Code-Mixing and Code-Switching in Cameroon Social Media

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Abstract

This study examines code-mixing and code-switching in Cameroon social media to find out the languages that are mixed or switched to and the reasons for the phenomenon. Insights came from the structural approach to code-switching, which measures the degree to which an L2 is incorporated into an L1 or vice versa (Poplack, 1980, 2000; Poplack & Meechan, 1995; Myers-Scotton, 1993b, 2002). Data comprises 245 e-messages which were drawn from e-mail(s) (100), Facebook (60) and WhatsApp (85). The data were collected through screenshots with the use of android phones. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of data show the presence of code-mixing and code-switching from English to French (48%), English to Cameroon Pidgin English (18.4%) and English to home languages (11.5%). It was construed that Cameroons mix or switch codes because of their multicultural and multilingual backgrounds.

1. INTRODUCTION

Code-mixing (CM) and code-switching (CS) are closely interrelated concepts. While CS has to do with the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two or more distinct languages across sentence boundaries within the same speech event (Labov, 1972, p. 457; Hymes, 1974; Bokamba, 1989), CM is the switch occurring within a sentence (Hoffmann, 1991, p.104; Myers-Scotton, 1997; Selamat, 2014, p.1, Ariesta & Sutrisno, 2019; Wulnandari, 2020; Pratiwi, 2022; A.S. Ezemba, Chilozie, O. M. Ezemba & Uwaezuoke, 2022). Some authors have used the term CS to refer to intra-sentential and inter-sentential switches (Myers, 2008; Wardhaugh, 2010; Panhwar & Buriro, 2020; Otundo & Mühleisen, 2022). According to Fishman (1972), Myers-Scotton (1992) and Nformi (2013, p. 9), Masrudin, Nasriandi, Ermawati and Al Hamdany (2022), CM/CS is a communicative strategy and can be influenced by factors such as the relationship among participants, setting, topic, social identity and educational background of the speakers.

CM/CS is an arbitrary phenomenon in Cameroon because of the multilingual nature of the country. Authors have advanced different figures for the individual languages in Cameroon. Biloa (2004) holds that Cameroon has about 285 home languages, two official languages (French & English), a major lingua franca (Cameroon Pidgin English- CPE) and Camfranglais. Tabe (2017b) refers to *Ethnologue* (2015), which puts the living languages of Cameroon at 280. The report from *Ethnologue* states that the languages of wider communication are Arabic,

Shuwa, Bamun, Bulu, Duala, Ewondo, Fulfulde, Kom, Lamnso', Medumba and CPE (Tabe, 2017b). All these points to Cameroonians being polyglots, and it is common to hear them mix or switch codes in their daily conversations.

Communication through the internet and Social media, in particular, has recently increased. Social media is generally perceived as a democratic space where discussions are free, encouraging many more people to interact online and use language unrestrictedly. Information from the Internet World Stats Newsletter (2021) puts the current rate of Internet users in Cameroon at 7.878.422 (29.7%). Statistics show that the internet growth rate in Cameroon from 2000 to 2020 is 39.3%, and Facebook subscribers as of September 30, 2020, stand at 2.700.000 (see http://internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm). This information is in line with Tabe (2017b), who reveals that Facebook is among the social media platforms preferred by Cameroonians. The growth in the use of the internet and social media in Cameroon indicates expansion in language use that may lead to CM/CS.

Therefore, this paper aims to find out: (1) which languages are mixed or switched to by Cameroonians in their emails, WhatsApp and Facebook chats? (2) To what extent do they mix or switch codes? (3) What are the reasons for mixing or switching codes?

2. THE LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND OF CAMEROON

Cameroon has a multiplicity of languages. Researchers are still to come to terms with the exact number of languages in the country. Some scholars have credited the country with 250-260 languages (Echu, 2002, 2003, 2004; Kouega, 2008; Abongdia & Foncha, 2017; Nkamta & Ngwenya, 2017). Pütz (2020, p. 295) holds that Cameroon is "a linguistic melting pot" with 283 indigenous languages. More current research puts the languages in Cameroon at 286 (see Eberhard, Simons & Fennig, 2022). Of these, 277 are living, and 9 are extinct. Of the living languages, 272 are indigenous, and 5 are non-indigenous. French and English are the official languages in Cameroon, a legacy of the country's colonial past as a colony of both France and Britain from 1916-1960. These two languages are used in education, administration and additional authorized activities in the country. Spanish, German, Chinese and Arabic are being taught in Cameroonian schools, especially in the French sub-system of education.

