

MINISTRY OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH

A RAPID APPRAISAL SURVEY OF DZODINKA (ALCAM 904)
AND MFUMTE (ALCAM 905)
DONGA MANTUNG DIVISION, NORTHWEST PROVINCE

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A RAPID APPRAISAL SURVEY OF DZODINKA (ALCAM 904)
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1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a preliminary linguistic and sociolinguistic survey of the Mfumte and Dzodinka languages, including reported dialects, carried out in Donga Mantung Division, North-West Province, Republic of Cameroon, from February 24 to March 1 and March 14 and 15, 1994. The research team consisted of Virginia BRADLEY, Caroline GRANT, Peggy GRIFFIN, Lawrence SEGUIN, and Duane TROYER from the Société Internationale de Linguistique (SIL); Dr. Engelbert DOMCHE TEKO and Dr. Etienne SADEMOUO from the University of Yaoundé I, Department of African Languages and Linguistics; and Joseph MBONGUE of the Cameroon Bible Translation Association (CABTA).

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance and welcome we received from government, church, and traditional leaders in the Mfumte area, without whose cooperation this mission would not have been possible.

1.1 Linguistic Background

Dzodinka: Dzodinka (or "Adere") is listed as code 904 in the *Atlas linguistique du Cameroun* (ALCAM, Dieu and Renaud 1983:121) and ADD in *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1992:187). Its linguistic classification as given in ALCAM and Ethnologue is as follows :

ALCAM : Niger-Kordofan, Niger-Congo, Bénoué-Congo, Bantoïde, Bantou, Grassfield, Est-Grassfield, Nord, Dzodinka.

Ethnologue : Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Broad Bantu, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, North, Nkambe.

Mfumte: Mfumte is listed as 905 in ALCAM (Dieu and Renaud 1983:122) and NFU in *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1992:198). Its linguistic classification in ALCAM and Ethnologue is as follows :

ALCAM : Niger-Kordofan, Niger-Congo, Bénoué-Congo, Bantoïde, Bantou, Grassfield, Est-Grassfield, Nord, Mfumte.

Ethnologue : Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Broad Bantu, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, North, Nkambe.

Ethnologue states that Mfumte is spoken in 14 villages (cf. Section 1.2). However, in addition to Dzodinka (Adere), a number of these villages have separate entries, namely Kwaja (KDZ), Ncha (NCH), Bitui (listed as "Ndaktup" [NCB]) and Koffa (Kofa [KFJ]).

Ethnologue's linguistic classification for each of these is the same as for Mfumte, and in each case a need for survey is mentioned.

1.2 Geographical location

The term "Mfumte" literally means "people under the palms." The 14 villages whose inhabitants identify themselves as Mfumte are Adere, Bang, Bitui, Jui, Koffa, Kom, Kwaja, Lus, Manang, Mbah, Mballa, Mbat, Mbibji, and Ncha'. All 14 villages are located in the new Kom Sub-division, in the northern part of Donga-Mantung Division, North-West Province (see map, Appendix A). At the time of the survey, the Mfumte area was still under Nwa Sub-division administration.

1.3 Population

Ethnologue cites a population of 24,700 Mfumte speakers. Mr. Lucas Abuh Funfe, First Deputy Municipal Administrator of Nwa, estimated a total population of approximately 18,000-19,000 (personal communication).

1.4 Languages of Wider Communication (LWCs)

In Donga-Mantung Division, as throughout North-West Province, Cameroon Pidgin English is the LWC. English is the medium of instruction in local schools at all levels.

1.5 Prior linguistic work

During our pre-survey research, two 120-item word lists were found, one in the Dzodinka language taken by VOORHOEVE and LEROY during the ALCAM project, and one in Lus dialect taken by Virginia BRADLEY of SIL in December 1992. No other prior linguistic studies on Mfumte or Dzodinka were found in available sources, apart from information collected for the ALCAM project.

1.6 Neighbouring languages

In Cameroon, the Mfumte and Dzodinka languages are bordered by two Grassfields languages, Yamba (906)/(YAM) to the south and Limbum (903)/(LIM) to the southwest, as well as one Jukunoid language, Mbembe (700)/(NZA), to the northwest. According to Ethnologue (Grimes 1992:323) four languages border the Mfumte and Dzodinka areas to the east in Nigeria. These are Ndoola (NDR), which is Mambiloid, and Bitare (BRE), Abong (ABO), and Batu (BTU), all three of which are Tivoid.

