**Writing in English**

Paul Nkwi

When I was a little boy, I learned my local dialect, Kom, a Semi-Bantu language that gave me an identity. When I turned 10, my parents who did not speak English, but admire the British who set the rules, brought me to a colonial mission school. From then, English would become part of me for the rest of my life until now. Greater confusion came when I was forced to undertake my undergraduate studies in Italian, and four years later to pursue postgraduate studies in German, conducted my field research in the Kom language, wrote my thesis in English, in a country where English was a strange language. I am sure there are hundreds of Africans who were, are and will continue to swim in this linguistic confusion.

It is interesting to note that my first tenure position was at a University where English and French were the languages of instruction. I was further forced in s a more confused situation; teach in *French* and write in English, conduct ethnographic research in *Kom*, the area I specialize in.

 Why on earth did I decide to become an anthropologist? Reading the ethnographies of Phylis Kaberry and Elisabeth Chilver, all British anthropologists, I was totally dissatisfied. I said to myself, I can do a better, after all, I have lived the culture and I can render inner soul of that culture in a more vivid and appropriate manner. Little did I know, what they wrote came from intensive hours of ethnographic grilling of Kom informers and deconstructing the meaning and concepts. Many months of data collection permitted me to understand the logic of those I was attempting to criticize. Indeed, I collected vast amount of data. On my return from the field, I faced the herculean task of analyzing, identifying patterns of concepts and ideas and consigning all this in writing in a more systematic way. This was certainly the most difficult part. My supervisor, a German speaker, was no answer to my problems of manipulating the "Queen's Language. Having written my thesis in English, and with a greater mastery of Italian and German, I was still under the spell of "*bad or poor English*.

Having been recruited to teach anthropology in English, I knew that I will either *publish or perish.* How could I compete for journal space in international journals if I did not master the English language? After five years into teaching at the University and publishing a few articles, I was forced to find an intellectual mentor, once the Editor of American Anthropologist. For years, he has been my mentor, reading, correcting and helping shape my English written articles and books into a language that meets the standard. That is how I have survived in this highly competed world of ours.

***Paul Nchoji Nkwi****is professor of African anthropology at the University of Yaounde I, Cameroon. He studied anthropology and education at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and has been a visiting professor at Harvard Medical School, University of South Carolina, University of Frankfurt, Rhodes University, the University of Leiden (1982), and the University of Bergen. His main interest is in the dynamics of social change, especially the changing nature of local cultures in the face of modernisation. His main field-work is in Cameroon, among the Kom of the Western Grasfields. His publications include After Traditional Government and Social Change (1976), Traditional Diplomacy: A study in interchiefdom relations (1986), and Local Elite in the Promotion of Development (1994). Having spent almost 12 years as an administrator of research in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, he developed an interest in applied anthropology, especially medical anthropology and enviromental studies. For five years, he supervised a five-country research project on HIV/AIDS and Culture in Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi and Togo. The findings of this piece of work are found on the UNFPA website. His interest in the development of anthropology on the African continent, led to the establishment of the Pan African anthropological association, and recently he published an article entitled Anthropology in Postcolonial Africa: The Survival Debate published in the book "World Anthropologies" eds. Escobar and Arturo (2007). Nkwi was the founding president of the Pan African Anthropological Association" 1989-1994. He has been Vice president of the African Academy of Sciences, and founding Executive Secretary of the Cameroon Academy of Sciences. In his political career, he has served as the policy adviser and now shadow cabinet of the Cameroon Social Democratic Front (SDF), for Social Affairs, Youth development and Sport.*