

LANGUAGE, CONFLICT AND NATION BUILDING: AN APPRAISAL OF THE LINGUISTIC APPROACH IN CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

Stakeholders in conflict matters often overlook the role of language in the resolution or settlement of conflicts. They tend to minimize the fact that the whole business of conflict resolution is a question of communication; and that communication entails the use of language. Exploring the linguistic aspects in the quest for solutions to conflicts is therefore an important avenue or approach to the multiple and diverse conflicts plaguing humanity today. The paper surveys how some resources and devices of linguistics are used to reconstruct, regulate and manipulate reality. It shall as well examine the ways political language is used in labelling and then categorising things, states, processes, people, events, phenomena and the goals of the state in order to frame them in a way appropriate to regulate and control the ideas and behaviour of the people. Finally, the paper shall seek to explore the role of language in general and the semantic approach in conflict.

Keywords: *Semantic approach, conflict, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Nationhood, metaphor*

1. Introduction

The persistent intensification of globalization is making the world increasingly more multicultural than it has ever been. As relations and contacts multiply across societies and peoples, more room is created for abrasions and contentions as a result of differences that tend to breed new forms of conflict and at the same time aggravating old forms of conflict in the world. Furthermore, as globalization tends to collapse geographical boundaries, people tend to claim new sovereignties or identities and all of this result in the multitude of conflicts that the world is witnessing nowadays. In fact, as globalization promotes coming together and understanding, it equally promotes conflict and contention among citizens of the world. This therefore justifies the need for more alternative dispute resolution strategies and techniques across disciplines at all levels. Indeed, if conflict can be considered as contentions that involve real or apparent interests, fears and values that are also expressed in language, whether verbal or nonverbal, then that place of language, most especially, the meaning of words used within the framework of the conflict must be taken seriously for the sake of effective resolution of the conflict.

In fact, the role of language in the perception and understanding of reality cannot be overemphasized here. It is worth noting that the ecosphere is created

or constructed by word, and any aspect of language used, especially in political discourse, carries ideological associations and sociopolitical undertones. This thus implies that language will have a major role not only in resolving conflict, but also in the formation of nationhood and in the advancement of nationalism.

Most studies on conflict resolution focus on the subject from a generic point of view. That is, they emphasize on common or cross cultural structural features of conflict resolution. After comparing and contrasting the negotiation of disputes across cultures, Gulliver (1979) posits that common patterns and regularities of interaction between warring parties exist irrespective of the particular contexts or the issues in dispute. Gulliver's claim ties with the universal categories of conflict resolution today which include negotiation, adjudication, mediation, and arbitration. These categories lay the foundation for the importance of inclusive or integrative bargaining and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) techniques. This justifies the adoption of the semantic approach alternative to conflict resolution that this paper seeks to address. The semantic analysis frameworks for this paper are complementary strategies of semantic analysis proposed by Agar (1996) and Lederach (1996), namely, the *Rich Points and Key Words*; and the *Themes and Metaphors* strategies.

2. Literature Review

Cohen (2001) holds that in analysing conflict resolution from a linguistic perspective, there are four major dimensions, namely: the rulebooks about the causes and nature of the conflict; the expectations of the mechanics and objectives of conflict resolution; the assumptions of what it means for a conflict to have been settled and finally the first choices for the ceremonials appropriate or affirming and symbolising the restoration of harmonious relations marking the end of the conflict. In conducting conflict resolution from this perspective, the source language(s) of the conflict has/have to be taken into consideration since the language(s) capture(s) the objective realities or cultures of the conflicting parties. According to Cohen (2001:26), "a comparative study of conciliation lexis reveals that concepts that seem self-evident and straightforward to the native English speaker may weigh significantly differently in other languages or not exist at all."

It is worth noting that language (the storehouse of the commonsense of the community), just like other systems including popular culture; nonverbal behaviour and religion render life meaningful and possible in a community. It is this common shared stock of meanings that serve as the baseline for all effective communication and organized actions.

Linguistic relativism otherwise known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis holds that a linguistic structure somewhat determines the conceptual system of the speaker of the language. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is a classic on the subject of language, worldview, and our conceptual system. The hypothesis has two assumptions, namely: linguistic relativism and linguistic determinism. Linguistic relativism holds that our worldview is molded by the grammatical structure of the language we speak. The implication here is that people who speak dissimilar languages can never share the same reality. By extension, it is impossible to have a perfect translation from one language to another.