According to Kouega (2008), 83% of Cameroonians are Francophones, and 17% are Anglophones. This is because French is the first official language in eight regions in Cameroon, and only two regions have English as their first official language. The author further states that the country has 55 Afro-Asiatic languages, two Nilo-Saharan languages, four Ubangian languages and 169 Niger-Congo languages. Ngwa (2021, p. 250) also mentions the Kordofanian language family, which to him, is the most highly represented in Cameroon. Tabe (2012, p. 30), referring to Echu (2002, 2003) and Biloa (2004), identifies 11 languages that are prevalent in Cameroon: Fulfulde, Ewondo, Bassa, Duala, Hausa, Wandara, Kanu, Arab Chao, Beti-fang, Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) and French. Wolf (2001:155) specifies three lingua franca groups in the country: the Fulfulde sector in the North, the CPE in the West and French in the rest of the country. CPE goes beyond most ethnic, educational, geographical, religious and social boundaries. It is used in informal contexts such as markets, streets and churches in towns and the countryside. Arabic is equally a language of Islam. All the official, indigenous and religious languages cohabit in the country.

Rosendal (2008, p. 16) and Ngwa (2021, p. 250) have placed the number of indigenous languages in Cameroon between 250 and 300. The indigenous languages in the country are many and varied as the number of ethnic groups. Njika (as cited in Tabe, 2012a) stipulates that there are 130 ethnic groups in Cameroon. These indigenous languages serve various functions in their respective communities, such as evangelisation and daily communication among the people in the community in which these languages are spoken. Mforteh (as cited in Ngwa, ibid) reports that 166 of these indigenous languages have been standardized; 36 are being taught in some primary schools; 18 have the translated version of the New Testament, and 30 have translated portions of the scriptures.

Background to the languages used in Cameroon is pertinent to this study because the languages are found in the linguistic repertoire of most Cameroonians. So, they can freely mix them or switch from one language to another during speaking.

3. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

This study is based on the structural approach to CM/ CS. According to structuralists, CS is the "juxtaposition of sentences or sentence's fragments, each of which is internally consistent with the morphological and syntactic (and optionally, phonological) rules of its lexifier language" (Poplack & Meechan, 1995, p. 200). The rules of lexifier refer to the borrow-ability of vocabulary (or lexicon) from one language to another as per the rules of the imported language. On the types of CS, Poplack (1988), referring to Appel and Muysken (1987), identifies three types of CS: tag switching, intra-sentential and inter-sentential CS. Tag switching involves the introduction of an exclamation, a tag or a parenthetical element in another language other than the rest of the sentences. Intra-sentential CS occurs within the same sentence or sentence fragment, and inter-sentential CS has to do with switches from one language to the other between sentences.

Closely following this, Muysken (2000) defines three types of CM: insertion, alternation and congruent lexicalization. According to the author, insertion is when lexical items from one language are incorporated into another. Alternation occurs when structures of the languages are altered indistinctively both at the grammatical and lexical levels. Congruent lexicalization is when two languages share grammatical structures which can be filled lexically with elements from either language.

In one study on CS, Myers-Scotten (1993b) developed the matrix language framework, which says that in CS, one language acts as the dominant or matrix language and the other as a subordinate or embedded language. According to her, the basic word structure of the matrix language determines what happens to words in the embedded language. She develops this in the morpheme order and system morpheme principle (Myers-Scotten 1993b, p. 83). The morpheme order principle states that morphemes reflecting surface syntactic relations will be that of the matrix language. The system morpheme principle holds that in matrix language and embedded language constituents, all system morphemes which have grammatical relations external to their head constituent will come from the matrix language. Since English is predominant among Anglophone Cameroonians, it is considered the matrix language in this study. The embedded languages will be those integrated in the frame of the English phrasal structure.

