties (it involves phonological processes such as vowel assimilation, dissimilation).

This rather interesting variation as provided by Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe is lost in the process of standardisation. Thus, the standard version ignores the situation in Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe and makes the definite article depend largely on syntactic and morphological factors. Consequently, the rather fascinating direct intersection between syntactic category and phonology as demonstrated in Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe, it can be argued, is lost in the standardised version of the category. The standardised version therefore not only fails to represent the variation within the language, but more critically, potentially

restricts the variety of data available to the linguist working on the Ewe language (especially those linguists working in theoretical linguistics).

## 2. THE VEHICULARISATION OF FULA IN NORTHERN CAMEROON AND ITS SOCIOLINGUISTIC IMPACT AND PERCEPTION

This part of the work discusses the question of language endangerment from the perspective of vehicularization with special reference to Fula Adamawa as lingua franca in Northern Cameroon. The expansion of Fula Adamawa as lingua franca in Northern Cameroon – favoured by its function in the market place and accelerated by Bible translation – exposed the language to structural contact with various languages of the Lake Chad basin that are typologically distant from it. This situation, reinforced by internal changes undergone over the course of the time, has favoured the emergence of a vehicular variety. Thus, we define *vehicularization* here as the process by which a language or a language variety becomes *vehicular*, i.e. a medium of interethnic communication. However, although Fula Adamawa is the lingua franca of Northern Cameroon, it should be noted that it is actually only the common or colloquial variety of the language which is particularly used as medium of interethnic communication and which we term vehicular Fula in opposition to conservative Fula. While the vehicular Fula Adamawa is characterised by structural simplifications based on overgeneralisations, reductions and refunctionalisations (Lacroix 1962, 1967; Noss 1979; Tourneux 2014), conservative Fula, which corresponds to the vernacular of ethnic speakers of Maroua as well as to formal Fula, is characterised by classical linguistic features such as *initial consonant alternation*, *subject verb inversion*, *nominal class agreement*, *middle voice*, *passive voice* and *participial constructions* which will be discussed and confronted with empirical speech data in individual parts of this section. After the linguistic demonstrations, the door will be opened to a sociolinguistic discussion of the question of language endangerment, both from the perspective of the speakers and researchers. But before reaching all these points, background information as well as indications related to data and methods will be shared.

### *2.1. Fula (Adamawa): the language and its speakers*

The Fula language – also known as *Fulfulde* (Mali, Nigeria, Cameroon), *Pulaar* (Senegal, Mauritania), *Pular* (Guinea) according to dialectal autonyms – is linguistically described and classified as member of the Niger-Congo Phylum. According to the genetic classification suggested by Westermann/Bryan (1952)

and Greenberg (1963), Fula belongs to the West-Atlantic Family or Branch<sup>4</sup>. As the SIL map below shows, the language has widely spread out from West to East. It has several millions of ethnic speakers distributed in many West and Central African Countries as well as in Sudan. They are called *fulani*, *fellata*, *plata*, *foulbé* by neighbouring communities, but their autonym is *fulbe* (*pullo* in singular).

