

Migration and Multilingualism: The Case of Lower Fungom (LF) Migrants in Souza

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Abstract

For several years now, Souza which is found in the Littoral Region of Cameroon has been host to a large number of Lower Fungom multilingual migrants. Such situations have led to language shift, code-switching, borrowing, code-mixing, and in some cases, language maintenance and language endangerment. These effects of migration are revealed in a range of speech styles that show that the use of multilingual repertoires by different subgroups in migrant communities varies depending on their social networks. Using an ethnographic approach, this research seeks to explore the effects of social networks on the multilingual abilities of Lower Fungom indigenes residing in Souza. The study will inform on some of the causes and consequences of social networks and provide possible solutions to some of the problems that may result from social ties. The study adopts both the qualitative and the quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. A total of twenty-one (21) consultants (6 males and 15 females) were used to collect the relevant data through a sociolinguistic interview guide, questionnaire, observation, and self-recorded interview. Both techniques were given equal priority and the data were collected simultaneously. This design equally enabled us to understand the causes and effects of social ties on a multilingual individual. The Social Network Theory was used to analyse the data. The foundations of this theory are based on the social contacts of individuals with other individuals. The theory stipulates that “social contacts consist of interpersonal ties” of different types of strength and these structural relationships between links can vary from one individual to the other. The study unearths the fact that social networks affect language usage patterns both positively and negatively. It, therefore, concludes that Lower Fungom migrants experience instances of code-switching, code-mixing, and language shift. With these, there is a possibility that the languages of Lower Fungom could experience language shift and be endangered. The study, therefore, recommends that Lower Fungom multilingual migrants in Souza should use more of their indigenous languages so that the languages are maintained and not endangered.

Keywords: migration, multilingualism, social network, repertoire, social ties

1. Introduction

The area Lower Fungom (LF), situated in the Menchum Division of the North West Region of Cameroon, has been described by linguists as one of the most linguistically saturated areas of the Grassfields regions of Cameroon. Research carried out by Good et al., (2011) disclosed that seven languages or small language clusters are spoken in thirteen recognized villages of LF, four of which have been restricted to a single village. In another study carried out by Di Carlo et al., (2020), it is revealed that individual multilingualism in three local languages plus Cameroon Pidgin English dominates the area of Lower Fungom, with a small number who also speak the English language. Di Carlo and Good (2014) revealed that Lower Fungom is an extreme case of linguistic diversity. Their study revealed that Lower Fungom is characterized by different languages and different language varieties which include: Ajumbu, Buu, Fang, Koshin, and Kung, which are grouped as one-village language, while the languages spoken in the other five villages; Abar, Biya, Missong, Munken, and Ngun are seen as “closely related varieties” of Mungbam. Mufu and Mundabli are regarded as varieties of the same language. Apart from Fang and Koshin, all other villages are inhabited by a number lower than one thousand, (Good et al, 2011).

The degree of linguistic diversity found in Lower Fungom as portrayed by previous research, possess a problem in determining the exact number of languages spoken by its inhabitants. To this effect, while a linguist would recognize eight languages as belonging to the population of Lower Fungom, any Lower Fungom indigene would rather recognize thirteen distinct languages. These statistics as stated by Di Carlo et al. (2020), are as opposed to an earlier study carried out by Good et al. (2011) in which it was revealed that seven languages are spoken in the thirteen villages of Lower Fungom. Studies carried out in Lower Fungom have revealed that self-reported multilingualism is very high. It is indicated that an individual language user in LF is capable of speaking at least six dialects or what a linguist will consider as four languages, Di Carlo et al. (2020). This gives the impression that there could be no monolingual speaker in the area of Lower Fungom.

