The Matched-guise Test in Rural Multilingual Settings: The Case of Lower Fungom, Cameroon

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Abstract

This study, informed by field research and results from an adapted form of matched-guise technique test, investigates whether stereotypes (i.e., social categorizations) shape language attitudes of speakers from the Missong village in the Lower Fungom area in rural North-West Cameroon, which is known to be a context of small-scale multilingualism. The study is based on data collected from both interviews and MGT. Semi-structured interviews were made using an ethnographically-informed questionnaire developed to capture information about respondents' social affiliations and motivations for being multilingual. The matched-guise test sought to explore the evaluation reactions of listeners towards local languages, taking into consideration linguistic ideologies. Out of the 77 multilingual individuals from Missong interviewed, 31 (aged 23-92) were tested on their language attitudes using a culturally-adapted MGT test. Data were analyzed and interpreted on three axes: linguistic similarity, geographical proximity, and sociological factors. The findings of the study provide results about the language attitudes of Missong speakers and deal with some significant methodological insights. For the former, unlike what is found in the literature, the main factors shaping Missong speakers' language attitudes are not stereotypical categorizations, but rather considerations of relational qualities. As for the latter, the inclusion of relational traits in the MGT captures locally salient features, calling for a deeper problematization of how to design MGT tests when targeting contexts of small-scale multilingualism. The study first represents one of the very few attempts to adapt the MGT to a small-scale multilingual context. Secondly, it shows how attitude judgments may not necessarily be rooted in social stereotypes. The results add to the body of language attitude research and question the validity of existing scholarly discourses on the importance of stereotypes as determining factors in people's language attitudes.

Keywords: Language attitudes, language ideologies, ethnographic questionnaire, matched-guise test, stereotypes, small-scale multilingualism.

Introduction

This study examines the language attitudes of the Missong people living in the Lower Fungom area (henceforth LF), in the North-West Region of Cameroon. LF is linguistically highly diverse, with high rates of multilingualism (Di Carlo, 2015; Esene Agwara 2013, 2020), and is known to be an area of small-scale multilingualism (Di Carlo, Good and

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Ojong Diba 2019, Lüpke, 2016b). Small-scale multilingualism contexts are often described as non-polyglossic, non-hierarchical, non-prestige-based, and usually found in rural contexts (see, e.g., François 2012, Cobbinah, 2020; Lüpke, 2016b for similar multilingual situations in Lower Casamance in Senegal). Such a characterization would seem to instantiate contexts escaping "classical" understandings of multilingual contexts (for Africa see, e.g. Myers-Scotton, 1993a; Myers-Scotton, 1993b; Juillard, 2005; Kamwangamalu, 2012; Abdulaziz, 1972), but the still relatively few studies devoted to such contexts do not currently allow the clarification of how different they are from better-known multilingual contexts like, e.g., the world's urbanized areas (for Africa, see e.g. McLaughlin, 2009).

One of the most intriguing aspects of multilingualism seen from the point of view of the individual speakers is what drives them to select one or the other language in interaction. To answer this question, scholars have based their analyses on observed language behaviors (like Myers-Scotton, 1993a) and on data elicited from speakers (e.g. Kashoki, 1982). The latter method includes two main approaches: the "direct approach"—mostly pivoting on speakers' self-reports—and the "indirect approach". One of the tools that best exemplifies the latter is the matched-guise technique test (henceforth MGT).

MGT was developed in Western settings in the 1960s (first applied in Canada by Lambert, Hudson, Gardner & Fillenbaum 1960) to test the evaluation reactions of listeners to particular languages, language varieties, and accents. This technique stems from the assumption that listeners' evaluations are the product of subconscious judgments, as hearing a particular language or accent triggers a set of traits that the group of speakers of that language has in mind about the speaker as a result of his/her experience of that population and the metapragmatic knowledge of dealing with that population. The main factors considered in MGT studies are connected with status/prestige and solidarity / social attractiveness traits stereotypically attributed by people to the various speaker populations.

Studies like Giles (1970) on the language attitudes of secondary school students towards South Wales and South West England accents, Hugyen and Vaughan (1983) on a range of speech styles of British, Dutch, Maori, and Pakeha speakers, or even the foundational work by Lambert et al. (1960) on attitudes toward English and French in Canada show that speakers who are perceived as having high and powerful speech styles are stereotyped on status-related traits defined, for instance, by high education and socioeconomic standards. By contrast, the low speech varieties are usually stereotyped on the social attractiveness dimensions such as sense of humour, warmth, and entertainment (Hewstone & Giles, 1997; Mgbo-Elue, 1989; Obiols, 2002; Ryan, Hewstone and Giles, 1984). The promotion of such distinctions is caused by the roles assigned to certain languages.

One key realization that lies at the root of the present article is that the contexts in which MGT has been applied exemplify sociolinguistic situations dominated by what Di Carlo et al. (2019) have termed di- or poly-glossia scales, i.e. linguistic spaces in which multiple languages are used by members of the speech community and are conceived of as being to some extent compartmentalized in their various functions and values of reference. In these contexts, roughly speaking, each language can be associated with a given social sphere: since the various spheres composing the sociolinguistic life of the speech community (e.g., ritual, education, administration, kinship relations, etc.) may be

ranked in a prestige hierarchy (see Di Carlo et al. 2019§2.3; see also Wolff 2016: esp. 228-231), so the "corresponding" language will also be ranked in these terms.