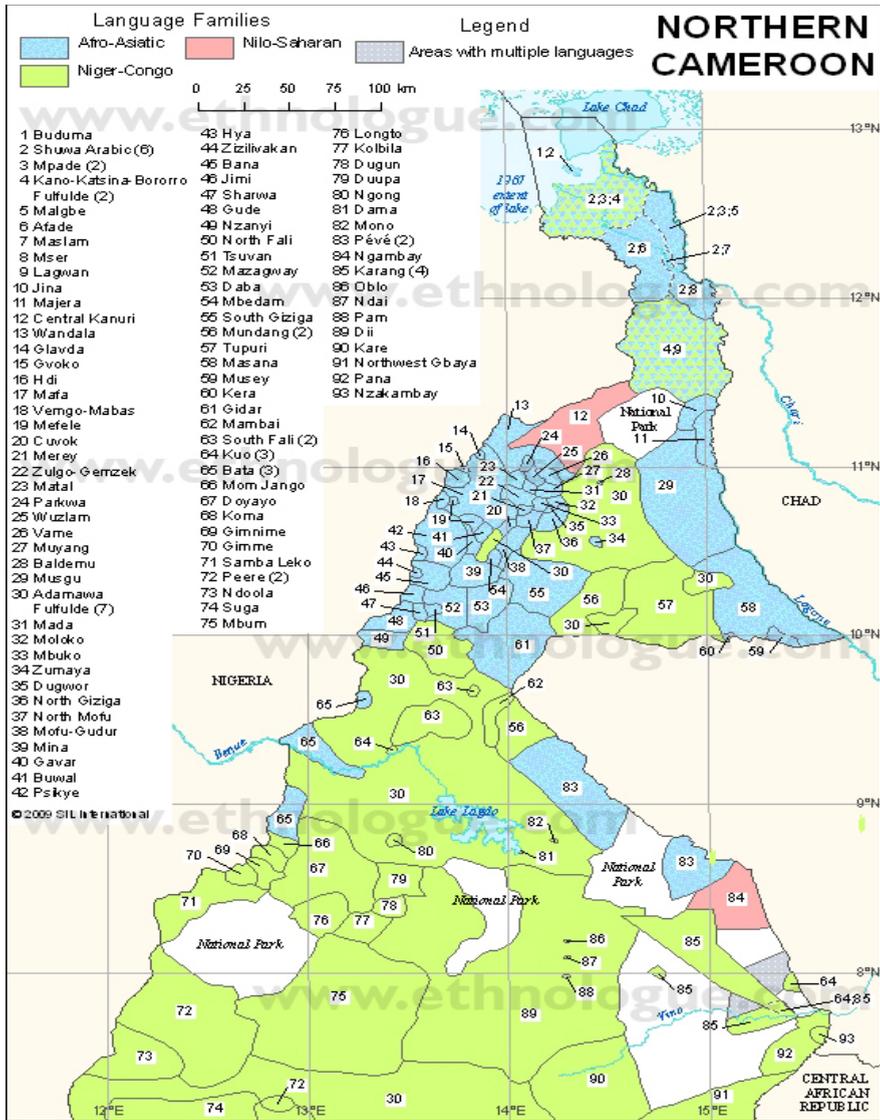


Map 2: Geographical distribution of Fula (from West to East)

The long and complex history of migration of Fulani throughout and across the Sahelian belt, as the map above illustrates, has given birth to various diatopic varieties. The number of Fula dialects differs from one author to another. Arnott (1970, p. 3) for instance distinguishes Fuuta Tooro (Senegal), Fuuta Jalo (Guinea), Maasina (Mali), Sokoto and western Niger, Central Northern Nigeria and Eastern Niger and Adamawa (Cameroon). Though spatial and temporal mobility has affected the system of Fula, it should be mentioned that its main typological features are still largely conserved. That is the case for nominal class agreement, initial consonant alternation, subject pronoun inversion, exclusive and inclusive pronouns and middle voice.

It is important to note that the Fula speaking community – which could also be called “fulophone” – goes beyond the ethnic boundary, especially in Cameroon where the language has got the status of lingua franca at least in the three Northern administrative regions: Far North (Capital: Maroua), North (Capital: Garoua), Adamaoua (Capital: Ngaoundéré). In this multilingual part of the country, Fula has become the main instrument of interethnic communication.

4 A classification of Atlantic languages provided by Sapir (1971), reproduced by Wilson (1989) and illustrated in Heine/Nurse (2000) however places Fula in the Northern Division of Atlantic.



Map 3: Linguistic map of Northern Cameroon (Ethnologue 2009)

As illustrated in the map above, Fula shares the linguistic environment with numerous other local languages belonging to branches of the Afro-Asiatic, Niger-Congo and Nilo-Saharan phyla. From the above presentation, it can be argued that there are two groups of Fula Adamawa speakers: the L1-speakers made up of 20 ethnic Fulani and some non-ethnic Fulani who shifted from the language of their parents; the L2/Ln-speakers comprising people who normally speak another language but have acquired Fula as vehicular language.

## 2.2. Data and methods

In this paper, the examples which will be given are taken from our Fula databank based on the variety spoken in Maroua (Far North Region, Cameroon) which is considered as the Adamawa<sup>5</sup> dialect. The empirical data for this study were collected through interviews, questionnaires and speech recordings carried out by us during four months of fieldwork around March 2013 and July 2014 involving both native and non-native speakers. The speech data, consisting of 13 hours of narratives, interviews and conversations were all transcribed and systematically analyzed with the linguistic tool Flexnow (Language Explorer 7-8), which enabled concordance analysis and statistic description. Thus, the speech data are made up of 3 526 segments, 6 814 types and 75 913 tokens.