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Linguistic determinism on the other hand maintains that we are inescapably passive prisoners of the language we speak rather than active masters of it. This hypothesis underscores that language determines culture and that the two are interchangeable: language is culture and culture is language

However, if language is what shapes or molds worldview and every individual in a culture or community shares the same worldview, as Whorf suggests, conflicts within a culture should not arise, since conflicts usually arise from differences in worldview or so-called ideology.

Since conflict is an inevitable community reality, the hope of survival of any community therefore will reside in its ability of handling disagreements and controlling violence among its members. And because language is the repository of the shared stock of meanings in a community, a focus on the study of language(s) of the particular community in matters of conflict (in order to come out with points of resemblance and variations across cultures can) offer an excellent vent in understanding the conflict and in seeking avenues for solutions to the conflict. This is because, as Cohen (2001:26) puts it, cross-linguistic and trans-cultural "...differences in the depiction of reality are hard to accept, precisely because we take the picture of the world conveyed by our native language to be self-evident and project it onto everyone else". Besides, it is said that when words are rooted in certain cultural soils, they (words) do not always travel well.

Furthermore, a people's cognitive processes in perception, interpretation and judgement are shaped, among other things, by language and culture, and Krocher and Kluckhohn (1962) think that language embodies the spirit of its speakers. This presupposes the inseparability of language from the identity of its speakers. Language acts, according to Leonard and Law (2004) are acts of identity. The perception, interpretation and judgement of reality by Anglophones and Francophones in Cameroon is undoubtedly mind-famed not only by the micro ethnolinguistic environments but more especially by macro linguistic frames of either French or English in which they find themselves through historical accidents. This is because our use of general terms is a reflection of the nature of our own minds; and not a reflection of the nature of the world.

Similarly, Quine (1960, 1969) holds that classification articulates a view that mirrors our needs, desires and interests rather than the world as it is in itself. Even John Locke (1632-1704) held the view that the words that a person uses are signified by arbitrary, spontaneous, individual, and private acts that are performed in the mind of the speaker. In fact, according to Locke, cited in Noriko (2005)

And every man has so inviolable a Liberty, to make Words stand for what *Ideas* he pleases, that no one hath the power to make others have the same *Ideas* in their Minds, that he has, when they use the same Words, that he does. (Locke, 1690: III 2.8)

3. Methodology

The paper adopted the survey design to appraise how some resources and devices of linguistics are used to reconstruct, regulate and manipulate reality.

The empirical data for the study consisted of lexical, phraseological and discourse features related to conflict and national development. The data was obtained through non-participant and participant observations of everyday usage of English in Cameroon, and also through social media exchanges of some renowned scholars of Cameroon. Furthermore, some ethnographic interviews were made in a bid to understanding the perception of some participants vis-à-vis the meanings and interpretations of some of the linguistic features of the study. The participants were university lecturers and post-graduate students drawn for convenience from the state universities of Cameroon. These participants constituted a focus group in which the issues related to the study were discussed. The discussions were done both face-to-face as well as through Short Message Services (SMS) and WhatsApp. The data obtained is depicted in italics in the paper, and then critically examined and discussed within the appropriate theoretical and conceptual frames.

4. Data Presentation and Discussion

The data collected for this study is presented and discussed qualitatively under key terms, language and culture, language in conflict and nation building, themes and metaphors in conflicts, metaphors and categorizations in conflicts, metaphors, human conceptualisation and ideology, image of the enemy through metaphorical processes, language and nationalism, and official language and real usage of ordinary speech.