1.7 Standardisation Efforts

Although ALCAM lists Mfumte as fulfilling the criteria whereby language standardisation is "possible and immediately desirable" (p. 159), no concrete steps have yet been taken to codify or standardise a Mfumte reference dialect. However, the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) has expressed a keen interest in Bible translation work in the area, and in the early 1980's intended to begin work on the Lus dialect but could not proceed after the designated translator's death.

2. THE SURVEY

2.1 Goal and Procedures of the Survey

A rapid-appraisal survey was carried out to gain an initial, general overview of the linguistic and sociolinguistic situation of the Mfumte and Dzodinka languages.

Rapid-appraisal surveys are based on the use of specific, non-technical means that take relatively little time to apply, consisting primarily of interviews with groups and individuals. This allows the research team to collect useful information in one or two days per village visited. Rapid-appraisal methods provide an overall impression of potential need for codification through limited subjective reports from local inhabitants; this may be sufficient for ascertaining need. In-depth linguistic and sociolinguistic research would yield a more comprehensive picture if unanswered questions were left at the end of the survey. The pitfalls of self-reports have been well documented (e.g. see Seguin 1991). For a complete discussion of rapid-appraisal, see Stalder 1993).

Three major areas are considered in a rapid-appraisal survey :

- a) **Dialect situation:** What are the perceived mutually understandable dialects of the language and the level of intercomprehension between them? It is assumed that two speech varieties may be dialects of the same language if: 1) speakers perceive them as such, and/or 2) children are reported already to understand the other speech variety by age 5 or 6. Otherwise, it is possible that the other speech variety is a separate language, comprehension of which is more or less easily acquired depending on linguistic similarity and the speaker's exposure to it.
- b) **Multilingualism:** What is the extent of speaking and comprehension proficiency in languages of wider communication (LWCs) as well as in geographically neighbouring and linguistically related speech varieties?
- c) **Language vitality and viability:** What is the potential for success of a language development project in a given language, as indicated by reported patterns of language use? One indication of vitality is that the mother tongue (hereafter referred to as "MT") is actively used in the home (between parents and children and among siblings) and in village settings (conversation between MT speakers and in traditional gatherings).

Consideration is also given to the attitudes of the community under study towards the MT, other dialects, related languages, or LWCs with which they have contact. Attitudes help predict the acceptability of literature produced in a given speech variety, be it the MT or another form.

In addition to the three above areas, questions were asked concerning migration patterns, intermarriage, and local development, where relevant to MT vitality and the potential success of a language development project.

The specific procedures used during this survey were as follows :

Word lists : One standard 120-item ALCAM word list was collected from MT speakers in each of the 14 villages for subsequent lexicostatistical analysis, consisting of a

synchronic comparison of items aimed at ascertaining possible levels of inherent intelligibility. The analysis is found in section 3.2.

Group interviews: A standard rapid-appraisal group interview was conducted with traditional and other leaders in each village.

Because of SIL's and CABTA's specific interest in Bible translation, Christian church leaders were interviewed in many of the communities surveyed. The major denomination in the Mfumte area is the Cameroon Baptist Convention, but the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon and the Roman Catholic church are also present in smaller numbers. Church use of local languages is relevant to future language development inasmuch as, in other communities, churches have been the primary users of materials written in the local language.

Individual Questionnaires: Ten individual questionnaires were filled out in Adere during the survey.

This report describes our findings concerning the Mfumte situation as a whole. Summaries of interview results are available upon request from SIL, Survey Department, B.P. 1299, Yaoundé, CAMEROON. Findings will be presented as follows:

- 3. Dialectology
- 4. Multilingualism
- 5. Language Vitality and Viability
- 6. Recommendations for Standardisation

3. DIALECTOLOGY

3.1 Mfumte villages

Each of the 14 Mfumte villages has its own distinct manner of speaking which differentiates it from the other villages. The local names are as follows; the spelling used is per the *General Alphabet for Cameroon Languages* (Tadadjeu and Sadembouo 1984):

<u>Name of village</u>	<u>Language name</u>
Adere	dzodibunka lidzonka dzodinka
Bang	ndiwubo
Bitui	ndaktup
Jui	beŋe
Koffa	kɔfa
Kom	nkwi'
Kwaja ⁽¹⁾	alabufwɔ
Lus	ndəwuli
Manang	ndi'imanəŋ
Mbah	ndiwemba
Mballa	mbɔlɔ'
Mbat	ndəkbinji
Mbibji	nde'wija
Ncha'	ndaktup

(1) Consists of two mutually understandable speech varieties: "bukwok" and "bujien"

Only Ncha' and Bitui share a name, "ndaktup." In the following discussion, we analyse the group interview responses and, based on reported comprehension, propose possible linguistic groupings covering the 14 Mfumte speech varieties studied. This is followed by a lexicostatistical analysis of the word lists that were collected.