The structural approach to CM/CS, therefore, measures the degree to which an L2 is integrated into an L1 and vice versa. It also explains the syntactic and morphological constraints which restrict this integration. This approach determines intra-linguistic CS as internalized grammatical systems or sub-systems of bilingualism; and semantic and syntactic ties which bind two languages in a single speech act (Poplack, 1980, 2000; Panhwar & Buriro, 2020).

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

CM and CS have attracted the attention of several researchers in and out of Cameroon. A handful of scholars have examined CM and CS in classroom settings (Lin, 2008; Youkhana, 2010; Muin, 2011; Benson & Çavusoglu, 2013; Magid & Muggadam, 2013; Nordin et al., 2013; Sokeng Piewo, 2018; W. Yang, 2020). These studies report that CM/CS is valuable to classroom participants as it eases interaction, simplifies the understanding of complex notions, motivates students and conveys lesson content. On the other hand, some other authors consider CM/CS as an indicator of a lack of linguistic ability (Flyman-Mattsson & Burenhult, 1999; Gumperz & Hernandez-Chavez, 1972; Youkhana, 2010, p. 5; Chaudron, 1988 & Lightbrown, 2001; Shay, 2015, p. 466). They think teachers, who are the sole models for students, should teach the target language exclusively.

Scholars have studied CM/CS within different contexts. Li (1995), and Li and Milroy (1995) examine CS within Chinese-English bilingual families in Britain. They show how effective a switch from Chinese to English can be when a mother asks her 12-year-old son in English rather than Chinese why he has not finished his homework. Siegel (1995) shows how Fijians sometimes use Fijian Hindi among themselves in CS situations for purposes of humour. Ayeomoni (2006) investigates CS/CM as a style of language use in childhood in Yoruba speech community and concludes that they correlate positively with the educational attainment of individuals. Koban (2013) looks at intra and inter-sentential CS in Turkish-English Bilinguals in New York City. Results show a positive but non-significant correlation between intra-sentential CS and language competence.

Some authors consider CM/CS as a social dynamic in bilingual or multilingual discourse (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton; 1993a, Panhwa & Buriro, 2020). They consider the speaker, interlocutor, physical setting, conversational style and discussion topics as the investigating tools to switch codes for achieving sociolinguistic goals (see Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2008; Chakrani, 2016; Clyne, 2003).

Interest has also been shown on CM/CS in CMC (Paolillo, 1999 2007 & 2001; Georgakopoulou, 1997; Hinrichs, 2006; Danet & Herring, 2007; Lee, 2007; C. Yang, 2007; Huang, 2009; Goldberg, 2009; Androutsopoulos, 2011, Samhan, 2017; Tsoumou, 2019). The researchers draw awareness to vernacular variants and CM/CS from English to other languages (e.g. Punjabi, Hindi, Chinese, Greek and Indian languages). They found that such variants are associated with strong network ties or intimacy. Yang (2007) found that to mix Mandarin and English is usually thought of as showing off and is unconsciously discouraged. Hinrichs (2006) obtained English and Jamaican creole in the email communication of Jamaicans. He concludes that the discourse relies on implicature and cultural interference. Danet and Herring (2007) found code-switching between multiple languages. The contributors hold that the features of local languages affect language use on the Internet. Goldberg (2009) found Spanish – English CS in the email communication of some native speakers of Spanish. The speakers' use of English is associated to professional or formal contexts, and their use of Spanish is linked to intimacy, informality and group identification.

Besides CM/CS researchers have probed into other linguistic features of CMC (December 1993, 1996; Yates, 1996; Garcia & Jacobs, 1999; Cherny, 1999; Crystal, 2006; Herring, 2002, 2012; Bou-Franch, 2006, 2013; Androutsopoulos, 2007; Siebenhaar, 2006, 2008; Yus 2011). Some of the authors found oral characteristics in CMC. Some other features the scholars point out include invented spellings and new vocabulary. The language features of CMC within the Cameroonian context are seen in some works by Tabe (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2019). She found clipping, humorous expressions, punctuation specificities, and the use of many languages, among other things. Anchimbe (2015) describes the illocutionary intents behind Cameroonians' code-switching from English to French and CPE in written online interactions. His data show that the choice of these languages in given contexts is motivated by the desire to denigrate, insult, exclude and consolidate in-group cohesion and raise the public esteem of the in-group.