The linguistic features we will present in the sections below are *initial consonant alternation*, *nominal class agreement*, *middle voice*, *passive* and *the participial constructions* which have been selected based on their contrastivity and frequency of occurrence in corpus. For each demonstration, we will proceed in a contrastive way opposing the vehicular structures to their conservative or classical forms. Also, statistical data will be provided to support the demonstrations.

## 2.3. Initial consonant alternation goes optional in vehicular Fula Adamawa

The initial consonant alternation in Adamawa Fula functions on the basis of a complex morphophonological system which is summarised and illustrated in the figure below, which was provided by Klingenheben (1963, p. 24) to represent initial consonant alternation in Fula Adamawa.

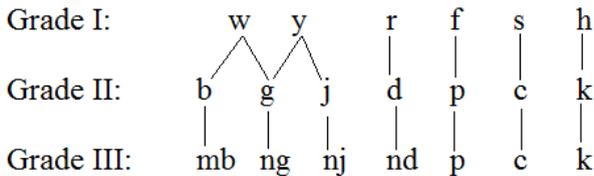


Figure 1: Initial consonant alternation in Adamawa Fula  
(Klingenheben 1963:23)

5 Actually, from a historical point of view, Adamawa is the name of a part of the Empire of the Sultan of Sokoto, UsmandanFodio, founded and ruled by the ModiboAdama, Emir of Yola (Northern Nigeria), from 1806 to 1848 (Noye 1971, p. 10, Boutrais 1993, p. 503). The expansion of the Adamawa Emirate (from Nigeria) reached Maroua and Kalfou in the North-East, Banyo and Tibati in the South.

The chart shows seven triadic alignments regulating the alternation of consonants at the beginning of verbal and nominal stems. Consonants that are missing in the schema are considered non-alternating consonants (McIntosh 1984). These are the implosives /b/ and /d/, the palatal lateral /y/, the alveo-dental plosive /t/, the nasals /n/, /m/, /ɲ/, /ŋ/ and the glottal stop /ʔ/<sup>6</sup>. They do not permute with any other consonant. They remain invariable irrespective of morphological, semantic or syntactic laws. The alternating consonants, on the contrary, obey morphological, semantic and syntactic constraints that will not be discussed extensively in this paper. But it is important to note that permutation rules apply on verbal morphology to (a) differentiate between the singular and the plural stems, (b) distinguish between the absolute stem and the relative stem (generally in cases of subject pronoun inversion triggered by interrogative, relative and focus constructions). They apply on the nominal morphology to mark the transition from singular to plural. Their impact on adjectives and participles is governed by the nominal class system, whereby each nominal class requires a specific alternation grade.

Now to the occurrence of initial consonant alternation (ICA) in our databank of (interethnic) vehicular Fula Adamawa: the findings demonstrate that this morpho-phonological feature becomes optional, as shown in the figure below, based on morphosyntactic environments where the application of the chart is required (according to the classical norm).

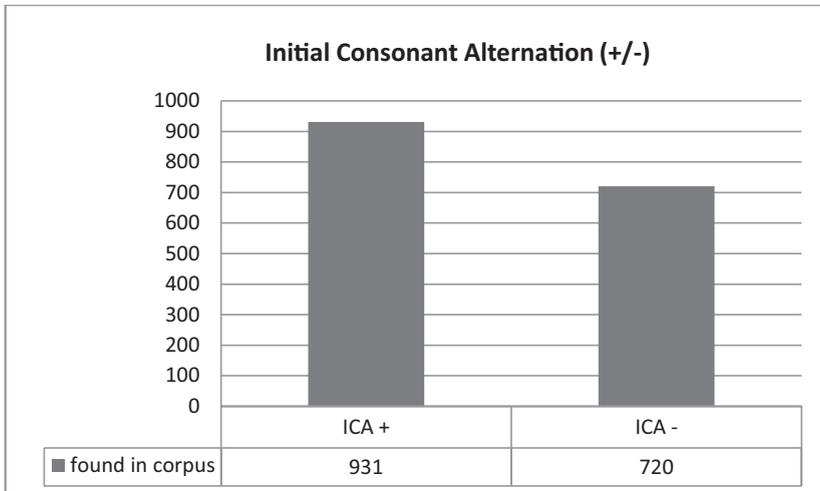


Figure 2: Occurrences of initial consonant alternation in the corpus

6 In Fuuta Toro (Senegal), the glottal stop /ʔ/ is an alternating consonant e.g. *'arii* (came.Sing) and *ngarii* (came.Plur.).