In chart 1 below, we use a three-letter system (A, B, and C) to rate the comprehension each village reported with respect to all the other villages' respective speech varieties. (The meaning of each letter is explained in the key below the chart.) The survey site is listed along the vertical axis on the left; the horizontal axis on the top refers to the speech variety (by village name) for which comprehension is rated.

CHART 1
REPORTED LINGUISTIC SIMILARITY
(EASE OF COMPREHENSION)

	Adere	Ncha'	Bitui	Kwaja	Lus	Mbah	Mbibji	Kom	Mballa	Bang	Koffa	Mbat	Manang	Jui
Adere	--						C-15/18							
Ncha'		--	A	A										
Bitui		A	--	A	B									
Kwaja		B	B	--	B									
Lus		C-15	C-15	C-10	--			C-10	C-10	C-15	C-10	C-15	C-15	C-10
Mbah	?	?	C-15/20	B	B	--	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Mbibji	C-30				C	A	--	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Kom					A	C-10	C-10	--	A	A	A	C-10	C-10	A
Mballa					A	C-20	C-20	A	--	A	A	C-12/15	C-12/15	C-12/15
Bang					B	B	B	B	A	--	A	B	B	B
Koffa					C-12	C-12	C-12/15	C-12	A	A	--	B	B	A
Mbat					C-12	B	B	B	B	B	B	--	A	B
Manang						B	B	B	B	B	B	A	--	B
Jui					C-20	B	B	A	A	A	A	B	B	--

KEY:

A - respondents group the speech variety in question with their own:

- reported to be "same language" or "closest/most similar to ours"
- immediate comprehension reported to exist, even among children 4-5 years old

B - reported as different, but with which there is good comprehension, even among children 4-5 years old

C - (age) - understood only by older children (10+ years) or adults, comprehension is variable within the population. The figure following the "C" is the age by which comprehension is acquired.

Blank - no comprehension (except by a few speakers).

On the basis of the "A's" in Chart 1, we can suggest the following:

- a) Ncha' and Bitui group together and claim to easily understand Kwaja; on the other hand, Kwaja does not perceive as close a relationship with these other two villages.
- b) Mbibji groups itself with Mbah, although Mbah does not group itself as closely with Mbibji. (Mbibji and Mbah border each other.)
- c) With a few exceptions, Kom, Mballa, Bang, Koffa, and Jui generally group themselves together.
- d) Mbat and Manang group themselves together.
- e) Adere is linguistically distinct. Comprehension seems to exist only with Mbibji; respondents reported that Adere people travel through Mbibji on their way to market in Mayo Binka. Even there, comprehension is reported to exist only among older people.

In Chart 2 below we broaden the definition of "similar languages" by collapsing categories A and B of Chart 1. The effect of this is to help us identify those pairs where good/immediate comprehension is reported to be acquired by age 12, regardless of whether they are perceived or not perceived to be the "same language" or "closest" linguistically. We suggest that such pairs correspond to languages where comprehension may be adequate or extensive enough among the adult population to allow use of literature in the other language. Those pairs rated in Chart 1 as "C-12" or higher are not included.

CHART 2

PAIRS WHERE COMPREHENSION IS ACQUIRED BY AGE 12

	Adere	Ncha'	Bitui	Kwaja	Lus	Mbah	Mbibji	Kom	Mballa	Bang	Koffa	Mbat	Manang	Jui
Adere	--													
Ncha'		--	A	A										
Bitui		A	--	A	A									
Kwaja		A	A	--	A									
Lus				B-10	--			B-10	B-10		B-10			B-10
Mbah				A	A	--	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Mbibji						A	--	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Kom					A	B-10	B-10	--	A	A	A	B-10	B-10	A
Mballa					A			A	--	A	A			
Bang					A	A	A	A	A	--	A	A	A	A
Koffa					B-12	B-12		B-12	A	A	--	A	A	A
Mbat					B-12	A	A	A	A	A	A	--	A	A
Manang						A	A	A	A	A	A	A	--	A
Jui						A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	--