Recent research has clarified that this type of language ideological matrix while featuring massively in the literature, is far from being universal in contexts of widespread individual multilingualism (Di Carlo 2018, Di Carlo et al. 2020, Luepke 2016, Cobbinah et al. 2017, François 2012, Epps 2018, Singer and Vaughan 2018). Matrixes that differ from the ideological construct of language compartmentalization and hierarchization have been called in different ways and, for the sake of convenience, will be referred to here, via the most neutral term, i.e. "small-scale multilingualism".[1] If small-scale multilingual contexts are characterized by ideological underpinnings escaping those in which MGT was rooted and applied, can MGT still be applied in small-scale multilingualism? If so, will any specific adaptations be necessary? What kind of results would one obtain? The present article, stemming from field-based research in the context of small-scale multilingualism in rural Cameroon, sets out to answer these questions.

In this article, I will review the approaches used by scholars to explore language attitudes and argue for an integrated approach (§2). Then, I will discuss the role of stereotypes in language attitudes (§3) as well as expose stereotypes and the small-scale multilingual context, calling on the need for context-specific description (§4). The research context and methods are presented in (§5). In §6, I elaborate on the findings and discussions. Finally, a conclusion is given in §7.

Methodological approaches to studies on language attitudes

"The feelings people have about their language or the language(s) of others" (Crystal, 2003, p. 256) have been treated in three main ways (Garett, 2010) since the first studies starting with the work of Lambert et al in the 1960s: namely, the societal treatment approach, the direct approach, and the indirect approach. I deal with each of these in the following of this section.

The Societal Treatment Approach

The societal treatment approach, also known as the content analysis approach infers the overt behavior of participants under natural conditions through observations and ethnographic studies. For instance, Schmied (1999) inferred the language attitudes of Africans towards English through letters written to the editor in African newspapers. This approach has minimally been utilized in general language attitude studies because it falls short of predicting other behavior in the social environment (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970, p. 138; McKenzie, 2010, p. 41). Despite its shortcomings, content analysis is considered more useful in complementing the mainstream approaches.

The direct approach

The direct approach falls under the mentalist perspective (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970) and has been used by many researchers studying language attitudes. This approach considers two key elements: the stimulus and the response triggered by the stimulus (Fasold, 1984, p. 147). In this case, the stimulus points to the questionnaire, and the responses are self-reported. The questions posed using the direct approach target the beliefs and feelings of the language users. This measure was said to be the most sought-after technique in gathering attitude data (Agheyisi and Fishman, 1970, p. 144) before the

popularity of the MGT. Some early works on language attitude studies solely employed questioning through interviews or written questionnaires usually in closed question format or scale-weighted measures (see for instance Gal's, (1979) language attitude study of Oberwart, Austrians towards German and Hungarian).

However, studying language attitudes through the direct method is not without pitfalls. First, the way of formulating questions may structurally influence the responses one gets. Some of the problems include: asking hypothetical questions, slanted questions, multiple questions, leading questions, and loaded questions (see Garett, 2010 for details). Second, the participants play a key role during the data collection process. Some of the problems encountered include the "social desirability bias"—the responses are shaped by what the participants think is socially appropriate and desirable—and the "acquiescence bias"—constructed based on responding in ways they think are satisfactory to the interviewer (Garett, 2010). Moreover, these participants hardly go beyond the question item and are not ready to give strong negative responses (McKenzie, 2010). Finally, participants may be unaware of their language attitudes and the values that go along with them or may be aware, but unwilling to disclose them for the sake of prestige. To bypass these weaknesses, another approach from a mentalist point of view was developed known as the matched-guise techniques.

The indirect approach

The indirect approach, sometimes referred to as the speaker evaluation paradigm, deals with eliciting language attitudes indirectly thanks to a tool developed by Lambert et al (1960) called the MGT. The process takes into account bilingual speaker(s), a short and context-free text, fillers, and bilingual listeners. The MGT methodology requires that speakers are audiotaped reading a neutral passage in two or more guises that could represent whole languages, language varieties, and accents. The listeners are made to listen to the tapes, with the voice quality being the only cue and all other prosodic and extraneous features remain neutral. The listeners were asked to rate the speakers as well as the fillers or distracters on 14 traits along with status and social attractiveness dimensions, based on a six-point rating scale. One should note equally that there are variations in the number of traits across authors (See Garett, 2010). The MGT has been praised for tapping into unconscious and private language attitudes, which the direct approach cannot achieve. Its enormous success motivated numerous studies to test this tool in different contexts across the world (Cargile, Giles, Ryan & Bradac 1994; De-Klerk & Bosch, 1995; Dragojecic & Gilles, 2014; Ihemere, 2006; Mc Kenzie, 2010; Mgbo-Elue, 1987).

However, some problems can be identified in using the MGT approach, too. I summarize the points raised in the literature (see Garett 2010, p. 57-59) and demonstrate how such criticisms were remedied in the later part of this work.

1) Listening to the tapes repeatedly may render the text more salient causing the speakers to pay attention to the content of the text itself rather than the language or variety as a whole.
2) The listeners may tend to judge the grammaticality of the passage, especially in cases of non-standard speech rather than the stimuli it is intended for.
3) The respondents may fail to match the voice to the corresponding area the language is spoken.

4) The erasure of the prosodic and paralinguistic elements that normally accompany certain languages or language varieties may defeat the purpose of the bilingual representing the languages or varieties in their authentic form.
5) Rewording the passage into several speech recordings per the targeted number of language varieties or languages may prove difficult hence, accuracy may not be achieved.
6) The style authenticity counts as one of the problems with using the MGT. By reading aloud, the speaker may produce different prosodic and segmental phonological features such as stress patterns and pauses that may not be present in spontaneous speech.
7) The question about the neutrality of the text presents a problem in the study of language attitudes to the issue of validity of results. Listeners and readers may condition their interpretations of the text as per their cognitive schemes (Mc Kenzie, 2010).