Just like Lower Fungom, many parts of the world, have human beings who use more than one language to communicate with one another. Cameroon is one of such countries which has multilingual speakers as it is made of a plurality of ethnic groups, cultures, and languages. For this reason, it is common for Cameroonians to speak another language besides their mother tongue, the national language, or even the foreign language during their communication. The systematic use of social networks as the basis for analyzing linguistic variation is often linked with James Milroy and Lesley Milroy’s study in Belfast, Northern Ireland (Milroy & Milroy, 1985). These two scholars

found that the patterns of language change they observed correlated in very informative ways with the web of relationships that make up what they referred to as social networks. Their argument was focused on the fact that social networks are as important as macro-social categories like a class for understanding how changes take place and spread within a community or communities. Later on, in 2003, Milroy & Gordon further referred to social networks as “the relationships individuals contract with others through social and geographical space (Milroy & Gordon, 2003).” Social networks group people based on idiosyncratic factors. In simplest terms, they are defined based on who your friends are, who your neighbours are, who you often have dinner or drinks with, and who you work with.

However, ideas about the role of social status and position within a network had appealed to in Linguistics in studies such as Labov’s (1975) early work on ‘Black Vernacular English’. In this study, Labov referred to a “lame” as an individual with weak ties to a network. Even though the view of a network was pioneered by Granovetter (1973), it was not adopted explicitly within linguistics to examine the spread of linguistic variants in a community until the studies of Milroy and Milroy (1985). Their research claimed that networks containing weak ties could facilitate rapid change, while communities with mostly dense networks and strong networks, tend to lead to norm enforcement and permit only slow change, Milroy & Milroy (1985, 1992). Equally, within the field of linguistics, the role of a network was also investigated by Lippi Green (1989). In this study, she examined how network integration correlated with linguistic conservatism in a small German-speaking community in Western Australia. She found that most integrated males, maintained more conservative linguistic variants, supporting the hypothesis that a network composed of dense- strong ties, facilitates norm enforcement rather than change.

The concept of social networks is applicable at both the micro and macro levels. Social networks are at work in communities as large as nation-states. They can equally be applied to intimate social groups such as friendship, family unit, or neighborhood. Since even the smallest networks contain an enormous number of potential connections between actors. Sociolinguists often study only small networks so that the fieldwork can be manageable. Looking at these structures within the social networks, it is important to note that language is at the center of it all. The use of language and social activities as highlighted by Yusuf and Hendrik, (2019) are bound to each other and are inseparable as language is considered a social behaviour or a social activity that reflects social life, social practices, and social identities. For us to effectively understand social networks, we have to bear in mind that it does not only involve the speaker but also, the people with whom the speaker interacts

in his/her day-to-day life. As propounded by Milroy & Milroy (1992), social network relates to the community and interpersonal level of social organization.

2. Review of Related Literature

This part of the study provides conceptual, empirical, and theoretical literature that relates to our study. Language is our primary tool of thought, perception, and expression is at the heart of who we are as individuals and as a community. Perhaps this explains why migrants are sometimes very attached to their language. Languages are constantly changing, sometimes into entirely new varieties. This is a situation that has led to subtle differences in how human beings present themselves to others. Just like fish cannot survive without water, so too an individual or even a community cannot successfully exist without a language. Language is an important factor of human communication because it is a good tool of interaction as the intended message will be conveyed and fully understood. It should be noted that people in several parts of the world are inhabited by different linguistic families and groups. This characteristic of language within a given area or locality also implies that people's social and economic structures are also varied. In Dorian's 1981 work cited in Adams et al. (2012), the diversity of languages leads to the unavoidable concept of multilingualism among the local speakers. For this reason, it is expected that instances of partial and complete language shift will occur and even diglossia may set in at some point in time.

In most multilingual communities, speakers switch among languages or varieties just as monolinguals switch among styles. The fact that speakers select different languages or varieties for use in different situations, is an indication that not all languages or language varieties are equal or seen as equally appropriate or adequate for use in all speech events. Speakers may sometimes code-switch, code-mix, and shift to the languages of their host environment to identify with their host community. This situation may be threatening to the source language(s) of the speaker. The selection of one language over another language or variety displays what may be referred to as "acts of identity," choosing the groups with whom the speaker wishes to identify. There may be, however, some common motivations for such choices in different societies. One of the points to consider in understanding what choices are available to speakers is to gain some idea of what languages and varieties are available to them in a particular social context. Often, each language or variety in a multilingual community serves as a specialized function and is used for particular purposes. This situation is also referred to as "diglossia."