4.1 Comparison of key terms

The semantic approach consists of comparing the meaning of key terms in the study of cross-cultural variations in conflict resolution across languages. The semantic approach is considered effective and parsimonious because communication is the bedrock in conflict resolution. Communication, which is a complex chain of verbal and nonverbal messages and moves, is effective when there is understanding at every stage of the process. The understanding is guaranteed when the parties are able to draw from a shared store of meaning; after they must have agreed on an overall understanding or a metaunderstanding of form and procedure. For example, to negotiate peace, the parties must first of all agree on the meaning of “peace” and “negotiation”. By focusing on language, certain cultural stereotypes are handled. This is because different languages have different versions of reality. For instance, the concepts of ‘*reconciliation*’, ‘*living together*’, ‘*dialogue*’, ‘*decentralization*’, ‘*federalism*’, ‘*bilingualism*’, ‘*Anglophone*’, ‘*terrorist*’, ‘*secessionist*’, ‘*inclusive*’, ‘*inclusive dialogue*’, ‘*marginalization*’, ‘*social cohesion*’, ‘*one and indivisible*’ etc. (data obtained through non-participant observation) may have different equivalents to different people in different languages or cultures; and so for effective conflict resolution, the warring parties must harmonize their understandings and agree on the meanings of the concepts. This is because their expectations of the concepts, such as those indicated above, will be informed by the local or indigenous knowledge that informs their understanding of the concepts. For example, if the concept of ‘Anglophone’ in Cameroon means “not only people who speak and/or write English, but also to people who neither speak nor write any English, but who originate from the former British Southern Cameroons,” this understanding must be ironed out before any effective reconciliation could

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be expected. This will be more so, if the concept constituted an aspect of the cause of the conflict. When the semantic fields and connotations of concepts like those above are compared and contrasted in the languages and/or cultures of the belligerents, some differences and similarities emerge. The emergent differences and similarities can lead to the identification of possible pitfalls in real life conflict situations.

In the same vein and at the same time stressing the subjective nature of language, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) opines that language is "...the external manifestation of the minds of people. Their language is their soul, and their soul is their language" (Humboldt, 1971: 24).

According to *nominalist* and *relativist* ideas, a thing comes into being when it is given a name (like '*Anglophone*', '*terrorist*', '*secessionist*'). Naming therefore is a function of our mind; that is, our way of thinking and our interests, and not reality in itself. This subjective view does not only concern the lexical aspect of the language, but also the other linguistic systems whether syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic, or discursal.

According to Lee, (1992: 48) great attention has to be given to the way in which "different perspectives, different ideologies interact within a particular language and a particular culture". This means that in our study of language and conceptualization, language should be considered more "as the medium of consciousness for a society, its forms of consciousness externalized" (Kress and Hodge, 1979: 13). This is because the use of words, grammar and discourse in any language encodes a view of the way the speakers see the world. Language is thus an external manifestation of a people's conceptual system as is usually the case with the use of metaphors.

4.2. Examining Language and Culture

The inseparability of language and culture is drenched in the fact that language reflects culture and culture is reproduced by language. The meaning of a word, that is, its reference, usage and connotations, is limited to the culture or way of life and worldview of the society that speaks it. This implies, as Cohen (2001) puts it, that "Languages do not exist in isolation as abstract systems of signs but within unique, organic habitats, complex ecologies of sensibility and interaction." This is understood to mean that apart from deceptive cognates or "faux amis" like '*assister*' and '*assist*' respectively in the French and English languages where the former predominantly means 'to take part or to participate,' the latter predominantly signifies 'to help' in English; there exist, most especially, abstract and socially constructed words or concepts like '*anglophone*, *dialogue*, *democracy*, *good governance*, *marginalization* or *wellbeing*' which possess their specific culture characteristics or range and context of usage. For instance, the meaning of Anglophone to a typical Anglophone Cameroonian (within the context of the Anglophone crises/conflict in Cameroon) will be difficult to be perceived and understood by any other speaker of English. It is obvious to hear a French-speaking Cameroonian saying "moi-meme, je suis Anglophone: je parle bien l'anglais", roughly translated as "I myself am an Anglophone because I also speak English". Being Anglophone in Cameroon is a way of life, a culture; that is not necessarily linked to language, but to worldview. A worldview that is

characterized by bottom up approaches to issues consciously or unconsciously inherited from the former colonialist – Britain. During the Major National Dialogue that was held in 2019 to seek solutions to the Anglophone Crises that have plunged Cameroon in a catastrophic armed conflict between separatist/secessionist/freedom fighters on the one hand, and the defense, security, and law and order enforcement forces of the country, it was paining to hear the Sultan of the Bamoun (French-speaking) people in Cameroon blaming Anglophones for fighting for the language of former British colonialist foreigners. The Sultan made this statement on the state-owned broadcasting corporation- the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV). The war, according to some participants in this study, was not for the language, but for a way of life of which the English language is just part. This way of life which now fortunately or unfortunately serves as their identity was inherited from their colonisers who were the British. Language can be considered as an external behaviour that allows the identification of a speaker as a member of a specific group (Tidwell 1998). In this regard, English and French are supposed to be the languages that allow the identification of Cameroonians as Anglophones or Francophones. Tidwell's (1998) consideration of language does not tie with the Cameroon reality if we take the definition of an Anglophone as earlier stated. In the process of enculturation, Triands (1995) observes that the foundation is established for shaping our mind sets and defining what is appropriate or inappropriate, good or bad, rude or polite, right or wrong; and that these are very crucial for determining the policy for conflict resolution and its process. It is therefore evident that cultural values are capable of narrowing down or broadening a person's perception of "...an event, focus, and diffuse their sense of logic or even discard certain information as irrelevant" Opara (2016:12).