Given the strengths and weaknesses exposed above, no method is sufficient enough for solid analysis and interpretation. In this study, I substantiate the methodological approach and findings on language attitudes thanks to the adapted MGT with ancillary data from the ethnographic questionnaire and sociocultural and oral histories. Notwithstanding its shortcomings, MGT may offer valuable insights into people's language ideologies and attitudes especially when they are seen in tandem with data collected following the direct approach and self-report.

The role of stereotypes in language attitude research

The traits associated with the social categories people are split into are referred to as stereotypes (Garett, 2010, p. 32). Fishman (1956, p. 28) has advanced that "stereotyping is one attempt to finding answers to questions concerning the 'why' of certain individuals and group attitudes towards other individuals and groups". Some researchers have stressed that stereotypes help reduce the complexity of incoming information about social groups, increase the rapid identification of stimuli, and serve for guiding and predicting linguistic behaviour (Hassan, Shah, Sarwar, & Alam, 2011, p. 4486; Hewstone & Giles, 1997, p. 271).

Stereotyping is a process of creation of identities that is tightly linked with what sociologists Brubaker and Cooper (2000) termed "categorical identification". In their terminology, "categorical" models of identity are those through which "one may identify oneself (or another person) by membership in a class of persons sharing some categorical attribute (such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:15). In this view, categorical is opposed to relational identity, which involves locating individuals within a web of relationships (e.g. within a kin group). In these cases, one's identity will be much more context-dependent: the same person may be mother, daughter, wife, or sister, and also cover many other roles that, depending on the specific cultural milieu, may or may not be sanctioned also at the level of linguistic practices.

So, despite the role of stereotypes in explaining linguistic behaviours, its core formation is heavily rooted in categorical models of identification, but the centrality of categorical identities has been questioned in contexts of small scale-multilingualism (Di Carlo, Good, Ojong, 2019; Di Carlo, Esene Agwara, Ojong, forthcoming; Luepke, 2018).

They suggest that categorical models be complemented by (if not ancillary to) relational models. Studies have shown, for example, that while the use of English can be connected with stereotypes of authority and prestige—i.e. categorical identities—local languages are associated with village affiliations—i.e. relational identities (Di Carlo, Esene Agwara, Ojong, forthcoming)—devoid of any stereotypical (i.e. categorical) traits.

On this basis—and following McKenzie's recommendation that "language attitude researchers should … not suppose that the same set of traits will be salient for different populations" (McKenzie, 2010, p. 50)—our main challenge was to try and adapt our MGT to test the salience of both categorical and relational identity traits for people who, according to recent studies, one would assume to rely more on relational than on categorical features for identity-making purposes.

Lower Fungom: stereotypes and small-scale multilingualism

The small-scale multilingualism context in the Lower Fungom region of Cameroon identified in recent literature (Di Carlo, 2018; Lüpke 2016) counts 13 societies inhabited by approximately 10000 inhabitants as a whole (Good et al, 2011, p. 105) in which 8 different languages are spoken (Di Carlo, 2016, 2018, Di Carlo and Good, 2020).[1] It should be noted that regardless of the identification that linguists make, i.e. counting 8 separate languages, the locals claim to speak different languages even when they agree that some of the codes rhyme. They believe that each village has its talk, and as such, local language ideologies stress one-to-one correspondence between "language" and village (see also Di Carlo, Esene Agwara, and Ojong, forthcoming; Ojong, 2020).

Lower Fungom (henceforth LF) is considered a context of small-scale multilingualism since it matches the two main characteristics of such contexts:

1. The linguistic repertoires of most speakers are dominated by many local languages and codes, on top of possible lingua franca and other languages of wider diffusion.
2. Communicative practices are neither essentially characterized by specific social domains nor conditioned by notions of prestige (see Lüpke 2016 for an overview of such contexts from different parts of the world).

For instance, the studies carried out so far in the LF area (Esene Agwara, 2013, Di Carlo, 2018, and Di Carlo, Good, and Ojong 2019) seem to portray an egalitarian multilingual situation, whereby no one language appears to dominate another. We instead notice communicative practices that show the use of multiple languages in the everyday lives of the people, without domain-related restrictions. Lack of power and prestige relationships between languages promotes a non-polyglossic and non-hierarchical form of multilingualism in LF. The outcome of the small-scale multilingual setting depicts members who report very high rates of multilingualism (see Figures 1 and 2).

Thus far, contexts of small-scale multilingualism have been identified in areas that are found in post-colonial countries (e.g. Senegal, Cameroon) or in settings that are otherwise quite different from Western or urbanized ones (e.g. Vanuatu, aboriginal Australia). Limiting our attention to a post-colonial context such as Cameroon in Central-

[1] The language associated with the village of Buu is now considered a separate language although no studies specific to it have been done so far (cf. Good *et al*. 2011 and Di Carlo 2018)

West Africa, the language policy established by state institutions had English and French become the two official languages of the country, which were assigned to all formal domains (Echu, 2004), while the local codes were implicitly meant only for informal communication. This policy fostered the development of different sets of language ideologies: e.g. the University of Buea uses English as the official language of instruction while the University of Yaounde uses French. In the Buea markets, Cameroonian Pidgin English is widely spoken.