Of the total amount of 1 651 expected cases of ICA, the statistics show that in 931 (56.39%) ICA was applied against 720 (43.60%) cases of non-application of ICA. Although we count more ICA+ instances than ICA-, the percentage of ICA- entries (43.60%) is important enough to consider the constraint of ICA gradually disintegrating in the vehicular system of Fula Adamawa. Below are examples which from the system of conjugation, which classically requires the initial consonant alternation ICA as a numeral marker of verbal stem mutation from singular to plural, on the one hand, and as a distinction between absolute and relative verbal stems, on the other hand. Below, as in the upcoming examples, the letters a and b attached to the numbers will respectively indicate the segments taken from the corpus and those construed by us to provide the conservative variant.

- (20a) oke , mi tamm -i en faam -i  
 en<okay 1SG.SBJ hope PFV 1PL.INCL understand ICA- PFV
- (20b) oke , mi tamm -i en paam -i  
 en<okay 1SG.SBJ hope PFV 1PL.INCL understand ICA+ PFV  
 ‘Well, I hope that we do understand’

The example (20a) is a typical case for vehicular Fula Adamawa that exemplifies a simplified verbal morphology which systematically eliminates the permutation constraint. The sentence clearly demonstrates that the verbal stem is simply replicated with its initial consonant of grade I. In fact, the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ is not replaced by its counterpart of grade III that should have been the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ which would have produced the expected verbal stem *paam* in accordance with the plural number marked by the first person plural inclusive *en*. We observe the same facts in syntactic environments where the classical system requires the application of ICA. The illustration below will serve as example.

- (21a) a yah -a a war -t- -a  
 2SG.SBJ go ICA- SBJV 2SG.SBJ come ICA- REVRS SBJV
- (21b) njah -a ngar -t- -a  
 go ICA+ 2SG.SBJ.SBJV come ICA+ REVRS 2SG.SBJ.SBJV  
 ‘You go and steal and come back’

The segment (21a) shows a sentence characterised by two important linguistic strategies which we consider typical for vehicular Fula. First we have the systematic adoption of SVO word order which eliminates the classical constraint of subject-verb-inversion required by subjective constructions with the second person singular as in (21b). Second we have the overcoming of the ICA constraint which is classically triggered by subject verb inversion as in (21b).

#### 2.4. *Loss of nominal class agreement in vehicular Fula Adamawa*

As already mentioned above, vernacular Fula is characterised by a conservative system which strictly observes the agreement of the noun with its pro-forms and modifiers according to the class to which the noun belongs. Unlike vernacular Fula, vehicular Fula Adamawa tends to break the law of nominal class agreement (NCA).

Contrary to the structure of conservative or classical Fula which requires that the attributive adjective agrees in number and noun class with the head noun, vehicular Fula Adamawa predominantly agrees in the neutral class 24 (*dum*)<sup>7</sup>, irrespectively of the number of the head noun. Besides, to make the form of attributive adjective stable or invariable, the initial consonant is fixed in the grade II alternation; that which corresponds to the classical requirement for the *dum*-class (class 24). Below we provide concrete examples evidencing the end of the nominal class agreement in vehicular Fula Adamawa as spoken in Northern Cameroon.

- |       |               |      |         |                      |
|-------|---------------|------|---------|----------------------|
| (22a) | duniyaaru yid | -aa  | kuude   | boodum               |
|       | world N3      | want | NEG.PFV | works N20 good ADJ24 |
| (22b) | duniyaaru yid | -aa  | kuude   | bood'e               |
|       | world N3      | want | NEG.PFV | works N20 good ADJ20 |
- "People do not appreciate good actions"

The sentences above are provided to illustrate the way vehicular Fula Adamawa departs from the conservative constraints of noun class agreement. The incompatibility between the class of the nouns modified and the suffix class of the modifying attributive adjectives attests it without ambiguity. Instead of *bood'e* (ADJ20) in (22a) the vehicular system simply functions with the neutral and generalised agreement in the *dum*-class (class 24, ADJ24). It is interesting to mention here that Gottschligg (1998, p. 128-131) made similar findings in the neighbouring North-Eastern Nigeria.