This is seemingly the same thing with the concept of '*dialogue*' as perceived by the Francophones and Anglophones of Cameroon. To the former, and still from interviews with some participants of this study, *dialogue* seems to be a top-down negotiation with pre-conditionalities where the conditionalities are spelt out by the superior party; whereas with the latter, *dialogue* means negotiations among equals without preconditions and in the presence of a third party. This simply indicates that a word in one language may cover more or less space in another language; that is, they may include meanings not present in the first language or may exclude other shades of meaning. These variational shades in the meaning of words or concepts across languages or peoples may also be resulting from religious, historical, or environmental differences. The wider the cultural gap between parties, the greater the potential semantic dissonance between the concepts and their meanings or labels across languages.

Hypothetical internalized prevalent concepts like '*marginalization*' or '*enemy in the house*' may be perceived differently by different societies or peoples, depending as indicated above, by environmental, historical or religious reasons. It follows that attention could be paid to language as an alternative technique or approach to the study of culturally grounded differences in conflict resolution.

4.3 Examining Language and /in Conflict and nation building

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Language plays an important role in the formation of nationhood. A nation here is considered as a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, ethnicity and/or psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. Nationhood is simply the quality of being a nation.

The most primary unit of politics is nationhood, and nationhood, according to Anderson (1991) is the most universally legitimate value in contemporary political life. To Anderson, (1983) the nation is nothing but an imagined community. It is an imagined community because the adherents or members of even the smallest nation are unfamiliar and anonymous to one another, yet the image of their fellow citizens' closeness is undoubtedly in the minds of each one's life. This implies that the existence of the community or nation is often imagined through language. This therefore highlights the vital place and responsibility of language in imagining and creating the nationhood. Furthermore, Anderson (1983: 122) captures the importance of language in creating community solidarity as follows:

It is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them as emblems of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dance, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarity.

Noriko (2005:105) however contests Anderson when he says

...a community is not necessarily an imagined entity, it can be composed of people each with individual agency, which involves volition, responsibilities, and active-energy input, and it functions as an agent to create, change, and sometimes even direct the course of history.

As we seek to understand conflict between warring parties in a community, gaps or slits in the understanding of each other emerge from the language of interaction. Taking the word 'anglophone' in the Cameroon conflict situation, the "rich point" in the contrast of meaning is that most French-speaking Cameroonians consider the word (anglophone) to mean any Cameroonian who has undergone the Anglo-Saxon system of education in Cameroon or elsewhere; whereas the English-speaking Cameroonian considers 'anglophone' exclusively as any person whose ancestors are from the former British Southern Cameroon, whether the person speaks, reads or writes English or not. The *Anglophone* community therefore becomes a new ethnic belonging in which "...The feeling of unity is so strong that 'being Anglophone' denotes a new ethnicity, transcending older ethnic ties Wolf (2001:223)."

Another word still within the framework of the Cameroon conflict is 'dialogue'. In relating the word to the notion of, and attitude towards leadership, it is evident from interactions in a focused group discussion for this study, that Anglophones take leadership to task; whereas Francophones tend to see this as a taboo. There is therefore a significant degree of interaction between Anglophones and their leaders, which is not the case with Francophones. 'Dialogue' in whatever form is conditioned by these attitudes. One tilts towards consensus while the other seems to tend to be authoritative.