Admittedly, the particular situation of small-scale multilingualism typical in non-Western contexts dwells more on "different sociocultural motivations for multilingualism" (Lüpke, 2016, p. 41) that exclude codes that bring about hierarchical structures and Western ideas of nation-states and standard language ideologies" (Lüpke, 2016). Observable data as well as interviews gathered from multilinguals in the LF or the Casamance region indicate one interesting phenomenon regarding motivations for speaking one code or several LF codes that is based on the non-compartmentalization of codes (see Di Carlo 2018, Di Carlo *et al*. 2020, Luepke 2016, Cobbinah *et al*. 2017). Speakers choose to speak a certain local code(s) not because of the external notion of prestige or the implied domain for which it is meant, but because of the need to affiliate with a given group (Di Carlo, Good, and Ojong, 2019; Di Carlo and Good, 2020; Lüpke, 2016). Di Carlo and Good (2014) refer to this kind of ideology as indexical or relational (see Di Carlo, Esene Agwara, and Ojong, forthcoming). The indexical or relational orientation is opposed to a categorical or essentialist ideology that calls up features that are associated with speakers of particular codes.

In light of this description of small-scale multilingual contexts, specifically that of LF, we quickly realized that there were challenges to adopting the MGT, a tool that was developed through the lens of Western realities. For one thing, the representation of the social categorizations should consider the speaker's local identities that are void of categorical models of identification indicated through—the absence of power structures or language hierarchies among local codes as well as populations that are associated with an imagined 'essence' that carry stereotypes that do not fit in the ideologies underpinning small-scale multilingual contexts. This study aims to identify the language attitudes of speakers of a language of LF by including the local small-scale multilingualism dynamics.

Research context and methods

Research context

This article is focused on speakers of the Missong variety of Mungbam [mij]. Missong is a village with a population of about 600 perched on a steep hill in the northern part of Lower Fungom, a rural area of about 240 square km in size, lying at the northernmost margin of the Cameroonian Grassfields (see Fig. 1).[2] It is important to keep in mind that, irrespective of linguists' analyses of Missong as a variety of Mungbam (however questioned in Good *et al*, 2011; Lovegren 2013), locals consider it as being a "language" of its own (see, e.g., Di Carlo 2016, 2018; Esene Agwara 2013).

[2] The Grassfields have long been known as one of the hotspots of linguistic diversity in sub-Saharan Africa (Watters 2003) and Lower Fungom represents an extreme of such regional tendencies.

"Small-scale multilingualism" is a term first introduced by Friederike Lüpke (see, e.g., Lüpke 2016). The same kind of phenomena has been referred to differently by other authors, including traditional multilingualism (Di Carlo 2015), endogenous multilingualism (Di Carlo *et al*. 2019), organic multilingualism (Beyer & Schreiber 2017), and indigenous multilingualism (e.g. Vaughan & Singer 2018). None of these terms are without problems, which is likely why a single term has yet to take hold.

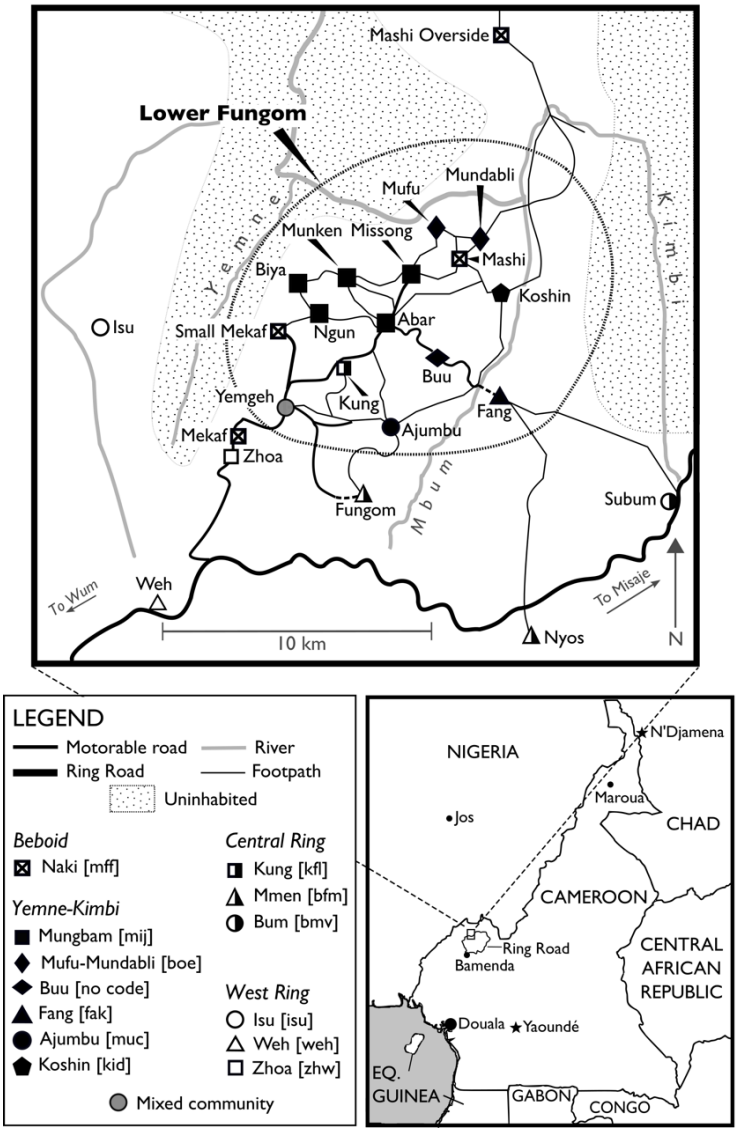


Figure 1: Language map of Lower Fungom in its regional context. From Di Carlo, Esene Agwara, and Ojong Diba: 2020.