7 The noun class numbering system adopted here is based on Klinghenben 1963.

### 2.5. Loss of passive and middle voices in Fula Adamawa

It is known that the conservative verbal system of Fula Adamawa has three verbal voices: the active, the middle and the passive. We want to point out here that vehicular Fula predominantly functions with the active voice alone and that middle and passive voices are gradually eliminated from the system and only survive in rhetorical expressions and lexicalised forms. As far as the middle is concerned, the quantitative description provided below is to be considered.

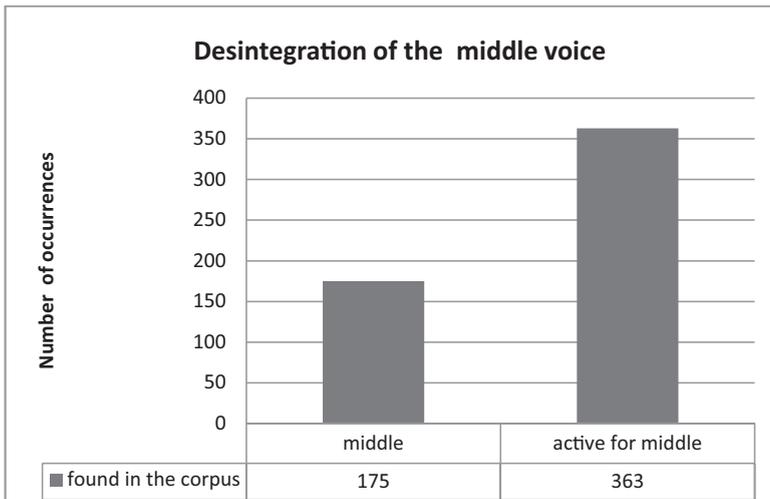


Figure 3: On the assimilation of middle inflections by active inflections

To illustrate this figure, a concrete example is provided.

(23a) 6e        jood'        -an        jam haa Urosaliima  
 3PL.N19 stay ICA-    FUT.ACT- fine to Jerusalem

(23b) 6e        njood'        -oto        jam haa Urosaliima  
 3PL.N19 stay ICA+    FUT.MID fine to Jerusalem  
 'They will be fine in Jerusalem'

According to conservative Fula Adamawa, the verb *jood'* always requires a conjugation in the middle voice. But the example shows the contrary. Instead of using the middle verbal inflexion for the future (-oto) as in (23b), vehicular Fula exemplified in (23a) simply applies the active verbal inflexion (-an).

Similar to the loss of the middle, the figure below demonstrates the rarity of passive morphology in vehicular Fula Adamawa.

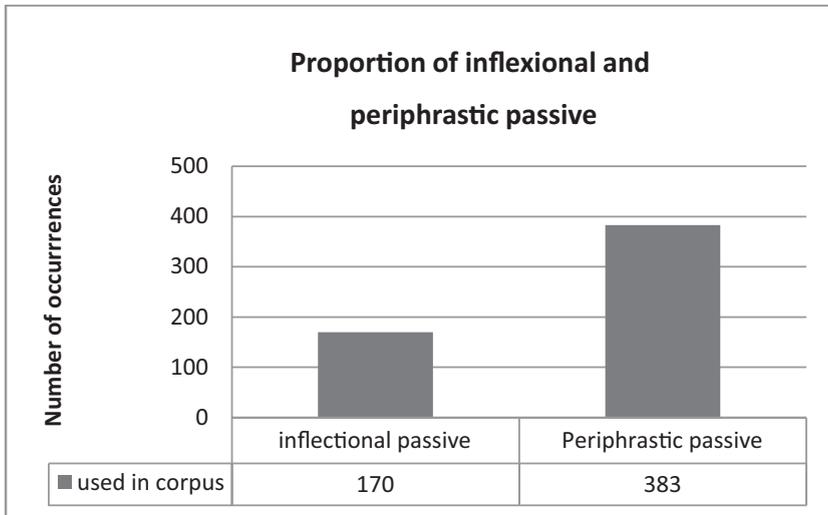


Figure 4: On inflexional and periphrastic passive

The figure not only shows that the use of passive inflections is rare in vehicular Fula, it also shows that the speakers of vehicular Fula predominantly use periphrastic construction in place of the grammatical forms of the passive required by the classical system. For instance, the example that follows demonstrates the substitution of the agentless passive of classic Fula by an impersonal third person plural *be* refunctionalised as an indefinite personal pronoun in a sentence in the active voice as in (24a).