Most countries have been globalizing and it will continue to be. Code-mixing and Code-switching are widespread phenomena in bilingual and multilingual societies, where speakers use their native language (L1) and their second or third language (L2 and L3) in different domains. Different views have been put forward concerning these two terms. However, they utilize the term “code” which was adopted by linguists from the field of communication technology in (Gardner-Chloros, 2009) to refer to “mechanism for the unambiguous transduction of signals between systems (Muysken 2000) has defined code-mixing as “all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence.” (Poplack, 2000) has on the other hand referred to code-switching as “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent.” Judging from these definitions, one could be tempted to associate it with the present condition of Lower Fungom migrants in Souza. The literature reviewed for this study further reveals that, the term “code” as shown by (Gardner-Chloros, 2009) is frequently used by linguists used nowadays by linguists as an umbrella term for languages, dialects, and styles.” The term “switching” on the other hand indicates an alternation between different varieties used by a speaker during a conversation. The former categorization according to Poplack (1980), provides three different types of code switching among which we; tag-switching, inter-sentimental switching, and intra-sentimental switching.

There are different processes involved in code-mixing and code-switching. These processes include insertion, a situation in which a speaker either consciously or unconsciously, inserts material such as lexical items from one language into a structure from the other language. Another process involved is congruent lexicalization. The idea of congruent lexicalization underlies the study of style-shifting and dialect/standard variations. Several reasons have been put forward by scholars as being responsible for code-mixing and code-switching. Grosjean (1982) has suggested that speakers mix two or more languages when they cannot find proper words or expressions or when there is no appropriate translation for the language being used. Interlocutors, situations, messages, attitudes, and emotions are equally factors that favour code-switching and code-mixing. Bhatia & Ritchie (2004) equally noted that other factors such as with whom (that is the participants, their background and relationships), about what (that is the topic and content), and when and where a speech act occurs can push a bilingual and multilingual speaker to make language choices. The description of Bhatia & Ritchie (2004) vividly reflects what is going on among Lower Fungom migrants in communities like Souza.

The network is an increasingly popular word in sociolinguistic research. The word is often used synonymously for “partnership,” “collaboration,” “alliance,” or “group.” However, it is used with a

more specific intention to describe the relationships that exist between groups of individuals or agencies and the resources to which members of such groups facilitate access. The concept of a social network makes the basic assumption that we do not exist in isolation from each other or as free members of individual groups, but rather that we share social networks in which every element as Bergs (2006) has stated, is by some means elementarily linked to other elements in the node. An early examination of social networks by Traves & Milgram (1969), looked at the lengths of the paths between individuals and the question of the probability of any two randomly selected individuals knowing each other, or how many acquaintances might connect them in a chain of people.

Social networks have been considered as a determining factor in language change, language shift, language contact, and language maintenance, (Labov, 2001, De Bot & Stoessel, 2002). One of the most influential studies using the social network approach is the Belfast Study by Milroy (1980). Milroy investigated the social background of the network to find out the relationship between network tightness and the maintenance of the vernacular. The outcome of the finding revealed that “the closer an individual’s network ties are with his local community, the closer his languages approximate to localize vernacular forms.” Her findings equally showed that for language change to be observed, in social network situations, the way an individual speaker relates to the community needs to be taken into consideration. The link between an individual and the community portrays the strength of the social network that exists in that community.

Di Carlo, Good, and Ojong (2019) have used the term multilingualism to refer to “*individual multilingualism*,” a situation in which an individual multilingual, “*is anyone who can communicate in more than one language*” (Li, 2008). Individual multilingualism can either be active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading). Ojong (2019) in her PhD thesis, distinguishes between “*urban*” and “*rural*” multilingualism. In her study, she examines and describes how multilingualism functions in rural settings. To accomplish this, she examines individual rural multilingualism in Africa, though focusing on the indigenes of Lower Fungom in the North West Region of Cameroon. Her work reveals a dissimilarity between what she refers to as “*urban*” and “*rural*” multilingualism. In her view, she notes that a rural environment is characterized by a “*relative lack of demographic pressure and industrial development, where most of the inhabitants are engaged in food production*,” (Ojong, 2019).