From the ‘*anglophone*’ and ‘*dialogue*’ examples above, we notice that “rich points”, are important in intercultural negotiation of conflict “...because of the intricate web of associations and connotations that they carry with them, webs that have few or only opaque corresponding echoes in one's native language... Rich points are the linguistic tip of the cultural iceberg, the locations in discourse which signal major disjunctions in interpretation”. (Agar 1996)

Rich points are identified by juxtaposing key words of the conflict across the languages or cultures of the belligerents. The key words may be those that encapsulate the central or underpinning features of the cultures of the fighting factions. Still with the case of Cameroon, and in addition to those cited earlier in this paper, the study came up with other thematically related concepts like ‘*Anglophone Problem, Anglophone Crises, refugees, internally displaced persons, non-exclusive dialogue, peace, ex-combatants*’ etc. It is equally important to settle on the meaning or differences/similarities between ‘grand’ in French and ‘major’ in English in the concept of ‘Grand Dialogue National’ in the French language which is translated as ‘Major National Dialogue’ in the English language. Two days after I pondered on these rich points of ‘Grand’ and ‘Major’ in the *National Dialogue*, a group of scholars and researchers (professors and lecturers) of Cameroon corroborated my debate on the appropriateness of the translation/meaning of the rich points in a heated exchange as exemplified in the following unedited excerpts from the social media platform of WhatsApp. The names of the participants were however deleted for purposes of anonymity.

Dr M.: I think the expression "Major national dialogue" is definitely a Cameroonism and should be considered as such! It is probable that very soon the expression appears in the Dictionary of Cameroon English!

+237: I have also been asking myself what the correct translation should be. Can someone help?

+237: Should this be considered a semantic distortion or accepted as a Cameroonianism to be included in the Standard Cameroonian English variety which we can defend? I don't think so, cos we run the risk of letting 'anything' pass for Cameroon English!

Dr M: Di, lexico-semantic inovations in New Englishes at times are the result of semantic distortions of lexico-semantic constructions which originate from other languges. The acceptability or non-acceptability of a lexical item depends on the trends and proportion of its use. So language users are the ones who decide on whether an item is acceptable or not. Lexical innovations can originate both by people of the upper as well as from those of the lower class. Let us observe trends in the use of this expression and we will decide on its acceptability or non-acceptability... Let us be a bit patient. Time will tell. NB: There is no Academy of Cameroon English... not to talk Standard British English nor of other Englishes... This do not mean that I fo not condemn wrong translations. Saying that the expression "Major National Dialogue" is wrong implies that there is its Standard British English equivalent. What is it? I do not know. Let those who know tell us. It is simply a coinage resulting from the literal

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translation of the "French" expression "Grand Dialogue National" which does exist in Standard French. Good day!

Prof: Do you guys mean that the translation "Major national dialogue" was not done by a translator??? . If it is done by a translator, then, how can it definitely be a Cameroonism??? How would a translator from ANOTHER country who does not know the Cameroon realities translate the text?

Prof A.: I am not a translator. I happen to know English and French to an acceptable level. If I were asked to translate that text, I would say : "Inclusive national dialogue", or Global National Dialogue".

Prof A.: I agree that the term "major" sounds weird in my ears, but I simply want to give credit to the real Translators who proposed the translation. I hope, I do really hope that it is a lay mam in the office of the PM who decided to say Major ND. But, as we all know, "l'impossible n'est pas Camerounais.

Dr M.: Prof, if that were the case, the President would have said "Dialogue National Inclusif" not "Grand Dialogue National". The coiner or translator of the expression qualifier "Major National Dialogue" might have wanted to give a stylistic touch of greatness to this event through the use of the qualifier "Major" which is opposed to "Minor"...

Prof A.: OK.

+237: The truth behind that is buried in geopolitcal linguoscaping.

+237: The three word expression has many problems. First a dialogue presupposes 2 participants. Dialogue does not collocate with national. Major presupposes minor. The expression can be rendered as grand nationwide debate.

+237: Yes Prof , I agree with you that lexico-semantic innovations in New Englishes are a result of semantic distortions resulting from constructions from other languages, in this case French. But I didn't say it was acceptable or not. I simply expressed a fear over what we may one day be forced to accept as Standard Cameroonian English, except you don't envisage this possibility. I believe that the onus is on us of the language disciplines to direct others as to what we think is acceptable or unacceptable, even if we won't force anyone to accept our opinion. Like you said, let's wait and see how people react to this 'major' as opposed to the 'minor' dialogue. We had tolerated something like this before... ..'the force of experience', so we can surely do it again and again, especially if there is an agenda behind such language use. I rest my case!