Research Methods

Goals and Constraints

My first goal is to explore the language attitudes of LF people via an indirect approach in this article. My second goal is to test the validity of MGT in a research context characterized by a language ideology in which categorical and relational traits coexist.

In a research context such as LF, where most people speak no less than two local languages plus Cameroonian Pidgin English, the MGT risks becoming too complex, hence, "the time requirements of the listeners and the potentially confounding effects of listener-fatigue" (Mc Kenzie, 2010, p. 50). Thus, the selection of targeted languages making four codes was achieved, where three of them, (i.e. Missong, Munken, and Ngun) fall within a language cluster and one (i.e. Mashi) is a separate language. Additionally, as we have seen in sections 3 and 4, the salience of stereotypes in this setting is to be questioned: for this reason, relational and categorical qualities were included in the MGT yielding a total of 7 relational qualities and 6 categorical qualities used for testing (see Table 2). This is the key decision that allows me to achieve both goals: meaningful and relevant data and, methodological innovation.

Selection of languages

Following the constraint mentioned in the previous paragraph above, I opted for the following targeted codes (Missong (see 5.1.1), Munken, Ngun, and Mashi, and provide a background description based on a map and table representations along the lines of geographical proximity, of speaker populations.

Table 1. A summary of the similarities and differences between Missong, Munken, Ngun, and Mashi

	Missong	Munken	Ngun	Mashi
Population	500	600	150-200	300-400
Degree of linguistic similarity	Mungbam variety	Mungbam variety	Mungbam variety	Separate language
Degree of geographical proximity	-	50 minutes	110 minutes	45 minutes
Settlement history	More recent new comers	New comers	First comers	Antagonistic new comers
Degree of cultural similarity (adapted from Di Caro 2011)	100	60	60	40

As a side note, the selection of languages imposed a principled procedure for sampling research participants. These were first and foremost selected on a residential basis—that is, living in Missong—together with their multilingual competencies in the targeted

codes. I tried as much as possible to select participants following ethnographic information that included age, gender, and quarter.

Sample description

The ethnographic questionnaire is used here as a first step in selecting potential participants for the MGT. This instrument was designed in collaboration with Pierpaolo Di Carlo (e.g. Di Carlo 2015) and Angela Nsen Tem (e.g. Mba and Nsen Tem 2020, see also Esene Agwara 2013, 2020). The questionnaire data was used to guide me in the selection of participants. The questionnaire allowed me not only to have data about people's self-reported repertoire, but also their relations, and that the latter, too, were relevant for my selection.

The ethnographic questionnaire brought to light variables such as gender, age village, etc., but more importantly, "quarter" where it has been considered at a degree of detail higher than that of the village, which in most villages coincides with village-internal exogamous and residential units (see Di Carlo, 2011, p. 72). It is useful to consider this variable in our study, firstly for practical reasons—listeners may easily identify the guises that come from the same quarter as them. For the test, the listeners were evenly distributed representing different quarters and families of the Missong area. 40% came from the Bidzumbi quarter, 44% from the Bikwom quarter, 20% from Biandzem, and 6% from Abiami.

Research Participants

Participants were initially 33 in number and were finally reduced to 31 n (women = 14 (45%) and (men = 17 (55%)) Missong residents due to the same individual peculiarities: two participants were excluded due to numerous problems associated with their responses (for instance, they found the exercise out of place, and also, failed to correctly identify the codes they were requested to listen to). Participants ranged in age from 23 to 92 and averaged 51.9 years old (SD = 17.0). However, the majority of participants were below the age of 55 because of the health problems (e.g., hearing) faced by some of the elderly population.

The voice stimuli

For the test, 5 female speakers produced 8 stimulus voices i.e., 4 guises produced by the main multilingual speaker and 4 stimuli produced by multilingual distracters). After several rehearsals, they were recorded rewording a neutral story captured in six short sentences in the targeted codes about farming practices. The text reads as follows:

> *If we do not go to the farms what do we feed ourselves and our children with? In the early hours of the morning, we wake up by the crows of the cock. We quickly brush our mouths with chewing sticks and put on farm clothes. We till the soil shallow or deep depending on the crops we intend planting, and bury the seeds underneath. After several months, we harvest them, eat some, and trade the rest on market days. The income is used to pay school fees and savings in a group association.*

The recordings were rendered at a moderate pace throughout and emotionally flat. The main speaker, a Missong by origin, recorded the Missong, Munken, Ngun, and Mashi guises. The second speaker, who is originally from a different village (Abar) but fully proficient in Missong, played the role of a distracter and reworded the text in Missong and Munken. The third speaker, who is from Ngun, interpreted the text in Ngun. Finally,

the fourth speaker, who is from Mashi, recorded the Mashi guise. All 8 recordings were relatively of the same length ranging between 34 to 37 seconds.