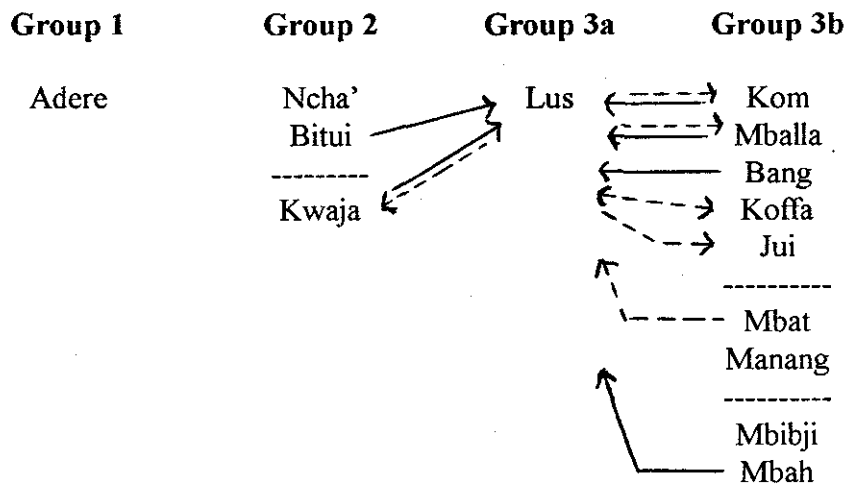
Notes:

A - immediate/good comprehension by ages 5-6 (inherent or acquired), corresponds with categories A and B of Chart 1

B - good comprehension acquired by age 12 (some of category C of Chart 1)

This analysis removes some of the "holes" of Chart 1. Thus, Ncha', Bitui, and Kwaja more clearly form a single group, although the differences reported by Kwaja speakers with respect to these two neighbours of theirs should not be discounted.

On the basis of the above, we suggest that the 14 Mfumte villages divide into 4 groups, (next page):



Falling into the same group are those dialects that the interviewees consistently reported as being "the same," "very similar," or where mutual comprehension is said generally to be present by age 5-6. The dotted lines are used to show the presence of "sub-groups" within the group, where a "looser" linguistic relationship appears to exist (comprehension acquired by age 10-12). Applied to our example of Ncha', Bitui, and Kwaja, this allows us to consider both their linguistic relationship and the perceived distinctiveness of Kwaja.

Reported comprehension *between* groups is represented via the arrows. A solid arrow shows good comprehension, even from a young age (5-6 years). A broken arrow implies a looser comprehension relationship, though it is still "good" and acquired by most people by a relatively early age (10-12 years). For example, the arrow from Kwaja to Lus means that those interviewed in Kwaja said they understand Lus well, even children of a young age. The broken arrow from Lus to Kwaja, however, means that although Lus speakers generally understand Kwaja, comprehension is uneven and generally acquired at a later age (age 10 in this case, as in Chart 1).

Lus (group 3a) and the group 3b varieties were separated because it came out several times in the interviews that Lus is somehow "different" from the others. And yet, as the

arrows show, there is two-way comprehension between Lus and many of the villages in group 3b.

The interview groups were also asked to indicate the order in which they understand the other villages' varieties, from more easily to less easily understood. Below are the first, second, and third choices reported in each village:

Group 1:

Adere: Mbibji

Group 2:

Ncha': Bitui, Kwaja (no order)

Bitui: 1) Kwaja, 2) Ncha'

Kwaja: 1) Lus/Bitui, 2) Ncha'

Group 3a:

Lus: 1) Kwaja/Kom/Mballa/Koffa/Jui, 2) Mbat/Manang

Group 3b:

Kom: 1) Lus/Mballa/Bang/Koffa/Jui, 2) Mbah/Mbibji

Mballa: 1) Bang, 2) Lus/Kom/Koffa

Bang: 1) Mballa/Koffa, 2) Lus/Mbah/Mbibji/Kom/Mbat/Manang/Jui

Koffa: 1) Mballa/Bang/Jui, 2) Mbat/Manang

Jui: 1) Kom/Mballa/Bang/Koffa, 2) Mbah/Mbibji/Mbat/Manang

Mbah: 1) Mbibji, 2) Mbat

Mbibji: 1) Mbah, 2) Kom/Mballa/Bang/Koffa/Mbat/Manang/Jui

Mbat: 1) Manang, 2) Mbah/Mbibji/Kom/Mballa/Bang/Koffa/Jui

Manang: 1) Mbat, 2) Jui

The above in most respects confirms the four groupings given above, including Lus' link to Groups 2 and 3b.