In Cameroon, Tanyi (2008) studied CS among Kenyang-English speakers in Yaounde and found out that 75% of Kenyang speakers switch codes when communicating in Kenyang. Emoh (2009) show that the characters in some literary novels by John Nkemngong and Alowbede d'Epie switch or mix code because the authors, among other things, want to portray the multilingual setting of the texts. Similarly, Neba and Kfukfu (2021) demonstrate that the language of Anglophone Cameroon Literature is a product of its multilingual ecology. The scholars discovered that though English is dominant, French, Meta, Noone, Fulfulde and CPE were also used in some literary works by Tah Protus and Bole Butake. Tabe (2012a) explored CM/CS in formal and informal contexts in Cameroon. After analysis of data she collected from classroom settings and informal conversations, she established that CM/CS are mechanisms for social interaction in Cameroon. Apuge and Foudangwa (2017) found creative switching patterns in advertisement discourse in Cameroon. Ngwa (2021) probes into the various

linguistic combinations evident in the language use of most Cameroonians. He found that languages that bare mostly combined are French and English suggesting that most linguistic combinations are done in cross-linguistic settings involving Anglophones and Francophones trying to cope with the shortcomings of official bilingualism. A.S. Ezemba, Chilozie, O. M. Ezemba and Uwaezuoke (2022) analyse CM/CS among students of Our Lady of Mount Carmel College Muea-Buea (Cameroon). They recorded utterances and also used observation. Their findings show that CM/CS help to ease and strengthen communication between teachers and students involved in classroom interaction. They found intra and inter-sentential code-switching. They concluded that CM/CS positively and negatively affect students. Otundo and Mühleisen (2022) focus on CS's social and pragmatic motivations between the caller and the host in radio phone-in programmes in Cameroon and Kenya. Their results show that situational CS was dominant in the Cameroon data, while metaphorical switches were evident in the Kenyan data. Participants code-switch to achieve meaning and urgency.