Using Lower Fungom as her case study, her research considers the inductive approach which allowed her to “*dig deep*” (Dornyei, 2011) into the lives of her selected participants. Exhausting an ethnographic sociolinguistic guide, a non-participant observation, and self-recorded interviews which

we equally considered as instruments of data collection for this present study, Ojong's (2019) work, using three main consultants who provided data that was necessary for her study. Her results refute the existence of code-switching among Lower Fungom indigenes, (p. 185) and assert the idea of language choice in Lower Fungom. This to an extent may be true given that her study was limited to the area of Lower Fungom. We however state that this situation may be different with Lower Fungom indigenes who have migrated to other parts of Cameroon like Souza where they experience language contact with other languages. Our argument is based on the studies of Milroy (1987a), Bortoni-Ricardo (1985), Lippi Green (1989), and Schooling (1990) who have demonstrated the usefulness of social networks in explaining the systematicity of linguistic variation in different settings.

Given that very few sociolinguistic studies on multilingualism in Africa especially in urban areas have applied the social network frame to investigate the impacts and effects of social networks on the multilingual repertoire of an individual migrant, this present study makes use of a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative). This is as opposed to the works carried out by Milroy (1992) who limited her study to the use of the quantitative method of data collection to examine the impact of social networks in the Belfast community. The study uses a questionnaire to elicit data on various aspects of social networks and how their influence on the languages spoken by Lower Fungom migrants in Souza.

Recalling that this study aims to explore the effects of social networks on the multilingual abilities of Lower Fungom indigenes in Souza, a study carried out by Angiachi (2013) accounts for high rates of multilingualism in Lower Fungom. Her work focuses on the indigenes of Lower Fungom in the North West Region of Cameroon. Her results revealed that there is a significant rate of multilingualism in Lower Fungom. The study used questionnaires and interviews to elicit the required data. Her analysis shows that “people in Lower Fungom claim to be able to speak thirteen languages and understand up to fourteen languages” (Angiachi, 2013). The study brought out some sociological factors such as blood and individual relations, which account for the reasons why most people learn an additional language(s). According to Angiachi (2013:94), three underlying reasons why people learn a language(s) are based on their desire to affiliate to a linguistic community, gain favour and intercept evil. We add that, another reason is to maintain their social networks in any linguistic community. Our opinion is focused on Eckert (2012:4) who contradicts Labov (1966) on style and posits that “style is the individuals’ natural choice of language use depending on the context/setting in which he/she is” (Eckert, 2012:4). The basis of our argument is equally based on Gile’s (1987) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) which examines the different ways in which an

individual engages his communication (this includes the languages used and how they are used), their motivation for doing so (the context/setting and participants) and what they expect as outcomes (this includes gaining favour and getting integrated into a linguistic community). Angiachi's (2013) work fails to bring out the consequences that may arise as a result of Lower Fungom languages coming into contact with other languages, which situates the gap for this study. Her work first and foremost, established that Lower Fungom indigenes are multilingual speakers.

3. Theoretical framework

This section informs us about the various theories related to our work. The theory employed for this study is the Social Network Theory of Milroy (1992). This theory asserts that, in some communities, complex patterns of social network relations often develop among subgroups to demarcate them from other subgroups and these intercultural variations are often reflected in the linguistic variations within the general language norms of the community, (Edwards, 1992). According to Milroy (1992), the foundations of this theory are based on the social contacts of individuals with other individuals. Based on Milroy's views, these social contacts consist of "interpersonal ties" of different types of strength, and how these structural relationships between links can vary.

Granovetter (1982), further reveals that the strength of a tie, the linear differentiation between a weak and a strong tie, is described by "a combination of the amount of time, the level of emotional closeness, the intimacy and the reciprocal services that surround a tie. He further assumes that weak ties represent linguistic bridges between personal communities, while strong do not. This assumption is based on the foundation that weak ties are numerous and require fewer efforts. Based on this, it is evident that information passed on weak ties tends to be innovatory since people linked by strong ties tend to share contacts and therefore, the same information. We note here that weak ties individuals carry new information/language across social boundaries, while as suggested by Granovetter (1982), strong ties hinder the exchange of new information and thus, linguistic change. Milroy 1992, believes that in a maximally dense and multiplex network, everyone would know everyone else (density) while the actors would know each other in a range of capacities (multiplexity). She further adds that this construction is an "idealization" which predicts that in a community bound by maximally dense and multiplex network ties, the linguistic change would not take place at all. In her point of view, "close socialization patterns have the effect of maintaining traditional norms, and resisting change from outside."