3.2 Lexicostatistical analysis

A synchronic analysis of the word lists collected yielded the following matrix showing percent lexical similarity:

PERCENT LEXICAL SIMILARITY

Manang	Mbat	Mbah	Mbibji	Mballa	Lus	Kom	Koffa	Jwi	Bang	Bitui	Ncha'	Kwaja	Adere
88	69	78	37	37	66	70	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
64	69	78	37	37	66	70	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
68	69	78	37	37	66	70	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
40	37	42	37	37	66	70	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
37	34	38	34	66	70	71	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
43	37	46	38	69	70	71	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
48	40	48	42	70	62	71	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
51	50	53	52	66	59	62	71	71	59	33	45	32	32
45	37	48	38	70	58	62	67	59	59	33	45	32	32
48	41	46	41	32	35	33	36	35	33	60	45	32	32
42	37	44	37	27	29	26	29	32	26	60	45	32	32
39	35	39	36	25	23	24	28	27	24	58	45	32	32
33	40	39	38	26	22	23	25	32	24	35	30	32	32

Margin of error: \pm 3.6-9.8%

italics 50-59%

bold 60+%

Taking 60% as the threshold figure for grouping speech varieties together, we see that the groupings above are in close agreement with our conclusions from the interviews. Lus, however, appears to be more closely related to Mballa, Kom, Koffa, Jui, and Bang than implied in the interviews.

3.3 Nigerian Languages

Two Mfumte villages reported comprehension of languages spoken in Nigeria: Ncha' reported comprehension of the speech of Antere, and Bitui reported comprehension of the languages used in Antere and Ankiri. These may be dialects of "ndaktup"; however, Ndaktup is not listed for Nigeria in the 1992 edition of *Ethnologue*. Nor are Antere and Ankiri mentioned.

4. MULTILINGUALISM

4.1 Official Language: English

English is taught in all the Mfumte schools. The level of English comprehension tends to correspond with the level of schooling achieved. In most of the villages approximately 50% of the children finish primary school. A smaller percentage of students continue on to secondary school. Therefore, the level of English comprehension is not very high.

4.2 LWC: Pidgin English

Pidgin English is much more widely known and used among the Mfumte villages than is English. This is seen in the Mfumte churches where English is used mostly for Scripture reading and hymns, whereas Pidgin is used for the sermon, prayers and songs. It is also the language most widely used as an LWC, even between Mfumte dialects which are not mutually intelligible. It would be advisable to do further testing to determine how widespread the comprehension of Pidgin is among Mfumte speakers and to objectively measure their level of proficiency.

4.3 Neighbouring Languages

4.3.1 *Yamba*

There is a certain amount of speaking and comprehension proficiency in Yamba, but it does not appear to be generalised to the entire Mfumte area. Furthermore, some Yamba dialects are better understood than others.

For example, the leaders interviewed in Kwaja stated that most Kwaja speakers understand the Ntim dialect of Yamba, though they did note that Pidgin English is easier for them to understand. The Ntim village is located just 3 km from Kwaja. The Kwaja leaders' attitude towards learning to read and write in Yamba was positive. (It should be noted, however, that the Yamba dialect which has been standardised (Mbem) is more difficult for the Kwaja people to understand than the Ntim dialect, due to the fewer contacts Kwaja speakers have with Mbem speakers.)

Manang speakers also claimed to understand Yamba (Mbem, Gom and Nkot dialects) very well, in addition to speaking it some. Only one-quarter of the Manang population are said to understand the Ntong and Ngung dialects, however. The Mbat interviews also revealed that Mbat speakers do not understand the Ngung and Ntong dialects, but do understand the other dialects of Yamba (after age 20-22). The Mbat leaders stated that people would be interested in buying Yamba literature but would not approve of Yamba being used as a medium of instruction in the schools.

The Mbah leaders stated that old people understand Yamba well and that some young people understand Yamba (after age 15-20), but others do not. They also stated that Mbah speakers understand Yamba better than Limbum. The Mbibji interviews revealed that many Mbibji speakers (but not all) understand Yamba, especially the Nwa, Mbem, Gom and Ngung

dialects. The Lus leaders stated that some people understand Yamba deeply, due to family ties, especially with the Ngung village.