Though the literature on CMC is fast growing, much evidence from many other languages and cultures is still needed (Herring, 2010; Thurlow & Puff, 2013). Although an attempt has been made to investigate multilingualism on Cameroon social media (Tabe, 2017b), it is insufficient. Attention paid to CM/CS on social media in Cameroon is still sparse. This research is out not only to examine the phenomenon but also to show the impact of social media on the language in Cameroon.
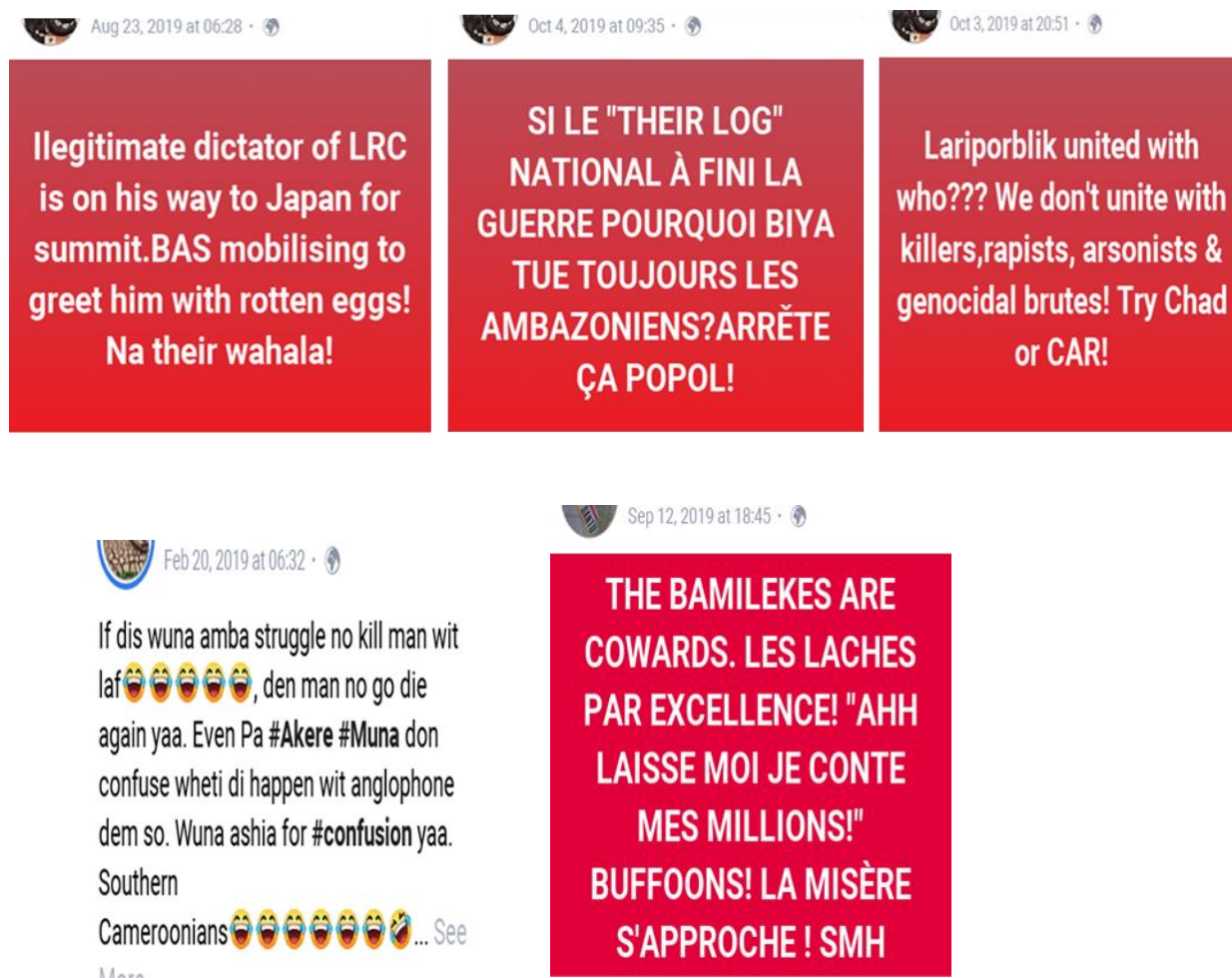
5. DATA AND METHOD

The data for this study comprises authentic social media messages collected from English-speaking Cameroonians from 2019 to 2022. The data were collected through screenshots with the use of an android phone. Some of the data were got through personal appeals. Two field assistants also helped in collecting data for this research. We met some Anglophone Cameroonians and pleaded with them to give us their emails and chats for research purposes. They forwarded their e-texts to us, which we assembled and examined for CM and CS. The table below summarises the platforms from which the messages were collected and the total number of messages per platform.

Table 1: Corpus composition

Platform	Number of messages collected
Email	100
Facebook	60
WhatsApp	85
Total	**245**

Table 1 shows that the data were collected from three platforms: email, Facebook and WhatsApp. A total of 245 electronic texts were collected, with 100 coming from the email platform, 60 from Facebook and 85 from WhatsApp. For ethical reasons, all names on the emails and chats were replaced with letters. All the e-texts were coded; those from email range from E01 to E100, the ones from Facebook from FBK01-FBK60, and those from WhatsApp from WhAp01-WhAp 85. Some of the screenshots that were collected are presented below.

Figure 1: Screenshots showing CM/CS from English to CPE and English to French

More screenshots are found in the appendix. The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively based on the structural approach to code-switching (see section 3). The frequencies of the CM/CS were done manually. The CM/CS from English to French, English to CPE and English to home languages (HLs) were represented on a table, and their frequencies were given. The qualitative method was used to complement the quantitative analys is to interpret and describe the data represented on the tables.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data from email, Facebook and WhatsApp revealed the existence of CM and CS from English to French, English to Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) and English to home languages (HLs) with varying degrees in the three platforms under study. Table 2 presents the CM/CS and their general distribution in the data under study.