Given that social networks investigate the forces that impact individual behavior, rather than simply attributing linguistic differences to social class, a theory of language change based on social networks can explain linguistic behavior more deeply than variationist sociolinguistics. The two major findings of social network theory are that dense (highly interconnected) networks are resistant to change, and most linguistic change is initiated by weak links. That is people who are not centrally connected to the network in question. Though sociolinguists working on social networks agree on these findings, there has been an extended debate about which actors in the network are the primary drivers of linguistic change. The results of this debate brought about two theories, the strong-tie theory, and the weak-tie theory.

The explosive growth of the Social Network Theory might be due in part to a couple of distinguishing features of the network paradigm itself. We bear in mind that it is amendable to many levels of analysis. As such, it can be applied to individuals, teams, and organizations. Equally, studies on social network theory can combine quantitative, qualitative, and geographical data, allowing for fuller descriptions of the social world that are both ethnographically grounded and quantitatively grounded. In the perspective of network theory, the relationship between actors is the central factor. The network theory takes into account the web of relationships in which actors are embedded that both constrain and provide opportunities. This aspect is strongly focused on an entity's environment, which is conceptualized as consisting of other entities and the relationship between them. Linking this to organizational network, we realize that network theorists would want to examine the relationship an organization has with another organization and not just the characteristics within an organization. This goes the same with explaining individual achievement. An important aspect of the network concept is that ties between nodes are not treated in isolation. Rather, they link up to form paths, thereby providing a mechanism through which nodes can affect one another directly.

4. Methodology

The data for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources of data. The researchers with the help of a field guard were able to select twenty-one (21) native speakers (6 males and 15 females) from Ajumbu, Mundabli, Kung, and Abar, who were used as consultants for the study. The consultants were arrived at through the purposive sampling technique. Lower Fungom migrants in Souza who were not multilingual speakers were not part of the study. This study made use of a mixed method of data collection which incorporated non-participant observation, elicitation, and self-recorded interviews. Given that qualitative data focuses more on unstructured text-based data, the recordings were transformed into textual form to ease analysis. For this study, these textual

data included structured and unstructured interviews, answers elicited from different consultants with the aid of a questionnaire, self-recorded interviews, and notes taken from participant observation. The language used by the consultants and even the body movements portrayed during interview sessions were equally considered. For these to be captured into meaningful text, we partitioned and assigned data into fragments. To this, we took note of the different information provided by the consultants with whom we used the sociolinguistic interview guide, listened to the self-recording made by the consultants. In this process, we took into consideration those who initiated the conversations. This gave us a safe space to ensure that multiple uses of language, code-switching, and code-mixing by our consultants were not just a way of priding themselves off.

We further identified the languages used by our consultants, how they were acquired, when they were used, why they used them in some situations and not in others, how they were used (by code-switching or code-mixing), and all the common factors that cut across all our consultants. All of these enabled us to visualize and understand their choice of networks and the consequences of these networks on their multilingual tendencies. For all of these to be achieved, we coded the personal information of our consultants for confidentiality. Our secondary data came from books and articles written by scholars such as Milroy (1980), Di Carlo and Good (2014), Good et al. (2011), Poplack (2000), Labov (2001), Yusuf & Hendrik (2019), amongst others.

5. Data Presentation and Analyses

This section of the paper presents, describes, and analyses the data provided in this study and discusses the results of the data obtained from the field.