The Ncha' leaders stated that Ncha' speakers understand the Ntim, Mbem and Ntong dialects of Yamba "a bit" but the other Yamba dialects "not at all." The other Mfumte villages (Adere, Bang, Bitui, Jui, Koffa, Kom, and Mballa) stated that only some of the older people know some Yamba, but generally speakers from these villages communicate with Yamba speakers using Pidgin, which indicates a low comprehension of Yamba.

In terms of standardisation, Yamba appears poorly suited to serve as a standard reference dialect for the entire Mfumte area. On the other hand, Yamba materials could possibly already be introduced for adult literacy purposes in Kwaja, Mbah, Mbat, and Manang—villages reporting good comprehension of and/or positive attitudes towards Yamba. It should be pointed out that only Kwaja gave unqualified approval to using Yamba materials for adult literacy and school use.

4.3.2 *Limbum*

Patterns of comprehension are much the same as with Yamba, although there are considerably fewer Limbum dialects.

Of all the Mfumte villages, Mbibji seemed to claim the highest level of comprehension of Limbum. They stated that Mbibji speakers understand Limbum "deeply," including the children. During the team's visit, Virginia Bradley (personal communication) noticed similarities in Mbibji speech with Limbum.

The Mbah leaders also claimed that Limbum is well understood even by Mbah children of 5 to 6 years old. They speak Limbum with Wimbun people, since Wimbun people do not understand the Mbah language. The Mbat leaders stated that everyone in Mbat understands Limbum because there is a small market nearby where they meet Wimbun people. They also noted that even when Wimbun people speak among themselves Mbat speakers understand, and that they understand Limbum better than Yamba.

The comprehension of Limbum in Kom and Manang seems to be due to market contact. The Kom elders stated that many Kom people understand Limbum (by age 12); if not, they use Pidgin English. Kom speakers understand Limbum better than they do Yamba. The leaders in Bang stated that Limbum is understood by Bang young people, but that they do not speak Limbum.

Among Adere, Bitui, Jui, Koffa, Kwaja, Lus, Mballa and Ncha' speakers, the number of those who understand Limbum is quite limited (only among older people or individuals who have had enough contact with Limbum speakers) and the majority of people understand little or no Limbum. Therefore the leaders of each of these villages stated that speakers from their village would use Pidgin English when communicating with Wimbun people.

As regards standardisation, as with Yamba, Limbum is limited in its usefulness as a language for written use, although materials could possibly be introduced in some Mfumte villages, most notably Mbibji, Mbat, and Manang.

4.3.3 Mbembe

None of the Mfumte villages claimed to understand Mbembe well. The Adere elders stated that some old men understand Mbembe but cannot speak it. They also stated that other Adere speakers *do not understand Mbembe speakers and communicate with them in Pidgin English*. This is in contrast to ALCAM's assertion that Mbembe seems to be used as a second language by virtually everyone in Adere (Dieu and Renaud 1983:122). The Kom interview revealed that a few older people understand Mbembe, but most do not. Each of the Mfumte village interviews revealed that speakers from those villages communicate with Mbembe speakers in Pidgin English.

4.4 Conclusion

Since the Yamba language (Mbem dialect) has already been developed, it seems reasonable to suggest that literacy in Yamba should be promoted in those Mfumte villages where it is understood well. This would include Kwaja, Manang and possibly Mbat and Mbah. This is not to say that developing another Mfumte language which they understand well would not be more useful to these Mfumte language groups, but rather would provide at least an interim solution to having access to written materials in a national language. The attitudes and motivation regarding learning to read and write in Yamba would of course be very important in determining whether Yamba literacy classes would be successful among these Mfumte languages.

Similarly, the Limbum language is in the process of being developed, and written Limbum materials could possibly be used by Mbibji, Manang, and Mbat speakers. Again, their attitudes toward and acceptance of Limbum written materials would play a big part in determining whether it would be worthwhile to extend a Limbum literacy programme to these villages.

5. VITALITY AND VIABILITY

5.1 Language Use

5.1.1 *General Use of MT*

The various forms of Mfumte are used in all domestic domains in each of the villages visited. Mfumte is used in all contact with other MT speakers (i.e. with those from the same village or with whom there is immediate intercomprehension): for example, in the fields or in the marketplace. This is a strong indication that overall, the language is not in any immediate danger of dying out. In order to examine this further, patterns of language use and relevant sociological influences on the long-term viability of the language are examined below.