Table 2: CM/CS and their general distribution in Cameroon Social media

CM/CS \ Social media	From English to French	From English to CPE	From English to HLs	Total
Email	45 (54%)	24 (24%)	24 (24%)	93 (93%)
Facebook	30 (60)	20 (33.4)	00 (0%)	50 (83.4%)
WhatsApp	44 (51.8%)	01 (1.2%)	04 (4.7%)	49 (57.7%)
Total	119 (48.6)	45 (18.4%)	28 (11.5%)	192 (78.4%)

Table 2 indicates the total frequency of CM/CS that was found in Cameroon social media.

The overall use of CM/CS in all the three platforms is above average (78.4%). The highest frequency of CM/CS comes from email (93%), followed by Facebook (83.4%) and WhatsApp is the last with 57.7%. This information shows that Cameroonians try to transfer what is happening in their society to social media platforms. They consciously or unconsciously mix or switch codes because of their multilingual nature.

Information gleaned from table 2 equally reveals how Cameroonians mix or switch codes from English to French, CPE and HLs. Data show that CM/CS from English to French is the highest (48.6%), English to CPE is the second with 18.4%, and English to HLs is the last with 11.5%. Though all are below average, it is still important because it signals Cameroonians' multicultural and multilingual nature. Details on this are given in the following section.

5.1.CM/CS From English to French

French is one of the official languages in Cameroon. It is the first official language used by Francophones and the second official language of Anglophones. All official business in the country is done in English and French. It was, therefore, not surprising to find CM/CS from English to French in the data under study. As earlier mentioned, statistics from table 2 reveal that CM/CS from English to French occupies the first position (48.6%). Individual figures put Facebook at the top with 60% followed by email (54%) and WhatsApp the last with 51.8%. Instances of this from the data can be seen in the following excerpts. The French expressions have been italicized and the explanations are given in square brackets.

(1) …
  A: Hahahahaha
  B: Amen oooh !
  A: *Vraiment !* [truely] I hear you.
  B: Why are attacking our able entrepreneur?   (WhAp 74)

(2) i was with Amabel in Bamenda during my *stage* [internship] and her baby is doing fine.
   (E87)

(3) I would like to apply for the post of *standardist* [receptionist] advertised in the Cameroon tribune. (E60)

(4) …
A: Ok ohh. Am thinking of trying ASTI this year
B: *Du courage* [courage]. But can't you enroll for Ph.D in a different field ?
A: Woowww, great news !! (WhAp 84)
In example (1) above, "Vraiment !" is a French exclamation and this type of CS is referred to by Poplack (1988) as "Tag switching", and by Appel and Muysken (1987) as cited in Nformi (2013) as "emblematic switching". In addition, *stage* and *standardist* in examples (2) and (3) are French words that have been incorporated into English. Clyne (1991) refers to them as "transference" and Musysken (2000) calls this type of CM "insertion" while Myers-Scotton (1992) uses the term "embedding" to capture them. *Du courage* in example (4) can also be considered as tag switching.

Furthermore, it was found that some e-texts had structures of English and French languages altered indistinctively both at the grammatical and lexical levels. Muysken (2000) has referred to this as "alternation" while Poplack (1988) and Myers-Scotton (1993a, p. 3) call it inter-sentential CS. Consider examples of this below.

(5) *Bonjour ma chère* [Good morning my dear],
je suis effectivement bien arrivé et installé dans mon bureau d'ici [I have actually arrived and settled down in my office here]. Thanks a lot for the greetings and all. I will do my best to find

some of the titles You need, […] *Dans tous les cas je ferai un effort* [In any case, I will make an effort] for you.