Table 1: Presentation of Consultants

S/N	NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION
1	Nang Valdis Bang	36	Male	Business
2	Kah Samuel Ncha	26	Male	Teacher/Farmer
3	Ngong Christopher Njuo	29	Male	Farmer/Business
4	Lydia Schente	67	Female	Farmer
5	Kulo Nadine Nforg	22	Female	Tailor/Farmer
6	Etung Charlotte Laji	29	Female	Farmer/Business
7	Ngong Chantal Sih	29	Female	Teacher
8	Che Gilbert Asah	42	Male	Rubber tapper/Bike rider
9	Kimbi Stanley Che	47	Male	Farmer/Bike rider
10	Ngong Jacqueline Sih	40	Female	Business
11	Chem Emmaculate Sih	38	Male	Business
12	Che Hedwig Nyeh	22	Female	Student
13	Buh Christal Bih	30	Female	Tailor

14	Museh Grace Fueh	40	Female	Farmer/Business
15	Kanyu Mirabel Nkuo	40	Female	Business/Farmer
16	Che Benis Bie	38	Female	Business
17	Dzuh Enamy	38	Female	Business/Farmer
18	Chin Emmanuel Nyam	38	Male	Business/Farmer
19	Sanje Felicia Bih	35	Female	Farmer/Business
20	Npeng Seraphine Ndzuh	36	Female	Business
21	Che Mirabel Nkuo	36	Female	Business

Table 2: Distribution of the actual sample size

<i>Age * Sex Cross tabulation</i>					
Age range			Sex		Total
			Male	Female	
20-30	Count		2	5	7
	% within Age		28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
	% within Sex		33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
	% of Total		9.6%	23.8%	33.4%
31-40	Count		2	9	11
	% within Age		18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
	% within Sex		33.3%	60.0%	46.3%
	% of Total		9.6%	42.9%	52.59%
41-50	Count		2	0	2
	% within Age		100.0%	00.0%	100.0%
	% within Sex		33.3%	00.0%	16.7%
	% of Total		9.6%	00.0%	9.6%
51-60	Count		0	0	0
	% within Age		00.0%	00.0%	00.0%
	% within Sex		00.0%	00.0%	00.0%
	% of Total		00.0%	00.0%	00.0%
60+	Count		0	1	1
	% within Age		00.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within Sex		00.0%	6.7%	3.4%
	% of Total		00.0%	4.8%	4.8%
Total	Count		6	15	21

	% within Age	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
	% within Sex	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%

Source: Conceived by researchers, December 2021

To arrive at the figures in table two above, the following calculations were done:

1. To calculate the % within Age for male:	$\frac{\text{No. of male}}{\text{No of male and female for each age range}} \times 100$
	No of male and female for each age range
2. To calculate the % within Age for female:	$\frac{\text{No. of female}}{\text{No. of male and female for each age range}} \times 100$
	No. of male and female for each age range
3. To calculate the % within Sex:	$\frac{\text{No. of male}}{\text{Total number of males in all age ranges}} \times 100$
	Total number of males in all age ranges
4. To calculate the % within Sex:	$\frac{\text{No. of female}}{\text{Total number of females in all age ranges}} \times 100$
	Total number of females in all age ranges
5. To calculate the % of the total of males:	$\frac{\text{No. of male}}{\text{Total number of the population (consultants)}} \times 100$
	Total number of the population (consultants)
6. To calculate the % of the total of females:	$\frac{\text{No. of females}}{\text{Total number of population (consultants)}} \times 100$
	Total number of population (consultants)
7. To calculate the total within Age:	% within Age of male + % within Age of female
8. To calculate the total within Sex:	% within Sex of male + % within female divided by 2
9. To calculate the % total of total:	% of total male + % of total female

Table 3: Most suitable areas where new networks are created

Use of social networks	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	100.0
Suitable avenues for the creation of new contacts/friends		
Market	16	22.5%
Church	11	15.5%

Use of social networks	Frequency	Percent
“Njangi”	20	28.2%
Drinking spots	11	15.5%
Quarter	10	14.1%
Place of work	3	4.2%
Total	71	100.0%
The number of social networks created for the time spent in Souza.		
10-20	7	35.0
20-40	3	15.0
60-80	4	20.0
80-100	6	30.0
Total	20	100.0

Source: Conceived by researchers, December 2021

In table 3 above, all the respondents (100%) indicated that they use social networks. 28.2% of the respondents indicated that “njangi” avenues are more suitable for them to create new contacts/friends, 22.5% indicated that it was the market 15.5% indicated that it was drinking spots and the church, 14.1% indicated that it was the quarter and 4.2% indicated that it was at the workplace. Findings reveal that 35.0% of the respondents indicated that they have created 10-20 social networks for the length of time they have been in Souza, 30.0% indicated that they have created 80-100 social networks, 20.0% indicated that they have created 60.80 social networks and 15.0% indicated that they have created 20.40 social networks.