It is to be noted that participants in the debate above were Cameroonian Anglophone, Cameroonian Francophone, Franglophone (Nkwetisama, 2013:73) linguists and a non-Cameroonian linguist. The debate underscores the importance of elucidating and agreeing on the meaning of key points in conflict management.

The term *bilingual country* seems to mean different things to different Cameroonians. To many, mostly the French-speaking Cameroonians, according to the focus group discussions for this paper, it is the country that is bilingual, not the people! This implies that the bilingualism is geographical.

Others, still mostly Francophones say Cameroon being a *bilingual country* means that you speak *your* English and I speak *my* French and we understand each other; not that I speak *your* English. Such semantic rich points need to be straightened for any sustainable conflict resolution, peaceful living together among Francophones and Anglophones in Cameroon.

4.4 Examining Themes and Metaphors in Conflicts

Themes and metaphors are an extension of Michael Agar's rich points. Here a repertoire of buzz words, terms or phrases and concepts describing the various facets of the conflict is collated and studied in a bid to discerning some perceptions or behaviours that can be exploited in describing and handling the conflict. Triandis (1995) upholds the fact that peoples' thoughts, feelings, reasoning and ways of communication in everyday life are influenced by the language they speak; and that to varying degrees, many abstract concepts are inherently structured by language and metaphors arising from recurrent personified experiences in the real life cultural world. The linguistic relativity theory holds that each word that we use in everyday communication is a tip of an iceberg and that beneath that word there is an intriguingly complex set of interactive ingredients that constitute a language. Our knowledge is expressed through language just the same as we acquire meaning through language. Language therefore does not only embody an interpretation of reality; it also influences thought. In this connection therefore, Opera (2016) affirms that a people's or an individual's "...perception, interpretation, logic and the categorization and inference of everyday settings, as well as events, could be influenced by [their] understanding of a language structure."

This repertoire offers words and metaphors which according to Lederach (1996) provide "...enormous insight into how people think about, respond to, and experience conflict in their everyday setting." With the case of Costa Rica, Lederach (1996) found out that the key metaphors gyrated around heat, having sensations of being ensnared or lost with no way out and considering conflict as embedded in a network of people. From the analysis, John Paul Lederach concludes that beyond being a just a vehicle of communication, language is equally a window into how people organize both their understanding and expression of conflict, and more so in keeping with their cultural patterns and ways of operating. Taking the case of Cameroon, we notice, through non-participant observations, that fabricated expressions like '*Popping Corn, frying popcorn, corn popping*' to refer to intermittent gunshots exchanges between the Anglophone armed separatist/secessionist/freedom fighters on the one hand and Cameroon government armed defense, law enforcement and security forces. Besides, we observed phrases like '*Country Sunday, indoor days, lockdown days, ghost towns days*' mourning days to describe days or periods during the Anglophone crises when inhabitants of the restive and war-torn North West and South West Regions are forced by the *secessionist/restorationist* authorities to remain indoors as an insignia of civil disobedience. During these periods no business premises, school establishments, markets, interurban/ intervillage transportation or movements as a whole are authorized. Any violations of the injunctions are met with anything ranging from kidnapping, ransom demands to death. Furthermore, terms like '*Sugar cane* (noun), *sticks* (noun), *Ground nut* (noun), *Garri* (noun, verb)' are often heard from the fighters to refer to guns for

the first two and ammunition for the last two. These are linguistic devices of metaphor and categorization.

4.5. Examining metaphors and categorizations in Conflicts

We examined earlier under the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that not only does language reflect reality; but that it equally affects reality and makes changes to it. Similarly, language reflects history and politics; and also greatly affects them. Nishitani (1992: 3) cites a war analyst who said “the violent reality of war exists outside language; everything, including language, melts into the brutal reality of war.” This view does not tie with the situation in Cameroon. As we see, language dynamically operates in the war discourse of Cameroon e.g. *dialogue/biyalogue, rebel, and freedom fighter* and the ideological underpinnings.

4.6. Examining metaphor, human conceptualisation and ideology

In matters of thought control, metaphor stands out as a very powerful linguistic tool. Metaphor had before now been disregarded by linguists and marginalized and confined to literary language or poetry. Metaphor is a conceptual and a linguistic phenomenon; that is, metaphor is not only crucial in language but also in the way people make sense of, and talk about the world. Take for example the metaphors of *infiltrator, privileged slave, sardine eater, blackleg, secessionist, enabler, restorationist, separatist, rebel, and freedom fighter* etc in the case of Cameroon. These are depictions of enmity, division, hatred and war.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3-6) re-echo the theory that our cognitive systems or worldview are structured through language and then capture metaphor as follows:

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish— a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought and action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. ... The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and consequently, the language is metaphorically structured...metaphor is not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words...on the contrary, human thought processes are largely metaphorical.