      Amicalement [Friendly] Yours   (from E48)

(6) A: Oh! My God. I think your documents have not been taken away.
    B: Weee Rich! *J'espère qu'ils n'ont pas emporté tes docs* [L hope your documrnts have not been taken away]. Hi to all. (WhaP 51)

(7) sis,
  c'est comment? [how is it?] we know life is difficult but we
won't like to know you have erased us from your mind. (E53)

The examples above are cases of inter-sentential CS. CM/CS from English to French is a common phenomenon in Cameroon, and can be observed even in official settings (Tabe, 2011, pp.118-119; 2012a). Suter (1993) and Breure (2001) hold that there is a relationship between a discourse genre as a communicative frame and its socio-cultural context. They think that individuals combine their cognitive, social and technical forces in a communicative situation. It is not surprising that Cameroonians have transferred the phenomenon of CM/CS from English to French or vice versa in their society to their e-texts. It is part of their background knowledge context and they do not find any problems switching or mixing the two languages because they are born not only bilingual, but multilingual. This result is similar to that of Ngwa (2021) who found English and French as the languages that are mostly combined in Cameroon.

5.2. CM/CS From English to Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE)
CPE is a lingua franca in the country. It is used across ethnic groups in Cameroon for various purposes such as business and religion. In Ekanjume-Ilongo's (2016, p.154) words, "CPE is viable, flexible and practical, and […] Cameroonians are more comfortable using this language […]" She considers CPE as a putative and coalescing language among Cameroonians because it does not belong to any particular tribe. Statistics show that CPE is the second most favoured language that Cameroonians mix with their English (cf. from table 2). Though its overall frequency in the data stands at 18.4%, it is nevertheless important because it combines with the other languages used to portray the diverse or all-inclusive nature of Cameroonians. Facts from table 2 illustrate that Facebook has the highest (33.4%) CM/CS from English to CPE. Email comes next with 24% and is followed by WhatsApp with just 1.2%. Consider the following examples from the data. The CPE expressions are written in italics and the explanations are given in square brackets.

(8) A: Ambazonians, you have touched *alakata pepper* [a type of hot pepper harvested from the forest]. *Wuna go see Juju craze* [you people will see a masquerade go mad]. My one move *go give wuna* [will give you people] 12 years sleeplessness. Wait for me   (FBK07)
(9) How are you today? *Na only that book de come kill you so? Ashia oh.* [Is it only book work which is going to kill you? Courage!] I just wish you all the best.   (E33)
 (10) Hey man. Biya and Beti Bulu Cabal!
The southern Cameroons people are asking "what's up"? *Wuna Don Tire*? [Are you people tired?] (FBK35)

In example (8), we have CM (insertion) as seen in *alakata pepper* and *go give wuna*. There is also inter-sentential CS or alternation which is the CPE sentence *Wuna go see Juju craze*. The instances in (9) and (10) are equally inter-sentential CS. The mixing of English and CPE in the above examples shows that the participants share a lot of background knowledge and are able to understand the CPE expressions without any problems. They use CPE to capture certain local items like "*alakata pepper*" that may not be found in other cultures.

5.3. CM/CS from English to Home Languages (HLs)

Echu (2002, 2003) holds that Cameroon is home to 247 indigenous languages, while Pütz (as cited in Eberhard, Simons & Fenning, 2019) put the national languages in Cameroon at over 283. These native languages are often mixed with official languages in both formal and informal settings for various purposes (see Tabe, 2012a). She found that expressions from Cameroonian mother tongues are used by students in their formal classroom essays. Information gathered from table 2 shows that expressions from HLs were not prevalent in the data as the general frequency is only 11.5%. The email platform tops the list with 24% followed by WhatsApp with 4.7%. Facebook has no expressions from home languages. See examples of CM/CS from English to HLs in the extracts below. The expressions from HLs have been italicize and the explanations are given in square brackets.