Due to the number of guises (8) considered for this study, and after a pilot study, a more realistic approach ensuring valid results necessitated that I create eight tapes, with each tape containing one voice stimulus ordered as follows: Missong guise, Missong distracter, Munken guise, Munken distracter, Ngun guise, Ngun distracter. Precautions were taken to eliminate room for fatigue and the production of unreliable data in general. The need for including distracters and ordering as such was to reduce the risk that sharp listeners would recognize the main guise as being the same speaker. 5.2.6 Pilot study and test items

During the pilot study, the test items were initially 22 in number, which was then reduced to 13 as the exercise lasted beyond the limits of concentration.[3] Ambiguous qualities (e.g., competence, attractiveness) were taken out of the list of traits, aiming for those that reflected the speakers' ideologies (see section 4).

I represent two dimensions here: categorical or status-related qualities and non-categorical or relational qualities. The categorical qualities were informed by existing literature (Garett, 2010; Ihemere, 2006; Ryan *et al*, 1960). The following categorical features were targeted: being tall, good-looking, intelligent, proud, rich, and hardworking. In connection to relational features, I explored the possibility of using traits describing personal qualities that implied interpersonal or group-based relations. To make an example, the quality "friendly" necessarily means that one tends to be accommodating and careful to others as one cannot be friendly if alone (whereas one can be tall, intelligent, proud, or rich even if alone). The relational qualities are presented in Table 1 below and were presented to the respondents as such. As for the semantic rating scales, respondents responded to whether they strongly agree (SA), slightly agree (SLA), remain neutral (N), slightly disagree (SLD), and strongly agree (SD) with the targeted traits.

Table 2. Matched guise trait dimensions on non-categorical or relational items

Non-categorical or Relational traits	Additional meaning
Friendly	One who accommodates and careful to others
Helpful	Offering assistance to others
Protective	Would not permit someone hurt another
Trustworthy	Someone reliable, honest and truthful
Selfish	Refusing to share something with others
Wicked	Someone who aims at personal benefit through deceiving others
Hypocritical	Speaking evil behind someone's back

The procedure

The listeners were informed that the test would be concerned with how people evaluate others based on a list of traits on limited information. Because of the low literacy levels of the participants, rating the guises on an answer booklet was far from ideal. This contrasts

[3] A great majority of studies were based on an average of 10 to 13 test items (Brown, Gilees, & Thakerar, 1985, p. 211; Dragojevic & Giles, 2014, p.100; Lynskey, Ward, & Fletcher, 1991, p. 118).

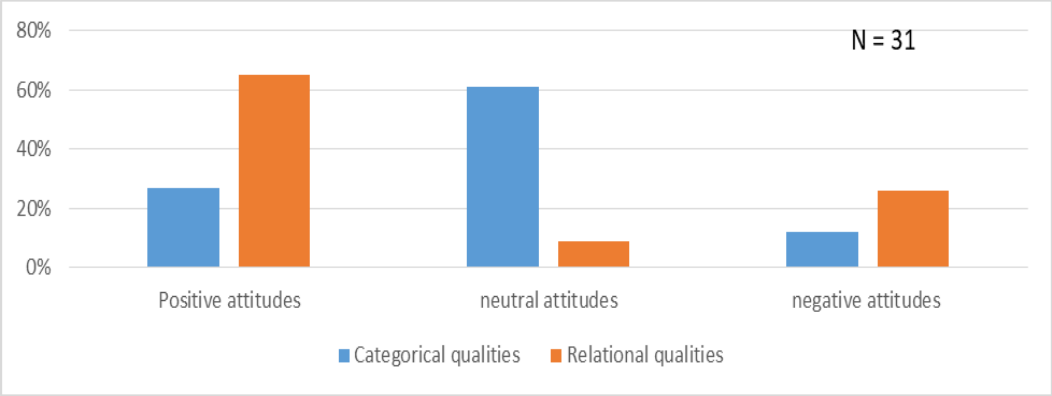
with the numerous studies on language attitudes where test samples have attained college (Lambert *et al*, 1960) or university education (Ladegaard, 1998; McKenzie, 2010). The test was carried out orally either in their homes or near their homes. This was done in quiet locations, free from interventions from family members and friends. After recording their consent, and recording with the digital recorder, each tape was played twice: they were to first identify the code they heard, and then rate the guise on 6 status traits, and in the second session on 7 relational traits on a five-point scale. The medium of communication was the Cameroonian Pidgin English which all members were quite fluent in.

Due to the few numbers of participants (N =31), the data does not undergo the rigorous quantitative approach that other studies with larger sample sizes utilize (Dragojevic & Giles, 2014, p. 98; Dragojevic & Gasiorek, 2017, p. 283; De Klerk and Bosch, 1995, p. 30). Moreover, the goal in utilizing this particular sample is not to attain statistical significance. Instead, it is to serve as a first step in analyzing an otherwise under-researched context by using some basic statistics