The role of metaphor in language is observed from the level of word meaning to that of discourse. We can understand the discourse schema in observed words like *traitors, returning to normalcy, putting someone out of the game* and *neutralizing someone*. These words and phrases indicate war, danger, killing, and insecurity.

Metaphor is a weapon of thought control because of its ideological potential. Chilton (1985: 121) says, “metaphor plays an important role in our conceptualizations, and that is not to be dismissed as mere rhetorical

ornament— but so assimilated to our cognitive processes that they go unnoticed.” An interesting aspect of the Cameroon Anglophone Crises is the nomenclature applied to weapons: *Garri, sugar cane, groundnut*. This naming is based on broad cultural prototypes. It can be noticed that most of the names of some of the fore line non-governmental forces: *Fireman, Chop-no-Die, Stone, Green Snake, Die-Man* are heroes, animals, or gods syntagmatically associated with these attributes.

Some terms suggest the intended function of the weapon, such as a threat, violence, or sinister aims (e.g., *Stick, Intruder, and Harm*). Obviously, the naming is based upon familiar things we can easily associate with.

Lee (1992: 84) opines that the naming process is partially “....an attempt to promote their acceptance, to incorporate them into our everyday understanding of the world, to legitimise them in terms of our past and our cultural heritage.” Chilton (1985: 55) describes this as a linguistic strategy of “negotiating [war] discourse with the non-military public”

Above word-level, catchphrases like *collateral damages* or *accidental damages* are rhetoric used to conceal the destructive features of the war of the crises or to minimize the image of casualties among civilians or noncombatants who in Cameroon, include children, women, pregnant women, mentally/physically or visually impaired or old persons. Chilton (1985: 57) concludes that:

The whole effect is *distancing* through *abstraction*, by connoting “positive strength rather than negative destruction: to switch meaning of specific object and effect to more generalized, emotive conditioning”

Such usage becomes so impactful in engendering emotive conditioning in the use of words like genocide, colonial slave, spy, stranger etc. This kind of conditioning is very liable to intensifying radicalization, acrimony and hate.

4.7. Creating an image of the enemy through metaphorical process

To create an enemy image is also a metaphorical process. Noriko (2005) says that is how leaders conceptualize an *enemy* or how they want their people to perceive the *enemy*.

It would be recalled that during World War II, the name the Japanese gave the American soldiers was *kichiku beiei* (beast-like American and British people). Killing of human beings in one situation may be constructed as *pacification* or *assassination* depending on who died. Fowler et al. (1979: 128) hold that constructing “... an enemy is based on the simplified categorization process of dichotomization: *us* and *them*. This process entails dehumanizing, the transformation of human individuals into depersonalized objects.” They equally qualify such a replacement process as being one by which a particular kind of individual can be replaced by noun phrases indicating larger abstract entities. This kind of impersonalized naming that leads to depersonalization is a routine feature of official discourse; if one takes the case of *collateral damages, accidental damages* or *boys in the bushes* in the Cameroon war discourse

Using generic pronouns like *us* presupposes that interests of every one of us are unitary and undivided. Hartley (1982) however says this is not always the case in reality. Fowler et al. (1979) points to the fact that with such discourse, and as a collectivisation strategy, a class of agents is simply related to a class of actions in a simplified manner, with complex variables ignored. Noriko (2005) then concludes that with this in mind, each discourse is constructed in a certain direction in a bid to rationalising and justifying policy and goals utilising the power of metaphor.

Language resources are used to mobilize people or a nation for a certain cause (e.g. peace, war). Classification is one of such resources. Classification is an ideologically creative process. Thus, language realises and makes sense of a world by classification in the double sense of comprehending it and producing it (Fowler, 1991: 58). As discussed earlier, more recent ideas view language, and classification made by language, as a living process. The *boys in the bushes* are made to look like non-human threats, and like any other threat, we must strive to neutralize the threats. Human beings use their words to affect and change the world they speak about. This study found out that speaking English in Noso is *us-ness* and speaking French in Noso is *them-ness*; and this classification is an ideologically creative one whose consequences span between life and death.