(11) […] it will take me some time to came [sic] home but hope we always remain in touch. I ate my last fufu and *kati kati* [chicken roasted traditionally] in nkongsamba […] (E68)

(12) […] The people from the North of Cameroon speak *Fulbé* [a home language] and Haussa. The men wear *Gandoura* [a long loose clothe] and the women wear *wrappers* [CPE: loin cloth] The staple meal is corn fufu. The *sawa* [coastal] people of littoral province speak *Mbana Eh* [home language of the Doualas] Their festival is the *Ngondo* [traditional festival of the Doualas]. The women wear *Kaba* [long loose gown] and the men wear *wrappers* with long sleeves shirts. I want to end here […] (E45)

(13) A: Very painful *partenaires* [partners], just be courageous and by the grace of God all things will be solved. Oh my dear friend take heart *Allah* [God] is there to help us you will solve it by the grace of God (WhaP 12)

In examples (11) and (13) we have insertion or intra-sentential CS as seen in the words *kati kati*, *partenaires* (French) and *Allah.* There is congruent lexicalisation in example (12) as many lexical elements from home languages are mixed with English. The cases above of CM/CS from English to indigenous languages illuminate the use of cultural-based concepts by Cameroonians. The context is, therefore, a great determiner of code choice. The CM/CS is a special strategy and a resource used by Cameroonians to foster social interaction, group solidarity/intimacy, national culture and identity (see Echu, 2002; Tabe, 2012a). It adds a local colour to their e-texts. These expressions from French, CPE and HLs have already been incorporated into Cameroon English (CamE). This mechanism reflects not only the multilingual nature of Cameroon, but also authenticates the setting. It is undoubtedly part of their cultural background knowledge. This view is further reinforced by Fishman (1972); Tay (1989); Myers-Scotton (1993a, 1993b) and Han Chung (2006) who think that the decision to CM/CS is socio-psychologically driven. To them, the phenomenon is writer/ speaker-oriented as the speaker or writer tries to negotiate his/her position in a conversational context.

6. CONCLUSION

This research has examined CM/CS in Cameroon social media. The aim was to find out the extent to which Cameroonians mix or switch codes, and the languages that they mix or switch to in their emails, Facebook and WhatsApp. A total of 245 e-messages that were screenshot from these platforms formed the data for this study. Analysis of data show that Cameroonians mix or switch codes from English to French (48.6%), English to CPE (18.4%) and English to HLs (11.5%). These results are similar to the findings in Tabe (2017, p. 68) which show that "other languages that are valued after English by Anglophones are French and CPE". Pütz (2020) is also in keeping with the findings when he states that the typical Cameroonian speaker daily switches between three and more codes, not necessarily within the same word but rather from utterance to the utterance (inter-sentential switching) or speech event to speech event.

The CM and CS by Cameroonians can be linked to their desire to spice up their English, to express intimacy with their interactants, and to portray their national identity and culture. For more on reasons that push Cameroonians to mix or switch codes, see Tabe (2012a).

The CM/CS by Cameroonians identified here may not be the same in other contexts or platforms. Further research could examine CM/CS in other internet platforms not examined here, such as tweeter, Instagram and Messenger.

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Appendix

May 15, 2019 at 03:18 · ⊕	Sep 14, 2019 at 17:29 · ⊕	Sep 20, 2019 at 20:51 · ⊕
With a rogue and manipulative regime like the one in Cameroun, I am bound to see reason in the ancient Roman saying that: "Si vis pacem, para bellum" Meaning if you want peace, prepare for war"	**People weh only protest get 15 years, then you tell the ones weh carry gun make dem drop for forgiveness. YOU BE VERY FOOLISH MAN.**	**If wuna wan hit Phobia terrorist, make sure say na between ye eyes or for kanas. That chest proof no reach for down there. Na So.**
Jul 15, 2019 at 00:42 · ⊕	Jul 12, 2019 at 12:47 · ⊕	Jun 13, 2019 at 07:55 · ⊕
Mimi Mefo go cut sleep for eye for auberg, only for cam bomb lie about Kumba for facebook. TUMBU LASS	**Minister Paul Tasong dey Menji now. Mad Bareta send amba 4ooLs near yi if you get kanas! Nobi beb beb beb for facebook!!**	**So for 3 years of beating around the bush, the only ally ambaZOOnia could have is kamtoZOOnia ehh? 😂 wuna ashia for struggle yaa!**

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Camilla Arundie Tabe *is an Associate Professor in English language and Linguistics and Head of the Department of English Language and Literature in the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences of the University of Maroua. Her research domains are internet linguistics, the use of ICTs in language pedagogy and Sociolinguistics. She has co-edited two books and has published papers in national and international journals.*