(24a) *be*      *d'on fel*                      *-a*                      *ma*  
 3PL.N19 be    advise ICA-                      PROG.ACT 2SG.OBJ

(24b) *a*                      *fel*                      *-aama*  
 2SG.SBJ advise                      PASS  
 'You are given good advice'

Classic agentless passive constructions in sentences like (24b) are recurrent in vernacular Fula Adamawa but rare in the vehicular variety. Most passive inflections found in vehicular Fula count among the lexicalised participles in the area of terms of address and politeness like *barkaama* (your Honour) and *jabbaama* (welcome).

## 2.6. *Loss of participle construction in vehicular Fula Adamawa*

Unlike conservative Fula Adamawa which uses participle constructions to modify the referent with an extended participial attribute, vehicular Fula tends to make use of relative clauses introduced by the generic (non-agreeing) relative pronoun *jey*.

The sentences (25a) and (26a) show the use of the noun-class-neutralising relative pronoun *jey* in vehicular Fula Adamawa for the introduction of relative clauses which are nothing other than the attributes of the preceding noun they modify. These relative clauses contain a verb which occurs in the finite form according to the voice-aspect-mood conjugation which applies. The usual word order in these relative clauses is SVO. The classic principle of subject pronoun inversion is not applied.

(25a) yimbe        jey            war        -i        yennde alarba  
 people N19 REL.PRONØ come    PFV day N1 wednesday

(25b) yimbe        warbe            yennde alarba  
 people N19 come PTCP19        day N1 wednesday  
 ‘People who came on Wednesday’

(26a) derdfiraawo        jey            won        -i        caka    amin  
 brother/sister N22 REL.PRONØ be        PFV between POSS.1PL.EXCL

(26b) derdfiraawo        gondo            caka    amin  
 brother/sister N22 be PTCP22.ICA+        between POSS.1PL.EXCL  
 ‘Our sister/brother who is now among us’

The sentences (25b) and (26b) respectively show how (25a) and (26a) should have been formulated, had they followed the conservative grammar of Fula Adamawa. In fact, the respective relative clauses could have been transformed into participial constructions. As is clearly demonstrated, the participles would have agreed with the noun class of the antecedent that they modify. The chart of initial consonant alternation also would have applied to verbal stems with mutable initial consonants in (26b). In effect, the process of formation of the participle *gondô* consisted in changing the verbal stem *won* into *gon* via permutation of the initial consonant /w/ with its grade II counterpart /g/ required by the noun class 22 (o). The process is completed by the attaching the suffix *-dô* agreeing with the noun class of the head noun.

## 2.7. Speakers' discourse on language endangerment

It is interesting to note here that both ethnic and non-ethnic speakers are aware of the endangerment of their languages and accuse each other as responsible for that endangerment.

From the observations and interviews carried out during fieldwork in the city of Maroua, we came to realise that the native speakers, in their position as language controllers, are well aware of the fact that their language has already undergone enormous structural change. They proudly differentiate between *fulfulde laamnde*, a kind of "pure" and "prestigious" variety which they claim<sup>8</sup> to speak, and *fulfulde bilkiire*, which they consider a broken variety and characterise as non-native speech (Lacroix 1962). Furthermore, we noted a popular belief that non-native speakers are lazy in acquiring the complex grammar of their language and are responsible of its deformation. However, there is a well-known saying among Fulani themselves which supports the thesis of dialectal variation which is not directly related to contact: "*fulfulde yotti Marua, somi haa Garua, waati haa Ngaoundere, be uwi nde haa Banyo*" [Fula reached Maroua very well, it got tired in Garoua, it died in Ngaoundere, then it was buried in Banyo].



Map 4: Diatopic variation of Fula Adamawa according to popular discourse (Maroua)

8 In several papers on the variation of Fula, Gottschligg (1995, 1998, 2006 and 2009) presents data attesting that many native speakers of Adamawa Fula do not really have a stable command of the so called 'pure' variety.