4.8. Language and nationalism

Nationalism is the idea of supporting one's country, people or culture; supporting the creation or establishment of a sovereign nation (which does or does not currently exist). Official nationalism and official language can be viewed as originating from two angles: from above (official nationalism) or from below (popular nationalism).

Official nationalism is often considered as an obscure concept as far as language usage is concerned. It tends to mask a dichotomy that exists between the nation and its political sphere. That is, the gap between national languages (languages spoken in everyday lives like the lingua francas of Pidgin English and Fufulde on the one hand and the over 265 (Nkwetisama 2017a,b,c) indigenous languages in Cameroon) and official languages English and French in Cameroon. Noriko (2005) believes that national languages have much more symbolic characteristics as emblems of a community than official languages which are used for practical purposes for communicating at a national level. In a multilingual and multicultural society like Cameroon where more than 265 indigenous languages are spoken, French and English function as official languages. However, within the context of the Anglophone crises in Cameroon, English, the colonial language of the former British Southern Cameroons seems to be assuming the status of a national language to the Anglophones (as defined in this paper). Tanaka (1992) holds that official languages are deliberately ambiguous, and they serve to obscure the distinction between official language and national authority. A recent example is the case where a Cameroonian member of government insists that all official texts in State Universities be released in both French and English; but, paradoxically the text giving this instruction comes only in the French language. Such instances fuel the feeling

of marginalization within the ranks of the minority English-speaking demographics of the nation, which is a good ingredient of conflict.

4.9. Official language and real usage of ordinary speech

There is a gap between the centralized or dominant bureaucratic or official language of people in power and the common usage of ordinary people. Milroy and Milroy (1999: 36) ascertain that this language is useless for communicating with ordinary people; and further discuss the emptiness and artificiality of propaganda slogans and political jargon, seen in words like *professional, objectively, living together, counterrevolutionary, capitalist, struggle, normalcy, democratic elections* etc. Earlier, Yuan et al. (1990: 74) had called this kind of vocabulary “empty phraseology” because their meanings are vague, general, and abstract, but useful for producing an excited atmosphere. To Noriko (2005), these linguistic abuses attempt to exert power in a covert way. One would not usually find them in the colloquial speech of ordinary people but are full in centralized, official speech and documents, where they are considered as standard usage (Standard English). The authority found in language use as a result of standardization by institutionalists is to be condemned. This is because as Taylor (1990:10) puts it, institutionalism considers language “as an institution which exists independently of the individuals who perform linguistic acts.” This is irrespective of the reality that language is inseparable from political issues.

People develop their own language by the continuous exchange of thoughts and anti-thoughts reflected in language and antilanguage. Wierzbicka (1990) carried out research on the development of “antilanguage” from the lexical to the discourse level in Poland and found out that antilanguage developed from official propaganda. Wierzbicka’s findings demonstrated that language is *generated* by a community, and a community is not only the invention of language. And Halliday (1978) extrapolates antilanguage to anti-society when he says that an antilanguage is not only parallel to an anti-society; it is in fact generated by it. We have here the example of *Dialogue* and the antilanguage of *Biyalogue* in the Cameroon crises context. Another case in point in the Cameroonian context is where all government officials are referred to by ordinary people in ordinary usage, to use colonial discourse, as colonial occupiers/settlers. In the Nsoland of the North West Region, “professional” law and security enforcement officers are referred to as “arim”, meaning that they are cannibalistic wizards. Mr./Messrs. Envelope is the name given some traditional authorities who try to back up government activities (especially elections) during the crises.

5. Conclusion

Lasting nation building based on linguistic ventures could be attained if concepts like ‘*reconciliation*’, ‘*living together*’, ‘*dialogue*’, ‘*decentralization*’, ‘*federalism*’, ‘*bilingualism*’, ‘*Anglophone*’, ‘*terrorist*’, ‘*secessionist*’, ‘*inclusive*’, ‘*inclusive dialogue*’, ‘*marginalization*’, ‘*social cohesion*’, ‘*one and indivisible*’ etc which may have different equivalents to different people in different languages or cultures or worldview of the warring parties are harmonised; and the meanings of the concepts and their understandings agreed

upon. This is because their expectations of the concepts will be informed by the local or indigenous knowledge that informs their understanding of the concepts.

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