Table 4: Length of time and number of hours spent with networks

Duration of contact with networks		
1 year	6	30.0%
2 years	2	10.0%
3 years	2	10.0%
4 years	6	30.0%
5 years and above	4	20.0%
Total	20	100.0%
Approximate hours spent with networks per day		
1– 5hours	6	30.0%
5 – 10 hours	10	50.0%
10 – 15hours	4	20.0%
Total	20	100.0%

Source: Conceived by researchers, December 2021

Table 4 above reveals that spending years with their social networks influence the languages spoken by multilingual indigenes from Lower Fungom who have migrated to Souza. 30.0% of the respondents indicated that they have stayed in Souza for 5 years and above, 25.0% indicated that they have stayed in Souza for 1 and 2 years respectively, 10.0% indicated that they have stayed for 5 years and 5.0% indicated that they have stayed for 3 and 4 years respectively.

The frequency of contact of respondents with social networks has been a major source of investigation for this study. Field statistics shows that 30.0% of the respondents indicated that they have been in contact with these networks for 1 year and 4 years respectively, 20.0% indicated that they have been in contact for 5 years and above and 10.0% indicated that they have been in contact for 2 and 3 years respectively.

Findings from this study on hours spent with each contact on the network revealed that 50.0% of the respondents have spent 5-10 hours on each contact per day, 30.0% indicated that they spent 1-5 hours per day with their social networks and 20.0% indicated they did spend 10-15 hours a day.

6. Findings

We live in a time with unparalleled degrees of connectivity, as physical and psychological restrictions defined by traditional, geographical, and social ties with close family members have greatly been declining and global mobility has become the order of the day. Consequently, people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are interacting with one another, and more people are being exposed to multiple traditions and languages. In sum, multilingualism has become a regular component of the lives of many migrants. This phenomenon is in part reflected in the lives of Lower Fungom migrants in Souza. This study carried out on multilingualism and social networks reveal meaningful situations of code-switching, code-mixing, language shift, language loss, and language maintenance among Lower Fungom multilingual indigenes in Souza. The influence of their newly created contacts on their linguistic repertoire reveals to be both positive and negative. While some of the Lower Fungom migrants have been able to gain new languages as a result of their social networks, the data used in this study shows that others rather abandoned some of the languages they had in their linguistic repertoire to what they consider as prestigious languages (Abo'o, Pongo, French, and English). This as provided by their data, has been a means of integrating themselves into their host community. This only goes to demonstrate that social exchanges depend not only on the intrinsic preferences and perceived status differences of the individuals but also on the large pattern of relations within which both social actors are embedded. Triggering these relationships requires one to negotiate the ins and outs of often ambiguous group situations and rely on the perceived strength of relations between social actors to reaffirm with what is already known and acquire from others, what is not. Valuable active learning occurs through the exchange of opinions, exposure to new ideas, and the sharing of experiences. In social network terms, such learning exchanges call on the unique strengths of both weak and strong social ties. Exposure to newer ideas comes from interaction with those with whom we are strongly tied to.

7. Recommendation

Based on the above, the following recommendation should be practiced by the Lower Fungom multilingual indigenes residing in Souza to ensure that they preserve their language(s). We recommend that Lower Fungom multilingual indigenes residing in Souza should create more avenues like “njangi” groups and sports competitions made up of speakers of Lower Fungom languages. During such gatherings, emphasis should be laid on the use of Lower Fungom languages. Lower Fungom migrants in Souza should equally practice using more of their languages with their family members. If this is considered, their languages will continue to be transmitted from one generation

to the other and will go a long way to reduce language death and fortify the maintenance of their languages.

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