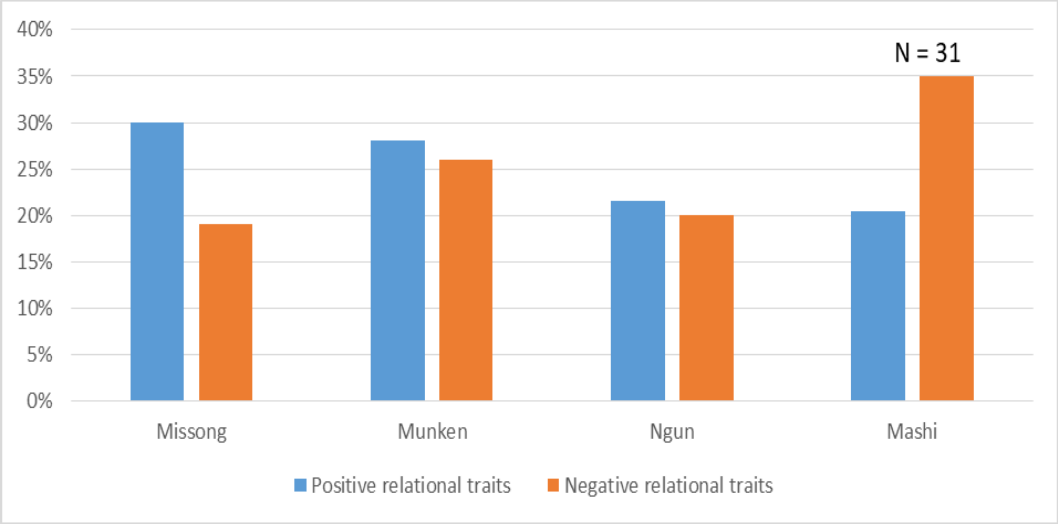
Findings and discussions

Findings about the language attitudes of Missong people

The study indicates that the Missong people generally hold positive attitudes (65%) toward themselves and others when relational items are targeted, and more neutral attitudes (61%) when categorical items are involved (see graph 1). Overall, Missong in-group members judge themselves more favorably than their out-group counterparts. In Graph 2, on positive relational qualities, while Missong is the most rated (30%), Munken (28%) narrowly follows. Mashi comes in third place (21.5%) and Ngun (20.5%) is the least favored. On negative relational qualities, Mashi out-group members are highly downgraded (35%), followed by Munken (26%), then Ngun (20%), and finally by Missong (19%). So, while Mashi are out rightly judged on negative traits, they merely dominate Ngun on positive traits.



Graph 1: General language attitudes of Missong members by categorical and relational items



Graph 2: Positive and negative language attitudes of Missong people across targeted codes

In general, results indicate that contrary to what one would expect from existing literature on MGT, non-prestigious codes are not positively associated with stereotypes of socially attractive qualities. In addition, categorical qualities reveal more neutral responses, suggestive of the idea that these qualities may appear to be less salient to the Missong people. In contrast, the results on relational qualities yield convincing evidence that, in Missong, the language attitudes are more linked to relational models of identification, and this is suggestive of a situation in which attitudes tend to be specific to individuals and contexts, rather than being inscribed in the metapragmatic knowledge of an entire speech community.

When we match the total number of responses of all the targeted codes across all the non-categorical qualities we notice that the positive items (friendly, helpful, protective, and trustworthy) are judged more favorably (77%) and the negative qualities (23%), such as being selfish, wicked and hypocritical are downgraded. For the positive traits, the image of being friendly (28%) and trustworthy (27%) are called up the most whenever listeners perceive the targeted codes and, for the negative traits, the quality of being hypocritical (36%) and selfish (33%) take the lead. When response rates correlate with individual questions, the quality of being hardworking emerges with a distinct pattern. While the neutral option was highly selected on the qualities of being tall (19%), good-looking (17%), rich (22%), proud (19%), and intelligent (18%), there was a deviation on the quality of being hardworking with 5% of neutral responses. Perceiving all the targeted codes being used by the listeners' calls up the image of hard work (86%).

On the response rate per each test item across individual codes

-Recall that the perception of all targeted codes calls up more or less neutral images on the categorical dimension. However, the quality of being tall takes on a different dimension. Perceiving the Ngun code calls up the image of being tall the most. It is not coincidental that of 31 listeners, 10 associate the quality of being tall with Ngun as I discuss in the next section.

-Mashi is very much rated (47%) on the image of being proud when compared to the other codes.
-Ngun was upgraded greatly on the quality of being protective (30%) and is the least favored on the image of being friendly (21%). Mashi was downgraded on this quality (17%).
-The image of being wicked is mainly associated with the Mashi guise (47%) and Missong the least (13%).

The Missong members upgraded the Missong speakers particularly in terms of being friendly and helpful (non-categorical traits). These traits received the most favorable responses. Aside from kin relations, friendship happens to be one of the reported reasons why people claim high rates of multilingualism (see Di Carlo, 2015, Esene Agwara, forthcoming). Evaluational reactions toward the quality of being friendly may not be incidental. Missong speakers (Esene Agwara, in prep) report that they have numerous friends in Missong and their proximal environments (see section 5.2.1). The fact that Ngun is furthest from Missong may indeed make language contact difficult. The findings show that Ngun is the least favored on the item of being friendly. Speakers represent through their responses what they experience daily—meeting and sharing with friends from the same area.

There is equally convincing evidence that Ngun is the only code to be highly attributed to the image of being tall despite that this categorical quality has been identified to be associated with speakers of a prestigious variety, i.e., English (Garett, 2010). 10 out of 31 listeners associate this image with Ngun. This, however, is not pinned down to stereotypes as ethnographic, historical, and participant observations account for this result. I observed that in a relatively small village (ca. 150) two (i.e., Asaweh and Bendine) out of four village quarters in Ngun had physically tall people of about 1.8 meters, not excluding women. Drawing a connection with the ethnographic data gathered during the interviews, I found out that listeners who identify Ngun with tallness have blood relatives in the Bendine and Asaweh quarters of the Ngun village. One could assume that the image of being protective as a non-categorical feature linked to Ngun may also indirectly be connected to being tall. Oral accounts also indicate that Missong people as well as other LF people all agree to the successful ring fights organized in the past using sticks. Winning such fights was facilitated due to the tall nature of the Ngun people. In addition, Di Carlo (2011) identifies Ngun as the 'first comers' to occupy the LF area. Their tallness in stature, their physical victories, and being the first settlers in the LF area may cause listeners to upgrade Ngun on the image of being protective since they might be seen as people who can provide some kind of protection from outsiders.