The non-native Fula Speakers as well as the non-ethnic native speakers, on their side, see in Fula a killer language which is responsible for the loss of their Chadic heritage languages. They have learnt Fula because it is a language of social access. It opens access to the prestigious business world dominated by the Fulani community and it facilitates communication with other ethnic groups (Boutrais et al. 1984), especially in informal contexts, where the official languages (English and French) cannot help. A study conducted by Tourneux et al. (2011) reveals that many non-Fulani families who migrated to urban areas for economic reasons have shifted to Fula. Their children, adults of the second generation, have either totally lost their ethnic language or have less command of it than of Fula which has become their L1. Some parents who still have relatives in their village of origin take their children to the village during school break for them to learn their heritage language.

A similar investigation to Tourneux's based on a qualitative survey was carried out in 2015 in Madouvaya, a small multi-ethnic village located in the Mayo Sava Division of the Extreme North Region. There, parents and children were interviewed in relation to their linguistic repertoire and language use as well as to their attitude towards Fula. The results show that Fula Adamawa is progressing while the other minority languages are regressing or losing their original domains of use. The results show drastic changes in the repertoire of parents and children. While parents claim competence in their ethnic language and in three to four neighbouring languages, children vouch for competence only in their heritage language, in the language of education (French), in the language of the market of Dulek (Giziga) and in the regional lingua franca Fula. As far as language use at home is concerned, parents complain that their children very often switch to Fula when they speak the heritage language to them. Looking at the linguistic behaviour of their children, the parents fear that the children of their children will not be able to speak the language of their ancestors. The same feeling characterises the discourse of migrants in the city of Maroua who see a clash between their children's language of expression and what they see as their identity (Lüpke 2013).

### *2.7.1. Language endangerment as linguistic pathos*

Speakers' discourse on language endangerment that we collected through techniques of questionnaire and interview in the city of Maroua (Extreme North region, Cameroon), show that they are concerned with the fear of losing their identity, as if their linguistic identity was absolutely attached to that of their ancestors of which they unfortunately do not know more than what their parents tell them. Instead of taking on the ongoing hybridisation to which communities of speech are subjected in the global context of intercultural communication and relations going beyond

ethnic, religious and even national boundaries, they adopt a pathos-driven discourse in which they apprehend the lack of command in their heritage language as loss of their identity. The pathos becomes more acute as some of them see in Fula the language of the oppressors of their ancestors, the language of those who took many of their people in captivity and forced to become Muslims. Although most of them show a good command of Fula and take advantage of it, they do not feel comfortable with identifying themselves with that language for reasons of historical memory.

The ecological discourse on language endangerment that assimilates the regression of linguistic varieties with loss of linguistic diversity (Mühlhäusler 2012, Romaine 2013) is nothing else than linguistic ideology which desperately surfs on the pathos and tries to ignore established facts on what human languages are, what speakers do with them and how they reflect human thoughts and life. Knowing that each language is a sociohistorical construct resulting from human experiences and contact situations on the one hand, and considering the fact that the birth or multiplication of languages is a result of historical processes that caused dispersion of human beings around the world in the course of time (Mufwene 2004), we base our analysis on the approach of language evolution to support the hypothesis of language demotion instead of language endangerment, because languages do not ‘die’, but the speakers through which they exist do die or stop using them for various possible reasons, that cannot be extensively discussed here.

### 2.7.2. *Demotion vs. promotion*

The term *demotion*, which is borrowed from the economy of human resources, “is just the reverse of the term *promotion*. It means the transfer of employees to lower positions in the organisational structure” (Durai 2010, p. 449). It is also defined as “shifting an employee down to lower levels of positions which involve decrease in salary, status and privilege” (Ali Baci, cited by Durai (ibid.)). Linguistic demotion as we suggest it here is understood as the process through which a language loses its socio-communicative functions and becomes uncompetitive or useless. It can be also understood as the result of this process. Thus, languages like Latin and Classical Greek are considered demoted languages. The notion of language in demotion is therefore introduced in opposition to the notion of language in promotion or promoted language which refers to a language which enjoys social and/or institutional advantages enabling its development. From this perspective one can differentiate between socially promoted languages (for instance lingua francas) and institutionally promoted languages (for instance official languages and documented standard varieties). Similarly, a language can find itself institutionally and/or socially demoted to a lower status.