5.1.2 *Church Use of MT*

There are three main Christian denominations in the Mfumte-speaking area: the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), by far the largest in membership; the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon (PCC), which is much smaller in size; and the Roman Catholic church, which has only a nominal presence.

Generally, within each of the fourteen villages of the area, the MT is used in church services of at least the CBC and PCC congregations. (No interviews were conducted with Roman Catholic representatives.) Interpretation into the MT is given orally in most church services, showing that in terms of the level of comprehension required for understanding spiritual and religious matters, there seems to be a clear, felt need for use of the MT. English and Pidgin English, which are commonly used, do not seem sufficient for this level of understanding. From the interviews held with various church leaders, a general pattern emerged of MT interpretation of the Bible readings and sermon, and of some prayers and songs being said in the MT.

As far as we could determine, there are currently no attempts underway to put any Mfumte variety into written form. In the 1980s, the CBC started preliminary work in language development, using the Lus dialect as a standard form for the six-congregation Lus Association. This preliminary language work has since been discontinued.

In each of the villages surveyed, only part of the population can be said to be churchgoers; the rest of the villagers tend to follow traditional practices.

5.2 Attitudes towards MT Development

In each village surveyed, a very positive attitude was expressed towards the development of the MT in written form. Those interviewed said that they would like their children to learn to read and write in the MT, and that they as adults would also be prepared to attend literacy classes in their own language.

5.3 Attitudes towards the Use of Other Mfumte Speech Varieties

In each group interview, the following question was asked: "Would you be willing for your children to learn to read and write in X language?" (where X represented various other Mfumte speech varieties).

Adere, Lus, Kom, and Bang replied negatively, only wanting the development of their own languages. Kwaja chose Lus in preference to the MT, and the following six villages chose Lus in second place to their own variety: Bitui, Mbah, Mballa, Mbat, Mbibji, and Ncha'.

The other villages chose, in second place to the development of their own language, closely neighbouring speech forms. For example, Jui chose Bang, Koffa, Kom, or Mballa as having a form which would be acceptable to Jui speakers to read and write. Koffa expressed a preference for Jui, Bang, and Mballa as one speech form. Manang preferred Koffa, and Ncha' chose Kwaja in addition to Lus. Thus, on the basis of preference, no single speech form or dialect of Mfumte emerged as an obvious choice for standardization throughout the area. (Nevertheless, some recommendations are made in section 6).

5.4 Language Maintenance and Shift

The LWC in the Mfumte area is Pidgin English, although neighbouring languages such as Limbum and Yamba sometimes fulfill this role, where the speech form concerned borders on one of these languages (see section 4.3).

Generally speaking, there does not seem to be any fear of encroachment of another language on the use of the MT. However, in Adere and Mbibji, some concern was expressed regarding the long-term health of the MT. People in Adere said that if a road were ever built to their village, then the language might well become threatened by the inevitable influence of outsiders who would begin to pass through the village. Mbibji speakers expressed a concern about the possible disappearance of their language, particularly if it is never written down. (Mbibji has a significantly mixed population, with about only 300 out of 2,000 inhabitants MT Mbibji speakers.)

Most of the Mfumte children attend primary school, although in certain areas, this has only been in recent years. In general, secondary schools are attended by the minority of schoolchildren, who often have to travel outside of their own MT area, and thus mix with children speaking different forms of Mfumte, or even totally different languages. In order to facilitate communication, the children are then obliged to use Pidgin English.

5.5 Socio-economic Factors

Three areas are examined in this section, which, according to Watters (1989), are significant factors which could probably affect the development and success of a language programme. He writes:

The basic hypothesis runs as follows: the greater the community's homogeneity, openness to the outside, and resident middle-aged leadership, the greater is the possibility for a widespread community participation in the development and implementation of a language program. Furthermore, the greater the community

participation in the program, the greater is the potential current and future use [of] the language in written form (1989:6.7.1).

The three socio-economic factors to be examined are as follows:

- (i) homogeneity and social cohesion of the language community;
- (ii) openness of the community to change/development;
- (iii) presence of local middle-aged leadership.

5.5.1 Homogeneity of the Language Community

Eight of the villages in the Mfumte area are linked by unsurfaced road. Those with no road access from the Mfumte area are Adere, Jui, Kwaja, Manang, Mbat, and Ncha'. In rainy season these villages are not easily reached, even on foot, thus effectively cutting them off at times from other parts of the Mfumte community.