The findings also reveal that Mashi is downgraded on the positive images (e.g. helpful, friendly) and upgraded on negative qualities (e.g. wicked, proud). A starting point for such a judgment is on the status of Mashi. Mashi is the only language singled out as different from the targeted code. It may appear to be that the degree of linguistic similarity gives more salience for in-group members (Missong) to judge themselves more positively together with speakers of other varieties of Mungbam (i.e., Munken and Ngun), and downgrade speakers who are perceived as linguistically different (i.e. Mashi).

More so, historical and sociological factors seem to account for this negative judgment. Their sporadic market appearances are viewed as a place for high socialization in rural contexts (see Connell, 2009) and their recognized inability to speak other LF codes except for a handful may influence negative evaluations. Historical accounts state that the Mashi were the most recent comers into LF (Di Carlo 2011) known for beheading other LF people who trespassed in their territory probably for their status as 'newcomers'. Ascertaining themselves in a newly settled LF area was projected through violent ways. They have been in recent conflicts over land and poor farming methods with Missong whom they share physical boundaries. These past, as well as relatively new experiences, may certainly shape the way listeners evaluate the targeted speakers.

Findings about the methodological choice

My field experience regarding the data-gathering methodology for such a rich, yet lesser-known context suggests that a multi-dimensional and flexible approach should be undertaken when researching language attitudes. One of the important discoveries revolved around the technicalities of testing language attitudes. The low literacy levels required other measures, including oral testing, which happens to be a far-fetched application to mainstream language attitude studies. In addition, the number of codes needed to be reduced to stay within human capabilities. Testing all the codes of LF via the indirect method could prove nothing short of unreliability.

Another aspect I paid particular attention to was the nature of the test items and the categories targeted for interpretation. Some ways of achieving this were through ethnographic inquiries, observations, and information about oral histories. The whole idea was aimed at adapting the language attitude instrument to observed socio-cultural behaviours. I wanted to see whether the choice I made concerning including relational traits in addition to categorical traits was useful and meaningful.

The findings showed that listeners take more time to respond to categorical features than the non-categorical traits despite that the latter traits outnumber those listed in the former (see Table 2). Listeners take an average of 14.2 minutes to respond to categorical qualities and 10.9 to relational qualities (see De Klerk and Bosch, 1995 on the ease in response item). Moreover, the qualities of being tall, good-looking, and rich took far more time to rate than the other qualities such as the quality of being hard-working. Respondents' initial reactions to these items included some noticeable silence, sometimes laughter, and, some other times, comments and questions were posed. The participants reflected a greater difficulty in responding to items that seemed not to appeal to their cultural realities. Listeners greatly associate the image of hard work with the targeted codes based on their way of life. The LF people are known to rely on farms, for basic survival as occupational diversity is lacking. Working on the farms requires not only physical energy as they rely solely on traditional methods, but also on committing daily over 12 months to go through activities such as the clearing of grass, tilling, planting, weeding, and harvesting. Therefore, one can assume that more positive judgments can easily be realized when the categorical qualities are more reflective of the lifestyle of the people and more neutral responses are provided on the categorical qualities—like being rich or good-looking—that are not directly associated with their way of life.

I also found out that when the total number of responses was matched against all of the categorical and relational qualities per rating scale, there was a higher salience in relational rather than categorical qualities as captured in the rating scales. In line with the

categorical qualities, the results indicate that the 'N' semantic field was the most sought option (61%), followed by the 'SA' (27%), and the least options were for the 'SLA' (5%), 'SLD', (4%) and 'SD' (3%). By contrast, the listeners rated the relational qualities by choosing the 'SA' mainly (46%), then 'SD' (20%), followed by the 'SLA' option (19%), the 'N' (9%) and lastly 'SLD' (6%). Therefore, the language attitudes towards relational qualities are generally positive, and neutral for categorical qualities. This, too, is telling of the higher degree of salience of relational qualities as compared to the categorical qualities.

The findings at hand suggest, in general, that what drives language attitudes in Missong (and most likely throughout LF) dwells heavily on speakers' sociocultural realities rather than on some stereotypical categorizations.

Concluding remarks

This study systematically explored the language attitudes of 31 Missong participants from a whole of 77 Missong multilingual. The results tend to indicate that language attitudes inferred from a list of 13 traits grouped into features indexing categorical and non-categorical identities are free of stereotypical judgments. This finding is further expatiated in the ratings listeners' accord to linguistic codes through the voice quality. I have found out that the local language ideologies and sociological and historical factors are important variables associated with the constructions of deep-rooted language attitudes. The evaluation reactions towards the different codes, i.e., Missong, Munken, Ngun, and Mashi are shaped by the experiences that people undergo that carry with them deep local ideologies.

The findings of this study suggest that there is certainly an absence of the categorical identities translated through the test items on the status dimensions associated with the LF codes. The perceptions of local codes do not call up the images of being intelligent, rich, or good-looking which are all representations of an "essence", associated with a group of people assumed or stereotyped as having prestige as with the case of English speakers. Rather, studying language attitudes from a small-scale multilingual context suggests that relational identities translated to non-categorical dimensions and inferred through ethnographic, sociological, and historical knowledge account for language attitudes among multilingual that are void of stereotypes. Social categorizations or stereotyping represents an exciting avenue for further research in the language attitude domain in contexts that can be characterized as small-scale multilingualism

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