The main function of human language as developed in the sociology of language is communication: communication in terms of sharing thoughts and knowledge and expectations. All this is summarised in the triadic model of the pragmatist Karl Bühler (1978) who distinguishes between the expression, the appeal and the representation. A language in demotion, be it a diatopic or diastratic variety, progressively withdraws from the field of communication because it loses its usefulness and usability, to the advantage of another one which becomes more important in terms of usefulness and usability – for a certain category of people if not for a whole community – and which we term language in promotion or promoted language. In our understanding of the evolution of human languages and considering historico-linguistic findings (Liebermann 1984, Labov 2001), we see in every language a potential candidate for demotion and promotion. Thus, a language which loses conditions favourable to promotion is subjected to demotion and becomes a *language in demotion*, or in worst case, a *demoted language*. Among the conditions which favour the development of languages, sociolinguists mention the number of speakers, the use as medium of education, the use as medium of religious practice, the use in media and the use in interethnic communication (Heine 1970, Wolff 2000, Lüpke & Storch 2013, Tourneux & Konai 2014). From this perspective, one can assert that some languages are more in demotion than others or some are more in promotion than others.

### *2.8. Lessons from the impact and representations of standardisation and vehicularization*

To bring our theoretical reflexion onto concrete ground, the impact of standardisation of Ewe in Ghana and the vehicularization of Fula Adamawa in Northern Cameroon serve as appropriate illustration. Tɔŋúgbe speakers are obliged to speak one superimposed dialect in the classroom and their dialect once at home. The dialect, it may be argued (by taking into account the definite article), has been demoted (especially in the classroom) in favor of the standardized language. Such a demotion (with its consequent sociological ramifications) is not without effects as data on the language is mostly taken from the standardized version.

The observable consequence of Fula Adamawa becoming a lingua franca enjoying promotional conditions – as language of business and language of local media, language of religious literacy (in church and mosque) and medium of interethnic communication – is found in the demotion of its prestigious and conservative dialect which gives in to the simplified vehicular variety. While the native speakers of Fula Adamawa accuse vehicularization or, in other words, the L2 speakers, of “killing” their “prestigious” linguistic system, the L2 speakers in their turn, whose

younger generations are shifting to Fula, consider their language losing ground to Fula and French which they consider “killer” languages. The minority languages of Northern Cameroon nowadays are reduced to home languages and this is even more and more accentuated by economic migrations which are emptying dry villages of the Madara Mountains.

### 3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The question of language endangerment has been discussed here in a sociolinguistic and precisely variationist perspective. The thematic integration of linguistic variation in the framework of language endangerment is justified by the impact of the promotion of one variety among many others as is the case with the documentation of standard Ewe and the emergence of vehicular Fula Adamawa in Northern Cameroon. Focusing on the case of the definite article in Ewe, our analysis has demonstrated immanent structural loss and restrictions in the standard documentation. Thus, the definite article in Ewe, owing to the novel data presented on TḶḶḶḶḶḶ, is an intersection between morphology, syntax and phonology. Restricted to standard Ewe, the definite article is more of a syntactic phenomenon. However, with data from TḶḶḶḶḶḶ available, the definite article is much more appreciated and opens itself up to new analysis and theorization both in synchrony and diachrony (especially in language change theorization). Thus, the standardized data alone does not cater for all the properties of the language’s definite article. The absence of such crucial data on the language variety will only restrict our understanding of the possible diachronic and synchronic directions of Ewe and Gbe. Following from this, it can be observed that standardization does not only relegate other dialects (such as TḶḶḶḶḶḶ) to the background (demotion), but also (potentially) blinds the linguist from obtaining the necessary data needed for theorizing on language in general.

The discussion of the sociolinguistic impacts and representation of the vehicularization of Fula Adamawa revealed two important facts: on the one hand, the process gave birth to a simplified variety of Fula induced by a long contact with typologically and genetically divergent languages. On the other hand, the expansion of Fula as lingua franca in Northern Cameroon is one of the causes of language shift among the ethnic minorities of the area. On the basis of their representation of language endangerment, some speakers accusing others of “killing” their languages, and considering natural language evolution, we argued that the pathos-driven discourse of language endangerment definitely is pure ‘ecolinguistic ideology’, which regards each linguistic variety/system as part of the linguistic diversity that should be protected from death. Contrary to this conception,

we suggested the concept of *language in demotion* and *demoted language* borrowed from the economy of human resources to denote the situation or the status of languages which are losing or have partially or totally lost the main communicative functions of human languages.

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