Each of the villages surveyed said that their own community was homogeneous as far as the "sameness" of the language was concerned. In other words, the speech variety does not vary within the confines of each village concerned, and there are no problems of comprehension within each of them.

However, across the range of villages visited, it cannot be said that the Mfumte language group as a whole forms one single linguistic community, as is discussed in section 3.1. Although the Mfumte villages can be described as culturally homogeneous, linguistic homogeneity only exists on an individual village level.

5.5.2 Openness to Development

Each of the villages visited in the Mfumte area demonstrated a real interest and openness to development, as evidenced by use of local health centres and clinics, where available, the creation and involvement of local development committees, the presence of schools, and a positive attitude towards the development of their own languages. In several villages, the local development committees have been involved in the construction of schools and clinics, and in road improvements.

5.5.3 Local Leadership

In nearly all of the villages surveyed, we observed that there was a strong presence of middle-aged leadership. The majority of those interviewed felt that the long-term future of their communities was assured, in that there would be sufficient leaders to take over from the present leadership. The presence or absence of middle-aged leadership has implications for the viability of a language development programme, since it is usually the local leaders who provide the necessary impetus for the continuing support of a community-wide literacy and language development project on a local level. Overall, the impression gained was that the local community leaders would give their support to MT development.

According to Watters' criteria used in describing the type of community being surveyed, we can say that the Mfumte community as a whole is a *changing community*. This indicates that the best time for development initiatives on a local level may well be right now:

the people are open to and wanting development, and the community is still united in such a way as to facilitate this development on a grass-roots level rather than through outside initiatives only.

5.6 Conclusion

The major question to be resolved concerning language development in the Mfumte area is that of standardisation. From the limited data obtained through group interviews, it was not clear which form(s) of Mfumte would be appropriate for development and use by the wider Mfumte community. Therefore, it will be necessary to investigate this question further, and to survey the attitudes of the local people on a deeper level before decisions are made. This is examined in more detail in the "Recommendations" section 6.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STANDARDISATION

6.1 Summary

From the findings of this survey it seems clear that there is a codification need for the Mfumte cluster of languages. How to meet that need is another question altogether.

First of all, due to its linguistic distinctiveness Dzodinka should be codified quite apart from the other Mfumte villages. Its small population, however (approx. 2,000-2,500), puts it outside historical Cameroon government criteria for codification/standardisation priorities.

For the other 13 Mfumte villages, we suggest two possible approaches:

1) Select Lus as the site for beginning work. The advantage with Lus is that it is reported to be understood to some extent by most of the Mfumte villages, including Ncha', Bitui, and Kwaja (group 2), as well as most of the 9 villages in Group 3b. It is also the dialect which the Cameroon Baptist Convention chose in the early 80's for translation work. The main disadvantage is that apparently gaps in comprehension exist within several segments of the overall Mfumte population. In addition, some villages (Jui, Manang, Kom, Koffa, Bang) expressed real reservations towards Lus being used as the written Mfumte language.

If Lus is considered, it is recommend that dialect intelligibility testing and attitude studies be done to obtain a clearer picture. Because more than 10 villages would be involved, this would take quite a long time.

2) Select Kom as the site for beginning work. The advantage with Kom is that it would probably well serve the villages of group 3b, and perhaps Lus as well. In addition, it is centrally located, has been selected as the subdivisional headquarters for Mfumte, and has a clinic. Selecting Kom, however, would leave open the question of how to serve Kwaja, Ncha', and Bitui. As with Lus, a certain amount of dialect intelligibility testing and attitude studies should be considered with Lus and some of the villages of group 3b, especially those having a looser linguistic relationship (Mbibji, Mbah, Mbat, and Manang).

It may be discovered that 2 or 3 varieties of Mfumte will need to be standardised. Ultimately, it is our opinion that efforts to standardise Mfumte would need to approach it as a language cluster.

6.2 Changes to ALCAM

It is the recommendation of this report that the current entry for "Mfumte" be modified as follows:

- a) Separate entries for Ndaktup and Kwaja;
- b) List the Mfumte dialects (with autoglossonyms under the listing for Mfumte).
- c) In the prose descriptions for each of these languages, mention their association with each other as "Mfumte" people.

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APPENDIX A
 MAP OF THE MFUMTE AREA
 (prepared by I. Seguin)

